



SAVE THE DATE! - UUFANJ Gala 2/8/2025 (see p. 10)

<https://www.uufaithaction.org/blog>

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.

EJTF ACTIVITIES

• EJTF Front and Center at NJ Climate Superfund Act Rally & Hearing

On December 12, 2024, **EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh, EJTF member Mike Skelly, and UUFANJ Board member Susan Druckenbröd** attended a packed hearing of the Senate Environment Committee for the Climate Superfund Act bill - it **PASSED** the committee! Mike submitted a slip to the committee in favor of the bill (Mike and Peggy can be seen in the center of the photo below left). Mike, Susan and Peggy then attended a rally in front of the State House in favor of the bill, with Mike and Peggy holding a giant banner asking for polluters to pay for the next climate disaster (see photo at right). **See p. 2 for additional information about the Climate Superfund Act.**



Photos by EmpowerNJ

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EJTF ACTIVITIES (Cont.)

• NJ Climate Superfund Act (Cont.)

The NJ Climate Superfund Act (bill S3545) has been in development for two years. UUFANJ/EJTF has been an advocate for the bill and revisions along the way to make it stronger. EJTF and a broad coalition of health, energy, and environmental advocates have been actively speaking out, writing, and rallying on the Statehouse steps for this and other common-sense energy laws. Bill S3545 imposes liability on certain fossil fuel companies for certain damages caused by climate change and establishes a program in the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to collect and distribute compensatory payments. After the bill passed the NJ Senate Environment Committee, this landmark bill was sent to the NJ Senate Budget Committee for further hearings and action.

It is key that the Climate Superfund Act be supported by municipalities, because it moves some of the cost of climate change damage - such as repairs to infrastructure - from the municipal budget to the industries that caused the damage. The EJTF partner Food & Water Watch has prepared a "Guide to Passing Municipal Resolutions to Support the Climate Superfund Act" (available here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10IpeG8GhYHtoRr7ikSqIYnFn_mDb9ZybK1KaNMQk8vE/edit). **This guide contains everything from template emails to city council members, environmental commissions and Green Teams, to tips for outreach to potential ally groups and appearing at council meetings, to frequently asked questions about the Climate Superfund Act.**

• EmpowerNJ Post-Election Strategy Session & Potluck

EJTF member **Nancy Griffeth** attended the strategy session and potluck that EmpowerNJ (a coalition of which **UUFANJ is a member**) hosted on December 3, 2024 "to assess the current moment and chart our path forward." Focusing on the next weeks and months that are key for enacting effective state-level climate solutions, the main item for discussion was the Climate Superfund Act, and convincing municipalities to pass resolutions supporting it (see the [NJ Climate Superfund Act](#) item above).



Empower NJ Steering Committee, from left to right: Dave Pringle, John Reichman, Matt Smith (Food & Water Watch), Doug O'Malley (Environment NJ), Ken Dolsky, Amy Goldsmith (Clean Water Action), Tracy Carluccio (Delaware Riverkeeper)



Photos by Nancy Griffeth

EJTF ACTIVITIES (Cont.)

• Formosa Plastics Protest

EJTF member Nancy Griffeth took part in a protest on December 5, 2024 against Formosa Plastics, at various banks in Livingston that invest in the company. Formosa Plastics is a Taiwan-based company that has its U.S. headquarters in Livingston, NJ. It operates facilities in Texas and Louisiana as well as in Taiwan and Vietnam, and it is accused of dumping plastic pellets in waterways.



Photo by Nancy Griffeth

• Farewell Luncheon for Meera Rao

As UUFANJ Administrator, Meera Rao has provided invaluable assistance to EJTF and all of the other UUFANJ Task Forces. EJTF organized a luncheon on December 19, 2024 in Princeton, NJ to bid Meera farewell and best wishes on her retirement! Shown in the photo at right, starting from front left, are UUFANJ Board President Phil Lubitz; Meera Rao; EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh; EJTF member Mike Skelly; UUFANJ Board Trustee Susan Druckenbröd; Lois Moran; and UUFANJ Immigration Task Force Chair Tom Moran.



Photo courtesy of Mike Skelly

• Pemberton Township Planning Board Hearing

EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh and **EJTF member Mike Skelly** have attended several hearings of the Pemberton Township Planning Board, to provide support for **EJTF partner** Pinelands Preservation Alliance (see December 2024 newsletter for photos of the November 2024 hearing). These hearings regarding the approvals toward a housing development in the Pine Barrens, which may have an impact on the pine snake, have been taking place over the last two years. EJTF and supporters of the pinelands and wildlife came out in orange t-shirts and gave testimony. In an exciting long session held on December 5, 2024, the Township Planning Board voted the development plan down, giving victory for EJTF, Pinelands Preservation Alliance, the People, natural systems and living creatures of Pemberton Township! This is proof that public participation CAN make a difference. See the article on [p. 21](#) for additional details.

Finally, the First New State Plan in 23 Years Is Unveiled for Public Comment

The NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan has very important environmental, climate change, and environmental justice implications. It has not been updated since 2001, but a new Preliminary Draft Plan was just issued.

From Gov. Murphy's press release (available here:

<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/approved/20241206a.shtml>):

"Building on Governor Murphy's commitment to fully update New Jersey's State Plan for the first time since 2001, the State Planning Commission approved the publication of the Preliminary Draft Plan [available here: <https://tinyurl.com/bde7n8bw>] of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The State Development and Redevelopment Plan, developed through collaboration across all levels of government, serves as a guide to inform the public and encourage state agencies, counties, and municipalities to align their land use policies with its vision. It aims to promote a balanced and inclusive strategy for managing and guiding growth across New Jersey, centered on ten key land use priorities." The State Plan provides a comprehensive framework intended to guide future development, redevelopment, conservation, preservation, and restoration efforts, and for the first time, it includes climate and equity goals.

Gov. Murphy wants the updated State Plan to be approved by the time he leaves office at the end of 2025. To accomplish this, a number of steps must occur, in a process of extensive outreach, comment, and (if necessary) revision.

Next steps:

- 1) **Starting February 12, 2025, an intensive two-month public comment period will feature meetings in every county.** These hearings will continue through April 16, 2025 and **initiate a cross-acceptance process**, comparing municipal, county, and state land use plans with the State Plan to achieve maximum consistency across all levels of government.
- 2) **A Final Draft Plan will be published.** It will include an Infrastructure Needs Assessment and an Impact Assessment (that analyzes the Plan's impact in addressing the State goals and policies and that of the public, State, county, and local governments). **This Final Draft Plan will again be presented to the public as part of another six public hearings throughout the State.**
- 3) **After these analyses and public outreach efforts occur the Draft State Development and Redevelopment Plan will be presented to the State Planning Commission for approval.**

This *NJ Spotlight News* article includes a comprehensive description of the State Plan, including its history, implications, the approval and adaptation process, and its inclusion of climate, equity and environmental justice goals.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/12/nj-officials-unveil-draft-state-plan-first-in-23-years/>

FUTURE EVENTS - *Virtual, In-person, and Hybrid*

[EJTF members - also watch for email announcements of events with short lead times!]

