



New Jersey Clean Communities 2023 Report to the Governor and Legislature

The Report to the Governor and Legislature highlights the activities of the NJ Clean Communities Council with special attention to the 2022 and 2023 contracts, as required by law and year one of NJ's Single Use Plastics Law. The budget report for FY 2022 is included in this report.

Background

New Jersey Clean Communities is a statewide, comprehensive, litter-abatement program created by the passage of the Clean Communities Act in 1986. The Act provides a funding source for the program by placing a tax on fifteen categories of businesses that may produce litter-generating products.

The Clean Communities Council oversees the implementation of litter abatement programs in 558 municipalities and 21 counties, collects statistical reports, maintains a database of information that tracks local programs, and implements a statewide program of public information and education that targets Clean Communities coordinators, schools, and the general public. The Clean Communities Council also administers New Jersey's Adopt-a-Beach and Adopt-a-Highway programs.

On November 4, 2020, the NJ State Legislature found that “one third of all plastics produced are single-use plastics and that an estimated 100 billion single-use plastic carryout bags and 25 billion Styrofoam plastic coffee cups are thrown away in the United States each year and that most single-use plastics are disposed of in landfills, are incinerated, or become litter in waterways and oceans. Eight million tons of plastic end up in the oceans annually. New Jersey must do its part to minimize plastic pollution in the ocean, and to ensure that future generations have a clean and healthy environment to live, work, and recreate in; that banning or limiting the use of single-use plastic carryout bags, polystyrene foam food service products, and single-use plastic straws is a significant step in this effort, as these items are among the most significant sources of beach and ocean pollution.”

Furthermore, the Legislature designated the Clean Communities Program as lead agency to “develop and implement a statewide public information and education program which shall include educational programs, public service announcements, and the distribution of free reusable carryout bags throughout the State.” The Governor signed this into Law on November 4, 2020, with an effective date of May 4, 2022.

Accomplishments



Sustainability In Motion Conference

In 2023, the NJ Clean Communities Council partnered with the Association of New Jersey Recyclers to sponsor the first ever Sustainability in Motion Conference at Caesars, Atlantic City. This conference focused on sustainability, recycling, litter abatement, materials management and much, much more! More than 40 vendors from the tri-state area exhibited at the inaugural conference and over 250 clean communities, recycling and sustainability coordinators, government representatives, elected officials, business and industry, consultants, and non-profit agencies attended and networked. The NJ Sustainability in Motion Conference offered a premier opportunity for all to network, earn needed CEUs and meet with vendors. This conference boasted 17 sponsors and was sold out three weeks for the event.



Best Practices

The Best Practices Guide is an incredible resource for new and seasoned Clean Communities Coordinators alike, providing a clearinghouse of information that incorporates general information about the Clean Communities program, examples of model programs, creative ideas, and vendor lists. Coordinators are encouraged to copy, borrow, and customize all documents for their Clean Communities Programs.

The most significant contribution to the state program since its inception in 1986, the Best Practices Guide is available online at www.njclean.org. The manual was initially created and released in 2006 by a team of county coordinators. The guide offers a clearinghouse of information on New Jersey Clean Communities programs broken down into 3 main categories: cleanup, education and enforcement. It has been revised, edited and “added to” in each of 17 consecutive years.

The list of litter-related assembly programs and books is a coordinator favorite and in 2023 a list of litter abatement related field trips was added.



Clean Communities Coordinator Certification

The Clean Communities Council partnered with the Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education in the spring of 2015 to launch the inaugural certification training program for Clean Communities coordinators. The purpose of coordinator training is to provide coordinators with the tools to effectively manage grassroots, community-driven Clean Communities programs. The Certified Clean Communities Coordinator (CCCC) program involves a three-day course and a final assignment, along with two additional hours earned by attending a Clean Communities Council state-sponsored event.

The program continues today and is more popular than ever. Our mission is to reduce litter in public places through a network of highly skilled, talented, and dedicated Clean Communities program managers.

In 2022, two certification classes were held, one in the spring and one in the fall. A total of 88 students participated and 57 new clean communities coordinators were certified. In 2023, a fall program was held with 82 attendees and an additional 57 new coordinators completed certification.

