

SAVE THE DATE! UUFANJ ANNUAL MEETING
 5/11/2024 - See [p. 16.](#)

<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.

EJTF and CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

HARD-FOUGHT LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES, WITH EJTF IN THE MIX!

The week of March 11, 2024 saw positive movement in the NJ legislature for several bills that EJTF has been heavily involved with, and EJTF was represented at the hearings where it all took place. The "Green Amendment" bill and the "Clean Energy" bills were reported out of committee along with a grid modernization bill, and a bill related to the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) that we opposed was pulled. See the **"Special Section: Legislative Update"** on [p. 3 to p. 5.](#)



(Photo credits: Michael Skelly. Photo at right: (L-R) EJTF member Mike Skelly, "Green Amendments For the Generations" Founder Maya Van Rossum, and EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh; photo bottom left: (L-R) Mike Skelly, Clean Water Action NJ Director Amy Goldsmith, Peggy Middaugh, and environmental consultant David Pringle); middle photo: NJ legislative hearing; and bottom right photo: Mike and Peggy at the OPRA hearing).



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EJTF and CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES (continued)

- **EJTF member Dr. Michael Skelly, Sr.** co-authored an Op-Ed, "Calling on Gov. Murphy to Fill All Seats on Environmental Education Commission," which was published in NJ Spotlight News. He was successful in seeing that UU FaithAction was listed as a co-author on the Op-Ed, which calls for all seats to be filled on the NJ Environmental Education Commission, to help advance Environmental Education policy in NJ schools and communities (see the article on [p. 26](#)).

Dorothea Dix Unitarian Universalist Community (DDUUC)

- **EJTF member Dr. Michael Skelly, Sr.** delivered a sermon on "Nature and Interconnectedness" at Dorothea Dix Unitarian Universalist Community (DDUUC) in Bordentown NJ on March 10, 2024. "We are a part of nature. Our Unitarian Universalist 7th Principle and 1st Value call to us to live out these beliefs every day."



Dr. Michael Skelly, Sr.



(L-R) Denise McCormack, DDUUC; Dr. Michael Skelly, Sr. EJTF and DDUUC; Peggy Middaugh, Chair, EJTF UU FaithAction NJ

- Rev. Charles Loflin, Executive Director of UU FaithAction NJ, delivered a sermon at Dorothea Dix Unitarian Universalist Community (DDUUC) on February 25, 2025.



Rev. Charles Loflin, Executive Director, UU FaithAction NJ

Photos by Michael Skelly

SPECIAL SECTION: LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

EJTF in the Mix at the NJ Statehouse

The week of March 11, 2024 saw legislative action on key environmental bills that EJTF has been following, some of them literally for years. The three articles below, by EJTF member Michael Skelly (pictured at right with EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh in front of the NJ Statehouse - photo by Michael Skelly) detail the actions that took place at three different legislative meetings, with favorable outcomes for three bills EJTF supports, and the tabling of a bill that we do not support.



We realize that much work remains to be done to advance these bills farther, and EJTF plans to remain very actively involved!

Energy, Climate and Health in the Balance at State Legislative Hearings

Story and photos by Michael Skelly



Environmental Justice advocates presenting testimony



(L-R) Assembly Committee on Telecommunications and Utilities Chairman DeAngelo and Senate Committee on Energy and Environment Chairman Smith

Faith-based Environmental Justice, environmental, and industry representatives converged on the State Capital on a chilly and clear Monday morning to stand for and speak out in daylong hearings for the future of electricity production and distribution in NJ. A joint committee hearing was held before the NJ Senate Energy and Environment Committee and Assembly Telecommunications and Utility Committee on March 11, 2024.

Michael Skelly and Peggy Middaugh (not shown in picture) were present in Committee Chambers representing UU FaithAction NJ Environmental Justice Task Force in daylong hearings on New Jersey's energy future. This was the first hearing on these issues held in the new session of the legislature. It is a follow-up to the bills that have been in the works for the past two years.

At issue were whether the electricity that will be produced in NJ will be required to be "squeaky clean". This would substantially cut "co-pollutants" from being produced while the electricity is being generated. EJTF stands with our Environmental Justice allies, and EmpowerNJ environmental community coalition in favor of "squeaky clean" energy because it would cut air toxics and eliminate incinerating trash from the definition of "clean energy."

Also up for consideration was modernizing the electricity grid to carry much more power. Further modernizing would support conserving energy and improving reliability by moving energy back and forth between our solar panels, cars and the Grid.

UU FaithAction NJ Environmental Justice Task Force supports properly planned and economically built grid modernizing. It will help carry clean, renewable and sustainable electrical energy to our communities throughout New Jersey. This can cut pollution that harms our health and creates the climate crisis.

SPECIAL SECTION: LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (continued)
EJTF in the Mix at the NJ Statehouse

Statehouse Environment and Energy News

by Michael Skelly

After hours of impassioned testimony on Monday March 11, (see articles on [p. 3](#) and [p. 23](#)) NJ Senate Environment and Energy Chairman Bob Smith suddenly called a called another meeting of the Committee for Thursday March 14. Advocates and the media were taken by surprise by the swift action. Three bills were the result of a lengthy and arduous process of public meetings, study, and modifications that had stretched through the last two years and into 2024. At stake was whether the bills would be approved and released for further consideration and possibly become law or defeated in committee.

The three bills: a substitute bill S237 "**New Jersey Clean Energy Act of 2024**" establishes 100 percent clean electricity standard and directs BPU to establish a clean electricity certificate program (see <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/S237>); S258 requires electric public utilities to develop and implement **grid modernization** plans and appropriates \$300 million (see <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/S258>); and SCR43 proposes a constitutional amendment to make the State trustee of public natural resources and guarantee the people other environmental rights (the "**Green Amendment**" - see <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2024/SCR43>). These bills affect many of the EJTF big priorities for this year. The Environmental Justice Task Force of UU FaithAction NJ has submitted written comments, formal letters of our positions, appeared in person at Committee hearings, and rallies outside the Statehouse with our coalition partners to shape and move each of these bills forward into law. This was a major milestone in our efforts to improve our health, reduce climate change, and aid the web of life that we are a part of.

The Committee room on the upper floor of the Capital was packed with people who had worked on these bills for years. Senator Smith opened the meeting. After one final statement on behalf of the NJ Business and Industry Association opposing two of the three bills, the Committee took votes on each of the bills. Some of the Committee members voted in opposition. see the links above for the votes.

However, ALL three bills were passed and released for further action. This was a huge step on our journey towards environmental justice.

Senator Smith closed with a warning message that these bills had been approved and released from Committee, but the environmental advocates need to get ready for the next stage because it will not be easy to get further approvals and have them finally adopted into law.

We are looking for volunteer help on environmental justice on Clean Energy, Forestry, Education, Green Amendment, Food Security/Regenerative Agriculture and these bills and much more as we go ahead. If you'd like to know what's going on or even be part of our dynamic team working on the environment PLEASE be in touch with EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh at environment@uufaithactionnj.org. For the latest issues and actions, especially ones that are coming up soon, you can access our outstanding newsletter every month at <https://www.uufaithaction.org/environment/>.

SPECIAL SECTION: LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (continued)
EJTF in the Mix at the NJ Statehouse

Statehouse Update on Changes to Open Public Records Act

News and Opinion by Michael Skelly

Thursday, March 14, 2024, shortly after the Senate Environment and Energy Committee completed its votes (see the article on [p. 23](#)), EJTF and partner advocates from throughout New Jersey assembled in another committee room in the Statehouse. The Open Public Records Act (OPRA) in New Jersey is a cornerstone of public participation and media access into the records and actions of our own state and community government officials and agencies. Many actions affecting the environment and so much more have relied on access to public records.

This gathering at the Statehouse was the next phase in the process regarding the proposed amendments to the existing Open Public Records Act. Initially, the amendments specifically named exclusions for personally identifiable information rarely found in public records subject to an OPRA request. These modest and sensible privacy amendments were largely unnecessary due to the rules in the existing law, though it shouldn't hurt to protect privacy better.

Then proposals were offered to reduce commercial use of government staff to create databases and information troves for profit-seeking companies. This generally made sense, but these proposals needed further discussion and refinement so they wouldn't interfere with citizen and media requests for other purposes..

In the weeks before this Committee meeting, the proposed amendments then took on an ever-growing list of anti-press and anti-public exclusions and hurdles obviously designed to hide important information held by numerous agencies and government bodies. The impacts would radically change our way of life as citizens and the media for the worse.

This was followed by fierce media and public outcry. Pressure rose as word circulated that these amendments were going to move fast. The public and press stood little chance in having them slowed down for careful review and input. UU FaithAction NJ and hundreds of groups had spent the previous days flooding the mailboxes and phone answering services of legislators in opposition to the proposed amendments and the hurry-up legislative process.

In the afternoon of Thursday March 14, the Committee room filled up with members of the public and advocates including representatives from EJTF and other concerned Unitarian Universalists. They waited ready to give live testimony or stand as witness to the process. No updated version of the bill was available.

Without warning, there was a cheer and visible relief filled the room. The proposed bill to amend the Open Records law had been "pulled" and there would be no committee meeting that day.

After a brief celebration and taking stock of the situation, we all knew that our work for environmental justice was not done. We must be ever vigilant, and actively engaged. Expect a further proposal on Open Public Records to resurface.

Many thanks to UU's and our friends who responded to this urgent situation. You should be proud that your work helped to make BIG a difference. Please stay ready, as we will surely need your help another day.

Also see the news video at <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/nj-spotlight-news-march-15-2024/>, minute 2:45 to 6:45.

