



ANJEC REPORT

Local Environment Matters

SUMMER 2020

Inside:

- ANJEC grants awarded
- Pandemic guidance for ECs
- Farewell to an environmental legend



Director's Report

Since our last edition of the *ANJEC Report*, so very much has changed for all of us. First and foremost, I hope each of you and your families are staying safe and healthy. With about 13,000 New Jersey residents, and more than three times as many of our New York neighbors, lost to COVID-19 since mid March, I extend my sincerest sympathy to all of you who have lost a loved one.

The stress and anxiety of the past few months have been unparalleled in our lifetimes, and at ANJEC, we are working hard to adapt to serve you and your communities. We know that the crises of climate change, plastic pollution, equitable access to open space and other environmental priorities will outlast this pandemic, and we therefore must continue the fight for clean water, air, and open space.

ANJEC and environmental commissions have a deep history of focusing on the long game and the big picture. That perspective was cultivated by ANJEC's founding Executive Director, Candace McKee Ashmun. Sadly, Candy, as she is known to us, took her leave of this Earth that she so loved in late May. I understand that she passed peacefully at home in her sleep. In early March, before we went into pandemic lockdown, we celebrated her 96th birthday with her, complete with sparkling candles on a chocolate cake, and wine. She would, however, want me to say that as a leap year baby, it was really only her 24th birthday.

I can't possibly begin to summarize the enormity of Candy's impact on New Jersey.

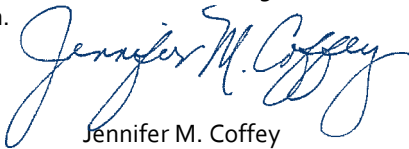
In his tribute to her, Governor Murphy rightfully called her a "national treasure." The centerfold of this issue is dedicated to Candy and her lifetime of achievements. Personally, I am most grateful to have known Candy for the past 15 years. I remember her as someone who always stood firmly for the environment, regardless of the obstacles. She inspired and held our leaders to higher standards.

In 2020, 100 years since women finally won the right to vote, I think it is very fitting for us to remember that Candace McKee Ashmun empowered generations of women. She was a mentor, influencer, inspiration and confidant for so many NJ women who are leaders in the environmental field, including, but most certainly not limited to: Michele Byers, Executive Director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation; Cindy Ehrenclou, Executive Director of Raritan Headwaters Association; Jaclyn Rhoads, Assistant Director of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance; Julia Somers, Executive Director of New Jersey Highlands Coalition; and of course, me.

I am especially thankful for Candy and the work of her colleagues in passionate pursuit of conservation when I visit the Pinelands. I didn't know anything about the now-designated UNESCO world biosphere area when I went to Richard Stockton State College in the 90's, but I was quickly mesmerized by it. I am eternally grateful that generations before me fought to protect it. Candy was the longest serving member of the Pinelands Commission and its last original member, serving since 1979.

As we went to press, the Pinelands Commission was still lacking enough confirmed commissioners to achieve a quorum. For the second consecutive year, Governor Murphy has nominated five candidates to serve, but the Senate Judiciary Committee has yet to take up the matter of confirmation. Those nominees are: Robert Jackson, Theresa Lettman, Jessica Rittler Sanchez, and me as new members, and Ed Lloyd for another term.

When I asked Candy what I needed to know or what advice she could share with me, she said "Read the *Plan (The Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan)*. Know the *Plan*. All decisions need to be rooted in the *Plan*." I consider myself lucky to have an assignment from Candy and to have her voice in my head guiding me. I don't intend to let her or the next generations down.



Jennifer M. Coffey
Executive Director

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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.

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On the cover: *Scarlet Tanager* Photo by Charlie Finneran

New Jersey's eco awakening

By **N. Dini Checko**, ANJEC Resource Center, and **Isabella Castiglioni**, ANJEC Landscape Makeover Project

Here in New Jersey, we've been staying home since March to slow the spread of COVID-19. It feels like the pandemic has shaken our society at its foundation, and it can be difficult to keep track of all the changes taking place. On the surface, COVID-19 may not seem like a typical environmental issue. The pandemic is unprecedented, but the issues that it inflames in our society are not. For decades, environmentalists have been advocating a stronger connection with nature. This pandemic reveals what we know all too well: Human health is inextricable from environmental health. From increased demand for local food to the realization that better air quality is within our reach, the public seems to be experiencing an eco-awakening.

We humans love our food and drink; it's the social touchstone of our lives. However, many of us have become quite complacent and disconnected from the sources of our food because of the convenience and abundance of prepackaged goods. Over the past few months, we've been going back to the basics because the food shopping experience has become inconvenient and challenging. As customers have been waiting in long lines at grocery stores that are understocked and charging higher prices, with reduced meat supplies due to closed processing plants, people are reassessing their connection to food. This concern has translated into a shift towards



Home gardening has become more popular during the pandemic.

eating locally produced food and a reduction in meat consumption.¹

Just in time for Jersey's summer farm bounty, there's been more interest in buying from local farms. Brianna Baker, reporting fellow for The New Jersey Sustainability Reporting Project, covered the story about the Metuchen Farmers Market in her article, "As a Central Jersey Farmers Market Goes Virtual, It Finds a New Kind of Community." Pre-ordering online with curbside pickup has attracted new customers, who are using digital platforms that enable farmers to track inventory. One fan is Metuchen Mayor, Jonathan Busch, who recently tweeted: "Just returned from picking up some earth booty from the perfectly synchronized, no-contact, and volunteer-run [Metuchen Farmers Market]."

As more people have been stuck at home, riding out the pandemic, and with more time on their hands, home gardening is getting more popular. And with increased concerns about germs and who may have

touched their food on its way into their homes, many people feel more comfortable growing their own food. Warren Township's third-generation, family-owned Malanga Farm Market and Greenhouses has been much busier this spring compared with previous years, according to Manager Dan Panella. "There has been an increase in home gardening. With more time, people are experimenting with planting herbs and vegetables."

Working and shopping from home cuts air pollution

An added benefit of the State's stay-at-home order is the reduction in the number of vehicle miles traveled, which is an important strategy for decreasing climate-heating greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). A large portion of the working population is either laid off or working from home, and travel for work or leisure has been greatly curtailed, so there's less traffic on the roads and far fewer flights at the airports.

In New Jersey, the transportation sector is responsible for a whopping 42 percent of the State's total GHGs. According to Monica Mazurek, air quality expert at the Rutgers Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation, NJ's air is the cleanest it's been since travel was temporarily restricted after 9/11. In cities such as Elizabeth that typically have heavy vehicle traffic, particulate matter pollution has significantly decreased between March 2019 and 2020. There's also been a dramatic decrease in another GHG pollutant, nitrogen dioxide, a key ingredient of smog. Not only are humans appreciating cleaner air and less noise, so are the wild and marine life. Social media is full of awe-inspiring, joyful stories and videos of people spotting wildlife for the first time in their backyards and city centers.

Keeping the momentum going

Now is the time to plan for the ways to maintain a positive trajectory for the environment. Unfortunately, climate scientists estimate that once we are clear of the pandemic, GHG emissions will likely

return to normal. Current findings show that this temporary decrease in GHG emissions will not have a measurable effect on reducing overall climate change.²

If economic recovery plans do not take climate change into account, our goals for a livable future on earth are jeopardized.

