



2026 Election

See our special Election 2026 section inside for coverage of this year's General Election.



A graceful egret at the Ocean City Rookery. Credit: Seth Kantor

Trump's Offshore Wind Farm Cancellations Won't Hold Up in Court

By Chris Hitchcock • Chapter Legal Advisor



As part of the Trump administration's irrational campaign to block offshore wind projects, it recently cancelled the Department of Interior's (DOI) lease with

Attentive Energy for its offshore wind projects off the coast of New York and New Jersey.

As is patently obvious to New Jersey, New York, and other northeastern states, there is a pressing need to provide more electric power to their residents. Attentive Energy's projects would have provided 2.7 gigawatts of electricity to New Jersey and New York, enough to power over 1.3 million homes. Because of the compelling need to provide new sources of clean energy, and the Trump administration's breach of statutory requirements in cancelling the lease, New York, New Jersey, and

five New England states that would have received power under this lease filed suit in the District of Columbia on June 2, 2026, to overturn the lease cancellation and prevent the Trump administration from taking further steps to implement the cancellation.

New Jersey and New York have relied on developing offshore wind as part of their long-term strategies to support grid reliability, energy diversification, and climate goals. Attentive Energy's lease was crucial to this plan because the addition of offshore wind would ensure that there would be adequate electricity to meet the growing demand for electricity in both states.

As part of the planning for the offshore wind projects, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) analyzed and extensively consulted with the Department of Defense (unofficially the Department of War) to ensure that any resulting wind energy projects would comply with all nation-

al security concerns. Nevertheless, in December 2025, BOEM Acting Director Matthew Giacona issued orders directing five offshore wind projects to suspend all ongoing activities for the next 90 days for unspecified national security reasons. However, in January and February 2026, two federal district courts temporarily blocked the suspension orders because the government failed to prove any imminent national security risk. On similar grounds, another federal judge rejected the administration's efforts to block onshore wind farms in various western states.

Despite failing to prove any national security risk, on March 23, 2026, four years after awarding Attentive Energy the lease, the DOI announced that it had cancelled the lease and would pay the company \$795 million in taxpayer dollars, the amount Attentive Energy paid for the lease. In addition, Attentive

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Amazon's Delaware River Data Center Doesn't Comply With Clean Air Act

By Kathleen (Kip) P. Cherry, PP, AICP • Conservation Chair, Central Jersey Group



Amazon has proposed a massive data center along the Delaware River in Falls Township, Pa. While official filings claim a capacity of 500–600 MW, the sheer volume of proposed backup generators suggests a total power requirement reaching 1,100 MW—over a gigawatt. Spanning 3 million square feet across 10 buildings, the project poses severe threats to regional air and water quality.

Despite these impacts, Amazon's development process has lacked transparency. Seeking approvals under the name "North Point," the company hid the data center from the public for over a year. Officials in Falls Township failed to inform constituents or raise critical

environmental questions, effectively shutting Pennsylvania and New Jersey residents out of public participation until over 4,000 people signed a petition demanding accountability.

The Loophole: Synthetic "Minor" Sources

The primary conflict centers on the project's draft air permit with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). Amazon proposes two massive backup generator arrays to power the facility when it is temporarily disconnected from the grid.

- **79 Diesel Generators:** Application #09-0261A includes 72 2.5 MW units and four smaller units (already approved and installed).
- **283 Natural Gas Generators:** Application #09-0261 includes 280

natural gas units with add-on controls plus three additional diesel units.

Because grid emergencies occur on the hottest and coldest days—when local air quality is already poorest—running these fossil fuel arrays will release toxic volumes of nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide, benzene, formaldehyde, and particulate matter. The surrounding region is already in serious failure to meet ozone standards; these pollutants will exacerbate respiratory illnesses and introduce severe health risks to nearby populations.

To evade stricter regulations, Amazon submitted two separate permit applications, artificially capping NOx limits to claim "synthetic minor source" status for both arrays. However, these systems will operate simulta-

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2026 Election for NJ Chapter Members and Group Leaders

Balloting is now underway for the 2026 election of executive members and group leaders for the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club. All current members are invited to participate.

On September 15, members will receive email solicitations to vote online. Votes also may be cast using the mail-in paper ballot in the print edition of this newsletter (see page 2 for the ballot). All ballots—electronic or paper—must be received by Thursday, November 12. Your participation is essential in choosing leaders who will best represent the interests of our membership!

The Chapter's Executive Committee (ExCom) consists of nine at-large volunteers who generally meet on the second Saturday of each month to discuss state, regional, and other environmental issues and to set policy. ExCom also oversees committee work on sustainability and conservation, initiates legal action, endorses candidates for public office, and hears reports from staff and volunteer officers.

Each year, three ExCom members are elected (or reelected) to serve three-year terms. There were no petition candidates this year. This year's ExCom candidates were nominated by Nominating Committee members Stan Greberis (chair), Sindhu Pasricha, and Bill Beren.

ExCom candidate bios and photos appear on page 2. This year's candidates are Pat Miller, Nidhi Rajesh, Renée Pollard, Gary Frederick, and Laura Lynch. They will compete for three at-large positions.

Please vote for ExCom candidates as well as for the leadership of your regional group. If you do not know which group you belong to, refer to the Group News section of this newsletter, where all 12 Chapter groups are listed.

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2026 BALLOT

Instructions for completing your ballot

Vote for the NJ Chapter leadership. Vote for candidates in your assigned regional group. To confirm your group, check the mailing label on page 1 of this newsletter.

If you would prefer to vote online instead: Visit <https://myaccount.sierra-club.org/> and log in to your personal account, then scroll down the page to the Sierra Club Elections Portal (bottom right) and click on that. This will enable you to vote for Chapter ExCom and Group Leader candidates.

Group codes are:

Central Jersey (4001), Jersey Shore (4002), Loantaka (4003), North Jersey (4004), Skylands (4005), West Jersey (4006), South Jersey (4007), Raritan

NJ Chapter ExCom: Vote for a maximum of three candidates. The top three candidates will have three-year terms until the end of December 2029. Name order has been randomized.

Candidates	Member or 1st Joint Member Vote	2nd Joint Member Vote
Pat Miller	☐	☐
Nidhi Rajesh	☐	☐
Gary Frederick	☐	☐
Renée Pollard	☐	☐
Laura Lynch	☐	☐

Group Leadership: Vote for candidates in your designated regional group.

Candidates	Member or 1st Joint Member Vote	2nd Joint Member Vote
Central Jersey Group (4001): Vote for a maximum of two candidates. The two elected candidates will have two-year terms that expire December 2028.		
Kip Cherry	☐	☐
Dave Mattek	☐	☐

Jersey Shore Group (4002): Vote for a maximum of five candidates. The elected candidates will have two-year terms that expire December 2028.		
Jim Baye	☐	☐
Bob Grize	☐	☐
Pat Miller	☐	☐
Steve Miller	☐	☐
Harold Zullo	☐	☐

Loantaka Group (4003): Vote for a maximum of five candidates. The elected candidates will have two-year terms that expire December 2028.		
Eric Hausker	☐	☐
Allen Swanson	☐	☐
Gilbert Rohde	☐	☐
Rob Metters	☐	☐
Jerry Rosenthal	☐	☐

North Jersey Group (4004): Vote for a maximum of three candidates for two-year terms that expire December 2028.		
Bob Weiss	☐	☐
Judith Green	☐	☐
Bushra Asfare	☐	☐

Skylands Group (4005): Vote for a maximum of five candidates. The winning candidates will serve two-year terms that expire December 2028.		
Chris Dunbar	☐	☐
Write-In		

Valley (4008), Hudson County (4009), Gateway (4010), Hunterdon Warren (4011), and Ocean County (4012).

Mailing Instructions

Clip the entire ballot and mail it to: **Sierra Club Ballot**
1 North Johnston Avenue, Suite A203
Hamilton, NJ 08609.

Be sure your newsletter address label, which includes your membership number, is on the back of the ballot.

Ballots are due by Thursday, November 12, 2026.

If you have questions about the elections process or need assistance, please contact the Chapter elections chair at vice.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org.

Joint members of the Sierra Club may share this ballot form by using the second column of boxes for votes.

Write-In
Write-In
Write-In

West Jersey Group (4006): Vote for a maximum of two candidates. The winning candidates will serve two-year terms that expire December 2028.

Tony Hagen	☐	☐
Write-In		

South Jersey Group (4007): Vote for a maximum of two candidates. The winning candidates will serve two-year terms that expire December 2028.

Dick Colby	☐	☐
Tom Boghosian	☐	☐

Raritan Valley Group (4008): Vote for a maximum of three candidates. The winning candidates will serve two-year terms that expire December 2028.

Gary Frederick	☐	☐
S. Pasricha	☐	☐
Bernadette Maher	☐	☐

Hudson County Group (4009): Vote for a maximum of four candidates. The winning candidates will serve two-year terms that expire December 2028.

Patricia Hilliard	☐	☐
Ricardo Pereira	☐	☐
Write-In		
Write-In		

Gateway Group (4010): Vote for a maximum of three candidates. The winning candidates will serve two-year terms that expire December 2028.

Danielle Rapsas	☐	☐
Ron Pate	☐	☐
Write-In		

Hunterdon Warren Group (4011): Vote for a maximum of three candidates. The three elected candidates will have two-year terms that expire December 2028.

Karen Becker	☐	☐
John Kashwick	☐	☐
Amelia Weeder	☐	☐

Ocean County Group (4012): Vote for a maximum of five candidates. The five elected candidates will have two-year terms that expire December 2028.

Margaret Mary Piccolo	☐	☐
Write-In		
Write-In		
Write-In		
Write-In		

ExCom Candidate Bios and Statements

The following five candidates are running for three available three-year terms on the Executive Committee of the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club in the 2026 election.

Laura Lynch

I have been an active member of the New Jersey Sierra Club since 1996, at various times as conservation chair at the group and Chapter level, as a group chair, and as an Executive Committee member. In 2021, I stepped back to serve on Chapter committees instead. I am currently the chair of the Legislative Committee and a member of the Data Center and Warehouse Committee. In these roles, I don't pull punches. I believe that the New Jersey Chapter should be a watchdog, not a lapdog, when it comes to state environmental policy.



Renée Pollard

A Gloucester County resident, I have been an environmental advocate for over 20 years. I have much expertise from working with environmental, social justice, climate, and health organizations. In our NJ Chapter, I am an Executive Committee member and chaired the Environmental, Social Justice Committee. Also, I co-chair the Tri-County Sustainability Environmental and Climate Justice Committee, and I serve on the boards of the Camden County Air Quality Committee and the Salem County Interagency Council of Human Services. I believe if you are put in positions that can effect change, it is your responsibility to help produce that change.



Gary Frederick

A Sierra Club member for over 35 years, I have been active in the New Jersey Chapter since 2016 when I became Raritan Valley Group chair. Today, I serve as RVG's conservation chair, a co-chair of the Data Center and Warehouse Committee, and a member of the Transportation and Environmental



and Social Justice Committees.

I have helped lead the NESE pipeline opposition since 2020. I have also helped lead the Chapter's opposition to harmful data center growth. An outdoor enthusiast, I often hike in northern New Jersey. Most recently, I visited the Rocky Mountains, Yellowstone, and the Grand Tetons.

Nidhi Rajesh

As a high school student driven by a vision that humankind can someday live regeneratively, alongside nature, I joined the Sierra Student Action Committee. There, I met with and led like-minded NJ students. Recently, I expanded my connections with similarly driven young people through the National Sierra Student Coalition. As an ExCom member of the SSC, I helped plan and attended Sierra Club summer training (SPROG), a major leadership/training experience that changed my world view. If elected to the NJ ExCom, I will represent the youth of New Jersey, ensuring we sustain the generational fight for our planet's future.



Pat Miller

I am a member of Sierra Club Jersey Shore Group and co-chair of the Building Electrification Committee. I was a systems engineer and manager in network operations at Bell Labs/Telcordia for 30 years and a certified project management professional. Post-retirement volunteer positions included Monmouth Civic Chorus treasurer and AAUW Northern Monmouth Branch treasurer and president. As a Climate Reality Leader, I (with husband Steve) founded Middletown for Clean Energy and NJ Electrification Coaching Network. We have run five years of monthly BE webinars and lead Electrification Committees in CRP and CCL. We (including Steve) were 2025 Volunteers of the Year.



How the US-Iran Conflict Affects New Jersey

By Disha Rao



One of the most urgent needs of our time is to make visible how events unfolding in one part of the world can shape lives in another. In much of the Western

world view, isolationism and territorial boundaries leave little room for true interconnectedness—or for understanding the real consequences, especially devastating ones, that flow from it.

The Canadian wildfires are one example of how environmental interconnectedness is now impossible to ignore. Distance may blur destruction, but it should no longer let us believe that a crisis in some distant, unfamiliar

place has no bearing on our lives.

Foreign policies that lead to war, bombardment, occupation, militarization, and political violence must be discussed through this lens of interconnectedness. Americans deserve clear information about how such activities affect ordinary lives economically, environmentally, and socially—especially here in New Jersey.

War, climate disruption, and economic strain are not separate crises, but connected forces already shaping life in New Jersey and beyond. The US-Iran war shows how foreign policy decisions made far from home can intensify climate emissions, raise household costs, strain farmers and food systems, and expose critical infrastructure vulnerabilities.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

The New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club is seeking a volunteer **vice treasurer**. Assist our Chapter treasurer in tracking donations, disbursements, and grant funding. Experience managing financial records of a business or nonprofit organization and knowledge of NetSuite accounting software are a big plus. For further information, contact Chapter Treasurer Paul Sanderson at treasurer@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Attention, Sierra Club Aficionados!

Longtime member Bill Nierstedt has decided to give away his collection of Sierra Club magazines. This is an almost complete collection dating back to 1988. The magazines contain a wealth of information about the Sierra Club, its activities and people, and our natural environment. Bill will give them away free to a good home—someone who will cherish them as much as he has. For more information, reach out to Bill at williamnierstedt@gmail.com.



Technology vs. Humans

By Tony Hagen • editor@newjersey.sierraclub.org

It’s a crazy world when billions of people are allowed to make individual decisions about how much to produce and consume and what size carbon footprint they can leave upon the planet. People have always thought technology could outpace the problems we create for ourselves. It turns out that this was just a jingle invented by Madison Avenue. Technology is now outpacing us.

A few years ago, we thought warehouses were our biggest problem in New Jersey. Now, data centers have taken over as the Sauron/Voldemort du jour. What will we see tomorrow?

Regulate Business

You can’t stand in the way of business, but you can regulate it. There are too many private interests with enormous amounts of capital with which they can fight you, from giant corporations to individual investors, who, in the aggregate, may include somebody in the house or apartment across the street from you—maybe all of your neighbors.

This year, the Sierra Club has supported various pieces of successful legislation that have hemmed in data centers’ power to destroy our landscape and pollute our air and water. We continue to fight for clean energy—bona fide clean energy—such as solar and offshore wind.

Offshore wind in New Jersey has been severely knocked about by the Trump administration, which promotes the lie accepted by so many that it harms ocean creatures, pollutes the environment, and isn’t economical. The extreme politicization of the energy industry is forcing us into a much broader reliance on fossil fuel and—ugh!—nuclear power.

A lot of us are OK with these compromises. America is still a country where everybody pretty much does their own thing. But the planet is telling us in not-so-subtle ways that it can’t take much more of this. Wildfires in Canada have made our air unbreathable for two years in a row. Europe has endured one extreme heat wave after another, and the “blue” Danube is running dry.

Thirty-five years ago, I lived in Japan, and the summers there were hot and muggy but not like they are now. Over there, a huge industry has sprung up to deliver heat-relieving products, from moist neck towels to liquids you can spray on your clothes to make them feel cooler. Guides will tell you

not to visit Japan until October, at the earliest.

I went to Greenland this summer, leading the wave of what will surely become eco-tourist refugees. North of the Arctic Circle, it was 48 degrees and very pleasant compared with New Jersey’s on-and-off, 90-degree/100-degree heat waves this summer.

However, Greenland won’t be a cool country for much longer. Already, warming temperatures are contributing to intense fog, which is making it more difficult for Greenland Air to land and take off on time. Greenland Air already has one of the worst departure records in the world. Percentagewise, double-digit cancellations are normal.

I got caught in this trap when my plane was canceled, along with many others, in mid-August. I spent four more days in Ilulissat than I needed to.

Ilulissat, by the way, is close to the Sermeq Kujalleq, considered one of the world’s most productive glaciers in terms of icebergs discharged. It has receded more in the last 20 years than in the previous 100. Our administration in Washington doesn’t want you to know this, though, as they have “cleansed” much information from governmental websites, suppressed environmental reports, and redirected activities and funding from so many worthwhile investigations and studies. It is shameful myopia.

Stronger Leadership

I believe many of us would curtail our production and consumption habits if we had stronger leadership that didn’t make it sound like a free-for-all is the only reality. No sensible individual pollutes his own world and compromises his own interests. So why continue to abuse a planet that so clearly depends on our good stewardship?

The Sierra Club is filled with outdoor enthusiasts who have noticed these changes and have committed to doing something to slow or prevent the decay. You can get involved, too, either by donating or lending a hand. Perhaps you have unique talents that are going to waste. Perhaps you have more money than you could spend in your lifetime. This is your opportunity to put some of that to work for the benefit of future generations who may include members of your own family.



What’s Going on Here, Anyway?

By Joe Testa • chapter.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org

From time to time, you might read in a daily newspaper or online that the Sierra Club has filed a lawsuit regarding a fossil fuel infrastructure project or has been involved in supporting or opposing a bill in the state Legislature. This is only the tip of the iceberg in how the staff and volunteers in the New Jersey Chapter are working behind the scenes every day to support the mission of the Club. It is often hard to keep track of our efforts, from working for regulatory reform of PJM Interconnection—our region’s electric grid coordinator—to drafting legislation and fighting development projects that threaten open space and habitat!

The Sierra Club’s stated mission is “to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the Earth’s ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.” That’s a pretty broad mandate our members have signed up to support. How does the Club figure out how to take action to actually make progress in achieving that mission?

Around the country and here in New Jersey, we’re working to fulfill that mission with a grassroots model unique in the environmental movement: a decentralized network of (mostly) state-level chapters. Each chapter sets its own local priorities that are consistent with the Club’s mission and suited to the local economic, environmental, and political situation—leveraging the energy and expertise of their local volunteers, in collaboration with professional staff. In New Jersey, we have a team of five staff members along with several volunteer committees who are taking on these challenges.

