



# Ringwood Environmental Commission 2022 Annual Report

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*Prepared for the Ringwood Mayor and Borough Council*

Thomas Conway | Chair | 01/05/2023



## Summary and Overview

The Ringwood Environmental Commission met in person once again in 2022 and we hosted more meetings than during Covid-19. We followed the usual pattern of identifying goals for the year and assigning some Areas of Focus. For some Commissioners, it was their first time meeting in the council chambers.

Trails were a focus for the year. Areas around Ringwood were scoped out for further trail access. Acquiring the land adjacent to the Jerry Wyckoff Natural Area was identified as a priority. We can get land from the PRC to build a hiker's lot to Governor's Mountain and decrease the reliance on the church nearby. The Library Trail has been a success and the Commission spent the year getting approvals for a complete trail from the Library to the viewpoint, avoiding the cell tower road. Construction will begin in the spring of 2023.

Large environmental projects were a big focus in 2022. The Tennessee Gas Pipeline Compressor expansion in West Milford is moving forward, but the Commission tried to block it. Special thanks to the Ringwood Council for their support and the resolution that was passed in 2021 to resist the pipeline. The Superfund site saw heavy activity until November. The OCDA remains as the last of the three sites to be completed.

The Commission continued to push for improvements to our borough-wide septic issues. This year we sent a letter to the Board of Health to ask them to begin tracking the septic pump outs and send specific letters to those who have not pumped. The Commission will continue to push for septic education and specific updates to homeowners. The Commission discussed ways to improve communication of various government tests that are done on our lakes.

Our State Parks are underfunded and abused. The cub shooting in November put a spotlight on the issues and the Commission coincidentally sent out a letter requesting funding for the parks at our November meeting. This will be a focus in 2023.



## Appendices

- Appendix A - Superfund Documents
- Appendix B - TGP Compressor Station Upgrade
- Appendix C - Library Trail
- Appendix D - Commission Documents
- Appendix E - Correspondence



## **Commission Actions**

Most Commission actions are presented in the meeting minutes. This section will highlight some of the accomplishments of the Commission.

## **Vision, Mission, Values, and Objectives**

The Commission continues with a set of Vision, Mission, Values and Objectives. These are intended to guide the current and future Commissioners to make sure our actions are aligned to the goals of the Environmental Commission. These were established and voted on early in the year. They can be found on the Borough website. These remain unchanged.

## **Plan Reviews**

Commissioners adjusted to the virtual environment by reviewing plans as they were received from the Borough. Comments were added when necessary and sent back to the Board of Adjustment for Review. The Commissioners appreciated getting the applications before the meeting so they could gather comments ahead of meetings. We expect to have applications sent electronically in 2023 and then reviewed in person at our meetings.

## **Letters**

The Commission sent a few letters in 2022. Two of these letters were to support the Borough in its efforts to use the 2021 Watershed report to get funding for stormwater projects. As mentioned in the summary, we sent a letter to the Board of Health. We also reviewed a long draft of a letter concerning the deterioration of the state parks, but ultimately voted to shorten it down to one page to encourage the state to properly fund our parks.

## **TGP Pipeline Expansion**

A letter is also in the appendix for the TGP pipeline expansion. The Chair also attended various meetings to oppose the expansion. Some notes are included in the TGP Expansion Appendix B.



## Chair's Report

As I have done in the past, I will switch to the first person for this section. It is my personal belief that transparency is paramount for a local government to function at its peak level. In appointing me as Chair, the Mayor has given me wide latitude to learn and connect with others to promote Ringwood's interests. In this section I will detail the activities I undertook using the office to which I have been assigned. All legal functions, such as plan reviews and spending money, are voted on by the Commission; there are many functions that are handled by the Chair alone. The following is a brief summary of the actions I have taken in 2022.

## Tennessee Gas Pipeline

I have been following this for a decade now. The initial expansion involved work in the woods and that legacy is disappointing. The pipeline is still a large scar across our Borough and the only successful plantings are by the main roads, i.e. window dressing. Every single access gate has been broken for years, so ATV's continue to roam in our woods. I saw a convoy of 20 private vehicles on a Sunday afternoon in November.

Despite their failure to abide by the environmental promises made a decade ago, TGP has received the go ahead to build a compressor station in West Milford yards from the Ringwood border. I have personally fought against this for two and a half years, but lost at every stage.

The corporation works with unions to gain local support. The union leaders have no idea what the project is about as they often talk about how their wives (their words) like to cook with gas. Their comments are irrelevant since no gas is intended for New Jersey. They are puppets of the corporations they are supposed to fight against.

The worst hypocrisy is reflected in the governmental levels above Ringwood. Since Democrats own the environmental cause, they do nothing at the county, state and federal level to help stop these dangerous projects. Instead we get grand projects (like offshore wind) that grab headlines but do almost nothing to reduce GHG emissions. I spoke at the county and state meetings and the response was not what you would expect from leaders that tout their environmental awareness.

This issue is a fail and the project will move forward in 2023.



## **Ringwood Mines Superfund Site**

I inspected the site as the work was underway. Some safety issues were brought to the EPA's attention and little got done. When raised to the Borough, the issue got fixed. Some of these included trucks leaving the site without decontamination procedures and inadequate fencing.

I was very happy to see Joe Kulak, a Commissioner, work with the Borough to assist with Superfund oversight. He was the right person at the right time. His professional background was a proper fit.

I have great concerns with the solution to the groundwater (OU3). The idea of plugging the airshaft is, frankly, naïve. Hydrologic forces will push that contaminated water to an up gradient spot that is currently unknown. The EPA is under the false assumption that the contaminants are not widely distributed through the old mine workings.

I must express my sincere appreciation for the support of the Borough officials, especially Scott Heck. I represent the environment of Ringwood only and he put up with many of my criticisms and explained why things had to be done with compromises to my satisfaction. Unlike Scott, I did not have to balance competing demands, just be a voice for the water and land that have none. Let's also be clear, that is my duty, not a personal mantra. I only took these actions because of the trust the elected officials have in me.

## **Library Trail**

Unlike the above, this is a personal passion for me. I have always lamented the lack of "training" trails in the tristate area. There are too few places to be able to hike with ease to a nice viewpoint. We accomplished this in late 2021 by using the cell tower road. We got approval in 2022 for a footpath to the top that avoids the road. We hope to have the new route complete by late 2024.

The trail has seen a tremendous increase in foot traffic. I have met quite a few wonderful people at the viewpoint. The undesirable traffic also seems to have gone down. In 2020, I picked up 13 bags of trash, 8 coming in the initial cleanup. The Borough helped remove two couches that year. In 2021, only 7 bags of trash were filled. In 2022, that number was down to 4 and I had to search the playground and Park and Ride to fill each of those four. The cleaner environment up there may be working like the "broken windows" theory. People see a clean viewpoint, so they leave it clean.



### **2023 and Beyond**

I expect to resume my role in 2023. This year we will focus on park funding including State Park Police.

I will personally lead an effort to collect 365 bags of garbage this year from the Borough. This includes all land, regardless of ownership.





# Ringwood Environmental Commission Annual Report

## Appendix – A



# EPA Ringwood Mines Groundwater Summary

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This is a summary of the EPA Ringwood Mines Groundwater report by Thomas Conway, Ringwood Environmental Commissioner. I have read the report and compared some facts against previous reports. The following is my interpretation of the EPA's stance as well as concerns for the residents of Upper Ringwood and the area that could be affected by the Superfund Site.

