

Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter April 2020

[covering 2/25/2019 – 3/25/2020] <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.

Earth Day 50th Anniversary
April 22, 2020



**See Action
Alerts on p. 3**

EARTH DAY IS GOING ONLINE!

According to the Earth Day Network, “Earth Day’s updated digital-first strategy will... mobilize millions in a collective call for transformative action for our planet... The global conversation will be unified and tracked by the shared hashtags #EarthDay2020 and #EARTHRISE. Earth Day Network will provide live coverage... from its social media accounts (@earthdaynetwork)... Other digital events will include virtual protests, social media campaigns, online teach-ins and more. A full scope of digital actions will be available at www.earthday.org.”

In the event that some local Earth Day events do take place, you can find them on an interactive map on the Earth Day Network website, under “Earth Day 2020”(check to see if the event is still taking place). The live Earth Day Network event has been rescheduled for October 24-25, 2020, the half birthday of Earth Day.

EARTH DAY–RELATED ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AT HOME

READ ABOUT THE HISTORY OF EARTH DAY - <https://www.earthday.org/history/>

CALCULATE YOUR CARBON “FOODPRINT”

BBC Climate Change Food Calculator shows how your food intake compares to emissions of driving, heating a home and consuming water. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-46459714>

Eat Lower Carbon compares the carbon foodprint of different meals, and tests your knowledge on common foods. <http://www.eatlowercarbon.org>

Food Carbon Emissions Calculator provides a comprehensive approach to calculating your foodprint. It accounts for transport, waste, and quantity purchased.
<http://www.foodemissions.com/foodemissions/Calculator>

Earthday Network’s partner FoodPrint has a fun and easy quiz that helps you better understand the concept of a foodprint and shows you how well you’re doing so far. <https://foodprint.org/quiz/>

How Does Your Diet Contribute to Climate Change? The New York Times quiz allows you to choose common meals and beverages to see how your carbon foodprint compares to others.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/30/climate/your-diet-quiz-global-warming.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Ffood&action=click&contentCollection=dining®ion=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=6&pgtype=sectionfront>

The Meat Calculator shows you how much water and carbon dioxide you save if reducing your meat consumption. It also tells you the approximate number of animals that could live from your reduction. <https://www.blitzresults.com/en/meat/#sources-formulas-and-references-to-the-meat-calculator>

“Climate Change and the American Diet” Report based on findings from a nationally representative survey conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and Earth Day Network.
<https://16og7a3snajg2i1r662yjd5r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Climate-Change-and-the-American-Diet-FINAL-REPORT.pdf>

CALCULATE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Carbon Footprint Calculator For Individuals And Households:
<https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>

PERFORM “ELEVEN ACTIONS FOR THE PLANET”

Eleven Actions for the Planet During a Pandemic: <https://www.earthday.org/11-actions-for-the-planet-during-a-pandemic/>

THREE ACTION ALERTS!

ACTION 1: NO to NESE! No Pipeline through our Bay! No fracked gas compressor in our town!

We are again called upon to tell NJDEP to deny the proposed Williams NESE pipeline and compressor station through Central NJ and the Raritan Bay – **comments are due by April 3rd**. This project is a disaster for our health, safety and our climate. But Williams, the largest gas pipeline company in North America, has submitted another application to build this pipeline to Long Island. Submit comments at www.nj.gov/dep/nese and tell the NJDEP to 1) extend the public comment period, 2) hold public hearings on the proposed project, and 3) deny this unnecessary and environmentally-destructive project once and for all. Additional actions you can take are here:

<http://cleanoceanaction.org/index.php?id=866>

ACTION 2: NO to MASSIVE NJ Turnpike / Garden State Parkway Expansion!

Public comments on the proposed NJ Turnpike Authorities' highway expansion project are **due by April 3rd at 5 p.m.** This massive expansion project would be yet another major subsidy to the fossil fuel industry in NJ, and would dramatically increase air pollution and climate-disrupting greenhouse gases at a time when we urgently need to reduce both. Read the press release from NJ Sierra Club for more background on the impacts of this project and how the agency is violating the COVID-19 State of Emergency: <https://bit.ly/NJSierraPressRelease>. Submit your comments in opposition to this project via email to: NJTAPublicComments@NJTA.com.

ACTION 3: NO LNG Exports on the Delaware River!

Public comments on the proposal to construct a massive new Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Export terminal on the Delaware River are **due by April 24th**. Submit your comments to the Delaware River Basin Commission at <http://hearing.drbc.commentinput.com>, urging them to rescind their previous permit for this project. Visit the Delaware Riverkeeper Network website for a sample letter you can easily click through and send: <https://www.delawareriverkeeper.org/node/6277>. Additional information is in the news item under “Fossil Fuel Infrastructure” on page 9 of this newsletter. Please share the action on Facebook to encourage your congregation members, friends and family to submit a comment: <https://www.facebook.com/events/140506770621437/>.

