



ANJEC REPORT

Local Environment Matters

SUMMER 2022

Inside:

- Earth Day highlights
- Leaf blowers under fire
- Native plant ordinances growing



Director's Report

Earth Day every day!

We know that environmental commissioners live every day as Earth Day! This year we were thrilled to gather with you at the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's 50+2 Earth Day celebrations (Page 19) and other events throughout the State as in-person public events resume. There is extra reason to celebrate this year in honor of your historic achievement building grassroots action into statewide change.

We are over-the-moon happy with the success of the campaign to end plastic pollution that we launched together seven years ago! Those years of work engaged and empowered thousands of supporters, advocates and people looking to make a difference. We assembled, educated, advocated, lobbied, cursed a little (or a lot), rallied as a team, took a few hits and brushed them off, wrote model ordinances, held huge regional forums and, at the end of the day, out-lobbied a multi-billion dollar oil, gas, and fracking industry that opposed what is now the strongest plastic pollution reduction law in the country! We even made a lot of friends along the way. Together we have accomplished systemic change and are altering New Jersey's culture in ways that end plastic pollution, fight the climate crisis and advance environmental justice.

We know that New Jersey has become ground zero for plastic pollution. Surrounded by water on three sides, most of the litter found on our beaches and riverfronts is plastic, and scientists are increasingly finding microplastics in waterways.

What is sometimes less obvious is that single-use plastic also makes the climate crisis worse because these substances are made from fossil fuels. We must reduce greenhouse gas emissions quickly to keep the impacts of climate change from increasing exponentially, and we must therefore reduce our dependence on single-use plastics.

We also need to create a more equitable society that advances environmental justice and stops perpetuating disproportionate levels of pollution in communities where residents are predominantly of color or low-income or who speak English as a second language. These are the very neighborhoods where plastic manufacturing plants are located and belch cancer-causing chemicals like benzene into surrounding neighborhoods. Those same neighborhoods also suffer caustic air pollution when plastic waste is incinerated.

As of May 4, NJ is now reducing the use of plastic bags by 4.5 billion annually. We have also eliminated polystyrene food containers and the cancer-causing chemicals they leak into our food. We are advancing climate goals by reducing dependence on paper bags representing 1,300 football fields of trees cut down annually to support NJ's paper bag habit. We are keeping communities and natural habitats healthier by lessening the demand for single use plastics. And hopefully, we've done a turtle or two a favor by making straws available upon request only.

The *Plastic Pollution Reduction Act* is just the beginning of the progress we can make by banding together in creative, nontraditional ways to combat the climate crisis and create healthier communities and a robust natural environment.

We encourage you to please share ANJEC's social media posts on your municipal and personal accounts all summer as we strengthen compliance with the new *Law*. There is more work to be done to improve recycling rates and manufacturers' use of recycled materials, and to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. But this season, as we continue to work, let's also take a moment to celebrate New Jersey leading the way!

For more information on plastic pollution reduction and the new *Law*, please visit www.NJNoPlastic.org.


Jennifer M. Coffey
Executive Director

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564 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: The pollinator garden in Moorestown (See Page 25)

Go for the win-win!

How collaboration led to passage of Eatontown's native plant ordinance

By **Amanda Brockwell (she/her)**, ANJEC Director of Development and Donor Relations

The Borough of Eatontown successfully passed a new ordinance in March that requires native plants to be used in the landscape designs of development applications while also prohibiting the planting of non-native or invasive plant species. The ordinance will significantly increase the amount of native plant habitat available to provide food sources for wildlife among the commercial buildings and retail areas in the largely developed community. The Environmental Commission (EC) and Shade Tree Commission (STC) worked together to identify the issue, research and draft the ordinance before successfully gaining the support of the Mayor and Council.

EC chair Laura Bagwell explained that their Commission's motto is: "See a problem, solve a problem." The problem facing pollinators and other native wildlife species is all too clear as their populations plummet due to habitat loss, among other factors. Pollinators, such as bees, birds, bats, butterflies and other insects, are critical in sustaining approximately 75 percent of all food crops, and they play an important role in supporting a healthy ecosystem. Unfortunately, many pollinators



Eastern tiger swallowtail butterfly on Joe Pye weed

are in decline for a variety of reasons that are not fully understood, but mostly attributable to changing climate patterns, chemicals and loss of natural habitat areas due to development. Increasing the number of indigenous plants growing throughout the town will provide increased habitat to support native wildlife.

After teaming up on several projects over the years, the EC and STC began working together to recommend use of native plants as part of site plan review. The EC also attended Planning Board meetings and routinely requested planting indigenous species.

A team effort

"After multiple developers agreed to use native plants, we decided to pursue an ordinance to ensure consistency with applications going before the Planning and Zoning Boards," Bagwell explained. "By providing the standards we require in Eatontown up front,

the developers have a clear understanding of what we want to see. They don't need to spend extra funds redesigning their landscape for a site plan approval. They save money and the environment benefits."

ANJEC provided support in the research phase of the project by supplying sample ordinances from other New Jersey municipalities.

"This ordinance is a win-win," explains Mayor Talerico, adding that he is very proud that Eatontown's Environmental Commission and Shade Tree Commission worked together on the ordinance.

"Collaborative efforts, while they may take longer, are so much more successful because they have more extensive reach and understanding of the topic," remarked Candace Faust, Chair of the Shade Tree Commission.

"The Environmental Commission is grateful to have support from Shade Tree Commission members, the Mayor, and our Council liaisons from the Shade Tree and Environmental Commissions," Bagwell explained. "Collaboration was essential to garnering support for this effort."

More information

ANJEC provides municipal members with sample ordinances, resource papers and other support to help environmental commissions bring their ideas to reality. Visit www.anjec.org or email info@anjec.org for assistance and resources.



Save the date!



Friday, October 14

9:00 am to 3:30 pm

**Mercer County Community College
West Windsor, NJ**

Join us as we come back together for a day jam-packed with information and resources you can use, with exciting speakers, informative workshops, an array of exhibitors, Environmental Achievement Awards, and much more.

Virtual programming will be offered through the week, leading up to the in-person event on October 14.

Check the ANJEC website www.anjec.org for details and registration info.

For sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities contact abrockwell@anjec.org

Native plant ordinances springing up around NJ

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

New Jersey's native plant diversity is greater than Alaska's, with about 2,100 indigenous species, and 19 globally rare plants have their largest or most viable populations in the Garden State. In January, Governor Murphy signed legislation launching the Jersey Native Plants Program to promote the sale of native vegetation at local garden centers by creating a labeling system to identify certain plants as "Jersey natives." Many NJ municipalities are also doing their part to promote the planting of native species and discourage the proliferation of invasives. Here are some examples:

- **Evesham** – Environmental Commissioner Mike Jacob developed a spreadsheet that the EC uses when commenting on landscape plans during site plan review. It provides a standardized approach focused on increasing the use of native plants and includes a list of native plant species.
- **Montclair** – The town recently passed an ordinance mandating only native plants be planted on town property. It's called the *Jose German-Gomez Native Species Act*, named for a community environmentalist and founder of the Northeast Earth Coalition
- **City of Long Branch (Monmouth)** – The town requires that native plant species be primarily specified and

invasive exotic species must be avoided in the West End Overlay District and in the Transit Village. To conserve water, the ordinances also specify that only moisture-sensing irrigation systems using non-potable water are permitted, and where irrigation is not used, all plant materials must be drought-tolerant species.

- **Belmar** – An ordinance passed last year prohibits the new planting of bamboo and other invasive species, and imposes a maximum \$2,000 fine on property owners who allow the fast-growing plants to spread to their neighbors' yards or public grounds.
- **Point Pleasant Beach** – To discourage the planting of invasive species and encourage



Monarch butterfly on Black-eyed Susan Photo by Cheryl Reardon

the planting of native species, the Borough enacted an ordinance requiring residents to prevent the significant growth of invasive plants beyond their property lines, including when the plant's roots grow beyond the boundaries of their yard, or take over a neighbor's fencing plants or other landscaping.

- **Egg Harbor Township** – Residents and businesses are prohibited from planting any invasive plant species such as bamboo anywhere within the Township. Where bamboo or another invasive plant species is already growing, the owner has a duty to either remove it or confine it to prevent its spreading. 💧

It's always Earth Day at ANJEC!

ANJEC's 2nd virtual Earth Day celebration highlighted flagship activities of Environmental Commissions throughout NJ. But Earth Day didn't end on April 22 for us. We work 365 days a year to protect the environment across the State and around the world.



Here's what your support has helped us accomplish lately!

- We played a leading role in the January 2022 passage of NJ's *Recycled Content Law* that establishes post-consumer recycled content requirements for a variety of plastic and glass packaging.
- We continue working to ensure the successful implementation of the *Plastic Pollution Reduction Act* banning single-use bags and polystyrene food container that went fully into effect on May 4.
- ANJEC is offering another year of grants to support Environmental Commissions in open space stewardship.
- We continue publishing the quarterly *ANJEC Report*, covering the most important issues to keep you informed and ready for action.
- We've partnered with communities and groups around the State to install rain gardens that divert millions of gallons of polluted stormwater from our streams and rivers.



And please join us for ANJEC's annual Environmental Congress on Oct. 14, featuring exciting speakers, workshops, exhibitors, Environmental Achievement Awards and more!

We invite you to make a commemorative gift in honor of ANJEC's 53rd birthday!



Please return this portion along with your tax-deductible contribution to ANJEC and mail it to:

ANJEC • PO Box 157 • Mendham, NJ 07945 • or phone: 973-539-7547

Yes!

I want to support ANJEC and help protect NJ's environment:

☐ \$553 ☐ \$353 ☐ \$153 ☐ \$53 ☐ Other \$ _____

- ☐ I would like to become a regular supporter by making a monthly credit card donation of \$ _____
- ☐ I have enclosed a check made payable to ANJEC.
- ☐ My employer will match my gift; forms are enclosed.
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- ☐ Please keep my gift anonymous.
- ☐ Send information about remembering ANJEC in my will.

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Credit Card # _____ Exp _____ / _____
Month Year

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All contributions are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Your donation today will help us keep the good work going all year!



This year marks our 53rd year of working together to conquer seemingly impossible challenges:

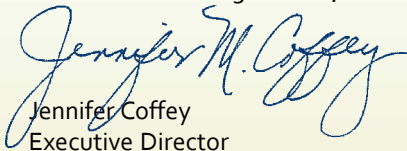
- climate change
- environmental injustice
- habitat destruction
- pollution of our land, air, and water.

We've accomplished so much together. And the future looks bright because of your continued support.

Your donations enable ANJEC to support stronger local and State policies and decisions that improve environmental and community health throughout the Garden State.

Thank you for helping us to continue the momentum in overcoming the biggest threats to protecting our shared earth.

In celebration and gratitude,


Jennifer Coffey
Executive Director



Please consider making a special donation to ANJEC celebrating 53 years of protecting NJ's environment!

Thank You!

Acting Locally



By ANJEC Staff Members Michele Gaynor, Georgia Madiba,
Randi K. Rothmel and Julie Lange Groth

Ocean City plants beach plums for erosion control

Each equipped with a shovel and a bucket, about 15 members of the Ocean City High School Student Environmental Association (SEA), Environmental Commission (EC) and other community volunteers planted about 75 beach plum shrubs on dunes to create a stronger barrier against coastal storms and erosion.

Beach plums are native to the northeast and offer added protection when dune grass alone is not enough. The salt-tolerant species is especially effective in stabilizing sand and is approved by the Army Corps of Engineers for planting in the dunes.

This event was the second EC planting of beach plums on the 57th Street Beach. The Ocean City Public Works Department helped find an appropriate location for

planting. Alma George, owner of Jalma Farms in Ocean View, donated the beach plum cuttings and provided instruction on the benefits and uses of the beach plums. The rooted plant shoots were dipped in a water retaining gel before being planted in an 18-inch-deep hole in the sand with a large handful of topsoil provided by Ocean City Public Works.

According to EC Chair Rick Bernardini, students from SEA are actively engaged with many other environmental projects, including the City's program for protecting Shooting Island from erosion by growing muscles, oysters and clams in an upweller (a type of shellfish incubator), in coordination with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.

– Michele Gaynor



Volunteers planting beach plum seedlings in Ocean City

Students take a bite out of food waste and more

The South Mountain Elementary School community in South Orange learned how choices of food types, production, packaging, origins and waste can help or hurt the environment, thanks to a video produced by students.

