



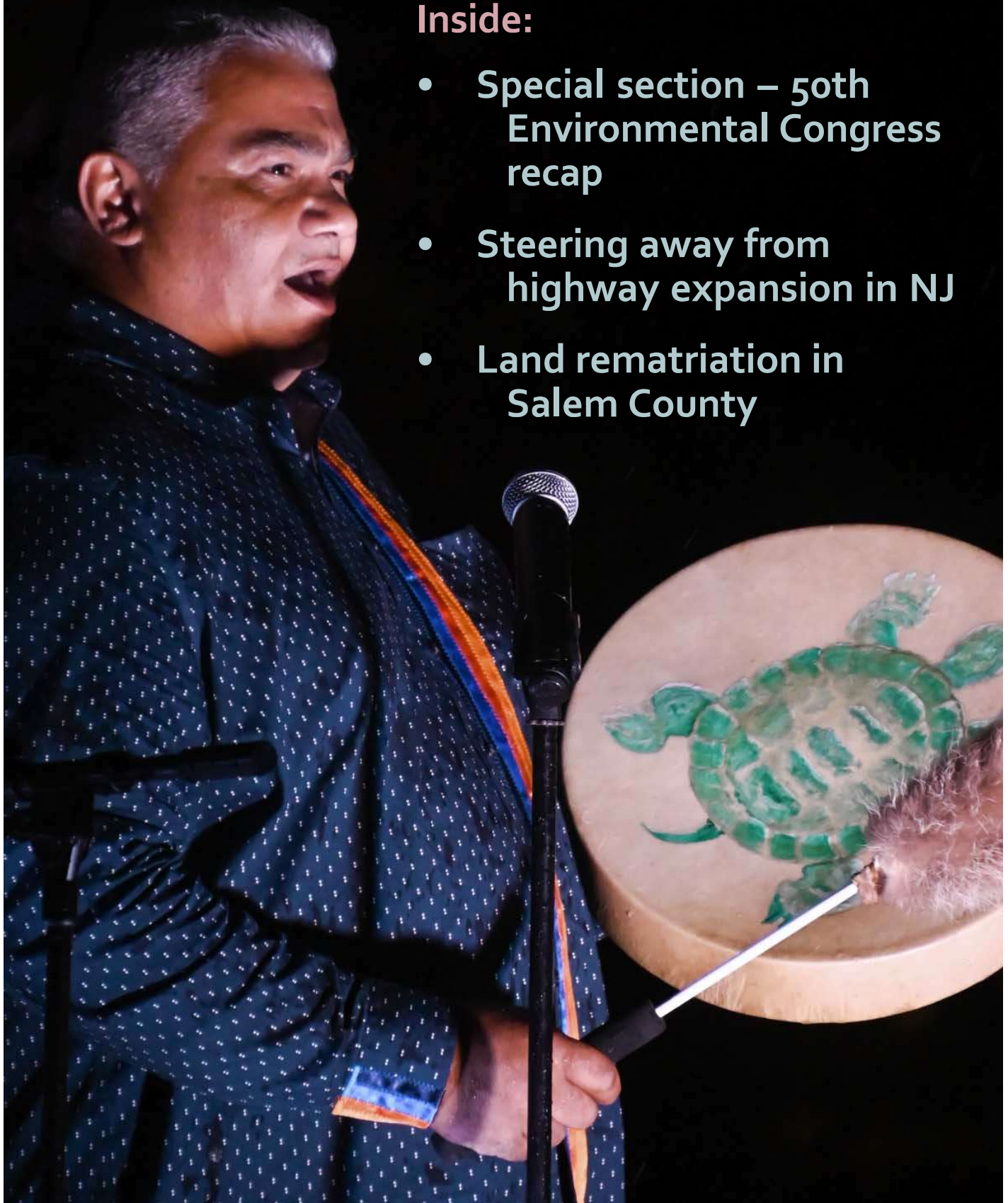
# ANJEC REPORT

Local Environment Matters

WINTER 2024

## Inside:

- Special section – 50th Environmental Congress recap
- Steering away from highway expansion in NJ
- Land rematriation in Salem County





## Director's Report

### Keep leading the good fight

Setting intentions for your EC in the New Year is a good way to center your efforts on making an important impact. I encourage you to join us at ANJEC in reflecting on how we make progress on the big challenges in front of us. The average annual temperature in NJ has increased 3.9°F since 1895.<sup>1</sup> Because warmer air holds more moisture, precipitation in NJ has increased by eight percent above average in the last decade. The most recent climate modeling specifically focused on NJ climate crisis impacts shows that annual precipitation is expected to increase between six and 24 percent, (depending on county) by the end of the century, even with moderate greenhouse gas emission reductions. Models tell us to expect a minimum of an additional 1.4 ft of sea level rise by 2050.

As one of the oldest states in the Union, we have an aging and failing infrastructure. NJ is also the most densely populated state in the nation, with one of the most diverse populations, where dis- and underinvestment in access to clean water, clean air, and open spaces is readily noticeable in communities with residents who are primarily black, brown, and/or who earn low-incomes.

Yes, we have big challenges, but we know we can do hard things because we have done hard things before. Last fall, we celebrated ANJEC's 50th annual Environmental Congress together. For a half century, environmental commissioners like you dug in and fixed the problems of the day. When environmental commissions (ECs) were first established in 1968, and ANJEC's first Environmental Congress convened in 1973, our biggest environmental and community health threats were contaminated sites, waterways spontane-

ously combusting from hazardous pollution, orange and brown air pollution doming cities on most warm days, followed by acid rain and ozone depletion. ECs rolled up their sleeves and demanded change, making NJ a national environmental leader.

New Jersey adopted the nation's first *Coastal Wetlands Protection Law* in 1970 and freshwater wetlands protections in 1987. Wetlands are even more critical now because of their ability to absorb flood waters, filter pollutants and provide expansive habitat. NJ remains one of the states with the strongest wetlands protections in the country. Federally, wetlands are still not comprehensively protected, and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) protections were rolled back by the Supreme Court of the United States last year in the *Sackett v. EPA* case. ANJEC is working with other nonprofits and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to ensure that your advocacy and that of your EC predecessors stand strong in the name of wetlands protections.

In 1976, ECs supported the NJ Legislature in passing the first law facilitating the cleanup of contaminated sites. New Jersey's *Spill Compensation and Control Act* became the basis for the 1980 federal Superfund law sponsored by our very own (then) Congressman Jim Florio. Since then, the Garden State has been a leader in cleaning up toxic and hazardous contaminated sites.

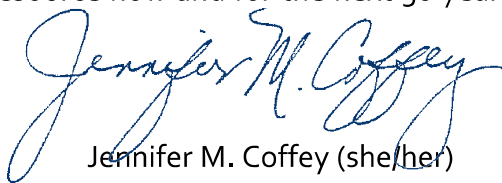
The nation's first *Environmental Justice (EJ) Law* was adopted in August 2020. New Jersey's own EJ Law is based on a Cumulative Impacts Ordinance that the Newark Environmental Commission, residents, powerful community activists with the Ironbound Community Corporation and others drafted and shepherded through to adoption more than a decade prior.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dep.nj.gov/climatechange/>

Last July, NJ became the first state in the nation to use climate modeling to inform land use decision making with the adoption of the Inland Flood Hazard Regulations. These regulations require additional safety standards and, coupled with another NJ first – the *Flood Disclosure Act*, will result in better construction and awareness of potential flood impacts.

As you lean into setting 2024 goals for your EC, remember the required compliance with the new Inland Flood Hazard Rules and the new Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) permits, and consider advocating for adoption of a stormwater utility in your town. ANJEC pushed for these regulations and laws because we heard from you about the challenges your community is facing. These tools will help solve the most pressing problems of today, and ANJEC is here as your resource now and for the next 50 years.