Another unique aspect of Sierra Club is that it’s each chapter’s elected volunteer executive committee (“excom”) that votes to set the chapter’s local priorities and oversees the chapter’s budget. As I write this article in July, our own Chapter’s ExCom is putting together our work plan for the coming fiscal year. It’s our job to translate

broad ideas such as “protect the wild places of the Earth” and translate them into specific actions that will move us toward meeting those objectives.

While not finalized yet, here are some of the priority topics that are likely to be included in our final plan:

- Promoting renewable, affordable energy generation and infrastructure, including educating the public about the benefits of clean energy.
- Advocating for wildlife and habitat protection.
- Countering data center impacts and proliferation.
- Promoting building and transportation electrification.
- Supporting coastal resiliency and responsible land use.
- Strengthening the Chapter’s internal structure, as a critical component for achieving the Chapter’s policy goals.

The ExCom that sets our Chapter priorities is acting on behalf of our membership, and is in fact elected by our members. This is where *you* come in. Our Chapter’s Nominating Committee, led by Chair Stan Greberis, has recruited an outstanding slate of five candidates for this year’s ExCom election. On page 2 of this issue, you will find a ballot where we invite every member to vote to fill the three positions up for election. We invite you to review their statements and cast your vote by either returning the paper ballot or responding to an emailed ballot many of you will also receive (if you have previously given us permission to send to your email address). When you participate in our election, you are demonstrating your support for our mission.

What are *your* thoughts on how we are focusing our work according to the priorities I listed above? Drop me an email at chapter.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org if you’d like to weigh in on our Chapter’s work or volunteer with a team or committee that is tackling one of the topics above.



ExCom Meeting Highlights

August: Renée Pollard has resigned as chair of the Environmental and Social Justice Committee. We are looking for a replacement and all suggestions are appreciated (Contact Chapter Chair Joe Testa: chapter.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org). Renée will continue as an ExCom at-large member.

Congratulations to Stan Greberis, Gary Frederick, and Kip Cherry. Thanks in part to their advocacy, The NJ Department of Environmental Protection purchased 22 acres near Monmouth Battlefield State Park for \$15 million and headed off a proposed warehouse and industrial development.

Volunteer members in leadership roles are urged to take the mandatory behavioral training courses offered through Campfire to ensure our Chapter remains problem-free.

David Eisenhower was introduced as the Chapter’s newly hired energy policy and legislative director. This brings our New Jersey staff to five.

ExCom members emphasized their opposition to the development of nuclear power in New Jersey.

The Chapter is urging the Department of Environmental Protection to address a potential cancer cluster at Keyport related to seepage from the Aeromarine landfill there.

Rich Isaac was appointed to the Transportation Committee.

The ExCom approved the 2026–2027 Chapter Priorities, available at this [link](#).

July: Seth Kantor resigned as membership chair and communications chair, although he will remain involved in Chapter activities. If you are interested, contact Chapter Chair Joe Testa: chapter.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Chapter Director Anjuli Ramos-Busot said she has submitted the first draft of our budget to National. Further discussion and a presentation will be held at the September 19 ExCom meeting.

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NEW JERSEY: where beautiful places can be protected forever by gifts in wills

Are you thinking about creating an estate plan?

The New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club offers *Giving Docs*, a simple, secure way to create your will and other estate planning documents online. It’s **free** for Sierra Club supporters, and it only takes a few minutes!

You can also use *Giving Docs* to leave a lasting legacy by naming the New Jersey Chapter as a beneficiary of your estate. Gifts of any size make a difference and are greatly appreciated!



Scan the QR code or get in touch to learn more

julia.curtis@sierraclub.org
(800) 932-4270
myplan.sierraclub.org

Generate Solar Electricity on Your Balcony!

By Steve Miller • Building Electrification Team



On June 30, 2026, the NJ Assembly and Senate unanimously passed the Garden State Balcony Solar Act ([S2368/A4836](#)), allowing “plug-in” solar. The act is expected to be signed by Gov. Mikie Sherrill and would go into effect six months later.

For \$285, you could buy a complete solar system that includes a single solar panel and an inverter, which converts solar to household AC electric. You would simply place your solar panel in the sun, plug it into the nearest 120-volt electrical outlet, and start piping free electricity directly into your home’s electrical system!

Who Can Have Plug-in Solar?

NJ homeowners, renters, or tenants in single and multi-family units who pay their own electrical bill are eligible for these systems. Landlords, homeowners’ associations, condominium associations, housing corporations, and governors of planned real estate

developments, can request reasonable solar mounting locations but are not allowed to ban the presence of the panels.

How Much Does It Cost?

The nonprofit company [Bright Saver](#) is the first to provide solar balcony kits that are compliant with the UL 3700 photovoltaic safety standard. Two kits are available: a \$285, single panel 180-watt system with an inverter, or two 180-watt panels plus inverter (360 watts, total), costing \$414 for Bright Saver members and including shipping. (Members pay \$29/year and are eligible for discounted purchases of other green products.)

Bright Saver states that a single 180-watt panel can produce up to 270 kWh per year. This provides an annual savings of \$54 (assuming 20 cents/kWh electric rate). You can assume \$108 in annual savings for a kit of two panels and payback in just four years! Kit prices include the [Hoymiles](#)-brand [HiFlow Pro](#) microinverter. This was the first US microinverter that met the new UL 3700 safety standard (July 2026), for plug-in balcony solar.

Why Are Bright Saver Prices so Low?

Bright Saver’s mission as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit is to make balcony solar affordable and accessible. Future products are expected to include larger, higher-efficiency panels and a battery.

What Are the Requirements?

A balcony solar system, generating less than 400 watts, can be plugged into any standard 120-volt electric outlet. No alterations of the building wiring would be required. Also, installation would not require permissions or permits from the electric company, or from local and state authorities. However, these solar systems would require compliance with the 2029 National Electrical Code (NEC) and the 2029 NJ Uniform Construction Code.

The Pending Balcony Solar Act

National safety committees are proposing that plug-in solar systems, up to 1200 watts, require possible wiring changes performed by a licensed electrician. The Garden State Balcony Solar Act would exempt solar systems less than 400 watts and allow

plug-ins to standard 120-volt electric outlets. The act would allow a single dwelling to connect multiple plug-in systems meeting the 400-watt plug-in requirements; however, the total power of all qualifying systems must be less than 1200 watts. To meet the intent of the 1200-watt safety limit (but not stated in this NJ law), multiple 400-watt qualifying systems must each plug-in to a separate branch circuit served by a separate circuit breaker.

Alternative Suppliers

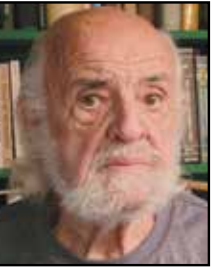
Two companies that supply the [German market](#) for balcony solar, CraftStrom and EcoFlow, are beginning to market in the United States. CraftStrom boasts that their current products incorporate multiple advances in German balcony solar design.

Resources

Balcony Solar Act: <https://shorturl.at/d7wZ8>
Potential savings: <https://shorturl.at/BhTSe>
Balcony solar in other states: <https://shorturl.at/nehuI>

Time for AI to Foot Its Own Energy Bill

By George Moffatt • Education Chair, Jersey Shore Group



The surge in electricity demand from AI data centers is pushing up the cost of maintaining enough power-generating capacity across the PJM Interconnection grid.

In [PJM’s latest auction](#), data-center demand was responsible for an estimated \$6.3 billion of the \$16.4 billion in capacity costs that customers will ultimately pay—for just the 2028–29 delivery year.

New Jersey is part of a 13-state cluster where electric power utilities sell electricity directly to their customers in a deregulated competitive retail market. The other states are Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. The District of Columbia is also in this group.

New Jersey has four electricity distribution and transmission utilities:

Public Service Electric and Gas, Jersey Central Power and Light, Atlantic City Electric, and Rockland Electric.

These utilities are connected both to their customers and to PJM’s centralized switching hub. PJM can re-route electricity to any of its member power utilities to relieve power overloads, power failures, or other electrical transmission problems.

The residents of these 13 states and District of Columbia were recently hit with surprising and steep electrical power price increases, announced during the quietude of mid-July during what the electrical industry calls “auctions.”

Auctions enable PJM to calculate the lowest total cost to keep the grid reliable.

But AI companies are frantically building enormous power-consuming computer centers, in their quest to be No. 1. Thus, New Jersey’s electrical power companies are now being enticed, no, pressed to upgrade grid capacity, power lines, substations, and transmission interconnections to meet AI’s increasingly expanding power needs.

AI corporations are swimming in cash—enough to build their own power plants. So why don’t they? Because they are politically adept, and don’t want to pay their fair share of the extra electrical power their AI operations consume. Also, they may feel they don’t have the time to develop new sources of power. In PJM’s interconnection queue, it could take five years or longer to get new plants approved and connected.

As a result, New Jersey’s homeowners and businesses may be forced to pay high fees upfront for the very large power upgrades that only AI needs.

But there is one outcome that everyone but AI will experience—lighter wallets.

Consider some current stats, which tend to be approximate (only AI knows for sure). The total value of the global AI market was \$294 billion in 2025 and is projected to grow from \$376 billion this year to a whopping \$2,480 billion by 2034. These projections could amount to a compound annual growth

rate (CAGR) of 26.60%. The US AI market is an estimated \$83 billion in 2026, according to [Fortune Business Insights](#).

This raises a question our state legislators should answer: Why are they allowing a major percentage of AI’s unprecedented power costs to be passed on to New Jersey’s other power customers?

The answer is that state regulations require a power company’s regular business and general customers to share in any increased costs of a power company’s expansion to meet expanding demand. But today’s regulations never anticipated electrical users whose power needs can only be described as “voracious.”

Even if AI proves to be our future savior—a reasonably debatable question at the moment—should our state and regional electrical power regulations remain unchanged, forcing all New Jerseyans to subsidize AI?

Perhaps AI can come up with a more equitable solution.

Just a non-AI generated thought.

US-IRAN CONFLICT

continued from page 2

Environmental Costs

Global warming is not a distant abstraction, nor is it shaped only by local conditions. CO₂ traps heat around the Earth. Human activities, including fossil fuel use, deforestation, industrialization, consumption, and war have added more than natural systems can absorb. Since 1880, average global temperatures have increased by 2.2° Fahrenheit, or 1.2° Celsius.

[One analysis](#) suggests that more than 5 million tons of CO₂ were emitted in the first 14 days of the US-led war on Iran.

New Jersey and the Northeast, more broadly, are warming. Summer 2024 ranked as the [third-warmest summer](#) in New Jersey since recordkeeping began in 1895, and 18 of the 20 hottest years recorded in the state have occurred since 2000, according to NJ Department of Environmental Protection data. Heat Hub NJ makes clear that extreme heat is already a [public health](#)

[and infrastructure concern](#). This is not an isolated weather story; it is part of a larger planetary crisis reaching directly into New Jersey lives.

Science tells us that emission of millions of tons of CO₂ throughout this preventable war—which by the end of August had lasted 184 days—will, without a doubt, contribute to the heat we feel on city blocks, in farm fields, in classrooms, in senior housing, and in our homes.

General Economic Costs

According to Brown University, as of mid-August, the US-Iran war had cost each US household an average of [\\$656.74](#) in increased gasoline and diesel energy costs.

For many families, that figure is not theoretical. It represents a missed payment, a delayed repair, a smaller grocery cart, or another month of stretching what is already too thin.

Although we are the Garden State,

New Jersey farms are often small, specialized, and expensive to operate. This year, a warm spring followed by a freeze caused widespread crop damage across the state. Some farmers lost about 90% of their crops, while others experienced complete loss.

At the same time, [NJ Spotlight News](#), for example, reported that diesel prices surged nearly 50% and the cost of nitrogen fertilizer rose more than 30%, placing severe strain on agriculture. Because fuel and fertilizer are basic inputs, these increases raise the cost of planting, harvesting, transporting, and, ultimately, feeding people.

Water Systems

The risk to water systems is not theoretical, either. New Jersey’s Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell (aka NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness) has identified water and wastewater systems

as facing serious cyber threats, and recent reporting from [The New York Times](#) described malicious cyber activity targeting water systems in seven US states in late July 2026. This summer, at least two New Jersey water systems were [reportedly hit](#) by cyberattacks, which temporarily limited the operators’ ability to monitor or manage the systems remotely.

Conclusion

New Jerseyans deserve a policy that refuses to treat war, climate, and economic survival as separate stories. They are one story. And it is already being lived here.

Resources

Brown University energy calculator: <https://shorturl.at/SprX6>
Agricultural costs: <https://shorturl.at/75TPg>
Cyber threats: <https://shorturl.at/Zr2eX>

Can New Jersey Restore Its Old-Growth Forests?

By John Miraglia • Raritan Valley Group



Old-growth forests (trees 150-plus years old) store [double](#) the carbon of younger, “even-growth” forests (trees mostly 40-90 years old). Unfortunately, as the [NJ State Forest Action Plan 2020](#) (SFAP) notes, less than 1% of New Jersey’s remaining forests are old-growth.

The good news is that even-growth forests dominate the forested portions of New Jersey and, if protected from development and properly managed, will sequester carbon at a high rate and may eventually become high-capacity carbon vaults.

One forest management technique is to take a passive “let nature take its course” approach. This might work for existing old-growth forests. However, attacks on our even-growth forests from commercial development, “...climate change, invasive species, white-tailed deer herbivory, fire suppression, insects, and disease” make a passive approach [unlikely to succeed](#).

What’s Being Done Now

Job No. 1 is to preserve the forests that we do have. New Jersey loses thousands of acres of forest to urbanization, infrastructure development, wildfires, and logging. Another challenge to preserving forests is that 48% of forests in New Jersey are [held in private hands](#). The SFAP does not control how private property is managed, but it does have voluntary programs.

- The Farmland Assessment Act offers tax breaks in return for active forest management.
- Allowing forests to grow uninterrupted (proforestation) helps achieve carbon sequestration and other ecological goals.
- Expanding conservation easements can place more forests on a permanent no-development status

On state-owned land, the No Net Loss Compensation Reforestation Act (1993) helps by ensuring that state development projects do not reduce forest cover.

Another strategy is prescribed burns—controlled fires that forestall damaging wildfires and help devel-

op new old-growth forests. Most take place in the Pine Barrens to help protect pitch pines.

Where prescribed burns are not practical, clear-cutting of 1-5 acre plots can open the forest canopy and stimulate new growth. Eliminating invasive species with herbicides or manually removing them is also helpful.

One of the most significant roadblocks to managing our forests in New Jersey is our large deer population. Deer browse trees and other plants through several forest stages. They eat seedlings during the regeneration stage, eat saplings before they grow above the browse line, and selectively eat trees such as oak, maple, and white pine, while ignoring invasive species.

Deer hunting accounts for almost all deer control efforts in New Jersey. Trapping, euthanization, and fertility control also are employed when hunting is not feasible.

What We Can Do

The Sierra Club in New Jersey actively advocates for forest management. You can get your group involved in a

local forest management issue or join a Chapter-level team.

As individuals, we can speak at township meetings when development projects are being discussed, write letters to the editor, and support pro-forest political candidates.

We can also get involved in hands-on projects for removing invasive plant species or for other types of pro-forestation.

While restoring old-growth forests is not a focus of the SFAP 10-year plan, the actions noted above can help achieve that end. However, doing so is a decades- or century-long process. What we do today to preserve forests, eliminate invasive species, and control deer populations will serve to keep our current forests healthy and restore old-growth forests.

Resources

NJ Forest Action Plan:

<https://shorturl.at/TFwhj>

Old Growth:

<https://shorturl.at/l9gwj>

See our story on invasive plants at Eagle Rock Reservation in our special section!

The Threats to Our National Parks

By Gary Frederick • Conservation Chair, Raritan Valley Group



Recently my wife and I visited three of our country’s most beautiful national parks. Our journey began with our flight into Bozeman, Montana, where we hopped into our rented Ford Escape to begin our adventure. The first stop was Yellowstone, where we spent four incredible days before continuing south through Grand Teton and ending at the southern expanse of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.

The good news is that these parks remain as majestic as any in the national park system. Yellowstone is simply magnificent. At 3,742 square miles, the park is bigger than Rhode Island. It contains natural wonders you can’t see anywhere else, since it sits atop a massive and active volcano. The molten rock below the surface powers Yellowstone’s many geysers, mud pots, heated streams and bubbling springs. (Don’t worry. The volcano last erupted 640,000 years ago.)

Yellowstone is also home to massive bison herds, bighorn sheep, grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, coyotes, elk, moose, and mule deer. These creatures can also be seen in Grand Teton. We spotted a grizzly along the main road before it wandered off into the forest. Awareness of grizzlies is so great in both parks that we always carried bear spray, holstered across our hips like gunslingers in the old West.

While Yellowstone is about the ecology of being atop a huge volcano, Grand Teton is about the towering snow-covered peaks the area is named for. Almost anywhere in the park, you can see the mountains rising from the valley floor to almost 14,000 feet above sea level. Contrast Yellowstone and Grand Teton with the forests, streams and valleys of the Rocky Mountains and you have three distinct parks, each with their own personality.

So, yes, the good news is these parks are well worth a visit. The bad news is that they may not always remain so. Behind the scenes are stressed employees whose numbers have been cut.

[Inside Climate News](#) reported that 2,750 National Park Service employees were fired in the first 11 months of Trump’s second term. Although a federal judge mandated rehiring many of those workers, gaping staffing holes still exist across the NPS. Some visitor center hours have been cut, some ranger programs eliminated and maintenance is backlogged.

The effects of Trump’s second term are hitting hard, including:

- The bulldozing of portions of Big Bend National Park in Texas to make way for Trump’s border wall. Demolition began in August with trees ripped up and trails erased. As of this writing, several environmental groups have sued to stop the demolition, which Tiernan Sittenfeld, National Park Conservation Association president and CEO, called “an unconscionable attack on one of America’s greatest treasures.”

- Reducing the size of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase - Escalante national monuments by 90% this past July. The effect will be to open these lands to oil and gas drilling and ignore the cultural significance of these lands to several indigenous tribes. President Obama, in 2016, called Bears Ears “one of the densest and most significant cultural landscapes in the United States.” Today, the signposts leading into the parks have been [pulled down and many cultural references are gone](#).
- An administration proposal to shift management of grizzly bears to often hostile Northern Rockies states.

According to the [Montana Free Press](#), Interior Secretary Doug Burghum “touted a new set of management rules that gives state wildlife agencies more independence to control or kill grizzlies that are in conflict with humans, and more leniency to excuse the deaths of grizzlies killed by traps set for other animals such as wolves.” To me that sounds like a license to kill grizzlies.

