



ANJEC REPORT

Local Environment Matters

SUMMER 2023



Inside:

- Special section –
Reducing waste in NJ
- ANJEC Open Space
Stewardship Grant winners
- Restoring NJ's salt marshes



Director's Report

Among the hundreds of inquiries the ANJEC Resource Center receives annually, many center on two very different development issues: warehouses and affordable housing.

Affordable housing is an obligation

ANJEC's position is that providing safe, quality, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents is both a legal obligation and moral imperative.

A comment we often hear regarding development goes something like this: "Somebody told us (usually the developer) that we have to provide a waiver for (insert: environmental protection) to allow for affordable housing in this development." This is FALSE.

Environmental protections are adopted to save lives, enhance quality of life and protect natural resources. There are NO applications for development that require those protections to be waived. ANJEC's position is that the environment is not an "extra." People with more financial means are not entitled to a cleaner, safer environment than those with less.

Waiving flood hazard protections in exchange for affordable housing, for example, would cause the least financially resilient among us to live in the highest areas of risk. That is environmental injustice.

There are complicated scenarios in which a municipality may face a lawsuit and court orders requiring the construction of affordable housing. Many municipalities have refused to participate in planning for affordable housing. The current affordable

housing rules require municipalities to appear before a judge to receive a determination of the number of affordable units they must build. Failure to complete this process opens municipalities up to a "builder's remedy."

The builder's remedy is painful – it requires one affordable unit for every four market-rate homes built. This is where large developers struggling to comply with environmental regulations often file requests for waivers in exchange for including affordable housing. The most important action ECs can take to help their towns avoid mega developments that do little to meet affordable housing needs is to ask elected officials about the status of the municipality's affordable housing plans.

Where to put warehouses

The Port of NY/NJ is now the busiest in the nation. Proximity to the Port plus a vast network of highways and large swaths of open land in suburban and rural communities make New Jersey a magnet for warehouses. If you are ordering online and live east of the Mississippi, your items have likely traveled through or been shipped from NJ. The State Planning Commission has issued guidance for municipal decisions about planning for warehouses. The 49-page document (<https://nj.gov/state/planning/assets/pdf/warehouse-guidance.pdf>) advises consideration of noise, lighting, proximity to residential areas, air quality and more.

Fundamentally, municipalities have all the power they need to restrict the development of warehouses in their communities. Many municipalities have established commercial zones for retail development,

but current pressure for warehouse space is taking precedence. Municipalities such as Franklin Township in Somerset are taking action to amend their land use codes to specifically name warehouses as non-permitted and non-conditional uses, effectively prohibiting the development of warehouses. ECs should seek community input and cooperation with elected officials about the appropriate areas for warehouses and take proactive steps to amend their respective land use ordinances accordingly.

Bottom line: Be proactive

In short, ensure your municipality has an affordable housing plan and examine your zoning with special attention to commercial zones. As always, ANJEC is available to help you get answers to your questions on these matters.



Jennifer M. Coffey (she/her)
Executive Director

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564 MUNICIPALITIES ONE ENVIRONMENT

Executive Director Jennifer M. Coffey
Editor Julie Lange Groth

The mission of ANJEC is to promote local action to protect and restore New Jersey's natural resources and to ensure healthy communities for today and the future. ANJEC advances its mission by engaging in equitable and inclusive practices through leadership, partnerships, education, advocacy for strong public policy, and in support of environmental commissions, public officials, and communities throughout New Jersey.

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On the cover: The eastern bluebird population is growing in NJ faster than any other state.

Photo by Steve Byland



“Marshing” towards resilience

Why coastal wetlands?

By **Shane Godshall**, Habitat Restoration Project Manager, American Littoral Society; and **Randi Rothmel**, ANJEC Project Director

The need to restore tidal salt marshes has been brought into sharp focus as we grapple with the realities of climate change. Their ability to sequester carbon and mitigate some impacts from storms and rising seas has prompted federal and State agencies, local municipalities, and various nonprofits to put a concerted effort into the restoration of New Jersey’s salt marshes.

Tidal salt marshes cover over 200,000 acres of New Jersey’s coastal landscape, providing vital habitat for wildlife, maintaining water quality and helping protect people from storm surge and flooding. A 2017 study (www.nature.com/articles/s41598-017-09269-z) concluded that NJ’s salt marshes prevented over \$400 million in damages from Superstorm Sandy. Inland flooding can also be reduced by coastal ecosystems that provide resistance to the flow of water during a surge.

Over the last century, however, parts of New Jersey, such as Barnegat Bay, have lost more than 25 percent of their salt marshes due to infilling and development. *The NJ Coastal Wetland Law*, while limiting this loss, has not sufficiently protected the coastline. New NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) coastal flood hazard area rules are anticipated as part of the Resilient Environment and Landscapes (REAL) initiative, under the NJ Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJPACT) program, to further protect the coastline.



Protecting and restoring New Jersey’s salt marshes helps sequester climate-heating carbon emissions.

Recognizing that a healthy ecosystem plays an important role in sustaining coastal communities, both people and wildlife, a NJ guidance document, "Building Ecological Solutions to Coastal Community Hazards," was developed in 2017 by the National Wildlife Federation in collaboration with a consortium of nonprofit organizations (www.nj.gov/dep/oclu/oclu/docs/bescch-final.pdf). This guide challenges and empowers coastal communities to consider ecological solutions through approaches that work with nature towards coastal resiliency.

Working towards restoration

The State has implemented several marsh restoration projects that utilized dredge sediment from navigational channel maintenance. This process, known as beneficial use, has been quite successful at restoring marshes while leveraging the maintenance work the State is required to perform, especially along the back bays of the Atlantic Coast.

Along the shoreline of Delaware Bay in NJ's rural southern counties, the erosion of salt marshes has been exacerbated by the history of marsh diking to farm salt hay and food crops. This process of building earthen dams to hold back the high tide has resulted in an unexpected loss of elevation as the underlying marshy peat layer has dried out and decomposed. As farms were abandoned, those dikes became compromised and tidal inundation resulted in erosion leaving behind degraded marsh and mudflats.

Coastal conservation nonprofits like the American Littoral Society have been working to identify practical, nature-

based solutions to restore and protect salt marshes in New Jersey. The Littoral Society designed and built a one-and-a-half-acre pilot project that used coir (coconut fiber) logs to create a containment area for dredge sediment that would raise the marsh platform by two feet, taking it from a mudflat to a functioning low marsh. This project was implemented five years ago and has proved to be a viable solution for certain situations.

