



Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter

December 2019

[covering 10/28/2019 – 11/26/2019] <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.



SAVE THE DATE – UUFANJ’s FIRST ANNUAL GALA!

January 10, 2020 [See page 7]

UU CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

MORRISTOWN UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP



EV/Hybrid Day!

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony on Sunday, November 17, 2019 for the beautiful new parking lot at the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship, more than 25 drivers participated in "EV/Hybrid Day," organized by the Green Earth Ministry. Many more EVs/Hybrids were scattered about the lot. A number of drivers stood outside in cold, windy weather and enthusiastically shared information about their vehicles' cost, gas mileage or range, and more (see photos).



Also, phone calls to legislators regarding specific vehicle electrification bills were encouraged.





“Hands-On” for the Environment!

On Sunday, November 10, 2019, members of the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship Senior Youth Group (SYG) put their fingers to cold steel to make good on their commitment to help preserve the environment. The youth group, their advisors, and members of the Fellowship’s Green Earth Ministry (GEM) checked tire pressures on 35 vehicles and increased pressure on 102 tires in the new parking lot during Sunday services.

Said one Youth group member: “In general, I enjoyed the experience. It was pretty easy and I was saving the world - in a way! Just one complaint; it was really cold outside. So...maybe we could do Tire Day on a warmer day next year?” Youth group advisor Catie James observed, “I thought that I could really feel the youth take on responsibility to help their communities and the environment! They took on a challenging situation with the new parking lot and only a handful of SYG members and advisors, and they managed not only to help our community (including those with disabilities) but also definitely had a lot of fun!!! I’m so proud of them.”

FYI: This group effort benefitted the environment by the avoidance of up to 4500 lbs. of carbon dioxide and reduced the gas expense for each car by an estimated \$17 annually. Other benefits are longer tire life and safer handling.

Save the Date! Sunday, January 26, 2019

The Morristown Unitarian Fellowship Green Earth Ministry (GEM) will screen a 1 ¼ - hour documentary film, “**Paris To Pittsburgh**”, that addresses how Americans are affected by and reacting to climate change. The screening will be followed by discussion, and light refreshments will be available, and local environmental groups are invited to have displays. In response to our country’s declaration of a planned exit from the Paris Climate Agreement, this film shows how communities all over the country are determined to uphold the agreement to drastically cut carbon emissions, despite the absence of government leadership.

EJTF ACTIVITIES

Governor Murphy and Congressman Tom Malinowski came to the Westfield train station November 3, 2019 to campaign for local assembly and town council candidates.



EJTF Chair Nancy Griffeth managed to thank Murphy for opposing the Meadowlands power plant and ask him to declare a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure (he just said “oh it’s never enough!!”). Then Nancy, along with her husband Bill, had their pictures taken with both Governor Murphy (photos above) and Tom Malinowski (photo below), complete with UU FaithAction NJ T-shirt and Food and Water Watch sign!



And REMEMBER - Make a quick phone call on “*MORATORIUM MONDAYS*” to Stop New Fossil Fuel Development!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Rally to Stop the Roseland Compressor Station Expansion Monday, December 2, 2019 from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm 563 Eagle Rock Ave, Roseland, NJ

Join Roseland Against Compressor Station (RACS) on December 2, 2019 at 4:00 pm at a rally in Roseland to demand a halt to construction of the compressor station expansion. **This is particularly timely in light of what happened 11/21/2019 right down the street from the Roseland compressor station. As reported at <https://patch.com/new-jersey/livingston/pseg-breaker-blows-roseland-cops-say-nearby-towns-hear-boom>, a very large piece of equipment malfunctioned at PSE&G's Roseland Switching Station, causing a fireball that extinguished itself.** Local people and RACS have been speaking out for years about the very real dangers of building a large—now very large—gas compressor station right next to high-tension power lines and an electrical switching station on a flood plain at a time of greater climate instability and more extreme weather events. We need to raise the demand that Governor Murphy step in to prevent the turning on of the new compressor expansion until an independent safety study has been done to determine what are the risks and if it can be one safely.

Whether you can or cannot come to the rally, you can take action to stop this project NOW:

1. Send an email to Commissioner McCabe at jennifer.tamasi@dep.nj.gov. Tell the commissioner to “Stop construction of the Gateway Expansion Project and expansion of the Roseland compressor. DEP permits have been appealed and are “under review” by your Office of Legal Affairs!”
2. Call Governor Murphy at 866-586-4069 and say, “Governor Murphy must order his DEP to stop construction of the Gateway Expansion Project in Roseland right now.”
3. Join us to protest the expansion in front of the compressor station at 563 Eagle Rock Avenue. More information is at <https://www.facebook.com/events/985246638477165/>

Accelerating the Transition to a Clean, Equitable, and Resilient Transportation Future Tuesday, December 3, 2019 from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm Rutgers University, 33 Livingston Ave., New Brunswick (The Alan M. Voorhees Distinguished Lecture)

Hear what's at stake and the steps that leaders in states and communities are taking to reduce emissions and shift to cleaner transportation alternatives while preparing for climate change impacts, including heat waves, intense storms, and rising seas. Climate change is already affecting our region, the U.S., and the planet, bringing risks to public health and safety as well as to our infrastructure and communities. The transportation sector is now the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions, and is also quite vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate. Lecture will begin at 5:30 pm; guests are invited to attend a reception beginning at 5:00 pm. RSVP is requested by visiting <http://go.rutgers.edu/mwusqzbd>, or for more information and free tickets by Eventbrite, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/events/456179538338703/>

UUA Climate Crisis Panel in NYC
Thursday, December 5, 2019 - 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
221 E. 52nd St. (Salvation Army Auditorium), New York, NY

Join the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office for a panel discussion on creating inclusive climate policies to marginalized and forgotten groups. The panel features a list of speakers who represent communities at the forefront of climate change and are leaders in the movement for an equitable world. This panel will be an interactive intergenerational event with a focus on action. For information, see

<https://www.uua.org/international-justice/events/climate-crisis-fight-justice-warming-world>.

