**Washington Township Environmental Commission (WTEC)**

**June 6, 2016 Minutes**

Present – CJ Sinko, Bill Leavens, Mark Napolitano, Joseph Amoroso, Merv Haines

Start 7:30

1. **NJ Conservancy tour – South Branch Preserve**

The team met at the South Branch Preserve, South (Restoration Site) off of Shop Lane. This land was obtained by the group in 2009 from a developer who had gone bankrupt in part due to not obtaining proper permits for his housing project. David Epstein Director of the Land Conservancy of NJ provided a tour and overview of the project, specifically addressing the deer issues and native/invasive plants.   David brought photographs of what the project looked like before.   The Land Conservancy shared pamphlets with the WTEC on other work and projects they do.

It was evident immediately walking into the preserve the absence of many of the invasive plant species we see daily around the township and the presence of natives. Although it was noted there is still presence of invasives such as Russian Olive it was understood this project will require continuous effort to manage invasives.

Much of the success of the project was in part from, besides the enormous efforts and sweat equity of the Land Conservancy personnel, e.g., manual removal, controlled spraying etc., the fence which surrounds the entire 100 acre preserve. The fence prevents intrusion of deer which allows for natives to out compete the invasives which otherwise would thrive in the absence of the natives.

Other notables from the tour, the Land Conservancy Group restore stream beds, removed foundations, and created man made vernal pools.

 The preserve offers excellent hiking opportunities and is a beautiful site to visit.

Key take aways for the WTEC: 1) the conservancy would be an excellent consultant for stream and vernal pool restoration 2) Protection of natives via fencing is not practical from a financial and logistics POV for the Township.

Rest of June’s agenda postponed until next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30