



ANJEC REPORT

Local Environment Matters

AUTUMN 2021

Inside:

- Celebrating open space in NJ!
- Fighting climate change locally
- Remembering Abigail Fair



Director's Report

The future is now, and it's electric. New Jersey leads the nation in fighting to end the climate crisis by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from our vehicles. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reports that 42 percent of our State's GHG emissions come from transportation, the largest contributor of emissions in the Garden State.

In July 2021, Governor Murphy signed into law municipal requirements designed to expand electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. By October, municipalities are required to adopt an ordinance directing the installation of EV charging stations. The law and subsequent ordinance affects the parking requirements for site plan applications for multiple dwellings of five or more units, and all other development or redevelopment projects that create 25 or more parking spaces. (See page 25)

In August, President Biden announced an Executive Order establishing the goal that 50 percent of all new vehicles sold in the United States will be zero-emission EVs by 2030. This significant market shift will both reduce GHG emissions and improve local air quality.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released updated climate crisis findings and projections this summer. UN Secretary General António Guterres called the findings "a code red for humanity." The report finds that all areas of our planet are being affected by human-induced climate change. It also finds that global warming is happen-

ing at a rate that exceeds model projections. We have now, unfortunately, entered an emergency phase of the climate crisis.

New Jersey must lead

As the most densely populated state in the nation, New Jersey has a responsibility to lead by example. The work we do now to reduce GHG emissions will determine how many climate refugees we create, the fate of agricultural food production and the quality of life associated with temperature, floods, and droughts.

ANJEC is working with ChargeVC and the State on a model ordinance for municipalities to update their land-use codes to comply with the new EV infrastructure law. ANJEC is also working with the State and other nonprofits to create guidance for municipalities to complete a Climate Hazard Assessment, a requirement signed into law by Governor Murphy earlier in 2021. All of these materials will be posted at www.anjec.org, and we will be offering webinars on these topics. And this issue of the *ANJEC Report* includes the first "Climate Watch" column, a regular update on issues, initiatives and progress in the fight against climate change.

The best available climate data sets and models tell us that global temperatures will continue to rise and natural systems, including ocean and wind currents, will continue to destabilize through 2050 given the amount of emissions already released into the atmosphere. The work we do now – today and in the next few years and decades –

to reduce GHG emissions will determine whether we will make the climate crisis impacts exponentially worse or not.

This is no dress rehearsal. This is simply science, and our chance to make good decisions. The problem is immense, but we have achieved hard things before. Waterways no longer glow orange nor spontaneously set on fire¹; the thinning of the ozone layer has largely been repaired because we stopped emitting certain chemicals and allowed the natural system to fix itself. We can mitigate the climate crisis, but it will take a lot of work. ANJEC is here as your resource for fighting the climate crisis and for everything you do to protect and restore natural resources in your community.



Jennifer M. Coffey
Executive Director

¹ Cuyahoga River fires (www.smithsonianmag.com/history/cuyahoga-river-caught-fire-least-dozen-times-no-one-cared-until-1969-180972444/)

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Local Environment Matters

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565 MUNICIPALITIES ONE ENVIRONMENT

Executive Director Jennifer M. Coffey
Editor Julie Lange Groth

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.

The *REPORT* welcomes articles and photographs but is not responsible for loss or damage. Opinions expressed by guest authors do not necessarily reflect ANJEC policy. Articles may be reprinted with permission and credit.

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On the cover: *The view from High Point State Park at sunset* Photo by Cheryl Fleishman

Acting Locally



By Randi Rothmel, ANJEC Project Director;
Steve Carroll, ANJEC Volunteer;
Cheryl Reardon, ANJEC Project Director;
Michele Gaynor, ANJEC Resource Center

Mountain Lakes student serving up aces

When Emily Samay joined the Mountain Lakes High School tennis team last year, she noticed that used tennis balls were simply being thrown out and she thought there had to be a better way. Researching this issue, she discovered that it takes about 400 years for a tennis ball to decompose in the regular trash. That is when she jumped up to take action and started “Aces for Earth,” a tennis ball recycling program.

With support from local tennis pros and coaches, especially her coach Mike O’Donnell, Aces for Earth officially launched in April 2021. An ongoing GoFundMe page (www.gofundme.com/ff/aces-for-earth) is providing the funding to purchase outdoor bins. To date, bins have been placed at Mountain Lakes High School, Montville High School, Rockaway River Country Club, Park Lakes Tennis Club, Mountain Lakes Club, Morristown Field Club and Lake Valhalla Club. Currently, Emily is working with Morris County school athletic directors to get bins installed at all County high schools – and more are on their way, slated for installation before the beginning of the 2021–2022 school year.

Once bins are filled (approximately 200 balls), they are boxed up and sent to RecycleBalls in Vermont where the tennis balls are ground up and the felt separated from the rubber. The “green gold” rubber is then used for constructing tennis courts, playgrounds and horse footings. RecycleBalls is also researching how to create a durable, energy efficient stucco replacement using the green gold material. Aces to Emily for her local effort to find a new home for these used tennis balls. Emily can be reached at emilysamay@gmail.com or acesforearth@gmail.com for more information. – Randi Rothmel



Emily Samay of Mountain Lakes High School organized an innovative program to recycle tennis balls.

Pesticide ordinance moves in Chatham Township

On June 21st, Chatham Township passed a new ordinance eliminating use of pesticides on municipal recreation areas. The ordinance contains six clauses listing the hazards of pesticide use plus exceptions to the ordinance in cases of emergency. The stated purpose of the ordinance is this: "It shall be the policy of Chatham Township to eliminate toxic pesticide use on all municipal recreational areas."

The ordinance passage was preceded by a multi-year process of research, demonstration programs and the combined efforts of the Chatham Township Environmental Commission (CTEC), the Township Committee and community residents. The project was led by Cara Feeser, deputy chair of the CTEC, who stated that, "The pesticide ordinance is a culmination of the last four years of having successful organic land care practices on our recreational areas, and it also represents the desire of our residents who spoke vocally for this back in 2018 and have continued to do so over the years, really advocating for safe recreational areas for the children." Throughout the process, there was strong support from the Township residents

In 2018, the Township Committee approved a one-year organic land care pilot program on Township recreational areas, including all athletic fields and the town pool. During the pilot, the recreational areas were maintained by a landscaper certified by the Northeast Organic Farm Association (NOFA). When choosing the organic route, a NOFA-certified landscaper is critical to avoid the potential for "greenwashing." NOFA landscapers have strict rules to follow and can ensure full compliance.