The panelists include: Rick Chavolla - Board of Directors Chair for American Indian Community House and on the Board for the NGO Committee of the UN on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Agnes A Harm - Deputy Permanent Representative to the Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations; Rodrigo Alberto Carazo Zeledón - Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations; Daphne Frias - Deputy Director of Global Outreach for Zero Hour and New York State Director for March For Our Lives; a representative from the International Disability Alliance; a representative from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Office, 14th District of New York; Moderator: Dr. Scott Carlin - Co-Chair for the International Day of Education for Global Citizenship and Associate Professor of Geography at Long Island University's LIU Post.

RSVP on the Eventbrite page: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-climate-in-crisis-the-fight-for-justice-in-a-warming-world-tickets-81817998837?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>.



CLIMATE STRIKE!

December 6, 2019
Various Locations

The September 20th Climate Strike was the largest day of action for climate justice ever. **On December 6th, as world leaders gather at the UN's annual climate conference, people across America will join a national #ClimateStrike to take the momentum from September to our elected officials' doorsteps.**

In September, many politicians shared nice words of encouragement. But, we didn't walk out of school and work to earn their praise. We joined the #ClimateStrike because our lives depend on elected leaders treating this crisis like the emergency it is. On December 6th, we'll show up at the offices of our political leaders and ask them, **are you ready to stand with our generation and fight for a Green New Deal?** <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/climatestrike>

On December 6th, hundreds of students and community members from across NJ will again walk out of our schools, jobs, and homes to demand that Governor Murphy rejects NJ transit's fracked gas power plant proposal and enacts a climate emergency moratorium on all 14 major fossil fuel expansion projects proposed or moving forward throughout the state.

North Jersey Climate Strike

12:00PM - Gather at Rutgers-Newark at Norman Samuels Plaza, which is located behind the Robeson Center, and adjacent to the Dana Library. (Closest address for GPS: 92 Bleeker St Newark, NJ 07102) Here we will be joined by communities from across NJ joining us by train. Meet fellow strikers, create art, learn songs, and drink hot chocolate.

1:00PM - March to NJ Transit Headquarters (1 Penn Plaza, Newark, NJ 07102) to say No NJ Transit Fracked Gas Power Plant! Demand a renewable energy alternative and solar rail!

1:30-2:30PM - Rally at Peter Francisco Park. (70 New Jersey Railroad Ave, Newark, NJ 07102) We will hear from movement leaders and community members from across North Jersey, as we demand actions from our elected officials.

Sign up now to be a part of the #ClimateStrike! More information about the rally at:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/712538265816325/>

Host Contact Info: njclimatecoaliton@gmail.com

Montclair Strike for Climate

10:00 AM - Watchung Plaza, Montclair, NJ, Montclair, NJ 07042 Come join us at Watchung Plaza for a quick rally before we head over to Newark to participate in the North Jersey Climate Strike!

Host Contact Info: joshpshapiro@gmail.com

Central Jersey Climate Strike

-Rally for Climate Justice - New Brunswick Station 10:15am - 10:30am

-Take the train to Newark Penn Station 10:43am (Scholarship tickets available. Email msmith@fwwatch.org if interested).

-Rally for ethical divestment and carbon neutrality at Rutgers Newark 12:00pm

-March to NJ Transit Headquarters to stop the Fracked Gas Power Plant 1:00pm

-Big Climate Strike Rally, Peter Francisco Park, 1:30pm

-Train back to New Brunswick 2:30pm

Host Contact Info: msmith@fwwatch.org

Jersey City Strike 4 Climate Justice

Rally at the fountain outside Journal Square PATH station at 12pm

Journal Square (Fountain outside the Path Station). Intersection of Bergen Ave and JFK Blvd, Jersey City, NJ 08901

Take the PATH Train to Newark Penn Station (depart for Newark at 12:45pm)

Host Contact Info: msmith@fwwatch.org

Camden Climate Strike

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM - Camden City Hall•520 Market St, Camden, NJ 08102

Host Contact Info: rtati@hsdems.org

NJ Spotlight Roundtable
New Jersey's Clean Energy Future: What's Next with Electric Vehicles?
Friday, December 13, 2019 from 9:00 am - 11:30 am
Hilton Garden Inn, Hamilton, NJ

There is widespread agreement that New Jersey will not achieve its clean energy goals unless it gets moving on electrifying its transportation sector, the biggest single source of greenhouse gas emissions. How the state should go about doing it is a matter of dispute.

- What, if any, new incentives are needed to convince motorists to buy electric vehicles?
- What role should utilities play in building out the charging infrastructure?
- What type of investments may be required in the electric grid?