So far, the largest environmental deregulation of the Trump administration is the reduction of the corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) and CO₂ emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks, model years 2021-2026. But there are promising signs on the horizon.

- New Jersey's new electric vehicle (EV) law, passed in January, sets forth policies to reduce emissions by mandating items such as the strongest electric vehicle (EV) rebate in the country (up to \$5000 for new EVs) and providing financial assistance for building a statewide, high-speed EV charging network.
- In January, New Jersey became the first state to require that builders take into account the impact of climate change, including rising sea levels, in order to win government approval for projects.
- State officials announced in June that New Jersey will become the first state to incorporate climate change into the curriculum of kindergartners through high school seniors.

Positive change is happening at the local level too. For example, to keep enjoying cleaner air and less noise, Montclair Township passed a resolution to urge landscapers and residents to limit the use of gas-powered leaf blowers during the COVID-19 health crisis. Citing the reason that people are

1 Esther Ciammachilli. "The Pandemic Has People Rethinking Their Relationship With Food, Especially Meat". NPR. www.npr.org/local/305/2020/05/04/850066429/the-pandemic-has-people-rethinking-their-relationship-with-food-especially-meat

2 Le Quéré, C., Jackson, R.B., Jones, M.W. et al. "Temporary reduction in daily global CO₂ emissions during the COVID-19 forced confinement". Nat. Clim. Chang. (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-020-0797-x>



With the stay-at-home order, reduced traffic has led to cleaner air.

working and studying from home, Montclair is using this opportunity to educate residents and landscapers. Gas driven lawn equipment, especially leaf blowers, create a mix of toxic fumes, particulate matter and noise pollution that adds to local smog and GHG emissions.

On the other hand

We must be wary of treating COVID-19 as a “win” for the environment. Thousands of people are diagnosed each day in the United States with COVID-19, and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, marginalized populations, especially those who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color, carry a disproportionate burden of disease. Marginalized people are more likely to deal with conditions like dense housing, poor air quality, food deserts, and a lack of green space. This disparity can be broadly categorized as “environmental racism,” and though not due to intentional acts of hatred, the absence of these vital resources can have a dramatic effect on people’s health. Diseases like asthma, diabetes, and now COVID-19 are left to wreak havoc.


There is a divide in our society between who has access to nature, and who does not. If we do not fight for marginalized people to benefit from a healthy environment, then what kind of future are we building? This disparity can be broadly

categorized as environmental racism. The absence of access to vital resources can have a dramatic affect on people’s health.

One way for environmental commissions to combat this issue is by investing in community gardens. In urban spaces throughout NJ and the United States, community gardens provide healthful, locally-grown food as well as community green space in food deserts.

From switching to electric leaf blowers and home gardening to driving less, there’s an uprising of collective sustainable actions. Rather than have this be just a passing moment in time, let’s ride the tailwind of change to create lasting impacts that keep us connected to our humanity and to nature. The cleaner, greener world that environmentalists are too often told is only a dream is, in fact, right at our fingertips.

More info

- New Jersey Sustainability Reporting Hub – https://srhub.org/?mc_cid=o8fa2d6e29&mc_eid=cdo609e4dc
- NJ Future: NJ Stay-at-Home Order is reducing GHG emissions – www.njfuture.org/2020/04/15/nj-stay-at-home-order-is-reducing-ghg-emissions
- NJ.com: N.J.’s air is the cleanest it’s been since 9/11 due to Coronavirus shutdown
- www.nj.com/coronavirus/2020/04/njs-air-is-the-cleanest-its-been-since-9-11-due-to-coronavirus-shutdown.html 

ANJEC awards 2020 Open Space Grants

By **Elizabeth Ritter**, ANJEC Deputy Director

For the seventh year, ANJEC is pleased to announce the continuation of the ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grants.

During these challenging times, it's heartening to see that environmental commissions (ECs) are still moving forward and planning projects that can be safely implemented and that the community will appreciate and enjoy for years to come. In these pandemic times, getting outside to enjoy nature is more vital than ever to the physical and mental health of NJ residents. The projects awarded for 2020 were varied and show how unique and energetic our NJ environmental commission members are! Projects include: trail maintenance, invasive species mapping and removal, native plantings on trails, educational trail signage, a pollinator palooza, a nature gathering space, a meadow and trail for a school, butterfly garden signs, a pollinator garden, a beehive project and more. ANJEC looks forward to sharing photos and ideas with other communities in the months to come.

This year, the following communities were selected for grants:

- Atlantic Highlands (Monmouth)
- Berkeley Heights (Union)
- Byram (Sussex)
- Delanco (Burlington)
- Delaware (Hunterdon)
- Evesham (Burlington)
- Franklin Lakes (Bergen)
- Frelinghuysen (Warren)
- Holmdel (Monmouth)
- Jersey City (Hudson)
- Metuchen (Middlesex)
- Middletown (Monmouth)
- New Milford (Bergen)
- Ramsey (Bergen)
- West Orange (Essex)

No cash match is required for the grants, which range from \$400 to \$1500. Projects require an in-kind labor contribution from the commission or other volunteers totaling at least 80 hours. Projects often bring in many times that amount in support from community groups and individuals, 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 to protect the environment.

ANJEC remains committed to these worthwhile projects and all the enthusiasm and community goodwill they generate. The primary objective of the Open Space Stewardship Grant Program is to increase residents' awareness and appreciation of local open space, ultimately increasing public support for open space stewardship. Another objective of the program is to raise the profile of environmental commissions


Last year the Stillwater Environmental Commission used their ANJEC grant to create educational signage welcoming visitors to Trout Brook.



in their communities. ECs do untold amounts of important work in their towns, but often operate under the radar.

The program requires grantees to include community outreach and promotion 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 their efforts. It is essential for a commission to continually affirm its value

as a community resource, so the town will trust and support the group's efforts and programs.

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 you would like to make a donation, contact ANJEC at 973-539-7547, info@anjec.org. 

EC operations during the pandemic

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

We don't know how long the COVID-19 global pandemic will last, but we do know that environmental challenges such as climate change, plastic pollution, and disappearing habitats will outlast the current health crisis.

This is no time to take your foot off the gas! It is critical that environmental commissions (ECs) continue to work and advocate locally to keep our 50-plus-year history of progress in environmental protection alive in New Jersey. By maintaining our momentum, we can ensure that after the pandemic dust settles, we can still celebrate the protection and restoration of clean water, clear air and open spaces that we all cherish.

New guidance available

ANJEC has developed guidance to help environmental commissions operate effectively during this new, abnormal period of social distancing. It's a living document that will evolve as circumstances change, covering a range of issues, from conducting online meetings to staying connected with

your community. The document is available on the ANJEC website at www.anjec.org. Here are some highlights.

Virtual meetings – what are the rules?

All over the State, municipalities have switched to conducting business virtually. But what about public meetings? Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 103 on March 9, 2020, declaring a State of Emergency due to COVID-19, and issued Executive Order 107 on March 21, 2020, to control the Coronavirus outbreak. The New Jersey Legislature subsequently adopted A3850/S2294, signed into law by Governor Murphy, permitting virtual or teleconferenced municipal meetings during a State of Emergency.