For areas with higher energy and accelerated erosion, the Littoral Society has been experimenting with hybrid breakwater structures in conjunction with living shoreline components. The first phases of a project in the mouth of the Maurice River have been implemented; a series of rock breakwaters and a rock revetment were constructed along the last remaining bit of salt marsh that protects the communities, businesses and infrastructure further upriver. The long-term goal of this project is the recovery of 400 acres of marsh by creating conditions where sediment can build up and marsh vegetation can regrow.

Get started

Environmental commissions and municipalities who are interested in protecting and restoring their tidal salt marshes can find some great information and tools online.

The New Jersey Bay Islands Restoration Planner (<https://maps.coastalresilience.org/nj-bay-islands/>) is a mapping tool created by Barnegat Bay Partnership, Stockton University Coastal Research Center, The Nature Conservancy and US Fish and Wildlife

Over the last century, parts of New Jersey have lost more than 25 percent of their salt marshes due to infilling and development.

Service. This tool can help decisionmakers with data needed to assess marsh islands in Barnegat Bay and develop restoration plans.

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (<https://delawareestuary.org>) has produced several helpful documents to assist municipalities and landowners with understanding salt marsh restoration and the techniques used.

Restore America's Estuaries has the *Coastal Restoration Toolkit* (<https://restoreyourcoast.org/>), a terrific resource for community members and local governments to learn about restoring their

coastline. This toolkit goes beyond salt marshes, offering guidance on planning, permitting and funding restoration projects.

Protecting and restoring New Jersey's salt marshes will provide unique and much-needed habitat, sequester carbon, reduce the impact from storms and give a sense of place to the communities that occupy the coast. It is a worthy goal for many reasons, both tangible and intangible, and as the fight against climate change intensifies, salt marshes will be our first line of defense. 🌊

Save the dates!



2023 ANJEC

50th Annual Environmental Congress

Friday, October 13

In-person event at Mercer County College Conference Center

October 13 highlights:

- Morning and afternoon workshops with multiple choices of topics
- Presentation of 2023 Environmental Achievement Awards (see below)
- Exhibits by nonprofits and environmental professionals
- special tract on land conservation and stewardship workshops in partnership with the NJ Land Trust Network
- Breakfast and lunch included

Virtual sessions
Tuesday, October 17; Wednesday, October 18; and Thursday, October 19

ANJEC 2023 Environmental Achievement Awards
ANJEC will present the 2023 awards at the 50th Environmental Congress

Now's the time to nominate an Environmental Commission or nonprofit organization (community organizations also eligible) for projects that are improving NJ's environment.

See our website for details and nomination form.

ANJEC awards 2023 open space grants

By Elizabeth Ritter, ANJEC Deputy Director

For the tenth consecutive year, ANJEC is pleased to announce its Open Space Stewardship Grants. It's wonderful to see that environmental commissions (ECs) are moving forward and planning projects that their communities will appreciate and enjoy for years to come.

The projects awarded grants for 2023 are varied and show how unique and energetic our NJ environmental commission members are! Projects include: trail maintenance, pollinator gardens, demonstration gardens, educational signage, remediation projects and more. ANJEC looks forward to sharing more information about these projects in the months to come, so check our social media pages for photos and updates throughout the year.

For 2023, the following communities were selected for grants: Avon-by-the-Sea, Berkeley Heights, Buena Vista, Cherry Hill, Clifton, Englewood City, Flemington, Highland Park, Hillsdale, Mahwah, Milburn,

Peapack-Gladstone, Pemberton, Pitman, Sparta, Summit, Upper Deerfield, Waldwick and Washington Twp.-Morris County.

ANJEC is pleased to announce that the 2023 grant program was partially funded by a continued partnership with the New Jersey



Licensed Site Remediation Professionals Association (LSRPA) Foundation, Inc. We are excited about this partnership that allows us to expand funding to more municipalities as they continue their work to protect local natural resources.

No cash match is required for the grants, which range from \$600 to \$1500. Projects require an in-kind labor contribution from commissioners, staff 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. 🌱



This Califon pollinator garden is a 2022 grant project.



Coming soon! The *Packaging Reduction Act*

By Jennifer M. Coffey, ANJEC Executive Director

New Jersey is on a winning streak when it comes to reducing plastic pollution. The Legislature is in the process of moving several bills to curb plastics in the air we breathe, the food we eat and the water we drink. ANJEC is working closely with Senate Environment and Energy Committee Chairman Senator Bob Smith and former Governor Codey to support legislation aimed at reducing the volume of packaging for items sold in brick-and-mortar stores as well as shipped for home and office delivery. The *Packaging Reduction Act*, officially known as S426/A1444, is sponsored in the Assembly by Environment and Solid Waste Chairman James Kennedy and Assembly representatives Raj Mukherji and Shama Haider and "...requires producers of packaging products sold in New Jersey to adopt and implement packaging product stewardship plans."

This bill is aimed at reducing waste and plastic pollution by avoiding

excess packaging and will include specific benchmarks for reductions. Several states have adopted packaging reduction standards in a much larger context of extended producer responsibility (EPR).

The idea motivating EPR legislation and New Jersey's *Packaging Reduction Act* is to hold the companies responsible for creating waste as also responsible for reducing the environmental impact. For far too long, the blame and responsibility has been placed on consumers to reduce waste in an ever-intensifying system that appears to thrive on waste.

We know that we cannot recycle our way out of the plastic pollution problem. The volume of waste is simply too enormous.

NJ's comprehensive approach

New Jersey's comprehensive approach is to ban the most common plastic litter items found in our



The Packaging Reduction Act aims to lessen the volume of unnecessary packaging.

environment through plastic bag and polystyrene (aka Styrofoam) food containers and plastic straw reductions in the *Plastic Pollution Reduction Act*. New Jersey's *Recycled Content Law* signed by Governor Murphy goes into effect in 2024 and mandates that certain common products such as hard plastic containers, trash can liners, contractor bags and more be made from an increasing percentage of recycled content. The *Recycled Content Law* will transform the recycling system by making recycled content a valued commodity rather than a costly waste product.

An additional pair of bills designed to evaluate and establish treatment standards to remove microplastics from drinking water have passed favorably out of both the Senate Environmental and Energy and the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste committees.

- S3283/A4821 directs the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to take certain actions concerning identification and testing of microplastics in drinking water and requires the DEP and Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to study and promote use of microplastic removal technologies.
- S3282/A4823 requires the DEP and BPU to study and promote the use of microplastic filtering systems and technologies in New Jersey.

