



# NJANJEC REPORT

Local Environment Matters

SUMMER 2025



## Inside:

- Special section – Celebrating NJ Rivers
- National Moth Week started here!
- Envirofix in '26 – Get on board!



*ANJEC  
Executive  
Director  
Jennifer Coffey*

Photo by Taylor McFarland

## Director's Report

### Governor Murphy: Stand up, fight back on climate change

As I write this, we are concluding a month of Earth Day celebrations, and I am outraged.

The most frequent request for assistance that we receive at ANJEC is for help with stormwater management and flooding. In 2004, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) adopted the first set of comprehensive stormwater management rules that required builders to manage both the amount and quality of stormwater created from a new development. We still do not have functional stormwater management regulations for redevelopment.

Now, rather than working to protect NJ residents and businesses, some members of New Jersey's Congressional delegation and our State Legislature have peddled the obvious delusion that NJ can deny the science proving the devastating toll caused by climate change on our economy, environment and the very safety of residents impacted due to increased flooding.

Congressman Van Drew has asked the Trump Administration to interfere with NJ's right and responsibility to protect the livelihood and very lives of residents. Members of the State Legislature promoted scientific skepticism and outright denied climate facts as they questioned DEP Commissioner LaTourette during budget proceedings in April.

The controversy is over a set of proposed regulations named NJPACT REAL – New Jersey Protecting Against Climate Threats, Resilient Environments and

Landscapes. These rules are designed to keep people from drowning in their homes, just as 29 New Jerseyans did in Hurricane Ida.

After more than a decade under development, we now have data and modeling that analyzes the collapsing arctic vortex (that's why we sometimes get arctic blasts in NJ now) and the collapsing Gulf Stream Ocean current that holds major influence over weather on the East Coast of the US and West Coast of Europe. We now have a very accurate understanding of the increase of both precipitation and sea level rise for NJ through the year 2100.

The NJPACT REAL regulations simply require new development and redevelopment standards to prepare for the flooding that we know will happen and, in fact, is already happening. New development will have to be elevated above the areas that will flood.

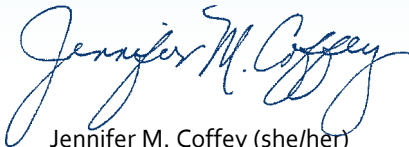
The NJPACT REAL rules also take a commonsense approach to flood prevention by requiring stormwater management for redevelopment projects, preference for nature-based infrastructure solutions, and better protection for wetland buffers.

Sadly, the provision of the NJPACT REAL rules that will literally save lives by requiring new development to be constructed above flood levels is the most controversial portion of the proposal. When politicians wield false accusations about the validity of the science and resort to emotional claims of financial hardship for millionaires and billionaires, they are putting both NJ lives and our economy in danger.


The truth of the matter is: NJ experiences a \$1 billion weather event every 32 weeks on average. From 1980-2024 (as of September 2024), there have been 72 confirmed weather/climate disaster events with average losses exceeding \$1 billion in damages each. (National Center for Environmental Information).

The NJPACT REAL rules are based on sea level rise that is moderate, planning for five feet of increased flooding, rather than “extreme” as Van Drew claims. The extreme scenario for climate flooding impacts in NJ predicts nine feet of sea level rise.

Now is the time to activate our resistance to the anti-science agenda. Governor Murphy needs to stand up and fight back. We need the NJPACT REAL rules to save lives so we can be both Jersey strong and Jersey smart.



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: *Two Great Egrets sparring*





By **Keven Porter**, Founder and Director, Rabbit Hole Farm Newark;  
**Jennie Aylward**, ANJEC Volunteer; **Michele Gaynor**, ANJEC Resource Center;  
and **Julie Lange Groth**, ANJEC Report Editor

## Rabbit Hole Farm Newark: Cultivating community, health and connection



*A drum circle at Rabbit Hole Farm*

Photo courtesy of Rabbit Hole Farm

Nestled in the heart of Newark's South Ward, Rabbit Hole Farm Newark, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is a vibrant hub for holistic living and community empowerment. Dedicated to fostering healthy lifestyles, the farm offers hands-on education and meaningful engagement that inspires residents to grow, learn and thrive together.

The farm hosts a variety of workshops to nourish body and soul throughout the year, blending practical skills with cultural celebration. For example, the farm will host an Elderberry Syrup Workshop on September 7 as part of the Newark Garden Concert Tour, and fire cider making will be featured at another upcoming session, where participants will learn to make a

traditional herbal tonic used for boosting immunity.

For a deeper connection to history and nature, the farm's Juneteenth Herb Walk will explore the powerful ties between African American heritage and traditional herb use, guiding participants through the garden's lush greenery.

Rabbit Hole Farm Newark also brings people together throughout the year with sweat lodges and drum circles, fostering spiritual and communal bonds.

### Empowering the next generation

Through the Young Farmers Program, children discover the joys of gardening, from planting seeds to harvesting fresh produce. This hands-on initiative nurtures a love for



*Mayor Conley looks forward to getting clean electricity from a solar carport at the Madison Recreation Complex.*

Photo credit: Jennie Aylward

nature and teaches valuable lessons about sustainability and self-reliance.

At the *Community Grocery Store* shoppers can pick up Rabbit Hole Farm's herbal teas and stylish t-shirts. Every purchase supports the farm's mission to promote wellness and community growth.

Rabbit Hole Farm Newark is more than a garden – it's a place where community, culture and wellness flourish, where people connect, learn, grow and celebrate the power of togetherness. The farm welcomes volunteers to tend the garden, become a master gardener or lend a hand with events – email [rabbitholefarmnewark@gmail.com](mailto:rabbitholefarmnewark@gmail.com). To stay updated on farm events follow [@rabbitholefarmnewark](https://www.instagram.com/rabbitholefarmnewark) on Instagram or check the website at [www.rabbitholefarmnewark.com/](http://www.rabbitholefarmnewark.com/).

– Keven Porter

## Madison pursues solar despite federal funding uncertainty

Speaking publicly on behalf of Madison's local elected officials on February 10, Mayor Robert H. Conley voiced concern that the Trump administration has threatened various programs authorized by the US Congress.

"Putting a hold on programs or funding while we wait for courts to sort out the challenges will shut down these projects and take away support for those who are most vulnerable," he said during a regular meeting of the Mayor and Borough

Council. "State and local governments will be forced to step up, hitting us all in the wallet."

Construction of a solar carport was one of the Madison projects the Mayor cited as an example. Borough officials had anticipated receiving about \$600,000 toward the renewable energy project from the federal government, thanks to an incentive in the 2022 *Inflation Reduction Act*. But President Trump put those incentives on hold on the first day of his administration, and it is uncertain whether or when they will be released.

