



Environmental Justice Task Force 2018 Fall Issues Report

Executive Summary

Advocacy and Mobilization: Since the Spring Plenary, the EJTF has:

- Issued an action item opposing the Meadowlands Power Plant;
- Written comments for and testified at the BPU hearings on the Community Solar Pilot Project (July) and the Energy Master Plan (September);
- Issued a position paper on remediating lead in drinking water.
- Voted to support the Green Amendment proposed by the Delaware Riverkeeper
- Testified at the Joint Legislative Environment Hearing on Plastic Waste in Toms River.

Education: Since the Spring Plenary, the EJTF has:

- Initiated a newsletter to support better communication with and between congregational environmental groups
- Provided input at the NJ Climate Stakeholders Forum held at Princeton University.

The full report addresses actions for the full year.

Advocate and Mobilize

RPS

The Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) voted in favor of supporting 100% renewable energy by 2035 and issued a position paper¹. A group met with Assemblyman Tim Eustace, who had introduced bill A1823 requiring 100% renewable energy by 2035, to the NJ legislature.

Status: On May 23, 2018, passage of bill A3723 increased the total RPS requirement in New Jersey to 35% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 where the specified percentage of electricity sold in the the state must come from qualified Class I renewable energy sources. In addition, 2.5% of the electricity each year must come from qualified Class II renewable energy source. Pursuing ways to increase use of renewables will be important.

The EJTF also worked on three items related to transitioning to renewable energy, the PSEG Nuclear Subsidy, the Meadowlands Power Plant and the Energy Master Plan.

PSEG Nuclear Subsidy

The EJTF opposed the proposed PSEG Nuclear Subsidy, which could cost ratepayers up to \$300 million, primarily because PSEG was not required to make public the data establishing its financial need. The position of the EJTF is that we need to rely on nuclear energy in the short term to avoid increasing the use of natural gas in New Jersey.

The EJTF produced a position paper² explaining our opposition and sent it to Senate President Stephen Sweeney and to all committee members. Action items went out in December and January opposing the bill. The bill did not pass in December, but it revived in the new session and was ultimately signed by the governor in spite of opposition from the EJTF and almost all other environmental organizations in the state.

¹ <https://uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PositionOn100by2035.pdf>

² https://uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018_PSEG_Bailout-2.pdf

Status: On May 23, 2018, Governor Murphy signed the S2313 (the PSEG Nuclear Subsidy bill) into law. While the financial data establishing the need for the subsidy will not be made public, the Division of Rate Counsel should be involved in considering any rate hikes under this bill.

Meadowlands Power Plant

The EJTF opposed the Meadowlands Power Plant and sent out an action item, which UU Faith Action circulated, urging UU Faith Action members to call or write the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Gov. Murphy to express opposition.

Status: The DEP issued six permits in July for the project. The plant needs several more permits from DEP and New York regulators. Several New Jersey towns have passed resolutions opposing the plant. Writing Murphy and the DEP would be helpful.

Energy Master Plan

Governor Murphy called for a new Energy Master Plan, with hearings on five subjects in September: Clean and Reliable Power, Reducing Energy Consumption, Clean and Reliable Transportation, Modernizing the Grid, and Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure. The EJTF sent comments for all but Modernizing the Grid and testified at the hearings on Clean and Reliable Power, Reducing Energy Consumption, and Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure.

In testimony, the EJTF focused on the impact on communities that are already disadvantaged by climate change, mostly poorer communities and communities of color. It needs to be easier for households in these communities to access the benefits of reducing energy usage and converting to clean energy. For these households, tax incentives are irrelevant and large investments in clean energy are impossible. Also, pollution from diesel vehicles disproportionately affects communities are the Ports of Newark and Elizabeth, and cleaning this up is needed to improve public health. Part of the EJTF testimony was highlighted on NJTV on September 14³.

Status: The stakeholder meetings are completed and our comments have been submitted. A draft plan will be announced next and comments on the draft plan invited. The EJTF will review the draft plan when it is released.

Community Solar

The EJTF “signature legislation” was to be a law enabling Community Solar in New Jersey, so that LMI households, which are primarily renters, would have more access to solar. Since there was already a bill in the legislature that would accomplish that, Gary Nissenbaum’s law firm determined that four amendments would be needed to make the bill LMI friendly. However, provisions providing for three of the four amendments were quickly added to the bill. As a result, the EJTF effort turned to the BPU rule-making effort.

