



TRANSFORMER



Commissioner
Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti

The Garden State Continues to Blossom with NJDOT Assistance



Pollinators such as bees, butterflies, bats, and ants play an important role in helping ecosystems because flowering plants depend on these pollinators to produce seed. Sadly, the natural habitats of these helpful insects and animals have decreased over time due to development, pesticides, parasites, and more. As a result, some pollinator species have become extinct.

The NJDOT landscaping unit launched the Pollinator Initiative program to create pollinator habitats and new opportunities for environmental stewardship statewide.

Charles Shankle, NJDOT Landscape Designer, Bureau of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Solutions (BLAES) developed the Pollinator Initiative in response to a State Right of Way beautification request. He determined that a pollinator habitat offered a low-cost, high impact solution that provides great environmental benefits, including support for monarch butterflies during their migration across the state.

In 2021, the Pollinator Initiative took root when BLAES included it in its portfolio of landscape solutions, with the initial installation in July 2021. Throughout the spring and summer, BLAES received requests through the Office of Community and Constituent Relations and the Good Neighbor Planting Program that could be resolved with pollinator plantings.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) recognized the benefit of the Pollinator Initiative and requested NJDOT's assistance in rehabilitating an old soybean field along Route 29 that is adjacent to Cooley Preserve, D&R Canal State Park, Kingwood Township. "This project is a successful



Great ideas and butterflies emerge when like-minded experts come together for the common good. Charles Shankle, NJDOT Landscape Designer (orange vest) met with Don Torino, President, Bergen County Audubon Society (center-right), and our Office of Community Relations staff Anthony Sytko (L) and Ariel Luna (R) to discuss how they can create new opportunities to expand habitat locations and encourage public-private partnerships for the state's ecological well-being.

example of how government agencies can work together in achieving parallel goals for the benefit of our constituents and our wildlife," said Stephanie Fox, Resource Interpretive Specialist, Division of Parks and Forestry, NJDEP.

Additional pollinator locations have been established on Route 10 in Livingston, I-195 in Hamilton, I-287 in Mahwah, and Route 35 in Point Pleasant Beach. All of the pollinator installations have been inventoried and documented in the Transportation Asset Management System (TAMS) for tracking. In addition, signs have been placed to label the tract and ward off inadvertent mowing.

BLAES will be working with the NJ Audubon Society in the spring of 2022 to support their efforts in planting and maintaining milkweed plantings in the Meadowlands to increase butterfly habitats. They will also supply roadside signage to protect these areas from mowing.

In addition, BLAES is working with the Earth Matters Collective to install and maintain a large pollinator habitat in the Route 66 Circle in Neptune.



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This effort will involve wildflower seed planting, shrubs and small trees that support pollinator species. They will also explore eco-friendly ways to remove vegetation without toxic herbicides.

What constitutes a Pollinator Planting?

Thus far, seven projects have been planted around the state using primarily wildflowers. The growth of these plants is being documented for future reference. In addition to wildflowers, NJDOT has used these pollinator plants in various locations:



Milkweed is a source of nourishment for bees and are essential pollinator plants for monarch butterflies.

Prunus laurocerasis
"schipkaensis" (Skip Laurel)
Baptisia australis (False Indigo)
Amsonia (Blue Star)
Monarda (Bee Balm)
Echinacea
Phlox
Bluebells
Milkweed

License Plates Promote Pollinators

On October 27, 2021, Governor Murphy signed into law the authorization for New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission to offer specialty "Protect Pollinators" license plates. The specialty plates will be available for purchase for any motor vehicle owned or leased and registered in the State.

The Garden Club of New Jersey, Inc. will design the license plates incorporating symbols such as the State bird, the Eastern Goldfinch; the State bug, the Honeybee; and the State butterfly, the Black Swallowtail butterfly along with the required identification information. A \$50 fee will be collected in addition to the standard cost of the plate. The additional funds will be directed to the "Protect Pollinators License Plate Fund" and appropriated annually by the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey and the Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Program. Signing the law was the first step in advancing the program.



Monarch butterflies lay a single egg and will only do so on a milkweed plant leaf. When the monarch caterpillars emerge, milkweed is the only nourishment they consume.

The Future of BLAES

Looking forward, BLAES will be growing its program to align with the Integrated Roadside Vegetations Management Program, and FHWA pollinator guidelines. "We are continually looking for opportunities to expand this program," Charles Shankle said. In addition, they will continue their partnerships with corporations, municipalities, DOT Maintenance, and other state agencies to build awareness of the importance of pollinator habitats.

NJDOT Annual Service Anniversary Awards Celebration

Staff filled the sunlit courtyard outside of the Engineering and Operations building on the NJDOT Ewing campus for the annual Service Anniversary Awards celebration held on Tuesday, October 19, 2021.

The event honorees were NJDOT staffers who had served for a minimum of 25 years, the freshmen in the crowd, up to 45 years. The spirit of the day felt like a family reunion after a long stretch of time apart, which for many, it was.

The ceremony began with the Pledge of Allegiance and then Mistress of Ceremonies Talayia Little individually introduced the Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Chief of Staff and their awardees for a certificate and photograph. The Assistant Commissioners, in order of appearance were: Lewis Daidone, Finance and Administration; Michael Russo, Planning, Multimodal and Grants; Andrew Tunnard, Transportation Operations, Systems and Support; Snehal Patel,

Capital Program Management; Vanessa Holman, Deputy Chief of Staff and Megan Fackler, Director, Government and Community Relations; Joseph Bertoni, Deputy Commissioner; and Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti, Commissioner.



Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti remarked, "When one reflects upon their career, it is the culmination of many small steps that become milestones, and then accumulate over the years to become great achievements, just like the roads and bridges that we build. Having a career at one organization allows a person to see the change that their work has achieved."

In addition, Commissioner wanted the staff to know that they are appreciated for all that they do and stated, "Please continue to do the hard work... we are proud of you."

All Service Award honorees will receive a newly designed, commemorative desk weight created from metal guiderail.

NJDOT Season of Service



Thanks to the generosity of the NJDOT staff, a record-breaking 6,002 items were donated to local food banks across the state this holiday season. The donations will assist individuals and families who are facing food insecurity. Arm in Arm Food Bank in Trenton, Market Street Mission of Morristown, Fulfill Food Bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, and Food Bank of South Jersey were the recipients of the food.



Javier Jesus (above), a Fernwood Yard mechanic, displayed his creativity and holiday spirit with the creation of a unique Christmas tree constructed from recycled tires. His coworkers are enjoying the display and snapping holiday photos. Javier explains the design idea and process in a video available on NJDOT Twitter, Facebook, and [LinkedIn](#) platforms.



The Procurement unit celebrated the holiday season with good cheer and a friendly mason jar decorating competition. Congratulations to Tamara Smith (left) and Nikki Ghorbani on their winning entries!