To celebrate Earth Day 2022, Student Council officers

starred in a video that was used as part of lesson plans for the day. The eight-minute piece explores “meatless Mondays” and vegan baking and also features physical education teachers pining for nibbles of the homemade sweet treats. The takeaway is concise, providing viewers with five things everyone can do to take a “bite” out of greenhouse gas emissions:

- 1) reduce meat and dairy consumption,
- 2) avoid food waste,
- 3) opt for reusables,
- 4) choose food that’s made or grown nearby and
- 5) compost.

See the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6jzopYOZSg>.

The video is part of the Eco Star program, the education and outreach arm of the school’s Green Team. The program educates the school community to become environmental stewards and leaders, to think deeply and creatively about current environmental topics, and to act sustainably in as many ways as possible.

– Georgia Madiba



Scene from the food waste video by South Mountain Elementary School students

Manalapan youth’s filmmaking success is “in the bag”

Aaron Diamant, 16, son of Manalapan EC Chair Jenine Tankoos, is already racking up awards for his cinematic skills. His video on how to reduce plastic pollution won the



Aaron Diamant

BagUpNJ PSA contest in Category II. Aaron is a junior at Communications High School in Wall Township.

The young filmmaker took an interest in sustainability and protecting nature at a very young age. He has raised monarch butterflies every summer since he was eight years old and was nine when Ed Begley, Jr. handed him the Garden State Green Award at the Garden State Green Fest held at Kean University. Aaron also co-authored the children’s book *Lets Go Green Together* with his mother.

The Mayor of Manalapan appointed Aaron to two different volunteer positions – an internship as the Information Officer for the Environmental Commission and membership on the town’s local cable channel MTTN.

Aaron has made many films, documentaries and music videos, even a documentary about what life was like in town during the Covid shutdown, which won an award from Jersey Access Group, a professional organization. Naturally, he plans to pursue a filmmaking career.

Aaron’s video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/6l13LZqSrCs> – Julie Lange Groth

Invasive species education with a humorous twist

Sophia Noto, a Hopewell Valley Central High School senior, combined her passion for the environment and her career goal of working in graphic design to create a comic book on invasive species. This



Sophia Noto, left, Hopewell Valley Central High School, with Pat Heaney, Assistant Director of Education at The Watershed Institute

Photo by Seth Siditsky

yearlong art project qualified her for a Girl Scout Gold Award for completing a project offering lasting solutions for the community. The 18-page comic book is available on the Watershed Institute website (https://thewatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Invasive_Species_Comic_Noto_final/pdf) and will eventually be printed into a hard-copy book.



Sophia believes that “If we want to make progress with our planet, we need to keep educating the younger generations,” and she wanted her book to be an asset owned by the Watershed Institute. She started her project after seeing spotted lanternfly populations explode, creating environmental concerns. Working with the high school district’s STEM coordinator and her art teacher helped shape her project.

With a mix of humor and seriousness, the comic book

provides background on the lanternfly and four other invasive species – hydrilla, multiflora rose, garlic mustard and Japanese honeysuckle. Sophia chose these invasive species to illustrate problems and possible solutions that children could tackle. Go Sophia!

– Randi K Rothmel

BAG BAN RESTORES BALANCE IN THE FORCE

In a galaxy far, far away, an engineer invented a one-piece plastic bag to make transporting purchased goods more convenient.

Little did the engineer know, his invention would create a great imbalance in the Force.

In 1979 these bags landed in the U.S. and have wreaked havoc by making homes in our trees, tumbling down our roads, and polluting our waterways.

On November 4th, 2020, New Jersey helped restore balance in the Force by enacting a bag ban law to prevent single-use plastic bag litter and reduce plastic waste.

THE BAG BAN WILL TAKE EFFECT ON MAY 4TH, 2022.

Retail and grocery stores 2,500 sq ft. or greater will no longer offer single-use plastic bags at checkouts.

Do your part to save the galaxy - balance the Force by shopping with reusable bags today!

We're here to help. The County has partnered with the NJ Clean Communities Bag Up NJ campaign to distribute reusable bags throughout the year at various events.

Several towns have also joined the campaign to hand out reusable bags to their residents. Contact your town to inquire.

AND MAY THE 4TH BE WITH YOU...

Burlington County took a creative approach to publicizing the new plastic bag ban.

The Force is with you!

When Burlington County recently sent out their Spring Recycling Guideline, it included a new ad reminding the community about the single-use plastic bag ban. The ad, which has a Star Wars theme, was designed by Rachel Barton, Burlington County Clean Communities Coordinator, with artwork from Susan Rogozinski at Rowan College at Burlington County.

Hammonton tackles a monstrous problem

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

Once upon a time, there was a discarded plastic bag, floating on the breeze with nothing to do. Before long, it found others like itself marauding through town and, propelled by wind and rain, the bags soon began to gather in the river. Floating downstream, their numbers grew, and they eventually met hundreds more bags, then thousands, then millions! Before they knew it, they were amassed in the ocean, growing into a giant, ugly, polluting monster. When the children of the town learned about the harm caused by the bags people threw away, they wanted to do something about it. And that's when this story really began.

Caden, Tyler and Zoey Kienzle, three kids from Hammonton, were worried about the impact of single-use plastic bags, so they decided to go to a Town Council meeting and talk about it. They shared their concerns about the impact of all the single use plastic bags that are part of everyone's daily life and challenged fellow residents to help by raising awareness and taking action.

The kids also talked to the Hammonton Environmental Commission, which led to the formation of a single-use plastics interest group (SUP) that included members of the Green Committee, the Environmental Commission and the community.

SUP got busy. They applied for a Clean Communities grant through the Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA) to help

fund their awareness-raising activities. After some brainstorming, the group began to envision the problem of pollution from



Leviathan in residence in Hammonton

single-use plastic bags as a beastly sea monster. Local artist Don Swenson, with the support of an ACUA litter prevention grant, brought to life the concept of the Leviathan, made of discarded plastic bags.

Volunteers began collecting

discarded plastic bags, and after a pause during the COVID pandemic, they got to work stretching and tying thousands of bags over a frame of wood and wire to form the giant sea monster, dubbed Leviathan. Warehouse 15 provided space over many months for construction of the Leviathan.

