

HACKENSACK RIVER NATION SUMMIT AND ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR

Tuesday, April 28, 8:30 am - 3:30 pm
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Teaneck, New Jersey

2026 PROGRAM

Learn a lot. Make great connections.
Get inspired. Share your knowledge.

Hackensack River Nation Summit is the annual conference of Hackensack River Nation, which is produced by the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.



ABOUT HACKENSACK RIVER NATION

The Hackensack River is a special place. This North Jersey artery has nurtured people for more than 10,000 years, supported a diverse ecosystem for even longer, and helped build the prosperity that so many people in Bergen and Hudson counties enjoy.

Yet despite this, too many business leaders and public officials over the past three centuries have treated the river as a dump site, killing off native wildlife and causing so many people to figuratively turn their backs to the river.

Hackensack River Nation, established in 2024 by the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation and several partner organizations, is dedicated to raising awareness and improving the health of the Hackensack River and its 197-square-mile watershed, which soars northeastern New Jersey and southern New York.

This collaborative effort seeks to underscore the power of unity and set a precedent for community-driven environmental stewardship for problem areas like pollution, flooding and overdevelopment. We also strive to develop a shared vision for the future of the Hackensack River and the watershed.

Inspired by the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation's philosophy, "What can we do together that we can't alone?", the Hackensack River Nation brings together municipalities, public agencies, nonprofits, businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations. This collective effort aims to enhance the watershed's health and accessibility through collaboration.

Produced by the Northern New Jersey
Community Foundation.



[NNJCF.ORG/HRN](https://www.nnjcf.org/hrn)

ABOUT THE NORTHERN NEW JERSEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation (NNJCF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life across North Jersey. Serving six counties, NNJCF brings together residents, businesses, nonprofits, and public leaders to address regional challenges and create more equitable, vibrant, and resilient communities.



[NNJCF.ORG](https://www.nnjcf.org)

NNJCF's work is guided by four key focus areas:

Green and Healthy Places

NNJCF works with communities to address environmental challenges such as flooding, pollution, and climate change. Through partnerships and community-driven solutions, the Foundation advances environmental justice, promotes green infrastructure, and supports healthier, more sustainable places to live.

Creative Communities

Through arts and culture, NNJCF strengthens public spaces and community connections. Its ArtsBergen initiative supports creative placemaking projects that reflect local identity, foster civic engagement, and enhance the vibrancy and livability of neighborhoods.

Belonging and Opportunity

NNJCF promotes inclusive growth by fostering collaboration across communities and sectors. By celebrating local culture, supporting community-driven initiatives, and expanding access to opportunity, the Foundation helps ensure all residents feel connected and able to thrive.

Community Philanthropy

NNJCF makes it easier for individuals, families, and organizations to give back and support meaningful causes. Through donor-advised funds, grants, and partnerships, the Foundation connects generosity to local impact and strengthens the nonprofit ecosystem across North Jersey.

Across all its work, NNJCF serves as a connector, convener, and catalyst to bring people and resources together to build stronger communities throughout the region.



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR WATERSHED MANAGEMENT & ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION



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- ✓ NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
- ✓ POND & LAKE MANAGEMENT
- ✓ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



TIME**SESSION****8:30 am – 3:00 pm**

ECollab - Would you like help with a project or initiative? Need advisors? Put out a call for collaborators on the Summit ECollab board.

8:30 am – 9:30 am

Doors open for registration, breakfast, networking, and Environmental Fair.

9:30 am – 9:45 am**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.****STATE OF THE RIVER - CAPTAIN BILL SHEEHAN, HACKENSACK RIVERKEEPER.**

Captain Bill is one of the most influential and effective environmental leaders in North Jersey in our time. Through his advocacy and programming, Hackensack Riverkeeper has helped make the river and its shores healthier and more beautiful, and connected thousands of people to the river. In this inspirational speech, Captain Bill will talk about the keys to his success in environmental advocacy, and give us insights for our own.

KEYNOTE**9:45 am – 10:30 am****LEADERSHIP MODELS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION.**

Representatives from Jersey Water Works, Sustainable Jersey, and Green Infrastructure Champions talk about their respective programs and why they have been so successful. The conversation is meant to inspire nonprofit organizations, environmental commissions and green teams to think about what they can do to engage and empower their constituents for action.

PLENARY SESSION**10:30 am – 11:30 am**

Speakers: **Dr. Christopher C. Obropta**, Professor, Extension Specialist, and Director of the NJ Water Resources Research Institute, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. **Nicole Miller**, Jersey Water Works Steering Committee Co-Chair; Principal, MnM Consulting. **Randall Solomon**, Executive Director, Sustainable Jersey.

