Monmouth County Environmental Newsletter: Summer 2025

Monmouth County Hosts its First Farm Summit at the Agricultural Building

On March 12, 2025, the Monmouth County Division of Planning, in collaboration with the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board, welcomed more than 100 attendees to the Farm Summit. Participants enjoyed an engaging networking event prior to the formal program commencement, providing a valuable opportunity to connect with fellow members of the agricultural community.

Throughout the event, representatives from various organizations, including the Monmouth County Board of Health, Monmouth County Division of Mosquito Control, Monmouth County Reclamation Center, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Freehold Soil Conservation District, the State Agriculture Development Committee, Monmouth Conservation Foundation, the Department of Agriculture, Grown in Monmouth, USDA Farm Service Agency, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service were present to address questions and engage with attendees. Presentation Materials have been posted under Farm Summit 2025 on the Division of Planning's webpage.

Upcoming Environmental & Outdoor Events for Monmouth County:

•June 26, 7-8 pm, Nature Lecture Series: Sea Star and Sand Dollars of the Jersey Shore, Bayshore Waterfront Park Activity Center, Middletown, Free

•July 23, 7-8 pm, Volunteers Needed for Summer Beach Cleanup in July, Mouth of Many Mind Creek, 10 Simon Lake Drive Gravel Parking Lot, Atlantic Highlands, Registration Requested, Free.

•July 27, 7-8 pm, Nature Lecture Series: Woodpeckers of Monmouth County, Freneau Woods Park Visitor Center, Aberdeen, Free.

•July 27, 9 am, Casual Birder, Freneau Woods Park

NJ Secretary of Agriculture, Edward D. Wengryn

Pictured l to r: Charlene Kiley, Tom Freiberger, Amy Butewicz, Karyn Malinowski PhD, Al Ochsner

Photo credit: Monmouth County Planning

Planning for next year's Farm Summit, which will be held on March 25, 2026 is already underway. Look out for a save-the-date! If you are looking for more information or would like to participate in next year's conference, please email us at FarmSummit2025@co.monmouth.nj.us.

Visitor Center, Aberdeen, Free.

•Aug. 19, 9 am, Casual Birder, Hartshorne Woods Park Rocky Point, Highlands, Free.

•Aug. 21, 7-8 pm, Nature Lecture Series: Sea Turtles of the Jersey Shore, Bayshore Waterfront Park Activity Center, Middletown, Free

Cohansey Meadows Tour Highlights Conservation in Action

On May 8, 2025, the Environmental and Sustainability staff from the County's Division of Planning toured Cohansey Meadows, a farm located in Cumberland County that is currently seeking preservation through New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program. Like Monmouth County, Cumberland County collaborates with the State to protect and preserve valuable farmland.

Cohansey Meadows spans an impressive 1,650 acres along the scenic Cohansey River and Delaware Bay. Farm owner John Zander led the group on a tour of the property, sharing its deep agricultural and cultural history—one that includes early Quaker settlers, pirates, and trappers. John's stewardship of the land offers a compelling example of conservation and sustainability in practice.

Thanks to his commitment the farm has become a thriving habitat, now home to an abundance of wildlife including six active bald eagle nests—a testament to the success of his ecological approach.

John currently grows and sells a range of environmentally beneficial products, including cut salt hay and live plugs of saltmarsh species like big cordgrass, smooth cordgrass, and salt grass. These products are used as chemical-free weed barriers, mulch, animal bedding, and in construction and erosion control applications such as living shorelines.

To learn more, visit their website Cohansey Meadows.

Photo Credit: Harriet Honigfeld, Monmouth County Division of Planning

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New Jersey Watershed Ambassador at work in Monmouth County

For more than 25 years, the Planning Division has hosted a Watershed Ambassador on behalf of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassador Program runs annually from September to July. Each ambassador commits to 1,700 hours of service, which includes conducting stream assessments, participating in environmental stewardship initiatives, and engaging in public outreach and education—particularly targeting school-aged children.

The stream assessments conducted by ambassadors provide critical data to the NJDEP, helping to identify and fill data gaps used in preparing the department's biennial Integrated Report, an assessment of statewide water quality. This report can be viewed here NJDEP Report. While the data tends to lag, the NJDEP takes corrective action when warranted, primarily through the implementation of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs)—also explained in the linked report.

Photo Credit: Caroline McFarland

Environmental stewardship and service projects conducted by ambassadors may include stream and park clean-ups, invasive species removal, and tree planting. In addition, the ambassador undertakes projects that directly support the initiatives of the Host Agency. Over the past two years, these have included activities centered around County events, such as a tour of flood mitigation projects and support of stewardship presentations at the inaugural Farm Summit.

This year, the ambassador expanded educational outreach to include schools that had not previously participated, notably gaining access to Asbury Park as part of an effort to reach more disadvantaged communities.

Our most recent ambassador, Caroline McFarland, chose to serve a second term in Watershed Management Area 12- Monmouth, with the Planning Division after completing her first term with the Barnegat Bay Partnership in Watershed Management Area 13. Across her two terms, she delivered 118 educational presentations to a total of 2,113 students, completed 18 service projects (including the removal of 1,669 lbs. of trash from local streams and parks), and conducted more than 50 stream assessments—a number that would have been higher if her term had continued. Caroline recently highlighted the program and her service to the Planning Board and to the Monmouth County Environmental Council.

