



**Morris Township
Environmental
Commission
2024 Annual Report**

Pictured is the Butterworth Park Pollinator Garden in the Fall. The garden was created with a \$1000 grant.



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Message from the Chairperson

The Township of Morris Environmental Commission (EC) had a very successful 2024 as measured by its ongoing commitment to reviewing development applications, growth/maturity in membership, and delivery on both its required and prioritized mandates.

2024 was a year where the EC continued to build on its strength – more internal training, improved site review reports, outreach events, and increased collaboration.

I continue to be amazed at how much this volunteer group of residents is able accomplish, and how much more we hope to accomplish in 2025. We are endlessly thankful to a supporting Township Council and Administration. As residents of the township, state and planet, we all have a responsibility to protect our surrounding environment in a sustainable and equitable manner. There is no better way than to start locally, so please consider helping the volunteers already on the EC with your time and ideas. You can submit a volunteer application on the [Township website](#) or contact us via email at envcomm@morristwp.com.

Brian Morgan
Chairman Morris Twp Environmental Commission

About the Environmental Commission

The Township of Morris Environmental Commission (EC) is a municipal advisory commission created by Township ordinance pursuant to enabling authority conferred under a 1968 New Jersey statute. As stated in the ordinance, the Commission exists for the protection, development and use of natural resources, including water resources, located within the Township and, like most environmental commissions within the State, the Commission interprets this directive broadly to embrace the range of issues described in this report.

The Commission is restricted to seven voting members and two alternate members who only vote when required to achieve a voting quorum. At its November 2020 meeting, the Township Committee adopted an ordinance suggested by the Commission and providing for the appointment of an unlimited number of non-voting associate (adult) and student members to provide people interested in the environment with a sense of empowerment and connection to the Commission’s activities while also expanding the experience and effort that could be brought to bear in discharge of the Commission’s affairs. Exiting 2024, [the Commission members](#) are set out below:

<u>Voting Members</u>	<u>Alternate Members</u>	<u>Associate Members</u>
Brian Morgan (Chairman)	Kathleen Hourihan	Hart Coven
Barbara Buda	Eric Rush	Leslie Jones-Wentz
Cecile Kent		Ned Gardner
Charlie Schachter		Karen Seidmon
Jennifer Carcich		Diana Agu
Joshua Saks		
Thelma Achenbach		

In addition to the volunteer members, Morris Township is fortunate to have two Township Committee liaisons assigned to the EC (who also attend nearly every meeting). In 2024, that was Siva Jonnada and Jeff Grayzel. In 2025, EC liaisons will remain unchanged.

The EC is very thankful for the many Township Professionals that support us including:

- Environmental Commission Secretary: Annaliese Rush
- Township Administrator: Timothy Quinn
- Township Engineers: Jim Slate, Dave Hansen
- Land Use Board Secretary: Sonia Santiago

The EC met 11 times this year – on the second Thursday of every month except July.

Environmental Reviews

The Environmental Commission has as its primary function the review of proposals submitted to the Township’s land use boards to ascertain and report any adverse environmental impact. To this end, while having many reviews to execute, progress was made to improve and mature the process.

- **Education** - As in prior years, various Commission members sought to sharpen their site review skills through participation in the annual site review training workshop conducted by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions as part of its virtual “Fundamentals for an Effective Environmental Commission” webinars.
- **Standardization** – improved suggestions for land protection was developed and included on several reviews. Continued areas of focus this year included lighting and storm water management while integrating data from authoritative sources (NJ Highlands)
- **Collaboration** – Partnering with our neighboring towns in Madison and the Chathams, continued discussion was held to understand each other’s Site Review process, share ideas and identify areas for each town to improve.

