



Environmental Justice Task Force Newsletter

October 2020

[covering 8/28/2020 – 9/25/2020] <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.

**NJ IS MAKING GREAT STRIDES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT!
THE EJ CUMULATIVE IMPACTS BILL WAS SIGNED INTO LAW and
THE U.S.'s STRONGEST PLASTICS/PAPER BAN BILL PASSED THE LEGISLATURE!
These are BOTH huge victories - thanks to all who called, emailed, and messaged the legislature.
This is truly evidence that action and persistence actually do work!**



The photo above shows the historic signing of the Environmental Justice Cumulative Impacts bill (see articles on p. 12) at a park in Newark's Ironbound section. In the photo, Governor Murphy is in the middle, with NJ Senator Troy Singleton (second row, straight behind the governor) and NJ Assemblyman John McKeon (first row, to the governor's right), who were the bill's sponsors. Also in the photo, and instrumental in defining and pushing the bill, are (left to right, first row, to the governor's left) Kim Gaddy of Clean Water Action, Maria Lopez-Nunez of Ironbound Community Corporation, and Melissa Miles of the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance (NJEJA). Nicky Sheats of NJEJA is visible behind Melissa Miles.



In the photo at left are Maria Lopez-Nunez, Kim Gaddy, and Melissa Miles, with Governor Murphy to their left and Senator Cory Booker (who is introducing a similar bill at the national level) to their right.

At the signing ceremony, the Governor gave a lot of credit to the three ladies shown above, who were instrumental in defining and pushing the bill. Also, Kim Gaddy spoke about how important it was that they all did it together, Troy Singleton gave John McKeon a lot of credit for getting the bill through, and John McKeon spoke about NJ Senator Loretta Weinberg's work on the bill, starting 10 years ago. [Photos by EJTF member Nancy Griffeth.]

UU CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

MORRISTOWN UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP

On September 21, 2020, the Green Earth Ministry of the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship (MUF) hosted an online public viewing of the film "The Story of Plastic," which concluded with a lively Zoom discussion. This 2019 documentary takes a sweeping look at the man-made crisis of plastic pollution and its worldwide effects on the health of the Earth and its people. After the film, Michele Gaynor of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) made a brief report on the state's plastic reduction bill, which passed both houses of the legislature on September 24 and is awaiting signature by Governor Murphy (see articles on p. 18).



The post-viewing discussion included questions such as:

- The heroes featured in "The Story of Plastic" are working on the problem across all fronts, from petrochemicals, to ocean pollution, to zero waste. Do you identify with any of the heroes? How so?
- "The Story of Plastic" illustrates how we can't recycle our way out of the plastic pollution crisis. What steps can we take to address the problem at the source? Does the film make you question your own (or your school's, or your company's) plastic use/recycling methods? What can you do to address the problem?
- The plastics value chain is complex and spans the globe. What stage of the plastics value chain (from oil and gas extraction to plastic production and distribution to consumption and finally disposal, recycling, incineration, and export) are present in your community or region? Are there any efforts by local groups to address these impacts that you can support? What are steps that you as an individual or community can take?
- How might we reimagine a future without single-use plastics? What kinds of policies and systems might we implement (both in our communities and on a wider scale) to help us get there?



In June, the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship (MUF) congregation had passed a Resolution declaring the global climate crisis a "humanitarian and spiritual emergency requiring the Fellowship's full commitment to help alleviate the causes... and reduce its impact," and a Climate Crisis Task Force (CCTF) was created. Following several open brainstorming sessions, the CCTF created a sub-team to liaison with MUF's Gateways (building expansion) group. Another sub-team explored assorted options that could include every member directly, and the "People's EcoChallenge" was selected. Also, to hasten the exchange of ideas, actions, and successes virtually, a "Fellowship Green Corner" was created on Facebook for members. Some members have increased advocacy for legislative action by way of UU-affiliated groups, but there are many more opportunities!

EJTF ACTIVITIES

- **EJTF Co-Chair Peggy Middaugh** attended the September 12, 2020 rally in support of the Liberty State Park Protection Act, which would remove forever the possibility of private interests purchasing parts of the park for private gain. It would also keep development from Caven Point, an incredible wildlife sanctuary and the longest stretch of natural beach left in New York Harbor. (See articles on p. 20.) A wonderful 360-degree video of the Caven Point area is here: <https://vimeo.com/263792722>.



Caven Point is a naturalists' delight, right in the middle of an industrial area, and is used extensively by Jersey City residents. Speakers at the rally reiterated the overwhelming support for the LSP Protection Act from community members, the Mayor, and councilors, all of whom want to preserve the public park. A billionaire golf club developer has wanted to expand Liberty National golf course into Caven Point.

- **EJTF Member Nancy Griffeth** testified at the September 9, 2020 NJ Transit Board Meeting, regarding the proposed NJ Transit natural gas-fired power plant in Kearny. Nancy's statement is below.

EJTF Member Nancy Griffeth's Statement at the NJ Transit Board Meeting 9/9/2020

"I'm Nancy Griffeth, from Westfield NJ. I'm a member of the Environmental Justice Task Force of the Unitarian Universalist Faith Action New Jersey. We're a faith-based group that believes in justice, equity, and compassion in human relations and in the interdependent web of all existence, and that's why I'm calling. My primary concern about this power plant is the health of residents of the communities around the NJ TransitGrid. The state legislature has just passed a bill recognizing the fact that overburdened communities need special consideration in approval of such facilities. Pollutants emitted by power plants are known to cause both respiratory diseases and cancer, which are both much higher in Kearny than in the rest of the New York/Newark metro area. Such pollutants are also related to increased risk of death from COVID. The level of environmental damage and the consequent unnecessary deaths in a community like Kearny are inexcusable, and most certainly should not be increased even more. Other commenters are discussing sound alternatives to this power plant. Please consider them, and stop this project before we kill more people. Thank you for listening."

- **EJTF member Christine Dunbar** has continued involvement in actions related to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company's (TGP) proposed expansion of the Wantage compressor station and a new West Milford compressor station, including providing comments. A number of public comments have been submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regarding the TGP 300 expansion, and the TGP Environmental Information Request document (CD20-493-000) has

been completed by TGP. The comments, and the TGP Environmental Information Request questions and responses (a total of 148 pages), can be accessed by entering "TGP 300" in the "Keyword Search" field at <https://elibrary.ferc.gov/eLibrary/search>. In addition, an Environmental Assessment that will take 4-6 months to complete will be done. TGP has also submitted an application for expansion to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and interested parties are waiting to see what process will follow; there is a coalition of concerned residents and organizations that is forming at this time.