FUTURE EVENTS - *Virtual, In-person, and Hybrid*

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

APRIL 2024 (with hyperlinks to details on the following pages)						
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
	1	2 "The National Security – Climate Adaptation Nexus" - 2:00 p.m.	3 "How to Kill a Powerline: Utility-on-Utility Violence and Electricity Capital in Energy Infrastructure Disputes" - 12:00 p.m. i-Tree Open Academy - 1:00 p.m.		5	6 NJ Tree Foundation Tree Planting (2) - 9:00 a.m. 8th "Acting Locally for a More Sustainable World" Conference - 9:00 a.m.
7	8	9 Liberty State Park – Design Task Force Public Meeting - 6:00 p.m. NJDEP Draft 2024 Statewide Water Supply Plan Public Meeting - 7:00 p.m.	10 NJ Tree Foundation Tree Planting - 9:00 a.m. NJ Transit Board Meeting - 10:00 a.m. DOE OCED MACH2 Hydrogen Hub Listening Session - 6:00 p.m.	11	12 2024 Wind Institute Research Symposium - 8:30 a.m.	13 Climate Action Gathering - 10:00 a.m.
14	15 "Zero-Carbon Electricity: The Key to the Clean Energy Transition" - 2:55 p.m.	16 "Navigating Global Challenges to Accelerate the Energy Transition" - 8:30 a.m. New Jersey Clean Air Council 2024 Public Hearing - "Reducing the Impact of Food Waste on Air Quality and Climate Change" - 9:30 a.m. EPA National Environmental Justice Community Engagement Call - 2:00 p.m. "Demystifying Ocean Carbon Dioxide Removal" - 2:00 p.m. LWVNJ - "Understanding NJ School Boards" - 6:00 p.m.	17 Pinelands Commission Climate Committee Meeting - 9:30 a.m. i-Tree Open Academy - 1:00 p.m. Option Green: Wind Lecture - 7:00 p.m.	18 "How to Plan the Electrification and GHG Reduction of Your Household" - 7:00 p.m.	19 Sustainable Futures Conference - 9:00 p.m.	20 NJ Tree Foundation Tree Planting - 9:00 a.m. "Understanding the DEP Regulatory Process II" - 10:00 a.m. EARTH DAY Cape May County Earth Day Celebration - 10:00 a.m. EARTH DAY Friends of Princeton Open Space Earth Day Volunteer Event - 10:00 a.m. EARTH DAY Hunterdon County Earth Day Festival - 10:30 a.m. EARTH DAY Essex County Earth Day Celebration - 11:00 a.m.

						<p>4/20 (CONT.) EARTH DAY Skylands Drive Electric Earth Month Event - 11:00 a.m.</p> <hr/> <p>Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC) March for Clean Air - 12:00 p.m.</p>
<p>21 EARTH DAY Northeast Earth Coalition Earth Day Celebration - 9:00 a.m.</p>	<p>22 EARTH DAY "Garbage in the Garden State" - An Earth Day Program - 10:00 a.m.</p> <hr/> <p>"A Tale of Twin Energy Developments: Shale Gas and Large-Scale Solar" - 2:55 p.m.</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 i-Tree Open Academy - 1:00 p.m.</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26 NJ Tree Foundation Tree Planting - 9:00 a.m.</p> <hr/> <p>Comments Due: NJDEP Draft 2024 Statewide Water Supply Plan</p>	<p>27 Newark South Ward Environmental Alliance (SWEA) 3rd Annual Environmental Summit - 8:30 a.m.</p>
<p>28 EARTH DAY ACUA'S 32nd Annual Earth Day Festival - 10:00 a.m.</p> <hr/> <p>NJ Youth Climate Justice & Action Summit - 11:00 a.m.</p>	<p>29 Topic TBA (a Cornell Atkinson Seminar Series Seminar) - 2:55 p.m.</p>	<p>30 Statements Due: New Jersey Clean Air Council 2024 Public Hearing - "Reducing the Impact of Food Waste on Air Quality and Climate Change"</p>	<p>HAPPY EARTH DAY 2024! Link to map of additional EARTH DAY events.</p>		<p>SAVE THE DATE: UUFANJ ANNUAL MEETING 5/11/2024</p>	

FUTURE EVENTS

"The National Security – Climate Adaptation Nexus" - Webinar 4/2/2024, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

HAPPY EARTH DAY 2024!



For Earth Day 2024, EARTHDAY.ORG's theme is "Planet vs. Plastics." As stated on their website, "EARTHDAY.ORG is unwavering in our commitment to end plastics for the sake of human and planetary health, demanding a 60% reduction in the production of ALL plastics by 2040."

See the "EARTH DAY" events shown on the "Future Events" calendar. Additional events, including several "clean-ups," are listed on the "Find an Event Near You" map on the EARTHDAY.ORG website available here: <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2024/>.

"The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) invites you to a briefing on the impacts of climate change on U.S. national security. Climate change impacts - from extreme heat to wildfires and flooding - affect people's homes and communities, as well as supply chains, the electric grid, military installations, and other critical infrastructure across the country. Effective adaptation actions can help address these widespread and costly vulnerabilities. Panelists will discuss climate adaptation already happening at the local level around the country and the range of federal programs designed to support these efforts. They will also highlight ways that federal policy can advance national-level coordination on adaptation to safeguard critical infrastructure, and protect and improve people's lives." Additional information and the link to RSVP are available here:

<https://www.eesi.org/briefings/view/040224adaptation>.

"How to Kill a Powerline: Utility-on-Utility Violence and Electricity Capital in Energy Infrastructure Disputes" - via Zoom
4/3/2024, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

This talk, part of the Dartmouth "New Energy Series," will be presented by Maddy Kroot, PhD candidate in Clark University's Graduate School of Geography. In contrast to the usual NIMBYism impeding energy transitions, "This talk explores a different driver in project delays and cancellations: 'utility-on-utility violence.' Drawing on doctoral work on two controversial high-voltage transmission lines in northern New England, the talk explores how incumbent electricity capital effectively weaponizes the mandate for public participation in infrastructure permitting to block new energy sources from entering the grid and jeopardizing the profitability of existing assets." Additional information and the link to register are available here: <https://irving.dartmouth.edu/news-events/news-events/new-energy-series>.

8th "Acting Locally for a More Sustainable World" Conference
4/6/2024, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Montclair, NJ - In-person

This event, sponsored by the Northeast Earth Coalition, will bring together "passionate individuals from various backgrounds to share ideas, learn from experts, and take action toward a more sustainable world. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, attend insightful workshops, and explore innovative solutions to environmental challenges. Come and meet community leaders to network on environmental issues, including local food, eco-friendly gardening, sustainable communities, alternative transportation, renewable energy, clean air and water, environmental justice, and climate change activism." Additional information, including a list and description of speakers, and the link to register, are available here: <https://neearth.org/events/8th-annual-conference-acting-locally-for-a-more-sustainable-world/>.

Liberty State Park – Design Task Force Public Meeting
4/9/2024, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Jersey City, NJ - In-person

"The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection [DEP] will host a public meeting of the Liberty State Park (LSP) Design Task Force to discuss alternatives for potential active recreation, arts, and cultural amenities in LSP-North (Phase 1B), as well as elements for inclusion in the Master Plan for LSP-South (Phase 2). Following the Task Force meeting, an open comment period will be held for members of the public to offer comments to the Design Task Force." Additional information is available here: <https://dep.nj.gov/event/liberty-state-park-design-task-force-public-meeting-20240409/>.

NJDEP Draft 2024 Statewide Water Supply Plan Public Meeting - Virtual
4/9/2024, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is seeking input on the Draft 2024 New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Plan. For the first time, the draft plan (available here: <https://tinyurl.com/vfuum6hj>) assesses water supply challenges resulting from climate change and offers climate resilience solutions. It concludes that, "under normal conditions and in most regions, New Jersey has adequate volumes of source water supply and is well-positioned to address water supply challenges as long as the state continues to take actions to mitigate the threats of climate change, aging infrastructure and emerging contaminants." NJDEP will be holding the second of two public meetings on 4/9/2024, to provide members of the public the opportunity to give oral comment. This will be an evening meeting held virtually, using Microsoft Teams. DEP will also accept written comments through the comment portal, which will be given equal consideration to oral comments. **Comments are due 4/26/2024.** Additional information and the link to submit comments are available here: https://nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2024/24_0226pn.htm. Registration for the public meeting is available here: <https://dep.nj.gov/event/nj-statewide-water-supply-plan-public-meeting/>.

NJ Transit Board Meeting - Hybrid
4/10/2024, 10:00 a.m.
Newark, NJ - In-person & Livestreamed

An email from Doug O'Malley, representing EmpowerNJ (a coalition of which **UUFANJ is a member**) has asked that people attend the next NJ Transit Board Meeting, either virtually or in person, to protest the proposed NJ Transit fare hikes. He states: "Thank you to everybody that turned out to hearings earlier this month to oppose the NJ Transit 15% fare hikes for rail AND bus riders. Despite hearings that didn't allow a virtual option, the message was loud and clear to NJ Transit: no fare hikes on the backs of transit riders and fund a better NJ Transit, not a massive Turnpike expansion.... NJ Transit's Board plans to finalize the fare hike on April 10th and the NJ Turnpike just hiked tolls to spend \$100 million plus on the Turnpike Expansion boondoggle, whose funds could instead be used to replace the fare hike....**Take action:**" Register to attend (in person or virtually) the NJ Transit 4/10/2024 Board Meeting, at which a vote will likely be taken on the fare hike. The form to sign up to speak at the NJ Transit Board Meeting, and/or to submit written comments for the record, is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/43k4rkkf>.

DOE OCED MACH2 Hydrogen Hub Listening Session
4/10/2024, 6:00 p.m. - Virtual

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) is holding a virtual public "listening session" for the Mid-Atlantic Hydrogen Hub (MACH2) on 4/10/2024 at 6:00 p.m. If you want to speak, you need to register by 4/7/2024. According to the DOE, "In response to feedback from attendees at our H2Hub community briefings, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations (OCED) is providing virtual listening sessions to communities within the hubs to voice their questions and concerns. [See the article on [p. 25](#) regarding the first, very contentious, in-person public "informational" meeting held by MACH2.] Registrants may sign up for the opportunity to speak directly to OCED personnel for up to 4 minutes, or alternatively select that they would instead prefer to join in listening mode." (The Delaware Riverkeeper Network encourages participation, and has

provided suggested talking points, available here: <https://www.delawareriverkeeper.org/sound-doe-mach2-virtual-listening-session>.) Additional information and registration for the listening session are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/bvwpxf8>.

NJ Climate Action Gathering
4/13/2024, 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
New Brunswick, NJ - In-person

This first-ever statewide NJ Climate Action Gathering event (**of which UUFANJ is a sponsor**) "will be a chance for all to learn about the work happening in New Jersey to facilitate a just transition off of fossil fuels, share skills and knowledge, learn about how to win campaigns, build community with one another, and step into action!" Attendance is free, lunch and childcare is included at no cost, and Food & Water Watch is working to organize free transportation from different locations around the state (links to transportation are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/yhm9upw7>). Additional information and the registration link are available here: <https://www.mobilize.us/fww/event/609557/>.

