

2025 MID-YEAR REPORT

RIVER-FRIENDLY REFLECTIONS

Official Newsletter of the NJ River-Friendly Programs



Mid-Year Report

A NOTE FROM THE COORDINATORS...

It is stunning that 2025 is half over already so we wanted to share with you, what River-Friendly news has happened so far!

We appreciate the time you have invested towards this certification and have enjoyed getting to know you, your school, business, or golf course.

The Numbers

- 102 new RF residents
- 4 new RF Certified Schools
- 2 new RF Community Partners
- 4 Pollinator projects installed



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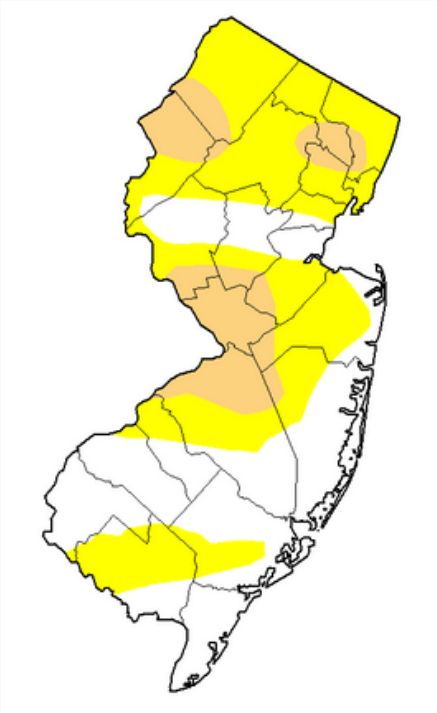
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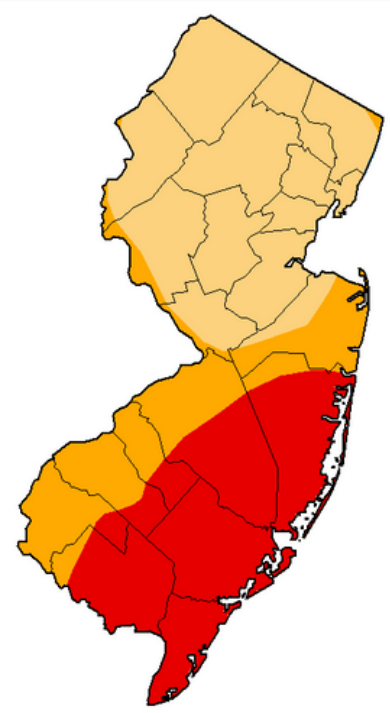
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N.J. Drought Update

According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, New Jersey’s drought that started in Summer 2024 is finally over as of mid-July. As seen in the maps below, the effects of drought span farther than the summer season, exemplifying the need to practice River-Friendly water conservation measures year-round.



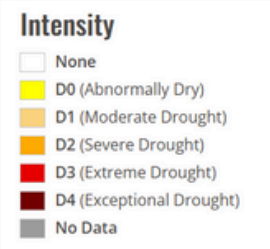
July 16, 2024



December 31, 2024



July 22, 2025



The U.S. Drought Monitor is jointly produced by the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Map courtesy of NDMC.

N.J. Drought Update

NJDEP offers great seasonally relevant water conservation tool kits that you can share online or with your community!

10 SIMPLE STEPS TO SAVE WATER THIS SUMMER



Water flowers and landscaping with water harvested in a rain barrel connected to a downspout.

1



Avoid recreational toys that require a constant stream of water.

6



Use 30-50% less water with drip irrigation and micro-sprays compared to sprinklers.

2



Raise your lawnmower blade to at least 3 inches to promote deeper grass roots which hold water better.

7



Only water when needed; in NJ most landscapes need only 1 inch of water per week. This often comes from dew and rainfall.

3



Use water from dehumidifiers and air conditioners to water your plants.

8



If you have a pool purchase a water saving filter.

4



Use native plants that need less water.

9



Cover your pool when not in use to reduce evaporation rates.

5



Group plants together based on water needs.

10

Summertime, means swimming pools, sprinkler jumping, and barbeques surrounding by manicured landscape. During the summer months, while water supplies are typically declining, water usage is increasing. In fact, water usage from winter to summer increases by approximately 30%. However, we can all do our part to reduce water usage by following these 10 simple tips.



<https://dep.nj.gov/conserve-water/toolkit/>

Congratulations New 2025 River-Friendly Schools!



