

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

January 2021



Sean Mohen

Executive Director, Tri-County Sustainability

Sean Mohen is an 18-year Wall Street veteran and capital markets strategist who has chartered top-tier Wall Street firms through times of growth and change. A series of events, including experiencing the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 firsthand, compelled Sean to think about his role in the world and how he could be a force for positive transformation. Fast-forward many years, and a move back home to South Jersey, Sean has emerged as an influential sustainability leader who dedicates his time to climate-focused philanthropy and environmental organizations.

Sean brings a unique global perspective and organizational management experience that is helping him transform sustainability groups both locally and across New Jersey. He explained, “Climate change and the economy are interconnected, so the solutions should be too. My ultimate goal is to bring capital markets solutions to global warming, which is a capital markets problem.”

Sean is the executive director of [Tri-County Sustainability](#), a Sustainable Jersey hub serving the 101 towns and the 1.2 million residents of Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties. He is a member of the [Oaklyn Green Team](#), a participant of the [Rutgers University Environmental Stewards Program](#), co-founder of the environmental justice organization Suburban Allies for Clean Air, and a member of The Green Faith Circle of South Jersey. Sean is also a member of the [Newton Creek Watershed Association](#) and a founding member of Oaklyn’s Shade Tree Advisory Committee. In 2020, he joined the ranks of Al Gore’s [Climate Reality Leadership Corp](#) connecting with fellow change agents around the globe.

As the youngest of ten siblings and severely dyslexic, Sean is a creative thinker and a natural problem solver. He explained, “Navigating the world with dyslexia means constantly deconstructing things in order to better understand how they work and keep yourself organized. You become good at breaking down complicated issues into manageable chunks so that they become easier to address, be they sophisticated financial products or navigating local bureaucracies to help pass environmentally sound ordinances.”

Moving NJ Legislation for Low Carbon Concrete Forward: Sean is a core member of the advocacy team helping introduce legislation in the New Jersey Senate and Assembly supporting the use of Low Carbon Concrete. The bill, called the New Jersey Low Embodied Carbon Concrete Leadership Act is modeled directly from the [New York State Low Embodied Carbon Concrete Leadership Act \(LECCLA\)](#). Sean said, “This pending legislation incentivizes contractors and builders here in New Jersey for using new technologies in their bids for state and municipal contracts. This is the definition of a capital markets solution to the climate crisis.” He added, “According to [Project Drawdown](#), cement, concrete’s main ingredient, is responsible for approximately eight percent of all greenhouse gas emissions globally. The low embodied carbon procurement standard would leverage New Jersey’s substantial concrete purchasing power to catalyze low carbon alternative methods and products in the concrete and cement industries as a whole.”



#FindOurGreta Contest: In 2019, as a trustee for [Sustainable South Jersey](#), Sean created the [#FindOurGreta contest](#) to recognize and reward youth eco-champions from Princeton to Atlantic City. The contest was open to all residents and students and was an overwhelming success. The stories of South Jersey's youth are inspiring to read. The first-place prize went to a dedicated group of Medford Middle School students from the Citizen Science Education Program; they worked with industry representatives testing bio-based blacktop sealers at their school, conducted research with NASA/NOAA weather and climate scientists and traveled overseas to collaborate on environmental issues with a global student population. Sean said, "Facing the climate crisis is not always easy. I have hope for the future thanks to these students. They understand the problems and are ready to do what it takes to change. The contest projects were really good and they were submitted from kids age four to 18 years old." Through Tri-County Sustainability, Sean is continuing to focus on empowering young environmental advocates including new partnerships with organizations such as the [New Jersey Student Sustainability Coalition](#), a youth-run network of college, high school and younger students.



Borough of Oaklyn Green Team: Gwenne Baile, the leader of South Jersey's thriving backyard chicken scene, encouraged Sean to start attending his town's green team meetings. Sean credits neighbors like Robert Bennett and Lorraine Prince for helping to educate him on important topics like permaculture and watershed protection and said his climate journey started with the green team. Oaklyn is a unique and charming town on Newton Lake, four-miles from Philadelphia. The residents pride themselves on being sustainably-minded. "Our mission has been to help the town of Oaklyn apply a sustainability lens when it comes to our financial and natural resources," he said. To help fund the many tasks of the green team, Sean presented an impressive 2020 green team budget proposal to Oaklyn Borough and was successful in securing a 47 percent increase in funding over the previous year. He said, "I try to get our neighbors and municipal government to approach sustainability like our world depends on it. Because it does. The effects of climate change are here in Oaklyn now. From the damage to our municipal shade tree cover by recent storm events to eutrophication and remediation of our beloved Newton Lake, including the 20 million dollar dredging project currently underway."



