



Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter March 2019

UU Seventh Principle: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. Environmental Justice (EJ): Addressing disproportionate and adverse human health or environmental effects in communities of low-income residents or persons of color.

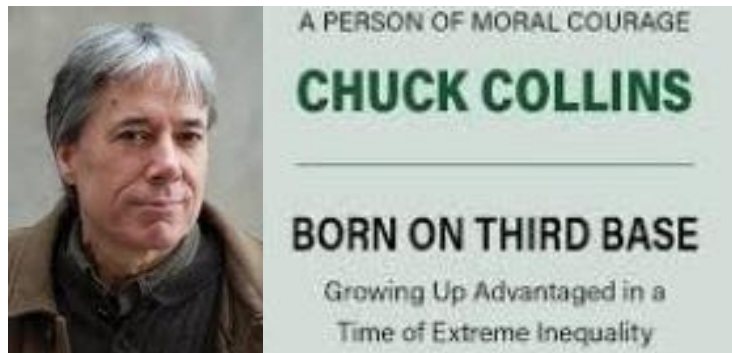


REMINDER! UU FaithAction NJ PLENARY IS APRIL 13, 2019!

This year's annual Plenary will be on **Saturday, April 13th, 2019 from 10:00 am – 3:30 pm** at the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair**, located at 67 Church Street, Montclair NJ, 07042.

The keynote speaker will be **Chuck Collins**, author of *Born on Third Base: Growing Up Advantaged in a Time of Extreme Inequality*.

Register [HERE!](#)



UU CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITY

UU OCEAN COUNTY CONGREGATION (UUOCC)

The Social Justice Committee at UU Ocean County Congregation wanted to do something about reducing the amount of plastic going into the waste stream and into our waterways. So Irene Tysh, Audrey Maxymuk, and Barbara Diamantopoulos formed a subcommittee to make reusable shopping bags. Barbara (in photo at right) put her artistic skills to work on the multicolored bags (see photo on page 2), which also serve as an awareness building item for UUOCC.





FUSP (First Unitarian Society of Plainfield)

The March meeting of the FUSP Women’s Alliance group featured a presentation on “NJ Environmental Issues (Environmental Justice, Climate Change, etc.) and What UUs Can Do” by EJTF member Carol Hemington. The program was well received, and an extended discussion resulted, which included the signing of petitions for the “Green Amendment” and the Moratorium.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FORUMS – Empower NJ: For a Moratorium on New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

Empower NJ is a coalition of more than 50 environmental groups, demanding that Governor Murphy declare a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure until there is a plan in place to comply with the Global Warming Response Act of 2007 and to reach Governor Murphy’s goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050. Neither of these will be possible if any of the 12 fossil fuel projects (8 pipeline/compressor projects and 4 power plants) is completed. [See their Facebook page here.](#)

They have made the case in the report “FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE IN NJ: The Urgent Case for a Moratorium on all Fossil Fuel Projects” and are giving forums around the state to educate citizens on the problems. Additional forums may be scheduled, but there is currently one scheduled forum remaining:

- **Thursday, March 21, 2019 7:00-9:00 pm**
Ridgefield Community Center
725 Slocum Ave., Ridgefield, NJ
<https://www.facebook.com/events/266591350937480/>

A climate crisis-related event of interest:

“THE CLIMATE CRISIS – NEW JERSEY TAKES ACTION” – an event sponsored by 350NJ Rockland - Updates, Keynote, Break-outs, Music, Pot-Luck Meal, Etc.

- **Saturday, March 23, 2019 – 10 am to 3:30 pm**
Brookdale Reformed Church
10 Bellevue Ave., Bloomfield, NJ
<http://world.350.org/newjersey/>

EJTF ACTIVITIES

UPDATE ON EJTF KEY ISSUES FOR 2019:

1) Fighting against fossil fuel infrastructure

We are working on actions related to achieving a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure in NJ. We have joined Empower NJ - Twitter hashtag, #empowernj - (see “Forums” on page 2), a coalition of environmental groups, to demand that Governor Murphy declare a moratorium on building fossil fuel infrastructure, just as [Governor Brendan Byrne did to prevent development in the Pinelands](#) and [Governor Thomas Kean did to protect freshwater wetlands in New Jersey](#). We are asking our members to contact the governor and to write letters to print and on-line news sources, to attend demonstrations against new pipelines and power plants, and to organize educational events in their congregations and in our municipalities.