- The continued assault on the Endangered Species Act. In July 2026 the administration redefined the word “harm” in the ESA. While the original definition of “harm” includ-

ed any “[modification or degradation](#)” of habitat that kills or injures animals by impairing their ability to eat, shelter or breed, the new definition says that destroying an endangered species habitat would not necessarily be illegal. For example, if a species of birds migrates away from nesting grounds during the winter, developers can destroy those nesting grounds while the birds are away. Although the effect might be the starvation and death of those birds when they return, that is no longer considered “harm.”



Elk spotted at Yellowstone Park. Credit: Gary Frederick

By the time you read this article, there will no doubt be other assaults on our national park system. Let your Congress members know you stand with our national parks, that you believe in the Endangered Species Act and that any attempt to extract oil and gas from these natural resources is unacceptable. No one wants to see oil rigs in Grand Teton National Park.

MONEY MATTERS

Support the Sierra Club

By Jim Andreano • Fundraising Committee Chair, Jimandreano@gmail.com



So, you’ve finally purchased that EV. Well done! Or maybe you haven’t. We won’t judge. Anyway, you now have an unneeded car that you need to dispose of.

While we don’t have a catchy jingle, we humbly suggest that you donate your old car to Sierra Club Foundation, for the benefit of the New Jersey Chapter. We also accept boats, motorcycles, trucks, and RVs.

It’s really easy to do. Just call 855-337-4377 or visit scfch.careasy.org/index.html

Indicate that the donation is for the New Jersey Chapter. The Sierra Club Foundation will arrange for free vehicle pickup and the subsequent vehicle sale. When the vehicle is sold, you will receive a tax receipt for the full amount of the sale. The proceeds (less a sales commission) will be remit-

ted to the New Jersey Chapter. We will use the funds to help preserve a clean and healthy environment for kids and grownups and, of course, wildlife.

What’s more, the sale of the old vehicle may in itself be an environmentally friendly act. Many old cars, when sold, are stripped down for parts. The steel will be salvaged and recycled. (The steel industry uses 74% less energy by recycling steel instead of producing new steel.) Also, any motor oil remaining in the vehicle will be safely reused and will not become a contaminant.

We recognize that not everyone is in a position to donate a vehicle. Fortunately, we also accept cash and credit cards. You may have seen our summer appeal letter. If not, you may receive another at year-end. In fact, we will gratefully accept your donation anytime, at <https://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey> Look for the red donate button at the top right.

As always, we thank you for your support!

OFFSHORE WIND
continued from page 1

Energy promised to invest the full payment in fossil fuel projects. As is typical of the Trump Administration, it blithely ignored the legal requirements for cancelling the lease. For example, the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act limits the DOI’s ability to cancel the lease. The law requires that DOI hold a hearing and, based on the evidence presented at the hearing, find that the lease would likely cause serious harm to life, property, national security, or the environment. It also must determine that the benefits of cancelling the lease outweigh the benefits of the lease continuing. No such hearing was held. The DOI also violated the National Environmental Policy Act by failing to complete an environmental impact statement for the cancellation. DOI also ignored procedures required by the Administrative Procedure Act. The \$795 million payment also vio-

lates the Judgment Fund Act, which authorizes payments only to settle claims related to ongoing or imminent litigation. The payment to Attentive Energy clearly is not a settlement of imminent litigation. Separately, on July 15 and 16, New Jersey joined New York, Delaware, and the five New England states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont) by filing two notices of intent to sue DOI for cancellation of leases with Bluepoint Wind LLC (Bluepoint) and Invenergy Wind Offshore LLC and Invenergy NE Offshore Wind LLC (Invenergy). DOI agreed to pay \$765 million in taxpayer dollars to Bluepoint and \$653 million to Invenergy. Together, these offshore wind projects would have provided enough electricity for three million homes. The notices cite the same statutory violations as in the Attentive Energy lawsuit. DOI claimed the same nation-

AMAZON DATA CENTER
continued from page 1

neously as a single coordinated power source. Under Clean Air Act precedent (such as National Fuel Gas Midstream v. PADEP), facilities sharing the same industrial classification, located on contiguous property, and under common control, can and should be aggregated. PADEP has full authority to classify the combined cluster as a single “major” emissions source.

- Demands for PADEP Accountability**
- The Sierra Club and local community members urge PADEP to exercise its regulatory authority and enforce the following measures:
- 1. **Reclassify as a Single “Major” Source:** Aggregate both generator arrays into one major source permit, subjecting the facility to rigorous pollution control standards.
 - 2. **Eliminate Emission Exemptions:** Count emissions generated during grid emergencies, testing, and maintenance toward total permits. Emergency exemptions are unnecessary if clean power is available.
 - 3. **Conduct Comprehensive Air Monitoring:** Replace the inadequate proposal—testing generators once every five years under non-operational conditions—with active daily monitoring during real-world

- emergency operations.
- 4. **Require an Environmental Impact Statement:** Assess the multi-state impacts on the Delaware River ecosystem. The river supplies drinking water to millions, supports endangered species like sturgeon, and cannot handle unchecked water withdrawal for data center cooling—especially alongside existing regional power demands.
 - 5. **Mandate Noise and Vibration Mitigation:** Require Amazon to implement noise mitigation plans to protect neighboring communities, including residents directly across the river in Bordentown, NJ.
 - 6. **Force a Shift to Renewables:** Require Amazon to replace fossil-fuel backup arrays with renewable alternatives paired with battery storage. Local institutions—such as Princeton University’s geoechange grid and Mercer County Community College’s solar arrays—demonstrate that large-scale clean energy systems are entirely feasible.
- PADEP must prioritize public health and environmental integrity over corporate convenience by reclassifying the Amazon data center as a major emissions source and mandating a transition to sustainable energy.

al security concerns despite the federal government having renewed and approved these leases after years of consultation with the Department of Defense and federal courts, which uniformly rejected this claim and found no imminent risk. The lease cancellations follow a familiar pattern for this administration of cancelling programs it doesn’t like and ignoring legal constraints in doing so. The strategy is that, even if the cancellations are voided after years of

litigation, these companies will have little appetite for resuming work on the projects. It is expected that the states will seek an injunction to prevent the DOI from enforcing the cancellations while legal action is pending. But in the meantime, the lease cancellations are disruptive in multiple ways. They undermine the states’ economies, grid reliability, diversification of energy resources, growth of union jobs, and access to clean, affordable energy.



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- Hunterdon Warren:** Open Position!
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- Inspiring Connections Outdoors:** Oscar Nazar chair.njico.sierraclub@gmail.com
- River Touring:** Fred Tocce, (908) 453-2205 (H) RD-1, Box 277, Washington 07882

Outing Leaders and Group Outings Coordinators: Please send write-ups for January-April 2027 to your group outings coordinator (or, if you don't associate yourself with a single group, directly to pineypaddlers@gmail.com) before December 1, 2026. Outings for early May 2027 can be included.

NOTES ON OUTINGS: Outings are generally open to Club members, guests, and anyone interested. Unless otherwise specified, the events are free. All participants in Sierra Club outings must sign liability waivers. Please check with the leader before bringing small children on an outing. A parent or other

responsible adult must accompany persons under 18. Participants may bring pets on outings only if the event description specifically says pets are allowed.

Sierra Club outings are arranged and conducted by volunteer leaders who are responsible for the safety, welfare, and enjoyment of all participants. Leaders determine qualifications to participate, adequacy of equipment, routes to be followed, and special precautions to be taken. Please arrive adequately prepared and equipped. If you have any allergies, please remember to bring your medication. The leader has the final word in the conduct of the trip. Your cooperation will help ensure a safe and pleasant outing.

Please arrive early at the meeting place so the outing can start on time. For day hikes, lunch, water (at least a liter), extra clothing, rain gear, and emergency equipment should be carried in a small daypack. For all except easy hikes, sturdy over-the-ankle shoes or boots should be worn. For most trips, you are expected to have your own equipment. In some cases, it may be rented from outdoor/camping suppliers—call or message the trip leader for more information. If the weather is questionable on the date of the outing, you may assume that it will take place, unless the hike description indicates otherwise.

Unless registration is required, or if you have a question, it is not necessary to contact the leader before the trip. However, as these outings are planned many months in advance, we do advise that you contact the trip leader one to two days before the outing to make sure it is not canceled.

If you are a Sierra Club member interested in becoming an outing leader or have suggestions for new outings, contact your group outings chair or the Chapter outings chair for assistance and further information. The Chapter group or section leading each outing is given at the end of the write-up, as follows:

Atlantic Chapter, ACOC; Central Jersey, C; Gateway, G; Hudson, H; Hunterdon Warren (HW); Jersey Shore, JS; LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender, Queer, Plus); Loantaka, L; NJ Chapter, NJ; North Jersey, N; Raritan Valley, RV; Ocean, O; River Touring, RT; Singles Section SS; Skylands, Sk; South Jersey, SJ; West Jersey, W.

OCTOBER

Oct. 3 (Sat): Guided Bird Walk at Palmyra Cove Nature Park (rain date Oct. 4) (Burlington Co.) 8:30 a.m., 2 miles, easy flat walking trails with some scenic views on the Delaware River. Palmyra Cove Nature Park shows how a neglected dredge spoil area and former leaf dump can be transformed into an oasis of biodiversity. The park has consistently been a fall migration hot spot. In recent years, about 25 species of warbler have been observed, including rarities such as mourning and Connecticut warbler. Shorebirds, such as greater yellowlegs and least sandpiper, turn up on the pond edges and river. Our guides and NJ Sierra Club members, Sharon Hardy and her husband Walt Nadolny, are avid birders who love to travel and learn about birds wherever they go, and this is a favorite local spot. Binoculars are a must; they do have a few pairs to share. Bring water and snacks. Please, no dogs on this bird walk. Meet in the parking lot: 1335 NJ-73, Palmyra. Facilities are not available on weekends. Rain cancels. Leaders: Leona and George F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/west-jersey (W)

Oct. 3 (Sat): Meditation Hike Eagle Rock Reservation (Essex Co.) Arrive by 6:30 a.m. We will enjoy the sunrise in the forest and then do a forest meditation hike throughout the reservation for two hours. Bring water and a snack. Wear hiking boots. No dogs, please. Rain cancels. Meet at the 9/11 Memorial in Eagle Rock Reservation, 1 Crest Dr, West Orange. Leader: Ron Pate, Ronpate31@verizon.net or 973-965-7578. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/sierra-singles (SS)

Oct. 10 (Sat): Fall Hike at Holmdel Park (Monmouth Co.) 10 a.m., about 2-3 miles, easy pace. Holmdel Park is one of Monmouth County's most popular locations for recreation and nature appreciation. Hike on a wooded trail through hills with views of the forest and a pond. There are facilities. No charge for the hike. Leader will provide meeting location and directions after participants register. Leader: Sandra, gohikenow@icloud.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/jersey-shore (JS)

Oct 10 (Sat): Sterling Forest Hike, Tuxedo Park, NY (Orange Co.) Time: Arrive by 9:40 a.m., Hike starts at 10 a.m. Estimated: 6-7 miles in 4 hours, in hilly terrain and strenuous. Features: Sterling Lake, Bare Rocks Lookout, Remains of the 2024 Forest Fire. Facilities: Indoor restrooms at the visitor's center. Requirements: No pets. Hiking boots and non-cotton hiking socks. Bring a daypack with water and lunch. Registration required via Web: Start with the calendar at <https://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar> and click on the “Sterling Forest Hike”, then click on

>continued on page 7

ExCom MINUTES continued from page 3

National is forming a task force on volunteer leadership and governance. The purpose is to improve communications, information sharing, etc. Chapter members may be invited to some of their sessions to provide input. The task force is expected to produce recommendations by October 19. Sylvia Kay has drafted a fact sheet on artificial turf versus natural grass, which she will share with anyone interested. You can reach Sylvia at sylviaokay222@gmail.com Olivia Xu has resigned from the ExCom so that she can go to college. Nidhi Rajesh is now leading the Student Action Committee and will complete Olivia’s unexpired term. She introduced herself at the July meeting. **June:** Chapter staff presented a webinar on June 16 about offshore wind and its current status in New Jersey. Chapter Director Anjuli Ramos-Busot announced that New Jersey is joining other states in a lawsuit against the Trump administration for making improper payments to offshore wind developers to impel them to cancel existing contracts. See our related story about that suit by Chapter Legal Advisor Chris Hitchcock. Anjuli noted that the Chapter has made progress in lobbying for data center legislation that could force developers to adhere to better standards and pay their fair share for costs associated with this additional energy demand in New Jersey. See additional reporting on this topic elsewhere in *The Sierran*. Group Leadership meetings were reestablished with a kickoff meeting based on these issues and will include a survey of concerns. Subsequent meetings will focus on these issues and to include helpful presentations on tools and strategies for successful advocacy, member growth and retention. For information, contact Group Leadership Chair Tony Hagen at vice.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org Five candidates were selected by the Nominating Committee for the ExCom 2026 election: Pat Miller, Nidhi Rajesh, Renée Pollard, Gary Frederick, and Laura Lynch. They will compete for three at-large positions.



Your Votes Matter in This Election

By Ricardo Pereira • Chapter Political Chair



The stakes for the 2026 congressional election couldn't be higher. Every year, drastic climate action becomes more and more necessary. Yet, since returning to the presidency, Trump and his administration have implemented a sweeping deregulatory agenda, turning back the clock on decades of environmental progress. Their destructive actions over the last two years could fill a book.

The Trump administration has shrunk the EPA's regulatory oversight. They've rolled back scores of environmental rules governing everything from allowable carbon emissions and air quality standards to water quality protections and industrial waste discharge. All of us will suffer as a result.

A significant amount of federal-sponsored climate change research has been halted—both in the public and private sectors. Funds have been slashed for NASA, the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#), the Department of Energy, and the EPA, and vital science advisory panels have been disbanded.

By targeting foreign aid programs, the Trump administration has crippled international environmental protections, conservation, and climate adaptation. Even rainforest protection programs in the Amazon and Africa have been disrupted.

The United States has also left multiple international accords, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Trump administration has

deemed these partnerships “contrary to US interests,” but in withdrawing, the United States has severely undermined our chances for timely climate change intervention.

Additionally, the Trump administration has expanded fossil fuel drilling and fracking, destroyed wildlife protections, desecrated national monuments, expanded commercial fishing into marine sanctuaries, and extended logging into pristine forests, such as the Tongass in Alaska.

Meanwhile, data centers threaten to consume much of our energy and water supplies, and federal oversight is unlikely to come.

These changes undo decades of progressive action and run counter to the mission of the EPA. They present real, tangible danger for the immediate future of Americans and show no signs of abating.

For two years, Congress has side-stepped its vital role in implementing laws, funding, and regulations that shape our nation's responses to environmental crises. Congress continues to hold power over policy, priorities, and actions, but it needs to act. This moment is an inflection point for environmental protection. Who we send to Congress matters.

The New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club has identified key candidates in this election who have shown the willingness and potential to support a healthy, sustainable environment. Our endorsements reflect their records, positions, and responses to our endorsement process. See the box at right for the candidates we have endorsed for Congress in 2026. Please vote for these recommended candidates, and keep an eye open for additional endorsements leading up to the election.

Chapter 2026 Endorsements

The New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club has announced its endorsements for the 2026 federal elections, supporting Sen. Cory Booker for reelection to the US Senate and ten candidates for the US House. Our endorsements have been selected based on the candidates' strong support for environmental protection and clean energy, their commitment to addressing climate change, and their demonstrated record of leadership on these issues.

Endorsed Candidate	Office	Status	Opponent
Cory Booker	Senate	Incumbent, Democrat	Justin Murphy, Republican
Donald Norcross	House, NJ-01	Incumbent, Democrat	Damon Galdo, Republican
Zach Mullock	House, NJ-02	Challenger, Democrat	Jeff Van Dew, Republican
Herbert Conaway	House, NJ-03	Incumbent, Democrat	Michael McGuire, Republican
Frank Pallone	House, NJ-06	Incumbent, Democrat	Hillary Herzig, Republican
Rebecca Bennett	House, NJ-07	Challenger, Democrat	Tom Kean Jr., Republican (Highly competitive race)
Robert (Rob) Menendez, Jr.	House, NJ-08	Incumbent, Democrat	Anthony Valdes, Republican
Nellie Pou	House, NJ-09	Incumbent, Democrat	Rosemary "Rosie" Pino, Republican
LaMonica McIver	House, NJ-10	Incumbent, Democrat	Carmen Bucco, Republican
Analilia Mejia	House, NJ-11	Incumbent, Democrat	Joe Hathaway, Republican (Competitive race)
Adam Hamawy	House, NJ-12	Challenger, Democrat	Gregg Mele, Republican

For official election updates, polling locations, or voter registration details, visit the New Jersey Division of Elections Portal: <https://www.nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml>

Save Eagle Rock From Invasive Plants and Trees

By Ron Pate • Outings Chair, Gateway Group



Eagle Rock Reservation, one of the Essex County Parks designed by the Olmsted brothers in 1903, is a 400-acre suburban forest that is being overwhelmed by invasive plants. It is overbrowsed by whitetail deer, undergoing soil compaction by an overabundance of privately created trails, and losing trees due to the emerald ash borer and beech leaf disease.

Having led outings and hikes in Eagle Rock for many years, I noticed that the reservation had fewer trees and was losing its understory of plants. I decided to restart the Eagle Rock Reservation Conservancy (estab. 2004) and work with Essex County and volunteers from the New York New Jersey Trails Conference and the NJ Native Plant Society to revive this natural gem in Essex County.

Forest regeneration refers to the renewal of tree cover and native vegetation in an area, either naturally or with human assistance. It is essential for maintaining ecosystem stability, supporting biodiversity, and providing ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, soil stabilization, water regulation, and habitat for wildlife.

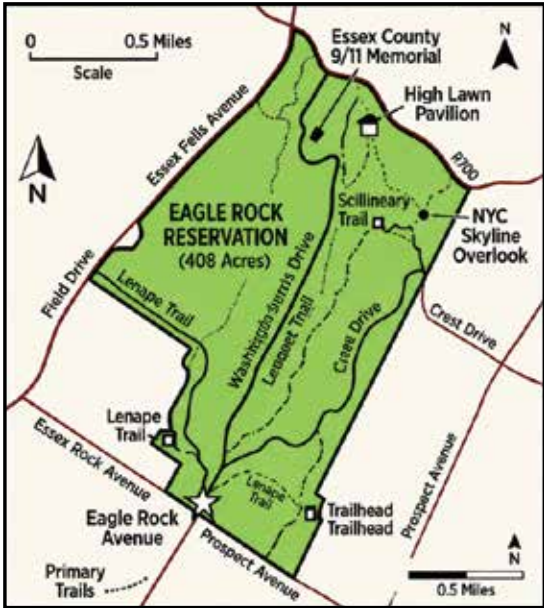
We are repairing deer exclosures built in 2010 to provide deer-free zones where native plants and trees can regenerate and spread seeds. These protected areas are being cleared of any invasive plants that have colonized the interior due to fence breakage. We are also planting young hardwood trees like oaks and hickories in areas that have lost older canopy trees. This will become more important as we lose beech trees to beech leaf disease.