The beast's debut at Hammonton's Green Day celebration last October attracted lots

Enforcement and compliance of the new plastics law

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

ANJEC is often asked: "How should my town handle concerns of non-compliance?"

The *Plastic Pollution Reduction Law* does not mandate that municipalities **must** enforce this *Law*, but it does recommend that towns have a plan in place for when they do receive complaints.

If the municipality elects to handle enforcement, a designee certified under the *County Environmental Health Act* should be identified and contact information shared. Municipalities are required to report their enforcement activities for single-use plastic shopping bags and polystyrene containers to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) each quarter (inspections conducted, warnings or violations issued, penalties

assessed/collected) along with other pertinent information that will be used to determine compliance and effectiveness of the *Law*.

If the municipality does **NOT** want to handle compliance, they must send citizen complaints and reports to the County Environmental Health agent. As a last resort, people can contact NJ DEP's hotline (1-877-WARNDEP) for Bags/Styrofoam. For specific enforcement questions, please email Sonya Silcox (sonya.silcox@dep.nj.gov). For general questions, reach out to singleuseplastics@dep.nj.gov.

Issues with plastic Straws are being handled by the NJ Dept. of Health.

Questions can be directed to

SingleUsePlasticStraws@doh.nj.gov and

(www.nj.gov/health/ceohs/phfpp/retailfood/singleuseplasticstraws.shtml).


Environmental commission members are the eyes/ears of the community and can help to educate and support local businesses and town officials. For general information, visit njnoplastics.org. 



of visitors, inviting them to reconsider their use of single-use plastics. Information was provided about the new plastic pollution law in New Jersey that bans single-use plastic bags as well as polystyrene food

Leviathan under construction

containers and plastic straws.

After an initial residency at Veteran's Memorial Park, Leviathan reemerged at the Hammonton Lake Park. It has its own web page at <https://hammontongreencommittee.com/what-is-that-thing/>. 

Plastic Pollution Reduction Act update

Advocates fight fossil fuel lobbyists and win

By **Alex Ambrose**, Chair, Clinton Twp. Environmental Commission

When the New Jersey Legislature passed the *Plastic Pollution Reduction Law*, also known as the “bag ban,” ANJEC knew that the plastic industry was going to try to weaken it. As predicted, in February 2022, the first of what will likely be many challenges appeared.

Words matter, and ANJEC fought hard to make sure the definition of a reusable bag in the original *Law* was as strong as possible. California became infamous for their failed plastic bag ban; their law had a loophole allowing the use of thicker plastic bags, similar to the ones often given out at department stores. These bags were erroneously labeled as “reusable,” leading consumers to believe they were a more sustainable option but, in fact, they are made of the same plastic film as other single-use bags. In fact they use MORE plastic than a standard bag. New Jersey’s definition of a reusable bag still remains strong thanks to the efforts of ANJEC’s members and many other advocates, but the fight was not easy.

The first challenge

The NJ Assembly introduced an amendment that was intended to help food pantries, which have seen a huge increase in plastic bag usage since the pandemic began. The first draft of the amendment

appeared to give a permanent exemption for food pantries to comply with the bag ban – well intended but not the best solution. Unfortunately, the amendment also contained language that created a loophole to allow for thicker plastic film bags – yes, the same kind that torpedoed California’s plastic bag ban. One plastics industry lobbyist attempted to convince the Legislature that

their plastic bags should be labeled reusable. Fortunately, New Jersey does not stand alone in the fight against plastic pollution, and this lobbyist tried to use the same strategy in New York. ANJEC and our partners were able to demonstrate the fallacy of this position to the Legislature and, after pressure from advocates like ANJEC members, they withdrew the amendment.

Advocates for food pantries and environmental justice all agreed they did not want more plastic in their neighborhoods. Low-income communities already suffer from cumulative impacts of air pollution, water pollution and other kinds of environmental injustices – they did not want more plastic!


To help food pantries remain affordable, ANJEC and partners worked with the Legislature to come up with an even better solution. Food pantries received a six-month extension to comply with the new *Law*, and will also receive at least 500,000 reusable



bags from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection at no cost to distribute to customers for free. This both keeps food pantries affordable and helps reduce the amount of pollution in our drinking water and environment – we consider that a win-win-win!

We have no doubt that the plastic industry will continue to fight for their ability to continue polluting the Garden

State. But because people like you pay attention, listen to the science and use your voice to advocate for the right thing, we are prepared for that fight. New Jersey’s *Plastic Pollution Reduction Act* remains the strongest in the nation, and it couldn’t have happened without you.

For more information on the *Plastic Pollution Reduction Act*, check out NJNoPlastics.org. 

Welcome new ANJEC staff!

Amanda Brockwell, Director of Development and Donor Relations



Amanda Brockwell knows that successful fundraising is critical to program success and nonprofit growth. Amanda joined the ANJEC staff last December after dedicating her career to natural resource conservation and nonprofit management in numerous roles. She has previously worked in government and nonprofit positions, most recently as Deputy Executive Director at Monmouth Conservation Foundation before joining the ANJEC staff.

As an environmentalist, lifelong New Jersey resident and Rutgers University graduate, Amanda is energized to work with ANJEC’s vast network of environmental commissioners and supporters towards the shared goal of protecting our State’s natural resources.

Georgia Madiba, Membership Manager

A member of both her town and her children’s elementary school Green Teams, Georgia completed her certification as a Rutgers Environmental Steward (RES) in 2021, where she wrote and produced the *Home Eco-Guide* as her internship project. Her project received the “Local Environmental Hero” award at the 2021 ANJEC Environmental Congress. A few months later, she answered an ANJEC job posting and joined the team in March.

Georgia has been a lifelong carrier of reusable bags and, as a high schooler, she lectured her father on the perils of plastic sandwich bags. She



feels right at home with the ANJEC staff! Georgia strongly believes that sustainability can be incorporated into practically anything, and our everyday choices make a difference.

She is a transplant from Seattle and lives in South Orange with her husband and two children.

Jack McCausland (he/him/they/them), Water Outreach Specialist



Jack joined ANJEC in September 2021 after graduating from Drexel University with a major in International Business and a minor in Environmental Studies, having completed a five-year program with 18 months of professional work experience. During that time, Jack discovered a love for the natural world through frequent excursions in Philadelphia’s Fairmount Park and decided to pursue a career in protecting the earth’s natural resources.