UPCOMING EVENTS ONLINE

CLIMATE STRIKES

Coronavirus Crisis Forces Greta Thunberg To Take Climate Strike Online

From Greta Thunberg’s Twitter account (@GretaThunberg): “...The climate and ecological crisis is the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced but for now (of course depending on where you live) we’ll have to find new ways to create public awareness & advocate for change that don’t involve too big crowds - listen to local authorities.

So keep your numbers low but your spirits high and let’s take one week at the time. You can join the #DigitalStrike for upcoming Fridays- post a photo of you striking with a sign and use the hashtag #ClimateStrikeOnline !#fridaysforfuture #climatestrike #schoolstrike4climate”.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/greta-thunberg-coronavirus-climate-strike_n_5e68de8cc5b60557280eb374

Clean Water Action Annual Conference
CANCELLED: NOW A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE & WEBINAR SERIES!

Clean Water Action is canceling its 34th annual conference scheduled for April 4th, but is moving forward with a virtual conference. For more information, please visit www.cleanwater.org/conference2020 or email njcwa@cleanwater.org.

Clean Water Action is bringing their activist community to your living room! They are hosting an incredible **panel on Zoom about the health of democracy in New Jersey** led by organizers and local experts as well as an exciting **month of weekly virtual workshops LIVE on Facebook**.

Healthy Democracy, Healthy Environment Panel
Saturday, April 4, 2020 at 9:30 a.m.

Learn how the census, redistricting, and NJ power politics impact environmental policies. Clean Water Action has assembled a panel of local organizers and experts to walk us through how we can all advocate for reforms to make our local democracy stronger. Learn how you and your family can help make NJ politicians work for ALL of us as we fight for our state's environmental future. Featuring:

- Imani Oakley, N.J. Legislative Director & Regional Organizer, NJ Working Families
- Helen Kioubis, Program Associate, NJ League of Women Voters
- Peter Chen, Coordinator, Census 2020 NJ Coalition & Policy Counsel, Advocates for Children of NJ

Space is limited on the Zoom conference, so **RSVP here:**

https://zoom.us/meeting/register/uZMvdOGhpzkso6l_9lhiX7Ie7eoWvFYPOA. The panel will also be presented live on the Clean Water Action Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CleanWaterActionNJ/>

Also, be sure to tune in to the weekly workshop series leading up to the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day!

Taking Climate Action: A Virtual Workshop Series
Five Tuesday nights beginning on March 31, from 7 to 8 p.m.

For five Tuesday nights beginning on March 31, from 7 to 8 pm, gather your family of activists for a LIVE online series of informative speakers and calls to action to tackle the climate crisis. We can't gather in person, but we can still work together to advocate for our climate future! The topics will be:

- March 31: Water in a Changing Climate
- April 7: Consumer Footprints
- April 14: The Green Youth Movement
- April 21: Black Carbon & Dirty Ports
- April 28: Equity in a Green Grid

Register here on Zoom for one or more of the weekly workshops: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUkd-6pqjMjBN43aB1hSykBJXNzB3rC2Q>

OTHER FUTURE EVENTS

(check to see if the event is taking place before going)

New Jersey Clean Energy Conference: Charting the Path to 2050 - **POSTPONED**

The Conference was originally scheduled for April 6-7, 2020 in Atlantic City, NJ. Register for email updates about the rescheduling of the conference here: <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/about/contact/subscribe.html>

UUFANJ Annual Meeting (formerly known as Plenary) –DATE CHANGED****

Update your calendar! The UUFANJ Board has voted to change the date for the Annual Meeting from April 25th to Saturday, June 6, 2020. It is expected that this will be a VIRTUAL meeting via conference/video call; more details will be available at <https://www.uufaithaction.org> soon.

Climate Spirit Gathering

May 31, 2020, 4:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. (check status at <http://www.unitariansociety.org>)
The Unitarian Society, 176 Tices Lane, East Brunswick, NJ 08816

Since September 2019, The Unitarian Society in East Brunswick has been holding regular gatherings to create and hold space for climate grief - through song, ritual, and breaking bread together. The next gathering, open to all, is Sunday, May 31, 2020, 4:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.. They are building momentum and welcome your participation.

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

Format:

- Happening every other month or so
- Ongoing and Drop-In – the more who come, the more everyone benefits
- Share a vegetarian meal (vegan option)
- Sing together
- Collective rituals
- Time to reflect and connect, to listen and witness each other



Interested? Curious? Have Questions?

Reach out to Rev. Karen Johnston at The Unitarian Society at revkarentus@gmail.com or on Facebook at Revkaren G Johnston

Look for an abbreviated version of ClimateSpirit at General Assembly in Providence in June!

UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) “Spring for Change – A Season of Sacred Activism”

See www.uumfe.org/resources/spring-for-change-2020/whwn/ for a number of events and activities, including: Letter-writing National Advocacy Campaign on climate change - March-May; Earth Day – April 22, 2020; and Biodiversity Sunday – May 17, 2020.

