New Jersey Sustainability Hero
November 2026

Anne E. Heasly

Senior Program Manager for Policy & Planning
Sustainable Jersey

Anne Heasly believed in the power of thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, and local action to create more sustainable communities. As Senior Program Manager for Policy & Planning at Sustainable Jersey, she worked with municipalities, state agencies, and academic partners to turn sustainability goals into practical local action. Anne passed away on October 7, 2026, leaving a lasting legacy in land conservation, climate resilience, safer streets, and water sustainability across New Jersey.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Anne was a genuinely good person whose kindness, thoughtfulness, and wry sense of humor made her a pleasure to work with. She was a valued and beloved member of the Sustainable Jersey team, someone colleagues could count on and simply enjoyed being around. Her contributions to the organization were significant, but so was the warmth and camaraderie she brought to the workplace. She will be deeply missed, both for all she did and for who she was.

Turning Sustainability Goals Into Local Action

Anne brought decades of experience in conservation, planning, landscape architecture, and community sustainability to her work at Sustainable Jersey. Before joining the organization, she spent more than 13 years with The Nature Conservancy's New Jersey Chapter, working to protect the Delaware Bayshore and Pine Barrens, including serving as director of the Conservancy's Pine Barrens Field Office. She later managed planning and grant programs for Conservation Resources, Inc. and advised nonprofit organizations as an independent consultant.

At Sustainable Jersey, Anne drew on her extensive experience to develop policies and programs that helped municipalities tackle environmental challenges. She managed technical assistance programs, led trainings, and guided major initiatives in Complete Streets, climate resilience, and the development of the Star Standards in Water and Climate Readiness. Her work helped translate sustainability goals into steps municipalities can take to protect natural resources and strengthen their communities.

> "Anne was a wonderful person to work with. She was deeply committed to sustainability, smart growth, and protecting the natural environment. It was a privilege and a joy to collaborate with her on strategies Sustainable Jersey could pursue to advance those goals. She was smart, practical, experienced, and creative—and simply an absolutely lovely person to be around. She was thoughtful, kind, funny, and self-deprecating. She knitted gifts, brought cookies, and did all the little things that made working with her such a pleasure. And at the end of the day, when all the big-picture planning and cookie eating were done, Anne delivered. The projects got completed, communities got helped, and the cause moved forward. We will miss her tremendously." **-Randall Solomon, Executive Director, Sustainable Jersey**

> "Anne brought extraordinary knowledge and experience, particularly in natural lands management, to Sustainable Jersey. Her kind and welcoming demeanor fostered a spirit of teamwork that inspired colleagues toward developing and implementing municipal actions that advance a more sustainable future all across the Garden State." **-Gary Sondermeyer, Former Chair, Sustainable Jersey Board; Vice President of Operations, Bayshore Recycling Corp**

Advancing Climate Change Resilience

Anne helped municipalities understand and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Working with Sustainable Jersey Program Manager Tanya Rohrbach and other partners, she contributed to the development of The Guide to Local Climate Change Adaptation Planning - The Model Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment for New Jersey Municipalities, which received the 2024 Achievement in Planning Award from the New Jersey Planning Officials.

The guide provides a framework for municipalities to assess climate-related vulnerabilities across five interconnected systems that support their communities. It helps local governments identify risks, engage stakeholders, and develop strategies to strengthen their resilience. Anne was proud of the guide and continued working with municipalities to put its recommendations into practice. As she explained, "Recognizing that New Jersey municipalities need direction on responding and adapting to climate change, Sustainable Jersey was glad to partner on the development of this guide. We encourage municipalities to explore and use the guidance as they plan for their future sustainability and resilience. Town planners can build upon Sustainable Jersey certification actions, identify relevant risks, engage stakeholders, and begin planning adaptation strategies – all while meeting the Municipal Land Use Law requirements."

Anne also led the development of the Sustainable Jersey Star Standard in Climate Readiness, which recognizes municipalities that demonstrate progress in preparing for climate impacts through specific certification actions and performance standards. Through technical assistance provided in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Resilient NJ Program, she helped nine municipalities conduct Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessments and use the findings to inform local planning. Supported by the William Penn Foundation, Anne also worked with community partners in the City of Camden to complete a community-based assessment of climate vulnerabilities.

> "I'm so lucky and grateful that I got to work so closely with Anne over the past several years. Through our professional work together, I saw firsthand her deep commitment to sustainability and the care she brought to every project. I've never known anyone like her. She was so genuinely kind, attentive, and thoughtful that every second with her was a joy." **-Tanya Rohrbach, AICP, CFM, Program Manager, Policy and Planning, Sustainable Jersey**

> "The first real interaction I had with Anne was when she had first joined Sustainable Jersey just in time for our summer staff outing – that year it was canoeing in the Pinelands. As Anne's canoeing partner, I inadvertently provided the opportunity for her to display right off what we later came to know as trademarks of her character and professional conduct – steadfastness, level-headedness, lack of self-importance and a great sense of humor – when I managed to flip our canoe and dump us both into the tea-dark creek! As my friend and colleague, she was my good-morning and coffee-break companion, as we shared stories of our risk-taking young adult sons and she served as my go-to source for news on New Jersey and Pennsylvania conservation and planning. She was my inspiration and thought partner in tackling thorny strategical and practical questions in "action" development, project management, and task group organizing." **-Melanie McDermott, Ph.D., Former Senior Researcher, Sustainable Jersey**

Making Streets Safer and More Accessible

Anne led Sustainable Jersey's work on Complete Streets initiatives, including its role in collaborative technical assistance programs that help municipalities create safer, more accessible streets for people of all ages and abilities. Working alongside the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association (CCCTMA), and the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO), Anne helped communities identify practical ways to better accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists.

