



## Verona Environmental Commission

600 Bloomfield Avenue  
Verona, New Jersey 07044

[www.veronaec.org](http://www.veronaec.org)

December 18, 2014

Dear Verona Mayor Bob Manley, Town Manager and Council Members,

Please see below the 2014 Verona Environmental Commission Annual Accomplishment Report:

### New Commissioners

The Verona Environmental Commission (VEC), created in 1992, has seven volunteer members and two alternates, all appointed by the Mayor. Former long time VEC Chair, Gerard Shimonaski, retired this year. Gloria Machnowski has served on the VEC since 2009 and as Chairperson since 2013. Longtime Commissioners are Tony Saltalamacchia (Vice-Chair), Virginia Citrano and James Loudon (Plans Review). The new Commissioners appointed in 2014 are: Jessica Pearson (Treasurer and Secretary), Larry Lonergan (Planning Board), Chris Stark, Julia Capuano (Alternate 1-VHS Liaison) and Martin Golan (Alternate 2). Kevin Ryan had been our Council Liaison since 2011.

### Social Media

The Commission maintains its website up to date [www.veronaec.org](http://www.veronaec.org) on a weekly basis and joined Facebook and Twitter in April, expanding opportunities to communicate with residents and aiming to increase participation in our projects, all free of cost.

### Sustainable Jersey

At Verona Environmental Commission encouragement, Verona joined the program Sustainable Jersey and achieved bronze certification in 2014. The VEC formally presented the program to the council on November 2013 and provided information to residents at our table in the December 2013 Fair in the Square. In 2014 Verona became the 400th municipality in the state to join the program and a Green Team was established.

### April 26 Earth Day Event

To celebrate Earth Day the VEC organized a river and trail cleanup in the municipal lot behind F. N. Brown School. Over 40 volunteers, including students from the VHS environmental Club, removed bags of cans, plastic bottles, broken glass and large items including a boiler, wire fencing, bed springs and pipes. Volunteers also pulled out invasive plants and mulched. DPW provided supplies and removed the collected garbage.

### Open Space Stewardship Grant

The Commission won a \$1,400 grant from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) to fund the purchase of native trees and other supplies to restore the municipal woods by the Peckman River, behind F.N. Brown School. The woods had sustained substantial damage in recent storms and the spread of invasive plants had crowded out much of the native vegetation.

### Verona Recycling 101 Video

In partnership with the Verona High School Environmental Club, the VEC produced a new 6 minute video to answer all residents' recycling questions. The video was filmed at the Verona Recycling Center and edited by commissioners with its own equipment, without spending any tax dollars.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJAYVXjiej4> – At the VEC encouragement the Verona Community Center installed recycling bins in the building this year.

#### Environmental Achievement Award

The VEC won a 2014 ANJEC Environmental Achievement Award, which is given by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. The commission was honored for the “Recycling 101” video. The video has been watched over 400 times on YouTube and has been shown at a Town Council meeting and aired on VTV and local websites. VEC members attended the ANJEC Environmental Congress at the Raritan Valley Community College and received the award in October. The VEC Chairperson presented the award at the November Town Council meeting and it is currently on display at the Verona Community Center.

#### May 31 Peckman River Trail Planting

After putting together a restoration plan, VEC commissioners purchased 8 native trees and several plants with grant money and organized a planting event. DPW took care of delivering the trees to the site. 16 kids (including girl-scout troop # 20228) and 22 adults put over 80 hours of combined work in the woods to remove the invasive Japanese knotweed and plant 6 Ostrich ferns, 2 Serviceberries, 3 River Birches and 3 huge Swamp White Oak trees.

#### Summer watering and weeding

A weekly watering and weeding event organized by the VEC took place all summer long at the Peckman Trail. Volunteers used the BOE generator and a sub-pump to water the new plantings with river water, pulled out the invasive Japanese knotweed plant and mulched the trees. The commission placed a trail map and information about the project in the trail bulletining board. The VEC would like to thank volunteers, the DPW, James Aiello from the BOE and F.N. Brown school custodians Louis Cerretta and Ignatius Jozwik (Iggy) for helping us.

#### Fall Clean Up

The commission organized a Fall clean up at the Peckman Trail behind F.N. Brown School on September 28. You can see the results in this new video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toUD9MB4jvw>. Fifteen volunteers showed up to remove cans, bottles and even old furniture! Volunteers also cleared a few downed trees, allowing the group to extend the pathway, and continue to pull the invasive Japanese knot weed.

#### VEC Poster Contest

The VEC conducted its sixth annual poster contest in October. Anti-Idling was the theme for the last 5 years. This year's theme was sustainability. Walking or biking to school, turning off cars while parked, preserving open space, planting native trees, composting, using renewable energy and buying locally are just a few ways to make Verona more sustainable. The event is aimed at supporting Walk to School Day and raise awareness for Verona's environment. The contest was open to all public elementary schools in Verona, H. B. Whitehorne Middle School and for first time the Verona High School. We received over 200 entries and we exhibited the posters at all 6 schools, at the Verona Community Center and at the Hilltop informational kiosks located at the entrance and exit of the reservation. The commission produced a video depicting the students' artwork and presented the video at the award ceremony in Town Hall in November. Winners received award certificates and \$50 dollars from Verona Mayor Bob Manley. The video was also broadcast in Verona TV and on local Web sites. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJAYVXjiej4>

#### Verona Fair in the Square

The Commission participated in Verona's Fair in the Square on Sunday, December 7th. The VEC held composting demonstrations (including a real composter on site) and crafts. Kids made over 40 pine cone bird feeders and several snowflake ornaments with plastic bottles prepared by HBW, Environmental Club students. Several kids hung their bird feeders from nearby trees while others took

them home with a brochure to help them identify common backyard birds. The commission also distributed composting brochures and it will continue offering composting demonstrations in 2015.

42 Grove Ave. Nature Trail Project

Every other year the Junior Woman's Club of Verona funds a community improvement project, their budget is \$2,000. This year they contacted the VEC and both groups are planing to create a nature trail in the wooded municipal lot located at 42 Grove Ave. The VEC recommended Verona Mayor and Town Manager to preserve this open space and the existing trees and they agreed. Plans include to install two park benches, a trail sign and a trash receptacle by the front. Preserving the existing vegetation is crucial, the commission also wants to remove invasive plants and plant a wild-native flower garden and a few native trees with volunteers during the Spring.

Other 2014 VEC initiatives included:

Following up on school Green Cleaning Policy and Styrofoam-free cafeterias.

Reviewing recycling issues and making recommendations to the township.

Evaluating proposed development in the Township and submitting comments to the Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and Board of Education related to the preservation of existing natural resources.

This year, as well as last year and the year before, the VEC recommended to adopt a Steep Slope Ordinance and an Anti Idling Resolution. We hope the Council understands the importance of these legislation and adopts them soon. Also, we are currently working to gather support to adopt a Green Building Policy.

For more information please visit the commission's Web site at [www.veronaec.org](http://www.veronaec.org)

Regards,

Gloria Machnowski  
Chairperson  
Verona Environmental Commission