

Citizen Stewards of Our Environment

New Jersey's dense population and industrialized and urbanized landscapes have created unique environmental challenges for the state. The Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) is at the forefront of dealing with these challenges, which include issues of waste management, environmental remediation and ecological restoration. Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the outreach unit of NJAES, has created the Rutgers Environmental Stewards program so that residents of New Jersey can help to tackle some of these problems in their own communities.

The Rutgers Environmental Stewards program recruits individuals from communities throughout the state. Participants learn how to advocate and implement local and state environmental projects. The training familiarizes them with the science behind today's most pressing environmental issues, including climate change, sustainable energy, and land and water stewardship. Communication, conflict resolution, and leadership skills are taught to enable them to be effective in community action and political discourse.

In addition to classroom instruction from NJAES faculty and environmental industry experts, each volunteer must complete an internship in his or her community. These internships have included a program that increased recycling by sixty percent in three months in one community, and another that established a town Environmental Advisory Committee. The completion of the training and intern project culminate in certification as a Rutgers Environmental Steward. For some this is only the beginning: several alumni have chosen to remain active and an alumni association has recently formed to facilitate continued networking and education for the growing number of volunteers.

If you would like to help make the Rutgers Environmental Stewards program an ongoing success, contact The Office of Development at 732-932-9000, ext. 576 or development@njaes.rutgers.edu.

For more information, visit us at www.njaes.rutgers.edu/development.

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