

**CRANBURY TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
23A North Main Street
Cranbury, New Jersey 08512**

Barbara Rogers, Chair
James Gallagher
Andrew Johnson
Paul Mullen
Paul Ginoux

David Marabello
Theresa Vaccaro
Becky Lowery
John Persico

TO: Cranbury Township Committee
FROM: Barbara Rogers, Chair of the Cranbury Environmental Commission
DATE: September 2016
SUBJECT: Environmental Commission 2015 Year-End Report

The activities of the Cranbury Township Environmental Commission in 2015 are summarized in this Year-End Report.

Membership – The EC had full membership for 2015.

Open Space Management and Initiatives:

Cranbury Book Preserve – The EC continued the replanting of native plants, the eradication of invasive plants, and the management of the grasslands. The No Net Loss Reforestation sub committee continued work on Phase III of the tree planting initiative.

Reinhardt Forest Preserve – The site continued to be maintained by the commissioners. Trails were cleared throughout the year and additional gravel was bought and delivered to improve the parking lot. DPW spread the gravel. Geocache project in the preserves began with a geocache box (container) placed in the Preserve. Geocaching is an outdoor recreational treasure hunt activity where participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) to hide or find the containers called “caches”. Coordinates are found on the Cranbury Township website, <http://www.cranburytownship.org/Geocaching-in-the-Cranbury-Township-Walking-Trails.pdf>

Environmental Resource Inventory – With a grant obtained from Sustainable Jersey, Commissioner Andrew Johnson continued to lead an update of the content and maps of the ERI.

An intern from Rutgers University was hired to complete the maps using GIS mapping techniques and commissioners reviewed and edited content. The plan is for the ERI to be put on the website and used as an educational tool about the township's natural resources.

Dam Reconstruction Project – Work on the area was completed in the fall with the planting of trees and the installation of fencing, benches and sidewalks.

NJ Invasive Species Strike Team – The Commission became a member at the Eradicator level which provided a NJISST member to help identify invasive plant species in Cranbury Brook Preserve. Commissioner Barbara Rogers and Shade Tree Commissioner Kathy Easton walked the Cranbury Brook Preserve with an NJIAAT member and identified the many different invasive plants in the preserve. The Preserve was found to be heavily impacted and needs a concerted management effort to remove the invasive plant species to allow natives to grow.

Educational Activities –

Cranbury Day – The EC continued to provide environmental education activities on Cranbury Day with over 200 patrons visiting the EC booth. Information was provided about recycling, open spaces and water conservation. Cranbury's Open Spaces were promoted with a newly created map of all current and proposed township property walking trails and by handing out coordinates of the geocache in Reinhardt Forest Preserve. The Parks Commission Open Space list from their website was also presented for the public to review. A stormwater drain model was displayed and demonstrated to educate the public about stormwater management and run-off. Children were intrigued by the stormwater model and other hands-on activities. Commissioners Barbara Rogers, John Persico, Paul Mullen, Andy Johnson, David Marabello, Theresa Vaccaro and Paul Ginoux manned the table and talked with the public throughout the day.

Sixth Annual Alfred Meiss Environmental Appreciation Award – The EC again sponsored an award for Cranbury School 8th grade students to recognize one student who has been a positive environmental role model. Becky Mathers Lowery and Barbara Rogers were on the subcommittee that made changes to the award criteria and selection committee. Dave Marabello attended the award ceremony at the school in June and presented the award.

Stream Clean up – In April, the EC participated in the 9th annual Stream Clean-up sponsored by the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed. Approximately 32 volunteers collected 358 pounds of garbage using 40 trash bags. The most common items were cigarette butts, lumber, and plastic bottles and bags. Also found were tires.

Rain Barrels – The program, Aquaponics, that incorporated the donated rain barrels continues to grow. Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 have learned about Sustainable Farming and manage the Aquaponics System by feeding the fish, water testing, tracking fish and plant health, and harvesting vegetables to donate to our local food bank. A large part of the Aquaponics program

is Global Outreach where our students partner with schools around the world on local sustainable issues. EC Commissioner Theresa Vaccaro continues to keep abreast of this project and its impact on the school.

Township's quarterly newsletters - Articles about EC activities, Green Team initiatives and Sustainable Jersey were written by Commissioners and included in the newsletters.

Environmental Initiatives:

Sustainable Jersey –

Sustainable Jersey Certification: The “Green Team,” led by Barbara Rogers, met during EC meetings to discuss environmental initiatives. A partnership with the Cranbury Arts Council was initiated for commissioners to volunteer to be docents at the CAC’s annual fundraiser event in Cranbury Brook Preserve in the fall of 2016.

Sustainable Jersey Schools: The township Board of Education passed a resolution to become a Sustainable Jersey School. A Green Team has been established within the school. The Green Team has partnered with the Health and Wellness Committee. Mrs. Vaccaro, Dr. Rogers and Mrs. Lowery partnered with Cranbury School Chief School Administrator Susan Genco and Teacher Susan Lepardo to become a registered Sustainable Jersey School and work towards becoming certified at the bronze level in 2016.

School goals for Sustainable Jersey such as water quality and recycling were identified.

Student Liaison to EC – An eighth grade student, the student council president, attended meetings and reported on the recycling and upcycling efforts at Cranbury School, including working with Terracycle to gather juice pouches and other containers. This position was created last year to keep the EC abreast of environmental initiatives within the school. A gently used toy collection drive was initiated and completed over the winter holidays. With the EC’s help, these drives were expanded town wide with collection sights set up in the townhall and promotions in the township newsletter. The school liaison position has been a fantastic addition to the meetings as an outreach and educational component to the EC/Green Team.

Cranbury School students attended a library geocache event in support of the EC geocache initiative.

No Net Loss Reforestation – Barbara Rogers continued to participate in a subcommittee with Kathy Easton to advise the Township Committee on the planting locations for the New Jersey Turnpike Expansion Mitigation Project. The subcommittee also advised on tree placement and replacement, species choice, watering, soil condition, deer protection and staking. A trail with newly planted trees was created to lead hikers from South Main Street to Old Cranbury Road. A Boy Scout from Troop 52 has proposed making a trail for his Eagle Scout project. The trail will meander along the Millstone through the Hagerty Preserve to link the two trails together.

Rain Garden – The \$5,900 grant from New Jersey American Water Company for the rain garden in Village Park near the floating dock was completed. Environmental Commissioner Dave Marabello coordinated the upkeep of the project and completion of the informational sign with the aid of volunteers and commissioners. Upkeep of the rain garden included mulching, additional stone, replanting and weeding of the area. It continues to successfully collect run-off from the gravel parking lot areas and Dirt Mountain and prevent run-off into Brainerd Lake. A \$400 donation from the Rocky Brook Garden Club has also been dedicated for maintenance.

Riparian Zone Ordinance (RZO) – Commissioner Paul Mullen participated on the Environmental Commission and Cranbury Township Land Development Ordinance Subcommittee to amend the Cranbury RZO. He participated in the discussions and meetings that led to the passage of an amended RZO.

Applications – Numerous applications for development were reviewed, and comments were submitted to the Planning Board and Zoning Board, as appropriate. Specifically, Cedar Brook Crossing application was reviewed to obtain a variance to the RZO to build a gas station.. The EC continues to monitor state DEP activity.

Development Review Committee (DRC) – Commissioner Paul Mullen served as the EC representative to the DRC. He provided input from an environmental standpoint to applicants seeking land use approvals.