Empower NJ has launched a “Stop Fossil Fuel” campaign - there’s good information about it here: <https://www.cleanwateraction.org/releases/empower-nj-stop-fossil-fuel-campaign-launch>. Their report, “FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE IN NJ: The Urgent Case for a Moratorium on all Fossil Fuel Projects,” is available here:

https://www.cleanwateraction.org/sites/default/files/EmpowerNJ_Report_190211_Color_1.pdf.

It articulates the evidence-based case for a moratorium on fossil fuel projects in New Jersey. EJTF attended the press conference (see photo below):

<https://www.cleanwateraction.org/releases/empower-nj-stop-fossil-fuels-press-conference-statement-amy-goldsmith-nj-state-director>.

THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN A VICTORY – THE PINELANDS COMMISSION HAS VOIDED THE APPROVAL OF THE SOUTH JERSEY GAS PIPELINE (see news articles on pages 6 and 7)!



EJTF Vice Chair Ray Nichols (at left, in UU FaithAction T-shirt) listening to Amy Goldsmith, NJ State Director, Clean Water Action, at the 2/15/2019 press conference at the State House Annex, where Empower NJ released their report “FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE IN NJ: The Urgent Case for a Moratorium on all Fossil Fuel Projects.”

UPDATE ON EJTF KEY ISSUES FOR 2019 (continued):

2) Reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions from transportation

- Electric Vehicles (EV's)

Legislation: For electrification of New Jersey's transportation sector, we are supporting New Jersey Senate Bill 2252, which "establishes goals, initiatives, and programs to encourage and support use of plug-in electric vehicles," and are asking for additional incentives for replacing diesel buses, especially school buses, in New Jersey with electric buses. We are working on a draft position paper on EV's.

Volkswagen Settlement Funds: The state is allocating \$11.2 million from a Volkswagen settlement to install electric-vehicle charging stations at hundreds of locations around New Jersey and to buy new electric buses for NJ Transit in Camden. One focus of the funds is to be on environmental justice to communities which are disproportionately impacted by pollution and resulting health impacts. The new electric buses in the City of Camden will be a step toward electrifying public transportation in New Jersey, and directly addresses one of EJTF's priorities. The press release describing the program is here: https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2019/19_0011.htm; a list of locations of the planned charging stations is here: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/vw/project.html>.

OTHER EJTF ACTIVITIES

ACTIONS RELATED TO EJTF AREAS OF INTEREST

"GREEN AMENDMENT" Sponsored in the Assembly by UU Nancy Pinkin



The "Green Amendment" bill (Senate Concurrent Resolution 134), for a proposed amendment to the NJ Constitution to grant every person the right to a clean and healthy environment, passed the NJ Senate Environment and Energy Committee by a bipartisan supermajority. It was sent to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee 10/15/2018.

A summary and a list of actions you can take are available here:

<http://delawareriverkeeper.org/ongoing-issues/new-jerseys-green-amendment-generations>

LEGISLATION THAT WOULD PROVIDE A BARRIER FOR NEW JERSEY AGAINST THE TRUMP TEAM'S ROLLBACK OF ENVIRONMENTAL RULES

- **UU Nancy Pinkin, (Chair of the NJ Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee) proposed legislation on 2/14/2019 that would keep federal regulations from the pre-Trump era in force in New Jersey.**



- The bill (A5033) would authorize a NJDEP rulemaking to prevent backsliding or weakening of certain State environmental regulations due to changes in federal law or regulation.
- Specifically, it addresses endangered species, air pollution control, water pollution control and safe drinking water, and would maintain them at a minimum level in effect on January 19, 2017 (the day before the last Inauguration Day). The related federal laws establish standards that serve as the baseline level for environment, natural resources, and public health protection, while authorizing states to adopt more protective measures. However, beginning in 2017, the President and United States Congress have engaged in efforts to weaken these federal laws and the protections they provide.
- This bill is intended to ensure continued protections for the environment, natural resources, and public health in New Jersey even if these federal laws are weakened, and would retain the protections afforded under the federal laws and implementing regulations in effect on January 19, 2017, regardless of actions taken at the federal level to weaken those protections. This bill is similar to legislation pending in California.
- Further description is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/25/building-nj-barrier-against-trump-teams-rollback-of-environmental-protections/>

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE –NJ Environmental Justice Draft Guidance Document

The Department of Environmental Protection has issued a draft guidance document pursuant to Executive Order No. 23, which calls upon all state government agencies to make environmental justice a key consideration in decision making that affects residents' environment, communities, homes and health. The executive order, signed by Governor Murphy on 4/20/2018, directs the DEP to take the lead in developing environmental justice guidance for state agencies. Written comments may be submitted until 3/22/2019 on the document, which is available here: www.nj.gov/dep/ej/eo23/docs/eo23-draft-guidance.pdf.

