

# Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter September 2019

[covering 7/27/2019 – 8/26/2019] <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.**

## UU CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITY THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY in EAST BRUNSWICK

The Unitarian Society in East Brunswick is beginning a quarterly series of services to create and hold space for climate grief -- through song, ritual, and breaking bread together. The first gathering is scheduled for Sunday, September 15, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Purpose: “process climate grief so you can face reality and do what is yours to do”

Format:

- First gathering: September 15; then quarterly (and more if there is interest)
- Ongoing and Drop-In – the more who come, the more everyone benefits
- Share a vegetarian meal (vegan option)
- Make art
- Sing together
- Centering practices (like meditation)
- Time to reflect and connect, to listen and witness each other

Interested? Curious? Have Questions?

Reach out to Rev. Karen Johnston at The Unitarian Society at [revkarentus@gmail.com](mailto:revkarentus@gmail.com) or on Facebook at Revkaren G Johnston



For additional information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2376561882620480/>

## **OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **NJ Energy Master Plan Public Hearings and Comment Period**

**The Energy Master Plan is New Jersey's roadmap to achieving 100% clean energy by 2050. Come hear what citizens, unions, industry, and environmentalists have to say about it, and/or testify (register to testify at <https://www.nj.gov/emp/get/>).**

**Tuesday, September 3 (newly added),** 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. at the Hackensack Administration Building in Hackensack

**Thursday, September 5 (newly added),** 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. at the LMH Room, Toms River Municipal Complex in Toms River

**Thursday, September 12,** 2 sessions: 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the Black Box Theater in The Kroc Center in Camden

Each stakeholder who wants to testify can register ahead for only one session, and the deadline for registering ahead is noon of the day before (early registrants usually get preference in being heard).

Written comments are due on **Monday, September 16** at noon.

See <https://www.nj.gov/emp/get/> for details.

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## **CLIMATE STRIKES**

G L O B A L  
**CLIMATE  
STRIKE**  
**20-27 SEPT**

**We've endured another summer of record-breaking heatwaves, floods, and refinery explosions. Enough is enough. No more government inaction and half-measures.**

**It's time to build a renewable energy economy that works for everyone. Join us in the streets September 20 and the week after to demand climate justice for all.**

**There will be events in New York City, New Brunswick, and Princeton, among other places, on September 20.**

**New York City Climate Strike with Greta Thunberg** - Friday, September 20, 2019, 12:00 p.m.  
Foley Square, New York City

**Global Climate Strike in New Brunswick** - Friday, September 20, 2019, 2:30 p.m. - Community rally at Rutgers University followed by community march to Congressman Frank Pallone's New Brunswick office

**Princeton Climate Strike** - Friday, September 20, 2019, 12:30 p.m. - 3 Palmer Square, Princeton

There's a map at [https://actionnetwork.org/event\\_campaigns/us-climate-strikes](https://actionnetwork.org/event_campaigns/us-climate-strikes) where you can find a climate strike nearby, and the main page is: <https://globalclimatestrike.net/>

## **“Take Action on Climate” Event**

Friday, September 6, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Summit, 4 Waldron Ave, Summit, NJ

Hosted by Westfield 2020 Environmental Committee, UU FaithAction NJ, and Green Earth Ministry, at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit, this event will include a brief introduction to pressing state energy and climate issues. Then there will be options for activities like submitting Energy Master Plan comments, writing postcards to Governor Murphy urging a moratorium, writing postcards to environmental voters urging them to call the Governor on Moratorium Mondays, and more to come!

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## **SIERRA CLUB LECTURE: Where Are We on Climate Change and Energy?**

Wednesday, September 11, 6:00 p.m.

Mercer County Community College Student Center, Room SC104, 1200 Old Trenton Road,  
West Windsor, NJ

Jeff Tittel, Executive Director of the Sierra Club New Jersey, will give a frank, no-holds-barred assessment on where we are in fighting Climate Change and preparing for it. He will put a special emphasis on energy, the call for a moratorium on fossil fuels, and barriers to faster progress in renewables.