- The September 2020 EJTF monthly Zoom meeting included a presentation and Q&A by Kim Gaddy, Environmental Justice Coordinator of Clean Water Action. During the Q&A, EJTF Co-Chair Ray Nichols asked what the current top priority issues are, so that the EJTF may take these into consideration when deciding what to focus on. Kim provided the following list: 1) completion of the regulations implementing the EJ Cumulative Impacts bill that just passed; 2) completion of infrastructure related to replacing lead service lines; 3) opposition to expansion of highways; and 4) support of the Green Amendment.

EVENTS

(some in person, most online - some upcoming, and some past but viewable as videos)

[EJTF members - also watch for email announcements of events with short lead times!]

New Jersey Tree Foundation Fall Volunteer Tree Planting IN PERSON EVENTS Multiple dates



The NJ Tree Foundation Fall Volunteer Tree Planting schedule is shown below. The number of volunteers is limited for each event: the number next to the event is the maximum number of people allowed. Please email or call the contacts shown below to RSVP yourself or your group, and carefully read the safety measures for this fall, available here: <https://njtrees.org/volunteering-in-the-new-normal/>.

Renaissance Tree Program Tree Plantings

Contact cwessel@njtreefoundation.org or 609-439-1755 to volunteer.

- October 7, 2020 - Fisherman's Park, Atlantic City (15 trees, 30 volunteers)
- October 17, 2020 - Pomona Ave, Newark (18 trees, 40 volunteers)
- November 14, 2020 - Ironbound Neighborhood, Newark (10 trees, 30 volunteers)

Urban Airshed Reforestation Program Tree Plantings

Contact Meredith Brown at 856-287-4488/mbrown@njtreefoundation.org to volunteer.

- October 3, 2020 - 24th & Howell St (10 trees, 30 volunteers)
- October 10, 2020 - 6th & Bailey Streets (11 trees, 33 volunteers)
- October 24, 2020 - 4th & Washington Park (16 trees, 48 volunteers)
- October 27 and October 28, 2020 - Liney Ditch Park (48 trees, 144 volunteers)
- October 31, 2020 - 600 block Mount Vernon St (12 trees, 36 volunteers)

"Environment New Jersey Electric Vehicle 101" Webinar
Thursday, October 1, 2020, 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Curious about what it would be like to own an electric vehicle (EV)? Interested in learning more about electric vehicles? Join this online event during National Drive Electric Week, hosted by Environment America and Environment New Jersey, to learn about EVs from a panel of electric vehicle owners and industry experts. You'll hear about all the benefits to owning an electric vehicle, and the answers to some EV frequently asked questions. RSVP here to receive the event information:

https://environmentnewjersey.webaction.org/p/salsa/event/common/public/?event_KEY=973.

Sustainable Jersey "Just Eat It" Virtual Film Screening and Discussion
Thursday, October 1, 2020, 7:00 p.m. - to 9:00 p.m.

The Tri-County Sustainability Alliance (TriCSA), a Sustainable Jersey Regional Hub, will hold a virtual film screening of the documentary, "Just Eat It," about the issue of food waste and possible solutions for the future. The movie follows the journey of a couple who attempt to demonstrate the magnitude of food waste by quitting grocery stores and living entirely off of discarded food. This film shows: how 40% of all food generated and 25% of all food purchased is wasted; steps we can take to prevent food waste; and how sound management saves wallets, the impoverished, and the planet. Following the screening, the TriCSA will hold an interaction discussion with producer Jen Rustemeyer. Registration is required: <https://www.sustainablejersey.com/events/calendar/>.

ANJEC 2020 Environmental Congress - Virtual
Ten Thursday evening and Friday mid-day sessions throughout the month of October

The ANJEC (Association of NJ Environmental Commissions) 2020 Environmental Congress will be presented all through October in an all-virtual format. The agenda including speakers, and registration information, is available here: <https://anjec.org/anjec-2020-environmental-congress/>. The fee for all 10 sessions is \$25 for ANJEC members, \$35 for non-members. All sessions will be recorded and shared to all those registered. Here is a summary of the agenda:

Thursday, October 1, 6:00 p.m. - Welcome and Introduction to the Environmental Congress
Thursday, October 8, 6:00 p.m. - Workshop Session: Climate Resilience Initiatives & Programs
Friday, October 2, 12:00 p.m. (noon) - Presentation & Q&A: Catherine McCabe, NJDEP Commissioner
Friday, October 9, 12:00 p.m. (noon) - Workshop Session: Stormwater, Green Infrastructure
Thursday, October 15, 6:00 p.m. - Social Evening: Featured NJ performers and artists
Friday, October 16, 12:00 p.m. (noon) - Keynote: Judith Enck, Founder, Beyond Plastics
Thursday, October 22, 6:00 p.m. - Workshop Session: New Jersey Legislative Update
Friday, October 23, 12:00 p.m. (noon) - Workshop Session: Clean Energy Projects in New Jersey
Thursday, October 29th, 6:00 p.m. - Workshop Session: Environmental Justice Advances
Friday, October 30th, 12:00 p.m. (noon) - Reports from successful Environmental Commissions

Webinar: "New Jersey Leading the Way on Climate Change Solutions Part II: Opportunities for Leadership - Learning from the Past to Inform the Future"
Friday, October 2, 2020, 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

A Virtual Dialogue between Thomas H. Kean, 48th Governor of New Jersey, James J. Florio, 49th Governor of New Jersey, and Christine Todd Whitman, 50th Governor of New Jersey. Sponsored by the NJ Climate Change Alliance and the Rutgers University Eagleton Institute of Politics Center on the American Governor. Registration is required: <https://njadapt.rutgers.edu/news-events/upcoming-events>

Webinar - Meet and Greet with New NJDEP Deputy Commissioner on Environmental Justice and Equity - Olivia Glenn
Friday, October 9, 2020, 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) just appointed a new Deputy Commissioner on Environmental Justice and Equity, Olivia Glenn, to ensure that all of its programs work to meet racial justice and equity principles. Together with the recent passage of a landmark environmental justice bill that will reduce pollution in communities of color, this role will be pivotal in moving NJ closer to achieving its equitable, clean energy goals. Ensuring that NJ's environmental policies, programs, and decisions are truly equitable and just will be a massive undertaking. Getting the opportunity to engage with Deputy Commissioner Glenn early in her new role about the issues facing NJ's low-income and communities of color will help ensure that we continue to move in the right direction, especially as we continue to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change.

