

### 3. Project Background, Purpose and Partnership

The development of the Neshanic River Watershed Restoration Plan was funded by the Federal Clean Water Act Section 319 (h) Program administered through the Office of Policy Implementation and Watershed Restoration, formerly the Division of Watershed Management, at NJDEP. This chapter describes the general background of the planning area, project organizational structure and introduces the purpose of the watershed restoration plan.

#### 3.1. Background

The Neshanic River Watershed is located in Hunterdon County and encompasses Raritan, Delaware and East Amwell Townships and Flemington Borough. It is part of the Raritan River Basin in Central New Jersey. Figure 3.1 shows the general location of the watershed.

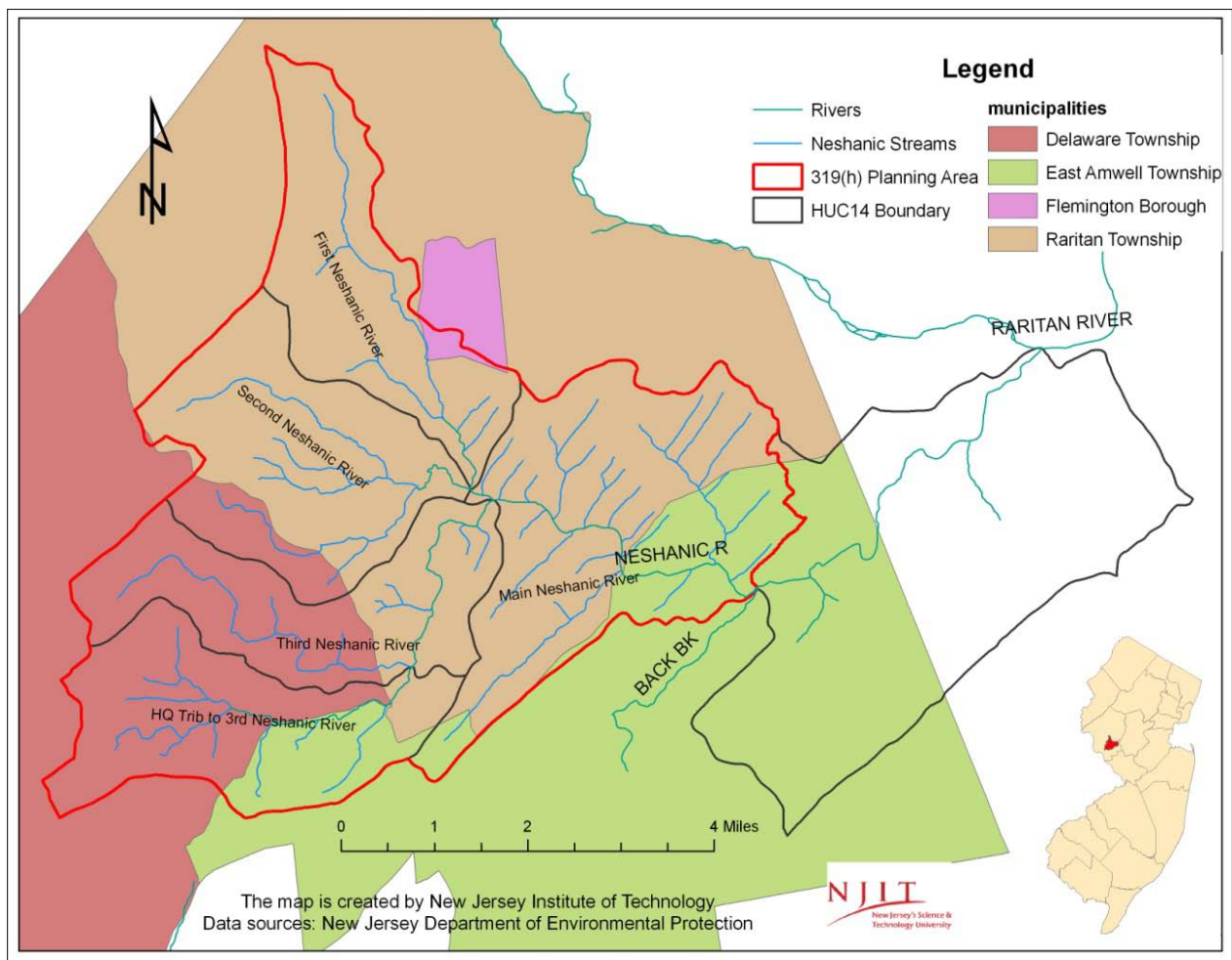


Figure 3.1: Neshanic River Watershed, New Jersey

The broad Neshanic River Watershed includes Walnut Brook, First, Second and Third Neshanic Rivers, Back Brook and the Neshanic River main branch. A similar watershed planning effort was conducted for the Back Brook and its drainage area. Therefore, the Neshanic River Watershed Restoration Plan focused on the 31 square mile upper part of the Neshanic

River Watershed and includes Walnut Brook, First, Second and Third Neshanic Rivers and the Neshanic River main branch immediately above the Back Brook confluence with the Neshanic River. The planning area covers four HUC14s including First Neshanic River (02030105030010), Second Neshanic River (02030105030020), HQ Trib to Third Neshanic River (02030105030030), Third Neshanic River (02030105030040), and two-fifths of the HUC14 Main Neshanic River (02030105030060).