Why this fight matters

At ANJEC, we spend so much time working with communities, nonprofits, colleges, recyclers and legislators on plastic pollution because it is among the most challenging environmental issues of our time. Plastic is fossil fuel. Yes, there are bioplastics, but they are far and few between. They require high-heat and high-pressure industrial composters to degrade, and often have to be run through multiple digestion cycles. In a landfill, bioplastics often do not decompose as advertised. Even after digestion, their safety is questionable, and they have been banned by California in organic soil supplements and farming.

Thanks to ANJEC member communities

We are grateful to the thousands of volunteers serving as local officials in more than 300 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! 🌱

Single-use plastics support the fossil fuel industry and help them justify more fracking, more drilling, more pipelines and more climate-heating carbon and methane emissions.

The creation and disposal of single-use plastics is an environmental justice issue. Plastics are created by chemically manipulating products from fossil fuel extraction, converting ethane into ethylene. This process is known as cracking, as in cracking the molecules, and it releases toxic air pollutants such as benzene, toluene and other cancer-causing chemicals into the surrounding communities whose residents are typically majority black, brown, low-income, and/or those who speak English as a second language.

We encourage you to reach out to Senator Smith (senbsmith@njleg.org), Assemblyman Kennedy (Asmkennedy@njleg.org) and Governor Codey (sencodey@njleg.org) to encourage them to pass the Packaging Reduction Act by year end. Find a sample municipal resolution at <https://anjec.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Municipal-Resolution-of-Support-for-Packaging-Reduction-Act-2023.doc> 🌱



PFAS “forever chemicals” regulations proposed by the EPA following action by NJ

By **Hana Katz**, ANJEC Policy and Program Associate



In March 14, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed new regulations to control and reduce the presence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in natural bodies of water and water sources. This long-awaited proposal was created in response to increasing public health concerns over the negative health effects of PFAS, including certain cancers, liver damage and developmental issues in children.

PFAS are a group of chemicals made by humans. Since the 1950s, PFAS have been present in many consumer prod-

ucts and industrial processes for their properties that resist heat, grease and water. They are found in products we handle every day, such as cleaning products, water-resistant fabrics, umbrellas and tents, grease-resistant paper, nonstick cookware, shampoo, dental floss, nail polish and eye makeup. They are also present in stain-resistant coatings used on carpets, upholstery and even in firefighting foam.

The main ways people are exposed to PFAS include drinking contaminated municipal or private well water, eating food grown or raised near places

where PFAS were used, eating food packaged in material made with PFAS, swallowing contaminated soil or dust and using some consumer products, such as ski wax, nonstick cookware, and stain- and water-repellant sprays for fabrics. The proposed regulations aim to protect public health by setting a maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 10 parts per trillion for PFAS in drinking water.

NJ led the way

Prior to the proposal of these federal regulations in 2019, New Jersey was already leading this fight as the State became the first to set strict limits on PFAS in drinking water. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection quickly established a task force to investigate the extent of statewide PFAS contamination and develop

strategies to address it. The regulations require the routine monitoring of public water systems for PFAS, notification to their customers of violations within 30 days of determining that a violation has occurred, and the reporting of MCL violations to the public in their annual Consumer Confidence Reports.

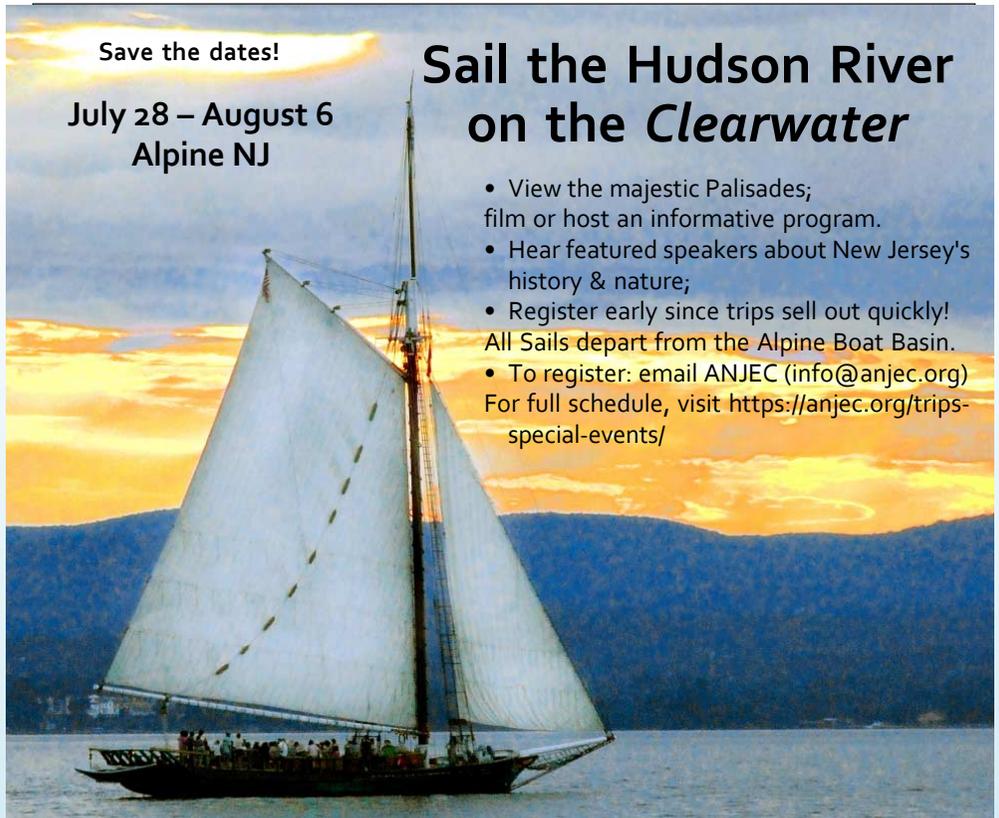
The creation of these regulations demonstrates the federal government's commitment to protecting public health from the dangers of PFAS, and it provides a framework for other states to follow in setting their own regulations. As the EPA continues to refine its proposal in response to public comments and scientific feedback, we can expect to see further progress in the national fight against PFAS contamination. 🌊

Save the dates!

July 28 – August 6
Alpine NJ

Sail the Hudson River on the *Clearwater*

- View the majestic Palisades; film or host an informative program.
 - Hear featured speakers about New Jersey's history & nature;
 - Register early since trips sell out quickly!
- All Sails depart from the Alpine Boat Basin.
- To register: email ANJEC (info@anjec.org)
- For full schedule, visit <https://anjec.org/trips-special-events/>



The Plastic Pollution Reduction Law – One year later

By **N. Dini Checko**, ANJEC Project Director
and NJ Plastics Advisory Council Member

The sixteen-member Plastics Advisory Council (PAC) was established in April 2022 to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the *Plastic Pollution Reduction Law* (PPR) and to make strategic recommendations for policies and processes towards continued reductions in plastic waste. Their first-year report was released this May with multifaceted insights and potential for improvements.