The following environmental applications were reviewed by the Commission in 2024:

Planning Board

<u>ID</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>
PB-07-23	257 Mt. Kemble Avenue, LLC, OSGU / RA-15 zone.	Block 5401 Lot 2, 257 Mt. Kemble Avenue	Applicant proposes a major subdivision to create four additional lots.
PB-08-23	LIDL US, LLC	Block 10401, Lot 3.01 191 East Hanover Avenue	RDP zone. Applicant proposes to install additional building and monument signs, as well as temporary banner signs.
PB-01-24	Crum & Forster	Block 8304, Lot 30, 305 Madison Avenue	OL-5 Zone. Applicant proposes to replace existing free-standing sign with a new larger sign
PB-02-24	Red Bull Arena	Block 9101, Lots 4 & 5, 101-103 Columbia Road	OL-40/PUD Zone. Applicant proposes various modifications to Building A, Building B, the seating area at Field 8, and the previously approved landscaping and utilities as set forth on the approved site plan.
PB-03-24	OSBNJ-St. Mary’s	Block 4501, Lot 2.01, 230 Mendham Road	OSGU zone. The applicant proposes the construction of a Student Life Center.

Board of Adjustment

<u>ID</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>
BA-25-23	One Paw Away, LLC	Block 7003, Lot 17, 467 South Street	OL-40 zone. Section D. Applicant proposes a change of use from a veterinary hospital to an animal day care and boarding
BA-01-24	Morgan Stanley c/o Signs of Success	Block 6101, Lot 5, 340 Mt. Kemble Avenue,	OL-40 zone. Applicant proposes installation of façade and entrance building signs
BA-04-24	Columbia Road Partners, LLC	Block 9003, Lot 10, 65 Columbia Road	OS-GU zone. Applicant proposes installation of three Padel Courts in a space previously occupied by a single, oversized clay tennis court.
BA-08-24	Richard Landreman	Block 3002, Lot 43, 44 Woodlawn Drive	RA-25 zone. The applicant proposes to subdivide an existing lot that is partially located in Morris Township and partially in the Town of Morristown to create one additional lot.

Community Outreach

Newsletter

The Environmental Commissions' email newsletter, *Environmental News You Can Use*, has been published since February 2021. To date, over 45 issues covering more than 200 topics have been researched, written, and delivered to resident emails.

The newsletter contains information about the activities of the EC, but also includes many articles about diverse topics such as native habitat and wildlife, lawn care practices, and energy conservation. There is a focus on actionable and seasonal information that readers can use to live a more sustainable everyday life.

The [newsletter's subscription list](#) increased from 40 subscribers in Feb 2021 to more than 760 by the end of 2024.

The relevance of the newsletter to residents is manifested in the extremely high "open rate" of 65%.

Poster Contest

The Environmental Commission sponsored a poster contest for students attending Morris District schools or being homeschooled in Morris Township or Morristown. Children in grades 3–8 were invited to create artistic wall hangings on the environmental issue of **Food Waste** with possible solutions to this problem. Those students participating did not disappoint.

Four children were recognized with awards at the Environmental Commission meeting by Township Committeeman, Siva Jonnada, and the full Environmental Commission.

The 2024-2025 poster contest is looking to build on the success of this years contest with a new theme - **Plastics in the Environment**.

