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New Jersey Clean Communities Report to the Governor and Legislature March 1, 2021

The Report to the Governor and Legislature highlights the activities of the NJ Clean Communities Council with special attention to contracts SW19-004 and SW20-006, as required by law. The budget report for SW19-004 is included in this report.

Background

New Jersey Clean Communities is a statewide, comprehensive litter abatement program that incorporates a network of 558 municipalities and 21 counties. Created by the passage of the Clean Communities Act in 1986, the program spans three decades-- from the writing and passage of the Act in the 1980s; to the struggle to maintain the program in spite of severe statewide budget cuts in the 1990s, and the sunset of the program in the year 2000; to the resolution of the struggle on December 20, 2002 with the passage of the Clean Communities Act. The 2002 Clean Communities Act provided funding for a nonprofit solely dedicated to litter abatement education to administer the educational and administrative elements of the program lost in the 1990s. Funding for the program increased in the fall of 2020 with the passage of legislation that bans paper and plastic bags, and appropriates money from the Clean Communities Program Fund to be used for a "Choose to Reuse" re-use educational campaign.

Since 2002, the nonprofit designated to administer the program has been the NJ Clean Communities Council, Inc. Clean Communities Council also administers New Jersey's Adopt-a-Beach and Adopt-a-Highway programs. While the administration of New Jersey's Adopt-a-Highway program is not part of the council's contract with NJDEP, it is interesting to note that in the seven years of the program, 5968 volunteers cleaned up 1352 miles of state highways, picking up 5984 bags of trash and 1846 bags of recyclables. The dedication of groups committed to keeping New Jersey clean, continues even in trying circumstances.

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Accomplishments



Choose to Reuse:

During 2020, the Clean Communities Council partnered with the NJ Food Council to promote the use of reusable bags instead of plastic or paper. Then on November 20, 2020, Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation that bans single-use plastic and paper in New Jersey and appropriates \$500,000 in each of three years from the Clean Communities Program Fund for a public education campaign. Funding is earmarked for the Clean Communities Council.

Rise to the Challenge:

The Clean Communities Council was fraught with challenges during 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic crippled the state. Restrictions imposed by COVID-19 virtually eliminated volunteer cleanups which are the crux of the statewide litter abatement program. Along with the suspension of cleanups came the proliferation of litter, exacerbated by discarded masks, plastic gloves and other paraphernalia associated with COVID-19. It was only in July of 2020, municipalities and counties were permitted to resume cleanup activities, on the condition that CDC guidelines were followed and that the cleanups were the responsibility of sponsoring agencies, and not the state.

The council created a *Rise to the Challenge* awards program to honor those who helped reduce litter during the pandemic. Six entities were honored with awards:

The Association of NJ Environmental Commissions, *Single Use Plastics & The Pandemic*

Borough of Union Beach, *Mini Cleanups*

Cape May Ferry Green Team, *COVID Cleanup and Education*

City of Bayonne, *Dispose of gloves and Masks Properly*

Township of Wyckoff, *COVID Compliant Team*

Jennifer O'Sullivan, Hunterdon County, *3rd Annual Delaware River Cleanup*

Stephanie Fox, D&R Canal State Park, *3rd Annual Delaware River Cleanup*

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Kathy Klink, Delaware Township, *3rd Annual Delaware River Cleanup*

Ryan Rollero, West Amwell Township, *3rd Annual Delaware River Cleanup*



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 program. 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. Rutgers reports that, since the start of the certification program in 2015, 653 people have attended one or more sessions of the initial (three-day) certification training, 520 people have completed the program and approximately 50% of those have maintained their certification over time. Individuals who completed the program in 2020 will need to recertify by December 31, 2022 in order to maintain their certification. In light of the current pandemic, the decision was made to extend the deadline for individuals whose certification expired on 12/31/20 to 12/31/21.

Best Practices

The most significant contribution to the state program since its inception in 1986 may be the Best Practices in Clean Communities Manual, available online at 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, including vendor lists, summary of litter-related educators and books, model programs and creative ideas. It has been revised, edited and “added to” in each of 15 consecutive years and was recently modified to add Covid-19 model language, waivers and graphics.