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## **“Achieving Clean Energy in New Jersey: Energy Storage, Microgrids, and Distributed Energy Resources” A NJ Spotlight Roundtable Event (Free)**

Friday, September 20, 8:00 a.m.

Robert Treat Hotel, 50 Park Place, Newark NJ

As New Jersey pursues its clean energy agenda, the challenge of effectively storing and distributing energy has emerged as critical to realizing the state's renewable energy potential. To succeed, several key considerations must be addressed and met with coordinated responses:

- Is New Jersey expanding energy storage solutions quickly enough to allow the scale adoption of renewable energy sources?
- How can the state advance the deployment of energy storage technologies without sacrificing any resiliency of the traditional power grid?
- What role can microgrids play in enabling energy to be sourced and stored closer to where it will be used by consumers and businesses?
- What kind of incentives may be needed to ensure the state will meet its 2021 energy storage mandates?

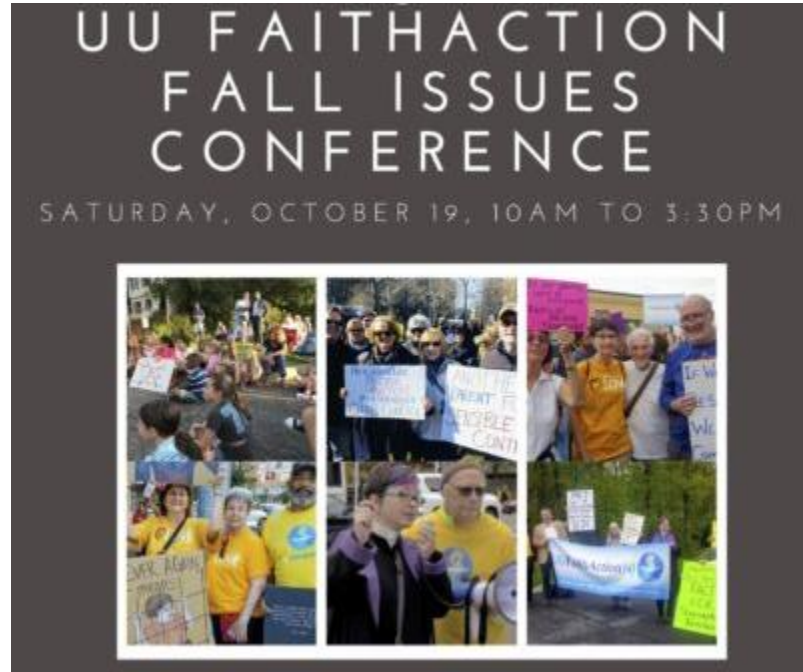
These and other questions will be explored at this NJ Spotlight Roundtable on September 20th.

Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nj-spotlight-achieving-clean-energy-in-new-jersey-energy-storage-microgrids-and-distributed-energy-tickets-68309271871>

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## UU FAITHACTION NJ FALL ISSUES CONFERENCE

Saturday, October 19, 10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Central Unitarian Church, 156 Forest Avenue, Paramus, NJ



What's driving you? Justice for Immigrants? The assault on women's reproductive rights? Making the Garden State greener? Tackling the injustices in our criminal justice system? Join UU FaithAction NJ on Saturday, October 19, 2019 for the annual Fall Issues Conference when the top legislative priorities for the following year(s) are developed.

Register Here:

[http://salsa4.salsalabs.com/o/51510/c/301/p/salsa/event/common/public/?event\\_KEY=11572](http://salsa4.salsalabs.com/o/51510/c/301/p/salsa/event/common/public/?event_KEY=11572)

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### Stop New Fossil Fuel Development!

Make a quick phone call on "**MORATORIUM MONDAYS**"!!





## ***EJTF ACTIVITIES***

- **EJTF Testimony At NJ Draft Energy Master Plan Public Hearings**

UUFANJ/EJTF continues to review the Draft NJ Energy Master Plan (EMP), to prepare detailed comments, to give testimony at hearings, and to provide written comments. We plan to testify at additional hearings and to provide additional comments until the deadline. We are following the seven strategies of the EMP, but have added two additional categories, implementation and food. Others are welcome to join our discussion, or to provide comments individually. You can find a link to the EMP at <https://nj.gov/emp/>, along with additional information about it.

