



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>.

Subsequently, the BPU created a draft plan and held hearings throughout the summer. Rob Gregson and Ray Nichols testified at the first hearing, on July 17 in Trenton. Jo Sippie-Gora testified at the second hearing, on August 8 in Newark. Nancy Griffeth testified at a supplemental hearing in Hackensack on September 3. Peggy Middaugh and Rev. Robin Tanner testified at a hearing in Toms River on September 5. We also submitted written comments on the Energy Master Plan, which can be found at https://www.uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019_EMP_Comments.pages.pdf.

Nancy Griffeth gave two presentations on the Energy Master Plan at Beacon on Sunday August 25. The presentation is available on youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHbRGz2EfCM&t=1s>.

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.

Three members of the EJTF attended the organizing meeting at which EmpowerNJ was born, and 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. We signed off on the initial letter to Governor Murphy about the moratorium.

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 many Sundays during the year 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 organized 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.

UU FaithAction has been publishing Action Alerts every Monday to urge UU’s to call Governor Murphy to ask for a moratorium and the newsletter regularly includes news and action alerts on the moratorium.

Challenging pipelines through petitions. EJTF member Bill Potter has pointed out that N.J.S.A. 48:2 – 40 as interpreted by the state Supreme Court in a 1969 opinion -- provides that the BPU has the plenary authority to reopen, rehear, and reconsider any regulatory decision previously made, even if the public utility has invested heavily in reliance on that prior decision, in light of changed circumstances, new evidence, etc.

Because of this, he has petitioned the BPU to reconsider its decisions on the Southern Reliability Link (a pipeline through south New Jersey). UU FaithAction has signed on to the petition and also convinced the League of Women Voters and Greenfaith to sign on.

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.

On May 18, 2019, Rev. Rob Gregson, Executive Director of UU FaithAction NJ joined hundreds of high school students, elected officials and residents in the “March for our Lungs: No Meadowlands Power Plant”, a youth-led march and rally in opposition to the massive fracked gas power plant proposed in North Bergen Township and for climate justice

Earth Day: On Earth Day (4/22/2019), EJTF Chair Nancy Griffeth joined with a number of environmental groups in an Earth Day press conference at the State House Annex in Trenton. The groups demanded that the state Legislature and Governor move forward on a strong environmental agenda for New Jersey, issuing a comprehensive press release that emphasized the climate crisis that’s getting worse. “Sea levels are rising and we have more extreme weather. New Jersey residents worry about climate damage and the potential impact of proposed fossil fuel power plants and pipelines. What’s even more alarming to residents and environmental groups is the lack of urgency the Legislature and Governor show when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases (GHG’s) and moving forward with renewable energy.”

Climate Strike: UU FaithAction advertised the climate strike. Executive Director Rob Gregson and EJTF members Jo Sippie-Gora and Peggy Middaugh, along with many other UUs, went on the strike in New York, Red Bank, Morristown, and Princeton. Pictures are in the October newsletter.

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.

On the May 8, 2019 call, the EJTF voted to support 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.

Other

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Action:** EJTF member Lyle Rawlings (President, Mid-Atlantic Solar & Storage Industries Association (MSSIA); President & CEO, Advanced Solar Products) testified at the 5/16/2019 Senate Environment and Energy Committee hearing on S3681, which requires all electricity in New Jersey by 2050 to come from carbon-free sources, and S 3215, which require state agencies to use the 20-year time horizon in assessing climate pollutants instead of the 100-year time horizon that had been being used.

Status: Both bills passed

Education

1. The EJTF newsletter has been published monthly, covering progress on our goals, the call for a moratorium, and congregational activities.
2. UU FaithAction joined the Create Climate Justice Web site and regularly uploads a variety of materials, including the monthly newsletter.
3. 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?”
4. 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/>.
5. A forum for the “NJ Tour for a Fossil Fuel Moratorium was held at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit on February 18, 2019.
6. The Princeton congregation hosted a forum cosponsored by UU FaithAction, Empower NJ, and Indivisible NJ, on Earth Day (Monday, April 22, 2019).
7. On March 7, 2019, UU FaithAction NJ cosponsored (with the Network for Responsible Public Policy) a panel discussion in Westfield NJ. The panelists, Serpil Guran and Matt Civello, discussed “Handling our Trash: Getting to a Circular Carbon Economy.” Serpil manages the Rutgers EcoComplex “Clean Energy Innovation Center.” Matt serves on the Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board helping to achieve its zero-waste goals and advises the Manhattan Borough President, City Council and mayoral administration and others on policies and programs on furthering the City’s waste prevention, reuse, and recycling programs.

Recognition of EJTF Members

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

Carol Hemington proposed, created, and puts together the monthly newsletter.

Ray Nichols and **Sally Gellert** proposed and drafted the statement about Environmental Justice that appears on our Web site.

Ray Nichols, Peggy Middaugh, Sally Gellert, Jo Sippie-Gora, and **Nancy Griffeth** testified at the Energy Master Plan hearings on behalf of UU Faith Action, along with **Robin Tanner** (minister at Beacon) and **Rob Gregson** (Executive Director of UU FaithAction NJ).

Bill Potter proposed and put together a petition for the BPU to reconsider its decisions on the Southern Reliability Link.

Peggy Middaugh contributed the section on trees to the Energy Mater Plan comments and **Mike Skelly** contributed the section on agriculture, and **Bill Potter** contributed the section on implementation.