  
Jennifer M. Coffey (she/her)  
Executive Director

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**ANJECREPORT**  
Local Environment Matters

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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: Turtle Clan Chief Vincent Mann performs a ceremony at Liberty State Park on Sept. 17 honoring the area's Native American heritage. (Page 24)* Photo by Taylor McFarland

# Spiritual rematriation of homelands – 63 acres acquired by Native American nonprofit

By Tyrese "Bright Flower" Gould Jacinto, President, CEO and Founder of Native American Advancement Corporation and Nanticoke Lenape Tribal Citizen

“Burden Hill is the dust of my ancestors; it will someday be mine.” These are the words often spoken by Marion ‘Strong Medicine’ Gould. It is easy to imagine the romantic notion that we can give land back to the original caretakers with a sense of accomplishment; however, at what price? Through the hard work of many partners and supporters, Native American Advancement Corporation (NAAC) in Cumberland County recently acquired a unique property, Cohanzick Nature Reserve, 63 acres of pristine forest land nestled within hundreds of preserved wooded lands.

The rematriation of this land is a symbolic homecoming because it lies within the traditional homestead of Chief Mark ‘Quiet Hawk’ Gould's direct ancestors, where he still lives today. His grandfather's actual historical home is pictured, and the location is mentioned, in the book about Mark's mother, *‘Strong Medicine’ Speaks: A Native American Elder Has Her Say*. Author Amy Hill Hearth is a *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today* and *Publisher's Weekly* bestselling author. Historical maps show the areas where the ancestors resided for hundreds of recorded years and depict a historical encounter of our original families before the first incursions.

*Tyrese “Bright Flower” Gould Jacinto leads a smudging and blessing ceremony at the land rematriation event on Sept. 15.*

Our Indigenous community has faced numerous challenges over the years, from loss of land and businesses, poverty, underfunded educational systems and limited access to resources. Despite these hardships, we remain committed to preserving our culture and traditions and ensuring a better future for our children.

This land acquisition allows NAAC to provide youth with quality education and training, build more robust conservation programs and promote economic development initiatives to create jobs and opportunities for the community focusing on conservation.

## The significance of rematriation

Land rematriation refers to returning land to its original owners, typically after it has been taken away through force, coercion, taxation or unjust means. It is a cause that strikes at the very heart of social justice and human dignity. For centuries, we Native American communities have suffered under the unjust loss of our ancestral lands, resulting in the disruption of our spiritual practices and traditions. Now, we can support our community and all local individuals as we work to steward our traditional homelands and restore our connection to the land.

This accomplishment is the result of years of effort by many to reclaim lands taken from our Native American communities. NJ Green Acres, NJ Conservation Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and Open Space Institute, along with NAAC, all worked tirelessly to begin the first step of many to be able to protect and preserve the conservation of land and the ways of Indigenous Americans.

Land rematriation significantly impacts the lives of the local communities, providing access to economic opportunities, restoring traditional spiritual practices and promoting spiritual continuity, all of which can help to create a brighter future for all our neighboring and Native American communities.

## Righting past wrongs

Before European colonization, our tribes had distinct territories and boundaries, which we used for hunting, fishing, agriculture and spiritual practices. However, the US government took away much of our land over the centuries through treaties, laws, taxation and military actions, displacing and marginalizing our Native American communities.

Losing our ancestral lands has profoundly impacted our Native American communities, disrupting our spiritual practices, language and traditions. Land Rematriation, therefore, is seen as a way to right past wrongs and restore a sense of spiritual continuity and identity. By accessing our traditional lands, we can reconnect with our spiritual heritage and engage in traditional practices that have been suppressed for generations.

The land is not just seen as a physical commodity to us Native Americans, but is also deeply imbued with spiritual significance. Many of our communities know the land as a living entity that is sacred and is connected to the cycle of life and death. Therefore, land rematriation is not just about gaining access to resources or economic opportunities but is also about honoring spiritual traditions.

For our Native American communities, land rematriation is a critical issue because it relates to the heart of our spiritual identity and beliefs. Land rematriation is a vital issue for our communities because it represents a way to heal past wounds and reclaim our spiritual identity and connection to the land. 🌿

**Note:** Tyrese "Bright Flower" Gould Jacinto is the Granddaughter of Strong Medicine and studied with her to be a keeper of the wisdom of plants and healing.

# Conservation vs. medicine

## The horseshoe crab dilemma

By Julie Lange Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

Each May, during the high tides of the full and new moons, an ancient annual ritual unfolds, beckoning female horseshoe crabs to make their way up New Jersey's sandy Delaware Bayshore beaches, where male crabs are waiting for them at the tide line. Each female digs a shallow nest in the sand and deposits up to 20,000 little green eggs, which are then fertilized by the males. After two to four weeks, the 1/8-inch-long hatchlings dig their way to the surface and head for the water.

Meanwhile, thousands of miles to the south, red knots are winging their way from their wintering grounds in Central and South America with a planned stop-over on the Delaware Bay before moving on to their Arctic breeding area. Their two-week stopover in the region is crucial to their survival. Feeding on horseshoe crab eggs, many birds will almost double their body weight before proceeding on the next 2,000-mile, nonstop leg of their journey.

Mother Nature has cleverly designed the Delaware Bay as the principal East Coast breeding grounds for American horseshoe crabs as well as one the largest staging areas for the red knot in North America. But the pharmaceutical industry has put them both at risk. Horseshoe crabs,

which have existed for 450 million years, are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as a "vulnerable" species based on a 2016 assessment. And the red knot is listed as threatened under the *Endangered Species Act*.

### Blue blood saves lives

Over 400,000 horseshoe crabs are harvested annually for biomedical purposes. The crabs' copper-based, blue blood contains a special clotting agent that attaches to bacterial toxins. Limulus Amebocyte Lysate (LAL), which is manufactured from horseshoe crab blood, has become the worldwide standard test to screen for bacterial contamination. Every intravenous drug, vaccine and surgical implant, such as pacemakers and prosthetic devices, must be tested using LAL. ([www.nj.gov/drbc/basin/living/horseshoe-crabs.html](http://www.nj.gov/drbc/basin/living/horseshoe-crabs.html)) Horseshoe crab blood has recently been found to be useful in cancer research as well.

*Horseshoe crabs lay their eggs on NJ beaches.*



Blood from horseshoe crabs is harvested from adult crabs by extracting a portion of their blood before releasing them alive. It takes dozens of the crabs to produce enough blood to fill a single glass tube. The estimated crab mortality during and after the bleeding process is between 10 and 30 percent. The resulting decline in the horseshoe crab population poses a serious threat to the survival of the red knots.



*Red knots stop to feed on horseshoe crab eggs before continuing their migration.*

## New protections

New Jersey banned the horseshoe crab harvest altogether in its waters in 2008 (the only location in the world that completely restricts their harvest). Other Delaware Bay states follow annual catch quotas set by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), a federal agency.

In May the ASMFC approved new guidelines aimed at keeping more horseshoe crabs alive. While voluntary, the new guidelines urge best practices for the biomedical industry's harvesting and processing of the species. They include measures aimed at limiting exposure to sunlight and keeping crabs cool and wet, which could improve survival rates.


## A synthetic alternative to horseshoe crab blood

In August, *U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP)*, a nonprofit that sets scientific standards for the pharmaceutical industry, proposed a new standard<sup>1</sup> for endotoxin testing that would use non-animal products – the reagents rFC and rCR. If approved, the change could curb demand for horseshoe crab blood. While not

mandatory, the new standard would serve as a best practice for the industry and would bring the US endotoxin testing standards into line with those of Europe and Japan, where the use of non-animal reagents is already approved. One major US pharmaceutical company, Eli Lilly, is now using non-animal reagents for its products.