Invasive plant and tree removal requires an assessment of priority problem areas within the reservation. Through hiking and observation, the

conservancy has identified several areas of high invasive plant infestation. Of particular importance is the removal of mile-a-minute weed, Chinese wisteria, and non-native “devils walking stick” trees that overwhelm native shrubs and trees.

This effort will require an all-hands-on-deck effort and will take many years. We welcome new members to join us on workdays. You can also familiarize yourself with invasive plants that affect all our suburban forests and ensure you remove them or don't plant them in your yard.

Contact me at ronpate31@verizon.net to join the effort.



Eagle Rock is a 400-acre reservation overlapping Verona, Montclair, and West Orange in the Watchung Mountains.

Chris Russo for Morris County Commissioner

By Richard Isaac • Loantaka Group Chair



Sierra Club has endorsed Chris Russo for Morris County commissioner.

Throughout his time on the Morristown Council, Chris Russo has supported policies that recognize conservation as an investment in Morris County's future. Last year, he supported a successful referendum establishing Morristown's Open Space Trust Fund, creating a dedicated funding source to preserve open space, protect environmentally sensitive lands, expand parks and trails, and ensure the long-term stewardship of the county's natural resources.

The referendum also committed Morristown to updating its Open Space and Recreation Plan so such investments will be guided by thoughtful, long-term planning.

In addition to his public service, Chris Murphy has developed a deep appreciation for New Jersey's parks

and open spaces through his work as the co-owner of Superhero Events, a company that organizes races/marathons and community events throughout the state. These events rely on healthy, well-maintained parks, trails, and public spaces to bring communities together, promote healthy lifestyles, and support local economies. They have reinforced Russo's belief that investing in our environment benefits everyone,

not only by protecting wildlife and natural resources, but also by improving public health, strengthening our communities, and enhancing our quality of life.

If elected as a Morris County commissioner, Russo will continue to champion the preservation of open space and farmland, protect our tree canopy and water resources, encourage smart and sustainable development, and ensure that Morris County remains a place where residents can enjoy a healthy environment for generations to come.

The Sierra Club encourages all Morris County residents to vote for Chris Russo.



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Touring the Great Lakes by Ship and Rail

By Pat Miller • Co-Chair, Building Electrification Committee



I and my husband, Steve, had the opportunity in July to sail all five of the Great Lakes, from Toronto to Chicago. We decided this was the year to vacation entirely without air

travel and see a huge swath of the Midwest up close.

We traveled by NJ Transit from our home to New York City, then rode Amtrak to Toronto, crossing the Canadian border at Niagara Falls. There, we got off the train with our luggage, walked through the customs building with passports in hand, and reboarded the train after inspection. In Toronto we boarded the Victory 1, a 190-passenger Victory Cruise Lines ship. Our return trip from Chicago to New York was in an overnight Amtrak sleeper car.

The Great Lakes are part of a ship-ping route from the Atlantic and the St. Lawrence River to the busiest mid-western ports of Cleveland, on Lake

Erie, and Duluth, on the western tip of Lake Superior. Wherever the lake elevations differ, passage of ships between them is via locks.

After we boarded the ship in Toronto, near the southwestern tip of Lake Ontario, we went through our first lock at dinnertime, and then we passed through seven more locks during the night before reaching our first port, Niagara Falls, the next morning.

Our excursion that day was to ride the Maid of the Mist below and between the Canadian and American falls, getting soaked in the process. We saw the huge buildings on both sides of the falls that house the hydroelectric turbine generators there. Later, we re-boarded our ship on Lake Erie.

We spent nine nights aboard Victory 1. Our days also included motor coach excursions, onboard lectures, outstanding nightly entertainment—mostly pop music from across the decades by an in-house, three-piece band and singing combo. The food was excellent—they even catered to us vegans.

Major port cities between Toronto and Chicago included Cleveland, Detroit, and Milwaukee. All these five, formerly industrial cities, suffered greatly when manufacturing jobs and population plummeted starting around the 1970s, although the city guides gushed about the revivals that have taken place since then. Tall, new skyscrapers were everywhere, as well as sparkling clean and safe public transit.

We rode the metro in both Toronto and Chicago. Also, in Toronto there were public ferries (which signs said would soon be electrified) to Toronto Island, a half hour away, where we had a lovely outdoor meal with live blue-grass music. Other highlights were visiting Cleveland’s Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Detroit’s Henry Ford Museum.

Lake Huron was a “sea day” for us with no port until we reached Sault Ste. Marie, a small city in Michigan that boasted ownership of the Soo Locks at the mouth of Lake Superior.

Our only venture into Lake Superior was to sail upstream through the locks, turn around and come back down into Lake Michigan.

We disembarked in Chicago and encountered the worst of the July wildfire smoke, and we had to wear masks when outside. The highlight of our Chicago visit was taking the Metra commuter rail system to the Obama Presidential Center.

Environmental fun fact: The flow of the Chicago River was reversed in 1900 to carry Chicago’s sewage and meat-packing industry waste west toward St. Louis. Workers accomplished that by digging a canal deep enough to drain the river away from nearby Lake Michigan and toward the Mississippi. Missouri sued but lost in the Supreme Court. The river still flows west, but Chicago has cleaned up its waste.

The overnight, 20-hour Amtrak ride home was surprisingly pleasant. We slept well all night and arrived in New York City on time the following evening.

TRANSPORTATION CHAIR’S REPORT

Fast Chargers Populate NJ Toll Roads

By Bill Beren • Beren1@verizon.net



With almost all the service areas on New Jersey’s toll roads now under management of Applegreen, all but five of the 22 service areas on the NJ Turnpike, Garden State

Parkway, and Atlantic City Expressway now have Level 3 fast chargers for electric vehicle passenger vehicles. The exceptions are the Parkway stops Bruce Willis (mile 18), Frank Sinatra (mile 42), Celia Cruz (mile 76), Jon Bon Jovi (mile 124) and, on the Turnpike, Thomas Edison (mile 92, southbound).

The chargers on the Parkway and Turnpike are all Applegreen-branded fast chargers, which means drivers will have to download yet another app to power up, but at least fast chargers are available. The Frank Farley Service Area on the Atlantic City Expressway has 16 Level 3 fast chargers: eight EvGo and eight Tesla-branded chargers.

Applegreen expects that chargers will be installed at Frank Sinatra, Celia Cruz, Jon Bon Jovi, and Thomas Edison by the end of the year. Since Applegreen does not have the franchise for the Bruce Willis service area, they have no plans for installation of fast chargers there.

NJ Transit Less Reliable

Riders continue to give NJ Transit poor marks, reflecting frequent service delays and cancellations on both rail and bus routes.

A clue as to why riders view NJ Transit so poorly is found within the monthly reports given to the NJ Transit Board of Directors’ Operations and Customer Service Committee.

The standard metric used by transportation agencies is called “mean distance between failure,” or MDBF. Expressed in miles travelled, it states, as the name implies, how many miles a bus or rail car travels on average before it is taken out of service for repairs. Clearly, the higher the MDBF, the more

reliable the bus or train service will be.

Unfortunately, the BDBF numbers for New Jersey are very low. From a pre-Covid peak of 85,000 miles in 2017, the rail system MDBF average fell to slightly above 45,000 miles as of the end of May 2026, the most recent month for which data were published, as of this writing.

Not surprisingly, of the 231 train trips cancelled in May, 51% were caused by mechanical breakdown, another 5% were the result of rail cars and locomotives not being available, and an additional 8% were due to crew absenteeism.

In contrast, in 2024, Metro-North Railroad, which serves New York, Connecticut, and a small part of New Jersey, reported an MDBF of 336,000 miles, and LIRR trains were reporting an MDBF of 193,000 miles.

Reliability of bus service is also affected by poor maintenance of NJ Transit’s bus fleet. According to data from NJ Transit, bus MDBF hovered around 15,000 in 2017, but because of increased equipment failures the MBDF dipped to a low of 4,600 in August 2025 before improving somewhat to 7,000 this past May. Although it would be important to know, NJ Transit does not report on the number of bus trips cancelled. This means the full impact of poor vehicle maintenance on service levels cannot be determined.

During these declines, New Jersey Transit has not announced any program to halt the degradation of vehicle reliability. Their answer when the question is raised at public meetings is that the fleet is old and parts for the vehicles are hard to purchase. Reliability will improve, they say, once new rail cars and buses are placed in service.

NJ Transit owns slightly over 3,000 buses. The agency was funded to buy 286 new buses in 2025 and 750 new buses in 2023. In addition, they began rebuilding 200 buses in 2022. As for the remaining 1,750, or so, it’s unclear what condition they are in.

NJ Transit has ordered 374 new rail

cars over the past five years, but that represents just 33% of the fleet. The condition of the remainder is unclear.

NJ Transit riders will continue to see poor service as long as the agency continues to rely on obsolete and poorly maintained rail cars and buses.

In a telling article in the Bergen Record, transportation reporter Colleen Wilson wrote that in order to prevent disruptions of NJ Transit services during the World Cup, the agency “budgeted more than \$12.7 million to [purchase in advance](#) the train parts that break down frequently, such as air conditioning units.”

Why isn’t this done for regular commuter service, and why haven’t they instituted a more robust preventive maintenance program? It doesn’t bode well for maintaining all the new equipment they are purchasing.

In Memorium: Greg Tufaro

I was deeply saddened to learn of the untimely passing of Greg Tufaro

at the age of 59 on Aug 10 of unreported causes. Greg was Sen. P. Diegnan’s (D-LD 18) chief of staff. He and I worked closely together as we drafted the bill that authorized the NJ Electric School Bus Program, which set aside \$45 million to fund electric school bus grants across the state. Greg worked tirelessly to make sure that whatever we felt was important was included in the final legislation. His support was crucial to the bill’s final passage in June of 2022.

I last spoke with Greg in the middle of July, when we discussed the need to draft new legislation to continue funding the grant program beyond this year, an effort we will continue to pursue with Sen. Diegnan and his staff.

Prior to serving as chief of staff to Sen. Diegnan, Greg was an award-winning reporter for the Home News Tribune, covering high school and college sports in Central Jersey. His front-page obituary appeared in the August 13 edition of the Star-Ledger.



Hunterdon Warren Group members Jonathan Wall and John Kashwick joined activists from the Sierra Club and other national environmental organizations in Washington, DC, to lobby senators and representatives to protect the Endangered Species Act—landmark legislation that has helped prevent the extinction of countless species and preserve critical wildlife habitat across the country. While activists were still in Washington, congressional leadership tabled the proposed bill, but advocates remain vigilant as efforts to weaken the act could return in the future. Credit: Jonathan Wall.

Data Centers Threaten Our Environment

By Eric Hausker • Conservation Chair, Loantaka Group



We have seen technical innovations arise, develop, and transform our society before. The discovery and mass generation of electricity, the invention of internal combustion engines, and the deployment of atomic energy—all of these have been double-edged swords which have benefitted and “wrecked” our global society. Electrification and fossil fuel-driven forms of transportation and industry have led to unstoppable climate change and sea level rise; nuclear plants can help but bring their own set of harsh difficulties.

Now, artificial intelligence (AI) looms as the next big transformer of our lives. Technical innovations that promise faster and faster access to and exchange of information are impossible to resist because of the powerful sectors of the economy that demand them. The data centers required by AI will be as hard to manage and control as fracking was. They present a nightmarish problem to our Chapter’s Environmental Committee.

The New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club has properly determined that data centers are a threat to the health of our environment because of what they do to the communities where they are being sited:

- Data centers accelerate the already increasing demand for electricity. They compete for energy with existing industrial, transportation, and residential users and make the transition from fossil fuel to clean renewable energy more difficult. Currently, data centers consume 12% of the US electricity supply.

- Data center energy demand raises prices for other users of electricity. One data center can use as much wattage as it takes to power 100,000 homes.
- When water is used to reduce the heat generated in the interior of a data center, such warmed water causes thermal pollution when discharged into lakes and rivers. Just one medium-sized data center can use more than 300,000 gallons daily.
- The rows and rows of diesel generators, used when data centers cannot get enough energy from the grid, create air pollution in the form of fine particulate matter (just like diesel trucks), nitrous oxide, and CO₂.
- Perhaps most unpleasant for homeowners near them, data centers produce background noise that may exceed 85 decibels. This humming penetrates the inside of homes and spoils the fun of being outdoors. Property values will inevitably suffer.

In New Jersey, over 100 data centers are either currently in operation or planned. These data warehouses in Essex, Hudson, and Union counties raise the issue of environmental justice, as they burden neighborhoods already suffering from more than their fair share of air pollution and noise.

There is hope, however. The worst aspects of the explosion of data centers (3,900 so far in the US) are provoking grassroots outrage. Fifty percent of Americans are in favor of bans on data centers. In New Jersey, pre-emptive bans on their construction are rapidly being enacted. To date, over 25 municipalities have done so. This resistance is bi-partisan—in Warren County, solid

GOP territory, 11 towns have prohibited data centers from being built. New Providence and Berkeley Heights have recently joined the list.

Loantaka Group Chair Rich Isaacs joined me in mid-summer to lend Sierra Club support to a Kenilworth group called Union County Residents Alliance Coalition. We met Renee Spaziani, the grassroots leader, and 100 of us stood along Kenilworth Boulevard to protest against the data center already under construction there (approved last year) and the proposed addition of two more next to it, on the old property of Merck near Parkway Exit 138.

I learned from one participant that people who are looking to buy houses in the area around the data center are already asking about the noise level caused by the servers, the constant vehicle traffic, the backup generators, and the cooling equipment.

An anecdote I found online came from a neighboring state: Residents complaining about the noise from a new data center were told by the sneaky plant manager that the diesel generators had been turned on “just for testing”—and of course were never turned off.

When local town councils are persuaded to approve a data center, the sneakiness continues: The companies urge the councils to sign non-disclosure agreements so that information about actual power and water usage are not made public.

Despite the encouraging fact that \$64 billion worth of planned installations and projects were cancelled between May 2024 and March 2025, AI companies and their high-powered lawyers



will often get their way. In such cases, measures to limit the damage they cause can be taken.

The amusing acronym “BYONCE” (bring your own new clean energy) refers to stipulations that data centers generate their own power using solar and wind. Towns may also require the use of “closed loop water cooling systems” to prevent heated water from being discharged into the environment. The water will be cooled then re-used, all within the confines of the plant. As for the external noise, some kind of sound barrier like those lining highways may need to be considered.

Gov. Mikie Sherrill is trying to forestall the coming intense competition for electric power by giving a green light to nuclear plants. And on May 27, she issued a set of guidelines for data centers that in this author’s view don’t go far enough. Sherrill’s “Fair Share Rules” include the following:

- Data centers must use clean, renewable energy and contribute to infrastructure investment.
- Data center operators must be transparent and honest about projected energy and water usage.
- Operation standards will be set to enable local governments to seek redress regarding pollution and noise.
- During construction, local labor must be paid competitive wages.

We certainly have our work cut out for us.

New Jersey Can Plug Into Clean Energy

By Greg Gorman • Chair of the Conservation Committee



In a recent interview on *Morning Joe*, Arnold Schwarzenegger—the opening speaker for the 10th Austrian World Summit—made the point that fossil fuel [air pollution](#) kills more people per year than climate change. Statistics support his claim. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimates that approximately [7 million](#) people die each year from air pollution. Climate change is currently causing 315,000 deaths each year through hunger, sickness, and weather disasters, plus an estimated 400,000 deaths due to hunger and diseases related to climate change—[total 715,000](#).

Regarding energy price increases, there were 18 states that saw year-over-year percentage increases in the double digits. New Jersey was in second place with an [18.2% rise](#). The sharp rate hikes here are the result of PJM Interconnection’s capacity auction system, supply shortages, renewable project delays, and booming data center construction, all compounded by global energy cost pressures. Without faster grid upgrades, more renewable interconnections, and better demand forecasting, prices are [likely to keep rising](#). Although expensive, upgrading the

electric grid is essential. The effort is needed to replace an aging infrastructure, meet growing demand, integrate clean energy, withstand climate impacts, and ensure reliable, affordable, and secure power for the 21st century. The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) oversees utility plans for grid modernization, including deployment of advanced sensors, monitoring systems, and [advanced metering infrastructure](#) to improve outage detection, customer service, and real-time energy management.

One bill we are following in the Legislature is NJ S657/A6153, which would require electric public utilities to develop and implement grid modernization plans and appropriate \$300 million in grants to electric public utilities for the purpose of providing financial relief to ratepayers for rate increases caused by the implementation of a grid modernization plan.

We need more renewable interconnections to reduce electricity costs. Once solar panels are installed, generating additional electricity is nearly free. The same can be said for offshore wind. Renewable energy deployment in Europe has reduced wholesale electricity prices and mitigated price volatility, while providing [substantial consumer savings](#). Fortunately, Gov. Mikie Sherrill’s Executive Order No. 2 directs the BPU to accelerate the development of

“distributed,” utility-scale solar electricity generation. Distributed solar includes residential, school, and corporate solar arrays. If allowed to proliferate, these individual solar generators could add up to utility scale energy production.

According to the state [Department of Environmental Protection](#), “New Jersey has one of the most ambitious renewable portfolio standards in the country by requiring [that] 35% of the energy sold in the state come from qualifying energy sources by 2025 and 50% by 2030. New Jersey has also enacted aggressive offshore wind targets, calling for 11,000 MW by 2040, and new solar targets,” although the future of offshore wind energy in New Jersey is in limbo because of federal obstruction.

There are alternative strategies that can be utilized to defer or avoid expensive grid upgrades:

No-wire solutions: These include asking consumers to use [less electricity](#) during periods of peak demand, battery energy storage, micro-grid development, finding ways of using excess heat created during energy creation, and conservation and energy efficiency measures. These approaches are already employed by NJ grid operators to manage supply resources.

–[Grid enhancing technologies](#) are tools that help the existing electric grid carry more power more efficiently

ly and reliably. These include software, monitoring systems, and devices that improve the flow of electricity. Another option is upgrading existing power lines with advanced conductors that can carry more electricity without building new transmission infrastructure. Gov. Sherrill recently signed the Advanced Grid Technologies Act ([S4411/A5188](#)), which requires state oversight of supplemental transmission projects and expedites review processes for projects that utilize advanced transmission or distribution technologies.

