

The Peacock Planet

Saint Peter's University Sustainability Council Newsletter

February 2021



Since January 21, it's been hard to keep up with all of the sustainability initiatives and announcements by the government and the private sector. Here are just a few of the latest headlines from the New York Times: *Biden cancels Keystone XL Pipeline and rejoins Paris climate agreement. BlackRock Chief is using his firm's influence to pressure companies to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Biden bans new oil and gas leases on Federal Land. General Motors will sell only zero-emission vehicles by 2035. Biden, emphasizing job creation, signs sweeping climate actions.*

While the Saint Peter's University Sustainability Council members digest all of this climate action, we invite you to see where you could make small differences to help our planet. We offer you in this newsletter some bite-sized actions that you could take; from participating in a neighborhood clean-up to turning down your thermostat and buying sustainable Valentine's Day gifts. Together we will make a difference!

If you need some inspiration, we invite you to take 4 minutes out of your day to watch this [inspiring spoken word video by Amanda Gordon, Youth Poet Laureate of the United States, called "Earthrise"](#).

February Events: Save the Date

- February (ongoing): [Backyard Bird Count](#)
- Friday, February 5 at 2pm: [Webinar](#) on Summer 2021 [UNH Sustainability Fellowships](#) (for graduating undergrad or graduate students)

- Saturday, February 13 and 20 from 10am to 1pm: [Jersey City Neighborhood Cleanup](#). Click on the link to volunteer for these two Jersey City clean-up events
- Wednesday, February 17 at 4pm: [Planning for Bird-Friendly Cities that Put Nature First](#) Audubon Society webinar
- February 25 at 11am: [NYBG Winter Lecture Series on Gardens of Meaning: Leslie Bennett](#)
- February, various dates: [Seven Free Natural History Programs Streaming in February](#), hosted by the Smithsonian.

Did you know?