The report offers 20 recommendations for action to:

- increase the effectiveness of the *Law*;
- advance plastic recycling and overall waste reduction;
- decrease microplastics entering the environment; and
- enhance sustainable materials management within the State.

Right out of the gate, this law eliminated single-use plastic (an estimated 5.5 billion) and paper bags

(estimated 110 million) from the solid waste stream. And for the first time since 2007, plastic bags were NOT included in Clean Action Ocean's 2022 Beach Sweep Dirty Dozen list!

However, there is much more work to be done and it falls into four main categories: reduction, legislation, education/outreach and metrics.

The best piece of plastic is the one that's never used! We are literally drowning in plastic that's incorporated into every aspect of our lives. While there are many new single-use compostable/bioplastic ("green") alternatives on the market, substituting one single-use item for another is not the solution.

Is there a way out of this cyclical trap? Yes! By hosting zero-waste events,



encouraging waste-reducing procurement in municipalities and schools, installing hydration stations throughout the community, making "refill and reuse" the norm and/or passing "Skip the Stuff" ordinances where customers have to opt in for single-use items, such as condiments and utensils.

NJ's ban on bags and Styrofoam has gone well but there's still a lot of confusion about the straw provision of the Law. It stipulates that plastic straws should only be provided upon request, not placed automatically into drinks or on the table. Promoting solid legislation to make manufactures responsible for the full life cycle of a product's packaging is another solution to reduction. Currently, the Packaging Product Stewardship Act (S426/A1444) is making its way through the legislature. (page 12)

Public awareness is key

Education and outreach can take different forms – community events/presentations, video/poster contests, press articles, social media, etc. – to help draw the connection between plastic and public health, climate change, environmental justice and wildlife.

NJ's plastic recycling rates are still dismal at about 11 percent; we need that number to be much higher to support our new *Recycled Content Law* (page 14) and to reduce solid waste.

While we don't have consistent statewide data on the amount and types of plastic entering the environment, NJ Clean Communities (NJCC) has developed a litter metrics tracking sheet and encourages working with your local Clean Community Coordinator. The NJCC Coordinator will share clean-up metrics data with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This will help evaluate the effectiveness of the *Law* and identify what else needs to be done to reduce plastic pollution within the State.

One unintended consequence of the *Law* has been the proliferation of reusable bags from home delivery services. Please advertise that people using at home delivery services (e.g.,

Instacart) or curbside pickup can request boxes or no bags under special instructions. There are currently pilot programs to collect, sanitize and redistribute these reusable bags to food banks/shelters. Please check in with NJCC or DEP's Get Past

Plastic Free July

Plastic Free July® is a global movement that helps people be part of the solution to plastic pollution – so we can have cleaner streets, oceans and beautiful communities. Here's how to reduce single-use plastic waste every day at home, work, school, and even at your local café:

- Choose to refuse single-use plastic items when you eat out.
- Choose to refuse single-use plastic bathroom products.
- Avoid pre-packaged foods by choosing bulk or loose food at the market.
- Buy less to avoid unnecessary package waste.
- Think reusable when purchasing giftwrap and partyware.
- Promote solutions to plastic waste in your community.

Find more ideas and info at www.plasticfreejuly.org/.



Plastic websites for pending information.

Be sure to reshare ANJEC's posts or use the resources at NJNoPlastics.org to help spread the word!

More information:

- Plastics Advisory Council – <https://dep.nj.gov/get-past-plastic/plastics-advisory-council/>
- PAC first year report – <https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/pac-first-year-report-2023.pdf>
- NJ No Plastic – <https://njnoplastics.org> 

About 5.5 billion single-use plastic bags and 110 million single-use paper bags were eliminated from NJ's waste stream and the environment by the supermarket sector alone from the effective date of the Plastic Pollution Reduction Law on May 4, 2022, through the end of year.



New Jersey's Recycled Content Law

This new Law requires manufactures to incorporate a certain percentage of post-consumer recycled material (PCR) into specific products sold or offered for sale. For example, plastic beverage containers are required to contain 15 percent PCR by 2024. Plastic trash bags are required to contain 5-20 percent PCR and rigid plastic containers must have 10 percent PCR by 2024. The Law also requires certain products to increase the amount of PCR used to manufacturer them over time.

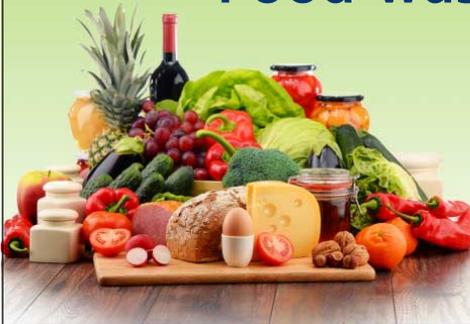
The Law also bans polystyrene (Styrofoam) loose-fill packaging,

otherwise known as packing peanuts, from being sold or offered for sale. Eco-friendly corn-based peanuts are now available. To find out whether you've received corn-based or Styrofoam peanuts, place one in water. If it disintegrates, it's corn-based!

Support for proper recycling will help make NJ's recycling stream cleaner, ensuring that more material is available for products made with post-consumer recycled content.

To learn more about NJ's *Recycled Content Law*, visit www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycled-content 

Food waste facts



- An estimated 40 percent of all food grown in the USA is wasted.
- In the country's second most affluent state, 11 percent of NJ's population and 15 percent of kids 18 years and younger are food-insecure.
- 133 billion pounds of food is wasted each year. *continued on page 15*

continued from page 14

- 22 percent of solid waste in NJ is food waste.
- Landfills are the 3rd largest source of human-related methane emissions in the US – directly linked to climate change.

Recent legislation to address food waste

- 2017 – *NJ Food Waste Reduction Act*
- 2019 – Suite of laws to reduce the number of food insecure people
- 2020 – NJ statewide disposal ban for large scale generators (52 tons per year).

On the horizon

- A1439/S2730 – *County Food Recovery Planning Act*, sponsored by Assemblyman Jim Kennedy; passed Senate Environment Committee; passed full Assembly; referred to Senate Appropriations.
- S418/A4342 – Date Label Legislation,

sponsored by Senator Bob Smith/Assemblywoman Shama Haider; passed Senate Environment Committee; referred to Senate Appropriations and Assembly Community Affairs.