After a successful first year, the pilot program was renewed annually. It has proved that maintenance of athletic fields is possible without the use of toxic chemicals. After the Township's successful

first years of organic land care, the ordinance was passed and the permanent ban of toxic chemicals is complete.

— Steve Carroll

Self-help guide offers tips for sustainable homes and gardens

The South Orange Environmental Commission and Green Team produced a Home-Eco Guide featuring "10 Environmentally Friendly Tips for Your Home and Garden," suggesting actions residents can take to incorporate sustainability into their household, from small tweaks to big changes.

The guide was put together by Commission Member Georgia Madiba as her internship project for Rutgers Environmental Stewardship Program, and is designed to help all residents contribute to the sustainability of their community. The printed guide appeared as an insert in the spring issue of *Matters Magazine*, a local print publication that is delivered free to each residence in South Orange and Maplewood.

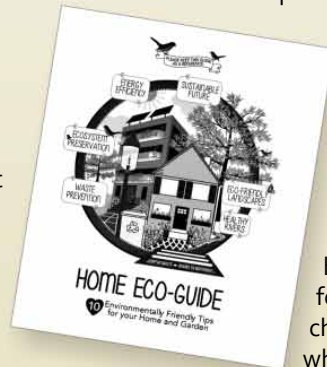
Free copies of the Guide are

also available at local shops, eateries and outdoor events, and local realtors give copies to new homeowners.

A community blog has also been set up for folks to exchange ideas about what actions they are taking.

Funding was made available by the Township of South Orange in collaboration with local businesses, an illustrator and design and printing services.

For more information, email environmentalcommission@southorange.org.



The South Orange Environmental Commission developed a handy guide for sustainable living.

You can browse the Home Eco-Guide online at: <https://sogreenteam.wordpress.com/2021/06/02/south-orange-home-eco-guide/>
– Cheryl Reardon

A beehive joins a pollinator garden

In June, West Orange residents gathered for a Beehive Ribbon-Cutting & Hive-life Demonstration at a six-acre preserve known as The Rock. Also in attendance were members of the West Orange Environmental Commission & Open Space Commission and Assemblyman John McKeon.

Attendees were treated to a hands-on beekeeping demonstration by beekeeper Jim Michael and West Orange Open Space Commission Chair Joe McCartney. As they donned their beekeeping suits, they showed the crowd the inner workings of the box-frame beehive. Displayed at the event were detailed posters to explain the grant project and why pollinators are essential to maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment.

The pollinator garden was established in 2019 with initial funding from Sustainable Jersey. An ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant in 2020 helped to establish the first beehive. A solar-powered fence surrounds the perimeter of the hive to protect the bees and hive from other wildlife.

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! 



West Orange held a ribbon cutting and demonstration of the new beehive in the town's pollinator garden.

A future phase to this ongoing project will include an educational component involving students and the community. A middle school teacher will work with students to incorporate QR codes they developed to be used in the pollinator garden.
– Michele Gaynor

ANJEC depends on our business members to help pay for the cost of printing the ANJEC Report. Please let them know that you saw their ad here. Remember, however, that ANJEC does not necessarily endorse any of these firms.



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Remembering Abigail Fair

By **Sandy Batty**, ANJEC Advisory Council

"Passion for the environment, talent for absorbing and analyzing information, willingness to work hard, desire to share knowledge, and determination to make a difference. Combine these qualities with a big smile and a dose of humility and you get Abigail Fair!"
– **NJ Conservation Foundation**

In May, ANJEC and New Jersey's environmental community lost a respected leader, passionate advocate and treasured colleague with the passing of Abigail Fair, known to all as Abbie. For 22 years, Abbie directed ANJEC's water resources program, working on a range of water protection issues – from stormwater to septic systems, wastewater planning and stream protection. She continually researched and learned as she followed her passion of protecting the State's water resources.

Before joining ANJEC, Abbie had coordinated the Freshwater Wetlands Campaign, a coalition of over 100 organizations that succeeded in passage of the landmark *NJ Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act* in 1987. The following year, ANJEC recruited Abbie to direct education for local officials about the new law. She organized workshops, answered countless calls and wrote a 50-page manual, which remains a standard text on the *Wetlands Act*.

Her expertise gained her the respect and admiration of environmentalists throughout the State. Abbie had the ability to study pages of regulations proposed by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and develop constructive comments


to improve the rules. She would analyze the impacts and coordinate with other environmental organizations to mount a united stand to strengthen what the State had proposed.



Through practical experience, she also became an expert on the environmental impacts of land use. She served her local government in Chatham Township as a member of the Planning Board for 23 years and on the Township Committee for five terms, including a term as mayor.

Always willing to share her skills, she helped environmental commissioners across New Jersey to

foster local land use policies to protect water resources. Abbie built such a solid reputation with local officials that people constantly were asking for her help with a water or land use problem. Abbie would provide the answers, and often would follow up – writing a letter to the editor, speaking to a reporter about the issue, or staying in touch to find out how things were going and whether the caller needed more help.

Recently, ANJEC trustees and staff passed a resolution to honor Abbie – a testament to the love and admiration of those who knew her well. She will long be remembered for all she was – truly a force of, and for, nature. 

