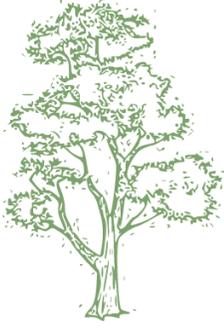


ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMISSION
MORRIS TOWNSHIP



Morris Township
Environmental
Commission
2023 Annual Report

Pictured on the right is a native Swamp Milkweed blooming in the new Butterworth Park Pollinator Garden. 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 2023 as measured by its ongoing commitment to reviewing development applications, growth/maturity in membership, and delivery on both its required and prioritized mandates.

2023 was a year where the EC continued to build on its strength – more internal training, improved site review reports, outreach events, and grants won.

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 2024. 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 2023, [the Commission members](#) are set out below:

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

In December, Environmental Commission member Siva Jonnada has stepped down after several years due to his election victory for a Township Committee position.

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 2023, that was Cathy Wilson and Bud Ravitz. In 2024, EC liaisons will be Siva Jonnada and Jeff Grayzel.

With Cathy Wilson stepping down from the Township Committee after many years, we thank her for her strong support for the EC and look forward to partnering with our new EC liaisons.

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 10 times this year – on the second Thursday of every month except August and November.

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” webinar in March.
- **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 reviews were completed by the Commission in 2023:

Planning Board

<u>ID</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>
PB-15-22	Morris County Golf Club	Block 9101, Lot 2	Applicant proposes modification to accessory structures.
PB-16-22	Order of St Benedict of New Jersey, Delbarton School	Block 4501, Lot 2.01	230 Mendham Road, OSGU zone. Applicant proposes an addition to the existing St. Mary’s Abbey Monestary
PB-17-22	DKR5, LLC	Block 8603, Lot 2	200-204 Madison Avenue, B-11 zone. Applicant is proposing a Starbucks for the retail use.
PB-03-03	Morristown Area American Little League	35-47 Woodland Ave., OSGU zone	Applicant is proposing to build a new 5,650 sf open-air canopy structure to cover existing batting cages and pitcher warm up zones and to improve the playing surface area at the existing practice facility.
PB-04-22	SLOC Acquisitions, LLC- The Carriage Homes at Spring Brook	Blocks 5801 and 5403, Lots 1, and 8 & 9	9 Spring Brook Road, 234 Mt. Kemble Ave., 232 My. Kemble Ave., OSGU zone and RA-15. Applicant proposes the construction of a single family residential development containing 16 single family homes. Additional proposed improvements include, but are not limited to, a passive community space (pocket park with walking paths and landscaping) on existing lots 8 & 9, grading modifications, stormwater management infrastructure, new utilities, paving and curbing, internal sidewalks and/or walking paths, landscaping, lighting, retaining walls, and guide rails.
PB-05-23	Cory Road Associates LLC Roof Mounted Solar Energy System Replacement	Block 10401, Lot 2	268 Martin Luther King Avenue, I-21 zone (Industrial Zone). Applicant is proposing to install Roof Mounted Solar Energy System. Applicant is seeking to replace solar panels on the roof of the building with new panels in conformance with Section 95-34, 4C (1) General Requirements and C (2) Roof or building mounted solar energy system.

Board of Adjustment

ID	Name	Where	What
BA-22-23	Hanover Estates - construction of eight (8) townhouses	Block 10302, Lot 1, 2, 3 & 4	245-251 E. Hanover Avenue, RA-7 zone. Applicant proposes construction of eight (8) townhouses.

