

From Leaf Blowers to Dark Skies: Reclaiming Quiet



Amalia Duarte is on the Mendham Township Committee and has been the liaison to the town's Environmental Commission since 2018, supporting their initiatives and participating in annual Earth Day cleanups, Styrofoam recycling events, and native tree plantings. Among key accomplishments is successfully advocating for Mendham Township to join the Highlands Council.



Sascha Prochaska is an At-Large Member of the [Mendham Township Environmental Commission](#), where he drives local sustainability initiatives and community education. He concurrently serves as the Chief Creative Officer and Chief Customer Officer at [aiDecyde](#), leveraging human-centered industrial design and technology to envision and execute forward-thinking business frameworks. Sascha is also an Adjunct Professor of Industrial Design at Kean University, where he guides future human-centered industrial designers.

From Leaf Blowers to Dark Skies: Reclaiming Quiet



Lois Kraus is a co-founder of Advocates of Transforming Landscape in NJ (ATL-NJ), a cooperative group seeking to reduce the use of 2-stroke lawn equipment. She is the Co-Chair of Beyond Plastics NJ and/or Rahway River Watershed Association Trustee.



Charlie Schachter has been a member of the Morris Township Environmental Commission since January 2021. His proudest achievements to date are the Butterworth Park Pollinator Garden and a nearby one-acre native plant meadow. He also created and publishes a monthly EC newsletter with 835 subscribers.

**Sponsored by the Mendham Township
Environmental Commission (MTEC)**

Caring for our Mendham Environment

Preserving Our Dark Skies

May 21, 2026

- Amalia Duarte
- Steve Mariconda
- Serena Mody
- Sascha Prochaska



From Idea to Ordinance:



The idea for a Dark Sky Ordinance started with a proposal to install permanent lighting at the sports fields and the parking lot at Mosle Preserve.

2023

- January - Rec. Dept proposes permanent lights at Mosle Preserve sports fields and parking lot for football and baseball.
- April - Public meetings ensure. Committeewoman Duarte proposes that lighting must comply with Dark Sky standards.
- June - Environmental Impact Statement concludes permanent lighting is improvement over diesel.
- August - Township Committee forms Mosle Lights subcommittee.

2024

- February - Mosle Lights project withdrawn from consideration.
- May - Committeewoman Duarte partners with Environmental Commission and town engineer to research Dark Sky Ordinances.
- October - Environmental Commission wants Dark Sky mandate.
- November - Township Committee will support Ordinance only for new developments and town or school renovations.

2025

- July 28 - Ordinance introduced unanimously by Township Committee as changes to Land Use "design standards." Referred to Planning Board for review.
- Aug. 19 - Planning Board unanimously agrees the Ordinance is aligned with goals of the Master Plan.
- August 20 - Township Committee unanimously adopts the Ordinance!



So, what makes
outdoor lighting
"good"?

Preserving Mendham's Night Sky: A Guide to the Dark Skies Ordinance

Mendham Township has enacted Ordinance 05-2025 to reduce light pollution, conserve energy, and protect the local environment. While the ordinance targets new construction and public spaces to ensure the stars remain visible for future generations, all residents are encouraged to adopt "dark sky" practices to preserve the township's bucolic character.



UNSHIELDED

Unshielded: Light scatters upwards, causes skyglow, and wastes energy.



SHIELDED

Shielded: Light is directed downward, reducing skyglow and illuminating only what is needed.

Understanding Conformance



Mandatory for New Developments

Requirements apply to new builds of 3+ units, roads, parking lots, and commercial sites.



Voluntary for Existing Homes

Current residents are encouraged to voluntarily retrofit fixtures to support the township-wide initiative.



\$1,000 Daily Penalty

Non-compliance for mandated sites results in daily fines if not remedied within 30 days.



Shield and Direct Downward

Use fully shielded fixtures that point light toward the ground, eliminating upward scatter.



Follow the 10:00 PM Curfew

Extinguish non-essential public and commercial lighting by 10:00 PM or the close of activities.



Use Warm, Low-Intensity Bulbs

Prioritize amber or "warm" white bulbs (3000K or lower) to reduce atmospheric skyglow.

Public Property Standards

Purpose: Specific regulations for municipal and community-managed spaces.

Feature	Regulation
Motion Sensors	Must extinguish lights no later than 10 minutes after activation.
Flag Lighting	Must use a narrow cone of light that does not extend outward.
Landscaping	Lighting for the sole purpose of illuminating landscapes is prohibited.