## Overview

The groundwater report is based on the conclusion that the groundwater and the water in the mines pose no risk to humans. Because of this assumption, any remedy that proposes to clean the site is pretty much disqualified since there is no risk from leaving everything as is. That leaves us with attenuation solutions across the board.

## Solution

Based on the reading of the report, the EPA is going to go with Monitored Natural Attenuation with some enhancements. This will consist primarily of oxygen being injected into wells to create a barrier through the overburden. The barrier will be oxygen rich and that will help the natural organisms break down the COC's (bad stuff) emanating from the site. Peter's Mine Pit (PMP) will most likely be permanently capped with oxygen producing containers thrown into the air shaft.

## Assumptions

- The EPA is stating that 30 years of data shows that natural attenuation is already taking place. Unfortunately, they only show data from 2015 to present in the report. Even that small sample of data is unconvincing. 1,4 dioxane numbers actually appear to be increasing. Benzene, deep in the air shaft, is also elevated during the brief time period.
- The EPA claims that the physical source of the COC's cannot be determined. Because of this, they do not have any target to remediate. In addition, the EPA states that the mine workings and natural contaminants are present in the site and will prevent the water from ever being able to be returned back to NJ groundwater standards. Because of this assumption, the proposed remedies will not include any type of general cleanup as the EPA sees this as pointless.
- Any water in the mines below the air shaft is not considered part of Ford's waste disposal activities. Therefore the mines themselves are ignored.
- The EPA assumes that the low COC readings down gradient of the site indicate that dispersal from the source is enough to guarantee that the reservoir is not at risk. While they acknowledge that solutions may affect the groundwater movement, they make no accommodation for a change in the groundwater flow in the future.
- The EPA assumes that the water in the mines has almost no interaction with the surrounding area.
- Groundwater flows to the southeast with flow moving upward vertically in the mine areas.
- Dumping has occurred before, during, and after Ford's 4 year ownership.

# DRAFT

- OCDA was historically used as a settling pond for the mines.
- No wells have been affected in Ringwood.
- The air shaft has a thermocline and chemocline around 170-180 feet bgs.
- 1,4 dioxane levels at depth are the result of mining activities.
- Benzene is declining in the PMP area.
- When the EPA gets a high reading, they dismiss it and make no argument that the levels can fluctuate.
- There is no information to lead one to believe that 1,4 dioxane would reach the reservoir at criteria levels.
- There is too much organic material in PMP to make a oxidizing solution work well.
- Since they don't know what the effects of pumping will be, they assume that it is not worth the risk since the benefit may be slight.
- "Under existing conditions, there is no significant human health or ecological risk associated with groundwater or surface water at the Site and no risk of migration to any downgradient receptor, including the Wanaque Reservoir or the Borough's public water supply wells."
- The bad readings at the bottom of the air shaft reflect historic mining activity.
- The EPA estimates 43 grams of Benzene in the PMP air shaft. When they model to the oxygen needed to bind the benzene, they make no account for the oxygen that will be lost to other processes in the mine, like iron and the bio matter.
- There is no way to meet Class IIA NJGWQS
- Sealing off the air shaft could help the surrounding area.

## Contradictions

- Benzene levels in the air shaft are not decreasing, but the report only talks about a general decline in benzene readings.
- The EPA cannot determine the source of COC's, yet in the PMP air shaft solution they state that it could help the surrounding area.
- There are 262M gallons of water in the mines. The report only deals with the 0.345M gallons in the air shaft. That is 0.13% of the total mine water. The EPA assumes the rest (261.655M) is not going anywhere.
- They recognize that the air shaft is connected to the rest of the mine. Then they say that pumping from the airshaft could alter the flow of water in a bad way. Everywhere else they say that the water in the air shaft barely affects anything.
- The data does not support that natural attenuation is happening enough to be a long term solution.
- They reference the Jacob's report, but dismiss the report's conclusion that there is a possibility that 1,4 dioxane could reach the reservoir.
- They throw out high readings as anomalies, but do not do the same with unusually low readings.
- They talk about 1,4 dioxane a lot. They make no allowance that other untested chemicals may be in the site.

## Omissions

- The Jacobs report conclusion that 1,4 dioxane could migrate offsite is not addressed.

- There is no talk about upward movement of water affecting the current residents.
- No accommodation for the water levels in mine tubes going up and down sending the stagnant air into the local environment. No air monitoring that I have seen.
- There is no accommodation for new chemicals in the site, yet 1,4 dioxane plays a prominent role in the study despite it only being detected recently and by the town, not the EPA.
- The report does not take into account the fact that the harmful chemicals are still suspended in water. Usually pollution will settle out of the water column over time. The fact that it is still suspended in water should be a major concern.

## Conclusion

The report is a travesty for the residents of Upper Ringwood, the people relying on the reservoir and for the EPA Superfund's mission. The EPA begins with the assumption that:

*Under existing conditions, there is no significant human health or ecological risk associated with groundwater or surface water at the Site and no risk of migration to any downgradient receptor, including the Wanaque Reservoir or the Borough's public water supply wells.*

That removes a lot of possible solutions. The EPA also believes that current natural attenuation is working fine. Therefore they are only proposing solutions to monitor nature and possibly enhance the attenuation.

99.87% of the water in the mines is basically ignored as stable and not related to Ford's dumping. In essence, Ford made a smart decision to dump their waste in the mines. Since the condition of the mines prior to Ford is not known, it is easy for them to claim that any pollution below the surface is not their problem.

The most troubling aspect of the report is that assumptions generally favor Ford. High COC readings get thrown out as anomalies, despite the dual sample testing they employ. They don't mention the testing standards. Low results are kept. This is data bias.

We knew this was coming. Fifty years of mismanagement of the site has put the COC's into the groundwater. The EPA and Ford could now both be liable for groundwater contamination, so the objectivity of this analysis is close to zero. Clearly both parties have a conflict of interest. I also wonder why Ford replaced Arcadis with Cornerstone.

This report needs to be thrown out. Some assumptions are clearly wrong and there is a clear bias to prove that there is nothing wrong in the groundwater. There is no accommodation for a change in bedrock or an acceleration of the existing upward vertical movement of the water, despite historical readings that fluctuate so much that the data gets thrown out. We have a unique site and this report tries to fit it into typical models that do not apply.

Our community needs to reject this report and demand a neutral party (NJDEP) take over the investigation. At the least, we should spend some of the \$4M on an independent study. The NJWSDC should also join our effort as the EPA has rejected the conclusions in the Jacobs report.



# Ringwood Environmental Commission Annual Report

## Appendix – B



Thomas Conway  
Chair, Ringwood Environmental Commission  
60 Margaret King Avenue  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

The Honorable Phil Murphy  
Governor of New Jersey  
225 W State St.  
Trenton, NJ 08625

RE: Tennessee Gas Pipeline East 300 Upgrade Project, Title V Air Permit

Friday, July 15, 2022

Dear Governor Murphy:

I am urgently requesting your intervention in the Tennessee Gas Pipeline East 300 Upgrade Project, Title V Air Permit. This is New Jersey's last chance to stop this unnecessary and risky utility expansion in our protected Highlands Region. I beg you to intervene and continue to protect our future by limiting our contribution to climate change.

