

UU FaithAction NJ



EDUCATE • ADVOCATE • MOBILIZE

Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter January 2020

[covering 11/27/2019 – 12/28/2019] <https://www.ufaithaction.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

“Paris to Pittsburgh” Film – January 26, 2020

The environmental documentary *Paris to Pittsburgh* will be screened at the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship, 21 Normandy Heights Road, Morristown, NJ on Sunday, January 26, 2020 at 1 pm.

As part of the program, several local environmental groups and the Senior Youth Group at the Fellowship will have displays starting after the second service at 10 am.

Refreshments will be served with donations appreciated.

The movie trailer puts it this way:...”Paris to Pittsburgh celebrates how Americans are demanding and developing real solutions in the face of climate change...they aren’t waiting for Washington to act.”

This event is sponsored by the Green Earth Ministry and the Morristown Chapter of Citizen’s Climate Lobby.

PARIS
TO
PITTSBURGH
VIA
MORRIS COUNTY

More information and the film’s trailer are available at: <https://www.paristopittsburgh.com/>.



Central Unitarian Church
156 Forest Avenue, Paramus, N.J.
Sunday, Jan. 12th, 2020
4:00 – 7:00 P.M.

Please join us on Jan. 12th, 4 to 7 P.M., for a watch party for the kickoff of the UUA's #UUtheVote campaign.

The UUA is already partnering with a variety of leading national movement organizations for 2020; UU the Vote is designed to support building deeper solidarity with local, statewide, and regional partners from both secular and multifaith justice movements.

Our goal is to create a large-scale, decentralized campaign that moves our UU faith communities into new or deeper action by leveraging our greatest resource—our people and our passion—and focusing it where it can have the greatest impact.

Directly or indirectly, all of the issues that we care most deeply about as UUs are on the ballot in 2020, and *there is broad consensus in movement circles that we must have an electoral strategy if we are to have a chance at long-term success.*

Progressive people of faith can be powerful and prophetic without being partisan. We are educating on issues, we are not advocating for or supporting candidates. We are registering all voters, regardless of party or ideology.

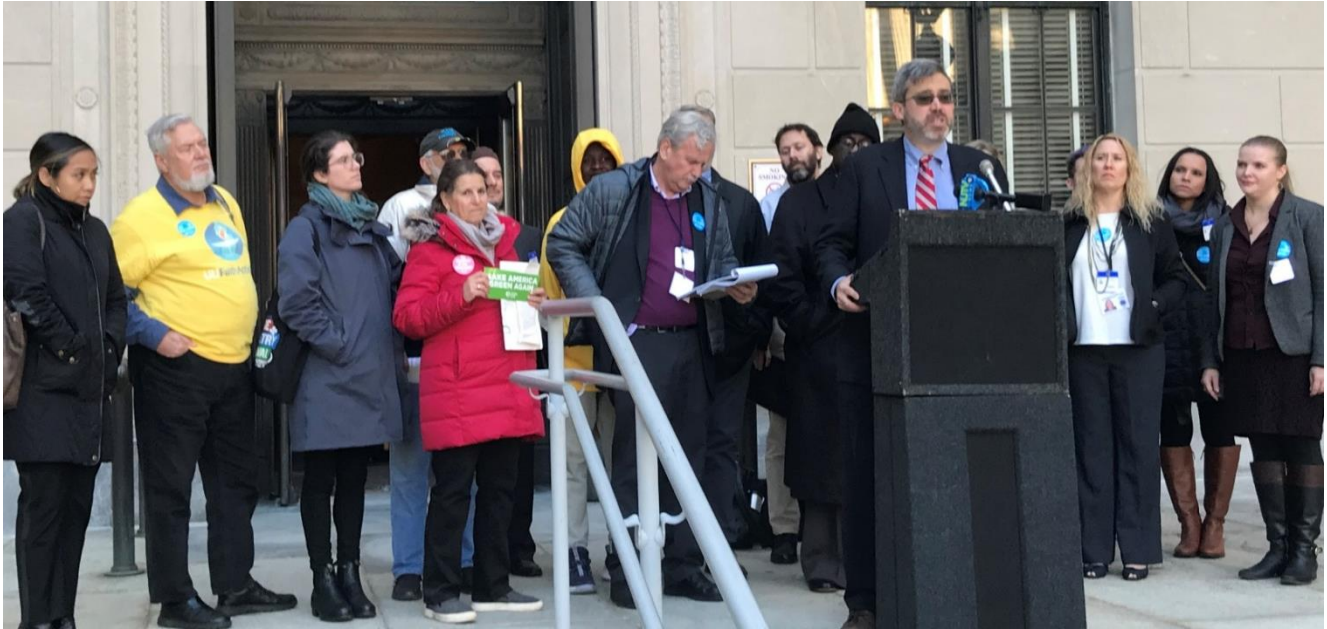
With love as our guide, how can we not win?