Convinced of its value, Madison borrowed funds to go ahead with the \$2 million carport, which will generate 850,000 kwh of clean electricity per year. Construction began in March.

Madison intends to follow this project with more solar installations. If the federal incentive does not materialize, those projects will take longer to build, potentially delaying the Borough's achievement of its sustainability goals. Madison aims to decrease its total carbon footprint by 80 percent, from 140,000 tons in 2018 to 28,000 tons by 2050.

"We'll have to rebuild our capital reserve, and we will have to pay down the loan before we go on to the next project," Mayor Conley said in early April. Despite the obstacles, he was clear that Madison is committed to fighting climate change. "I think we inspire others to do the right thing," he said.

– Jennie Aylward

## Edison residents can Adopt an Area and fight bamboo spread

The Edison Township Council welcomed spring by unanimously approving two new ordinances in March. One measure expands the town's Adopt an Area Program to allow



*Bamboo is a fast-spreading plant that can invade neighboring properties.* Photo by Pixabay

individuals, businesses and organizations to “adopt” a street or area to keep it clean and tidy by picking up litter and trimming overgrown bushes and trees. Areas can be adopted for one to two years, and the township will provide signage displaying the adopters' names. Properties will be routinely inspected by the Township Engineering and Planning Department to verify compliance with the rules.

The ordinance was spearheaded by Council Vice President John Poyner, who has participated in many cleanup days over the years but found that those individual events did not provide for general maintenance of the property. Adopt an Area participants will be responsible for all maintenance of their adopted properties, including lawn cutting, watering, fertilizing, raking leaves, removing and trimming trees and shrubs, litter removal, weeding, mulching, flower and shrub planting, etc.

The other new ordinance prohibits the planting of bamboo in the township. The invasive plant species can have a negative impact on residential and commercial properties and cause damage to landscaping, structures and infrastructure.

Under the ordinance, existing planted bamboo can remain unless the township zoning officer or a designee determines a part of the bamboo tree has been allowed to grow over any public right-of-way or private property. The ordinance also forbids planting or cultivating any bamboo on any lot unless the root system is entirely contained in an above-ground container that prevents the spread of the bamboo root system.

Any resident found to be growing bamboo on their property will receive a notice from the township giving them 45 days to remove the bamboo or face a \$100 fine for each day past the 45-day period.

– Julie Lange Groth

## Montclair moves to ban single-use ‘stuff’

Many of us accumulate excessive amounts of plastic forks, spoons, condiments, coffee stirrers, etc. that are thrown into kitchen drawers, never to be used or later tossed into the trash. To reduce the prevalence of these single-use, often unneeded items, Montclair has passed an ordinance to avoid this unnecessary waste.

Montclair's Skip the Stuff Ordinance went into effect in March and applies to food service providers in the town. The single-use items normally included with takeout and delivery orders, including plastic utensils, condiment packages and stirrers, will no longer be automatically provided, but customers can request them.



*Skip the stuff by saying “no” to plastics.*



Two residents proposed this ordinance to town officials. Montclair has received several grants in the past to help move towards sustainability and waste reduction and the Skip the Stuff law is one more way Montclair is working toward their sustainability goals.

### A larger movement

Several other NJ towns have enacted this type of ordinance, including Hoboken, Red Bank, Montclair, Maplewood and Jersey City. Across the Hudson, New York City has also joined the movement.

Passing local ordinances to reduce package waste helps build support for a broader statewide policy. Matching Skip the Stuff bills are currently making their way through the NJ Legislature (S1395/ A5157). Once passed, our state will have the strongest single-use foodware bill to date. (page 10)

According to a May 2019 *Forbes* magazine article, 40 billion individual plastic utensils are wasted per year in the United States alone. After just one use, most of them are thrown out and end up in landfills and in our waterways.

We know statewide policies to reduce plastics and waste are very effective. Since NJ's single-use plastic bag law went into effect in May 2022, over 16 billion plastic bags have been avoided annually by shifting to reusable ones. This law has curbed litter, kept plastics out of our waterways and saved businesses money.

#### More info

- <https://njnoplastics.org/the-law/>  
– Michele Gaynor

## A tree nursery is born in Middlesex

The newly re-established Middlesex Borough Environmental Commission has made it a priority to help their town grow and plant tree saplings to help reestablish their tree canopy. Due to a US Army Corps flood wall project, 35 acres of trees were lost, and severe storms and invasive insects



Photo by Clare Levourne

### Middlesex EC members planting saplings.

took down many more. The town and Environmental Commission stepped in to create a Tree Giveaway program.

EC Chair Clare Levourne discovered Green Columbus's Tree Giveaway and downsized it to fit her community. In the first year, the town's new tree nursery grew over 300 bare-root saplings to give away to residents in the fall. They have been manually watering all the young trees with help from Mother Nature and the DPW, but they plan to install an irrigation system in the future. Some of the tree species include black cherry, black oak, hackberry, mockernut hickory, northern red oak, pitch pine, red mulberry, river birch, swamp white oak, sycamore, white oak and white pine. Residents can place orders through an online order form.

This is the second year Middlesex is giving out free trees. Most of last year's tree saplings were purchased, and the rest were donated by residents and organizations. In 2024, they handed out 155 trees to residents and planted the remainder to restore a wooded area adjacent to the nursery. Restoring the tree canopy is particularly important to lower income neighborhoods where the tree loss is felt the most.

– Michele Gaynor



## Enviro Fix in '26 – a nonpartisan environmental agenda for the next NJ governor

By **Luke Pavlov**, LCV Campaign Manager

New Jersey is at a crossroads. With an upcoming gubernatorial election and a federal administration that has positioned itself as extremely hostile to safeguarding the environment, now more than ever, we must ask what kind of leader will protect New Jersey's natural resources? Will the next governor listen to the concerns of constituents worried about climate change?

As we gear up for one of the most consequential gubernatorial elections in our state's history, we need to ask: what kind of future do we want for New Jersey? Will we continue to suffer through the health, economic and climate impacts of pollution, flooding and outdated infrastructure? Or will we seize this moment to chart a

course for a more sustainable future for NJ?

These questions are the launch pad for New Jersey LCV Education Fund's Enviro Fix in '26 public education effort. The campaign provides a bold roadmap for New Jersey's next governor to bring us into a cleaner, healthier and more just future for all.

### More than a wish list

Launched by a coalition from the environmental, public health, faith and local community sectors, Enviro Fix in '26 outlines a comprehensive agenda to protect NJ's air, drinking water and open spaces, while also creating hundreds of new union jobs and

lowering energy costs for working families.

