



## UPPER RARITAN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

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### **URWA Asks Residents to Use Care When Selecting Driveway Sealcoats Bedminster, New Jersey; May 19, 2008**

There are many pollutants, including fertilizers and motor oil, which are washed from our lawns and driveways each time it rains. These pollutants eventually enter our streams and lakes as the rainwater travels across the surface of the land.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) are carcinogenic contaminants that are being detected in our waterways. PAH's degrade fish health and inhibit reproduction while increasing mortality in aquatic invertebrates, small critters that are used as indicators of stream health.

While PAHs originate from auto exhaust, motor oil, gasoline, tire particles, and lubricating oils, studies performed by the United States Geological Survey and other scientists have identified a previously overlooked and significant source of this contaminant – black top. People may enjoy the aesthetics of freshly sealed driveways and parking lots, but many of the products used to enhance the appearance and increase the longevity of asphalt contain 50% or more PAHs by weight.

The two primary sealcoat products available today are coal tar-pitch-based emulsions and asphalt-based emulsions. All sealants must be reapplied every two to three years as the material is worn away by vehicle tires, pedestrian traffic and weather. Studies to evaluate and compare the materials that wash off sealed and unsealed surfaces have found that coal tar sealed surfaces produce five times the amount of PAH contaminants as those treated with an asphalt-based emulsion sealant. The pollution derived from coal tar sealed surfaces was 65 times that originating from unsealed pavement.

After these studies identified coal tar based pavement sealants as a significant source of the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination found in stream sediments, some municipalities banned the sale and use of coal tar sealants since many alternatives are available. For now, please read labels carefully when purchasing sealcoat (or ask what type of sealant the contractor will use if you are planning to hire out the job) for driveways, parking lots, and other paved surfaces. Be sure the sealant does not contain coal-tar ingredients. This simple contribution will help to keep our streams and families healthy.

#### **About the Upper Raritan Watershed Association**

The Upper Raritan Watershed Association is a not-for-profit, membership supported organization working to ensure the protection of the Upper Raritan Watershed through education, advocacy, land preservation, and stewardship. Since 1959, the Association has been preserving and protecting natural resources throughout the watershed, a 194 square mile natural geographic region defined by the drainage basin of the North Branch of the Raritan River and its tributaries. The watershed, which includes 23 municipalities in parts of Somerset, Hunterdon and Morris Counties, is a vital link in New Jersey's water supply system and contains large areas of undeveloped, environmentally significant land.

#### **For More Information, please contact:**

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