Ben Franklin Elementary

Stream Level River-Friendly School certified

The school led a successful River-Friendly campaign where 44 families were certified River-Friendly Residents. Students also explored their local Little Shabakunk stream and learned about water quality monitoring using macroinvertebrates and chemical tests.



Bernards High School

Stream Level River-Friendly School certified

Bernards High School installed a 300 sq ft garden in their school courtyard. The Garden Club worked on gaining a Somerset Hills Garden Grant to buy new garden supplies, pay for new native plants, and pay for birdhouses and chairs.



Franklin Elementary

Baseline Level River-Friendly School certified

Students learned why water conservation is needed and discussed actions students can do at home and in school. Students then drew their dream home and included creative ways they could conserve water such as rain barrels.



Rocky Hill Cooperative Nursery School

Baseline River-Friendly School certified

Students learned about water quality concepts such as pH and how that affects what creatures can live in the water. Students used pH strips to determine if the water was safe for their aquarium fish. Then they took the concept outside and tested the pH of their local Millstone River.

Congratulations New 2025 River-Friendly Community Partners!



Best Lake Park

Community Partner Certified

Best Lake Park created a riparian buffer along a portion of the stream corridor leading to the park's lake. This project was in an effort to reduce stormwater runoff pollution and create habitat for native wildlife.

More certifications to come!

Featured River-Friendly Projects

These projects were funded graciously by a National Fish and Wildlife Federation Grant which focused on installing stormwater management or habitat enhancement projects at schools in the Delaware River Watershed.



Roosevelt Public School

This April, Roosevelt Public School installed a 150 square foot pollinator garden with the help of 40 students. This garden is planted with native grasses and flowering plants and will be used to educate students about the importance of native plants and pollination.

This is Roosevelt Public School's third garden! They have an additional native pollinator garden on the other side of their school plus a food garden tended by students and staff.



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Trenton Ninth Grade Academy

This May, high school students helped construct a butterfly house and add to their native plant, raised bed garden. This contributes to a growing outdoor classroom that provides students with valuable lessons in urban nature and gardening.

Students raised Painted Lady butterflies to learn about native pollinators and released them in their new butterfly house to watch them complete their lifecycle, on one of their host plants, Pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*). Students learned how, even in the middle of a city like Trenton, plants and animals can be given a habitat and thrive.



Featured River-Friendly Projects

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Franklin Elementary

This April, Franklin Elementary students added three raised bed gardens to their schoolyard located in Trenton filled with hardy native plants. The school was excited about these gardens because the only green space at the school is a small strip of sandy grass.

Teachers incorporated lessons about pollinators and native plants in their lessons so students understood the purpose of the garden. In addition, three classrooms grew herbs and annual flowers to add nectar sources and host plants for the pollinators they learned about.

Finally, students raised over 30 Painted Lady butterflies and released them at their school's garden.



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East Trenton Collaborative

In partnership with the East Trenton Collaborative and a local high school student, a native pollinator garden was planted at the East Trenton Center.

Plants such as Brown-Eyed Susans and Purple Coneflower will add a pop of color and provide nectar and seeds for local insects and birds.

Narrowleaf mountain mint was planted along the edge of the building by a frequently used sidewalk to attract local pollinators and provide a sweet smell for community members passing by.



Featured River-Friendly Projects

These projects were funded graciously by a Veolia water grant.



South Hunterdon Regional Elementary School

This April, South Hunterdon Regional Elementary installed native plants in front of their newly renovated school. The school underwent renovations last year that added sustainable features to the inside of the school. Thus, the school is working on adding native, beneficial plants to their landscaping.

The Watershed Institute created a plant scavenger hunt for teachers to use in their classrooms to engage with the plantings around their school.



Annual River-Friendly Teacher Academy

In this free annual workshop, teachers gather at The Watershed Institute to gain Project WET certifications, go home with a book of lessons, and participate in fun, hands-on activities focused on water quality, water conservation, and wildlife habitat.

Examples of activities done are butterfly catching, stream water chemistry, a macroinvertebrate tag game, bird box monitoring, rain garden tours, and more!

All grade level teachers are welcome! This year, the workshop is happening on **August 20th from 9am-4pm**. Sign ups for this year and following years can be found on this website: <https://thewatershed.org/teachers/>





Thanks for reading!

Be on the lookout for the end of year newsletter. Have a safe and happy summer!