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 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

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- **Environmental-Justice Bill Would Curb Pollution in ‘Burdened Communities’** - Environmental Justice (EJ) communities have a history of being the recipients of a disproportionate number of polluting facilities. A bill (S-232) would begin to address this by requiring the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) “to evaluate the environmental and public health impacts of certain facilities on overburdened communities when reviewing certain permit applications.” This article describes the bill, but the version of the bill described and linked in this article was substituted by a different version available here: https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2020/Bills/S0500/232_U1.HTM and described here: https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2020/Bills/S0500/232_S1.HTM. The substitute bill, which was approved by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee, redefines “overburdened communities” and requires an “environmental justice impact statement.” EJTF, while definitely in favor of the concept of the bill, had comments on it, including that it should be expanded to include communities adjacent to an overburdened community, as well as low- and moderate-income communities, and should include permit renewals. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/environmental-justice-bill-would-curb-pollution-in-burdened-communities/>
- **DEP Taps Volunteers to Help Transform Dump Site in Trenton Neighborhood** – A former industrial site (and current dumpsite) in a Trenton neighborhood is in the process of being cleaned up, with the goal of turning it into a skate park for area youth. This is part of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Community Collaborative Initiative (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/cci/index.html>), which addresses complex environmental challenges to revitalization and growth of primarily EJ communities in Camden, Perth Amboy, and Trenton. An article and NJTV News video is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/news/dep-taps-volunteers-to-help-transform-dump-site-in-trenton-neighborhood/>
- **Op-Ed: Governor’s Energy Plan a Threat to Low-Income Communities** (by Rev. Dr. Johnnie Green, president/CEO of MPAC (Mobilizing Preachers and Communities) and owner of Agape Children’s Academy in Irvington, NJ) – Rev. Dr. Green is concerned that the NJ Energy Master Plan will result in economic harm and regressive and expensive bills. A particular concern is related to the ending of natural gas, with resulting higher energy bills for residents, costs for retrofitting buildings, and a negative impact on attracting new business and affordable housing to the community. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/op-ed-governors-energy-plan-a-threat-to-low-income-communities/>

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- **NJ Drivers Can't Claim \$5,000 Electric Vehicle Rebate Just Yet. Here's Why** – Although Gov. Murphy, on a recent call-in radio show, touted the availability of the rebates for buying electric vehicles that he signed into law on January 17, 2020, apparently the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) doesn't have the program set up yet. Details about the program are here: <https://www.njcleanenergy.com/ev>. After the program is set up, it is envisioned that those previously eligible for a rebate will receive a check in the mail, and thereafter the rebate will be provided at the time of the sale/lease. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/nj-drivers-cant-claim-5000-electric-vehicle-rebate-yet-heres-why/>
- **NJTA Board Approves Deal to Add Electric Vehicle Chargers at Eight New Jersey Turnpike Service Areas** – The NJ Turnpike Authority (NJTA) has approved a licensing agreement that allows Tesla to install 56 additional V3 Superchargers at service areas on the NJ Turnpike, which will bring the total to 76. Tesla will also will build the utility infrastructure necessary for third-party providers to install at least two dozen additional non-Tesla charging stations on the Turnpike. After all of the Tesla charging stations called for in the licensing agreement have been installed, there will be electric vehicle charging facilities at 9 of the 12 service areas. <https://www.njta.com/newsroom/tesla-agreement>
- **Newark to Install Electric Vehicle Charging Stations** - In order to begin adding electric vehicles to its fleet, Newark will take the first step of purchasing three electric vehicle charging stations, which will also be available to the public. The cost will be covered by state rebates and Newark's Green Energy Fund. https://www.newarkpostonline.com/news/newark-to-install-electric-vehicle-charging-stations/article_f791fdoe-5d4c-558d-ab47-dfeefdc42669.html

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER



- **EPA Expects to Award New Jersey \$1,537,000 in Funding to Test for Lead in School Drinking Water** - Under its new “Voluntary Lead Testing in Schools and Child Care” grant program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded \$1,537,000 in grant funding to assist NJ with identifying sources of lead in drinking water in schools or child care facilities. According to the EPA, NJ intends to prioritize facilities located in low-income communities serving children ages 6 years and under, and childcare facilities that are not included in existing school-based lead testing programs. <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-expects-award-new-jersey-1537000-funding-test-lead-school-drinking-water>

- **As COVID-19 Heats Up, Governor Puts \$1B in Planned Spending in Deep Freeze** – In anticipation of a revenue drop in NJ due to effects from coronavirus, Gov. Murphy has put \$920 million in funds appropriated for 2020 in reserve, including \$9.2 million for lead-abatement programs and \$6.3 million for environmental protection programs. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/as-covid-19-heats-up-governor-puts-1b-in-planned-spending-in-deep-freeze/>
- **Murphy Pledges \$80M to Replace Lead Service Lines, Opening the Tap Just a Bit** – There is \$80 million in Gov. Murphy’s fiscal year 2021 budget that represents “a down payment for our communities to replace lead-water-service lines and modernize our infrastructure,” according to the Governor. But Jeff Tittel, director of the NJ Sierra Club, noted that “It’s a down payment, but we need \$2.3 billion to deal with lead service lines. We need a long-term stable source of funding.” <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/murphy-pledges-80m-to-replace-lead-service-lines-but-is-fuzzy-about-source/>

ENERGY MASTER PLAN AND “PACT”

On January 27, 2020, Gov. Murphy unveiled the final NJ Energy Management Plan (EMP) https://www.nj.gov/emp/docs/pdf/2020_NJBPU_EMP.pdf and Executive Order 100 <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-100.pdf>, which directs the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to adopt, within two years, PACT (“Protecting Against Climate Threats”) regulations to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change.