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs has published guidance to clarify the new virtual meetings law. At the time of this publication, that guidance can be found at: <https://nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/pdf/GovConnectNotice-NewRemotePublicMeetingsGuidance.pdf>.



This guidance refers to meetings that need to comply with the *Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA)*.

ANJEC recommends that all ECs comply with *OPMA*, especially if your EC has a budget, which makes it a steward of taxpayer funds. That means you have to inform the public about your meetings and invite public participation. EC meeting schedules are most often published at the beginning of the year for the entirety of that calendar year. Just like meetings of the governing body and land use boards, EC meetings must be noticed in the municipality's newspaper of record and should also be listed on the town's or EC's website. Consider also advertising your meeting on social media to encourage public attendance.

Relationships matter more now


Social distancing and stay-at-home requirements may make it more difficult to interact with your mayor and members of your governing body, who now have a whole new set of priorities to manage in addition to all of their usual obligations. Now is the time to be proactive in communicating with town officials. Keep them informed about your meetings, activities, and priorities. Don't wait until you have a problem to reach out to them. Find ways to remind them of the value you continue to bring to the community.

While the pandemic forces you to be less physically visible in the community, your relationship with the public also needs

continued attention. Since in-person events are limited, use that energy to find new ways to engage with the public and make your presence and your work known. For example, this is a good time to amp up your commission's social media presence. Many ECs do an excellent job of reaching out to their communities on Facebook to promote their efforts and educate residents.

Even though you can't host events in the usual way, you can still meaningfully engage with residents. Some ECs are doing hands-free giveaways of tree saplings or organizing online watch parties of environmental programming via Facebook. The Hope Twp. EC had a great response when they held their popular Green Festival online this year. (See article on page 10.)

We're here to help

While our physical office remains closed, ANJEC is still here to help. For any type of assistance – from information to tools, training and resources – just email us at info@anjec.org. 

ANJEC's 2020 Environmental Achievement Awards

To be presented at the
47th Annual Environmental Congress
October 1

Deadline:
Entries must be received by
September 11, 2020

Email entries to info@anjec.org
For categories, application form and additional details go to www.anjec.org
or call ANJEC at (973) 539-7547

When life hands you a pandemic, make a virtual green fair...

By **Monica Sobon**, Hope Twp. Environmental Commission

With only three weeks to go before Hope Township's 7th Annual "Go Green With Hope" Green Fair, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy banned gatherings of more than 50 people and then reduced that number to 10 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Hope School, the planned venue, was shuttered. Even March Madness was canceled, Major League Baseball's 2020 season was in jeopardy, supermarket shelves were being decimated, and the grim daily counts of positive Coronavirus cases and deaths were becoming standard. It didn't matter that the Hope Township Environmental Commission (EC) and Green Team had been planning the April 4 event for a year; that over 50 organizations were preparing to set up displays, activities, and collections; that ads and flyers were posted and the floor plan was drafted.

To paraphrase a classic "Casablanca" line: "It doesn't take much to see that the problems of one little green fair don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy, COVID-19 world." How do you salvage all the energy spent and harness the sincere intentions of so many supporters to inform and entertain during a pandemic? You morph an on-the-ground Green Fair event into a virtual experience – transform physical activities into web pages. And do it without technical expertise and monetary expenditures. Here's how we did it:

- We began by informing all participants that the Green Fair was going virtual, and debuting on the original date.
- We invited each exhibitor to provide at

least an image and a message that could capture what would have been in their display. Neighboring Allamuchy EC created their own video for the site to promote composting, and added online handouts.

- We chose an online platform that would be workable with limited online programming expertise. We found Google Sites to be free and it did not require HTML programming skills. You can find our finished website at: <https://sites.google.com/site/hopenjenv/home/green-fair>.
- We expanded our social media reach, joined more closed groups and built up our email database, so that when we launched, we could post in as many places as possible.
- Each exhibitor's table became an online entry that included at least a representative graphic and a message. In the past, one table always offered free raffle tickets to attendees, and the online version did manage to "collect tickets" as emails and the winners were drawn on Earth Day-50.
- We focused on providing an interesting diversion as well as instruction. We understood that people would probably be more concerned with buying milk and toilet paper during the pandemic, rather than composting and recycling; however shelter-in-place at least provided the time and opportunity for people to leisurely scroll through the Green Fair any time instead of strolling through tables on a specific day and time.

- We accepted it would not be perfect or complete, but it would be something of value.

The online green fair debuted on the day the in-person event would have taken place. We promoted it via email and on Facebook. There were follow up posts to highlight the raffles, new videos on composting and how to make a tote from a T-shirt, all leading up to the drawing for Earth Day-50.


The website was set up to receive feedback, and the responses were all appreciative and supportive:

- "This was great!"
- "Although we all wish we were attending in person, I feel I had more time to read about the different organizations."
- "Informative and fun."
- "I love that all the information is easily available online. I hope you add this to the physical green fairs in the future for those who cannot physically attend."
- "I hope you keep this page up and running as an easier way for people to learn about these green options."
- "LOVE that you did this!."

On the bright side, being forced to go virtual means there is no need to coordinate an army of volunteers, no setting up a gym full of tables and chairs and no worrying about food and facilities. Weather is not an issue; no parking space is needed; there is no breakdown and no clean up! Exhibitors need not worry about booking more than one event, staffing their tables or arriving on time. People can scroll through the "fair" any day, any time.

We are following the virtual attendees' suggestion to maintain the site at this time, adjusting it as needed to account for additions, expirations, and adjustments.

Currently, we have the opportunity to run our green fair tree seedling distribution from New Jersey Forestry using reservations and curbside pickup. There will never be a replacement for an in-person experience, but when there is no choice, an online "something" beats "nothing".

For more information, contact Monica Sobon at monica.sobon@icloud.com. 

New Jersey regulates two more "forever compounds"

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

New Jersey was the first state in the nation to regulate PFNA (per fluorononanoic acid), a virtually indestructible compound, with a concentration limit of 13 parts per trillion (ppt). In April, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection moved to regulate two more "forever compounds," PFOS (per fluorooctane

sulfonate) and PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid), by setting a concentration limit of 14 ppt for PFOA and 13 ppt for PFOS. The new rule, finalized and published in the *New Jersey Register* on June 1, sets the strictest standards in the US – far stronger than the 70 ppt advisory guideline set by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

The new rule will require public utilities and owners of private water wells to ensure that drinking water contains less than the maximum concentration limits and also mandates cleanup of source contamination from groundwater that feeds drinking water supplies. Beginning in the first quarter of 2021, all public water systems must analyze for all three compounds – many already comply. According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG), there are over 500 water systems in NJ that have some level of these compounds.

Have PFOA, PFOS, or PFNA been detected in your area? Check EWG's interactive map to find out: www.ewg.org/interactive-maps/pfas_contamination/map/

The fluorinated compound family

PFOA, PFOS and PFNA are members of a much larger family of compounds known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. These three chemicals were once used in consumer products like nonstick cookware and flame-retardant fabrics; they have many industrial uses, particularly firefighting foams, which is a major source of groundwater contamination at military bases especially. Some studies have shown that they can:

- interfere with the body's natural hormones;
- increase cholesterol levels;
- affect the immune system; and
- increase the risk of some cancers.