Enviro Fix in '26 is not just a wish list. It is a call to action, an agenda that can be adopted by each candidate who is running to lead our state. We are demanding that our future leaders work for us and put protecting our environment at the top of their priorities. At the heart of Enviro Fix in '26 is environmental justice and shaping a New Jersey that has a cleaner, healthier environment for everyone.

The goals of the Enviro Fix in '26 initiative

build on the previously successful New Jersey LCV Education Fund's Green in '17 and Green in '21 initiatives. Each of them emphasized the need for a nonpartisan coalition, partnership, community and education through

the dissemination of an Environmental Policy Guide for the gubernatorial candidates, reinforcing the importance of prioritizing environmental policy. We are also garnering public support and mobilizing a strong base fighting for the transition to clean, renewable energy, as well as protecting our clean water, clean air and preserving open spaces. We strongly believe that a community-driven effort is foundational to the success of our campaign.

### Success is in the works

After officially launching in January 2025, Enviro Fix in '26 has already made great





strides in achieving its goals. We've convened multiple roundtable discussions with our diverse coalition of industry leaders to discuss issues ranging from land use to clean energy, to clean water and air.

We have a growing list of partner organizations (including ANJEC) who are excited to participate in this initiative alongside us. We have also hosted a New Jersey Gubernatorial Candidate Forum on the Environment and Public Health, a nonpartisan event where we talked to five candidates – Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, Mayor Ras Baraka, Mayor Sean Spiller, Mayor Steve Fulop and Senator Jon Bramnick. We brought our key issues and critical environmental topics like extreme weather events and clean energy solutions to the forefront of current political discourse.

The true measure of our success will be what comes next. As we move closer to Election Day, it is up to all of us to ensure that concern for the environment remains at the center of the gubernatorial race by asking every candidate about their plans to protect our precious natural resources. We must demand bold leadership and, most importantly, show up to the ballot box to make our voices heard.

New Jersey's future is on the line in this election cycle. The decisions we make now will determine whether we will continue to grapple with worsening climate disasters and polluted water and air, or whether we will embrace a future where clean energy, environmental justice and sustainability are at the core of our state's policies.

The time for action is now. With the Enviro Fix in '26 agenda, we have a roadmap to success. Let's work together to defend our environment and build a cleaner, healthier and more just New Jersey for all.

*Luke Pavlov is the Campaign Manager overseeing Enviro Fix in '26 at New Jersey LCV Education Fund, a nonpartisan organization that educates, empowers and mobilizes communities to protect natural resources, to promote environmental justice and to strengthen democracy for a healthier, more equitable future. To learn more or join our fight to make the environment a top issue, go to [njlcvef.org/issues/environmental-fix-26](http://njlcvef.org/issues/environmental-fix-26).*

## 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!

## Take action to protect NJ homes and businesses

Governor Murphy is under pressure to abandon legislation that would protect New Jersey from flooding. The NJPACT REAL rules represent an essential step in building communities that can withstand the impacts of climate change while preserving the natural landscapes that make New Jersey unique. Please sign our petition to show your support for the NJPACT REAL rules!

<https://thewatershed.org/tell-governor-murphy-to-stay-the-course/>



# Join the fight against toxic plastics

**T**wo bills to reduce plastic waste are making their way through the NJ Legislature. Here's the status at the time the *ANJEC Report* went to press. Please consider adding your voice to the get these bills signed into law.

## SKIP THE STUFF BILL:

S3195 – Released from Senate Environment and Energy Committee, currently in Senate Budget and Appropriations (Committee Chair: Senator Sarlo, District 36) sponsored by Senators Fred H. Madden, Jr., District 4, and Shirley K. Turner, District 15

A5157 – Currently in Assembly Commerce, Economic Development and Agriculture Committee; Bill Sponsor: Assemblywoman Collazos-Gill, District 27 (Committee Chair: Assemblyman Spearman, District 5)

## PACKAGING PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP ACT:

S3398 – Released from Senate Environment & Energy Committee, currently in Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee (Committee Chair: Senator Sarlo, District 36), sponsored by Senator Bob Smith, District 17

A5009 – Currently in Assembly Science, Innovation, and Technology Committee; Bill Sponsor: Assemblywomen Collazos-Gill, District 27, and Hall, District 28 (Committee Chair: Assemblyman Kennedy, District 22)

## PLEASE CALL YOUR NJ SENATE AND ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES TO URGE THEM TO SUPPORT THESE BILLS

### What to say:

*Hello! My name is [Your Name] and I am a resident of [Your Town]. I'm calling to ask your support for sustainable waste solutions. Specifically, I'm asking you to vote YES on two bills: the Packaging Product Stewardship Act (S3398/A5009) and the "Skip the Stuff" Bill (S3195/A5157). Thank you for your time and leadership on these issues.*

### Find your legislator at

[www.njleg.state.nj.us/#findLegislator](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/#findLegislator)



## Climate Resilience Tip Let trees do the talking

Your town's street trees are not only beautiful – they also work hard to cool urban heat islands, filter pollutants from the air and absorb climate-heating carbon dioxide. They also cool the neighborhoods, muffle street noise and support birds and other wildlife. Let people know by posting small signs near larger trees where there is heavy foot traffic. Sample sign language: This red oak tree absorbs about 48 pounds of carbon dioxide\* and up to 40,000 gallons of stormwater\*\* every year.

\* <https://tinyurl.com/bddve3mp>

\*\* <https://tinyurl.com/3z4hjc28>

## Celebrating NJ Rivers

# Protecting and restoring NJ rivers

By **Michael L. Pisauro, Jr., Esq.**, Policy Director,  
The Watershed Institute

New Jersey's creeks, brooks, streams and rivers form a vital backbone for our state and its communities. New Jersey has over 19,000 miles of waterways that once provided transportation, power, drinking water and sanitation to the early settlers of this state. These waters continue to serve these functions while providing habitat for a multitude of species.

Because of the importance of waterways to our state, many of our older communities were developed along their banks. We can see examples of this beside the Passaic River where Paterson and Newark hug its contours and the Assunpink with its mouth at Trenton. Our need to be near water provided solutions in the early days that are now causing unintended consequences.

Centuries of development have stripped away protections both to and from these streams. We have removed the trees and plants that once provided a buffer between streams and us. These buffers used to filter out some of the pollution from our activities and helped reduce the amount of runoff entering our streams.

Not only have we removed these buffers, but in many areas of the state we have also reengineered the banks of our streams, removing the floodplains.


These floodplains provided vital functions by allowing waterways to overflow and spread out without causing damage downstream. Because we have disconnected our streams from their floodplains, the water has nowhere to go but downstream, so we are causing increased flooding to neighboring communities.

