Sustainable Oakland Green Team
Impact Statement

For the year ended December 31, 2018

This past year has been an exciting time for the Sustainable Oakland Green Team. They have been focusing on building infrastructure in order to create an easier path toward completing actions. In addition to their participation in local planning, the Sustainable Oakland Green Team is also a member of the Sustainable Bergen County Hub, which was created in 2018. The Sustainable Bergen County Hub is a coalition of all active towns in the Sustainable Jersey program located in Bergen County. They collaborate on group projects and assist each other with completion of individual projects.

Three Styrofoam drives were held in the Bergen County Styrofoam Reduction Pilot Program. Oakland residents brought their Styrofoam (Expanded Polystyrene) to Leonia and Glen Rock and helped to fill two 16' box trucks. Due to the success of the recycling drives and creation of the Hub Styrofoam Reduction Program for EPS and XPS (Extruded Polystyrene), eight Hub municipalities were awarded a grant for this program. The program will have four focus points: Education for children and adults, Recycling, Policy and a Business Awards Program.

Styrofoam informational sheets prepared by the Sustainable Bergen County Hub members can be found in the library.

The Fifth Annual FLOW Film Festival took place in March with a few dates rescheduled due to extreme weather events. The four movies selected were chosen because of their thought provoking themes. Team members took place in organizing and selecting films, advertising the event, and participating in discussion panels, which followed the films. The Oakland Library looks forward to screening environmental films in 2019, now that their renovations are complete.

Sustainable Oakland Green Team participated in two local events, the Town Carnival and Choptoberfest, in 2018. During both events, they provided information to attendees on recycling, composting and climate change. During Choptoberfest, they distributed 55 reusable bags, saving 38,500 single use plastic bags. Approximately only 1% of single use plastic bags in circulation, are recycled. The reusable bags distributed during the event have prevented 34,650 single use plastics from entering waterways, storm-water drains and landfills.

The team also distributed 110 reusable beverage containers, 90 with reusable straws. The average life cycle of these reusable containers is 5 years, saving 167 single use bottles per container per year, for a total reduction of 91,850 single use

bottles. Of the total amount of plastic eliminated from our waste stream, Oakland's Green Team members have saved 64,295 single use containers from landfill, as only 30% are recycled. Plastic straws are not recyclable due to size and material content at this time. By using beverage containers with reusable straws, we have saved 75,150 straws from impacting wildlife, waterways and landfills.

The team also had a live monarch enclosure at Choptoberfest. Monarchs in all stages shown as eggs, caterpillars, chrysalis and butterflies were present. Sadly due to rain, we could not release any butterflies that day. Monarchs in the wild only have a 10% chance of survival due to predators, habitat loss and herbicides, insecticides, and other pesticides often found in lawn treatments. Monarchs who are raised indoors have a success rate of 50% - 90%. 78 monarchs were released in total compared to the 11 that could have survived in the wild. 50 of those Monarchs were tagged in the Monarch Watch program.

Earlier in the year, Sustainable Oakland Green Team and Oakland Environmental Commission teamed up for a planting of Common Milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) in two areas of Great Oak Park. Both areas require a lot of maintenance, and routine weeding was performed. During the fall, additional native plants were added to the small butterfly gardens. Every milkweed planted will help this species, which is in decline. The Eastern Monarch is listed as, "Special Consideration," by the New Jersey Endangered and Non-Game Advisory Committee.

In addition to benefiting Monarchs, Common Milkweed is an excellent defense against the Spotted Lantern Fly. Spotted Lantern Fly is an Asian plant hopper that was introduced to the US in 2014. The Spotted Lantern Fly is extremely destructive and consumes and destroys over 100 types of plants and trees including wheat, corn, wine grapes, hops, and hardwood trees, including Tulip Poplar, Pine, Maple and Oak. Three counties in New Jersey remain under quarantine to help prevent the further spread of this invasive species.

Green team members also worked together with the Oakland Environmental Commission, the Recycling Coordinator and the Borough Administrator on testing and promoting the Recycle Coach App. The app will help to inform residents as to when curbside pick-ups occur and will also let them know which materials are scheduled for pick up. County HAZMAT material collections and special recycling events such as Paper Shredding Events are also listed. The app also includes a search feature which residents can use to learn how to recycle various recyclable waste. This should lead to improved quality of recyclable material.

While using the App, the Green Team members discovered that wax box carton recycling is now available. This includes aseptic (shelf-stable) containers such as broth and nut milks and gable topped (refrigerated) containers including heavy cream and eggnog. The inclusion of these items in our residential commingled collections will help to decrease garbage and improve the quality of our recycled material. Our schools will have the most significant decrease in waste collection

numbers since they will no longer dispose of milk and juice box containers in our non-recyclable waste stream.

For residents who are interested in composting, composter units are now available at the DPW as of mid October for only $60, which is a significant savings from the retail price. According to the DPW, the response has been positive. The average family disposes of 10lbs of compostable food waste a week into a landfill, which is the 3rd largest producer of methane gas. Food does not turn into compost in a landfill due to lack of air and other factors. The composters sold in 2018 will save over 2,000lbs of waste from going into landfill, reduce the carbon footprint, and create a product that can be used for gardens, lawns and rebuilding stream banks. As of December 1st, 22 units have been sold and these 22 units alone are projected to save 11,440lbs worth of material from landfills, in 2019. Advertising for the composting units include the Borough website, Environmental Commission Newsletter, Borough of Oakland's social media presence on Facebook and twitter and in the Garden Club newsletter.

In 2018, Sustainable Oakland Green Team received the Bronze level of certification. We will be actively seeking Silver Certification over the next three year cycle. This is not an easy task as out of all participating municipalities in New Year, only 25 have achieved Silver, 3 being in Bergen County. Several projects will take years to complete and we have begun taking steps on the following actions:

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
Community Gardens
Reforestation of Critical Areas
Monarch Way-station Development
Zero Waste Community Events
Storm-water Management Plan
Innovative Non Mandated Recycling Programs

Regards,

Carol Peterson
Vice Chair Sustainable Oakland Green Team

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Informational resources:
https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/
https://mightynest.com/articles/no-more-plastic-water-bottles
https://www.reusethisbag.com/articles/how-recycling-makes-a-worldly-impact/
https://www.nj.gov/dep/docs/monarch-fact-sheet.pdf

https://www.monarchwatch.org
https://njaes.rutgers.edu/spotted-lanternfly/
https://www.bcua.org/index.asp?SEC=A0782358-D135-4B82-BDB5-0AD79BB30DD9&Type=B_BASIC
https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/overview-greenhouse-gases#methane