



# ANJEC REPORT

Local Environment Matters

SPRING 2021

Inside:

## *Acting Locally to Advance Environmental Justice (EJ)*

- NJ's new EJ law
- EJ communities in NJ
- EJ steps towns can take



## Director's Report

We are entering our second spring season practicing quarantining, social distancing, wearing masks and relying on technology to keep us connected. Most environmental commissions (ECs) are meeting virtually on a regular basis and many are virtually reviewing development applications. Since public health officials are currently telling us that it will be summer before COVID-19 vaccine is available to all Americans who want it, and there is still much unknown, we should plan for ECs to continue meeting virtually through at least the middle of this year.

At ANJEC, we are planning to carry forward the increased accessibility of virtual meetings into a post-COVID world, whenever we get there. We will continue to offer webinars as a companion to meeting in person once it is safe to do so. ANJEC has posted most of our virtual programming from the past year on our YouTube channel, ANJEC Views, for EC members to watch at their convenience, including our January webinar *2021 Goals and Actions for Environmental Commissions*. ANJEC's *2021 Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissioners* trainings are also being posted as we complete them throughout March – BYO bagel and coffee.

ANJEC encourages ECs to think about how they can continue to use virtual access to expand outreach and engagement to different groups and neighborhoods in your community during the remainder of the pandemic and beyond.

Meanwhile, the must-do list for ECs in 2021 is substantial, and ANJEC is here to support you with webinars throughout the year, new publications on deck and, as always, with one-on-one assistance.

### Stormwater

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection set March 2, 2021, as the deadline for municipalities to adopt an updated stormwater ordinance to comply with the new rules. ECs should first ensure that their town has adopted the ordinance. Reviewing the new ordinance and discussing it as an EC will help you understand how the new rule requirements affect new proposed development and redevelopment in your municipality. Most notably, green infrastructure is now a requirement rather than an option.

### Plastic pollution reduction

The first element of the *Plastic Pollution Reduction Act* goes into effect in November with plastic straws available only upon request in restaurants and other dining facilities. The remainder of the Law goes into effect in May 2022 with prohibitions on single-use plastic bags, brown paper bags except for use at small retail establishments, and bans on polystyrene food containers.

ANJEC is launching a new website, [NJNoPlastics.org](http://NJNoPlastics.org), that will offer educational materials and up-to-date resources to help you and your community comply with the new law. Your local action led NJ to the strongest plastic pollution law in the country, and now your action is needed to make it a success.

### Climate crisis

Everything we do in the environmental field, as well as in transportation, building, labor and more, needs to advance the fight against the climate crisis. There is an

enormous amount of work to be done, both in becoming more resilient to the impacts of climate change that we cannot stop and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to stem the crisis. In our survey of ECs last year, we heard that you want actionable items that link together with the actions of other municipalities to make a greater difference – just as you did and are doing on plastic pollution. To address your needs, ANJEC is developing a municipal action toolkit. Please stay tuned for more on that as the year progresses.

We look forward to being with you in person when it is safe. In the meantime, we'll see you on Zoom. If you need assistance, please contact us at [info@anjec.org](mailto:info@anjec.org) and a team member will be in touch shortly. Stay safe and be well!




Jennifer M. Coffey  
Executive Director

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Local Environment Matters

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**565 MUNICIPALITIES ..... ONE ENVIRONMENT**

Executive Director ..... Jennifer M. Coffey  
Editor ..... Julie Lange Groth

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The Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions is a private, non-profit educational organization serving environmental commission and open space committee members, concerned individuals, non-profits, and local officials. ANJEC's programs aim to promote the public interest in natural resource preservation, sustainable development and reclamation and support environmental commissions and open space committees working with citizens and other non-profit organizations.

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*On the cover: Cherry blossom time at Branch Brook Park in Newark, NJ* Photo by K Poppel

# Neonics and the plight of our pollinators

By **Randi K. Rothmel, Ph.D.**, ANJEC South Jersey Project Director

**T**he bee population is dwindling. We have all read about it and witnessed it in our own backyards – our pollinators are in trouble. Land-based insects have declined 50 percent in the last 75 years<sup>1</sup> and many species are on the brink of extinction. Climate change, loss of habitat, invasive species, pathogens and pesticides are all contributing factors and, combined, these stresses are especially harmful. Loss of plant diversity has led to poor nutrition and compromised immune systems, making bees and other pollinators more susceptible to disease and pesticides. It has become increasingly clear is that neonicotinoid insecticides – or neonics – play a major role in this decline.



*Honeybees are among the many pollinators harmed by neonics.*

## What are neonics?

Neonics are a group of nicotine-based insecticides. Imidacloprid, clothianidin and thiamethoxam are the most commonly used. Unlike traditional pesticides that remain on the surface of plants when applied, neonics are systemic; they are adsorbed and spread through the plant tissues. Modeled after nicotine, neonics interfere with the nervous system of pollen eaters, nectar feeders and other insects, causing tremors, paralysis and eventually death. Exposure has been shown to affect bee reproduction, and many honeybee colonies do not survive the winter.

Neonics, first marketed in the mid 1990's, have become the most popular insecticides in the US because of their selective mode of action against insects and their systemic protection of plants. Although less toxic to

mammals and humans compared with organophosphate and carbamate insecticides, they are not without environmental consequences. They are widely used on crops, golf courses, residential lawns, gardens, and in flea and tick treatments for pets and livestock. Over 90 percent of the 89 million acres of soybeans and over 90 percent of the 88 million acres of corn planted in the US in 2018 used seeds coated with neonics. Neonics are also applied through irrigation water or as a soil drench, allowing roots to soak up the insecticide during crop growth.

## What are the environmental impacts?

While nuisance insects are the target, neonics also kill beneficial insects, cause significant loss of aquatic invertebrates (a critical food source to birds and fish), and have been linked to losses of bird populations. Only about five percent are taken up by the plants treated with these chemicals, but they persist in the soil for a long time, up to 1,000 days. Sublethal effects on earthworms have been shown, as well as altered soil microbiome composition.

Highly water soluble, they infiltrate into groundwater and mobilize into surrounding lakes, streams and sources of drinking water. Contaminated water runoff results in neonic uptake by plants outside of agricultural fields. Neonic residues have been found in over 80 percent of honey in the US and in apples, cherries, strawberries, baby food and other foods. Emerging research suggests that

exposure to neonics in the womb or early in life may be linked to heart deformities, muscle tremors or memory loss.

## Will NJ restrict the use of neonics?

The legislative bill S1016/A070 to classify neonicotinoid products as “restricted use pesticides” passed a full Senate vote in 2020 and moved out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee on Jan 7. By early March, the full Assembly had not yet voted.

The bill stipulates that only registered neonicotinoids can be purchased and applied by licensed pesticide applicators to agricultural plants. There are exceptions for pet care, veterinary use, indoor pest control and agricultural seeds. If adopted into law, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would set the rules and regulations classifying which neonicotinoid pesticides are for restricted use and followup with reviews every three years to update classifications of neonics determined to cause harm to pollinators, birds or aquatic invertebrates. Currently only Connecticut and Maryland have classified neonics as restricted use pesticides. While this bill is a step in the right direction, it does not outright ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.

Would a ban reduce a farmers’ ability to produce high quality affordable food in a sustainable manner? The 2018 EU ban on neonics has shown only a marginal loss in their rapeseed oil production, and there is an allowance for emergency use, which has recently been granted for sugar beets in 11 countries to fight aphids infected with a disease that has dramatically impacted crops. A Canadian study<sup>2</sup> comparing crop yield and pest abundance between corn and soybean fields planted with and without neonic-treated seed coatings revealed no significant differences.