Moderator: **Leonardo Vazquez**, AICP/PP, Executive Director, Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.

TIME**SESSION**

11:30 pm – 11:50 pm Break and Networking.

11:50 am – 12:50 pm **BREAKOUT SESSIONS A**

E-CONNECTIONS.

Experts in various topics of interest to HRN Council members and established environmental leaders will be at tables that seat 6 or 8 people. Participants can then go to whoever they would like to ask questions, and however many experts or leaders they would like to talk to. The experts/leaders can provide technical advice, information, or respond to ideas that participants may bring. We will invite experts in watershed improvement planning, who can help participants get ideas for their required Phase 2 WIP strategies.

Available E-Connection subject matter expertise and experts:

- **MS4 permit** – Gillian Mulvoy and Alena Brayshaw, Rutgers Water Resources.
- **Green infrastructure** – Benny Roe and Taline Kelly, Rutgers Water Resources.
- **Rain gardens** – Alrick Rodriguez-Perez and Brendon Opilac, Rutgers Water Resources.
- **Creative engagement** – Leo Vazquez, AICP/PP.
- **Environmental Health and community-engaged science** – Dr. Robert Laumbach and Kerry Margaret Butch, Rutgers Center for Environmental Exposure and Disease.
- **Engaging grantmakers** – Elisheva (Liz Davidoff) Crowley, Program Officer, F.M. Kirby Foundation.

THE THREE-LEGGED STOOL.

Exploring the Shared Roles of Private, Non-Profit & Local Government Partners in Environmental Stewardship.

Effective local environmental policy rarely happens through government alone. This educational session explores the three-legged stool of municipal environmental policy: local government, nonprofit organizations, and private sector partners. Featuring two local elected officials, participants will learn how these three sectors interact, depend on one another, and move through the legislative process together, from proposal to passage to implementation. Using a real-world local example, the session offers students and community members a clear, nonpartisan look at how environmental policy actually gets done at the municipal level, by working together.

Speakers: Hillary Goldberg, Councilmember, City of Teaneck. **Lisa Sandhusen**, Councilwoman, New Milford.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS A (Continued)

GETTING A STORMWATER UTILITY IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

This session will help participants learn how to address the technical, political and other challenges to getting a stormwater utility ordinance enacted. Speakers will also discuss how this helps municipalities with their Watershed Improvement Plans. Representatives of Jersey Water Works Stormwater Utilities Committee and public officials will present.

Moderator: Dana Patterson Gear, Director of Marketing & Communications, Princeton Hydro.

Speakers: **Nancy Adams**, Council member and former Mayor, Maplewood Township. **Prabha Kumar**, Managing Director, Black & Veatch. **John Tully**, Supervisor of Engineering & IT, Supervisor of Stormwater Utility, Raritan Township.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

Public art can be a powerful vehicle for bringing people together and focusing their attention on subjects like environmental protection. Even more powerful is the process that creates the art. Meet environmental public artists who have created innovative environmental projects produced by the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.

Moderator: Danielle De Laurentis, Associate Director, NNJCF

Speakers: Environmental artists **Larissa Belcic**, **Paul Pinto**, **Julia Stein**, and **Juanli Carrión**.

TIME	SESSION
12:50 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch.



TIME

SESSION

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

BREAKOUT SESSIONS B

STRATEGIC CONVERSATION: MAKING THE HACKENSACK RIVER WATERSHED MORE SUSTAINABLE.

Making a More Sustainable Hackensack River Watershed: Through the Open Space or World Cafe community engagement model, participants will discuss issues and identify strategies for making the watershed more sustainable. The ideas will be noted, published and shared with public officials and environmental leaders in the area. This is a good session for anyone interested in learning more about community engagement techniques.

Moderator: Leonardo Vazquez, AICP/PP, Executive Director, Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.

HACKENSACK RIVER SUPERFUND CLEAN UP - UPDATES AND IMPACTS.

In 2022, the Lower Hackensack River was designated a Superfund site. EPA's Lower Hackensack River project team will discuss the approach to cleaning up the river and provide an update on the work conducted thus far, as well expectations for the near future.

Join this workshop to learn about the progress of the Superfund project and what this means for development and building along the river.

Session leaders: Jennifer LaPoma, Project Manager, US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2, **Josh Smeraldi**, Project Manager, US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2, **Brandon Holsten**, Project Manager, US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2, and **Drew Curtis**, Community Engagement Coordinator for US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2.

3:00 pm – 3:30 pm

WRAP-UP: WHAT NOW, WHAT'S NEXT?