**CURBSIDE
RECYCLING
IN JERSEY CITY**

We now accept  resin codes, in addition to  & 

 Do not place in bags, only loose in containers

 Keep paper and cardboard separate

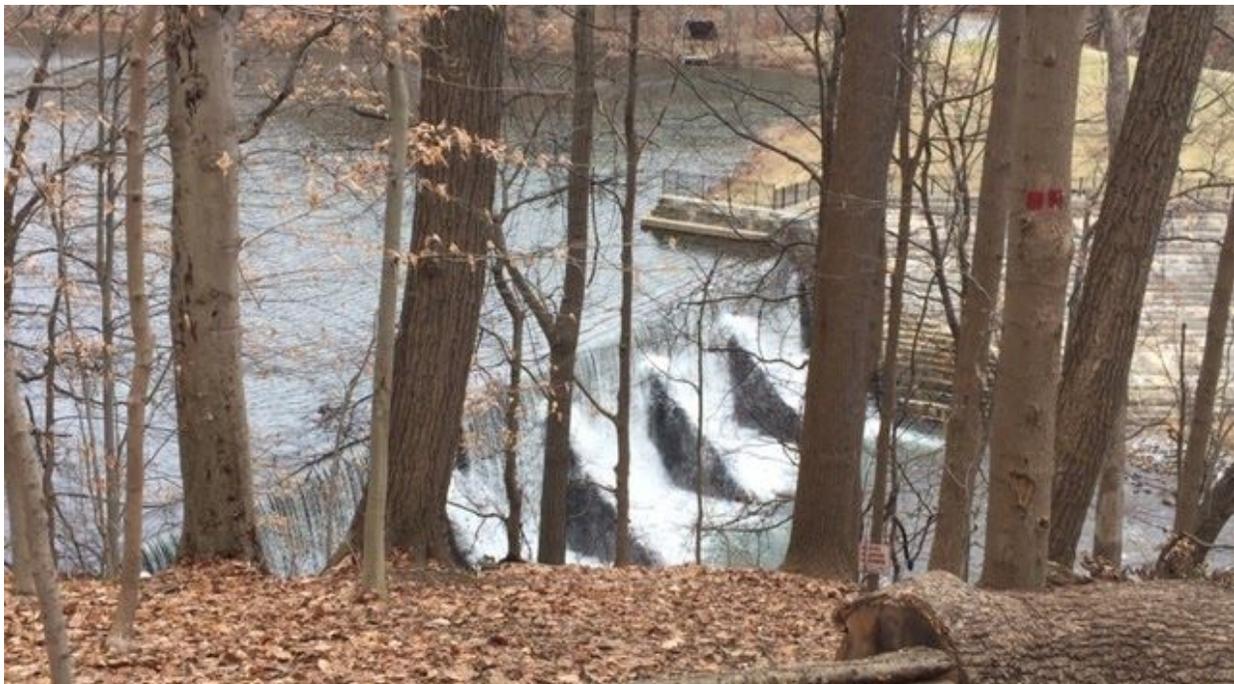
 **visit: jcnj.org/recycling**

The graphic features a large green recycling bin with a white recycling symbol on its side. Several people are shown interacting with the bin: one person is climbing a ladder to reach the top, another is carrying a large blue bottle, and a third is standing nearby. The bin is overflowing with various plastic bottles and containers. The background is light blue with green leaves and a white recycling symbol.

Big news! Jersey City is now accepting #5 plastics. Visit www.jcnj.org/recycling for more info.

Our Favorite Hikes: **Columbia Trail**

By Dr. Brandy Garrett-Kluthe, Assistant Professor of Biology



[The Columbia Trail](#) is one of my favorite places to visit in NJ even on an overcast winter day! This trail is a converted railroad that runs from the cute little town of High Bridge all the way to Califon. The trail itself is perfect for all levels of adventure including walking or biking. You can also connect to the Ken Lockwood Gorge and the Falls. This is perfect for a quick outing or for an all day experience. The trail has lots of little surprises to discover including little fairy houses and other interesting things hidden along the path. Parking is convenient and you can also take the train from Newark-Penn Station. After your trail experience you can choose from a variety of local restaurants in High Bridge.

What We're Reading & Watching

Here are some media recommendations from Council Members:

- [Kiss the Ground](#) documentary film on Netflix about carbon sequestration and soil health
- [A Defiant Move to the Norwegian Arctic](#) article
- [Filipino student invents solar windows that don't even need the sun to work](#) article
- [Biden Sets Stage for Climate Resilient Food & Agriculture](#) article
- [Das Green Old Deal](#) - Podcast about how Germany used feed-in tariffs to switch to 50% renewable energy
- [Colombia Has A Hippo Problem, Thanks To Pablo Escobar](#) 3-minute listen
- [Restoring Environmental Rules Rolled Back by Trump Could Take Years](#) article
- [Thunder & Lightning: Weather Past, Present, and Future](#) book by Lauren Redniss

“This book is part picture book and part science book with strange and interesting stories from all categories of weather.” - Dr. Garrett-Kluthe

Monthly Challenge: Conserve Energy at Home



How? Turn off lights when you leave a room and keep your thermostat at a low but comfortable level.

According to Accuweather.com, the most energy is saved when your home's temperature is near outside temperatures. Of course, during the winter this is not always practical. An "ideal" for the winter is to keep your thermostat 25 degrees warmer than outside, but if the outside temperature is 30°F or lower, keep your thermostat at least at 60 °F. Most people feel comfortable between 63-72 °F. If you feel too cool, you can always put on a sweater! And in a cool room, you'll sleep better at night!

Some website resources:

- [The Ideal House Temperature, according to Accuweather](#)
- [The Ideal Room Temperature, according to the EcoGuide](#)

One Small Step: A Sustainable Valentine's Day

By Stephanie Martinez, Class of 2022 Biology Major



When I think of Valentine's Day, the first thing that comes to mind is being grateful and appreciating your loved ones in your life, whether it be a significant other, family member, friend, and even yourself. One main thing we tend to forget to love is our Mother Earth. So here are some small ways to show our affection to our loved ones and give love back to the planet.

1. Chocolates: Chocolate is the perfect gift for anyone and can be easily consumed. However, the chocolate industry can have a few sustainability/social issues such

as deforestation and child slave labor. There are sustainable options that you can choose to satisfy your conscious cravings.

