



Kingwood Township Environmental Commission Annual Newsletter and Report 2019

350 Trees Planted!

The EC partnered with Hunterdon Land Trust for a \$3,700 Roots for Rivers reforestation grant from The Nature Conservancy. Volunteers from the EC, the Township Committee, Parks and Recreation Committee and Cub Scouts from Pack 251 helped plant 350 trees on April 13, 2019. The trees were planted in Kingwood Park and on adjacent preserved farmland in the Lockatong Creek riparian zone. Forested riparian buffers reduce sediment, fertilizers and other pollutants from running off surfaces into the creek. The trees will also provide habitat for wildlife and shade that will be good for trout which need cool water. Tree tubes will protect the young trees from deer browsing.



PennEast Pipeline Update

Since 2014, the EC has worked together with neighboring towns, environmental groups, and elected officials to protect our environment, health, safety, homes and property rights from the harm PennEast would cause our community.

In August 2019, PennEast submitted an application to NJDEP for a state Freshwater Wetlands Act permit, a Flood Hazard Area Verification and Letter of Interpretation, and a Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification. Kingwood received dozens of boxes of documents and maps, which were arranged, labeled and made available for public review. Then in September 2019, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that PennEast, as a private company, lacked legal authority to seize or condemn state-owned lands in federal court. This meant that PennEast can't condemn more than 40 properties preserved by the state in order to build their pipeline. Even before we had a chance to fully catalogue the application's inaccuracies and inadequacies, NJDEP denied PennEast's application, since applications are not valid for the land not owned by the applicant. PennEast appealed the court's September decision, but it was upheld. PennEast is appealing this decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as attempting a run-around of regulations by splitting the project into two phases. **Please refer to our [website](#) for current information about our continued opposition to PennEast.**



Mara Tippet, lead of the Township's Green Team, Sustainable Kingwood, attended the NJ Sustainability Summit College in June, where she learned more about the steps required to develop a Sustainable Jersey group in our township. Due to

her efforts pulling together the large amount of data that was necessary for the Sustainable Jersey application process, Kingwood Township gained Bronze Level certification as a Sustainable Municipality for 2019. The Sustainable group is beginning to look forward to additional opportunities and actions in the coming year.



Celebrating Progress, Envisioning the Future

CoCoRaHS – Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network

Gail Ashley presented information on the CoCoRaHS project that she has been a part of for the past ten years. This organization is a national network of people who collect data on rain, hail and snow using specific measuring tools and post their data results to www.cocorahs.org website. The New Jersey Network is coordinated by the State Climatologist. Gail shared a [graph of precipitation in Kingwood from 2010 to 2019](#). The 30 year average precipitation in Kingwood is 49 inches per year. In 2018 the total precipitation was 66 inches.

Cell Tower Lights Can Affect Birds



A proposal from Verizon to build a cell tower on County Route 519 prompted the EC to research the effects of cell tower lights on migrating birds. Of particular concern is the color light used for compliance with FAA requirements. Red lights have a disorienting effect on migratory birds. However, white lights do not, as long as they blink every 1.5 seconds. The EC recommended that the Kingwood Township Board of Adjustment and Planning Board require Verizon to use white lights instead of red and that the boards consider an amendment to the current ordinance #132-49 Wireless Communication Towers requiring all future towers be required to have white lights that blink every 1.5 seconds to ensure the safety of migratory birds.

Sustainability Grants

M. Tippett discussed two grants that were awarded to the Kingwood Township Environmental Commission. A \$2,000.00 Grant from Sustainable Jersey will be used for public access and hiking through certain areas of open space within the Township. The award will be used specifically for trail development, outreach, and educational information.



A \$1,827 Grant from Delaware River Wild and Scenic was used to help create a pollinator meadow at Horseshoe Bend Park.

This restoration project aims to protect and promote pollinator populations and biodiversity in the Lower Delaware region and foster an appreciation for pollinator species and their native hosts within the community. With the help of Girl Scout Troop 81176 and members of the Sustainable Kingwood Green Team, 1.5 acres of field were planted with a seed mix containing native wildflowers and grasses.

1,000 Free Trees Reforesting Kingwood

The NJ Forest Service, in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation, provided 1,000 tree seedlings which were distributed for free to Kingwood residents on April 6th at Horseshoe Bend Park. The project was part of a continuing effort to replace trees that were lost in Superstorm Sandy.