JANUARY 2025 (with hyperlinks to details on the following pages)						
<i>Sun.</i>	<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Tues.</i>	<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thurs.</i>	<i>Fri.</i>	<i>Sat.</i>
			1	2	3	4
5 "From Fork to Forest: the Climate Crisis and How We Eat" - 12:30 p.m.	6	7	8 "Green Amendments Ambassador Program Welcome and Launch Session" - 7:00 p.m. "The State of the State's Alternative Energy Programs" - 7:00 p.m.	9 NJ Community Forestry Council - 10:00 a.m. "Beloved Community: Building a Village in the Face of Climate Chaos" - 8:00 p.m.	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 "Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education (ANJEE) - 40th Annual Winter Conference" - 7:30 a.m. "Green Amendments for Clean Energy Forum" - 12:00 p.m. "An Overview of Technical Note 190-12: Conservation Activities in Organic Farming Systems Part 1: Soil Health, Climate and Nutrients" - 1:00 p.m.	17 "Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education (ANJEE) - 40th Annual Winter Conference" - 8:00 a.m. NJBP Technical Conference on NJ's Distributed Energy Resource Participation in Regional Wholesale Electricity Markets - 9:30 a.m.	18 Martin Luther King March of Resistance - 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Newark, NJ Additional information is available here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/bbabin-united-with-pop-mlk-march-of-resistance-tickets-1123212923089
19	20	21	22	23 "Challenges and Opportunities of Scaling Nature-based Solutions for Climate Adaptation" - 1:00 p.m.	24	25 NOFA-NJ's 35th Annual Winter Conference: "Living Roots, Resilience, & Food Security" - 8:30 a.m. Liberty State Park Open House - 11:00 a.m.
26	27	28 "Lessons Learned After Two Years of Accelerating Lead Service Line Replacement in NJ Communities" - 9:00 a.m.	29 "Navigating Climate Information for Effective Policy-Making" - 2:00 p.m. Option Green: "The True Cost of Fashion" - 7:00 p.m.	30 "Can AI Help Reduce Emissions of Greenhouse Gases?" - 12:00 p.m.	31 Comments Due on the following: NJ's Distributed Energy Resource Participation in Regional Wholesale Electricity Markets Rulemaking Proposal to Establish the Dual-Use Solar Energy Pilot Program Draft Update to NJ Offshore Wind Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI) "Short-term Highest Priority Research & Monitoring Needs"	

FUTURE EVENTS

"From Fork to Forest: the Climate Crisis and How We Eat" - via Zoom 1/5/2025, 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. (EST)

This presentation is hosted by Genevieve Vavreck, the Climate Justice Team Chair of the UU Church of Minnetonka in Minnesota, and will be held in-person there and on Zoom. "Even if we stopped using fossil fuels today, emissions from our food system would still cause the earth to exceed targets. This lively presentation will discuss the under-appreciated impact our food system has on climate and the environment. Learn actions you can take at your very next meal to start changing things for the better." Additional information, including the Zoom link, is available here: <https://secure.everyaction.com/m1QqXg9uGkqRrGFkGlq8ZQ2>.

"Green Amendments Ambassador Program Welcome and Launch Session" - Virtual 1/8/2025, 7:00 p.m.

Green Amendments For The Generations is launching a nationwide Green Amendments Ambassador Program. The welcome and launch session on 1/8/2025 will provide information about the program, including how Ambassadors will grow the movement, and how you can get involved. Additional information about the Ambassador Program is available here: <https://forthegenerations.org/actnow/become-an-ambassador/>. The registration link for the launch session is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/rss73tu9>.

"The State of the State's Alternative Energy Programs" - Virtual 1/8/2025, 7:00 p.m.

In this webinar, organized by the Hunterdon Warren Group of the Sierra Club NJ Chapter, "Deputy Chief of Staff at the NJ Board of Public Utilities, Henry Gajda, will guide us through New Jersey's Clean Energy Program (NJCEP). This statewide initiative promotes energy efficiency programs and the development of clean, renewable sources of energy including solar, wind, geothermal combined heat and power (CHP) and sustainable biomass. NJCEP leads the nation in clean energy investments and offers incentives and services that benefit NJ residents, businesses,

educational and non-profits and government entities to help save energy, money and the environment." Additional information and the link to RSVP are available here: <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=701Po00000Wg44rIAB&mapLinkHref=>.

NJ Community Forestry Council 1/9/2025, 10:00 a.m. - Hybrid Jackson, NJ - In-person & Online

"The NJ Community Forestry Council (Council) to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is comprised of members appointed by the State Forester, with expertise or interest in trees, forestry, or tree or forest management, maintenance, or care. The Council advises the State Forester, the Division of Parks and Forestry and the DEP.... in promoting, supporting and advancing healthy, safe and sustainable urban and community forests in New Jersey." The meeting agenda will deal with implementing the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act, the No Net Loss Reforestation Act, and issues concerning urban and community forestry and the forest and tree resources. Links to additional information are available here: <https://dep.nj.gov/event/nj-community-forestry-council-3/>.

"Beloved Community: Building a Village in the Face of Climate Chaos" - Webinar 1/9/2025, 8:00 p.m.

This webinar, sponsored by Unitarian Universalists for a Just Community (UUJEC), will be presented by Janice Booher, MS, who is currently serving as the Director of UU Justice Florida's Climate Resilience Ministry and as the Vice President of the non-profit Health Initiatives Foundation, Inc. with the goal of obtaining resources to address community-identified issues. "Standing with others to confront complex issues is a Unitarian Universalist strength. As we reach tipping points, the impacts of climate change are challenging available resources. Willingness to work together is coming from many unexpected quarters. Jan will discuss her commitment to building Beloved Community in challenging times. She will discuss bringing diverse groups together to recover from disasters, to build individual and community resilience, and to make and implement plans that strengthen community. If there is hope in the devolving climate crisis, it is in the amazing

innovative strength that comes from people of many backgrounds working together in new ways." Additional information, including the registration link, is available here: <https://uujec.org/webinars>.

**"Green Amendments for Clean Energy Forum" - Virtual
1/16/2025, 12:00 p.m.**

Green Amendments For The Generations is hosting "A forum of experts, experience and facts to defeat a false narrative of industry opposition [to Green Amendments].... The fossil fuel industry appears to be underwriting opposition to Green Amendments using clean energy as a cover to make false arguments of opposition. Contrary to what the fossil fuel industry would have you believe, Green Amendments are a strong and powerful foundation for good quality clean energy projects, and for ensuring we make strong progress on addressing climate change and preventing the climate crisis to protect present and future generations." This forum will provide "the understanding, information and talking points needed to push back on the false narratives of the fossil fuel industry." Additional information, including the registration link, is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/y2dj2sy9>.

**"Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education (ANJEE) - 40th Annual Winter Conference"
1/16/2025, 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (plus Happy Hour and ANJEE Birthday Party)
1/17/2025, 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Ewing, NJ - In-person**

The Alliance for NJ Environmental Education (ANJEE) is presenting a two-day Environmental Education Conference. "As a proud Affiliate of the North American Association for Environmental Education, The Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education (ANJEE) presents its 40th Annual Winter Symposium & Conference to be held IN PERSON, focusing on the powerful role of collaboration and networks in moving the field of environmental education forward. The Annual Conference will be spread across two days this year. Two full days of workshops for formal, non-formal and higher education teachers, with topics ranging from Pre-K through adulthood. There will

also be limited outdoor field experience workshops available." Additional information, including the agenda, descriptions of workshops, and the link to register (**for non-members: \$180 for 1/17/2025; \$180 for 1/18/2025; \$310 for both**) is available here: <https://anjee.org/schedule-and-workshops.html>.

**"An Overview of Technical Note 190-12: Conservation Activities in Organic Farming Systems Part 1: Soil Health, Climate and Nutrients" - Webinar
1/16/2025, 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

This U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) webinar "will cover select topics from Technical Note 12 – Conservation Activities in Organic Farming Systems [this very comprehensive - but easy-to-understand - document is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/3ehzz45h>] – which provides a wealth of knowledge needed to effectively support the unique requirements of organic producers. Tech Note 12 helps organic producers articulate the conservation benefits of their practices.... Part one of this webinar will cover the areas of soil health, climate, and nutrient management as they relate to organic management. The webinar will provide detailed scientific information in these areas as they relate to organic production and give real-world examples that illustrate how conservation activities have been implemented." Additional information, including how to join the webinar, is available here: <https://conservationwebinars.net/webinars/an-overview-of-technical-note-190-12-conservation-activities-in-organic-farming-systems-part-1-soil-health-climate-and-nutrients/view>. [Note: this event uses Adobe Connect.]

**NJBPU Technical Conference on NJ's Distributed Energy Resource Participation in Regional Wholesale Electricity Markets
1/17/2025, 9:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Webinar**

The NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) is holding a Technical Conference to address matters pertaining to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Order No. 2222 (Order 2222). "Order 2222 requires regional transmission operators including PJM Interconnection, L.L.C.