Community Outreach

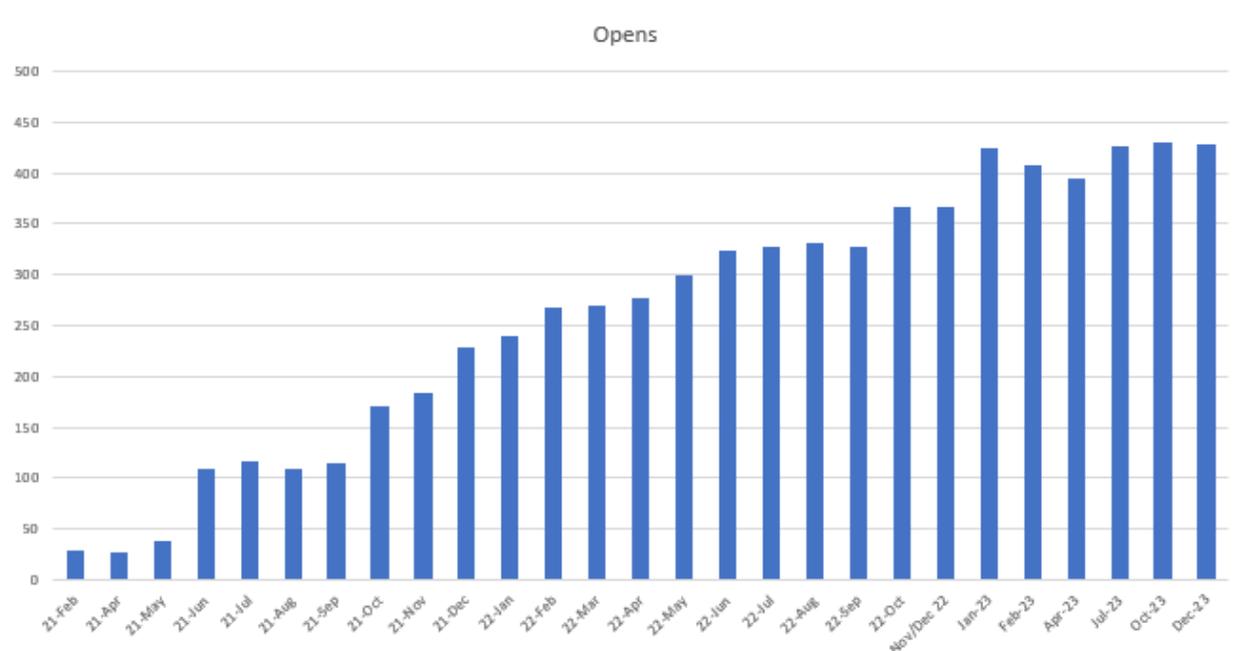
Newsletter

The Environmental Commissions' email newsletter, *Environmental News You Can Use*, has been published since February 2021. To date, over 30 issues covering more than 100 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 700 by the end of 2023 -- which is more than one out of every 33 residents in the township.

The relevance of the newsletter to residents is manifested in the extremely high "open rate" of 65%. Below is a chart of newsletter "opens" since Feb 2021.



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. Many submissions were made at the end of 2023 with winners announced and celebrated in 2024.

Outreach Grant

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.



The funding is enabling the EC to purchase reliable booth equipment, create new signage, and develop a comprehensive toolbox of educational materials. These improvements will empower the EC to engage and educate the community, fostering a more sustainable future.

The EC has been actively promoting sustainability and community engagement through our events. However, the EC's current booth equipment and materials have been insufficient. The grant addresses these challenges by providing the means to acquire reliable booth equipment, develop impactful signage, and create educational materials.

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.

New Logo

Working with the extremely talented Township professionals, the EC now has a new Logo! This new logo will allow for improved visibility on printed and electronic communications.

The new logo has been very well received and has already been included in all of our outreach materials.



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 2023:

- Feb 2023 – the EC chairman presented the Annual Report to the Township Committee at their monthly meeting
- April 2023 – the Township free Tree Giveaway
- June 2023 - Harmonium’s “Earthsongs” Concert
- June 2023 - Great Swamp outdoor concert
- Oct 2023 - Morristown Fall Festival
- Jan-Mar, Dec – Grow it Green Winter Farmers Market



Conservation

Grant for Butterworth Pollinator Garden

The Butterworth Park Pollinator Garden officially opened on June 12th 2023. A brief ceremony was attended by four members of the Township Committee, the Township Administrator, members of the EC, and some township residents.

The garden provides critical habitat to insect pollinators facing severe population decline. It contains a wide variety of native perennial herbaceous plants that will bloom at different times of the year:

- *Amsonia hubrichtii* (Hubricht's bluestar)
- *Anemone canadensis* (Canada anemone)
- *Asclepias incarnata* (Swamp Milkweed)
- *Hypericum prolificum* (Shrubby St. John's Wort)
- *Monarda fistulosa* (Wild Bergamot)
- *Penstemon digitalis* (Foxglove Beardtongue)
- *Rudbeckia fulgida* (Blackeyed Susan)
- *Symphotrichum novae angliae* (New England Aster)
- *Solidago speciosa* (Showy Goldenrod)
- *Zizia aurea* (Golden Alexander)



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 the brainchild of Morris Township resident and Environmental Commission member, Charlie Schachter. He spent two-and-a-half years planning and developing the garden, which was fully funded by a \$1,000 grant from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions.

