



Environmental Justice Task Force

2020 Spring Annual Report (October 2019 – May 2020)

SUMMARY

2020 Goals

In the fall of 2019, the EJTF voted to focus primarily on two goals for the coming year:

- Mandatory emissions reductions in EJ communities, along with transitioning to electric vehicles, especially buses and trucks.
- Mitigating lead in the New Jersey water supply.

EJTF members attended meetings, testified at hearings, issued action alerts and participated in educational forums about the New Jersey Energy Master Plan that would set goals of 100% clean energy by 2050. The EMP was finalized by the administration in January 2020. Our work to promote the emission reductions and electrification of transportation sector continues.

Activities related to Core Goals:

Three **bills we supported were passed into law** in January. They were: S2252, which supports use of plug-in electric vehicles; A1030, which gives condominiums the right to install EV charging stations; and S721, which authorizes electric school buses .

Nancy compiled a **YouTube video** explaining the basics of **the Energy Master Plan** for EJTF members to share with their congregations. Available on EJTF website.

We submitted comments to the NJ DEP regarding Governor Murphy's initiative "**Protecting against Climate Change**" (PACT).

An article on **Clean Energy and the Health Impacts of Climate Change**, written by Nancy Griffeth and Valerie Griffeth, was published in the Star Ledger. Available on EJTF webpage under News and Blogs <https://www.uufaithaction.org/blog/>

Through our partnership with Empower New Jersey, we continued to advocate for a **moratorium on fossil fuel infrastructure projects** by calling the Governor's office on "moratorium Mondays" and attending rallies. Infrastructure projects we oppose include NESE pipeline, NJ Transit Powerplant, Meadowlands Plant. SRL pipeline, PennEast Pipeline, Williams Transco Gateway Expansion Project in Roseland, Meadowlands Power Plant, and others.

We participated in forums related to Climate Change; and signed on to a letter to support A4606/ S3215 to use **20 year timeframe for calculating global warming impact of GHG**. CCL leaders Nadine Sapirman and Ann Perry presented benefits of **Citizen Climate Lobby's Carbon Fee and Dividend** approach to lowering carbon emissions at an EJTF meeting. Members participated in weekly Climate Strikes

We also signed a letter in support of National bill to **stop federal permits for fracked gas projects**.

Members testified at a virtual public hearing by DOT in **opposition to the proposal to expand the NJ Turnpike and GS Parkway**.

Nancy is **building partnerships with EJ organizations** including Ironbound (Newark) and New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance (NJEJA) by attending their meetings, public hearings and endorsing letters. Nancy participated in Transit Equity Day by handing out flyers. Sally participates in ongoing NJ Transit meetings.

Nancy worked with UUFA Board to secure Environmental Justice leaders in New Jersey as **keynote speakers for the June 6 Annual Meeting of UU FaithAction NJ**. **Dr. Ana Baptista and Dr. Nicky Sheats** both serve on the Board of NJEJA and have long and distinguished careers in Environmental Justice. Jo Sippie-Gora confirmed **Maya K. Rossum for the EJTF breakout session** held during the Annual Meeting. Maya is a veteran environmentalist and original petitioner and leader of the **Green Amendment** movement as well as author of “The Green Amendment: Securing Our Right to A Healthy Environment.”

Nancy worked with EJ Partners Rev. Dr. Randall M. Lassiter and Rev. James Bailey to help draft OpEd entitled *Cleaner Air Shouldn't Require a Global Pandemic*. It ran in NJ.COM around Earth Day.

On behalf of UU FaithAction and in partnership with Nicole Scott-Harris Nancy Griffith applied to the UUA for **funding for a new project to engage, educate and empower UU youth and youth from underserved neighboring communities** to learn together about environmental projects.

Ray Nichols continues to follow legislation regarding **lead in drinking water** and has testified at hearings in support of replacing lead pipes (S3990, S1440, S4177).

Other Items:

The EJTF **newsletter has been published monthly**, covering activities throughout New Jersey related to our goals. News articles, upcoming workshops, conferences and other events are noted as well as photos of members participating in activities and news articles about events from individual congregations. Thanks to Carol Hemington for her tireless work in compiling this information each month. All newsletters are available on the UUFA website <https://www.uufaithaction.org/blog/>

Members attended hearings for **plastic bag legislation**.

Many **Earth Day activities** were planned by UU Congregations around the state but due to COVID 19 restrictions, many were changed to virtual events. A **calendar of Earth Day events** was listed in the April issue of EJTF Newsletter.

We supported Governor's **appointees to Pinelands Commission and Highlands Commission** but need to push for Senate confirmation.

We signed letter of support for Green Amendment. Maya K. van Rossum was scheduled to speak at several congregations before in person services were suspended due to Coronavirus. Throughout the year members have collected signatures in support of the Green Amendment

In April, we held a separate ZOOM discussion about **our work and its connection to COVID-19**. New research from Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that higher levels air pollution, specifically PM 2.5 were associated with higher death rates from the disease.