These and other questions will be the focus of this NJ Spotlight roundtable.



The fifth annual Jersey Water Works Conference will bring together more than 300 state and local decision-makers, practitioners and stakeholders to amplify the importance of addressing NJ's water infrastructure, explore national models for innovative solutions and celebrate the work of Jersey Water Works and its members. Jersey Water Works is a collaborative effort of many diverse organizations (UU FaithAction NJ is a member) and individuals. Their common purpose is to transform NJ's inadequate water infrastructure by investing in sustainable, cost-effective solutions that provide communities with clean water and waterways; healthier, safer neighborhoods; local jobs; flood and climate resilience; and economic growth. The keynote speaker at the conference is to be George S. Hawkins, Esq., Founder and President, Moonshot Missions. George helps agencies identify and adopt strategies to deliver better service and lower cost. More information and registration (there are fees, which increase on November 22) is available here: <https://conference.jerseywaterworks.org/>



SAVE THE DATE – UUFANJ's FIRST ANNUAL GALA!
January 10, 2020

In celebration of its upcoming 10th anniversary, UU FaithAction NJ is hosting its first annual gala, an Eco-Gala, as both a fundraiser and celebration of UU justice ministry. The gala will take place at **6:30 pm, Friday, January 10, 2020 (snow date January 24) at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit, located at 4 Waldron Avenue**. Tickets are on sale now, at \$100 per ticket with a sliding scale from \$45 to \$150. Free infant and child care will be provided at Beacon. Tickets for children 18 and under attending the event are available for purchase. Dinner will include vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options as well as a cash bar. More information and tickets are available here: <https://www.uufaithaction.org/2019/10/25/uu-faithaction-nj-first-annual-eco-gala/#more-8408>



You are invited to host a “Living the Change” Supper or a conversation in your faith community. “Living the Change” focuses on making a change in our own lives as a vital part of the path to a sustainable future. Of course, this needs to happen together with institutional and systemic changes ... but we also know that most of us are simply consuming in unsustainable ways. We need to transform our own lives and learn how to “live the change” day to day.

We’re bringing together friends and neighbors of diverse faiths and spiritualities for climate-friendly events around the world during the second annual Time for Living the Change. These gatherings let us reflect, share, and make a real difference together. We invite you to organize an event in your faith community today.

We’ve developed a great toolkit to help you organize your own Living the Change Supper or guided conversation, which has everything you’ll need to create a really special event — discussion guides, social media tools, even some delicious plant-based recipes. By downloading this helpful toolkit, you will:

- Learn which actions matter most for the climate crisis (hint: diet, transportation and home energy use are key);
- Share your feelings and concerns about the challenges of making a change in your own life and in your local community; and
- Have an opportunity to make a personal resolution — a commitment to walk more gently on the Earth.

We will also provide support through our trainings, our community engagement, and broader opportunities for reflection and action. We are answering the climate challenge by reconnecting with our deepest values and making changes ourselves. This personal commitment will enable us to go much farther than ever before. By changing our own lives, we can change the world. Will you join us on this journey? We are Living the Change. We invite you to join us: <https://livingthechange.net/>



EJTF's GOALS FOR 2020

1) Mandatory emissions reductions in EJ communities, along with transitioning to electric vehicles, especially buses and trucks (This is a re-focusing of our goal to get off fossil fuels, now that the Energy Master Plan is almost complete - we need to focus on the most important sources of emissions in EJ communities.)

2) Mitigating lead in the New Jersey water supply (This affects much more than just Newark.) Report on drinking water: <https://www.jerseywaterworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/JWW-Lead-Report.pdf>

NEWS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- **NJ Transit Head: Not So Fast on Move to Electrify Bus Fleet** - NJ Transit is taking a go-slow approach toward electrifying its fleet of 2,500 buses, in part due to reliability concerns that have arisen in other places where battery-powered vehicles have been deployed. NJ Transit is buying eight electric buses, which are destined for a pilot project in Camden next year, and has plans for a similar project in Newark. Besides reliability, there are other issues such as the electric load of keeping all buses charged, and range issues related to when bus heat or air conditioning are on. Studies show that, beyond running green and clean, electric buses cost less than half as much to run and maintain as diesel vehicles. But for now, the agency, which serves 478,000 bus riders every weekday, is beefing up its fleet with new diesel buses, 183 regular cruisers and 85 articulated buses. NJ Transit received \$8 million from the Volkswagen settlement to spend on new electric buses. It also just received more than twice that – \$17.3 million – via a federal grant to buy more diesel buses: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/nj-transit-head-not-so-fast-on-move-to-electrify-bus-fleet/>



- **One More Step Forward for Electric Vehicle Bill** – ChargeEVC, a statewide coalition of conservation, transportation, and electric vehicle advocates (Greenfaith is a member), launched a campaign to push a comprehensive bill (S-2252) to transition the NJ transportation sector to plug-in electric vehicles in the lame-duck Legislature. The legislation has been stalled after clearing a key committee more than a year ago. It would allow up to \$5,000 rebates to consumers who buy electric vehicles. In addition, under the bill, 600 fast-charging stations would have to be built, and another 1,000 so-called Level 2 charging stations, which take longer to recharge a vehicle. The bill's big stumbling blocks largely focus on funding - under the bill as drafted, most of those programs would come out of either a ratepayer-subsidized charge on utility customers' bills or from revenues NJ receives as a result of rejoining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a multistate program that taxes power plants to reduce carbon pollution: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/one-more-step-forward-for-electric-vehicle-bill/>