The NJ League of Conservation Voters, Coopers Ferry Partnership, and Urban Promise Ministries are sponsoring this meet and greet with Deputy Commissioner Glenn. She'll discuss what DEP hopes to achieve in the coming months to truly protect everyone living in NJ. Also joining in the webinar will be Deputy Commissioner and Chief of Staff Shawn LaTourette and Chief Advisor of Regulatory Affairs Sean Moriarty, who are working with Deputy Commissioner Glenn to see that DEP meets the highest standards. RSVP here to receive the login information:
<https://secure.everyaction.com/f2ItJ4eaWk6O7aXD6okxZw2>

"Save the Sourlands Solo Fest" Online
Saturday, October 10, 2020, 8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Join the Sourland Conservancy for a musical and educational celebration of the beauty and importance of NJ's Sourland Mountain region, a vital 90-square mile natural area facing an invasive insect that will kill 1 million ash trees. NJ musicians will entertain amid stunning landscapes, as naturalists explain the importance of the Sourlands as a source of water, a wildlife habitat, and as a defense against climate change. Go to: www.sourland.org/solofest.

4th Annual Delaware Watershed Research Conference **Virtual**
Thursday, October 22, 2020, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Registration is now open for the all-virtual 4th Annual Delaware Watershed Research Conference, which is a component of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University's initiative to encourage novel research throughout the Delaware River Watershed and to foster collaboration among the growing research community. This gathering will serve as a platform for experts in their respective disciplines to discuss the state of watershed research, particularly within the Delaware River Watershed, toward answering management and conservation questions. In the past, topics have ranged from environmental monitoring, novel research, and ecological modeling, to economic, social, and political effects and implications. Registration is free this year, but is required for all attendees. Anyone doing research within the Delaware River Basin is encouraged to attend. A full agenda is coming soon - in the meantime, contact Kathryn Longwill at kab543@drexel.edu with any questions. The website is here: <http://www.delriverwatershed.org/events-1/2020/10/22/4th-annual-delaware-watershed-research-conference-online>.

Security and Sustainability Forum **Webinars**

Several EJTF members recommend the webinars of the Security and Sustainability Forum (SSF). The SSF "convenes global experts to address the impacts to society from climate and other disruptions to natural systems." The main SSF products are free webinars on energy, food and water security, public health, urban resilience, economic vitality, infrastructure, governance and other impacts that must be solved in meeting climate security challenges. The following are several webinars that may be of interest:

**"Money Isn't What You Think It Is, nor Is Debt -
Steering Societies Beyond GDP to the SDGs" (2 webinars)**
Thursday, October 8, 2020, 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.
& Thursday, October 22, 2020, 1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

These two webinars in the SSF series, with ecological economist and futurist Hazel Henderson, look at the future and sustainability. They address how the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) can and should replace Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as the basis for valuing society, leading to an economy based on planet protection and human wellbeing. GDP accounts for all the public expenditures as "debt" while ignoring the value of the assets they created. If GDP were to be corrected by including the missing asset account, these debt-to-GDP ratios would be cut by up to 50%. Learn why money isn't what you think it is and why that matters to life on Earth.

October 8 - Vicki Robin, coauthor with Joe Dominguez of the international best-seller "Your Money or Your Life: Transforming Your Relationship With Money and Achieving Financial Independence," is the October 8th guest. Register here:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/9185257874558317072>

October 22 - Claudine Schneider is the October 22nd guest. She is a former Republican U.S. Representative from Rhode Island. She was the first, and to date only, woman elected to Congress from Rhode Island. She is founder of Republicans for Integrity, which describes itself as a network of "Republican former Members of Congress who feel compelled to remind Republican voters about the fundamentals of our party and to provide the facts about incumbents' voting records." Register here:

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4403503795593068816>

Security and Sustainability Forum **Webinars** (cont.)

How State Governments Can Help Communities Invest in Climate Resilience **Wednesday, October 14, 2020, 1:15 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.**

This SSF webinar deals with states' resources related to local climate challenges. The challenge of climate resilience is mostly local. But local governments don't have all of the capacities, including financial wherewithal, to cope alone during the next decades. States have the ability and responsibility to make a difference in building local climate resilience. They reap the rewards of improved quality of life, reduced disaster impacts and increased economic stability for their constituents. In this interactive session, state and local leaders from around the country and resilience finance experts will share their insights, and will discuss:

- What financial strategies can state governments use to help local governments invest in climate resilience?
- What resources do states have to fund and finance resilience?
- How can states expand federal pre-disaster funding?
- What can states do to enable local governments to raise local funds for resilience projects?
- How can private investment in local resilience be increased?

Register here: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2065867308970078223>

New Energy: Conversations with Early-Career Energy Researchers

"Interdependent Energy Infrastructure Systems" Webinar **Wednesday, October 7, 2020, 12:00 p.m.**

This presentation by Steffi Muhanji and Wester Schoonenberg of Dartmouth College is part of the series "New Energy: Conversations with Early-Career Energy Researchers" (see p. 9 for more information about the series). Two major trends dominate the 21st century's changing energy landscape: globalization and climate change. Climate change challenges that are constantly threatening the growing urban populations require not only sustainable infrastructure systems that can cater to the growing needs of the urban population, but also the resilience of these systems and communities towards the effects of climate change. While decarbonization of key infrastructure systems is paramount, recognizing the operational interdependence of various systems such as energy-water, and energy-transportation is necessary to realize their synergistic benefits. This presentation covers the study of such interdependent infrastructure systems from two angles: system structure and system behavior. This includes modeling the structure of interdependent smart city infrastructure systems, and examination of studies of renewable energy integration and the benefits of actively engaging the demand side, showing this can play a prominent grid balancing role in a decarbonized electricity grid. More information is here:

<https://irving.dartmouth.edu/engagement/new-energy-conversations-early-career-energy-researchers>. Register here:

https://dartmouth.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9wv_sczyRKORSKCeV_9S-w.

"Energy, Poverty and Health in a Changing Climate: Implications for Policy and Practice" Webinar **Wednesday, October 21, 2020, 12:00 p.m.**

This presentation by Diana Hernandez, Columbia University, is part of the series "New Energy: Conversations with Early-Career Energy Researchers" (see p. 9 for more information about the series). One in three households in the US are energy insecure. There are acute and chronic forms of energy

insecurity which stem from persistent poverty and climate-related impacts. The implications of acute and chronic energy insecurity result in direct and indirect adverse health consequences. This presentation will provide a conceptual and empirical overview of the energy, poverty and health nexus in the context of climate change, highlighting policy and practical opportunities to promote energy justice. More information is here: <https://irving.dartmouth.edu/engagement/new-energy-conversations-early-career-energy-researchers>. Register here: https://dartmouth.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1zWbw_-xRxybIVJXFYC-Lw

New Energy: Conversations with Early-Career Energy Researchers is an online series featuring graduate, post-doctoral, and other early-career researchers sharing their discoveries and perspectives on energy-related topics. From policy to analysis to emerging research, this bi-weekly series will give anyone interested in energy the opportunity to learn from the rising stars in the field. For more information about the program, future talks, and for links to past talks, see <https://irving.dartmouth.edu/engagement/new-energy-conversations-early-career-energy-researchers>.