Homeowner

BUILDING UNDER THE STARS:

A DEVELOPER'S GUIDE TO MENDHAM'S DARK SKY COMPLIANCE



PROJECT SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

- NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS: MANDATORY FOR DEVELOPMENTS WITH THREE OR MORE UNITS.
- SCHOOL AND MUNICIPAL PROJECTS: REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS, PARKING LOTS, SCHOOL FACILITIES, AND MUNICIPAL PROPERTIES.
- PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ROADWAYS: ALL NEWLY DEVELOPED ROADS MUST MEET DARK SKY LIGHTING STANDARDS.

TECHNICAL LIGHTING STANDARDS

- FULLY SHIELDED / FULL CUTOFF FIXTURES: NO DIRECT UPLIGHT, 100% LIGHT DIRECTED DOWNWARD.
- MAXIMUM 3,000K COLOR TEMPERATURE: USE WHITE LIGHT TO REDUCE BLUE-LIGHT SCATTERING.
- PROHIBITED LIGHTING TYPES: FLASHING, INTERMITTENT, COLOR-CHANGING, AND SPOTLIGHT-TYPE FIXTURES (UNLESS MOTION-CONTROLLED) ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED.



MAIN STREET CORRIDOR SPECIFICS:

USE STARBURST "CARSON CITY" FIXTURES (OR APPROVED EQUIV.) ON BLACK POLES WITH HALF MOUNTING HEIGHT OF 14-16 FT.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND CURFEWS

- THE 10:00 P.M. EXTINGUISHMENT: ALL NON-ESSENTIAL ILLUMINATION MUST BE EXTINGUISHED BY 10:00 P.M. OR THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS, WHICHEVER IS LATER.
- MOTION SENSOR CALIBRATION: SECURITY LIGHTING WITH MOTION SENSORS MUST EXTINGUISH NO LATER THAN 10 MINUTES AFTER ACTIVATION.
- FLAG AND LANDSCAPE RESTRICTIONS: AMERICAN FLAG LIGHTING MUST USE A NARROW CONE; LANDSCAPE-ONLY ILLUMINATION IS PROHIBITED ON PUBLIC AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES.

SUBMISSION AND ENFORCEMENT

- COMPREHENSIVE SITE PLAN REQUIREMENTS: SUBMIT PLANS DETAILING LOCATION, FIXTURE TYPE, LIGHT RADIUS, MOUNTING HEIGHT, AND FOOTCANDLE INTENSITY.
- 30-DAY CORRECTION WINDOW: DEVELOPERS HAVE EXACTLY 30 DAYS TO BRING VIOLATIONS INTO COMPLIANCE AFTER A ZONING OFFICIAL'S NOTICE.
- \$1,000 DAILY PENALTY: CONTINUED NON-COMPLIANCE AFTER 30 DAYS IS SUBJECT TO A FINE OF UP TO \$1,000 PER DAY.

Developer

Next Steps:

Awareness Outreach:

1. Town Website Page
2. Social Media
3. Printed Handouts
4. Certification Recognition



Quiet Summer Initiative

The First Step Against Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers



Charlie Schachter
Morris Township Environmental Commission
charles.schachter@gmail.com



“Air and noise pollution generated by gas-powered leaf blowers pose multiple hazards to human health.”

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Institute for Exposomic Research



Why Quiet Summer?

- A lot of unnecessary outdoor blowing takes place year-round, but especially in the summer.
- An opportunity to:
 - Raise awareness of the health hazards generated by gas leaf blowers and the ecological damage done by excessive blowing.
 - Start conversations about the need to regulate and phase out the use of gas leaf blowers.



How Quiet Summer Works

- Voluntary participation
- Asks DIY residents and professional operators to stop using gas leaf blowers from May 1 through September 30
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn to provide nutrients
- For walkways and patios, electric blowers and brooms can do the job quickly and quietly.



Potential Benefits of Quiet Summer

- Improves air quality and fosters peace and quiet
- Encourages everyone to spend more time outside
- Protects people most at risk: seniors, children, and operators
- Reduces damage to natural habitats and ecosystems
- Improves soil quality and lawn health



How to Implement Quiet Summer

Create a flyer that explains the initiative and offers education on the health hazards associated with gas leaf blowers

Join us for a **Quiet Summer**

Residents are invited to help create a calmer, healthier neighborhood by reducing the use of gas-powered leaf blowers during the summer months.