#VoteLove

#DefeatHate

EJTF ACTIVITIES

UUFANJ/EJTF Joins Jersey Renew's Day of Action in Support of Electric Vehicles



On November 19, 2019, UUFANJ Executive Director Rev. Rob Gregson and EJTF Co-Chair Ray Nichols (in the yellow UUFANJ t-shirt in the photo above) participated in Jersey Renew's day of action to urge legislators to pass the electric vehicle bill S2252/A4819. UUFANJ is a coalition member of Jersey Renew's. Supporters gathered in the State House Annex to promote a just transition to an electrified transit system in New Jersey. Rev. Rob Gregson (seen in the photo below with his son Cory) spoke at the event - a video can be found here:

https://www.facebook.com/JerseyRenews/videos/nov-25-electric-vehicle-day-of-action-press-conference-rob-gregson/739876233159872/?so=permalink&rv=related_videos



With nearly 50% of greenhouse gas emissions coming from the transportation sector, and with a majority of that coming from light-duty vehicles like the standard family car, it is imperative that action is taken to get cleaner cars on our roads. Approval of the proposed bill S2252/A4819 will make it cost-effective and easier for New Jerseyans to buy electric cars and find places to plug in, and will be a huge step towards reducing harmful emissions. In passing this bill, New Jersey has an opportunity not only to improve public health and help mitigate the effects of climate change, but also to spur economic development and make New Jersey a leader in the electric vehicle market.

Call NJ legislators to urge them to approve S2252/A4819! More information is at:
<http://www.chargevc.org/legislative-action-center/>



Cory Gregson, Rev. Rob Gregson, and Ray Nichols at the Jersey Renews Day of Action

“There is a time and a season for everything, and the time for electric vehicles, cleaner air, a safer climate, and green jobs has arrived, said Rev. Ronald Tuff, clean energy organizer for GreenFaith. “We urge the state to take action quickly.”

“This legislation will help kick electric vehicles into high gear and reduce air pollution,” said Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club. “New Jersey is one of the best states to utilize electric vehicles since most of our energy is already carbon-free. We need to accelerate the timeline of this legislation and get it passed before the end of the year. This will create new jobs and get our economy moving forward with electric vehicles.”

EJTF Members Joined the December 6, North Jersey Climate Strike

On December 6, 2019, EJTF members joined young people from across the state, who held 10 local rallies as part of the North Jersey Climate Strike. Many of the students rallied outside train stations, and then took trains to Newark Penn Station and converged at Peter Francisco Park in Newark. Sister rallies were held across the country and in Moristown, Princeton and Camden. In Newark, demonstrators spoke on local issues: the need for clean water in Newark, divestment by Rutgers from fossil fuel companies and stopping a proposed gas-fired power plant in Kearny.

Deb Huber and Jo Sippie-Gora attended the Morristown Climate Strike event in Morristown; in the photo below, Deb is flying her "earth rising" flag. The Morristown event was on NJTV (1:07-1:11 in this link: <https://www.njtvonline.org/news/video/nj-students-join-in-worldwide-strike-press-for-immediate-action-on-climate-change/>), and also see news article on page 14.



Nancy Griffeth participated in the "North Jersey Climate Strike" against the proposed NJ Transit natural gas power plant in Kearny (see photos below). It started at the Rutgers Law School, participants marched past the NJ Transit headquarters, and finished at Peter Francisco Park.





North Jersey Climate Strike participants and speaker at Peter Francisco Park in Newark

Nancy Griffeth of EJTF Spoke at Vote Solar Press Event

Vote Solar held a press event on Monday, December 9, 2019 to announce their Equitable and Resilient Solar Roadmap for New Jersey, which asks for:

- 250,000 low-income solar households by 2030;
- 400 MW of storage for low-income and environmental justice communities by 2030; and
- \$125 million per year dedicated to low income and environmental justice communities for solar + storage projects.

Nancy Griffeth of EJTF spoke at the press event. A photo and summary of the event, including a quote from Nancy, is available here: <https://votesolar.org/usa/new-jersey/updates/justice-climate-and-solar-advocates-release-nj-equitable-solar-policy-roadmap/>. Also see news article on page 13. Also speaking at the event were Joseph Fiordaliso (chair of the Board of Public Utilities), Assemblywoman Nancy Pinkin (chair of the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee), State Senator Troy Singleton, Assemblyman John McKeon, Executive Director Doug O'Malley of Environment NJ, and Mid-Atlantic Director Pari Kasotia of Vote Solar, and representatives of other environmental organizations. Here is Nancy's statement:

"I'm Nancy Griffeth of Unitarian Universalist FaithAction in New Jersey. We're a faith based group that works to ensure justice for those who are hurt first and worst by environmental damage -- residents of low income communities.

One particularly terrible aspect of fossil fuels and climate change is the impact on health. Respiratory diseases and cardiovascular diseases are the most prevalent in low income communities, and those are exactly the ones that are worsened most rapidly by the use of fossil fuels and climate change. We must act now to reduce the use of fossil fuels and to mitigate the impact on global warming.

Unfortunately, many of our initiatives apply only to middle and upper income people, for example rebates for electric vehicles and rooftop solar. We need to focus on the things that do work in low income communities, like providing access to solar electricity through community solar and creating innovative ways to finance renewable energy. We also must include voices from low income communities in planning and implementing the transition to renewable energy.

In promoting community solar and innovative methods of finance and community involvement, the Vote Solar roadmap is a big step in the right direction."

UPCOMING EVENTS



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 (at \$100 per ticket with a sliding scale from \$45 to \$150) are **currently sold out**, but you can check back as to any availability by email at admin@uufaithaction.org, between January 6-8. Because this will be a busy time for the staff, they will only be able to respond if there is the opportunity to buy a ticket.

