

DEC Recognizes Eight New York State Innovation and Sustainability Leaders

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recognized eight organizations for state-of-the-art programs and commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic viability at the 13th Annual New York State Environmental Excellence Awards, held at Union College's Park Hall in December.

"DEC is proud to present Environmental Excellence Awards to these eight businesses and organizations that have demonstrated outstanding leadership in adopting innovative solutions to protect our environment and enhance our economy," said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos. "These projects set a high bar for others to follow in addressing critical environmental and public health issues such as increasing energy efficiency, cleaning up our waters, keeping materials out of landfills, and making our healthcare sector more sustainable. Congratulations to all of our well-deserved award winners."

The 2016 Environmental Excellence Award Winners are:

Finger Lakes ReUse, an Ithaca-based not-for-profit, was honored for turning waste into opportunities by diverting reusable materials from the landfill. Materials are repaired and repurposed and sold at affordable prices. This successful model is advancing waste reduction and poverty relief by providing meaningful job training opportunities in an economically challenged part of the state. This organization is leading by example and has achieved significant and remarkable benefits for New York's environment and economy, as well as the Finger Lakes community. The ReUse Centers are visited by about 285,000 customers each year and more than 600,000 items have been returned to active use, generating more than \$2.5 million in revenue.



Diane Cohen (left) receives a 2016 Environmental Excellence Award from Kate McArdle of the Pollution Prevention Institute at R.I.T.

Diane Cohen, Executive Director of Finger Lakes Re-Use, Inc. said, "We are so grateful to receive the Environmental Excellence award. This exciting recognition helps Finger Lakes ReUse and our partners further amplify the multiplying positive impacts of the growing reuse industry, and is a welcome affirmation of the years of planning and developing reuse efforts. None of this would be possible without our many community partners and advisors, employees, trainees, and volunteers, led by our visionary collaborators at Tompkins County Solid Waste. A Reuse Center in Tompkins County has long been an aspiration of County Solid Waste Manager Barbara Eckstrom, and we accept this award in honor of and as a result of her many years of unwavering commitment to making our world a better place."

The New York Yankees were honored for their outstanding and ongoing commitment to environmental excellence, sustainability, and fan engagement. The new Yankee Stadium is energy efficient and offers composting and recycling for guests and stadium staff, and is diverting more than 4,000 tons of waste from landfills. The Yankees Organization donates more than 125,000 pounds of unserved food to senior centers, homeless shelters, and other charities. The Yankees are committed to purchasing greener products, including those with recycled content. This world-renowned organization is setting an example for national and international sports organizations and venues and is encouraging millions of fans to become more sustainable at work, at home, and while enjoying baseball, either home or at Yankee Stadium.

Doug Behar, Vice President of Stadium Operations at Yankee Stadium said, *"It is vitally important that we help promote sustainability and reduce our impact on the environment. We have implemented an array of green initiatives at Yankee Stadium and continue to look for new and better ways to conserve natural resources, educate our guests and Yankees Team Members, and support and partner with programs that promote sustainability. We are humbled to receive this award from the State and will continue to work hard to further our efforts in sustainability."*

The Adirondack Mountain Club, working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy Adirondack Chapter, was honored for the High Peaks Steward Program, which protects, preserves, and rehabilitates New York's fragile alpine habitat through hiker education, trail work, and research. The results achieved by this effort are substantiated with scientific evidence of plant rebound linked to hiker behavior changes. The steward program is a model of excellence emulated in other alpine locations. The environmental and social benefits of this program reach beyond the Adirondack Park.

Neil F. Woodworth, Executive Director of The Adirondack Mountain Club said, *"The Adirondack Mountain Club is honored to receive the much-coveted NY State Environmental Excellence award on behalf of the High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program. Receipt of this award validates the work of this collaborative partnership to protect the state's rare and precious alpine vegetation and helps reach new audiences as we fight to prevent these plants from becoming extinct in New York State and in some cases, across the entire globe."*

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) New York City Transit (NYCT) Mother Clara Hale Bus Depot was honored for incorporating innovative features into the depot, such as a green roof, solar wall, and capturing and reusing rainwater for washing buses. New boilers have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 85 percent. It is the first LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certified bus depot in the country and sets a new standard for future depot design, construction, and rehabilitation. In addition, MTA and NYCT engaged hundreds of community members and leaders in an innovative process that influenced the depot's final design.