## What else is being done?

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is studying how declining shorebird populations are directly linked to the Delaware Bay. And many NGO's that are currently working toward the conservation of the Bay (The NJ Wetlands Institute, NJ Fish & Wildlife, Conserve Wildlife NJ, NJ Audubon and Celebrate the Delaware Bay, along with other organizations) are protecting and rescuing horseshoe crabs in an effort called reTurn the Favor<sup>2</sup> to strengthen the population. Meanwhile, Stockton University and partner organizations are working to remove lost and abandoned crab traps in the bay and have recovered about 800 traps so far.

More information on the state of the horseshoe crab population in New Jersey can be found at <https://dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/dsr/trends-horseshoe-crab.pdf>. 

1 [www.usp.org/news/expert-committee-proposes-chapter-for-endotoxin-testing-using-non-animal-derived-reagents](http://www.usp.org/news/expert-committee-proposes-chapter-for-endotoxin-testing-using-non-animal-derived-reagents)

2 <https://returnthefavornj.org/>



## Why we shouldn't expand the NJ Turnpike

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

If it seems like roadway congestion is getting worse every year across the State, that's because it is. Since 2000, the State population has increased by roughly a million residents and is expected to reach half a million more by 2030, increasing the number of vehicles on the road.

The New Jersey Turnpike Authority (NJTA) has embarked on a mission to accommodate this growing number of vehicles, almost always turning to expensive highway expansions. The NJTA is now preparing more widening projects, with the largest costing \$10.7 billion just to widen and repair the 8.1-mile segment of I-78 approaching the Holland Tunnel. Despite continuous expansion projects, Turnpike congestion hasn't improved. This is clearly just one facet of a larger issue. NJ's encouragement of car-centric infrastructure

has sidelined crucial investments in innovative public transportation.

The crux of the issue lies with the number of vehicles in NJ growing faster than our roads can expand. This imbalance manifests as worsened traffic congestion, ultimately diminishing quality of life, especially in environmentally overburdened areas. While proponents argue that this project will ease congestion and stimulate economic growth, a significant number of experts argue that highway expansion will result in "induced demand" by encouraging automotive transportation.

Other negative consequences will have severe implications for public health, including higher levels of roadway pollution in the forms of runoff, air quality and noise. Transportation accounts for a major share of the State's greenhouse gas emissions

that contribute significantly to climate change.

There are alternative solutions that will avoid these negative impacts. The State should



*The number of vehicles in NJ is growing faster than our roads can expand.*

invest in shared public transportation to increase the use of mass transit, thus alleviating congestion, reducing carbon emissions and providing convenient options for commuters. There should also be a major investment in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to promote healthier modes of transportation while reducing reliance on cars. And finally, improving our freight train system could reduce traffic from trucks while accommodating warehouses and growing industry. By investing in public transportation, the State can create a brighter future for all residents.

After determining the proposed expansion would harm the quality of life for residents, the Jersey City Environmental Commission passed a resolution through their city council in 2022 formally opposing the program. This proved to be a game-changer in their city's progress towards a sustainable future. Visit [anjec.org/action-alerts/](https://anjec.org/action-alerts/) to learn how commissions can adopt a resolution supporting sustainable transportation infrastructure in their municipalities. And check out the informative webinar on the proposed Turnpike expansion on our YouTube channel at ANJEC Views. 🌊

## \$10 million to advance NJ's electric vehicle transportation goal

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

To address the waitlist for electric vehicle (EV) charging station funding, Governor Phil Murphy has announced a \$10 million boost in State support to accelerate development of EV infrastructure in New Jersey. This move advances the Administration's bold vehicle electrification and climate mitigation goals. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has already allocated about \$8 million from this funding for workplace and multi-dwelling charging-station projects across the State.

DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette discussed the funding boost on Sept. 28 during a National Drive Electric Week event in Lawrence Township. The municipality is adding chargers to its municipal complex for employee and public use, investing in an electric garbage truck for the Public Works Department, and is among the first communities in the country to sign the national Charge@Work pledge (*Charge@Work*).

"Our climate is changing right before us. We must continue to act with the sense of



urgency the climate crisis demands," Commissioner LaTourette said. "Governor Murphy and I are committed to moving forward decisively with the transition to an electrified transportation sector by providing the funding and the leadership that will result in a healthier, sustainable and more resilient future for New Jersey."

The transition to electric vehicles is especially important in NJ, where emissions from gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles are the largest source – approximately 37 percent – of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. 🌊

# Olivia Glenn reflects on EPA priorities, local opportunities

By N. Dini Checko, ANJEC Resource Center

*"Serving on an environmental commission shows you the true essence of public service and volunteerism." – Olivia Glenn*

**A** NJEC was honored to welcome Olivia Glenn, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 2 Chief of Staff, as our 50th Environmental Congress keynote speaker. Glenn has an accomplished record of environmental leadership in New Jersey. Prior to her role at EPA, she was Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Justice and Equity at the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and managed the Department's Division of Parks and Forestry.

Glenn began her remarks by sharing about her invaluable experience as a Pennsauken Township Environmental Commission (EC) member. She emphasized the value of local community engagement and actions because these are what drive state and federal priorities. Shifting to her current responsibilities, Glenn said the historic *Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law (BPIL)* and the *Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)* reflect the EPA's on-the-ground priorities – from expanding access to clean drinking water to rebuilding roads, bridges and rails with a laser focus on combatting climate change and advancing environmental justice.

The Justice 40 initiative, which is funded by the *BPIL* and the *IRA*, mandates that at least 40 percent of the

benefits of certain federal investments must flow to disadvantaged communities. Justice 40 programming covers seven categories: climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean water and wastewater infrastructure. She noted that New Jersey and New York are national leaders with innovative environmental justice laws. ([www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40-epa](http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40-epa))

## Grant opportunities

Glenn listed several available grants and opportunities for municipalities.

### Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund –

This program will leverage public investment with private capital to fund projects to combat the climate crisis and create good-paying jobs. The Clean Communities Investment Accelerator dedicates \$6 billion to support community-driven, nonprofit pollution reduction initiatives.

**Climate Pollution Reduction Grant programs** – This \$5 billion grant pool is a three-part program for communities, states, territories and tribal nations. Currently, \$3 million in grant funding has been expended for planning. Projects need to be focused

on the following: electricity generation, industry, transportation, buildings, agriculture and waste management. In Spring 2024, another round of grants for implementing the planned projects, called the Climate Pollution Implementation Grants, will be released.

**Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR)** – SWIFR allocates \$55 million in grants every year (from 2022 to 2026) and funds activities that support long-term planning and data collection to demonstrate progress toward the National Recycling goal and the Food Loss and Waste Reduction goal. It advances circular economy for materials, as well as supporting state-led implementation of plans to advance post-consumer materials management.

**State Revolving Fund** – States spent \$495 million in 2022 and 2023 on clean water (water quality, water and energy efficiency and combined sewer overflows) and drinking water (contamination prevention and lead pipe replacement). NJ is only one of four states selected to be part of the national Lead Service Line Accelerator Program. Newark's pilot program advancing lead service line replacement is a national leader.

**Environmental Justice Block Grants** – This program allocates \$2.8 billion for financial and technical assistance to carry out environmental and climate justice activities to benefit underserved and overburdened communities. Thriving Communities' Technical Centers are being established to help towns navigate these various grants and federal agencies. ([www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-thriving-communities-technical-assistance-centers](https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-thriving-communities-technical-assistance-centers))

The EPA recently awarded NJ funding for two exciting programs: reducing food waste and supporting environmental justice. A \$500,000 grant was awarded to provide food waste management guidance for local governments and to create a food waste estimation tool for commercial businesses and institutions to determine how much

pre-consumer versus post-consumer food waste they generate per year.