New Jersey Clean Air Council 2024 Public Hearing - "Reducing the Impact of Food Waste on Air Quality and Climate Change"
4/16/2024, 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Trenton, NJ - In-person

As part of its charter, the NJ Clean Air Council (CAC), which provides advice to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on air quality matters, annually holds a public hearing on a current topic of interest. Formal transcripts are prepared and reports are written for each hearing. According to the CAC web page, "the 2024 public hearing will provide further understanding of the extent and impact of emissions from food waste disposal and landfilling and develop a series of recommendations to the Commissioner of NJDEP to improve air quality using waste reduction strategies and implementing state of the art control measures to eliminate or recapture GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions. Members of the public are encouraged to submit detailed written comments for incorporation into the hearing report." **Written statements in Microsoft Word will be accepted until**

4/30/2024 via email to George Berdomas at George.Berdomas@dep.nj.gov. Additional detailed information and the link to register are available here:
<https://dep.nj.gov/cleanaircouncil/2024cachearing/>.

**"Navigating Global Challenges to Accelerate the Energy Transition" - Livestreamed
4/16/2024, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

"The Columbia Global Energy Summit 2024, hosted by the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University SIPA, is an annual event dedicated to thought-provoking discussions around the critical energy and climate challenges facing the global community. This year's day-long Summit will address myriad issues at the heart of today's complex geopolitical, environmental and economic landscape, including the impact of climate change and the energy transition on geopolitics and security; the outlook for clean energy deployment in the face of growing policy support, as well as challenges such as interest rates, permitting reform and trade conflict; pathways to mobilize finance for clean energy in emerging and developing economies; energy justice imperatives; and the impact for energy and climate policy in key elections around the world in 2024." Additional information and the link to register are available here:
<https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/events/2024-columbia-global-energy-summit/>.

**EPA National Environmental Justice Community Engagement Call
4/16/2024, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Virtual**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) invites Environmental Justice (EJ) advocates to participate in its National EJ Community Engagement calls. "The purpose of these calls is to inform communities about EPA's environmental justice work and enhance opportunities to maintain an open dialogue with environmental justice advocates. As environmental justice continues to be integrated into EPA programs and policies, the Agency hopes that relaunching these calls will help reaffirm EPA's continued commitment to work with community groups and the public to strengthen local environmental and human health outcomes." Additional information

will be available here: <https://tinyurl.com/5a986sf6> and registration is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/p6ys5yb7>.

**"Demystifying Ocean Carbon Dioxide Removal" - Webinar
4/16/2024, 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.**

"The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) and the World Resources Institute (WRI) invite you to a briefing about ocean carbon dioxide removal (CDR). Reaching global climate goals will require not only deep and rapid reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, but also large-scale removal of excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. While federal funding for research, development, and demonstration of land-based CDR approaches and technologies has increased significantly in recent years, the ocean also presents opportunities for carbon removal. The ocean covers 70% of the Earth and serves as its largest carbon sink, holding 42 times the carbon in the atmosphere. Ocean CDR - the practice of removing and storing carbon from the ocean - is garnering increasing scientific, governmental, and private sector interest. At the same time it presents uncertainties related to efficacy, ecosystem impacts, and governance, which decision-makers must understand in order to determine if and how the practice could be scaled up as a climate solution. Panelists will discuss the current state of ocean CDR, including the status of different approaches; the policy and regulatory landscape; research gaps; and the importance of responsible scaling." Additional information and the link to RSVP are available here:
<https://www.eesi.org/briefings/view/041624ocean>.

**LWVNJ - "Understanding NJ School Boards" - via Zoom
4/16/2024, 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.**

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey (LWVNJ) (of which **EJTF member Nancy Griffeth** is co-chair of the Natural Resources Committee) has been presenting a public series of virtual activist training sessions designed to equip participants "with the knowledge and skills needed to carry out dynamic organizing strategies that can effectively influence public policy and the state of democracy in New Jersey." The session

scheduled for April 2024 is described below; descriptions of this and future sessions are available here: <https://www.lwvnj.org/training>.

"Education is a vital cornerstone of our society, and local school boards play a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape in our communities. If you are interested in understanding how decisions are made at the local level and in making a difference in our education system, this training is for you. Join us to get an overview of local New Jersey school boards -- including their structure, responsibilities, and decision-making processes. Learn how to advocate for change within the school board framework and engage effectively with board members." Registration is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/4wt66v2h>.

Pinelands Commission Climate Committee Meeting
4/17/2024, 9:30 a.m.
Location is forthcoming

Additional information on location, agenda, and other details will be available here: <https://www.nj.gov/pinelands/home/meetings/index.shtml>.

Option Green: Wind Lecture - Hybrid
4/17/2024 - 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
East Brunswick, NJ - In-person & Online

In 2017, the East Brunswick Public Library began a partnership with the Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission (a nonprofit dedicated to local environmental education and conservation) on the "Option Green" program series. Each year there are six events, ranging from lectures featuring environmentalists in various fields to documentary screenings with facilitated discussions. Since 2017, over 600 people have attended Option Green programs. Additional information about this program, "Wind Lecture," will be available here, along with the link to join the event online: <https://ilove.ebpl.org/adults/events/option-green-wind-lecture-hybrid/2024-04-17-230000-2024-04-18-003000>.

"How to Plan the Electrification and GHG Reduction of Your Household" - Webinar
4/18/2024, 7:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.

In this webinar presented by the Sierra Club NJ Chapter and Building Electrification Committee, Professional Energy Consultant Matt Kavanagh will provide examples and data to create a complete plan to electrify your household. Matt will cover "Options for heating/cooling, & all electric appliances including lawn equip.; Use tax credits and IRA to lower/eliminate utility bills; Improve home comfort & reduce harmful pollution; Reduce your carbon footprint; and Backup for electric outages." Additional information and the registration link are available here: <https://act.sierraclub.org/events/details?formcampaignid=7013q000002ISdPAAW&mapLinkHref=>.

Sustainable Futures Conference
4/19/2024, 9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Princeton, NJ - In-person

This event is presented under the auspices of the Fung Global Fellows Program at Princeton University. "The program brings exceptional international early-career faculty members working in the social sciences and the humanities to Princeton for a year of research, writing and collaboration." This conference "will bring together scholars from around the world who will explore the concept of sustainability, addressing current and future challenges for sustainable futures and introducing innovative and feasible solutions to these challenges." Additional information and the link to register are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/4uszyeym>.

"Understanding the DEP Regulatory Process II" - Hybrid
4/20/2024, 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Camden, NJ - In-person and Online

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), in partnership with the Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Council's Environmental Education Committee, is presenting "Navigating the DEP: A Series of Environmental Seminars for Overburdened Communities" for EJ advocates from across the state to learn about DEP's regulations, permitting processes, and

opportunities for funding. One seminar related to the regulatory process remains: "Understanding the Regulatory Process II - learn about permitting processes for Drinking Water, Watershed and Land Use, & Air." Additional information and registration are available here: <http://tinyurl.com/ecnd68se>. Links to videos of previous seminars are available here: <https://dep.nj.gov/ej/seminars/>.

Cape May County Earth Day Celebration
4/20/2024, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Cape May Court House, NJ - In-person

"The Cape May County Park and Zoo is the perfect location for this day of fun and learning. Hands on educational exhibits, children's amusements, live entertainment, a variety of environmental eco-shops, scavenger hunt; all which will guarantee a day of earth friendly fun. Large tents on the center field will showcase educational exhibits. The Bandstand nearby will feature the entertainment for the day. Crafters, wares, and a food court surround the field and complete the venue." Additional information is available here: <https://www.capemaycountynj.gov/1614/Earth-Day-Celebration-2024>.

Friends of Princeton Open Space Earth Day Volunteer Event
4/20/2024, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Princeton, NJ - In-person

Join the Friends of Princeton Open Space (FOPOS) "for a special Earth Day event at the Billy Johnson Mountain Lakes Nature Preserve in Princeton, NJ. Volunteers will work under the guidance of FOPOS' stewardship staff to perform riparian and forest restoration, and plant native species in the Billy Johnson Mountain Lakes Nature Preserve." Additional information and the link to register are available here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/earth-day-volunteer-event-42024-tickets-800274932867?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>.

Hunterdon County Earth Day Festival
4/20/2024, 10:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Flemington, NJ - In-person

"Join us for the Division of Parks and Recreation's 20th Earth Day event! Help us celebrate the one, the only, Planet Earth! At 11:30 AM, learn about Lenape Lifeways with Carla Messinger, a Lenape

descendant from Pennsylvania, from the Turtle Clan Lenape. At 1:00 PM, enjoy a live animal show with Rizzo's Wildlife World. All day, meet animals and do other activities with local 4-H clubs. Make and take home a recycled or natural craft. Visit the tables of local environmental organizations to find out what they do. See what critters live in the stream (bring water shoes or boots), and try out fishing on the pond. Enjoy an Earth Day StoryWalk®! The event will conclude with a campfire and an interactive story at 3:00 PM. Bring your own campfire snack if you would like." Additional information is available here: <https://co.hunterdon.nj.us/2636/Earth-Day-Festival>.

Essex County Earth Day Celebration
4/20/2024, 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Rain or Shine
Roseland, NJ - In-person

"Yay, it's EARTH DAY! Bring your family, friends, and neighbors to our annual outdoor festival honoring beautiful planet EARTH, the sustainer of all life! On this special day, the Essex County Environmental Center will make extra efforts to share its wonder and appreciation of the natural world with patrons, partners, and friends. Enjoy a day filled with crafts, games, and recreational opportunities, such as canoeing and hiking. Enjoy demonstrations, information, and a local eco-vendors' sale. Environmental Center staff and partner groups will be on hand to guide you throughout this exciting Earth-centric day!" Additional information is available here: https://essexcountynj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Earth-Day-Flier-2024_non-sponsor.pdf.

Skylands Drive Electric Earth Month Event
4/20/2024, 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Newton, NJ - In-person

Drive Electric Earth Month, taking place throughout April, is a nationwide campaign "about revving up awareness and excitement for EVs.... Come to Sussex County Mall on Hampton Road in Newton NJ on April 20 between 11:00 and 4:00 to examine a display of electric vehicles [EVs]. Rain date is April 27. EV owners and dealers will share their experience with you in collaboration with the New Jersey Electric Vehicle Association in order to highlight electric vehicles during Earth Week.

Participants are encouraged to offer ride/drive experiences. Your host, Skylands-Group, Sierra Club-NJ Chapter will have information and handouts available." Additional information and the link to attend and/or bring your EV are available here:
<https://driveelectricearthmonth.org/event?eventid=4242>.

**Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC)
March for Clean Air
4/20/2024, 12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Newark, NJ - In-person**

On April 20th, **EJTF partner** Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC) will lead a march from their Down Bottom Farms at the corner of Ferry and St. Charles Streets in Newark to the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission to amplify the message: No Fourth Power Plant in Newark! "This is more than just a fight against the proposal of a fourth power plant in the Ironbound, but an ongoing fight against environmental racism. Newark has borne the brunt of fighting against so many polluting facilities, including a sludge processing plant, an Amazon hub, and two other incinerators. Not to mention, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority has now begun the preliminary stages of their turnpike expansion plan. While making steps to improve the turnpike from exits 14A and 14B, the NJTA is also going to be adding more lanes to the turnpike, and because highway expansions increase the number of vehicles, this also increases carbon emissions. Newark is an overburdened community that deserves clean air.... We'd love to have you, your networks and especially your family and friends to come together alongside us in marching for clean air!" Registration is available here:
https://secure.everyaction.com/iFr6_I9ImkiOteJED6v7w2.

**Northeast Earth Coalition
Earth Day Celebration
4/21/2024, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Montclair, NJ - In-person**

"Join us for a day of fun and environmental awareness at Crane Park in Montclair, NJ, USA! Celebrate Earth Day with the Northeast Earth Coalition and be a part of the movement to protect our planet. This in-person event will feature

exciting activities, live music, and educational workshops. Learn about sustainable practices, explore eco-friendly products, and connect with like-minded individuals who care about the environment. Bring your friends and family for a day of green fun and inspiration. Let's come together to make a positive impact on our beautiful Earth!" Additional information and a link to register is available here:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/northeast-earth-coalition-earth-day-celebration-tickets-794561122707>.

**"Garbage in the Garden State"
- An Earth Day Program - Online
4/22/2024, 10:00 a.m.**

At this event sponsored by the Jersey City Public Library, Jordan P. Howell of Rowan University, author of 2023's "Garbage in the Garden State," will discuss the history of waste management in New Jersey. "Acknowledging Earth Day 2024's them of 'Planet vs. Plastics' special attention will be paid to New Jersey's history of recycling, and plastic recycling in particular." Additional information is available here:
<https://jclibrary.libcal.com/event/12032416>.

**Newark South Ward Environmental Alliance (SWEA) 3rd Annual Environmental Summit
4/27/2024, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Newark, NJ - In-person**

The South Ward Environmental Alliance (SWEA) was founded in 2015 by **EJTF partner** Kim Gaddy "to cultivate healthy and vibrant neighborhoods by ensuring residents' voices are heard and they are active participants in decision making policies that impact their neighborhood." This year's summit focuses on "Environmental Unity, Progress, and Legacy; If it is to be, It starts with me." In the past, this summit has provided a very interesting networking opportunity.
<https://files.constantcontact.com/f19108ed801/2b670d40-129a-4301-b6a1-288566a7085d.pdf>.

**ACUA'S 32nd Annual Earth Day Festival
4/28/2024, 10:00 a.m., Rain or Shine
Egg Harbor Township, NJ - In-person**

The Atlantic County Utilities Authority's (ACUA) Annual Earth Day Festival "attracts thousands of visitors in the South Jersey area. Families can

browse hundreds of vendors, participate in games and activities, attend workshops, and even take a hayride to the top of the landfill! ACUA is proud to open our doors to the public with tours, programs, and lots of eco-giveaways. Kids and adults can easily spend the whole day having fun and learning about the Earth. There will be a variety of free, fun and educational activities for all ages to enjoy! The celebration has many exciting events and entertainment options throughout the day, and more than 150 vendors, crafters, food vendors and exhibitors will be part of the celebration." Additional information is available here: <https://www.acua.com/Community-Hub/Events-and-Classes/Earth-Day-Festival.aspx>.

NJ Youth Climate Justice & Action Summit
4/28/2024, 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Pennington, NJ - In-person

"Learn how to get involved in national and local youth climate campaigns. Meet other high school and college students who are taking action in their schools and communities. Enjoy lunch, make new friends, and explore the beautiful Watershed Institute. Vegan & vegetarian lunch options will be available; optional hike on The Watershed Institute trails at 3:00 p.m." For additional information, contact smharpoon@gmail.com. Register here (registration closes 4/26/2024): https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdckkijnJoi_30Ar7_Hll_S9h80x2v89VEfeb06NiVNDRkq3A/viewform.

NJ Tree Foundation Spring Tree Plantings
Various dates and locations - In-person

"The NJ Tree Foundation [of which **EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh** is a Trustee] is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to planting trees in New Jersey's most urban neighborhoods, where the need is greatest. Through tree planting, volunteerism, and partnerships, [the NJ Tree Foundation] assist[s] numerous communities in improving their environment and quality of life." The spring plantings are beginning, in the two tree-planting programs shown below (**All plantings are rain or shine, and are held from 9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.**):

Urban Airshed Reforestation Program: email Crystal at cwessel@njtreefoundation.org or call 856-287-4488 to sign up -

4/6/2024 – Waldorf St, Camden – 10 trees – 25 volunteers needed

4/10/2024 – Johnson Park, Gloucester City – 23 trees – 15 volunteers needed

4/20/2024 – Chestnut Ave, Gloucester City – 20 trees – 50 volunteers needed

4/26/2024 – Farnham Park, Camden – 16 trees – 40 volunteers needed

5/11/2024 – State Street, Camden – 10 trees – 30 volunteers needed

Dates TBD: Cadwalader Park, Trenton; George Page Park, Trenton; CCMUA Plant, Camden

Renaissance Trees Program: email Elena at emessina@njtreefoundation.org, or call (609) 439-1755.

4/6/2024 – Boylan Street Recreation Center, Newark – 9 trees – 20 volunteers needed

5/11/2024 – Cliff St, Newark – 15 trees – 15 volunteers needed

5/18/2024 – Vassar Ave, Newark – 12 trees – 20 volunteers needed

Additional information is available here:

<https://njtrees.org/about/camdens-urban-airshed-reforestation-program/> and here: <https://njtrees.org/about/newark-renaissance-trees-program/>.

Cornell "Perspectives on the Climate Change Challenge" Seminars - via Zoom
Various dates

The Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability presents a seminar series that "provides important views on the critical issue of climate change, drawing from many perspectives and disciplines. Experts from Cornell University and beyond present an overview of the science of climate change and climate change models, the implications for agriculture, ecosystems, and food systems, and provide important economic, ethical, and policy insights on the issue." Talks scheduled

for April 2024 are listed below. Links for additional information and to attend via Zoom are shown after each title.

- **"Zero-Carbon Electricity: The Key to the Clean Energy Transition"** - **4/15/2024, 2:55 p.m. - 4:10 p.m.,**
https://events.cornell.edu/event/dr_karl_hausker_79_zero-carbon_electricity_the_key_to_the_clean_energy_transition

- **"A Tale of Twin Energy Developments: Shale Gas and Large-Scale Solar"** - **4/22/2024, 2:55 p.m. - 4:10 p.m.,**
https://events.cornell.edu/event/k_max_zhang_a_tale_of_twin_energy_developments_shale_gas_and_large-scale_solar_4919

- **Topic TBA - 4/29/2024, 2:55 p.m. - 4:10 p.m.,** This seminar will be presented by Dr. Kate Marvel, a senior climate scientist at Project Drawdown, the world's leading resource for climate solutions. Additional information and the link to attend the Zoom will be available here:
<https://www.atkinson.cornell.edu/news-events/climate-change-seminar/>.

Rutgers Climate and Energy Institute Listing of Climate Events

Multiple events are listed on this site (an event for April 2024 is listed below) check the site periodically for an updated list, here:
<https://rcei.rutgers.edu/events/> and here:
<https://rcei.rutgers.edu/news-events/external-events/>.

2024 Wind Institute Research Symposium 4/12/2024, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Union, NJ 07083 - In-person

Sponsored by the NJ Economic Development Authority (EDA), the Wind Institute for Innovation and Training is presenting its second annual Wind Institute Research Symposium. "The Research Symposium consists of fellow and researcher presentations, industry panels and presentations on topics regarding offshore wind, New Jersey state updates on offshore wind research including the Research and Monitoring Initiative, and networking opportunities with members of the offshore wind industry, government representatives, and researchers." Additional information, including the agenda and registration

link, is available here: <https://www.njeda.gov/wind-institute-research-symposium/>.

i-Tree Open Academy - Virtual Various dates, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

"i-Tree is a state-of-the-art, peer-reviewed software suite from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service that provides urban and rural forestry analysis and benefits assessment tools. The i-Tree tools can help strengthen forest management and advocacy efforts by quantifying forest structure and the environmental benefits that trees provide. Since the initial release of the i-Tree Tools in August 2006, thousands of communities, non-profit organizations, consultants, volunteers and students around the world have used i-Tree to report on individual trees, parcels, neighborhoods, cities, and even entire states. By understanding the local ecosystem services that trees provide, i-Tree users can link forest management activities with environmental quality and community livability. Whether your interest is a single tree or an entire forest, i-Tree provides data that you can use to demonstrate value and set priorities for more effective decision-making." The i-Tree Open Academy will provide a broad introduction to the i-Tree suite of tools. Two sessions have already taken place (i.e., "Introduction to i-Tree" and "Online with MyTree, i-Tree Design, and i-Tree Planting") but recordings are available. Remaining sessions (i.e., **4/3/2024** - "The view from the top: i-Tree Canopy and OurTrees," **4/17/2024** - "i-Tree Landscape: Your data, maps, and equity portal," **4/24/2024** - "i-Tree Eco - the flagship tool," and **5/1/2024** - "Putting i-Tree to Work") can be livestreamed or recordings may be viewed later. Additional information and links to register and to view recordings are available here:
<https://www.itreetools.org/support/i-tree-open-academy-spring-2024>.



UU FaithAction NJ Annual Meeting - Hybrid
5/11/2024, time TBA
Summit, NJ - In-person & Online

The UU FaithAction NJ (UUFANJ) Annual Meeting will be held on May 11th, 2024, and will be hosted at the Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Summit, NJ and online. All New Jersey UUs are encouraged to attend! The meeting schedule and additional details will be available here: <https://www.uufaithaction.org/event/annual-meeting-3/>.

VIDEOS OF PAST EVENTS

"Navigating the DEP: A Series of Environmental Seminars for Overburdened Communities" - Videos of Seminars

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), in partnership with the Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Council's Environmental Education Committee, is in the process of presenting "Navigating the DEP: A Series of Environmental Seminars for Overburdened Communities" for EJ advocates from across the state to learn about DEP's regulations, permitting processes, and opportunities for funding. Links to videos of the four seminars are available, or will be available, here: <https://dep.nj.gov/ej/seminars/>.