## Pledges on Climate Change

When you came to office, people were pleased to hear your promises to reduce New Jersey's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The State now has aggressive goals (50% GHG emission reduction from 2006 levels<sup>1</sup>) and we are less than eight years away from the first checkpoint. Allowing the TGP pipeline expansion in Wantage and West Milford will increase the amount of methane released from New Jersey. During the last few years, the body of scientific evidence demonstrating harmful consequences of methane emissions has only grown and strengthened.<sup>2</sup>

Just last November, you issued Executive Order 274 stating, "WHEREAS, global atmospheric warming, caused largely by the burning of fossil fuels, constitutes one of the **greatest long-term threats currently facing humanity** and is leading to significant changes in climate patterns here in New Jersey, across the United States, and around the world, resulting in rising sea levels, increased flooding, more frequent and

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<sup>1</sup> New Jersey Executive Order 274, <https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-274.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> R. Ravishankara et al., Global Methane Assessment: Benefits and Costs of Mitigating Methane Emissions (Nairobi: Climate and Clean Air Coalition and United Nations Environment Programme, 2021), <https://www.ccacoalition.org/en/resources/global-methane-assessment-full-report>

severe extreme weather events, and numerous other adverse environmental impacts...”<sup>3</sup> Clearly the threat of increased GHG emissions from fossil fuels is a danger we both acknowledge.

Under your watch, the State updated the Global Warming Response Act to call for GHG emissions to be 80% below 2006 levels by 2050.<sup>4</sup> You issued Executive Order No. 100 (...to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other climate pollutants).<sup>5</sup> In it, Paragraph 1.C states, “..**Integrate climate change considerations**, such as sea level rise, into its regulatory and permitting programs, including but not limited to, land use permitting, water supply, stormwater and wastewater permitting and planning, **air quality**, and solid waste and site remediation permitting.”<sup>6</sup>

Given the above, it is imperative that New Jersey consider the fact that approving the pipeline Compressor Station upgrades not only goes against the orders you have issued, but will **increase** one of the most potent GHG emissions there is. Increasing methane emissions in our protected Highlands Region is an insult to all the residents that have had to sacrifice to comply with the protections the Highlands Act demands.

You have made the executive orders and you have the power to stop this unnecessary expansion. Controlling methane emissions is one of the quickest ways to reduce the GHG issue in the short term.<sup>7</sup> Please act now!

## Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)

Our partner in the RGGI, New York, is also keenly aware of the impact methane has on climate change. They have prevented fracking in the western section of their state because of its harms to the environment. New York has also rejected numerous gas pipeline expansions in the past decade.

In the 2017 New York Methane Reduction Plan, the State observed that “Methane accounts for 9% of New York State greenhouse gas emissions<sup>8</sup> and is second to carbon dioxide in its contribution to climate change as a result of its high volume in the atmosphere and strong radiative effects. Moreover, we may not fully understand the extent of methane emissions, as estimates of methane leakage from oil and natural gas infrastructure, landfills, and farm activities continue to increase with new research and improved reporting.”<sup>9</sup>

When New York looks at where those leaks come from, they concluded, “Midstream emissions... [accounted] for 67.8% of emissions, with compressors (storage and transmission) comprising the largest

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<sup>3</sup> New Jersey Executive Order 274, <https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-274.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> N.J.S.A. 26:2C-37

<sup>5</sup> New Jersey Executive Order 100, <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-100.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> Global Methane Assessment: Benefits and Costs of Mitigating Methane Emissions, United Nations Environment Programme, May 6, 2021, <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-methane-assessment-benefits-and-costs-mitigating-methane-emissions>

<sup>8</sup> NYSDA 2016. New York State Greenhouse Gas Inventory: 1990 – 2014. Final Report. <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/About/Publications/EA-Reports-and-Studies/Energy-Statistics>

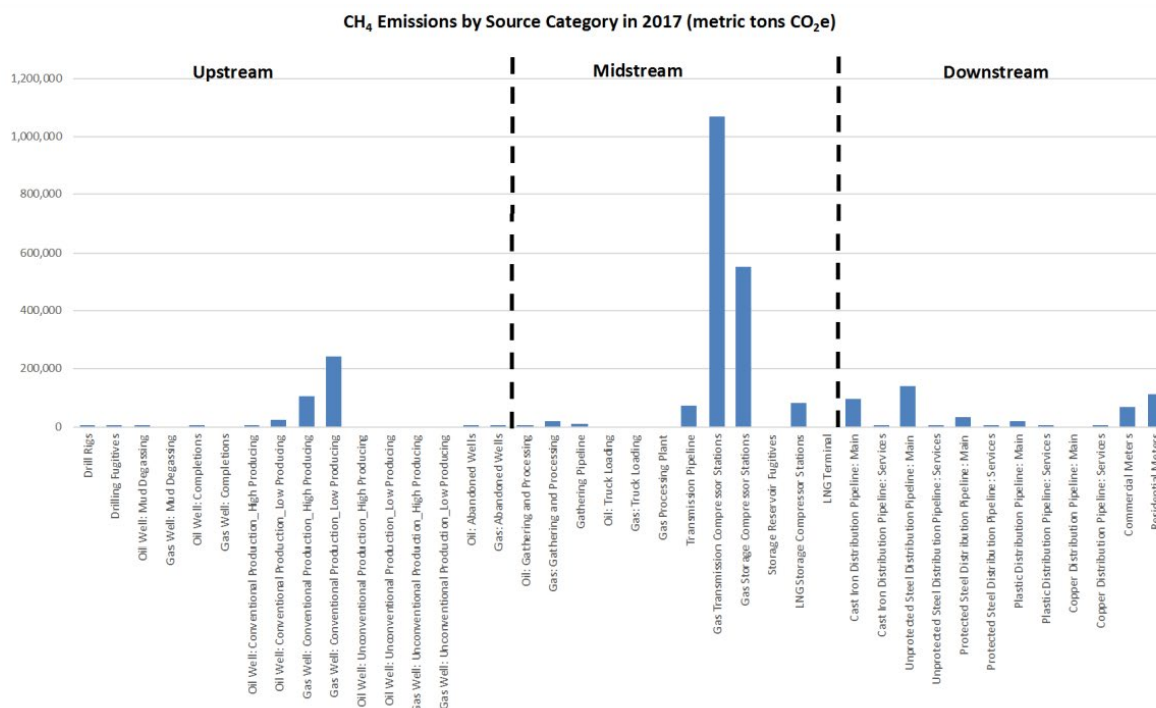
<sup>9</sup> New York State Methane Reduction Plan, [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/mrpfinal.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/mrpfinal.pdf)

source categories in the inventory. **In fact, storage and transmission compressor stations are the two largest single-source categories identified in New York State...**<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, New York recognizes the harm to our planet as a whole, as well as their own climate change targets of compressor stations along pipelines. It is why they reject so many pipeline proposals. It is easy to infer that this pipeline project is attractive to New York since **they will get the natural gas they need from Pennsylvania, but Pennsylvania and New Jersey will get the emissions hit.** This should be irrelevant since all methane emissions are a global problem, but New York's political maneuvering should not be hidden by abusing New Jersey's protected areas.

