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NEWS

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PVSC ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM HONORED: *Agency Garners WAVE Award for Wildlife Habitat Program*

(NEWARK) – The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission was recently awarded a Public Education Wave Award by the Association of Environmental Authorities of NJ (AEA). The agency was honored for its outstanding work in its Education Outreach Wildlife Habitat Program. The AEA is the association of public water, wastewater, solid waste and recycling service providers in New Jersey, primarily utilities authorities, and also including municipal utilities departments and vendors in the public utility sector.

“I’m delighted that PVSC’s work was recognized by the Wave Award Committee for our Wildlife Habitat Education Program,” said DeFrancisci. “This program has been a source of pride for us at PVSC, as well as for students and educators in our service area.”

The PVSC was honored specifically for its initiative showcasing barn swallows and their importance to the environment. Through the PVSC’s Educational Outreach Pollution Prevention Program, educators taught students about a specific bird – the barn swallow - whose habitat has declined along the urban waterways. The initiative was a practical way to illustrate to students the potential that humans have in maintaining a codependent existence with avian life on the river. PVSC educators demonstrated this by having the students build and decorate birdhouses to reside on.

The Awards were presented at the AEA’s 2013 Conference in Atlantic City on March 13. In conferring the award, the AEA Awards Committee cited the outstanding achievement of PVSC’s educational outreach team and said, “This is recognition of excellence in the public water/wastewater/solid waste/recycling sector in New Jersey.”

“Although the Wildlife Habitat Education Program is geared towards special needs students, the goal of the course is to show students of all ages and abilities that we have a symbiotic relationship with nature,” said DeFrancisci. “The Wildlife Habitat Education Program and our other programs have enhanced the education experience for students in our service area.”

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To supplement the work done in the classroom, the PVSC Educational Outreach Program uses a service-learning model by providing opportunities for students to organize their own stream bank cleanups. This greatly enhances their learning experience and enables the students to apply what they've learned in the class to their own communities.

Staff has also created the Wildlife Habitat Education Program to reinforce the importance of preserving and protecting wildlife habitat in our region. PVSC worked with over 30,000 students during the 2011-2012 school year. PVSC has had an opportunity to educate more than 210,000 K-12 students, since the inception of the program in 2003.

“Engaging kids in hands-on service projects helps reinforce the important lessons they learn in the classroom,” said DeFrancisci. “Education is a key component to maintaining the quality of our waterways and to the overall long-term health of our environment.”

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In order to protect and preserve local streams and rivers from water pollution, the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission operates one of the country's oldest and largest treatment plants for the wastewaters of northern New Jersey, serving over 1.4 million people in five counties.