



Washington Township Environmental Commission

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report highlights significant activities and accomplishments of the Washington Township Environmental Commission during 2015.

2015 Membership

Appointed Members:

Leon Lakritz, Chair
Vicky Binetti, Vice Chair
Harry Larzelere, Treasurer
John Boyer, Planning Board Member
Ann Culkin
Anne Hastings
Russ Price
Lola Pellegrino, Alternate
Chet Nawoyski, Alternate

Dorothy Hunter, Secretary

Associate Members:

Ed Andricola
Cheryl Reardon (ANJEC)
Robin Dahm
Rich Fini
Steve Hastings
Michael Keating
Bill Neimeister
Mark Phillips
Jodie Smith
Bob Starrantino
Devin Walker

Council Liaison: Sean Longfellow

*The purpose of the
Environmental
Commission is the
protection, development
and use of natural
resources, including
water resources, in
Washington Township
(Washington Township
Code §2-61)*

2015 Meetings

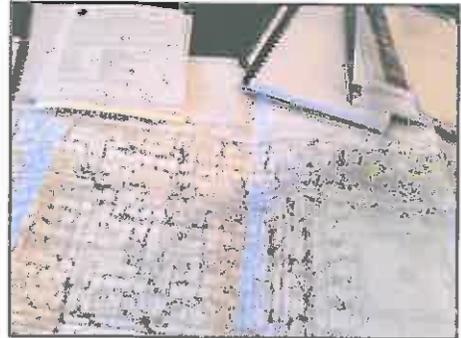
The Environmental Commission meets on the first Thursday of each month, with workshop meetings on third Thursdays, as needed. The business meeting scheduled for March 5 was cancelled because of inclement weather. Meetings in 2015 were convened on the following dates:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| January 15 | July 2 |
| February 5 | August 6 |
| March 19 (workshop) | September 3 |
| April 2 | September 17 (workshop) |
| May 7 | October 1 |
| May 21 (workshop) | November 5 |
| June 4 | December 3 |
| June 18 (workshop) | |

Minutes of meetings are posted at www.twp.washington.nj.us (see Boards & Commissions).

Land Development Project Reviews

The Washington Township Environmental Commission (WTEC) performs reviews of land development projects submitted to our Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment. While all aspects of a project application are important, the WTEC pays particular attention to potential environmental impacts to natural resources, such as the conservation of natural and landscape features and vegetation, particularly tree cover; the protection of surface and ground water resources, especially through appropriate stormwater management; and the potential for land or water pollution from past contamination or from planned land use activities. Written reports documenting these reviews are submitted to the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment, as appropriate.



Reviews for the following projects were submitted to the Washington Township Planning Board in 2015:

- CNG Filling Station – Block 704, Lot 6
- Ganttown Equities, LLC (formerly Cedar Properties) – Block 192, Lot 4 – Site plan/Tree Planting and Removal Plan
- Mccallremicharlie (Jeep Chrysler) – Block 109.02, Lot 10 – Site plan
- Pinnacle Place – Block 48, Lots 2, 3, 4 and 13; Block 52, Lot 4.01 – Site plan

Reviews for the following projects were submitted to the Washington Township Zoning Board of Adjustment in 2015:

- Republic Bank – Block 193, lots 7 and 7.01 – Site plan

The Environmental Commission also provided verbal testimony on certain project proposals before the Planning and Zoning Boards.



Earth Day Celebration

The Environmental Commission marked its twenty-fifth celebration of Earth Day by departing from its tradition of outdoor fairs in Washington Lake Park, and instead sponsoring numerous activities that reflected the historic intention of the holiday: *Think globally. Act locally.* The Commission sought to engage our residents in educational events and locally-based activities on the days surrounding Earth Day (April 22nd) throughout the Township. We partnered with community and civic groups, neighborhood associations, and local experts to encourage appreciation of the natural environment and an understanding of ways to improve environmental stewardship at the local level and in our individual actions.

A main feature of the 2015 events, on weekends before and after Earth Day, was Neighborhood Beautification. The Master Gardeners, landscape architect Alan Koch, and Environmental Commissioners joined volunteers to refresh and renew entrances to several subdivisions in the Township: weeding, clearing and trimming vegetation in islands and entry areas and replanting beds and gardens with a focus on attractive, low maintenance and water conserving ground cover and shrubs. Assistance with debris removal, watering and mulching was provided by the Township Public Works Department, Whitman Square Fire Company and Peach Country Tractor, respectively. An objective of this effort is to encourage other developments to undertake similar facelifts, with the result of enhancing the appearance and

environmental performance of these local elements of our landscape. Shown here are projects at Robindale Manor, Twin Ponds, Bateman Farms and Whitman Square.





