



# Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project

[www.raritanbasin.org](http://www.raritanbasin.org)

## Results of the Participant Survey, April-May 2002

The Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project provided a 24-question survey to meeting participants and on its Web site, one year after the formation of the Raritan Project committee structure. 64 responses were received, 27 from the Web site and the remainder at Raritan Project meetings. The Raritan Project has approximately 490 people on its active mailing lists, with over 125 active participants. This report summarizes the results, based on an Excel file with the raw scores and comments. It is important to note that this survey was of active participants, and there is no inference that it reflects the views of the general public or non-participating stakeholders.

### Survey Structure

Staff of the New Jersey Water Supply Authority developed the survey, with suggestions from several Raritan Project leaders. The survey has 23 multiple-choice questions, some of which have an open-ended component. Question 24 provides room for open-ended comments in response to any of the other questions, or for any additional thoughts from the respondent. The questions ([see list](#)) focus on several key points of concern for the Raritan Project, which are summarized below (click links to each):

- [Level of participant involvement](#)
- [Comfort level with Project progress rate](#)
- [Quality of staff support](#)
- [Level of available Project resources](#)
- [Level of participant knowledge](#)
- [Goals & Objectives process](#)
- [Likelihood of watershed plan completion and adoption](#)
- [Potential reasons for Project failure](#)

The survey was provided to participants in all Raritan Project meetings from early April through May. Over 100 people attended these meetings. The survey was also posted during the same period on the Raritan Project Web site for those who wished to respond electronically ([www.raritanbasin.org](http://www.raritanbasin.org)). Twenty-seven of the 64 responses were received through the Web site.

Please [click here](#) for the statistical results for the multiple-choice questions (11X17 inches).

### Level of Participant Involvement

Most (81%) of the 64 respondents attended six or more meetings in the prior 12 months, with 30% having attended more than 20 meetings (Question 1).<sup>1</sup> Their involvement was evenly distributed across the three Watershed Management Area

<sup>1</sup> Raritan Project committees usually meet monthly, approximately 10 or 11 times per year.

Committees (North & South Branch Raritan, Lower Raritan, Millstone) and Basin-wide Committees (Question 2; 22 to 27% each). Respondents were allowed to select multiple choices regarding their involvement, recognizing that an individual could be heavily involved in both a WMA and Basin-wide committee; the 64 respondents selected 69 choices, and only six indicated that they were not active participants. Those attending 16 or more meetings per year were far more likely to indicate major involvement in more than one place, usually a WMA committee and a Basin-wide committee. Most respondents indicated that they planned to spend the same (52%) or more (34%) amount of time working with the Raritan Project in the coming year (Question 21). Those indicating an interest in spending more time on the project were generally those who were actively involved already, though some had attended very few meetings.

Respondents were about evenly split between those who felt that all interests were present and those who felt that some or many interests were missing (Question 5). Most frequently identified as missing were: Municipal representatives, especially those who are elected and appointed officials rather than staff (9 mentions); developers (7); agriculture (4); and business/industry (3); and academia (3).

64% of respondents felt that they have effective opportunities for input and that the input was useful (Question 20). However, 36% selected "neutral" regarding this question. It is interesting to compare Question 20 results to the results for Question 19, which asked whether the management plan addresses the major needs of the respondent's agency, organization, interest group or personal interest, on five-step scale. A total of 41% chose the top two steps, indicating that the plan (to the extent it was completed at that time) did meet their needs relatively well. However, 53% chose the middle step and 8% the fourth step, indicating potential concerns about the plan's scope. As of the time of this survey, the Problem Statements, Goals & Objectives had been developed for all three Watershed Management Areas, allowing people to understand the general direction of the plan but not the details.

### **Level of Participant Knowledge**

Nearly all respondents (86%) felt that their knowledge of key watershed management issues in the Raritan Basin was at least adequate, with 45% claiming a thorough or very thorough knowledge (Question 13). Regarding the knowledge level of their peers on the committees (Question 15), the responses were very similar -- 81% selected adequate or better, with 39% considered to have thorough or very thorough understanding of the issues.

Most respondents have read one or more of the Project's seven Technical Reports, with a total of 147 responses or 2.3 reports per respondent (Question 12). In general, those who attended more than ten meetings also read more reports (ten of 35 frequent attendees read four or more reports). However, ten of the same 35 had read none of the reports, while five of the 29 people who attended ten or fewer meetings also read at least four. Six respondents indicated that they read all seven reports (three of whom attended more than 10 meetings, and one who attended no meetings). The motivation

of those who read the reports but did not attend is not known. Regarding their peers (Question 14), respondents generally believed that many or most other participants had read the technical reports relevant to their committees (40%), while equal numbers (23% each) said that either few others had read the reports or they didn't know.