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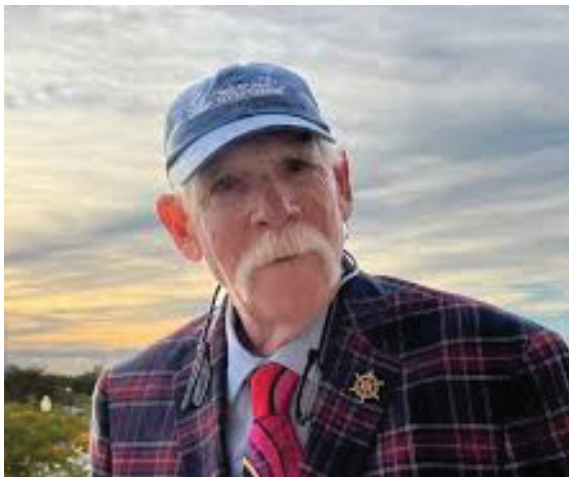
CAPTAIN BILL SHEEHAN

Hackensack Riverkeeper, Hackensack, NJ.

Growing up along the Hackensack River, Captain Bill Sheehan has witnessed decades of devastation and has dedicated his career to cleaning up the Hackensack River and its watershed. His journey to restore the Hackensack River and its watershed, which includes the Meadowlands—an essential east coast estuary—includes his startup of Hackensack Riverkeeper, Inc.. Captain Bill has served as the organizations Riverkeeper and Executive Director since 1997. Hackensack Riverkeeper, is one of the original founding members of the Waterkeeper Alliance, an international coalition of over 300 clean water advocates working for waterways across the globe. In the past, Bill has served on their Waterkeeper Council—one of the Alliance’s governing boards—as their Northeast Regional Representative.

Prior to joining forces with the Waterkeeper Alliance, Bill was a founding member of the Hackensack Estuary and River Tenders (HEART) organization. He is a lifetime member of the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association and in past years has served on their board as their Environmental Director. Captain Bill is a member and the current vice-chairman of the Bergen County Trust Fund Public Advisory Committee where he advises Bergen County Freeholders on funding recommendations for Open Space, Farmland, and Historic preservations. He is also the current chairman of the Meadowlands Conservation Trust, the agency charged with acquiring, holding and managing conservation properties in the Meadowlands and throughout the Hackensack River watershed. Captain Bill Sheehan and Hackensack Riverkeeper have been recognized for their work on numerous occasions by the media, government, and the environmental and business communities.

Captain Bill earned his US Coast Guard Master’s License in 1995. It is from the helm of a boat that Bill does his best work: advocating for, educating about, and patrolling the Hackensack River. When he is not conducting Eco-Cruises,



chairing meetings, or otherwise advocating for protection, preservation and restoration of the Hackensack River Watershed, Captain Bill enjoys rock and roll music, watching movies with his partner Mary Ellen, and (of course) casting a line into his favorite river.



BRANDON HOLSTEN

Project Manager, EPA Region 2 Superfund Program, Edison, NJ.

Brandon Holsten is a Project Manager for the EPA Region 2 Superfund Program, based out of the Edison, NJ office. Brandon manages the cleanup at the Pierson's Creek Superfund site, the Universal Oil Products Superfund site, and is one of the project managers for the Lower Hackensack River Superfund site and the Berry's Creek Study

Area portion of the Ventron/Velsicol site. Brandon received a B.S. in Biology from Furman University where he focused on ecology and political science. Before Brandon joined the EPA in early 2024, he worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in North Dakota and then joined the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection where he worked on several Superfund, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and Formerly Used Defense Sites.



DANA PATTERSON

Director of Marketing and Communications, Princeton Hydro.

Dana is a passionate environmental communicator who blends diverse stakeholder engagement with values-driven communication strategy. As Director of Marketing and Communications at Princeton Hydro, she focuses on branding, marketing, and digital media to elevate the organization's mission and values.

She believes communications has evolved beyond simply sharing information—communicators now play a vital role in connecting people through storytelling and building diverse networks. Dana earned her Master of Environmental Management from Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, where she focused on climate change and wildlife conservation communication. She has held digital media roles with organizations including the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, Yale Environment 360, and the National Audubon Society.

Before graduate school, she spent five years as a nonprofit community organizer and educator, driving environmental change across New Jersey communities. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Fairleigh Dickinson University, where she focused on converting waste vegetable oil into biodiesel. Dana is also an active volunteer, including with the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) New Jersey Post, which recently recognized her with an award.



CHRISTOPHER C. OBROPTA, PH.D., P.E.

Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences, Rutgers University.