The same approach was undertaken at the Municipal Building with the aid of the Master Gardeners and local Girl Scout Troops. Ongoing maintenance was provided by Scout Khanh Pham, the Pham Family and other members of the Scout Troops.



Township Park Rangers also helped Commissioners replace more than 15 trees in Township-owned open space at the Winchester Farms subdivision.



Educational events were also on the Earth Day agenda. The Environmental Commission partnered with the Margaret E. Heggan Library on several offerings. On April 19th, 15 residents participated in a workshop presented by the Commission at the Library on Furoshiki, the Japanese art of fabric folding to make useful items from reusable material. Participants learned to fashion items such as tote bags and wine carriers, and to wrap packages with fabric, rather than paper.



On Earth Day, April 22nd, Woodsy Owl was joined by Mayor Barbara Wallace for a topical book reading with pre-school children in the Library's *Book Buddies* class.



The Commission also prepared a display in the Library that was exhibited throughout April on ways to reduce one's environmental footprint through energy and water conservation, and by following principles that help to "Reduce – Re-Use – Recycle – Re-Purpose" every day. The Library staff contributed to the Earth Day spirit by featuring books on environmental, ecological and natural history themes.



With assistance from Joe Traum, AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassador assigned to Watershed Management Area 18 – Lower Delaware, our Park Rangers, and several skilled community volunteers, the first of two rain barrel construction workshops for our residents was held in conjunction with Earth Day

activities, on April 18th. (A second workshop was held on July 12th.) Rain barrels can be used by homeowners to collect and store rain water from roof tops for use in bed and garden irrigation. The environmentally friendly practice conserves water and reduces damaging effects of stormwater runoff, and rain barrels can be painted to provide decorative outdoor garden features.

Ken MacKenzie, aka *Shark Man* and our local fossil expert, hosted two sessions on April 18th in the Municipal Building on recognizing these remnants of past inhabitants of our planet.



Community-Wide Clean-Up Day



Since 2004, the Environmental Commission has sponsored an Annual Community-Wide Clean-Up Day. On October 10th, 2015, more than 300 volunteers from school groups, community and civic organizations, businesses and the general public joined forces to remove litter and trash from 19 areas throughout the Township. The clean-up activity focused on parks, roadsides, open space parcels and other public areas. The accumulated bags of trash and recyclables were collected by Township Public Works staff.



After the morning's efforts, volunteers were invited to a barbecue in Washington Lake Park, as a token of the Township's appreciation for their efforts. Over hot dogs and hamburgers grilled by members of Washington Township Council, the Administration, and other

volunteers, participants bragged about their most unusual trash discoveries and shared their pride in making the Township sparkle.



Purchases of safety vests, trash bags, gloves and collection tools, as well as food, drinks and supplies for the barbecue were supported by generous contributions from Township business, professional and civic organizations and individuals. Our successful 2015 Clean-Up Day was truly a community-wide event.

Other Natural Resource-Related Activities

Endangered Species Protection



Swamp pink grows in shady, wooded wetland areas; populations have diminished because of destruction and deterioration of the plant's habitat. Swamp Pink plant once occurred in wetland areas from New York to Georgia, but today 70% of the known remaining sites are in New Jersey.

In August 2014, a 2100-linear foot fence was installed on one of the Township's open space parcels to protect a local population of the Swamp Pink plant. The purpose of the fence is to deter damage to the plants by human vandalism or animal foraging. Swamp Pink (*Helonius bullata*) is listed as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act and is categorized as endangered by the State of New Jersey.

The installation of the fence was funded by a grant to Washington Township from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP); the South Jersey Land and Water Trust (SJLWT) has provided assistance with the installation and maintenance of the fence. Unfortunately, a number of very large trees felled by the June 23rd microburst caused extensive damage to portions of the fence. The largest fallen trees were removed, with support from the USFWS and the Township's Tree Trust Fund, and the collapsed portions of the fence were repaired by volunteers from the SJLWT, the Environmental Commission and the Township's Open Space Advisory Committee in December 2015.



Trees: Conservation, Protection and Reforestation

The Environmental Commission conducts a number of activities related to tree stewardship and maintenance of adequate tree cover in the Township. The Environmental Commission reviews site development plans to assure conservation of existing natural vegetation (including trees) to the extent practical, and compliance with the Washington Township Tree Preservation and Maintenance Ordinance. Written reports documenting these reviews are submitted to the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment. In the course of these reviews, opportunities to protect existing trees from unnecessary destruction are identified, and recommendations are made to the Boards as to optimal and adequate compensation for trees that must be removed.