- A4547/S3154 – Community Garden Composting Exemption Bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Kennedy/Senator Greenstein; passed both Senate and Assembly Environment Committees.
- A4548/S3153 – Regional School Composting Bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Kennedy/Senator Cody; passed full Senate and Assembly Environment Committees.
- A5191/S421 – Establishes statewide targets to reduce organics to landfills, sponsored by Senator Smith/Assembly McKeon; passed Senate Environment Committee and referred to Senate Appropriations. 🌱

Resources

<https://anjec.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ANJEC-Food-Waste-Resources-Links-March-28.pdf>

Food waste composting: A success in Secaucus

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

Secaucus is one of several New Jersey communities with food composting programs. The town of 22,000 residents launched a pilot food scrap drop-off program in partnership with the Community Compost Company in June 2021. Participants diverted more than 9,000 pounds of food waste from landfills over the first six months,

convincing municipal officials to authorize the program on a long-term basis.

To join the program, residents first complete an online survey. The Secaucus Environmental Department (SED) then contacts them by email, providing individualized guidance and the access code for a locked compost shed at one of five drop-off locations that accept

food scraps 24/7. The town's five community gardens also use composting systems at each location.

The Community Compost Company picks up the materials on a regular basis and processes them into compost. The company partners with farms and compost facilities in the Hudson Valley of New York. The finished compost becomes a valuable soil amendment that helps to improve water retention and provide nutrient-rich food while reducing emissions produced by landfills.

So far there are 291 residents signed up for the program and nearly 20 tons of food scraps have been collected through March 2023.

Food for thought

Speaking at an ANJEC Roundtable on food waste in March, Jennifer Schneider, until recently the Environmental Director for the Town of Secaucus, offered these considerations for any community considering a food waste composting program.

- Know the current end destination for your municipality's solid waste. Check your county's solid waste management plan if you're not sure.
- Determine your town's main goal for collecting food scraps. Is it to create compost to improve soil health, to feed animals or to generate energy? This will help you in selecting the company that will haul your materials.



Secaucus compost bin

- Ask potential haulers where they will take your food waste, how it will be processed and what it will be used for.

Schneider also stressed the importance of outreach when establishing a food waste composting program. Secaucus set up a special page on the town's website that includes a survey for potential participants, addresses of drop-off locations, and a list of what can and cannot be composted. They also promoted the program in the municipal newsletter and provided community education through homeowners' associations, at school carnivals and the town's green festival, in schools and at community garden trainings.

How much of an impact has the program had on climate heating greenhouse gas emissions? Schneider said the emissions reductions attributable to food waste diverted from landfills has been significant, the equivalent of 39,208 vehicle miles traveled or 1778 gallons of gasoline! 🌊



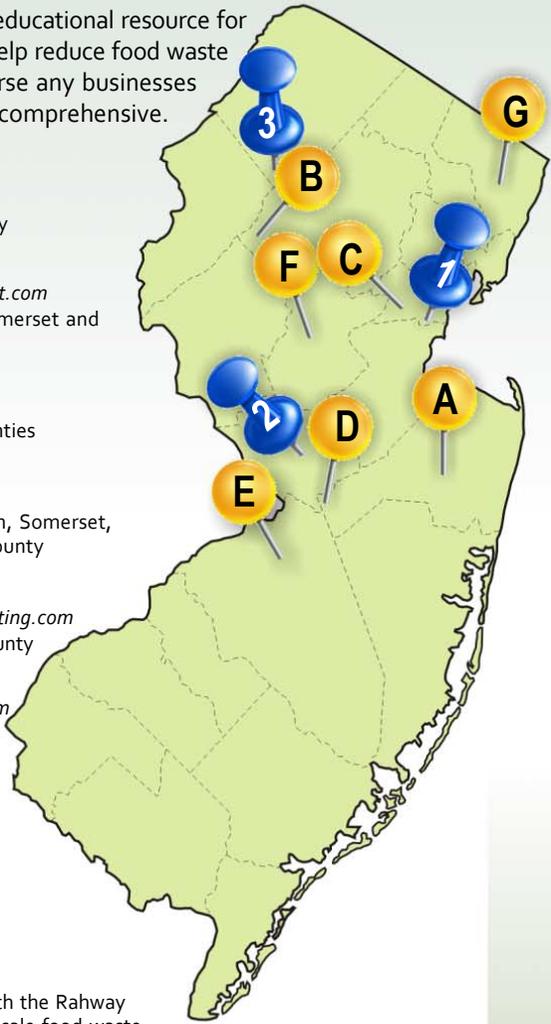
The Secaucus community garden uses compost made from local food waste.

Food waste haulers and processors in NJ

This listing and map are provided as an educational resource for municipalities seeking possible partners to help reduce food waste in their communities. ANJEC does not endorse any businesses and acknowledges that this list may not be comprehensive.

HAULERS:

- A** Un-Waste – unwastemovement.world
Select locations within Monmouth and Ocean County
Compost delivered to Trenton Renewables
- B** Neighborhood Compost – neighborhoodcompost.com
Service areas: Hudson, Bergen, Morris, Northern Somerset and Northern Hunterdon Counties
Compost delivered to a farm located in NW NJ
- C** Java's Compost – javascompost.com
Service areas: Parts of Essex, Union and Morris Counties
Compost delivered to Ag choice
- D** OneCompostCan – onecompostcan.com
Service areas: Mercer County, portions of Hunterdon, Somerset, Northern Burlington and Pennsylvania's Bucks County
Compost delivered to a farm in central NJ
- E** Garden State Composting – gardenstatecomposting.com
Serving: Camden County and parts of Burlington County
Compost delivered to a farm in PA
- F** Green Bucket Compost – greenbucketcompost.com
Serving: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, Somerset, and Union Counties
Compost delivered to Trenton Renewables
- G** Community Compost Company – communitycompostco.com
Service areas: Hudson County
Compost delivered to a facility in Kerhonkson, NY



PROCESSING FACILITIES

- 1** Waste Management Flora CORE® Facility
Waste Management of New Jersey, in partnership with the Rahway Valley Sewerage Authority operates NJ's first full-scale food waste recycling and co-digestion project, a cost-effective alternative for turning food waste into renewable energy. The CORE® process is a purpose-built, centralized, source-separated food waste processing and blending facility that takes a combination of pre- and post-consumer food wastes and produces a high-quality product designed for co-digestion in municipal anaerobic digesters.
- 2** Trenton Renewables – trentonrenewables.com
Trenton Renewables is a food waste recycling and renewable energy company that operates the Trenton Biogas facility. They combine advanced material handling technologies with a biological process called anaerobic digestion to recycle food waste into renewable energy, premium compost and organic fertilizer.
- 3** Ag Choice – ag-choice.com
Ag Choice collects and composts a wide array of organics, including food waste, leaves and manufacturing organics to be transformed into high quality soil amendments.