NEWS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES

CLEAN VEHICLES

- **Part of VW Settlement Fund Goes to EV Charging Stations, Electric Buses** - Hundreds of charging stations are to be installed across the state, and NJ Transit in Camden is to get some electric buses: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/28/part-of-vw-settlement-fund-is-allocated-to-ev-charging-stations-and-electric-buses/>
- **Businesses, Investors Want to Jump-Start NJ's Push for Plug-In Vehicles** - Electrifying the transportation sector is critical to cutting greenhouse gases, achieving a clean economy. Advocates argue legislation to get the job done is already in committee: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/20/businesses-investors-want-to-jump-start-njs-push-for-plug-in-vehicles/>
- **NJ Cleanup of Car Emissions Put at Risk as Feds Exit California Talks** - Decision by the Trump administration to end negotiations over California's fuel-efficiency standards likely will go to court, delaying New Jersey's own efforts to curb emissions: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/21/nj-cleanup-of-car-emissions-put-at-risk-by-federal-exit-from-california-talks>
- **Low-Speed Electric Bikes Get Go-Ahead from NJ Lawmakers** - Current state regulations are not up to speed with e-bikes, causing confusion for some police departments. Electric bikes with low-speed motors that have become popular in many cities across the country and controversial in others could be riding throughout New Jersey soon. The Legislature has sent Gov. Phil Murphy a measure (S-731) to allow the operation in New Jersey of so-called e-bikes and e-scooters: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/17/low-speed-electric-bikes-get-go-ahead-from-nj-lawmakers>



FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

- **The Petition for a moratorium on fossil fuel infrastructure:** <https://secure.foodandwaterwatch.org/act/gov-murphy-enact-moratorium-fossil-fuel-infrastructure>
- **Plan to Convert BL England Plant to Natural Gas Is Dead on Arrival** - After nearly a decade of bitter fighting, RC Cape May Holdings raises a white flag over the proposal to build a natural-gas pipeline in Pinelands. The plan to convert the BL England power plant to natural gas, one of the most controversial projects proposed in the Pinelands, is dead — at least for now: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/27/plan-to-convert-bl-england-plant-to-natural-gas-is-dead-on-arrival>

- **BL England Decision May Doom Pipeline but Natural-Gas Projects Still On** - Opponents cheer the abandonment of a plan to convert the South Jersey coal units to natural gas, which appears to doom a 22-mile gas pipeline through the Pinelands. But companies forge ahead with plans for big investments in natural gas: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/28/bl-england-decision-may-doom-pipeline-but-natural-gas-projects-still-on-the-table>
- **Pinelands Commission voids approval of South Jersey Gas pipeline** - The approval of a controversial South Jersey Gas pipeline project has been reversed: <https://www.njtvonline.org/news/uncategorized/pinelands-commission-voids-approval-of-south-jersey-gas-pipeline/>

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- **NJ Senate Environment and Energy Committee Approves Legislation to Address Disproportionate Environmental Impact on Poor Urban Communities** - Legislators voted on Jan. 24 to give environmental justice communities more say in blocking new and expanded projects that could increase pollution in their neighborhoods – the bill has been referred to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/01/24/senate-panel-approves-environmental-justice-protection-for-poor-communities/>

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER (and other water issues)