**UN Sunday 2020 "All In for Climate Justice: People, Power, Planet"
October 25, 2020 (or another date of your congregation's choice)**

United Nations Sunday celebrates the work of the United Nations and the Unitarian Universalist Office at the United Nations (UU@UN). Each year the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) encourages congregations to have a service and/or event to celebrate the day. The UN Sunday theme is based on the April Intergenerational Spring Seminar topic, so this year's is "All In for Climate Justice: People, Power, Planet." There is a collection of UN Sunday Resources (available here: <https://www.uua.org/international-justice/un/sunday>) that highlight the suggested theme and provide readings, an RE curriculum, planning timeline and checklist, order of service (including hymns), and more.

The recommended date for a UN Sunday service is the Sunday closest to UN Day (October 24), so the suggested date for UN Sunday in 2020 is October 25. Many congregations choose to have their service on a different day, however.

Rutgers Climate Institute Listing of **Virtual Climate Seminars
Multiple dates**

Multiple online events are listed on this site, including those from the Rutgers Climate Institute and also many climate-related events sponsored by various groups such as EPA, NOAA, and others. Listed below is a small sampling of webinars taking place in October 2020. Further information about these seminars, **including registration information**, and a complete listing of the seminars, both virtual and in-person, for October 2020 is here: .
<https://climatechange.rutgers.edu/events/all-climate-events/month.calendar/2020/10/22/->

Earth Day, Every Day: Ten Ways to Adapt to Coastal Flooding
Monday, October 19, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

**Rutgers Climate Symposium 2020: Public Universities and Transformative Climate
Action for a Just Recovery**
Friday, October 23, 2020, 11:00 a.m.

Health Effects Associated with Harmful Algal Blooms and Algal Toxins

Wednesday, October 28, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

"Securing a Sustainable Energy Transition" **Virtual 2020 Annual Meeting** Princeton University Andlinger Center for Energy + the Environment Friday, October 30, 2020, 10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

The 2020 annual meeting addresses the very important topic of security in a transition to an energy system based on the electric grid. It brings together industry, government, and academic experts to speak on the opportunities, threats, and challenges to decarbonizing the U.S. power sector and building a secure, environmentally sustainable, and resilient 21st century grid. The keynote speaker is Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, a national security expert and energy leader who served as the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy from October 2014 to January 20, 2017. Panels include "Panel: Security Challenges for a Grid in Transition" and "A Conversation with Electric Utility CEOs Leading the Way to a 100% Clean Electricity System," and research presentations will also be given. The agenda and registration (\$35 - \$50) information is here: <https://acee.princeton.edu/2020-annual-meeting/>.

UUFANJ Fall Issues Conference (**Zoom**) Saturday, November 7, 2020, 10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE! -

This is the Conference where we will select the EJTF's goals that we will concentrate on for the next year.

The Fall Issues Conference is at the heart of our ministry together as UU social justice advocates in the state of NJ. This year our first-ever, all-conference theme is "Youth and Justice"--we're really excited to see what youth, young adults, adults and elders from across the state can create together!

Once a year, near the beginning of the state legislative session, UUs from across NJ gather to educate ourselves on the burning political and justice issues of the day in NJ. We worship together, listen to expert speakers on topics UUs care about, then break into smaller Task Force groups. At the end of the day each Task Force votes on the top 2-3 issues it decides to champion over the coming year, often in the form of specific pieces of legislation. Folded into those different proposed bills, however, are many ways to get involved: public witness (rallies, demonstrations, marches, vigils), outreach to other UUs and congregations, working closely with many coalition partners including the NJ Environmental Justice Alliance, etc.

Additional information and registration is available here:

<https://uufaithactionnj.salsalabs.org/2020issuesconference/>

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>

RESOURCES

Princeton University Andlinger Center for Energy + the Environment "Rapid Switch" Website is now live

For those of you interested in keeping up with international research related to decarbonization, "Rapid Switch," the global decarbonization initiative spearheaded by the Andlinger Center, has launched its website. There you can find resources for connecting with the researchers, and explore the projects, partners, and news updates. The first findings are expected in the Fall 2020.

Rapid Switch is a solutions-focused, international research effort that aims to identify a realistic pace and pathways for decarbonizing the world, sector by sector, and region by region. Led by Princeton University's Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment, the research network seeks to identify viable decarbonization opportunities using existing technologies while acknowledging regional technological, social, political, and economic constraints. In a series of reports, the researchers will identify roadblocks and unintended consequences that could slow the deployment and scale-up of more sustainable technologies with an eye to address these potential bottlenecks before they arise. Currently, partner institutions and researchers represent the U.S., India, China, Australia, the U.K., and other world-wide institutions. <https://acee.princeton.edu/rapidswitch/>

Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Green Sanctuary 2020 Edition Issued



The UUA Green Sanctuary (GS) Program has issued "Green Sanctuary 2020: A Faithful Response to Climate Urgency," the 7th iteration since the GS Program began in 1989. All congregations are invited to use this program whether or not they are interested in GS accreditation. This 2020 edition "calls for a much more widely shared level of UU congregational climate action and climate engagement, infused with spirit and passion to join others in climate action and justice. GS provides a path that offers the gift of transformation to congregations. It begins with spiritually grounded depth and moves the whole congregation through a continuous spiral of awareness and commitment, resulting in transformed congregational life and courageous, ongoing climate action." More information and links are available here:

<https://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary/green-sanctuary-2020-faithful-response-climate-urgency>.