('PJM') to remove barriers to Distributed Energy Resource ('DER') participation in its regional, wholesale energy, capacity, and ancillary services markets by allowing for multiple DERs to form a DER Aggregation ('DERA'), to combine their output and become an eligible market participant. As part of Order 2222, there are a number of requirements related to interconnection, location/nodes, data, telemetry and metering, maintaining the reliability of the grid, and coordination between the DERAs, utilities, and PJM. The purpose of this Technical Conference is to help stakeholders: 1) understand PJM's Order 2222 Compliance Filing; 2) understand the technical standards required by the Compliance Filing and Order No. 2222; 3) identify any remaining barriers to implementing Order 2222; 4) examine and evaluate the potential impacts of Order 2222 on ratepayers; and 5) identify potential paths for implementation of Order 2222 within the state." The FERC website includes a helpful "FERC Order No. 2222 Explainer" (available here: <https://www.ferc.gov/ferc-order-no-2222-explainer-facilitating-participation-electricity-markets-distributed-energy>) that explains why Order 2222 may be relevant to ratepayers. "Order No. 2222 is to better enable distributed energy resources (DERs) to participate in the electricity markets run by regional grid operators. The term 'DERs' covers a wide variety of resources, including electric battery storage systems, rooftop solar panels, products like smart thermostats that enable one to reduce power usage, energy efficiency measures, thermal energy storage systems such as ice storage, or electric vehicles and their charging equipment. Such DERs may be in your home, business, church or other non-profit organization, community center, local government office, or even a shared solar facility." **The deadline for comments on this matter is 5:00 p.m. on 1/31/2025.** Additional information about the Technical Conference, including the registration link and how to comment, is available here: <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/pdf/publicnotice/Notice-TechnicalConference.pdf>.

**"Challenges and Opportunities of Scaling Nature-based Solutions for Climate Adaptation" - Webinar
1/23/2025, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

This webinar is sponsored by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Climate and Social Interactions Division. "Nature-based solutions including green infrastructure (NbS/GI) have been implemented for some time as a multifunctional, decentralized strategy for stormwater management. Locally, the benefits and co-benefits of these systems are well quantified. However, to address regional climate risks, NbS/GI need to be upscaled in non-trivial ways across urbanized landscapes. This upscaling poses several formidable physical, economic, and collaboration-related challenges. Addressing these challenges represents one of the front lines in advancing comprehensive resilience and sustainability planning. This webinar episode will feature how Franco Montalto, ... [of the] Consortium for Climate Risk in the Urban Northeast (CCRUN), has leveraged funding.... to advance science to support local action and adaptation at a broader scale." Additional information and the link to register are available here:

<https://cpo.noaa.gov/challenges-and-opportunities-of-scaling-nature-based-solutions-for-climate-adaptation/>.

**NOFA-NJ's 35th Annual Winter Conference:
"Living Roots, Resilience, & Food Security"
1/25/2025, 8:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Asbury Park, NJ - In-person**

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ) is holding its 35th Annual Winter Conference at the Berkeley Oceanfront Hotel in Asbury Park, NJ. The theme of this year's conference is "Living Roots, Resilience, & Food Security." "Our state's food security relies upon local producers and effective, accessible food systems. In order to keep the Garden State well-nourished, NJ farms must find resilience to withstand a changing climate, global economics, and evolving agricultural policies. Join us in Asbury Park for a day (and evening) filled with education, connection, and lots of local food as we highlight efforts to support local farming and food systems throughout the Garden State." Additional information and the registration link (admission is **\$120.00 for NOFA-NJ members and \$150.00 for non-members**, with some scholarships available) are available here: <https://nofanj.org/calendar/wc/>.

Liberty State Park Open House
1/25/2025, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Jersey City, NJ - In-person

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is hosting an open house-style event, focused on the Liberty State Park Revitalization Program, on 1/25/2025 at the Liberty Science Center.

"The open house will provide the final opportunity to review and share opinions on:

- Development of the park's holistic long-term master plan
- Design plans for the Audrey Zapp Drive corridor – groundbreaking of priority projects along the Audrey Zapp Drive corridor is expected in 2025!
- Restoration of the historic train shed

Additionally, updates on the following will be provided:

- Active recreation amenities in the park
- Clean-up of the long fenced-off park interior
- Feedback from the Sept. open house"

Additional information is available here:

<https://dep.nj.gov/event/liberty-state-park-open-house-2/>.

"Lessons Learned After Two Years of Accelerating Lead Service Line Replacement in NJ Communities" - Webinar
1/28/2025, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

This webinar will be presented by Jersey Water Works and accredited by the NJ Water Association. For additional information, contact Deandrah Cameron at dcameron@njfuture.org.

"Navigating Climate Information for Effective Policy-Making" - Webinar
1/29/2025, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Although this overall Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) briefing series, "Congressional Climate Camp," is geared toward the federal Congress, the topics being covered in this briefing may also be applied to more local policies. In the briefing, EESI will "review climate science, cutting-edge innovations, and the role of the legislative process in climate mitigation and adaptation.... The briefing will cover climate concepts and terminology - from types of greenhouse gases to renewable energy

technologies - to help you identify policy solutions at the intersection of these issue areas. At this briefing, panelists will showcase tools - like the EN-ROADS simulator, co-developed by MIT Sloan and Climate Interactive - that staff can use to easily digest climate data and generate policy ideas." Additional information and the link to RSVP are available here:

<https://www.eesi.org/briefings/view/012925camp>.

Option Green: "The True Cost of Fashion"
1/29/2025, 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Hybrid
East Brunswick, NJ - In-person & via Zoom

This event is part of the Option Green series co-sponsored by the East Brunswick Public Library and Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission. "Who makes our clothes, and where and how they are made are all ethical questions related to the almost three trillion-dollar-a-year global fashion industry. How has our love for buying cheap clothing come at a high cost to the people who make it and the planet? In this talk, we will examine solutions for a more sustainable future for the global industry, now in a crisis, through innovation, policy reforms, and conscious consumerism." The talk will be presented by Kathleen Webber, "an associate professor of journalism and professional writing at The College of New Jersey. She has been a freelance journalist since 1998 writing about sustainability in the global fashion industry, innovation in creating circular economies and domestic manufacturing." Additional information, including the link to join via Zoom, is available here:

<https://ilove.ebpl.org/adults-teens/events/option-green-true-cost-fashion-hybrid/2025-01-30-000000-2025-01-30-013000>.

"Can AI Help Reduce Emissions of Greenhouse Gases?" - Webinar
1/30/2025, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

"Please join the Center on Global Energy Policy (CGEP) at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs for a special webinar 'Can AI Help Reduce Emissions of Greenhouse Gases?' A new 17-chapter volume by CGEP Inaugural Fellow David Sandalow and a team of 24 co-authors explores that question in a 90-minute virtual discussion. The Artificial

Intelligence for Climate Change Mitigation Roadmap (Second Edition) provides introductions to both AI and climate change, examines the potential for AI to help reduce emissions in eight sectors (including the power sector, transport sector, and manufacturing), and analyzes cross-cutting issues including the role of large language models. The Roadmap also explores the rapidly growing power demand for AI and the extent to which computing operations for AI will increase emissions." Additional information and the link to register are available here:

<https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/events/can-ai-help-reduce-emissions-of-greenhouse-gases/>.