Grants

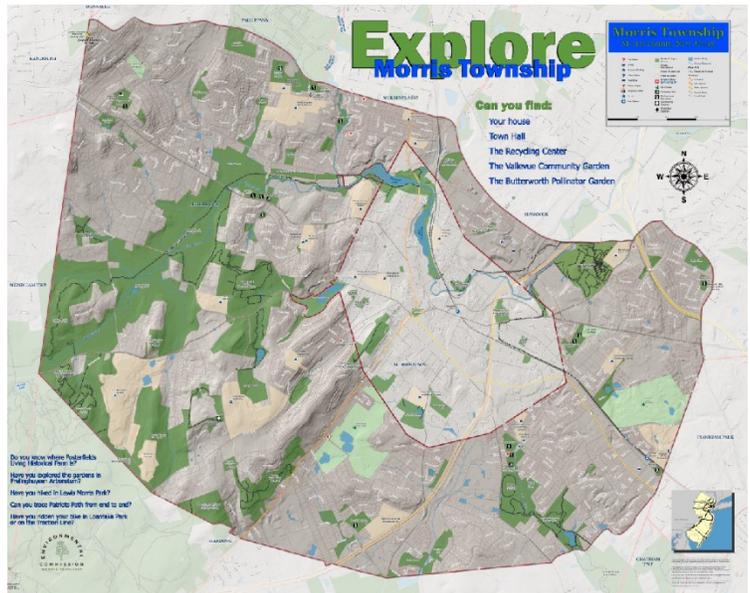


In May of 2023, the Environmental Commission was thrilled to announce that it was awarded a grant from Sustainable Jersey to enhance its community outreach tools.

In 2024, this grant was completed, the grant was successfully closed and the funding enabled the EC to purchase reliable booth equipment, create new signage, several township maps (see picture below) and develop a comprehensive toolbox of educational materials. These improvements are empowering the EC to engage and educate the community, fostering a more sustainable future.

The Commission is thankful for Sustainable Jersey recognizing our efforts and supporting our mission. Through the enhanced outreach toolbox, the EC is better able to raise awareness and inspire community members to create a greener and more sustainable Morris Township.

In 2024, unsuccessful grant applications were made to Sustainable Jersey for the creation of an Environmental Resource Inventory and to ANJEC for Invasive Plant removal in Jones Woods. Despite the outcome, these initiatives are still priorities the EC will continue to pursue



Outreach Events

The Environmental Commission continues to be on the ground meeting residents and informing them of the EC objectives and general sustainable practices. Events where the EC has been present in 2024:

- Jan-Mar, Dec – Grow it Green Winter Farmers Market
- Mar 2024 – the EC chairman presented the Annual Report to the Township Committee at their monthly meeting
- April 2024 – the Township free Tree Giveaway
- May 2024 - Great Swamp Music Fest
- Sep 2024 - Morristown Fall Festival



Conservation

Butterworth Pollinator Garden

Now in its third season, the Butterworth Pollinator Garden provides critical habitat to insect pollinators facing severe population decline. It contains a wide variety of native perennial herbaceous plants that bloom at different times of the year. The 200-square foot garden was funded by a \$1,000 grant from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions.

The Butterworth Pollinator Garden also includes a short path, a bat-house on a 10-foot post, and informational signage for visitors to the garden. The garden is maintained by EC member Charlie Schachter with the help of the Friends of Butterworth Garden, a neighborhood volunteer group pledged to maintain the garden.



Park can be found at 35 Lynnfield Drive at the above location.

Butterworth Pollinator Meadow

Inspired by the success of the Butterworth Park Pollinator Garden, the Township Parks & Recreation Department, with input and support from the Environmental Commission, created a one-acre meadow of New Jersey native wildflowers and grasses in the northwest quadrant of Butterworth Park. The costs are covered by the Township's Open Spaces fund.

Compared with the cool-season grass it replaces, the meadow (1) provides habitat enhancement for wildlife; (2) reduces the mowing required, thus decreasing greenhouse gas emissions as well as noise pollution; and (3) improves stormwater management for the baseball fields below. It will take 2-3 years for the meadow to reach maturity.



Avoiding Invasives / Encouraging Native Plants

Since the passage in April 2022 of a Do Not Plant list by the Township Committee, the Environmental Commission continues to play a key role in providing Outreach and communicating the benefits of avoiding invasive plants and encouraging native plants.

In April 2023, the EC has developed a [Pledge to Avoid Invasives, Plant Natives](#) in your own yard. This pledge has been shared online and in person at the EC outreach events to further raise awareness of what residents can do to help promote Native Plants.

The spread of invasive plants is hurting forests and the benefits they provide, like clean water and places to play. The displacement of native plant life by these invaders also has a negative ripple effect on insect, bird, and wildlife populations.