Numerous monitoring sources, including the NJDEP Ambient Biomonitoring Network, the USGS/NJDEP water quality monitoring network and the Metal Recon Program, indicate the Neshanic River and its branches are severely impaired. The Neshanic River was listed in the 2008 New Jersey Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report for impaired aquatic life, and NPS from bacteria, phosphorus, and TSS (NJDEP, 2008). According to USGS, the Neshanic River was one of the water bodies with the worst overall water quality in the Raritan River Basin (Reiser, 2004). A TMDL for fecal coliform was approved and adopted for the Neshanic River in 2003 by NJDEP (2003). This TMDL requires an 87 percent reduction in fecal coliform from medium/high density residential, low density/rural residential, commercial, industrial, mixed urban/other urban, forest and agricultural lands. Additionally, a TMDL for total nutrients in the Raritan Basin was developed by NJDEP; it has not been released. Another concern in the watershed is the increasing occurrence of no/low baseflow in the Neshanic River in the late summer (Reiser, 2004). Although available data clearly show that the Neshanic River is impaired, the specific sources and causes of these impairments are not known. Although the TMDL for the Neshanic River requires an 87 percent reduction in nonpoint source fecal coliform loads for all non-natural land uses, the TMDL does not identify specific sources or management measures to achieve that reduction. Both natural causes and human activities could contribute to the increasing occurrence of low/no base water flow in recent years. No study has been done to investigate the dynamic nature of this issue and no actions have been taken to restore the baseflow.

### **3.2. Purpose of the Plan**

The project developed a watershed restoration plan that describes the management measures needed to achieve the needed reduction in fecal coliform and attain water quality standards for TP and TSS, reduce aquatic life impairments to a non-impaired level and assess the potential for restoring the base flow of the Neshanic River in the 31 square mile watershed.

### **3.3. Partnership**

The development of the Neshanic River Watershed Restoration Plan is a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency collaborative effort. The collaborative partner agencies are listed below:

Administrative Agency

New Jersey Department Environmental Protection (NJDEP)

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NJ Department of Environmental Protection

Office of Policy Implementation and Watershed Restoration

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(609) 633-2201  
<http://www.nj.gov/dep/>

#### Lead Agency

##### New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT)

Contact Information: Dr. Zeyuan Qiu  
Department of Chemistry and Environmental Science  
Newark, NJ 07039  
(973) 596-5357  
<http://www.njit.edu>

#### Collaborative Agencies

##### Hunterdon County Soil Conservation District

Contact Information: William E. Engisch  
687 Pittstown Road  
Frenchtown, NJ 08825  
(908) 788-9466  
<http://hcsd.weebly.com/>

##### Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Contact Information: Christine Hall  
54 Old Highway 22, Suite 201  
Clinton, NJ 08809-1389  
(908) 735-0733  
<http://www.northjerseyrcd.org>

##### New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA)

Contact Information: Kathy Hale  
74 East Main Street  
Somerville, NJ 08876-2312  
(908) 685-0315  
<http://www.raritanbasin.org>

##### North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council

Contact Information: Patrick Natale  
P.O Box 5113  
Clinton, NJ 08809-0113  
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##### Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE)

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South Branch Watershed Association (SBWA)

Contact Information: Bill Kibler  
Lechner House; 41 Lilac Drive  
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Raritan Township

Contact Information: Marianne Rampulla  
5 Fairfax Court  
Flemington, NJ 08822  
(908) 806-2933

Delaware Township

Contact Information: Kathy Klink  
155 Ferry Road  
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Flemington Borough

Contact Information: Lois Stewart,  
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East Amwell Township

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The Plan was developed by two entities: the Neshanic River Watershed Restoration Plan Project Team; and the Neshanic River Watershed Restoration Planning Committee. The project team consisted of representatives from NJDEP, NJIT, HCSCD, RC&D, NJWSA and SBWA with NJIT as the project lead. The project team developed the Plan by carrying out ten tasks as identified in the contract scope of work. Regular project team meetings were held to discuss progress being made and coordinate project activities. The planning committee included the project team members described above, representatives of four townships in the watershed, related agency personnel and other stakeholders, such as local residents, businesses and farmers in the watershed. Three public planning committee meetings were held during the course of the project. The first planning committee meeting was held on March 28, 2007 to introduce the public to the project, the project team, the methodology being used in the project, and to seek project volunteers as well as public input on the water quality problems and their solutions in the watershed. The second planning committee meeting was held on March 30, 2009 to communicate preliminary project results and findings to the general public and seek their input on the development of the Plan. The third planning committee meeting was held on March 16, 2011 to present the Neshanic River Watershed Restoration Plan and seek public input to revise and refine the Plan and identify opportunities for implementing the Plan.