Turning to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies along with agroecological practices, such as diverse crop rotations, cover cropping and use of beneficial insects to prey upon crop pests, would be a more sustainable solution to pest management.

## What can ECs do?

ECs can educate their residents about neonics and ask them to call their legislators in support of S1016/A070, or have their township draft a resolution in support of this bill. They can also encourage local farmers to implement IPM strategies in lieu of neonic usage.

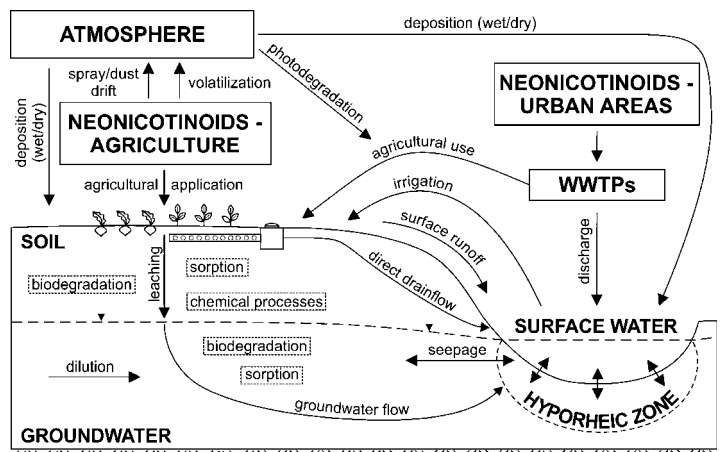
## More info

- Senate Bill 1016: [www.njleg.state.nj.us/2020/Bills/S1500/1016\\_S3.PDF](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2020/Bills/S1500/1016_S3.PDF)
- Map of agricultural pesticide usage: [https://water.usgs.gov/nawqa/pnsp/usage/maps/compound\\_listing.php](https://water.usgs.gov/nawqa/pnsp/usage/maps/compound_listing.php)
- Neonic Fact sheet: <https://njudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-Neonic-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- Pathway of Neonicotinoids in the environment – <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chemosphere.2020.126981>

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- 2 <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0229136>

### How neonics affect the environment





By **Michele Gaynor**, ANJEC Resource Center;  
and **Lyle Landon**, ANJEC Development Director

## No garbage wasted in Millburn

After learning that the residents of Millburn were interested in participating in town-wide food waste recycling, Environmental Commission (EC) Chair Priya Patel contacted the town’s business administrator, recycling coordinator and mayor to discuss a residential compost program. The municipality initiated a six-month pilot program in February to determine whether such a concept would succeed. A total of 55 households signed on to participate. The town purchased ten 32-gallon bins and locks for the bins and provided participants with a compostable pail/lid and compostable bags for the pail. The cost for the composting program was \$50 per household.

Millburn partnered with Java’s Compost ([www.javascompost.com/](http://www.javascompost.com/)). Located in West Orange, the company offers composting options for commercial and residential customers.

Patel offered a Zoom training session and created a quiz for the participants, who bring their food waste to the Millburn Town Yard, located behind the Department of Public Works building. The compost is picked up weekly from the Yard and brought to a composting site in Andover, NJ.

The food waste composting program gives businesses and residents the option to divert approximately one third of their household garbage from landfills, which will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Other composting facilities that offer similar programs serving other areas of NJ are Un-Waste ([www.unwastemovement.com/](http://www.unwastemovement.com/)).

*world/*) and Neighborhood Compost ([www.neighborhoodcompost.com/](http://www.neighborhoodcompost.com/)).

– Michele Gaynor

## Mountain Lakes rain garden is a winner

A Mountain Lakes rain garden has won the prestigious Governor’s Environmental Excellence Award under the category of Healthy Ecosystems & Habitats. Seven individuals and organizations were chosen to receive the Environmental Excellence Awards in 2020.

The project, using a green infrastructure approach to stormwater management, was created by the Whippany River Watershed Action Committee (WRWAC) and Garden Magic LLC. The WRWAC was looking for a project to fund and the Mountain Lakes Environmental Commission (MLEC) decided to apply for the grant. The Birchwood Rain Garden combines woodland restoration practices with advanced rain garden concepts in a single project.

An area near the parking lot of Birchwood Lake, which is adjacent to Crystal Lake, was chosen as the location for the rain garden, based on a town-wide survey. The project team determined that the rainwater flowing from the parking lot would be directed to and captured in the rain garden, allowing water to filter into the ground instead of eroding the bank and washing contaminants from the parking lot into Crystal Lake. The rain garden is situated in an area that is



*Birchwood Lake rain garden*

significantly higher than Crystal Lake, so it interrupts the flow of stormwater towards the lake.

Native perennial plants and shrubs were chosen that will help keep the soil porous, allowing it to soak up water and remove contaminants. The garden will also provide habitat and food for pollinators.

There will be ongoing coordination between the Mountain Lakes Department of Public Works, MLEC and the Mountain Lakes High School student liaisons to maintain the garden. — Michele Gaynor

## NJ towns tackle the foam monster

The statewide ban on single-use plastic, paper bags and plastic food containers and cups made of polystyrene foam will become effective in New Jersey in May 2022. Meanwhile a number of municipali-

ties already have taken additional steps forward by establishing recycling programs for expanded polystyrene foam (EPS) products such as packaging, EPS sheets and foam coolers.

EPS occupies up to 30 percent of the space in some landfills and takes approximately 500 years to decompose. When incinerated, EPS releases styrene gas into the air and produces a mix of toxicants that can impair the nervous system. That's why some environmental commissions, green teams and DPWs are working together to create solutions. Could one of these models work for you?

**Set up your own program:** Glen Ridge collects EPS once a month at their recycling center using a DPW truck and drivers to take it to the recycler, Foam-Pack, in Springfield.

**Find funding:** Sustainable Jersey awarded the Bergen County Sustainable Hub a grant for their Styrofoam Free Program, which reimbursed

Green Teams the cost of renting a truck to transport EPS to Poly Molding in Haskell, NJ, for recycling. Only the residents of the host municipalities were allowed to make deposits for the first hour of the Saturday collection and then any resident of Bergen County could discard their foam waste for the next two hours.

**Purchase a recycling machine:** Middletown was the first town in New Jersey to purchase their own Styrofoam/EPS recycling machine. A short video from Mayor Tony Perry explains their reasoning and the process ([www.middletownnj.org/591/Styrofoam-Recycling](http://www.middletownnj.org/591/Styrofoam-Recycling)).

**Partner up:** Talk to Environmental Commissions in neighboring towns and Green Teams to see if they'd like to work together and fund a pilot program. The costs are minimal: less than \$200 for a one-day truck rental and gas, plus a fee to the recycling facility (\$0-\$100). Ask for help from local corporations. For example, Suez North America provided trucks and drivers for the EPS collection in Leonia.



*Fair Lawn hosted their Styrofoam Free Program on Jan 2, 2021.*

Wildlife Refuge to another, volunteering to help the professional staff educate the public, restore habitats and protect endangered species. They do whatever needs to be done, including learning how to install drip-irrigation systems, leading canoe floats for birders, sweeping the desert to remove illegal off-road

To be successful, these programs require education, publicity and oversight. Typically, events are promoted through informational flyers, on the town website and via social media. Mendham Borough and Mendham Township hoisted an announcement banner over Main St. All recyclers require that the EPS be clean, white blocks, without tape, stickers, labels or cardboard, and packed in clear bags. Teams are responsible for loading and unloading the truck.