They know that pipeline transmission is a big part of the GHG emissions. "Although natural gas production in New York State has declined since 2006, this trend [methane emissions] closely follows increased natural gas consumption, which has risen by 16.2%, from 1,080 Bcf in 2005 to 1,255 Bcf in 2017. Correspondingly, emissions from transmission compressor stations have risen in order to accommodate increased natural gas throughput in the State... Midstream emissions... [accounted] for 67.8% of emissions, with compressors (storage and transmission) comprising the largest source categories in the inventory."<sup>11</sup>

This picture from the above report is worth a thousand empty pledges:



<sup>10</sup> New York State Oil and Gas Methane Emissions Inventory: 2018-2020 Update, Final Report, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Prepared by: Abt Associates, December 2021, <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/-/media/Files/Publications/Energy-Analysis/NYS-oil-gas-sector-methane-inventory-2018-2020.ashx>

<sup>11</sup> ibid



New York is attempting to conceal the true cost of this project by shunting the emissions into New Jersey. They recognize how damaging GHG emissions are from transmission and compression and will saddle other states with that burden. **New Jersey should not play this shell game.**

## Con Edison – The End User

We got here when Con Edison announced that most **new gas hookups in Westchester County** would be suspended until they could secure more supply. They have used this ploy before, but neighboring New York City already passed legislation to ban new gas hookups starting as early as 2024.<sup>12</sup> Con Edison supported this action.<sup>13</sup> New Jersey must ask if New York is serious about reducing its GHG emissions. If it is, then this project has little benefit since it is a year or more from delivering on its promise.

Concerns about the power transmission to compensate for the loss of new gas hookups is not a problem according to Con Edison. Since a majority of natural gas usage is during the winter months, Con Edison can handle the load. In the same testimony, they state, “Our electric grid is well-poised to support the transition to heating electrification. Because our system is built to serve our customers’ energy use during the hottest summer afternoon (about 13,000 MW) and energy use is currently lower in the winter (about 8,000 MW), many parts of our system can easily support the growth of heating electrification for the coming years.”<sup>14</sup>

Con Edison (like New Jersey and New York) also has a commitment to the future. Their “Clean Energy Commitment” has five pillars.<sup>15</sup> Pillar three is “Reimagine the Gas System” and contains the following initiatives<sup>16</sup>:

- Support policy reforms and programs that reduce natural gas consumption and provide customers clean energy alternatives.
- Provide customers heating options through non-pipe, clean energy alternatives and continue to focus capital investments on public safety and system reliability, **leveraging our main replacement program to reduce methane emissions.**
- Pursue reduction of upstream fugitive methane emissions across the natural gas production and delivery value chain.

All of the above are contrary to their stated goals in the pipeline application.<sup>17</sup> Con Edison and Tennessee Gas Pipeline are working together to increase the natural gas supply in RGGI states through any means necessary to get the infrastructure in place before the anticipated ban on new pipelines and pipeline upgrades. This project is unnecessary and, worse, makes a joke out of your and New York’s stated climate goals.

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<sup>12</sup> New York City, Intro. 2317-2021, passed December 22, 2021

<sup>13</sup> Submitted Testimony for the City Council Environmental Protection Committee Oversight Hearing re: Building Electrification, Con Edison, November 17, 2021

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

<sup>15</sup> Con Edison, Our Clean Energy Commitment, June 2022, <https://www.coned.com/en/our-energy-future/our-energy-vision/our-energy-future-commitment>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, L.L.C., Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for the East 300 Upgrade Project of Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, L.L.C. under CP20-493, June 30, 2020

I applaud your effort to get our State moving on climate change. We have made progress. **Please keep that momentum going by using your Executive Order 100 to prevent the State of New Jersey from issuing the required air permit based on its stated increase in GHG emissions.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Conway", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Conway  
Chair, Ringwood Environmental Commission

CC      Shawn LaTourette, Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

The 2021 State of New Jersey Climate Change Resilience Strategy starts with, "Climate change is the single greatest long-term threat currently facing humanity, and our state and economy are uniquely vulnerable to its devastating effects..."

And here tonight we sweat in the Highlands Protected Region, debating fossil fuel expansion.

We seem to lose track of the spirit of our laws. Clearly the Highlands Act was meant to protect our drinking water from all threats to the watershed. Yet, we allow out-of-state corporations to exploit loopholes meant improve the infrastructure for those living in the Highlands. This one falls under Exemption 11. The Act is a toothless tiger.

The 2012 pipeline expansion continues to wreak havoc on our forests. After a decade, chemical treatments are still necessary to combat the invasive species that have popped up in the day-lighted pipeline path. The planted trees have died along the path, allowing rains to wash sediments into our streams and lakes. ATV's rumble down the pipeline roads because the gates have been broken since they were first installed in 2013. The promises made by TGP are still unfulfilled and yet here we are talking about another TGP expansion, which will soon be an abandoned asset, if our politician's pledges are to be believed.

The battle is looking bleak. Large corporations get around our best intentions with little effort. It seems like we are defenseless to stop them, having neither the tools, nor the will.

But there is hope. You have been given a sword, **Executive Order 100**. In it, the Governor points out:

- the only method to begin mitigation of these effects is through steep and immediate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions

- in the absence of action at the federal level, **states must take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change**
- **It specifies this board to Integrate climate change considerations, into air quality permitting.**

It is long past time that we put action behind these lofty words. I am not talking glamour projects, but the work in the trenches that needs to be done to get moving on reducing GHG emissions. This project has one purpose: to increase methane use in New York. It is obvious that you cannot reduce GHG emissions by expanding our methane infrastructure. Approving this project nullifies all the grand proclamations made by regional leaders.

You have been given the sword to stop this project. Use it. Decades from now, you may be sitting with your grandchildren on a nice, summer night. A cool night thanks to the progress made on our pending clean-energy transformation. When they ask about your time with the NJDEP, what are you going to tell them?

Will you say you did your best, but couldn't effect the outcome? Or will you tell them about the time you went out on a limb and stood up to the pipeline company. How you put action behind the Governor's E.O. 100 and took a stand against climate change. You have the chance to be the spark that ignites New Jersey's moment to lead the nation on GHG emission reductions; ending the years of empty promises and unfulfilled pledges.

We are at the turning point in history, the question is whether or not this board will be a part of the story or just another rubber stamp claiming to do their job.

The time to just do your job has passed. It is not enough. **I am here to ask you to do your duty and deny this permit.** Good Evening.



# Ringwood Environmental Commission Annual Report

## Appendix – C



September 7, 2022

Bureau of Watershed Management  
NJDEP – Division of Watershed Protection and Restoration  
501 East State Street  
Mail Code 501-02A, PO Box 420  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420

Re: 2020-22 Water Quality Restoration Grants  
Borough of Ringwood, Passaic County  
Cupsaw Brook Watershed Implementation Project

To Whom It May Concern:

The Ringwood Environmental Commission is pleased to provide this letter of support on behalf of Ringwood Borough's 319(h) grant application to be used to implement a nonpoint source control project involving the construction of a rain garden in the watershed of Cupsaw Brook and Cupsaw Lake.

The project proposed will assist to reduce non-point source pollution to the lake and the downstream portion of a Cupsaw Brook tributary. The Borough of Ringwood has begun to implement the projects identified in the study report recently funded by the NJ Highlands Council *An Assessment of the Lakes and Watershed of Ringwood Borough*.

Our Commission is working to educate the residents of our 100% Highlands Preservation Area Borough on proper ways to reduce nutrient loading in our waterways and lakes. While much of our work goes unnoticed, this project would allow us to reach all children in the sixth through eighth grades in the Borough and begin their education on why watershed protection is a cornerstone of New Jersey's future. It would be a huge win-win for today and our State's future.