- **BPU Taps Rowan University to Conduct Study to Expand Electric Vehicle Infrastructure in State’s Underserved Communities** - The NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has awarded a contract funded by a federal grant to Rowan University to conduct a study and create an actionable plan to improve access to clean transportation in underserved communities throughout the state. The two-year, \$100,000 grant is funded through the U.S. Department of Energy’s State Energy Program (SEP). It will support Rowan conducting a feasibility and market analysis on plug-in Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure and usage programs specifically focused on low-income populations and multifamily dwellings. Access to clean transportation is proven to improve air quality in communities. The grant awarded to Rowan is aligned with the New Jersey Partnership to Plug-In, a first-of-its-kind, statewide partnership to build out the necessary infrastructure to support electric vehicle ownership to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
<https://www.bpu.state.nj.us/bpu/newsroom/2019/approved/20191121.html>
- **How Will NJ Fund Transportation Projects if Input from Gas Tax Dwindles?** - The gas tax contributes \$2 billion annually to road, bridge, transit improvements. Lawmakers want to figure out how to sustain it after switch to clean-energy vehicles. Under a bill (S-4090) up for consideration in the Legislature, a new seven-member Alternative Fuel Vehicle Transportation Financing Commission would come up with a new system of taxing motor vehicles including, but not limited to, electric cars and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles. Climate activists say NJ will never achieve its goals without significantly electrifying vehicles, not only light-duty cars, but commercial vehicles and buses, too. But replacing the gas tax — a conventional way of financing transportation improvements — is proving to be a tough choice for states as consumers switch to vehicles no longer fueled by petroleum. Some, like Oregon, and other western states, have tried pilot programs that tax motorists on vehicles per mile traveled: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/how-will-nj-fund-transportation-projects-if-input-from-gas-tax-dwindles/>
- **Murphy Signs Bill to Expand Electric Vehicle Infrastructure** - Gov. Phil Murphy approved a bill (S606) encouraging municipalities to develop plans on how to accommodate the increasing presence of electric vehicles. The bill asks each local government to take a look at where they could build charging stations for electric vehicles. Local governments can also include charging stations and the surrounding infrastructure into their “redevelopment plan.” Still, environmental advocates were critical that the measure falls short of another proposal with more teeth to it (S2252). “This law is a good step, but we need a comprehensive electric vehicle bill like S2252 passed to advance EVs and especially EV infrastructure in our state,” stated Jeff Tittel, director of the NJ Sierra Club. “We should be doing more, such as requiring new developments to have charging station,” he added. “We also need to retrofit existing developments to implement charging stations.” <https://njbiz.com/murphy-signs-bill-expand-electric-vehicle-infrastructure-minor-victory-environmentalists/>
- **New Developments in Westfield Soon Must Provide for Electric Vehicle Charging** - Developers wishing to build new buildings that include parking spaces in most parts of this Westfield will have to provide electric vehicle charging stations under new rules approved by the Town Council. The new law would require that electric vehicle charging stations comprise 3% of the total number of parking spaces of any development, and takes effect in January 2020. The regulations allow for the owner of a charging station to collect a fee for the use of that station. Electric vehicle charging stations have been popping up in municipalities throughout NJ, including Verona and Bridgewater. Data from the state Department of Environmental protection show 26,840 electric vehicle registrations statewide as of June 30 of this year, which is up from 338 electric registrations in 2011:
<https://www.tapinto.net/towns/westfield/sections/green/articles/new-developments-in-westfield-soon-must-provide-for-electric-vehicle-charging>

- **How Would You Like to Charge Your E-car in 10 Minutes?** - Electric vehicle owners may soon be able to pull into a fueling station, plug their car in, go to the restroom, get a cup of coffee and in 10 minutes, drive out with a fully charged battery, according to a team of engineers. “We demonstrated that we can charge an electric vehicle in ten minutes for a 200 to 300-mile range,” said Chao-Yang Wang, William E. Diefenderfer Chair of mechanical engineering, professor of chemical engineering and professor of materials science and engineering, and director of the Electrochemical Engine Center at Penn State. “And we can do this maintaining 2,500 charging cycles or the equivalent of half a million miles of travel.” The researchers had previously developed their battery to charge at 50 degrees F in 15 minutes. Charging at higher temperatures would be more efficient, but long periods of high heat also degrade the batteries. Wang and his team realized that if the batteries could heat up to 140 degrees F for only 10 minutes and then rapidly cool to ambient temperatures, lithium spikes would not form and heat degradation of the battery would also not occur: <https://enviropolitics.com/how-would-you-like-to-charge-your-e-car-in-the-time-than-it-takes-to-say-the-title-of-the-penn-state-researcher-who-discovered-the-new-method/>