Trees improve

- * water quality
- * air quality
- * home value
- * wildlife habitat
- * ground water supply
- * mental and physical health
- * and reduce energy use

NJDOT Rockfall Mitigation

The NJ Department of Transportation spoke about their plans for Route 29 Rockfall Mitigation at the Township Committee's special meeting on August 1, 2019. The DOT's intent is to "shave" entire cliff areas back 15 to 25 feet depending on the area, to make a gap between the road and the rock wall to collect any potential falling rocks. The wall would be tilted back, leaving a "clean" rock face wall. The Devil's Tea Table would be cemented and fenced. EC Chair Debbie Kratzer, highly critical of their plans, asked a number of questions that they never answered. The EC is skeptical of the risk posed by rockfalls in an area that has experienced one documented dangerous rockfall and is concerned about environmental and structural impacts of blasting and construction. The EC and dozens of township residents in attendance demanded an explanation of why less drastic alternatives were discarded and the community was never consulted. DOT estimates that the project will cost \$29 million.

Recycling 2019

The Kingwood Township recycling depot continued operating through half of the year as it had for many years but as of August 1, 2019 the dumpsters were removed, and the depot closed.



The suspension of operation was due mainly to two factors: the high cost of collection and unacceptable levels of trash and non-recyclable items in the dumpsters. A letter was sent to residents explaining that unless a significant reduction in the level of contaminants in the dumpsters was made, the Township would be forced to stop collecting material. Unfortunately, reduction did not occur. The recycling market at this time requires clean materials to be recycled. Unopened bags, containers with food in them, and oily cardboard can send the entire load to the trash dump.

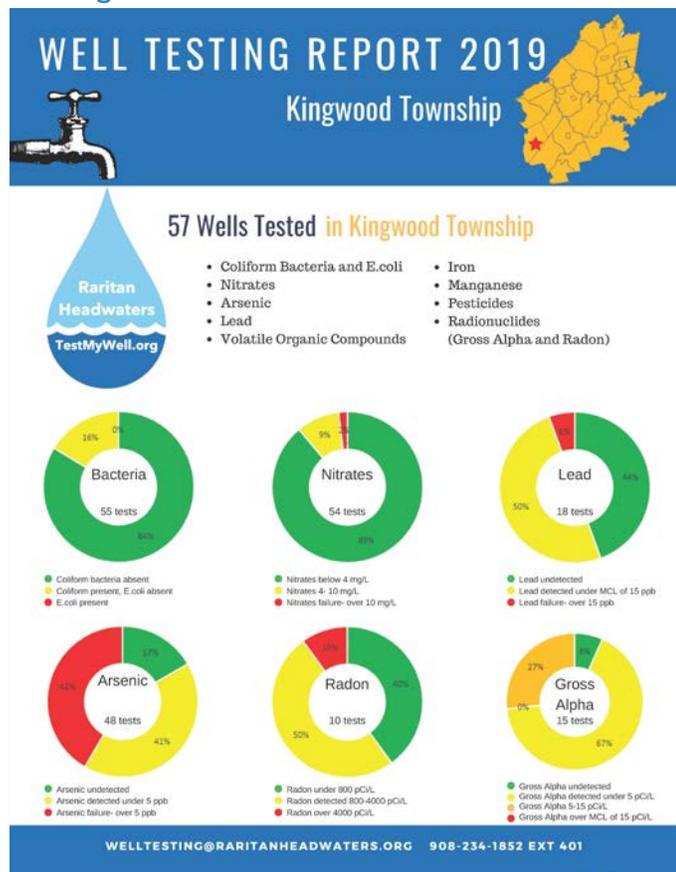
From August 1 and going forward, your recyclables are placed curbside and collected through the service provided by your trash hauler. In addition, the Hunterdon County Transfer Station/Recycling Depot, 10 Petticoat Lane, Annandale, NJ, Phone: (908 236-9088) is open Monday through Friday for Hunterdon County residents with recyclables that cannot be managed curbside. Check the [Hunterdon County website under "Recycling"](#) for more details.

The metal recycling dumpster will remain open at this time. The clothing recycling bin was removed as we have had difficulty getting the clothing picked up in a timely manner. The church in Baptistown has a clothing shed for drop off.

Fall Discount Water Testing and Septic Cleaning Program

Everyone in Kingwood gets their water from private wells and disposes of their wastewater in septic systems. To ensure the health and safety of our water supply, the EC recommends that all well owners test their water biannually, and pump their septic systems every three years. Mara Tippet, representing Raritan Headwaters, arranged a community well testing day. Homeowners were able to purchase a test kit for \$60.00 which includes the recommended annual basics of coliform bacteria and nitrates, or residents could select more to address their individual needs and health concerns. The samples were collected by homeowners and then sent to Garden State Labs for results. Ms. Tippet reported that 57 people took advantage of the community discount water testing program this year. Arsenic is a naturally occurring contaminant that is prevalent in Kingwood and 42% of the wells tested in 2019 had levels of arsenic that exceeded the state standard of 5 ppb (see below for additional results). Castle Septic was selected for the 2019 Resident Discount Septic Cleaning Program.

Check the Kingwood website in the late summer for information on 2020 well testing and septic cleaning!



