

Submitted by Rancocas Pathways, a 501c3 organization

- 1. Policy priority statement:** *Please provide 1-3 sentences stating the intention of your nomination.*

*Gain National Water Trail (NWT) designation for the Rancocas Creek via the nucleus of public access. Support physical and mental health benefits of a Delaware Estuary's exemplary multi-use water trail that provoke associated sustainable values as a neighborhood asset to a healthy community, which in turn promotes the benefits of water quality.*

- 2. Description of the nominated policy priority and suggested resolution:** *Why is this a priority in the Delaware River Watershed and why should the Coalition take it on as a priority?*

*Rancocas Creek attains the greatest length of any Coastal Plain stream entering the Delaware River Estuary, w some tributaries falling within 15 miles of Barnegat Bay. The Rancocas is both tidal and non-tidal that is under assault from pollution, floods, benign neglect and purposeful thwarting of conservation. Before Europeans forged their presence, Rancocas heritage goes back 6,000-8,000 years for American Indians. Rancocas Creek's alluvial plain and incisional marl creek banks were part of the late Cretaceous ecology where Mosasaurs and Bolivina Punctata d'Orb, alike thrived. Rancocas Creek topography is the basis for its noted agriculture and water-power exploited for industrialization. In the Mid-Atlantic and Delaware River Estuary the Rancocas Creek Watershed is unique.*

*Gaining National Water Trail designation is a priority because the Rancocas Creek Watershed, 360 square miles is a balkanized area of so-called competing interests. Anchoring the NWT is a watershed focus on the protection and preservation of the Rancocas Creek through a County Greenway flanking a proposed National Water Trail. This blending of resources supports multi-use common ground "ownership" among divergent interests. Ownership is as a Janis Joplin sings "ownership is just another word for stewardship".*

*Grass root efforts cultivates a renaissance from individuals, organizations and agencies as a public resource and market that supports enhanced water quality that fosters multi-use outdoor recreation: local as local should be.*

- 3. Basic workplan or strategy:** *How would the Coalition work on and achieve success this priori? Maximum 300 words.*

*The coalition will work on gaining National Water Trail designation of the Rancocas Creek by helping enhance awareness of the Rancocas among stakeholders throughout the Delaware River watershed through stewardship, education and promoting common ground. Such connection, taking a literary license, bridge to local interests anchors the sustainable nature of public access and promoting water quality. Specifically, the Coalition will direct people in a possible campaign to initiate and evaluate a regional sign-on endorsement letter program.*

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**4. Briefly discuss the timeliness of this policy priority: Why does the Coalition need to work on it now?**

*For the last 5 years the Rancocas Creek Water Trail has been promoted and engaged w business, individuals, farms, agencies, organizations and communities. The Water Trail has a well-documented increase in multi-use visitors that nurtures community growth and business involvement along the Rancocas Creek. The only demographic of interests along the Rancocas Creek Watershed not engaged in gaining a NWT designation for the Rancocas Creek is the regional environmental community.*

*Here upon and nevertheless passing under our Nation's most heavily trafficked roads (Exit 5, NJ Turnpike and Rt 295) complimentary to the asphalt bridges and byways the Rancocas slinks gracefully across the expansive confluence of the Rancocas Creek's tidewater "wishbone". Where once Indian canoes bartered under Rancocas State Park's Horsehead Point is where the lore of colonial intrigue and commerce blossomed. Here on the North Branch Timbuctoo welcomed escaped slaves. Here where steam ships, tugs, barges and scows ran. Where today kayakers and motorized craft play are ecosystems of wildlife, natural history and heritage. Vital to gaining NWT designation is engagement to neighborhood assets within communities. Here civics bridges common ground and respect of different opinions.*

*Local as local can be, divisive problems are used to improve water quality of the Delaware Estuary. The Rancocas Creek water balance is under assault from industrial warehouses and urban growth. It is our intent to leverage efforts and opportunity on issues that support a sustainable future of enhanced public access that promotes water quality. Rancocas Creek watershed falls under the umbrella of Burlington County's agriculture heritage and culture. Water resources are foundation of the Creek's maritime cultural landscape. From the Pine Barrens they came, North from Atsion Furnaces, iron wrought products loaded on South Branch Lumberton barges for delivery down the tide to Delaware River estuary ports and cities. Down the North Branch via Mount Holly came Pine Barren timber feeding mills and markets in the Estuary, proper. Into these respective former creek community's Ports came imports and other various items of water borne commerce.*

*Harnessing the energy of the Coalition supports a diverse set of concerns; forges common ground among all and provides proof that leveraging policy is the hook to civic engagement. 60,000 people reside in and around the Rancocas Creek Watershed, here is a market to open, an untapped resource of residents who are active in one way or another in the Creek. Your coalition needs to prove that it's inclusionary, not exclusionary; that multi-use is a treasure to be valued via civic engagement and that policy protects the entire Delaware River watershed. Penultimately here on the Rancocas is the fusion, naturally, of recreation and health. Lastly, it is our wish here on the Rancocas Creek Water Trail actions define the greater awareness of water quality that fosters Auerbach's "spirit of conservation".*