Jersey City, Newark, Hudson County, DEP, the Ironbound Community Corporation and the NJ Environmental Justice Alliance were awarded \$4.8 million in funding for projects/programs to support environmental justice work.

## Opportunities for towns

Glenn offered recommendations to help communities make the most of available resources:

Engage with your municipal business administrator, planning board liaison and mayor. A lot more federal funding is slated for NJ over the next few years and the EPA must partner with municipalities to properly allocate this money, so it's important to know what your town is prioritizing.

Review the DEP's Environmental Justice website; it's robust with mapping tools, resources and project highlights. (<https://dep.nj.gov/ej>)

Consider how your environmental commission can best support residents living in vulnerable areas in your community. For example, New Brunswick organized a cleanup in their 57-block Esperanza neighborhood with local leaders in Spanish. 🌱

*Olivia Glenn, EPA Region 2  
Chief of Staff*



# DEP Commissioner LaTourette stresses EC partnership

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

**S**hawn LaTourette, NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner, delivered the featured address to a full house of environmental commissioners from across the State at ANJEC's 50th annual Environmental Congress. He began by narrating his aerial tour of the Jersey shore earlier in the morning.

LaTourette noted that the challenges across the State vary and emphasized that those differences make the jobs of environmental commissions (ECs) even more important. He explained that the dedicated DEP staff in Trenton have great ideas, but the "...hyper-local experience that our environmental commission members have is critical. The understanding of that experience and the needs of our communities is critical for us [the DEP] to provide the services that we hope will reach every corner of the State." LaTourette emphasized the tandem importance of the DEP hearing from ECs about their needs and, in turn, ECs knowing what services DEP has to offer to meet the needs of communities and our natural environment.

## Partnerships for health and environment

LaTourette pointed to the DEP's Community Investment and Economic Revitalization Program that connects public health and the environment to improve the quality of life for NJ communities. "How well we care for the public health and the environment we share is in fact an economic and community development imperative," he said. "...You can't have healthy people and good commerce without clean water or



*DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette (right) with ANJEC Executive Director Jennifer Coffey*

good tree cover.... This program [Community Investment and Economic Revitalization] houses many of the functions that directly serve our local communities, including our Green Acres initiative, our local government assistance and our Community Collaborative Initiative, which is a specific place program based where we work in tandem, in place, in communities with community leadership." (<https://dep.nj.gov/cier/>) "It is full of opportunities that local government leaders and ECs should know about. There is a lot of opportunity in DEP to assist local communities."

LaTourette encouraged ECs to reach out to DEP to develop partnership and to help advance solutions to local public health and environmental challenges. Keiona Miller, Manager of the Office of Local Government Assistance, and her staff were present at the Environmental Congress for

the entire day, answering questions and making connections. She and her staff can be reached at 609-633-7700 or via email at [localgov@dep.nj.gov](mailto:localgov@dep.nj.gov).

## Climate change and environmental justice

The Commissioner focused much of his remarks on the challenges of climate change and advancing environmental justice, particularly for communities who are first and worst hit by the impacts of the climate crisis.

"The reality is terrible," LaTourette acknowledged. He talked about some of the largest greenhouse gas emission polluters in New Jersey: energy production, transportation and building inefficiency. The political, policy and economic challenges of making our natural infrastructure stronger are huge. How we reduce climate change is all about how we reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Commissioner noted. We've made progress in adopting policies such as a cap on carbon emissions for energy generation. We need to prompt change in the transportation sector, since about 70 percent of emissions are from passenger vehicles and light duty trucks, he observed.


Making personal changes en masse is one of our biggest challenges. It's difficult

to get people to do something different than they have always done, such as moving from combustion engines to electric vehicles, LaTourette said.

## Moving to resilience

The flip side of pollution reduction has to do with our response to climate change. "It is still going to get bad, a lot worse, because environmental problems take a long time to materialize and an even longer time to correct. So even after we get to net zero and lower them further, it still gets bad. The Earth's response to all that pollution will continue for decades," LaTourette warned. "Warming and extreme precipitation will get worse."

New Jersey is on the cutting edge, advancing resilience policies that embrace the reality of the climate crisis. The Inland Flood Hazard Regulations that were adopted in July 2023 are the first in the nation to use climate modeling to regulate land use decisions, he said. We need ECs as partners to ensure municipal ordinances are updated and the rules are implemented.


Commissioner LaTourette closed by underscoring the critically important role that ECs have played in making New Jersey the great State that it is and the need for ECs' continued work as we face the challenges of today and tomorrow. 

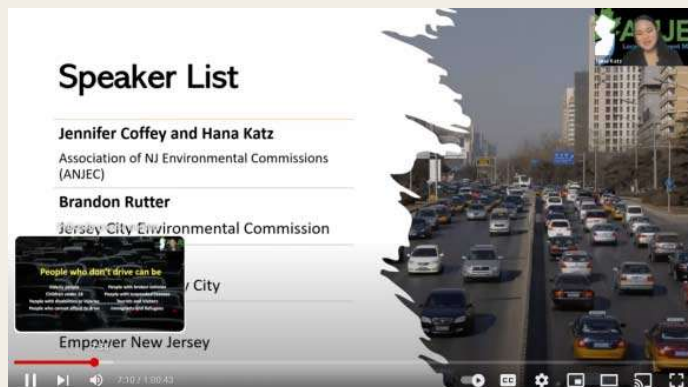
## Visit the ANJEC YouTube channel

### Now with over 100 training videos!

You can find recordings of our webinars, workshops and trainings from the past three years, including Environmental Congress presentations, on ANJEC's YouTube channel, ANJEC Views. This is your opportunity to:

- View presentations you may have missed;
- Provide training for new environmental commission members; or
- Share valuable content with municipal officials.

Find it all at ANJEC Views at [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com/ANJECViews). 



# ANJEC recognizes outstanding environmental achievement

**E**nvironmental commissions (ECs), nonprofit organizations and municipal leaders received ANJEC's prestigious Environmental Achievement Awards at the 50th Annual Environmental Congress on Oct. 13.

## Environmental Commissions

### Bedminster – Bedminster Township Pond

Popular for waterfowl and frequented for fishing, Bedminster Township Pond became a victim to stormwater runoff containing fertilizers and seeds from invasive plants, as well as increasing temperatures. Hikers and bikers using the nearby trails noticed the absence of swans and that plant life mostly concealed the pond. The EC consulted with the Raritan Headwaters Association, Black Lagoon (the Township's pond maintenance vendor), and the NJ Invasive Species Strike Team, leading to a two-year trial period being created and adapted in 2021 to restore the pond. With the support of the Township Committee, the Bedminster EC is proud to report that the pond is healthier and viable after only two years of restoration.

### Caldwell – Planting for Pollinators

In May 2023, a "Planting for Pollinators" webinar was held by the Caldwell Environmental Commission and eight kits, purchased from the Great Swamp Watershed Association containing 25 chemical-free native plants, were raffled off to attendees to encourage gardens on their properties. Additionally, the Caldwell EC provided tours of their pollinator garden, part of the Borough's open space, in June of 2023 and provided reading materials to further encourage learning about native plants.