Christopher C. Obropta, Ph.D., P.E. is the Extension Specialist in Water Resources with Rutgers Cooperative Extension, and he is a Professor with the Department of Environmental Sciences at the School of Environmental & Biological Sciences, Rutgers University. He has a doctorate in Civil Engineering from Stevens Institute of Technology, an M.S. in Civil Engineering from New Jersey Institute of Technology, and a B.S. in Civil Engineering from New Jersey Institute of Technology. Prior to joining Rutgers, Dr. Obropta was an environmental consultant for 12 years at Omni Environmental Corporation.

Dr. Obropta has a background in watershed management, water quality modeling, hydrologic and hydraulic modeling, and coastal engineering. His specific experience includes watershed restoration, onsite wastewater treatment system design and management, wasteload allocations and TMDL studies, stormwater management, wetland design, effluent dilution analyses, longshore sediment transport, computer-aided design, and geographic information systems (GIS). He teaches Bioresource Engineering Design I & II, where he directs student design teams to develop solutions to complex real-life engineering problems.



KERRY MARGARET BUTCH

Associate Director, Rutgers Center for Environmental & Disease (CEED).

Kerry Margaret Butch is the Associate Director of the Community Engagement Core at the Rutgers Center for Environmental & Disease (CEED). She focuses on uniting residents, researchers, and organizations to drive impactful environmental health research. With over thirty years of experience as a community organizer, advocate, and coalition builder in New Jersey, she previously served as the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey and the Asbury Park Consortium. Kerry is known for spearheading leadership training programs, including the "New Leaders Project," "I Dream a City," "Leading Green," and the Jersey City Environmental Health Community Leadership Training Program. A filmmaker, she produced the award-winning documentaries Greetings from Asbury Park and Storming for the Vote: Hurricane Sandy and the Election. She has also served on the board of the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance for nearly twenty years.



DREW CURTIS

Community Engagement Coordinator for EPA.

Drew Curtis is Community Engagement Coordinator for EPA Region 2. He serves as Community Involvement Coordinator for the Lower Hackensack River Superfund site, and multiple other Superfund sites throughout New Jersey, including the Diamond Alkali Superfund site, the Riverside Industrial Park Superfund site, and Ringwood Mines Superfund site. In this role, Drew is responsible

for ensuring community voices are heard and their thoughts are incorporated into site clean-ups. Drew came to EPA in 2023, after 13 years working for Ironbound Community Corporation in Newark, where he worked on addressing environmental and housing challenges, including serving on the Passaic River Community Advisory Group. He holds B.A. in history from Rutgers University and a M.S. in Urban Policy Analysis and Management from the New School University.



HILLARY GOLDBERG

Owner of HG Calculated Solutions.

Hillary Goldberg brings her expertise to the Teaneck Town Council, representing a legacy of community commitment spanning three generations. A proud graduate of Teaneck High School's Class of 2002, she combines deep roots with fresh perspectives in public service.

Hillary brings exceptional academic credentials to her public service, holding master's degrees in Public Administration, Accounting, and Business Administration. As owner of HG Calculated Solutions, a financial consulting firm, she combines professional expertise with community service.

Her comprehensive understanding of municipal finance and public policy provides valuable insight into town operations and planning. Her professional background enables her to approach municipal challenges with fiscal responsibility and innovative solutions.

As a Teaneck Council member, Hillary acts as liaison to the Parks, Playgrounds, and Recreation Advisory Board, Municipal Open Space Trust, and Environmental Commission. She also serves on the Zoning Subcommittee and Budget Subcommittee. Her initiatives focus on enhancing quality of life through improved recreational facilities, environmental sustainability, and transparent governance. Hillary's approach combines careful attention to community needs while planning for Teaneck's future generations.

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JENNIFER LAPOMA

Project Manager, EPA Region 2 Superfund Program, NYC.

Jennifer LaPoma is a Project Manager for the EPA Region 2 Superfund Program, based out of NYC office. Jennifer manages the cleanup process for multiple Superfund sites. She graduated with a Master of Science in geoscience from Montclair State University. Jennifer started her career in Region 2 in 2009 working primarily on whether sites are eligible for the National Priorities List. In 2011, she became a project manager and has since worked on several sediment Superfund sites including the Lower Hackensack, Diamond Alkali – Lower Passaic River, and the Hudson River. She is a NJ native – born in Belleville and grew up in Morris County, where she still lives with her family.

JOHN TULLY

Engineering Supervisor, Stormwater Utility Supervisor, IT Supervisor Raritan Township.

John Tully is a seasoned professional with over 20 years of experience in private land development and 9 years in municipal government. Currently employed by Raritan Township, John serves as the Engineering Supervisor, Stormwater Utility Supervisor, and IT Supervisor. He is also the Township Stormwater Program Coordinator, holding a certification from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). John's extensive background and diverse skill set make him a key asset in managing and enhancing the township's infrastructure and environmental initiatives.