Jack is looking forward to engaging with the New Jersey community to promote the implementation of green stormwater infrastructure projects and to help ensure resiliency in the face of the threats associated with stormwater runoff. When not busy at work, Jack can be found biking, running or hiking in nature. They are also an avid photographer. 🌊

A greener way to move people

By **Katharina Miguel**, Clean Energy Advocate, Isles

Isles Inc., a nonprofit community development and environmental organization that works to foster self-reliance and healthy, sustainable communities, is on a mission to bring the electric vehicle (EV) market to Trenton. The organization that has served Trenton through on-the-ground services for the past 40 years will soon launch Green Options Trenton (better known as *GOTrenton!*) – a multi-service electric vehicle pilot that will work to increase access to jobs, healthcare and new opportunities while addressing public health challenges imposed by greenhouse gases and air pollution.

GOTrenton! is both comprehensive and flexible for the different travel needs of Trentonians. The pilot will include three services:

- a carsharing service that allows residents to rent electric vehicles for designated periods of time;
- a ridesharing service that will hire local drivers, support local businesses and improve residents’ mobility and access to essential resources through on-demand transport;
- a shuttle service that will connect residents to jobs and create a network of community organizations to expand social, health and financial services.

A plan to drive the future

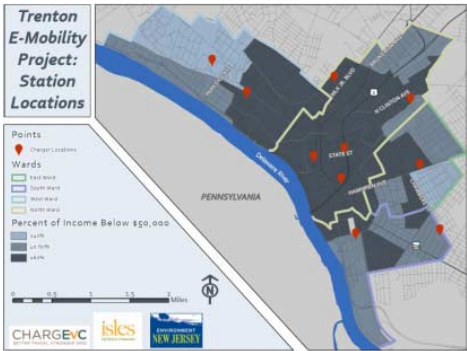
According to the *Trenton 250 Master Plan*, approximately 30 percent of Trenton households are car-free, and 21 percent of residents reported relying on carpooling as a primary mode of transportation for commuting to work. While the pilot is open to the public, its development will prioritize providing reliable and affordable transportation options to low-income residents who may not have access

to a personal vehicle. Isles is in the process of administering an extensive outreach plan to ensure that the project is “driven” by and serves the community, which includes surveying residents and community organizations, hosting listening sessions and recruiting local ambassadors.

The project is supported by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, which awarded Isles a grant last year to establish the building blocks to create a

successful program. Isles will be installing both Level 2 and DCFC charging stations at a developing headquarters location and throughout Trenton in collaboration with

City officials. These locations were identified through an in-depth planning process that considered factors such as population density and income with a focus on locating sites where household incomes fell below \$50,000/year. The process also included feedback



Trenton Isles Station Locations

from residents and other community organizations as well as the City of Trenton Planning Board.

This pilot project has been possible through its collaboration with ChargeEV, the New Jersey Clean Cities Coalition and Environment New Jersey. These statewide organizations were awarded an opportunity to workshop an e-mobility project with Rocky Mountain Institute, which brought together brainpower from all over the country to help chart this program.

GOTrenton! is expected to launch by the end of 2022.

Katharina Miguel can be reached at 609.341.4777.

Trenton Isles team members with a fleet EV



Earth Day makes a big comeback in NJ

By **Cheryl Reardon**, ANJEC Project Director

The first Earth Day was celebrated in 1970 with rallies across the country to raise awareness about environmental issues. The largest event was held just across the Delaware River in Philadelphia. By the end of that year, the US government responded to the nation's outcry and created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and here in New Jersey, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) was formed. By 1990, Earth Day was an event celebrated by more than 140 countries with billions of people around the globe taking action to protect our planet.

As the pandemic put a damper on crowd gatherings for two years, people sought solace in nature and looked for opportunities to enjoy NJ's many natural assets, bringing an even greater awareness and deeper appreciation for open space and outdoor recreation.

But Earth Day festivities have returned with a bang this year, bringing all manner of celebrations throughout the country. Here in New Jersey, one day was not enough and Earth Day plans grew into

Earth Month celebrations. Environmental commissions, green teams, State, county and local leaders, places of worship, Scouts, senior centers, land and water trusts, and environmental nonprofits welcomed opportunities to coordinate nature walks, host informative talks, educate and entertain, with lots of fun activities for all ages.

Communities held celebrations to open new trails, rain gardens and pollinator habitat areas completed during the pandemic. They distributed native tree seedlings, milkweed for monarch butterflies and other indigenous plants, and coordinated tree and shrub plantings along waterways and in local parks. They held electric vehicle shows, displayed a variety of green products at eco festivals and hosted polystyrene collections.

On the cusp of the full implementation of NJ's tough new plastic pollution reduction law on May 4, Earth Day presented the perfect opportunity for public education about how single-use plastic harms our communities, beaches, parks/open spaces, waterways, wildlife and people. Reusable

shopping bags with educational materials were distributed to thousands of festival attendees.



DEP celebrates 50 years +2

In April, NJ's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held a double celebration – its birthday and Earth Day. Although two years late due to the pandemic, the Department's 50th anniversary was an event to remember.

On April 23, Liberty State Park in Jersey City provided the perfect setting for fun and festivities, including food trucks, lawn games, State Police K-9 demonstrations, a freshwater fish mobile aquarium, a wildlife trailer, a slide obstacle course, an appearance by Smokey the Bear and much more. Of course, ANJEC was there to educate and inform the public about the work being done to protect natural resources at the local level.

A single day wasn't enough time to celebrate the DEP's half-century of protecting the quality of the air, water and land in the Garden State, so on April 27 and 28, the Department's Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Warren County held its annual open house. Activities included fishing, archery, exhibits, wildlife artists, carvers, taxidermists and an outdoor marketplace.

"There is much to celebrate about our environment every day, but especially during Earth Week," DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette said. "The celebration at Liberty State Park was a wonderful opportunity to get outdoors to one of the most beloved parks in our State to not only see how far our environment has come since 1970, but to understand what we all must do to protect it for future generations." 💧

ANJEC Executive Director Jennifer Coffey at the ANJEC table at DEP's 50 years + 2 celebration at Liberty State Park.