MITIGATING LEAD IN THE NEW JERSEY WATER SUPPLY



- **Newark’s Lead Filters Are 97% Effective, Report Confirms** - A report from Newark’s water consultant has announced that of 198 lead filters tested, all but five reduced lead to acceptable Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) levels, - 97% effectiveness rating. When residents let the tap run for five minutes, the filters worked 99% of the time, so the EPA lifted its bottled-water recommendations. But the report also found that about a quarter of the filters tested were non-viable because they were improperly installed or maintained. “It is therefore important,” said the letter, “that the city implement a strong education and outreach program regarding proper installation and operation of filters ...” <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/newarks-lead-filters-are-97-effective-report-confirms/>
- **Here’s Where You Can Check for Lead in Your School’s Drinking Water** - The Murphy administration has created a new district-by-district clearinghouse for information on lead contamination in NJ schools’ drinking water. In the “centralized online database” users can search each of the state’s school districts to see if they have reported “yes” or “no” for lead contamination in any source above the federal mark of potential concern, and it provides a link to a district’s website and water-quality information. The rollout of the clearinghouse follows through on at least part of Gov. Phil Murphy’s pledge that he would take immediate and long-term steps to address concerns about lead contamination in schools: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/heres-where-you-can-check-for-lead-in-your-schools-drinking-water/>

- **Screening Reveals 4,500 Kids in NJ Have Elevated Blood-Lead Levels** - Stricter guidelines help identify four times more children at risk of lead poisoning in 2018 than year before. Nearly 4,500 children in New Jersey were found to have elevated levels of lead in their blood last year. The rate of children impacted varied significantly across the state, ranging from 0.4% in Sussex County to 5.6% in Salem County, and reaching 6.4% in two cities, Irvington and Trenton. Salem, Warren, Essex, Cumberland and Mercer counties had the highest level of children testing above the threshold in 2018, in descending order, according to the report. Irvington, Trenton, East Orange, Atlantic City and Newark were the large municipalities with the highest percentage of elevated blood-lead levels. Newark, with the largest population of young children in any city, reported 587 cases, the highest number of any city: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/screening-reveals-4500-kids-in-nj-have-elevated-blood-lead-levels/>
- **Taking Inventory Seen as First Step in Legislative Fix for NJ's Lead Issues** - A bill (S-4177) requiring a statewide inventory of lead service lines in NJ and calling for their eventual replacement over the next 10 years was approved by the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee as part of a three-bill package. Under this bill, water systems would have to provide a detailed inventory of all known lead service lines in their systems within 18 months and then inform customers of problems, and the measure also would mandate replacement of lead service lines by allocating costs between customers and shareholders. Other bills in the package would require the disclosure of lead plumbing in residential and other properties prior to their sale (S-3990), and would allow municipalities to adopt ordinances allowing them to go into residential properties to replace lead service lines as long as they notify residents in advance (S-4110). Finally, the Senate Education Committee reported a bill (S-4115) that would require the state Department of Education to publish all drinking water reports and their testing results on its website: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/taking-inventory-seen-as-first-step-in-legislative-fix-for-njs-lead-crisis/>
- **Newark Residents Line Up for Bottled Water, Doubt Official Assurances About Lead** - It's been a month since Newark officials stopped widespread distribution of free bottled water, after they said expanded testing showed that tap filters were working to remove lead contamination from city drinking water in a part of town where elevated readings had been detected. But city residents are again picking up bottled water — in this case, from pallets donated by a Texas charity — saying they are still worried about the dangerous element in their drinking water and expressing doubts about the assurances offered by officials. In early October, city officials stopped widespread water distribution, after reporting that tests of PUR filters conducted with the federal Environmental Protection Agency proved they worked in 97% of samples. The filters are intended as a short-term protection for impacted residents, while the city implements a new corrosion-control treatment. It's also working on a long-term solution to replace all lead service lines within two years, tapping a \$120 million loan from Essex County. It has done 2,000 lines, so far: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/newark-residents-line-up-for-bottled-water-doubt-official-assurances-about-lead/>
- **Could Newark's Lead Problems Affect Investment, Development in Resurgent City?** - Beyond the health concerns that are paramount in Newark, related to the problem with the lead service lines, questions have arisen about effects on the economy. It is still too early to tell the long-term effects, but interviews with a mix of businesspeople, academics and residents indicate the city's business interests so far seem to be weathering the storm, despite hiccups with the initial response to the crisis by the city. "A major issue is, will we as a country step up and improve the delivery infrastructure of water to our citizens in urban areas," said Roland Anglin, former director of the Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies at Rutgers University-Newark, now dean of Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs. "The real question is what to do quickly so that we don't choke off investment in a community that is coming back after a long stretch of non-investment." <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/could-newarks-lead-problems-affect-investment-development-in-resurgent-city/>

FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Seeking Voter Approval of a Constitutional Amendment to Ban New Fossil-Fueled Power Plants in NJ** - Environmentalists are unhappy that a constitutional proposed amendment would not apply to nine pending pipeline projects in the state, but only applies to fossil fuel plants (natural gas, coal or oil), and therefore falls short of being a moratorium on new fossil fuel infrastructure. The bipartisan proposal (SCR-197) was introduced this summer, but its backers are hoping to put the question before voters statewide no later than 2021, timing that might be too late to block a handful of power plant projects pending in NJ. “It is the most sensible approach to curbing global warming,” said Sen. Bob Smith (D-Middlesex), who chairs the Senate Environment and Energy Committee, arguing that shutting down new fossil fuel generation also will dry up demand for new natural gas pipelines.: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/seeking-voter-approval-of-ban-on-new-fossil-fueled-power-plants-in-nj/>