**NJBPU Notice of Rulemaking Proposal to Establish the Dual-Use Solar Energy Pilot Program
Comments Due 1/31/2025**

"The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities [BPU] is proposing to amend its existing solar energy rules to establish the Dual-Use Solar Energy Pilot Program (Pilot Program) and to integrate it with the larger Successor Solar Incentive (SuSI) Program.... This rulemaking is designed to bring the Board's rules into compliance with P.L. 2021, c. 170 (the 'Dual-Use Solar Energy Act,' 'Dual-Use Act,' or 'Act'). The Pilot Program is designed to incorporate dual-use solar facilities, also known as agrivoltaics, and provide incentives within the SuSI Program, which serves as the permanent program for providing solar incentives to qualified solar electric generation facilities." The proposed rules are available here:

<https://tinyurl.com/mtcn4tysf>. The BPU held an informational session about the proposed rules; a recording of the session is available here:

<https://tinyurl.com/2fbp2w9u> and the presentation slides are available here:

<https://tinyurl.com/33yn9pp3>. **The deadline for comments is 5:00 p.m. on 1/31/2025.**

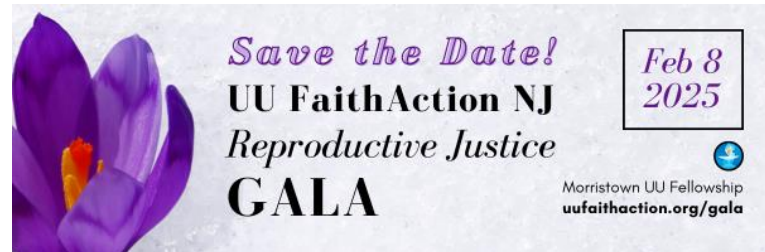
Instructions for submitting comments is shown at the beginning of the proposed rules, linked above.

[Note: in conjunction with this rulemaking, the BPU established the "Dual-Use Pilot Program" by Board Order in 10/2024; the press release is available here:

<https://www.nj.gov/bpu/newsroom/2024/approved/202410231.html>.]

**Draft Update to NJ Offshore Wind Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI)
"Short-term Highest Priority Research & Monitoring Needs"
Comments Due 1/31/2025**

The New Jersey Offshore Wind Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI) is seeking input on a draft update to its existing "Short-term Highest Priority Research & Monitoring Needs." The RMI is administered by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in collaboration with the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Initial funding is provided by developers through NJ's Offshore Wind Solicitation 2. "The [RMI] Initiative seeks to employ a rigorous scientific approach to research and monitoring of marine and coastal resources during the development, construction, operation and decommissioning of offshore wind as recommended in the New Jersey Offshore Wind Strategic Plan." **See p. 22 for additional information, including the draft update for review, and instructions for commenting. The deadline for comments is January 31, 2025.**



**UUFANJ Gala
2/8/2025
Morrystown, NJ - In-person**

The 2025 UU FaithAction NJ (UUFANJ) Annual Gala will be a luncheon hosted at the beautiful Morrystown Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. The 2025 "Reproductive Justice" Gala will be an afternoon of great food, dynamic speakers, and the very best company! Please save the date. Additional information will be available here: <https://www.uufaihaaction.org/gala/>.

VIDEOS+ OF PAST EVENTS

"Electrify Your Life: Starting the Electrification Journey in Your Home" - Videos of Webinar

The Elders Climate Action (ECA) Electrify Your Life series is designed for elders who want to know how to plan and implement home electrification options. "During this session, ECA's electrification volunteers [suggested] where to look for recently updated information so that you can begin or extend your own electrification journey, including how to look for an electrification coach, how to seek out a contractor, and where to obtain helpful information about rebates and financing." The presentations are in four videos, available as follows:

- "Starting and Mapping Your Electrification Journey" - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NePXe3w5_Yg&t=1s;
- "Finding and Using a Coach" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QuPOEZb7LEI>;
- "Finding and Hiring Contractors" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOUh4R8r268>; and
- "Financials - Rebates, Loans, Tax Credits" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RY5gQOO1R7M>.



"Fighting Artificial Turf in NJ" - Video of Webinar

This webinar, co-hosted by the NJ Sierra Club, the Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC), the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, and Waterspirit, featured a panel of experts and local activists, including residents who have experience fighting turf

fields. The panel provided an overview of the impacts of astroturf on communities and public health, including its financial costs versus alternatives, and actions that can be taken locally or statewide. According to **EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh**, who viewed the webinar, "the mind

boggling thing to me is that NOBODY WANTS IT! not the players, not the parents, not the coaches, not the fans. There are more player injuries and IT COSTS THREE TIMES AS MUCH - from installation to maintenance to how long it lasts." The video is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIZHb-T4IJs>.

"Induction Cooking Demonstration by Chef Rachelle Boucher" - Video of Webinar

This Elders Climate Action (ECA) webinar provided real-time lessons about the many benefits of induction cooking. Chef Rachelle Boucher and an ECA team cooked and demonstrated "the wonders of today's electric kitchens, while also sharing holiday prep and cooking tips." Rachelle Boucher is the Senior Lead for Culinary Experiences and Events for the Building Decarbonization Coalition, whose mission is to bring people and organizations together to advance the transition to a clean energy future. The video is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qt3dPj1PJP4>.

Federal Tools for Environmental Justice: "Understanding and Addressing Health Disparities and Community Impacts" - Video of Webinar

This webinar was sponsored by the River Network. "Have you ever wondered how satellite data could be used to demonstrate the impacts of green infrastructure on public health? Have you heard of EJScreen but you're not sure how to use it? In this webinar, speakers [shared] more about various tools—such as CDC public health data, EJScreen, and NASA's EJ Data Catalog – that help practitioners map and understand the vulnerabilities impacting our communities' land and waterways, and connect ecosystem health with the health disparities shown by local socioeconomic data. Practitioners [gained] a better understanding of the purpose of each tool, how to access and use them, and how to use multiple tools to create a holistic picture of local climate and health challenges and how to address them from an ecosystem perspective." The video is available here:

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

"MACH2: Our Community Speaks Out" **- Video of Webinar**

This webinar was sponsored by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. "It's been more than a year since the MACH 2 Hydrogen Hub was announced, along with the other six proposed hubs across the nation. After all this time, we know very little due to the exclusion of the public from the 'hub' process and the secretive practices that have kept us in the dark. Our communities have organized, fought for information, advocated for opportunities to influence decisions and planning, and made our opposition to the proposed MACH2 sprawl of hydrogen projects known. At this special community webinar, we [heard] from community members and group representatives and we [shared] what we have learned about the plans for MACH2 and its potential impacts for southeastern PA, South/Central NJ and the state of Delaware." Additional information and the link to register are available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwyK6QrTq8U>.

"Introducing GeoBridge: A Centralized Repository for Geothermal Information" **- Video of Webinar**

In this video presented by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), GeoBridge, a new resource from DOE's Geothermal Technologies Office and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) is described. GeoBridge "offers a centralized repository for geothermal information. GeoBridge covers everything from home geothermal heat pump (GHP) installation to careers in geothermal, educational tools, and cost savings opportunities for businesses." Additional information about GeoBridge is available here:

<https://openet.org/wiki/GeoBridge> and the video of the webinar is available here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZ6qBR3u_Dg.

"Consumer Protections in the Solar Industry - Best Practices and Expert Perspectives" **- Presentation Slides and Video of Webinar**

This webinar was presented by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO). In the webinar SETO shared R&D efforts to improve the customer

"Climate Change Misinformation and Disinformation" - Video of Webinar

This webinar, sponsored by the Columbia University Consortium for Climate Risk in the Urban Northeast (CCRUN), is part of the CCRUN "Green Infrastructure, Climate, and Cities Seminar Series." The focus of the seminar series is on "urban solutions to global problems associated with increasing temperature and sea level rise, precipitation variability, and greenhouse gas emissions. We are interested in the implications of such changes on the complex infrastructure of intensely developed landscapes, and on the health, well-being, and vulnerability of the people who live in them." In this webinar, three researchers explored different aspects of climate change misinformation and disinformation. The video is available here:

<https://ccrun.climate.columbia.edu/content/climate-change-misinformation-and-disinformation>.

Princeton University Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment 2024 Annual Meeting - "AI for Energy and Energy for AI" **- Videos of Sessions**

"While the artificial intelligence boom is poised to transform how we understand and solve global challenges, its heavy reliance on energy and water has led to concerns about its own impact on the environment. This year's Annual Meeting [explored] how we can harness the power of AI to make rapid progress in global decarbonization efforts and navigate the risks that AI will create for achieving a clean and just energy future." The keynote speaker was Melanie Nakagawa, Chief Sustainability Officer, Microsoft. Links to videos of the following presentations are available here:

<https://acee.princeton.edu/2024-annual-meeting/videos/>.