- **Chemours Shipped PFAS Substitute Chemical to South Jersey Site, EPA Says** - Critics say GenX may worsen water contamination near Chambers Works site in Salem County: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/22/chemours-shipped-pfas-substitute-chemical-to-south-jersey-plant-epa-says>
- **Criticizing Inaction on Lead in New Jersey Schools' Drinking Water Supplies** - State Sen. Linda Greenstein says Department of Education should 'tighten up its rules on testing': <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/26/criticism-of-inaction-on-lead-in-new-jersey-schools-drinking-water-supplies>
- **NJ Spotlight Roundtable: Achieving Lead-Free School Water in New Jersey** – Schools across New Jersey have tested positive for lead in their drinking water. What can be done to remedy the problem?: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/27/nj-spotlight-roundtable-fixing-school-water-infrastructure>
- **Op-Ed: Investment (and Planning) Urgently Needed for Water Infrastructure** - Public works contractors see the problems first-hand - and the potential costs if New Jersey doesn't get to grips with one of its most vital systems: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/27/op-ed-state-investment-and-planning-urgently-needed-for-water-infrastructure>
- **Newark Begins \$75M Program to Replace Lead Water Pipes** - Mayor says it could take eight years to change 15,000 service lines. City has received four violations for elevated levels of lead since 2017: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/13/newark-begins-75m-program-to-replace-lead-water-pipes>
- **Ridgewood Water sues DuPont and others over PFAS contamination:** <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/bergen/2019/03/11/ridgewood-nj-water-sues-corporations-over-contamination-pfas-pfoa/3080002002/>

RENEWABLE RESOURCES



- **N.J. fishermen and offshore wind firms learning to coexist:**
https://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/news/n-j-fishermen-and-wind-energy-firms-learning-to-coexist/article_f58ad8e4-94f4-5f7f-bcf4-fb7cd92bf85e.html **More Job Losses Last Year for New**
- **There may be new life yet for two New Jersey power plants set to be decommissioned -**
The Press of Atlantic City reports offshore wind company Orsted is eyeing B.L. England and the Oyster Creek Generating Station as part of a plan to connect its turbines to the energy grid:
<http://enviropoliticsblog.blogspot.com/2019/02/danish-wind-company-wants-to-use-closed.html#.XJEEe-sapo>
- **Op-Ed: Here Comes the Sun for Less Money than You Thought -** With the cost of renewable energy sources continuing to decline, New Jersey will benefit — but two factors are needed to achieve New Jersey’s low-cost clean energy future: a new planning framework that identifies the right mix of energy resources to dramatically reduce emissions at the lowest cost for New Jersey; and cost-effective programs to attract those resources: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/17/op-ed-here-comes-the-sun-for-less-money-than-you-thought>

CLIMATE CHANGE

- **The Big Challenge for NJ’s Clean Energy: Juggling All the Moving Parts -** NJ Spotlight roundtable is told climate change will be the big driver of changes in how energy is applied, delivered and used in the state and elsewhere. The state is mapping out a path to a clean energy future, a goal that augurs fundamental changes in how energy is applied, delivered, and used not only in New Jersey, but also the rest of the country, according to experts and other officials who took part in an NJ Spotlight roundtable 3/15/2019. In a wide-ranging discussion on the state’s energy policies, there was broad consensus on moving forward on the Murphy administration’s targets to have half of the state’s energy come from clean energy by 2030 and all of it by 2050, but also fears of missteps and the need for mid-course corrections along the way: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/17/the-big-challenge-for-njs-clean-energy-juggling-all-the-moving-parts>
- **Students across the world took part in “climate strikes” to convey their feelings on environmental issues pertaining to climate change -** In New Jersey, students took part in organized climate strikes in Montclair, Mahwah, Princeton, and Morristown:
<https://expo.nj.com/news/g66l-2019/03/bf4d77a1d07573/the-clever-creative-signs-and-a-trex-spotted-at-nj-students-climate-strike-.html>

- **Protesting students across N.J. skip school, join global 'climate strike' to preserve their future** - Hundreds of students around New Jersey skipped school 3/15/2019 for a cause that runs much deeper than a typical day of hooky: <https://www.nj.com/news/2019/03/protesting-students-across-nj-skip-school-join-global-climate-strike-to-preserve-their-future.html>

POLLUTION



- **Legislation (S1073) that will allow counties and municipalities in New Jersey to establish stormwater utilities and management policies was signed into law March 18, 2019 by Governor Phil Murphy:** http://enviropoliticsblog.blogspot.com/2019/03/by-frank-brill-enviropolitics-editor.html#.XJENCu_sapo

S1073 does not directly impose any fees on property owners. Instead, it allows municipalities and counties to create their own local stormwater utilities that could then charge property owners a fee based on "a fair and equitable approximation" of how much runoff is generated from their property. The utility could then use the funds generated by the fees only on its system, such as reinforcing or replacing pipes or creating green infrastructure like rain gardens and tree planting to absorb water that would otherwise carry trash, bacteria and heavy metals.