UUFANJ/EJTF member Jo Sippie-Gora testified at the August 8, 4:30 p.m. Draft EMP hearing in Newark; her comments are on page 6.

UUFANJ/EJTF members Nancy Griffeth and Peggy Middaugh, who plan to testify at future hearings, attended the 1:00 p.m. Draft EMP hearing on August 8 in Newark (see photos below).



Grace Strom Power, BPU chief of staff, giving the introduction



Nancy Griffeth and Peggy Middaugh at the hearing

Fifty people testified at the 1:00 pm hearing, including twenty-two people from nonprofits, primarily environmental groups. Thirteen of these were affiliated with Empower NJ, which has called for a moratorium on all new fossil fuel infrastructure in the state. The members of Empower NJ are concerned that the Draft EMP “does not halt new fracked gas projects, and will utterly fail to achieve the Governor’s 100% clean energy goals and Global Warming Response Act mandates.” The Empower NJ comments are available at: <http://empowernewjersey.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Empower-EMP-comments-7-15-2019.pdf>.

There were eleven industry representatives at the hearing, primarily from renewable energy companies, but three were from businesses selling propane or supporting companies that do, and there was one group of student interns from New Jersey Natural Gas. The main arguments from the non-renewable industries pertained to maintaining their businesses in NJ. The student interns had done a project on using gas generated from landfills to make “Renewable Natural Gas.”

There were also four union representatives, three of whom mostly support the Energy Master Plan. The Steamfitters Union (which builds pipelines) is opposed.

## Jo Sippie-Gora's Comments on the Draft Energy Master Plan

My name is Jo Sippie-Gora. Over a hundred years ago, my parents emigrated to NJ from an impoverished part of Italy. I feel deeply privileged to have been born in a land of opportunity, a resource-rich nation where exponential technological growth and physical expansion have produced an enviable global economy. But our economy grew at a steep price. Little attention was paid to the connection between our use of natural resources and the well-being of the planet that sustains us. We cannot ignore it anymore.

After years of the previous administration's lukewarm support for addressing our climate change crisis, I felt relieved when Gov. Murphy signed the Clean Energy Act, which kicked off the Plan we are discussing today. Thank you for providing the public opportunities to comment upon the Plan, which I generally support. However, it falls short in several ways. The EMP lacks the sense of urgency required to avoid the irreversible climate catastrophe predicted if we don't act quickly. The Plan does not place a moratorium on fossil-fuel projects and allows the proposed natural gas projects to continue. This is akin to running water into an already full bathtub. Also, the plan redefines Clean Energy as Carbon Neutral, which means carbon may still be released after the 2050 target date. In addition, the draft plan provides an escape clause for nuclear generation, which presents real risk and produces radioactive waste that still lacks a safe method of disposal. Finally, Low-income communities and communities of color, which have not shared equally in the benefits of past programs, would continue to be burdened.

Our culture is based on consumption, and our economic policies are driven by it. We need to address this fact in the energy master plan. I am deeply, and morally, convinced that this state must face the scientific data head-on. We know that New Jersey, especially our shore communities, face future catastrophic losses unless greenhouse gases are reduced rapidly. Even those who live in the more suburban and rural areas of the state – like myself - will suffer from shortages of food, energy, medicine, transportation failures, and more.

A very important part of the Plan is its sixth strategy, which calls for supporting community energy planning and action in Environmental Justice communities, but it has a hitch: your BPU grant program for community energy planning views proposals more highly if they come from communities with prior success in clean energy projects. This requirement will exclude most environmental justice communities. Clean energy must not be a luxury of the well-heeled. It must be economically accessible to everyone. At present, there are incentives for homeowners who are installing solar panels and purchasing new cars to buy EVs. These are not the kinds of purchases that environmental justice households can consider. Environmental Justice consumers must have viable options they can use to participate in clean energy. Also, you should exempt Environmental Justice communities from "Societal Benefits Charges" or subsidize them. Provide more grants to these communities to upgrade the lighting on their recreation fields and parks, promote the use of LED bulbs with give-away programs and especially, upgrade their bus systems to include jitneys for a smaller number of riders.