Coordinators may earn recertification hours by attending seminars and workshops offered by the Clean Communities Council and affiliated organizations. Credit hours must be approved by the Clean Communities Council at least 2 weeks before the event takes place. Sign-in sheets must be submitted to Rutgers OCPE, no later than 2 weeks after the event takes place.

The NJCCC continues to expand opportunities for certification credits through our annual conference, coffee with coordinator meetings, lunch and learn events and annual webinars.



Education and Outreach

NJ Clean Communities hosts meetings, webinars and other events throughout the year to keep local governments, state agencies and other stakeholders involved and engaged. NJCCC also speaks and exhibits at statewide and regional conferences.



Events include the NJ State Chamber Conference, NJ Association of Counties (NJAC), NJ Conference of Mayors, Solid Waste Association of NJ (SWANA), American Public Works Association, NorthEast Recycling Conference and NJ League of Municipalities.

Below is a highlight of sponsored events:

- April 13-14, 2022- NJ Chamber of Commerce Conference
- April 23, 2022 - NJDEP Earth Day Event –Liberty State Park
- April 27-29, 2022 - NJ SWANA Conference
- May 6, 2022 - NJ Association of Counties
- May 10-12, 2022 - NJ Conference of Mayors
- May 26, 2022 - Annual Webinar “Gateway to a Litter-Free New Jersey”
- June 27-29 – Recycle Florida Conference (Speaker)
- August 24, 2022 - Hosted County Coordinators meeting at Save Barnegat Bay Complex
- September 14, 2022 – Plastics Enforcement Webinar
- November 15-18, 2022 - Hosted NJCCC booth and annual NJCCC session at League of Municipalities
- December 15, 2022 - NJCCC Winter Webinar in partnership with American Public Works Association NJ Chapter. Had 337 attendees who received NJCCC/CPWM credits.
- January 11, 2022 - Regional meeting at Kean University in conjunction with the Watson Institute/Urban Mayors Council
- April 12-14, 2023 – NJ Conference of Mayors Conference
- April 26-28, 2023 – SWANA conference
- May 3-5, 2023 – NJAC Conference
- May 24-25, 2023 – NJ Public Works Conference
- June 29, 2023 - Hosted a *Plastics Compliance Webinar* in conjunction with NJDEP, NJDOH, NJBAC, & NJFC. Approved for NJCCC, CRP and REHS credits and had 280+ attendees.
- November 1-2, 2023 NERC Conference, Rhode Island
- November 14-17, 2023 – NJLM Conference
- November 29, 2023 – Union County Environmental Workshop (Film Fest 2.0)
- December 5-8, 2023 – Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Conference, Ocean City Maryland

The Council is a member of MARCO (mid-atlantic regional coalition on the ocean) and participates in their monthly Marine Debris Working Group and is a project partner on NOAA’s Marine Debris Regional Plan. NJ Clean Communities submits litter prevention articles for NJ Urban Mayors & NJAC newsletters and NJLM magazine and oversees paid outreach campaigns with TAPinto.

NJ Single Use Plastics Education and Outreach Campaign

NJCCC Executive Director JoAnn Gemenden serves on the Single Use Plastics Communication Task Force, composed of NJCCC, NJ Food Council, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, and Business Action Center; as well as Food Council Communication and Convenience Store working groups. NJCC Single Use Plastics campaign highlights:



- Secured paid outreach campaigns for various media outlets including radio (English, Spanish and Asian), online TAPinto, NJ Advanced Media, MVN and NJ Transit Bus Ads. Worked with a translation company to provide LitterFreeNJ social media in Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Chinese and Korean.
- Participated in many reusable bag giveaway programs throughout NJ.
 - Served as reusable bag sponsor for NJBIA Women in Leadership Conference.
 - Provided reusable bags to NJDEP for Governor's Hispanic Heritage Month fair.
- Developed a series of 15 second and 30 second LitterFreeNJ Radio PSA's; added to toolkit.
- Partnered with NJDEP to launch a joint Video PSA contest for schools entitled **Reduce Single Use**. Review committee consisted of representatives from NJCCC, NJDEP and NJFC and first, second and third prizes were awarded in two age categories. Winning PSA's can be found at litterfreenj.com.
- Designed Reusable Bag Toolkit (How To, flier, sign, logo)
- Ordered 38,000 insulated bags to be divided up and distributed to all 21 County Welfare Agencies in NJ.

