



Environmental Justice Task Force 2019 Annual Report

Advocacy and Mobilization

2019 Goals

In 2019, we voted to focus on two goals, getting to renewable energy (and off of fossil fuels) and supporting electrification of all vehicles.

Renewable Energy/Getting Off Fossil Fuels

Energy Master Plan: In September and October, we testified at four of the five Energy Master Plan hearings (Clean and Reliable Power on Sept 7, 2018, Reducing Energy Consumption on Sept. 14, 2018, Clean and Reliable Transportation on Sept 20, 2018, and Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure on Sept 28, 2018). We submitted written comments for all four of these; they are available at <https://uufaithaction.org/policy-briefs-and-positions/>. We also testified at the general meeting in Newark on October 4, 2018. The transcript of that meeting is at <https://www.nj.gov/emp/pdf/04-Oct18-CleanEnergyGeneralSetonHall.PDF>.

The next step is for the BPU to create a draft plan, which is scheduled to be issued on June 1, 2019, and comments will be invited. The EJTF will review the draft plan when it is released. We also signed on to Jersey Renews comments to BPU on Reducing Energy Consumption on Feb 15, 2019.

Moratorium on Fossil Fuel Infrastructure: The EJTF joined the EmpowerNJ coalition to demand that the governor declare a moratorium on fossil fuel infrastructure in New Jersey, until there is a sound plan for reaching the governor's goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050.

Five members of the Environmental Justice Task Force attended the campaign kickoff at the State House (Nadine Sapirman, Louis Sapirman, Peggy Middaugh, Nancy Griffeth, and Clara Haignere) on December 5, 2018.

UU FaithAction and various congregations have tabled, getting signatures for the EmpowerNJ petition and providing talking points for letters to the governor. The tabling events have been held on Feb 10, 2019, at the UU Congregation of Monmouth County event "Are We Cooked?"; on several Sundays in March, 2019, at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit and Morristown Unitarian Fellowship; and on March 9, 2019, at the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield.

Nancy Griffeth organized a forum for the "NJ Tour for a Fossil Fuel Moratorium" at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit on February 18, 2019. Ray Nichols is organizing another for the Princeton congregation on Earth Day (Monday, April 22, 2019).

On January 15, members of EJTF joined others from EmpowerNJ to "bird-dog" Governor Murphy at his "State of the State" speech at the State House Annex.

Meadowlands Power Plant: On May 16, 2018, we issued an action item opposing the Meadowlands Power Plant. The DEP issued six permits in July 2018 for the project. The plant needs several more permits from DEP and New York regulators. Several New Jersey towns have passed resolutions opposing the plant. Writing Murphy and the DEP would be helpful.

Electrification of Vehicles

The EJTF supports S2252/A4819, which “establishes goals, initiatives, and programs to encourage and support use of plug-in electric vehicles.” with some changes, for example, to include electrifying school buses and improving public transportation in New Jersey.

Margaret Babcock attended the Senate hearing on S2252 in order to testify. Unfortunately, only invited speakers were allowed to testify. However, Rev. Ronald Tuff of Greenfaith worked with Assemblyman Wimberley to arrange a meeting with himself and Assemblyman DeAngelo to discuss the bill, and invited UU FaithAction, Jersey Renews, Environment NJ, Isles, and others to attend. At the meeting on Monday March 26, most of the discussion was about jobs and job training in EJ communities. Assemblyman DeAngelo opposes classifying jobs as “green jobs” or any other category — they all require electricians, and electricians can do any of them. He didn’t respond to a question about rebates for leasing vehicles or for motorbikes and motorcycles. The meeting was terminated after about 15 minutes because it was a very busy day in Trenton. Rev. Tuff agreed to try to set up another meeting with him at DeAngelo’s Hamilton office.

A position paper on electrification of vehicles is in progress.

2018 Goals

In 2018, we had voted to focus on Renewable Energy, Community Solar, and Lead in Drinking Water. Renewable Energy is discussed above, the other two issues are discussed below.

Community Solar

The EJTF testified on July 21, 2018, at the BPU hearings on the Community Solar Pilot Project, and submitted written comments, which are available at <https://uufaithaction.org/policy-briefs-and-positions/>

The draft rules for the Community Solar Pilot were issued and comments are due by November 29. We testified at the stakeholder group meeting on Thursday, November 8, at 1 pm at Rutgers University. The final rules for the Community Solar Pilot have been issued.

Nancy Griffeth and Rev. Ronald Tuff met with PSE&G to discuss whether Greenfaith and UU FaithAction NJ would support their petition to be allowed to develop a Community Solar project (the BPU rules prohibit Electric Distribution Companies from doing so). At the meeting, Michele Gonzalez, the PSE&G representative, said that the petition had already been denied by the BPU and because of other issues that PSE&G has in front of the BPU (eg, the nuclear rate hike), PSE&G will not pursue this immediately. However, they may bring it up again for the second year of the Community Solar pilot, and we agreed that if the impact on LMI communities appears to be either negative or negligible, we might agree to sign on to a letter of support on the grounds that PSE&G has the deep pockets to support a successful Community Solar project. Whether we would actually do so would depend on further discussion about their support for EJ communities.

