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For Immediate Release

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ANJEC Recognizes Eight Towns for Environmental Achievement

Mendham – The Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) will present its prestigious Environmental Achievement Awards to eight local environmental commissions and three environmental nonprofits at the organization’s 37th Annual Congress on Friday, Oct. 15, at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft.

New Jersey’s Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Robert Martin and Chris Daggett, President of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, will be keynote speakers at the event, typically attended by about 200 environmentalists from around the State. Reflecting the current economic and political hurdles to environmental protection in New Jersey’s municipalities, this year’s Congress theme is “On the Front Line: Local Environmental Action in Challenging Times.”

This year’s Environmental Achievement Award winners include Environmental Commissions from Cape May Point, Manalapan, Millstone, Roxbury, Southampton, Voorhees, Westville and Woodbridge, with honorable mention going to Asbury Park.

ANJEC Executive Director Sandy Batty said it was gratifying to receive such an abundance of nominations submitted for high-quality projects. A special awards committee comprised of ANJEC Trustees and staff members selected winners based on their exceptional environmental efforts. ANJEC has been presenting the coveted annual awards since the mid-1970s.

Award winning projects

Cape May Point - Triangle Park Rain Garden

Under the leadership of the Environmental Commission, the site of a neglected historical monument that had become an eyesore and embarrassment was transformed into a pocket park and rain garden that now attracts garden and butterfly tours. The Commission recruited volunteers to plan the garden and raised funds to plant and maintain it. In the process, they had to remove a large concrete pad. The rain garden features a solar-powered bird fountain, a donated boat transformed into a planter, and

many species of native plants that provide food and habitat for wildlife and local and migratory birds. The Triangle Park Rain Garden won the town's 2010 Community Service Award for the project.

Manalapan Twp. Environmental Commission - *Green Matters in Manalapan*: a Television Series

To reach a broader audience, provide environmental education and promote “greener” behavior, the Environmental Commission created a television series for the local cable TV station. Commission members developed the content, wrote scripts and helped edit the programs. They invited high school environmental club members to participate in the shows. The first three episodes focused on using compact fluorescent bulbs to conserve energy, building a rain garden and curbside recycling, which included a David Letterman-style “Top 10 Reasons to Recycle”.

Millstone Twp. Environmental Commission

To protect the environmentally sensitive community of Millstone Township (at the headwaters of the Assunpink with extensive wetlands), the Environmental Commission undertook, with the support of the Township Committee, a mission to protect the local threatened and endangered species and their habitats. The Commission spent three years researching the areas and ways to protect them. With advice from their consultant, they developed an ordinance that strictly protects the T and E habitat, which the Township Committee unanimously passed in 2010.

Roxbury Twp. Environmental Commission - Community Garden

The initiative to create a community garden on eight acres of Township-owned open space began in January 2007 under the Environmental Commission's leadership. The Commission researched nearby community gardens and recognized an opportunity to encourage organic growing on land that had not been farmed for some years. Genesis Farms of Blairstown educated the Commission on best practices for organic community gardening and a local Master Gardener advised on soil testing. Local businesses donated time and equipment to install water lines and fencing. After a ribbon cutting on Earth Day, 2009, the garden operated at full capacity in its first season.

The Southampton Environmental Commission - Rural Sustainability Plan

The Commission applied for and received a NJ Department of Community Affairs grant of \$50,000 to develop a 20-Year Rural Sustainability Plan for the Township. In addition to administering the grant,

coordinating professional consultants, and hosting six community visioning meetings, Commission members wrote the Carrying Capacity Report and the 2009 ERI that provided the basis for the final product, a *Rural Sustainability Plan Vision 2030*. The Planning Board adopted the Plan into Southampton's Master Plan, and it received an Achievement in Planning Award from NJ Planning Officials in March 2010. Commission members estimate that they contributed over 1000 hours of labor to this project.

Voorhees Twp. Environmental Commission - Open Space Enhancement Plan

The Voorhees Environmental Commission observed that many of the 140 Township-owned open land parcels were not being utilized or appreciated, due to a lack of public awareness, access or maintenance. The Commission worked with a consultant to inventory, map, inspect and assess the town's open spaces. They recommended 150 neighborhood-centered enhancement projects including: parking; removal of fallen trees; informational signage; outreach; low-impact activity facilities suitable for the underserved senior population; trails and bike pathway connections to encourage physical activity and non-motorized transportation; and suggestions for corporate and volunteer support for the town's open space network.