Part of NJCCC's mandate included reusable bag giveaway programs. The Council developed a series of reusable bag designs featuring iconic Jersey locations, activities and themes.



The NJCCC rolled out a small grants program for New Jersey-based non-profit organizations to support education and outreach focused on reducing the public's consumption of single-use plastics. The scope of the program focused on behavior change, "Skip the Straw" campaign support, litter analytics and other litter reduction initiatives.

Worked with NJ Food Council to develop a video highlighting the success of NJ's single use plastics law. Video can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/GbWf9MugMe0> .

Single Use Plastics & LitterFreeNJ Campaign:

The "Litter Free NJ" campaign is the New Jersey Clean Communities Council's new single use plastic and paper bag ban outreach campaign, which has a simple message: **Bring your own reusable bag(s) every time you shop.**



On Nov. 4, 2020, Governor Phil Murphy and the New Jersey Legislature enacted the most progressive bag ban law in the country. The law aims to prevent litter by encouraging the use of reusable bags by phasing out single-use plastic and paper bags in grocery stores, and eliminating the use of single use plastic bags at all other stores. The law also banned polystyrene foam food service products; and made plastic straws at restaurants available only upon request.

NJ's statewide public education and outreach campaign relative to the state's single use plastics ban continues to be an all-encompassing mission of the NJ Clean Communities Council. NJCCC continues to use our campaign message and logo, *LitterFreeNJ*, along with a corresponding website and robust toolkit with free downloadable artwork, flyers, videos, signs, billboards, and radio and video PSA's to name a few. Outreach materials are provided in seven (7) different languages. A *LitterFreeNJ Month* resolution was developed along with a Model Website and shared with all 21 counties and 558 municipalities.

NJ Clean Communities worked in conjunction with the NJ Business Action Center and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to educate business associations, local governments, chambers, downtown organizations, special improvement districts, economic development agencies and other key stakeholders.

Skip the Straw:



NJ's single use plastics law also provides a "by request only" mandate for plastic straws. In response, NJ's *Skip the Straw* campaign was developed to educate the public about the new requirement and encourage residents to *Skip the Straw* all together! The restriction went into effect on November 4, 2021.

NJ Clean Communities, NJ Business Action Center, NJ Department of Environmental Protection and NJ Department of Health worked jointly to conduct numerous education events and provided


outreach materials to assist businesses with educating customers and employees. This law applies to all food-service businesses which includes all restaurants, convenience stores and fast-food businesses.



Recycle Coach:

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection currently has a contract with Recycle Coach for a free statewide recycling app. NJCCC expanded on their success by including litter abatement packages.

NJCCC partnered with Recycle Coach to help design and promote single use plastics content and amplify messaging around clean communities and litter abatement to app users. This partnership was formed in an effort to expand our reach and further engage both residents and students of NJ to prevent litter and minimize their dependence on single use plastics. The goal is to enhance single use plastic messaging, including litter prevention and Get Past Plastic Campaigns, and corresponding lesson plans and activities for schools.

 A downloadable app was created as a resource. “We've been taught to recycle. Now

it's time to learn to recycle correctly. Download the [Recycle Coach](#) app.”

[Clean Communities Packages with Recycle Coach](#)

Deliverables include a downloadable Litter Awareness Calendar offering tips on how to prevent litter and reduce waste while keeping up with several eco-friendly holidays and a kids activity book to educate youth about the harmful effects of litter on wildlife and the environment. Both are available free to download (and local branding can be added).

[NJCC Litter Activity Book](#)



[NJCC 2024 Litter Awareness Calendar](#)





NJ Clean Communities Annual Recognition Awards

The Trustees of the New Jersey Clean Communities Council annually honor government agencies, businesses, community organizations, schools and individuals who have helped make New Jersey clean at their annual New Jersey Clean Communities Awards reception.