**Fun fact:** A forty cubic yard dumpster filled with EPS is transformed into three hundred pounds of densified foam to be sold and used as recycled content for new products. Recycling is an accessible, better choice and NJ towns are making it!

– Lyle Landon

vehicle tracks, as well as less glamorous chores such as cleaning park restrooms. They each have logged more than 8000 volunteer hours and have had the opportunity to see and touch some of the most endangered plants and animals on earth. They find it very rewarding, and a fitting “give back” to help compensate for society’s degradation of the environment.

With 28 assignments under their belts, the Larsons are veteran volunteers for the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), one of six federal agencies with volunteer programs. The USFWS program requires 48 volunteer hours per week for a couple (32 hours for a single person) for a minimum of three months. The Service provides full hook-ups, uniforms, laundry facilities, Internet access, tools and a vehicle for work.

## Living the dream (the Larsons in retirement)

Jan Larson, a past ANJEC trustee and former member of the Toms River Environmental Commission, and her husband Rocky had big plans for retirement and now they are living their dream. About eight months a year, aboard their motor home, they drive from one National



*Jan and Rocky Larson in the field*



The Larsons have taken assignments from Alaska to the Outer Banks of North Carolina, from the Lower Rio Grande Valley to their current assignment at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's Space Coast, which also offers a great view of NASA launches from the Kennedy Space Center.

It was a balmy 88 degrees on the February day I spoke with them, compared to the 38 degrees in Toms River, their hometown. While bear-proofing trashcans and emptying fish guts and bait into a dumpster might not be fun, they work surrounded by palm trees, palmettos,

hollies, pines, ibis, osprey, spoonbills, manatees, dolphins and alligators. Working only three days a week leaves plenty of time for exploring and recreation.

For the summer months, the Larsons are hoping for an assignment in Maine. They'll take their time getting there, stopping to visit family and volunteer friends, "some of the most wonderful people on earth," returning to New Jersey to reset before taking off for Maine. You can explore volunteering for the federal government at: [www.volunteer.gov/gov](http://www.volunteer.gov/gov). Tell them the Larsons sent you.

– Lyle Landon

# Remembering Blanche Hoffman

## 1923-2020

By Gary W. Szec, P.E., ANJEC Trustee

"Listen! This is Blanche Hoffman from the Environmental Commission. Can you come to our next meeting?"


That is how I came to know Blanche, up front and direct. As the Assistant Township Engineer, my site plan reviews contained a "green element," and she seized on that to get me to an EC meeting-and continued to have me attend those meetings for the next 20+ years (long after I left the Township) – such was the power of Blanche. It was not easy to say no to her boundless enthusiasm.

Although her background was in finance, she thoroughly educated herself on environmental matters and served many years on ANJEC's Board of Trustees.

Blanche founded the Old Bridge Township Environmental Commission in the early 1970s, back when environmentalists were often construed as "obstructionists." Although that title was pinned on Blanche,

she gained people's respect as they realized her only agenda was that she wanted her town to be a green, livable, quality community. This was obvious as a succession of mayors on both sides of the aisle reappointed her as chair of their EC for nearly 30 years. Her philosophy was simple – if it's a good development, fine; if it's bad environmentally, we will oppose it or we will try to help you make it a better one.

Most of her conversations started with "Listen!" But she said it with passion and hope: "Listen! We need to get out a memo!" "Listen! We need to investigate this proposal!" And listen we did for many years and were inspired in the process.

It is said that to be successful, one must leave the world better than when one entered it. Blanche did that, and she left it greener too. 



# Educating your community about NJ's new plastic pollution reduction law

By N. Dini Checko, ANJEC Resource Center

The wait is over; the nation's strongest plastic pollution reduction law will start this year in New Jersey. The intention of the law is to create awareness of the amount of harmful plastic in our lives and shift behavior. If your municipality currently has a plastics ordinance, it will stay in effect until the implementation date of the State law for each product type.

Beginning in November 2021, plastic straws will only be provided upon request at food service businesses. In May 2022, all single-use plastic carryout bags and polystyrene foam food service products (commonly known as Styrofoam) are banned. Also in May 2022, single-use paper carryout bags are banned at grocery stores over 2,500 square feet.

As with plastics, single-use paper bags have a negative environmental footprint. The manufacturing, transportation and recycling of paper requires substantial amounts of wood, water, energy and chemicals, all of which create waste and emissions that must be controlled and treated.

## Spread the word!

It's not too soon to educate your community via press releases, articles, the municipal website, social media and Choose-To-Reuse signage strategically placed around town. You could also screen a plastic pollution documentary film or host a green event focused on reducing plastic waste. Here are themes to stress:



- Be sure to highlight the current impact of single-use plastics and how the new law will help offset the problems locally.

Plastic litter reduction can lead to improved public health, increased recycling rates, financial savings for municipalities due to less need for maintenance, and less localized flooding.

- Encourage residents to bring reusables and remind them to sanitize bags and containers for pandemic safety. Remind them that small personal changes lead to a large cumulative impact.
- Highlight businesses in town that are already encouraging reusable bags, alternatives to plastic or Styrofoam food containers and plastic straws.
- Ask businesses to check inventory levels, train staff to ask if a customer needs a single-use carryout bag before bagging purchases, post signage and do a plastic audit. Consider hosting a local business roundtable.

## More help is here!

ANJEC has created a brand new website, [NJnoplastics.org](http://NJnoplastics.org). It's loaded with FAQ's for residents, municipalities and businesses, with template resources to help with education. This website is evolving as we work with our partners, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and NJ Clean Communities, so be sure to check back often for updates.

# Earth Day 2021... maybe it's not just a day at all!

By Cheryl Reardon, ANJEC Project Director

Last March as COVID-19 became a reality, we were unsure what the days ahead would hold. Over the last year, we've made tremendous strides in learning to virtually navigate the world of work, education, extended family, music and even social gatherings. Webinars, Zoom and other virtual spaces have now become important connective threads in our lives and daily routines.

If your environmental commission's (ECs) Earth Day plans typically include a fair or festival, you are probably better prepared this year to celebrate, educate and enjoy the event with pandemic safety in mind. And like some New Jersey ECs, instead of trying to cram it all into a single online event, perhaps your virtual celebrations will expand this year to Earth Week, Earth Month or longer.

Here are some activities you might consider:

- **Invite residents to plant a family or friendship tree or adopt one in the community.** Nurturing nature is a positive action to take wherever you live. Adopting a tree in your community or public park is a valuable way to mark special occasions and changing seasons. People can take family photos with the tree, measure its trunk using string to record growth, do bark tracings and

observe changes as the tree matures. Use your EC's social media pages to display participants' photos and highlight the importance of the trees to the environment and wildlife.

- **Be a digital wildlife watcher.** Thanks to the US Fish & Wildlife Service and several other conservation organizations, members in your community can watch bald eagle and osprey nests in real time

throughout our region.

Hold a Zoom gathering to discuss the species, its habitat, what it eats, and threats it may be facing along with actions we can take to help it along.

- **Host a backyard birding webinar** on native birds and their habitat. Discuss ways to create backyard habitat by removing invasive

species and planting native plants that support bees, butterflies, birds and other pollinators. The National Wildlife Federation offers a great guide to building a wildlife habitat. Perhaps even start a "Certified Backyard Habitat Program." ([www.nwf.org/certify](http://www.nwf.org/certify))

- **Hold a book reading Zoom program** that inspires adventures in nature. Most of us still recall our favorite childhood books. Invite people from your community (ie: the mayor, police chief, school nurse) to read different books each week.
- **Declare a Zero Waste Day.** Encourage people to set a day (or maybe a week)



when they commit to generate no trash. The average US household produces 650 lbs. of organic trash a year with most of it going to landfills that contribute to global warming. Many don't realize the substantial benefit they can have on the environment just by taking a hard look at grocery store purchases, choosing to use fresh items from local farm markets that are not prepackaged, replacing store-bought coffee, water and juice bottles with their own refillable varieties and, of course, bringing their own reusable bags when shopping. Encourage people to perform a home waste audit.