You probably already have a certain level of these compounds in your bloodstream, especially PFOS, although this is trending downward since PFOS and PFOA are no longer manufactured in the US. (www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas/pfas-in-population.html) Numerous other PFAS compounds continue to be produced and are widely used, and some substitute compounds have also come into use, including GenX (high performance fluropolymers) and PFBS (perfluorobutane sulfonic acid). Toxicity studies on these chemicals have shown that the liver is sensitive to GenX, and the kidney and

thyroid are sensitive to PFBS (www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-11/documents/factsheet_pfb-genx-toxicity_values_11.14.2018.pdf). GenX has already been found in surface water, groundwater and drinking water in some parts of the US.

Are PFAS truly forever?

While PFAS compounds are highly recalcitrant and thought to be “forever compounds,” microbial organisms have been identified that can biotransform / mineralize some PFAS compounds. Currently, the only effective clean up strategy is to bind PFAS compounds to activated carbon or ion exchange resins. Remediating subsurface contamination using this technology requires pumping and treating enormous volumes of groundwater.

In 2020, the US Department of Defense's Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program began funding projects geared to understanding these biodegradation processes and developing alternative subsurface in situ treatment strategies for PFAS. More information on these innovative projects can be found at: www.serdp-estcp.org/News-and-Events/Blog/Expanding-the-Biodegradation-Knowledge-Base-of-PFAS-in-the-Subsurface.

More info

- Summer 2018 ANJEC Report “PFAS: PFOS and PFOA and TCP in our drinking water?” <http://anjec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Summer2018ANJECReport.pdf>
- Summary of Proposed Rule 51 N.J.R. 437(a) setting limits on PFOA/PFOS https://services.statescape.com/ssu/Regs/ss_8586473702750956081.htm
- Info on private well testing – www.state.nj.us/dep/watersupply/pw_pwta.html
- Drinking water supply test results – www.state.nj.us/DEP_WaterWatch_public/
- EWG PFAS page: www.ewg.org/key-issues/toxics/nonstick-chemicals

New protections for 600 miles of NJ rivers and streams

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor



In April 6, 600 miles of New Jersey's pristine rivers and streams were upgraded to Category One (or C1) status, the State's first such upgrade in over a decade. Through an amendment to the Surface Water Quality Standards that codifies these new C1 streams, their exceptional water quality and ecological diversity will be protected from possible future degradation.

"These Category One stream upgrades represent a landmark for environmental protection in New Jersey, providing important protections to some of New Jersey's most valuable waters," said NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe. "Continuing our proud tradition of relying upon the best available science, DEP's Water Resource Management team worked diligently to evaluate data and new information provided by the public and regulated community throughout the process of developing these new standards."

These are the first C1 waterway upgrades since 2008. Of the newly upgraded 600 miles, 547 miles of waterways are receiving the higher level of protection due to their exceptional ecological value and 53 miles due to their exceptional fisheries resources.

The new C1 waterways flow through 67 municipalities. The upgraded waterways, or portions of them, include the Pequest River in Warren County, the Ramapo River in Bergen County, the South Branch of the Raritan River in Somerset and Hunterdon Counties, Jacobs Creek in Mercer County, Tuckerton and Westecunk Creeks in Ocean


County, Woodbury Creek and Still Run in Gloucester County, the Salem River in Salem County, and the Cohansey and Maurice rivers in Cumberland County.

About C1 designation and waterway protections

The DEP uses a three-tiered system to categorize waterway protection, with the top tier being those designated as Outstanding Natural Resource Waters. These waterways, many in the Pinelands National Reserve, are set aside in their natural state for posterity.

At the next level, Category One waterways are noted for their exceptional ecological, water supply, recreation, and/or fisheries values. With these upgrades, some 7,400 miles of waterways in New Jersey are now designated as Category One waterways.

Wastewater or other regulated discharges to C1 waterways must meet stringent water quality standards. C1 waterways are also afforded 300-foot development buffers under the *Flood Hazard Area Control Act*, enhancing water quality and flood protection by providing undeveloped areas rich in vegetation.

For a full list of waterways and waterway segments that have been upgraded, an interactive map, a fact sheet on the rule amendments adoption and general information on the DEP's Surface Water Quality Standards program, visit www.state.nj.us/dep/wms/bears/swqs.htm. 

NJ outlines plan to spend RGGI funds on climate change initiatives

By **Alex Ambrose**, ANJEC Policy Associate

In April, New Jersey unveiled its final Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) *Strategic Funding Plan*

What is RGGI?

RGGI (pronounced "Reggie"), is the first market-based regulatory program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This initiative essentially charges power plants for emitting CO₂ – one of the greenhouse gases largely attributed to climate change – then gives those funds back to the states to spend on clean energy programs. Of the nearly \$92 million dollars auctioned in the first quarter of 2020, New Jersey received over \$20 million.

Currently, 10 Mid-Atlantic and New England states are participating in the Initiative and, this year, Governor Murphy successfully negotiated and reentered our State into the initiative. (Governor Christie pulled NJ out of RGGI in 2011.) This money will specifically be invested in clean energy, climate change, and equity projects in the State.

Does RGGI really work?

Yes! RGGI is a very successful program. Since it was established in 2005, CO₂ emissions from the power sector have decreased by over 40 percent, while state economies grew 8 percent. In fact, due to its success in both fighting against climate change AND protecting our economy, the National Research Service has stated that "For a number of reasons, experiences in RGGI may be instructive for policymakers seeking to craft a national program."¹

What is the *Plan*?

The *Plan*, which guides how the funds will be spent over the next three years, has four broad strategic goals:

- **Catalyzing clean, equitable transportation:** Similar to one of the goals of NJ's *Energy Master Plan*, the funds will be used to accelerate the development of clean and equitable transportation, with a focus on communities that share a disproportionate amount of the burden of air pollution.
- **Promoting blue carbon in coastal areas:** "Blue carbon" is carbon that is stored in wetlands, marshes, and similar ecosystems. These ecosystems are essential; although salt marshes are only a small percentage of land cover in the US, they account for approximately 21 percent of carbon sequestered by ecosystems.
- **Enhancing forests and urban forests:** Another natural way to sequester greenhouse gases is to protect and maintain existing forests. In fact, the State's natural resources sequester 8.1 million metric tons of CO₂, which is more than is generated by the waste sector in one year.
- **Establishing a New Jersey Green Bank:** A "green bank" is an institution that helps secure low-cost resources for clean energy projects, and New Jersey wants to focus those resources on those who would otherwise have trouble securing them. An example would be partnering with private investors to give low-cost loans to a rooftop solar project in an underserved community that would help train and employ local residents in the new clean energy sector.

Anything else I should know?

While this plan does focus its funds on environmental justice communities, RGGI is not the sole component of NJ's fight against climate change. Many environmental groups, especially those that work in environmental justice communities, say that RGGI unfairly places the burden of pollution on those communities. This is not an unfounded concern; while RGGI has been shown to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it does not require a reduction, and therefore by itself, may do little to help overburdened communities. That is why it's important that our State not only participate in RGGI, but continue with our

commitments in the *Global Warming Response Act* to reduce emissions, and to work towards our goal of 100 percent clean energy by 2050.