Programs should be comprehensive, involving the elements of cleanup, enforcement, and education. *Stewardship of Public Lands Awards* are presented to businesses, community organizations, schools and individuals who best demonstrate spirit and community pride through contributions to New Jersey Clean Communities. Special consideration is given to programs or projects that are ongoing, innovative, results oriented, and that may be a model for the entire state. Award categories include:

- Municipal Program Award
- Municipal Coordinator Award
- County Program Award
- County Coordinator Award
- Single Use Plastics Outreach Award
- Stormwater Management Award
- Innovative Program Award
- Public Lands Cleanup Award
- Clean Waterway/Stormwater Award
- Adopt-a (road, park, waterway, neighborhood, school, or other public place award)
- Volunteer Award
- Media Award
- Excellence in Education Award
- Single Use Plastics Business Partnership Award

NJCCC also annually recognizes a legislator who has made a significant impact on the environment with the Legislative Award. In 2023 the award went to Senator Bob Smith for all his efforts in support of Clean Communities and NJ's Single Use Plastics law.

Legislative Award - Senator Bob Smith



Business Partnership Award - NJ Food Council



NJ Food Bank Bag Initiative



In April of 2022, the NJ Legislature provided the NJ Clean Communities Council with an additional \$600,000 in grant funding to purchase 500,000 reusable bags for NJ's seven (7) designated food banks.

Collaborating with representatives from all of NJ's seven (7) designated food banks to discuss service area, bag needs, education/outreach and storage capacities and promote reusable bag donations.

A series of custom bags featuring food-related items were designed in concert with Food Bank representatives. NJCC coordinated four separate purchases of bags, ranging from 120,000-140,000 bags per shipment (based on storage constraints) and delivery to all 7 food banks. Final delivery of 140,000 was completed in May of 2023.

Reusable Bag Resource Center

In January of 2023, NJCCC worked in conjunction with the NJ Food Council to establish a Reusable Bag Working Group aimed at designing a workable plan to accept donations of reusable bags, sanitize them and donate them back to those in need.



The NJ Community Food Bank offered to host a statewide donation location site and task force members worked to develop a "How To" guide for events, engage public entity partnerships, develop sample flyers and signs, and promote the campaign via a QR code.



In the fall of 2023, the Reusable Bag Resource Center was launched! The digital tool is accessed through a QR code on customer receipts and easily allows users to find a reusable bag donation location near them. Designed as a link tree, the user can also find more information on how to prepare bags for donation, host an event, find more information on the single use plastics law and even calculate the success of the bag law in their town through the use of a Plastic Bag Calculator. This Tool proved useful in our efforts to prove the single use plastics law has been a success.

[Environmental group data suggests NJ's plastic bag ban has had positive impact on environment](#)





Adopt-a-Beach

Adopt-A-Beach is a comprehensive, statewide, volunteer program created by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Clean Communities Council to encourage volunteers to clean and maintain beaches, bays, rivers, and all waterways. Our mission is to clean waterways in an ongoing effort to protect these natural resources and foster the volunteer stewardship of public lands; to clean and maintain roadways because street litter often ends up in the water.

The Clean Communities Council sponsors two cleanup initiatives each year. The [Clean Water Challenge](#) takes place March 1-April 30 and the [International Coastal Cleanup](#) takes place in September in conjunction with Ocean Conservancy. Volunteers are invited to participate in existing events or schedule their own working closely with local governments.

NJ Clean Communities supports and participates in Clean Ocean Actions' Annual Clean Sweeps Program and submits litter data from these events to Ocean Conservancy annually.

Businesses, community organizations, schools and individuals who would like to volunteer can register online via our website.



Adopt-a-Highway Program with NJDOT

The Adopt a Highway Program saw a renewed interest in the program in the past two years and staff is busily responding to weekly inquiries through our website, www.njclean.org.

Eighty-eight applications/inquiries were received in 2023 - an increase of 25%. While not every inquiry resulted in the adoption of a roadway, the Adopt-a-Highway program executed **twenty-three new contracts** during the months of January through December. These new contracts represent community and business groups committed to keeping specific stretches of highways clean in Bergen, Hudson, Burlington, Somerset, Monmouth, Union, Essex, Mercer, Cumberland, Atlantic, Middlesex, and Warren counties.

Contracts with our volunteer groups renew every June and December. The majority of our existing contracts with volunteer groups were renewed this year; however we did have two of our volunteer groups decline to renew their contracts in 2023. NJCC is astounded by the commitment and continued interest with all of our NJ community volunteers.

Currently there are ninety-six approved groups and all have actively resumed their commitment to keep their adopted roadways clean. From January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, 1,098 Adopt a Highway volunteers have devoted 2,352 hours to remove 750 bags of trash and 351 bags of recycling and clean almost 252 miles of NJ state highways. Volunteers have noted the lack of plastic bag litter confirming the value of NJ single use plastic ban. The most common littered item has been noted to be cigarette butts, small "airline size" liquor bottles, car parts as well as beverage cans and bottles.