### **Comfort level with Project Progress Rate**

The respondents had almost equal responses to Questions 3 and 4, regarding the rate of progress for the committees on which they serve and for the Raritan Project as a whole. Most (69% and 66%, respectively) felt that the process was moving at a rate that was "about right" while approximately 25% felt the process was too slow. In a similar vein, 89% felt that the committees on which they serve meet at the right frequency.

### **Quality of Staff Support**

The New Jersey Water Supply Authority provides most of the staff support to Raritan Project committees and subcommittees, under a Memorandum of Agreement with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Respondents indicated a very high (64%) or high (28%) regard for the quality of NJWSA staff support (Question 7), with none saying low or very low. Regarding the level of staff assistance, 84% responded that the current level is appropriate (Question 9), with 12% asking for more staff assistance. Results for NJDEP (Question 8) were more mixed, with a fairly even spread from very high to low (23%, 16%, 23% and 20%), and 5% saying very low. One person recommended that the level of staff assistance should be much less.

### **Level of Available Project Resources**

The resource-related questions addressed both financial/staff resources (Question 10) and the availability of information and expertise (Question 11). Regarding project resources, 52% felt that they were adequate, with 28% saying that resources were more than adequate and 19% saying they were inadequate. None felt that the resources were excessive or highly inadequate. Likewise, 48% responded that committee access to expertise and information was adequate, with 12% saying inadequate. Interestingly, 34% indicated that the expertise and information was "more than adequate." However, no respondents provided additional information regarding this answer.

### **Goals & Objectives Process**

During the first year, the three Watershed Management Area Committees and their subcommittees and work groups spent a considerable amount of time on the development of problem statements, goals and objectives, based on the findings of the Technical Reports and other information. Nearly half (47%) of respondents strongly agreed that the development of Goals & Objectives was important in developing a high quality plan (Question 16), while 34% agreed. Strong disagreement came from 5%, disagreement from 3%, and 11% were neutral. Of the five people who disagreed, all attended numerous meetings, with two attending more than 20. The survey also asked whether the Goals & Objectives process had helped them as individuals gain a better idea of the best focus for the management plan, on a five-step scale (Question 17); 44% chose the top two scores, while another 41% chose the middle score. Only 12% (8

individuals) indicated little benefit; all these attended 6 or more meetings and two attended more than 20. Interestingly, none of the three people who answered “strongly disagreed” to Question 16 chose the lower two steps for Question 17 (two answered in the top two scores and one in the middle score), indicating that the process was of some personal benefit to them in understanding the plan’s focus, even though they felt that the process was unimportant to a good plan.

### **Likelihood of Watershed Plan Completion and Adoption**

Respondents were asked to rank the likelihood of plan completion by 2004 on a five-step scale (Question 18); 28% chose the top two ranks, indicating a relatively strong belief that the plan would be completed in that schedule. However, nearly 60% chose the middle step and the rest (8%) the fourth step. Belief that NJDEP will adopt the plan when finished had similar results (Question 22), with 34% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 55% neutral; 6% disagreed. In short, most respondents are not convinced that NJDEP will use the results of their work.

Question 18 also included an opportunity for open-ended comments on the reasons the plan would or would not be completed by 2004, and 28 people commented. Project leadership and NJWSA staff support were cited as positive reasons by a few, but most responses addressed reasons why the project might not succeed. The most responses (8) focused on insufficient or declining resources for both the project and stakeholder involvement. Three potentially related issues received four comments each: process complexity; process length and size; and the lack of public involvement. A concern was raised by three respondents that stakeholder involvement would wane due to the lack of tangible results from the process.

### **Potential Reasons for Project Failure**

Question 23 posed a variety of theoretical reasons that the Raritan Project might fail, drawn from the Center for Watershed Protection. The survey asked respondents to choose up to three. Of the eight proposed reasons that might “currently most endanger the project”, two were chosen by a large percentage of respondents. Approximately 56% chose “Plan lacks local ownership and key stakeholder involvement” while 41% chose “Plan does not assess adequacy of local program for implementation.” Four other reasons were chosen by 30% (Plan is at too great a scale, and Budget for developing the watershed plan is insufficient), 27% (Plan focuses on tools of watershed analysis rather than watershed outcome) and 20% (Plan does not address the issue of land use change).