A stakeholder meeting on community solar was held on July 24. The EJTF submitted written comments⁴ and collaborated with Rev. Ronald Tuff of Greenfaith to testify at BPU Community Solar Pilot hearings on July 24⁵. Rev. Tuff, the Energy Director of Greenfaith, has asked to partner with us going forward.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaWXQhHdQd4>

⁴ <https://www.bpu.state.nj.us/bpu/agenda/rules/communitysolar.html>

⁵ Morning session: http://njcleanenergy.com/files/file/CommunitySolar/Transcript_Community%20Solar%20Energy%20Pilot%20Program_Stakeholder%20Meeting_2018-07-24_AM%20Session.pdf

Afternoon session: http://njcleanenergy.com/files/file/CommunitySolar/Transcript_Community%20Solar%20Energy%20Pilot%20Program_Stakeholder%20Meeting_2018-07-24_PM%20Session.pdf

Status: The draft rules for the Community Solar Pilot have been issued and comments are due by November 29. There are stakeholder group meetings on Thursday, November 8, at 1 pm and 5:30 pm at Rutgers University.^f

Remediating Lead in Drinking Water

The EJTF issued a position paper⁶ on remediating lead in drinking water, supporting the recommendations in New Jersey Future's 2017 report Lead in School Drinking Water in New Jersey⁷ and the recommendations of the New Jersey Joint Legislative Task force on Drinking Water Infrastructure⁸.

A group from the EJTF met with Assemblywoman Nancy Pinkin in June and testified at a committee hearing on that same day about our concerns about lead in drinking water. The committee voted out four bills on the subject of lead, all supported by EJTF. The four bills were: A2697 Requires public water systems to compile, and submit to DEP, lead service line inventories.

A3373 Requires DEP to adopt Statewide plan to reduce lead exposure from contaminated soils and drinking water.

A4121 Requires DOE and DCF to establish online reporting systems for schools and child care centers to report lead testing results.

A4122 Concerns disclosure by homeowner of lead plumbing prior to home sale.

Also, Chris Sturm of Jersey Water Works gave a well-received talk at the Spring Plenary.

Status: The four bills have all passed the Assembly and are in Senate committees. An action item to call the committee chairs to ask for action would be useful.

Green Amendment

We support a Green Amendment to the New Jersey constitution, which would affirm every person's right to a clean and healthy environment.

Tim Eustace introduced such an amendment as assembly resolution ACR85. Nancy Pinkin is also a sponsor. The bill is in the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, but none of the sponsors are on that committee.

Status: This is an initiative of the Delaware Riverkeeper. It is in committee. An action item would be in order to ask the committee chair to bring it up in committee.

Single-Use Plastic and Plastic Waste

Ray Nichols testified for the EJTF at the Joint Legislative Environment Hearing on August 23 in Toms River, supporting Senate bill S2276 which "prohibits carryout bags made of plastic film, polystyrene foam food service products, and single-use plastic straws; assesses fee on paper carryout bags."

Status: The identical Assembly bill is A4330 and it is in the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee. The Senate bill S2776 started in the Senate Environment and Energy Committee but has been referred to the Appropriations Committee. An action item calling for it to be brought up in committee would be in order.

⁶ <https://uufaihtaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Position-Paper-Lead-in-Drinking-Water.pages.pdf>

⁷ <https://uufaihtaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Microsoft-Word-NJF-Recommendations-Summarized-by-UUFAEJ.docx.pdf>

⁸ <https://uufaihtaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/TDWI-Final-Report.pdf>

Educate

Panel on Transitioning to 100% Renewable Energy

On April 19, the EJTF co-sponsored a panel (with Westfield High School, the Union Area League of Women Voters, and Beacon's Green Earth Ministry) on transitioning to 100% renewable energy. It was attended by about 250-300 people, including a number of UUs from as far as Princeton and Ocean County.

The panelists were Jim Walsh, the Renewable Energy Policy Analyst for Food and Water Watch, Lyle Rawlings, the President of the MidAtlantic Solar Energy Industry Association (MSEIA) and a member of UU Faith Action NJ, Richard Lawton, the Executive Director of the New Jersey Sustainable Business Council, Serpil Guran, the Director of the Rutgers EcoComplex, and Dan Fattouh, the Executive Director of the Work Environment Council and of Jersey Renews (now at the Energy Foundation).

Videos are available on-line.

Introduction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpSmmf-sqwk&t=2s>

Opening statements: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYqlmaFCy3k&t=17s>

Best path: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27pCRkTqxTs&t=2s>

How fast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMD5LIAUZk4>

Cost: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAQMYR0dAZw&t=2s>

Newsletter

Carol Hemington has begun publishing a newsletter for the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF). A primary goal of the newsletter is to publicize actions of the EJTF to congregations and to publicize congregational actions to the EJTF and to other congregations.

The newsletter has already succeeded in inter-congregation communication. When Marilyn Maney of the Ridgewood Congregation saw the story in the newsletter about Beacon's Electric Vehicle event, she asked the presenter — a member of the Ridgewood congregation — to duplicate the presentation there. Our understanding is that he is ready to repeat it for any interested congregation.