Repair cafes are part of a global sustainability movement

By Cheryl Reardon, ANJEC Project Director

Repair cafes are gaining popularity as free meeting places where people come together to fix things. They are a community resource offering tools and materials to fix items along with volunteers with skills and knowledge to assist with repairing everyday items such as electronics, clothing, bikes and furniture. Observers at repair cafes also learn to sew, fix zippers, wire plugs and other skills by watching and working with volunteers. These local events focus on making things last, saving people money and helping the environment by reducing waste and use of raw materials.

Why the need for repair cafes?

We live in a throwaway society that generates vast amounts of waste and is using up valuable resources for mass manufacturing, much from foreign countries. As we grow more conscious of the harm to our environment, we become more aware that we can be part of the

global solution right in our local communities.

A 2015 study found that between 2004 and 2012 the number of household items that broke/died within five years more than doubled (from 3.5 percent to 8.3 percent), with an even higher increase for large appliances (from 7 percent to 13 percent). An analysis of junked washing machines at a recycling center showed that more than 10 percent were less than five years old.

We need to change our individual perspectives and our wider culture of waste. Besides society's fondness for the newest trends, there is also the issue of planned obsolescence, where manufacturers design products to break down while making them difficult to fix, thus encouraging buying a new item rather than repairing the old one. This quick replacement mentality is significantly contributing to serious global waste pollution and consumption of our finite resources.

How repair cafes work

Repair cafes typically meet in local spaces such as community centers, churches,

A volunteer fixes a broken electronic item at the SOMA repair cafe.



The Rutherford EC sponsored its 6th repair café this spring.

libraries, etc. Volunteers often bring their own tools or they can be provided or funded by donations. Most cafes operate during specific hours and people who bring broken items are placed with a volunteer who can help. Some cafes offer separate stations for specific types of repairs (i.e. sewing, electronics) while others will guide visitors to certain “fixers” for specific items.

For items that may be too large to transport, telephone assistance can also be an option. Repair cafes usually stock items needed to make common repairs or will assist with ordering a needed part.

A step toward sustainability

Of course, repairing rather than discarding and replacing promotes sustainability and benefits the environment. A survey showed that three in five items are successfully repaired, preventing good items from going to the landfill, and reducing emissions that would be produced from waste disposal while decreasing raw materials used in manufacturing and emissions from transportation – all contributing to the climate crisis.

Repair cafes also help build a sense of community by encouraging people to work together and get to know their neighbors. When residents help one another, the social interaction results in community cohesion with many additional benefits. They operate free of charge or by donation, so they save people money! And repair cafes build needed skills and a real sense of accomplishment and confidence for both the person with a broken item and the volunteers putting their skills to good use right in their local community.



The origin of repair cafes

Repair cafes are a worldwide movement to increase sustainability at the local level that was started by Martine Postma in Amsterdam, with the first cafe opening in 2009. Its success prompted Postma to start Repair Café International Foundation, a nonprofit providing professional support around the world.

Here in New Jersey, Lorraine Graves was inspired to start a repair cafe in her local Maplewood-South Orange community in 2017 where the events continue to this day. You can visit their Facebook page at “SOMA Two Towns for All Ages.”

Since then, several more towns around the Garden State have started them. The Rutherford Environmental Commission sponsored its sixth repair café on May 13. More information is available on their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/rutherfordrepaircafe.

For more information on Repair Cafes in New Jersey, check out www.repaircafegs.org.

For more on the history of repair cafes globally, visit www.repaircafe.org/en/. 

Earth Day Celebration



ctions around NJ



③



④



⑧

- ① Bike tune-up at Milburn Earth Day Climate Action event by Doug Olson
- ② Chatham Borough mini Earth Day Fair by Susie Robertson
- ③ East Greenwich garden cleanup
- ④ Emerson Earth Week event
- ⑤ Earth Day activities in Manalapan
- ⑥ Point Pleasant Borough Earth Day celebration by Chris Constantino
- ⑦ Red Bank Earth Day Fair
- ⑧ Smokey visits the Sparta Earth Day Fair by Jenny Dericks
- ⑨ Summit Earth Day cleanup
- ⑩ Verona Earth Day cleanup



⑩

Battery electric garbage trucks are ready for prime time: Are you?

By **James Sherman**, Chief Development Officer, Roundtrip EV Solutions, Inc.

The diesel garbage truck is the most polluting vehicle in any New Jersey municipal DPW fleet, bar none. This is because diesel garbage trucks operated in the start-and-stop fashion known as “creep mode” emit seven times more air pollution than an 18-wheeler going down the NJ Turnpike. The start-and-stop operation also results in abysmally low fuel economy of around three to four miles per gallon. Then there’s the whining noise of the engine being cranked every time the compactor is run.

Well, it doesn’t have to be this way any longer. Cities and towns across New Jersey are starting to transition their DPW vehicles like garbage trucks and medium-duty mason dump trucks to battery electric models. The Jersey City DPW has been operating a fleet of medium- and heavy-duty battery electric garbage trucks for over a year and Bergenfield, Bloomfield, the Elizabeth Board of Education, Hoboken, Perth Amboy, Secaucus, Woodbridge, and others all have battery electric garbage trucks or mason dump



Lion8 zero emission refuse truck

trucks on order. So they're here and they're ready for prime time.

Transitioning a municipal DPW fleet to battery electric vehicles and operations requires experience, expertise and independence. It begins with a detailed fleet transition planning exercise in which the existing operations are analyzed for electric truck range and duty cycles. Then there is a technology review and selection of vehicles, chargers, and telematic and software control systems. Next, the utility infrastructure and charging equipment have to be designed, procured and installed. Then the battery electric vehicles, chargers and control systems have to be integrated, optimized, and commissioned.

How do short-staffed and under-funded municipalities accomplish all this? Some towns have turned to outside companies for help in transitioning their DPW fleets with confidence. For example, Roundtrip EV Solutions' service includes the electric trucks, the charging equipment, the software and telematic control systems, all designed, installed, integrated, commissioned and ready for operation. It also includes maintenance of the truck's high-voltage system, the chargers, and 24/7/365 remote monitoring and trouble-shooting. All of this is offered as a service for a fixed monthly fee.