- **"Welcome Remarks and Introductions"**
 - **"Keynote: AI's Opportunities and Challenges for the Energy Transition"**
 - **"Panel 1: Energy and Future Computing"**
 - **"Panel 2: Power for AI"**
 - **"Panel 3: AI for Power"**
 - **"Panel 4: AI for Climate"**
-

experience. The discussions included the kinds of problems consumers are facing, steps the government is taking to deter deceptive business practices, and standards to protect consumers from harm. The presentation slides are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc46h6rm> and the video of the webinar is available here:

<https://tinyurl.com/567p5e7j> (passcode, if needed: vV^8z#30)

"State of Protection: Strengthening Rights in Healthcare, Immigration, Environment & Law" - Video of Panel Discussion

This panel discussion addressed "how we can proactively strengthen New Jersey's laws and services to ensure they remain resilient and inclusive for all." **EJTF member Nancy Griffeth** found it to be encouraging! Panelists included: Amol Sinha, Executive Director, ACLU-NJ; Heather Howard, Former NJ Commissioner of Health and Senior Services; Matthew J. Platkin, NJ Attorney General; and Andrew Zwicker, State Senator, 16th Legislative District. The video is available here:

<https://andrewzwicker.com/state-of-protection-panel/>.

NEWS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES **[covering 11/26/2024 – 12/25/2024]**

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Nearly \$1.6 Billion in Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants

From the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ): "On December 12th, EPA announced the selections of 105 applications for the Community Change Grants Program, totaling nearly \$1.6 billion in awards to advance local, on-the-ground projects that reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity. Made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act, the Community Change Grants Program constitutes the single largest investment in environmental and climate justice in history and provides critical

funding to address the diverse and unique needs of disadvantaged communities nationwide." In NJ, [**EJTF partner**] Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC)'s Enhancing Community Resilience with Microgrid Technology project has been selected to receive \$20 million. The project will develop a mobile microgrid powered by solar panels and battery energy storage systems in the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark. It will establish Community Resilience Hubs at critical community facilities, and funding will also be used to establish an electric vehicle charging area and to purchase two electric passenger vans and an electric passenger vehicle to meet resident transportation needs.

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-nearly-16-billion-environmental-and-climate>

NJEJA Releases 2024 End-of-Year Report

The **EJTF partner** NJ Environmental Justice Alliance (NJEJA) has released its 2024 End-of-Year Report, "Disrupting Metropolis: An EJ Manifesto." "From community engagement initiatives and workforce development programs to our advocacy on critical policies, we're proud to highlight the strides we've made this year in advancing environmental justice across New Jersey." Many of the activities and initiatives described reflect the interests and goals of EJTF.

<https://njeja.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/NJEJA-2024-Annual-Review.pdf>

GREEN AMENDMENT

Montana Supreme Court Affirms Decision in Historic Youth Climate Case

As only one of three U.S. states that have a "Green Amendment" in their state constitution, the victories in legal cases related to Montana's Green Amendment can help to inform the process to pass such an amendment in NJ. This case (very well described here: <https://forthegenerations.org/wp-content/uploads/Held-v.-Montana-MT-Sup-Ct-12.18.2024.pdf>), brought by sixteen youth plaintiffs, is the first constitutional climate change lawsuit to go to trial. The state Supreme Court has upheld a district court ruling that the youth

plaintiffs have a “fundamental constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment” while revoking two Montana statutes that prohibited state environmental reviews from considering impacts beyond the state borders.

<https://stateline.org/2024/12/19/montana-supreme-court-affirms-decision-in-historic-youth-climate-case/>

ELECTRIC VEHICLES & VEHICLE EMISSION REDUCTION



More Than 200,000 Electric and Plug-in Cars Now on NJ Roads

This 1-minute news video describes the increase in electric vehicle (EV) registrations in NJ, noting that NJ is one of the top states for EV registrations but is lagging behind other states in EV charging infrastructure. Additional information is in Gov.

Murphy's press release, available here:

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/approved/20241210a.shtml>. EV registrations numbered close

to 208,000, which is double the number at the end of 2020; NJ has a goal of 330,000 light-duty EV registrations by 2025.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/more-than-200000-electric-and-plug-in-cars-now-on-nj-roads/>

Assembly Committee Approves Delay of Clean-Truck Rule

As described in this 4-1/2-minute news video, the Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee unanimously approved a bill (A4967) that delays implementation of NJ's Advanced Clean Truck (ACT) rules by two years. Two hours of testimony, primarily from business and trucking interests, cited the lack of charging

infrastructure, the need for improvements in electric vehicle technology, and the need for more affordability. Approval of the bill would also be needed from the full Assembly and the Senate. Environmental advocates pointed out that delaying the rules will negatively impact both climate change and people's health.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/assembly-committee-approves-delay-of-clean-truck-rule/>

NJDOT Awards NEVI Contract to Build Network of Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

From the NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) press release: "New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) Commissioner Fran O'Connor announced Joseph M. Sanzari, Inc. has been awarded a \$20.96 million contract to build EV charging stations at 19 locations along NJDOT-maintained Interstate Highways. This historic contract is the first time NJDOT is funding construction of publicly-accessible charging stations throughout New Jersey.... The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program funds the deployment of Electric Vehicle (EV) fast chargers along designated electric vehicle corridors to establish an interconnected EV charging network across each state and the nation."

https://nj-dot.nj.gov/transportation/uploads/comm/news/details/comm_np_20241212_133252_NJDOTAwardsNEVIContracttoBuildElectricVehicleChargerswithmap.pdf

RENEWABLE RESOURCES (other than Offshore Wind)

NJDEP Grants First-Ever Permit for Solar Panel Recycling to Commercial Solar Panel Recycling of Phillipsburg

This information provided by Commercial Solar Panel Recycling (CSPR) of Phillipsburg describes the first Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Project permit granted by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for solar panel recycling in NJ. According to NJ State Senator Bob Smith, "The NJDEP's RD&D certification for solar panel recycling marks a critical step in advancing long-term solutions

outlined in my newly introduced New Jersey Senate Bill 3399, which mandates end-of-life recycling for solar and photovoltaic energy facilities and structures. This milestone and CSPR's initiative as the first solar panel recycling operation in New Jersey are an exciting start toward a greener, more sustainable future." The bill (S3399) unanimously passed the Senate and is under consideration by the Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee. <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/765637517/njdep-grants-first-ever-permit-for-solar-panel-recycling-to-commercial-solar-panel-recycling-of-phillipsburg>

NJBPU Opens Remote Net Metering Segment in Administratively Determined Incentive Program

From the press release: The NJ Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) "announced the establishment of a Remote Net Metering (RNM) segment and an application approval process in the Administratively Determined Incentive (ADI) Program. These crucial changes to the RNM program will help catalyze the continued expansion of New Jersey's nation-leading solar industry, which includes more than 209,000 projects generating energy for homes and businesses across the state. 'The updates to the RNM program... will help more public entities, like municipalities and school districts, seeking to lower their energy costs do so by expanding eligibility and other program specifications,' said NJBPU President Christine Guhl-Sadovy. 'These updates are another step taken to support the continued growth of solar energy projects in New Jersey and deliver savings for ratepayers.' RNM allows for the energy generated by a solar array at a specific site to be credited toward energy consumption at a different location." <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/newsroom/2024/approved/20241218.html>

LAND MANAGEMENT/ AGRICULTURE/FOOD

Cutting Food Waste Could Help Feed the Hungry, New Report Says

This NJ Spotlight News article provides an excellent description of the causes and some solutions to food waste in NJ, as detailed in a new report. The NJ nonprofit "Move for Hunger," supported by the NJ grantmaker "The Tepper Foundation," have released a report "Exploring Potential Solutions for Increasing the Availability of Fresh Food for Those Experiencing Food Insecurity in South Jersey" (available here: https://www.njspotlightnews.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/123/2024/12/M4H_The-Tepper-Foundation-Report.pdf). This report will complement research by the NJ Office of the Food Security Advocate (website available here: <https://www.nj.gov/foodsecurity/>), a new agency whose goal is to coordinate the efforts of nonprofits, governments, community groups and religious centers in addressing food insecurity in NJ. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/12/curbing-new-jersey-food-waste-could-help-feed-hungry-residents-report/>