- **Create community art from nature.** Invite people of all ages to create art using natural items such as stones, twigs, feathers, sand or shells, and hold an outdoor art display at the municipal building, school, library or park. Or, have community members paint small stones with colorful pictures and/or inspirational words and then place them along nature paths to brighten someone's day. Folks will enjoy both placing and finding them!
- **Lead virtual tours of a local park or trail.** Contact local parks and land trusts to coordinate a virtual walk or tour of their location, discussing their mission, projects, benefits to the community, wildlife and environment, and ways

people can become more involved.

- **Start a Zoom book club.** Choose books featuring nature or the environment. Your local public library might be able to assist.

Acts of caring and nurturing nature build psychological and emotional resilience at a time when children and adults most need it. Over the past year, many have become far more aware of the importance of nature and open spaces to reducing stress and improving their overall wellbeing. Now is an ideal time to coordinate a community survey to gain input on how residents would like to add to and improve open spaces in their community. Perhaps they are interested in:

- a community rain garden or pollinator garden to relax and meditate,
- improving existing trails,
- starting a community garden,
- planning scheduled trail walks and hikes, or
- having an evening event like a "moth watch."

Now is an ideal time to get input and plan for better days ahead to get out and enjoy the great outdoors! 

## Candace McKee Ashmun Memorial Fund

The ANJEC family honors the memory of our founding executive director, friend, colleague and mentor Candy Ashmun, who was our most loyal supporter and volunteer right up to her last days.

ANJEC has established the Candace McKee Ashmun Memorial Fund in her honor. Donations to the fund will be used to support the ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant Program, an annual program for municipal environmental commissions to carry out local stewardship projects.

Candy's support of ANJEC's mission and her unwavering belief in the power of the local environmental commission makes this program a perfect way to remember her legacy for years to come.

### To donate

Mail a check to ANJEC, PO Box 157, Mendham NJ 07945. 

# NJ leading the way in environmental justice

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

Fulfilling a commitment to enact sweeping protections for environmental justice (EJ) communities, last September Governor Phil Murphy signed the nation's strongest law protecting overburdened communities from pollution. The legislation (S232) requires the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to evaluate the environmental and public health impacts of certain facilities (such as gas fired power plants, solid waste facilities, landfills, medical waste incinerators, resource recovery facilities, sludge processing facilities and sewage treatment plants) on overburdened communities when reviewing permit applications. Our State is

*Environmental justice aims to address inequities of pollution in overburdened communities.*

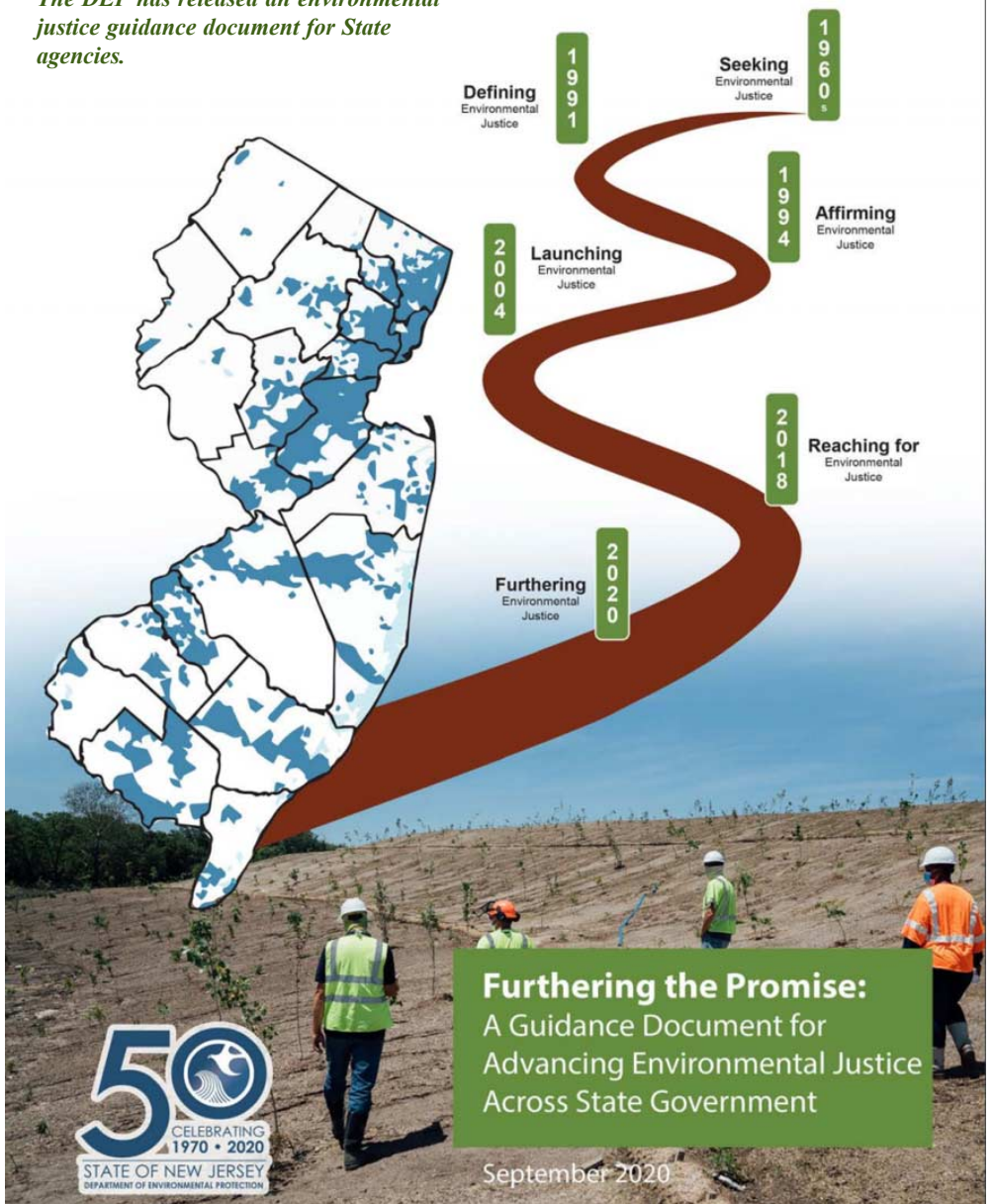
now the first in the nation to require mandatory permit denials if an environmental justice analysis determines a new facility will have a disproportionately negative impact on overburdened communities.

As part of the permitting process, the DEP must notify the public and consider their input on these projects. While the law helps to prevent further pollution in certain overburdened neighborhoods, it still doesn't require that polluters remediate any environmental harm that they've already caused in these communities. That's a fight for another day.

There are approximately 310 municipalities with overburdened communities within their boundaries, with populations totaling about four and a half million. (See map on page 18.)



The DEP has released an environmental justice guidance document for State agencies.



In October, Governor Murphy issued *Executive Order 23* directing that all State government decisions be guided by environmental justice principles and establishing an environmental justice interagency council. The DEP has issued a guidance document, available for download at <https://nj.gov/dep/ej/>, that directs executive branch departments and agencies

to create assessments and action plans to improve the agencies' effects on EJ communities.