Despite the impediments imposed by presidential policy, New Jersey has taken action to increase clean energy and to lower our electric bills. You can do your part. First, stop burning oil, natural gas, and coal, or at least reduce your consumption of fossil fuel. Electrification (i.e., electric stoves rather than gas) of your home and transportation is cost effective and technically feasible. If you can, install solar panels or [enroll in a community solar project](#). Second, ask your legislators to support Gov. Sherrill’s initiatives both in Trenton and Washington.

Resources

Community solar: <https://shorturl.at/VMzjC>

Virtual power plants: <https://shorturl.at/DmCBX>

HAMILTON REPORTS

Balcony Solar Can Offset Home Power Needs

New Jersey lawmakers passed landmark legislation in July to allow “plug-in solar” systems for homeowners and renters. Plug-in solar systems are generally one or two-panel solar systems that can be affixed to home balconies or exteriors very simply. The electricity generated is fed into the home’s electrical system and helps to offset energy drawn from the grid.

Balcony solar can provide for only a fraction of a home’s electricity needs, but even that, over time, can add up to savings. It has been estimated that a plug-in solar system can pay for itself in as little as three years.

Plug-in solar systems, in the aggregate, can generate large volumes of clean energy, across a footprint of many homes, and this is partly the appeal for state officials and clean energy advocates. These solar systems can be so numerous as to represent utility scale power production. They have been successfully implemented in Europe, where they are highly popular.

The plug-in solar bill had not been signed into law by Gov. Mikie Sherrill as of this writing. An [April EDU poll](#) found nearly 80% of New Jerseyans support plug-in solar.

“New Jersey must ensure that our energy policies are able to lower costs for our residents, and this law is a direct step toward that goal,” said Sen. John McKeon. “Plug-in solar puts clean, affordable energy within reach of every household in the state.”

“Passage of The Garden State Plug-In Solar Act is a great step forward toward expanding access to clean, affordable energy in New Jersey,” said Sierra Club NJ Chapter Director Anjuli Ramos-Busot.

Sierra Club Urges Government Leaders to Protect Keyport

The former Aeromarine landfill is a smoking gun in a suspected cancer cluster developing in Keyport, NJ.

At a community action meeting with hundreds of people in Keyport, the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club called on local, state, and federal officials to find sustainable solutions for the borough that protect the residents of Keyport and surrounding communities from this threat.

Sierra Club demanded effective cleanup, smart, long-term solutions for the site, and robust legislative action to address decades of hazardous leakage.

Currently, the community is awaiting environmental test results from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the New Jersey Department of Health, and Excel, an independent environmental testing firm hired by Keyport. Town leaders must proactively prepare sustainable, safe alternatives if the final data proves that a redevelopment proposal for the site is too dangerous.

“The Sierra Club New Jersey Chapter strongly opposes corporate-driven redevelopment shortcuts at the Keyport Aeromarine landfill. With over 400 local families reporting cancer cases, we insist that no redevelopment permits should even be considered until the state completes a rigorous exposure pathway analysis,” said Taylor McFarland, a resident of Keyport and the conservation program manager for the Sierra Club NJ Chapter.

“This contamination has been going on for decades. That is long enough for our government representatives to find solutions,” she said.

Green Acres Bill Would Prohibit Artificial Turf

The Senate Environment Committee unanimously released [S3254](#) (Mukherji/Greenstein), which would prohibit the use of Green Acres funds for the purchase, use, installation, or replacement of artificial turf fields.

In recent years, the Green Acres program has spent millions in public funding on artificial fields, including \$10 million in 2023 and another \$4 million in 2025. This legislation is essential for ensuring that Green Acres funds are strictly dedicated to conservation and safe recreation, as well as for protecting our environment and public health.

The current use of state tax dollars for artificial turf not only undermines conservation efforts but also raises significant environmental concerns. One artificial turf field contains approximately 40,000 pounds of plastic, equivalent to 2.4 million plastic water bottles. Alarmingly, up to 8% of the field’s plastic grass blades may break off each year, entering our local ecosystems.

Public health hazards, waste, extreme heat effects, and costs are other reasons why artificial turf fields are a bad deal for New Jersey. On summer days, for example, artificial surfaces can reach temperatures up to 70 degrees hotter than natural grass, and for a standard artificial turf field, towns and schools may face a replacement cost of about \$2.7 million every 10 years, compared with just \$430,000 in maintenance costs for natural grass.

“The Green Acres program was created to protect New Jersey’s natural environment, not to pave it over with plastic,” said Taylor McFarland, conservation program manager for the NJ Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Governor Signs Key Bills on Data Centers, Energy

This summer, Gov. Mikie Sherrill signed several landmark energy affordability bills, among them the Data Center Tariff Bill ([S731](#), Burzichelli); [A796](#), Bailey), which is critical to ensuring big tech pays its fair share of energy infrastructure and generation costs.

This bill will require electric utilities to develop and apply special tariffs for large-load data centers to protect ratepayers from these costs.

Sherrill also signed the RTO Adder Bill ([S1673](#), Zwicker; [A2757](#), Katz), which ends the superfluous payment of taxpayer dollars to NJ electric utilities simply for being a part of the PJM Interconnection grid. These payments no longer serve any viable purpose as an incentive.

Additionally, the Advanced Grid Technologies Bill ([S4411](#), Zwicker; [A5188](#), Miller), was signed. This requires utilities to get state approval before building certain transmission projects. It also speeds up regulatory review of projects that use technologies that can increase the capacity of existing power lines.

NJ Leaders Demand a Grid That Answers to Ratepayers

In July, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) convened a daylong technical conference in Washington to examine how PJM Interconnection governs itself and who gets a real say in its decisions. PJM is the regional grid operator for all of New Jersey, 12 other states, and the District of Columbia.

“We’ll be watching closely for FERC to move from listening to acting,” said New Jersey Sierra Club Director Anjuli Ramos-Busot.

The conference comes after a period of record-shattering electricity cost increases. Those costs began flowing into bills in June 2025, when some New Jersey households saw increases of up to 20%.

“In Jersey, people are having to choose between groceries or their energy bill—this is what happens when monopolies at the top put profits over people without any effective oversight,” said Sen. Andy Kim. “We need transparency, accountability, and real solutions from PJM about how they plan to bring costs down for millions of people and stop price gouging those who simply should not have to live like this.”

Sen. Andrew Zwicker said PJM has failed to manage surging electricity demand from data centers and allowed more cost-effective clean energy projects to languish in a years-long interconnection queue.

NJ Delays Vital Climate Rules and Legislation

Over the Fourth of July weekend, New Jersey was hit by a days-long, [record-breaking](#) heatwave, with many towns experiencing temperatures as high as 105 degrees, and yet amid this latest evidence of rapid climate change, New Jersey put the brakes on resilience measures that could save lives and property.

The NJ PACT REAL rules, a package of protections, would ensure new buildings are constructed above FEMA flood levels. The rules were officially adopted in [January of this year](#) and were set to be implemented in late July. However, the state Department of Environmental Protection [announced](#) in June that the rules would be delayed one year to ensure a “balanced framework and achieved permitting efficiency.”

NJ.com has estimated that [29 New Jerseyans](#) have lost their lives due to the extreme temperatures over the Fourth weekend, and at least one person died in the New Jersey flash flooding.

The intense weather also resulted in countless NJ Transit [delays](#).

“The Fourth of July in New Jersey usually marks the kickoff of summer celebrations across the state. Instead, what we saw was climate chaos—dangerous heat, public transit delays, intense thunderstorms, and life-threatening flash flooding, said Sierra Club NJ Chapter Director Anjuli Ramos-Busot.

“We need urgent action now to protect residents from not only the very real, physical danger of climate events, but also the financial and emotional burden left after storms,” she said.

This past summer, the NJ Legislature failed to post and vote on the Make Polluters Pay for an Affordable NJ Act, ([A3735](#) (Collazos-Gill) / [S2338](#) (McKeon)), a critical piece of legislation that would not only hold polluters accountable but also generate funding for climate change adaptation and resiliency projects, like flood protection, stormwater protection, and transportation infrastructure.

The summer’s devastating extreme heat and flash flooding have been a warning that climate change is no longer a distant threat.

Sierra Club urges the Legislature, the Sherrill administration, and the state Department of Environmental Protection to work together to enact and move forward these lifesaving accountability and resilience measures.

Be sure to vote in November’s General Election and return your ballot for NJ Chapter leadership positions!

OUTINGS *continued from page 6*

RSVP (in red background), then fill it out. Directions for the meeting place will be sent via email to members who register. Leaders: Jimi Oleksiak, The_Hikist@mac.com and Jerry Ruocco (SS)

Oct. 11 (Sun): Fall Migration Birding Walk at Colonial Lake Park, Lawrenceville (Mercer Co.) 9 a.m., about 2 miles. Colonial Lake Park is set around a man-made lake along Shabakunk Creek. This is our first Sierra Club birding walk at the park and we will be guided by experienced birder and NJ Sierra Club member, Susan Matson. A 25-acre lake serves as the focal point of this park. It is spacious, has sun and shady areas, lots of benches, and a nice long paved walkway around the whole lake. Fall migration will be in full swing with warblers, thrushes, and flycatchers moving through the trees ringing the lake path. Increasing numbers of resident and transient waterfowl utilize the open water of the lake. Meet in the parking lot at 100 Bridge Dr, Lawrence Township. There are no facilities. Bring water and snacks. No dogs, please. Rain cancels. Leaders: Leona and George F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar (C)

Oct. 12 (Mon): Indigenous People's Day Hike at Davidson's Mill Pond Park (Middlesex Co.) 10 a.m., 3 miles, easy pace. The Yellow Trail is a grassy/rocky section through the woods that includes narrow boardwalks. A small pond on the White Trail has beaver lodges and new picnic benches for our snack break. Option: the forested Blue Trail has elevations, exposed roots to step over, and large stones for steps in some sections. Good footwear recommended and hiking poles (if you use them). Bring water, snacks, and lunch. Dogs on leash are welcome. Portable toilet at parking lot. The meeting location will be sent to those who register. Rain cancels. Co-leaders: S.P., spjersey@gmail.com and Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Registration is required: <http://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/raritan-valley> (RV)

Oct. 16 (Fri): National Trails Day: Our Seventeenth Annual Guided Walk at Double Trouble State Park/Village (Ocean Co.) 10 a.m., 2-3 miles, easy pace. Once home to both a lumber industry and cranberry farm, this former company town is a window into past and current industries in the Pinelands. Andrew Anderson, historic resource interpretive specialist, will be our guide. Meet at Double Trouble State Park parking lot, Pinewald-Keswick and Double Trouble Rds. There are indoor restrooms. Leashed dogs are welcome. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. Rain cancels. Co-leaders: Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com and Margaret Mary Piccolo, gogreenp1@yahoo.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/ocean-county (O)

Oct 17 (Sat): Shoreline Cleanup at Lincoln Park West in Jersey City (Hudson Co.) 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Join the Hudson County Sierra Club, Jersey City Birds and Hackensack Riverkeeper at this annual event. Dress in clothes you don't mind getting dirty. Gloves and tools will be supplied. Bring water and snacks. Location: Lincoln Park West Wetlands and Nature Trail, Jersey City (parking lot near Joseph J. Jaroschak Field). There are facilities. Leader: Steve Krinsky. For more information, email HUDSONSIERRACLUB@gmail.com Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/hudson-county (HC)

Oct. 17 (Sat): Ramapo Valley County Reservation Hike (Bergen Co.) 8 a.m., 4-5 miles, moderate pace. The Ramapo Valley County Reserve offers over 4,000 acres of diverse terrain, featuring waterfalls, scenic vistas, and the serene MacMillan Reservoir. The trails wind through lush forests and offer panoramic views of the surrounding highlands. Meet at the main parking area, 610 Ramapo Valley Rd, Mahwah. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. Sturdy hiking shoes and poles recommended. Rain cancels. Facilities are available near the parking lot. No dogs, please. Leaders: Rebecca, rebeccalwilkin@gmail.com, and Kathy. Register at www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar (N)

Oct 25 (Sun): Nature Walk on the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway (Hudson Co.) 10 a.m. Join the Hudson County Sierra Club and the Hudson River Waterfront Conservancy for an easy 3-mile round-trip nature walk with views of Bayonne Inlet on the Hudson River where migrating ducks and geese are arriving this autumn. Bring water and snacks. Steady rain cancels. Meet in the parking lot of South Cove Commons Mall near Otaiko Restaurant. Bayonne, NJ. Leader: Pat Hilliard. For more information, email HUDSONSIERRACLUB@gmail.com Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/hudson-county (HC)

Oct. 25 (Sun): Hike the Franklin Parker Preserve Yellow Trail (Burlington Co.) 10 a.m. Two options: 5 miles, moderate pace on sandy trails and woods trails. An option now available when you arrive at the meeting place is an easy-paced hike, this one an out-and-back of about 2 miles (total), the pace of this hike a little slower than the other hike. The hike will be along reclaimed cranberry bogs and through pitch pine forest on packed dirt trails and roads. With any luck, our two groups will meet at the lunch spot, a pavilion overlooking a large pond. And there may be a surprise or two along the way! Pine Barrens gentians are a New Jersey native wildflower, unusual because they bloom from September through early November. We are meeting at the Speedwell entrance off Rt. 563, Woodland Township. There is a portable toilet. Leashed dogs are welcome. Bring water, snacks, and lunch on the hike. Good footwear recommended and hiking poles (if you use them). Rain cancels. Co-leaders: Tom Boghosian, tfboghosian44@gmail.com and Ysan Reischke, reischky@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/south-jersey (SJ)

Oct. 30 (Fri): No Mischief Hike with Your Dog at Perrineville Lake Park (Monmouth Co.) 10 a.m., 3 miles, easy pace. A popular park to walk your dog! Let's enjoy the foliage in beautiful woodlands. There are some ups and downs on forest trails. Hiking boots are recommended and hiking poles (if you use them). Meet at 23 Agress Rd, Millstone. There is a portable toilet available in the parking lot. Rain cancels. Option: late lunch at Albivi Brick Oven restaurant. Co-leaders: Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com and Sandra, Gohikenow@icloud.com. Registration is required at www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/jersey-shore (JS)

NOVEMBER

Nov. 1 (Sun): "Fall Back" Hike at Estell Manor Park (Atlantic Co.) 10 a.m., easy pace, about 2 miles out and back on the Purple Heart Trail to the remnants of the Estellville Glassworks with a break at the scenic Stephens Creek Overlook. Option for further exploration after lunch, possibly the first few stops of this historical trail. In 1918, the United States government selected part of the site for the Bethlehem Loading Company, a munitions plant built during World War I. In a matter of months, the pine forest transformed into a sprawling industrial complex with factories, rail lines, and housing for workers. History link: shorelocalnews.com/exploring-the-history-of-estell-manor-park/. Meet at the Warren E. Fox Nature Center at 109 Boulevard Rt. 50, Mays Landing. Facilities are available. Bring water, snacks, and lunch on the hike. Leashed dogs are welcome. Good footwear recommended and hiking poles (if you use them). Rain cancels. Co-leaders: Tom Boghosian, tfboghosian44@gmail.com and Ysan Reischke, reischky@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/south-jersey (SJ)

Nov. 4 (Wed): Preservation Celebration Hike at Monmouth Battlefield State Park (Monmouth Co.) 10 a.m., 3 miles, easy pace on the Green and Red Trails. There are narrow woods trails with elevations. Appropriate footwear and hiking poles are recommended (if you use them). Monmouth Battlefield State Park is the site of one of the longest Revolutionary War battles (June 28, 1778). The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) has acquired and preserved a 22-acre property as an addition to Monmouth Battlefield State Park. Congratulations and massive kudos to our NJ Sierra Club volunteers Stan Greberis, Gary Frederick, and Kip Cherry, who have worked for two years collectively with the public, Monmouth Conservation Foundation, and Green Acres to prevent the construction of a flex warehouse opposite the entrance to Monmouth Battlefield State Park by enabling the State to buy the property! Meet at the Visitors Center, 16 Business Rt. 33, Manalapan. There are facilities. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. Leashed dogs are

welcome! Rain cancels. Co-leaders: Sandra, Gohikenow@icloud.com and Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/jersey-shore (JS)

Nov. 7 (Sat): Mills Reservation Hike, Upper Montclair (Essex Co.) Meet before 10 a.m. We will hike 4-5 miles in the Mills Reservation starting in Mountainside Park. Enjoy stunning views of Manhattan, the Audubon Society, Hawkwatch, and the old Quarry. Bring water and a snack. Bring hiking poles and wear hiking boots. No dogs, please. Rain cancels. We will meet at 424 Highland Ave. in Upper Montclair. Leader: Ron Pate, Ronpate31@verizon.net or 973-965-7578. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/sierra-singles (SS)

Nov. 8 (Sun): Celebrate Diwali, the Indian Festival of Lights with a Fall Walk at Colonial Park Gardens (Somerset Co.) 10 a.m., 2-3 miles, easy pace. A walk to see the last of changing colors, with exposed branches and evergreens. Colonial Park Gardens is one of the treasures in Somerset County. It features an accredited arboretum and shrub collection—and much more. After walking the grounds, we'll cross the canal bridge to the Delaware and Raritan Canal Towpath (surface is sand and crushed stone). Meet at Colonial Park Gardens' parking Lot F. There are facilities. Bring water and snacks. Rain cancels. Leashed dogs are welcome. Option: late lunch at a local restaurant. Co-leaders: Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com and S.P., spjersey@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/raritan-valley (RV)

Nov. 11 (Wed): Veterans Day Birding Walk at Veterans Park (Mercer Co.) 10 a.m., 3 miles, easy pace. Veterans Park is a 350-acre park known for its recreation and wildlife. Located near Martin's Lake and Pond Run stream, the park attracts various bird species, including bald eagles. There are woods, boardwalks, and paved trails, with some elevations. The NJTA and D&R Greenway website notes that the paved trails are accessible by wheelchair and baby stroller. Wear appropriate footwear and bring hiking poles (if you use them). Meet at the Tennis Court parking lot, 2264 Kuser Rd, Hamilton Township. There are facilities. Bring water and snacks. Option: late lunch at Golden Dawn Diner nearby. Rain cancels. Leaders: Leona and George F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar (C)