A Watch Party for Kickoff of UUA’s #UUtheVote Campaign

**Sunday, January 12, 2020
Central Unitarian Church
156 Forest Avenue, Paramus, NJ**



[See page 2]



**“Paris to Pittsburgh” Film
Sunday, January 26, 2020 – 1 pm
Morristown Unitarian Fellowship,
21 Normandy Heights Road, Morristown,**

[See page 1]

*Climate Talks
End With U.S.
Ceding Nothing*

New York Times, 12-16, 19

*It's Up
to Us*

Free Webinar – Energy Justice and Solving Climate by 2030 Wednesday, January 29, 2020, 1:15 pm – 2:15 pm

We live today in an uneven world, defined significantly by energy injustice. Moving from here to the Paris climate goals will require a ten-year, global transition towards clean energy. How can we create a just energy system in the transition? Join the Security and Sustainability Forum and Bard College in a sixty-minute session about how innovative city and state policy will be critical to ensure justice in the economic transformation needed to solve the energy side of climate change by 2030. Panelists are entrepreneur and energy democracy leader Michael Dorsey and Eban Goodstein, Director of the Center for Environmental Policy at Bard College.

Michael will explore how both energy and income inequality could be impacted, positively and negatively, as renewable energy infrastructure scales. He will focus on how we can rewire the world with clean energy to help alleviate injustice. Eban will discuss a new Bard-led program, Solve Climate by 2030. The program is supporting a nationwide series of campus and community Power Dialogs to engage 100,000 students in critical conversations about power as in “clean energy”, but also about power as in “engaged civic action”.

For more information, and to register, see: <https://ssfonline.org/energy-justice-and-solving-climate-by-2030-10868>. (If you register, you can also download the webinar for future viewing.)

**Watch this space for a
future Green Amendment talk at Beacon UU Congregation in Summit**
by noted speaker, Delaware Riverkeeper, and Green Amendment champion **Maya K. van Rossum**,
author of **“The Green Amendment: Securing Our Right to A Healthy Environment”**

An ACTION ALERT from the Delaware Riverkeeper Network and “For the Generations”

Call your legislators and ask them to sponsor a NJ Green Amendment!

Environmental Rights are Human Rights! We encourage Green Amendment Champions to call your legislators and ask them to sponsor ACR85/SCR134 if they haven't already, and to be sure to vote for its passage as soon as the opportunity arises.

New Jersey legislative leaders have introduced a bill to amend the state Constitution to ensure New Jerseyans' "right to a clean and healthy environment, including pure water, clean air, and ecologically healthy habitats," for "both present and future generations."

But we need your voice! If you want the right to pure water, clean air, and healthy environments, call your Assembly Member and Senator to tell them how important this environmental rights amendment is to their voters.

Call your NJ legislators today (https://forthe generations.org/actnow/actionnj/#NJ_call) and encourage them to secure your environmental rights under the highest level of protection.

We'd love to hear how it goes! Let us know which legislators you've reached out to and any updates at GAFTG@forthe generations.org

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>

With respect to Goal 1, EJTF Co-Chairs Peggy Middaugh and Ray Nichols, and EJTF member Judy Stevens attended the *NJ Spotlight* Roundtable on Electric Vehicles; a summary by Judy is on pages 9-10.

With respect to Goal 2, a number of commitments related to lead were made at the Jersey Water Works Conference: <https://www.jerseywaterworks.org/our-work/2020-commitments/>.

Summary of *NJ Spotlight* Roundtable on Electric Vehicles (held December 13, 2019)

- by EJTF member Judy Stevens

As with so many major issues concerning both environmental and social justice issues, how to fund mass changeover to electric vehicles was a central issue discussed at the NJ Spotlight Roundtable discussion held on December 10. But it was a widely shared view that it is one piece of three “C’s” that form the tipping points that, once overcome, can lead to much broader adoption of EV’s in both the private and public sectors: cost/convenience/consumer awareness. This was addressed in the (virtual) keynote, a recorded video statement by Patty Monahan, Commissioner for the California Energy Commission, and returned to by most panelists.

New Jersey is also at a point that in order to advance the number of EV’s on our roads, the collective will of the state, through its infrastructure and consumer demand, need to be evidenced. The state currently ranks 17th of the 17 states polled in the availability of public charging stations. Due in part to this limitation, NJ’s current goal of having 350,000 EV’s on the road by 2025, given its current 33 – 35,000, seems a push.

Concerning consumer demand for privately owned vehicles, there was consensus that in order to have dealers offer EV’s that people want to buy and can afford, and that address concerns about range, NJ needs to provide much greater access to routine charging, provide a program that supports and encourages purchases and invests in consumer awareness regarding the desirability of adopting EV.

At present there are 22 publicly accessible fast charge stations; to further interest buyers and make EV range concerns less of a deterrent to both individual purchasers and fleet conversion to EV’s, approximately 100 are initially needed, with 5 or more ports each. Mark Warner, a vice president with Gabel Associates, an energy, environmental and public utility consulting firm, estimated that 300 stations would be needed, most near where people live or work, to alleviate range concerns. PSE&G believes the grid as it is now can handle a statewide adoption of 5 – 10% and commensurate home and public charging with managed (off-peak) charging and rate design.

Jim Appleton, president of the New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers (and an EV owner), made note that while New Jersey has subscribed to CARB (California Air Resources Board) standards for 15 years, the state has done little to meet those standards regarding increases in EV purchases: the target through 2019 was 22,000 and there were 5,600 sold. The target in 2019 is 56,000, with a projected estimate of 7,300 sold; the target for 2025 is 116,000, whereas current sales project only 25,000 through that date. Sales in the state, low in part because of range concerns, mean few(er) car dealerships have EV’s in stock, so often steer consumers away from an EV purchase, furthering the problem. He also noted that if some of the monies the state could appropriate to subsidizing EV purchases are put in effect, coupled with federal tax breaks available, this could make the price difference between carbon fuel vehicles and comparable EV models as low as \$2 – 4,000.