### Readington – 2023 Digital ERI

Readington Township, in partnership with Princeton Hydro, developed New Jersey's first interactive Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) in digital format, paving the way for a more modernized, easily accessible, and highly functional resource. Users are now able to explore environmental resource mapping, zoom and pan to specific sites, and view attributes without specialized GIS software or training. The interactive ERI is now complete and available at (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1605902a9599483d9f43b4bdf4fd8f8c>)

### Rumson – Emerald Necklace Green Infrastructure Project

In honor of Frederick Law Olmsted, the Rumson Environmental Commission has applied his term "Emerald Necklace" to describe a recent project educating and promoting green infrastructure in the Township. Rumson's "Emerald Necklace Green Infrastructure" project selected two parks on the rivers that surround their peninsula as well as the Rumson School District property that sits in its center as the framework of the "necklace." Through education, outreach and support, the Rumson EC encourages residents to install green infrastructure practices to add "jewels" to the town's necklace. With four grants totaling \$36,000, the Rumson EC began the project in the spring of 2022 with three objectives: install three demonstration rain gardens, educate on the importance of green infrastructure and provide project support via workshops, starter kits and a core group of "Rain Garden Ambassadors."

### **Recurring Project Award Pitman Environmental Commission – Pitman BioBlitz 2023**

The Pitman Environmental Commission held its first annual “Pitman BioBlitz” in June 2023 at Alcyon Park, with the objective of finding and identifying as many species of plants and animals as possible over a short time using the iNaturalist app. The event promoted citizen science, environmental education and understanding local ecology, plus it helped the Pitman Environmental Commission monitor the biodiversity in the Borough and support decision making. The all-ages event was a huge success and included an entire day of presentations and activities related to trees, insects and land to name a few. The Pitman EC looks forward to planning the second annual event in 2024.

### **Nonprofit Achievement Awards Candide’s Garden and Friends, Inc – Patchwork for Wildlife**

Lake Como’s Candide’s Garden and Friends, Inc. works with the Environmental Commission to encourage residents to make various environmental improvements in their yards, such as native plantings, installing pervious surfaces and eliminating chemical applications. Their signature project “Patchwork for Wildlife” fulfills their mission by providing resources to make these environmental improvements and, once achieved, awards residents with certificates of appreciation for their

endeavors by gifting yard signs for display on their properties. In July 2023, the first annual Environmental Garden Tour was held in Lake Como to educate and promote the program within the Borough and beyond. The program currently includes 100+ yards.

### **Mutual Morris – Food Waste Reduction and Distribution**

Founded in February of 2020, the mission of Mutual Morris is to create mutual aid networks in Morris County to support emergency relief and build self-sufficiency through education and community initiatives. The organization launched a “food waste reduction and distribution” program in June of 2023 to redistribute over 1,000 pounds of produce, bread, eggs and other goods weekly from Trader Joe’s with the help of Sharing Excess, a food rescue nonprofit. The food is delivered weekly to over 100 families in Morris County in reusable bags and cardboard boxes to enhance sustainability. The program is currently run out of a community member’s house, and Mutual Morris is in the process of setting up a formal

*From left, Marion McClary, Jr., ANJEC Board President; Raymond Le Chien, Emerging Leader Committee, Brick Environmental Commission; Francesca Mundrick, Emerging Leader Committee, Pitman Environmental Commission; Nicolette Albanese, Emerging Leader Committee,*

*GZA Geoenvironmental; Shawn LaTourette, DEP Commissioner and Jennifer Coffey, ANJEC Executive Director.*





*From left, Mario Cabalero of Clinton Twp. with DEP Commissioner Shawn La Tourette and Municipal Leadership Award winner Amy Switlyk, Clinton Twp. Councilwoman.*

Photo by Chris Sotiro

distribution site at the food pantry of the First Baptist Church in Madison.

### **Save the Environment of Moorestown – Swede Run Fields Conversion to Habitat Restoration**

After learning of the Township's interest in improving a land parcel, Save the Environment of Moorestown (STEM) contacted the US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS) to propose their idea of converting it into a native grass and pollinator field under the US FWS Partners for Wildlife Program. The 75+ acre property, located within the Swede Run Fields, was formerly a soybean and corn farm that had been grown over by invasive plants. US FWS conducted a survey of the site and deemed it valuable for habitat restoration. The Township provided financial commitment and support via a May 2021 resolution. STEM coordinated the project from start to finish according to the US FWS specifications, and today the field is full of native grasses and pollinators and offers critical habitat for endangered birds.

### **Sustainable Ringwood's Green Team – Pollinator Garden**

In 2022, Sustainable Ringwood planted a pollinator garden in an area adjacent to the Ringwood Public Library to educate the community on the value and importance of plants that support pollinators. An event at the library marked the official opening of

the garden in July of 2023 which included activities for children and adults alike to learn the necessity of pollinator gardens and hear from a beekeeper. The library incorporated the garden into its summer programming by scheduling opportunities for children to learn about their role in the plant ecosystem. The municipal government funded the plants and soil amendments, and the garden will be maintained by Sustainable Ringwood's Green Team.

## **Community Legacy Awards**

### **Ridgefield Park Environmental Commission – Ridgefield Park Nature Preserve**

Over fifty years in the making, the Ridgefield Park Nature Preserve opened in June of 2023. John Anlian, a young forestry student, wrote a letter to the local newspaper in 1970 citing the importance of open space and preserved land and, along with his friend Steve Quinn, presented slideshows to all types of civic organizations to promote the message. The targeted area was initially owned by 18 different property owners and, over the years, the village acquired the lots – all on a voluntary basis – and thanks in large part to the NJ State Green Acres Program and the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund. The Nature Preserve comprises three separate areas: a woodland, a marsh and a field/meadow. Visitors enjoy trail routes with interpretive signage, scheduled activities and the opportunity to enjoy nature firsthand in their own village. The preserve is a living laboratory for all, as well as for future generations. Anlian is now the mayor of Ridgefield Park and thanks to his dedication and leadership, and the volunteer hours of students, the Environmental Commission, and community members, the preserve is maintained and kept full of life.

### **Sea Girt Conservancy – Edgemere Park Pollinator Garden**

Sea Girt resident and councilwoman Diane Anthony has a knack for explaining the importance of native species and eliminating invasives – and effectively getting residents to do something about it.

In 2020, amidst the pandemic, Anthony formed the Sea Girt Conservancy (SGC), a nonprofit committed to improving parks and open spaces through education and projects. SGC put their mission into action by taking on the invasive species that had overtaken a long-neglected Borough park called Edgemere. In March of 2023, they held an information session to explain the benefits of pollinator gardens and, a few months later, over 300 plants were installed at Edgemere Park as the first phase of the project. SGC envisions that Edgemere Park will become an environmental benefit to the area that will bring educational value to the community.

## **Municipal Leadership Awards**

### **Councilwoman Amy Switlyk, Township of Clinton**

Councilwoman Amy Switlyk plays an instrumental role in the protection and improvement of municipal open space by leading activities involving reforestation, spearheading pollinator restoration, and working closely with the Department of Public Works to maintain trails. One of Switlyk's top priorities is outreach, creating yearly educational programs such as "birding for beginners," stream health assessments, hosting a Green Fair and an electric car show. Switlyk serves as the council liaison to both the Environmental Commission and the Open Space Committee in the Township.

### **Councilman William Boyce, Borough of Old Tappan**

Councilman William Boyce possesses a strong commitment to the environment and encourages the rest of the Old Tappan governing body to be conscious of the impact people have on their surroundings. Boyce founded Biosphere Inc, a professional landscape firm, and his company's designs have been recognized for their unique sensitivity to the environment. Serving as the liaison to both the Planning Board and Environmental Commission, Boyce has supported the Commission by securing funding for an additional community garden, reviewing development proposals,

and is currently updating Old Tappan's tree ordinance with the future at the forefront.