Speaking at ANJEC's Environmental Congress in October, Olivia Glenn, DEP Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Justice and Equity and a former member of the Pennsauken Environmental Commission, noted that EJ impacts on overburdened

communities go beyond air and water pollution.

“Disparities are not limited to air quality and facility siting. They are also present in climate change impacts, water infrastructure and flooding issues, and they are reflected in land use and planning policy.”

## Local action matters

Community action has played a major role for more than a decade in advancing the cause of environmental justice in the New Jersey. A number of nonprofit organizations and community groups have been leading voices in the fight, including the NJ Environmental Justice Alliance, the Ironbound Community Corporation and Clean Water Action, among others.


When the new EJ law was signed, Kim Gaddy, Newark resident and Environmental Justice Organizer for Clean Water Action, said in a statement: “Environmental justice communities like mine have suffered far too long. After more than 10 years of fighting for this legislation, our voices have

finally been heard. Our communities will receive the right environmental protection for our complexion.”

ECs also have an important role to play in ensuring the new EJ law fulfills its promise.

“Environmental justice is a vital part of making New Jersey stronger and fairer for all of its residents,” stressed Glenn. “I encourage every environmental commission in the State to join us in our mission by taking our message to your communities and keeping vulnerable populations at the center of your decisions.”

## EJ Resources

- NJ Office of Environmental Justice – <https://nj.gov/dep/ej>
- List of overburdened communities in New Jersey – <https://nj.gov/dep/ej/communities.html>
- EJ-related mapping tools – <https://nj.gov/dep/ej/resources.html> 

# Environmental justice starts with you

By **Jennifer M. Coffey**, ANJEC Executive Director

In passing the *Environmental Justice (EJ) Law*, also known as the *Cumulative Impacts Law*, New Jersey is beginning to assess and set right generations of inequities. For too long, minority and low-income communities have been overburdened by air and water pollution and a lack of funding for open spaces. Inequitable systems that led to such pollution are slowly changing, thanks to the hard work and advocacy of residents, community leaders, nonprofit and citizen groups, including the Ironbound Community

Corps, the Environmental Justice Alliance, Clean Water Action, and ally organizations.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is hosting stakeholder meetings to gather input on changing State policies and criteria for permitting development projects that support more equitable and just decision-making and lead to a cleaner environment for those who have been denied it for too long. ANJEC strongly supports this cause and we have been working hard to examine how to best support environmental commissions



(ECs) in their EJ efforts. Many commissions are deeply immersed in the fight for a cleaner environment, specifically in minority and low-income communities, but even more don't know where to start. As we journey together to better serve communities overburdened with environmental pollution, we suggest that ECs consider these first steps. Please keep us informed of what you are working on so that we can share success stories, inspire and support one another.

## Take a fresh look at your community

The new EJ law uses census tract data to identify overburdened communities. Review the centerfold map in this issue of the *ANJEC Report* or visit [www.nj.gov/dep/ej/](http://www.nj.gov/dep/ej/) to see the map as well as updates on the State's activities.

An Overburdened Community (OBC), as defined by the law, is any census block group, as determined in accordance with the most recent United States Census, in which:

- at least 35 percent of the households qualify as low-income households (at or below twice the poverty threshold as determined by the United States Census Bureau);
- at least 40 percent of the residents identify as minority or as members of a State recognized tribal community; or

- at least 40 percent of the households have limited English proficiency (without an adult who speaks English 'very well,' according to the United States Census Bureau)." ([www.nj.gov/dep/ej/](http://www.nj.gov/dep/ej/))

Does your municipality have census tracks that are identified as overburdened communities? How about neighboring municipalities? Do those census tracks connect in neighboring municipalities indicating opportunities for collaboration across municipal borders?

## Build new relationships

Once you identify the overburdened communities within your municipality, assess whether you have any EC members who live in those communities. When is the last time you, personally or as a commission, spent time in those communities or conducted outreach to the people who live and work there? If you don't have EC connections in those communities, think more broadly. Are there community organizations or faith-based groups with whom you could foster relationships?

Understand that forging relationships in communities where you have had little prior engagement will take time to build trust. There may be language barriers. Consider that people in low-income communities may be under-employed and working multiple part time jobs, and they



may not have a lot of time to volunteer on an EC. Nonetheless, the air they breathe and the water their children drink is just as important to them as it is to you.

### Seek deeper understanding

Challenge your EC to look at the last time you prioritized work in overburdened communities versus other areas of town. When was the last time you organized a cleanup or educational program there? Spend time as an EC reviewing maps such as New Jersey's Conservation Blueprint ([www.njmap2.com/blueprint/](http://www.njmap2.com/blueprint/)). How do the overburdened communities look different from other areas of your municipality? Are there economic or racial disparities? Are there fewer trees? Smaller stream buffers? Less access to open space? Talk about these issues as an EC and how you may be able to better serve those communities.

### Make space and take action

Consider adding a standing item to your regular meeting agendas to specifically explore the challenges and inequities facing

overburdened communities in your municipality. The residents of EJ communities have borne a greater burden of environmental pollution than other areas for generations. It will take time for you to deepen your understanding, build relationships, and chart the course to become a good ally fighting for clean air, water, and open spaces in areas long denied. You will have positive interactions and you will make mistakes. Be open to learning. ANJEC is learning with you and is committed to supporting ECs and organizations working for environmental justice. 🌱

*Landfills are among the facilities regulated by NJ's new EJ law.*



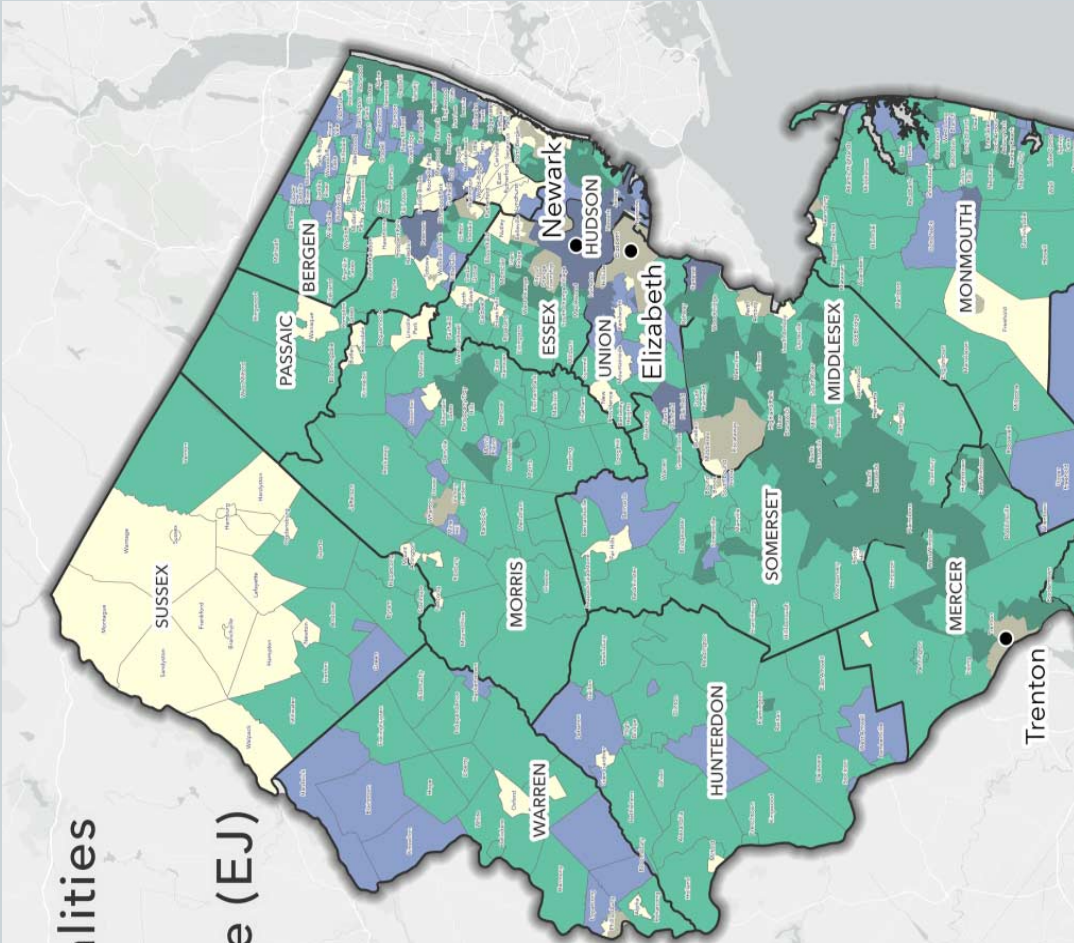
# New Jersey Municipalities with Environmental and Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities

