

SUSTAINABILITY HEROES

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New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Catherine McCabe, Debbie Mans, Paul Baldauf, Athena Sarafides, Jennifer Feltis Cortese, Steven Rinaldi, Helaine Barr, Tanya Oznowich and Elizabeth Semple

Sustainable Jersey Celebrates a Decade of Impact: This year, Sustainable Jersey turns ten. To celebrate this milestone, Sustainable Jersey is spotlighting the people, organizations, businesses and agencies that have been a part of our evolution. The [New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection](#) (NJDEP) is one of our original partners that helped create, and now continues to support, Sustainable Jersey. With a staff of approximately 2,900 people, NJDEP is a national leader in pollution prevention efforts and innovative environmental management strategies. From the very first Sustainable Jersey planning meeting, NJDEP staff have been at the table to develop and guide policy while integrating Sustainable Jersey into NJDEP’s existing programs.

Sustainable Jersey is supported by nineteen issue-based task forces that research and disseminate best practices, translate global and state imperatives into local actions, test sustainability planning models and develop community resources. NJDEP provides dedicated staff who support Sustainable Jersey by participating on the task forces and reviewing select certification action submissions. NJDEP staff share their expertise at Sustainable Jersey free trainings and webinars and speak at events like the New Jersey Sustainability Summit.

Sustainable Jersey values the expertise and dedication of all of our partners at NJDEP. A special thank you is due to the sustainability heroes who have been a part of Sustainable Jersey’s #DecadeofImpact including Catherine McCabe, Debbie Mans, Paul Baldauf, Athena Sarafides, Jennifer Feltis Cortese, Steven Rinaldi, Helaine Barr, Tanya Oznowich and Elizabeth Semple.

Athena Sarafides has led sustainability efforts in New Jersey for over three decades. In February 2019, Athena retired from NJDEP after 32 years of service. Athena was part of the original committee of leaders that launched Sustainable Jersey in 2009. As a NJDEP representative, she participated in the Mayors Committee for a Green Future and the subsequent Sustainable Jersey Board of Trustees as an ex officio member. At NJDEP, she focused on sustainability, green design, climate, energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste reduction and recycling.



Athena explained, “Sustainable Jersey provides tremendous benefits to agencies like NJDEP and organizations in New Jersey because it puts all of the programs and resources in one place that is easy for people to access and use.” She added, “For a long time, I was making the rounds talking to communities about sustainability and I think people got stuck on the term ‘sustainability.’ Sustainable Jersey breaks sustainability down into ‘People, Planet and Prosperity,’ which helps people find an entry point for getting involved.” As the former co-chair of the Sustainable Jersey Green Design Task Force, Athena led the development of the first slate of actions including [Green Building Policy/Resolution](#), [Create a Green Development](#)

[Checklist](#) and more. She also chaired the Sustainable Jersey Waste Management Task Force where she led the development of the first slate of actions including [Recycling Depot](#) and [Materials Reuse Program](#).

Catherine R. McCabe was appointed the NJDEP Commissioner on January 22, 2018. Her distinguished career has included government service, both in environmental law and science. Most recently, Commissioner McCabe served as U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Deputy Region 2 Administrator in New York City. In that position, Commissioner McCabe assisted the regional administration in overseeing operations and regional implementation of all EPA programs in New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Commissioner McCabe is leading NJDEP to make progress on ambitious environmental goals for New Jersey – addressing the effects of climate change being felt along the Jersey shore, building a clean energy economy with well-paying green jobs and restoring the state’s participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative with the intention of having New Jersey reach 100 percent clean energy by 2050.



Paul D. Baldauf, P.E. has served as the assistant commissioner for NJDEP’s Air Quality, Energy and Sustainability (AQES) Program since 2016. In this role, Paul is responsible for the management and oversight of two divisions: Air Quality and Energy Security and Sustainability. Paul serves on the Sustainable Jersey Board of Trustees as an ex officio member. Paul commented, “Ten years after Sustainable Jersey’s launch, New Jersey communities understand what sustainability means and have the tools to implement programs that help achieve sustainability, including waste, energy and water reduction; provide services that enrich the arts and support their local economy. The Sustainable Jersey actions and associated tools created to support these efforts are reproducible and have resulted in increased public involvement in environmental action.” Paul joined NJDEP in 1987 as an engineer in the water quality program and transitioned into the radiation protection and release prevention element in 2003 where he rose to the level of Director of Environmental Safety and Health in 2010. Paul became the Director of AQES’s Division of Energy Security and Sustainability in 2015.



Debbie Mans is the NJDEP deputy commissioner; she joined the agency in February 2018. Debbie has extensive experience both in government and with environmental organizations. For almost ten years, she served as Baykeeper and executive director of the NY/NJ Baykeeper, a conservation organization that works to protect, preserve and restore the Hudson-Raritan Estuary. Prior to joining Baykeeper, she served as environmental and energy policy advisor to then-Governor Jon S. Corzine and assisted in the development of a State Energy Master Plan, charting clean energy plans through 2020. With a commitment to clean energy and conservation, Debbie is helping NJDEP lead the nation in developing solutions to such critical issues as climate change and renewable energy. Debbie said “Sustainable Jersey is an important way to drive environmental improvements at the local level. The addition of actions and standards to reflect the diversity of New Jersey's communities is an important step. We need to ensure that New Jersey is on a path to clean energy and sustainability, while also protecting public health, cleaning up polluted sites, and conserving our natural resources.”