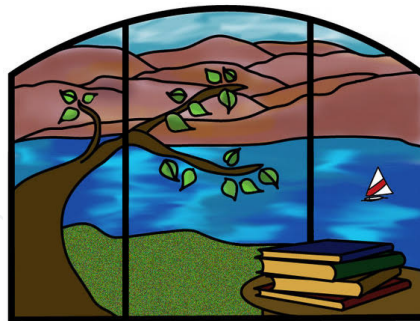
Sincerely,

Thomas Conway  
Chair, Ringwood Environmental Commission





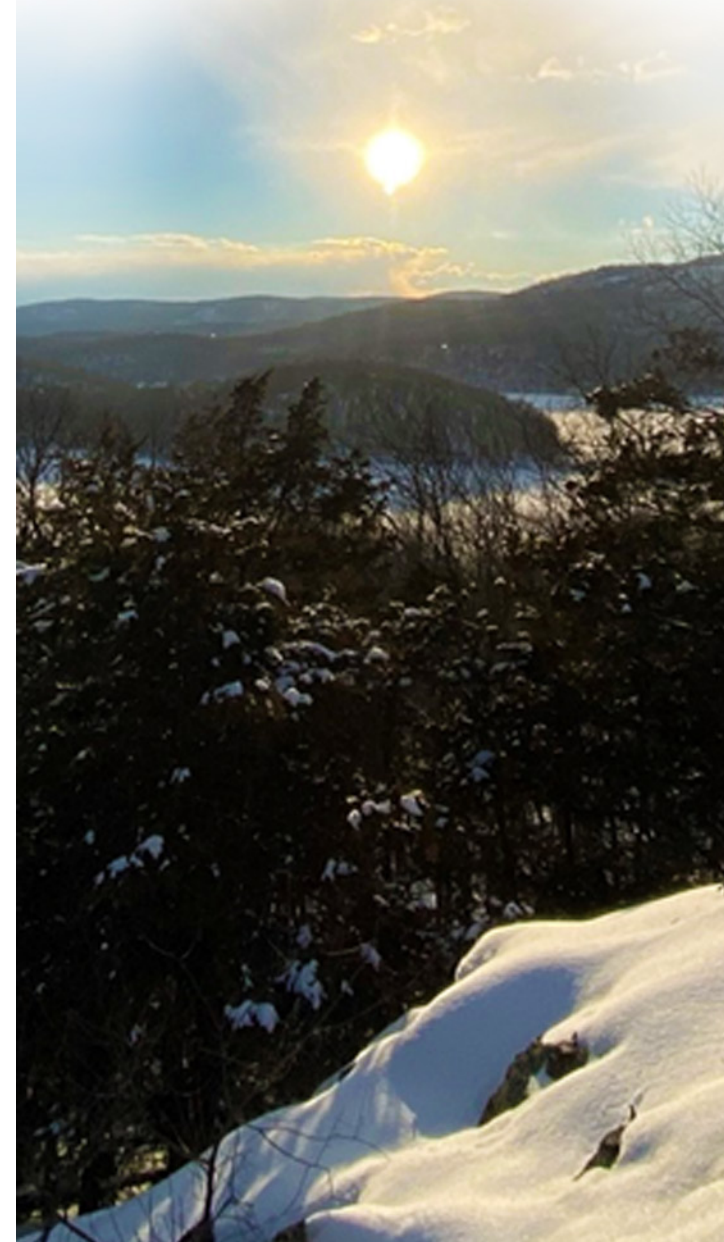
From October  
through February,  
the viewpoint offers  
the best sunset view  
in Ringwood.



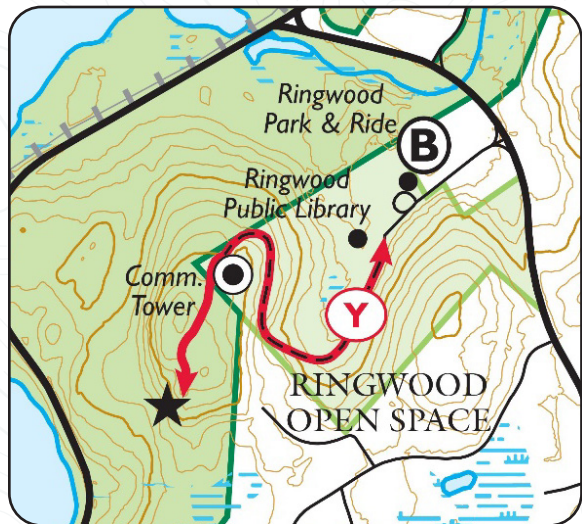
Ringwood Public Library  
30 Cannici Drive  
Ringwood, NJ 07456  
(973) 962-6256  
[Parker@ringwoodlibrary.org](mailto:Parker@ringwoodlibrary.org)  
[www.ringwoodlibrary.org](http://www.ringwoodlibrary.org)



# RINGWOOD LIBRARY TRAIL







## BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING

Even on a short hike like this one, people should carry some essentials as conditions can change quickly on the mountaintop. Be sure to wear or pack the following:

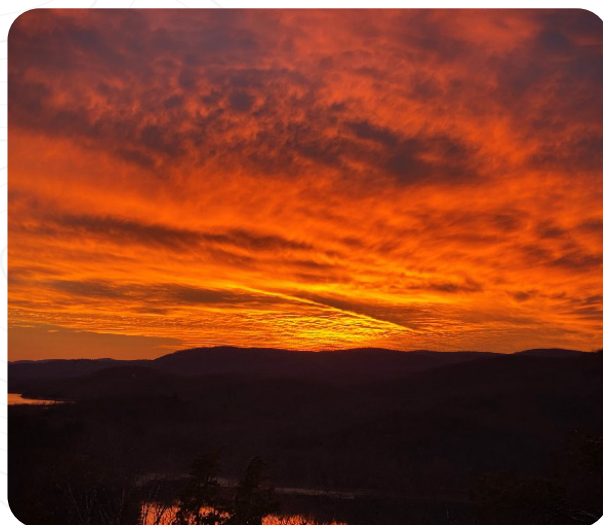
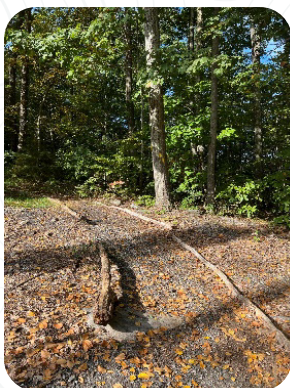
- Water
- Sturdy Shoes
- Windbreaker or Jacket
- Flashlight (for sunset hikes)
- Snack (especially for kids)
- Camera
- Bug Repellant (spring through fall)

## THE TRAIL

The trail starts at the gated woods road by the walkway to the playground. It follows the road uphill for about 500 yards to the cell tower near the top of the hill.



From here, look to the right of the cell tower to continue on the trail into the woods. The trail becomes a single-track path for the next 300 yards to the viewpoint.



## BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TRAIL SIGNS

*The Ringwood Library Trail is the perfect hilly trail to start hiking. For kids, the playground at the beginning offers an attractive destination. Adults can utilize the library or walk down the road to a pair of eateries. It is also conveniently located next to the Ringwood Park and Ride; one of the few trails in the county to be accessible from public transportation.*

The first sign for most trails consists of three markers. This indicates the beginning or end of a trail.



The most common marker is a single mark indicating a mostly straight route to the next marker(s).

Two markers in a diagonal position indicate a turn ahead. In this photo, the top is to the left of the bottom marker indicating a left turn coming up.



Hi Tim,

Thanks for taking the time to chat the other morning. I would like to expand the Library trail to have an option to avoid the cell tower road completely. This is an ideal beginner's trail as the road will still be there in case someone needs help, but will allow hiker's a more natural experience.

90% of the trail will be on Ringwood's property between the library lot and the road. I can connect the trail to the road at the border with your land, but staying out from the road into NJDWSC property makes the most sense for grading and avoiding the road completely. The new footpath would connect to the existing one just beyond the cell tower.