Wildflower Farm Blazes Trail for Black-Owned Sustainable Farms

This NJ Spotlight News photo essay focuses on "Wildflower Farm," one of only 97 Black-owned farms, out of the 9,998 farms in NJ. The 42-acre family-owned farm produces organically and ethically raised food. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/11/wildflower-farm-blazes-trail-for-black-owned-sustainable-farms/>

OFFSHORE WIND

Atlantic City Offshore Wind Plan Passes After Hours of Public Comment

This article describes the 12/18/2024 meeting of the Atlantic City Council, at which the City Council, in a 5-4 vote, passed an ordinance giving the Atlantic Shores offshore wind project permanent easements and other concessions to move

electricity across the city via underground cables. The meeting, which lasted 6-1/2 hours, included nearly 4-1/2 hours of public comment, which became contentious at times. Videos of nearly 3 hours of the public comments are included in this article.

<https://breakingac.com/news/2024/dec/19/atlantic-city-offshore-wind-plan-passes-after-hours-of-public-comment/>

BOEM Identifies Environmental Measures for NY Bight Wind Energy Development

In 10/2024, the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Management (BOEM) issued the final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS - available here: <https://www.boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/new-york-bight-final-programmatic-environmental-impact-statement>) for the NY Bight, which includes six lease areas offshore NY and NJ. Now, based on the PEIS, BOEM has issued a Record of Decision (ROD - available here: <https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/renewable-energy/state-activities/NY%20Bight%20ROD.pdf>) that "outlines BOEM's decision to identify certain avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and monitoring (AMMM) measures that BOEM plans to apply as conditions of approval for activities proposed by NY Bight lessees in their construction and operations plans (COPs). This ROD concludes the programmatic National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the six NY Bight lease areas." According to this *The Maritime Executive* article, "Some of the projects have submitted early proposals to state regulators in New York and New Jersey but all are in the survey and planning stages. TotalEnergies, citing the political uncertainties, last week however said it planned to shelve its project. The others could use the work developed by BOEM to submit their individual environmental studies and construction and operation plans to BOEM." <https://maritime-executive.com/article/boem-identifies-environmental-measures-for-ny-bight-wind-energy-development>

Final Phase of Major Shore Flood Defense Project

This 4-1/2-minute news video describes the extensive \$300 million Port Monmouth Storm Risk Reduction flood defense project being constructed in response to climate change-exacerbated increased flooding (a comprehensive map of the planned construction projects is at minute 2:11 of the video). The system includes interconnected levees, gates, walls and dunes.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/final-phase-of-major-shore-flood-defense-project/>



Murphy Administration Partners with USDA to Launch Buyouts of Flood-Prone Property in Cranford

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Blue Acres Program has, for the first time, partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Emergency Watershed Protection Program to fund a \$3.5 million project to buy out flood-prone residential properties in Cranford Township. The land will be restored to a natural state, which helps protect the surrounding community by increasing flood storage capacity and preventing future development in high-risk zones.

<https://dep.nj.gov/blueacres/murphy-administration-partners-with-usda-to-launch-buyouts-of-flood-prone-properties-in-cranford/>

Amid Newark Building Boom, Passaic River Flooding Poses Threat

This comprehensive article describes the potential relationship between climate change-exacerbated flooding and new development planned for Newark. It also describes the existing situation with the Passaic River and what needs to be done to address the myriad concerns related to it. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/special-report/passaic-river-flooding-threat-as-building-surges-in-newark>

Opinion: Is New Jersey Ready to Deal With Weather Fluctuations??

In this opinion piece, Christine Todd Whitman, honorary chair of Jersey Water Works (JWW) and former governor of NJ, describes the reasons NJ needs to focus on funding infrastructure improvements, and touts the role of the JWW in coordinating these efforts. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/12/former-nj-gov-christine-todd-whitman-highlights-serious-combined-sewer-overflow-threat/>

FOREST HEALTH

Mettler's Woods Brought Under Additional Protection of National Organization

From "Rutgers Today": "Mettler's Woods, one of the state's last remaining virgin forests that sits in a 65-acre patch of land owned and managed by Rutgers University-New Brunswick, has been chosen for preservation by a national organization. The Old-Growth Forest Network inducted Mettler's Woods in Franklin in Somerset County, N.J... during a ceremony held on site under a canopy of trees, some of which have stood since the Revolutionary War. The network – which is dedicated to... creating a national web of protected, mature, publicly accessible native forests – recognized the university's preservation efforts." The area that includes Mettler's Woods, a National Natural Landmark, was acquired from the local Lenape by Dutch settlers in 1701. <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/mettlers-woods-brought-under-additional-protection-national-organization>

New Wharton State Forest Access Map Draws Mixed Reaction

This 5-1/2-minute news video describes the new Wharton State Forest access map (available here: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/wharton/>) released by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Vehicle access is allowed on 261 miles of paved and dirt roads, which includes 175 miles of dirt roads open to all street-legal vehicles, 57 miles of paved roads, and an additional 28 miles of dirt roads open for hunting access only during designated hunting seasons for those with valid hunting licenses. All motorized vehicles operating on unimproved roads must be street legal, registered, insured and operated by a licensed driver. The DEP will begin enforcing the map's requirements, and giving out fines, after the first of the year. Under NJ state law, fines for illegal off-roading start at \$500 for a first offense, \$1,000 for a second offense and a minimum of \$1,000 for any subsequent offenses. If natural resources are damaged or destroyed, the responsible driver can be fined up to five times the total cost of that damage. In addition, vehicles used in illegal off-roading may be impounded. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/new-wharton-state-forest-access-map-draws-mixed-reaction/>

144 Trees Planted In Belleville With Aid Of School District, Town

The Belleville Board of Education received a \$249,639 grant through the NJ's Trees For Schools program. Twenty-three public school districts, two public charter schools, and nine public colleges and universities have been awarded \$4.55 million to plant trees on campuses across the state under this program, which is a collaboration of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), The College of New Jersey, and Sustainable Jersey, and funded through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Emphasis is given to overburdened communities. The complete list of awardees is available here: <https://www.sustainablejerseyschools.com/grants/trees-for-schools/>. Bellevue has planted 144 trees throughout the town. It is envisioned that the trees will serve as outdoor classrooms, and community outreach demonstrations are also planned, to promote the importance of the trees

and to educate the public in how to properly plant and care for a tree.

<https://patch.com/new-jersey/belleville/144-trees-planted-belleville-aid-school-district-town>



Mayor & Council Introducing an Ordinance to Establish a Shade Tree Committee

An ordinance to establish a Shade Tree Committee was introduced at the 11/21/2024 meeting of the Borough of Roselle Park Mayor and Council, and was given a second reading and approved at the 12/5/2024 meeting. The ordinance (available on p. 12, here: <https://www.rosellepark.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/November-21-2024-Minutes.pdf>) establishes a 5-member committee that would govern the installation, care, and removal of shade and ornamental trees on public property and within public rights-of-way throughout the town, and would supervise annual maintenance, including watering and trimming, of trees to help preserve the tree canopy. The Superintendent of Public Works and the Chairperson of the Environmental Commission will hold two seats on the Committee, and the remaining three members are to be residents of the Borough of Roselle Park appointed by the Mayor.

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/roselle-park/sections/government/articles/mayor-council-introducing-an-ordinance-to-establish-a-shade-tree-committee>

Raritan Township Defines New Tree Committee, Updates Environmental Commission Roles

In the spirit of so many NJ communities, Raritan Township has taken steps to recognize the need for a defined committee to address tree issues in

the Township. The Raritan Township Tree Committee, along with the environmental commission, will serve as the administrative body for Raritan’s Community Forestry Management Plan.