The Morris Township Environmental Commission educates residents about a healthy native plant-based ecosystem at nearly all of our outreach events in and had over 70 pledges in 2024.

Annual Free Tree Giveaway

While driven by the township professionals and other township volunteers, the EC remains active in assisting and promoting the popular tree giveaway in the Spring. Once again, the free trees were quickly scooped up on April 13 at Frelinghuysen Middle School. Residents should be sure to subscribe to the Municipal Messenger or the EC newsletter to hear more about events like these in 2025.

"New Jersey Tree Recovery Campaign Provides Free Tree Seedlings to Residents in Morris Township"

Morris Township, NJ - Free tree seedlings will be available to Morris Township residents on April 13, 2024 as part of the New Jersey Forest Service's New Jersey Tree Recovery Campaign.

Seedlings will not be given out earlier than 9:00 AM!

From 9:00 am to 12:00 Noon on Saturday, April 13, 2024 residents will be able to obtain up to five free tree seedlings at the front entrance to the Frelinghuysen Middle School on Jane Way in Morris Township. Seedlings, available on a first come, first served basis, come with instructions on how to store, care for, and plant the trees. The guides help residents choose the right place on a property to plant a tree while keeping in mind the tree's full-grown size in the future. Residents should plant the seedlings within two days after pick-up in order to prevent the roots from drying out.

The initial goal of the Tree Recovery Campaign, to distribute over 700,000 tree seedlings to New Jersey residents over the course of eight years, was met in 2020. With natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy, and the damage caused by several new invasive insects to New Jersey, our state needs more new tree seedlings than ever before. Therefore, the campaign is moving into its 12th year. The program is a joint effort between Morris Township, NJ Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry Program, NJ Forest Service Nursery, New Jersey Soil Conservation Districts, and the Arbor Day Foundation.

Collaboration

Knowing Environmental issues know no boundaries, the Environmental Commission's efforts in 2024 continued to extend beyond the EC and the Township.

Great Swamp Plant Sale

The fourth annual Great Swamp Watershed Association (GSWA) Native Plant Sale was held in April. This plant sale has been supported since its founding by the Morris Township Environmental Commission with several members directly involved in its success. We collaborate with many other municipalities and non-profit organizations to help publicize and staff the sale, at the end hosting over a dozen local pickup sites distributed around the watershed.

Pollinator enthusiasts purchased more than 25,000 plugs at this year's native pollinator plant sale. When you dig deeper and see that 500-600 purchasers across many towns purchased plants, the benefits to pollinators and wildlife are even more significant. Now there are waystations for pollinators as they move around neighborhoods, and this will only increase as these gardens grow, and as our friends and neighbors follow our example.

Prior to the sale, there were three informational webinars on native pollinator plants, the important pollinators themselves, and how to prepare your own garden. Planting for pollinators is at the core of improving local ecology and creating a sustainable environment, so it was impressive to see just how much interest this generated.

The [GSWA Plant Sale website](#) offers native plant landscaping guidance for anyone, not only for plant sale customers.

Advisory Chair discussion

In March, the chairman of the EC joined the chairs of the other volunteer boards in the Township for a conversation with the Mayor for introductions, review protocols, and discuss topics of mutual interest. It was a great opportunity for collaboration and for Township volunteers to learn from each other and the mayor

Jones Woods Tour with TAC

Members of the EC joined the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on their Morris Township in Motion event Jones Woods tour. TAC member Rick Bye provided a very entertaining and informative walk around Jones woods giving historical context and current happenings of the area. The experience left everyone with a greater appreciation for the Townships beauty and need to preserve and care for our open space.



Environmental Education

Community Garden Tour

In July, members of the EC toured the Theodore Largman Community Garden at Vallevue Preserve on Picatinny Road. We were awed by its beauty and bounty, and learned a lot from Garden Coordinator Ned Gardner, who happens to be an EC member and Rutgers Master Gardener. A full recap was provided in our newsletter, but we found the garden to be a little known gem in the township run by a number of dedicated volunteers and participants with amazing support from the township administration.