The Greening of New Jersey

For 60 years, DEP's Green Acres Program has been putting parks near people

By **Shawn M. LaTourette**, Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

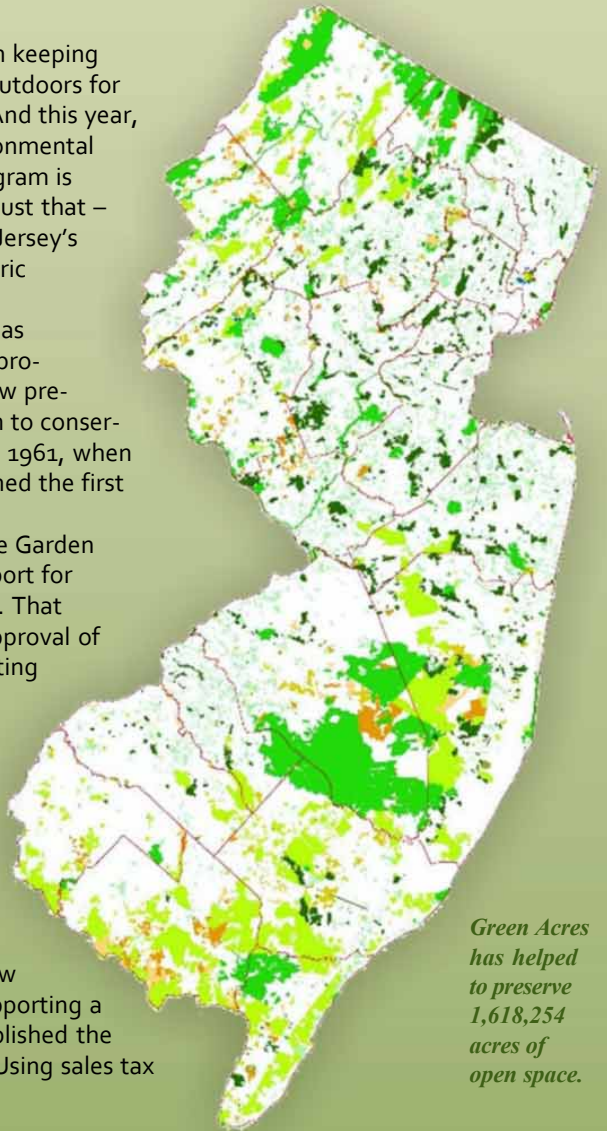
In New Jersey, the emphasis is on keeping things green – preserving the great outdoors for Garden State residents and visitors. And this year, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP's) Green Acres program is celebrating 60 years of having done just that – conserving land and protecting New Jersey's natural, scenic, recreational and historic resources.

Over its six decades, Green Acres has helped to plan and grow the State's protected lands, with 1,618,254 acres now preserved as open space. This dedication to conservation got its official start on June 3, 1961, when then-Governor Robert B. Meyner signed the first *Green Acres Bond Act*.

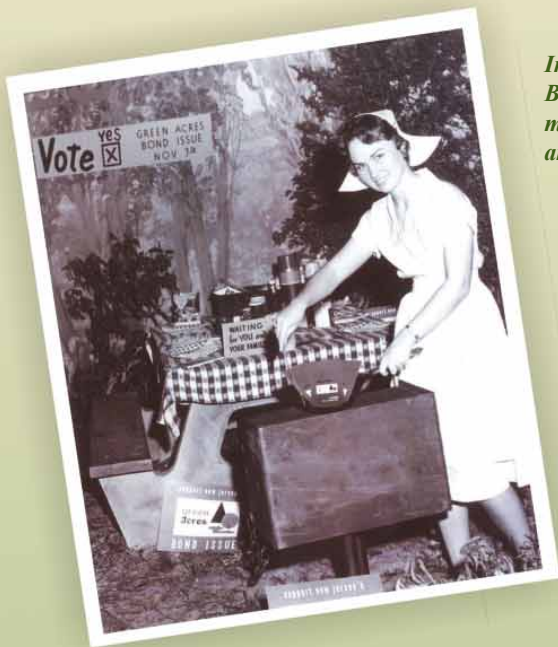
Suburban sprawl was devouring the Garden State's natural areas, and public support for protecting open spaces began to rise. That support would translate into voter approval of a key bond referendum formally creating the Green Acres program and setting aside \$60 million dollars for recreation and conservation efforts.

Since that first victory for open space – nearly a decade before the first Earth Day and the creation of the DEP in 1970 – every Green Acres question put to voters has been overwhelmingly approved.

In 1998, New Jerseyans showed how much they value green spaces by supporting a constitutional amendment that established the *Garden State Preservation Trust Act*. Using sales tax



Green Acres has helped to preserve 1,618,254 acres of open space.



In 1961, the first Green Acres Bond Act set aside \$60 million dollars for recreation and conservation efforts.

The Green Acres program, as of July, has secured 677,828 acres of parkland through local, nonprofit and State acquisitions. These priceless spaces stretch from High Point to Cape May Point – and the work continues.

Equity and open space

Putting parks near people is integral to the Green Acres mission. The principles of environmental justice are a program priority, ensuring equitable access to parklands, particularly in overburdened communities. Examples of this commitment and proof that it can work are visible across the State.

One of the most notable urban parks is Camden's Ulysses S. Wiggins Waterfront Park. This once-highly industrialized city space was home to docks, factories and railroads. As those uses ebbed away, the

revenue, the Act funded open space, farmland and historic preservation. Most recently, the public approved the *Preserve New Jersey Act*, which dedicates corporate business tax revenues as a long-term, stable source of land preservation and recreation funding.

Camden's Ulysses S. Wiggins Waterfront Park



areas were left vacant. In 1975, the city acquired 21.8 acres of waterfront. With Green Acres' development grants and other funding, Camden transformed the land into a family-friendly waterfront recreation area.

To the north is Liberty State Park – New Jersey's first urban state park – and one of Green Acres' crown jewels. Located in Jersey City, the park offers access to open space and the waterfront, as well as views of the Statue of Liberty. The path to the park began in 1965, when Jersey City donated 160 acres to the State. Shortly after, dollars from the inaugural Green Acres Bond Fund were used to acquire additional land from Jersey City and the Central Railroad of New Jersey. Liberty State Park officially opened on June 14,

1976. Today, it encompasses 1,212 acres, with trails, bike paths and playgrounds, and the Empty Sky Memorial, honoring the 749 people who lived in or had ties to New Jersey and lost their lives in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Earlier this year, one of the largest land preservation deals in State history was celebrated: The Holly Farm tract, within the Menantico Ponds Wildlife Management Area, was acquired by the Murphy Administration. See page 12. The 1,400-acre property was purchased from Atlantic City Electric, with funding from Green Acres. This land, between the Menantico and Manumuskin Creeks, two federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, provides numerous benefits – from protecting New Jersey's largest




Liberty State Park

concentration of endangered species to maintaining a natural buffer against climate change. Green spaces can store large amounts of carbon emissions and absorb water to reduce flooding, making the area more resilient. The Cumberland County site eventually will serve as the southern regional headquarters of the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Reclaiming flood-prone properties

Green Acres also is working to look after developed lands that are repeatedly flooded. The Blue Acres program, established in 1995, specializes in purchasing storm-damaged homes in flood-prone areas from willing sellers. The purchased homes

are demolished and the land is permanently preserved as public open space for conservation and recreation. Through Blue Acres, 1,080 flood-prone properties have been returned to natural settings, helping to build the State's resilience against climate change.

Since 1961, the Green Acres program has ensured the preservation of New Jersey's vast natural beauty, invaluable ecosystems and recreational opportunities for its residents and visitors to enjoy today and for years to come. 