Biologist Studied Native Bees at Horseshoe Bend Park

At the July 23, 2019 EC meeting, Rutgers PhD candidate Colleen Smith presented the results of her bee research regarding biodiversity of forest bees. Ms. Smith's research was focused on how forest bees are affected by forest age and size. Horseshoe Bend Park was included in the study as an example of a large young forest. During the study, she found 288 bees of 37 species, slightly more than in similar sized forests. The most common bees found were spurred carpenter, Maine blueberry and parasitic cuckoo bees. Horseshoe Bend Park has slightly more species of forest bees than comparable parks. She concluded that large forests of any age have greater bee diversity than smaller forests.



Ms. Smith emphasized that wild bees are extremely important in pollination of crop species. She recommended that, in addition to conserving large tracts of forests for forest bees, people can help bee conservation by planting flowers, reducing the use of pesticides, providing nest sites and mowing less frequently (every two or three weeks).

Invasive Species: Mile-a-Minute Weed Update

EC member Ralph Celebre met with Wayne Hudson of the NJ Dept. of Agriculture at Horseshoe Bend Park. They reviewed the progress of a Beneficial Insect Program the Ag Department initiated in the park to combat mile-a-minute weed. Mr. Hudson noted a moderate population of mile-a-minute-loving weevils. He based this on the extent of damage the weevils had done to the invasive plant. He noted damage in the 5-30% range, which is a low to moderate impact. The weevils do best in sunny locations, and accordingly less damage to the plant was noted in shady areas. He explained that the goal is to slow the mile-a-minute's lifecycle. Upon inspection in September, if there are a lot of immature green berries, that is a sign of success. If larger amounts of mature purple berries are present, then the plant's reproductive cycle has not been sufficiently slowed. In that case, a request for an additional release of the beneficial insects can be made to the Department of Agriculture. The program began in 2001 and there have been releases throughout the state. A report on mile-a-minute plant is available on the Department's website: www.nj.gov/agriculture/.

Co-op Electric

In 2019, the EC supported the Township Committee's decision to participate in the Delaware River Area Renewable Energy Procurement Cooperative (DRAREPC). This is a cooperative energy purchasing group made up of surrounding municipalities for the purpose of purchasing electricity from alternate energy providers with lower rates and higher renewable energy. Until that program is set up, Kingwood has decided to join the Hunterdon Area Energy Cooperative for 2020. This co-op offers a lower rate than current suppliers (\$0.0863/kWh) through December 2020, although it did not initially offer an option to choose a renewable energy option (but will in 2021). Bills are still coming from JCP&L and the lower rate is automatically applied except for residents who have already chosen an alternate energy supplier. Residents may opt out by contacting JCP&L.

Free Radon Test Kits Available from Hunterdon Public Health

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection considers Kingwood Township homes to have a high potential for high radon levels.

- Radon occurs naturally and could be inside your home.
- Testing is important because radon can cause serious health problems like lung cancer.
- Radon is a gas that you can't see, smell or taste

Testing your home for radon is easy and homes with high levels of radon can be mitigated.

<http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health/environmental/radon.html>

Membership in ANJEC The EC renewed annual membership in ANJEC, which provides resources such as a quarterly newsletter. Debbie Kratzer attended the ANJEC annual Environmental Congress.

Update on Luxfer (formerly MEL or MEI)

Luxfer MEL Technologies (formerly MEL Chemicals and MEI) has been manufacturing zirconium-based products at the Breeze Point plant since 1950's. Groundwater contamination (wastewater salt plume) was detected by NJDEP in the 1980's and site remediation has gone on for decades. Groundwater is pumped, treated and trucked to Trenton Water Treatment Plant. According to NJDEP, the pumping underway has contained the "salt" plume so that it is now entirely within the boundary of the site (114 acres). However, the final Remedial Action Report for ISRA (Industrial Site Remediation Act) for MEI Case # E95161 is still outstanding. A public meeting was held by the Environmental Committee (EC) Dec 4, 2017 with Luxfer officials and hydrogeologists from Ramboll Environmental; a CD recording of that meeting is available from Township office; a transcript of the meeting is filed in Kingwood EC online archive.

MS4 Stormwater Permit Update

Rain washes pollutants into storm drains and directly into our lakes, rivers and the ocean.



What can you do to stop pollution?

Visit <https://cleanwater.nj.org/>



NJDEP requires all municipalities to educate residents about keeping our water clean. Through the annual [stormwater brochure](#) mailing, planting trees, and other actions, the EC once again fulfilled Kingwood regulatory requirement for education points.

2019 Kingwood EC Members

New EC Member: The EC welcomed new member Betsy Combs.

Debbie Kratzer (Chair)
Gail M. Ashley
Timothy Cahalin
Ralph Celebre

Mara Tippet (Vice-Chair)
Sandra McNicol
Lois Voronin

Secretary: Michele Tipton-Walters
Governing Body Member: Maureen Syrnick
Alt. #1: Cynthia Niciecki
Alt. #2: Elizabeth Combs