Why to transition your town's DPW fleet to electric

- **Fleet operational reliability/up time:** Battery electric trucks are incredibly reliable. This is because they have 20 moving parts whereas a diesel engine has hundreds of moving parts. A private sanitation company in Idaho has operated a fleet of battery electric garbage trucks for almost three years now with no service calls and no brake changes.
- **Municipal budgeting predictability:** Diesel fuel prices are subject to wide price swings from year to year, whether because of the land war in Europe, OPEC production cuts, changes in global refining capacity, and other international

and national political and climate-related weather events. By transitioning over to battery electric trucks, municipalities will be trading in diesel fuel and its price volatility for electricity and its stable and predictable rates that do not radically change from year-to-year.

- **Cost savings:** Diesel engines going down the highway are, at best, 44 percent efficient at converting liquid fuels into motive power, whereas an electric motor is around 95 percent efficient at converting electricity into motive power. This fact, coupled with the immediate inherent savings in trading \$4.50 per gallon for diesel down to \$0.15 per kwh for electric power is estimated to result in operating cost savings of 20 percent on average, as compared with the cost of operating a diesel garbage truck over the length of the service agreement. These savings are passed through directly to you.
- **Incentives:** Several NJ municipalities have received State funding to help purchase electric garbage trucks with income from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, known as RGGI. So far, the State has awarded funds for nearly 3,000 electric vehicle charging stations, 700 electric trucks and buses and 12,000 electric passenger vehicles, so stay tuned for future funding announcements.

Now is the time to start planning and transitioning your DPW fleet to electric drive.

Note: James Sherman is a former ANJEC trustee and former chairman of the Montclair Environmental Commission. He can be contacted at jsherman@roundtripev.com 

Vectors of EC success

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

Every environmental commission (EC) has unique strengths and challenges. Relatively new commissions may be brimming with enthusiasm but need to strengthen their position and build support within their community, while long-established ECs may have a long record of accomplishment but face flagging enthusiasm, diminishing numbers or even opposition from newly elected officials. Whether you're looking to establish, revitalize or boost the effectiveness of your EC, here are four important vectors of success that can amplify your efforts.

✓ **VIABLE ECs build a strong foundation**

- Assess skill gaps and fill them by recruiting new EC members with key strengths.
- Work on your relationships with town officials. Ask what issues are important to them when setting goals for the year and keep them apprised of your efforts. While you may not agree on all the issues, look for common ground.

Strong ECs add ✓ **VALUE**

- ECs can enrich town coffers by bringing in grant funding to help accomplish environmental goals and enhance quality of life. ANJEC's Open Space Stewardship grants are just one example (page 7).
- Make sure local officials are aware of the amount of volunteer time and key skills EC volunteers are contributing to supplement the efforts of paid staff.
- Invite municipal officials and employees to join ANJEC training, webinars and conferences available free or at minimal cost to member communities.

✓ **VISIBILITY enhances credibility**

- Make your EC visible in the community by tabling at local events or hosting river cleanups, green fairs, paper shredding days, etc. Educate the public with workshops on environmental topics, such as how to choose native plants, build rain barrels and protect pollinators.
- Publicize your efforts on your town's website. Use social media to keep the public

Volunteers at Earth Day cleanup at Lake Papaiani in Edison



engaged and let the press know about your goals and accomplishments.

Be OCAL on issues that matter

- Contribute to your town's master planning process and offer input on open space preservation.
- Propose ordinances to help protect the environment and offer to help write them. ANJEC can provide sample ordinances from other towns to help with wording.

Case in point: The reawakening of the Edison EC

The COVID pandemic hit the Edison Environmental Commission hard. During the shutdown, their numbers shrank from seven to two due to relocations and childbirth, with one member, John Poyner, getting elected to the Council (He's now Council President). The EC's liaison with the Green Team, an important ally, died of COVID. The only remaining Commission members, Chair Sally Yabra and local brewer Charles Bachman (now the EC vice president) got to work recruiting new members – with impressive success.

A volunteer who was working on the town's community garden website was soon invited to join the Commission, and an employee of the Board of Education also came on board as well as a resident who was very connected to other community groups.

Soon the EC was operating at full speed, working in full partnership with other local groups like the Open Space Committee, the Green Team, Beautiful Edison, the Garden Club, Scouting groups, local businesses and others. Together they've been accomplishing great things.

"It's like a brotherhood," says Yabra. "We have amazing teamwork. The DPW crew is always pitching in whenever we need their help. The local Department of Health and Clean Communities program have also

been important partners. And the Mayor has been a great friend to the EC too."

Gardens have been among their most visible initiatives, beginning with the 34-bed community garden at Thomas Swales Park that includes four ADA-compatible beds. Another community garden on the other side of town will soon open at Dwyer Park. Both were created in tandem with the Township.

Four pollinator gardens are also in the works, two of them at a formerly abandoned property at Silver Lake. Within two months after the municipality acquired the property, the EC organized a cleanup where volunteers picked up trash and vegetative debris and pulled invasive plants to fill nine dumpsters and 13 recycling bags. It was the first of 11 cleanups at the site.

The Commission has accomplished many other projects since its rebirth. Yabra offers these tips for keeping an EC vital and active:

- Involve young people – Students and Scouts often need volunteer hours, and their efforts often lead to their parents' involvement.
- Talk to your neighbors. "If you spend 15 minutes at a neighbor's house, you've got them. Talk about the projects you're working on and let them know what you need." Yabra says her neighbors have provided power tools for cleanups and chairs for events, to name just a few contributions.
- Partnerships are essential to getting things done. Involve as many community groups in your efforts as possible.
- The Edison EC also works with neighboring towns to amplify the impact of their efforts. Sustainable Highland Park was willing to bring 50 pickers to Edison's Earth Day cleanup, and the Commission is working with Metuchen on an invasive species education program.
- Involve businesses. They can contribute so much, from seeds for the gardens to volunteers for cleanups. "You can't do everything," says Yabra. "You have to be good neighbors." 

Acting Locally

By **Patty Rosa**, Manalapan Environmental Commission;
Michele Gaynor, ANJEC Resource Center;
and **Georgia Madiba**, ANJEC Membership Manager

Bringing bluebirds to Manalapan

“My hope is that from what you learn today, you can make a direct impact right in your backyard... It just takes one person to make a difference, to go from a negative to a positive.”

These words by Manalapan Environmental Commissioner Shaun Armhold kicked off the interactive workshop, “Attracting Bluebirds,” cohosted by the Manalapan Environmental Commission (MEC) and the Central New Jersey Bluebird Society, held in January at the Manalapan Community Center.