Check out the latest ANJEC Resource Papers

Evolving issues, emerging trends, new laws and regulations – the environmental landscape in New Jersey is ever changing. To help satisfy your need to know, ANJEC Resource Papers provide authoritative information on a wide variety of topics important to local governments.


Some of our new or recently updated publications include:

- Open Space Plan: Charting a course for your town's green assets
- Site Plan / Subdivision Review: Protecting the environment during development
- Remediating & redeveloping brownfields in New Jersey
- Stormwater Management for Municipalities: Green infrastructure designs and options
- Municipal Techniques: Long term control plans, stream

daylighting and combined sewer overflow programs

- Septic Systems, Clean Water and Your Municipality

Most ANJEC Resource Papers can be downloaded from our website free of charge at <https://anjec.org/publications/>.

They're also available for purchase in printed form by contacting us at info@anjec.org. 



The Holly Farm finally preserved

By Jane Morton Galetto, CU Maurice River

Just a few days before Thanksgiving in 2019, Governor Phil Murphy, Catherine McCabe – then Commissioner of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection – and the NJ Natural and Historic Resources Group’s Green Acres program bestowed a great gift on the citizens of NJ...the 1,400-acre Holly Farm tract. The property has now been added to the Menantico Ponds Wildlife Management area and will become home to NJ Fish and Wildlife’s (NJFW’s) Southern Region Office. We have much to be thankful for!

The COVID-19 pandemic curtailed the proper celebration of this monumental achievement. Then on June 2, 2021, at an event celebrating 60 years of Green Acres and the addition of The Holly Farm tract, NJFW Director David Golden declared that this property now connects over 50,000 acres of protected space. Pepco/Atlantic City Electric is to be saluted for having decided to sell the land to Green Acres for preservation versus development.

The most important component in prioritizing land for species protection is connecting preserved lands for use as wildlife corridors. Species are reliant on diverse habitats at various stages in their individual life cycles and in their individual connections with other species, often for sustenance. This purchase filled a “hole in the donut” by joining many protected spaces creating 50,000 contiguous acres of preserved land.

A long and winding trail

Conservation organizations doggedly tried to safeguard the forest commonly called The Holly Farm for 30-some years. Over time, housing developments, coal-fired energy plants, soccer fields, race tracks, solar fields and sod farms have been proposed for it. Throughout each of those threats, CU and many other conservation organizations held firm to the belief that it should be protected instead.

Millville’s Master Plan has The Holly Farm zoned for conservation and described it as a great property to help meet their goal of preserving 50 percent of the City’s land. This shows a great commitment to the environment and to clean air and clean water. But had the Master Plan not been poised to support this protective effort, it would likely not have succeeded.

So why would CU Maurice River, NJ Conservation Foundation, NJ Audubon, ANJEC, Columbia Law School’s Environmental Clinic and so many others rally efforts for so long to see this entire site preserved? Because The Holly Farm tract contains a wide variety of habitat types and, along with more common ones, it supports the greatest concentration of threatened and endangered species in New Jersey. The now-protected property also connects two National Wild and Scenic Rivers and their corridors, safeguarding them from the risks of development and

The Holly Farm tract.



further fragmentation. It is forested and dotted with wetlands and vernal ponds. Forests are the lungs of our planet, cleaning our air, while wetlands are the kidneys that clean our water. With so much of our State and nation falling to development, more and more habitats are being lost and more and more aquifers are being threatened. This property is truly a regional investment toward a sustainable future.

The environmental community's tenacity for protecting this property has paid off. Preparedness and dedication are key components in conservation. The Holly Farm site will be enjoyed by wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts while playing an important role in environmental protection. 🌱



*Don't miss
ANJEC's biggest
event of the year!*



Beginning on **Tuesday, October 19th**, at 7pm and continuing through **Friday, October 22**, at 7pm with workshop sessions daily.

This fully virtual conference features:

- Keynote Address - Surili Patel, Vice President, the Metropolitan Group
- Featured Presenter: Commissioner Shawn LaTourette, NJ Department of Environmental Protection
- Presentation of the ANJEC Municipal Leadership Awards
- Presentation of 2021 ANJEC Environmental Achievement Awards
- 10 great sessions, including 7 educational workshop presentations
- Entertainment by African drummer Maxwell Kofi Donkor

One small \$25 fee covers all 10 sessions, or pay a maximum of \$100 for any/all members of your environmental commission to attend all sessions and access recordings!

All sessions will be recorded and shared to all registered. Scholarships are available.

For more information, visit our website at <https://anjec.org/anjec-2021-environmental-congress/>.

Preserving and protecting the Pinelands

By Sheila Baker Gujral, ANJEC Resource Center Director

Some call it the Pine Barrens, some call it the Pinelands and some just call it the Pines. The New Jersey Pinelands, formally known as the New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve, stretches across seven counties in southern New Jersey. In 1978, Congress designated 1.1 million acres as the Pinelands National Reserve and in 1979 New Jersey designated the State Pinelands Area, which encompasses 938,000 acres (or 1,465.6 square miles – 19 percent of the total land area of New Jersey). It has also been designated an International Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations. The Pinelands is home to a diverse variety of plant and animal life, some of it rare and unusual, and helps to recharge the 17-trillion-gallon Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer.

As the most densely populated state in the nation, NJ is fast approaching full buildout, which requires careful planning and preservation throughout the State. The Pinelands Commission is the 15-member independent State agency focused on preserving, protecting and enhancing the Pinelands. They have done a great job preserving this large tract of land (the largest tract of open space on the mid-Atlantic coast) by using creative and innovative approaches to preservation – instead of requiring residents to leave the

area, they instead created a growth management plan that would use regulations and incentives to concentrate development in specified areas around the Pinelands' edges, while severely restricting development options in the large intact forests of the Pine Barrens' interior.

To execute this vision, the State Designated Pinelands Area (which encompasses approximately 312,000 acres) was delineated into various Land Use Management Areas: the Preservation Area District (295,000 acres); the Special Agricultural Production Area (37,500 acres); the Agricultural Production Area (68,500 acres); the Forest Area (257,000 acres), the Rural Development Area (109,500 acres); the Regional Growth Area (76,500 acres); the Military and Federal Installation Area (47,000 acres); and the Pinelands Towns (21,500 acres) and Villages (26,000 acres).