Question 23 also provided an opportunity for open-ended answers beyond the eight alternatives posed; 17 comments were received. Four respondents each suggested that the process (1) is not addressing the political issues and the views of those opposed to the entire process; and (2) the lack of State support and regulatory mandates that would ensure implementation. Three people noted that the Municipal Land Use Law drives land use decisions and will make plan implementation difficult. Two comments each noted the lack of broad public interest in the plan and the lack of “local ownership.”

### **General Comments**

Question 24 provided an opportunity for explanation of any other responses and for raising any other issues. Eighteen people responded, some with short comments about the other questions. However, a variety of significant comments were also received ([click here for listing](#)). The comments mirror issues from the other questions, for the most part, and emphasize key issues. The importance of NJDEP and political support (and concerns about the lack of it) are raised again, as are concerns about the complexity and length of the planning process. One respondent provided extensive comments suggesting staff dominance of the process and the need for far more public involvement and night meetings. Others suggest further roles for the staff in making sure that the goals and objectives and scientific information are consistently raised and addressed through the process. Two respondents noted the value of the technical reports and the necessity of the watershed process in bringing that information to policy makers.

### **Synopsis of Findings**

The survey results present the view of a generally supportive but also worried group of stakeholder participants. The sample size is large relative to total participation in the Raritan Project, and there is an even distribution across Watershed Management Area Committees and Basin-wide Committees. The respondents range in a relatively even distribution across involvement levels (from few or no meetings to many). Therefore, the results might be reflective of the project participants as a whole, but is not possible to confirm this based on available data. The survey did not ask stakeholders to reveal their particular interest group affiliation, and so it is not possible to determine whether the full range of participant interests are represented. In addition, some interests are not involved or minimally involved, and so it is not possible to determine whether these results reflect the views of those who are opposed to or indifferent to the process, or simply don't have time for it. Finally, this survey was not in any way a random survey of watershed stakeholders (both participants and non-participants) or of the general public. The Raritan Project did conduct a random public opinion survey in September-October 2001, through TechnoMetrica, Inc., regarding water resource issues in general, rather than the Raritan Project per se.

The Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project is seen as a necessary effort by most respondents, and is moving at an acceptable rate with most of the necessary stakeholder interests "at the table." Participants are seen as generally knowledgeable enough to be effective, have access to adequate information, make use of the Technical Reports, and have reasonable opportunities for input. They show a great willingness to attend meetings, and many anticipate a greater level of involvement in the coming year. NJWSA staff receives very high marks for the quality and focus of their work, while views about NJDEP staff involvement are more mixed. The planning process is seen as important and viable, and yet there are many concerns about whether the watershed management plan will be truly successful in the long run, or even adopted by NJDEP. Of all concerns mentioned, the dominant issues are related to local capacity to

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implement the plan and local support for the plan. Stakeholders also are uncertain whether the plan will address their major issues.

It is important to note that this survey was distributed just after the Watershed Management Area Committees completed development of their Goals & Objectives, but before the process focused on developing implementation strategies. Given that the strategies will be the key “action” component of the plan, stakeholders at this time (April-May 2002) were aware of the general direction of the plan but had no details on how, when and where implementation would occur. In addition, during this period stakeholders became aware that NJDEP had begun a review of the watershed planning process statewide, with the potential for ending the process. Both of these factors may have affected responses.

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## Raritan Project Survey Questions

Q #	Survey Questions
1	I have attended the following number of Raritan Project meetings in the past 12 months:
2	I am involved to a major extent with (circle as many as appropriate):
3	The committees on which I serve are moving at a rate that is:
4	The Raritan Project as a whole is moving at a rate that is:
5	The key interests "at the table" in the committees on which I serve are:
6	I feel that the committees/subcommittees/work groups on which I serve meet:
7	The quality of NJWSA staff support to the committees has been:
8	The quality of NJDEP support to the committees has been:
9	Staff assistance to committees (such as presenting options, draft concepts, issue summaries, etc., for consideration by the committees) should be:
10	Current Raritan Project resources necessary to develop a high quality watershed management plan (not including implementation) appear to be:
11	Committee access to expertise and information necessary to develop a high quality watershed management plan is:
12	Which of the seven Technical Reports have you read (circle all you have read)?
13	My understanding of the key watershed management issues in the Raritan Basin related to the committees on which I serve is:
14	Based on your experience, to what extent have other committee members read the key Technical Reports that apply to the committee's work?
15	The understanding of other committee members regarding the key watershed management issues in the Raritan Basin is:
16	The process of developing Goals & Objectives was an important component in developing a high quality watershed management plan.
17	On a scale of 1 to 5 (five being the best), the process of developing Goals & Objectives has helped <b>me</b> develop a clearer idea of the best focus for the management plan:
18	On a scale of 1 to 5 (five being the highest probability), the likelihood that the Raritan Basin Watershed Management Plan will be completed by the Raritan Project in 2004 is
19	On a scale of 1 to 5 (five being the best), the focus for the management plan addresses the major needs of my organization, agency, interest group or personal interest (as appropriate):
20	I have had effective opportunities for input to the planning process and feel that my input has been useful in the plan development process.
21	Compared to last year, my time commitment to the Raritan Project in the next year will be:
22	NJDEP will formally adopt the Raritan Basin Watershed Management Plan when the stakeholders complete it.
23	The Center for Watershed Protection has posed the following reasons for the failure of many watershed management plans across the country. Please put an X by the three reasons you believe currently most endanger this project.
24	If for any questions above you answered on the lowest or second lowest part of the scale, help us improve the process by listing the question number below and providing your thoughts on what has gone wrong and how we can improve. Also feel free to add any additional comments or commentary.