- **PennEast Will Appeal to US Supreme Court Over Lower Court’s Adverse Ruling** - PennEast Pipeline LLC announced in a press release it would seek to overturn a decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit that denied its bid to condemn state-owned lands for its \$1 billion project. The three-judge panel ruled in September that private companies do not have the authority to condemn state-owned lands under the 11th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Under the doctrine of sovereign immunity, a state cannot be sued by a private company without its consent. The decision to ask the highest court to review the case is not unexpected. “Based on the law, we don’t think the Supreme Court should pick up this case. However, given Trump’s appointments to the court, who knows,” said Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club. If the nation’s highest court rules against PennEast, the company could opt to ask Congress to rewrite the Natural Gas Act to allow condemnation of state-owned lands, or reconfigure the proposed pipeline route around state lands: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/penneast-will-appeal-to-us-supreme-court-over-lower-courts-adverse-ruling/>
- **Have Feds Delivered Death Blow to PennEast Pipeline Project?** U.S. Appellate court only needed one paragraph to tell owners of the contentious PennEast Pipeline project it will not rehear the case blocking PennEast from condemning state lands. The court ruling takes NJ “a step closer to permanently stopping a gas pipeline we don’t need,” said one critic. The ruling leaves the company with fewer alternatives: appealing the case to the U.S. Supreme Court or reconfiguring the pipeline’s route to avoid some 40 state-owned properties or lands previously preserved for agriculture, recreation or conservation. In even more unlikely scenarios, the company and industry could push for changes to the Natural Gas Act or ask the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to give private companies the authority to condemn state-owned lands. In its original September decision, the court ruled PennEast lacked legal authority to seize state lands. **“I think this kills the project,” said EJTF member William Potter, a lawyer who works on energy issues. “The Supreme Court will never get into this natural gas-thicket.”** PennEast said it is “evaluating all of its options in light of this recent development:” <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/have-feds-delivered-death-blow-to-penneast-pipeline-project/>

NJ ENERGY MASTER PLAN

- **Transition to Cleaner Energy Won't Need Big Rise in Spending, NJ's Consultant Suggests** - The findings, offered in modeling by the Rocky Mountain Institute for the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU), will shape NJ's final Energy Master Plan. If the state moves to a least-cost pathway to clean energy, the consultant estimated overall energy spending in New Jersey would only increase to \$34.7 billion in 2050 compared to \$32.6 billion if energy policies continued with business as usual, or a 6% increase. The projections do not include impact to ratepayers, which is the subject of another ongoing study by the Rutgers Energy Institute. Critics of the master plan state that it fails to detail what these policies will do to electric and gas bills. In addition, they state that the costs of various programs have been left out, and that the consultants have assumed a very high reliance on solar energy to provide the power needed to replace fossil fuels: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/njs-transition-to-cleaner-energy-wont-need-big-rise-in-spending-states-consultant-suggests/>

RENEWABLE RESOURCES

- **Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order to Increase Offshore Wind Goal to 7,500 Megawatts by 2035** - On 11/19/2019, Gov. Phil Murphy, alongside First Lady Tammy Murphy and former Vice President Al Gore at the Liberty Science Center, signed Executive Order No. 92, raising NJ's offshore wind goal from 3,500 megawatts of offshore wind-generated electricity by 2030 to 7,500 megawatts by 2035. "When we reach our goal of 7,500 megawatts, New Jersey's offshore wind infrastructure will generate electricity to power more than 3.2 million homes and meet fifty percent of our state's electric power need. Our offshore wind industry will generate billions of dollars in investments in New Jersey's future, that will, in turn, create thousands of jobs." said Governor Murphy. Executive Order No. 92 will be effective immediately: <https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562019/approved/20191119b.shtml>
- **Analysts: Murphy's Ambitious New Goal for Offshore Wind** - Gov. Phil Murphy's ambitious new plan to more than double the amount of wind energy generated off the New Jersey Shore in the next 15 years looks achievable, given clear interest from the wind industry, strong demand from the huge Northeast market, and a state administration that is serious about hitting its clean-energy goals, observers said. Murphy's plan, unveiled 11/19/2019, would increase the amount of offshore wind energy to 7,500 megawatts — enough to meet half the state's electricity needs — by 2035. The governor was joined at the event by former Vice President Al Gore, who praised the initiative as a sign that the world has the capacity to combat climate change even amid gathering signs of climate disruption. "If anybody doubts that we as human beings have the ability to solve this crisis, just remember that political will is itself a renewable resource," he said. A video of some of former Vice President Al Gore's remarks is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/analysts-murphys-ambitious-new-goal-for-offshore-wind-looks-achievable/>
- **No Consensus on How to Bring Offshore Wind Power Ashore in NJ** - As NJ starts the search for cost-effective means of transmission, different stakeholders propose different approaches. The two main choices are to build a backbone offshore-wind transmission system or to allow developers to build transmission lines directly to on-shore facilities. For the short term, offshore wind developers will likely have relatively few problems hooking up with the electric grid, at least to achieve the Murphy administration's goals of developing 3,500 megawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030. Long term is another issue altogether, especially if the state opts to adopt a consultant's projection that the state will need to nearly triple that goal and build up to 11,000 MW of offshore wind capacity by mid-century to achieve its target of 100% clean energy by then; there are not nearly enough interconnections onshore to accommodate that much capacity: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/no-consensus-on-how-to-bring-offshore-wind-power-ashore-in-nj/>