JOSH SMERALDI

Project Manager, EPA Region 2 Superfund Program, Edison, NJ.

Josh Smeraldi is a Project Manager for the EPA Region 2 Superfund Program, based out of the Edison, NJ office. Josh manages the cleanup of the Riverside Industrial Park Superfund site and is one of the project managers for the Lower Hackensack River Superfund site and the Berry's Creek Study Area portion of the Ventron/Velsicol site. Josh received his Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental

Engineering at University of California, Irvine where he investigated the fate and transport of nanoscale particles in wastewater treatment processes. He worked at DC Water in Washington D.C. investigating methods to improve wastewater treatment efficiency. Josh started working for the EPA in 2014 at its headquarters in Washington DC where he assisted EPA regions with the cleanup of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contaminated sites and evaluated/approved destruction technologies for PCBs. Josh then transferred to the EPA Region 2 Superfund program to be a project manager in 2019.



JULIACKS

Writer, artist, and director of films, performances, plays, graphic novels and visual art.

Juliacks is a writer, artist, and director whose work spans films, performances, plays, graphic novels, and visual art. Using diverse forms—from comics and installations to public art—she creates narrative worlds that explore social issues through artistic and research-driven approaches.

Her graphic novel *Architecture of an Atom* is widely available, and her work has appeared in publications such as *Jaywalk Magazine*, *Lumpen Comics*, and *The Washington Square Review*. She has received fellowships and grants from the New Jersey Council of the Arts, the U.S. Citizen Diplomacy Fund, and the Fulbright Foundation, with public artworks exhibited internationally, including in Amsterdam and at Newark Penn Station. In 2023, she was commissioned by the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation and NJDEP to create *Flood Theater*.

Her films and performances have been shown at institutions such as MoMA PS1 and Moderna Museet, and she has lectured and led workshops at universities including Carnegie Mellon, SVA, and MICA, presenting her research at over 15 international conferences.



LARISSA BELCIC

Landscape architectural designer and artist, Co-Founding Director of Nocturnal Medicine.

Larissa Belcic is a landscape architectural designer and artist, and Co-Founding Director of Nocturnal Medicine, a nonprofit studio for cultural transformation and climate consciousness. Her interdisciplinary work brings together landscape architecture, experience design, sound, performance, and participatory social practice to address environmental and cultural healing.

She grew up on Lenape land in New Jersey between the Hudson and Hackensack Rivers, shaped by the region's industrial landscapes and her Italian-American and Istrian heritage. She holds a Master's in Landscape Architecture from Harvard and has worked across research and traditional practices (OFICINAA, TerreformONE, MBC Landscape Architecture), while also leading her own studio, Land of the Living. She has taught at the University of Pennsylvania, RISD, and Columbia, and lectures widely.

Through Nocturnal Medicine, she creates immersive experiences—from ecological grief rituals to public healing events—across venues including nightclubs, landscapes, cultural centers, and universities nationwide. Their work has been featured in The New York Times and Canada's Global News for its soul-centered approach to addressing the psycho-emotional impacts of ecological crisis.



JUANLI CARRIÓN

Creative Practitioner.

Juanli Carrión is a creative practitioner whose work is internationally recognized for his research, design and education of community engaged practices addressing social and environmental justice. As a maker and strategist, Juanli creates places, cooks meals, maps pollution, or facilitates workshops as tools to help communities grow. In 2017 Carrion co-founded OSS Project, a non-profit that builds gardens in public housing as platforms to empower

underrepresented groups, promoting economic and environmental resiliency. In 2023 he was awarded Van Alen Institute's Common Build Award for Whit Your Voice, a community engagement tool designed to inform and hear the Gowanus residents about the ongoing rezoning. Carrion has exhibited and worked with institutions such as the National Academy of Sciences and The Art Institute of Chicago in the US, Peru's Museum of Contemporary Art, India's National Gallery

of Modern Art or Servia's MOCA. With more than a decade teaching at public and private universities, including NYU and SUNY, over the past eight years Carrión dedicated his passion for pedagogy to The New School where he is an Assistant Professor of Strategic Design & Community Development, and where he has developed initiatives like the Creative Community Development Graduate Minor or courses like Resilient, Mutual Development. He also lectured, led workshops, and participated at Conferences at Columbia, Carnegie Mellon, SVA, Pratt Institute, AIA New York, Fordham, or Getty Foundation.



NANCY ADAMS

Board member of Downtown New Jersey.