From January 1, 2022, through July 18, 2022, 468 Adopt a Highway volunteers devoted 125 hours to remove 321 bags of trash and 176 bags of recycling and clean almost 100 miles of NJ state highways.

While the administration of New Jersey's Adopt-a-Highway program is not part of the council's contract with NJDEP, it must be noted that in the eight years of the program, 6,593 volunteers cleaned up 1,508 miles of state highways, picking up 6,904 bags of trash and 2,084 bags of recycling.

Litter Data Collection

In accordance with the 2002 Clean Communities Act, the New Jersey Clean Communities Council collects municipal and county statistical reports annually. The online reporting system was developed by the Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA,) and they continue to maintain the database and provide technical assistance to the Clean Communities Council as needed. The numbers from this database have been used for the counts indicated below.

Statistical Reporting Information for 2020-2022

Using the information collected from the database each month, the Council creates a report of all report forms that have been initiated or submitted by local governments. This report is sent quarterly to each County Coordinator to provide them with the number of missing and incomplete statistical reports by town in each county. Additionally, grant guidance documents have been developed and are available on the Coordinator tab of the njclean website. Clean Communities staff are also available year-round to provide assistance. Based on the number of report questions and requests for assistance, the tools provided have been effective in generating reports.

Since 2016, close to 3,000 reports have been sent to the database. This number reflects both open (incomplete) and submitted status reports.

Additionally, the database indicates that within the eight-year period since 2016, over 350,000 volunteers have participated in over 217,000 cleanups, cleaning just under 600,000 miles and more than 1.6 million acres. Over 500,000 tons of debris have been collected and an additional 300,000 tons of recycling. Over 50,000 citations and violations have been issued during this period.

There were more than 14,000 programs presented throughout the state, with over 11 million in attendance.

Statistical Report Data (Close of Report Year 2022)

REPORT FIELDS	2019	2020	2021	2022
Reports Collected	380	338	373	312
Cleanups	30,146	22,362	25,319	22,160
Volunteers	47,474	25,557	39,209	40,427
Trash Picked Up Tons	11,160	14,302	36,933	10,929
Trash Recycled Tons	8,541	5,862	594,989	2,293
Road Miles Cleaned	78,488	67,666	41,863	88,310
Acres Cleaned	45,829	45,145	96,007	1,183,958
Citations	3,363	1,167	285,146	1,984
Violations	10,946	6,599	6,566	5,854
Programs	1,537	734	1,804	1,206
People Reached	494,195	240,080	4,290,404	4,512,025

Media & Advertising

The Clean Communities Act was amended in 2008 to provide funding for a media campaign that would promote the reduction of litter and, in the long-term, sustain a reduction in litter.

Through the work of the Council's public relations firm, Jaffe Communications of Cranford, 2022 and 2023 were robust years for media relations. With the onset of NJ's single use plastics law and partnership with the NJBAC and NJDEP, there was an abundance of media opportunities. Between April 1, 2022 and January 31, 2024, there were 376 earned news articles appearing in statewide media about the work of the Council, focusing on both our litter abatement efforts and statewide outreach on the single use plastics ban through LitterFreeNJ.

Jaffe Communications continues to work closely with NJCCC to maintain a statewide education campaign, following the successful passage of the plastic and paper bag ban, signed by the governor in 2020. Jaffe Communication developed and hosted a website, litterfreenj.com, which was developed to host and promote our Litter Free NJ Campaign. The website highlights bag giveaway events as well as a robust toolkit for government and businesses to use for outreach, as well as news of ongoing outreach efforts coordinated through the NJCCC.

Budget Report (FY2022)

The Budget Report reflects the close-out of the contract for fiscal year 2022.

Budget Report (FY2022)

Personnel Wage & Fringe	\$ 175,500
Consultants	76,500
Rent	24,500
Telephone	2,500
Insurance	11,000
Postage	2,000
Supplies	3,000
Equipment	2,000
Printing	7,000
Special Events	60,000
Meetings/Conferences	7,000
Miscellaneous	4,000
Total	375,000.00

New Jersey Clean Communities Council, Inc.



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