RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Water Resources Program
New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

DECEMBER 2025

WATER PAGES eNEWSLETTER

Best wishes for a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season from the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program!

Christopher, Lisa, Chris, Hollie, Matt, Allison, Payal, Maya, Benny, Gillian, Alena, Alrick, Erik, Meghan, Sophie, Taline, Brendon, Roy, Taylor, & Katelyn

Happy Holidays from the RCE Water Resources Program

The holiday season is upon us. I spent some time over Thanksgiving reflecting on our efforts here at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Water Resources Program. This past summer marked the beginning of my 24th year at Rutgers as the Extension Specialist in Water Resources. It seems like yesterday when I was contemplating how to use my newly obtained Ph.D. in engineering to ask my consulting company for a big raise. Little did I know I would be at Rutgers several months later, a move I never regretted.

When I started the RCE Water Resource Program, I immediately surrounded myself with the smartest people I could find. They were all young and excited about making

a difference. They all loved our mission to solve New Jersey's water resources problems. As full-time Rutgers staff, they were entitled to free tuition for graduate courses, and they all took advantage of this opportunity. They learned in the classroom from some of the brightest professors, and they learned how to get things done in the real world by being part of the RCE Water Resources Program.

Over the years, the program has shifted to primarily addressing stormwater issues. The stormwater problems are not overly complicated. In most cases, solutions are well known; they just must be adapted and applied to the current situation. The community must also be engaged to ensure the solution is implemented and maintained.

The goals of the Water Resources Program have always been to improve the health of New Jersey's waterways and to reduce localized flooding. I think we have made progress in achieving these goals. Another goal was to raise awareness among the public while training the next generation of water resources professionals. We educated youth and adults with various programs. We taught college students about solving water problems, and many of them got master's or doctoral degrees from their efforts. But in the end, it is the public that is important. If we want to fix the waterways of the state, people need to change their behavior. We need to start thinking differently about stormwater and how we manage it.

In January, we are starting our eighth year of the Green Infrastructure Champions Program. This program teaches people about different practices that can be implemented to manage stormwater, where to put these practices, and how to advocate for these practices in your community. All this can be learned, and you don't need a college degree in engineering to gain this knowledge. What cannot be taught is passion. To make a meaningful difference, you need to be passionate about what you do. If you made it this far through my rambling, you all obviously care about the environment; you have passion. Now, take or retake the Green Infrastructure Champion Training Program, and gain the knowledge you need. Become part of our community, the Green Infrastructure Champions community, and together we can save the world (or at least fix our local waterways).

I hope you all have a wonderful holiday, and I will see you online on January 9, 2026, for our first Green Infrastructure Champions class. Go to **www.water.rutgers.edu** to register.

~ Christopher C. Obropta, Ph.D., P.E., Extension Specialist in Water Resources

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DID YOU REGISTER YET?
What are you waiting for?
Become a leader, become a Green Infrastructure Champion in 2026!

Classes start Friday, January 9, 2026

The next Green Infrastructure Champions Training Program will be offered every other

Friday from 10AM to 12NOON starting January 9, 2026!

All sessions for the 2026 training program will be offered via an online format for FREE.

Registration is required and OPEN at water.rutgers.edu!

Here is what we can offer as part of the program:

- Training on green infrastructure planning and implementation
- Networking opportunities with other Green Infrastructure Champions for mutual support
- Assistance with grant writing

2026 Training Program Class Schedule:

1. How to identify green infrastructure projects in your town (January 19)
2. Moving from planning to implementation of green infrastructure (January 23)
3. Maintaining green infrastructure practices/projects (February 6)
4. Stormwater management regulations, policies, and ordinances (February 20)
5. Green infrastructure planning and implementation for Sustainable Jersey points (March 6)
6. Green infrastructure projects for targeted audiences (March 20)
7. How to design and build a rain garden (April 3)
8. Retrofitting traditional detention basins with green infrastructure (April 17)
9. Developing green infrastructure master plans for an entire site or neighborhood (May 1)
10. Using green infrastructure to promote climate resiliency (May 15)

Attendance at a minimum of five (5) classes is **needed for certification**.

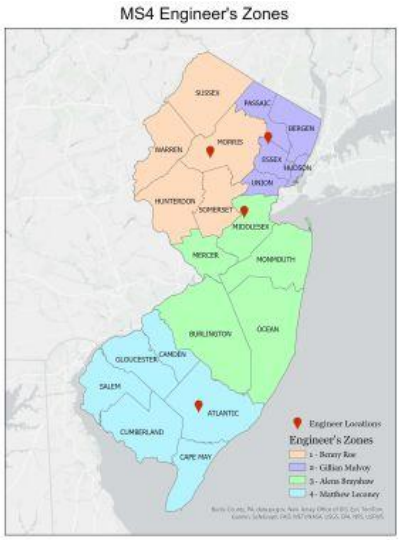
Pax Amicus Castle Theatre to Feature a New Rain Garden

The Pax Amicus Castle Theatre in Mount Olive Township, Morris County, NJ, a community staple known for its medieval castle-style architecture and year-round lineup of plays, musicals, and educational performances, is taking a meaningful step toward environmental sustainability. A 120-square-foot rain garden was installed in the turfgrass area next to the entrance to the castle. This new green infrastructure feature is designed to manage runoff from 995 square feet of impervious surface, including the theatre's roof and a portion of the adjacent asphalt roadway. The rain garden will capture, convey, and infiltrate stormwater and will help to reduce flooding and protect local waterways. Over the course of a year, the rain garden is expected to manage approximately 14,071 gallons of stormwater runoff. To further enhance ecological benefits, the project will include the planting of 50 native plant species. These plants will provide habitat for pollinators and play an important role in stormwater treatment within the rain garden. This project reflects the theatre's commitment to solutions that reduce stormwater impacts, beautify community spaces, and improve the water quality in Budd Lake.

Rain garden construction, November 2025
[Photo credit: Brendon Opilac, RCE Water Resouces Program]

Fall planting, November 2025
[Photo credit: Frank Giambrone, Drakes Excavating

The MS4 Technical Assistance Program is Here to Help



The MS4 Technical Assistance Program continues to assist municipalities throughout New Jersey to handle their MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) permit requirements. This year we've been able to provide assistance and guidance to at least 45 municipalities throughout the state. We've been helping many municipalities prepare their *Watershed Inventory Report*, which is due at the end of the year, but it is anticipated that many towns are behind on that deadline. We will continue to provide assistance with this in the new year along with providing guidance and assistance on the second phase *Watershed Assessment Report* of the *Watershed*

Improvement Plan.

If your municipality is behind on preparing your *Watershed Inventory Report*, please do not hesitate to reach out as we can help get you on track as we've streamlined many aspects of preparing the report. We are also open to any requests for assistance that fall under requirements of the MS4 Permit, but please see our program page for more details and future updates at **water.rutgers.edu**.

This program is supported by funding from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), so we are able to provide services at no cost as long as we have the capacity to complete them. Feel free to reach out to the respective engineer for your region to request assistance.

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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

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