



Liberty Township Environmental Commission

2019 Annual Report

Roster

Chairman Phil Wooldridge, Vice Chair Doug Hankin, Dan Kurela, Maureen Bonner, Jess Howk, Richard Larsen, first alternate Diane Gonski, second alternate Helen Danitz, Secretary Shannon Schaaf

Meetings are held the third Thursday of each month, 7 PM at the Municipal Building. Membership in the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions was maintained.

Aquatic Weed Control

The agreement with Solitude Lake Management was reviewed and re-negotiated for the municipal beach area at Mountain Lake. The services include bi-monthly inspection of the 2 acre beach area, monthly treatment to target plant growth between April and August. There are additional funds available for additional treatment of lily pads or testing if needed.

Smart Lighting Solutions

The EC purchased 50 each of four different brochures to promote public awareness on the benefits of smarter lighting solutions. The brochures are in the vestibule for the public to take and discuss the benefits of smarter lighting on people, wildlife, reducing crime, and energy efficiency.

Cabin Fever Workshop

On March 29th, the LTEC hosted their Annual Cabin Fever Workshop focusing education efforts on plastic recycling and single use plastics. The Commission showed the documentary, "Bag It", provided through the ANJEC library. Attendees enjoyed the film, learned about the plastic recycling program through Trex and the Commission's involvement, as well as made a no-sew reusable tote bag from a t-shirt to encourage less use of plastic bags.

Arbor Day

Free Trees were given away to residents and the surrounding communities on May 4th in order to celebrate Arbor Day. The LTEC purchased 400 silky dogwood seedlings from the NJ Forest Service Nursery. 250 were given away to residents and the remaining 150 went to planting around Mt. Lake.

Slope Planting by the Beach

The western slope at the Mountain lake Beach parking lot was planted with 150 silky dogwood saplings to stabilize the slope. Volunteers gathered on May 26th to heel all of the seedlings in the slope within 1 hour. The site was approved through DPW and the Township Committee.

Community Day

On June 8th, the Environmental Commission hosted a table at Community Day. The EC provided literature about watershed health, non-point source pollution, trees, native plants, and wildlife. Additional information on display included the sample of the porcupine cribs to be installed in the lake and support fish habitat as well as information regarding the ANJEC grant and the wildflower meadow to be planted in the fall. Volunteers ran games and crafts, while hosting the table and giving away reusable sandwich bags and wildflower seed.

Summer Recreation Program

The LTEC coordinated a Bug Party at the 2019 Summer Rec program. Over 70 kids attended camp that day and saw a presentation about insects from far and near. The presenter discussed the importance of these bugs in the ecosystem.

ANJEC Grant

In April, the EC received approval from ANJEC for their grant request to establish a native wildflower meadow and education garden for the community. The approved garden site will be along the green to the north of the John Fisher Pavilion at Mt. Lake. With funding from this grant, the EC was able to install 240 quart size native plants in the 400 square foot area. The EC received \$500 worth of wood chips from a local tree company to prep the site for a fall planting. Plants were purchased through a local native nursery, Wild Ridge Plants, in June. The EC purchased two sandwich boards to promote the planting (and future events). Twenty-five volunteers attended the September planting event and worked diligently to move mulch, dig in the tough soil, plant and water all 240 new plants (11 varying native species). Volunteers assisted in installing t-posts and animal netting to protect the garden, as well as a sign for public knowledge about the garden. Over the course of the fall, volunteers donated hours watering the plants to ensure their survival. The EC will begin working on the educational leaflet and self-guided tour of the meadow for the public.

Native Seed Garden

As an expansion of the Wildflower meadow, the EC organized a native seed garden for installation in the retaining wall grass strip along Lakeside Drive West and the Wildflower Meadow. The LTEC purchased native seed mix (majority wildflowers, with native grasses) as a low growing pollinator garden to be established in the planting area. Hours were spent to prepare the area and on November 3, volunteers gathered to remove invasive plants and roots, cut back the grass, and disburse the seed mix along a 200' planting strip; then cover the seed with hay. The garden will take a few years to establish, and will be a low maintenance garden to provide beauty and habitat.

Fish Habitat at Mt. Lake

Muskies Inc., NJDEP Fish & Wildlife and the Environmental Commission partnered together to install 24 cribs in Mountain Lake. Through the assistance of NJDEP, the EC, Township Committee and the Mt. Lake Community Association the ideal locations were defined. In October, the first four porcupine cribs were installed, marked via GPS, and documented for future follow up. The EC anticipates the remaining 20 to be installed in September 2020. Thanks to a generous donation, the original 20 proposed cribs was increased to 24 total to be installed at the lake. Mountain Lake is the first lake in New Jersey to utilize porcupine cribs for habitat enhancement, a practice that has seen success in lakes of neighboring states.

Trex Recycling Challenge

In April, the Environmental Commission received their first Trex bench. This bench was a recycling partnership with local Kindergarten Girl Scout Troop 97260. The bench was donated to Central School garden in May with a plaque from the Girl Scout Troop and Environmental Commission educating all about how the bench came to be and that over 45,000 plastic bags were collected to receive the bench.

In October, the Environmental Commission received their second bench. The bench is currently located in the foyer of the Municipal Building for all to see. A plaque will be purchased and added to the bench for public education. The recycling challenge will continue for a third and fourth bench. This project has been far more successful than imagined by the Commission.

Welcome to the Watershed Bags

Welcome to the Watershed bags were updated and distributed to 11 new homeowners in Liberty Township.

Memorial Tree Maintenance

EC volunteers organized a tree maintenance day for the memorial trees planted in memory of Beverly and Eckhardt; two former Commission members. At the end of November, volunteers met with mulch and pruners to remove and broken or damaged branches, raise the canopy, and spread mulch to protect the tree.