



January 2025



Deb Hammond

Chair, Delran Green Team (Burlington County)

On a mission to make [Delran Township](#) a better place to live, work and play, Deb Hammond has served for ten years as the chair of the Delran Green Team, also known as [Sustainable Delran](#). In addition to achieving Sustainable Jersey certification for Delran Township, the green team has improved the quality of life in Delran through the revitalization of Lake Lonnie, development of a Tree Protection Ordinance and Community Forestry Management Plan, achievement of Tree City USA recognition and implementation of many community-based sustainability initiatives. Deb said, “I am trying to make a positive impact by acting locally. I want to model and provide opportunities for everyone to contribute to the health of the planet by taking action in their own community.”

Deb has a long history of championing environmental stewardship issues. Deb joined the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) after graduating from Cook College, Rutgers University, with a degree in Environmental Science. She worked for 36 years at DEP on water monitoring, along with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting and planning. She was the Chief of the Bureau of Water Quality Standards and Assessment Program, and was responsible for the development of water quality standards and criteria for both surface and ground water as well as the development of the Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report. Deb is a New Jersey sustainability hero who has made an impact in Burlington County and across New Jersey.

Sustainable Jersey Certified: Delran Township

Delran Township achieved bronze-level Sustainable Jersey certification five times, most recently in 2024, and has been consistently certified since 2015. “The green team has been meeting the second Wednesday of every month since 2014,” Deb explained. “From the outside, it may seem like we have chaotic or unconventional meetings where everyone is free to speak up and say what they want, but I think this is the key to our success over the years. All our green team members have individual areas of expertise, and I encourage people to come with crazy ideas. We respect each other and collaborate to achieve our mission.”

The green team kicked off the 2025 New Year with its First Day Hike at Lake Lonnie. Nearly 70 community members joined the green team for a hike to enjoy the outdoors and learn how to geocache.

For the last six years, the green team has organized a Free Halloween Shop that allows residents to drop off costumes before and after Halloween for reuse by others. Holiday lights are collected for recycling, and the green team has collected soft plastic for the [NexTrex Recycling Challenge](#) since 2023.



The Delran Green Team works closely with the township on activities and receives their financial support. Councilman Lynn Jeney serves as the liaison to the green team. The group has a standing invitation to be on the agenda at council

meetings. The Delran Green Team works closely with the school district's green team. All four Delran schools are certified with [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#). In 2017 and 2021, Delran Township School District and Delran Township received the [Sustainable Jersey for Schools Green Team Collaboration Award](#). The Delran Green Team frequently hold education and outreach events at the schools. Deb organized an Electric Vehicle show for the school district's STEM fair. The school district has helped the municipal green team with language translations for education and outreach materials, and recently created a community solar letter in Turkish and Portuguese.

Lake Lonnie Reopened to the Community

In May 2024, Lake Lonnie was reopened thanks to the leadership of Deb and the hard work and contributions of an inspired community and green team. The idea for the project started two years prior, when members of the green team and a few local high school students wanted to open the trails. They generated interest in their project by holding community hikes in the area. Delran Township applied and received a \$2,000 [Sustainable Jersey Grant](#) funded by the PSEG Foundation to support improvements.

With funding and a plan, the good idea was embraced by a network of leaders who volunteered their time to make the project a reality. The partners in the project included residents, members of the [Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3020](#), [Delran Fire Department](#), [Delran Township School District](#) including Delran High School students, [Burlington County](#) and Delran Township.

Deb said, "When we started the project, we were surprised at how many people didn't know about the park. It was great to see how the idea grew and was embraced by our neighbors who came out to help. With a reopened Lake Lonnie, we have access to a nice, wooded space with a lake that will add to the quality of life of our residents for generations to come."



Lake Lonnie had its heyday in the early 1950s to 1968 when it was a popular swimming facility with lifeguards, a beach, pavilions, picnic groves, restrooms and concessions. In the 1970s, the township purchased Lake Lonnie with state funding from the [Green Acres Program](#). Over time, the area became wooded and mostly unused. To begin the Lake Lonnie project, volunteers used GPS equipment borrowed from Burlington County to map the trails. The Delran Fire Department cleared the trails of fallen trees and branches. The new trails were marked with tree safe paint. Teams of volunteers cleaned trash, filling 27 bags in 2024. The Delran High School Ornithology Club installed bird and bat houses constructed in the [Delran Innovation and Fabrication Lab](#) (FabLab) to help increase wildlife within the park. Volunteers from VFW Post 3020 cleared away debris to open an area for picnic tables and access to the beach, enabling visitors to fish. A new park kiosk and gate were added at the entrance. Geocaches are being added around the park so visitors can navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates to find the geocache marker at that location.

Tree Protection and Planting

Trees are critically needed to meet national and state climate goals, and improve the quality of life in New Jersey. The Delran Green Team have done exemplary work in tree protection and planting. Since 2019, nearly 200 trees have been planted. The green team also worked with the township to develop a community forestry management plan, a revised township tree ordinance and implementation of community tree planting programs.