The work continues

It appears that community events are going to continue through the summer months and gain momentum during the fall and winter with harvest fairs and holiday activities. ANJEC's staff and the Resource Center are busier than ever providing webinars, toolkits and other resources for environmental commissions, municipal leaders and those doing community education and outreach – especially relating to issues of stormwater management, green infrastructure, electric vehicle charging, and ending single-use plastics. Among the many resources ANJEC has to share on loan are educational films, displays,

game wheels and tabletop games that are fun for all ages.

For more information about reserving items for an upcoming event, please email info@anjec.org.

ANJEC extends our sincere appreciation for the commitment and work so many are doing in communities throughout New Jersey, each and every day, and especially now as partnerships grow to address the increasing urgency of climate change. We share your commitment to protect the local environment, conserve natural resources and ensure safe and healthy communities where all can live, work and play. 💧

Earth Day

Evesham Sapling Give-away



ACUA Earth Day



Bradley Beach Green Fair



ACUA Earth Day



Florham Park tree planting



every day!



Avalon Green Fair

ANJEC Trustee Barbara Vadnais at DEP 50+2

ANJEC Executive Director Jennifer Coffey at DEP 50+2

East Greenwich Mayor Dale Archer

Chesterfield reusable bag distribution

ANJEC display at DEP 50+2

East Greenwich Earth Day

ACUA Earth Day

Atlantic County Utilities Authority hosts 30th Earth Day Festival

ANJEC joined the Atlantic County Utility Authority (ACUA) in its 30th annual Earth Day Festival by hosting an informational booth. Mother Earth shined in her glory with ideal weather for an event that was bigger and better than ever. With about 10,000 people in attendance, mostly families, ANJEC's booth was buzzing with activity.

Throughout the day, ACUA provided educational workshops along with tours of their huge eco-complex, including a state-of-the-art recycling facility that primarily operates on green energy produced by onsite solar and wind turbine installations.

Over 150 vendors offered locally made products, including jewelry arts and pottery items and large selections of native flowers/shrubs along with information on the importance of using native vegetation that supports pollinators, birds and wildlife populations. The festival also featured live wildlife with education on the local habitat they require to live and breed.

Electric trucks and cars were also on display, including those used in ACUA's operation. Many conservation and environmental organizations provided education and resources on conserving energy and distributed thousands of energy efficient power strips and light bulbs while talking with attendees about everyday actions they can take to protect water resources, minimize food waste, reduce energy usage and lighten their carbon footprint. And, of course, everybody was eagerly stocking up on reusable shopping bags in preparation for the full implementation of NJ's plastic pollution reduction law on May 4.

People of all ages seemed thrilled to attend the festival in person and genuinely excited to do their part to protect the environment, 🌱



Visitors to ANJEC's display play Plink the Plastic game.



ANJEC met many new friends at the ACUA Earth Day celebration.

A supersite for pollinators in Moorestown

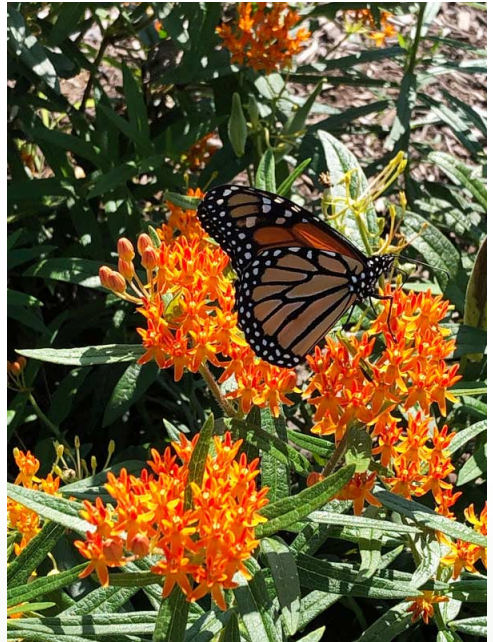
By **Mark Pensiero**, STEM President

Save the Environment of Moorestown (STEM), a local environmental group that includes some members of the town's Environmental Advisory Committee, worked with the Xerces Society to install a 4,000 plus-square-foot, 1,200 plant, native plant pollinator garden. While the Xerces Society and their partner Pinelands Nursery provided the plants, STEM and its volunteers did all the prep work and planting. The site was divided into nine zones, with an "owner" for each of the zones. These owners had responsibility for watering, weeding and mulching their zones.

The garden is made up of ten species of native pollinators including: butterfly weed, milkweed, purple coneflower, blue mistflower, false sunflower, tall white beardtongue, black-eyed Susan, little bluestem, early goldenrod and smooth blue aster. The plants were two-inch plugs and required a lot of care to help them become established during the hot summer.


The garden provides color and pollen from April through October. In September the garden hosted many monarch butterflies who enjoyed the flowering plants, but more importantly laid eggs on the two species of milkweeds in the garden. The garden hosted many Palm Warblers, who visited the garden to dine on the many species of insects living there.

Most of the plants (80 to 90 percent) not only survived but thrived their first year. We expect the garden to only get better in the coming years.



Butterflies feast in the Moorestown pollinator garden.

The garden is not only a beautiful addition to Moorestown's landscape, but also provides a great opportunity to teach visitors about the importance of pollinators and the native plants that support them. One of STEM's members provided funding for a beautiful educational sign that greets visitors to the garden.

STEM is now working with the Township and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to convert a 75-acre preserved property across the street from the pollinator garden into native grasses and pollinator fields. 

Leaf blower bans still gaining steam

By **Sheila Baker Gujral**, ANJEC Resource Center Director

We reported last year about the groundswell movement in New Jersey to rein in the use of gas-powered leaf blowers (GLBs). A working group, Advocates for Transforming Landscaping in New Jersey (ATL-NJ), has been sharing resources and providing guidance to municipalities who want to restrict or ban the use of leaf blowers. Towns have been taking different strategies, some going for a ban, some conducting a pilot, some having their municipal public works departments test out electric equipment, with others going for a voluntary restraint on GLB use. The first step is to lead with education.