- **PSEG Looks to Become an Active Player in Offshore Wind Development** - Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG) is looking to get back into offshore wind, and will enter into exclusive negotiations with Ørsted to acquire a one-quarter interest in its 1,100-megawatt wind farm off Atlantic City, which is expected to be commissioned in 2024.. The \$1.6 billion Ocean Wind project is the first offshore wind farm approved in New Jersey. Located 15 miles off Atlantic City, it is projected to supply more than a half million homes with power. Ørsted has emerged as the biggest force in the nascent offshore wind market in the United States, operating the first offshore wind facility in the country off Block Island in Rhode Island. Offshore wind is a key, if not most crucial component of Gov. Phil Murphy’s goal of converting to a clean energy economy. By 2030, the administration wants to build 3,500 MW of offshore wind off the Jersey coast: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/10/pseg-looks-to-become-active-player-in-offshore-wind-development/>
- **Funding Advances Anaerobic Digestion Projects in Philly and New Jersey** - Leyline Renewable Capital recently announced new bridge financing for RNG Energy Solutions to develop two anaerobic digestion projects. Each will see approximately \$3 million for pre-construction activities such as permitting, engineering, site analysis and securing interconnection agreements. One RNG Energy site will be in Philadelphia, on a former refinery site, and plans to create renewable natural gas to be sold as transportation fuel. The other, in Linden, New Jersey, will be focused on creating pipeline quality gas. The two sites, each with processing capacity for up to 1,100 tons per day, are expected to begin construction in Quarter 3 of 2020: <https://enviropolitics.com/funding-advances-anaerobic-digestion-projects-in-philly-delaware-and-new-jersey/>

CLIMATE CHANGE



- **Murphy Unveils Climate Resiliency Effort** – On the seventh anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, Gov. Phil Murphy signed an executive order designed to combat the effects of climate change in NJ, creating a chief resilience officer position to coordinate the effort. [The Executive Order can be viewed in its entirety at: <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-89.pdf>] A climate report is to be prepared within 180 days and updated every two years, detailing what can be expected in terms of average temperatures, storm severity and sea level rise by 2050. And by 9/1/2020, a strategy is to be developed for coping with those findings, to “promote the long-term mitigation, adaptation, and resilience of NJ’s economy, communities, infrastructure, and natural resources.” Among the items included in the outline for that strategy are promoting water and energy security, reducing the risk of wildfires in state forests and supporting “sustainable and resilient” economic development, along with developing a long-term strategy for resilience and adaptation specific to the coastal areas of the state. Under the executive order, a new interagency council will be created specifically to coordinate the efforts of 16 separate state agencies: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/10/in-sandy-ravaged-hoboken-murphy-unveils-climate-resiliency-effort/>

- **Global Warming, Sea-Level Rise Could Mean a Devastating One-Two Punch for NJ** - In the past four decades, the risk of tidal flooding doubled in NJ. Wind damage from hurricanes is no longer confined to coastal communities. By 2050, damage from flooding and wind will likely soar by \$1.3 billion — possibly as much as \$3.1 billion. A new study by the Rhodium Group suggests much of the state is more vulnerable to climate change today than it was in 2012, and exposure is expected to grow in the future — even in counties as far north as Hudson and Bergen. By midcentury, an additional 33,000 to 58,000 buildings in the state will flood frequently, caused by so-called sunny-day flooding, or the temporary flooding of low-lying areas near the coast at least 10 days a year during full or new moons: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/10/whats-ahead-for-nj-more-tidal-flooding-more-battering-from-hurricanes>
- **Increased Risks for NJ Superfund Sites Due to Climate Change** —A federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on Superfund site risk due to climate change named 141 NJ sites, many of which could be damaged by floods or fires. NJ Sierra Club director Jeff Tittel said NJ is unusually vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including sea-level rise. “When these sites flood, they will wash all kinds of toxic chemicals into streams, rivers and even homes,” he said. Where contaminated material has been capped rather than removed, flooding will cause the caps to fail, allowing the contaminants to enter groundwater, Tittel said. The GAO made recommendations for EPA, but EPA rejected three of the GAO’s four recommendations, and issued a statement saying its current processes are enough to ensure the sites’ safety. EPA’s arguments were rejected by 11 U.S. Senate Democrats (including NJ’s Cory Booker), who said the GAO’s report supports the conclusion that the EPA’s “shortcomings” in managing risks from climate change have largely resulted from the agency’s leadership under the current administration: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/does-climate-change-increases-risks-for-new-jerseys-superfund-sites/>
- **Op-Ed: NJ Policy on Managed Retreat Must Become Equitable as Sea Levels Rise** – (by Andrew S. Lewis, author of *The Drowning of Money Island*) - Millions of Americans will eventually need to retreat from our flood-prone coastlines. NJ’s managed retreat program, Blue Acres, is a taxpayer-approved and -funded initiative to acquire lands in the state’s coastal areas, where the risk of storm damage and flooding is high. To date, the vast majority of the acquisitions have been in blue-collar communities along the state’s rivers and bays, and none of those acquisitions have been of single-family homes on the oceanfront. As adaptation to sea level rise becomes more of a necessity, it cannot be that only some of our coastal residents will be encouraged to retreat from their homes while others, whose properties fall on the positive side of cost-benefit, will be encouraged to remain. Several studies have shown that inequitable managed retreat is not just a NJ problem, but is countrywide: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/op-ed-nj-policy-on-managed-retreat-must-become-equitable-as-sea-levels-rise/>