"CivicStory" Newsletter

In addition to the "NJ Spotlight" daily newsletter (subscribe here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/newsletters/>), another periodic newsletter is produced in NJ by "CivicStory." It is devoted primarily to issues of interest to NJ residents, and often has articles on topics related to the issues EJTF follows. CivicStory (<https://www.civicstory.org>) is a nonprofit news site focused on sustainability, civics, and creative change in NJ, with the mission of advancing solutions-based news about citizens building healthy communities. A link to previous newsletters is here: <https://www.civicstory.org/newsletter-archive>

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

- **Governor Murphy Signs Historic Environmental Justice Legislation** - This is Governor Murphy's press release describing the "nation's strongest measure to protect overburdened communities from pollutants," which fulfils a commitment he made "to enact sweeping protections for environmental justice communities." The law requires 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. NJ is the first state to require mandatory permit denials if an environmental justice analysis determines a new facility will have a disproportionately negative impact on overburdened communities.
<https://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20200918a.shtml>
- **NJ Towns Burdened by Pollution Now Have Power To Say 'No'** - Since 2008, environmental justice advocates have been fighting for legislation such as this, that would require consideration of cumulative impacts when siting new facilities that could increase pollution in communities already overburdened by it. The law is touted as the strongest of its kind in the nation. "It is long past time that our environmental protections actually protect all of our citizens, especially those communities who have been historically burdened by pollution and environmental injustice," said U.S. Senator Cory Booker. "By evaluating the cumulative environmental impacts on communities when it comes to the permitting of certain facilities, we will make better, more thoughtful and inclusive decisions." Senator Booker is working on a similar initiative in the U.S. Senate. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is now tasked with developing regulations to implement the law .
<https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/nj-towns-burdened-by-pollution-now-have-power-to-say-no/>

- Polluters in NJ's Lower-Income, Minority Communities Under Fire** - NJ Attorney General Grewal and NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner McCabe announced the filing of 12 new environmental enforcement actions targeting polluters whose actions threaten the health and safety of residents in minority and lower-income communities in Newark, Orange, South Orange, Paterson, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Hillside, Fairton and Upper Deerfield Township. Photos of the sites are available here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/newjerseyoag/sets/72157715654858172/> and the press release, including a map, is here: <https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases20/pr20200827b.html>. Many of the properties have pollutants known to contribute to health problems including respiratory tract irritation, chronically reduced lung function, kidney problems, neurological disorders and certain cancers, and which may exacerbate COVID-19 risks. Since announcement of the State's environmental justice initiative in 2018, Attorney General Grewal and Commissioner McCabe have filed numerous lawsuits, making New Jersey a national leader in environmental justice enforcement. <https://patch.com/new-jersey/mendham-chester/polluters-nj-s-lower-income-minority-communities-under-fire>
- NBC News Video: Neighborhood Pollution Contributing to Higher Asthma Rates among Black Americans** - NBC News interviewed Kim Gaddy, Environmental Justice Organizer, Clean Water Action and Melissa Miles, Executive Director, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance (NJEJA) on NBC National News about air pollution in Newark. "In Newark, New Jersey, where the population is 50 percent Black and 36 percent Latino, the rate of emergency visits for asthma is more than ten times greater than in Livingston, a mostly white community within the same county. A major factor is the pollution, advocates say." <https://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news/video/neighborhood-pollution-contributing-to-higher-asthma-rates-among-black-americans-91224133829>

ELECTRIC VEHICLES



- Cleaner Air From Zero-Emission Vehicles Could Save Thousands of Lives, Study Says** - A report prepared for the American Lung Association, "The Road to Clean Air: Benefits of a Nationwide Transition to Electric Vehicles" (available here: <https://d1ung6iqj8iqxc.cloudfront.net/wp-content/blogs.dir/123/files/2020/09/ALA-electric-vehicle-report.pdf>) finds that: "...transitioning to zero-emission transportation solutions along with increasing levels of renewable energy by mid-century will save thousands of lives, avoid tens of thousands of asthma attacks, hundreds of thousands of other health impacts, and avoid tens of billions of dollars in health costs as a result of significant pollution reductions. In addition, moving to eliminate combustion from the transportation sector will yield significant reductions in greenhouse gases that drive wide-ranging climate change impacts on air quality and public health. The dual air pollution and climate change health crises facing America today must be addressed immediately, with electric vehicles and clean energy playing a leading role in the solution." <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/zero-emission-vehicles-electric-vehicles-asthma-heart-disease-transportation-pollution-fossil-fuels/>

- **ICCT: Update on Electric Vehicle Adoption Across U.S. Cities** - This article provides statistics from the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) about electric vehicle adoption in the U.S., and provides a map showing electric vehicle shares of new 2019 vehicle registrations by across the U.S. <https://www.automotiveworld.com/news-releases/icct-update-on-electric-vehicle-adoption-across-u-s-cities/>

LEAD IN DRINKING WATER

- **Newark Says Lead Water Pipes Nearly All Replaced** - One year after receiving the assistance of a \$120 million loan from Essex County, and working at a rate of 65 lead service line replacements a day, Newark has reached the final stage of the project with nearly 15,000 of the City's 18,000+ lead service lines replaced with copper pipes at no cost to taxpayers or residents. <https://www.njspotlight.com/video/newark-says-lead-water-pipes-nearly-all-replaced/>

FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Foes of Gibbstown LNG Plan Hope DRBC Delay Means Project Can Be Stopped** - The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) represents the final approval needed for construction of NJ's first liquified natural gas (LNG) export terminal, proposed for Gibbstown, NJ. The DRBC had initially approved the project in 6/2019, but suspended that decision to allow a quasi-judicial hearing in 5/2020, requested by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network to present arguments as to why the project should not proceed. A rumored vote for 9/11/2020 (see article below) has been delayed pending additional review of the materials provided at the 5/2020 meeting. A letter signed by 133 groups, including UUFANJ, (available here: <https://delawareriverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/sign%20on%20ltr%20DRBC%20Gibbstown%20LNG%20Export%20updttd.pdf>) lays out reasons why the project should not proceed, and requests that the Commissioners vote "no" on its approval. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/gibbstown-south-jersey-lng-terminal-drbc-delayed-decision-opponents-hope-stop/>
- **First Natural Gas Terminal for Tanker Ships May Get Final Vote** - The vote described in this article (which was not included on the official agenda for the Delaware River Basin Commission's (DRBC) meeting) was postponed - see article above - however, this article provides background information about the issues involved in the proposed Gibbstown Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) export terminal. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/gibbstown-lng-terminal-september-10-decision-possible-last-minute-protests/>
- **More Join Attack on Trump Water-Rule Rollback** - In 7/2020, NJ joined 18 other states and the District of Columbia in filing a lawsuit to block "updated" regulations issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that govern Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). The CWA Section 401 has been used by states to block proposed energy projects like new natural-gas pipelines and other fossil-fuel projects (that lawsuit is described here: <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/07/trumps-epa-trying-to-strip-away-power-of-states-to-prevent-water-pollution-nj-says/>). Now, a group of tribes in western states and the Sierra Club have filed a similar lawsuit. In their complaint, they state that "The CWA's single objective is to restore and protect the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters and to do so as broadly as possible," and that "EPA admits that its primary motivation in proposing and finalizing the rule is a desire to facilitate the construction of fossil fuel infrastructure." <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/pipeline-fossil-fuel-lawsuit-trump-administration-block-pipeline/>