While some objectors respond that “it’s only for twenty or thirty minutes” that people are impacted by a neighbor’s GLB, it is important to put that into perspective:

- In those twenty minutes a cadre of four or five leaf blowers could be cycling over 90 decibels at the same time.
- The health statistics on this issue are compelling. The California Air Resources Board equates pollution from an hour of leaf blower use to 1,100 miles driven in a 2016 Toyota Camry.¹ In other research: “An authoritative, independent laboratory study showed that operating a two-stroke GLB for 30 minutes emits pollutants equal to those generated by driving a Ford F-150 truck 3,900 miles, as far as from Texas to Alaska.”² So, just one of those four or five leaf blowers outside your house is releasing the same amount of pollution as a truck driving almost

4,000 miles. You might as well live on a highway.

Municipalities leading the way

Maplewood has been first out of the gate on this issue starting with a 2016 pilot program and a 2017 ban, which was amended in 2021. The Township Committee voted in late April to enact a year-round ban on all gas leaf blowers.

Princeton recently passed a gas leaf blower ban and Montclair has expanded the time frame of their leaf blower ban. Westfield is leading with an education campaign before pursuing regulation.³ South Orange Village Trustees recently voted to conduct a leaf blower pilot to explore what life without two-stroke engines roaring around their neighborhoods and kicking up dust would feel like.

Health is the issue

As Maplewood Township Committee-woman Nancy Adams recently said on the Brian Lehrer show on NPR, “The main reason, the big reason, is health...the health of the workers, the health of the residents, the health of the environment, the health of the air we breathe, the health of the insects and birds and animals and everything, and actually just health overall. Elected officials everywhere, I urge you to take control of this issue in your community.”⁴

On a statewide level, Senator Bob Smith introduced Senate Bill S437⁵ in January 2022 and it has been referred to the Senate

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! 💧

Environment and Energy Committee. The bill proposes a ban on the sale and use of GLBs throughout the State and allows for a four-year transition. On May 9, State Assemblyman Herb Conaway, Jr, introduced Assembly Bill 3906, which reaches farther – it would prohibit the sale and use of gas-powered lawn equipment (not just leaf blowers) and provides for a series of tax credits for those purchasing electric equipment to replace their gas-powered equipment.

If you are interested in exploring how to reduce the use of GLBs in your town, you can reach out to the ATL-NJ group at lois.kraus2662@gmail.com or email info@anjec.org.

Resources/further reading:

- Quiet Communities: <https://quietcommunities.org/land-care/>
- Healthy Yards : www.healthyyards.org/homeowners/
- AGZA (American Green Zone Alliance): <https://agza.net/>
- NJ Senate Bill S437, NJ Legislature: www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/S437/bill-text?f=So500&n=437_l1
- NJ Assembly Bill A3906: <https://legiscan.com/NJ/text/A3906/2022>
- Brian Lehrer Show "Bans on Leafblowers"(NPR): www.wnyc.org/story/bans-leaf-blowers/
- New York Times Guest Essay, "Here's a Better Way to Care for Your Yard. Your Neighbors, and the Planet, Will Thank You.": <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/15/opinion/climate-change-gas-leaf-blowers.html?searchResultPosition=13>
- Leafblowers: Westfield Looks at Education Before Regulation: <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/westfield/sections/green/articles/leaf-blowers-westfield-looks-at-education-before-regulation>

¹ Facts: Gas Leaf Blowers, https://ec78c1df-68b3-47do-99b4-038c5ff76fe4.usrfiles.com/ugd/ec78c1_3bd7d38597fa4b2c8edfc319fb7e421c.pdf

² Ibid

³ www.tapinto.net/towns/westfield/sections/green/articles/leaf-blowers-westfield-looks-at-education-before-regulation

⁴ www.wnyc.org/story/bans-leaf-blowers/

⁵ https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2022/So500/437_l1.HTM

Gas Leaf Blower emissions for 30 minutes are equivalent to the CO₂ produced by driving a truck from Anchorage to Houston according to an independent study.





By **Jennifer M. Coffey (she/her)**, ANJEC Executive Director

ANJEC joins DEP Advisory Committee

On Earth Day, NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Shawn LaTourette announced the launch of Outside, Together! ANJEC has been named as an Advisory Committee member to help guide the Department's newest initiative.

The DEP and advisory committee will engage the public on six core principles for Outside, Together!:

- expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jerseyans;
- enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development;
- empowering communities through investment in ecotourism and outdoor recreation;
- embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation;
- furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation; and

- continuing the commitment to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.

"Every New Jersey community should have quality equipment, amenities and opportunities for families and children to enjoy the outdoors," Commissioner LaTourette said. "Outside, Together! is DEP's pledge to the public that their input is essential in creating a blueprint that enhances and ensures fair and equitable recreation and conservation practices statewide."

Setting priorities

"Beginning this summer and into next spring, multiple opportunities for engagement will allow DEP to set priorities, determine action to optimize access to open space and parklands and help ensure that the State's recreational investments are consistent with the Murphy Administration's environmental, climate, equity and economic goals," a DEP press announcement stated.

"The Outside, Together! plan will give us an opportunity to ensure that our communities have equitable access to the benefits of New Jersey's natural resources," said Governor Murphy. "This initiative is especially imperative as we continue to assess how climate change will impact recreational activities, as well as the future of our natural resources. I look forward to




expanding our investments in local parks, open space and natural resource restoration to best serve all of our New Jersey residents.”

ANJEC is excited to partner with the DEP and celebrate the launch of Outside, Together! Access to high quality open spaces is a right that belongs to every New Jersey resident, and this project brings improved equitable access to open spaces, particularly in communities that do not already benefit from preserved spaces and wild places. We know that high quality open spaces are essential to enhancing our resiliency to the impacts of the climate crisis and provide economic benefit.

“Interaction is the gateway to understanding,” said Marcus Sibley, NJ NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice Chairman. “There have been longstanding barriers to access and inclusion in our outdoor recreational spaces; therefore, we’re supportive of initiatives such as ‘Outside, Together!’ due to the possibilities for growth, progress and healing when we’re all outside, together.”

“Protection of parks, lands and wildlife is an integral part of the Sierra Club, which is why we are very excited about DEP’s Outside, Together! initiative,” said Anjuli Ramos-Busot, New Jersey Director of the Sierra Club. “New Jersey is one of the most unique places in the country. From the Highlands to the Pinelands, to the beautiful beaches of Sandy Hook to the massive Lake Hopatcong. These types of areas need to move forward with appropriate growth and development and utilize their historic eco-tourism potential. At the same time, they need to be resilient to climate impacts. More importantly, open space, parks and historic sites must be accessible to all, especially in urban areas.”