## Survey General Comments (Question 24)

### **NJDEP Involvement and Support**

"I have great concerns about DEP's commitment. We've rarely seen them at subcommittees and spotty attendance at steering committed."

"I don't believe, at this time, that DEP will adopt the management plan as written unless there is sufficient public/political support for the plan as written, and without strong, effective leadership from DEP for the process. Without strong support I foresee a perhaps prolonged period of negotiation with DEP over strategy details."

"Have NJDEP step up their involvement. Perhaps have an interim review of the Plan by NJDEP by feedback."

"I think the DEP representatives have been faithful in attending our meetings but are constrained in their ability to give us a sense of whether we are going to be successful in convincing them to adopt our plan."

### **Project Process**

"This project has been too process oriented. It's time to move on to the real work. There are too many subcommittees and committees, all populated by the same people. Few of us have the time to attend so many meetings each month. All this said, the Raritan Basin planning efforts runs more smoothly and is better organized than some of the other watershed planning initiatives in which I am involved."

"Processes take too long, dominated by Staff, inhibits the flow of members. Meetings are dominated by staff and as a result, attendees tend to sit back and wait for ideas to be presented by staff and merely agree or keep silent. Staff has been faultless in the amount of work and quality of work. They need to take a few steps backward and have the expectation that committees will do their own work. We need more public involvement. We need general meetings of WMA and not just committee meetings, which are poorly attended and often result in minimal discussion. Increased attendance could reflect more diverse viewpoints and be more reflective of the realities of what will be faced by the attempts to put the plan into practice. It would be better to have interaction with a diversity of viewpoints NOW at this stage and attempt to engage many more players in the process at this point in development of the plan. The comment has been passed several times that by keeping the number of attendees at a meeting reduced, that there is less opposition and it is easier to get agreement. In the long run this attitude has the potential to short-circuit the process. Strongly urge more public involvement. Token night meetings are not enough, do not provide consistency and familiarity for public to want to continue to be involved with the project or have a sense of personal contribution. Appreciate the viewpoint that staff does not want to attend so many night meetings but question whether this is necessary. Night meetings could simply be summarized for staff."

"Too much time is given to "rhetoric" without facts. The staff should regulate this and keep the conversations to the task at hand. More maps and visuals please. At a minimum, a map of the watershed area and key locations of discussion items (like USGS sample points, etc.) should be present at every meeting."

"At every meeting, the goals and objectives of the plan and the issues should be clearly stated and defined as they pertain to technical issues. We're all not rocket scientists but we all have enough scientific background to read a graph. The issues or goals and objectives of the plan get lost and it becomes difficult to tie the graph to the purpose of the committee and the plan. To the staff: keep up the hard and very necessary work."

“Nothing has really gone wrong. The Watershed Protection Authority [Water Supply Authority] had a clear program module in mind at the start and has worked hard to implement the module. The process has imposed a heavy time burden on the participants and sometimes the concentration on process has been wearisome. I appreciate the input of experts who bring the project to life.”

### **Funding**

“Funding needs to be continued and increased so that an adequate amount of data can be collected to properly form a baseline on which to assess water quality throughout the WMA's.”

“Resources.....inadequate. Meeting once a month in the evening to combat the giants of development (i.e.: Toll Brothers) who pursue land acquisition 24/7 seems daunting.”

### **Political Support**

“I don't think these issues are really taken that seriously by the players who make the decisions, at least now . A more major water crisis like a long term drought may open ones eyes.”

“I hope we will have enough time to develop ways to reach local officials. Those who participate in the project are already believers.”