As a Humanist, I believe that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny. As a Unitarian Universalist, I practice the seven basic Principles of our faith, which include respect for this interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part, and to call for justice, equity and compassion in all our relations. I am here today as one of the representatives of the Environmental Justice Task Force of Unitarian Universalist Faith Action of NJ.

Through our Environmental Justice Task Force, we at Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ intend to work hard with our coalition partners Jersey Renews, Empower New Jersey, and Greenfaith in the effort to make the Governor's draft Energy Master Plan not only workable, visionary and impactful--but equitable and just too.

Thank you.

- **EJTF Draft NJ Energy Master Plan Educational Outreach to Congregations**

On Sunday, August 25, 2019, EJTF Chair Nancy Griffeth presented an educational program on the Draft NJ Energy Management Plan (EMP) at the Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Summit. Educational outreach to UU congregations about the contents, importance, and ramifications of the Draft EMP is a goal of the EJTF.

Nancy's presentation slides are available here: [https://www.uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019\\_EMP\\_Presentation\\_v2-copy.pdf](https://www.uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019_EMP_Presentation_v2-copy.pdf)

## **UPDATE ON EJTF KEY ISSUES FOR 2019:**

### **1) Fighting against fossil fuel infrastructure**

We are working on actions related to achieving a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure in NJ. We have joined Empower NJ - Twitter hashtag, #empowernj - a coalition of environmental groups, to demand that Governor Murphy declare a moratorium on building fossil fuel infrastructure. We are asking our members to contact the governor, especially on "Moratorium Mondays" (see page 4), to write letters to print and on-line news sources, to attend demonstrations against new pipelines and power plants, and to organize educational events in their congregations and in our municipalities.

In addition, we are signing on to EJTF member Bill Potter's petitions to the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for reconsideration of their permits for various pipelines

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

#### **- Electric Vehicles (EV's)**

**Legislation:** For electrification of New Jersey's transportation sector, we are supporting New Jersey Senate Bill 2252/ Assembly Bill 4819, 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.

Although the EV bill (S2252/A4829) is stalled, the VW settlement is being used to help fund an electrification program that includes electric garbage trucks, school buses, and port-related vehicles. The EJTF had some criticism of the EV bill based on its relative inattention to public vehicles and transit and its focus on private EVs and EV charging, so this is welcome news.

A position paper on electrification of vehicles is in progress.

## NEWS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES

### FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE



- **PennEast Natural Gas Line Resubmits Bid for Needed Permit to NJDEP** - PennEast Pipeline resubmitted its application for a needed permit from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, which had rejected its original filing as incomplete in February 2018. The consortium of natural gas companies hopes to begin construction in 2020 on the proposed 120-mile, 36-inch-diameter underground line. Environmental groups maintain that the new line is “dangerous and unnecessary,” in the words of NJ Sierra Club Director Jeff Tittel. “PennEast have completed their land surveys and used eminent domain to get on properties,” Tittel said. “Now they have the information needed for DEP. The PennEast Pipeline and project would cut through an incredible amount of environmentally sensitive areas, critical drinking water and historic properties. It must be stopped.”  
<https://www.lehighvalleylive.com/news/2019/08/penneast-natural-gas-line-sends-bid-for-needed-permit-back-before-nj.html>
- **PennEast Reaches Major Milestone, Plans to Submit New Application to DEP** - The controversial 120-mile pipeline has wrapped up all outstanding land surveys, completing a step that kept it stalled for more than a year. PennEast Pipeline expects to submit a new application to the state DEP this month (see news item above), setting the stage for what might be the pivotal decision in whether the project moves forward. Another controversial pipeline project through parts of the New Jersey Pinelands has also won key approvals: New Jersey Natural Gas, a subsidiary of NJR, received road-opening permits for its 30-mile Southern Reliability Link through parts of Burlington County. The permits are the last of the major approvals for the project, which is about half completed, with complete construction planned by 2020, and which is moving forward even though litigation involving it is still pending in the courts: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/06/penneast-reaches-major-milestone-plans-to-submit-new-application-to-dep/>
- **Big Cut in PSE&G Spending Plan for Gas and Power Grids Ready to Be Finalized** – PSE&G tentatively agreed to a reduction (from \$2.5 billion to \$842 million) in the proposed plan to make its gas and power grids more resilient; public outcry over Gov. Murphy’s \$300 million nuclear subsidy to keep open three power plants operated by PSEG Power, a PSE&G affiliate, may have had an effect. The proposed settlement could be up for approval by the Board of Public Utilities at its initial September meeting. **Significantly, under the tentative agreement, PSE&G’s proposal to invest \$863 million in 14 new pipelines to back up suppliers in the event of disruptions in interstate pipelines was eliminated.** The utility had sought to invest \$1 billion in its gas system but ended up only getting \$150 million under the tentative settlement:  
<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/07/30/big-cut-in-pse-g-spending-plan-for-gas-and-power-grids-ready-to-be-finalized/>