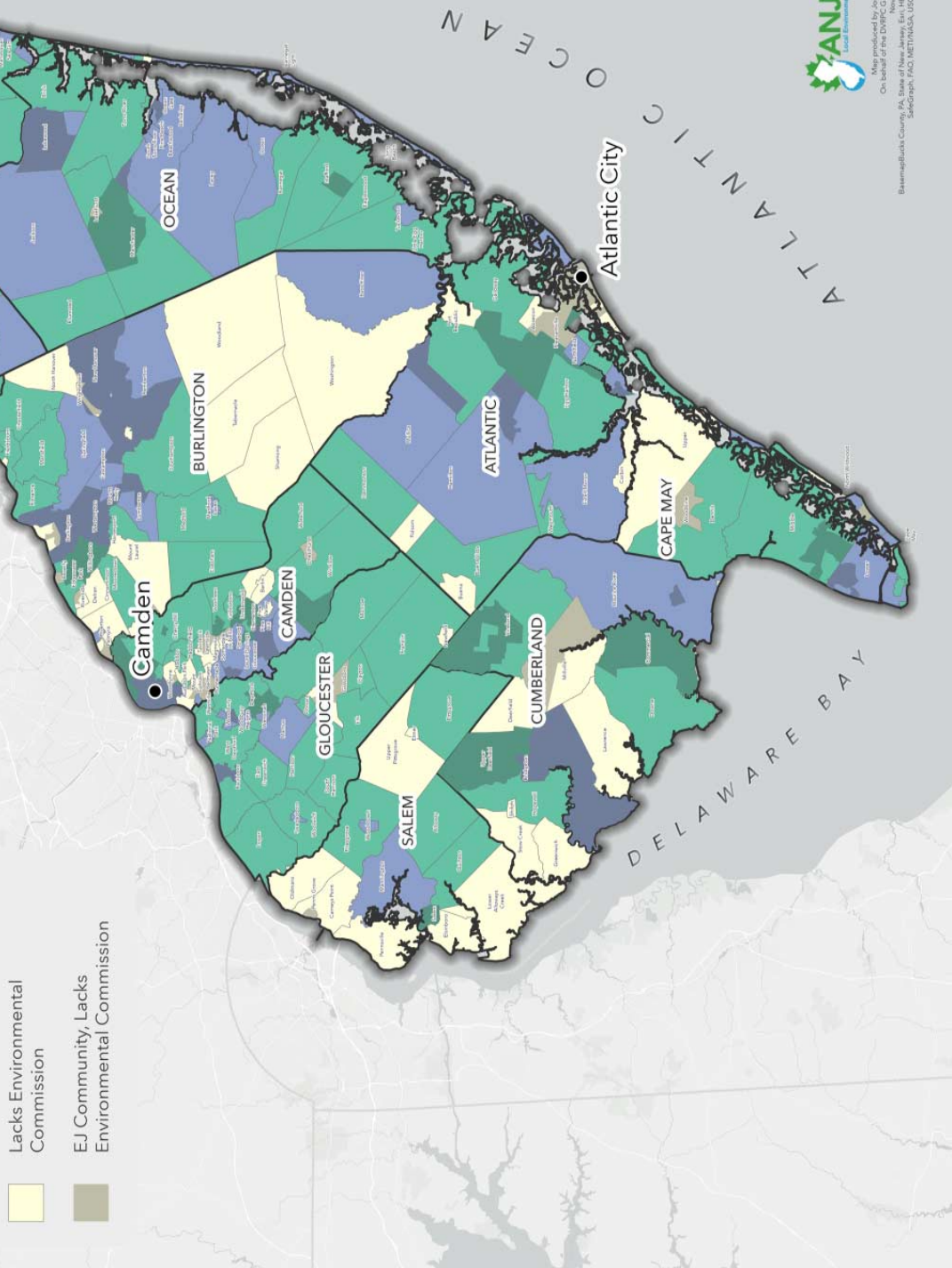
## EJ Community

One in which:

- (1) at least 35 percent of the households qualify as low-income (at or below 200% of the poverty line);
- (2) at least 40 percent of the residents identify as minority or members of a State recognized tribal community; or
- (3) at least 40 percent of the households have limited English proficiency.

- Has Environmental Commission (ANJEC Member)
- EJ Community, Has Environmental Commission (ANJEC Member)
- Has Environmental Commission (Not ANJEC Member)
- EJ Community, Has Environmental Commission (Not ANJEC Member)





- Lacks Environmental Commission
- EJ Community, Lacks Environmental Commission



Map produced by John Vandjale  
 On behalf of the DEWCEP  
 November 2020  
 Base map: Bucks County, PA, State of New Jersey Env. HERE, Garmin,  
 SpheronX, A.D. NETINDIA, USGS, EPA, NPS



## Considering climate change in land use decisions


By **Alex Ambrose**, ANJEC Policy Associate, and **Missy Rebovich**, New Jersey Future

To say that New Jersey has already felt the effects of climate change would be an understatement. Between record-setting coastal flooding, more frequent and intense storms and wacky weather patterns, nearly every New Jerseyan has a story of how the climate crisis has already hurt them. These events are expected to grow worse as our atmosphere continues to warm. Sea level rise will force residents to rebuild homes, businesses will have to deal with ruined inventory and destroyed shops, and commuters will be forced to navigate roads that are flooded or attempt to use mass transit to access basic necessities.

These hazards will only become more frequent and more damaging over time; this means New Jersey needs to start preparations and planning now. While our State's *Municipal Land Use Law* does not currently take climate change into account for planning or land use decisions, the State Legislature wants to change this. Senate Bill S2607, and its companion in the Assembly, A2785, add a new component to the land use element of the municipal master plan. It calls for "a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment" along with mitigation measures and an analysis of the entire master plan for other risks from natural disasters.

The bill's sponsors, Senators Bob Smith and Linda Greenstein, and Assembly members Nancy Pinkin, Daniel Benson, and John McKeon, successfully shepherded the bill through both chambers of the Legislature and on February 4, Governor Murphy signed the bill into law.

Municipalities will be on the front lines of the climate crisis as they deal with closed

roads, flooded bridges, downed power lines and more. It's time to start devising strategies to address these risks now. This type of forward-thinking land use planning is critical to keeping New Jersey residents, businesses, and the environment safe and thriving. 