While much of our alteration of streams and the surrounding land has already occurred, we continue to modify our waterways and their buffers. These factors are occurring in combination with climate change, which is causing more rain to fall annually and in changing patterns. NJ is experiencing more frequent and intense short storms than ever. This means flooding has been increasing and will continue to do so.

## Degrading stream health

Flooding is not the only impact of these changes. According to the most recent report from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), only 20 percent of the waterways the agency monitors are healthy enough for aquatic life. Over the last several years we have started to see increasing amounts of harmful algal blooms. HABs are caused by many factors including the nutrients that run off our land in stormwater.





It should be unacceptable to all of us that our lakes, rivers, streams and creeks are damaged and polluted.

- In 1972, as a nation, we committed to restoring our waterways with the *Clean Water Act*.
- In 1978 New Jersey made its own commitment to restore and protect our waterways with the *Water Pollution Control Act*.

These laws have done much to minimize the most obvious sources of pollution and to slow down and reduce impacts from the less obvious. But more needs to be done to reverse the damage done and restore our waters. It not only is important for the environment, but ultimately it helps protect us and our communities.

### State rules to protect streams

Over the last few years New Jersey has proposed or adopted new regulations and statutes that enhance stream protection. In 2020, New Jersey put in place the green stormwater infrastructure rules. They require us to use nature-based systems to treat our stormwater runoff and require those systems to be decentralized and closer to the sources. In


2023, we adopted the Inland Flood Protection (IFP) rules. Acknowledging that the storms of the 1900s are not the storms that we are currently experiencing, these rules updated standards used to design stormwater management systems. The extent of flooding is not the same today as it was decades ago. The IFP rules require that we use the current and anticipated future conditions and not those of the past.

Last year, the DEP proposed additional regulations that, if adopted, will strengthen the protections to our waterways and wetlands. (See page 2)

### What towns can do

Municipalities hold primary responsibility for land use in NJ and are stepping up to consider those impacts and how to address them. Over the last several years many municipalities have adopted a stronger stormwater management control ordinance than the State stormwater rules require. This will mean less pollution and less flooding into our waterways. Many municipalities have stronger stream buffer ordinances than the State mandates.

## Model municipal ordinances for riparian protection

- DEP riparian/stream buffer ordinance [www.nj.gov/dep/wqmp/docs/riparian\\_model\\_ordinance.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dep/wqmp/docs/riparian_model_ordinance.pdf)
- Enhanced stormwater ordinance <https://thewatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/model-ordinance.pdf>
- DEP steep slope ordinance <https://tinyurl.com/y5ya9sw3>
- ANJEC Resource Paper – Sample Ordinances for Protecting Coastal Habitats <https://anjec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CoastalHabitats2007.pdf> 

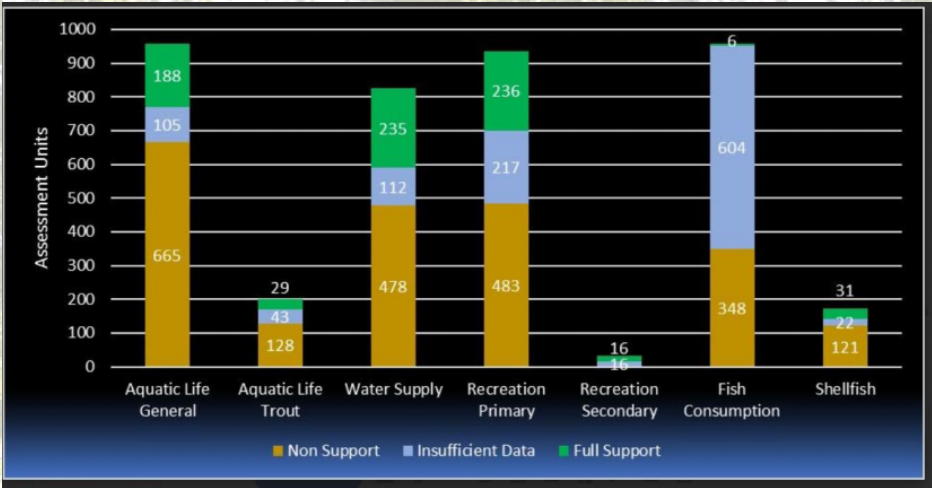


What about your town? If your municipality uses the DEP model ordinances, they can be strengthened.

The DEP's stormwater permit requires towns to develop plans to reduce flooding and improve water quality. Again, this is an opportunity for towns to go above and beyond baseline compliance and instead develop plans based upon watersheds. Towns can join with their watershed neighbors to

develop these plans, which will better reduce water pollution and flooding.

Lastly, we all can do our part to protect our waters. If you live along a stream, replace the grass lawns along the banks with native plants to restore the buffer. You can also replace some of your lawn to recreate native plant meadows. Take a look at the River Friendly Certification Program for additional ideas: <https://thewatershed.org/river-friendly/>.



*From 2022 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Integrated Water Quality Assessment Report*

*The Stony Brook River*  
Courtesy of the Watershed Institute





*The WEC continues to maintain the buffer, infilling native plants and trees each year to strengthen the ecosystem.*

Credit Watchung Environmental Commission



## Celebrating NJ Rivers

# How NJ communities are protecting their streams

By **Chris Obropta, PhD, PE**, and **Chris Perez**, RCE Water Resources Program; **N. Dini Checko**, ANJEC Project Director; and **Vinesh Gujral**, Graduate GIS Candidate

## Planting for stream protection in Watchung

Towns throughout New Jersey are facing stream erosion and local flooding challenges. In 2022, the Watchung Environmental Commission (WEC) launched a riparian planting project along the East Branch of the Stony Brook, just before it enters Best Lake. This area lacked trees and native riparian vegetation, which typically serve as pollution buffers, erosion control measures and habitat enhancements. The Mayor and Council approved and funded the project through the Borough's Tree Bank Fund.

As part of the initiative, six 2½-inch-caliper native trees – including swamp white oak, river birch and silver maple – were planted, along with 50 native understory shrub saplings, such as silky dogwood and arrowwood viburnum. These understory plantings complement the trees by improving habitat for pollinators and birds.

On Earth Day 2022, WEC members, Borough staff and volunteers dug holes, planted trees and shrubs and installed deer protection around the new vegetation. The roots help absorb excess water during floods, stabilize the stream bank

and reduce erosion and sediment flow into the lake. The tree canopy also provides shade to keep the stream cool in summer, supporting a healthy fish population.

Now, three years later, the plants and trees are thriving. The WEC has installed an interpretive sign, partnered with an Eagle Scout to add bird boxes, and replaced dead ash trees near the buffer with a diverse selection of native trees.