Ask your landscaper to pause the use of gas-powered leaf blowers from May until the end of September.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
MORRIS TOWNSHIP

Join the Quiet Summer Initiative
For Cleaner Air & Quieter Yards.

Why It Matters

Loud and persistent noise contributes to hearing loss, hypertension, sleep disturbance, and cognitive stress.

2-stroke gas engines release **toxic un-burned fuel** containing carbon monoxide, nitrogen-oxides, benzene and formaldehyde.

Fine carbon **particulate matter** created by gas-powered leaf blowers can linger in the air for days and is linked to asthma, lung disease, heart disease, and cancer.

Electric leaf blowers are quieter, do not emit air toxins, and are **acceptable alternatives**.

Use the QR code for a bilingual letter you can share with your landscaper



How to Implement Quiet Summer

Create a bilingual letter that a resident can use to ask their landscaper to curtail their use of gas leaf blowers

Morris Township
Quiet Summer 2026 Initiative

Dear Landscaper,

Please stop using a gas-powered leaf blower on my property from May until the end of September.

You can leave grass clippings on my lawn to make it healthier.

For grass clippings on my driveway and sidewalk, you may use an electric leaf blower or broom. Any grass clippings on the street will dry up and blow away naturally in a few days.

Please discuss with me if you are unable to fulfill this request.

Thanks!

Municipio de Morris
Iniciativa Verano Silencioso 2026

Estimado equipo de jardinería:

Por favor, no usen sopladoras de hojas a gasolina en mi propiedad desde mayo hasta finales de septiembre.

Pueden dejar los recortes de césped sobre el césped. Esto ayuda a que el césped esté más saludable.

Para los recortes que queden en la entrada del garaje o en la acera, pueden usar una sopladora eléctrica o una escoba.

Los recortes que queden en la calle se secarán y desaparecerán solos en unos pocos días.

Por favor hablen conmigo si no pueden cumplir con esta petición.

¡Gracias!



How to Promote Quiet Summer

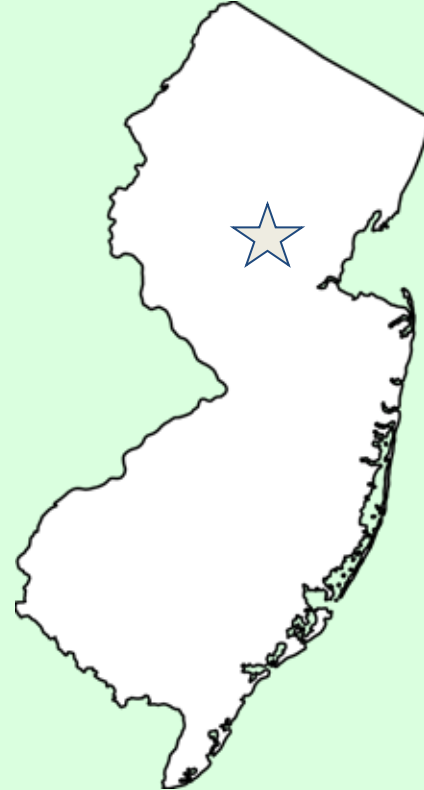
- Environmental Commission
 - Series of articles in EC newsletter
 - Members act as Neighborhood Ambassadors
 - Members post on personal social media
 - Notify neighborhood and community organizations
- Administration
 - Direct communication via postal mail and/or email
 - Press release
 - Social media
 - Website
 - Electronic signage
 - Yard signs at municipal properties



Quiet Summer 2026

Morris County Participants

- Morris Township
- Madison
- Chatham Boro
- Chatham Township



Conclusions

- Quiet Summer is a relatively easy, low-stakes way to start the conversation and provide education
- Impact on actual use of gas leaf blowers is minimal
- Even when homeowners make the request, landscapers will ignore them or push back
- Ordinance is required for a meaningful change





Summer's Over ...What Now? Strategies to Accelerate Change

Lois Kraus

Co-Founder, Advocates Transforming Landscaping in NJ (ATL-NJ)

September 2026

Who is ATL-NJ?