Nancy Adams moved to Maplewood in 1989 with her husband and three young children and quickly became active in the community—first through local schools and the League of Women Voters of Maplewood and South Orange, where she served as President, and later as a District Leader with the Maplewood Democratic Committee. Her local activism began with efforts to improve Springfield Avenue, leading to her appointment to

the Township's Economic Development Commission. She went on to co-found the College Hill Neighborhood Association and helped establish the Springfield Avenue Partnership, serving on its Board and helping launch the town's first Special Improvement District.

A professional with over 25 years of experience in downtown revitalization, Ms. Adams is certified in Downtown Management by the National Main Street Center and serves on the board of Downtown New Jersey. Locally, she has been a member of the Maplewood Planning Board since 2010, advocating for thoughtful development and design.

Elected to the Township Committee in 2015 and reelected in 2018 and 2021, she served as Deputy Mayor in 2016 and 2017. Her work has focused on environmental initiatives, including restrictions on gas-powered leaf blowers and single-use plastics, as well as expanding tree planting and greener park practices. She has chaired multiple committees and served as liaison to several local boards and commissions.



NICOLE MILLER

Principal of MnM Consulting, Vice Chair of NJPEEC.

Nicole Miller, Principal of MnM Consulting, serves as the Vice Chair of NJPEEC, and is a communications professional with nearly two decades of experience creating targeted publicity and marketing campaigns for a range of clients in private industry and the non-profit sector.

MnM Consulting specializes in media development, digital and print publishing, brand strategy, content creation, and clean energy/sustainability education for business and general audiences. MnM Consulting works with several small business, government and non-profit clients on brand development, project management, event coordination and product deployment.

An appointee of the Governor serving on the Clean Buildings Working Group, Nicole Miller is a resident of Newark, NJ, a member of the Newark Environmental Commission advising the Mayor and City Council on sustainability issues, Chair of the Newark Green Team, Co-Chair of NewarkDIG (Doing Infrastructure Green) dedicated to resilient and sustainable municipal stormwater management and Co-Chair of the Jersey Water Works Steering Committee, a statewide coalition focused on improving NJ's aging water infrastructure.



PAUL PINTO

Composer.

Hailed by *The Wire* as “one of the most exceptional composers in new music, with a sensibility that can handle deadly seriousness and wicked humour” Paul Pinto is a multi-disciplinary dabbler who makes opera-theater, installation, video art and durational performance. Sometimes with his longtime friends thingNY and Varispeed. And sometimes alone in his bedroom. Some highlights include Meredith Monk’s *Indra’s Net*, *Patriots* with Jeff Young, Gelsey

Bell’s *μουνη*, Peter Maxwell Davies’ *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, the cyclorama video installation *Whiteness* with Kameron Neale, an ongoing re-arrangement of Robert Ashley’s *Perfect Lives*, and his first opera *Thomas Paine in Violence* with Joan La Barbara. He sang and danced on Broadway in Dave Malloy’s *Great Comet of 1812*, and created many tiny performances during the pandemic for Zoom, television, headphones and the U.S. mail. Recent projects include *Water Music*

(an album and soundwalk on Gold Bolus Recordings), *String Quartet No. 3 'Octet'* (for The Rhythm Method and Bergamot Quartets and four-channel video), *The All-Father* (a new take on Wagner's Ring Cycle), and the operatic monodrama *MANO A MANO* with director Kristin Marting. A child of immigrants, born and raised in Queens, Paul now proudly calls Jersey City his home, because that's where his wife, child, and vegetable garden are. pfpinto.com



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PRABHA KUMAR

Managing Director in Black & Veatch Corporation.

Ms. Prabha Kumar is a Managing Director in Black & Veatch Corporation and is the national practice leader for Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Utility Consulting services. She has 27 years of utility consulting experience and specializes in assisting municipalities with stormwater utility development, implementation, and post-implementation support.

She has significant expertise in stormwater utility programs, billing systems, and stakeholder engagement. She has assisted several large and small municipalities with stormwater utility services nationwide and regionally including the cities of Newark, NJ; Hoboken, NJ; Wilmington, DE; and Philadelphia, PA.

Ms. Kumar is the lead author for the chapter on “Stormwater Feasibility Study” in the “User Fee Funded Stormwater Program” guidance manual published by the Water Environment Federation (WEF). She is an active contributing member of the NJ Stormwater Utility Adhoc committee, a member of the Stormwater Funding and Finance Committee within WEF, and a member of the Legal and Regulatory Affairs committee of NACWA.



ELISHEVA (LIZ DAVIDOFF) CROWLEY

Program Officer, F.M. Kirby Foundation.