The WEC continues to maintain the buffer, infilling native plants and trees each year to strengthen the ecosystem. The WEC also invites the public to assist with maintenance efforts at least once each year, usually around Earth Day. Volunteers help with tree planting and riparian buffer maintenance, including invasive plant removal, weeding, mulching and deer fence repair.

WEC Chair Doug Speeney explained, "We do this because we need the help, and it's an excellent opportunity to educate community members about the environmental benefits of the project."

– N. Dini Checko



# Restoring the eroding shoreline at Memorial Lake

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Water Resources Program, in collaboration with the Woodstown-Pilesgrove Environmental Commission and ANJEC, had a great opportunity to implement a lake restoration project last fall at Memorial Lake in Woodstown. This project was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The team worked with contractor Ernie Davis Landscaping, who regraded the shoreline while the RCE Water Resources Program staff installed 310 feet of coir coconut fiber logs at the toe of the slope, and covered over 6,400 square feet of regraded slope with a soil erosion control blanket.

A riparian native seed mix was placed under the blanket, and 1,700 herbaceous plugs were planted through the blanket and in the coir logs. The team also installed

native shrubs throughout the project, including buttonbush, red-osier dogwood and summersweet. Davis Landscaping constructed several access locations throughout the project so the residents can continue to enjoy fishing in the lake.

Temporary goose fencing was installed around the entire project to allow the plants to grow without being devoured. The project is beginning to blossom this spring with blue flag iris, Joe Pye weed and milkweed. The butterflies will be plentiful and, with a little luck, the lakeside buffer will alter the goose habitat just enough to get the pesky birds to seek other refuge.

This project is the first of two that the RCE Water Resources Program is supporting. The second project will happen this year at Fox Chase Pond in Hillsborough. The team plans to return to Memorial Lake in Woodstown in early summer to do some maintenance and add additional plants. Anyone interested in helping should reach out to Chris Perez at the RCE Water Resources Program ([cperez@envsci.rutgers.edu](mailto:cperez@envsci.rutgers.edu)).

– Chris Obropta and Chris Perez

## Memorial Lake Shoreline Restoration Coir Log Installation



Credit Rutgers Water Resources Program



# From erosion to renewal: the Glenn Avenue Minipark stream bank stabilization

Blocks from Lawrence High School, the stream that surfaces in the Glenn Ave. Minipark was in past generations full and healthy enough to be a fishing spot. What remains is a shallow and silted, muddy remnant less than two feet across and less than ankle-deep. There are no animal inhabitants to be seen along its whole exposed 250-foot stretch.

The stream, a tributary of Shabakunk Creek, emerges from a covered section and returns to another, with no end in sight for either of them. The upstream end has a small, floating, oil-absorbent boom running across it with the middle sections already saturated with the surface-floating lipids it is there to contain.

The Lawrence Environmental and Green Advisory Committee (EGAC) applied for an ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant to revitalize and improve the health of this stream section. And since it's about two blocks from the local high school, the project will offer many educational opportunities.

If cost were no concern, the ideal practice would be to stabilize the stream bank and prevent erosion by planting saplings that were already a few feet high. But since dollars were scarce, the team chose a very effective and inexpensive approach by blanketing the target area with cut live branches incubated in water for a few weeks. Between 30 and 80 percent of these live stakes will take root and start.

When volunteers arrived on the morning of March 15, the stakes had all

been cut, soaked and bundled. Each team had at least one hole-maker with a piece of rebar and one stake-planter. The goal was to bury each stake two-thirds deep.



Photo by Annette Loveless

Most of the ground surfaces were muddy and offered little resistance, so the stakes slid neatly into their holes, but many needed to be hammered in. In other barer sections, exposed concrete lattice on the steeper sides of the stream sometimes made finding a good spot tricky, requiring multiple tries and

resulting in almost-horizontal plantings that will make interesting trees if they take root.

There was a good turnout from multiple organizations as well as town residents, including a healthy youth presence. Over 30 volunteers pitched in, including representatives from: ANJEC; The Trails, Open Space and Stewardship Committee; the Friends of Colonial Lake Park; the Lawrence EGAC; The Watershed Institute; the Lawrence League of Women Voters; the DPW; Scouts; and the Rutgers Water Resource Program (Green Infrastructure Champions program). Among the neighbors who made an appearance was Council Member Chris Bobbitt. Mayor Patricia Farmer was unable to attend but remains an enthusiastic.

This project would not have been feasible without communication and support from the Municipal Manager, Public Works, the Engineering Department and neighborhood residents. With luck, this communal effort will pay off and saplings will be stabilizing the streambank within a year or so.

— Vinesh Gujral



## Celebrating NJ Rivers

## Need help?

## Contact your watershed ambassador

By **Georgia Madiba**, ANJEC Membership Manager

Each of New Jersey's 20 watersheds are assigned an individual "watershed ambassador" under the AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program, which is operated by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP's) Division of Water Monitoring, Standards and Pesticide Control. The program goals as described on the DEP's website are, "... to promote watershed stewardship through education and direct community involvement, and to monitor stream health through performing visual and biological assessments."

Watershed ambassadors can help their watershed communities with their events and initiatives, especially when it comes to the three Ps – Planning, Promotion and acting as Point Person. Ambassadors establish connections with environmental commissions (ECs) by attending at least two EC meetings during their 10-month term of service, September to June.

Brianna Casario, a second-year ambassador and recipient of the ANJEC 2022

Lechner college scholarship, explains that typical projects are stream cleanups and earth day celebrations, but ambassadors also have helped with many other types of initiatives over the years, such as rain barrel workshops, bird walks, bioblitz events, stream assessments and even showcasing upcycled clothing. Brianna's tip for ECs is to contact their ambassador each October to plan for the type of help needed over the next year.

An excellent example of how ambassadors can aid ECs in their endeavors is a Middlesex Borough EC project that current ambassador Sheyla Casco helped with. (See

page 7.) Naturally wooded wetlands were destroyed near the Bound Brook and Green Brook tributaries due to the building of a flood wall by the Army Corps of Engineers. Casco took charge of a project to plant 100 trees by promoting the event and

coordinating community volunteers along with the EC. The trees that have now become a "mini forest" were left over from a giveaway earlier in the year. 🌱

### Insider Tip for ECs

Establish contact with your watershed ambassador annually in October. Scan here or use the link for a list of current ambassadors.