<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/flemington-slash-raritan/sections/government/articles/raritan-township-defines-new-tree-committee-updates-environmental-commission-roles>

LEAD REDUCTION IN HOUSEHOLDS

Trenton Lead Pipe Replacement Program Under Scrutiny After Contractor Charged in Newark Scheme

Since 1/2024, the U.S. Attorney's office has been investigating allegations of noncompliance with requirements for lead service line replacement by JAS Group Enterprise, Inc. (JAS) contractors hired by the City of Newark. In 10/2024, the U.S. Department of Justice charged two JAS individuals with fraud, stating that “By causing misleading photographs and verification forms to be submitted, [the two individuals] concealed that they intentionally did not replace lead pipes and defrauded Newark by collecting payment for work they did not properly perform.” The *Jersey Vindicator*, has now reported that officials are reexamining work done in Trenton by JAS. According to this article, "Crews from Trenton’s water utility and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) are now reexamining thousands of valves and lead service lines that were reportedly replaced by the same contractor recently charged with fraud for falsifying lead replacement work in Newark." *The Jersey Vindicator* article is available here:

<https://jerseyvindicator.org/2024/12/04/trenton-lead-pipe-replacement-program-under-scrutiny-after-contractor-charged-in-newark-scheme/>.

DRINKING WATER-RELATED ISSUES (other than lead)

Hazard NJ Season 2, Episode 3: Tainted Blood

"Hazard NJ" is an NJ Spotlight News podcast series that examines serious pollution issues. "Season 2 dives deep into the crisis of toxic pollution caused by PFAS, or 'forever chemicals,' around New Jersey and beyond." Each episode is a 28-minute podcast, with transcript available on the website. Episode 3, "Tainted Blood," addresses potential health effects of PFAS, as a team of Rutgers University researchers is studying the blood of residents in Paulsboro, NJ, where a high-profile pollution incident left the town's water supply contaminated for years.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/podcast/hazard-nj-season-2-episode-3-tainted-blood/>

Marking 50th Anniversary of Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, DEP Presents Our Water's Worth It Award to the New Jersey Drinking Water Quality Institute

From the press release: "In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection today [12/18/2024] presented the third Our Water's Worth It award to the New Jersey Drinking Water Quality Institute (DWQI), whose scientists developed the state's first-in-the-nation drinking water standards for PFAS, commonly called forever chemicals.... 'In the spirit of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, DWQI's work has positioned New Jersey as a national leader in setting rigorous standards for drinking water that protect public health. Their actions directly support the DEP's mission to ensure access to clean and safe drinking water,' said Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette."

https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/24_0060/

EDUCATION and YOUTH-RELATED

PSEG Foundation Awards \$1 Million to Montclair State University to Expand Green Teams Program

Every year since 2016, the Green Teams Program of the Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG) Institute for Sustainability Studies (ISS) has provided an internship that groups students with corporations and organizations to address local and global sustainability challenges. The Montclair State University Foundation has been awarded a two-year, \$1 million grant from the PSEG Foundation to further develop and expand this program. To date, 420 students from across the country have completed over 350 real-world project. "One of the core objectives of the grant is to provide Green Team interns to New Jersey municipalities and nonprofit organizations that lack the resources to fund their own sustainability projects. These projects focus on promoting and achieving environmental justice. The grant will also support advanced technology and expertise... including empowering students with Geographic Information System (GIS), drone (UAV) and virtual reality (VR/XR) technologies."

<https://www.montclair.edu/pseg-sustainability-institute/2024/10/29/pseg-foundation-awards-1-million-to-montclair-state-university-to-expand-green-teams-program/>

Mercer Elementary School Leads TerraCycle Recycling Contest For a Chance to Win an Eco-Friendly Learning Garden

From the "*TrentonDaily*": "Mercer Elementary School, a school designed for students presenting a wide variety of learning and developmental needs, is competing to win a learning garden made from recycled Takis® packaging as part of the Takis® Back-to-School Recycling Challenge [described here: <https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/contests/takis-back-to-school>]. The challenge is sponsored by Takis®, the iconic brand known for its intensely spicy rolled tortilla chips, and TerraCycle®, the global leader in recycling hard-to-recycle items."

<https://www.trentondaily.com/mercerelementary-school-leads-terracycle-recycling-contest-for-a-chance-to-win-an-eco-friendly-learning-garden/>

DEP, NJCCC Announce Winners of Second Annual 'Reduce Single Use' Video Contest

From the joint press release: "The New Jersey Clean Communities Council (NJCCC), in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), is announcing the middle school and high school winners of an annual video contest to promote awareness about how single-use plastics harm the environment. The "Reduce Single Use" video contest, for students in grades 7-12, encouraged greater understanding of the state's single-use plastics law, which went into effect in May 2022. The winning videos appear on the LitterFreeNJ.com website [here:

<https://litterfreenj.com/index.php/news/video-contest-2024-winners>]

and will be featured at the Garden State Film Festival in March, at theaters in Cranford and Asbury Park."

https://dep.nj.gov/newsrel/24_01220/

POLLUTION

Environmental, Business Groups Clash Over Plastic Packaging Bill

In this 4-1/2-minute news video, proponents and opponents of the "Packaging Product Stewardship Act" bill (S3398/A5009) provide their views. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Bob Smith, while primarily focused on plastic packaging, addresses all types of packaging. From the proposed bill: "A producer responsibility organization shall ensure that: (1) commencing January 1, 2032, the cumulative amount of single-use packaging products sold, offered for sale, imported, or distributed in or into the State by the producer responsibility organization's members has been reduced by 25 percent by volume... (2) at least 10 percent of the source reduction required pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection has been achieved by shifting a single use packaging product to a refillable or reusable product, or by eliminating a plastic component; (3) commencing January 1, 2034, all packaging products sold, offered for sale, imported, or distributed in or into the State by the producer responsibility organization's members are either compostable or recyclable, as determined by the department; and (4)

commencing January 1, 2036, the packaging products sold, offered for sale, imported, or distributed in or into the State by the producer responsibility organization's members are recycled at a rate of not less than 65 percent." The bill also establishes an "Office of Plastics and Packaging Management" in the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and establishes a "Packaging Reduction and Recycling Fund."

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/environmental-business-groups-clash-over-plastic-packaging-bill/>



Millburn Township Committee & Residents Discuss Leaf Blower Ordinance

The Millburn Township Environmental Commission has prepared a draft ordinance to regulate gas-powered leaf blowers. They held meetings to gather information from the public and from landscapers, and as a result the Commission has unanimously passed a resolution in favor of a seasonally restricted ban that would be in effect from May 1st through September 30th. A discussion of the proposed ordinance that took place at a recent Millburn Township Committee meeting is described in this article. The Environmental Commission is planning a future educational session, to be held in the library, <https://www.tapinto.net/towns/millburn-slash-short-hills/sections/government/articles/millburn-township-committee-residents-discuss-leaf-blower-ordinance>

OTHER

Group Says New Jersey Toxic Waste Dumping Caused \$1B in Harm, Calls Settlement Inadequate

In 8/2023, NJ finalized a settlement with the chemical company BASF that purported to compensate for damage to natural resources as a result of chemical leaks at Toms River by the company's predecessor, Ciba-Geigy. (The natural resources damages settlement is separate from BASF's environmental cleanup of contamination at the site, which is being supervised by the federal government.) At the time the settlement was finalized, the Save Barnegat Bay group and Toms River threatened to sue NJ to overturn the settlement, stating that it is "woefully inadequate" and doesn't compensate local people for the environmental damage. They estimate that at least \$1 billion in damage was done to natural resources, while the settlement only requires BASF to pay \$500,000 and carry out nine environmental remediation projects at the site of the former Ciba-Geigy Chemical Corporation plant.
<https://apnews.com/article/toms-river-toxic-waste-cancer-ciba-geigy-90b270b4c3cec258923fb4bb85c816f0>

Pemberton Twp. Planners, in 6-3 Vote, Reject Application for 89-Unit Senior Housing Project; Appeal Being Mullied

