2026 Environmental Congress
Workshop Sessions

Workshop Session 1 -10:30am

Stormwater Regulation Compliance -Municipalities are on the front lines to combat stormwater and the state regulations (MS4 permits) that need compliance. Learn how to check your municipalities compliance with the regulations and how you can assist in complying if things are being missed. The Regional Watershed Management Plan is another part of the stormwater regulations, hear how the Watershed Institute has created a plan and how you can participate.

** 1 CEU from NJ Clean Communities Council

Presenters:
Chris Obropta, Ph.D., Director, Rutgers Water Resources Program
Mike Pisauro, Advocacy Director, The Watershed Institute

Environmental Advocacy Tools: Strategies for Effective Action
Effective environmental advocacy requires a combination of sound science, strategic communication, community engagement, and persistence. This workshop examines successful local advocacy campaigns to identify practical tools and strategies that can be applied to a wide range of environmental issues.
Using real-world case studies — including campaigns addressing food waste reduction, construction dust mitigation, and leaf blower bans — participants will explore how advocates built public support, worked with municipal officials, navigated policy development, and achieved meaningful outcomes.
Designed for environmental commissioners, municipal officials, and community advocates, this workshop will provide participants with practical advocacy tools, communication techniques, and organizing strategies to help turn environmental priorities into effective local action.

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Presenters:
Andrea Dolan, Morristown Environmental Commission
Amanda McCabe, Northeast Earth Coalition
Dr. Phoebe Stapleton, Rutgers University

Understanding Invasive Species Legislation and Tree Canopy Management

Participants will gain an overview of current and emerging legislation related to invasive species and its implications for municipal planning, tree management, and environmental stewardship. The session will also explore best practices for identifying and addressing invasive species, protecting native ecosystems, and developing effective tree canopy management strategies that support long-term community resilience. Attendees will learn about available resources, policy considerations, and practical approaches to balancing regulatory requirements with local conservation and urban forestry goals.
Whether your municipality is updating its tree management plans and tree ordinances, responding to invasive species challenges, or working to expand its urban forest, this workshop will provide valuable information and actionable guidance to support informed decision-making.

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Presenters:
Anna Grossman, Director, Sustainable Montclair
Dr. Michael Van Clef, Stewardship Director, Strike Team Program Director at Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

2nd Session -11:45am

Food, Turf, and Water: A 2026 Policy Update

While federal environmental protections shrink, New Jersey is moving the other way. Join us for an update on three key state actions: the new food waste reduction law (mandating a 50% cut in food waste by 2035), the push to update Green Acres regulations (S3254/A4908) to stop funding artificial turf fields, and the fight to defend the NJ PACT REAL Rules. Learn what these policies and regulations mean for pollution reduction efforts on the ground — and how your EC can help move them forward.

Presenters:
Jennifer Coffey, Executive Director, ANJEC

Taylor McFarland, Conservation Program Manager, Sierra Club, NJ Chapter
Matthew Wasserman, Vice President, NJ Composting Council

Restoring Our Clean Waters

This workshop brings together water supply treatment experts, and non-profit community advocates to talk about the current challenges with ensuring we have enough clean water to meet all of the Garden State's water needs and the actions being taken to manage emerging and continuing threats such as PFAS, microplastics, pathogens and non-point source pollution. Learn what is being done to reduce forever chemicals, hear about study results on microplastics in the Passaic River and civic science environmental monitoring programs for the Raritan River.

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Presenters:
Heather Fenyk, Executive Director, Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership
Sandra LaVigne, Director of Water Quality Programs, Great Swamp Watershed Association
Ali Pajooman, P.E., Senior Program Manager VEOLIA Water New Jersey, Inc.

Wildlife Connectivity Across NJ

Wildlife in New Jersey faces many threats from human activities. New Jersey's roads and highways are one of the deadliest places for our wildlife friends. Especially in Central NJ, busy roadways restrict where and how far animals can range to find shelter, food, and each other. But together we can develop strategies to ensure that all wildlife, from bobcats to salamanders, have room to roam. Hear how NJDEP, The Nature Conservancy, Duke Farms and others are working to protect NJ's wildlife.

Presenters:
Larry Fink, Team Leader, State Land Acquisition, NJDEP Green Acres Program
Lauren Wasilauski, Open Space and Stewardship Director, Montgomery Twp.

Featured Workshop -Afternoon Session -2:15pm

AI Data Centers -AI Data Centers are popping up all over the country and NJ is on the front lines for many large projects. The environmental effects on water, air, and energy are just beginning to be understood. Hear about the latest updates on projects throughout the state and status of statewide policy to guide this development. Learn how Warren County is working on protecting the environment through local policy in their municipalities.

Presenters:
Brooke Helmick, Policy Director, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance
James Kern III, Deputy Director, Warren County Board of County Commissioners

Lightning Round Sessions -3:15pm

Join local environmental commission members as they share projects that have been successful and offer ample opportunity for replication.

Session A

Protecting Natural Habitats in New Jersey

Sharing projects that promote habitat restoration, native species and controlling invasives. Hear about three projects that environmental commissions have initiated to support and restore NJ's natural resources: Using weevils to battle a tough invasive, restoring a stream bank with live staking and creating a micro forest.

Annette Loveless, Chair, Lawrence Twp. Environmental and Green Advisory Committee
Donna Goggin Patel, Chair, Summit Environmental Commission
Armin Zomorodi, Frenchtown Environmental Commission

Session B

From Leaf Blowers to Dark Skies: Reclaiming Quiet

This workshop features three fast-paced lightning rounds on community initiatives that promote healthier, quieter, and more sustainable neighborhoods. Explore leaf blower ordinances, quiet summer initiatives, and dark skies initiatives through brief presentations highlighting local approaches, lessons learned, and practical strategies.

Participants will gain a quick overview of what these initiatives can accomplish, how communities are implementing them, and opportunities to adapt successful ideas locally. Come prepared for concise, engaging discussions and practical takeaways you can bring back to your community.

Presenters:

Sascha Prochaska, Mendham Township Environmental Commission
Amalia Duarte, Mendham Townshiip Committeewoman
Lois Kraus, ATL-NJ (Advocates for Transforming Landscaping in New Jersey)
Charlie Schachter, Morris Township Environmental Commission.

Session C

ANJEC Office Hour

Come connect with ANJEC staff to answer any questions you might have.

Our office hours are a welcoming space for environmental commissioners throughout New Jersey to connect with us. Whether you have a question, an idea, an inspiration, or a challenge, we're here to listen, help, and share resources. Bring us what's on your mind—we're always glad to hear from you and work together toward a healthier environment for your community.

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