Nov. 14 (Sat): Hike at Shark River Park (Monmouth Co.) 10 a.m., 3 miles, moderate pace. Shark River Park is the first park in Monmouth County for recreation and nature appreciation. Walk on mostly flat trails with some slopes, cross over the Shark River, and through the center of the park. There are facilities. No charge for the hike. Leader will provide meeting location and directions after participants register. Leader: Sandra, gohikenow@icloud.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/jersey-shore (JS)

Nov. 14 (Sat): South Mountain Reservation Hike, West Orange (Essex Co.) Time: Arrive by 9:40 a.m., Hike starts at 10 a.m. Estimated: The hike will cover 6 miles in 3-4 hours, in moderately hilly terrain. Features: Hemlock Falls, Washington Rock and Quarry Lookouts, Rahway River, Tulip Springs. Facilities: New, futuristic self-cleaning restroom building. Requirements: No pets. Hiking boots and non-cotton hiking socks. Bring a day-pack with water and lunch. RSVP required via Web: at www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar. Scroll down to "South Mountain Reservation Hike" and click on it. Click on the RSVP (in red background), then fill it out. Directions will be sent via email to those who RSVP. Leaders: Jimi Oleksiak, The_Hikist@mac.com and Jerry Ruocco (SS)

Nov. 15 (Sun): Visit Edelman Fossil Park and Museum of Rowan University (Gloucester Co.) 10 a.m. The Edelman Fossil Park & Museum features a 66-million-year-old 6-inch-deep "fossil bone bed" set into a 65-acre former marl quarry. The bedrock of Gloucester County, where Edelman Fossil Park is located, is composed of alternating layers of sand, silt, and clay due to fluctuating sea levels since the Cretaceous. We'll walk through the Cretaceous World Galleries and experience full-scale reconstructions of dinosaurs, reptiles, and sea creatures that roamed the earth in this region. And we'll meet Hadrosaurus "Haddy", New Jersey's hometown dinosaur discovered in Haddonfield and now featured in the Dinosaur Coast Gallery. General Museum Admission: (Adult - \$29; Child 3-12 - \$24). The new Quarry Grounds Cafe is open every day. The Veranda overlooks the fossil quarry. Option to meet us at 9:30 a.m. in the cafe. www.efm.org/quarrygrounds. Museum Address: 66 Million Mosasaur Way, Mantua. Co-leaders: Gina Carola, ginaceee@verizon.net and Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Please register at www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/west-jersey (W)

Nov. 29 (Sun): Slow "Turkey Trot" Hike at Duke Island Park (Somerset Co.) 10 a.m., about 3 miles, easy pace. Let's burn some of those Thanksgiving calories! Duke Island Park includes trails that are part of the Raritan River Greenway. The park website describes flat, paved, and wheelchair-accessible paths along the scenic Raritan River. We'll meet at the Visitors Center main parking area Lot F, 191 Old York Rd, Bridgewater Township. There are facilities. Look for the Sierra Club banner on a blue Forester. Inclement weather cancels. Bring snacks, water, and lunch. Leashed dogs are welcome. Co-leaders: Leona and George F. at pineypaddlers@gmail.com and S.P., spjersey@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/raritan-valley (RV)

DECEMBER

Dec. 5 (Sat): Eagle Rock Reservation Hike (Essex Co.) Meet before 10 a.m. We will hike 4-5 miles at a moderate pace. Wear hiking boots. Bring water and a snack. No dogs, please. Rain cancels. Meet at the 9/11 Memorial in Eagle Rock Reservation, 1 Crest Dr, West Orange. Leader: Ron Pate, Ronpate31@verizon.net or 973-965-7578. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/sierra-singles (SS)

Dec. 6 (Sun): Hike at Batsto Village Wharton State Forest (Atlantic Co.) 10:00 a.m. The pre-lunch hike is an easy-paced (less than 2.5 mph), one-mile walk that is still in the planning stages, taking us either through Batsto Village for a visit to the Nature Center (winter hours not yet set) on Batsto Lake or over the Sand and Water Trail to view groves of Atlantic white cedar and features of the Mordecai Swamp. Lunch will be at picnic tables back at the trailhead. Those interested in a post-lunch hike can join us on a faster, moderately paced (2.5 to 3.0 mph) 4-mile loop hike through oak and pine forest and along Batsto Lake with one early out opportunity. Leashed dogs are welcome. Bring water, snacks, and lunch. Rain cancels. Meet at the Batsto Village Visitors Center parking lot, 31 Batsto Rd, Hammonton. There are facilities. Co-leaders: Tom Boghosian, tfboghosian44@gmail.com and Ysan Reischke, reischky@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar (SJ)

Dec. 12 (Sat): Hike at Henry Hudson Trail (Monmouth Co.) 10 a.m., 3+ miles, moderate pace. The Henry Hudson Trail is a recreational trail for nature appreciation and environmental purpose. Walk on a flat gravel trail along Sandy Hook Bay. There are facilities. No charge for the hike. Leader will provide meeting location and directions after participants register. Leader: Sandra, gohikenow@icloud.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/jersey-shore (JS)

Dec. 12 (Sat): Lord Stirling Park, Basking Ridge (Somerset Co.) Time: Arrive by 9:40 a.m., Hike starts at 10 a.m. Estimated: 5 miles in 3 hours on flat terrain and boardwalks through wetlands of the Passaic River. Facilities: Indoor restrooms in the Environmental Education Center. Requirements: No pets. Hiking boots and non-cotton hiking socks, and a backpack with water and snack/lunch. RSVP required via Web: at www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar. Scroll down to "Lord Stirling Park Hike" and click on it. Click on the RSVP (in red background), then fill it out. Directions will be sent via email to those who RSVP. Leaders: Jimi Oleksiak, the_hikist@mac.com and Jerry Ruocco (SS)

Dec. 12 (Sat): Winter Holiday Traditions at Whitesbog Village—Candy Cane Trail Stroll (Burlington Co.) 10 a.m., about 3 miles, easy pace on sandy trails through the village, around the bogs, and in the woods. Join us for the Whitesbog celebration of the holidays: crafting, artists and vendors, wagon rides, pictures with Santa, live music, hot chocolate bar, museum tours, and more! Bring water, snacks, and lunch. The Tundra Swans migrate south from Alaska and Canada,

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OUTINGS *continued from page 7*

arriving at the flooded cranberry bogs by November or December. Wear appropriate footwear and bring hiking poles (if you use them). Leashed dogs are welcome. Meet at the parking lot, 120 Whites Bog Rd, Browns Mills. Look for the Sierra Club banner on a blue Forester. There are facilities. Leaders: George & Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Registration required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/west-jersey (W)

Dec. 18 (Fri): Hike at Smith’s Woods and Holiday Tour of Smithville Mansion (Burlington Co.) 10 a.m., about 3 miles, easy pace. After the hike, we’ll enjoy a guided tour of the Mansion decorated for a Victorian Holiday by local garden clubs (\$10 adults, \$8 seniors/students). Meet at Smith’s Woods Parking Lot, 39 East Railroad Ave, Eastampton. There are facilities. Wear appropriate footwear and bring hiking poles (if you use them). Leashed dogs are welcome. Inclement weather only cancels the hike. Bring water and snacks. Option for late lunch at Vincentown Diner. Leaders: George & Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Registration is required: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/west-jersey (W)

Dec. 26 – Dec 31: Patriots Week in Trenton: History of the American Revolution in NJ (Mercer Co.) Learn about the American Revolution during Patriots Week. Every day of the week offers fun and history for the entire family. See the First and Second Battles of Trenton Reenactments and participate in Walking Tours of the Trenton Battlefields. Leaders: Leona and George F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com. Register if interested to meet for various events: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/calendar (C)

JANUARY

Jan. 1 (Fri): Monmouth Battlefield Park Guided Walking Tour of Perrine Hill (Monmouth Co.) The Friends of Monmouth Battlefield will participate in “America’s State Parks First Day Hikes” programs sponsored by the state’s Division of Parks and Forestry. Meet 11 a.m. at the Visitors Center. There are facilities. The group will drive in convoy to Perrine Hill on Rt. 522. At Perrine Hill, we’ll view the main American position and walk to sites associated with Molly Pitcher. Bring water and snacks. Good footwear recommended and hiking poles (if you use them). Please, no dogs. Co-leaders: Leona F., pineypaddlers@gmail.com and Sandra, gohikenow@icloud.com. Register (with a phone #) to receive information if cancelled last minute due to inclement weather, as decided by the park this past New Year’s Day morning. www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/jersey-shore (JS)

Jan. 9 (Sat): Hiking Turkey Swamp County Park (Monmouth Co.) 10 a.m., approx. 5–7 miles. Easy pace and easy/moderate terrain (flat, some roots, but longer distance). Turkey Swamp County Park is a hidden gem. Pass through areas of pitch pine and oak trees with soft sand and pine straw underfoot, with a view of the Manasquan River. Good footwear is needed for areas of the trails that may have exposed tree roots or some parts that can get boggy! Bring water and snacks for the hike and lunch afterwards. Any rain cancels. We’ll sit by the lakeside fireplace in the sheltered park office to warm up after our walk. Meet at 200 Georgia Rd., Freehold. From the park’s website: State Hwy. 9 to Rte. 524 west, follow 524 west to Georgia Rd., turn left and follow Georgia Rd. 1.7 miles to the main entrance. There are facilities at the park. Co-leaders: Caitlin and Candace D., sportycatsarehiking@duck.com. Registration is required at www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/lgbt (LGBTQ+)



There are 12 regional groups in the NJ Chapter of the Sierra Club. All groups have open officer positions for volunteers and welcome new members. Interested persons should reach out to the contacts listed below. Participation in the Sierra Club is a meaningful and rewarding way to give back to your community and help create a sustainable and healthier environment for all.

Groups are listed in rough geographical sequence: North to South

SKYLANDS GROUP

(Sussex and Northern Warren counties)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/skylands
Facebook: www.facebook.com/SkylandsNJSC
Email: chachabacon@yahoo.com; phone: 973-886-7950

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE and other OFFICERS (ExCom members are elected to serve 2-year terms; term-expiry date in parentheses)

Chair	Greg Gorman	chachabacon@yahoo.com
Vice Chair	Susan Williams	SkylandsGroup@gmail.com
Secretary	Norene Haberski	norenehaberski2@gmail.com
Treasurer	Norene Haberski	norenehaberski2@gmail.com
ExCom at Large	Dave Alcock	dwhoob@hotmail.com
	Allison Orsi	aeorsi@hotmail.com
	Jill Aquino	jda1timeforchange@gmail.com
	Chris Dunbar	chrisdunbar458@gmail.com
Conservation Chair	Greg Gorman	chachabacon@yahoo.com
Outings Chair	Dave Alcock	dwhoob@hotmail.com
Outreach Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>	
Environmental Justice	Susan Williams	SkylandsGroup@gmail.com
Political Co-Chair	Susan Williams	SkylandsGroup@gmail.com
Publicity Chair	Norene Haberski	norenehaberski2@gmail.com
Recycling/Zero Waste	Jill Aquino	jda1timeforchange@gmail.com
Chair Webmaster	Ron Goshal	

GENERAL MEETINGS (Conducted via Zoom)
The Skylands Group of the NJ Chapter of the Sierra Club serves Sussex and Northern Warren counties. We offer a variety of opportunities for the public to learn about and connect with the natural environment. We present informative films and speakers; exploration of the great outdoors on hikes, edible-plant tours, and picnics; public outreach via town tabling; and visits to schools. Our hope is to foster love and deep respect for our great outdoors.

The Skylands Group works with grassroots organizations to protect open spaces and water quality, promote clean energy, and oppose privatization of public trust resources.

CURRENT CAMPAIGNS: The Skylands Group advocates the protection and enjoyment of the wild environment and public parks.

The Skylands Group supports the Green New Deal, Sunrise Movement, and transition toward a clean energy economy, and the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Partnership.

HUNTERDON WARREN GROUP

(Hunterdon and Southern Warren counties)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/hunterdon-warren
Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/sierraclub.hunterdonwarren/
YouTube: www.youtube.com/@sierraclubhunterdonwarren9255/videos

OFFICERS		
Chair	Celeste Martin*	onecentral@mac.com
Vice Chair & Secretary	Karen Becker*	karbecker@gmail.com
Treasurer	John Kashwick*	jkashwick@gmail.com
Conservation Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>	
Outings	<i>Open Position!</i>	
Political Chair	Karen Becker*	karbecker@gmail.com
Warren County		
Warehouse Issues	Pat Banes	patrick_banes@comcast.net
Light Pollution and Dark Skies	Jonathan D. Wall*	docjdwall@gmail.com
	Arlene Tkatch*	abt22@gmail.com
	John Kashwick*	jkashwick@gmail.com
Webmaster/Listmaster	John Kashwick*	jkashwick@gmail.com
	Tom Schroth*	tfschroth@gmail.com
ExCom at Large	Jonathan D. Wall*	docjdwall@gmail.com
	Tom Schroth*	tfschroth@gmail.com
	Amelia Weeder	aweeder@comcast.net
	Arlene Tkatch*	abt22@gmail.com
	* Group Executive Committee Member (EXCOM)	

GENERAL MEETINGS: Meetings are virtual or in-person at 7–9 p.m. In person meetings are at Hunterdon North County Library, 65 Halstead St, Clinton, NJ 08809.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS:
Beyond Plastics Film Screening & Discussion
October: Date, Time, and Location: TBD (In Person)

Join **Lois Kraus**, a volunteer leader with Beyond Plastics New Jersey, for a screening of a thought-provoking documentary followed by a discussion on the growing impacts of plastic pollution on our environment and human health. The program will explore the science behind microplastics, the health risks associated with plastic exposure, and practical steps individuals and communities can take to reduce plastic pollution and advocate for meaningful policy change. This event will be co-hosted by the Town of Clinton Green Team. Check back soon for date/time on our Facebook page.

NOVEMBER
Free-Flowing Rivers: How Dam Removal Restores Healthy Watersheds
In Person Nov 4 at 7 PM in the Hunterdon North Branch County Library
Join **Robert Lucas**, Restoration Coordinator for Raritan Headwaters, for an engaging presentation on how removing obsolete dams is helping restore the health of New Jersey’s rivers. Learn how dam removal improves water quality, reconnects fish and wildlife habitat, reduces flooding risks, and restores natural river systems. Robert will highlight current restoration projects in the Raritan watershed, discuss the science behind stream restoration, and explain how these efforts benefit both people and wildlife. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion

CURRENT ISSUES
Glen Gardner Quarry: Help support Glen Gardner residents as they fight Vulcan Materials’ request for variance that would negatively impact the quality of life. Concerns include clean water, air quality, veteran’s PTSD and compromising building foundations due to quarry blasts. Planning board meetings are held at Spruce Run Memorial VFW Post 5119, 179 Main St, Glen Gardner. Contact Celeste at for upcoming meeting dates and times.

Warehouse Projects: There are several massive warehouse projects proposed for Hunterdon and Warren counties. Please consider representing our group at local, county and state meetings that may permit these projects. Contact: Patrick Banes at patrick_banes@comcast.net

Night Skies: The Hunterdon Warren Group and the Light Pollution and Dark Skies Committee (LPDSC) are encouraging municipalities to curb light pollution by adopting stricter ordinances to reduce excessive light pollution. Help us partner with environmental commissions and land use boards to encourage municipalities to enact energy and tax saving initiatives. Contact: Jonathan Wall at jonwall@jonwall.com

NORTH JERSEY GROUP

(Bergen and Passaic counties)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/north-jersey
Facebook: www.facebook.com/northjerseysierraclub
Twitter: [@sierraclub_nj](https://twitter.com/sierraclub_nj)
Instagram: [sierraclubnorth_nj](https://www.instagram.com/sierraclubnorth_nj)

OFFICERS		
Chair	Diane Scarangella	diascat@hotmail.com
Treasurer	Bob Weiss*	bobweiss1967@gmail.com
Secretary	Ron De Vos	rondevos58@outlook.com
Event Planning and Political Action Committee		
Chair	Ron De Vos	rondevos58@outlook.com
Outings Committee		
Chair	Rebecca Wilkin	rebeccawilkin@gmail.com
Youth Outreach Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>	
Conservation Committee		
Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>	

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GROUP NEWS continued from page 8

Climate Change Committee

Chair	Judy Green*	jugreen547@gmail.com
Co-Chair	Martine Jaffe	martinejaffe@yahoo.com

Diversity, Inclusion, Environmental Justice

Chair	Bushra Asfare*	bushra__c.e@hotmail.com
Consulting Engineer	Bushra Asfare	bushra__c.e@hotmail.com

Social Media/Website

Chair	Marie Mannino	mmannino@yahoo.com
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*Elected North Jersey Group Executive Committee Member.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Do you like meeting people and working with others to create educational events and develop new members and partners? If so, please join our leadership team as our new Membership and Special Events Coordinator. We need you! Contact Diane at diascat@hotmail.com if interested or if you have questions.

Are you interested in leading an all-inclusive and/or LGBTQIA+ hike? A nature walk, backpacking trip, or water event? If so, please let us know! We need you! Contact:

- Wanda Ashbrook: pridegrrlnj@aim.com
- Rebecca Wilkin: rebeccalwilkin@gmail.com

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

- Rail Safety Advocacy: Supporting legislation for improved rail safety. Contact Betsy Longendorfer (BetsyLong.env@gmail.com).
- Climate Superfund Act advocacy: Contact Diane at diascat@hotmail.com

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

- Composting & Sustainability Initiatives: Outreach to school districts and research on composting grant funding. Contact Rebecca Wilkin (rebeccalwilkin@gmail.com) to participate.
- Electrification Coaches Available: Free home electrification coaching through the NJ Electrification Coaches Network. Visit: njecn.substack.com.
- Protecting open space, parkland, wetlands and flood prone communities from development/overdevelopment: Contact Diane at diascat@hotmail.com.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Join Our Slack Group! Are you a high school or college student interested in environmental activism? Join our Youth Slack Group: bit.ly/3BHU8Uc or contact Rebecca Wilkin (rebeccalwilkin@gmail.com).

Stay engaged, volunteer, and take action with the North Jersey Sierra Club!

GATEWAY GROUP

(Hillside, Elizabeth, and Essex County, except for Livingston, Millburn, and Roseland)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/Gateway/ (Also accessible from the NJ Chapter webpage: sierraclub.org/new-jersey/gateway)
Members can join the Gateway Group on **Facebook** at www.facebook.com/pages/Gateway-Group-NJ-Sierra-Club/128998363842782

Please contact any of the leaders below if you are interested in joining our campaigns to protect the environment. There are several group officer positions open.