Liz Crowley is a philanthropy professional focusing on environmental justice, climate change mitigation, and public health. She is interested in using data-driven philanthropy, community engagement, and cross-sector collaboration to solve environmental and public health problems in the communities she serves. Liz manages and oversees \$1.6 million in annual conservation

and environmental justice grantmaking in New Jersey, North Carolina, and the Adirondacks. She also oversees a \$4 million human services budget, supporting over 100 social service organizations. She also has a background in redevelopment and housing.



RANDALL SOLOMON

Director of The Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey.

Randall Solomon is the Director of The Sustainability Institute at The College of New Jersey and the Executive Director of Sustainable Jersey. He has over 25 years of experience across government, academia, and the nonprofit sector and is one of the founders and leaders of the Sustainable Jersey Certification program.

Previously, he founded and directed the New Jersey Sustainable State Institute at Rutgers University, focused on expanding public decision-making capacity around sustainability. His experience also includes roles as a policy advisor on sustainable development for the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, director of the States Campaign for the Resource Renewal Institute in San Francisco, and policy director for New Jersey Future. He has also served as a national Park Ranger and was part of the inaugural AmeriCorps class.

He has served on advisory boards for federal and state agencies, civic organizations, and private companies, and frequently writes and speaks on sustainable development, energy and land use policy, and governance. He holds a B.S. in Biology from Stockton University and an M.S. in Public Policy from Rutgers University.



LISA SANDHUSEN

Councilwoman, Borough of New Milford, New Jersey.

Lisa Sandhusen has served as a Councilwoman for the Borough of New Milford, New Jersey since 2020, where she acts as liaison to the Environmental Commission and Green Team. A passionate public servant and environmental advocate, she holds a BS from Framingham State College and is currently enrolled in the Master of Arts in Public Leadership

program, a partnership between Elected Officials to Protect America (EOPA) and the University of San Francisco. Sandhusen brings a compassionate background in maternal wellness, having worked as a postpartum doula and prenatal fitness instructor. Under her environmental leadership, New Milford earned its Sustainable Jersey Bronze Certification, and the municipality was honored with the Sustainable NJ Rookie of the Year Award in 2021 for its achievement in reaching Bronze level. She serves as a member of the Steering Committee for the Hackensack River Nation and has championed community initiatives ranging from youth sports affordability to women's health advocacy.



BENNY ROE

Research Project Coordinator I.

Engineer, graduated from Rutgers University in May 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering. He interned with the Water Resources Program from June 2021 to May 2022. His work consisted of assisting with the design, construction, and maintenance of green infrastructure projects all over New Jersey.

Before working at the Water Resources Program full time, Benny worked in consulting engineering.

This experience included environmental sampling, air quality monitoring, and construction observation. He is enrolled in the Rutgers University Bioenvironmental Engineering master's program as a part time student while working full time for the Water Resources Program. Benny's work focuses on creating engineering designs, modeling hydraulic systems, and assisting with the coordination of green infrastructure projects.



TALINE KELLY

Research Project Coordinator I.

Engineer, graduated in May 2025 from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a minor in Environmental Policy, Institutions, and Behaviors. She interned with the Water Resources Program from January 2025 to May 2025 and transitioned to full-time staff in September 2025. As an intern, she assisted in the completion of various rain garden designs for NJ municipalities.

Before joining the Water Resources Program, she interned for several engineering firms in bridge design, land development, and power engineering. Taline is currently enrolled in the Rutgers University 4+1 Civil Engineering master's program with a focus in Structural Engineering. Her work focuses on designing and implementing stormwater best management practices for New Jersey municipalities as well as helping municipalities to ensure compliance with MS4 permit requirements.



GILLIAN MULVOY

Research Project Coordinator I.

Engineer, graduated in May 2024 from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering and a Bachelor of Art in Political Science.

Prior to working for the Water Resources Program, Gillian interned with the Environmental Protection Agency in Enforcement and Compliance of Lead-Based Paint and Pesticides. Gillian is currently enrolled in the Rutgers University 4+1

Bioenvironmental Engineering master's program. Her work focuses on helping New Jersey municipalities design and implement stormwater management projects through the MS4 permit.

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ALRICK A. RODRIGUEZ-PEREZ

Program Associate I.

Landscape Architect, graduated in May 2024, from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture. Alrick began as an intern in June 2023 and transitioned to full-time staff in October 2024. As an intern, Alrick worked on conceptual green infrastructure master plans, concept visualization, rain garden planting design, and rain garden plantings.

Alrick's work with the Water Resources Program focuses on preparing green infrastructure concept and preliminary designs and associated planting plans, impervious cover reduction plans, green infrastructure feasibility studies, and educational/outreach materials as well as assisting with coordinating water resources Extension efforts in New Jersey



BRENDON A. OPILAC

Research Project Coordinator I.