### **Mayor Robert Jakubowski, Borough of Audubon**

Mayor Robert Jakubowski has been an active member of Sustainable Audubon and has contributed to many of its successful projects, such as establishing a shade tree replacement program, initiating the development of a Community Energy Plan, and creating gardens that benefit pollinators and improve stormwater management. In addition, Jakubowski has taken the initiative to alert Sustainable Audubon of external funding opportunities for these projects.

### **Council Member Marjorie Fox, City of Summit**

Council member Marjorie Fox is a tireless champion of the environment. Fox founded Summit's Annual Citywide Earth Day Clean Up and has supported numerous and varied sustainability efforts over her nearly two decades of public service as a volunteer and elected official. Projects include the Summit Free Market, Tiny Forest, residential food waste composting, shade tree plantings, an expanded sidewalk plan, several rain gardens, and education efforts on lawn care, idling, proper recycling, and single use plastics. Prior to becoming an elected official, Fox served on Summit's Environmental Commission and, once elected, she has served as the Council liaison.

### **Councilman Dean Blumetti, Sparta Township**

Councilman Dean Blumetti has dedicated years to turning Sparta Township into a community of environmentally conscious residents. Blumetti began as an Environmental Commissioner and instituted the procedure of meticulously examining every development application with reference to protecting the Highlands. As Councilman, he has served as both the liaison to the Planning Board and Environmental Commission, which has helped greatly to improve communications and support dialogue, throughout town government regarding the environment. 

# ANJEC honors Senator Bob Smith

At ANJEC's Environmental Congress 50th anniversary celebration on Oct. 13, NJ Senator Bob Smith was presented with the organization's Environmental Champion for New Jersey Award. Senator Smith has served the people of NJ as a distinguished representative in the Legislature for 27 years and in the State Senate since 2002. His outstanding service as chair of the Senate Environment & Energy Committee (which he describes as the "most interesting committee in the Senate") has helped cement NJ's status as a national environmental leader.

His accomplishments include: shepherding landmark legislation that has led to cleaning up thousands of contaminated sites; reducing flood hazards; combating climate change; saving our nation's oldest continuously operating nature center at the NJ School of Conservation; securing long-term sustainable



*Senator Smith with Keiona Miller of NJ DEP at the ANJEC Environmental Congress*

funding for the preservation of open spaces, farmland, and historic sites; our nation's first *Environmental Justice Law*; and the country's strongest plastic pollution reduction law to date.

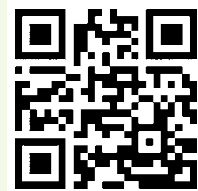
Senator Bob Smith is also a former member and chair of the Environmental Commission in his hometown, Piscataway. 🌊



*In honor of  
ANJEC's Founder and  
First Executive Director*

## Candace McKee Ashmun Memorial Fund

ANJEC established the Candace McKee Ashmun Memorial Fund in her honor to support the **ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant Program**. The annual program provides small grants to help environmental commissioners carry out local stewardship projects.



[ANJEC.ORG/DONATE](https://ANJEC.ORG/DONATE)

To donate, use the QR code or mail a check to ANJEC, PO Box 157, Mendham NJ 07945.

# Sandy Batty receives the Candace McKee Ashmun Environmental Legacy Award

**F**ormer ANJEC Executive Director Sandy Batty was presented with the eighth annual Candace McKee Ashmun Award, named in honor of ANJEC's first director, Candace McKee Ashmun, who served a leadership role at ANJEC for over 40 years and was a tireless advocate for New Jersey's environment.

During Batty's 29-year tenure at ANJEC, she served as Executive Director for 12 years. Previous roles included directing the recycling program, editing the *ANJEC Report*, writing the third edition of the *Environmental Commissioners Handbook* and overseeing production of publications.

She also held leadership positions with several other environmental organizations in New Jersey. She was a founding board member of the NJ Highlands Coalition and served several terms as board president. She also helped found the NJ League of Conservation Voters and served as its first treasurer. She chaired the board of the Coalition for Affordable Housing and the Environment, and convened the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition, leading its meetings.

At the municipal level in Mountain Lakes, Batty has served for many decades in local government. She is currently chair of the Shade Tree Commission, secretary of the Affordable Housing Committee and vice president of the Library Board. Formerly, she was an elected member of the Borough Council, long-time member and chair of the Planning Board, and a member of the Environmental Commission. 🌱



*ANJEC Executive Director Jennifer Coffey presents the Candace McKee Ashmun Award to Sandy Batty, right.*

## 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! 🌱

# 2023 ANJEC

Local Environment Matters

## 50th Annual Environmental Congress



Photos by Kyle Krejdovski and Gary Szelc





By **Lisa Plevin**, Vice-Chair, Parsippany Environmental Advisory Committee;  
**Shawn R. Klein**, MD, Livingston Councilman; and  
**Stephen Elliott**, ANJEC Landscape Makeover Project Director

## Bat walks enlighten Parsippany residents

The Parsippany Bat Protection Project's (PBPP's) ongoing bat walks are very popular with children of all ages, who are mesmerized by these mysterious and ecologically important creatures of the night. Participants gather at Troy Meadows Nature Preserve and settle in for an outdoor educational program, followed by a walk at dusk to locate bats as they start to feed. Free bat-themed arts and crafts, such as coloring books, are provided for children before the program begins. Each bat walk usually draws about 50 people.

The PBPP is an initiative of the Parsippany Green Team, supported by the Parsippany Environmental Advisory Committee, Wildlife Preserves, Morris County 4-H and Rutgers University. Its goals are to educate people about the importance of bats in the ecosystem, to provide local bats with suitable habitat and to humanely reduce conflicts between bats and people.

To protect habitat for bats, the PBPP also works to identify local areas most suitable for bat houses and works with local scout troops to build them. Another important goal is the protection and

creation of natural habitat for bats, such as shagbark hickory trees, where bats will roost under their loose bark. The group also focuses on engaging children by creating bat-related lesson ideas, activities and resources for teachers and school librarians.

Because educating people is critically important to bat protection efforts, PBPP organizes several bat walks per season, which are both educational and a lot of fun. Experts from the Rutgers Wildlife Conservation and Management Program lead the walks, beginning with fascinating facts about bats, why they are so important to the environment and why some species

face the threat of extinction. They engage the audience with trivia, quizzes and games to illustrate the value of their research and their love of bats.

Finally as the sun sets, a Rutgers educator leads the group on a walk, using special equipment designed to identify bat echolocation calls, which are usually above the range of human hearing. Looking up into a clearing, the night sky shows quick flits of bat activity as they forage for insects. Most children and adults have a



*Children learn about the importance of bats in the ecosystem during bat walks sponsored by the Parsippany Bat Protection Project at Troy Meadows Nature Preserve.*

chance to see several bats and the walk back is filled with excited chatter about their sightings.

For more information visit <https://parsippanygreenteam.com/bats>

– Lisa Plevin

## Livingston enacts green building ordinance

Officials in municipal government looking to raise the bar on environmental standards for local building construction often have difficulty requiring more

stringent requirements than those mandated by the State. This can be particularly frustrating with so much new construction taking place as towns and cities are faced with fulfilling affordable housing obligations. It seems like an important missed opportunity.

Livingston officials found a pathway forward. Often, when municipalities deal with affordable housing, they turn to the tool of redevelopment. When an area is declared in need of redevelopment, the usual building standards need not apply. When municipalities and developers sign agreements for redevelopment, greener

*continued on page 24*

## Fun and learning with moths

Whether you're in North Jersey, South Jersey or even that mythical Central Jersey for at least one week in the summer, the picturesque Monarchs, swallowtails and true brushfoots take a back seat to their more mysterious relatives within the order Lepidoptera. Started in this very State, National Moth Week has brought lesser known, but no less important, insects to the forefront.