- [Alter Eco](#) certified Fair-Trade chocolate, uses compostable packaging, supports reforestation
 - [Divine Chocolate](#) certified Fair-Trade chocolate, prioritizes gender equality
2. Flowers: Roses are red, but they come with a high carbon footprint since they travel all the way from Ecuador and Colombia. Billions of flowers that are imported from Colombia release 360,000 tons of carbon emissions from their flights to Miami alone. Here are some other eco-friendly options to still show your appreciation to your loved one.
 - Buy flowers locally: buying seasonal blooms cuts down emissions from travel and supports local florists!
 - Give a houseplant instead: houseplants are still beautiful and last longer
 - Plant a Tree Together!
 3. Making a Love Letter: Writing a love letter to your loved ones makes the gift feel more personal and can focus on what truly matters most which are our relationships and partnerships. You can always throw in some cute puns to bring a smile! (See Bernie in Mittens valentine message above!)
 4. Make a Playlist: Just like Chandler made a mixtape for Monica in *Friends*, a more modern version is to make a playlist! Here are some songs to include.
 - [Come Fly With Me - Frank Sinatra](#)
 - [Just the Way You Are - Bruno Mars](#)
 - [Bones - Michael Kiwanuka](#)
 5. Quality time: pretty self-explanatory, but some ideas can be
 - Painting together
 - Have a movie night!
 - Just enjoying each other's company
 6. Cook a Meal: If you have ever tried to eat out on Valentine's Day you know how busy restaurants can be. So, for the health and safety of you and others, this year why not cook a delicious meal instead! Or if you do plan to go out/order takeout try out some vegan food! My favorites around NJ are
 - Tea NJ located at 262 Newark Ave, Jersey City
 - Vegan AF located at 291 Central Ave, Jersey City
 - @PardonMyVeggies -place an order for pickup/delivery through Instagram
 - Kaya's Kitchen located at 1000 Main St, Belmar, 07719 (a little farther from campus but 100% worth the drive)
 7. Congenital Heart Defects (CHD) Awareness: During the week of Feb. 7-14 you can help spread awareness for CHD and help raise funds for research for the world's most common birth defect. [To learn more or donate click here.](#)
 8. Adopt an animal: Instead of buying a one-time stuffed animal every year that eventually may go to waste, why not adopt an animal! Supporting a nonprofit to honor an animal in your loved one's name is more interesting, fun, and sustainable. Some zoos that are doing Symbolic Animal Adoptions are
 - [Bronx Zoo](#)
 - [Roger Williams Park Zoo](#)
 - [Aquarium of the Pacific](#)
 9. Appreciate Nature: Some of the most special are ones you share with Mother Earth. After all, Valentine's Day is not all about buying the most flowers and gifts. Here are some ideas to connect back to the Earth and appreciate its beauty
 - Watch the sunrise/sunset together
 - Go camping/ hiking
 - Go star gazing
 10. Bring love to your community: This year many of us have been away from our loved ones because of stay-at-home orders or have even lost a loved one. Here are some ideas to show some love to your neighbors/community.

- Check up on a neighbor: Calling or messaging a neighbor can go a long way to help them feel appreciated, especially if they live alone
- [Neighborhood cleanups](#): what better way to give love back to the planet than to simply keep your community clean and sustainable! One of my favorite cleanup movements is right here in Jersey City!

Community Voices:

Diversity in the Field of Sustainability

By Dr. Marilú Marcillo, Associate Professor of Business

In addressing the numerous areas related to our environment which are of importance to all of us, we need to consider the representation of minorities in the field of sustainability because often these critical environmental issues impact minority groups disproportionately by comparison to other groups. This lack of representation by Black, Brown and Indigenous groups is problematic in addressing the pressing needs in these communities. Evidence of this disproportionality has never been clearer since the onset of the pandemic. Black, Brown and Indigenous communities have been the hardest hit by the virus, mainly because of the work we do (front line workers), the communities in which we live, which often requires us to live in close proximity to others with little room for social distancing, the lack of adequate healthy fresh produce and food, which exacerbates our incidences of heart disease, obesity, asthma, cancer and high blood pressure; all contributing factors in our demise to COVID and the lack of affordable preventive medical care (DoSomething.Org, n.d.).



We know representation matters. How do we make an impact on environmental equity if the field of sustainability is poorly represented by people of color and our specific needs are not being addressed given the environments in which we live? To get to a point where we are addressing these numerous environmental issues more needs to be done to ensure that BIPOC people are part of the conversation. Where we stand today is, “There are still relatively few connections between communities of color and the environmental sector. The ongoing lack of ethnic diversity on environmental organization boards and staff suggests that, overall, talk of increasing diversity has not turned into widespread action” (Gewin, 2018) and this lack of action has had a negative impact on the lives of these communities of color.