This is an exciting step forward in the fight against climate change and the protection of the health of New Jersey's citizens and natural resources. If you'd like to learn more, the full strategic funding plan is available at <https://nj.gov/rggi/>.

References

- 1 Ramseur, Jonathan L. (April 2016). "The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative: Lessons Learned and Issues for Congress" – <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41836.pdf>



SAVE THE DATES

ANJEC'S
47th Annual
Environmental Congress

In consideration of the current COVID-19 restrictions and prediction for a fall resurgence, ANJEC has decided to offer our 2020 Environmental Congress in an expanded online format.

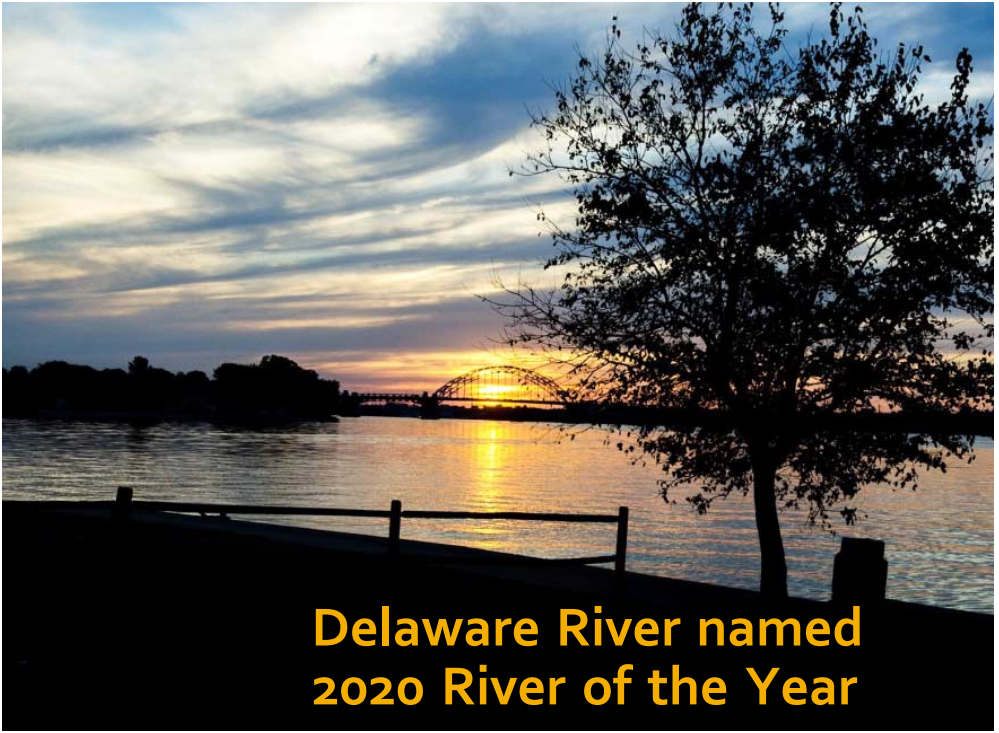
Throughout the month of October, we will feature exciting speakers, informational presentations and discussions – and even some fun entertainment. We will also present the ANJEC 2020 Environmental Achievement Awards.

Please mark your calendar now, and we look forward to sharing more details soon!

Key dates:
Thursday Evenings
October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Friday Lunch Sessions
October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

50 YEARS OF GREEN ... AND BEYOND
CELEBRATING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN NEW JERSEY



Delaware River named 2020 River of the Year

A story of renewal and hope

By **Cheryl Reardon**, ANJEC Project Director

American Rivers' announcement naming the Delaware River as 2020's River of the Year is exciting news. Most of all, it's a story of renewal and hope. "The River," as New Jerseyans affectionately call it, has gone through toxic times, when it was extremely unhealthy for people and wildlife, but thanks to many who cared, the Delaware is greatly renewed.

Its health is essential for many reasons, most importantly because over 15 million people depend on it for safe drinking water, including two of the five largest cities in the US, New York City and Philadelphia, not to mention Trenton, NJ, and Wilmington, DE. It passes through 42 counties in five states (NY, NJ, PA, MD and DE) and drains an area of 14,119 square miles.

The River's toxic past

Some 75 years ago, the Delaware River was laden with sewage and industrial pollution. In addition to people being choked by its stench, parts of the River were "dead zones," unable to support fish and other aquatic life. It was slated to be carved up with dams for flood control and water supply, its natural character lost forever. Fortunately, people who cared lobbied on the River's behalf and its fate began to change.

It happened through a combination of federal safeguards, state action and local initiatives, along with private funding from The William Penn Foundation's Delaware River Watershed Initiative, which underwrote work by ANJEC and other nonprofits.

Today, the quality of the Delaware's water has drastically improved. Fish and wildlife have returned in tremendous numbers. Its main stem remains the longest free-flowing river in the eastern United States, and it has the most extensive National Wild & Scenic River protection in the country! Today, people and communities along the River are setting a national example of river stewardship.

What's in the future?

The Delaware has come a long way, but important work remains to be done with necessary continued action to address ongoing challenges, such as aging water infrastructure, urban development and, of course, impacts of climate change. Severe storms and lingering Nor'easters occur with increased frequency and intensity due to climate change, and stormwater runoff challenges continue to threaten drinking water intakes and can cause sewage overflow contamination at ill-prepared water treatment plants.

Sound federal and state policies and responsible local planning are essential, along with critical funding and additional restoration protection projects that are necessary to support the River, as well as the communities, people and wildlife that depend on it for drinking water, recreation and commerce.

The Delaware River demonstrates how a healthy river can be an engine for thriving

communities and strong local economies. With responsible actions, ANJEC will help to ensure that the River continues to improve and shine as a national example for clean water and river health as well as an economic and recreational asset to millions of people.

Learn more

American Rivers – www.americanrivers.org. For more information on the work being done as part of the Delaware River Watershed Initiative, please visit www.4states1source or contact ANJEC's Resource Center at info@anjec.org.

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!

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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A Legacy for Candace McKee 1924-

By Sandy Batty, former ANJEC Executive Director

“Candy was the leader in every important fight for the environment in New Jersey. She was the last of a remarkable group of women who made a huge difference in our state. I will miss her leadership and her smile.”

– Gov. Thomas Kean

Candace McKee Ashmun (Candy to all who knew her) was not a native of New Jersey – she spent her childhood in Oregon and Brazil – but from the time she moved here upon her marriage to Charles Ashmun in 1946, she adopted the State as her own and cared for it for the rest of her life. She was its leading environmental land use champion over the ensuing decades.

Candy got her start in the environmental field volunteering with her husband to organize the recycling program in Bedminster, and she later served as a member of the environmental commission and planning board. With a degree in physics from Smith College, she joined the staff of the Upper Raritan Watershed Association in the early 1970s.

When the new nonprofit, the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) had matured enough to hire its first executive director, the organization drafted Candy to fill the job. As executive director, she guided the fledgling organization to become a leader in the field of local environmental and open space protection.