- **DEP Seeks Public Input on Rules to Cut Climate-Altering Emissions** – The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held a public information session asking for input related to “Greenhouse Gas Monitoring and Reporting” under the PACT regulations. The presentation slides from the session are here: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/workgroups/docs/njpact-air-ghg-20200221-pres.pdf>, and **EJTF’s comments are here:** https://www.uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NJ-PACT-Monitoring_GHG_Emissions_Comments.pdf. Among other comments, EJTF emphasized that, because the major sources of emissions tend to be in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities, permanent ambient air quality sampling stations should be installed on roofs of government buildings in those communities, for verifying the emissions there. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/dep-seeks-public-input-on-rules-to-cut-climate-altering-emissions/>
- **DEP’s First Step Toward Reducing Greenhouse Gases Dismissed as Too Tame by Critics** – The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held a public information session asking for input related to “Reducing CO2 Emissions” under the PACT regulations. The presentation slides from the session are here: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/workgroups/docs/njpact-co2-emissions-20200225-pres.pdf> and **EJTF’s comments are here:** https://www.uufaithaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PACT_Emissions-Reduction_Comments-2.pdf. Among other comments, EJTF pointed out that increasing efficiency is not always available in EJ communities due to problems with the existing housing infrastructure. Expensive energy-efficiency measures may even make housing more expensive and less accessible to low-income households; financial incentives for residents and landlords are at least as important as incentives for wealthier people to purchase new electric vehicles.

Similarly, electrification efforts such as installing solar panels or buying electric vehicles don't always apply in low-income communities, so it is important to make it possible for them to electrify while lowering their costs; additional programs such as the BPU's community solar and community microgrid should be pursued. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/deps-first-step-toward-reducing-greenhouse-gases-dismissed-as-too-tame-by-critics/>

- **DEP Seeks Input on New Land-Use Rules to Adapt to Climate Change** - The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held a public information session asking for input related to “Incorporating Climate Change into Land Use Rules” under the PACT (“Protecting Against Climate Threats”) regulations. The presentation slides from the session are here: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/workgroups/docs/njpact-lum-20200302-pres.pdf>. The regulations to be developed will assume that climate change and its resulting impact on sea level will occur. The rules to be developed might include limits on certain types of development, and/or additional requirements for construction. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/dep-seeks-input-on-new-land-use-rules-to-adapt-to-climate-change/>
- **As NJDEP Climate Pollution Stakeholder Meetings Begin, Nearly 100 Diverse Organizations Urge DEP to Follow Climate Science to Reduce Global Warming Pollution** – Ninety-seven diverse organizations, including UUFANJ, joined in signing a letter to Gov. Murphy, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner McCabe, and the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) President Fiordaliso to ensure that the NJ PACT (“Protecting Against Climate Threats”) process sets an unconditional goal to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 45% (over 2010 levels) by 2030. Neither the existing NJ Global Warming Response Act (GWRA) or the NJ Energy Master Plan (EMP) state any goals for reducing greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 2030. Both documents only have goals for 2050. <https://environmentnewjersey.org/news/nje/njdep-climate-pollution-stakeholder-meetings-begin-nearly-100-diverse-organizations-urge>
- **New Jersey Is at the Forefront of Climate Change Adaptation** – This analysis by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) calls NJ a “shining example” of climate commitments in 2020, citing Gov. Murphy’s PACT (“Protecting Against Climate Threats”) regulatory reform initiative. After describing NJ’s historical lack of concern for the environment, the NJ Energy Master Plan and PACT are summarized, as well as steps NJ has taken to join with other states in programs to address climate change concerns. <https://www.eesi.org/articles/view/new-jersey-is-at-the-forefront-of-climate-change-adaptation>

FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Hearing on LNG Terminal Plan for South Jersey Will Give Critics Another Chance to Object** – The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) has scheduled a quasi-judicial hearing on the proposed Gibbstown liquefied natural gas (LNG) tanker terminal that it had previously approved. The hearing was requested by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network and Maya van Rossum, to provide an opportunity to show that the previous decision of DRBC should be changed. Detailed information is here: https://www.nj.gov/drbc/meetings/adjudicatory-hearing_DRP.html Written comments will be accepted at <http://hearing.drbc.commentinput.com/> through April 24, 2020. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/hearing-on-lng-terminal-plan-for-south-jersey-will-give-critics-another-chance-to-object/>

