

2021

Annual Report

*Woodbridge
Township
Environmental
Commission*



John E. McCormac, Mayor

Annual Report

Mission Statement

The Woodbridge Township Environmental Commission supports the development of a sustainable community. A sustainable community meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future through the effective and efficient use of natural ecosystems and social systems.

Goals

- To maintain a healthy community and populations.
- To identify, protect, and preserve open space.
- To create and expand awareness of natural systems.
- To provide educational information that will increase awareness of issues and concerns.

Composition

The Commission 7 members 2 alternates appointed by the Mayor. One of the members shall also be a member of the Planning Board and all members must be township residents. All members 3 year terms.

Statement of Purpose

Woodbridge already has a decorated environmental background, and the initiatives noted herein add to that fact. The Township was named an "All-American City" through the National Civic League, and has been recognized for its environmental policies and programs – including our Greenable Woodbridge initiatives, and we were the first-ever recipient and multi-year winner of the Sustainable Jersey Champion Award. 2021 stood as the 12th year that Woodbridge garnered the Sustainable Jersey Champion title in the large municipality category.

Concerted efforts of the 2021 Woodbridge Environmental Commission focused on planning and implementation mechanisms correlated to an alignment with the Township's Climate Action Plan in order to ensure successful long term environmental benefits. The projects denoted herein focus on all aspects of environmental health for the community.

2021 Environmental Commission Members

Morgan Jorgensen, Chairperson
Term Expires: December 31, 2021
Tammy Rapp DaRocha
Term Expires: December 31, 2023
Chantal Greffer
Term Expires: December 21, 2022
Danny Charles-Estain
Term Expires: November 9, 2024

Jay Ali, Planning Board Representative
Term Expires: December 21, 2022
Kyle Morgan
Term Expires: December 31, 2024
Antonio Cardona
Term Expires: December 31, 2023
Mirly Paul
Term Expires: December 31, 2022

In accordance with the statute requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act, C.10:4-8 (d), all meetings were held in the third floor conference room, One Main Street, Woodbridge, NJ, unless publicized to be held at another location. Meetings began at 7:00 p.m. and continued until adjournment. They are held on the second Thursday of every month on the third floor of Town Hall in the conference room across from the Mayor's office.

- January 14, 2021
- February 11, 2021
- March 11, 2021
- April 8, 2021
- May 13, 2021
- June 10, 2021
- September 9, 2021
- October 14, 2021
- November 11, 2021
- December 9, 2021

Projects, Procedural Developments, & Events

The Environmental Commission:

- Procedurally, in 2021 helped to explore new community gardens, expand pollinator gardens, and researched mechanisms to establish a tree mapping inventory and new invasive species outreach materials.
- 2021 also offered an array of detailed discussions in order to establish an updated biodiversity inventory of the Ernest Oros Preserve in Avenel. 2022 will mark over six years since the preserve has been extensively researched in order to update it's species inventory. Previously 388 species of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, reptiles, insects, fungi, plants, and other organisms were identified in the field, or at a large tented area (Base Camp) containing computers, field guides, microscopes, hand lenses, sorting jars, and plant presses. The Commission's long-term project outlines for 2022 & 2023 discussed re-establishing this exercise as a yearly event for outreach and education. Proposed project partners were noted as Rutgers Wildlife Conservation and Management Program, New Jersey Mycological Association, Sustainable Jersey, Woodbridge River Watch, and The Forest Fire Service.



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"A sustainable community meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future through the effective and efficient use of natural ecosystems and social systems."

- Woodbridge Environmental Commission

National Public Lands Day & Conservation Projects

- The Woodbridge Environmental Commission participated in the cleanup at Ernie Oros Preserve in Avenel, NJ for National Public Lands Day (September 25, 2021). Commission members helped to weed the butterfly garden, maintain the trails, and help restore natural areas.
- The conservation goals of additional 2021 Township restoration projects were crafted through the lens of Commission policies and goals and launched with help from the Township's Department of Public Works and volunteers through maximizing the use of over 200 native trees in order to increase the community's open space corridors and ecosystem services. Further, sheltered environment for habitat, and better filtration of surface water run-off were added benefits.