From Whitesbog and the Black Run Preserve in the Pinelands to the Abbott Marshlands, Great Swamp, Sparta, Westampton, and Woodbine, some rather simple but memorable events took place last July (other than those delayed due to weather) when the sun went down.

People of all ages stayed up a little later, not for fireworks but to learn about and experience firsthand this diverse group of pollinators that also provide a vital food source for birds, bats and mammals. A bright light and a white sheet with somewhere to hang it up is really all that is required to initiate this unique learning experience and attract a variety of species – some sinister looking, some stunning. Experts, of course, bring their metal halide or mercury vapor bulbs along with a concoction of beer and bananas to spread on trees as bait, but turn on a porch light near woods or wetlands and you will see that not all moths need red-carpet treatment.

Some moths are active as long as the temperature is above freezing, so you do not have to confine your activities to Moth Week to learn about the Viper's Bugloss, red-necked peanutworm, little devil, or Music-loving Moth. Flip on that porch light or set up a light and sheet in your yard, and definitely bring your inner child's curiosity to learn about these unfortunately declining denizens of the night.

– Stephen Elliott



*Moth night sponsored by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance in 2012*

## The Way of the Ramapough

ANJEC Executive Director Jennifer Coffey speaks at a news conference during an evening of cultural celebrations sponsored by a coalition of environmental organizations and educators. The event on Sunday, Sept. 17, at Liberty State Park in Jersey City honored the rich history and heritage of the Ramapough Munsee-Luunape people and supported their Federal recognition.

The program featured inspiring talks by Turtle Clan Chief of the Ramapough Munsee Lenape Nation Vincent Mann, Endurance Swimmer Lewis Pugh, Dr. Jack Chen of Rutgers Newark and other nonprofit and community leaders – as well as a ceremonial drum performance and a showing of the new documentary film “The Way of the Ramapough.”



*ANJEC executive director Jennifer Coffey at the podium.*

*continued from page 23*

building can be mandated above and beyond State regulations.

Livingston has passed an ordinance for redevelopment projects that requires minimum green building benchmarks in solar capacity, cool roofing, heat exchange units instead of typical HVAC, and increased capacity for charging stations for parked electric vehicles, among other improvements. The ordinance also man-

dates pre-wiring for electric ranges in kitchens, even where residents have opted for gas burners, so that they can be easily switched over in the future, allowing for a reduced carbon footprint and cleaner, safer indoor air without major reconstruction.

Livingston officials are happy to provide copies of their ordinance and strongly encourage other towns to pass similar legislation. Please reach out to [sklein@livingstonnj.org](mailto:sklein@livingstonnj.org). – Shawn R. Klein

## Gone, but not forgotten

By Cheryl Reardon, ANJEC Project Director

### Ed Lloyd (1948-2023) A true environmental champion

In early August we celebrated the life of Edward Lloyd, an environmental champion and fierce advocate of environmental causes. He took on corporations and state governments, crafted laws to protect the environment, founded the NJ Public



*The late Pinelands Commissioner Candace McKee Ashmun (1924 - 2020) with Ed Lloyd during the dedication of the educational exhibit that was named in her honor in 2018.*

Interest Research Group, and served on the New Jersey Pinelands Commission for 25 years... and that's just the short list!

On the NJ Pinelands Commission, Lloyd fought the proposal to build a 22-mile pipeline through the Pinelands. He sued Governor Chris Christie's administration for withdrawing from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. He also founded the Eastern Environmental Law Clinic, was a clinical professor of environmental law at Columbia University, and served on the New Jersey Supreme Court Committee on Environmental Litigation. Ed Lloyd leaves a lasting legacy as a defender of the environment and he is deeply missed by all who knew him.

## Honorable Sheila Oliver (1952-2023)

### A dedicated public servant and trailblazer



*Sheila Oliver*

August also saw the passing of the Honorable Sheila Y. Oliver. In 2017 she was elected Gov. Murphy's lieutenant governor after serving for more than 15 years in the Legislature. In 2010, Oliver became the first Black woman to hold statewide elected office in NJ, and to lead the predominantly male State Assembly. Governor Murphy characterized her as "a trailblazer in every sense of the word."

Oliver was active in the State chapter of Emerge America, a national organization that recruits and trains Democratic women to run for office. She often spoke of her formative years growing up and attending school in Newark, where her eyes were opened to "societal injustices and inequities."

Sheila Oliver is remembered for her inspiring and dedicated service and her tireless work to uplift the people and communities of New Jersey.

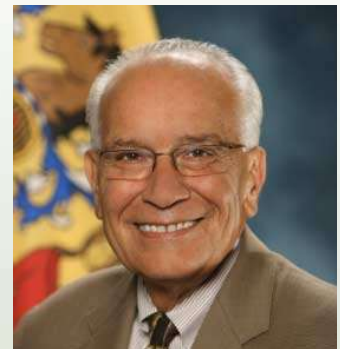
## Joseph Fiordaliso (1945-2023) – Clean energy leader

Joseph Fiordaliso, longtime New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) commissioner and its president since 2018, passed away in early September. As BPU president, he oversaw the Murphy administration's dedicated efforts to transition NJ to a clean energy future and was implementing one of the country's most aggressive clean energy programs.

Fiordaliso was appointed to the State Planning Commission in 2018 and served as co-chair on the NJ Council on the Green Economy. He also served on the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' Committee on Energy Resources and the Environment, and as a member of the Executive Committee for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Inc. In 2023, the federal Energy Regulatory Commission appointed him to the Joint Federal State Task Force on Electric Transmission.

Fiordaliso was known to speak of his grandchildren often when describing the planet he hoped to leave to them – one in which renewable energy sources like wind, solar and geothermal help reduce the worst effects of climate change by replacing the burning of fossil fuels.

Governor Phil Murphy described Joseph Fiordaliso as "a consummate public servant, a trusted colleague and a good friend."



*Joseph Fiordaliso*

# A vision comes to life – the Phillipsburg Riverfront Heritage Trail

By **Randi K. Rothmel**, ANJEC Project Director

A decade-long redevelopment vision, the Phillipsburg Riverfront Heritage Trail, can now begin in earnest. Designed in part using Highlands Council planning grants and assistance, the project recently received funding from the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TA) Grants Program.

TA grants provide federal funds for community-based, nontraditional surface transportation projects designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic and environmental aspects of the nation's intermodal system.

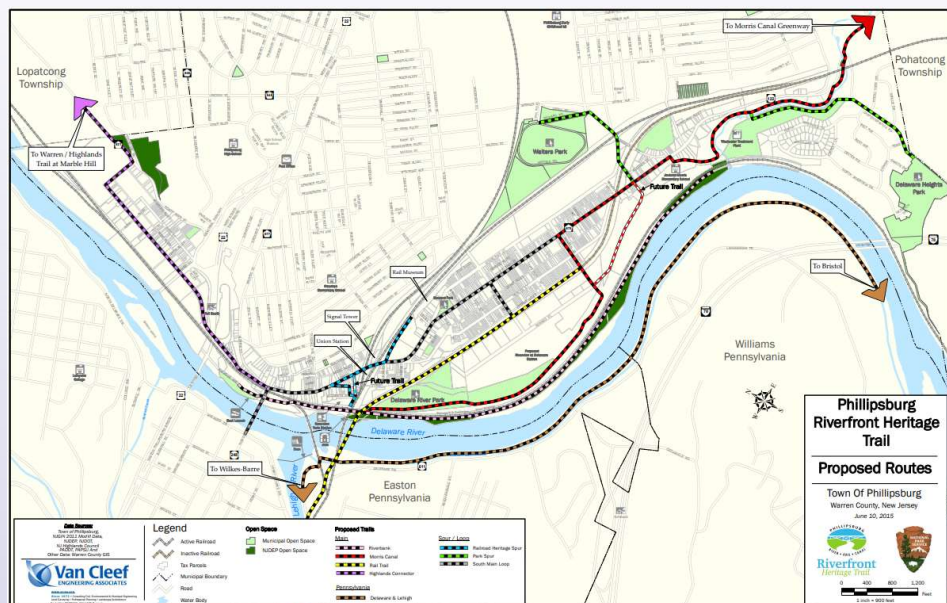
The NJ program is administered by the NJ Department of Transportation, in partnership with the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization. A total of \$52,168,000 was awarded to 47 communities statewide in FY 2023. Phillipsburg will receive a \$1.36 million grant to begin construction of the Riverfront Heritage Trail, which will provide unique eco-heritage and recreational tourism opportunities to support Phillipsburg's downtown revitalization efforts.