## NJ DRAFT ENERGY MASTER PLAN

- **Show of Force by Critics of Draft NJ Energy Master Plan, Frustration Grows** - In a third public hearing on the draft NJ EMP (see pages 5 and 6, above), many faulted the document, primarily for not imposing an immediate moratorium on all fossil-fuel projects in NJ. The omission threatens to deepen a rift between the environmental community — that largely backed Gov. Phil Murphy’s election — over the administration’s reluctance to halt several new natural gas pipelines in NJ as well as four new gas-fired power plants. Other speakers faulted the draft plan as not doing enough to address pollution in environmental justice communities, like Newark, home to a recently built new gas-fired power plant, a garbage incinerator, and one of the nation’s biggest wastewater treatment plants. Some called for mandatory air-pollution reductions in emissions from power plants and the 8,000 vehicles coming in and out of the port of Newark daily. Rev. Ronald Tuff, a member of GreenFaith, urged the state to set aside dollars to train low-and moderate-income people so they can take advantage of the switch to a green economy: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/08/show-of-force-by-critics-of-draft-energy-master-plan-frustration-grows/>

## RENEWABLE RESOURCES

- **BPU Gives Assurance that State’s Solar Projects Will Stay on Track** - Proposing a new rule to establish the parameters for ending its current process of solar project funding, the NJ Board of Public Utilities tried to calm concerns that projects undertaken years ago would be left in the red. A year-old law mandates that costs for installing solar systems be reduced; the expense is currently largely borne by utility customers. BPU president Joseph Fiordaliso said, “We have made clear through the new rule proposal, the board is committed to a balanced and stable solar market.” Some solar developers found comfort in the pledge, but worried about the methodology for closing down the existing program and its potential impact on the solar market. “The commitment to a stable and balanced solar market is what we wanted to hear,” agreed UUFANJ EJTF member Lyle Rawlings, founder of Advanced Solar Products. But he added that the proposal will create an oversupply in the market and require a market balancing mechanism to protect prices for solar incentives: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/07/bpu-gives-assurance-that-states-solar-projects-will-stay-on-track/>
- **NJ to Overhaul Current Financing Mechanism for Solar Systems** - As the Board of Public Utilities prepares to shut down current financing system for solar projects, clean-energy developers argue that the move threatens to disrupt the market significantly, jeopardizing millions of dollars in investments in the clean-energy technology from school systems, municipalities and others. In a BPU hearing, representatives from the solar sector said the closure of the market could leave some of the more than 100,000 solar projects undertaken in the past underwater, unable to generate the cash flow to remain viable. Many of those who testified urged the board to establish a new proceeding to develop a so-called “balancing mechanism” to give the agency flexibility after it closes the market. “It looks like the threat of a crash is easing if they follow through with a market-balancing mechanism,” said UUFANJ EJTF member Lyle Rawlings, founder of Advanced Solar. To that end, the sector will be looking closely at what the new rule proposal says when it is published in early August (see news item above): <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/07/31/state-to-overhaul-current-financing-mechanism-for-solar-systems/>

## CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Extreme Climate Change Has Arrived in NJ - Why We're at the Center of a National Trend** - NJ may seem an unlikely place to measure climate change, but it is one of the fastest-warming states in the nation. Average NJ temperature has climbed by close to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1895 - double the average for the Lower 48 states (see map included in the article). The average NJ temperature from December through February now exceeds 0 degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit), the temperature at which water freezes. That threshold, reached over the past three decades, has meant lakes don't freeze as often, snow melts more quickly, and insects and pests don't die as they once did in the harsher cold: <https://www.nj.com/news/2019/08/americas-hot-spots-where-extreme-climate-change-has-already-arrived.html>
- **Estimate Revised Upward of New NJ Shore Homes Imperiled by Sea-level Rise, Storm Surge** - Climate Central, a Princeton-based research group, and the national real-estate company Zillow, now estimate that 3,087 Jersey Shore homes built between 2009 and 2017 — together worth more than \$3 billion — are in a “risk zone” for the kind of flooding that is estimated to occur once a year by 2050. Under the 10-year scenario, there would be 4,524 New Jersey homes worth a total of \$4.61 billion in the risk zone, the highest number among the 10 states with elevated exposure. NJ also holds the two top spots in a national ranking of counties with the most houses in risk zones — Ocean and Cape May — and the two cities with the biggest housing exposure in the country - Ocean City and Beach Haven West: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/13/estimate-rises-of-new-shore-homes-imperiled-by-sea-level-rise-and-storm-surge/>
- **The Effects of Climate Change in NJ are Everywhere** - Disease-carrying mosquitoes and ticks are an increased threat in NJ because they are living longer lives due to extended warm months and mild winters. Some of the state's largest and most popular lakes have been inundated by algae blooms this summer due to an exceptionally wet year and exceptionally warm July. And fish that once swam in abundance off the coast of NJ have migrated north in search of cooler waters. Annual temperatures in NJ have increased approximately 3 degrees since the beginning of the 20th century. Sea level rise is happening so fast in NJ that it's double the global average, thanks in part to melting glaciers and the expansion of warmer water along with a gradually sinking coastal landmass: <https://enviropolitics.com/the-effects-of-climate-change-in-new-jersey-are-already-here-theyre-everywhere/>



- **NJ Challenges Weaker Rule on Emissions from Coal-Fired Power Plants** - A new rule from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would let coal units slide on pollution controls. NJ is among 22 states, and several cities, challenging the rule as unlawful. Earlier this summer, the EPA adopted a rule to overturn a signature environmental achievement of the Obama administration in its efforts to combat climate change. In a petition filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, the states challenged the action, dubbed the Affordable Clean Energy rule, as unlawful, saying it would allow coal units to operate indefinitely into the future without installing pollution controls to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/13/nj-in-court-challenge-over-weaker-rule-on-emissions-from-coal-fired-power-plants/>

- **NJ Sues over Federal Plan to Cut Penalty for Fuel-Economy Violations** - NJ once again is joining other states in challenging a Trump administration rollback of rules to weaken the penalty for violating the nation's fuel-economy standards for cars, seeking to stop the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration from more than halving the penalty for automakers that exceed national fuel-economy standards. The Trump administration finalized a rule to reduce the penalty from \$14 per tenth-of-a-mile per gallon to \$5.50, a 60 percent reduction: NJ, CA, NY, and other states are asking the U.S. Court of Appeals to set aside the new, reduced penalty and reinstall the \$14 penalty adopted under the Obama administration: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/04/nj-sues-trump-administration-over-cut-in-penalty-for-fuel-economy-violations/>