At a standing-room-only meeting of the Pemberton Township Planning Board that lasted over four hours, the Board rejected by a 6-3 vote "a long-disputed application for the 89-unit first phase of Liberty Woods, an age-restricted community proposed for a nearly 700-acre site off Lakehurst Road known as Pole Bridge Forest.... A good deal of what was discussed at the Dec. 5 session was devoted to questions of whether or not the acreage on which the units in question would arise was a habitat of the Northern Pine Snake, listed as a threatened species, and whether the area can be considered a wetland, within 300 feet of which development would be prohibited." **EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh and EJTF member Mike Skelly** attended the meeting in support of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance (see [p. 3](#)), and according to Peggy, this was a "Great experience in how democracy works at the local level - probably about 100 people there, all opposed to the development and all talking about the pine snake! Very civil, everyone polite and informed and it was a joy to watch." However, this may not be the end of the project, as the developer has not ruled out an appeal.
<https://www.pinebarrentribune.com/articles/featured-stories/pemberton-twp-planners-in-6-3-vote-reject-application-for-89-unit-senior-housing-project-appeal-being-mulled/>

EJTF's GOALS for 2024/2025

- 1. Advocating for the adoption of the Green Amendment in New Jersey through work in our congregations and as a Task Force;**
- 2. Working toward resolving the many challenges in New Jersey related to food-insecurity, including but not limited to promoting regenerative agriculture, increasing accessibility of healthy food, reducing food waste, and encouraging community and family gardens;**
- 3. Supporting 100% renewable energy and energy conservation through measures such as the Clean Energy Equity Act, and those affecting transportation and Electric Vehicles (EVs).**
- 4. Advocating for better health and reducing climate change for all by protecting and expanding New Jersey's public and urban forests.**
- 5. Advocating for a better understanding of the interconnected web of life by influencing education for people of all ages, including public school curriculum of K-12 students.**

Draft Update to NJ Offshore Wind Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI) "Short-term Highest Priority Research & Monitoring Needs"

"The New Jersey Offshore Wind Research and Monitoring Initiative is seeking input on a draft update to its existing Short-term Highest Priority Research & Monitoring Needs [the existing version is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/hw926yuv>]. These research priorities are the RMI's blueprint for assessing wildlife, fisheries, and the ecosystem in waters off of New Jersey before, during, and after offshore wind development. The RMI uses this list of priorities when selecting research projects to fund. In this draft update, some additions were made including priorities for research coordination and data governance, technological innovation, mitigation research and development, oceanographic and atmospheric change, habitat impacts, and ecosystem change. The existing wildlife priorities remain largely unchanged, with the addition of some clarifying details. **Please review the draft updates in the table below** and consider providing input via the NJ Offshore Wind Research Survey, available here: <https://tinyurl.com/3n9aud4w>. **The deadline for survey responses is 1/31/2025.**"

Category	Priority Area	Draft Research & Monitoring Needs*
Coordination	Research Coordination	Advance regional and cross-sector (i.e., academia, state and federal government, wind developer, fishing industry, etc.) OSW research and monitoring coordination.
	Data Governance	Enhance consistency in governance of OSW research and monitoring data, including standardization of data collection methods, processing, analysis, housing, and QA/QC.
Technology	Technological Innovation	Develop, test, and/or refine new tools (e.g., sensors, systems, or methods) for OSW research and monitoring to improve efficiency, quantity, quality, and/or utility of data, data collection, or decision-making processes. Technological advances may include autonomous, remote sensing, and AI tools for detecting, deterring, and mitigating OSW impacts on wildlife, environments, and fisheries.
Mitigation	Mitigation Research & Development	Develop and evaluate potential strategies, technologies, tools, management policies, or other methods to mitigate the effects of OSW development on wildlife, environments, and fisheries. Investigate strategies to reduce or address OSW impacts to regional survey efforts. Mitigation research may include such topics as stock enhancement, avian collision curtailment, noise reduction, vessel collision with wildlife, etc.
Habitats & Ecosystems	Oceanographic & Atmospheric Change	Examine potential effects of OSW development on meteorological and oceanographic conditions, including physical, chemical, and other processes and features (e.g., light and sound conditions, hydrodynamics, water column stratification, wind wake effects, etc.). Develop forecasting models to project future dynamics and conditions.
	Habitat Impacts	Evaluate the effects of OSW development and oceanographic processes on sensitive coastal and marine habitats (e.g., artificial reef, prime fishing areas, surfclam beds, SAV, estuaries, etc.). Develop and/or test nature-based designs (i.e., green infrastructure that increases biodiversity and/or measurable benefits for ecosystem).
	Ecosystem Change	Examine the effects of OSW development at ecosystem/landscape scales, including the connection between the oceanographic or atmospheric processes, habitats, and wildlife. Examine spatial and temporal dynamics in biological productivity (e.g., zooplankton distribution, primary productivity), trophic interactions, biomass, or other measures of resilience and/or recovery from disturbance.
Wildlife	Birds & Bats	Assess seasonal distribution, abundance, migration, and behavior (e.g. flight altitudes) for species likely to use OSW energy areas in the NJ/NY Bight using best available technology (e.g., GPS, radio/Motus, and satellite tags; audio-visual surveys; collision sensing, etc.). Evaluate potential environmental (e.g., atmospheric conditions, light, etc.), biological (e.g., prey distribution), or other drivers of movement and behavior, including related fitness and/or bioenergetic consequences. Improve and inform OSW collision risk models (e.g., attraction vs displacement, macro vs micro-avoidance behavior, habituation, etc.).
	Fishes & Invertebrates	Synthesize existing information and assess (using non-extractive methods when possible) potential effects of OSW development on the distribution, connectivity, behavior, health, reproduction, or other vital metrics for fish and invertebrate communities and species of concern. Evaluate potential environmental (e.g., water chemistry, sound, Cold Pool, etc.), biological (e.g., prey distribution, spawning aggregations, etc.), or other drivers of movement, behavior, and changes in fitness.
	Sea Turtles	Evaluate baseline and potential effects of OSW development on environmental and biological drivers of seasonal distribution, abundance, movement, and habitat use for sea turtle species in the Mid-Atlantic Bight. Evaluate effects of OSW development (e.g., attraction vs avoidance) and other stressors (e.g., oceanographic conditions, sound, vessel traffic, etc.) on turtle movement, behavior, fitness, and vessel strike risks. Advance emerging methods for sea turtle assessment and survey, including eDNA, remote aerial surveys, tag technology, biochemical assays, modeling, etc.
	Marine Mammals	Evaluate baseline and potential effects of OSW development on seasonal distribution, abundance, movement, and habitat use for marine mammals in the NJ/NY Bight. Evaluate potential environmental (e.g. oceanographic conditions, sound, etc.), biological (e.g. prey distribution), and other drivers of movement and behavior using in situ data collection or modeling techniques. Assess potential attraction or displacement effects of OSW development (e.g. sound, vessel traffic, or other stressors).
Fisheries	Fisheries	Develop, implement, and assess methods for evaluating and addressing direct and/or indirect effects of OSW on commercial and recreational fisheries, including changes in socioeconomics, sustainability, access, and cumulative impacts. Projects should employ and collaborate with New Jersey fishermen when possible.

*These priorities are not listed in any ranked order.

MORATORIUM MONDAYS CONTINUE

Please continue to contact Gov. Murphy every Monday and urge him to declare a climate emergency moratorium on fossil fuel projects! These efforts have been successful in that a number of projects have been stopped or delayed in the past. Either call through the Empower NJ number (866-586-4069) to get coaching on the topic of the week, emphasizing what is in the news, or call directly to the governor's office (609-292-6000). Over 50 environmental, citizen, faith, and progressive groups in NJ are calling on Governor Murphy to enact a moratorium on all new fossil fuel projects in NJ until there are rules in place to achieve 100% clean energy goals.

UU FaithAction NJ - Environmental Justice Task Force -

Visit <https://uufaithaction.org/environment/> for links and resources, and to join the EJTF