### **Plan Content**

“I have, however, found the technical reports extremely useful for my environmental commission. To be most effective, I hope the RAP [Raritan Plan] will make clear land use recommends, model ordinances, that towns can adopt in order to provide meaningful protection in the subwatersheds.”

“Planning is extremely important to environmental protection, conservation and preservation. Watershed planning creates a great forum for discussion and for understanding the decision making process, especially when participants from diverse disciplines are involved. Watershed planning is definitely a realm where others can look to for lessons learned on bringing together social issues with science and technology for useful policy making.”

**Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project  
One-Year Program Survey: Statistics**

Q1 # of meetings attended in 12 months					Q2 Involved to major extent with					Q3 My committees moving					Q4 Project moving at a rate that is					Q5 Key interests are				Q6 Committees/subcommittees meet							
None	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	>20	N&S Branch WMA	Lower Raritan WMA	Millstone WMA	Basin-wide Committee	Not Active Participant	Much Too Fast	Too Fast	About Right	Too Slow	Much Too Slow	Much Too Fast	Too Fast	About Right	Too Slow	Much Too Slow	All Present	Some Missing	Many Missing	Most Missing	Much too often	Too often	About right	Too seldom	Much too seldom		
4	7	19	8	6	19	17	14	15	17	6	0	1	44	16	2	0	0	42	17	1	29	24	5	0	0	2	57	2	0		
6.3%	10.9%	29.7%	12.5%	9.4%	29.7%	26.6%	21.9%	23.4%	26.6%	9.4%	0.0%	1.6%	68.8%	25.0%	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	65.6%	26.6%	1.6%	45.3%	37.5%	7.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	89.1%	3.1%	0.0%		
Q7 Quality NJWSA staff support					Q8 Quality of NJDEP support					Q9 Staff assistance should be					Q10 Project resources for plan					Q11 Committee access to info				Q12 Which of the Technical Reports have you read?							
Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low	Much more	More	Same as now	Less	Much less	Excessive	More than adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Highly inadequate	Excessive	More than adequate	Adequate	Inadequate	Highly inadequate	Settings	Landscape	Water Budget	Water Availability	Ground Water	Surface Water & Riparian Areas	Surface Water Quality & Pollutant Loadings
41	18	2	0	0	15	10	15	13	3	0	8	54	0	1	0	18	33	12	0	0	22	31	8	0	21	25	12	21	25	22	21
64.1%	28.1%	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%	23.4%	15.6%	23.4%	20.3%	4.7%	0.0%	12.5%	84.4%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	28.1%	51.6%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	34.4%	48.4%	12.5%	0.0%	32.8%	39.1%	18.8%	32.8%	39.1%	34.4%	32.8%
Q13 My knowledge of key issues					Q14 Others read Tech Reports					Q15 Understanding of issues by others					Q16 G&O process vital					Q17 G&O process helped me (5 high)				Q18 Will plan be complete by 2004							
Very thorough	Thorough	Adequate	Limited	Very limited	Most have read	Many have read	Few have read	None have read	Don't know	Very thorough	Thorough	Adequate	Limited	Very limited	Don't Know	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1	
15	14	26	7	2	14	18	15	0	15	13	12	27	2	2	6	30	22	7	2	3	12	16	26	8	0	8	10	38	5	0	
23.4%	21.9%	40.6%	10.9%	3.1%	21.9%	28.1%	23.4%	0.0%	23.4%	20.3%	18.8%	42.2%	3.1%	3.1%	9.4%	46.9%	34.4%	10.9%	3.1%	4.7%	18.8%	25.0%	40.6%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	15.6%	59.4%	7.8%	0.0%	
Q19 Plan addresses my interests					Q20 My input useful					Q21 Time commitment for next year					Q22 NJDEP will adopt final plan					Q23 Reasons that most endanger success of project											
					Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Much more	More	The same	Less	Much Less	None	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Plan is at too great a scale	Plan lacks local ownership and key stakeholder involvement	Plan does not address the issue of land use change	Budget for developing the watershed plan is insufficient	Plan focuses on tools of watershed analysis rather than watershed outcome	Plan does not assess adequacy of local program for implementation	Plan recommendations are too general	Plan had no requirements or meaning			
					7	34	23	0	0	10	12	33	8	0	1	5	17	35	4	0	19	36	13	19	17	26	7	4			
					10.9%	53.1%	35.9%	0.0%	0.0%	15.6%	18.8%	51.6%	12.5%	0.0%	1.6%	7.8%	26.6%	54.7%	6.3%	0.0%	29.7%	56.3%	20.3%	29.7%	26.6%	40.6%	10.9%	6.3%			