The workshop showcased the eastern bluebirds’ environmental and household benefits beyond their beauty and soothing melody. Attendees learned that attracting bluebirds and safeguarding their nesting habitats helps to rebuild their dwindling population. Bluebirds also provide homeowners with a natural method for backyard pest control.

“We want to make it easier for people to gain the information that they need to be proper stewards to these birds,” Armhold explained. To this end, John Hart, Vice President of the Central New Jersey Bluebird Society, led an engaging discussion on how to be a citizen scientist. He spoke in-depth on the different monitoring and maintenance methods for bluebird boxes around the State and provided detailed instructions on how residents can



Manalapan hosted a workshop on attracting bluebirds.

build their own bluebird boxes. Additional displays, posters and handout materials were set up by Manalapan High School Environmental Club members as well as local naturalist Nano “the Birdman” Mardones. MEC member Joan Crowe gave out stickers and materials on how to make bird suet.

Workshop attendees filled every seat at the Community Center, demonstrating a healthy interest in our community for events that focus on nurturing our environment.

“We are so grateful that you took some time out of your weekend to come here and learn something more about nature and how you can protect bluebirds and other animals in your yard,” MEC Chairperson, Jenine Tankoos (“Green Jenine”) told the packed center.

The event was filmed by Aaron Diament, MEC Information Officer, and edited by Jan Zachary for the Manalapan Township Television Network. It is available for viewing at vimeo.com/795001685 and on MTTN TV's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MTTNTV>. – Patty Rosa

Parsippany students shine at spring Green Fair

Student-led sustainability groups engaged the public with presentations and demonstrations at the Green Fair hosted by the Parsippany Environmental Advisory Committee and the Green Team in March.

Hubotics, a human robotics team made up of third grade students from several local schools, devised a robotic green community solutions demonstration. They showcased various forms of green energy with working lego models to help Parsippany residents envision ways to reduce the town's carbon footprint.

Parsippany students from Simply Green (<https://simply-green.org/our-work/>) were also on hand to educate the community about the detrimental effects of fast fashion on our environment. The group has been campaigning to introduce Meatless Mondays in the school district and spoke of the positive climate impact that could result from eating less meat.



The Green Fair featured various other educational attractions. Many attendees learned for the first time about the potential destruction of Drew Forest, which is 53 acres of biodiverse forest land owned by Drew University in Madison. Friends of Drew Forest educated the public about the important ecological value of this forest in their backyard.

Rutgers Wildlife Conservation and Management Program spoke about the beneficial impacts of bats, which include pollinating, insect control and dispersing seeds. Sustainable businesses, such as Bear Minimum Refinery, a zero-waste store in Boonton, displayed various sustainable products. Eco Rich Composting demonstrated their beautiful terracotta home composters (www.ecorichenv.com/home-composter). – Michele Gaynor

East Brunswick brothers stress importance of sustainability

For Earth Day, the East Brunswick Sustainability Task Force, a subcommittee of the Environmental Commission, held its second annual "Getting Past Plastics" forum at the East Brunswick Public Library. With about 65 people in attendance, the hybrid event consisted of a panel of community

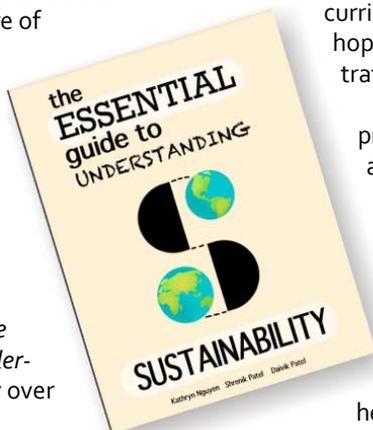
members, including the Mayor, a local church leader, the Clean Communities Coordinator of Middlesex County, a science teacher from the high school and twin students Daivik and Shrenik Patel.

Last spring the brothers attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting and met Kathryn Nguyen, a member of the East Brunswick

Parsippany's Green Fair offered many educational attractions.

Sustainability Task Force. The twins felt their high school peers and other residents were unaware of the real meaning and importance of sustainability. With a firm belief that actions we take lead to change, they teamed up with their newfound mentor, Kathryn, and wrote a handbook entitled *The Essential Guide to Understanding Sustainability* over the summer.

The 37-page book outlines the urgency for sustainability, highlighting the need to implement it within schools – the very place where the next generation of leaders is seeking answers. The publication lays out important terms and definitions, case studies, problematic societal habits and a call to action.



Brothers Daivik and Shrenik Patel coauthored a book on sustainability.



The Essential Guide to Understanding Sustainability

The authors aim to have their school district integrate the handbook into the curriculum and, in the meantime, they hope that teachers and the administration will use it as a resource.

At the event, each panelist gave a presentation followed by a question and answer session. A simple and true theme emerged in the ensuing discussion: Change starts with the youth. If young people are educated on environmental challenges and solutions, generational change will follow. Daivik and Shrenik whole-

heartedly agree and added that “if everyone makes a change, it adds up.”

Both brothers attribute the way they were raised and their vegetarian diet as the inspiration for their work on sustainability education. The twins graduate this June, and ANJEC wishes them well with their next steps in higher education. Without a doubt, they will be change-makers.

More information

- East Brunswick Sustainability Task Force – epsustainabilitytaskforce@gmail.com
- “Getting Past Plastics II, Accountability in Sustainability” April 25, 2023: visit EBTV’s YouTube channel @EBTV26 for the recording

– Georgia Madiba

Candace McKee Ashmun Memorial Fund

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

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

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

To donate, mail a check to ANJEC, PO Box 157, Mendham NJ 07945, or donate online at anjec.org/donate.



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The *ANJEC Report* welcomes submissions or suggestions from our readers.

- Is there a topic or issue you'd like us to write about?
- Have you recently completed a project that would be of interest to other local environmentalists?
- Would you like to author an article in your area of expertise?

If so, please let us hear from you. Your input is valuable. Just email the editor at jlange@anjec.org.



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August 6, 2020



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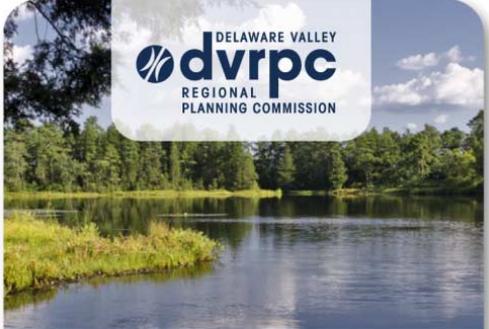
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Save the dates – ANJEC’s 50th Environmental Congress (Page 6)