With grants from the US Environmental Protection Agency, ANJEC published books that became references for environmental and conservation commissions throughout the Northeast. Under Candy’s leadership, ANJEC developed training courses to equip new commissioners with knowledge in the burgeoning field of environmental science, and wrote plans and policies to help them protect their towns’ natural resources.

Using funds from the *Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA)*, Candy greatly increased the staff to meet the expanding goals of the organization.

During her tenure as Executive Director, ANJEC became an effective organization for training, advising and promoting environmental commissions. The decade of the 1970s was a time of growth

for New Jersey commissions, which surged in numbers as many municipalities created commissions that NJ had enabled through its 1968 landmark legislation. Under Candy’s leadership, commissions gained in stature, offering well-researched advice for their local governments, information for their residents and advocacy on environmental issues across the state.

A leader in conscious land use

Through her work at ANJEC, Candy became a recognized leader in environmental land use policy. When the Pinelands Commission was formed in 1979, Gov. Brendan Byrne appointed her as one its first members. She was reappointed by successive governors, becoming the only member to serve on the Commission since its founding. She remained



Candy Ashmun with Gov. Thomas Kean

r New Jersey Kee Ashmun -2020

ANJEC Executive Director



governors Florio and Kean

“Candy Ashmun was one of a kind! She was a valued advisor, friend and a great raconteur. Her historical acumen of New Jersey’s environmental landscape was Impeccable. Much of what is good about New Jersey is due to Candy’s decades of work to protect our environment.

Candy’s essence and zest will forever inhabit The Pinelands. We will all miss her.”

– Gov. James Florio

a revered commissioner until her death. Candy was a strong advocate for the region’s natural resources and she promoted sound planning in the Pines to ensure their protection. Relying on her thorough knowledge of the *Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan*, Candy was able to defend the area from incursions by outside interests.

Candy was always willing to share her knowledge and experience. For many years, she coordinated the Environmental Summit for ANJEC, getting representatives of New Jersey’s environmental organizations to meet monthly to discuss issues and develop common positions so that the many organizations could speak with one voice.

In turn, these organizations recognized her expertise, with several recruiting her for their boards, including NJ Highlands Coalition, Raritan Headwaters Association, Coalition for Affordable Housing and the Environment, and Sierra Club. And she also served on the board of the Fund for New Jersey and was appointed to the State Planning Commission, where she served for many years.

Over the years, Candy became a mentor for generations of successive environmental leaders in New Jersey. We learned from Candy many important lessons:

- Be steadfast in your commitment to environmental protection and hold fast to your principles – don’t lose sight of the end goal.
- Do your homework – come to each meeting fully prepared to discuss and defend your positions; but listen to others and be ready to understand their points of view and amend yours accordingly.
- Keep sharpening your knowledge and skills to use as tools for whatever life brings.
- And above all, keep a sense of humor.

Candy continued her involvement with ANJEC for the nearly four decades after her retirement as Executive Director – serving in the capacity of President of the Trustees and also as a consultant on State Planning and other land use issues. We at ANJEC were fortunate to have her wise counsel, which she offered willingly, quickly responding to a question or a plea for help with a touchy situation. We always considered it a special day when Candy would join us for lunch or a staff meeting to discuss issues and look for solutions to environmental problems.

We will miss her wisdom, enthusiasm and advice. But we know that this extraordinary woman has left a legacy to inspire environmental leaders throughout the state – a state whose natural resources are better protected thanks to Candy. 🌊

Decolonizing food production in NJ

By Lyle Landon, ANJEC Development Director

When Europeans came to America, though they found it populated, they believed that the indigenous peoples and their food ways were not civilized and thus made them subject to European sovereignty and colonization. Today, agricultural decolonization has peeled back those assumptions and practices to find and restore native foods, farming traditions and their cultural significance, including planting a variety of crops that nurture the soil and farming collectively for self-sufficiency, community sustainability and local trading.

In the last hundred years agricultural decolonization has expanded on many fronts – the variety of crops grown, seed selection, farming methods, the number and size of producers, distribution, and consumption patterns. It is easy to see what is going on in big agriculture when driving in the more rural parts of the state: giant farms, massive equipment and storage facilities are in plain view.

Harder to see are the smaller and specialty farms – an outgrowth of a real resurgence of interest in the land, our relationship to it and a hungry marketplace. This is evidenced by an appreciation of indigenous foods and cultures. This interest extends to foods new to the US, introduced and cultivated by recent immigrants and by the huge popularity of media coverage on food and the culinary arts from around the world.

The root of the matter

Indigenous peoples, referring to all our ancestors from a multitude of homelands, had respect for the earth, recognizing its importance and honoring a contract of reciprocity. They tended the earth and the earth fed them. Living off the land was a way of life for many Americans through the beginning of the 20th Century. In 1900, 40 percent of the US population lived on farms and 60 percent lived in rural areas. Currently less than 2 percent live on farms. While the number of farms on a national basis is declining, New Jersey farms have increased by 800 to a total of 9,883, and acreage has increased by 20,000 to 734,000 acres.

New Jersey is also a leader with a high percent of female farmers – 40 percent vs. 27 percent on a national basis. In ancient cultures the earth was thought of as female and cultivators were mostly women (they carried the seeds). By contrast, modern farming is carried out primarily by manmade equipment and chemicals. Growth of smaller farms and female management in New Jersey is bringing into balance these ancient and modern ways and providing different concepts of balance and abundance. This transition in agricultural and small farming is being enabled at most New Jersey universities and community colleges as well as through associations such as the Northeast Organic Farming Association. The US Department



of Agriculture has a strong farmer mentorship program too.

Occupational cultivation

The lyrics from the song, "How Ya Gonna Keep Them Down on the Farm" (after they've seen Paree?), rang true for many military personnel returning from the world wars. Coming home to see new, efficient farm equipment signaled they weren't needed, plus the cities needed workers for jobs that did not require a dawn-to-dusk commitment. As families moved to the suburbs and the cities, they used their not-forgotten farming skills to create Victory Gardens, also called "food gardens for defense," planting them at private residences and on public land to reduce the pressure on the public food supply brought on by the war effort.

During WWII women were recruited to work in factories and sometimes took entirely new jobs replacing the male workers at war. Remember Rosie the riveter? Both men and women were widening their horizons, experiences and job options.

Social and political upheavals in the '60's and '70's from the Civil Rights and Women's Rights Movements drove changes for equality and diversity acceptance. This period birthed the Back to the Land Movement which attempted to find a "Third Way" between capitalism and socialism. Sound familiar? The publishing of Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring* brought to America's attention that the overuse of pesticides had led to a tripling of DDT found in human tissue, dramatically showing how what we did to the earth affected our bodies.


Processes and distribution

Decolonization and acculturation dismantled many of native North American food systems and the cultural memories that go with them. Recapturing these relationships is occurring in the Seed



Sovereign Movement. Leaders like Rowen White, Seed Keeper and farmer for the Mohawk community, refers to this as "re-indigenizing." You can learn more at local seed libraries and seed collectives. For a personal experience of this concept, contact Duke Farms to volunteer for their seed collection days.