So far, two newsletters have been published:

August: <https://uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Environmental-Justice-Task-Force-Newsletter-August-2018.pdf>

September: https://uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/20180926_Environmental-Justice-Task-Force-Newsletter-September-2018-copy.pdf

NJ Climate Policy Stakeholder Forum

Nancy Griffeth was invited to represent EJTF on September 15 at the NJ Climate Policy Stakeholder Forum sponsored by the Princeton Student Climate Initiative. The report is available here: <https://uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Report-on-NJ-Climate-Policy-Stakeholder-Forum.pdf>

Relationships

UU Faith Action NJ/EJTF joined Jersey Renews, the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, and Jersey Water Works.

EJTF partnered with Rev. Ronald Tuff of Greenfaith in developing comments and testimony for the BPU stakeholder hearings on the Community Solar Pilot and the Energy Master Plan. We plan to continue this partnership.

At the first Energy Master Plan hearing, Rev. Tuff asked for meetings in more convenient places for LMI communities. Subsequently, Lena Smith of Food and Water Watch organized a letter signed by many environmental organizations to Governor Murphy asking for a more inclusive process. Two more meetings were scheduled, one in Newark and one in Camden, at 4 pm instead of 10 am.

Ray Nichols, Margaret Babcock, and Nancy Griffeth attended Jersey Renews meetings on behalf of UU Faith Action. Jersey Renews is a coalition of environmental, faith-based, and labor groups. Since almost all of the important environmental groups are members, this is a great place to find out what is happening.

Nancy Griffeth represented EJTF at the first meeting of the "Use of Settlement Proceeds" subcommittee for the Natural Resources Damages task force authorized by Governor Murphy. This subcommittee is chaired by Doug O'Malley, to whom EJTF is known because of Jersey Renews.

EJTF supports the Food and Water Watch OFF bill, which mandates 100% renewable energy by 2035 and they have proved to be good allies as the letter on meetings for the Energy Master Plan illustrates.

The Network For Responsible Public Policy will have a forum in Westfield, NJ, sometime close to Earth Day on an environmental subject. EJTF can co-sponsor this.

The League of Women Voters - Natural Resources Committee is a valuable source of information for any members of both LWV and EJTF who would like to join the Natural Resources Committee.

Recognition of EJTF Members

Last but not least, several of our members deserve special recognition for their initiative and hard work.

Carol Hemington created a map of New Jersey with legislative districts and their congregations at <https://uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/NJ-State-Districts-UUs-map.pdf> She also compiled a list of environmentally-friendly legislators at <https://uufaithaction.org/new-jersey-legislature/> and a list of UU congregations with an environmental ministry at <https://uufaithaction.org/environmental-justice-teams-in-congregations/>. These can all be found on our Web site under Issues>Environmental Justice>Resources.

In addition, she helped prepare the EJTF comments and gave testimony on July 24, 2018, to the BPU on the subject of the Community Solar Pilot Program.

Finally, she proposed and designed the newsletter and edited the August and September newsletters.

Ray Nichols was a member of the EJTF groups that met with Assemblyman Tim Eustace in January, Assemblywoman Nancy Pinkin in June, Ken McPherson, legislative aide to Assemblyman John McKeon in June, and Mayor Jerrell Blakely of Trenton in September. He represented EJTF and nurtured relationships at meetings with various environmental groups such as Jersey Renews, the Delaware Riverkeeper, Jersey Water Works, and ANJEC.

He and Sally Gellert co-authored the comments on “Clean and Reliable Transportation” that EJTF submitted to the BPU and worked on “smoldering issues” such as the Green Amendment and planting trees in city.

Finally, he gave testimony on behalf of EJTF at the “Joint Legislative Environment Hearing on Single-Use Plastic and Plastic Waste” on August 23 in Toms River.

Sally Gellert gave testimony on behalf of EJTF at the BPU hearing on the Energy Master Plan in Newark on October 4. She and Ray Nichols co-authored the comments on “Clean and Reliable Transportation” that we submitted to the BPU.

Sally also tracked important events for the EJTF to follow, such as meetings and protests about the Meadowlands Power Plant and the Gateway Expansion Project, the latest news on the nuclear subsidy and about innovations renewable energy, recommendations from the UU General Assembly, and a thousand other things.

Peggy Middaugh drafted the position paper on Lead in Drinking Water, helped understand the issues with the plastic bag fee through her contacts in ANJEC, and provided materials on subjects such as NJEJA’s position on RGGI.

Lyle Rawlings gave an excellent presentation at the April 19 Panel on Transitioning NJ to 100% Renewable Energy and also at the October 4 BPU hearing in Newark (even though that was on behalf of MSEIA, not UU Faith Action NJ).