This year: A special focus on grasslands

The Pinelands Commission so far has provided close to \$10 million in funding for the permanent preservation of nearly 9,000 acres and has earmarked \$1 million this year for the preservation of grasslands in the Pinelands. The Commission has assigned the highest priority to properties with habitat for threatened or endangered species or properties associated with climate change factors of carbon sequestration, wildfire, and

The Pinelands is home to a diverse variety of plant and animal life.






More than half of the land in the State Pinelands Area has been permanently preserved as open space.

floodplains, followed by open space and historic preservation.

Among the many funding considerations will be the size and location of the parcels, the presence of threatened and endangered species habitats (with greater priority to grassland habitat with known, recent sightings of grassland birds), contiguity with preserved land, long-term maintenance capability, and potential for mitigation of climate change impacts (with greater priority given for carbon sequestration or storage and for large tracts of cedar swamp).

As of June 2020, more than half of the land in the State Pinelands Area has been permanently preserved as open space. In the continuing quest to strategically preserve and protect, this new round of funding focuses on protecting grassland habitats and mitigating the negative consequences of climate change. This is an exciting preservation opportunity in the Pinelands. As Nancy Wittenberg, the former Executive Director of the Pinelands Commission recently said, "Permanent land protection is among our most effective tools to preserve the Pinelands." 

Resources:

Pinelands Commission [www.nj.gov/pinelands/]

Pinelands Preservation Alliance [<https://pinelandsalliance.org/>]

Pinelands facts [www.nj.gov/pinelands/infor/fact/Pinelands%20Facts.pdf]


ANJEC honors the memory of Nancy Wittenberg and her tireless efforts on behalf of the Pinelands.

Recordings and resources from ANJEC webinars

ANJEC webinar recordings are now available on our YouTube channel at ANJEC Views. A listing of webinar links and associated slide presentations, handouts, case studies and other resources can all be found on the ANJEC website at <https://anjec.org/conferences-workshops/>.

Recent webinars include:

- Navigating the New Jersey Conservation Blueprint Interactive Mapping Tool
- Rolling Out the New Plastic Pollution Reduction Law in New Jersey
- Advancing Stormwater Management
- Get Ahead of the Stamped: Electric Vehicle Charging in Your Town
- Turning a Liability into an Asset: Remediating and Redeveloping Brownfields in New Jersey
- The Essex-Hudson Greenway: A Nine Mile Green Space Opportunity
- Acting Locally to Protect Green Spaces: Community Engagement and Government Support
- Social Media Engagement for Environmental Commissions

ANJEC is committed to providing relevant, useful training opportunities for environmental commissions and other local government officials in New Jersey. If you are looking for training or resources on a particular topic, please let us know. We'll do our best to provide the content you're looking for, whether it's by offering new webinars or finding what you need through our ANJEC Resource Center. Please reach out to us at info@anjec.org. 

ANJEC 2021 Stewardship Grants continue support for local open space projects

By Elizabeth Ritter, ANJEC Deputy Director

For the ninth year, ANJEC is providing funding for ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grants. This round of funding saw 14 environmental commission (EC) projects selected from a pool of over 45 applications. The funded projects include a wide variety of activities such as:

- a demonstration garden along the Rahway River

- community gardens
- bluebird house/habitat
- pollinator gardens galore!

No cash match is required for the grants, which range from \$500 to \$1500. Projects require an in-kind labor contribution of at least 80 hours from the commission and other volunteers. ECs often log many times that amount of time working alongside



ANJEC Stewardship grants require a community awareness component.

community groups and volunteers, who help with physical labor or even donate professional skills. The funded projects are often part of larger initiatives that may include funding from additional sources.

Receiving a grant can sometimes encourage the community to plan even more activities.

ANJEC remains committed to funding these important community environmental education and stewardship projects and all the enthusiasm and community good will they generate. The primary objective of the Open Space Stewardship Grant Program is to increase community awareness and appreciation of local open space, ultimately increasing public support for open space stewardship and local funding. Another objective of the program is to highlight the ECs who accomplish untold amounts of important work in their towns, but often operate under the radar.

Grantees are required to include community outreach and promotion/marketing of their projects through activities such as press coverage, social media and website postings, event attendance, signage, brochures and other efforts to bring attention to the projects.

It is essential for commissions to continually affirm their value as a community resource, so their towns will trust and support EC efforts and programs.

2021 grant recipients

The 2021 grantees are:

- Ridgefield Borough, Ridgefield Community Garden Project
- Sayreville Borough, Sayreville Community Garden
- Chester Borough, Seward Hill Preserve ecological restoration: bluebird houses
- Dennis Township, community garden restoration
- East Greenwich Township, demonstration pollinator garden
- Fair Lawn Borough, Fair Lawn riparian zone restoration project
- Hamilton Township (Mercer County), Pollinator-Friendly Hamilton
- Long Branch City, Jackson Woods Park Message Center & Native Garden

- Milltown Borough, Mill Pond Pollinator Garden
- Neptune Township, rain garden
- New Brunswick City, Buccleuch Park Pollinator Garden
- Montvale Borough, wetlands restoration/pollinator plantings
- Wayne Township, flood plain restoration and rain garden
- Parsippany-Troy Hills Township, Invasive species community education project

ANJEC's Open Space Stewardship 2021 Grant Program is underwritten by the Candace McKee Ashmun Grant Fund, established in 2020 with funds raised in the memory of ANJEC's first executive director and by generous donors like you.

ANJEC is always looking for additional sources of revenue to support grants for environmental commissions. If your organization would like to hold a fundraiser to support the grant program, or if you would like to make a donation, please contact ANJEC at info@anjec.org.



High Bridge Roots to Rivers project, June 2019

ANJEC Open Space Grant Fund

Bayside Park restoration in Brick Township



Bergen Hill Park pollinator garden in Jersey City



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Space Stewardship Projects

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*ell's organic
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*Swedesboro-Woolwich bluebird
habitat
restoration.*



Photo by
Ann Silvers



*North Union St. Park Wildlife
Habitat Garden in Lambertville*



*Washington Twp. (Gloucester)
Poplar trail rehabilitation*

Open space planning and natural climate solutions

By Isabella Castiglioni, former ANJEC Outreach Manager

All too often, addressing the climate crisis can feel like an insurmountable task. While our individual actions and efforts are critical, some of our most greenhouse gas-intensive activities, as well as our biggest opportunities for adaptations, are entrenched in our land use. Through careful planning and an open space program, we can create communities that are more resilient to climate change.