All trees installed received sheltered protection:

- 115 - 7" deep x 6" diameter
- 13 - 9" deep x 8" diameter
- 40 – Tree Tubes 10" deep x 2.25' diameter
- 32 – Tubelings 6"- 8"

200 – Tree Tube Shelters to protect all trees planted

Species selected and utilized (upland terrestrial site characteristics):

- ACER RUBRUM (Red Maple)
- BETULA LENTA (Sweet Birch)
- CERCIS CANADENSIS (Eastern Redbud)
- CORNUS FLORIDA (Flowering Dogwood)
- HAMAMELIS VIRGINIANA (American Witch-Hazel)
- JUNIPERUS VIRGINIANA (Eastern Red Cedar)
- PINUS RIGIDA (Pitch Pine)

Seed Library

- The Commission maintains a Seed Library at the Fords Branch Library which enables people to check out a packet of seeds, plant the seeds, let them grow to maturity to collect the next generation of seeds, then return the seeds they've collected to the library so other people can check them out.
- During the 2021 outreach campaign, the Environmental Commission conducted discussions in order to assess how seed packets and instructions could be best delivered to participants of the program.
- The commission engaged in discussions centered on new outreach techniques involving rain gardens adjacent to Township libraries as a manner by which to utilize the life cycle of the native plant seeds in future seed library donations and outreach events or presentations.



Annual Environmental Commission Green Fair

- The Commission hosted the annual Green Fair for Earth Day on May 1, 2021 which featured environmental friendly vendors and environmental groups to bring awareness to the community's attention to renewable resources, eco-friendly products, and services; and brings a venue to the township where other community and environmental groups can have the opportunity for public outreach. The Earth Day Fair encourages public participation in activities that create an environment that foster a sustainable and healthy community.



Annual Earth Day Fair; Environmental Commission

The Woodbridge Township Earth Day Fair event focused our community's attention on the steps and activities which would create an environment that would foster, encourage and sustain a green and healthy community, such as, but not limited to:

- Arbor Day was celebrated during the Earth Day Fair with the planting of a native Flowering Dogwood Tree on the Municipal grounds at Town Hall.
- The Commission's Prize Wheel was used to inform kids, from pre-school through high school age, the importance of surface water, composting, gardening, plants, animals, earth science, recycling, and food.
- To encourage the reduction of plastic bags, the Commission distributed reusable cloth bags to Earth Day Fair visitors; Seed packets and educational Seed Library Brochures were distributed to people interested in learning how to dry and plant seeds; and
- Various eco-friendly vendors including school groups, solar companies, and other groups and organizations participated as a result of invitations from the Commission. The diversity of vendors helped to provide educational materials and increased awareness of environmental issues such as composting, wildlife, tree replenishment, stormwater runoff, rain barrels, preserving open space and wetlands, recycling, re-purposing, and other local issues.
- Educational materials to help better inform residents about flood risk strategies, and the protection and conservation of biodiversity.
- The Earth Day Fair also included the focus on the importance of bees as pollinators. Local honey vendors were at the fair to sell honey related products and educate the public about bees and honey making. Pollinator posters from the NJ Garden Club were on display at the Woodbridge Environmental Commission table. The Prize Wheel included questions about bees. Kids attending the fair could also color educational sheets that had quizzes and pictures of bees.

Additional Tabling and Outreach Opportunities (i.e. Township Farmer's Market, etc.)

The Environmental Commission:

- Conducted outreach for local support centered on Community Gardens and Seed Library;
- Educated the public about the importance of stormwater pollution prevention;
- Publicized opportunities for participation in events held by other organizations like the Woodbridge River Watch;
- Promoted sustainable and green practices in our community; and
- Staffed a Prize Wheel to learn facts about water quality, composting, gardening, native plants, animals in the community, climate science, recycling, and other topics.