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Watershed Association Gives Environmental Awards and Appoints New Trustees at Annual Meeting

Hopewell Township—At its recent annual meeting, The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association presented its first annual Richard J. Rotter Award for Excellence in Environmental Education to Roosevelt Elementary teacher Ilene Levine of Princeton; its annual Watershed Environmental Stewardship Award to Ted Stiles of Pennington; and welcomed five new trustees to three-year terms: Bart Bennett, Skillman; Elliot Cohen, Princeton; Meg Gorrie, Pennington; Dick Scribner, Princeton; and Tee Williams, Ewing. Elected to a second three-year term was Rob Hillas of Princeton.

The Board selected the following officers for the upcoming year: Swep Davis of Hopewell returning as Chairman for a fourth year; and returning for their second year, Princeton residents Peter Gibson as Vice Chair, Lorraine Sciarra as Secretary and Zvi Eiref as Treasurer. John Ellis of Pennington began his first term as Vice Chair.

The Rotter Award for Excellence in Environmental Education, named in memory of Montgomery Township High School science teacher Richard J. Rotter recognizes a teacher who exemplifies the enthusiasm and commitment that Richard Rotter demonstrated in sharing the wonders of nature with his students. Ilene Levine, a science teacher at Roosevelt Elementary was chosen because of her ability to connect with her students, make them feel like a family and instill in them a love for the natural world. She has taken her 3rd, 4th and 5th graders on trips to the Pinelands to collect fossils, held evening star parties after planetarium visits and combined raising Monarch butterflies with insect safaris.

"You can tell what an effective teacher she is by seeing how excited her students are to be in her classroom," said Jeff Hoagland Watershed Association Education Director.

The Watershed Environmental Stewardship Award is presented to an individual who exemplifies a commitment to preserving New Jersey's fast disappearing natural lands and whose passionate advocacy has a significant positive impact on protecting water quality.

Ted Stiles of Pennington was chosen for this award. In addition to his service as a former Watershed Trustee for two six-year terms, he was Chair and currently serves on the Advisory Board. Stiles is active with Delaware Raritan Greenway, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, the Organization for Tropical Studies, and the NJ Nature Conservancy. He heads the Township Environmental Commission and serves on its Open Space Advisory Board, as well as on the County Open Space Board. He also teaches biology at Rutgers University.

The Watershed Association estimates that over 60,000 acres have been preserved in five counties through his efforts.

As Executive Director Jim Waltman said in presenting the award, “There are few people who do so much for the environment as well as Ted. From identifying funding sources and building consensus among various stakeholders to obtaining Deeds of Conservation Restriction, he continues to be our Green Acres guru, guiding the growth of the Reserve in the permanent protection of open space in our area. He taught us how to negotiate land sales to make everyone feel like a winner.”

The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association protects water resources in the 265-square miles of central New Jersey drained by the Stony Brook and the Millstone River, encompassing most of Mercer County and portions of Hunterdon, Somerset, Monmouth and Middlesex counties. The Watershed Association partners with municipalities and landowners to restore and maintain water quality, natural lands and waterways. It runs the state's largest water quality monitoring program along 60 miles of streams and restores stream banks. The Association's headquarters is located on an 860-acre reserve in Hopewell Township that includes a nature center, a four-acre pond used for education and research, 14 miles of hiking trails, a butterfly house (to open in June), and Honey Brook Organic Farm, an independent community supported agriculture farm. The reserve is the largest privately held and permanently deed-restricted land in central New Jersey. Visitors are welcome from dawn to dusk all year long. For more information, call 609-737-3735 or visit online at www.thewatershed.org.

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