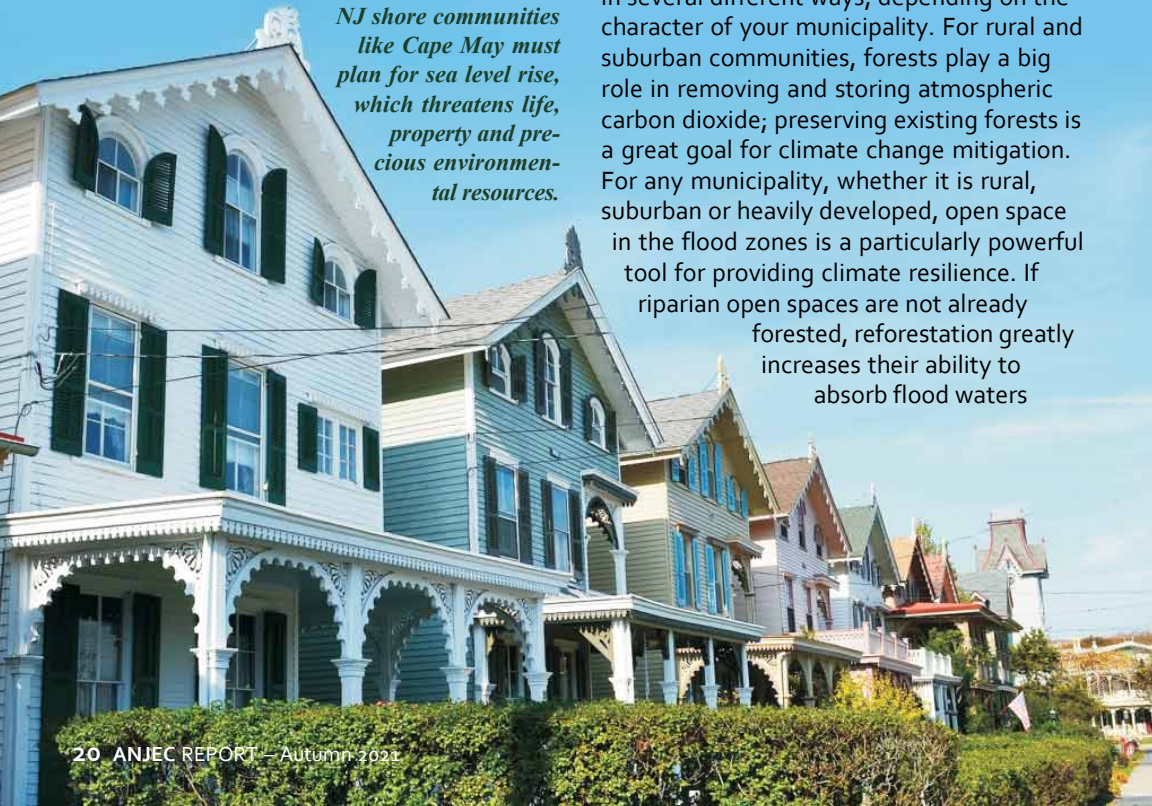
Open space provides a natural climate solution that helps mitigate climate change by removing excess atmospheric carbon dioxide and increasing the storage of

carbon dioxide in natural systems, like forests and soils.¹ The Nature Conservancy and their research partners have found that nature-based solutions can “provide up to 37 percent of the emission reductions needed by 2030 to keep global temperature increases under 2 degrees Celsius.”²

That statistic should provide us with some much-needed hope. During the pandemic, people have realized just how much we rely on open space for our physical and mental health. Environmental commissions can use this moment to improve and increase open space.

Open space can mitigate climate change in several different ways, depending on the character of your municipality. For rural and suburban communities, forests play a big role in removing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide; preserving existing forests is a great goal for climate change mitigation. For any municipality, whether it is rural, suburban or heavily developed, open space in the flood zones is a particularly powerful tool for providing climate resilience. If riparian open spaces are not already forested, reforestation greatly increases their ability to absorb flood waters

NJ shore communities like Cape May must plan for sea level rise, which threatens life, property and precious environmental resources.



while removing and storing excess atmospheric carbon dioxide.

While forested and reforested areas store and remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, other types of open space mitigate climate change in different ways. Linear open space with trails, such as greenways, allow people to travel safely without a car. Place this linear open space along a river and it can serve triple-duty: protecting the community from flood waters, mitigating climate change, and offering recreation and transportation options.

Community gardens cut down on the miles that it takes for food to reach our plates and increases the plant-based foods that we eat. This reduces the amount of greenhouse gases associated with each meal.

Beyond mitigation, open space can help municipalities adapt to climate change, too. Consider how increasing precipitation and temperatures will affect your community. In more developed urban areas, parks with green infrastructure can help to manage stormwater while cutting back on the urban heat island effect. No matter the scale, open space plays a valuable role in increasing climate resilience.

While criteria for preserving open space will vary between municipalities, there are some common elements to consider. What are the principles, goals, and policies guiding open space preservation in your municipality? Environmental commissions can help maintain their town's open space inventory and develop an Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI). The ERI along with the municipal master plan guides the municipality in identifying which lands to preserve.


It is also important to be aware of where existing open space and preserved lands are located within your municipality. This way, open spaces can be linked for greater benefit. A needs analysis, too, should guide



Protecting open space along rivers in urban areas, like Branch Brook Park in Newark, helps reduce the heat island effect and mitigates flooding caused by climate change.

the preservation of open space. Is there equitable access to open space across the whole municipality? Formerly redlined areas and newly designated Environmental Justice communities may be lacking open, green space. These areas should be priorities for open space creation.

The open space plan should also consider action items and methods of acquiring open space so that the plan can be made a reality. Partnering with other organizations in your community stretches each group's investment and makes sure that goals and plans complement each other. If your municipality is considering planning for open space, ANJEC's "Open Space Plan" resource paper will help you get started.

Open space and natural climate solutions will help your community support global efforts to reduce climate change. They protect your community from the effects of climate change that cannot be avoided through mitigation. Environmental commissions and local governments have great power to create equitable, resilient communities in New Jersey. With this in mind, we are excited to see what you can do to incorporate natural climate solutions into open spaces! 

Isabella can now be found at the NJ Highlands Council working as Resource Management Specialist.

¹ The Nature Conservancy. Playbook for Climate Action: Pathways for Countries and Businesses to Help Address Climate Change Today.