Thomas Abdallah, Deputy Vice President & Chief Environmental Engineer, MTA New York City Transit said, *"The Environmental Excellence Award is a testament to the hard work of many people who worked on the Mother Clara Hale Bus Depot project, including the community which had participated in a Community Design Charrette. Receiving such award, and being acknowledged by the NYSDEC is the best kind of tribute an organization can obtain regarding environmental protection and sustainability in New York State."*

The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), State University of New York, in New York City, was honored for its sustainable initiatives, including installing 17,000 square feet of green roofs, which reduced the campus' carbon footprint by 43 percent and is committed to a 50 percent reduction by 2020. In addition, FIT's curriculum offers students unique courses focused on innovative designs and strategic business solutions that have global impacts. Projects designed by students include an innovative fabric-composting system and a state-of-the-art dye-garden for plants that have the potential to reduce or replace the use of synthetic dyes. FIT's Dining Services partners with the American Forests organization and for every meal plan sold, the organization plants a tree. More than 5,000 trees have been planted as a result.

Dr. Joyce F. Brown, President of FIT said, *"This honor recognizes the myriad steps, large and small, that FIT has taken to become an example of environmental stewardship in action. FIT's success in sustainability is due to the work of many people from all corners of the campus who are continually creating unique and industry-specific ways to conserve, re-use, recycle, and innovate."*

SUNY Upstate Medical University (Upstate) in Syracuse was honored for taking sustainability to a new level by implementing innovative practices and working in creative partnerships. Upstate is the first in Central New York to offer a recycling program in patient rooms. The hospital has also pioneered recycling practices for operating rooms. A wide variety of programs have created a sustainable culture on campus. Upstate installed a green roof on the 90,000-square-foot Upstate Cancer Center, which collects storm water to be used for the rooftop garden and provides patients with a calming green space for relaxation and reflection. Upstate's sustainability initiatives have decreased their waste stream by 2,000 tons and reduced the facility's carbon footprint by about 28,000 metric tons.

Thomas Pelis, Upstate Assistant Vice President for Facilities and Planning said, "SUNY Upstate Medical University is grateful for this recognition from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. As Central New York's largest employer, and with support from our local and regional partners, Upstate has made great strides to reduce waste and increase sustainability in all areas of our enterprise, from clinical care to research. Whether it's our 'Last Out, Lights Out' or battery recycling campaign or one of a dozen other sustainability initiatives, Upstate employees are doing their part to build a healthier planet."

The New York Rural Water Association (NYRWA), headquartered in Columbia County, was honored for innovative and creative programming. NYRWA is improving and protecting the health of New York's waters and communities by providing unique and critical services, technical assistance, and training to small, rural communities with populations under 10,000 to help improve and protect water and wastewater facilities. An emergency 800 number gives facility operators access to 24-hour assistance. NYRWA's leak detection program has helped communities save nearly seven million gallons of water each year. Energy efficiency programs are resulting in a cost savings of more than \$200,000 to residents.

Patricia Scalera, CEO of NY Rural Water Association said, "The New York Rural Water Association greatly appreciates the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's recognition of our efforts in assisting small/rural water and wastewater systems. This Environmental Excellence Award will assist us to further bridge the gap that sometimes develops between regulatory agencies and water/wastewater system operators."

Waste Management's High Acres Landfill and Recycling Center in Monroe County was honored for being the first facility in New York State to offer an intermodal rail solution to waste management. Transporting waste by train instead of truck reduces nearly 12,000 tons of CO2 emissions each year. The High Acres management team designed a more efficient dump truck for waste by rail operations resulting in significant environmental benefits and setting a new industry standard. Instead of using chemicals and cannons for pest control, High Acres employs a team of eight falcons. The facility is also capturing landfill gases to create green energy at an on-site renewable energy facility, which creates enough electricity to power more than 10,000 homes for a year.

Jeff Richardson, Senior District Manager of Waste Management's High Acres Landfill and Recycling Center said, "Waste Management and the creative and talented people at High Acres are thrilled to have won this award. To be recognized by our colleagues, the NYSDEC and the environmental community in this way is a great honor. We are committed to the wellbeing of the environment, our employees and the communities that we serve. Our role in conserving resources is a point of pride because of WM's pledge to lead the industry in sustainability performance. This award is affirmation that as a company we are not just talking about environmental excellence, we are living it."

DEC established the Environmental Excellence Awards in 2004 to recognize those who are working to improve and protect New York's environment and contribute to a more healthy economy by advancing sustainable practices and forming creative partnerships. To date, DEC has recognized 80 businesses and organizations. Award ceremony host Union College is a 2008 award recipient for its campus-wide commitment to sustainability.

A statewide review committee, made up of 25 representatives from the public and private sectors, provided DEC advice in selecting the award winners from an array of competitive applications received in May.

See photos of the winners in [DEC's Flickr album](#). For additional information about the program and past winners, and to learn about applying for the [2017 Environmental Excellence Awards](#), visit DEC's website.