OFFICERS

Chair	Bill Beren*	973-746-9661	Beren1@verizon.net
Conservation Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Treasurer	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Secretary	Columb Mahoney		
Program Chair	Steven Yafet	908-354-2537	syafet@gmail.com
Environmental Justice Chair	Allison Fabrizio		allisonlfabrizio@gmail.com
Publicity Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Political Chair & Recycling Coordinator	Danielle Rapsas*		danielle.rapsas@sierraclub.org
Fundraising Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Membership Chair	Steven Yafet*	(see above)	
Passaic River Issues	Steven Yafet*	(see above)	
Outings Chair	Ron Pate		ronpate31@verizon.net
Webmaster	Christy Morganstein	732-718-4343	christy@medartsweb.com

*Group Executive Committee

The following Gateway Group positions are open for volunteers: vice-chair, conservation chair, Newark and Elizabeth issues. If you are interested, contact Bill Beren at 973-746-9661.

Please contact our program co-chairs if you have ideas or suggestions for a meeting-topic, program, or conservation project.

We invite YOU to join in our activism and ask your support as we strive to address the many issues facing our urban and suburban communities. Note the several vacant positions listed above.

WHAT WE DID THIS SUMMER

Montclair's Fourth of July Parade took place on a hot day, which kept down the crowds but enthusiasm once again reigned supreme. We had a lineup of 6 electric vehicles with participation of Sierra Club members and friends from the NJ Chapter of the Electric Vehicle Association, NorthEast Earth Coalition and Interfaith Climate Action. A special addition to this year's parade was the giveaway to viewers along the way of envelopes of sunflower seeds so people can start their own pollinator gardens.

In August, we were invited by Montclair Film to table at a special showing of Wild Inside, a documentary about Flaco, the Eurasian eagle-owl that escaped from the Central Park Zoo, learned to hunt and survive in Manhattan, and succumbed to rat poison shortly after its first year of freedom.

CONSERVATION NEWS

Tree Ordinances Montclair Twp is considering a new, stronger tree ordinance which will increase fines for chopping down trees without a permit and increasing the number of replacement trees that are required based on the age of the tree which is removed. Unfortunately, the ordinance does not control the actions of the county and township, both of which have cut down hundred year old trees on public and private property. We expect that the ordinance will be passed this fall.

Candidate Endorsements Three of the four candidates we endorsed for at-large Commissioners on the Essex County Board of Commissioners were selected by Democrats to run in the General Election. We are canvassing the candidates who are running for district seats following the primaries, and will announce our decisions on who we will endorse in September. Look for our email to Essex County residents where we report on the endorsements.

OUTINGS

Our Outings Chair, Ron Pate, continues to schedule hikes and activities in Essex County parks. These are included in the outings section of this newsletter and in the Gateway Group calendar at [Gateway Group | Sierra Club](#).

HUDSON COUNTY GROUP

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/hudson-county

Email: hudsonsierraclub@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/HCSierraClub/

Instagram: www.instagram.com/hcsierraclub/

Twitter: twitter.com/hcsierraclub

OFFICERS

Chair	Patricia Hilliard*
Secretary	<i>Open Position!</i>
Conservation Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>
Political Chair	Ricardo Pereira*
Delegate to Chapter	Ricardo Pereira*
Membership	Meera Jaffrey*
Publicity	<i>Open Position!</i>
Outings / Events	Steve Krinsky*
At-Large	Nancy Booth*
(*ExCom)	

Meeting Schedule: The Hudson County Group meets four times a year. Contact us at hudsonsierraclub@gmail.com for details.

Upcoming Events: We are planning activities: nature walks, shoreline cleanups and public forums. We will also be doing political outreach. Check our online calendar, watch your email or find us on social media!

Current Campaigns: Please join in. We can use help with any of these:

Environmental Justice: Clean air for Hudson County! We oppose scrap metal processing plants that pollute the air. Low-income communities suffer the most from environmental destruction with elevated levels of cancer, asthma and other respiratory diseases. We also oppose data centers in Hudson County because they drive up electricity prices, pollute the air with diesel back-up generators while creating only a few temporary jobs.

Liberty State Park: We support rallies called by the Friends of Liberty State Park. As part of our environmental justice campaign, we support the work on the interior of the park which will create 180 acres of wildlife habitat and 50 acres of active recreation for the community.

Skyway Park on the Hackensack River and Essex-Hudson Greenway: The Hudson County Group of the NJ Chapter of the Sierra Club is working to support and expand green spaces in Hudson County. We want to connect existing parks and trails, as part of the Crossroads Campaign to connect greenways across Hudson County. Join up and learn how you can help.

Political Action: In preparation for upcoming elections in New Jersey, we plan to meet with sympathetic public officials. We support the Protecting Against Climate Threats Act (PACT), the Essex Hudson Greenway and the Clean Energy Equity Act. We support renewable energy for NJ Transit and oppose rate hikes for passengers. Let us know if you would like to join our campaigns.

LOANTAKA GROUP

(Morris and Union counties (except for Elizabeth and Hillside), plus Livingston, Millburn, and Roseland, approximately)

Contact: Richard Isaac, risaacx@aol.com

OFFICERS

Group Chair	Richard Isaac	risaacx@aol.com	973-716-0297
Treasurer	Paul Sanderson		
Secretary	Emily Madeo-He		
Conservation Chair	Eric Hausker		
Presentations	Allen Swanson		
Group Webmaster	Gilbert Rohde		
Invasive Species	Rob Metters		
Fundraiser	Eric Hausker		
Programs Coordinator	Emily Madeo-He		
Political Chair	Richard Isaac		
PFAS	Jerry Rosenthal		

On Wednesday, September 16, 7:30 p.m., at the Library of the Chathams in the Lundt Room, Dini Checko, Project Director for the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) will give a presentation.

Her presentation will be on waste reduction, specifically the Skip the Stuff and Food Waste Reduction Laws.

>continued on page 10

Skip the Stuff is an initiative aimed at reducing waste by encouraging restaurants and food delivery services to stop automatically including disposable items such as utensils, straws, napkins, and condiment packets in takeout and delivery orders. Instead, these items are only provided upon customer request.

All are welcome, light refreshments will be served.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the group, contact Rich Isaac at ri-saacx@aol.com, 973-716-0297.

CENTRAL JERSEY GROUP
(Mercer County and neighboring towns in adjoining counties)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/central-jersey
Or find us from the NJ Chapter’s website.

OFFICERS		
Group Co-Chair	Kip Cherry	Kipatthesierraclub@gmail.com
Group Co-Chair	Sylvia Kay	Sylviakay222@gmail.com
Secretary	Leona Fluck	Pineypaddlers@gmail.com
Treasurer	Arlene Ceterskiva	Va2c2015@gmail.com
Outings	George and Leona Fluck	Pineypaddlers@gmail.com
Programs	Joanne Pannone	JPatMeadowbrook@gmail.com
Conservation Chair	Kip Cherry	Kipatthesierraclub@gmail.com
Zero Waste Coordinator	Sylvia Kay	Sylviakay222@gmail.com
Trails	Dave Mattek	MattekDC@aol.com
Webmaster	Benjamin Steinberg	
Group Executive Committee Members		
Kip Cherry, Sylvia Kay, Joanne Pannone		

We need volunteers to help us develop ways to achieve better land use decisions and make decisions that are related to the preservation of drinking water, better storm-water management, and the promotion of habitats and freshwater ecosystems. Our members have been speaking at township meetings, working with neighborhoods impacted by possible development, coordinating possible legal actions, and working on legislation to improve environmental sustainability. We are working to promote legislation to improve data center development. Recent projects have included:

- QTS Data Center, East Windsor, NJ
- Sentinel Data Center, South Brunswick, NJ
- Protecting the historic Monmouth Battlefield area from inappropriate development.

We are working with the Transportation Committee in encouraging school districts to invest in clean electric school buses that improve student health, neighborhood air quality, and lower fleet operating costs throughout New Jersey. Our recycling and zero waste coordinator is also the Chapter Zero Waste Co-coordinator and has given presentations on plastics and worked on legislation/bills on single-use packaging and extended producer responsibility (EPR).

More than 25 states have some form of an EPR bill for single-use packaging. We need to reduce the growing amount of municipal solid waste management from local governments and make the producers responsible to remove packaging toxins and hazardous materials from our environment. People are now accustomed to living without the plastic bags at the store and we notice less-littered roadways, waterways, and beaches. Our trails coordinator has been working with municipalities to obtain access through obtaining more open space, specifically in Mercer County. We need to preserve more open space to provide clean air and clean water and habitat for people and wildlife to survive and thrive.

We support the Green Amendment. We welcome new members!

RARITAN VALLEY GROUP
(Middlesex and Somerset counties and surrounding areas)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/raritan-valley
Facebook: www.facebook.com/RaritanGroupNJSC
Twitter: www.twitter.com/RaritanSierra

OFFICERS		
Group Chair	S. Pasricha	spjersey@gmail.com
Conservation Chair	Gary Frederick	
	garyfrederick@newjersey.sierraclub.org	
Membership Chair	John Miraglia	johnworks3@aol.com
	Marty DuBois	mdub78@aol.com
	Open Position!	
Political Co-Chairs	Bernadette Maher	berndanerin@aol.com
	Open Position!	
Publicity Co-Chairs	Open Positions!	
Treasurer	S. Pasricha	
Co-Webmasters	Dennis Colligan, Open Position!	
Outings/Events Co-Chairs	John Miraglia, S. Pasricha, Bernadette Maher, Jonathan Grey	
Health & Air Quality Issues Coordinator	Linda Powell	
Group Executive Committee Members	Gary Frederick*, S. Pasricha*, Teresa Callahan**, Kevin Corcoran**, and Bernadette Maher*	

*Jan 2025–Dec 2026
**Jan 2026–Dec 2027

Monthly membership meetings are typically held on the fourth Wednesday in New Brunswick. We discuss environmental issues (impacting Middlesex and Somerset), upcoming events, and volunteer efforts. See the calendar on the RVG webpage for meetings, outings, and events.

The issues of interest to our communities include:
1. Opposition to new fossil fuel infrastructure;
2. Conservation, preservation, and protection of the Raritan River Basin area; and,
3. Passage and enforcement of environmentally friendly ordinances.

NEWS FROM THE RARITAN VALLEY AREA
• **Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE)**, new FERC Docket CP17-101-007: The NJDEP Tidelands Resource Council voted to grant Transco the utility licenses to lay the pipes in critical wetlands. The pipeline will enter the Raritan Bay and Cheesequake Creek through NJ tidelands in **South Amboy**. The US Army Corps of Engineers will need to provide the final approval to dredge under the bay and disperse the dredged materials. <https://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/blog/2026/05/nj-tidelands-council-ap-proves-utility-license-nese-fossil-fuel-project>

The NJDEP also approved the air and water permits for the polluting pipeline that will send fracked gas directly to New York City. Note that the gas does **not** increase supply in New Jersey. Disturbing and dredging the sensitive habitat for construction will irreparably damage the bay. The Sierra Club among other groups filed a lawsuit against the NJ-DEP for improperly approving the water permits. <https://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/blog/2025/11/groups-challenge-new-jersey-s-approval-nese-pipeline-court>

Williams’ plans also call for the construction of a methane gas fired compressor station near homes and schools in **Franklin Township**, Somerset County. Additionally, there will be an expansion of the compressors in **Old Bridge**, Middlesex County. Once built, the compressors will send a larger volume of gas at a much higher velocity through existing pipelines via various towns in New Jersey. Map of pipelines by county: <https://pvnpm.phmsa.dot.gov/PublicViewer/>

The compressor station proposed near retirement communities in Franklin Township will spew hazardous toxins. The emissions are directly linked to cancer, asthma, heart disease, and neurological and developmental diseases. <https://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/blog/2026/01/nese-gains-air-permit-locking-new-dirty-gas-in-frastructure-nj>

• The Federal Regulatory Commission (FERC) reinstated Transco’s **Regional Access Expansion (REAE) pipeline (CP21-94-004)** despite the fact the Club prevailed in the lawsuit opposing the pipeline. The REAE will increase the capacity of the toxic compressor stations at CS 207 in **Old Bridge**, Middlesex County and at CS 505 in **Neshanic Station**, Branchburg, Somerset County.

• **South Brunswick:** In July, the NJDEP Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission approved the construction of a data center proposed at the contaminated Princeton Nurseries site despite the Club’s objections. The NJ Water Supply Authority draws water from the D&R Canal to supply drinking water for 1 million people. Details from the July hearing: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/drcc/pdf/minutes/2025/drcc%20minutes%2007.17.25.pdf>

• **New Brunswick’s** city council voted to block the construction of a 27,000 square-foot data center. Residents opposed the environmental impacts, the demands on energy, and the changes to the local neighborhood.

• **Franklin Township** has passed an ordinance that does not allow new warehousing within 500 feet of residential areas. https://anjec.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Franklin-Warehouse_Ordinance.pdf

• **North Brunswick Township:** has passed a resolution in support of the Climate Superfund Act. The legislation aims to hold polluters accountable for damage caused by the climate crisis. <https://tinyurl.com/582w68vy>

• **Middlesex and Somerset Counties:** A drought warning by the state is in place to conserve water supply. Check the drought status here: <https://dep.nj.gov/drought/current-conditions/>

We encourage you to get involved by attending your town’s planning and zoning board meetings. If you are aware of development proposals in your neighborhood that may have a negative environmental impact, please contact us and join our meetings.

JERSEY SHORE GROUP
(Monmouth County, approximately)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/Jersey-Shore/
Facebook: www.facebook.com/JerseyShoreNJSC/

OFFICERS		
Secretary	Tim Macaluso	
Chair (Emeritus)	Dennis Anderson	dennisaza@aol.com
Co-Chair	Robin Zullo	zullo@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Co-Chair/Letter Writing/ Webmaster/Climate Chair	Steve Miller	stevemiller@comcast.net
Vice Chair /Conservation/ Letter Writing	Stan Greberis	sgreberis@newjersey.sierraclub.org
ExCom, Treasurer/Political	Jim Baye	
ExCom, Education Chair	George Moffat	
ExCom	Bob Grize	
ExCom	Pat Miller	pat.miller@newjersey.sierraclub.org
ExCom	Harold Zullo	zullo@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Hike Leader	Sandra Peterson	sandrahike@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Outreach Coordinator	John Luard	
Social Media/ Assistant Webmaster	Elvira Tabaku	njshore.social@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Speaker Program	Lara Zullo	

Upcoming Science Monday Lectures
Date: September 28, 2026
Title: “50 States of Sustainability:” Hope=Action=Impact
Speaker: Larry Confino, film director and producer

GROUP NEWS *continued from page 10*

Description: Larry Confino is the director of “50 States of Sustainability,” a national-ly distributed PBS docuseries spotlighting individuals, corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies advancing practical solutions in energy innovation, resource re-silience, infrastructure modernization, and next-generation workforce development. For his presentation, he’ll show clips from the series and talk about the challenges and solutions to affect change from within every industry. He will further discuss how businesses, non-profits and individuals are working hard towards a more sustainable future. Discussion followed by Q&A.

Biography: Larry Confino is an alum from New York University’s film program and has been an independent director and producer for over 25 years. His focus has been fea-ture documentary production and documentary style productions for agencies, cor-porations and non-profits. His current project “50 States of Sustainability” is a do-cuseries about renewable energy and sustainability that has been airing nationally on PBS. Season #2 began airing in January 2026. Season #3 is currently in pre-production. Each episode highlights real-world progress across industries.

Date: October 26, 2026
Title: Watershed management: Green and sustainable infrastructure for stormwater management
Speaker: Christopher C. Obropta, Professor in Environmental Sciences, Rutgers University

Description: Join Dr. Christopher C. Obropta from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program for an engaging presentation, “All About Rain Gardens.” Learn how rain gardens help reduce flooding, improve water quality, and beautify communities by capturing and filtering stormwater naturally. Dr. Obropta will also share information about the Green Infrastructure Champions Program, which trains and supports local leaders, municipal staff, and residents in implementing green in-frastructure projects throughout New Jersey. Whether you’re interested in improving your community’s resilience or creating a rain garden at home, this talk will provide the knowledge and inspiration to get started!

Biography: Christopher C. Obropta, Ph.D., PE is the Extension Specialist in Water Re-sources with Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and he is a professor with the Depart-ment of Environmental Sciences at the School of Environmental & Biological Sciences, Rutgers University. Prior to joining Rutgers, Dr. Obropta was an environmental con-sultant for 12 years at Omni Environmental Corporation. Dr. Obropta has a background in watershed management, water quality modeling, hydrologic and hydraulic model-ing, and coastal engineering. His specific experience includes watershed restoration, wastewater treatment system design and management, TMDL studies, stormwater management, wetland design, longshore sediment transport, and geographic infor-mation systems (GIS).

Date: November 23, 2026
Title: Habitat conservation for endangered species in NJ
Speaker: William Pitts, Senior Zoologist with NJ DEP Fish & Wildlife’s Endangered & Nongame Species Program

Description: New tools and technologies are being applied to habitat conservation in New Jersey, to help endangered species such as the kestrel (our smallest falcon), the bog turtle, and the tiger salamander. Different species and the ecosystems they depend upon will be covered. The eDNA project (uses samples collected from the environment to assess the presence of species), GIS modeling of habitat suitability, and other tools are enriching the reach of our state’s wildlife biologists to study and protect the breed-ing and survivorship of endangered species.

Biography: William “Bill” Pitts is a Senior Zoologist with NJ DEP Fish & Wildlife’s En-dangered & Nongame Species Program. He has been with the program since 2005, and manages several projects across various species groups including, eastern tiger sala-manders, migratory shorebirds, and American kestrels. He has coordinated with and developed partnership with organizations in New Jersey such as the Conserve Wild-life Foundation and Raritan Headwaters Association, and in so doing has educated the public and supported the development of citizen and community science programs.

Science Monday lectures are usually held at Brookdale Community College on the fourth Monday of Sept, Oct, Nov, Jan, Feb, March, and April. Upcoming lectures are listed below. All lectures start at 6:30 p.m. and are held in the Twin Lights Rooms of the Student Life Center at Brookdale Community College. Meetings are free and open to the public; light refreshments are served.

Visit: <https://shorturl.at/sVuc6>

DIRECTIONS to BROOKDALE and the campus building:
To get to Brookdale’s Lincroft campus, take Parkway Exit 109 to Route 520 West (New-man Springs Road, which becomes E. Main Street at the Lincroft campus). Take the traffic circle into the campus and follow the signs to the Warner Student Life Center and parking lot 7. As you walk east toward the building complex, Warner will be down a slight incline to your left.