Lead in Drinking Water

The EJTF issued a position paper on remediating lead in drinking water. On June 14, we met with Nancy Pinkin, the chair of the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee, and testified in favor of four bills addressing the issue at her committee’s meeting. The four bills have all passed the Assembly and are in Senate committees.

On June 17, we issued an action item to call the Senate committee chairs to push the bills through. On June 18, we met with Nancy Pinkin and testified at the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee in favor of the following bills:

- S1783 (A2697), to require an inventory of lead service lines, passed the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and was referred to the Budget Committee;
- S682 (A3373), to require the DEP to adopt a plan to reduce lead exposure, was referred to the Senate Environment and Energy Committee;
- S2777 (A4121), to require the DOE and DCF to establish an on-line reporting system for schools and day care centers to report lead testing results, was referred to the Senate Environment and Energy Committee;
- A4169, to authorize the NJ infrastructure to expend moneys to make loans for environmental infrastructure projects, has been passed into law.

The bills were reported out of committee and later passed by the Assembly.

On June 25, we met with Ken McPherson, John McKeon's legislative aide, to discuss getting the bills passed in the Senate and other matters.

Other

1. **Action:** Voted to support the Green Amendment proposed by the Delaware Riverkeeper.
Status: This is an initiative of the Delaware Riverkeeper. A bill is in committee. An action item would be in order to ask the committee chair to bring it up in committee.: Tabled for signatures on a petition for the Green Amendment on Feb 10, 2019, at the UU Congregation of Monmouth County event "Are We Cooked?"; on several Sundays in March, 2019, at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit and Morristown Unitarian Fellowship; and on March 9, 2019, at the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield.
2. **Action:** Testified at the Joint Legislative Environment Hearing on Plastic Waste in Toms River supporting Senate bill S2276 which "prohibits carryout bags made of plastic film, polystyrene foam food service products, and single-use plastic straws; assesses fee on paper carryout bags."
Status: The identical Assembly bill is A4330 and it is in the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee. The Senate bill S2776 started in the Senate Environment and Energy Committee but has been referred to the Appropriations Committee. An action item calling for it to be brought up in committee would be in order.
3. **Action:** Opposed redistricting bill (aka gerrymandering bill) of December, 2018, by participating in the "ambush" at the state Democrats' caucus at the New Brunswick Hilton on December 12, 2018. Nancy Griffeth and Sally Gellert testified against the bill on behalf of UU FaithAction at the hearing the next day.
Status: NJ legislative leaders--primarily Democrats--supported an amendment to the NJ constitution (SCR152 and ACR205) that was a purely political proposal to increase the ability of politicians to choose their voters. The usual term for it is "gerrymandering." It would also have embedded the two-party system into the state's constitution, a blatant attempt to weaken third parties like the Green and Libertarian parties. Every group that testified on the proposed amendment opposed it. Voting on the bill was scheduled for December 17, 2018, but thanks to all the opposition, the Senate President Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Coughlin pulled the resolutions proposing the amendment on December 15. The League of Women Voters continues to work for an improved approach to redistricting, but it may be hard to get legislative support.
4. **Action:** Ray Nichols and Sally Gellert developed resources on the definition of environmental justice.
Status: 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
The document is available at: www.nj.gov/dep/ej/eo23/docs/eo23-draft-guidance.pdf

The Environmental Justice Task Force part of the Web site has been updated to reflect our understanding of environmental justice.

Education:

1. On April 19, 2018, the EJTF co-sponsored a panel (with Westfield High School, the Union Area League of Women Voters, and Beacon's Green Earth Ministry) on transitioning to 100% renewable energy. It was attended by about 250-300 people, including a number of UUs from as far as Princeton and Ocean County.
2. In August, Carol Hemington initiated a newsletter to support better communication with and between congregational environmental groups. Issues have appeared monthly ever since and are maintained on the Web site at <https://uufaithaction.org/blog/>.
3. Nancy Griffeth attended the NJ Climate Stakeholders Forum held at Princeton University, to provide input on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from a faith-based point of view.
4. Joined the Create Climate Justice Web site and uploaded a variety of materials, including the monthly newsletter.
5. A forum for the "NJ Tour for a Fossil Fuel Moratorium was held at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit on February 18, 2019, and another is being planned for Princeton on Earth Day (Monday, April 22, 2019).
6. In January, 2019, Ray Nichols and Sally Gellert researched environmental justice and provided definitions and discussion from the EPA, the DEP, and the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, which are available on the Web site at <https://uufaithaction.org/what-is-environmental-justice/>.
7. Nancy Griffeth attended Jersey Water Works Conference on December 7, 2018. Topics covered were: 1) the role of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), whose current priorities are as follows: climate change; protecting water; and, protecting the health of New Jersey communities, with particular focus on EJ communities; 2) the "water message paradox" – "The water is safe to drink... Everything is falling apart we need 1 million dollars;" and, 3) the case for water affordability, focusing on the fact that drinking water is an EJ issue, recognizing the importance of the infrastructure (Trump has signed a water infrastructure bill), and that we are seeing a startling return to piping sewage directly to the environment. Key questions are: "How much should a poor household be expected to pay for essential services? What sacrifices should be expected?"

Recognition of EJTF Members

Several of our members deserve special recognition for their initiative and hard work.

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

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

Finally, she proposed and designed the newsletter and has edited a monthly newsletter since August.

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

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

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

Finally, Ray and Sally Gellert

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

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

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

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