

2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FAIR HAVEN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION (“FHEC”)

2023 Commission Members

Brian Rice, Chairman
Jessie Murray, Vice Chairwoman
Kelly Flanagan
Ralph Wyndrum

Gary Patterson
Michal DiMiceli
Jonathan Peters
Brian Olson

Liaison - Councilwoman Tracy Cole

Borough Secretary to FHEC - Krystie Larsen

Mission: *The Environmental Commission promotes an environmental, ecological conservation and natural resources program for the Borough of Fair Haven. The Commission has the power to study and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council concerning open space preservation, water resources management, air pollution control, solid waste management, noise control, soil and landscape protection and protection of flora and fauna.*

The FHEC is a policy body that regards all open spaces in Fair Haven. Recent works and recommendations are as follows:

1. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE INVENTORY (“ERI”): Plans are underway for a complete revision of the 2017 edition, to create an environmental planning document for use by the Borough. Professional services will be needed to facilitate this process— ***this is a primary goal for 2024 and will require professional services.*** (Murray)
2. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT: Stormwater management, with a green infrastructure approach within the Borough is a priority of FHEC, including creating Fair Haven’s water story. (Murray, DiMiceli)
3. SHORELINE MANAGEMENT: FHEC is working with the American Littoral Society regarding a living shoreline at Williams, Albert and Robards Park, which provides resiliency and helps stabilize the shoreline. It is a nature-based solution vs. a bulkhead and is better for the ecosystem. The shoreline at the park is fairly stable; the main issue is the degrading of the coastal bluff, which is a 45-degree steep bluff. The Commission sent a memo to the Governing Body with its recommendation to resurrect this project and seek funding for the following components: rain gardens, a living shoreline and stormwater management solutions. (Rice, Murray)
4. GREEN TEAM COLLABORATION: Fair Haven achieved Sustainable Jersey Silver Status in 2022 and was recognized for this prestigious award which is given for municipal use of sustainable environmental practices. The Green Team continues to be involved in many Fair Haven projects including: Love Where You Live Day, Third Street Trail Pollinator Garden, Sport Equipment Swap, Junior Green Team and Rain Garden at Knollwood School, Bike Walk and Roll to School Day at Sickles and Knollwood Schools. (Flanagan, DiMiceli)
5. McCARTER POND: FHEC made a recommendation to the Governing Body to Hydro-rake McCarter Pond to remove the last decade’s rotting remains of each year’s crop of vegetation. FHEC is eager to see the results of the hydro-raking project. (Rice/Wyndrum)

6. DEER MITIGATION: NJDEP Fish and Wildlife employees toured areas of Fair Haven to evaluate the Borough's forest health relating to deer overpopulation. They assessed areas of Fair Haven Fields that can hold hunters and discussed hunting program options with FHEC. FHEC recommends that Council evaluate deer mitigation program options. (Patterson, Rice)
7. NAVESINK RIVER: The Navesink River is meeting its current classification and is still continuing to improve. NJDEP is adding two water quality monitoring stations to help determine a boundary to upgrade the *Restricted* waters west of the Oceanic Bridge to *Conditionally Approved*. NJDEP will also be removing the small suspension area around Station 1013C, since it now meets winter criteria. If the data continues to support the potential for upgrading a portion of *Restricted* waters to Conditional, it will be made effective at the next rule change. FHEC recommended a StormX system to be placed at the end of the outflow pipe off the Fair Haven Dock. The StormX is a netting system designed to capture floatables and pollutants and handle stormwater runoff. FHEC has shared additional educational resources about the importance of Stormwater Management and various water quality measures that residents can incorporate on their own properties and backyards. (Rice)
8. FAIR HAVEN PARTNERSHIPS: An Environmental Roundtable was created in 2022 and will continue quarterly to collaborate and discuss open spaces in Fair Haven. The agenda includes a prioritization of projects, maintenance and best practices. This will help the Environmental Commission update the Borough's foundational Environmental Resource Inventory and form an action plan for 2024 and beyond. (Rice)

Friends of FHEC

Harding Bird Sanctuary, Lee Davidson

The Garden Club has been the supervisor of the Bird Sanctuary since the 1950's when the land was given to the town. According to a consultant from Rutgers University the sanctuary is one of the few virgin woods left in NJ. Because the Bird Sanctuary is on the Borough's open space listing it is protected and can not be used in a Green Acres land swap or developed. In 2024 the Garden Club maintains the Bird Sanctuary by doing the following.

- At least 5 times a year the Bird Sanctuary committee walks through the sanctuary. They pick up trash, trim branches away from the trails and report any vandalism to the town.
- We maintain the gardens we planted at the entrance to the sanctuary.
- A current donation from a local family will provide bird houses in the sanctuary. The donation was given in memory of a family member who likes birds.

Third Street Trail, Mark Olson and Bonnie Torcivia

Third Street Trail ("TST") is a land reclamation project driven by a small group of volunteers with a long-term goal to improve the trees on this public land. Goals:

- Continue the restoration of TST by removing invasive vines and shrubs and planting native trees
- Establish new trails in the south/west section
- Finish planting the Pollinator Garden using Green Team grant funds, donated native plants and volunteers
- Community involvement aimed at inspiring future conservationists and stewardship of our natural areas and tree canopy
- Provide an opportunity for meaningful service hours for students

Action Plan:

- 1) Quarterly Volunteer Clean up days beginning in Feb (request DPW assistance in off season)
- 2) Semi-annual Volunteer Tree planting - spring (Arbor Day) and late fall
- 3) Professional tree removal for leaning/dead trees if we can secure funding
- 4) Purchase of native trees using sponsors/donations
- 5) Collaboration with Green Team, Environmental Commission, Administration and other town groups

Fair Haven Natural Area Advisory Committee ("FHNAAC"), Carolyn Ferguson

- 1) FHNAAC has requested curbs on Fair Haven Road along the cherry tree area to prevent erosion in the Natural Area (requested in 2022 and 2023 annual reports).
- 2) Northwest Area Restoration. At the beginning of 2023, this area was taken over by invasives, was impassable, and could not be safely used. During 2023, at the recommendation of the FHFNAAC, \$20,000 of Community Appeal donations to FHNAAC were used to clear the area. Plan for 2024: Continue the restoration of this area using the restoration plan from Monmouth County Parks, which has been shared with FHFNAAC and the DPW. Summary:
 - a. Expert from Monmouth County Parks to present plan to Borough Council
 - b. Encircle the restoration area with a trail to create a buffer zone
 - c. Mow the restoration area in March 2024
 - d. Plant the restoration area w with a native grass mixture + cover crop.(request grass seed in DPW budget) in April 2024
 - e. Spot treat re-emerging invasives with broadleaf herbicides (request herbicides in DPW budget) in June 2024
- 3) Collaborate with Borough government and Boro committees to celebrate 50-year anniversary of Fair Haven Fields
- 4) Devise a plan to address the ongoing damage to the Natural Area being caused by deer overpopulation in the area

FHEC Goals for 2024

1. Budget Request: FHEC requests a 2% increase in its operational budget to cover ANJEC membership and additional Green Team projects. Additionally, FHEC requests a Municipal Budget fund allotment for professional services to update the Environmental Resource Inventory.
2. Council Request: The Commission requests that the Borough produce a map of all Fair Haven's open spaces and natural resources, which is expressly stated as one of the Commissions powers in the ordinance. The map should be Borough property - produced by our professionals and accepted by FHEC and the Governing Body.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Rice, Chairman