Speakers at EC meetings

The EC is fortunate to have a number of informed speakers come to our meetings to present information for the team and township to learn. In 2024, there were two such speakers:

- **Green Infrastructure Presentation by John Landau** – John provided an overview of the basics of Green Infrastructure, requirements for the updated Stormwater requirements, and areas for needing further attention.
- **Discussion with Anthony L. Tamberelli - AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador** – Anthony spoke about his objectives for the year and discussed opportunities for further exploration. Discussions led to a partnership with the county, local residents and EC members on invasive Phragmites removal near Washington Valley Schoolhouse.

Tree Discussion with Township professionals

The Environmental Commission gives a big thank you to Township staff for assistance in explaining tree management in the Township. The EC invited key members of the Township staff to attend an EC meeting to explain the Township's policies on trees. Prior to the meeting, the EC prepared a list of questions that was submitted to staff. Staff, including **Tim Quinn, Township Administrator; Jim Slate, Township Engineer; Tom Eschmann, Superintendent of Public Works; Bill Foelsch, Director of Parks and Recreation; and Tim Hamfeldt, Parks Superintendent**, attended the March 2024 EC meeting and went through the questions with the EC and the public in attendance. The staff provided a great deal of information about trees in the Township and covered topics such as: removal of Ash trees which were preyed upon by the ash borers before they break and fall; tree removal and replacement from within the right-of-way (the approximately 10-foot wide strip of grass stretching from the pavement or curbing); a concern for Beech tree die off from bacteria is a major concern in parks and the cost to treat a tree; maintenance for street trees; the new MS4 permit tree ordinance requirement; the Shade Tree Trust Fund; the possibility of establishing a Shade Tree Commission and a tree inventory in the Township among other topics.

Training

Environmental Commission members diligently sought to grow their expertise over the past year through participation in remote webinars and in-person presentations offered by national, state and local academic, environmental and governmental organizations and addressing a wide array of topics pertinent to the Commission’s work. All such training was voluntary and completed on each member’s own personal time. The following is a chronological list of the various environmental education offerings attended or participated in during 2024 by at least one Commission member:

Date	Event/Webinar name	Source
1/16/2024	Webinar - Preserving NJ Open Space	Rutgers
1/18/2024	Webinar - Creating native woodland garden	Great Swamp
1/25/2024	Building Native Habitats at Federal Facilities Act - Mikie Sherrill presentation at Great Swamp	Great Swamp
1/25/2024	Bats with Chris Richardson	Lincoln Land Conservation Trust
1/31/2024	Morris County Municipal Recycling Coordinators Meeting	MCMUA
2/7/2024	WRWAC mtg guest speaker, Brian Marshall, Garden Magic, LLC-Invasives to Natives-Restoring Healthy Ecosystems	WRWAC
2/13/2024	Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)	Other
2/15/2024	Webinar - Native groundcovers	GSWA
2/15/2024	Webinar - Land Ethics Symposium - Creative Approaches for Ecological Landscaping	Other
2/18/2024	Green Infrastructure Planning - Recorded Madison Township Committee Meeting	Rutgers
2/21/2024	Webinar - Vernal Pool Construction and Restoration	Other
2/21/2024	Conservation - Cindy Ehrenclou, past Executive Director, Raritan Headwaters Association	Garden Club of Morristown
2/28/2024	Anaerobic Digestion and Other Solutions for Wasted Food	NERC (Northeast Recycling Council) & NEWMOA
2/29/2024	Webinar: Building Cleaner Communities through Stormwater Education	ANJEC
3/13/2024	Webinar - Pollinator conservation	GSWA
3/13/2024	Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions Webinar Series: Stormwater Regulation & Management, Green Infrastructure Resources	ANJEC
3/13/2024	Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions Webinar Series: Land Use Planning: The Municipal ERI, Master Plan and Ordinances	ANJEC
3/16/2024	Greenwood Gardens - Sonia Uyterhoeven, Head of Horticulture	Watnong Chapter of ARGS
3/26/2024	Expert Virtual Panel Discussion evaluating bottle redemption programs	NJ Plastics Advisory Council
3/27/2024	Five-County Municipal Recycling Coordinator Meeting	MCMUA, BCUA, ECUA, Passaic & Union Counties
4/1/2024	Webinar - Plant sale overview	GSWA
4/10/2024	Webinar: Native Plants you Love for the Northeast, with Carolle Huber	Friends of Frelinghuysen Arboretum
4/13/2024	In person: Fundamentals for Effective Environmental Commissions	ANJEC
4/17/2024	Annual Meeting New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team	NJISST
4/22/2024	NJ Legislature-Joint meeting of two committees to discuss the issue of plastic pollution	NJ Senate and Assembly subcommittees*
4/23/2024	The Importance of Tree Equity amidst Changing Community Climates in PA	Penn State
4/25/2024	Jean Epiphan's Tree Seedling ID	Rutgers
4/27/2024	Madison Green Fair, EV Expo and Arbor Day Festivities	Madison Environmental Commission