- **Op-Ed: PennEast Has a Pipeline to Sell You** (by Tom Gilbert, campaign director of ReThink Energy NJ and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation) – PennEast has been trying to get approval for its Pennsylvania-New Jersey pipeline for five years without success. It recently asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for permission to build the pipeline in two phases. This opinion piece details reasons for opposition, and lists “facts PennEast doesn’t want people to know.” <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/op-ed-penneast-has-a-pipeline-to-sell-you/>



RENEWABLE RESOURCES

- **2019 a Banner Year for Solar Industry in NJ Triggered by Ending of Current Program** – More solar capacity was installed in NJ in 2019 than in any previous year, resulting in solar power now providing 5% of the energy needed in the state. One factor may have been that the previous Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) incentives program was legislatively mandated to end at the end of the year. (<https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/2019-a-banner-year-for-solar-industry-in-nj-triggered-by-ending-of-current-program/>)
- **Big Wins Expected for Offshore Wind Over Next Decade** – A new study by the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), “U.S. Offshore Wind Power Economic Impact Assessment,” (https://d1ung6iqj8iqxc.cloudfront.net/wp-content/blogs.dir/123/files/2020/03/AWEA_Offshore-Wind-Report-1.pdf) describes the great potential for growth of the offshore-wind industry, especially along the East Coast, including the accompanying supply-chain manufacturing jobs needed to supply components for the industry. As noted in this article “A sample of the jobs the industry will create includes electricians, welders, turbine technicians, longshoremen, truck drivers, crane operators, ironworkers, pipefitters, pile drivers, engineers, mechanics, scientists and offshore-equipment and vessel operators.” <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/big-wins-expected-for-offshore-wind-over-next-decade/>
- **BPU Aims to Stabilize Solar Sector by Changing Incentives** – There has been an issue with the level of incentives (Transition Renewable Energy Certificates (TREC)) for the solar industry provided as a replacement for the previous incentives, as legislatively mandated. Without revising it, developers were concerned new projects would not be able to move forward, thus putting NJ’s renewable energy goals in jeopardy. The level was revised by the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU), and, according to **EJTF member Lyle Rawlings**, president and founder of Advanced Solar Products in Flemington, “Investors and developers really like it.” <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/bpu-takes-new-look-at-how-to-provide-boost-for-solar-projects/>

- State’s Big Solar Problem: How to Boost the Sector at Far Less Cost** – The NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) held a stakeholder meeting on the legislatively mandated successor program to the Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) incentives for the solar industry. A description of the requirements are in the BPU’s public notice, here: <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/pdf/publicnotice/stakeholder/Stakeholder%20Notice%20Successor%20Program%20Stakeholder%20Meeting%202020-03-03.pdf>. What is needed is a system that maintains the solar industry while reducing the subsidies that have been passed on to ratepayers, but still allows the industry to grow. This article describes a number of viewpoints, and states that there was positive attitude toward developers who are building community solar projects in low- and moderate-income communities. A large number of solar projects will be needed in order for NJ to meet its renewable energy goal, and **EJTF member Lyle Rawlings**, co-founder of Mid-Atlantic Solar & Storage Industries Association, stated that huge rooftop solar projects are the most cost-effective way of expanding the industry. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/states-big-solar-problem-how-to-boost-the-sector-at-far-less-cost/>
- Offshore Wind Power for 3 Million NJ Homes by 2035 Is Murphy’s Aim** – Gov. Murphy announced a schedule for offshore wind solicitations to be issued every other year until 2028, to provide half of NJ’s electricity needs by 2035. It is something no other state has done, but it does include flexibility in timing and quantity, to take into account a number of factors including fluctuations in cost. Cost might be impacted by a proposed regulatory change by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/murphy-plans-offshore-wind-power-for-3-million-nj-homes-by-2035/>
- NJ Bill to Stimulate Fuel Cell Use Passes Full Assembly on a Unanimous Vote** - This bill (A741 – summary Statement here: https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2020/Bills/A1000/741_S1.HTM) establishes in the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) the New Jersey Fuel Cell Task Force, which is to prepare and submit to the Governor and the Legislature a report detailing the task force’s plan to increase the use of fuel cells in the State, including any recommendations for legislative or regulatory action that are necessary to effectuate the plan. The report is to be submitted after a year, and annually after that. The bill was sent to the Senate. <https://enviropolitics.com/nj-bill-to-stimulate-fuel-cell-use-passes-full-assembly-on-a-unanimous-vote/>

ENERGY EFFICIENCY



- BPU Proposal Looks to Prompt Utilities to Get Customers to Use Less Energy** – The NJ Clean Energy Act of 2018 required utilities to reduce customers’ electric use by 2% a year in 5 years, and reduce gas use by 0.75% a year. To address this requirement, the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has issued a “Straw Proposal for New Jersey’s Energy Efficiency and Peak Demand Reduction Programs”

<https://www.nj.gov/bpu/pdf/3-20-20%20Final%20EE%20Straw%20Proposal.pdf> for comment. It proposes to give a significant portion of the administration of energy efficiency programs to the utilities. Utilities have had issues with energy efficiency because of its negative effect on their revenue, and this proposal addresses this by proposing “limited decoupling” of utility profits from energy sales.