## **DRINKING WATER and OTHER WATER-RELATED ISSUES**

- **Lead Concerns Spread to Towns That Share Newark's Water Supply** - Residents of Belleville and Bloomfield are among those wondering what the implications are for their water's safety. Newark's Pequannock Water System serves all of Bloomfield and Belleville, some 430 homes in Nutley and all of Pequannock Township, in addition to the western part of the city — a half-million people in all. Bloomfield has distributed more than 3,000 PUR filters to residents over the past 18 months because of elevated lead levels resulting from corrosion and contamination problems in the Newark system. Now residents share the same concern as their neighbors in Newark that those filters might not be removing enough lead: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/15/lead-concerns-spread-to-towns-that-share-newarks-water-supply/>
- **On the Streets of Newark, Worry About Lead in Tap Water** - In the wake of some elevated lead readings in homes with filtered water, there was worry among parents in Newark over the health of their children, after federal officials said tests showed that tap water in some city residences exceeded federal levels for lead despite the presence of faucet filters supplied by the city. Lead is known to be especially harmful to children, and parents who harbor any doubts about their children's level of exposure were urged to have them tested. Newark started distributing filters last November, but the filters were never tested to see whether they were working properly until July and August — because they're nationally certified and endorsed by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, according to sources in the Murphy administration: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/13/on-streets-of-newark-worry-about-lead-in-tap-water/>
- **City of Newark Has Replaced 700 out of 15,000 Lead Service Lines** – Since March, Newark's Lead Service Line Replacement Program has changed out 700 out of approximately 15,000 lead service lines — the lines that bring water from the street to homes — on private property. It has been doing so in partnership with the state, at a maximum cost to homeowners of \$1,000 even though the actual cost could be far higher. There is no deadline for homeowners to apply for replacement of the lead service line that goes to their home; they simply have to register to be included in the program: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/13/700/>
- **Newark Addresses Elevated Levels of Lead in Drinking Water** – In the wake of a federal warning that those living in homes with old lead service lines should not drink their tap water, Newark started distributing cases of bottled water for free, days after the federal Environmental Protection Agency strongly urged city officials to do so when tests at three homes turned up high lead levels in two of them, despite the homeowners using filters designed to eliminate lead contamination. The elevated lead readings served to confirm earlier readings in homes equipped with lead filters that still exceeded the federal standard of 15 parts per billion of lead: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/12/newark-addresses-elevated-levels-of-lead-in-drinking-water/>

**Testing and Follow-up Urged for Newark, Doctors Caution Against Panic** - Medical experts based in Newark advised against panic over elevated levels of lead in some of the city's water; they noted most lead poisoning cases there are caused by peeling paint, when children, especially toddlers, ingest lead by getting peeling paint — which contained the heavy metal until the 1970s — or tainted dust into their mouths. “Repairing city water infrastructure is important, but so is repairing the housing stock,” stated Dr. Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the New Jersey Poison Control Center, and an associate professor in emergency medicine at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, in Newark. “And remediation is expensive”: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/15/testing-and-follow-up-urged-for-newark-doctors-caution-against-hysteria/>

**Reports Say Toxins Have Been Found At 18 Swim, Drinking Sites in New Jersey** - Swimming or touching the water was banned at several NJ water sites this summer, but a new report says the problem has been bigger than you'd think over the past 12 years. The report documents the detection of “microcystins” - a class of toxins produced by freshwater cyanobacteria - in water sites over the past 12 years. At least one of those sites identified – the Manasquan Reservoir – helps provide 60 percent of the potable water used in Brielle, Sea Girt, Spring Lake, Spring Lake Heights, and Wall Township, according to the New Jersey Water Supply Authority website. After short-term exposures, the toxins can cause liver and kidney damage. Livestock and pets could be particularly vulnerable, and contact with the water could be fatal to animals: <https://enviropolitics.com/14503-2/>

## POLLUTION



- **See a Map of the Complicated Landscape of Plastic Bans in the U.S.** - A new map shows where states have banned plastic—and where states have banned bans on plastic. CA, NY, and hundreds of municipalities in the U.S. ban or fine the use of plastic in some way. Seventeen other states, however, say it's illegal to ban plastic items, effectively placing a ban on a ban. This kind of legal maneuvering is booming. Four states created preemptions this year alone with two only narrowly failing in SC and AL. Often, efforts to preempt plastic bans are aided by the plastics industry, which wants to ensure its products remain widely used: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/map-shows-the-complicated-landscape-of-plastic-bans/>