Jennifer Feltis Cortese, AICP has served a variety of roles at NJDEP since 2007. Her work consists primarily of regional and state planning initiatives, water resources management coordination activities and environmental justice. Jennifer leads and has led since 2008, the Sustainable Jersey Natural Resources Task Force that covers a large array of topics including water, land use, trees, conservation and habitat. Jennifer is also leading the Sustainable Jersey Water Gold



Committee. In this role with Sustainable Jersey, she is leading the effort to develop the Gold Star in Water which will identify the specific actions and levels of performance that municipalities can and must achieve for us to reach our goals for a sustainable New Jersey. The Water Gold Committee is developing new actions and revising old actions and will be integrating them into a Gold Star Standard for Water. Jennifer said, "Sustainable Jersey has played a large part in my career at NJDEP. It has been an honor and a privilege to have been entrusted with the "task" of leading the Natural Resources Task Force for so many years and now the Water Gold Committee. The volunteers that take part in these task forces have not only provided valuable input into actions but are a great inspiration about what can be accomplished in New Jersey."

Steven Rinaldi is a research scientist in NJDEP's Bureau of Energy and Sustainability and has worked to advance recycling in New Jersey for the past 32 years. Steven has been involved in all aspects of recycling, including legislative implementation, rulemaking, market and program development, grant management and education and promotion. He also coordinates NJDEP's [New Jersey WasteWise Business Network](#), a no-cost program designed to help businesses and other organizations learn how waste reduction, recycling and recycled product procurement help the environment and their bottom line. In this role, he works closely with Sustainable Jersey on recycling issues and develops educational and promotional initiatives on behalf of recycling. Steven serves on the Sustainable Jersey Waste Management Task Force and helped develop the [Sustainable Jersey Gold Star Standard in Waste](#). Steven said, "It has been a pleasure working with Sustainable Jersey staff over the years to advance waste reduction, recycling and other sustainable strategies in New Jersey."



Helaine Barr, AICP is a research scientist in NJDEP's Bureau of Energy and Sustainability; her responsibilities include coordinating the New Jersey Sustainable Business Registry, supporting New Jersey's reentry into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and assisting communities in sustainability initiatives. The [New Jersey Sustainable Business Registry](#) is a no-cost, voluntary program that recognizes and promotes sustainable businesses in New Jersey. Prior to joining NJDEP, Helaine worked for Philadelphia's Green City, Clean Waters program. Helaine said, "Sustainable Jersey is an important program that provides on-the-ground support for local communities to make measurable progress on tackling the most pressing issues of our time, like climate change." Helaine attends the Sustainable Jersey Board of Trustees meetings and serves on the Sustainable Jersey Municipal Certification Standards Committee and the Sustainable Jersey Local Economies Task Force.



Tanya Oznowich has served as the NJDEP Environmental Education Supervisor for over thirty years. Guided by a love of the natural environment, Tanya has spent her career raising awareness and integrating environmental education into schools, communities and homes. With Tanya's help, schools across New Jersey are incorporating environmental education into their curriculum from kindergarten through college.

Tanya participated in the formation of the Sustainable Jersey program when it was launched in 2009 and is now active in the [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) program. She is the co-chair of the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Student Learning Task Force and a thought leader in the field of Education for Sustainability. Tanya also serves on the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Standards Committee.



"Sustainable Jersey for Schools is a strong motivating force that I am grateful to have based in New Jersey," said Tanya. "It offers more than 90 actions where schools can earn points, and most of these provide opportunities to integrate student learning with school and community-based actions." In addition, there are numerous actions that call for the

integration of sustainability into classroom learning across a broad range of disciplines, from art and social studies to science and technology.” She added, “Other national sustainability certification programs such as the U.S. Green Ribbon Schools program and Eco-Schools USA, are also vehicles for integrating student learning into school sustainability initiatives and I am glad that NJDEP works cooperatively with all of them.”

Elizabeth Semple has worked at NJDEP for over 30 years in various leadership positions. Liz is currently the manager of the new Office of Climate Resilience (OCR) in the NJDEP Commissioner’s Office. OCR is serving as a “hub” responsible for coordinating the climate change resilience and adaptation work that is going on in many programs across the NJDEP. OCR also will be responsible for engaging with other state departments and agencies to coordinate and improve the State’s climate change planning. Liz contributed to the development and launch of Sustainable Jersey in 2009 and participated in the original Mayors Committee for a Green Future. Liz is the co-chair of the Sustainable Jersey Climate Adaptation Task Force and works closely with Sustainable Jersey on resiliency efforts.



NJDEP Staff Participating on Sustainable Jersey Task Forces: Sustainable Jersey is strengthened by the NJDEP staff that administer and participate in Sustainable Jersey task forces. Thank you to: Armando Alfonso, Nick Angarone, Ky Asral, Edward Bakos, Anthony Bevacqua, Scott Brubaker, Joe Carpenter, Kimberly Cenzo, Ryan Chumley, Rupa Deshmukh, Tracy Fay, Andrea Friedman, Monique Girona Biswarup Guha, Peg Hanna, Karl Hartkopf, Erin Hill, Amy Hillman, Bob Kettig, Ken Komar, Anita Kopera, Bill Lindner, Amanda Lotto, Greg McLaughlin, Kelley Meccia, Alan Miller, Steve Myers, Rachel Orobono-Stopper, Riche Outlaw, Jerry Palmer, Kelly Pflücke, Jorge Reyes, Katie Ribsam, Marc Rogoff, Carrie Sargeant, Rob Schell and Andrea Tingey.