<https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/bpu-proposal-looks-to-prompt-utilities-to-get-customers-to-use-less-energy/> Stakeholders interested in submitting written comments on the BPU Straw Proposal may file them electronically to EnergyEfficiency@bpu.nj.gov in PDF or Word format, including an email subject line of “EE Transition Straw.” **Written comments on the BPU Straw Proposal must be received on or before 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 13, 2020.**

- **Bills to Promote Sustainability in NJ Government Buildings Pass Committee** – Two bills related to environmental sustainability have passed the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. The first bill (S331), would require the State Capitol Joint Management Commission to prepare, adopt, and implement an environmental sustainability plan for the Statehouse Capitol Complex. This would include energy savings, efficiency upgrades and water conservation techniques. It would also include the involvement of food services and the establishment of performance measures to be reported annually, and made available on the Governor’s and the Legislature’s websites. The second bill (S337) would authorize the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank to issue up to \$20 million in bonds to finance cost-effective energy efficiency improvements in State, local, and school district buildings. <https://enviropolitics.com/bills-to-promote-sustainability-in-nj-government-buildings-passes-committee/>
- **NJ’s Two Biggest Utilities Finish Near Bottom on New Energy-Efficiency Scorecard** – In the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) 2020 Utility Energy Efficiency Scorecard, the two largest utilities in NJ (PSE&G and JCP&L) finished in the bottom 10 nationwide. The summary page for the Northeast, with graphics, is here: https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/ACEEE_2020_UtilScrSht_Northeast%202.13.pdf. A reason for this, put forth by environmentalists and the utilities themselves, relates to NJ’s lack of a way to compensate the utilities for revenue lost when customers employ methods of efficiency to use less gas or electricity. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/njs-two-biggest-utilities-finish-near-bottom-on-new-energy-efficiency-scorecard/>

CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Coastal Scientists Prepare to Retreat from Field Station Threatened by Rising Seas** – Scientists at the Rutgers University Marine Field Station that sits on an isolated peninsula near Tuckerton are planning to move to an inland location because of increasing flooding and difficulty accessing or leaving the site. The research station itself will remain on the peninsula, but will be fitted with remote monitoring technology. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/coastal-scientists-prepare-to-retreat-from-field-station-threatened-by-rising-seas/>
- **Should NJ Use Eminent Domain to Take Coastal Properties Threatened by Sea-Level Rise?** – NJ has a Blue Acres Program to acquire properties “that have been damaged by, or may be prone to incurring damage caused by, storms or storm-related flooding, or that may buffer or protect other lands from such damage,” but it is a voluntary program and not adequate for the extent of properties forecast to be affected by future sea-level rise. It has been reported that the U.S. Army Corps

of Engineers has been pressuring states to include eminent domain in their plans or risk losing federal funding. In NJ, increasing numbers of homes continue to be built every year in flood-prone areas; however, Gov. Murphy's recently-issued Executive Order 100 on mitigating and adapting to climate change (NJ Protecting Against Climate Threats, "PACT") addresses coastal development allowability as part of a wide-ranging review of environmental regulations.

<https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/should-nj-use-eminent-domain-to-take-coastal-properties-threatened-by-sea-level-rise/>

- **State to Get Millions for Climate Change Strategies After Rejoining Regional Energy Initiative** – The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which NJ recently rejoined, held a multistate auction for fossil-fueled power plants to purchase CO2 emissions allowances, in which close to \$92 million was generated for member states to use for programs related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, and reducing carbon pollution. The initiative places a tax on carbon emissions from power plants, which is passed on to utility customers; the estimated surcharge for NJ homeowners starts at \$9 a year. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/state-to-get-millions-for-climate-change-strategies-after-rejoining-energy-initiative/>
- **Coalition Calls for Carbon Cap-and-Trade Program Across Northeast, Mid-Atlantic** – The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI), which is composed of 12 states and the District of Columbia, has proposed a program similar to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) – see article above – for the transportation sector. It would establish a regional cap on carbon emissions and auction emission allowances to suppliers of fuel, which would ultimately be paid for by motorists. The proceeds would be sent back to the states. More than 100 signatories sent a letter to the governors of the 12 member states, backing the proposal. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/coalition-calls-for-carbon-cap-and-trade-program-across-northeast-mid-atlantic/>



- **Beach Renourishment Along the Jersey Shore: A Never-Ending Task?** – A description of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Sisyphean task of replenishing beaches along the NJ shore. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/beach-renourishment-along-the-jersey-shore-a-never-ending-task/>

- **Pallone Announces Additional Beach Replenishment Projects for Jersey Shore** – Federal appropriations have been approved for beach replenishment projects in Long Branch, Sea Bright, and Monmouth Beach. The article cites critics who have questioned the effectiveness of beach replenishment, and who promote other ways of beach preservation. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/pallone-announces-additional-beach-replenishment-projects-for-jersey-shore/>
- **Feds Cut Funding on Studies to Protect NJ Coastal Areas from Storm Surge** – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) had been studying ways of protecting the NY/NJ harbor and NJ back bays from damage from more intense storms and rising seas, but it lost funding for studies that had included those for a sea wall. Although no reason was given, a month before the funding was cut, the President had called the sea wall “foolish.” <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/feds-cut-funding-on-studies-to-protect-nj-coastal-areas-from-storm-surge/>