- **Pipeline Battle in New Jersey May Be Heading to the Supreme Court (video and article) -** This video and article summarize the current status of the ongoing, nearly six-year-long saga of the PennEast pipeline project. PennEast has petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review a Third Circuit decision that the company could not use eminent domain related to state-owned lands, which ran counter to approval it had been given by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to exercise eminent domain. The U.S. Supreme Court has asked the U.S. Solicitor General to file a brief expressing the Trump Administration's views on the issue. <https://www.njspotlight.com/news/video/penneast-pipeline-battle-in-new-jersey-may-be-heading-to-the-supreme-court/>

RENEWABLE RESOURCES

- **Offshore Wind in NJ Gets Boost, But Lawmakers Demand a Halt to One Project -** The NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) issued a second solicitation for offshore wind farms, which could triple the capacity to up to 2,400 additional megawatts. However, the previously-approved 1,100 wind farm is being questioned by some legislators regarding whether it is meeting its commitment to provide the economic benefits in its application. These include building a manufacturing facility, hiring union labor, and setting up a fund for minority- and women-owned businesses (see article below). The BPU also approved the final offshore-wind strategic plan, and entered into agreements for workplace training programs in offshore wind and to provide funds for clean-technology companies. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/offshore-wind-1200-megawatts-solicitation-bpu-orsted-halt/>
- **Offshore Wind Promised New Jobs and Economic Development. Where Are They? -** A group representing fishermen has asked for a five-year moratorium on offshore-wind projects, and business and consumer advocates are concerned that higher energy bills will result from the projects. In addition, some legislators are questioning whether the previously-approved 1,100 wind farm is meeting its commitment to provide the economic benefits in its application, including building a manufacturing facility, hiring union labor, and setting up a fund for minority- and women-owned businesses. One issue is delay in development of a monopole-manufacturing facility, which still has not been built; the delay may deprive NJ of being the center of wind energy monopole manufacturing in the region, since probably only one facility will be needed. Jeff Tittel, director of the NJ Sierra Club, referring to the ongoing dispute, said "This sends a chill through the whole sector. More importantly, it could hold up the industry in New Jersey." <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/nj-offshore-wind-orsted-plans-lawmakers-doubt-raise-jobs-costs-concerns/>
- **New Jersey Wind Port Project in Salem County is the Next Big Thing -** This article describes the anticipated local impact of the planned "New Jersey Wind Port" in Salem County for assembling wind turbines that was announced by Governor Murphy in June. It will be the first port in the U.S. solely intended as a location to serve the offshore wind sector. According to Liz Burdock, CEO and president of the Business Network for Offshore Wind, "By providing a location that can accommodate the industry's manufacturing and marshalling needs, the New Jersey Wind Port would make New Jersey an international leader in offshore wind and a hub of the East Coast wind industry." https://srhub.org/2020/08/31/new-jersey-wind-port-project-in-salem-county-is-the-next-big-thing/?mc_cid=41f41814d1&mc_eid=96631a0cc1
- **Op-Ed: Locating Solar Arrays on Farmland or Other Open Acreage Is a Bad Idea** (by Barry Chalofsky, a former Bureau Chief in the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, now an environmental and land use planning consultant) - The author refutes some of the arguments given by supporters of legislation to locate solar arrays on farmland and in existing forests, and puts forth the case for utilizing existing impervious surfaces such as surface and garage parking areas and rooftops of large buildings instead. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/solar-arrays-solar-energy-siting-farmland-open-land-land-use/>

- Biggest Solar Farm in New Jersey to Partner with Experienced Solar Grazier** - This article describes the relationship between the intended Nichomus Run Solar Farm in Pilesgrove Township, which will be NJ's largest, and the sheep planned to graze on it to manage the vegetation, which would otherwise require mechanical mowing (<https://solargrazing.org/biggest-solar-farm-in-new-jersey-to-partner-with-experienced-solar-grazier-asga-member/#>). The project will generate a peak output of around 150 MW of power, equivalent to the demand from 24,000 NJ homes annually. The project is expected to become operational in 2021 or 2022. On May 6, 2020, the project developer, renewable energy company Dakota Power Partners, hosted a live online public forum for Pilesgrove Township residents to learn more about the proposed solar farm. A video of the forum, along with slides and Q&A, are available here: <https://www.nichomusrunsolar.com/public-forum#farming>.



Tiny wind turbines around a Chilean gas station, 2017
(photo - Nancy Griffeth)



Daqing Mountain road, Inner Mongolia, China, 2015 (photo - Carol Hemington)

- U.S. Showers Tiny Wind Turbines With Big Love** - The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) holds a periodic solicitation - the Competitiveness Improvement Project (CIP) - through its National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Through this project, "manufacturers of small- and medium-sized wind turbines are awarded cost-shared subcontracts via a competitive process to optimize their designs, develop advanced manufacturing processes, and perform turbine testing. The goals of the CIP are to make wind energy cost competitive with other distributed generation technologies and increase the number of wind turbine designs certified to national testing standards" (a fact sheet is here: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2020/02/f72/cip-fact-sheet-2020.pdf>) Seven U.S. wind firms have just been selected through the most recent solicitation. Some examples of tiny wind turbines already in use in various countries include those in the photos above, taken in Chile in 2017 and in China in 2015, and in the photos accompanying this article (<https://inhabitat.com/gowanus-whole-foods-opens-with-super-green-parking-lot-powered-by-urban-green-energy/>), showing tiny vertical savonius wind turbines in use at the Whole Foods parking lot in the Gowanus neighborhood, Brooklyn, NY. <https://enviropolitics.com/u-s-showers-tiny-wind-turbines-with-big-love/>