Here are the topics of the seminars:

- Navigating the DEP Seminar 1 - Overview of Environmental Planning and Monitoring
- Navigating the DEP Seminar 2 - Understanding the Regulatory Process I
- Navigating the DEP Seminar 3 - Understanding the Regulatory Process II
- Funding Our Futures - Navigating State and Federal Grants for Environmental Justice Communities.

"Why We Need a World Without Cars"
- Video

This "Our Changing Climate" video essay gives a picture of the future of transportation, focusing on why we need a world without cars. "Instead, we need a future of dense interconnected public transit that is anti-racist, anti-ableist, and anti-capitalist. A transportation system that prioritizes people through pedestrian, bike, and public transit-centered design." The points in the video merit consideration for NJ's future transportation plans. The video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpo1iuSumM>.

"The Place of Human Values in Climate-risk Research" - Video of Webinar

This webinar, part of the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability "Perspectives on the Climate Change Challenge" Seminars, was presented by Dr. Casey Helgeson, an assistant research professor at Penn State's Earth and Environmental Systems Institute. "Climate change poses many risks. Research on these risks - and on what to do about them - unavoidably goes beyond purely scientific matters to touch on questions of values and ethics. Whose risks are most worthy of attention from researchers? Which stakeholder perspectives are acknowledged when assessing potential responses to risk?" In this seminar, Dr. Helgeson provided "an overview of important concepts for thinking and communicating clearly about the interplay of social values and STEM research... [and] discuss[ed] best practices for navigating this interplay ... show[ing] examples of their implementation in the area of climate-risk research." The video is available here: <https://www.atkinson.cornell.edu/media/the-place-of-human-values-in-climate-risk-research/>.

"Meeting the Net-zero Challenge: Corporate Climate Impact at Scale With the Voluntary Carbon Market"
- Video of Webinar

This webinar, part of the Cornell Atkinson Center for Sustainability "Perspectives on the Climate Change Challenge" Seminars, was presented by Dr. Jennifer Jenkins, Chief Science Officer at

Rubicon Carbon, "a company specializing in supporting enterprise customers through their decarbonization and net-zero journeys with market-based products and solutions." This webinar addressed the following: "The economic transformation required to reach global net zero requires change on the scale of the Industrial Revolution, taking place with the speed of the Digital Revolution (Al Gore, 2021). And while progress is encouraging, it is still too slow. The private sector is an important lever for change, but in order for the private sector to act, the range of solutions presented must be palatable and practical for corporate actors. The voluntary carbon market (VCM) is a critical mechanism that can be scaled for impact to help companies meet their own net zero goals." This talk introduced the VCM, describing how it works and the opportunities it presents, as well as the barriers it faces. The video is available here: <https://www.atkinson.cornell.edu/media/meeting-the-net-zero-challenge-corporate-climate-impact-at-scale-with-the-voluntary-carbon-market/>.

"The Next Climate Frontier – Industrial Decarbonization" - Video of Webinar

This webinar was sponsored by LightWorks at Arizona State University, ASU's Electrified Processes for Industry Without Carbon - EPIX, funded by DOE, and the Security and Sustainability Forum. "Heavy industries like steel, cement, and chemicals are among the largest emitters of carbon dioxide, accounting for 23% of global greenhouse gas emissions." This webinar presented a discussion about overcoming barriers to accelerate industrial decarbonization. Topics included: the speed at which the transition can occur, the capital required, and how this capital can be allocated most effectively; and, economic implications including how the cost of carbon might influence behavior and employment. The video is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/bdd4xv5k>.

"Understanding the [federal] 2025 Budget and Appropriations Process" - Video of Webinar

This webinar was sponsored by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI), and was "a briefing about the latest presidential budget proposal and the outlook for Congressional appropriations for fiscal year 2025. The briefing... describe[d] the different stages of the appropriations process and how it interfaces with other legislative activity on the Hill. The briefing...also shed light on the role of the 12 appropriations subcommittees and highlight[ed] ways Congressional staff, working both on and off the appropriations committees, can engage with the process. Panelists... showcase[d] examples of investments in climate, energy, and environment research and innovation that bring the process to life." The video is available here: <https://www.eesi.org/briefings/view/022924budget>.

EmpowerNJ "All-Hands Legislative Briefing & Campaign Strategy Session" - Video of Session

EmpowerNJ, a coalition of which **UUFANJ is a member**, held an "All-Hands Legislative Briefing & Campaign Strategy Session" on 2/6/24. As described by EmpowerNJ, "During this session, EmpowerNJ policy experts presented about the clean energy and unaffordable dirty gas bills and the dirty energy technologies we're fighting to stop, and reviewed our victories and updates from 2023's 'lame duck' legislative session. We then moved on to discussing our plans to win 100% truly clean energy and stop expensive subsidies for dirty gas in the 2024 legislative session." The video is available here: https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/okDD4GXnEI0VhhC14UYGz64t3cKkVPFFUmJFaWm-Lq_BPDkYXOEYs_ENMgLTvJaauv7xBAVLeeFQXuRK.U4q85H41-RqD0H0K.

"Hydrogen Hub MACH2: Powerfully Engaging MACH2 Communities"

- Video of Webinar

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network sponsored this talk on community engagement related to the hydrogen hub planned for the Delaware River Watershed. "Scant information has been available about MACH2 and the other 'hydrogen hubs' planned across the nation; most of the details have been kept secret." This webinar included community representatives from three hydrogen-hub impacted regions, who spoke about their concerns regarding impacts they would be expected to live and work with and their ideas for how to meaningfully influence the decisions being made about MACH2. The video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rj6ZEwJ48ag&t=3s>

"2024 Sustainable Energy in America Factbook" - Video of Webinar

This webinar was sponsored by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) and the Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE). It described the 12th edition of the Sustainable Energy in America Factbook. "The Factbook provides valuable year-over-year data and insights on the U.S. energy transformation, with an in-depth look at the energy efficiency, renewable energy, and natural gas sectors, as well as transmission, digitalization, micro-grids, offshore wind, hydrogen, renewable natural gas, and more." Panelists explored the impact of supply chain trends as well as permitting and siting processes on U.S. clean energy deployment. They also highlighted investment figures resulting from the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. The Factbook is available to download by registering here: <https://bcse.org/market-trends/>. The video is available here: <https://www.eesi.org/briefings/view/032124factbook>.

"Let's Talk Carbon Free Buildings" - Video of Webinar

This webinar, sponsored by Elders Climate Action, was presented by Ashita Gona, a Senior Associate on the Carbon-Free Buildings program at RMI, a nonprofit organization that works to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50% by

2030. Ashita works with stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region, to transition buildings away from fossil fuels. In this webinar, she discussed the importance of addressing fossil fuel combustion in buildings to reduce GHG emissions and address public health, and presented policy options to facilitate market transformation for electrified alternatives. The video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKaDZbCEog>.

NEWS RELATED TO EJTF ISSUES

[covering 2/27/2024 – 3/26/2024]

GREEN AMENDMENT

Proposal for 'Green' Amendment to NJ Constitution Spurs Intense Debate

Before a packed room of observers (among them Unitarian Universalists including **EJTF**), and after 6 long years since first being proposed, the New Jersey Green Amendment (SCR43) received a 3-1-1 positive vote to be reported out of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. EJTF has been championing this as long as it has been proposed for New Jersey. It would amend the NJ state Constitution to recognize our right to clean air, clean water and a healthy planet. The Amendment would require that all residents have equal protection from the government or private activities that are harmful to the environment. Supporters say it would provide an extra check on potential governmental abuse; opponents say it would slam economic growth, but Green Amendments adopted by three other states have NOT impeded their economy. The Green Amendment was subsequently reported out of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and has been "placed on the desk" of all members of the NJ Senate and Assembly, as required for proposed constitutional amendments. A constitutional amendment is put on the NJ ballot if it is approved by a three-fifths vote of the total membership of the Senate and the Assembly or if it receives a majority vote in the Senate and the Assembly in two successive years. See [p. 1](#) and the articles on [p. 3](#) and [p. 4](#). <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/nj-advocates-push-green-constitutional-amendment-opponents-say-it-would-damage-economic-growth/>

ELECTRIC VEHICLES & VEHICLE EMISSION REDUCTION

Murphy's Mixed Message on EVs: Pump up Incentives, Pull Plug on Sales Tax Exemptions

Gov. Murphy has proposed additional funding for the popular NJ "Charge Up" program that provides rebates to buyers of electric vehicles EVs. However, in his budget plan for next year, Gov. Murphy proposes phasing out the current sales tax exemption for EVs. Because the Charge Up program habitually runs out of money during each year, and the sales tax exemption affects all EV purchases all year, it has an impact on all EV purchases. In addition, Gov. Murphy has just signed the Transportation Trust Fund reauthorization bill that, for the first time, includes an annual fee for EVs. Environmental advocates stress that EVs are a key to NJ meeting its clean energy goals, and making them more expensive is not in the interest of achieving these goals. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/is-nj-gov-phil-murphy-sending-mixed-messages-on-electric-vehicle-incentives-sales-tax-exemptions/>

Governor Murphy Signs Law Reauthorizing New Jersey's Transportation Trust Fund for Five More Years

The NJ Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) would have expired on 6/30/2024, and Gov. Murphy has signed a bill (A4011) that "amends the 'New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund Authority Act of 1984' to make changes to support the State's Annual Transportation Capital Program for Fiscal Years 2025 through 2029. These changes also revise the rate of tax imposed on highway fuels under the Petroleum Products Gross Receipts Tax and establish an additional annual fee for zero emission vehicles from which all revenues would be dedicated to the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF)." A 4-minute news video, "**Higher Gas Tax and EV Fee Signed into Law**" describing the bill is available here: <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/higher-gas-tax-and-ev-fee-signed-into-law/>. The bill includes an initial yearly 2-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax and an

annual fee for zero emission vehicles, starting at \$250. The per-gallon gasoline tax is subject to adjustments, based on how close revenues come to the target amount each year. Additional information is in the article "**Drivers Would Pay More Under Proposed Remake of Roads Trust Fund**," available here: <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/drivers-would-pay-more-under-proposed-remake-of-roads-trust-fund/>. Gov. Murphy's press release is available here: <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/approved/20240326a.shtml>.