POLLUTION

- **New Version of Plastic Bag Ban Gets Signoff from State Senate** – The NJ Senate passed a bill (S864) that “prohibits provision or sale of single-use plastic carryout bags, single-use paper carryout bags, and polystyrene foam food service products; limits provision of single-use plastic straws; and appropriates moneys from Clean Communities Program Fund for public education.” It is similar to the bill that passed the Senate last year, but didn’t pass the Assembly at the end of the year. This bill is now in the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee, but the NJ Legislature has nothing on its schedule until May 4, 2020. <https://www.njspotlight.com/news/new-version-of-plastic-bag-ban-gets-signoff-from-state-senate/>
- **Measure Advances to Require NJ Hospitals, Prisons to Recycle Food Waste** – This bill (A2371) had previously been passed in the Assembly and on March 5, 2020 it was passed in the Senate. It requires large food waste generators such as hospitals, prisons, restaurants, and supermarkets, to separate and recycle food waste and amends the definition of “Class I renewable energy” to include energy produced from methane gas from biomass, and also methane gas from a composting or anaerobic or aerobic digestion facility that converts food waste or other organic waste to energy. There has been some concern that food digesters would disproportionately be sited in environmental justice communities, but the Senate President (Sweeney) stated that he would back a bill (S232) that addresses cumulative impacts on overburdened communities, and which has been approved by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and referred to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee (see article on p. 6). <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/measure-advances-to-require-nj-hospitals-prisons-to-recycle-food-waste/>
- **EPA: NJ’s Toxic Chemical Waste Increased Half-Million Pounds in 2018** – This article includes an interactive map from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Toxic Release Inventory, showing 2019 toxic releases in NJ by facility. 2019 marked the first year since 2014 that such releases have increased, but overall they have decreased since 2008. Many of the polluters are located in lower-income communities. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/epa-njs-toxic-chemical-waste-increased-half-million-pounds-in-2018/>

OTHER

- **Murphy Nominates Eight to Pinelands Commission, NJ Highlands Council** – Long-awaited nominations for the Pinelands Commission and the NJ Highlands Council all have environmental backgrounds, and it is hoped that previous issues that have held up some of the nominations have been resolved. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/murphy-nominates-eight-to-pinelands-commission-nj-highlands-council/>
- **Delaware River Experts Hail Environmental Wins but Warn of New Climate Threats** – NJ Spotlight held a roundtable “Health of the Delaware River: Where Are We Heading?” at which improvements were cited, such as higher levels of dissolved oxygen, but also warnings of risks from climate change were described. The risks include saltwater encroachment, algal blooms, and flooding. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/delaware-river-experts-hail-environmental-wins-but-warn-of-new-climate-threats/>. A video of the roundtable (1 hour 50 minutes) is available here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/health-of-the-delaware-river-where-are-we-heading/> and an audio of the roundtable is here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/assessing-threats-to-the-delaware-river-nj-spotlight-roundtable/>
- **Move to Tighten Water-Quality Standards Along Stretch of Delaware Used for Recreation** - Most of the Delaware River is designated for “primary contact” uses, which include activities such as swimming and tubing, but a 26-mile urban portion is designated for “secondary contact” uses such as boating and fishing that don’t involve significant contact with the water. However, people are increasingly using that urban portion for primary contact activities, even though water quality standards for that level of contact are not in effect there. A coalition of environmental organizations has filed a petition with the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) to upgrade the designation for that portion to reflect its actual use, which would result in higher water quality standards. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/move-to-tighten-water-quality-standards-along-stretch-of-delaware-used-for-recreation/>



- **DEP Funds Techniques to Fight Algae Blooms but Says They’re Unlikely to Fix the Problem Soon** – The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded nine grants totaling \$2.5 million to evaluate the effectiveness of various technologies to address the problem of harmful algal blooms (HABs) that impacted 39 NJ lakes last summer. The HAB problem is exacerbated by homeowners’ and farmers’ overuse of phosphorus-heavy fertilizers, leaking residential septic systems, and warming of the lakes’ water due to climate change. This article describes additional efforts underway as part of DEP’s strategy to manage HAPs. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/dep-funds-techniques-to-fight-algae-blooms-but-says-theyre-unlikely-to-fix-the-problem-soon/>