Doug O’Malley, director of Environment New Jersey, most directly addressed electrifying diesel truck and bus fleets. While nationally 50 transit agencies have pledged to electrify their fleets of buses by 2040, NJ Transit has no such plans and has been, essentially, dismissive of converting to EV’s. NJ Transit needs a strategic plan that incorporates a commitment to converting its fleet, one which should address and emphasize health, pollution and cost benefits.

(Continued on next page)

Summary of *NJ Spotlight* Roundtable on Electric Vehicles (continued)

The science is available to support claims of resultant significant lowering of particulate and gasses reductions, as well as claims that one diesel bus alone can have associated health impacts of \$150,000 in congested urban areas. Over a 10 year period that maintenance cost difference of electric compared to diesel offsets the current purchase price difference.

Stefanie Brand, director of New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel, asked that both those on the panel and those in the audience be mindful that utility rate payers are already underwriting many of the costs of finding and funding cleaner energy in the state, significant numbers of whom have difficulty paying for their utilities. There are benefits to inviting private investment in charging stations. Utility companies can continue to invest in the aging infrastructure needed but should look for targeted investment of private capital to expand the services needed.

While there was some disputing over the how's and what's of funding and what to tackle first, there was broad support for statewide conversion to EV's, to providing the infrastructure to do so, and to get the legislation passed, then adhered. The approximately 46% of in-state greenhouse gas emissions contributed by the transportation sector make it paramount that New Jersey develop the means and will to change.

A related article appeared in NJ Spotlight: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/south-jersey-utility-seeks-ok-on-plan-for-more-ev-charging-stations/>. A video of the entire Roundtable is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/time-for-new-jersey-to-be-more-aggressive-with-electric-vehicles-nj-spotlight-roundtable/>; and a podcast is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/whats-next-with-electric-vehicles-nj-spotlight-roundtable/>

NEWS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- **Scaling Back State's Goals for Electric Vehicles** - With little time remaining in the lame-duck Legislature, clean-energy advocates are pushing a slimmed-down bill promoting the use of plug-in electric vehicles. The bill scales back some of the targets set in legislation that cleared the Senate Environment and Energy Committee 13 months ago. It retains a goal of having 330,000 zero-emission vehicles on the road by 2025, but only targets having 1.5 million by 2035, instead of the 2 million in the original bill. It sets a goal of having 85% of all new light-duty vehicles to be plug-in cars by 2040. In another change, it requires only 400 fast-charging stations statewide by 2025, a drop from the 600 in the original bill. Another 1,000 slower charging stations would be installed across the state by 2025, which is identical to the original bill. By 2024, the bill would require at least 10% of all New Jersey Transit buses to be zero-emission, which may conflict with recent statements by agency executives (see <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/nj-transit-head-not-so-fast-on-move-to-electrify-bus-fleet/>), who argued for a go-slow approach because of concerns battery-operated buses were not as reliable in cold weather: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/scaling-back-states-goals-for-electric-vehicles/>



- **South Jersey Utility Seeks OK on Plan for More EV Charging Stations** - Atlantic City Electric is ramping up its efforts to electrify the transportation sector in South Jersey, seeking permission to invest \$42.1 million on expanding the infrastructure needed to charge electric vehicles in its area. The proposal would install 245 plug-in charging stations, including 45 fast-charging stations, across its territory, roughly the bottom third of the state, and also includes 50% rebates on EV charging equipment installed in homes, multi-family buildings, workplaces and business-vehicle fleets. It also includes \$2 million in grants to environmental-justice communities for EV projects and a pilot project to fund electric school buses, as well as a commitment to work with NJ Transit to support electrification of one of its southern bus depots. The cost of the program would be paid by a delivery charge on customers' bills – roughly 54 cents a month for the typical customer. PSE&G also has a pending petition before the BPU to incentivize the buildout of charging infrastructure:
<https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/south-jersey-utility-seeks-ok-on-plan-for-more-ev-charging-stations/>
- **Time for State to Get Moving on Electric Vehicles: NJ Spotlight Roundtable** – At an NJ Spotlight Roundtable, there was agreement that NJ needs to accelerate its efforts to electrify the transportation sector, but who should pay for it and how big a role utilities should play in making that happen sparked a lot of debate (see summary on pages 9-10). A video of the entire Roundtable is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/time-for-new-jersey-to-be-more-aggressive-with-electric-vehicles-nj-spotlight-roundtable/>; a podcast is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/whats-next-with-electric-vehicles-nj-spotlight-roundtable/>
- **Op-Ed: New Jersey Needs to Charge Ahead with Electric Vehicles** – (by Norah Langweiler, campaign organizer for Jersey Renews [UUFANJ is a coalition member] and New Jersey Work Environment Council) - The electric vehicle bill (S-2252/A-4819) moves New Jersey's government toward action to address the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the state. The business-as-usual voices of our day would have us believe that the market will provide solutions: whatever the need, the market will meet it. For a market to operate effectively and equitably, it must be governed and often supplemented by municipally-owned and -operated equipment. And while governments are not always first choice for innovation, they serve to level the playing field and ensure access. We must stop pretending the market will solve all problems independently and get real about the role government can play in providing solutions to our transportation challenges. The Legislature can begin by passing EV bill S-2252/A-4819: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/op-ed-new-jersey-needs-to-charge-ahead-with-electric-vehicles/>

FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Feds Approve Plan to Ship Liquefied Natural Gas to South Jersey by Rail** - Plans to build NJ's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal moved forward when the federal U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration approved the use of trains to ship the fuel from PA to a yet-to-be-built terminal at Gibbstown — the first route in the nation where transportation of LNG by rail would be allowed. The pipeline regulator said it was satisfied that the trains could be operated safely despite protests by environmental groups that the highly explosive liquids carried in them represent a grave risk to public safety, and in an instruction that will fuel critics' fears of a growing volume of shipments, the agency ordered the company to say how it will handle an expected increase in the volume of LNG by rail. The approval increases the chances that the project will be built over the strenuous objections of environmentalists who argue that regulators should not be approving new fossil fuel projects at a time when state authorities are setting ambitious goals to cut carbon emissions and curb climate change: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/feds-approve-plan-to-ship-liquefied-natural-gas-to-south-jersey-by-rail/>
- **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/>
- **Williams Transco Again Withdraws NESE Permit Applications from DEP** - Williams Transco withdrew all permit applications to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) proposed fossil fuel expansion project. The project calls for the creation of a massive new compressor station in Franklin Township, 3.4 miles of pipeline in Middlesex County, and 23.4 miles of offshore pipeline running through the Raritan Bay and Lower New York Bay. “Once again, Transco is trying to game the system for their own benefit... Transco is using time now as a way of fixing their application... The DEP should have rejected them but they do state in the letter that Transco must resolve certain deficiencies regarding public need and access to the compressor station before they can come back,” said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club. Besides the DEP permits, Transco still needs permits from NY. There has been major opposition from towns in Monmouth and Middlesex County on the NESE project. A coalition of groups, including the NJ Sierra Club have generated over 10,000 signatures asking DEP to deny the pipeline and compressor station. Williams Transco stated that new applications will be submitted “at a later date.” <https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/sierra-club-nese-withdraws-permits-dep-rejected/>

RENEWABLE RESOURCES

- **Clean-Energy Advocates Slam Federal Order They Say Favors Fossil Fuels** - Clean-energy advocates denounced a federal order issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), saying it will lead to higher prices for renewable-generated electricity and hinder efforts to curb carbon emissions. FERC ruled that the nation's biggest electric grid operator, PJM, must include electricity from state-subsidized renewable sources in its "capacity market," a move designed to bring the price of clean power into line with that generated by fossil fuels. The change is designed to address what FERC sees as a distortion of competition in the energy market as a result of state subsidies for clean fuels. PJM, which coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in 13 states and the District of Columbia, plays an important role in the prices utilities pay for power. The order was condemned by NJ's energy regulator, the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Outraged environmental advocates said the new policy would result in rising prices for renewables; Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey Sierra Club, said the rule change will increase fossil-fuel consumption while hindering the use of renewables. Tittel also said the change will prevent New Jersey from meeting its current clean-energy goals, like the 7500 megawatts of offshore wind recently announced by Murphy, and the short-term goal of reaching 20% of renewable energy by 2020: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/clean-energy-advocates-slam-federal-order-they-say-favors-fossil-fuels/>



- **Solar Power to the People: Coalition Hopes to Bring Clean Energy to Poor Families** - A persistent criticism of NJ's efforts to promote clean energy has been that most of the benefits of its aggressive program to install solar panels on homes have gone to households with higher incomes. A new coalition of climate and solar advocates and state lawmakers is aiming to remedy that flaw by creating a roadmap that ensures low-income populations and environmental-justice communities share in the benefits of a clean-energy economy, like less pollution and fewer health problems. It calls for having a quarter-million low-income families go solar by 2030, installing 400 megawatts of storage and setting aside \$125 million annually in state funding to achieve those goals. "We envision a clean-energy future for New Jersey that is resilient, equitable, inclusive and community-centric," said Pari Kasotia, mid-Atlantic director for Vote Solar, which put together the coalition. But advocates did not detail where they would get the needed \$125 million a year: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/solar-power-to-the-people-coalition-hopes-to-bring-clean-energy-to-poor-families/>
- **BPU Debuts Solar Transition Plan to Help Ease Costs for Utility Customers** – NJ has adopted a much-debated plan to help the solar sector transition to a new way of financing solar projects, an overhaul the Murphy administration hopes will rein in costs to utility customers who pay for the program. The plan has met a mixed reception from solar developers; the new incentive program reduces the subsidies given to developers and owners of solar arrays, as was sought by a law enacted in 2018. It sets up a tiered level of incentives depending on what solar projects are installed – those built on homes; on corporate campuses and businesses; on landfills and brownfields; grid supply projects

and community solar facilities. **“Our members are in a panic right now,”** said Lyle Rawlings, an EJTF member and founder of Advanced Solar Products in Flemington, referring to the Mid-Atlantic Solar and Storage Industries Association. “They don’t see how they can stay in business.” Rawlings claimed the new incentives are too small to grow some segments of the solar sector, and too rich for other parts of the sector. Residential solar projects and commercial ground-mounted solar arrays could be hurt the most, according to Rawlings: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/bpu-debuts-solar-transition-plan-to-help-ease-costs-for-utility-customers/>