Biden Announces New Rule for Gas Car Emissions That Could Boost EV Sector

This article provides a good description of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) new rule on vehicle emissions, including what the rule does, and does not, do. From *The Guardian*: "In a move being hailed as one of the most significant climate rules in US history, the Biden administration announced on Wednesday new regulations on tailpipe emissions. The rule, which calls for a 56% reduction in fleetwide average carbon emissions by 2032, constitutes the strictest-ever limit on pollution from the nation's cars and light trucks.... The new standards do not mandate the sale of particular kinds of vehicles, but they all but ensure a dramatic a dramatic increase in EVs over the next eight years." <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/mar/20/biden-car-transportation-emission-regulation-pollution>

NJ Has Easy On-Ramp for New EPA Rule to Get Gas-Powered Vehicles off the Road

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new rule on vehicle emissions sets a target of cutting vehicle tailpipe emissions in half by 2032, which EPA estimates could be met if 56% of new

cars sold by 2032 are electric. In contrast, NJ has adopted rules requiring that 43% of the annual production volume of passenger cars and light-duty trucks manufactured in 2027 must be zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs), with the percentage increasing each year, peaking at 100 percent in 2035 and thereafter. The NJ rule also includes multi-pollutant exhaust emission standards for manufacturers of internal combustion engine passenger cars, light-duty trucks, and medium-duty vehicles. Therefore, it appears that NJ should not have a problem meeting the EPA targets.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/ambitious-federal-regulation-slashes-carbon-tailpipe-emissions-establishes-new-ev-hybrid-targets/>

New EPA Rule to Cut Vehicle Emissions, Boost EVs and Hybrids

This 5-minute news video includes an interview with Doug O'Malley, director of Environment New Jersey and president of ChargeEV-NJ, in which he discusses the new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rule on vehicle emissions.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/new-epa-rule-to-cut-vehicle-emissions-boost-evs-and-hybrids/>

LAND MANAGEMENT/ AGRICULTURE/FOOD

New Jersey Department of Agriculture Announces \$120 Summer EBT Benefit for 2024

According to a NJ Department of Agriculture (NJDA) press release: "New Jersey is one of the 35 states that will be participating in the USDA's new Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) program to provide more food availability to children and families in need during the summer months, beginning this year. States will provide families with \$120 per eligible child for the summer to buy food at grocery stores, farmers markets, or other authorized retailers – similar to how SNAP benefits are used. According to USDA estimates, New Jersey will have well over 500,000 children eligible for Summer EBT for a total distribution of nearly \$65 million in federal food security benefits."

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/news/press/2024/approved/press240228.html>

Can NJ Grocers Do More to Help Feed the Hungry?

This 4-1/2-minute news video describes a bill (A2141) that requires "a supermarket, grocery store, or food supplier... to make a reasonable effort to donate all food that is fit for human consumption, but which would otherwise be discarded in the normal course of business ... to a food bank, a nonprofit organization, or to any person." The bill was voted out of the Assembly Health Committee and referred to the Assembly Children, Families and Food Security Committee.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/can-nj-grocers-do-more-to-help-feed-the-hungry/>

Princeton's S.C.R.A.P. Lab Turns Food Waste into Compost

Princeton University's S.C.R.A.P. ("Sustainable Composting Research at Princeton") Lab is a pilot program to process raw scraps and uneaten cooked food from the Frist Campus Center and campus cafés. The material is shredded, aerated, and mixed, and once it reaches maturity it is used on campus grounds, to help reduce the use of pesticides.

<https://paw.princeton.edu/article/princetons-scrap-lab-turns-food-waste-compost>

Opinion: Community Gardens Help Connections and Health Blossom

In this piece, Emily V. Merchant, PhD, an assistant professor in the Department of Urban-Global Public Health at the Rutgers School of Public Health, describes the positive impact community gardens can have on refugees, "addressing food insecurity while nurturing a sense of belonging in our newest residents. Additionally, these gardens promote sustainable local food systems, benefiting both refugees and established community members seeking fresh, healthy produce." One example is Global Grace Farms, "a community farm connecting refugees with hands-on gardening and farming opportunities, employment training, and connection with the larger community" located on the Rutgers University Cook Campus in New Brunswick, NJ.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/op-ed-community-gardens-help-connections-and-health-blossom/>

Green America's New Verification Label: Regenerative Agriculture Hits the Grocery Aisle

The Soil & Climate Initiative, "a holistic farm-to-shelf regenerative agriculture program with options for third-party verification," has just completed the independent verification process for several products that will soon be on grocery shelves with a "Soil and Climate Health Initiative Verified" label. To receive this label, the products have to be "made using ingredients from farms with confirmed commitments to actions to implement regenerative agriculture - a farming approach that prioritizes healthy, living soil." Additional information about what actions the source farms need to take is available here: <https://www.greenamerica.org/blog/green-americas-new-verification-label-soil-and-climate-health>.



'Sleeping Giant': NJ Transit Eyes Affordable Housing, Sidewalks for Route 9 Bus Commuters

In 2022, NJ Transit received a \$470,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to develop a comprehensive Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) study in Middlesex and Monmouth counties. According to NJ Transit, "The study area for this TOD planning project encompasses 21 linear miles of U.S. Route 9 from

the NJ Transit Old Bridge Park and Ride in Old Bridge Township (Middlesex County) to the Aldrich Park and Ride in Howell Township (Monmouth County) The project team is engaging local government and regional and state agencies to help create a collective vision and strategies for

transit-oriented development along this corridor. This initiative also includes outreach to the subject communities to better understand community needs related to housing, jobs, and access to transit, and to start to build support for transit-oriented development along the Route 9 proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor." This article describes in detail, with graphics, the current focus of the study.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/sleeping-giant-nj-transit-eyes-affordable-housing-sidewalks-for-route-9-bus-commuters/ar-BB1iKUUA>

NJ's Transit Stations Could Help Spur More Affordable Housing

This 4-1/2-minute news video describes the findings of a new report from the Regional Plan Association (RPA), "Homes on Track: Building Thriving Communities Around Transit" (available here: <https://rpa.org/work/reports/homes-on-track>), which finds that "Access to abundant homes can lower expenses and improve affordability, especially when strategically coupled with public transportation. This integrated approach, known as Transit Oriented Development (TOD), not only addresses housing costs but also promotes economic prosperity and environmentally sustainable outcomes. TOD also represents an essential shift in transportation planning, where the ultimate goal should be to improve an individual's efficient access to jobs and services, not maximizing travel speeds or ridership." The RPA found 74,000 acres of underutilized land surrounding commuter rail stations in New Jersey and New York. The news video focuses on the successful TOD in Metuchen, NJ.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/njs-transit-stations-could-help-spur-more-affordable-housing/>

FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE

Citing Climate Crisis, Lawmakers Move to Ban New Fossil-Fuel Power Plants

A NJ Senate resolution (SCR11) to amend the NJ constitution to prohibit construction of new fossil fuel power plants was reported out of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and has been "placed on the desk" of all members of the NJ Senate and Assembly, as required for proposed

constitutional amendments. A constitutional amendment is put on the NJ ballot if it is approved by a three-fifths vote of the total membership of the Senate and the Assembly or if it receives a majority vote in the Senate and the Assembly in two successive years. The proposed amendment would add the following language to Article I of the NJ Constitution: "No person shall construct or reconstruct, and the State shall not permit or otherwise approve the construction or reconstruction of, any new electric power generation facility in the State that produces electric power, in whole or in part, from the combustion of coal, natural gas, oil, or petroleum products. The prohibition in this paragraph shall not apply to the repair or maintenance of an electric power generation facility in existence prior to the adoption of this amendment." A bill (S198) that "Prohibits investment by State of pension and annuity funds in, and requires divestment from, 200 largest publicly traded fossil fuel companies" was also reported out of committee.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/lawmakers-move-to-ban-new-fossil-fuel-power-plants/>

Federal Court Wrestles With Pipeline Case That Could Derail New Jersey's Climate Goals

In 8/2023, a coalition of environmental organizations, backed by eight state Attorneys General and the NJ Ratepayer Advocate, appealed the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) approval of a Williams Co. subsidiary's Regional Energy Access Expansion (REAE) project, which would expand natural gas compressor stations in Branchburg and Old Bridge and build a new natural gas compressor station in West Deptford, plus 36.1 miles of pipeline in PA. Multiple arguments against FERC's approval of the project were given, including the agency's ignoring NJ's findings that the project is not needed and that it would interfere with NJ's climate change goals by potentially being responsible for nearly half of NJ's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. A three-judge panel of the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals is considering the case, including what the ramifications might be related to other states with such GHG reduction targets. "If your criticism is valid, then this problem would be

endemic," Judge Cornelia Pillard told an attorney for environmental groups challenging FERC.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2024/03/15/federal-court-wrestles-with-pipeline-case-that-could-derail-new-jerseys-climate-goals-00147344>

OFFSHORE WIND

Murphy Administration Announces \$3.7 Million in Funding for Offshore Wind Research and Monitoring Initiative

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the NJ Board of Public Utilities (BPU) "announced the award of nearly \$3.7 million in funding for scientific research projects being undertaken to ensure ecologically responsible development of offshore wind energy, an integral part of the Murphy Administration's climate change response and resilience strategy. Projects newly funded through the state's ongoing Research and Monitoring Initiative (RMI) include an aerial survey of whales, a whale satellite-tagging study, a study of seasonal water-mixing dynamics, the expansion of an existing tracking system for birds and bats, and a study focused on sea turtle behavior and health." See:

https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2024/24_00325.htm.

A 1-minute news video is also available here:

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/nj-commits-funds-to-study-offshore-wind-developments-ecological-impacts/>.