5/1/2024	NJ Urban and Community Forestry Core Training Short Course Mar 1- April 5	NJ Urban and Community Forestry
5/1/2024	WRWAC mtg guest speaker, Jennifer Coffey, ANJEC Enhancing Climate Resiliency through Improved Stormwater Management	WRWAC
5/1/2024	Enhancing Climate Resiliency through Improved Stormwater Management - ANJEC presentation	ANJEC
5/7/2024	Virtual meeting of New Jersey Wastewise Business Network	NJDEP & ANJR (Assoc of NJ Recyclers)
5/9/2024	In person: Northern Swap and Share	Association of New Jersey Recyclers
5/14/2024	Rutgers Environmental Stewards (Jan 23 to May 14) A certificate program that trains volunteers on important environmental issues in NJ and how they can make a difference in their community	Rutgers
5/29/2024	GSWA 2023 Water Quality Report Card	GSWA
5/30/2024	Morris County Municipal Recycling Coordinators Meeting	MCMUA
6/12/2024	Water Quality Event (part 2 of 2) in Mtn Lakes at Birchwood Lake, How to Assess a River or Stream - A Hands-On Class	WRWAC
6/15/2024	Madison's First Repair Cafe	Madison Rotary
6/18/2024	Webinar: CITIZEN SCIENTIST SERIES, Session 1: Using MyCoast NJ App to Capture Important Weather & Climate Related Events in your Community	ANJEC
7/29/2024	Webinar: Citizen Scientist Series: Traveling HAB Lab	ANJEC
8/6-8/7/24	Climate Change Learning Collaborative: Ecosystems & Water	Rutgers
8/8/2024	ANJEC Plastics: Effects on the Environment, Potential Policy Solutions	ANJEC
10/7/2024	Webinar: After Hurricane Helene How NJ Can Prepare for Future Threats	ANJEC
10/9/2024	Webinar: How to create a no fuss wildlife pond	Native Plant Society
12/10/2024	Webinar: Bring Back the Stars - Fighting Light Pollution for Darker Skies	ANJEC

Get Involved

Three Ways You Can Help:

Attend the next meeting of the Environmental Commission. The Commission meets on the second Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. A Zoom link and the agenda are available on our website: <https://www.morristwp.com/362/Environmental-Commission>

Subscribe to the Environmental Commission's monthly electronic newsletter and spread the word by forwarding the newsletter to friends, family and neighbors. A sign-up link may be found on our website: www.morristwp.com

Join us by completing a [volunteer form](#) at the Township Municipal Building (50 Woodland Avenue) or on-line at the Township website: www.morristwp.com

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We can be reached at our email address: EnvComm@morristwp.com

Content created by EC members, the EC newsletter, and Great Swamp newsletters.