Protecting Habitat Corridors through NJDEP's Green Acres CHANJ Partnership

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has announced the launch of a strategic, statewide land acquisition and preservation initiative designed to strengthen wildlife habitat connectivity and expand open space for public recreation.

NJDEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette stated that "This new land acquisition initiative will more closely link the great work of our longstanding *Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ)* wildlife habitat connectivity program with our *Green Acres* open space preservation program." Integrating the resources of the two programs will improve the targeting of habitat corridor preservation for wildlife and expand recreational open space opportunities for the public and become part of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection State Land Acquisition Strategies.

The NJDEP will use CHANJ's habitat connectivity mapping tools to identify high-priority parcels for conservation that overlap with properties currently for sale in 235 municipalities, focusing on areas essential for connecting fragmented wildlife habitats. As part of this innovative approach, the NJDEP will enhance collaboration with nonprofit organizations, municipal leaders, and community stakeholders.

NJDEP hosted an information webinar on June 12, 2025. A recording of the webinar can be found here: Protecting New Jersey's Open Spaces | Green Acres.

State Agriculture Development Committee's Statewide Farmland Preservation Formula is Now Available.

On Jan. 8, 2024 P.L. 2023, c.245, became law authorizing the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) to adopt rules establishing a Statewide Farmland Preservation Formula ("Statewide Formula") as an alternative method for the valuation of farmland to be acquired for Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) purposes. The rules were published April 7, 2025, and the Statewide Formula is now effective.

The intention of the new law is to provide higher values for those seeking to preserve their farmland.

For more information, please contact the Monmouth County Planning Division or the SADC Chief of Acquisition Stephanie Kreiser at Stephanie.Kreiser@ag.nj.gov or (609) 913-6612.

Join Full Sun Projects and Lunch Break to Combat Food Insecurity in Monmouth County

In partnership with Full Sun Projects, an initiative is underway to encourage residents of Monmouth County to donate fresh vegetables to Lunch Break's Your Choice Pantry. This collaborative effort aims to strengthen food security and foster a spirit of giving across the region. Project Citizen Gardener is a supplemental program targeting food insecurity in New Jersey considering the recent rise in food costs.

Lunch Break reports that there has been an increased demand for the pantry this last year as food costs continue to rise. *Photo credit: Lunch Break*

Community and backyard gardeners are invited to contribute their homegrown produce to help support local families in

Photo Credit: Monmouth County Division of Planning.

need. Farmers with surplus or cosmetically imperfect—but still edible—vegetables are also encouraged to donate.

Lunch Break Pantry and Kitchen noted this a list of preferences but any and all donated produce is welcome.

Kitchen and Pantry favorites:

- **Lettuces:** Romaine, Iceberg, Butterhead
- **Spinach**
- **Kale** - Lacinato
- **Collard Greens**
- **Swiss Chard**
- **Carrots**
- **Beets**
- **Broccoli**
- **Cauliflower**
- **Green Beans**
- **Parsley** - Italian Flat
- **Basil** - Italian
- **Radishes** - Daikon
- **Peppers** - Bell and Poblano
- **Tomatoes** - Slicers, Beefsteak, Heirloom varieties.
- **Summer Squash** - Zucchini
- **Ginger**

Additionally, students seeking to fulfill service hour requirements are welcome to join the initiative. A PCG service hours form has been created to facilitate student involvement and promote community engagement through growing and donating fresh food.

Greener, Cleaner, and Award-Worthy? Nominate NJ's Recycling and Sustainability Leaders Today!

In 1987, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to enact mandatory recycling legislation. Since then, recycling has become an essential part of daily life across the State of New Jersey and continues to remain a model of environmental and economic success.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's (NJDEP) annual Recycling Awards program is conducted in partnership with the Association of New Jersey Recyclers (ANJR), a nonprofit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting sound recycling policy in New Jersey through education, advocacy, and professional development. NJDEP is accepting nominations through July 25 to recognize New Jersey's recycling and sustainability leaders.

Nominations are open for awards in 11 categories including Institution, Business, Retail Merchant, Government, Leadership, Rising Star, Recycling Industry, Outstanding Educator/Educational Program, Volunteer Citizen, Waste Reduction/Resource Management/Sustainability, and Recycled Products Procurement Star.

The full 2025 nomination packet is available here:
https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/2025%20Recycling%20Award%20Packet.pdf

About This Newsletter

The purpose of the newsletter is to inform Monmouth County citizens on the health of their environment and list environmental outreach events in their community. The newsletter is produced by the Environmental & Sustainability Planning Section of the Monmouth County Division of Planning in coordination with the Monmouth County Environmental Council. The County of Monmouth and the Board of County Commissioners do not necessarily share the viewpoints of any environmental group mentioned in this newsletter.

If you have questions, comments, or wish to have an event listed in the newsletter, please contact: environmentalplanning@co.monmouth.nj.us

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