- **Might the State’s Latest Solar Incentive Plan Allay Some Solar Developers’ Misgivings?** - For much of the past year, NJ officials have been struggling to come up with a system to finance new solar projects in NJ, but not at too steep a cost to electric customers who foot the bill. The Board of Public Utilities’ (BPU) third revision of a draft proposal includes an incentive plan that may finally end a long-running dispute with solar developers who had argued previous incentives were much too small and could have led to a collapse in the sector. The latest proposal, say a number of solar developers, raises incentives enough to encourage investments in various types of solar projects in NJ, rather than lead to an exodus to neighboring states where solar development might be more profitable. However, some solar developers are skeptical the new incentives, even with the modest increases, will be enough. **“The effect is killing certain sectors,”** said Lyle Rawlings an EJTF member, and founder of Advanced Solar Products in Flemington. The result will hurt many institutions that have taken advantage of incentives to install solar, he said, citing schools, hospitals, and municipalities: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/states-latest-solar-incentive-plan-seems-set-to-allay-developers-misgivings/>

CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Hundreds March in Youth Climate Strikes across NJ** - On 12/6/2019, young people from across the state held 10 local rallies outside train stations as part of the North Jersey Climate Strike. The students then took trains to Newark Penn Station and converged at Peter Francisco Park. Sister rallies were held across the country and in Princeton and Camden. In Newark, demonstrators spoke on local issues: the need for clean water in Newark, divestment by Rutgers from fossil fuel companies and stopping a proposed gas-fired power plant in Kearny. “We’re going to be facing an extreme and irreversible climate disaster,” said Assatta Mann, president of the Rutgers-Newark College Democrats. “Gov. (Phil) Murphy is well-intentioned but sometimes that’s not enough.” Mann, 21, said Rutgers students are coming together to demand the university divest from any fossil fuel-related companies. She said students can take action right in their backyard to demand change from their local leaders: <https://www.nj.com/essex/2019/12/hundreds-march-in-youth-climate-strikes-across-nj.html>; and video: <https://www.njtvonline.org/news/video/nj-students-join-in-worldwide-strike-press-for-immediate-action-on-climate-change/>
- **Regional States’ Consortium Seeks Input on Plan to Cut Transportation Emissions** – The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) consortium created nearly a decade ago by Northeast and Middle Atlantic states to devise regional strategies for the reduction of greenhouse gases issued a draft plan that would impose a cap on emissions stemming from fossil fuels used by the transportation sector. The plan, which is estimated to generate \$7 billion a year, aims to slash tailpipe emissions by 25% over 10 years. It would set a regional emissions cap, then require large gasoline and on-road diesel distributors, such as fuel terminals, to pay the states millions of dollars for carbon credits if that cap is

exceeded. The proceeds would be made available for clean-air programs like funding incentives for electric vehicles, especially low-polluting buses and trucks. Preference for funding awards would go to low-income areas and communities of color most impacted by air pollution, but the plan could boost prices at the pump, as much as five to 17 cents a gallon. The 12 states and Washington D.C. that make up TCI are not yet committed to the plan, and each will get to decide how to spend its share of the proceeds to support TCI program goals. A final memorandum will be issued in the spring and each state will get a chance then to decide whether to take part. The program, if enacted, could be operational by 2022, according to the draft memo. TCI is seeking input from interested parties and the public between now and the end of February: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/regional-group-seeks-input-on-plan-to-cut-transportation-emissions/>

- **NJ Gets D-rating in Climate Change “State of the Beach” Report** - NJ is known for its popular beaches and seaside living, but the state received a D- grade when rated for its efforts to protect shore communities from the effects of climate change. The Surfrider Foundation gave New Jersey the lowest rating among states in the Northeast region (in the 2019 State of the Beach Report available here: https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publicfiles.surfrider.org/SOTB/SOTB-Report_2019.pdf). However, NJ, which the Foundation found in the past to be woefully behind in planning for sea level rise, made some strides in 2019. The state hosted a Coastal Resilience Summit and is in the process of improving guidance for local communities to proactively plan for sea level rise: <https://www.surfrider.org/coastal-blog/entry/how-does-your-state-manage-its-coast-surfrider-report-finds-most-states-are>



- **DRBC Establishes Advisory Committee on Climate Change – The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) unanimously approved a resolution establishing the Advisory Committee on Climate Change (ACCC).** Part of the ACCC’s initial charge is to help inform DRBC’s future water resource planning efforts considering climate change; support development of a comprehensive study on climate impacts to the basin’s water supply and water quality; and organize a Delaware River Basin Climate Forum. The ACCC will be comprised of up to 18 individuals with relevant expertise, split in half between reserved (appointed by the commissioners or their alternates, representing the basin states, federal government, New York City Bureau of Water Supply, Philadelphia Water Department, and the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary) and non-reserved (appointed by the executive director, representing academia/research institutions, environmental/watershed organizations, business/industry, and/or water/wastewater utilities) members. The committee is authorized for 10 years and can be renewed or extended prior to its expiration in 2029: https://nj.gov/drbc/home/newsroom/news/approved/20191212_ACCC.html

- **Op-Ed: New Jersey Must Ensure that All Residents Benefit from Clean Energy** – (by Pari Kasotia, the Mid-Atlantic director for Vote Solar, a national 501 (C) 3 nonprofit organization that advocates for solar-friendly policies nationwide) - Gov. Phil Murphy has set two bold climate goals for the Garden State: 100% carbon-neutral energy by 2050 and economy-wide emissions reduction to 80% below 2006 levels by 2050. New modeling from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities shows how to get there, but one crucial missing piece is that BPU’s modeling does not analyze the benefits of reducing health-harming pollution in low-income and environmental justice communities as a result of more deployment of clean energy and the shutting down of existing fossil fuel plants. The goal of any clean-energy targets should not only be to reduce overall emissions, but to ensure that all residents of NJ benefit from cleaner air and a healthy environment. Without specific, targeted policies, NJ’s low-income and environmental justice communities may not be able to fully participate in the growing clean-energy economy: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/op-ed-new-jersey-must-ensure-that-all-residents-benefit-from-clean-energy/>