- **Operator of Power Grid Accused of Overcharging Utility Customers Billions of Dollars** – A study commissioned by the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council found overcharging by PJM Interconnection, the regional transmission organization that serves all or part of 13 states and the District of Columbia. The study estimates that PJM overcharged consumers up to \$4 billion a year by overestimating the amount of power needed, for over a decade.
<https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/03/operator-of-power-grid-accused-of-overcharging-utility-customers-billions-of-dollars/>
- **PSEG Power Unloads Its Yards Creek Hydro-Pump Storage Facility** – This seems to be another step in PSEG’s divesting itself of assets other than its regulated utility, PSE&G, which has predictable cash flows. PSE&G appears to be moving toward NJ’s clean-energy goals, having proposed a number of initiatives to the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) related to energy efficiency, advanced metering infrastructure, energy storage, and electric vehicle charging stations.
<https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/02/pseg-power-unloads-its-yards-creek-hydro-pump-storage-facility/>

NEWS ARTICLES RELATED TO CORONAVIRUS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Coronavirus Holds Key Lessons on How to Fight Climate Change -

<https://e360.yale.edu/features/coronavirus-holds-key-lessons-on-how-to-fight-climate-change>

How Coronavirus Impacts Climate Change with Emissions Reductions -

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/severe-reduction-emissions-coronavirus-mitigate-climate-change-long/story?id=69334246>

How the Coronavirus Is (and Is Not) Affecting the Environment -

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/blogs/earthmatters/2020/03/05/how-the-coronavirus-is-and-is-not-affecting-the-environment/>

Why the Coronavirus Outbreak Is Terrible News for Climate Change -

<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/615338/coronavirus-emissions-climate-change/>

The Psychology of Coronavirus vs. Climate Change: Why We Mobilize for One, Not the Other -

<https://news.wttw.com/2020/03/02/psychology-coronavirus-vs-climate-change-why-we-mobilize-one-not-other>

The Coronavirus Outbreak Is Having an Unexpected Effect on The Environment, Too -

<https://www.sciencealert.com/china-s-carbon-emissions-suddenly-dropped-recently-but-not-for-the-best-reasons>

What Does Climate Change Have to Do with Coronavirus?

– by EJTF member Nancy Griffeth

Several people have asked whether coronavirus is due to climate change. This is a bit like asking whether a particular hurricane was caused by climate change -- climate change may increase the probability of such diseases, but it's not the cause.

There's another issue we need to think about. We repeatedly hear warnings that coronavirus is especially dangerous to people with heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes. We've long known that lung disease is caused and worsened by air pollution. Recent research shows that many heart issues are also caused and worsened by air pollution (<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/consumer-healthcare/what-is-cardiovascular-disease/air-pollution-and-heart-disease-stroke>).

Burning fossil fuels not only warms the atmosphere and raises ocean levels, it also puts pollutants in the air that cause respiratory problems, heart diseases, and death. Five Academies of science have called for reductions in air pollution to save lives. In a review of the impact of air pollution on low income communities, scientist say "air pollution is responsible for at least 5 million premature deaths per year." (McNutt M, Dzau V. Academies' Call to Action: Air Pollution Threatens Global Health. *Ann Glob Health*. 2019;85(1):145. Published 2019 Dec 16. doi:10.5334/aogh.2660). The review was done prior to the pandemic, and so this doesn't even include deaths coronavirus causes among those with compromised respiratory systems.

Ozone in particular causes lung damage, and methane is an ozone precursor. We don't need more methane leaking from pipelines into our air. We're not even detecting all the methane -- methane in the atmosphere is apparently seriously under-reported (<https://cleantechnica.com/2020/02/21/methane-emissions-under-reported-study-claims/>).

If our healthcare system collapses under the pressure of patients dying from coronavirus, and health care workers catching and possibly dying from it, it will be in part due to the pollution that fossil fuels have been spewing into the air over the last century.

The coronavirus is just one more reason to stop use of fossil fuels as fast as we can.

Healthcare Workers Need Your Help

What is #GetMePPE?

Healthcare workers need our help right now to make sure they can do their jobs to protect us. #GetMePPE is a movement of healthcare workers demanding we get the protection we need to protect ourselves and our patients.

There is not enough personal protective equipment for American healthcare workers - nurses, doctors, and other hospital staff. This is the result of the failure of our Federal government, which is not doing nearly enough to get healthcare workers the equipment they need to protect themselves and their patients. Meanwhile, the CDC is asking medical professionals to use bandanas to protect themselves.

The Federal government needs to protect us, but President Trump has refused to invoke the Defense Production Act, our most important law to produce the necessary materials in times of emergency.

Healthcare workers came together to launch an open sign-on letter to Trump calling for him to use the Defense Production Act to produce the PPE and ventilators we need. Already, 9,000 healthcare workers have signed on. Now we need your help to expand our movement even further.

As reported in the NY Times March 24, 2020, the need for gloves, gowns, masks, and face shields is extreme. Gov. Gavin Newsom said that California is trying to acquire about 1 billion sets of gloves and hundreds of millions of gowns, surgical masks and face shields. In another story in the Times, Texas Governor Greg Abbott lamented the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) available for health workers. He said they were seeing delivery dates in July.

You can help: Sign the petition at <https://getusppe.org/getmeppe/> and tell the US Trade Representative to drop tariffs on protective equipment and medical supplies from China at <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=USTR-2020-0014>.

UU FaithAction 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