² The Nature Conservancy. (2017). Nature's Make or Break Potential for Climate Change. Retrieved from: tinyurl.com/jxjwtrpb



Planning for climate resilience

By **N. Dini Checko**, ANJEC Project Director

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a dire scientific report in August with undeniable proof that human influence has unequivocally warmed the planet. It's been eight years since the last IPCC report and since then, observational data and computer modeling have greatly improved, which gives scientists more confidence that their models are correctly forecasting future climate conditions. Americans' lived experience these past eight years concurs with the IPCC report. The climate is changing rapidly with extreme heat, severe droughts and intense flooding. The looming question challenging the citizens of Earth now is: "How can humans alter our behavior and improve the climate outlook?"

Here in NJ, the State reached its 2020 goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants by 20 percent. Now, under the leadership of Governor Murphy, NJ has an ambitious goal of reducing emissions by 80 percent by 2050 (from the

2006 baseline). So, yes, it's possible when we take collective action.

The State is looking to accelerate its transition to a low-carbon economy through reductions in carbon pollution, expanding our clean energy infrastructure and building adaptable communities. However, given NJ's home rule, the key to continued success will be our 565 local governments. In February 2021, Governor Murphy signed a bill requiring that the land use element of municipal master plans must include a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment. This assessment should analyze current and future threats associated with climate change, including increased temperatures, drought, flooding, hurricanes and sea-level rise.

Dimensions of climate vulnerability

Vulnerability to climate change has three dimensions:

- **Exposure** – the degree to which a climate variation or change may affect people, places or systems;
- **Sensitivity** – the degree to which they could be harmed by that exposure; and
- **Adaptive capacity** – the degree to which the potential for harm could be mitigated by reducing exposure or sensitivity.

Determining a municipality's vulnerability is the first step, and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has released a new tool called "Local Planning for Climate Change Toolkit." It's designed to guide municipalities through the process of creating a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment as now required by



Electrifying transportation will go a long way to fighting climate change in NJ.

the Municipal Land Use Law.

But it's not enough to identify climate change threats; the second step is to build a strategy to respond. The Local Resilience Strategy should, at a minimum, address any areas prone to flooding, including redevelopment areas, the human-made (built) environment and related infrastructure. Each action identified as part of the climate resilience and adaptation strategy should detail a proposed implementation schedule, identify non-local assistance/resources needed, and target measurable outcomes (e.g., completion of a plan, securing sources of funding, updating an ordinance).

Jersey City's three-pillar approach

Jersey City has been actively working on reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) since 2015. On Earth Day this year, they doubled down on their commitment by joining the United Nations' Race to Zero campaign and pledged to become a carbon-neutral city by midcentury. After five years of visioning and stakeholder meetings, the City released their comprehensive 2021 *Climate and Energy Action Plan*.

The plan adopts a three-pillar approach to integrated climate planning:

- GHG reduction
- climate adaptation and
- climate equity.

Key goals are then categorized around three action areas: energy, transportation/



Jersey City's Climate and Energy Action Plan

land use and waste. For example, transportation accounts for 30 percent of Jersey City's GHG emissions. To reduce these transportation emissions, the City will improve opportu-

nities for bicycling, walking and use of transit. Strong planning and zoning decisions will strengthen mixed use walkable communities that will increase tree canopy and green space, which improves resilience to heat and flooding events.

Climate change events have exposed our current vulnerabilities. Let's use these experiences to strengthen our resolve to develop and implement positive solutions to alter the climate path. 🌱

References:

- IPCC climate change report (www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf)
- Jersey City's climate action plan (<https://jcmakeitgreen.org/climate-action>)
- ANJEC's Land Use Planning in Your Community Resource Paper – www.anjec.org/publications/

Local planning for climate change toolkit

DEP has developed a resource to help local governments in New Jersey understand how their communities can proactively plan for the changing climate and build resilience into their local governance. Communities that utilize this guidance can meet their obligations for

- Municipal Land Use Law requirements,
- State Hazard Mitigation Plan requirements, and
- Plan Endorsement requirements.

The resources within will also help communities to integrate equity considerations into climate resilience planning.

The toolkit also includes a Resilience Library of resources, case studies, templates and worksheets to help:

- identify hazards,
- assess vulnerabilities,
- prioritize assets and
- develop strategies and solutions for local climate resiliency.

Find the DEP's Climate Change Toolkit at tinyurl.com/fj3cd9am.



NJ State budget update

In a year of financial uncertainty, the environment still wins

By Alex Ambrose, ANJEC Policy Associate

Former President Barack Obama once said, “A budget is more than just a series of numbers on a page; it is an embodiment of our values.” The New Jersey Legislature passed its 2022 budget in June. Where does it place the environment on the State’s set of values? Read on to find out!

Full funding for Clean Communities, recycling, and parks

Last year the Governor proposed a budget diversion of \$22 million from the Clean Communities and recycling funds, dedicating that money instead to parks management. All three of these programs are essential in the fight against litter, pollution, and climate change. ANJEC and partners worked with the Legislature to ensure that these programs were fully funded in the final budget, and we are thrilled to announce that they remain so in the current budget.

Funding for the NJ School of Conservation

The NJ School of Conservation, an education center set in Stokes State Forest in Sussex County, suffered a blow last year when Montclair State University (MSU) unexpectedly announced they would no longer be the stewards of the School. Not only does the School of Conservation offer educational opportunities for local residents on environmental stewardship, but it also conducts critical research. Fortunately, the Friends of the NJ School of Conservation stepped in and advocated for funding and ownership independent of MSU. Thanks to all their hard work, the Friends are now the stewards of the School, with a budget of \$1 million to rehire staff and continue the important work of creating the next generation of conservationists.

NJ School of Conservation



Full funding for the Delaware River Basin Commission

The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) is tasked with maintaining the quality of the water supply for over 13 million people. The four states that rely on this drinking water – New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware, along with the federal government – all contribute a proportional amount to the DRBC. For the first time since 2013, NJ has contributed our full “fair share,” ensuring we are doing our part to keep our drinking water clean.

Room for improvement

The State budget still falls short in some ways. The Clean Energy Fund, created to finance a clean energy future, has been raided again, following a pattern that has been in place since the Corzine administration. Eighty-two million dollars is being diverted to pay for NJ Transit, which still does not have its own funding mechanism. Clean energy and public transit are both critical in the fight against climate change, and both need to be fully funded to protect New Jersey against the worst effects of the climate crisis. ●

More funding for green spaces

By **Drew Tompkins**, Policy Director, NJ Audubon; and **Alex Ambrose**, ANJEC Policy Associate

In an unexpected turn during an unprecedented year, the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT), responsible for preserving land in New Jersey, will have more funding than anticipated in the 2022 fiscal year.