DRINKING WATER-RELATED ISSUES (other than lead)

- **EPA ‘Close’ to Decision on Regulating PFAS, but Enforcement Likely Years Away** - It’s unclear whether the federal government will meet its own year-end deadline for deciding whether to regulate two toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemicals, but even if it moves ahead, it will likely be years before any enforceable health limits are in place. If the agency makes a “positive determination” it will then move ahead with regulation that would eventually set maximum health limits for the two chemicals, requiring utilities to monitor and clean up water supplies if contamination levels exceed any new limits. PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate) are man-made chemicals that were used in nonstick cookware and other consumer products. Although they have been phased out by major U.S. manufacturers, they persist in soil and water, and so are known as “forever chemicals.” There is recent interest in the chemicals, which is likely to rise further with the recent release of the movie “Dark Waters,” which tells the story of the contamination of ground water around Parkersburg, West Virginia with PFOA from a DuPont plant there: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/epa-close-to-decision-on-regulating-pfas-but-enforcement-likely-years-away/>
- **Pallone Urges Support for Curbs on PFAS; Accuses Feds of Hiding Chemicals’ Hazards** - Campaigners for tighter health limits on toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are taking their fight to Congress where a committee approved a bill that would require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set regulations that it has so far avoided implementing. The House Energy and Commerce Committee sent to the full House of Representatives a comprehensive bill that would direct the EPA to designate all PFAS as hazardous substances under the federal law that governs the cleanup of Superfund sites, allowing it to place sites with PFAS contamination on a National Priority List. Listing a chemical under the Superfund law will unlock resources for cleanup, and allow contaminated sites to be cleaned up and stop leaching the chemicals out into the environment, advocates say. The bill would also require the agency to set a maximum level for total PFAS that safeguards human health, protect populations such as children and pregnant women who are at greatest risk, and direct manufacturers to send EPA data on volumes, uses and exposure of the chemicals: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/11/pallone-urges-support-for-curbs-on-pfas-accuses-feds-of-hiding-chemicals-hazards/>

- **Op-Ed: Better Public Drinking Water Standards Are a Must for New Jersey** – (by Cindy Ehrenclou, executive director of the Raritan Headwaters Association) - Most water utilities get a passing grade from regulatory agencies, meaning their drinking water meets state and federal standards for contaminants. But a recent scathing report by the nonprofit Environmental Working Group (EWG) contends that government water standards are outdated and do not adequately address the health threats posed by myriad contaminants. According to the EWG, the problem is that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency hasn't added a single new contaminant to the toxic chemicals list covered by the Safe Drinking Water Act in almost 20 years. This ignores two decades of medical research documenting health threats posed by a wide array of chemical contaminants, including emerging contaminants whose impacts we're just beginning to understand. Private well owners also need to be vigilant, because there is no government-required annual testing of well water. Testing of private wells is required by law only when a house is being sold. The only way homeowners with wells can know what's in their water is by having it tested: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/op-ed-better-public-drinking-water-standards-are-a-must-for-new-jersey/>
- **Rivers, Lakes Show Some Gains, Some Losses in Water Quality** - The Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) draft New Jersey Integrated Water Quality Assessment Report for 2016 (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/wqmp/docs/202190916-int-wqa-report.pdf>), is issued to meet federal requirements for a statewide assessment of water conditions every two years. In all six categories of designated water use, the number of water bodies failing to meet the standard exceeded those that supported that use. For drinking water supply, the report stated that 43% of waters did not meet that use, exceeding the 38% that did meet the standard, while 19% had insufficient information to determine whether they qualified. Despite less pollution from wastewater treatment plants, stormwater remains a problem, the DEP report finds: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/rivers-lakes-show-some-gains-some-losses-in-water-quality/>



- **DEP Signs Off on New Stormwater Runoff Rule — Very Quietly** - Only 5% of NJ's waterways meet federal clean water standards, the level at which they are deemed safe for the public to swim and fish, with stormwater runoff being the single largest source of pollution; the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) quietly signed a controversial new rule that aims to control it. The proposal, which has drawn fire from most of the state's most prominent environmental groups as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, seeks to overhaul the state stormwater management program, which is designed to control flooding and runoff from streets, parking lots and other paved areas. The DEP did not make available the details of the regulation so it is unclear what, if any, changes were made from the original proposal. The full rule will be made available upon publication in the New Jersey Register, probably in the next month. As initially proposed, the new rule was criticized for not going far enough in protecting state waterways. But some aspects drew praise from conservationists,

particularly provisions focusing on green infrastructure, which helps to manage stormwater by aiming to mimic the natural water cycle by creating rain gardens, green roofs, and permeable pavements to allow runoff to be absorbed into soil or by trees and other vegetation:

<https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/dep-signs-off-on-new-stormwater-runoff-rule-very-quietly/>