OCEAN COUNTY GROUP

Webpage: www.meetup.com/sierra-club-ocean-group/

OFFICERS		
Group Outings Chair	Terry Brown	terrybrown@comcast.net
Group Treasurer, Political Chair	Margaret Mary Piccolo	gogreenp1@yahoo.com
Group Representative	Alejandro Meseguer	alejandro.meseguer@gmail.com
	Andrew Goddard	av.goddard@hotmail.com
	Maritza Sierra	

Activities and Issues: Our group is focused on many critical issues. Locally and statewide we are fighting a myriad of overdevelopment problems. Along with our al-lies, we are working hard to save Barnegat Bay and The Pinelands, two natural gems in Ocean County. We have been reignited. Come join us! The group is looking to build up its membership and welcomes new volunteers who care about the environment, com-

bating climate change, and people simply interested in getting outdoors. Interested persons should contact Terry Brown, terrybrown@comcast.net.

WEST JERSEY GROUP

(Camden, Gloucester, and Burlington counties, approximately)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/west-jersey
Facebook: www.facebook.com/WestJerseyGroupNJSC – Log on and Like Us!

OFFICERS			
Chair	Gina Carola	856-848-8831	ginaceee@verizon.net
Vice-Chair	Tony Hagen		editor@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Secretary	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Treasurer	Trish Clements		patri3210@gmail.com
Publicity Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Political Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Greenways Coords.	Frank and Ellen Zinni		efzin4@aol.com
Conservation Chair	Stacey Ayala		thunderwolfgalaxy@yahoo.com
Pinelands Rep	Eleanor Kelly		ekelly0917@gmail.com
Beyond Plastics			
Coordinator	Virgil Maderich		vann118@comcast.net
Membership Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Media & Communications	Tony Hagen		editor@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Open Positions! Call Gina to volunteer: 856-848-8831
Political chair, smart growth chair, programs chair, social media coordinators, out-ings chair, Off shore Wind Committee

West Jersey Group Meetings: Currently, there are no general meetings planned, due to difficulty in securing a venue. Please check our Facebook page for announcements.

If you would like to receive an email invitation when we do have meetings and are not already on our email reminder list, please send an email to Gina Carola, ginaceee@verizon.net, or visit our Facebook page for information: <http://www.facebook.com/WestJerseyGroupNJSC/>

Contact Gina to get involved in any of our many initiatives on climate change.

SOUTH JERSEY GROUP

(Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties, approximately)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/south-jersey

OFFICERS			
Group, Outings Chair	Tom Boghosian	609-335-6907	tfboghosian44@gmail.com
Vice-Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Conservation Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Political Chair, Calendars	Dick Colby	609-965-4453	dick.colby@stockton.edu
Membership Chair	<i>Open Position!</i>		
Secretary/Treasurer	<i>Open Position!</i>		
At Large	Allie Horn		

Dick Colby is an Atlantic County Parks Commissioner; contact him if you might be in-terested in attending monthly meetings of the Commission, which are open to the public. Julie Akers also works with Atlantic County Friends of the Parks, and is Presi-dent of the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association.

Current Issues: (1) We’ve been blue-blazing the southern portion of what will be a continuous footpath between the southern and northern tips of New Jersey, called the New Jersey Long Trail. Many others (and other groups) are contributing. De-tailed maps and descriptions are now on the chapter website. Dick has produced a brochure describing 15 historic walks in Egg Harbor City. Copies (electronic or pa-per) are available on request. (2) We continue to hope for community solar oppor-tunities for each municipality in South Jersey.

SINGLES SECTION

(A chapter-wide special interest section offering hikes/cleanups, social gatherings, meet-ings, etc.)

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/sierra-singles

OFFICERS		
Co-Chairman	Ron Pate	ronpate31@verizon.net
	Jimi Oleksiak	The_Hikist@Mac.com
Outings Chair	Jimi Oleksiak	
Treasurer	Jimi Oleksiak	
Social Chair	<i>Position Open!</i>	
Publicity	<i>Position Open!</i>	
Membership	<i>Position Open!</i>	
2025 Executive Committee	Ron Pate, Jimi Oleksiak	

The Singles Section has a need for volunteers. Contact the officers if you would like to volunteer for any of the following: outings chair, conservation chair, treasurer, social chair, vice social chair, programs, publicity, membership, nominations.

We’re a friendly, active group of individuals who enjoy hiking, biking, canoeing/kaya-king, as well as a variety of social and cultural activities throughout the year. This sec-tion was created to offer a variety of singles-oriented activities to NJ Sierra Club mem-bers. See the Outings section in this issue for a list of upcoming hikes.

COMMUNICATIONS: The best way to be notified of upcoming singles events is to join our free listserv. Anyone may subscribe by going to: <https://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/NJ-SINGLES-NEWS.html> and clicking on “Join or leave the list.” You may subscribe and unsubscribe at will. Events are also listed on the online calendar on the Chapter’s website: sierraclub.org/new-jersey. You can also “like” us on Facebook: “Singles Group New Jersey Sierra Club.” Activities will also be posted on Meetup.

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LGBTQIA+ (LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, QUEER, TRANSGENDER+) SECTION

Our mission is to support Sierra Club goals and to promote environmental activism and social equity. We are an inclusive section of the Sierra Club – all members of the LGBTQIA+ community and their allies are invited to join us for a hike or a rally.

Want to do more? Consider volunteering to work with our dedicated leadership team as our treasurer, secretary, or social media specialist! Volunteer and help us grow and better serve New Jersey’s LGBTQ+ hikers and environmentalists of all ages!

For more information or to help out, contact

- Diane Scarangella: diascat@hotmail.com
- Wanda Ashbrook: pridegrlnj@aim.com

Webpage: www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/LGBT/
Meetup: www.meetup.com/njsierraclub
Facebook: www.facebook.com/njsierralgbt

OFFICERS		
Co–Chair	Diane Scarangella	diascat@hotmail.com
Co–Chair and Outings Chair	Wanda Ashbrook	pridegrlnj@aim.com
Secretary	Open Position!	
Treasurer	Open Position!	
Webmaster/List Master	Open Position!	

OUTINGS AND ACTIVISTS
Are you interested in joining or assisting’s on LGBTQIA+ hikes or outdoor adventures? Create community surrounded by nature and have fun, too. Guidance and support to become a hike leader is available. Meet us at the trailhead.

Contact:
Wanda Ashbrook: pridegrlnj@aim.com
Rebecca Wilkin: rebeccalwilkin@gmail.comHello

Please consider spending some of your time providing events that build environmental advocacy through direct involvement in nature. Hikes, water activities, field trips, nature works, backpacking trips—these are just some of the activities we can provide if we have the help of people like you!

ICO: INSPIRING CONNECTIONS OUTDOORS
(A special interest activity with the motto: "No child left inside!")

OFFICERS		
Chair	Oscar Nazar	chair.njico.sierraclub@gmail.com
Other Officers	Amanda Gaglio	

New Jersey Inspiring Connections Outdoors: (NJ ICO) provides safe and fun wilderness trips for children and teenagers with limited access to the outdoors. Volunteer leaders collaborate with community partners to facilitate, lead, and promote events that will educate and foster a love of nature and the outdoors for youth in New Jersey, who may not otherwise have the opportunity or the means. The program works to reduce barriers by providing gear, transportation, trip fees, and leaders to create opportunities to explore, enjoy, and advocate for nature. The chair welcomes inquiries from leaders of schools and other community organizations.

The chair is currently seeking volunteers looking to get involved as outings leaders to help facilitate and organize outings with our Youth Partner Organizations.

The group is also looking to fill its treasurer position. Any member with prior experience or interest is welcome to reach out to the group chair for more information.

Upcoming Chapter Meetings

All members are welcome to attend these monthly policy deliberations, held by Zoom video conferencing usually on second Saturdays. Zoom can be accessed from a computer, smartphone, or telephone. The Conservation Committee meets from 10 a.m. to noon and the Executive Committee meets from 1 to 3 p.m. For meeting link, contact secretary@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Upcoming Meetings: September 18, October 10, November 14.
No meeting in December.



SIERRA CLUB

At-Large Executive Committee Members

Nidhi Rajesh, Renée Pollard, Joe Testa, Denise Brush, Kip Cherry, Stan Greberis, Pat Hilliard, Tony Hagen, Paul Sanderson

Chapter Chair and Council of Club Leaders

Joe Testa • chapter.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Chapter Vice-Chair

Tony Hagen • vice.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Conservation Chair

Greg Gorman • ggorman07419@embarqmail.com

Conservation Vice-Chair

Gina Carola (856) 848-8831
ginaceee@verizon.net

Political Committee Chair

Ricardo Pereira
political.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Parliamentarian and Council (CCL) Delegate

Joe Testa • CCLDelegate@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Vice-Parliamentarian • Dick Colby

Secretary

Jim Andreano • Jimandreano@gmail.com

Treasurer

Paul Sanderson (908) 233-2414
Treasurer@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Vice Treasurer

Sunil Somalwar • sunil.somalwar@gmail.com

Outings Chair

Leona Fluck (609) 259-3734
pineypaddlers@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor

Tony Hagen (609) 499-8678
editor@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Webmaster

Dennis Colligan • webmaster@newjersey.sierraclub.org

NEW JERSEY CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

Advisors and Liaisons

Inspiring Connections Outdoors Chair (ICO)

Oscar Nazar • ICOChair@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Compliance Officer

Open Position

Legal Advisor

Chris Hitchcock • chitchcock650@gmail.com

Committees

Building and Electrification Committee

Steve Miller, Co-Chair • stevemiller@comcast.net
Pat Miller, Co-Chair • patmiller@comcast.net

Clean Energy Committee

Denise Brush, Co-Chair
offshorewind@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Howard Stein, Co-Chair • stein5765@verizon.net

Elections Committee

Tony Hagen, Chair • editor@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Facilities Committee

Paul Sanderson, Chair • treasurer@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Finance Committee

Paul Sanderson, Chair • treasurer@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Forest Conservation Committee

Greg Gorman, Chair • ggorman07419@embarqmail.com

Fundraising Committee

Jim Andreano, Chair • Jimandreano@gmail.com

Group Vitality Committee

Joe Testa, Co-Chair • chapter.chair@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Rich Isaac, Co-Chair • richard.isaac@sierraclub.org

Information Technology Committee

Joe Testa, Chair • CCLDelegate@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Inspiring Connections Outdoors Committee

Oscar Nazar, Chair • chair.njico.sierraclub@gmail.com

Legislative Committee

Laura Lynch, Chair • njsierraclub@gmail.com

Light Pollution and Night Sky Committee

Jonathan Wall, Chair • docjdwall@gmail.com;
John Kashwick • John.Kashwick@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Nominating Committee

Stan Greberis, Chair • sgreberis@newjerseysierraclub.org

Personnel Committee

Joe Testa, Chair • chapter.chair@newjerseysierraclub.org

Student Action Committee

Nidhi Rajesh, Chair
student.action@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Transportation Committee

Bill Beren, Chair • Beren1@verizon.net

Data Center & Warehouse Committee

Stan Greberis, Co-Chair
sgreberis@newjerseysierraclub.org
Gary Frederick, Co-Chair
garyfrederick@newjersey.sierraclub.org

Wildlife & Endangered Species

Stan Greberis, Co-Chair
sgreberis@newjersey.sierraclub.org
Jamie Zaccaria, Co-Chair • jamiezaccaria@gmail.com

Issue Coordinators

Asbestos and Toxic Dust

Francie Goldstein, MD
franciegoldstein@mindspring.com

Coastal Wetlands Issues

Jennifer Bull-Czarnecki

Delaware River

Gina Carola • ginaceee@verizon.net

Genetically Modified Organisms

Joanne Pannone • jpatmeadowbrook@gmail.com

Passaic River

Steve Yafet • syafet@gmail.com

Pinelands

Gina Carola • ginaceee@verizon.net

Regional

Joan Denzer • jdenzer@yahoo.com

Solar Energy

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Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet

Resilience—What Is It? Why Do We Need It?

By Patricia Hilliard • Hudson County Group



By now, everyone has heard about climate change. As polar ice melts and water expands from heat absorption, sea level rises. When the oceans push upriver, cities and towns that never faced flooding before soon face flooding even during low tide, a phenomenon called “sunny day flooding.”

In a recent study by a Florida law firm, New Jersey was ranked No. 1 nationally for flood damage in terms of damage costs per square mile: \$31,751. The study, published in 2026 by the *Blue Acres Bulletin*, evaluated National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data from 2021 to 2025.

What Can Be Done?

Resilience is how humanity can survive the rising waters. The NJ Department of Environment Protection is doing their best to build resilience into our shorelines using integrated strategies.

One method is beach replenishment. This is not just pushing sand back onto the beach. Dunes are built to stop surges.

Berms help slow powerful storm waves. Shoreline restoration can create habitat for horseshoe crabs and beach nesting shorebirds, as was done along [Nantuxent Creek](#) at Money Island.

Cities and towns need a different style of protection. An example of that is the [Rebuild by Design](#) project. Resilience was needed in Weehawken, Hoboken, and Jersey City. Flooding of homes and businesses was ruining the local economy and destroying lives and livelihoods. Seawalls and flood gates were needed to help slow or redirect the tides. This infrastructure is being installed as landscape architecture that creates parks along waterways to act as flood plains.

The Meadowlands

In the [Meadowlands Flood Reduction Project](#), the Army Corps and contractors used pumps and channel dredging to redirect water. Trees and flowers were planted to create natural berms and rain gardens to absorb water. All of this was done in an urban center that included the towns of Carlstadt, Moonachie, Teterboro and Little Ferry.

Waterfront parks also provide amenities to residents such as intertidal marshes for wildlife viewing, shoreline

launches for kayaking and canoeing, waterfront paths for walking and jogging and meadows and groves for small informal events like poetry readings or stand-up comedy. No joke! Resilience can be beautiful!

The Department of Environmental Protection holds public meetings in neighborhoods that will be affected by the work that needs to be done to build protection and safety in the community. In the past, FEMA funding helped in restoration. Funding can also be acquired through cohesive planning and public/private partnerships. To withstand future storms and floods, New Jersey needs resilience and restoration of our important and beautiful shorelines, and we need it now.

Keep It ‘REAL’!

On August 5, 2024, the DEP proposed the Resilient Environment and Landscapes (REAL) rules for managing climate change, sea level rise, and flooding. This proposal was part of NJ Protecting Against Climate Threats (NJ PACT). Communities were to have a big voice in what was needed and how the work could be done such as Blue Acres buy-outs of flooded homes, flood protections for mass transit and major

highways, and other programs. In addition, it covered training for a green workforce and building infrastructure to protect drinking water supplies during drought.

Unfortunately, on May 29, 2026, Gov. Sherrill announced that the rules would be delayed! *NJ.com* stated, “The extension effectively gives builders, homeowners and local governments an additional year to lock in projects under the [less stringent rules](#).”

Over the next year, many people’s lives and homes face the threat of the 2026 El Nino that could bring worse weather than we’ve seen in decades.

It’s amazing to think but one out of eight people living in the US (35 million people) live within 100 miles of the NJ shore. Tourism brings NJ \$50.6 billion dollars statewide, and much of our border is shoreline, including many miles of river frontage.

Our shoreline and communities need to be protected. The NJ Chapter of the Sierra Club defends putting REAL and NJ PACT into effect as intended. No delays! Join us and help build resilience in our communities so we don’t have to suffer from poor planning, bad weather, and corporate greed.

My Visits to Two East Coast National Parks

By Denise Brush • Co-Chair of the Clean Energy Committee



In early June, my daughter Becca and I took a 10-day road trip together to the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia. I wanted to see the scenic Appalachian Mountains; Becca, until recently a Delaware State Parks employee, is a landscape painter who wanted new material for her canvas. After spending a few days with relatives in Raleigh and then Columbia, we

headed northwest to the Great Smoky Mountains Parkway in Tennessee.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which straddles the border between North Carolina and Tennessee, is America’s most visited park. We experienced it primarily by stopping at overlooks on the parkway, at posted elevations as high as 3,735 feet, to take photos of the amazing vistas.

We also visited the Oconaluftee Visitor Center in Cherokee, North Carolina, close to the Tennessee border. A short walk along a creek from the Visitor Center took us to the Mountain Farm Museum. There



are three other major visitor centers (Cades Cove, Kuwohi, and Sugarlands), multiple campgrounds, and 850 miles of hiking trails. Forests cover 95% of the park. The Wikipedia page about the park extols the huge variety of wildlife found in the park, including the American black bear. Just driving through on the road, we saw an elk!

We continued through



Above, the Smoky Mountains. At far left, the author’s daughter, Becca Brush, at New River Gorge in West Virginia. Credit: Denise Brush

eastern Tennessee and Kentucky and arrived in southern West Virginia, where we spent a very enjoyable day at New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. The gorge is cut through the mountains by the New River and is the longest and deepest gorge in the Appalachian Mountains. It’s stunning. New River Gorge was designated as a national river park in 1978 and was redesignated as a full national park and preserve in 2020. It is known as a site for white-water rafting and rock-climbing expeditions, though we did neither. Fishing and hiking are also very popular.

My daughter and I visited three of the four visitor centers and took many photos. The Canyon Rim Visitor Center offered two options: View the gorge through the floor-to-ceiling glass window while sitting inside in a rocking chair or walk a short distance to a solidly built outdoor viewing site overlooking the gorge. I did both. Through the exhibits in the visitor center we learned that New River Gorge provides essential habitat for endangered mammals, rare birds, and amphibians. The smaller Grandview Visitor Center also offered fantastic views from 1,400 feet above the gorge.

Railroad fans will appreciate the third location we visited in New River Gorge National Park, called Thurmond Depot. Thurmond was a small town of coal miners and their families in the early 20th century, and a stop on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. Thurmond Depot is a railroad depot, restored as it would have looked a hundred years ago, and a functioning Amtrak station! The train and automobile bridge, which spans the 3030-foot-wide gorge, was completed in 1977 and is the longest single-span arch bridge in the Western Hemisphere. At 876 feet high, it is one of the highest bridges in the United States and probably the highest bridge I’ve ever driven over. We were sorry that our route did not include the Sandstone Visitor Center, which was completed in 2003 with green design features for energy efficiency and resource conservation, and a native garden with a monarch waystation.

It was all downhill from there, literally and figuratively, as we headed back to the DC area and then through a lengthy traffic jam on I-95 back to South Jersey. But I highly recommend considering New River Gorge National Park and/or Great Smoky Mountains National Park for your next family vacation.



Bill Beren, chair of the Sierra Club Gateway Group, tables at the Clairidge Theater in Montclair at the premier showing of *Wild Inside*, a documentary on Flaco the Eurasian eagle-owl who escaped from the Central Park Zoo in 2023. Credit: JoAnn Katzban