Community Forestry Management Plan: In 2018, the Delran Green Team helped the township apply for a [New Jersey Urban & Community Forestry \(NJUCF\) Green Communities Grant](#) to develop a Community Forestry Management Plan. Using the \$3,000 grant, the green team engaged Forestry Consultant Barry Emens to assist in the development of the [Delran Township Five Year Community Forestry Management Plan](#). In 2023, Delran Township received the official NJUCF accreditation. Three municipal employees, one elected official and six volunteers have been trained through the NJUCF Core training. Delran Township received 20 certification points for this work by completing the Sustainable Jersey action: [Community Forestry Management Plan & NJUCF Accreditation](#).

Delran Township Tree Protection Ordinance: In 2020, the Delran Green Team developed recommendations for improving the existing Delran Township Tree Protection Ordinance. After two years, and many meetings of a special tree committee appointed by the Township Council, the new Delran Township [Tree Ordinance](#) went into effect on January 1, 2022. The ordinance requires property owners to obtain a permit to remove a tree with a diameter of 12 inches or more. Under the ordinance, if more than three non-exempt trees are removed, a tree replacement plan is required. Trees exempt from the replacement plan requirement include those that are dead, diseased, damaged or causing damage to existing structures and utilities. The permit fees are deposited into a Tree Bank and used to select, purchase, plant and maintain trees on township properties. Delran Township received 10 certification points with the completion of the Sustainable Jersey action: [Tree Protection Ordinance](#).

Delran's Tree Ordinance

A tree replacement plan is required if more than 3 trees are removed

Replacement trees are based on the size of removed trees

Inches in diameter	Trees
12-20	1
20-30	3
30+	6

Trees on Approved Landscape Plans must be maintained and removed and replaced when necessary

Trees are Important!

- Good for human health
- Minimize flooding
- Manage pollutants in the air and waterways
- Provide habitats for animals and shade for us
- Increase economic value of your property

Tree Bank

If required trees can't be planted:

- Payment of \$350 per tree not planted on site up to 5% of overall project cost can be made

Funds used to:

- Hire licensed tree expert, purchase, plant and maintain trees planted on township property

Delran Trees of Honor: The Delran Township Tree Ordinance also established a Memorial Tree program called [Delran Trees of Honor](#). Residents can recognize someone with a donation to the green team tree planting program. Donations are deposited into the Delran Tree Trust, which is a dedicated account used to purchase, plant and maintain the trees. A metal tree sculpture, located in the Delran Township Municipal building lobby, displays the customized leaves with the honoree names. The tree, along with the gold and silver leaves, were created in Delran High School's FabLab. A donation of \$100 will purchase a customized silver leaf, and a donation of \$350 will purchase a tree to be planted and a customized gold leaf. Each tree planted is tagged with the tree's common name, species and the year it was planted. Delran Township received 10 certification points for this program with the completion of the Sustainable Jersey action: [Innovative Community Project](#).

Arbor Day Tree Planting: On Arbor Day, the Delran Green Team plant trees and promote their tree protection activities. Deb explained, "Trees are an important part of our education and outreach because they are the easiest action we can do to combat climate change. We want everyone to learn the proper techniques and the reasons why trees are so important." For the 2023 Arbor Day event, 220 seedlings, received from the New Jersey Tree Recovery Campaign, were distributed to community members. Councilman Lynn Jeney read the Arbor Day proclamation to the 40 attendees. Deb and Delran Green Team members Al Carp, Candy Cure, Amy O'Donnell, Kara Bottino and Karen Nowicki provided residents with instructions on how to plant their new tree seedlings.



Tree Planting with the Schools: The Delran Green Team began a new tradition in 2023 with the start of a Kindergarten Grove at Conrow Park. Three trees were planted by the Class of 2035, the current kindergarten class and their families. The kids and their families helped plant the tree in the park and on a later date, two additional trees at the Millbridge Elementary School. The kids named their trees Jimmy the maple; Bob Elmer the elm; and Ellie Lilly the maple. Tree tags with these names were added. Delran Green Team member and Tree Committee Chair Al Carp talked to the kids about the importance of trees. Deb said that Al is in charge of 'shovel media' because he digs the holes for the trees and she is in charge of the social media to promote the tree plantings. "The goal is for the families to continue to watch and photograph their children along with their trees as they grow," Deb explained. The Delran Green Team has funding from the [New Jersey Shade Tree Federation](#) through the [William J. Porter Community Tree Project](#) to plant trees for the kindergarten class of 2036 and 2037.

More About Deb

Deb has lived in New Jersey all her life; she grew up in Cinnaminson and has lived in Delran for 45 years with her husband Jim. They have two grown children and two granddaughters. Deb enjoys traveling, painting, pickleball, tennis and tracing her genealogy. She also volunteers with the New Jersey League of Woman Voters to register new citizens to vote. She drives an electric vehicle, but her preferred mode of transportation is walking. She achieved her goal of walking 1,100 miles in 2024.