DRINKING WATER-RELATED ISSUES (other than lead)

- **What Happened to New Jersey’s Drinking-Water Watchdog?** - NJ environmentalists are pressing the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to explain why the Drinking Water Quality Institute (DWQI) hasn’t held a public meeting since December 2018. Without the DWQI’s recommendations, New Jersey can’t regulate toxic substances such as PFAS chemicals, said the Sierra Club’s director, Jeff Tittel. In early November, the Environmental Working Group, a national clean-water advocate, said PFAS chemicals were found in more than 500 New Jersey water systems, according to data gathered from the DEP: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/what-happened-to-new-jerseys-drinking-water-watchdog/>

- **Toxic ‘Forever Chemicals’ Found in More Than 500 New Jersey Water Systems** - The number of NJ water systems where toxic PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) chemicals were found surged by more than 11 times over the past year, largely because of a new requirement that utilities report one of the chemicals that is now regulated by the state, according to data released by the nonprofit Environmental Working Group (EWG). The latest reported levels show the results of testing at the time rather than what’s coming out of the tap now, and may no longer apply if a utility treated the water or shut down the source after discovering the chemicals, EWG said. About 65 of the systems exceeded health limits that have been proposed or adopted for three PFAS chemicals — PFNA, PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctanesulfonic acid) — by NJ officials:
<https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/toxic-forever-chemicals-found-in-more-than-500-new-jersey-water-systems/>

POLLUTION



- **Planned Recycling Panel Would Seek to Revive Depressed Markets for Materials** - NJ households are recycling less of their waste than they did a few years ago because of a decline in market demand for some materials, China’s recent decision to stop recycling plastic and other materials from overseas, and an increase in the contamination of recyclables because of collections that mix different materials. Now, the decline in recycling of paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, aluminum and other materials has prompted legislation that would set up a statewide council to find markets for recyclables and stop them ending up in landfills. The Senate’s Environment and Energy Committee combined two bills that were designed to analyze the state’s recycling challenges and recommend ways of reusing more recyclable materials. The resulting bill (S-3939/3-944) calls for the creation of a Recycling Market Development Council which would report on best practices to reduce the contamination of recyclables, and recommend ways of stimulating demand for the materials:
<https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/planned-recycling-panel-would-seek-to-revive-depressed-markets-for-materials/>

OTHER

- **Rate Hikes Authorized for NJ Utility Customers, Further Increases to Pay for Clean Energy Likely** - Customers' bills will rise following a decision by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to give rate increases to three of NJ's four gas utilities: Elizabethtown Gas, New Jersey Natural Gas, and Public Service Electric & Gas. Policymakers are pushing companies to increase the resiliency of their networks, reduce power outages and integrate solar and offshore wind energy into the electric grid. In addition, all electric customers throughout the state are now paying a \$300 million subsidy to keep three nuclear power plants operated by PSEG Power open. More rate hikes are likely as the state aims to jump-start an emerging offshore wind industry with more ratepayer subsidies; continue incentives to maintain a robust solar sector; and establish a new utility-driven program to get customers to reduce gas and electric usage: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/rate-hikes-for-nj-utility-customers-further-increases-to-pay-for-clean-energy-likely/>
- **New Gas Tax? NJ Says It's 'Engaged' in a Study That May Trigger It** – NJ, eleven other states, and the District of Columbia have been reviewing a "cap-and-invest" program that some say would function fundamentally as a "gas tax," channeling revenue toward curbing climate change and pollution and benefitting communities dealing with rising seas, erratic weather patterns and flooding. It's not clear how much NJ drivers would pay under the plan. The "Transportation and Climate Initiative" involves a 10-year plan of reducing emissions starting in 2022 and is not yet complete. The Initiative uses the term "allowances" rather than tax, with the "cap-and-invest" program working as follows: 1) placing a "cap" on carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels in the transportation sector to reduce transportation emissions; 2) requiring large gasoline and diesel fuel suppliers to hold allowances for the pollution that results from the combustion of the fuels that they sell to consumers; and 3) bringing in proceeds that can be used to fund programs such as increasing public transit: <https://patch.com/new-jersey/pointpleasant/new-gas-tax-nj-says-its-engaged-study-may-trigger-it>
- **Energy-Efficiency Conundrum: Will Clean Energy Cost Electric Utilities Money?** - When ratepayers reduce consumption, power companies earn less revenue, but decoupling (disassociation of profits from sales) is proving to be a controversial solution. The 2018 Clean Energy Act directs NJ's utilities to begin reducing customer electric consumption by 2% a year and gas use by 0.75% annually, but achieving these goals is complicated. Issues include: how to achieve those savings; who should oversee the programs; and how utilities ought to be compensated for programs that reduce energy sales, trimming the revenue they collect to keep their systems resilient. Utility executives, environmentalists and representatives from energy- efficiency companies essentially agree the state needs to adopt decoupling provisions, a way for utilities to recover lost revenue when it succeeds in getting customers to curb consumption. But consumer advocates have argued that decoupling ought to be allowed only if utilities are not able to bolster revenue by including those costs in their return on equity and through rates they collect from customers: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/energy-efficiency-conundrum-will-clean-energy-cost-electric-utilities-money/>

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