## NJ Legislature mulls low carbon concrete legislation

By **N. Dini Checko**, ANJEC Resource Center

Most folks don't stop and think about concrete. Sure, we may know that it's a composite material primarily made from cement, water and sand or gravel. And concrete's main ingredient, Portland cement, contributes more to greenhouse gas emissions than global air travel. How can this seemingly innocent material be so devastating? The production process of cement is the culprit. First, fossil fuels are used to heat limestone at super high temperatures. The, when the limestone chemically transforms, it releases CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. All this adds up to Portland cement being responsible for approximately 8 percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions.

There is now new technology, called *Low Embodied Carbon Concrete (LECC)*, that can reduce emissions from cement production by using concrete to store CO<sub>2</sub>; a powerful climate change mitigation strategy. Concrete is produced locally in plants that



*Concrete's main ingredient, Portland cement, contributes more to greenhouse gas emissions than global air travel.*

are mostly owned and operated by small- to medium-size businesses. Local production offers an opportunity for local government decisions and policies.

The *NJ Low Embodied Carbon Concrete Leadership Act (NJ LECCA, A5223)*, is currently making its way through the State legislature. The bill's intention is to introduce new low carbon emissions standards for concrete procurement by State public agencies and departments.

*LECCwork (www.lowcarbonconcrete.org/)*, an active NJ group of volunteers, is working at local and state levels to educate and drive policy changes. They are encouraging municipalities to start with a pilot program of using low carbon concrete for sidewalks and curbs; universal forms of civic infrastructure that all local governments regularly construct and maintain.


## What can ECs do?

Environmental commissions (ECs) can encourage their local governments to use low carbon concrete in municipal projects and to pass a low carbon concrete resolution. They can also ask the planning board to add *Low Embodied Carbon Concrete* to their green development checklist.

The Princeton EC recommends using low carbon concrete in their development review memos. The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson in NY passed a resolution and

successfully used LECC for the Village's retaining wall project. ([www.lowcarbonconcrete.org/learn](http://www.lowcarbonconcrete.org/learn))

## More information

The Kick Carbon to the Curb initiative is an ideal starting point from which to build local LECC understanding, experience and acceptance. ([www.lowcarbonconcrete.org/take-action-2](http://www.lowcarbonconcrete.org/take-action-2)) 

# Electric vehicles on the move in NJ

By **Julie Lange Groth**, *ANJEC Report* Editor

Electrifying transportation is pivotal in fighting climate change and meeting New Jersey's ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Here are some recent developments that have put 2021 in the fast lane.

In February, Governor Murphy committed to investing more than \$100 million in clean, equitable transportation projects in New Jersey's Environmental Justice Communities to improve air quality and reduce the effects of climate change while moving the State towards 100 percent clean energy by 2050. Funded by proceeds from the NJ's participation in the Regional

Green House Gas Initiative and the Volkswagen Mitigation Trust Funds, the State will dedicate:

- \$9 million in grants for local government electrification projects that will help to improve air quality in environmental justice communities through the deployment of electric garbage and delivery trucks;
- \$13 million in grants for low- and moderate-income communities to reduce emissions that affect air quality for children through the deployment of electric school buses and shuttle buses;
- \$5 million in grants for equitable mobility projects that will bring electric vehicle (EV) ride hailing and charging stations to four NJ towns and cities;
- \$5 million in grants for deployment of fast charging infrastructure at 27 locations statewide;
- \$36 million to reduce diesel and black carbon emissions in environmental justice communities by electrifying port, cargo handling and other medium- and heavy-duty equipment in port and industrial areas;
- \$15 million towards New Jersey Transit bus electrification; and
- \$15 million towards flex funding to further deploy additional funding to the listed initiatives.

## Incentives for electric vehicle charging

In January, New Jersey's Board of Public Utilities unanimously approved the State's first utility EV filing from PSE&G. Here's what this means:

- Up to 40,000 residential customers can apply for a make-ready incentive, covering up to \$1,500 of eligible costs per Level 2 charger (Level 2 charging adds about 25 miles of range per hour). The chargers must be networked and provide data to the utility.
- Up to 4,000 of those customers may also apply for incentives to offset the cost of service upgrades if they are required, up to a maximum of \$5 thousand per site.
- Residential customers may apply to receive an incentive that discounts off-peak charging.
- Non-residential customers may apply for an incentive to offset up to \$7,500 of make-ready costs per networked Level 2 stub, for up to 3,500 stubs total, plus up to \$10K per site (at an estimated 875 sites).

A list of resources to accelerate electric vehicle adoption in New Jersey with incentives, procurement tools, policy and planning support, and more can be found at [www.drivegreen.nj.gov/localresources.pdf](http://www.drivegreen.nj.gov/localresources.pdf).



*The BPU has announced new incentives for electric vehicle charging*

# From railway to trailway: The Essex-Hudson Greenway

By Sheila Baker Gujral, ANJEC Resource Center

**N**orthern New Jersey is famous (some might even say infamous) for being a transportation nexus. Goods and people pass through the area via air, road, boat and rail. When a shipping or air route is discontinued, it leaves no physical trace behind, but when a rail route stops being used, the tracks remain in place. In its unused state, some might see it as a liability – an accident waiting to happen with the site becoming more derelict with each passing year.

The people at the Open Space Institute (OSI), the New Jersey Bike and Walk Coalition (NJBWC), and the September 11th National Memorial Trail (9/11 Trail) see it differently. Since 2002, when Norfolk Southern Railway Company stopped running the old Boonton Line, the tracks have lain unused. OSI, NJBWC, and 9/11 Trail saw a huge opportunity for the eight communities along the rail line, which would also be a boon to many more people in Essex and Hudson Counties and beyond.

## A nine-mile greenway

The groups looked at how to make the former rail line an asset for the region and they proposed the Essex-Hudson Greenway. A greenway is a long corridor of land, often used for recreation and pedestrian and bicycle traffic and sometimes including retail uses. The proposed project aims to create a nearly nine-mile greenway starting in Jersey City in Hudson County and

passing through Secaucus, Kearny, Newark, Belleville, Bloomfield, Glen Ridge, and ending in Montclair (Essex County). The greenway will be at least 100 feet wide (more in places) and cover 135 acres. It will serve communities not only along the nine-mile trail, but also a wider audience, since it will be a segment of two increasingly popular larger routes, the 9/11 Trail and the East Coast Greenway.

The proposed greenway will:

- connect people and communities;
- offer multiple health and wellness opportunities;
- create a safe, off-road trail to ride a bike, walk, run, birdwatch, educate and play;
- enhance local economic activity and job growth;
- ease traffic and offer active transportation options;
- create alternative commuting options like biking or walking;
- provide close-to-home, easy access to the outdoors; and
- offer numerous opportunities for green infrastructure and stormwater storage.

## Just getting started

The project is still in the very early stages; “The Open Space Institute has negotiated a preliminary agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NSRC) to sell the line for the purpose of the Essex-Hudson Greenway Project. While it continues to work closely with Norfolk Southern,



*The Essex/Hudson Greenway will replace former rail beds.*

the Open Space Institute has initiated necessary work around securing project financing and obtaining the necessary engineering assessments to make the project a reality.”<sup>2</sup>

They are working on a financing package that will not tap into county or municipal funds. There are still many steps to come: besides obtaining crucial project financing, federal approval for the sale of the line needs to be obtained, and environmental and engineering reviews need to be conducted.