POLLUTION

- **Late Amendments Have Stalled the Effort to Ban Plastic, Paper Bags** - Advocates and critics alike were surprised when a NJ Assembly committee vote did not proceed on a bill to ban single-use plastic and paper bags in NJ. The bill apparently was pulled because of late amendments adopted when the measure moved out of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee (see article below). The amendments called for a ban on both plastic and paper single-use bags one year from enactment, as well as a surprise provision that big-chain grocery stores provide free reusable bags for two months after the law takes effect. Previously, the bill would have waited two years before paper bags were banned. The bill also would ban polystyrene foam cups and other containers, and plastic straws would only be available to customers who request them. With only a month left in the lame-duck legislative session, it is unclear whether the dispute over the late amendments will prevent the bill's passage before a new Legislature is sworn in early in January: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/how-late-amendments-have-stalled-effort-to-ban-plastic-paper-bags/>
- **Advances Made to Ban Single-Use Plastic, Paper Bags in New Jersey** - A long-dormant bill that would add New Jersey to the list of states banning single-use bags for consumers was given new life when the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee voted to release it for a vote in the full Legislature (but see article above). The bill, S-2776, would prohibit stores, restaurants and other food-service businesses from providing single-use plastic or paper bags, as well as polystyrene foam cups and food containers. Plastic straws would only be available to those customers who request them. The ban on single-use bags would become effective in a year; the prohibition against polystyrene containers would go into effect in two years. An earlier version of the bill approved by the Legislature in the summer of 2018 was vetoed by Gov. Phil Murphy who said he wanted a stronger law. It provided for a ban on plastic bags and would have imposed a five-cent fee for paper bags. Since then, more than 50 NJ municipalities have passed ordinances to reduce the use of plastic bags, straws, balloons, and Styrofoam containers. The bill also has or a requirement that big-chain grocery stores provide free reusable bags for up to two months after the law takes effect: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/advances-made-to-ban-single-use-plastic-paper-bags-in-new-jersey/>
- **Trenton Becomes Latest NJ City to Ban Single-Use Plastic Bags** – Trenton joined a growing number of municipalities in NJ to crack down on the use of plastic shopping bags. The prohibition will take effect 12/31/2020. Under the adopted city law, first-time offenders face fines of \$100, issued only after a written warning. Fines increase to \$200 for second offenses and \$500 for each subsequent offense. Retailers must also provide customers with “compliant bags” for 10 cents apiece: <https://enviropolitics.com/trenton-becomes-latest-nj-city-to-ban-single-use-plastic-bags/>
- **Shore Town is First in NJ to Offer Curbside ‘Plastic Film’ Recycling** - In partnership with SC Johnson, a manufacturer of household consumer products, Bradley Beach launched a pilot program that allows residents to recycle plastic bags, film, and wraps for a year-long period that started in November. SC Johnson is funding a collection vehicle, curbside bins, and community engagement materials to raise awareness of the pilot program, which functions by residents placing clean and dry plastic film into a plastic bag that is deposited in a special curbside bin collected on recycling day. The borough's Department of Public Works will then sell the film to an end-market purchaser: <https://why.org/articles/shore-town-is-first-in-n-j-to-offer-curbside-plastic-film-recycling/>

OTHER

- **Funding for State Pollution Control Dropped 12% in a Decade to 2018, Study Says -** NJ was among 30 states where spending declined on environmental agencies from 2008 to 2018. Funding and staffing for pollution control by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) dropped by double digits in the 10 years to 2018, part of a national trend of deep cuts in budgets for environmental agencies, according to a new study (“The Thin Green Line” <https://www.environmentalintegrity.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Thin-Green-Line-report-12.5.19.pdf>) by the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP), a nonprofit that investigates polluters. It found that the total DEP budget was 11.9% lower in fiscal 2018 than it was in inflation-adjusted terms in fiscal 2008. Over the same period, its work force dropped 19% to 1,858 from 2,321, according to the data obtained by EIP: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/funding-for-state-pollution-control-dropped-12-in-decade-to-2018-study-says/>



- **State Court Gives Local Governments Power to Push Polluters to Clean Up Spills -** A recent appeals court ruling is viewed as reinforcing state powers to force cleanups by polluters, ruling that local governments can impose significant penalties against companies responsible for unauthorized discharges of hazardous substances. The ruling by the appellate division last month is viewed by environmentalists as affording the state and municipalities a critical tool to force cleanups by levying penalties of up to \$50,000 a day for violations involving the New Jersey Spill and Compensation Act, based on a complaint filed by an employee of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). “Municipal court makes it quicker for the state to enforce violations against polluters and make them clean up their toxic mess,” said Jeff Tittel, director of the NJ Sierra Club. The ruling also may help towns seeking to force cleanups where illegal dumping has taken place, a recurring problem in New Jersey, he said: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/state-court-gives-local-governments-power-to-push-polluters-to-clean-up-spills/>
- **NJ Seeks Compensation for Natural-Resource Damages with Two More Lawsuits –** NJ filed two more Natural Resource Damage (NRD) lawsuits against alleged industrial polluters, continuing an aggressive strategy by the Murphy administration to get compensation for contamination of the natural environment. The Murphy administration has now filed 12 NRD suits, including eight in 2019, after none during the previous eight years of the Christie administration. The attorney general’s office and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) jointly announced suits against Sherwin-Williams Co., a paint manufacturer, and Handy & Harman Electronic Materials Corp., an etching and surfacing company, claiming both polluted the environment near their plants in Camden and Bergen counties, respectively: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2019/12/nj-seeks-compensation-for-natural-resource-damages-with-two-more-lawsuits/>

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



UUFaithAction NJ - Environmental Justice Task Force - <https://uufaithaction.org/environment/>
Co-Chairs – Peggy Middaugh and Ray Nichols
Visit our website for Environmental links and resources / sign up for email alerts / join the EJTF