

2014 Oakland Environmental Commission Achievements

The Oakland Environmental Commission had another very busy year. Stewart Woods Park, phase 1 and the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) were both completed this year. And other projects like the FLOW Environmental Film Festival and the EC table at the town carnival took months of planning. The EC has also been very active in the progress being made with Oakland's newest park, Great Oak Park. We met every month this past year with a quorum. We supported the Green Team all year with members and initiatives that earned points toward the Bronze Certification for Sustainable Jersey.

Stewart Woods Park

Plaque commemorating Mrs. Stewart was mounted on a large rock and garbage and recycling pails were installed. The EC organized an opening ceremony of Stewart Woods Park. Over 100 people attended the ceremony including the Mayor and members of the Stewart Family. The Special Events Committee provided refreshments. The EC concluded the event with a guided nature walk which over 30 people joined. Stewart Woods Park is a walking park that can be accessed from Ramapo Valley Road, Dogwood School and McNamee Avenue.

Crossroads: An article was submitted and included for each Crossroads that was published in 2014. Initiatives included in the Crossroads: Stewart Woods Park, Natural Resource Inventory, Green Team and Pilgrim Pipeline.

Green Team: The Green Team completed action items to obtain Bronze Certification for Sustainable Jersey. The Green Team held an anti-idling event in September at all the elementary schools and a composting event in October at Riverside Nursery. Discounted composters were offered to town residents. A Green Team high school student received approval from the RIH Board of Ed. to start a school Green Team at Indian Hills High School. IHHS was one of the first schools to register a Green Team in NJ. Members of the Green Team and EC attended the Peoples Climate March on 9/21 in NYC.

Great Oak Park: EC members participated in routine meetings of the Park Committee to review and discuss potential uses of the park. EC members are continuing to work on a plant survey, including taking aerial shots of various areas of the Great Oak Park for GIS map use. A Phase II study by Boswell Engineering is investigating the results of the Phase I study. The EC led the Great Oak Park committee in a stream channel restoration work day. A representative from trout unlimited was also on site to guide the process. The Eagle Scout projects are continuing into the spring. Sav-A-Tree reported that the Great Oak may be one of the oldest trees in Bergen County. A study of the tree will be included in future plans for the Park. The Committee will ensure that natural areas remain undisturbed, while disturbed areas will continue to be used according to past use. Hiking and biking will be allowed following a probable spring opening. A plant survey of the park was also completed.

Town Carnival Booth: Informational table was set up at the annual Town Carnival 6/25-6/28/14 with the Green Team and Shade Tree Commission. An energy savings poster and game were used to offer energy saving tips and renewable energy information. We had 6 maps on display from the Natural Resource Inventory which drew a lot of attention, especially to the open space map. We had a lot of free hand outs, including saplings. We also displayed items to be recycled and handed out information on Oakland's recycling program.

Natural Resources Inventory: The Oakland Natural Resource Inventory was adopted by the Oakland

Planning Board on September 10 as part of the Borough Master Plan. The NRI is an inventory of the Borough's environmental and biological infrastructure created for the purpose of protecting human and ecological health. The NRI was authored by Debbie Kratzer of Kratzer Environmental Services and prepared with the assistance of a Smart Growth Planning Grant from ANJEC. The NRI can be accessed from the EC and borough Website and a hard copy is kept at the Oakland Library.

Pilgrim Pipeline: In September the EC presented their report on the proposed Pilgrim Pipeline to the Mayor and Council. Based on the information available regarding the pipeline proposal and the geology and hydrology of Oakland the EC advised the Mayor and Council that the risks of this project greatly outweigh any benefit and recommended the adoption of a resolution against this pipeline. At the September 24 Council meeting a resolution was passed opposing the Pilgrim Pipeline. The report written by the EC has been used by surrounding towns to explain the risks of the pipeline to the aquifer.

Environmental Achievement Award: The Oakland Environmental Commission was one of six towns to receive an Environmental Achievement Award by the Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) at the organization's 41st Annual Environmental Congress on Friday, Oct. 24, 2014. The ANJEC Environmental Achievement Award program recognizes exceptional projects carried out by environmental commissions to protect natural resources, health and open spaces in their towns. The Oakland EC received the award for their work in the creation of Steward Woods Open Space Park.

Website: An EC member designed and developed a new website for the EC and Green Team at no cost to the town. This is a useful resource for updated information and initiatives. The new website is <http://mygreenoakland.org>

ANJEC Annual Meeting: In October, EC members attended the annual meeting for ANJEC. This is an inspirational meeting that helps us learn what other Environmental Commissions are doing throughout the state as well as a source of resources that are available for our town to better its environment.

Open Space: Bergen County Open-Space Trust Fund approved purchase of flood properties along Truman Blvd. in Oakland. In April when residents received notice of a possible overturn of the Pinnacle/Bi County property ruling by the DEP, the Environmental Commission educated people of the importance of the property for ground water, stream protection, wetland protection, stormwater control, and wildlife habitat. The property is part of the Highlands Preservation Area.

FLOW Film Festival- EC members met and coordinated a series of environmental movies with speaker panels for the month of May. This event was offered for the FLOW towns of Franklin Lakes, Oakland and Wyckoff and was held at the Wyckoff Public Library.

Earth Day plans – The EC sponsored a cleanup of Stewart Woods and also participated in the Great Oak Park clean up. In addition, the YES teams of Valley Middle school ran a town-wide clean on May 17th with the participation of the EC.

Black Bear Program – EC member attended the program in Franklin Lakes. It was very informative. This presentation is a free service provided by the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife and covered a wide range of topic relating to black bears. Plans have been made to have the program here in Oakland at the senior center on Tuesday, April 14.