The scouting of the path revealed little human activity by the proposed trail. I would use a trail planner from the New York New Jersey Trail Conference for a second opinion on the sustainability of the proposed trail. This means no grade above 5% and making sure the trail will not degrade.

I fully understand if this cannot happen. The Borough is thrilled with the existing trail as it has brought more people into hiking than we could have ever expected. I have already had to deliver my third batch of 100 brochures to the library. Better yet, I have seen decreasing amounts of garbage as the popularity has increased since we opened it in October. I consider that a win-win for everyone.

Besides the benefit to Ringwood, this trail is unique in that it is one of the few trails in northern New Jersey that is accessible from public transportation. I believe that if we can get this second option for people that want to avoid the cell tower road, it will be even more attractive to bus riders and residents. The combination of library, playground and trail is allowing parents to expose their kids to backwoods nature. I believe that is the most important task for our future. Kids raised in nature will protect our environment.

Regards,  
Tom



# Ringwood Environmental Commission Annual Report

## Appendix – D

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## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT TALKING POINTS

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- Plan reviews are done ahead of meetings – working well
- Letters about James Drive plant and septic awareness
- Focused on Water
  - Lakes Meeting
  - Review of Princeton Hydro Watershed Report
- Two proposed Ordinances
  - TGP opposition
  - Forest Steward Objection
- Spotted Lanternfly – ash borer still eating – gypsy moths at bay for now
- Superfund Activity - #1 issue for Ringwood
  - Raised many issues
  - Joe is working with Scott
  - Ringwood resolved issues the EPA ignored
- Library Trail
  - COVID-19 delayed
  - Wife and kids helped, thanks
  - Borough helped remove items from top of mountain
  - NYNJTC helped design and donated markers
  - Mayor and Commissioner joined first hike
  - Brochure available at library

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## 2022 FOCUS

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- Land
  - More trails
  - Protect forests from threats
  - Identify trailheads in neighborhoods
  - More trail building behind library and downtown
    - Need kiosk
  - Consider trails in new design of center
  - cleanups
- TGP
- Help septic education

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## 2022 AREAS OF FOCUS

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*With 2022 almost a quarter over, we have 9 months to complete some activities this year. Please consider taking on an area or two as a focus. I will be happy to help with each area, but would appreciate someone to make sure we stay on task. There is more here than we can do this year, but I think we can make progress on a few.*

### **Lake Watershed Report Follow Up**

I think we should still look for opportunities to implement some of the ideas in the 2021 Watershed report. This can be through grants, the Borough, County, or just connecting the lakes to help support a grant effort.

### **Invasives Species**

The Spotted Lantern Fly is here. We can setup a few Facebook posts to help get the word out through the Borough Page. There can also be a flier available there as a handout. Lot's of options.

### **Kiosk Redesign**

The Library Trail has a bad start. The only sign there says, "DO NOT ENTER." Not very welcoming. Scott has indicated that he could provide some DPW help if we give him a clear direction on what is needed. This is time sensitive and should be given to the Borough ASAP for any DPW work. A kiosk would also be nice to show the trail. I plan to expand trails in this area.

### **Septic Follow Up**

#### *Correspondence*

There are some strong feeling about a septic ordinance in town. I don't want to pursue this myself as I have dabbled before with little effect. This could use a strong lead to make sure our position is clear and broadcast.

#### *Education*

I am more interested in this. We have the opportunity to provide guidance to the Borough as they plan to hire a PR firm to help get septic knowledge out.

## **Borough Trails and Trailheads**

There are many access points to the woods in Ringwood that are known to the neighbors, but the trails are unmarked and sketchy. I have hiked many of these in the fall and there is potential to have a half dozen connections formalized into trails.

### *NJDEP*

Dealing with Eric Pain and the NJDEP is a job on its own.

### *Public Outreach*

It would be best to know if there are neighbors in these areas that have a big issue with improved and possibly marked trail access to the woods. It does have the potential to increase traffic and even cars parked in their streets.

### *Trail Building*

I will lead this. Happy to have help with your organization or with your back.

### *Trail Cleanups*

I would like to get some younger people around town to help with trail cleanups. Doug Ruccione did this with a small group. Ideally, we would have a few people on call to arrange a quick, 1-2 hour, cleanup. I am not sure how to start this, but cleanups work best with 5-10 people.

### *Economic Development Commission's Trail Study*

I am bad at keeping up with people and groups. Ideally, someone would reach out monthly and follow their meetings. I tried, but did not get far.

## **Other Areas**

Please do not feel constrained by the above. I would be happy to help with areas that I normally do not engage in. Ideas about green infrastructure, plastic reduction, stream monitoring, Borough Recycling and Garbage, etc. are always welcome.



## 2021 Vision, Mission, and Values

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The Environmental Commission adopted the following at its February 20, 2020 meeting. By having a clear vision, we know the general direction we all want to move in, no matter how impossible it is. The key is to move *forward toward something*. Once we know where we want to be in the future, we follow a mission. The mission explains what we need to do *now* to achieve the vision. The last step in defining an organization is the list the values that we hold close to our purpose. It is what we believe in and defines how we are supposed to conduct ourselves.

### Vision Statement

Promoting a clean, healthy and well-protected environment supporting a diversity of species while allowing people to connect with nature.

### Mission Statement

To protect and improve the quality of our land, water, and air by advising the Borough of Ringwood on actions and policies of sustainability. Through education and outreach, the Commission seeks to inspire our community to incorporate environmentally responsible practices.

### Values

1. We are a trusted, independent and authoritative advocate for the environment.
2. We make objective decisions based on the best available scientific evidence and information.
3. We make a difference by working with others to build trust, networks and partnerships to deliver effective outcomes.

### Objectives

1. Organize events to promote environmental awareness.
2. Maintain the environmental and ecological stability of the Borough of Ringwood by advising on environmental concerns and issues affecting the borough.
3. Enhance decision-making by the local government by ensuring that environmental policies are integrated into all plans and projects.
4. Provide guidance to residents on invasive species.
5. Promote and organize clean up events in the Borough and its parks.





# Ringwood Environmental Commission Annual Report

## Appendix – E



September 7, 2022

Bureau of Watershed Management  
NJDEP – Division of Watershed Protection and Restoration  
501 East State Street  
Mail Code 501-02A, PO Box 420  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420

Re: 2020-22 Water Quality Restoration Grants  
Borough of Ringwood, Passaic County  
Cupsaw Brook Watershed Implementation Project

To Whom It May Concern:

The Ringwood Environmental Commission is pleased to provide this letter of support on behalf of Ringwood Borough's 319(h) grant application to be used to implement a nonpoint source control project involving the construction of a rain garden in the watershed of Cupsaw Brook and Cupsaw Lake.

The project proposed will assist to reduce non-point source pollution to the lake and the downstream portion of a Cupsaw Brook tributary. The Borough of Ringwood has begun to implement the projects identified in the study report recently funded by the NJ Highlands Council *An Assessment of the Lakes and Watershed of Ringwood Borough*.

Our Commission is working to educate the residents of our 100% Highlands Preservation Area Borough on proper ways to reduce nutrient loading in our waterways and lakes. While much of our work goes unnoticed, this project would allow us to reach all children in the sixth through eighth grades in the Borough and begin their education on why watershed protection is a cornerstone of New Jersey's future. It would be a huge win-win for today and our State's future.