Anne understood that creating safer streets required more than technical expertise. It meant bringing municipal officials, transportation professionals, and community advocates together to identify solutions that reflected local needs and priorities. Beginning in 2018, she worked with 29 municipalities in the NJTPA region and in 2025 with five municipalities in the SJTPO region, helping local leaders access the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to plan and implement locally tailored street improvements.

Anne also contributed her planning expertise to the New Jersey Complete and Green Streets For All - Model Complete Streets Policy & Guide as a member of the Policy and Guide Team, supporting a collaborative statewide effort to advance Complete Streets policies and practices.

To learn more about this work, explore the NJTPA completed technical assistance projects and the SJTPO completed technical assistance projects.

> "Anne was an extraordinary colleague and a true joy to work with in every way. She had an inner light that could brighten even the longest meetings, bringing optimism, and a genuine belief in what we could accomplish together to make safe and healthier environments for people to walk, bike and lead a better life. She saw the possibilities for creating sustainable, healthy communities and had a remarkable ability to build partnerships, connect with communities, and bring people together around a shared vision. I am so thankful to have the privilege of working with her on many projects. She leaves an extraordinary legacy, and she is deeply missed." -**Leigh Ann Von Hagen, PP, AICP, Executive Director & Adjunct Professor, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

Protecting New Jersey's Water Resources

Anne played an important role in developing the Sustainable Jersey Star Standard in Water, which helps municipalities make progress in protecting and improving water quality, water quantity, and water use. The standard recognizes that every community has a unique water profile shaped by its geography, infrastructure, and local concerns, while providing a framework for municipalities to take meaningful action.

The program helps communities address issues such as drinking water protection, private well testing, lead in drinking water, and public outreach. Anne helped municipalities take a more comprehensive approach to managing and protecting their water resources.

> "Anne was a true champion for New Jersey municipalities and the work of Sustainable Jersey. It was a pleasure and honor to partner with her and I value her leadership as we worked to accomplish the Sustainable Jersey Natural Resources Actions and the Star Standard in Water." **-Jennifer Feltis-Cortese, Regional Environmental Planner, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection**

A Legacy of Collaboration and Service

Anne's commitment to conservation and sustainability extended well beyond her work at Sustainable Jersey. She served on the board of the Pinelands Alliance from 2007 to 2025, was vice chair of the Board of Trustees of the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust and served on the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council. In her community of Yardley, Pennsylvania, she volunteered with the Parks and Recreation Board and helped organize the annual Yardley 5K Run & Walk.

Anne was raised in Arlington, Virginia, and she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in natural resources from Cornell University and a Master of Landscape Architecture degree with a Certificate in Urban Design from the University of Washington. Anne and her husband, Richard, raised two sons, Calvin and Elliot.

> "From the day I interviewed Anne at Sustainable Jersey, I knew she was a perfect fit. Her welcoming personality and strong commitment to our mission made working alongside her a privilege. Anne was the ultimate teammate, endlessly patient with my planning questions, fully dedicated to her work, and always generous with her time and talents. From hand-crocheting thoughtful gifts and crafting office holiday decorations, to sharing a laugh during morning chats, her kindness brightened every day. She brought both deep knowledge and a genuine, caring heart to our team, and I will miss her immensely." **-Samantha A. McGraw, Senior Department Administrator, Sustainable Jersey**
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> "As an irreplaceable and beloved Sustainable Jersey team-player, Anne was kind, generous, super-knowledgeable, yet humble, dedicated, hard-working, yet pragmatic - and always displayed absolute reliability and integrity. I still can't believe she's gone. May we live to remember her wonderful self and to honor her by carrying on the work." **-Melanie McDermott, Ph.D., Former Senior Researcher, Sustainable Jersey**
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> "Anne taught me so much, not just about sustainability and planning, but about how to be a good person. I feel incredibly fortunate to have worked so closely with her and learned from her firsthand. No matter how busy she was, she always made time for my questions, never treating my curiosity as a burden, but encouraging me to keep learning and growing. Throughout my career at Sustainable Jersey, she advocated for me and made me feel that my voice mattered, even when I was just starting out. I can't count how many times I stopped by her office looking for advice, perspective, or a little comfort, and I always left feeling better. I wouldn't be the person or professional I am today without her. She was the kind of person and mentor I aspire to be, and I will forever be grateful for her guidance and friendship**."- Kaitlyn Vollmer, Grants Program Manager, Sustainable Jersey**

We are grateful for Anne's contributions to Sustainable Jersey and to the many people and communities whose work she helped advance. We will honor her legacy by continuing the work she cared so deeply about: protecting New Jersey's natural resources, strengthening community resilience, improving streets for everyone, and helping municipalities create healthier, more sustainable places to live.

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