

Twilight Riparian Renewal

August 2002

Masterfoods USA (M&M/Mars) hosted the 4th Watershed Roundtable on July 18 at the M&M/Mars manufacturing plant, in Hackettstown. Approximately 30 people from northwest New Jersey watershed associations as well as municipal and state officials attended the event. The evening activities focused on the riparian buffer project, which began at the plant in October 2001. The Musconetcong Watershed Association, in cooperation with Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Hackettstown High School students and M&M/Mars, began a landmark stream riparian buffer project where more than 1,500 native plant species were planted along Bowers Brook, a tributary of the Musconetcong River that runs through the property.

As only Mother Nature could provide, the watershed activities began with a thunderstorm. The storm, which lasted in intensity for about 1 hour, did not dampen the spirits of those in attendance.

The evening program began, under the front porch entrance, with an introduction by Tom Eckhoff, Masterfoods USA Regional Environmental Manager. He gave a brief history of M&M's® and the Hackettstown plant and provided a background on the project. Eckhoff singled out Ed Karlsson, and the students from the Hackettstown High School. Without their help, explained Eckhoff, the project would never have been completed.

Following was John Brunner, Executive Director of the Musconetcong Watershed Association. Brunner talked about the outstanding qualities of the Musconetcong River watershed and gave an overview of the challenges facing MWA, including the water quality and water quantity impacts of stormwater runoff and paved surfaces.

Grace Messinger, Watershed Specialist, North Jersey RC&D, spoke on funding sources that the North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development is offering to townships and organizations of the Upper Delaware Watershed area. Grants up to \$20,000 are available to establish riparian buffers along lakes and streams of the area, similar to the project at M&M/Mars.

Mark Vodak, Extension Specialist in Forestry, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, spoke about forestry management, the importance of land management strategies and the importance of riparian buffers for water quality. Vodak is responsible for obtaining grant money and implementing land management strategies.

Anthony Pasquini, Program Associate in Forestry, from Rutgers Cooperative Extension, filled out the program with a detailed history of the project. Pasquini is the project coordinator responsible for the design and implementation of the riparian buffer project at M&M/Mars. Pasquini spoke of native plant selection and the interaction of plant species, all of which is a critical aspect of design for "replanting nature."

Pasquini led the attendees on a detailed walk through the riparian buffer, explaining the design and species selection and location, in detail. He explained the benefits of riparian buffers in watershed management for reduction in non-point source pollution. Over 1500 native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants were selected for the Hackettstown project.

The event concluded with a meeting of the Upper Delaware Watershed Management Project group. Gracie Messinger explained the availability of grant money from NJDEP and the application procedure, and criteria, to obtain this funding.