"This is a tool that would only be used by towns that recognize they have a problem," said Chris Sturm, a water policy expert with New Jersey Future, a nonprofit that advocates a balance between economic development and environmental protection. "It's an important tool. It's one that can make a significant difference in the right towns."

The NJDEP will likely spend considerable time developing rules for the law. Then towns and counties need to determine whether they need such a utility. Local officials will then decide if they have the political will to issue fees to large property owners - some of whom already pay among the highest property taxes in the community.

- **AG Takes Aim at ExxonMobil Over Polluted Site in Gloucester County** - New lawsuit stands in contrast to Christie administration settlement with oil giant over former refineries in Linden and Bayonne. The state is once again going after ExxonMobil to clean up and pay to restore once pristine natural areas, in this case a 12-acre site in Gloucester County where drums of industrial products and other contaminants were dumped: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/07/ag-takes-aim-at-exxonmobil-over-polluted-site-in-gloucester-county>

OTHER

- **Op-ed - New Jersey has invested substantially in measures to improve energy efficiency.** The state needs objective, independent, and timely evaluations of these initiatives: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/02/18/op-ed-moving-beyond-promises-of-energy-efficiency-to-measurable-results/>
- **Murphy Hits Brakes on Diversion of Funds from Housing, Energy Programs** - Gov. Phil Murphy pledged to end the practice of diverting funds from state affordable-housing and clean-energy programs. Since the 2010 state budget, more than \$1.6 billion in clean-energy funds have been tapped to plug recurring holes in the budget: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/06/murphy-hits-brakes-on-diversion-of-funds-dedicated-to-housing-and-energy>
- **Energy Suppliers Ordered to Stop Passing on Higher Costs to Customers** - Tens of millions of dollars on the line as third-party suppliers dispute Board of Public Utilities' order not to increase fixed rate during term of contracts: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/03/energy-suppliers-ordered-to-stop-passing-on-higher-costs-to-customers-give-refund>
- **Will NJ Consumers End up on Hook for Transmission Line to Other States?** - FERC's decision not to rehear cost allocations for \$278 million power line could hit Garden State ratepayers right in their wallets - New Jersey ratepayers may end up paying a bigger share of the cost of a controversial transmission line to deliver power from the state's three nuclear power plants to customers in Delaware and Maryland: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/06/will-nj-consumers-end-up-paying-largest-share-of-transmission-line-to-other-states>
- **Arguments Heat Up as PSEG Fights for State to Subsidize Nuclear Plants** - Company claims South Jersey plants are uneconomic otherwise. Rate Counsel Stefanie Brand accuses it of 'holding a gun to the regulators' head': <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/10/arguments-heat-up-as-pseg-fights-for-state-to-subsidize-nuclear-plants>
- **BPU Eyes \$12B in Rate Increases All Told** - \$12B in filings with the Board of Public Utilities reflect the mounting costs utilities project for modernizing and making aging power grids more resilient, complying with state mandates to shift to cleaner sources of energy, and having ratepayers subsidize New Jersey's three nuclear power plants to prevent their closing. That's just for starters: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/13/small-price-blip-for-ace-customers-but-bpu-considering-12b-in-rate-increases-overall>
- **PSEG Disputes New Estimate of Nuclear Profits, Awaits Answer on State Subsidies** - Independent market monitor concludes that South Jersey plants, for which company is seeking \$300 million in annual state aid, will net big profits over the next few years: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/14/pseg-disputes-new-assessment-of-nuclear-profits-awaits-answer-on-state-subsidies>
- **Barriers, Flood Walls Could Help Protect Back Bays from flooding, Army Corps Says** - Interim U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report foresees 'massive' construction projects costing 'several billion dollars': <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/03/11/storm-surge-barriers-flood-walls-could-help-protect-back-bays-army-corps-says>

UUFaithAction NJ - Environmental Justice Task Force - <https://uufaithaction.org/environment/>
Chair - Nancy Griffith; Vice Chair - Ray Nichols

Visit our website for Environmental links and resources / sign up for email alerts / join the EJTF