<https://dep.nj.gov/wms/bears/americorps-nj-watershed-ambassadors/>





*NJ's Watershed Ambassadors attended ANJEC's 2024 Environmental Congress, shown here with ANJEC's Executive Director, Jennifer Coffey (far left) and DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette (far right). photo by David Magda, WMA 8 Ambassador*

## Resources for protecting streams and rivers

- River Friendly resident challenge <https://tinyurl.com/yr8yjmu5>
  - DRBC Report on the State of the Delaware River Basin <https://tinyurl.com/z7rnr6ef>
  - The Resilient NJ Raritan River and Bay Communities program  
[ResilientRRBC@dep.nj.gov](mailto:ResilientRRBC@dep.nj.gov)
  - Delaware River Watershed Initiative <https://4states1source.org/our-work/>
  - Wild and Scenic Rivers of NJ [www.rivers.gov/new-jersey](http://www.rivers.gov/new-jersey)
  - New Jersey Center for Water Science and Technology [www.montclair.edu/water-science/](http://www.montclair.edu/water-science/)
  - Passaic River Institute [www.montclair.edu/water-science/passaic-river-institute-2/](http://www.montclair.edu/water-science/passaic-river-institute-2/)
  - Maurice River Watershed <https://cumauriceriver.org/maurice-river-watershed/>
  - Rahway River Watershed Association <https://www.rahwayriver.org/>
  - Raritan Headwaters Association [www.RaritanHeadwaters.org](http://www.RaritanHeadwaters.org)
  - Musconetcong Watershed Association [www.Musconetcong.org](http://www.Musconetcong.org)
- ANJEC publications for stream protection:**
- Protecting Our Streams [https://anjec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RP\\_Streams.pdf](https://anjec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RP_Streams.pdf)
  - Municipal Techniques: Long Term Control Plans, Stream Daylighting and Combined Sewer Overflow Programs <https://tinyurl.com/4e28ve3b>
  - Sample Ordinances for Protecting Coastal Habitats <https://tinyurl.com/yfjdyk6j>
  - Creek Friendly Lawns brochure <https://tinyurl.com/3uc26t5b>
  - NJ Fertilizer Law brochure <https://tinyurl.com/2uk28yum> 

# Clean and Green

Earth Month '25







Photos by: Heather Fenyk, Georgia Madiba.



# National Moth Week is July 19-27

## Did you know it all started in East Brunswick, NJ?

By Julie Groth, ANJEC Report Editor

National Moth Week (NMW) is held annually worldwide during the last full week of July, celebrating the immense variety, beauty, life cycles and habitats of moths. But it first sprouted in Dave Moskowitz's backyard. Dave, who heads up the East Brunswick Environmental Commission, is a naturalist with a doctoral degree in entomology from the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences at Rutgers University.

The first Moth Night in East Brunswick was held in 2011 in a local park and had over 100 participants, an impressive turnout by any measure. The events have continued once or twice a year, sponsored by the Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission (FriendsEBEC). The group is a New Jersey 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to local environmental education and conservation. It was founded by Moskowitz and Liti Haramaty, a marine sciences researcher in the Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences at Rutgers and a member of ANJEC's Advisory Council.

"One evening we were chatting and Dave said he'd like to have moth night in many locations on the same day all over NJ, to which I said, 'Why only NJ?' The rest is history." Moskowitz and Haramaty became



*A luna moth*

Photo credit Pixabay

co-founders of National Moth Week (<https://nationalmothweek.org/>), celebrating the beauty, life cycles and habitats of moths around the world.

National Moth Week (NMW) is now celebrated in all 50 states and at least 124 countries, more than in the last Winter Olympics!

"It didn't build— it grew instantly," Moskowitz recalls. "It got covered by *National Geographic*, the *New York Times*, the *Star Ledger*, *India Times* and *Jerusalem Post*. We tapped into something that clearly people wanted to explore."

### Citizen science made easy

According to Haramaty, "NMW is different from many other citizen science projects – it doesn't require special equipment or training

of any kind and everyone can participate. All you need is an outdoor light to observe moths and it can be done everywhere, and everyone with a phone can submit observations. You can "moth" alone in your backyard and you can join a public event in a park, museum and other locations."

Hosting a Moth Night can be a great opportunity to educate residents about the plight of pollinators and ways to protect them. It also offers participants the experience of being citizen scientists by uploading their observations and photos on iNaturalist (<https://tinyurl.com/bdfku6nn>), which is used by scientists worldwide for mining data.

"NMW has presented several times at citizen science sessions of scientific societies," notes Haramaty. "There are also online data depositories that are used by scientists. New species are being described from submissions by citizen scientists, and thousands of scientific articles have already been published using Citizen Science data." FriendsEBEC also maintains a Flickr account where moth observers can upload their photos – there are currently about 11,500 photos in the group ([www.flickr.com/groups/2094435@N24/pool/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/2094435@N24/pool/) ).

## How to host Moth Night in your town

According to the Natural History Museum, you can have a successful Moth Night anytime the ambient temperature is above freezing, but you'll have better luck on warmer nights.

**Step 1:** Find a location that's accessible to



*A Lesser Grapevine Looper (Eulithis diversilineata) taken by Anita Gould, Flickr.html*

the public, with ample parking and appropriate for nighttime events. Get permission to run the event.

**Step 2:** Plan to set up a light to attract moths. Mercury vapor lamps can be more effective at getting a broader range of unique moth species, but any type of light can work – a CFL bulb, LED bulb, incandescent light bulb, mercury vapor lamp or even a black UV light.

**Step 3:** You'll need to aim the light at a white surface where the moths can land, and plan to secure it without trampling on sensitive vegetation.

**Step 4:** Promote your event through local press, social media, town newsletters and websites. Don't forget to notify school science teachers and environmental clubs.

**Step 5:** Consider baiting the area. In East Brunswick, they bait moths by "painting" a sugary, fruity fermented mix on trees.

**Step 6:** Observe, make notes, take photos and share them. 💧

## Resources

- Rutgers article: All You Have To Do Is Leave Your Porch Light On: Local Citizen Science Initiative Goes International – <https://tinyurl.com/5c6j4ddb>
- National Moth Week website – <https://nationalmothweek.org/>
- Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission – [www.friendsbec.com/](http://www.friendsbec.com/)
- Natural History Museum: How to Lightsheet for Moths – <https://tinyurl.com/3rubnujp>

*This Rosy Maple Moth (Dryocampa rubicunda) was caught on camera by Anita Gould in East Brunswick and uploaded to the FriendsEBEC Flickr page.*

# Collaboration is blooming in Camden

By **Jacqueline Maria Santiago-Vicente, MA**, Executive Director, Neighborhood Collaborative Community Gardens

**T**he Neighborhood Collaborative Community Gardens (NCCG) program is designed for individuals aged 14 and up, helping them become more involved in their environment and community. Our mission is to educate young people on how to become stewards of their community through comprehensive gardening education while preparing them for post-secondary success.

This initiative is crucial in reshaping the narrative about Camden, a city often misrepresented by negative stereotypes. By emphasizing the potential and resilience within our community, NCCG demonstrates that Camden is more than just a low-income area. It is a place rich with opportunities, growth and sustainability.