- **Amid Crisis, Lawmakers Take Fresh Look at NJ's Recycling System** - Some environmental advocates say the focus should be on reducing the amount of waste that's generated. The state Legislature held a hearing to examine ways to fix the state's recycling system, now in such a crisis that some communities pay more to recycle than to dispose of their garbage. The collapse of the recycling market across the country was triggered by the collapse of markets in China and elsewhere in Asia to accept recycled materials. The hearing, before the Legislature's top environmental committees, is likely to lead to new bills to ban throw-away plastic bags, straws and polystyrene foam containers, a measure vetoed by Gov. Phil Murphy last year, and to recycle food waste, a bill currently on his desk:  
<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/15/amid-crisis-lawmakers-take-fresh-look-at-njs-recycling-system/>

## OTHER

- **More NJ Residents Will Qualify for Help to Pay Their Gas, Electric Bills** - The Board of Public Utilities will add up to 5,700 low-income households to its Universal Service Fund program, raising the income eligibility limit from 175 percent of the federal poverty level to 185, which is equal to a monthly gross income of \$3,870 for a family of four. "Updating the income threshold to make more residents eligible for support is an important step in furthering our mission of ensuring affordable utility service for all customers in the Garden State," said BPU president Joseph Fiordaliso:  
<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/12/more-nj-residents-will-qualify-for-help-to-pay-their-gas-electric-bills/>



- **Feds Cancel Power Auction by Grid Operator, Market Uncertainty Increases** – A decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) affects PJM Interconnection's setting of energy prices, which is a source of long-running dispute in NJ and elsewhere. FERC has told the PJM, the operator of the nation's largest power grid, to cancel a planned auction next month that helps determine how much consumers and businesses pay for electricity. The auction was to line up the extra capacity of power PJM may need to meet peak electricity demand. FERC ruled a year ago the current rules for setting energy prices are "unjust and unreasonable. The delay, the second given by the federal agency to PJM, tightens the time frame for a consensus to be reached."  
<https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/07/28/feds-cancel-power-auction-by-grid-operator-increasing-market-uncertainty/>

- **Critics Warn Fed Proposal Could Hinder States from Protecting Waterways** - The federal Environmental Protection Agency is moving to streamline a section of the Clean Water Act (CWA) that states have used to hinder development of major energy projects that could impair their waterways; NJ activists wonder about effects on PennEast pipeline. The rule proposal is meant to comply with an executive order President Donald Trump issued this spring to limit the scope and time states would have to review energy projects, such as new oil and natural gas pipelines. The proposal won backing from power suppliers and gas companies. CT and NY have used Section 401 of the CWA to effectively block major pipeline projects. In NJ, critics of the controversial PennEast pipeline believe the provision is the best option for stopping the \$1 billion, 120-mile pipeline that begins in PA and ends in Mercer County: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/08/11/federal-proposal-could-hinder-states-from-protecting-waterways-critics-warn/>
- **Carneys Point, Seeking DuPont Cleanup, No longer a Meek Company Town** - Advocates claim links between illness and chemical contamination as DuPont and Chemours feud over who would pay to clean soil and water. DEP issued a “directive” in March to five chemical companies, including Chemours and DuPont, to investigate and clean up PFAS contamination around the state. DEP said 168 of 341 private water wells sampled within five miles of the Chambers Works facility exceeded screening criteria for the PFAS chemicals PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFNA (perfluorononanoic acid) or PFOS (perfluorooctanesulfonic acid), and PFOA combined. The tests also found GenX, a chemical that has been introduced by some manufacturers as a substitute for PFOA but which scientists say may be just as toxic as the chemical it is intended to replace: <https://www.njspotlight.com/stories/19/07/28/carneys-point-seeking-massive-dupont-cleanup-no-longer-a-meek-company-town/>

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

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