Another aspect of decolonization is the returning concept of collective efforts to provide for all. To address food scarcity, most community gardens today, including those at schools and houses of worship, make a donation to a local food bank or bring their produce to the people in urban food deserts or rural areas in a food truck.

Local and organic food is available at many locations – farmers markets, family farms, farm stands, and pick-your-own produce sites. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which allows people to purchase farm shares, is the perfect solution for people who want organic and local food, but don't have the space and/or time to create and maintain their own gardens. All of these local food source options – community gardens, farmer's markets, CSAs – not only provide healthy food, but a chance to meet and interact with more of your community and make new friends. Mangia! 

Your vote counts

By Marie Curtis, LWVNJ Voters Service Committee

It's 2020 – an election year. We are being reminded of how important it is to vote. In fact, some are asking us to vote “as if our life depended on it.” And in some ways, it does.

This year we in New Jersey are being asked to vote for a president, a senator, Congressional representatives, county officials, some local governments and local boards of education. All of these offices are important in varying ways that can affect our lives directly. At the federal level, decisions are made about going to war, payroll deductions, transportation safety, food inspections and, of course, about the safety of the air we breathe and the water we drink. At the county and local level, we experience firsthand the pothole repairs, education, public health and safety protections, parks, property restrictions and so on. Who we choose to make these decisions and carry them out is, indeed, important.

Voting in New Jersey is easier than in some states. Here we need only be registered 30 days before an election. Registration can be done when getting a driver's license or registering a car at Motor Vehicles, or by filling out a form from local election officials. Your basic name, address, and driver's license number or social security ending are all that is needed.


Every vote counts

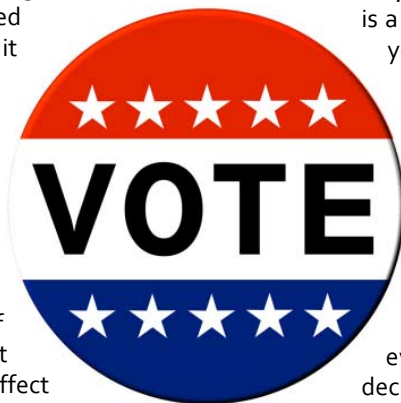
Statistics tell us that more people vote in presidential years. Yet your vote is almost more important in other years, because you represent a greater percentage

of the populace. Perhaps an analogy would help. Your vote for president is a drop in the ocean; your vote in state elections is a cup of water in the lake; your vote in county elections is a quart of water in a pond and local elections are a gallon into a large puddle. Where you have the most influence is at the local level, but that does not mean your vote for federal office does not count. On the contrary, in every election there are races decided by one, two or just a few votes out of thousands cast.

EVERY vote makes a difference

The number of votes cast, voter turnout, also makes a difference. It signals to office holders just how interested in government the people are. It either signals that no one is looking and so they can do as they want, or it says there is a great interest and they had better be careful and listen to their constituents. A vote is a powerful tool that keeps the machine of democratic government running smoothly.

A tool is only good, however, if it is used effectively. We have to pay close attention to what the candidates are really saying. We must get past the glittering generalities. Does the candidate have a solid record for views you endorse? Are there specific remedies being offered? Is this a single issue candidate? What is his/her experience? We have a right to know the answers to these questions and to have representatives who truly are looking out for our best interests. Your vote makes a difference. Make it count. Vote in the New Jersey primary election on July 7, and in the general election on November 3rd. 



Coronavirus: In NJ, don't be frightened into using single-use plastic bags

By **Ed Potosnak**, Executive Director,
New Jersey League of Conservation Voters

Right now, New Jerseyans are hunkering down and taking necessary precautions to remain healthy during the fight against the COVID-19 virus. Many of us are frightened and are struggling – because we can't visit loved ones who are sick, because we've been laid off, or because we're feeling isolated. That's why I am so disappointed to learn that the Plastics Industry Association and its supporters like the New Jersey Food Council are making unverified, misleading claims and using this crisis for their own financial gain.

The Plastics Industry Association recently sent a letter to the US Department of Health and Human Services requesting it make a public statement endorsing an unsubstantiated assertion that single-use plastics are the safest choice amid the pandemic, while some misguided lawmakers in New Jersey are calling for rollbacks of or easing prohibitions on single-use plastic bags, arguing that often-unwashed reusable bags are hotbeds for the Coronavirus.

It is unconscionable that profit-driven, single-use plastic bag proponents are spreading false information while people are vulnerable and seeking good advice.

Single-use plastic bags can transmit pathogens from those handling them in the store just like any other product. In fact, according to a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on March 17, 2020, COVID-19 stays on plastics longer than cardboard – roughly three times longer. You don't hear the plastics industry promoting paper bags as a safer measure to prevent the spread of Coronavirus – because they wouldn't profit.

Here are some facts about the detrimental impact of single-use plastic bags:

New Jersey has become ground zero for plastics litter. Surrounded by water on three sides and positioned between New




York City and Philadelphia, most of the litter found on our beaches is plastic, and scientists are increasingly finding microplastics in waterways. These small pieces of plastic now permeate our lives: they are in the water we drink, the fish we eat, and the air we breathe, posing health concerns for New Jersey residents and other wildlife.

In all corners of New Jersey, municipalities recognized this threat and have passed over 110 ordinances banning or limiting the usage of single-use plastic bags. Although the Legislature is lagging behind local communities on addressing this problem, the New Jersey Senate recently passed a bill (S-864) banning the use of single-use plastic and paper carryout bags as well as polystyrene foam containers.

If passed, the bill will prevent pollution from entering our waterways, preserve our State's unique natural history, and help end our reliance on single-use plastic products. It's what's best for our families and it's what's best for our economy.

This is not a time to mislead the public. It's unspeakable that during this time of crisis we have to worry about misinformation propagated by the plastics industry.

My heart aches for the lives that have been lost and those struggling during this pandemic, and I am grateful to our first responders, medical professionals, and grocery store employees on the front lines. As New Jerseyans responsibly shop in the days and months ahead, I urge us all to heed the advice of public health experts to wash our reusable bags and continue to take them with us when we go grocery shopping, following social distancing procedures, and not buy into the scare tactics of those who seek profits over public health. 

Published April 2, 2020, in NorthJersey.com


Why you should fill out your census form

Help Your Community Thrive. Does your neighborhood have a lot of traffic congestion, elderly people living alone or over crowded schools? Census numbers can help your community work out public improvement strategies.

Get Help in Times of Need. Many 911 emergency systems are based on maps developed for the last census. Census information helps health providers predict the spread of disease through communities with children or elderly people. When a disaster hits, the census tells rescuers how many people will need their help.

Make Government Work for You. It's a good way to tell our leaders who we are

and what we need. The information helps guide lots of important government decisions that affect your community, such as: land use planning; reapportionment of seats in the US House of Representatives; drawing federal, state and local legislative districts; the distribution of over \$100 billion in federal funds and even more in state funds; forecasting future housing needs for all segments of the population and much more.

For additional information about Census 2020, visit the Census Bureau's Internet site at www.census.gov. 