Sincerely,

Thomas Conway  
Chair, Ringwood Environmental Commission



February 23, 2022

Ms. Cathryn Schaffer, Manager  
Bureau of Watershed Management  
NJDEP – Division of Watershed Protection and Restoration  
501 East State Street  
Mail Code 501-02A, PO Box 420  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420

Re: 2020-22 Water Quality Restoration Grants  
Borough of Ringwood, Passaic County  
Cupsaw Brook Watershed Implementation Project

Dear Ms. Schaffer:

The Ringwood Environmental Commission is pleased to provide this letter of support on behalf of Ringwood Borough's 319(h) grant application to be used to implement a nonpoint source control project involving the construction of a rain garden in the watershed of Cupsaw Brook and Cupsaw Lake.

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Sincerely,

Thomas Conway  
Chair, Ringwood Environmental Commission

Ringwood Board of Health  
60 Margaret King Avenue  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

Ringwood Environmental Commission  
60 Margaret King Avenue  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

March 1, 2022

To The Environmental Commission:

The letter written by Thomas Conway was distributed to the members of the Board of Health and discussed at length at our February 9, 2022 meeting.

The Ringwood Board of Health is in unanimous agreement with the Environmental Commission's December 15th letter that a septic pumping ordinance is in the best interest of the environment and the health of our lakes and waterways. The creation and implementation of a septic ordinance has been discussed at previous meetings with several parties involved in creating such an ordinance. The previous registered environmental health specialist revised the town septic guidelines, however the specific pumping requirements were not defined. There are costs associated with the implementation of such an ordinance and the details of these costs are currently under review.

Current items under review are:

- A computer software program that will enable department of health staff to enter data, track status and print compliance letters
- Staffing needs to implement the ordinance
- Standards to allow for enforcement of the ordinance
- Cooperation with septic companies

As the logistics of implementing a plan are being reviewed, an education campaign will take place via a public relations company. This education will include the importance of septic pumping, as well as steps that can be taken to decrease the nutrient load being put into the waterways. This includes the importance of decreasing the use of phosphate containing fertilizers, detergents, and changing landscaping practices.

We will continue to address this issue and work with the health officer, registered environmental health specialist and the borough administrator before requesting the town council create a new ordinance. This issue is of great importance to all those involved and we look forward to open communication on this issue as we move forward.

Sincerely,  
The Ringwood Board of Health



# Ringwood Environmental Commission

Ringwood Environmental Commission  
60 Margaret King Avenue  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

Ringwood Board of Health  
60 Margaret King Avenue  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

Friday July 22, 2022

Dear Ms. Kirby and the Board of Health:

At our meeting on July 21, 2022, the Ringwood Environmental Commission unanimously voted to recommend the Board of Health work with the Health Department to begin mailing specific letters to homeowners based on the last date they pumped. Reminders should go out to any homeowner that has not had a pumping permit issued within the last three years.

Last year's watershed analysis of Ringwood's lakes conducted by Princeton Hydro identified septic systems as a major source of the nutrient loading that leads to HABs. If we do not take action now, we will most likely encounter lake warnings and closures which will affect the lives of our residents and consequently their property values. This issue is out of the reach of private lakes and only the Borough can track and remind septic owners to properly maintain their septic systems.

We kindly ask for your consideration of the following, in lieu of a septic pumping ordinance:

1. Increase tracking of all pumping permits to allow lists to be created based on the last date a septic was pumped.
2. Send out reminders to any septic owner that has not pumped within the last three years.
3. Any complaints about a septic system should be noted in each homeowner's record. The complaint should be investigated and a dye test performed.

The Commission believes that continued delay in increasing the amount of homes that pump is an unnecessary burden to our waterways and lakes. Since the Borough is not ready to require pumping at any frequency, we believe timely notification can get us part of the way to the same goal of an ordinance. It will also help the Borough be better prepared in the case a pumping measure is introduced at a County or Highlands Region level.

Sincerely,

Thomas Conway  
On Behalf of the Ringwood Environmental Commission

CC: Scott Heck, Borough Manager  
CC: Ringwood Mayor and Council



# Ringwood Environmental Commission

Ringwood Environmental Commission  
60 Margaret King Avenue  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

NJDEP, State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites  
Attn: John Cecil  
Mail Code 501-04  
PO Box 420  
501 East State Street, 4th Floor  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

Thursday, November 17, 2022

Dear Commissioner Cecil:

**The Ringwood Environmental Commission requests your attention to the deterioration of our beautiful State Parklands in the Borough of Ringwood.**

Crumbling roads, condemned buildings, closed swimming areas and broken bathrooms greet visitors to our parks. Further afield from the main areas, off-road vehicles carve deep ruts and illegal activities fill the vacuum from lax enforcement of park rules. This is all the result of years of underfunding our State Parks.

**The deterioration of our parks is an Environmental Justice Issue.** The communities that bear the heaviest burdens of our past mistakes are now denied even this fundamental chance to get away from their day-to-day life. A report from 2020<sup>1</sup> shows that 71% of black people and 82% of Hispanic people in New Jersey live in a nature-deprived area by census tract demographics. This number falls to only 25% for white people. The income disparity is similar with 83% of low-income people living in a nature-deprived area compared to 29% for high income. When you combine nonwhite and low income, you end up with 89% living in a nature-deprived area.

While privileged citizens can retreat to their country clubs and private-community recreational activities; the citizens of burdened neighborhoods are losing out on places they can enjoy on their day off. In the United States today, the color of one's skin or the size of one's bank account is a solid predictor of whether one has safe access to nature and all of its benefits. As a result, low-income communities, communities of color and families with children have diminished outdoor recreation opportunities and access to nature.<sup>2</sup>

New Jersey has made improvements on the living conditions of overburdened communities, but we are going backwards on providing areas to spend the day in a

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent A. Landau, Meredith L. McClure, and Brett G. Dickson, "Analysis of the Disparities in Nature Loss and Access to Nature. Technical Report." *Truckee, CA: Conservation Science Partners, May 29, 2020*

<sup>2</sup> Jenny Rowland-Shea, Sahir Doshi, Shanna Edberg, and Robert Fanger, "The Nature Gap, Confronting Racial and Economic Disparities in the Destruction and Protection of Nature in America" *Center for American Progress and Hispanic Access Foundation, July 21, 2020*

natural setting. In essence, the deterioration of our parks adds an ever-increasing toll on its visitors and is shutting out the very people who rely on the parks as an affordable way to enjoy our State's natural bounty. As Dr. Andrew W. Kahrl put it in 2020 when talking about restrictions resulting from the Corona virus, "... the socially advantaged tend to retreat into private spaces, withdraw taxpayer support for public recreation, and work to restrict access to public space within their communities, often using concerns about public health and safety as justification."<sup>3</sup> Two years later, this has come to pass in New Jersey as more public swim areas close due to lifeguard shortages, but private swim areas remain open.

**The lack of proper facilities in our parks has a negative effect on the 25% of Americans with disabilities.** For those who are mobility impaired, roadways are sometimes the only path they can travel on. Some of the roadways in the Ringwood parks are so dilapidated that a wheelchair would have trouble navigating them. A recent online petition to repair the roads gathered 2,983 signatures.<sup>4</sup> Instead of fixing the roads, the parks are forced to cover them with quarry process which quickly washes down into the streams.

For the average citizen from the more congested parts of New Jersey, visiting the parks used to be a summer tradition. Lazy afternoons at Shepherd Lake involved the whole family. Parents and their kids could play on a beach and swim to cool off. Grandparents would enjoy the picnic area and be able to use a bathroom in comfort. That is no longer possible today.