Charlie hopes to continue expanding the garden with the help of the Friends of Butterworth Garden, a neighborhood volunteer group pledged to maintaining the garden.

The Environmental Commission is hopeful that other volunteer teams will offer to take on similar pollinator garden projects elsewhere in the Township.



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

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.

Invasive plant encroachment seriously threatens the health of the public and private forests that we depend upon for storm-water mitigation, drinking water filtration, and recreation. They also threaten insect, bird and other wildlife populations because the native plants they crowd out are a critical part of the food chain.

The Morris Township Environmental Commission educates residents about a healthy native plant-based ecosystem at nearly all of our outreach events in 2023 (and plans to do so in 2024).

Annual Free Tree Giveaway

While driven by the township professionals and other township volunteers, the EC remains active in assisting and promoting this popular tree giveaway in the Spring. This year, the reduced quantity of 220 free trees were quickly scooped up on April 22 at Frelinghuysen Middle School. Residents should be sure to subscribe to the Municipal Messenger or the EC newsletter to hear more about this event in 2024.

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

Morris Township, NJ – Free tree seedlings will be available to residents as part of the New Jersey Forest Service's Tree Recovery Campaign, a program focused on helping communities replace trees damaged or destroyed by severe storms.

From 9:00 am to 12:00 Noon on Saturday, April 22, 2023 residents will be able to pick up tree seedlings at the Frelinghuysen Middle School.

Seedlings are available on a first come, first served basis. Residents will be provided with a care guide that addresses seedling storage, general care, and identifying an appropriate planting location. The Morristown Shade Tree Commission reminds residents to consider the size of a mature tree when choosing the planting location. The seedlings should be planted within two days after pick-up in order to prevent the roots from drying out.

In New Jersey, the goal was to distribute over 700,000 tree seedlings over the course of eight years. While that target was met in 2020, natural disasters such as Hurricane Sandy, along with damage caused by various new invasive insects, the need for more new tree seedlings continues with the campaign moving into its 9th year.

Among many other benefits, trees improve the visual appeal of neighborhoods and business districts, increase property values, reduce home cooling costs, remove air pollutants, and provide wildlife habitat, said commission officials.

ERI – Environmental Resource Inventory

The enabling legislation for of an Environmental Commission allows them to pursue a broad range of activities for natural resource planning, including to develop and maintain an environmental resource inventory (ERI) for the municipality.

The ERI is the gateway through which environmental concerns enter the municipal process, informing the master plan and the ordinances designed to carry it out. Without an ERI, decisions on a range of municipal functions are made without a conscious knowledge of the environmental impacts they may cause. ERIs are valuable tools in advocating for new legislation and regulation and defending existing ordinances and planning documents. An ERI confers legitimacy on the Environmental Commission and helps assure that municipal decision makers at all levels properly consider environmental values in their decision making.

The groundwork was started in 2022 to pursue an updated ERI for Morris Township. Research began to have an ERI created internally by Environmental Commission members leveraging the many available interactive online resources of public information. However, it was realized that having the expertise of a paid consultant could provide a more robust solution. The EC submitted for a \$20,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey to hire a consultant to create an updated ERI, that unfortunately did not win. However, with very positive feedback on our application, we will resubmit the grant with revisions in 2024 since the need for an updated ERI remains.

Regional Collaboration

Knowing Environmental issues know no boundaries, the Environmental Commission's efforts in 2023 continued to extend beyond the Township.

NJSMA - Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance

The Morris Township Environmental Commission continues to be an active member of the Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance - an ongoing collaboration of environmental commissions and municipal officials from towns across northern New Jersey.