Engineer, graduated in May 2025 from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering. Before joining full-time, he interned with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program, RS&H, and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, gaining experience in green infrastructure design, stormwater management, and environmental compliance. At RS&H, Brendon focused on

designing stormwater control systems for transportation infrastructure, while his time with NJDEP's Pesticide Control Program involved environmental data management.

He is currently pursuing a master's degree in Environmental Engineering at Rutgers University while working full time with the Water Resources Program. His work focuses on designing and modeling green infrastructure projects, conducting field inspections of stormwater management systems, and reviewing engineering permit applications to ensure compliance with environmental regulations.



ALENA BRAYSHAW

Research Project Coordinator I.

Engineer, graduated in May 2024 from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering.

Before joining the Water Resources Program, she worked at a wastewater treatment plant, assisting with the project management of ongoing engineering projects in the design and construction phase such as an anaerobic digestion project.

Alena is currently enrolled in the Rutgers University Environmental Engineering master's program as a part-time student and works full-time for the Water Resources Program. Her work focuses on designing and implementing stormwater management, helping municipalities in the state meet their MS4 permit requirements.





LEONARDO VAZQUEZ

Executive Director, Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.

Leonardo Vazquez, AICP/PP has more than 30 years of experience in community economic development, creative placemaking, and leadership development. He has a track record of building diverse alliances and teams to address critical issues facing communities.

Leo coordinates Hackensack River Nation, an alliance of more than 40 leaders representing municipalities, nonprofit organizations and businesses who seek to protect the Hackensack River Watershed ecosystem and connect more people to the Hackensack River. He also developed the Hackensack Environmental Justice Alliance, a resident-led group of more than 230 people seeking to address flooding and other environmental problems facing the city. Through the Foundation's Green Infrastructure for Environmental Justice initiative, Leo led the creation of a rain garden, public information activities, and a public art project. He is developing a green infrastructure plan to reduce flooding, reduce water pollution, and address heat island effects in Hackensack.

In 2024, the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation received an Environmental Achievement Award from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions.



DANIELLE DE LAURENTIS

Associate Director, The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.

Danielle De Laurentis has been directing programs and funds at The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation (NNJCF) for over a decade. She is involved in all aspects of the organization, working to improve community life in the Northern NJ region by galvanizing and connecting people around important issues, such as mental health, pediatric obesity, gentrification, civil rights, downtown

revitalization, and environmental protection. She also leads ArtsBergen, NNJCF's regional arts initiative to strengthen the arts community and connect communities to the arts.

Danielle is a graduate of Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy's Master Practitioner in Creative Placemaking intensive year-long

program. She continues to champion creative placemaking, leading the public and community-based art work of the Foundation to integrate art and culture into municipal planning, address critical issues, and honor lesser-heard voices in communities. Under her direction, NNJCF has become a leading organization producing public art in Bergen County. She has overseen large-scale installations such as The Black Women's Mural, celebrating the role of Black suffragists in the passing of the 19th Amendment, Flood Theater, a co-created site-specific installation to raise awareness of the devastation of severe area flooding, and The Demarest Place Mural revitalizing an underused alleyway while branding civic pride. She is passionate about both the participatory art process and creating interactive public art that instills belonging and encourages play and connection.



ROBERT LAUMBACH MD, MPH

Associate Professor, Rutgers School of Public Health.

Robert Laumbach MD, MPH is an Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health the Rutgers School of Public Health, where his research is centered on the cumulative impacts of multiple chemical and nonchemical stressors on health, focusing on the ways air and water pollution interact with other stressors in overburdened communities across New Jersey.

He directs community outreach and engagement for the NIEHS Center for Environmental Exposures and Disease (CEED) at the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI), where he facilitates bidirectional communication between scientists and communities as well as community-engaged research. Dr. Laumbach's research with communities has had a direct impact on local policy, supporting a city ordinance that resulted in an 86% reduction in truck traffic and an 80% reduction in black carbon and ultrafine particle counts.

He currently leads a study investigating the health effects of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a.k.a. "forever chemicals," that contaminated the municipal drinking water in Paulsboro NJ. Dr. Laumbach also maintains clinical practice in environmental and occupational medicine at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. At today's event, Dr. Laumbach will co-lead an e-connect roundtable for open dialogue with community members and organizations about what EOHSI and CEED have to offer, from research partnerships and environmental health resources to community outreach opportunities.

THANK YOU, FRIENDS OF



We appreciate all the friends who helped design, promote and provided other help to make this Summit successful.

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- Hackensack Riverkeeper
- Jersey Water Works
- Rutgers University Cooperative Extension Service Water Resources Program
- New Milford Councilwoman Lisa Sandhusen
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