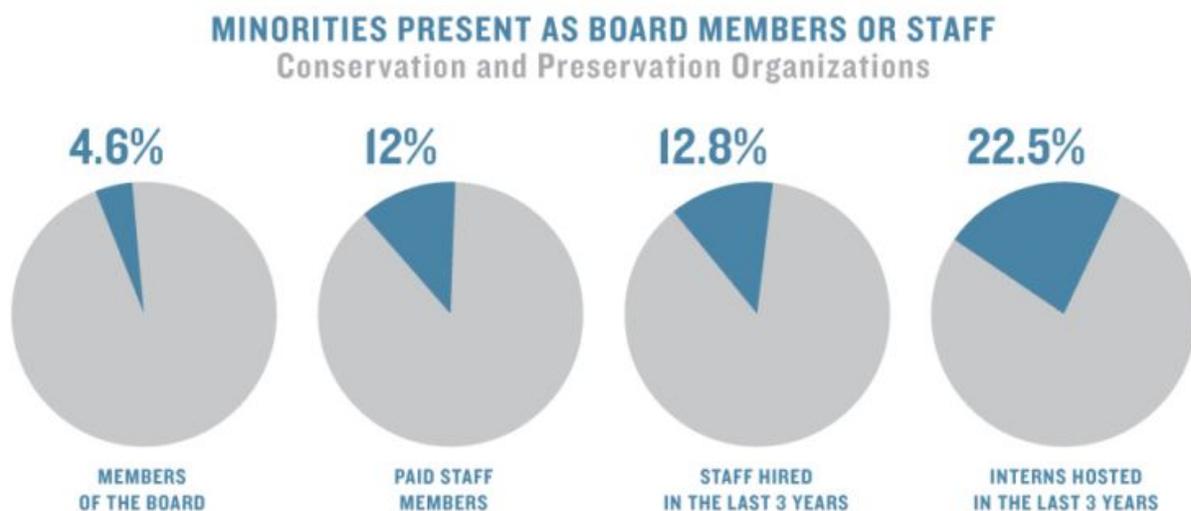
The question that we must ask ourselves is, “why do we have such lack of representation?” Is it that people of color have no interest in the environment? I would beg to differ, we are the most adversely affected by the decisions of governments to take our land, destroy the planet, pollute the water, pollute the air, extract minerals from the earth, dump garbage in our neighborhoods

etc. so we are very committed to the prevention of this exploitation and degradation. Unfortunately, the field of sustainability is representative of the larger world in which we live in, one where disparities exist due to systemic racism, lack of opportunities for people of color and unconscious bias. A study conducted in 2019 by researcher Stephanie K. Johnson found that her respondents had the following experiences:

“Every time you see a Person of Color, any time a Person of Color gets a job, gets promoted, is seen as successful, it is seen as somehow disingenuous. People think they benefited from a special program that was taking a job from somebody else. Every time someone is promoted, their skills are questioned, their abilities are questioned, their commitment is questioned and the assumption is they are taking the promotion from somebody else” (Johnson, 2019, p.12).

“Have I had second thoughts about going into environmental conservation? Yes. If I knew it would be like this, that some of the organizations would be so exclusive, then I would not have done it. I think I would have gone more in the direction of human rights, or I would have just done something else entirely. I didn’t really understand the landscape, if you will, when it comes to diversity and when it comes to authenticity until I got in it” (Johnson, 2019, p.12).

“It’s like, because you’re looking through me, you’re not speaking to me, or you think I am your secretary. These experiences can really drive People of Color out of the sector and create a self-fulfilling prophecy that then there is no pipeline because you’ve chased everyone away” (Johnson, 2019, p.12).



Ultimately, what this study concluded was that “the environmental movement has historically had a lack of racial diversity. Higher turnover rates among People of Color widen that gap. This report shows that People of Color perceive lower levels of fairness in development, evaluation, and promotion (DEP) practices and lower levels of intent to stay” and if we are to address these pressing environmental concerns more needs to be done to ensure that we reduce the high turnover rate, address unconscious biases, and create a pipeline in which leadership’s commitment is more than just empty promises or token BIPOC people who lack authority or control to make real change in our communities.

References

Gewin, V. (2018, May 23). [Why diversity in sustainability matters, and what you can do | Greenbiz](#). GreenBiz.

A thought to leave you with.....

“All of us bring light to exciting solutions never tried before
For it is our hope that implores us, at our uncompromising core,
To keep rising up for an earth more than worth fighting for”
- Amanda Gorman

The Saint Peter’s University Sustainability Council, founded in 2012, is a group of students, faculty, and staff who strive to make our campus community and our world more sustainable for future generations.

Your feedback, photos, event notices, and story ideas are always welcome. Please email them to skeller1@saintpeter.edu

Saint Peter’s University Sustainability Council
2641 John F Kennedy Blvd, Jersey City, NJ 07306