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June 12, 2015

MCIA Maps Spilling In-Depth Details on Local Waterways

MIDDLESEX COUNTY -- The Middlesex County Improvement Authority's newest website feature is steering residents toward one of the region's more underutilized, yet vast natural resources.

For applicable communities, the MCIA has recently created an electronic version of comprehensive maps, which serve as an overview for local streams, waterways and inlets, as well as their uses, currents and even restrictions.

"Our first set of 'Municipal Stream' maps is designed for the average resident, or school students -- from about fourth grade on up," said Denise Nickel, senior project manager for the MCIA's Economic Development Department. "The municipal stream maps show where streams are in a town, their flow from and into neighboring towns, as well as their relationship to key geographic attributes. These may prove useful for municipal recreation, environment and community service programs or even fairs."

A second set of maps, entitled "Municipal Stream and Raritan River Uses," tap into the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's designations to categorize these bodies of water in a variety of ways.

Each of these maps displays a key indicating a community's flood zones, unnamed and named streams, surface water, impaired streams and more.

"It serves as a baseline of sorts for what is known about the streams and the river," Nickel said, adding that this series of maps better lends itself to a well-informed audience, such as a biology-class student, environmental commissioner, elected official and the like.

The lower half of each map also contains informational tables that further flesh out the identity of area rivers and streams.

"They explain whether or not one can eat fish from the river or the stream, what kind of recreation can be done in it and if the water body supports other life or habitats," Nickel said.

The data collection and design for the maps was an eight-month-long endeavor for the Improvement Authority, made possible through the assistance of the Middlesex County Office of Planning, as well as grant funding from the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program.

More information on these stream maps is available at www.mciauth.com under the "redevelopment" section.

MEDIA CONTACT: Public Information Officer Maria Prato, 609-655-5141, mp@mciauth.com