CLIMATE CHANGE

- **Hoboken Files Lawsuit Against Oil Companies Over Climate Change** - The City of Hoboken, NJ has filed a lawsuit against ExxonMobil, Shell, Conoco, Chevron, Phillips66, and the American Petroleum Institute, for the companies' misleading the public about harmful climate-related impacts they knew would be caused by burning fossil fuels. The city is seeking to garner damages to fight the results of the climate change. A copy of the lawsuit (highly recommended reading) which provides an excellent and comprehensive illustrated description of the environmental issues, the impacts on Hoboken, the duplicitousness of the oil companies including copies of misleading advertisements, and the charges against the companies, is available here: https://assets-global.website-files.com/58407e2ebca0e34c30a2d39c/5f4f96db3326ed53317d5150_Hoboken%20v.%20Exxon%20et%20al.%20Complaint%209-2-20.pdf. The lawsuit also makes reference to racial issues, saying, "Like in other cities, the effects of climate change caused by Big Oil companies have had greater impacts on low-income communities and communities of color." <https://patch.com/new-jersey/hoboken/hoboken-files-lawsuit-against-oil-companies-over-climate-change>
- **Greenstein Bills Create "Climate Vulnerability" Plans in Municipalities** - A bill (S2607, as amended) passed the NJ Senate that would "require that the land use plan element of a municipal master plan include a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment." The plan would also need to include mitigation plans related to natural disasters. The bill was referred to the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee. <https://www.tapinto.net/sections/green/articles/greenstein-bills-create-climate-vulnerability-plans-in-municipalities>
- **'NJ Has One of the Worst Sea-level Rises in the World'** - In a virtual event sponsored by the Sustainable Green Team of Cape May, County, the Chief Resilience Officer of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Assistant Manager of the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve Watershed stressed the importance of resilience and adaptation. Here are some quotes from the event: "The cost to address these changing levels is not feasible considering the limitations on resources, including budget and engineering costs, and so we will be focusing on educating New Jersey's citizens about the importance of adapting," and "Our goal is to define resilience as not going back to the status quo but to a position that is better than before." https://www.capemaycountyherald.com/news/article_f148e77c-ec56-11ea-b9a3-9b1fe72cc772.html

DRINKING WATER-RELATED ISSUES (other than lead)

- **Toxic Chemicals at Salem County Site Sharply Exceeded NJ Safety Limits** - Groundwater at a site in Salem County was shown to contain PFAS chemicals at levels thousands of times the health limits set by NJ regulations. PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are termed "forever chemicals" because they do not biodegrade; they are the chemicals that figure in the movie "Dark Waters." <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/pfas-toxic-chemical-tests-chambers-work-nj-greatly-exceed-state-health-limits/>
- **Op-Ed: Clean Water Is the Path to Healthier, More Equitable Communities** (by Lee Clark, the environmental justice policy manager at NJ League of Conservation Voters and a former council member of Phillipsburg, and Andy Kricun, a senior fellow at US Water Alliance, managing director at Moonshot Missions, and former executive director at the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority) - The authors link investment in natural-water infrastructure with economic health, racial and social equity, and environmental sustainability, and point to the Delaware River as an example. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/clean-water-natural-water-infrastructure-rain-gardens-wastewater-treatment-green-stormwater-management/>

POLLUTION



- **Sweeping Ban on Bags, Food Containers Wins Praise after Winning Votes** - If Governor Murphy signs the bill (S864) passed by both houses of the NJ legislature - and he has voiced support for it - NJ will have the most comprehensive law in the U.S. banning most single-use plastic bags, single-use paper bags, and polystyrene containers, and limiting use of plastic straws. Years in development, the law was finally supported even by some who had opposed it, citing their preference to complying with one overall state law rather than with a myriad of programs in multiple localities. Some continue to question the inclusion of paper bags, however. This article shows what would be banned and what would not. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/sweeping-nj-bag-ban-plastic-paper-restricting-polystyrene-foam-food-containers/>
- **Environmental Leaders Cheer NJ Legislative Votes to Pass Single-use Waste Ban Bill Legislation Now Strongest in the Country** - Quotes from multiple environmental leaders from around NJ praise the NJ legislature's approval of what Beyond Plastics founder Judith Enck termed "the single most comprehensive plastics and paper reduction bill in the nation." "This legislation is critical because it could make New Jersey a national leader in trying to stop the plastic menace while coming up with better alternatives," said Jeff Tittel, Director of the NJ Sierra Club. "This is the most comprehensive plastic ban bill in the nation. We are the first state to ban paper bags as well as allow for hemp bags to be used." <https://www.insidernj.com/press-release/environmental-leaders-cheer-nj-legislative-votes-pass-single-use-waste-ban-bill-legislation-now-strongest-country/>
- **Even Paper Bags Will Be Banned From N.J.** - This article describes different sides on issues related to the single-use waste ban bill passed by the NJ legislature, with some critics hoping that Governor Murphy will not uphold the ban on paper bags. Others pointed out a potential increase in costs to restaurants, which are already having economic issues related to the pandemic. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/25/nyregion/nj-paper-plastic-bag-ban.html>
- **AG Grewal Challenges More Rollbacks of Limits on Greenhouse Gas Emissions** - NJ is joining a coalition of 20 states, 2 cities, and the District of Columbia in taking legal action to block new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rollbacks on protections from methane and other hazardous emissions in the oil and gas industry. According to the NJ Office of the Attorney General press release, "If left to stand, the new rules would gut protections adopted by the EPA in 2016 to limit harmful emissions of methane, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and other hazardous pollutants from new, reconstructed, and modified facilities in the oil and natural gas industry. The EPA's rollbacks,

and the resulting increase in methane and other air pollutant emissions, will threaten public health and accelerate the impact of climate change. 'EPA's latest rollbacks will allow more pollution with less accountability,' said Attorney General Grewal. 'This is just the latest example of EPA's reckless race to deregulate, without regard for the science or the consequences. EPA is putting our environment and the health of our residents at risk.' <https://www.nj.gov/oag/newsreleases20/pr20200914a.html>

OTHER

- **State's Electric Utilities Make Plans to Roll Out Smart Meters** - All four of NJ's utility companies have submitted plans to install, or have already installed (in a pilot program) smart meters. NJ had previously had a moratorium on them, but that has been lifted in conjunction with effecting a transition to 100% clean-energy technology. Utilities maintain that smart meters would, among other things, improve the speed of service restoration after storms. The NJ Rate Counsel has some concerns with the speed at which utilities are proposing to install the meters, such as immediately converting all meters including those that have recently been replaced, which would result in great expense. Utilities maintain that customers could see savings from smart meters, related to smarter decisions about electricity use and timing. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/08/smart-meters-ami-electric-utilities-nj-power-grid-advanced-metering-infrastructure/>
- **State Puts More Muscle Behind Push for Clean Energy** - The NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) approved a number of measures at its bi-monthly meeting. It approved a PSE&G energy efficiency proposal (see article below), a plan to set parameters for public vehicle charging stations, and the start of a review of utilities' proposals to install "advanced metering infrastructure" (AMI) including smart meters. The approved energy efficiency proposal marks the first time an electric efficiency portfolio has decoupled profits from sales. Erin Cosgrove, director of regulatory affairs for the Energy Efficiency Alliance for NJ said. "PSE&G will not receive payment from energy sales, but from performing energy-efficiency work for ratepayers all across their territory. This will in turn lower energy costs for everyone." <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/energy-efficiency-clean-energy-electric-vehicles-charging-stations-decoupling-smart-meters/>
- **PSE&G to Accept Curtailed Energy-Efficiency Plan, Still Will Cost Close to \$1B** - A program that PSE&G originally proposed for spending \$2.5 billion over six years for energy efficiency programs was approved by the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) for \$970 million over three years. PSE&G's parent company, Public Service Enterprise Group Inc (PSEG) noted that it is the largest energy investment commitment ever in NJ, and that the investments would cut customer bills by about \$1 billion and stimulate economic growth by creating up to 4,300 jobs. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/pseg-reduced-energy-efficiency-programs-tentative-1-billion-agreement/>
- **Fierce Debate over NJ's Clean-Energy Goals Centers on Possible Abandonment of Regional Power Grid** - This article describes the positions put forth at a recent webinar by various factions in the ongoing complex debate surrounding whether or not NJ should remain in the regional power grid. The NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) has opened a proceeding on this issue. The best method to meet NJ's clean energy goals, as well as implications related to customer costs, are major areas under discussion. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/nj-clean-energy-fight-pjm-regional-power-grid-stay-abandon/>
- **With No Budget Hearings, Activists Hold Their Own** - The NJ Legislature did not schedule any public hearings on the FY2021 budget that is to be approved and enacted by 10/1/2020, but a group held their own virtual "People's Budget Hearing" on their own. Speakers included Doug O'Malley, director of Environment New Jersey, who pointed out that the budget diverted funds from the Clean Energy Fund to subsidize NJ Transit, and asked for establishment of a dedicated source of funds for NJ Transit. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/with-no-budget-hearings-activists-hold-their-own/>