Since voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot measure in 2014, a certain percentage of the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) revenue is constitutionally dedicated each year to open space preservation, farmland preservation, historic preservation, and stewardship. Every year at the end of June, the Governor certifies the projected revenue for the upcoming fiscal year. Based on this certification, a level of funding is allocated to the GSPT, which is then distributed to various preservation and stewardship projects.

Once actual tax revenue is collected by the treasury, any additional funding owed to the GSPT per the constitutional amendment that exceeds the certified revenue is added to the next fiscal year's funds. Often this amount is rather small and normally does not significantly impact the total funds available. Of course, this was not a normal year.

In May, State Treasurer Muoio

announced that CBT revenue will be roughly \$1 billion higher than initially estimated for the year. This is roughly a 30 percent increase from the projected number and will also translate to an equal size increase in money going to the Garden State Preservation Trust for open space, farmland, and historic preservation and stewardship projects.

In total, between the normal amount appropriated from the certified revenue and this unexpected windfall, over \$200 million will go to our State's land and historic preservation and stewardship programs in fiscal year 2022! This is by far the largest amount of money available for these programs in recent memory, and a wonderful way to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Green Acres program.

NJ accelerates the push for EVs


On July 6, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPUB) opened Year 2 of its Charge Up New Jersey electric vehicle (EV) incentive program, taking one more step toward the Murphy Administration's goal of getting 330,000 EVs on the road by 2025. Charge Up New Jersey provides a rebate of up to \$5,000 toward a new EV purchased or leased in New

Jersey. The incentive is available exclusively as a “point-of-sale” rebate applied during the purchase or leasing process at dealerships and requires a valid New Jersey driver’s license to get started. Only EVs registered and purchased in New Jersey are eligible.

This summer the NJBPU also announced that it has expanded its Clean Fleet Electric Vehicle Incentive Program, with the availability of \$1 million in grants for local governments, local entities, and local schools to purchase electric light duty vehicles and associated Level 2 charging stations. BPU increased the award caps, allowing applicants serving larger populations to qualify for more electric vehicles and charging stations. Local governments, local entities, and local schools serving a population under 20,000 can receive a \$4,000 per vehicle rebate for up to two

vehicles and \$1,500 per charger rebate for one Level 2 charging station.

On July 9, Governor Murphy signed two pieces of legislation advancing New Jersey’s transition to a clean energy future to further the Administration’s goal of reaching 100 percent clean energy by 2050. The first new law establishes numerical requirements and zoning standards for installation of electric vehicle charging stations and charging-ready parking spaces. The second piece of legislation encourages development of zero-emission vehicle fueling and charging infrastructure in redevelopment projects.

Source: www.drivegreen.nj.gov/ 

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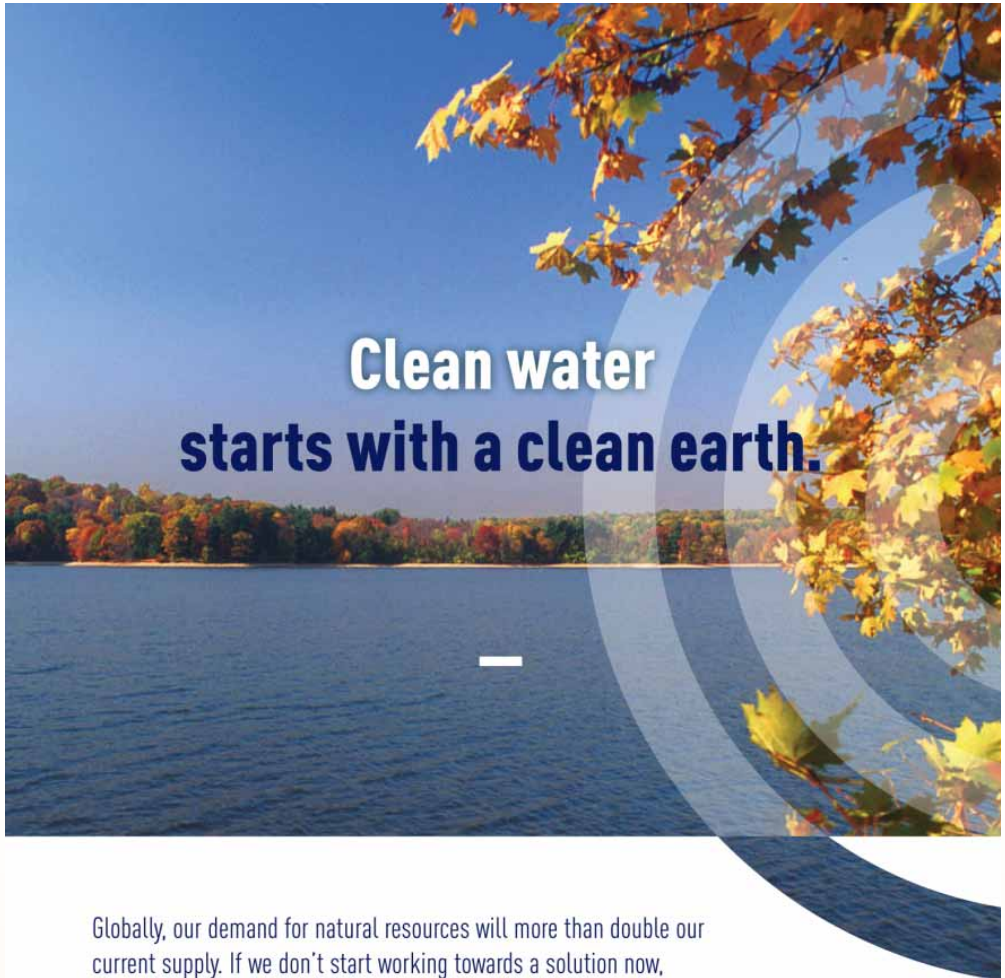
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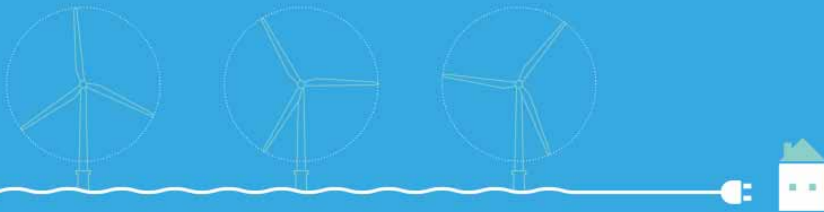
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