As the Outside, Together! initiative advances, ANJEC will be reaching out to environmental commissioners to assist with community engagement. 

From farm to kitchen: The environmental impacts of US food waste

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

Food brings people together; it is one of the oldest and most fundamentally unifying of human experiences. At the same time, wasted food is a major global environmental, social and economic challenge. The US currently wastes more food, in total and per person, than any other country in the world. A new landmark report from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies food

waste as the single most common material landfilled and incinerated from our everyday trash. Here in NJ, 22 percent of all solid waste consists of food waste, and residents throw away an average of 325 pounds of food per person annually.

Let’s look at the numbers. Each year food waste accounts for:

- 170 million metric tons of CO² (excluding landfill emissions) – equal to the



- annual CO² emissions of 42 coal-fired power plants;
- 664 billion kWh of energy – enough to power more than 50 million homes for a year;
 - 140 million acres of agricultural land – an area the size of California and New York combined;
 - 5.9 trillion gallons of water – equal to the annual water use of 50 million homes;
 - 778 million pounds of pesticides;
 - 14 billion pounds of fertilizer – enough to grow all the plant-based foods produced each year in the US for domestic consumption.

What to tackle first

With the ever increasing cost of food, it has become even more important to manage food consumption and waste. Here are three recommendations from the EPA report to influence food's environmental footprint.

1. The largest energy and greenhouse gas emissions benefits can be obtained by wasting less food in households and restaurants.
2. The greatest environmental benefits can be achieved through prevention rather than recycling.
3. The greatest impact during the consumption stage (households and food service), can be accomplished by reducing the most resource-intensive foods, such as animal products, dairy, eggs, fruits and vegetables.


Reducing and preventing food waste can increase food security, foster productivity and economic efficiency, promote resource and energy conservation, and address climate change.

Ways to reduce food waste at home

- Shop smarter and more realistically – only buy what you need and will eat.
- Save and actually eat your leftovers – plan out certain nights to enjoy leftover food from the fridge. This can save time and money too!
- Store food in the right places and in the proper ways; freeze surplus food if necessary.
- Avoid clutter in your fridge, pantry and freezer to prevent items from getting “lost” and, thus, spoiling.
- Treat expiration and sell-by dates as quality guidelines, not food safety standards.
- Donate excess food to local food pantries. You are protected by Good Samaritan laws.
- Keep track of what you throw away – it's more than you think!

More information

EPA report – www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-11/from-farm-to-kitchen-the-environmental-impacts-of-u.s.-food-waste_508-tagged.pdf

EPA food waste website – www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/food-waste 

Food packaging doesn't have to be wasted

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

Food packaging is an enormous source of pollution. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), food and food packaging materials make up almost half of all municipal solid waste. In Clean Ocean Action's cleanups along the Delaware River in NJ, plastic

beverage bottles are among the ten most commonly found items, along with plastic caps and lids, candy wrappers, plastic straws and foam cups. But some enterprising

product developers have come up with clever ways to package and serve food in edible materials. For example:

- Although plastic straws are discouraged in NJ, there are still a lot of them in use. Now a New York company is making flavored straws out of alginate from seaweed and agar from red algae. Loliware's straws behave like plastic for 24 hours once they become wet and then will degrade over two months in the environment. Or you can eat them if you like.
- Evoware, an Indonesian company, is making edible seaweed-based packaging that can be used to wrap burgers or make instant-noodle seasoning sachets and coffee pouches. The packaging is naturally high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- Saltwater Brewery in Delray Beach, FL, has released edible six-pack rings, a

brand-new approach to sustainable beer packaging. They're 100 percent biodegradable and edible – constructed of barley and wheat ribbons from the brewing process.


- Instead of the usual cups that get thrown on the streets, tired runners in the recent London Marathon were offered squishy, lime-sized bubbles to pop into their mouths when they passed mile 23. The edible drink pods made by London-based startup Notpla, called Ooho,

contained a sports drink encased in a waterproof film made from seaweed. Runners could swallow the film or spit it out, in which case it will biodegrade in a few weeks without a trace.

- Just Eat restaurant partners are trying out several Hellmann's sauces served in flavorless, seaweed-based, sachets made by Notpla.

More information

Litter assessment along the Delaware River – www.cleanoceanaction.org/fileadmin/editor_group2/Beach_Sweeps/Delaware_Sweeps_Progress_Report_-_92320.pdf

Chemical and Engineering News: The time is now for edible packaging – <https://cen.acs.org/food/food-science/time-edible-packaging/98/i4> 



A tiny invader threatens trout in NJ

By **Alex Ambrose**, Chair, Clinton Twp.
Environmental Commission

In 2018, the Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) documented the invasive New Zealand Mudsnail in the Musconetcong River in northwest New Jersey. This snail is so tiny, it could fit inside President Roosevelt's ear on a dime! While little, it is still mighty and dangerous; these snails outcompete many native riparian species, have no known predators, and can have as many as 30 million progeny in just three years.

Fish species may mistake them for their natural food sources, but they provide little to no nourishment and crowd out other food sources. If the New Zealand Mudsnail continues to proliferate, as it has further west, trout and other important fish species may suffer.

MWA has been educating the public about this miniscule villain along the waterways in New Jersey, particularly in the

Musconetcong watershed. According to the Musconetcong River Management Council, the snails are thought to be spread by hitchhiking on wader boots, kayaks, fishing tackle and other water gear. Unfortunately, once an invasive species enters a new environment, it is virtually impossible to get rid of. The best strategy to help stop the spread is to contain them as much as possible.

If you, like millions of other New Jerseyans, will be visiting one of our many great waterways this summer, please make sure to clean your equipment

before and after use! For more information, visit www.musconetcong.org/new-zealand-mudsnail 🐌



New Zealand mud snail

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Climate Change in New Jersey
 Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
 August 6, 2020

Visit the ANJEC YouTube channel

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- view presentations you may have missed;
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You can find it all at www.youtube.com/channel/UCCeUWtY-juaDStB-2zS5SpQ.

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