The Best Practices Committee expanded its scope of work in the fall of 2019 when committee members organized the first annual Best Practices Seminar. The seminar was held in conjunction with Rutgers OCPE. The seminar was not held in 2020 due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

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. Clean Communities Environmental Student Exchange (CCESE)

The Clean Communities Council is proud of the Clean Communities Environmental Student Exchange (CCESE), which took place year on March 21-22, 2019 in Brigantine. This annual event brings together students from different regions of state. Students work together to solve environmental problems, as they learn about each other and the region in which the event takes place. Unfortunately, CCESE 2020 was cancelled due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Clean Communities Spring Conference

A signature event of the Clean Communities Council has been a three-day conference that has taken place in each of 16 consecutive years just before the Memorial Day weekend, attracting as many as 3,000 people. The conference aimed to educate coordinators about litter-related topics, showcase the region in which the conference is held, and honor those who have contributed to a cleaner New Jersey. The last conference was held in Mercer County in May of 2019. The conference was cancelled in 2020 due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Adopt-a-Beach

Clean Communities Council assumed responsibility for New Jersey's Adopt-a-Beach program in the spring of 2011. This popular program attracts thousands of volunteers every year who clean rivers, lakes, streams, and beaches. Adopt-a-Beach is driven by the 1992 Adopt-a-Beach Act which requires the state (or its designee) to organize two volunteer beach cleanups every year. The Council promotes the Clean Water Challenge from March 1- April 30 each year and supports the International Coastal Cleanup during the fall of every year. The Council provides supplies for waterway cleanups and collects data. The Adopt-a-Beach program was suspended during 2020 due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Data Collection

In accordance with the 2002 Clean Communities Act, the Council collects municipal and county statistical reports and maintains a database of information to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature. The Council's online reporting system provides an accurate tracking system than the previously implemented manual input of data. The online reporting system was developed by the Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA). The ACUA maintains the backup database and provides technical assistance to the Clean Communities Council.

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The statistical reporting period for report year 2019 was extended from June 30, 2020 to December 31, 2020 due to the pandemic. As a result, there was a large influx of extension requests in the month of December. The reports for all years continue to come in, and to date, there are currently over 5,000 reports on file for all years. This number reflects both open (incomplete) and submitted (completed) reports for all counties/municipalities. Over 600,000 volunteers participated in over 360,000 cleanups, cleaning over 980,000 miles and over 1.4 million acres of public property. Over 1.2 million tons of debris have been collected to date, and over 700,000 recycling tons were also collected. Approximately 31,500 citations and violations have been issued. Due to the ongoing safety concerns related to COVID-19, cleanup activities throughout the state have been canceled and/or rescheduled, resulting in a significant decrease in reporting for report year 2019 and only a slight change from last quarter's number.

Statistical Report Data (Close of Report Year 2019)

REPORT FIELDS	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Reports Collected	545	539	528	495	426	436	283
Cleanups	35,878	45,933	39,040	35,886	34,888	34,060	22,564
Volunteers	35878	45,933	73,892	73,462	66,809	72,719	32,841
Trash Picked Up Tons	48,372	48,733	37,940	41,952	36,571	34,060	11,160
Trash Recycled Tons	54,469	69,036	49,524	66,123	63,998	18,450	7,175
Road Miles Cleaned	95,487	106,865	108,808	106,565	97,082	93,035	54,933
Acres Cleaned	99,368	250,417	227,289	123,833	91,837	42,501	42,113
Citations	7,539	6,835	8,039	11,977	19,503	3,944	2,339
Violations	20,460	20,533	24,691	22,610	11,718	10,350	24,462
Programs	3,480	3,252	3,014	3,453	2,618	1,969	3,152
People Reached	482,825	807,416	632,033	770,207	438,514	434,614	642,062

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Media & Advertising

The passage of the 2008 Recycling Enhancement Act amended the Clean Communities Act, providing 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, 2020-21 is being considered a solid year for media relations, despite the restrictions of COVID 19 that cancelled all in-person events, clean-ups, seminars and other media opportunities that traditionally gather exposure for the NJCCC. Between April 1, 2020 and January 31, 2021, there were 64 earned news articles appearing in statewide media about the work of the Council. This was 97 less placements than the previous reporting year, attributed to cancellation of events.

In addition, this reporting year, the firm continued the "Choose to Reuse NJ" campaign, which followed the public relations work regarding the statewide Visual Litter survey in 2017 and 2018. This time, the message focused on the need for communities statewide to address COVID-related litter and publicized award winners through the NJCCC's "Rise to the Challenge" awards. Jaffe Communications is working closely with NJCCC as part of roll-out of a statewide education campaign, following the successful passage of the plastic and paper bag ban, signed by the governor in 2020.

. Budget Report

The Budget Report reflects the close-out of contract SW19-004. The 2020 Budget Report will be available following the closeout of SW20-006, no later than December 31, 2021.

Budget Report (SW19-004)

Consultants	69,000.00
Rent	26,000.00
Telephone	3,000.00
Insurance	9,000.00
Postage	1,000.00
Supplies	3,000.00
Equipment	00.00
Printing	5,000.00
Special Events	86,000.00
Travel	6,000.00
Miscellaneous	2,000.00
Salaries & Expenses	165,000.00
Total	375,000.00

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