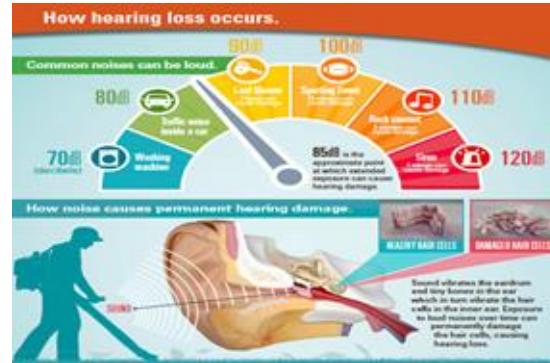
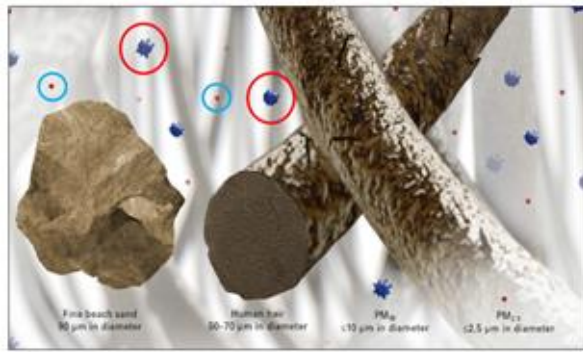
- Advocates for Transforming Landscaping in New Jersey (ATL-NJ) is a network of volunteers cooperating to reduce the use of gas leaf blowers (GLBs) and other 2-stroke landscaping equipment in our communities
 - Several members are on local Environmental Commissions, Green Teams, or environmental advocacy groups
 - Group meets quarterly by Zoom and shares best practices
- The group started in January 2021 with 12 members; now 49 members across 33 municipalities and nine counties:

NJ towns with existing ordinances include:

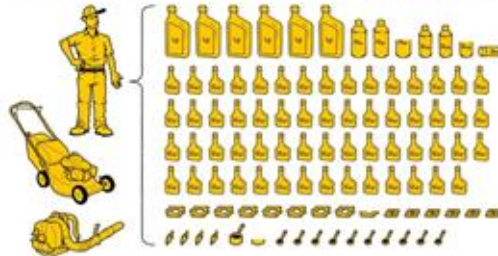
Glen Ridge, Mantoloking, Maplewood, Millburn, Montclair, Morris Township, Princeton, South Orange

**Next Meeting This Monday
9/28/26 @ 7 pm**

This isn't just a quality of life issue!



In addition to all the gas and oil burned and smog-forming emissions and greenhouse gases created, each gas crew worker also dumps 50 bottles, cans, tubes, and parts into landfills every year. These leech residual toxic chemicals into the soil and water. Electric tools need almost no maintenance or parts, and therefore create almost no waste stream.



Every Season Presents Opportunities for Engagement!

Fall: Lean in to the noise!

Winter: Use the “quiet months” to educate and get ready

Spring: The noise returns ...it's time to jump back in!

(If you lived in “XXXX” it would be quiet now)



So you want an ordinance ...now what?



This is a process that takes timefor most towns YEARS ...

Every town is differentspend time up front figuring out what the key will be for your municipality

Learn from the successes and mistakes of others

Plan, Educate, Recruit, Act



Planning: It Takes Time!

Who are your strategic partners (elected, town employees, volunteers, community)

What is the optimal way to educate your elected officials, residents and local landscapers?

How and when will you engage with your DPW, School, Parks and Recreation?

What special considerations need to be planned for?

- Public Golf Course, Parks
- Lot Size
- General landscaping aesthetics
- How many trees / leaves do you have? How are leaves collected on properties
- Landscapers living in your community
- Residents attitudes toward restriction of rights vs. “common good”

Recruit



Manyand with varied perspectives & skills

- Example: Merion Township, PA
 - Health Careespecially members of your BOH!
 - Gardeners
 - Landscapers (home and professional)
 - Residents who do landscaping / those who hire
 - Bee Keepers
 - Students
 - Residents with personal stories / health issues
 - Walkers / Parents
- What about people from other communities ?
- Writers, Social Media, Organizers, Public
Speakers Influencers

Educate



Do it Yourself, Tap into others



January 26 - 27, 2027

Powering the Industry. All Under One Roof.

New Jersey Convention Center, Edison NJ



**Advocates for Transforming
Landscaping in New Jersey ATL NJ**

Private group · 74 members



Act & Advocate; Often, Everywhere & with Calibrated Urgency



Highlight Landscapers offering electric / sustainable services

Kickoff your advocacy campaign

- Many players, different medias, continually in the conversation

BOH Health Advisory

Make an small investment

- Library of things
- Town Pilot of equipment
- Signage / Educational Brochures

Lead by Example: Show neighbors that use electric equipment & even a RAKE!

QUESTIONS?

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Advocates for Transforming
Landscaping in New Jersey ATLNJ

2026
ANJEC
Environmental
CONGRESS

Take the survey

 www.anjec.org