NCCG offers several key programs that provide students with practical knowledge and hands-on experience in environmental stewardship. These include composting, urban gardening and community education. Through our composting program, students learn about soil science and the importance of recycling organic waste into nutrient-rich soil. By repurposing kitchen scraps, students gain the ability to create compost at home, fostering sustainability within their own households. Vermicomposting, an extension of composting, teaches students how to utilize worms and microorganisms to break down food scraps, naturally enhancing soil fertility with organic fertilizers.

Urban gardening focuses on container gardening, demonstrating that plants can



*NCCG provides students with practical knowledge and hands-on experience in environmental stewardship.* Photo by Jacqueline Maria Santiago-Vicente, MA



*NCCG teaches students how to grow flowers as well as vegetables and fruits.*

Photo by Jacqueline Maria Santiago-Vicente, MA

thrive even in limited spaces. Students are taught how to grow flowers, vegetables and fruits while understanding the importance of plant care and nutrition. This program not only introduces them to sustainable food production but also helps to beautify urban spaces, promoting healthier environments.

Our community education segment encourages students to become environmental leaders. They engage in hands-on activities like planting and outdoor projects while also participating in community improvement initiatives, including farmers' markets, environmental advocacy events and attendance at town hall meetings. This program helps students develop leadership, public speaking and problem-solving skills through real-world applications.

## Solving problems, building bridges

NCCG's programs directly address environmental and social challenges in Camden by promoting sustainability and community engagement. Composting and vermicomposting help reduce food waste and enhance soil quality, supporting local agriculture. Urban gardening empowers residents to grow their own fresh produce, which can improve food security and urban aesthetics. Community education fosters civic responsibility, encouraging students to actively participate in shaping a healthier and more sustainable Camden.

NCCG's success is bolstered by strategic partnerships with organizations. For example, Camden 4-H plays a crucial role in introducing new programs that align with NCCG's mission, providing additional educational and community engagement opportunities. Subaru has been a dedicated partner, actively volunteering to clean up gardens and assist in building gazebos, enhancing the infrastructure of our green spaces. Delaware River Compost provides financial support, IT management assistance and vermicomposting education, ensuring that NCCG operates efficiently and continues to expand its impact.

These partnerships enable NCCG to extend its reach and effectiveness, leading to initiatives like garden installations at local schools, including Mastery High School of Camden, where students now cultivate watermelon, corn, peas, tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers and more.

## Documenting success

NCCG's impact is vividly documented through YouTube videos and social media, offering a visual record of our growth since 2017. These platforms highlight our journey from a small initiative to a thriving organization, showcasing student progress, community involvement and the tangible results of our programs. Our Facebook page features projects like the "A-Z Gardening: D is for Documentary!" initia-



*Urban gardening focuses on container gardening, demonstrating that plants can thrive in limited spaces.*

Photo by Jacqueline  
Maria Santiago-  
Vicente, MA



tive, where NCCG interns collaborated with Petty's Island to produce a student documentary, showcasing our history as a learning experience for younger students who cannot attend the island tours due to age restrictions. Our videos capture students confidently engaging with visitors and peers, demonstrating their knowledge and skills. These moments illustrate the effectiveness of our training and the enthusiasm of our participants.

Whether through interviews, project highlights or event recaps, NCCG's online presence serves as a testament to the positive changes we bring to Camden. NCCG envisions a future where Camden is recognized not for its challenges but for its environmental leadership and strong community spirit. By continuing to expand our programs, forge new partnerships and educate the next generation, we aim to create a lasting impact that extends beyond our gardens.

Community support is essential for NCCG's mission. Residents and supporters can get involved by volunteering, attending events or contributing resources to sustain our programs. Whether through hands-on participation or advocacy, every effort helps

strengthen our initiatives. Organizations like NCCG play a critical role in fostering environmental and social progress. Supporting NCCG means investing in Camden's future, empowering youth and building a community that thrives on sustainability and civic engagement.

NCCG is not just about gardening, it's about transformation. By addressing environmental challenges, fostering youth leadership and collaborating with partners, we are shaping a brighter future for Camden. Through continued support and community involvement, NCCG will remain a beacon of resilience and sustainability, proving that Camden is a city of growth, innovation, and potential.

For more info, visit <https://www.nccgardens.org/>. 💧

Save the Date



# Environmental Congress

Friday,  
October 10, 2025  
9:00 am to 3:00 pm

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Theological Seminary

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The Environmental Congress is an annual statewide gathering of environmental commissions, local officials, agencies, citizen groups and environmental organizations.

Learn from environmental experts, celebrate local efforts and interact with State policymakers.

2025 ANJEC Environmental Achievement Awards will be presented.



<https://anjec.org/environmental-congress-2/>

Check back soon for details and registration information





## Tools for eMobility planning in your town

Access to safe, reliable, convenient and affordable transportation is fundamental to community prosperity. Engaging with people who live, work and enjoy the areas affected by transportation decisions early in the planning process can help foster trust between municipal leaders and community members. This is especially important for marginalized communities that have historically been left out of transportation decision-making processes.

The eMobility planning toolkit helps local leaders identify transportation needs and preferences of residents through data analysis and meaningful engagement. This input, along with continued engagement, can then be used to develop thoughtful, community-driven solutions. Throughout the toolkit, this process will be referred to as a community transportation needs assessment (CTNA).

The results of the CTNA may indicate that the community could benefit from shared transportation programs, such as carshares, microtransit, bikeshares and shuttle services. These programs alleviate traffic congestion and connect residents to jobs, educational opportunities, medical services and other resources by filling mobility gaps and complementing mass transit. Additionally, using zero-emission vehicles for these shared transportation programs – a concept often referred to as eMobility – helps improve air quality in communities that are overburdened by environmental and health stressors.

For more information, visit the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Drive Green website at <https://tinyurl.com/4bwah7pd>.



# Climate resilience report tracks progress



On March 25, the Murphy Administration's Interagency Council on Climate Resilience released its first annual report highlighting progress made to make the State more resilient to the far-reaching impacts of climate change, from the public health dangers of extreme heat to the impacts of flooding caused by sea-level rise and increasing precipitation.