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**5. Please use this space to provide any other pertinent information:**

*Rancocas Creek Water Trail is about the environment, how nature and ecology sit among intrusion by man. Rancocas Creek Water Trail provides a venue for forays into outdoor recreation, exercise, adventure and exploration. In 2019 the Rancocas Creek watershed Rancocas Creek Water Trail is worthy of being designated a National Water Trail for the precise reasons that NJ is the most densely populated State. Here the Creek is a local resource, here the creek allows affordable public access, here the Rancocas is the catalyst for economic development and here where the watershed has been ignored for such a long time one experiences heritage set among wild areas. Here one traverses Federal, State, County and Municipal protected park lands and the Rancocas Greenway. It is here, a sense of place, where we can escape the maelstrom of everyday chaos to relax, to enjoy and to experience. From the Pine Barren headwaters to the Delaware River estuary tides the Rancocas is the Estuary's last remaining watershed requiring tincture of time and community involvement to protect and preserve for further generations.*

*Rancocas Creek Watershed is the largest western Pine Barrens drainage that is ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest outflow of NJ Pine Barrens National Reserve. Comparing and contrasting the Water Trails evolving ecology's is the focal point of different regions. Located in the Rancocas Creek Watershed and along the Water Trail is the State of NJ Rancocas Natural Area that is flanked by some of NJ's remaining 1,300 acres of NJ wild rice oligohaline marshes. The Rancocas is fed by both tidal and non-tidal tributaries that originate deep within shaded Atlantic White Cedar Swamps. Each of the four regions of the Rancocas watershed harbor its own unique ecology's, markets, growth patterns and heritage. The common ground of the watershed is public access to the Creek.*

*Mt. Holly is truly a water trail town.*

*Mount Holly on the North Branch is where the tide meets the non-tidal flow of the Rancocas at Iron Works Park. Mount Holly besides being a National Historic Area is part and parcel of early American privateers and admiralty courts. As tides ebb and flow so did commerce thru the estuary's Rancocas Valley. Today kayakers enjoy time floating on bucolic tidal currents through and around Mount Holly. Bisected by below grade creek channels of the oxbow flood channel and Mill Race here is the beating, vibrant heart of the Rancocas Creek Watershed. Within a few steps of the Creek bank is found downtown Mount Holly: eateries, shops, brew places, ice cream and more. 6 miles to the west Melpine Landing, then 2 miles to the confluence and another 8 miles for direct entry into the Delaware River estuary. From this market the Water Trail also runs 14 miles to the East and up into Pemberton reaching deep into the Pine Barrens.*

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**6. Endorsing organizations:** *Are there any other organizations that support this nomination? If so, please list them and a contact for the organization here.*



**Exhibit One. Resolution, Endorsements, Letters of Support or Direct Actions Favoring the RCNWT**

NJ Pinelands Commission	Southampton Township, under review
NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Pemberton Borough n Township, under review
Pinelands Preservation Alliance	Willingboro Township, under review
Rancocas Creek Association	Burlington County Parks Involvement
NJ Senate Resolution 78	Upstream Alliance (Annapolis, Maryland)
Mt. Holly Township	5 Alive Bass Club
Westampton Township	Eastampton Township
Lumberton Township	Hainesport Township
Delran Township	Fernbrook Farms Education Center
Riverside Township	Edgewater Park Township
Delanco Township	Robin's Nest Restaurant, Mt. Holly
Mansfield Township	Municipal Recreation Programs
Friends of Abbot Marshlands	Rancocas Nature Center Kayak Tours
Rancocas Conservancy	Medford Lakes
Moorestown Township	Burlington Township
Burlington County BSA	Winzinger Inc./Mill Race Shops/Other Business

**Editorial and Newspaper Articles**

Philadelphia Inquirer; Burlington County Times; Courier Post; American Canoe Association; Delaware Currents; New Jersey Conservation Foundation; Numerous, Vigorous Social Media Platforms

**3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District Photo Acknowledgement**

**Other:** Rowan College of Burlington County College and Stockton University Student Involvement

**New Rancocas Valley Kayak and Canoe Livery's**

Rita's Kayaks, South Branch Hainesport; Timbuctoo Kayak and Canoe Company, North Branch

**Paid Sponsors and/or Active Involvement in Adopt a Creek Programs**

Investors Bank, Fernwood Springs Farms, Spellbound Brewing, Village Idiot Brewing Company, Mt. Holly Motorsports, Vincent's Ice Cream, Rancocas Valley Veterinary Associates, RVRHS NJROTC, Other

**Individual Letters of Support**

NJ/PA/MD/NY/AZ/WA/DE/NV/Scotland/Charlie Coar Painting  
NJ Asm. Ryan Peters

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