In addition, the Environmental Commission, in cooperation with the Open Space Advisory Committee, identifies public grounds that would benefit by planting of individual or several trees, or by larger scale projects to install or restore stands of trees to aid in reforestation of open areas. In 2015, two such projects accomplished the installation of new trees and replacement of trees damaged by exceedingly dry weather and/or the June 23rd storm, in Township open space near Winchester Drive and in the stormwater retention area adjacent to the Twin Ponds development. The Environmental Commission also monitors payments to and from the Tree Trust Fund (which accrues funds contributed as compensation for trees that are destroyed, principally in the course of land development).

In our parks and backyards, near our streets and alongside our streams, trees make Washington Township a healthier and safer place to live. Trees improve the aesthetic quality of our community and enhance the landscape. They are also critical components of the natural infrastructure of our environment. They help to control runoff and erosion, conserve water and soil, moderate temperature, reduce air and noise pollution, and provide shelter and habitat for wildlife.

Community Outreach and Communication

Community Engagement

In addition to education, outreach and service efforts on environmental issues discussed above, other community-based activities included:

- Meeting with local emergency planning officials following the June 23rd microburst storm
- Meeting with curriculum directors for the Washington Township Public School District to discuss potential partnership activities

Facebook

The Environmental Commission launched its **Facebook** page in 2015. It has proven successful in announcing events, sharing environmental news, and getting input and feedback from the public. The Environmental Commission has nearly 600 **Facebook** friends.

Spring Lake Oil Spill

On June 29th, 2014, an estimated 2700 gallons of a petroleum substance were disposed into a storm sewer, causing significant contamination of Spring Lake in the vicinity of Hydra Lane and Pitman Downer Road. Emergency response personnel from Washington Township and the NJDEP took immediate action to contain the spilled material, and NJDEP oversaw the removal of oil and contaminated material from the site. Presentations for the public on the status of spill clean-up and recovery by Township and NJDEP personnel were provided during televised meetings of the Environmental Commission in July and August 2014. During the June 18th, 2015 Environmental Commission meeting, the NJDEP provided a summary of the event, the clean-up, and the environmental recovery of the lake. Following the meeting, several members of the Environmental Commission visited Spring Lake with residents to discuss remaining concerns regarding environmental conditions at the lake and in its environs. The lake's recovery was evidenced by the team's observations of wildlife, including many turtles and fish.



Other Activities

Sustainable Jersey

In 2015, the Environmental Commission continued to explore requirements for certification as a Sustainable Jersey community. Sustainable Jersey is a collaboration of the New Jersey League of Municipalities, the College of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Board of Public Utilities. Sustainable Jersey recognizes municipalities that want to go green, save money and take steps to sustain their quality of life over the long term. The program focus is to reduce waste generation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve environmental equity in our communities.

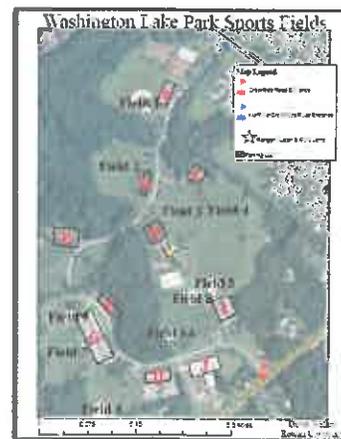
Ms. Randi Woerner, Economic Development Director for the City of Woodbury, attended the Commission's February 5th, 2015 meeting and summarized her experience leading certification efforts for Woodbury (and prior to that, for Glassboro), and provided advice for the

Commission and the Township's Green Team in selecting and documenting potential certification activities. Patrick McDevitt, chairman of Monroe Township's Green Team, also discussed his community's experience in pursuing certification, and suggested that Gloucester County municipalities might benefit by additional networking.

Washington Township Council adopted Resolution 62-2015 on March 11th, 2015, creating the Township's Green Team for Sustainable Jersey certification, and assigning to the Team initial tasks of mapping the certification process and compiling a fleet inventory. The Green Team comprises Township officials and community leaders, and includes the Environmental Commission. Because of limited personnel availability in 2015, the certification application process has not significantly advanced. However, the Environmental Commission anticipates progress in 2016.

GPS Mapping Project

Rowan University student in Environmental Studies, Devin Walker, undertook a mapping project with on-the-ground assistance from members of the Environmental Commission and Open Space Advisory Committee. The boundaries, walking/running paths and nature trails in Washington Lake Park were mapped using global positioning system (GPS) coordinates; a second map highlights athletic fields in the Park. The maps will provide platforms for future development of informational and educational tools for the Park.



Acknowledgments

The Washington Township Environmental Commission appreciates the outstanding and ready support it has received from Mayor Barbara Wallace, managers and staff of the Township, and Township Council Members, especially Council President Sean Longfellow, who served as Council Liaison to the Commission in 2015.