As Mayor Todd M. Tersigni said,

"The Riverfront Heritage Trail was originally conceptualized by the town as a way to maximize (its) assets, connecting residents and visitors with local history and businesses."

Phase One of the project includes construction of ten segments of the trail as well as downtown trail markers and wayfinding signage. Maryjude Haddock Weiler, Planning Manager for the Highlands Council, noted that "...the Riverfront Heritage Trail fits well in the larger framework of the Highlands Regional Economic Sustainability Plan." In particular, "The connections with the Morris Canal Greenway and the Highlands Trail... demonstrate how seeing beyond municipal boundaries and taking a regional view of planning can expand economic potential."

More information about the TA Set-Aside Grant Program can be found at [www.nj.gov/transportation/business/localaid/alternatives.shtm](http://www.nj.gov/transportation/business/localaid/alternatives.shtm).



# Introducing Stephen Elliott!

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

**A**NJEC is pleased to welcome Stephen Elliott, our new Water Outreach Specialist. In that role, he promotes, educates and manages the installation of green infrastructure projects and oversees the South Jersey Landscape Makeover Program - all of which help improve the water quality of South Jersey. He does this work for ANJEC and for the Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA).

Prior to joining ANJEC and PPA, Stephen served as an AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador, where he organized volunteer efforts resulting in the removal of ten tons of dumped materials from NJ state forests, as well as the planting of 1,400 native species in a bioretention basin and the improvement of a stormwater management area on Rancocas Creek Farm. He also managed the biological and habitat stream monitoring program for the Rancocas Creek Watershed under the NJ Department of Environmental Protection. The Watershed Ambassadors raise awareness of how human activities can affect water quality, especially in the most densely populated state in the nation. The goal of the program is to “promote watershed stewardship through education and direct community involvement, and to monitor stream health through performing visual and biological assessments ([www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bears/ameri-corps.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bears/ameri-corps.htm)).” This was a perfect place to train as a Water Outreach Specialist and we are lucky to have Stephen show up with this valuable background.


Environmental protection has been a new direction for Stephen. He has pivoted from a 17-year career with the federal government, beginning in the US Marine Corps as a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense specialist, where he



*Stephen with his buddy Loki*

was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal. He then became an intelligence officer, also for the US Marine Corps, and moved on to serve as a background investigator, interviewing federal employees and contractors who needed federal security clearance before being able to perform their jobs. At the Department of Veterans Affairs, he supported veterans and their families as they navigated the maze of government benefits. He also took on paralegal duties and was selected as a Veteran Affairs Acquisition Academy Fellow.

In his present position, he continues in this advocacy role and is focused on being an educator and advocate for ecologically sound decisions and sustainable practices.

Stephen is a graduate of Penn State University and is a Rutgers Cooperative Extension Green Infrastructure Champion. In his spare time, he likes to read, learn new skills or hobbies and wander the woods with his dog Loki (pictured). 

# ANJEC receives inspiring stock donation

## How your financial choices can make a world of difference

By **Amanda Brockwell**, ANJEC Development Director

**A**NJEC reached a significant milestone in 2023 by receiving the largest stock donation in the organization's history – a generous gift of nearly \$55,000 inspired by the donor's lifelong dedication to the protection of our environment. While choosing to remain anonymous, the donor made their intent clear: to ensure ANJEC has the financial resources to continue its mission and provide direct support to the Open Space Stewardship Grants program, which provides vital funding to community projects led by environmental commissions.

This substantial contribution will enable ANJEC to continue providing essential education and advocacy programs that environmental commissions depend upon. ANJEC Executive Director Jennifer Coffey expressed her gratitude for this remarkable gift: "I am humbled by the generosity and commitment of our supporters, exemplified by this incredible donation. At a time of global uncertainty and financial fluctuations, this gift helps ensure we remain able to continue promoting local action to protect our environment."

**Your donations in action**

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Inspiring collaboration

Providing guidance on community-driven projects


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**Would you like to make the most of your stock portfolio while simultaneously supporting a cause you care about?**

By donating stock or mutual funds directly to a qualified nonprofit organization like ANJEC, you can avoid capital gains tax, resulting in a 20 percent greater contribution to the cause that reflects your values. To be eligible for this tax benefit, the stock must have appreciated in value since your purchase and been held

for at least one year. This means you can give 20 percent more to a worthy cause while still being eligible to deduct the full market value of the stock donation on your income taxes.

To explore how this strategy can benefit you and the causes you hold dear, we recommend consulting with your financial and tax advisors. Your choices can make a world of difference. For more information on ways to help ANJEC, contact [abrockwell@anjec.org](mailto:abrockwell@anjec.org) 



## **Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions**

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**Virtual Sessions:**

Tuesday, March 12, 7 pm  
Wednesday, March 13, Noon & 7 pm  
Thursday, March 14, 7 pm

**In person session:**

Saturday, April 13, 9 am - 1 pm

Location details available soon at <https://anjec.org/conferences-workshops/>.

Check [ANJEC.org](https://anjec.org) for updates and registration information coming soon.

Remember to renew for 2024

# ANJEC membership:

## *Providing education and resources for ECs' vital work*

By **Georgia Madiba**, ANJEC Membership Manager

Through ANJEC membership, environmental commissions (ECs) join a statewide network of local groups who work to protect New Jersey's natural resources and ensure that the environment has a strong voice in local government. Education is at the core of ANJEC membership. Members are empowered with in-person and online trainings that provide:

- strategies to address current environmental challenges;
- resources and toolkits to help complete environmental projects;
- guides to advance local policies based on best practices; and
- updates on statewide policy.

### Membership benefits

- trainings, workshops and webinars offered in-person and virtually on timely environmental topics;
- expertise and toolkits from ANJEC's Resource Center staff;
- access to sample ordinances, plans, resource papers and manuals;
- subscription to the *ANJEC Report*, our 40-page quarterly magazine, and the ANJEC News, a bi-weekly online environmental news digest;
- opportunities to network with other environmental groups;
- portable games and displays for loan on a variety of environmental topics, for use at fairs and events.

*ANJEC staff helping members during the annual Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions course in April 2023*

ANJEC mails membership renewal invoices to municipal offices ahead of the New Year and they are also available at [anjec.org/memberships](http://anjec.org/memberships). To renew, please submit the invoice to your municipal office for payment and ANJEC will confirm membership via email once dues are received. Please remember to update ANJEC annually with a list of your current Environmental Commission members.

Please contact [gmadiba@anjec.org](mailto:gmadiba@anjec.org) with any questions.



ANJEC Membership Information & Forms  
[anjec.org/memberships](http://anjec.org/memberships)



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



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## NEW LOGO, SAME EXPERTISE

Amy Greene Environmental is changing its name to Davey Resource Group, Inc. (DRG). Visit our website for a comprehensive list of our ecological consulting services.

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