- New Jersey Says Cleanup Coming to Liberty State Park** - Utilizing funds recovered in lawsuits and settlements for natural resource damages, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has announced a proposal for Liberty State Park that would restore natural resources and create access to the interior of the park that has been off limits to the public for decades due to past environmental contamination. The DEP news release, with a description and map, is here: https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2020/20_0037.htm. The DEP plans a future meeting, with presentation materials available online (<https://nj.gov/dep/nrr/>) to invite comments and suggestions from the public. However, the Legislature needs to pass pending legislation (S1449/A 2189) that would establish permanent protections for the park, according to advocates (see article below). "The thing that is missing is keeping privatization out of the park and protecting the park for the future," Jeff Tittel, director of the NJ Sierra Club, said. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/liberty-state-park-pollution-cleanup-lawsuits-dep/>
- Rally at Liberty State Park Calls for Passage of LSP Protection Act as Dissenters Try to Counter** - In this article and video, politicians and environmentalists rallied in favor of the "Liberty State Park Protection Act" (A2189/S1449) which has been introduced in both houses of the NJ legislature but has not seen further activity in either of them to date. The bill would establish some permanent protections against large-scale development in certain areas of the park, require development of a management plan, require public involvement, and establish a Liberty State Park Advisory Committee. <https://hudsoncountyview.com/rally-at-liberty-state-park-calls-for-passage-of-lsp-protection-act-as-dissenters-try-to-counter/>
- Bipartisan Effort Leads To Conservation Victory For New Jersey** - U.S. Representative Mikie Sherrill, U.S. Representative Chris Smith and the entire New Jersey Congressional Delegation helped make possible the full and permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a federal program (part of the Great American Outdoors Act) that has enabled the acquisition and development of thousands of acres of open space and recreation areas in New Jersey. <https://patch.com/new-jersey/longvalley/bipartisan-effort-leads-conservation-victory-new-jersey>
- Atlantic White Cedar Once Fueled NJ Economy, Now It Stands in 'Ghost Forests'** - Sea-level rise and increased flooding due to climate change have negatively impacted the Atlantic white cedar, which once was abundant in NJ. The NJ Audubon group has received \$95,000 in Federal funding, which is being augmented by private funds, for a program to nurture seedlings on 100 acres of private land. <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/atlantic-white-cedar-ghost-forest-restoration-program-south-jersey-sea-level-rise-damage/>
- Op-Ed: With Sustainable Green Jobs, We Can Rebuild** (by Hugh C. Welsh is general counsel, secretary and president of DSM North America, "a global leader in health, nutrition and materials") - The author is supporting the "Sustainable Green Jobs Recovery Agenda" put forward by a "diverse array of business, environmental, recreational, community and planning organizations." <https://www.njspotlight.com/2020/09/op-ed-with-sustainable-green-jobs-we-can-rebuild/> [A letter describing the Agenda, from the groups to Governor Murphy, legislative leaders, and the Restart and Recovery Advisory Council, is here: <https://www.njlc.org/news/letter-sustainable-green-jobs-recovery-new-jersey>]

MORATORIUM MONDAYS CONTINUE

Please continue to contact Gov. Murphy every Monday and urge him to declare a climate emergency moratorium on fossil fuel projects! Either call through the EmpowerNJ number (866-586-4069) to get coaching on the topic of the week, emphasizing what is in the news, or call directly to the governor's office (609-262-6000). Over 50 environmental, citizen, faith, and progressive groups in NJ are calling on Governor Murphy to enact a moratorium on all new fossil fuel projects in New Jersey until there are rules in place to achieve 100% clean energy goals.

Coronavirus Deaths and Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs): Study

Previous studies have examined the relationship between exposure to certain components of air pollution and coronavirus mortality (e.g., a Harvard study correlating PM 2.5 fine particulates and probability of death from the coronavirus). A new peer-reviewed study by SUNY and Pro-Publica found a correlation between levels of hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) and the per-capita death rate from COVID-19 in U.S. counties. A description of the study, including maps and other data, is available here:

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/abaf86>.

HAPs are chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer and other serious health problems or adverse environmental effects. They can come from industrial facilities as well as from power plants and vehicles; industrial facilities emitting them are subject to regulation under the Clean Air Act.

The study found that an increase in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “respiratory hazard index” at the county level¹ was associated with a 9% increase in COVID-19 mortality, even when controlled for a long list of variables. This association existed at all levels of HAPs exposure, including levels that the EPA deems acceptable.

This correlation between HAPs and COVID-19 may shed light on the fact that a ranking of the top 20 U.S. counties (ranked by combining COVID-19 mortality rate and the quantity of pollution affecting the respiratory system), included more sparsely populated counties than urban areas. All of New York City's five boroughs except Staten Island were near the top (the Bronx was first), but the remainder of the list included counties in Louisiana, Alabama and Georgia that contain industrial facilities or power plants. Five counties in the top 20 are located on the lower Mississippi River in Louisiana's chemical corridor, including West Baton Rouge Parish, which is described in this article <https://www.propublica.org/article/new-research-shows-disproportionate-rate-of-coronavirus-deaths-in-polluted-areas>.

¹ - Note: latest index available is 2014

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