Partnership with Department of Public Works: Sean enjoys working with Oaklyn's Department of Public Works (DPW) and appreciates their willingness to partner on sustainability initiatives including thinking creatively to address the myriad of changes to the waste management and recycling markets in recent years. After visiting a regional recycling center and talking with DPW staff, Sean realized that food waste reduction has to be part of the solution to offsetting the revenue loss from recycling. He said, "The dramatic economic changes in the global recycling business, related to China's National Sword policy and similar legislation in other Asian jurisdictions, severely limits the types of content these countries import. Recycling which was once profitable for municipalities, including Oaklyn, is now a cost center. This could mean higher taxes for residents. The green team is working with DPW to develop specific curriculum on this topic for Oaklyn residents while continuing to review food waste recycling options, including sophisticated new composting technologies."



Tri-County Sustainability: As the executive director of Tri-County Sustainability (TCS), Sean is working with the leadership team to implement the best practices related to organizational structure and strategy learned during his professional career to help the regional Sustainable Jersey hub thrive. TCS provides a forum for sustainability enthusiasts,

green team and environmental commission members, and members of the general public looking to improve their communities and connect regionally.

Sean said, “Sustainable Jersey has been a crucial partner in helping the transformation of TCS, including significant logistical support and networking with various subject experts, not to mention moral support.”

The TCS virtual hub meetings have attracted enthusiastic participation from



towns and environmentalists across the region. At the last event, Sean included a session entitled ‘How green team leaders are overcoming pandemic malaise and reinvigorating their municipal sustainability teams.’ The discussion spoke to a need that has been identified across New Jersey. For Earth Day 2021, Sean and TCS members are strategizing an event at which representatives from all 101 towns in their hub participate. The TCS footprint stretches across 10 legislative districts, which means State and local elected officials are starting to take notice of TCS’s important work. To get involved or learn more about TCS, email info@tcsahub.org or visit www.tcsahub.org. Also, follow on social media via: Facebook @TheTCSA and Twitter @TriCountySusta1.

Launch of the NJ Statewide Collaboration Strategy Group: Another one of Sean’s projects is the creation of the New Jersey Statewide Collaboration Strategy Group which will connect towns and Sustainable Jersey Hubs to preemptively plan for anticipated changes in funding and project approvals in a post-pandemic economy. The goals include a shared repository of intellectual capital and proactive planning on how to procure eventual Federal stimulus funding in 2021 and 2022.

Towns Helping Towns: In 2019, Tri-County Sustainability (TCS) jumpstarted a program to mentor towns in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties that have not achieved Sustainable Jersey certification or have lapsed in their certification. The pilot was a success as six municipalities (Audubon Borough, Chesterfield Township, Gloucester City, Maple Shade Township, Medford Township and Runnemede Borough) were certified with Sustainable Jersey in 2019. Audubon Borough received the 2019 Sustainable Jersey Rookie of the Year award recognizing their dedication to sustainability efforts.

More about Sean: Sean holds certificates on The Science and Global Impact of Climate Change from Pennsylvania State University’s Department of Meteorology & Atmospheric Science; and The U.N. Sustainable Development Goals from University of Copenhagen’s Sustainability Science Center. Before focusing on climate change, Sean started his career working in prime brokerage serving the needs of hedge fund clients. He then transitioned to Investment Banking where he led strategic initiatives working directly with the firm’s Executive Office including the President and COO. Sean later settled in Global Wealth Management, where his responsibilities included building the offshore funds business for High Net-Worth and Ultra-High Net-Worth clients in Latin America and Europe. In 2008, Sean was recruited to join a foreign bank to manage the integration of their US securities businesses including brokerage and investment advisory. Sean went on to serve as Head of High Net-Worth & Institutional Investment Strategy.



One of Sean’s favorite activities is working with the [Oaklyn Food Pantry](#), including collecting Jersey Fresh® produce donations at local farmers markets for distribution to those in need.