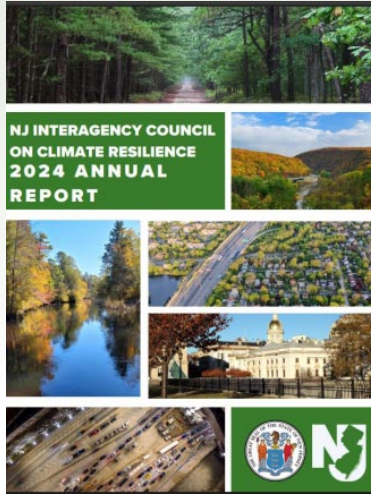
"Climate change poses unique threats to New Jersey's families, infrastructure and economy, including sea-level rise and extreme heat," said Governor Murphy in a statement. "The Interagency Council's report underscores our commitment to increasing the State's resilience and taking action to protect future generations by planning for the impacts caused by climate change."

New Jersey DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette said, "New Jersey is ground zero

for the far-reaching impacts of climate change, including sea-level rise, more intense storms and increased flooding of rivers and coastlines. The Interagency Council report ... provides an overview of the many concrete steps the Murphy Administration is taking to better protect lives and property and, perhaps even more important, provides a road map for the work that lies ahead in making New Jersey more resilient to the worsening impacts of climate change."

The Interagency

Report can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/4kauthux>. 🌊



*The Murphy Administration's Interagency Council on Climate Resilience released its first annual report on the State's resilience to the impacts of climate change.*



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ANJEC's Founder and  
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## 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.



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

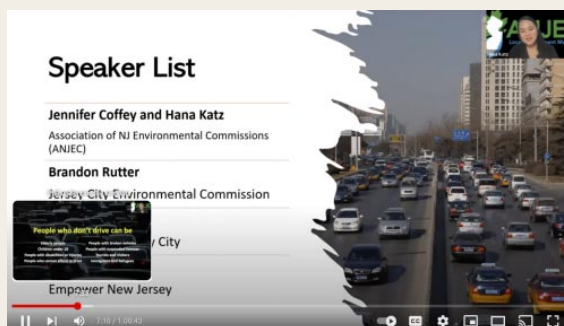


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- View presentations you may have missed;
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  - Share valuable content with municipal officials.
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## Check out the latest ANJEC resource papers

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

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- Remediating & redeveloping brownfields in New Jersey
- Stormwater Management for Municipalities: Green infrastructure designs and options
- Municipal Techniques: Long term control plans, stream daylighting and combined sewer overflow programs
- Septic Systems, Clean Water and Your Municipality

Most ANJEC Resource Papers can be downloaded from our website free of charge at <https://anjec.org/publications/>. Some are also available for purchase in printed form by contacting us at [info@anjec.org](mailto:info@anjec.org).





Climate Resilience Tip  
**Dog parks as  
communication spaces**

Dog owners who use dog parks appreciate preserved open space. Why not make them aware of the important role natural areas play in offsetting the impacts of climate change. An informative sign, even a small one, can educate visitors about how the park helps to improve air quality, absorb storm water and cool urban heat islands.

**Sample sign language:** This dog park helps your community offset the harmful effects of climate change by reducing carbon dioxide and absorbing stormwater.

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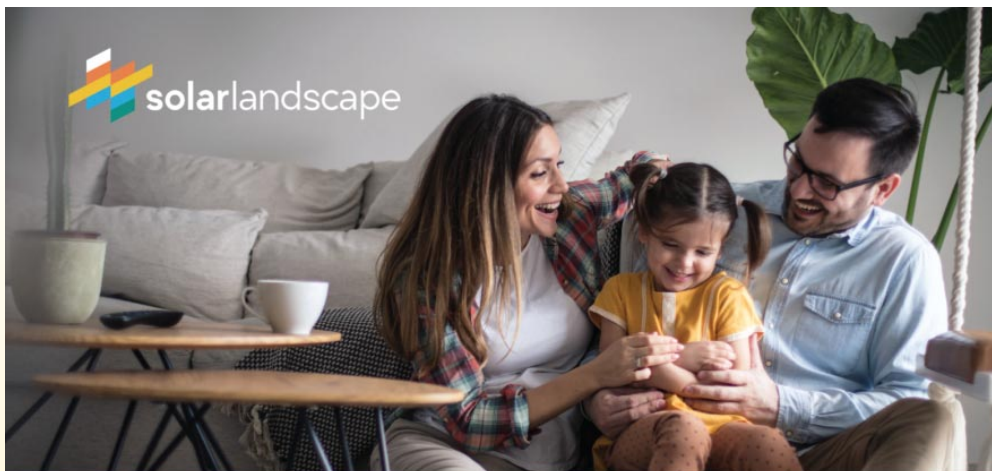
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A scenic photograph of a calm lake surrounded by dense green trees and forested hills under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The water reflects the surrounding greenery and sky.

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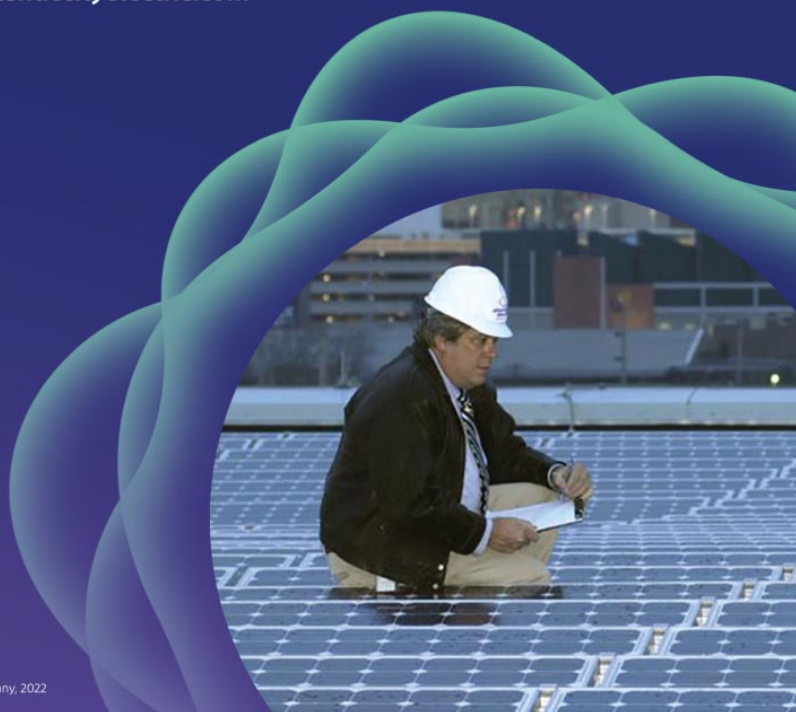
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As stewards of the earth's most precious natural resource, we know the importance of protecting our environment. All living things need water to survive. By investing in water conservation education, innovative treatment and delivery technologies, and source water protection programs, we are working to make a difference for our communities and our world. Learn more at [newjerseyamwater.com](http://newjerseyamwater.com). Be sure to check out our tips on how to use water wisely, because every drop counts!



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