Both the Essex and Hudson County Boards of County Commissioners (formerly the Boards of Chosen Freeholders) passed general resolutions in support of the project in 2020. Almost all municipalities (still waiting on Kearny) have passed resolutions of support as well.

## What can ECs do?

There are a variety of ways that your environmental commission (EC) can get involved.

- Send a digital letter of support (available at [www.essexhudsongreenway.org/support/](http://www.essexhudsongreenway.org/support/)).
- Sign up as one of the supporting organizations at [www.essexhudsongreenway.org/list-of-supporters/](http://www.essexhudsongreenway.org/list-of-supporters/).
- Attend the free informational webinar for environmental commissioners on April 26. (Register by emailing [info@anjec.org](mailto:info@anjec.org).)

“Multi-use trails, such as this proposed project, are an integral part of local transportation systems. They provide free recreational opportunities for all ages, encourage healthier lifestyles, bolster local economic development, reduce car trips and carbon footprints, provide additional transportation options, and encourage better environmental stewardship.” (<https://www.essexhudsongreenway.org/>)

- Sign up for project updates and/or to volunteer at the Essex-Hudson Greenway website.

## Resources:

Open Space Institute –

[www.openspaceinstitute.org](http://www.openspaceinstitute.org)

New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition – <https://njbwc.org>

September 11th National Memorial Trail – [www.g11trail.org/](http://www.g11trail.org/)

East Coast Greenway – [www.greenway.org/](http://www.greenway.org/)

<sup>1</sup> [www.essexhudsongreenway.org/faqs/](http://www.essexhudsongreenway.org/faqs/)



# ANJEC webinars

## Acting Locally to Protect Green Space

Monday, April 12, 2021

7:00 – 8:30 PM

- Why create an open space plan?
- How do you use an open space plan to enhance stewardship of municipal lands, from conservation easements to parks and other municipal properties?
- How do you work with town leaders and your community to not only approve the plan, but also implement it?



Get the answers to these and other questions to help you make the most of open space in your community.

Panel includes: Barbara Heskins Davis, VP of Programs, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey; Kevin O’Leary, Township Committee, Lafayette Twp.; Jennifer Coffey, ANJEC Executive Director.

## Turning a Liability into an Asset: Remediating and Redeveloping Brownfields in New Jersey

Monday, May 6, 2021

7:00 pm



Brownfields – or vacant and/or underutilized properties where there is known or suspected environmental contamination – are enormously prevalent throughout NJ.

There are likely multiple properties in each of New Jersey’s 565 municipalities. In spite of the challenges, brownfields remediation and redevelopment is a priority for many municipalities to stimulate economic development,

mitigate threats to public health and further communities’ environmental justice goals. Learn about:

- the nine steps of brownfield redevelopment
- the purpose and methods of conducting a brownfields inventory;
- land reuse success stories from around NJ;
- resources to help your community on the road to redevelopment.

Presented by ANJEC and the Center for Creative Land Recycling

For more info and registration, contact ANJEC at [info@anjec.org](mailto:info@anjec.org)  
or visit our website at [www.anjec.org](http://www.anjec.org).

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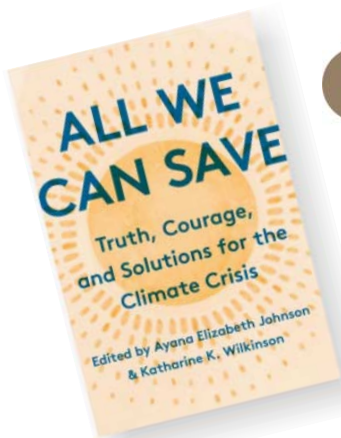
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## Thanks to ANJEC member communities

We are grateful to the thousands of volunteers serving as local officials in more than 260 municipalities and counties that are members of ANJEC. These dedicated people – from municipal and regional environmental commissions and green teams to open space committees, planning boards, governing bodies, shade tree commissions and zoning boards – dedicate their time and efforts to assure a clean environment and high quality of life in their communities throughout our State. Thank you! 



## What we're reading

Review by **Stephen T. Carroll**, ANJEC volunteer

### ***ALL WE CAN SAVE: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis***

Edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine K. Wilkinson.

*All We Can Save* is a collection of essays and poems about the climate crisis by sixty-one women. Some of them are well known (including Naomi Klein, Mary Ann Hitt, Katharine Hayhoe, Gina McCarthy) and others are less familiar but all are outstanding. The authors are characterized as a feminine leadership renaissance of the climate movement. Aside from being all women, they are a very diverse group in terms of age, race, geography and profession. The authors offer many different solutions, but a common aura of enthusiasm and commitment. It is difficult to summarize the separate writings of dozens of writers. To provide a sampling, four of the essays are briefly described below; they were chosen for their moving closing lines, which are included.

**Xiye Bastida** is of Indigenous background, raised in Mexico and a student at University of Pennsylvania. She is part of the global climate-strike movement. Her essay "Calling In" features ten tips for being a climate justice activist. She closes with this: *"It's time to change our mindset toward implementing solutions. A vibrant, fair and regenerative future is possible – not when thousands of people do climate justice*

*activism perfectly but when millions of people do the best they can."*

**Emily N. Johnston** is a writer and co-founder of 350 Seattle. In her essay "Loving a Vanishing World," she relates her part in the 2015 #ShellNo fight against Arctic Drilling, in which kayak activists delayed rig departure for an hour and the project was ultimately abandoned. Here's how her essay closes:

*"So some night soon, when you're on your way home and are tired and unsettled and thinking about all that you have to do; or next week, when this plea has faded away and someone asks you to do something you're not sure you want to do; or better yet, in a few weeks, when you realize that there's something you can do by bringing a group of people together, remember: In any moment, we can choose to show up. We can let them kill this beautiful world – or we can get to the beautiful work of making space for a decent future."*

**Leah Cardamore Stokes, PhD**, is a professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara and a policy expert on energy and climate change. In her essay "A Field Guide for Transformation," she stresses the point that the prime culprit of climate change is fossil fuel combustion, and that policy change is much more important than personal change. This essay may be the most important in the book. She closes the essay with the following paragraph:

*"When I come to the end of my life, I want the scales to show that I prevented more carbon emissions than I caused. And there is no way to make that happen if I only work on myself. My offset plan is activism."*

**Christine E. Nieves Rodriguez** is a mother, speaker, writer, emergent strategy practitioner and director of Emerge Puerto Rico. Rodriguez describes the recovery from

Hurricane Maria on the southeast side of Puerto Rico. Unlike most of the essays, which deal with climate mitigation, her story is about reconstruction. Maria totally destroyed the island and no external support was provided. They turned to community and formed a mutual aid project and survived. Christine Rodriguez states: "We have created a model of what it means for a community to be healthy enough and organized enough to face natural disasters."

Her essay is the last one of the book, and her closing is compelling.

*"It turns out that communities are the most important force that allows humans to weather great storms, literally and metaphorically. The climate crisis will intensify, but our communities will continue to rise – because they were always standing."*

All We Can Save is an important read. 🌊

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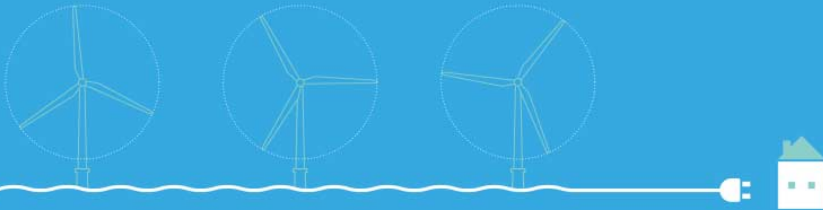
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