Westville Environmental Commission - Conservation Education and Erosion Control Projects

The Commission decided to use two of their previous construction projects, a rain garden and a butterfly garden in a well-visited park, to encourage residents to create conservation projects in their own backyards. The Commission hosted a Rutgers Rain Garden Seminar, with free starter plants for the 22 attendees, and a Butterfly Garden seminar. Another 80 people heard talks on the Rain and Butterfly Gardens as part of the Woodbury House and Garden Tour. The Commission also worked with the county park and public works staff to correct severe stream erosion problems along the Butterfly Garden. Corrective action included establishing a five-foot, no-mow zone and stabilization of the bank with Coir logs planted with native plants. The Commission funded the plantings and provided labor to secure the plants in the logs.

Woodbridge Twp. Environmental Commission

As envisioned by the Woodbridge Township Environmental Commission, "Greenable Woodbridge" is an effort to involve the entire community in taking responsibility for creating an energy efficient present and future. The Commission engaged businesses, volunteers and Township employees in a

partnership effort to accomplish a number of activities: a “Greenable Woodbridge” guide on the Township website; a 20-page “Green News” edition of the *Woodbridge News*; organizing a series of public outreach programs for businesses, students and residents; and coordinating with a special School District Green Team to implement sustainability in the schools, with Green Teams operating in each of the district’s 24 elementary, middle and high schools.

Honorable Mention

Asbury Park Environmental Commission - Eco Art for Youth

The Environmental Commission teamed up with the Sustainability Committee on an eco-art project to help local youth develop an appreciation of nature and a sense of stewardship. Volunteer mentors introduced the work of eco-artist Andy Goldsworthy, and then led an activity where the youth selected natural canvasses in Sunset Park and at the beach and composed visual art using only natural elements that emphasized shape, texture, form, light, color and composition.

Awards to Nonprofit Organizations

Friends of the East Brunswick Environmental Commission - Community Garden

The Friends group, created to support the Environmental Commission with projects and funding, initiated formation of a Community Garden. With Township permission, they opened the garden in 2009 with 80 plots and more than doubled the plots to 170 in 2010. The plan was to create “a community of gardeners’ through the community garden. Committees share the various duties: social, shared garden, newsletter, general garden and website. Two plots grow produce for the Municipal Senior Center, and supplemented with donations from gardeners, they yielded 226 pounds of produce. In addition, the Friends formed a unique partnership with a “sister garden” in East Brunswick, Australia, using a Skype hookup to watch their groundbreaking and speak to their gardeners. With overwhelming demand, the group is planning ways to expand the garden in 2011.

Musconetcong Watershed Association - Native Planting at the River Resource Center

The Association created a habitat of native plants at its River Resource Center to foster appreciation of indigenous species. The MWA solicited plant donations and received a small grant to cover preparation and planting. Volunteers prepared the soil and planted native trees, shrubs, perennials,

grasses, ferns and vines. They placed plant labels, created a native plant brochure and a map and key of the plants. The project helps educate people about how valuable native plants are for the River, its wildlife and the people living in the watershed.

Sourland Planning Council - Living in the Sourlands: A Guide for Responsible Stewardship

Formed to protect the ecological integrity and special character of the Sourland Mountain region, the Sourland Planning Council wanted to increase awareness and appreciation of the Sourlands and to show residents how they can soften their footprint on the fragile ecosystem. The Council researched, wrote and published a colorful 44-page handbook that illustrates the environmental issues and problems relevant to the Sourland Mountains, and gives practical advice for people living and working in the region. Handbook topics include protecting native plants, dealing with invasive species, attracting birds, organic practices and protecting water resources. The Council distributed 14,000 copies to residents and businesses in the region, who responded to the publication enthusiastically. Within six weeks following the mailing, membership increased 20%.

About ANJEC

ANJEC is a 41-year old, statewide nonprofit organization based in Mendham Township that supports local environmental commissions, municipal officials and other environmentalists in their efforts to protect the environment and preserve natural resources and promote sustainability in their communities. For more information about ANJEC visit www.anjec.org.

More about ANJEC:

<http://www.anjec.org/>

More about the Environmental Congress:

<http://www.anjec.org/ConfWorkshops.htm#congress>