By **Sheila Baker Gujral** and **Michele Gaynor**, ANJEC Resource Center, and **Cheryl Reardon**, ANJEC Project Director

Columbia High School Environmental Club pivots amid COVID-19 pandemic

Students at the Columbia High School Environmental Club in Maplewood always like to celebrate Earth Week with a seven days of fun educational activities. This year, after the COVID-19 pandemic threw a monkey wrench into the works, they reorganized their plans and expanded their offerings and the reach of their activities by going online. From April 13-26, they offered daily actions for living more sustainably on their Facebook (@chsenvironmentalclubmapso) and Instagram (@chs_environmentalclub) accounts. Daily actions included conserving energy, reducing paper waste, reviewing recycling guidelines, decreasing food waste, Meatless Mondays, conserving water and even a very current “upcycle your old fabric into masks” challenge. In addition, they had a busy week of online daily discussion panels, an art contest, and wrapped it up with a benefit concert for the Newark Water Coalition.

The daily Earth Week panels ran the gamut from vegan meal demonstrations to a composting presentation, a panel on the Green New Deal, a discussion about watersheds and our impacts downstream, a presentation on zero waste goals, and a discussion about what the pandemic means for the future of our food system. There were also presentations from sustainable local businesses, such as the Good Bottle Refill shop (www.goodbottlerefillshop.com) and the Dry Goods Refillery (www.drygoodsrefillery.com). Those two businesses don't require any packaging at

all – customers bring their own containers and fill them up with food; cleaning solutions, bath and body products, cosmetics and more. (The stores have also adjusted to today's conditions by offering curbside pickup and delivery.)

– *Sheila Baker Gujral*

Sustainable restaurants are still out there

According to statistics from the Green Restaurant Association, fast food or carryout restaurants generate about 200 pounds of disposable waste for every \$1000 in sales. So not only are we concerned with staying safe by staying home due to COVID-19, we also are concerned with the increase in the use of disposable packaging that is being used because of the pandemic. Some local restaurants have nonetheless continued to be eco-friendly during this crisis. Turf Surf & Earth in Somerville, NJ, is one such restaurant that provides healthy, local, delicious fare and believes in sustainable packaging. The eatery is run by young, mindful individuals who care about our planet's future. They are very aware of the negative impacts of single-use plastic and don't want to contribute to the growing plastic pollution problem. Turf Surf & Earth wants to show customers they care about our planet and hope their intentions have an effect on customers' personal choices as well.

One of the obstacles restaurants face is obtaining sustainable packaging due to the lack of availability from different distributors and the higher cost of the packaging. Although some restaurants and chains do offer eco-packaging, such as the Shake Shack restaurants, many owners still do not understand the negative health and ecological impacts of using single-use plastic.

Most of Turf Surf & Earth's sustainable containers are made from paper, corn starch, sugarcane, or Polylactic Acid (PLA) and are sourced from Imperial Dade. Both Turf Surf & Earth and Shake Shack are open for curbside pickup. See www.dinegreen.com/form for info on sustainable restaurants in your area.

— Michele Gaynor

Towns cooperate to limit plastic pollution

A regional collaboration by several neighboring Morris County towns to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags resulted in a joint initiative to pass local plastic bag ordinances. Taking the initiative a step further, the Madison Environmental Commission (EC) launched a reusable bag

drive, working with their mayor along with the mayors from Chatham Borough, Chatham Township and Morris Township.

Together they collected clean, slightly used reusable bags to be distributed to community groups such as food pantries and senior centers that may not have had these bags available for residents. About 700 bags were collected before the Coronavirus shut things down. Students from Drew University used a portion of the collected bags to roll out plastic-free campus education. Some bags were given to the senior center and also to Wind of the Spirit's immigrant outreach program that was offering bi-lingual plastic-free training in Morris County.

There are still more bags waiting to be collected once it's deemed safe to do so. Even though the campaign was interrupted by the virus, the towns deemed the initiative a success.

— Michele Gaynor

Galloway fighting tenacious invasives

The Galloway Township Environmental Commission (EC) received a \$1,500 ANJEC grant to be used for an awareness campaign about the top ten invasive plant species in the municipality. Through print, video, social media and direct education with residents, business owners, service groups and students, the program motivates and empowers residents to avoid and eradicate invasive plants while promoting native, natural landscapes and habitat.

Invasive plants choke out native species, leading to habitat depletion for indigenous wildlife. The various educational elements of this project were designed to make residents aware of the benefits of native plants and the problems caused by invasive species.

The project features a 38-minute film entitled "Twelve Tenacious Invasives" that identifies invasive species growing locally, along with best approaches for removal. The film features presenters Jesse Conner, a local naturalist, and Eric Schrading, New Jersey Field Office Supervisor for US Fish &



Drew University students collected used reusable shopping bags and distributed them to food pantries and senior centers.



Howell student video educates residents about plastic pollution.

Wildlife, and was produced by professional videographer Martin Fiedler (brother of EC Member Steve Fiedler).

The Township also set up an “Invasive Species Detective Unit” database to help manage occurrences of invasive species in the municipality. This project is ongoing. Some of the project partners working with the EC were members of Go Green Galloway, certified wildlife biologist Eric Schrading, Jason Howell of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, and representatives from the Southeast Chapter of the NJ Plant Society.

The EC has offered the brochures and video for replication and use in other towns. The video is viewable online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBO7FfoO14Y. For more information or to schedule a presentation of the film in your town, contact Steve Fiedler of the Galloway Twp. EC at: scfiedler@gmail.com

– Cheryl Reardon

Student video presents case against plastic bags

A team of six 8th grade middle school students in Howell Township found a unique way to communicate with residents and town officials about the importance of banning plastic bags. They created an infomercial to educate residents on the need to outlaw plastic bags, and screened it for the mayor and council members late last year.

Danielle Gianelos, an 8th grade science teacher at the middle school, challenged her students to tackle the problem of plastic in the environment. The team chose to address the issue by writing a proposal for their town to adopt an ordinance, which they presented to the town Council. They met with members of the Environmental Commission to prepare.

Students said it took months to create the video, which aired on the local government access channel for Howell and was also submitted it to the Nat Geo Tackling Plastic Challenge in hopes of recognition. The video can be found at: drive.google.com/file/d/1oqGnHEO3tWxgK8uWo7KcuJlyfb_RX_XJ/view?usp=sharing

The students involved in the project included: Cassidy Brennan, Brian Ye, Caitlyn Zito, Samantha Ngo, Holden Saluti, and Harrison Feldman. – Julie Lange Groth



The Madison EC distributed free reusable bags at the local farmers market.

Rain gardens at work

Take a tour of some of NJ's recently planted rain gardens as they come into their beauty under the summer sun.



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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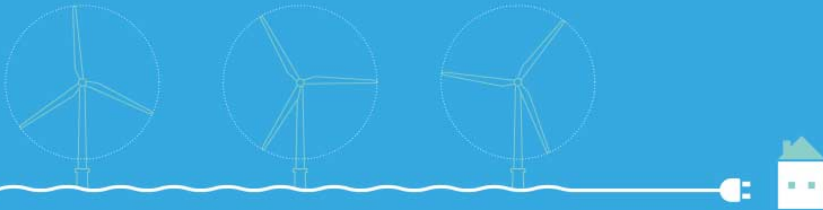
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