

Raritan Township Environmental Commission 2024 Accomplishments

After many years of service to the Environmental Commission, Ray Simonds and Jayne Gilbert resigned their positions to pursue their passions with Township Historical Committee and DAR respectively. We thank them for their many years of service to the Environmental Commission.

The Environmental Commission was fortunate to find highly qualified volunteers to assume their positions. This year we welcomed Rebecca Dougherty Mazzolla and Michelle Hatfield to the Commission.

The Raritan Township Tree Committee was officially established as a subcommittee within the Environmental Commission. As our Community Forest Management Plan is set to expire at the end of this year, the Environmental Commission and Tree Committee plans to work with a consultant to assist in creating a new plan to manage trees and forests on our public lands in 2025 to . NJ Grant funding has been announced to help towns develop/revise their Community Forestry Management Plan and we will be applying for such funding early next year.

The Environmental Commission ended the pilot Food Waste Recycling and Composting program in May with a total of 6 ¼ tons of food waste collected over the 10 months in operation. The success of this program attracted OneCompostCan to continue weekly collections for a modest fee (\$14/month) Saturday mornings at the Stangl Farmers Market. Curbside pickup service is also available for slightly more. The program also was a recipient of an ANJEC Environmental Achievement Award at this year's ANJEC Convention for the Food Waste Composting program.

The Environmental Commission and Green Team held a green Fair in May with 13 different environmental stations providing information on native plants, local wildlife, emergency management, composting and other topics. At the Green Fair we also gave away our allotment of free tree seedlings.

In 2023 336 native plants donated by Garden for Wildlife were planted in the Township Native Plant Pollinator Garden, completing the front area of the Municipal building and the area around the side of the Memorial Patio. The plants provided color and habitat during the 2024 growing season and now provide overwintering habitat for pollinators and birds.

We participated in the Sourland Mountain Music Festival and where we shared information about open space preservation, water quality, sustainable activities, watershed management, and general natural environmental initiatives with festival goers.

In September the Environmental Commission hosted a BioBlitz at Micek Farm Park, a 95 acre preserve on Johanna Farms Road. Ten participants came out to document the biodiversity at the park making 357 observations on 144 different species of plants and insects demonstrating the quality of the habitat at the park.

A \$1500 Grant awarded to the Environmental Commission from Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) and was used by volunteers to plant pollinator plants and remove invasives species from Morales Park.

15 Site plan applications were reviewed in a timely manner and comments submitted to the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment.

The Environmental Commission assisted Raritan Headwaters Association with residential Well Test collections. 92 residents participated in the well test program this year and a general review of the results is being planned in an open meeting for January 2025 .

The Environmental Commission participated in the Township Community Day event where we discussed with residents various stormwater related topics including the new Stormwater Utility under consideration by the Township and provided maps of our Township Parks and Preserves.

Environmental Commission members earned 17.5 NJ Forestry Credits towards our continued community forestry accreditation.

Volunteer Activities:

The Green Team updated current and completed some new Sustainable Jersey actions to increase our point count to 250 thereby achieving Bronze level certification again in 2024.

In conjunction with RHA Township volunteers performed a stream clean-up of Bushkill Brook.

At various times during the year, the Environmental Commission and local volunteers weeded, mulched, trimmed and watered the pollinator garden at the Municipal Building

The Environmental Commission and local volunteers completed a Fall Road Clean up on Dayton Road from Route 12 circle to South Main Street.

The Green Team, the Open Space Committee obtained a grant from Raritan Headwaters Association and used numerous local volunteers , the Township DPW staff and RHA staff to plant 300 trees at Mine Brook Park and Morales Park along the Walnut Brook (see Attached Tree Report)