ANJEC Central Jersey Regional Environmental Commission Kickoff

Recognized as a major contributor to the NJSMA, Morris Township EC chairman Brian Morgan was invited to present at an ANJEC sponsored event in Central Jersey where they are looking to mimic the success of the North Jersey group. Hosted in Somerville's Civic Center with EC members from over 13 municipalities represented, Brian presented the history and progress of NJSMA as well as provided a deep dive into an NJSMA presentation Brian gave in Dec 2022 on conducting Site Reviews. Many great ideas were shared, and highlighted the benefit of collaborating with our neighbors both near and far to drive environmental best practices.

Great Swamp Plant Sale

The third 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.

The plant sale has found homes for about 63,000 native plants over its three years.

Pollinator enthusiasts purchased nearly 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. Over 750 people attended these programs.

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

Environmental Education

Recycling Facility Tour

In order to learn more about the Township’s recycling, Environmental Commission members received a tour of the Republic Services Mine Hill Recycling Facility (where Morris Township’s recyclables go). While there, they learned the #1 recycling problem is rechargeable batteries catching fire (or exploding). These batteries should instead be dropped off at [the Public Works Recycling Depot](#). Alkaline batteries (AA, AAA, C, D, 9-Volt) should be disposed of with your garbage. This and more information was gathered and used for further outreach and public education.



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 2023 by at least one Commission member:

Date	Event/Webinar name	Source
01/11/23	Native Plants and Water Management starting in our own backyards	Other
01/17/23	Native Plants for Native Wildlife: Key Steps Toward Cultivating Biodiversity Conservation in our Gardens.	Great Swamp
01/18/23	Naturescaping: Landscaping Based on Nature	Other

01/19/23	Beyond Beauty: Establishing the Value of Urban and Suburban trees with David Bloniarz	Other
01/24/23	Electric Vehicles in NJ	ANJEC
02/09/23	Overview on Developing NJ Extreme Heat Resilience Action Plan	NJ DEP
02/10/23	Clean Energy, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction, and Rapid Decarbonization in the PJM Region	Rutgers
02/21/23	Misundersrtood Wasps - Eric Eaton	Great Swamp
02/23/23	Informational Webinar- how to make appropriate comments to NJDEP	Great Swamp
03/10/23	Aldo Leopold week- speakers	Other
03/09/23	Virtual public hearing- water quality management	NJ DEP
03/21/23	ANJEC - Environmental Commission Powers & Responsibilities	ANJEC
03/22/23	The New Stormwater Permitting Rules, Stormwater Utility Planning	ANJEC
03/22/23	Creating/Updating a Municipal ERI/NRI	ANJEC
03/22/23	Land Use: The Municipal Master Plan, Municipal Ordinances	ANJEC
03/23/23	Site Plan Review, Green Infrastructure/Stormwater Plan Overview	ANJEC
04/19/23	Who's in Your Garden? The life and times of insects and others all around us - Randi Eckel	Native Plant Society of NJ
05/04/23	Punching Out Plastic : Celebrate One Year Anniversary of the Plastic Pollution Reduction Law	ANJEC
05/23/23	Rutgers Environmental Steward 17-week certification course	Rutgers
07/01/23	Environmental Commission Roundtable: Food Waste Initiatives	ANJEC
07/18/23	Local Resources for Env. Commissions	ANJEC
09/19/23	Gardening for the Bats of New Jersey	Native Plant Society of NJ
09/21/23	Beech Leaf Disease - What's at Stake in New Jersey	Rutgers
09/26/23	Water Quality in Loantaka Brook	Great Swamp
09/29/23	Garden Futures Summit at the NY Botanical Gardens	The Garden Conservancy
09/30/23	Sustainable Lawncare 101	Other
10/08/23	Doug Tallamy lecture "Nature's Best Hope" Greenwood Gardens	Other
10/12/23	The Trouble with Garden [Native Meadow] Design	Other
11/03/23	Enhanced Stormwater Management Ordinances.	Watershed institute
11/04/23	ANJEC Central Jersey Networking Event - presenter	ANJEC

Additional highlights

- **Internal Township Collaboration** – The Environmental Commission has made it a priority to collaborate with the Township professionals and other Township volunteer bodies where possible. In October, chairman Brian Morgan was invited to present to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). Brian shared the EC priorities, opportunities for partnership going forward, and gave an overview of the Site Review process. Additionally, the EC has established relationships with the Land Use boards, Historic Preservation Commission and the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) to discuss the Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) and other shared goals.

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.