Now those visitors navigate around deep potholes, hoping a flat tire does not cause a financial hardship. Once at the picnic area, they are denied the opportunity for a quick dip in the enticing lake since the beaches and swim area have been closed for years. When their child wants to play in the sand, they must search for a spot that has not been overgrown with weeds. The trip to a Port-O-Potty is disgusting after a long, hot afternoon. They may recall what fun they had as kids, but the next generation will only remember a trip to the broken promise of a once-great park system.

As attendance across the park goes down, illegal activities increase.<sup>5</sup> Up on the pipeline trails, off-road vehicles (ORV) park at the top of a hill while their riders down beers and ingest illegal drugs; leaving behind the detritus of their debauchery. Hunters roam across the back trails looking for an illegal trophy. There is no fear of enforcement. Vigilantes fill this vacuum and mini-turf battles regularly occur as hiking and biking features are destroyed by the ORV riders. ORV's have also been shown to harm vegetation, wildlife, air quality, water quality and the socio-economic vitality of public parkland.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew W. Kahrl, "Who Will Get to Swim This Summer?" *New York Times*, June 28, 2020

<sup>4</sup> New Jersey Botanical Garden Association Petition, 2020, <https://www.change.org/p/phil-murphy-repair-long-neglected-roads-at-the-beloved-nj-botanical-garden>

<sup>5</sup> Michael Van Clef, "New Jersey State Lands Management Report" *Pinelands Preservation Alliance*, April 2022

<sup>6</sup> Ouren, Haas, Malcher, Stewart, Ponds, Sexton, Burris, Fancher and Bowen, "Environmental Effects of Off-Highway Vehicles on Bureau of Land Management Lands" *USGS* 2007



While this is unsettling for all people out in nature, our country's history of violence against black and brown people make a trip into the backwoods even more daunting. Just this week, four bear cubs were illegally shot within a few hundred feet of a public school and popular parking area for State Park access.<sup>7</sup> This was done on a Sunday, a day where all hunting is banned in our area. How can we introduce people to nature when the general lawlessness of the parks makes law-abiding citizens fear for their own lives?

It will not take much to return our parks to their former glory. The land is here. The structures still stand. All we ask is that the State properly maintain the gifts it has received from its generous citizens over the past century and enforce the laws meant to protect those treasures. Please help return our parks to their original promise of natural recreation for all of the citizens of New Jersey to enjoy.

**A little investment today will pay off in the future.** Studies have shown that spending time in nature is not only beneficial to a child's development, but it is also a crucial factor in the formation of a lifelong appreciation of nature.<sup>8</sup> If we are to get a more diverse representation in our state's environmental community, it starts with the next generation of citizens.

Currently, our state parks are so overwhelmed that they close during the busiest times of the year:<sup>9</sup> The very times when our overburdened communities are looking to bring their families to connect with nature. A family may drive up to a State park and get turned away unless they leave their home at daybreak. What could have been the start of a lifelong passion for the outdoors is snuffed out by being denied access to the public space. Despite our parks filling to capacity on nice weekends, there are fewer that offer guarded (or any) swimming.

The New Jersey State Lands Management Report indicates that our park funding is one sixth of New York State, one third of Pennsylvania and two thirds of the national average; as measured per resident.<sup>10</sup> The low staff levels have led "to reduced services including seasonally staffed or closed nature centers, swim areas closing early, and delayed storm cleanup."<sup>11</sup> Two of the three recommendations of the report involve increasing funding to our parks.

Here in Ringwood, maintenance of our existing facilities should be top priority. Dilapidated buildings should be refreshed and bathrooms with running water should be available at any park that provides picnicking areas. Roads should be maintained to allow people to have a casual drive through a natural setting while enjoying the view. Beautiful lakes should once again be made available for people to take a break from the heat on

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<sup>7</sup> David M. Zimmer, "Ringwood man, 22, charged with hunting, firearms offenses in shooting of bear cubs" *Bergen Record*, November 16, 2022

<sup>8</sup> Susan Strife and Liam Downey, "Childhood Development and Access to Nature." March 22, 2009

<sup>9</sup> New Jersey State Park Service, 2022 Swimming Schedule, <https://nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/swimmingschedule.html>

<sup>10</sup> Michael Van Clef, "New Jersey State Lands Management Report" *Pinelands Preservation Alliance*, April 2022

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

warm summer days. Visitors should feel safe knowing the security personnel are available to stem illegal and dangerous activities when they venture further into nature.

**Nature is supposed to be a "great equalizer" whose services are free, universal, and accessible to all humans without discrimination. We demand the State of New Jersey invest in these precious resources to return them to functioning parks.** With a small amount of attention paid to the roads and existing structures, our parklands can once again fulfill the promise to provide a wonderful day in nature. By allowing our most vulnerable citizens the opportunity to connect with nature, we will help create another generation willing to support and possibly enhance New Jersey's natural charm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Conway', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Conway  
On Behalf of the Ringwood Environmental Commission

CC Governor Phil Murphy  
Shawn LaTourette



# Ringwood Environmental Commission

Ringwood Environmental Commission  
60 Margaret King Avenue  
Ringwood, NJ 07456

NJDEP, State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites  
Attn: John Cecil  
Mail Code 501-04  
PO Box 420  
501 East State Street, 4th Floor  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

Thursday, November 18, 2022

Dear Commissioner Cecil:

**The Ringwood Environmental Commission requests your attention to the deterioration of our beautiful state parklands in the Borough of Ringwood.** The natural beauty of Ringwood's parks is becoming spoiled by lack of maintenance and upkeep along with destructive activities that undermine ecological health, the public trust and our previous investments. Just in the past few years we have seen the following negative consequences in our parks and the trend is accelerating.

- Four bear cubs were illegally shot in Ringwood State Park on Sunday, November 13, 2022
- Roads are crumbling to the point where the New Jersey Botanical Association gathered almost 3,000 signatures on a petition to fix them
- A fire on a nice day in March of this year burned down the Grasmere Gate House
- Shepherd Lake has been closed to swimming for years and the beach is overgrown with weeds
- The bathrooms at Shepherds Lake were closed this year
- Off-Road Vehicles (ORV) ruts are making many wooded roads impassable for emergency vehicles
- Most houses at Long Ponds Ironworks are about to collapse and are fenced off

**In short, the state parks in Ringwood are used, abused, underfunded and forgotten by the state of New Jersey.**

It should be noted, that both Ringwood Residents and out-of-state visitors enjoy the natural beauty of the Ringwood Parks, similar to the New Jersey Shoreline Parks. The only difference is with the lack of maintenance regarding the conditions of our parks. Ringwood residents along with out-of-state visitors are appalled and outraged at the conditions of our parks; highlighted by the recent news about the illegal shooting of four bear cubs. The latest media attention has put a spotlight on the years of neglect of these once-majestic parks.

Given our commitment to the natural beauty of Ringwood and our state parks, **we invite you to visit our town and tour the area to see the dilapidated conditions for yourself.** We ask the state to provide the attention and funds necessary to return our parks to their former glory. **Without your support, the reputation of Ringwood and its natural beauty is at stake. We will ultimately lose much needed tourism dollars due to the fact that people are turned off by the conditions of the Parks and will stop visiting Ringwood as a result.** Our citizens stand ready to partner with the state in a "Friends" organization for New Jersey state parks and forests.

Sincerely,



Thomas Conway  
On Behalf of the Ringwood Environmental Commission

CC Governor Phil Murphy  
Shawn LaTourette