Murphy Administration, Offshore Wind Developers Detail Transformative Benefits of New Projects That Will Advance New Jersey's 100% Clean Energy Goal

Gov. Murphy issued a press release stating "Cabinet leaders from New Jersey's Board of Public Utilities and Economic Development Authority joined senior representatives from Attentive Energy and Leading Light Wind – the winners of the latest offshore wind solicitation – to showcase the type of skilled jobs that will be generated by the Board of Public Utilities' recent milestone award of over 3,700 MW in clean, New Jersey-produced energy. The event was hosted by the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of

Carpenters (EAS Carpenters Union) at their state-of-the-art Commercial Dive School facility in Sicklerville, NJ, [a 3-1/2-minute video is available here: <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/offshore-wind-supporters-pitch-prospect-of-major-jobs-boost/>] where they have built an elite program that has become the go-to resource for training members from across the building trades unions for the vast work opportunities being produced by the growing offshore wind industry."
<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/approved/20240301a.shtml>

BOEM Announces Environmental Review of Proposed Wind Energy Project Offshore New Jersey

From the BOEM 3/15/2024 Press Release: "In support of the Biden-Harris administration's goal of deploying 30 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind energy capacity by 2030, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management today announced it will initiate the environmental review of a proposed wind energy project offshore New Jersey, which would deliver clean renewable energy to the region. On March 18, BOEM will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Construction and Operations Plan (COP) submitted by Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind, LLC (Atlantic Shores)."
<https://www.boem.gov/newsroom/press-releases/boem-announces-environmental-review-proposed-wind-energy-project-offshore-0>



Opinion: The Steps Needed to Get Offshore Wind Back on Track in 2024

In this piece by Heather O'Neill, CEO of Advanced Energy United, a national business association of clean-energy companies including wind and transmission developers, she describes "four key

steps we need to take to get offshore wind back on track."
<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/op-ed-how-to-get-offshore-wind-back-on-track-2024/>

CLIMATE CHANGE

Critical Climate Bills Face Steep Uphill Climb

This article was written right after the joint session of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee that took place on 3/11/2024, and which was attended by **EJTF Chair Peggy Middaugh and EJTF member Michael Skelly** (see the article on [p. 3](#)). At the meeting, two climate-related bills were discussed: the Clean Energy Bill (S237/A1480) and a bill allocating \$300 million to modernize the electric grid (S258). Environmental justice advocates supported the bills, but requested amendments to the definitions to include co-pollutants and to exclude incinerators. These requested changes were made in a subsequent meeting (see the articles below).
<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/electric-utilities-grid-modernization-fine-particulates-soot-contaminants-clean-energy-environmental-justice-garbage-incinerators-assemblyman-christian-barranco-r-morris-assemblyman-wayne-deangelo-d/>

Protest and Support for NJ's 'Clean Energy' Bill

This 4-minute news video shows the joint session of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee that took place on 3/11/2024, described in the article above.
<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/protest-and-support-for-njs-clean-energy-bill/>

Lawmakers Swiftly Advance Key Climate Bills

After the joint session of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee that took place on 3/11/2024, the Senate Environment and Energy Committee held another meeting on 3/14/2024, also attended by **EJTF Chair Peggy**

Middaugh and EJTF member Michael Skelly

(see the article on [p. 4](#)), at which the following three bills were voted out of committee:

- the Clean Energy Bill (S237/A1480), as revised to reflect, among other things, the changes to the definitions to include co-pollutants and to exclude incinerators (termed "resource recovery facilities") that were requested by environmental justice advocates (the revised bill is available here: https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S0500/237_U1.PDF);
- the bill allocating \$300 million to modernize the electric grid (S258), as amended (the bill, with amendments shown, is available here: https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S0500/258_R1.PDF); and
- the "Green Amendment," with a number of amendments (the bill, with amendments shown, is available here: https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/SCR/43_R1.PDF). Also see the article on [p. 18](#). <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/nj-lawmakers-advance-key-climate-bills-but-leading-senator-cautions/>

NJ's Energy Master Plan Is About to Get Reassessed

This article describes the background, and some issues, related to NJ's upcoming update to the 2019 Energy Management Plan (EMP). Also see article below regarding planned public hearings.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/bpu-announces-review-nj-energy-master-plan/>

2024 New Jersey Energy Master Plan Public Hearings Announced

The NJ Board of Public Utilities has announced the following: "Staff of the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities ("NJBPU") will be holding a series of virtual public hearings on the 2024 New Jersey Energy Master ("EMP") Plan. The 2024 EMP will serve as a whole-of-government progress report on the goals and strategies in the 2019 EMP, outline the changing landscape of State and federal support for climate action, and determine the basis for the development of actionable next steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and maximize clean energy uptake economy-wide. The 2024 EMP will be a public-facing document that incorporates progress information acquired

through inter-agency collaboration and stakeholder feedback to build upon the 2019 EMP and help New Jersey reach its goal of 100% clean energy by 2035, amongst other key clean energy and climate goals and benchmarks." The public hearings will be held on the following dates and will focus on the selected areas noted:

- Hearing #1 – 5/20/2024, 9:30 a.m. · Overview, progress, and current actions for Strategies 1, 2, and 5 listed in the 2019 EMP.
- Hearing #2 – 5/22/2024, 6:00 p.m. · Overview, progress, and current actions for Strategies 3 and 4.
- Hearing #3 – 5/29/2024, 9:30 a.m. · Overview, progress, and current actions for Strategies 6 and 7.
- Hearing #4 - 6/3/2024, 1:00 p.m. · Recap of Hearing #1, Hearing #2, and Hearing #3, and next steps in the development of the 2024 EMP.

More information, including details on how to register for the virtual public hearings, are included in the Public Notice (for Hearings #1, #2, and #3) and the revised Public Notice adding Hearing #4 (see links below). Stakeholders and members of the public are invited to provide brief comments at these meetings orally, as well as more detailed written feedback following the hearings on the matters addressed during each respective hearing. **The deadline for comments is 5:00 p.m. on June 12, 2024.**

Public Notice: <https://tinyurl.com/3buy7k6a>

Revised Public Notice: <https://tinyurl.com/3v76b9ne>

Push Is on to Open Power Grid to Intermittent Solar and Wind Projects

In what has been characterized as one relatively small effort to modernize the grid, a bill (S2816) that "Requires electric public utilities to submit to BPU [NJ Board of Public Utilities] and implement electric infrastructure improvement plans" was voted out of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. In the plans, the utilities would be required to describe how they plan to open up the electric distribution circuits that have been closed to renewable energy projects, primarily using technological fixes rather than infrastructure improvements.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/nj-lawmakers-push-opening-power-grid-to-more-solar-and-wind-projects/>

Interconnection Issues at PJM Threaten Reliability and Clean-Energy Goals, Warns New Study

PJM is the Regional Transmission Organization (RTO) that operates the wholesale power markets and controls the transmission of electricity in NJ and a number of other states. A new report by Grid Strategies and Brattle (available here: <https://gridstrategiesllc.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/AEI-2024-Generation-Interconnection-Scorecard.pdf>), "Generator Interconnection Scorecard: Ranking Interconnection Outcomes and Processes of the Seven U.S. Regional Transmission System Operators," puts PJM in last place with a score of D-, giving it failing grades in two of the six categories included. Interconnection issues at PJM have resulted in a backlog in connecting projects such that PJM is not accepting any new applications until 2025.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/02/pjm-interconnection-power-grid-operator-scores-worst-struggling-to-connect-new-electricity-projects/>



Lawmakers Urge New Protections for Workers Facing Extreme Heat

A bill (A3521/S2422) has been introduced in the NJ legislature that would require NJ employers to provide additional protections for workers in extreme heat conditions, both outdoors and indoors. It would also require the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL) to create a new heat stress standard and more specific regulations for employers to follow, by 6/1/2024. The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is developing federal heat standards, but it routinely takes more than 7 years for them to finalize standards; the NJ

Attorney General has joined a coalition of other state attorneys general to petition OSHA (letter available here:

<https://ag.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/osha-multistate-petition.pdf>) to adopt emergency

protections by 5/2024.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/nj-lawmakers-urge-new-workplace-heat-protections-soon/>

Critics Protest Turnpike Expansion Plan at Newark Open House

This 4-1/2-minute news video shows an open house held in Newark by the NJ Turnpike Authority to describe its controversial \$10.7 billion expansion plan for eight miles of the Turnpike between Newark Airport and the Holland Tunnel, including replacing the Newark Bay Bridge. Opponents, including environmentalists and area residents, staged a protest, noting that the expansion will add to air pollution in an already-overburdened area by increasing traffic, and that the funds could be better used just to fix the bridge and to fund mass transit. The meeting used an open house format rather than that of a formal hearing, so people were not afforded an opportunity to testify about their opinion after the presentation. Two more open houses were purportedly planned, but according to Doug O'Malley, director of Environment New Jersey, "The turnout and negative attention to the first NJ Turnpike Authority meeting in Newark has meant the agency has delayed open houses in Bayonne & Jersey City (for now)."

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/critics-protest-turnpike-expansion-plan-at-newark-open-house/>

Communities Occupy MACH2 Hydrogen Hub Meeting

This Delaware Riverkeeper Network press release (available here: <https://tinyurl.com/4fvbs9kr>) describes the contentious in-person meeting that was held by MACH2. It describes the background of the project, with its lack of public input or information, and provides comments from representatives of organizations that attended the meeting. A 5-minute video of the meeting, in which Delaware Riverkeeper Maya K. Van Rossum is seen shouting down MACH2 representatives including PA Gov. Shapiro, is available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_4bKtsDqco.

Updates on Resilient NJ's Municipal Assistance Program

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) "Resilient NJ" Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) provides municipalities with climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessments and resilience action plans, to be used by municipal governments to plan resilience efforts. The recently completed inaugural round of MAP projects include Ocean Township, Stafford Township, and Upper Township. A second round of projects, expected to launch in 2024, include the Town of Harrison, the City of Lambertville, and Montclair Township.

<https://nj.gov/dep/bcrp/resilientnj/projects.html>

FEMA Updates the Climate Risk & Resilience (ClimRR) Portal

In the wake of Cop 27, AT&T, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory jointly unveiled a Climate Risk and Resilience Portal (ClimRR) to assist vulnerable communities to enhance their preparedness for extreme weather events. ClimRR models over 60 climate variables to provide a national online source for climate data down to the neighborhood level. It is available for changing hazards: extreme temperatures (hot and cold), cooling and heating degree days, heat index, wind, fire weather index, and precipitation/no precipitation under two carbon emission scenarios. It has been enhanced to let users visualize and analyze future climate hazards combined with local demographic and infrastructure data. The enhanced features include:

- New Consolidated Local Reports Assessing Future Climate Hazards and Community Impacts;
- New Maps, Charts & Visualizations; and
- Improved Educational Features to Interpret Climate Hazard Data Points.

<https://climrr.anl.gov>

FOREST HEALTH

DEP Forest Fire Service Ramps up Annual Prescribed Burning Program, Unveils New Jersey Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal

According to a NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) press release: "Following a very active wildfire year in 2023, the [DEP] Forest Fire Service is introducing the New Jersey Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (NJWRAP) [including a Wildfire Risk Explorer Map, available here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ycjwub73>], which compiles data and resources to assist residents, community leaders and fire professionals in taking actions to mitigate the threat of wildfire risk. Data in the new portal will also assist the Forest Fire Service to identify areas where prescribed burning may help mitigate wildfire risk."

https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2024/24_0005.htm

EDUCATION and YOUTH-RELATED

Opinion: Calling on Gov. Murphy to Fill All Seats on Environmental Education Commission

In this piece, co-authored by **Michael Skelly - Environmental Justice Task Force - UU Faith Action NJ** and four other authors, they "urgently call on Gov. Phil Murphy to formally appoint and seat the full Commission on Environmental Education. Doing so will ensure that New Jersey remains the nation's leader in environmental education." The New Jersey Commission on Environmental Education "is an organization comprising volunteer experts from across sectors that provides cohesive and comprehensive communication about environmental education." It is currently not fully seated.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/op-ed-calling-gov-phil-murphy-fill-all-nj-environmental-education-commission-seats/>

Educational Resources For Inside and Outside of School (Updated for World Water Day 2024)

This list of resources for educators to incorporate water and climate topics into their curriculum from kindergarten through twelfth grade was compiled by the Jersey Water Works Water Workforce Task Force.

<https://www.jerseywaterworks.org/resources/educational-resources-for-inside-and-outside-of-school/>

TCNJ Professor Works to Expand Environmental Education across the State

"At The College [of New Jersey - TCNJ], students can now enroll in a five-course minor of environmental sustainability education - the only such program in New Jersey that is accredited by the North American Association of Environmental Education. The minor, which consists of three core courses, one science elective, one non-science elective, and one independent study, comes thanks to the efforts of Lauren Madden, Ph.D., a professor of early childhood education. Madden has dedicated much of her research to environmental science and currently coordinates both the minor and TCNJ's graduate certificate in environmental sustainability and education." The graduate certificate is to provide teachers with tools to better explain to students why climate-change-related environmental conditions are occurring. TCNJ is also launching a new environmental studies major this fall.

<https://srhub.org/2024/03/19/tcnj-professor-works-to-expand-environmental-education-across-the-state/>

LEAD REDUCTION IN HOUSEHOLDS

Audit of Faulty Lead Line Replacements in Newark Continues

This 1-1/2-minute news video describes the continuing audit that was begun in February of some faulty lead service line replacements in Newark. So far, 12 instances out of 90 properties have been found where partial replacements were done, instead of the full replacement that is required by NJ. State and city officials continue to stress that there is no threat to public health because of ongoing corrosion control treatment

that prevents lead from leaching into the water. See

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/audit-of-faulty-lead-line-replacements-in-newark-continues/>.

Additional information is available in this article: "**Newark Finds More Lead Pipes, but Officials Say Problem Not Widespread**," available here: <https://newjerseymonitor.com/2024/03/21/newark-finds-more-lead-pipes-but-officials-say-problem-not-widespread/>.



Lead in the Water, the Walls, and the Soil: Takeaways From the Lead Listening Session at the East Trenton Collaborative

This article reports on a listening session with residents of Trenton, at which they described the myriad pathways that lead can take to affect them and especially their children, and what they would like to see done to address the problems.

<https://trentonjournal.com/lead-in-the-water-the-walls-and-the-soil-takeaways-from-the-lead-listening-session-at-the-east-trenton-collaborative/>

Factors Influencing Customer Participation in a Program to Replace Lead Pipes for Drinking Water

This study in the peer-reviewed academic journal "Environmental and Resources Economics" was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The study states: "Using customer-level data from a water system serving more than 60,000 properties in Trenton, New Jersey, and four neighboring suburban municipalities, we examine the characteristics of properties and neighborhoods more likely to have LSLs [lead service lines] and to participate in the inspection and replacement program.... Results from the two grant program evaluations suggest that subsidies

for low-income homeowners to cover LSL replacement costs can significantly boost participation, but only when the programs are well publicized and easy to access. Even then, there was still significant non-participation among properties with confirmed LSLs."

https://cms.jerseywaterworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FactorsAffectingParticipation2024_EARE.pdf

DRINKING WATER-RELATED ISSUES (other than lead)

Pentagon Tries to Dodge PFAS Lawsuits Over a Product It Helped Invent

In 2021, NJ sued the federal government, charging it with contaminating public drinking water supplies with toxic PFAS ("forever chemicals") on and around three NJ military bases by continuing to use a type of firefighting foam that contains the chemicals. Twenty-six other local and state governments, businesses, and property owners also filed lawsuits seeking to make the government pay for the PFAS water and property contamination the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) allegedly caused. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has now asked that the lawsuits be dismissed, stating that the government is immune to the lawsuits under a provision of the Federal Tort Claims Act that protects it from tort liability for the discretionary acts of government employees. That law allows plaintiffs to sue the U.S. government for damages only if the government violates specific, mandatory policies.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/pentagon-tries-to-dodge-pfas-lawsuits-over-a-product-it-helped-invent/>

POLLUTION

Murphy Administration Awards \$16 Million in Grants to Advance Recycling and Waste Reduction Goals

According to a NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) press release: "As part of its commitment to promoting sustainability and clean communities, the Murphy Administration is awarding nearly \$16.2 million in grants to

communities across the state to support waste reduction and recycling programs.... Municipalities must use their funds for various recycling initiatives which can include sponsoring household hazardous waste collection events, providing recycling receptacles in public places or maintaining leaf composting operations." The press release includes a list of the grant recipients. https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2024/24_0007.htm

EPA Reports Encouraging News About NJ and NY Manufacturers

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released its 2022 Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) National Analysis (available here: <https://www.epa.gov/trinationalanalysis>), which shows that "During 2022, facilities in New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and eight Indian Nations (Region 2) managed 94% of their waste through preferred methods such as treatment, energy recovery, and recycling, while only 6% was released into the environment." The TRI National Analysis also includes the option to view the data on a map in the "Where You Live" tool, available here:

<https://www.epa.gov/trinationalanalysis/where-you-live>. Users can view data by state, Tribe, metropolitan area, EPA region, and watershed, with TRI facility locations overlaid with demographic data to identify potential exposure to TRI chemical releases in communities, including overburdened communities.

<https://enviropolitics.com/epa-reports-encouraging-news-about-nj-and-ny-manufacturers/>

Skip the Stuff! Borough of Garwood Passes a New Ordinance to Reduce Cutlery and Condiment Pollution

As part of its ReThink Disposable campaign to "stop trash before it starts," Clean Water Action is asking municipal governments to adopt "Stop the Stuff" ordinances, such as those prohibiting takeout and/or food delivery services from including plasticware (unless specifically requested) that have been passed by several NJ municipalities. The Borough of Garwood just adopted such an ordinance, including it in their 2019 bag ban. <https://cleanwater.org/releases/skip-stuff-borough-garwood-nj>

OTHER

Cheers and Jeers for Murphy's NJ Transit Tax Plan

This 5-1/2-minute news video describes Gov. Murphy's proposed "Corporate Transit Fee" tax on large businesses (with net annual incomes above \$10 million) to provide a dedicated funding stream for NJ Transit. The video includes reactions from both proponents and opponents of such a tax, which would need to be approved by the NJ legislature. See

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/cheers-and-jeers-for-murphys-nj-transit-tax-plan/>.

The proposal is described in the article about Gov. Murphy's budget proposal available here:

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/02/nj-gov-phil-murphy-proposes-another-record-high-state-budget-public-education-property-tax-relief-new-corporate-levy-help-nj-transit/>. It is further described in the

first 13:47 minutes of this NJ Spotlight News Chat Box (available here:

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/budget-business-chat-box-corporate-transit-fee-steve-sweeney-perspective/>), in which NJ Spotlight News

senior correspondent David Cruz is joined by Alex Ambrose, a policy analyst with New Jersey Policy Perspective, and Colleen Wilson, the transportation reporter with The

Record/NorthJersey.com, "to discuss whether the plan is enough of a lifeline for the troubled transit agency."



NJ Transit Takes Fare-Hike Hearing on the Road

This article describes the series of NJ Transit public hearings related to its proposed fare hike,

scheduled for March, and includes example new fares and a link to a 15-minute video regarding the fare proposal, provided by NJ Transit. (A 5-minute news video of one of the public hearings is available here:

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/light-crowd-at-nj-transit-fare-hike-hearing/> - Note: in response to

numerous complaints that NJ Transit's public hearings did not allow for widespread participation because they were all in-person and not easily accessible, NJ Transit did schedule one virtual public hearing.) The article also describes other possible funding sources for NJ Transit, such as the tax on businesses included in Gov. Murphy's budget proposal.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2024/03/nj-transit-takes-fair-hike-hearing-on-the-road/>

Artists and Community Organizations Work Together to Communicate Climate Risks in New Jersey

Utilizing funds from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Coastal Management Program (CMP) is providing funding to four community-based organizations to work with regional artists "to develop community-engaged art projects that communicate climate risks to the public." Since 2019, the CMP has partnered with the NJ State Council on the Arts to develop and implement a Community-Based Art Grant Program which, among other things, focuses on informing and involving the public about coastal hazard impacts and what actions they can take to reduce their risk.

<https://nj.gov/state/press-2024-0215.shtml>

Liberty State Park Plan Faces Billionaire-Backed Pushback

This 5-minute news video describes the recent Liberty State Park Design Task Force meeting, in which members of the public expressed appreciation for the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) plan for the park, and Task Force members associated with golf course owner Paul Fireman (the "People's Park Foundation") expressed interest in discussing plans "without the public present" and left before the public input portion of the meeting. The DEP Commissioner called out the misinformation being

spread regarding "flooding" of the Park, when in actuality the plans will provide flood mitigation. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/liberty-state-park-plan-faces-billionaire-backed-pushback/>

Opinion: Protect the Future of Liberty State Park, Free From Large-Scale Development

In this opinion piece by Hoboken Mayor Ravi Bhalla, he explains why he is in favor of the NJ

Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) plan for Liberty State Park. He compares the threats from special interest groups for large-scale development and commercialization, as well as flood retention issues, to what Hoboken went through to successfully protect its public waterfront. <https://hudsoncountyview.com/op-ed-protect-the-future-of-liberty-state-park-free-from-large-scale-development/>

EJTF's GOALS for 2023/2024

- 1. Advocating for the adoption of the Green Amendment in New Jersey through work in our congregations and as a Task Force;**
- 2. Working toward resolving the many challenges in New Jersey related to food-insecurity, including but not limited to promoting regenerative agriculture, increasing accessibility of healthy food, reducing food waste, and encouraging community and family gardens;**
- 3. Supporting 100% renewable energy and energy conservation through measures such as the Clean Energy Equity Act, and those affecting transportation and Electric Vehicles (EVs).**
- 4. Advocating for better health and reducing climate change for all by protecting and expanding New Jersey's public and urban forests.**

MORATORIUM MONDAYS CONTINUE

Please continue to contact Gov. Murphy every Monday and urge him to declare a climate emergency moratorium on fossil fuel projects! These efforts have been successful in that a number of projects have been stopped or delayed in the past. 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 (609-292-6000). 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 NJ until there are rules in place to achieve 100% clean energy goals.

UU FaithAction NJ - Environmental Justice Task Force - Peggy Middaugh, Chair
Visit <https://uufaithaction.org/environment/> for links and resources, and to join the EJTF
