

# City of Vineland Environmental Commission

## *2022 Annual Report*



***Prepared by:***

**Vineland Environmental Commission**

## **From the Chairperson**

On September 25, 1973, the City of Vineland passed Ordinance #902, which is codified in Chapter 41-1 and reads: "Pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40:56A, there is hereby created an Environmental Commission of the City of Vineland for the protection, care and development of the natural resources within the territorial limits of the City of Vineland." This ordinance repealed and replaced the Board of Natural Areas Preservation Commission, which previously undertook these endeavors, and so this was not the first time Vineland pursued conservation of its natural resources. Going back even further, Charles Landis himself was a huge proponent of tree-lined streets and had intended Vineland's parks to be filled with shade trees.

The Vineland Environmental Commission is the only Board/Commission of the City for which its members serve without compensation. The seven members and two alternates are dedicated to the duties of their appointments and put in hundreds of volunteer hours annually. Some members have been serving for more than 40 years, and one has served for over 50 years. Other members volunteer many hours of additional time serving on committees, such as the Site Plan Review Committee, Tree Committee, and the Community Wildlife Habitat Program Committee. Members spend Saturdays and many hours of their personal time cleaning litter, planting trees, and putting their efforts toward making our community more environmentally friendly. Every member brings some area of interest and expertise to the group, and we are grateful for their contributions toward making Vineland a better place to live. At this time, the Environmental Commission is pleased to submit this annual report for calendar year 2022 to the Mayor and City Council.

*Diane Amico*

# **City of Vineland Environmental Commission Annual Report 2022**

## **1) Members**

Diane Amico, Chairperson

Susan Fenili

Charles Valentine

John Casadia, Planning Board member

Lisa Fleming

David Lowenstern

John Pedersen

Anthony Coffee

Ariana Headley

## **2) Meetings were held on the following dates in 2022**

January 10

February 14

March 14

April 11

May 9

June 13

July 11

August 8

September 12

October 11

November 14

December 12

Guest Presentations at Meetings:

- February: Kristen Hock, NJ Audubon Society
- September: Randi Rothmel, ANJEC

Agendas and minutes of meetings are posted at [www.vinelandcity.org](http://www.vinelandcity.org) under Boards and Commissions, Environmental Commission ( <https://www.vinelandcity.org/environmental-commission/> )

### 3) Stewardship and Volunteer Activities

2022 Volunteer Days	Location / event	Activity	participants	hrs.	total hrs.
2/12/2022	Giampietro Park	invasive vine removal	4	4	16
3/19/2022	Giampietro Park	invasive vine removal	13	2	26
4/2/2022	Campanella Park	litter cleanup and seedlings planted	12	3	36
4/9/2022	D'Ippolito School	planted tree seedlings & mulched	10	4	40
4/16/2022	Seedling giveaway	marking trees, interacting with residents	11	5	55
4/16/2022	various parks/natural areas	plant leftover seedlings riparian buffer	2	3	6
4/23/2022	Blackwater Branch	maintenance	3	4	12
			1	1	1
4/23/2022	Vld Public Library	clean out raingarden	1	3	3
4/24/2022	Giampietro Park	plant seedlings, clean out raingarden	4	4	16
4/30/2022	Vld. Public Library	weed raingarden, plant	2	3	6
			3	5	15
6/2/2022	Vld Green Fair	tabling	5	6	30
8/2/2022	National Night Out	tabling	5	5	25
8/13/2022	Willow Oak	trail maintenance	2	4	8
10/8/2022	Annex Raingarden	weeding	12	4	48
10/19/2022	CCTech	bluebird nesting boxes	20	3	60
10/22/2022	Library	raingarden/grounds maint.	13	4	52
12/16/2022	Magnolia Rd park	plant 3 trees	5	4	20
					<b>475</b>

The total volunteer hours logged for events for 2022 is 475, plus time spent at meetings, committee meetings, and preparation for events is 168 hours. With the current 2022 value of a volunteer hour being \$29.95 (as per IndependentSector.org), these aggregated efforts have a contributory value of \$19,257 to the City.

#### 4) **Education and Outreach**

- February 16, 2022: Chairperson Diane Amico spoke at the Mennies School 5<sup>th</sup> grade Safety Patrol meeting about their group planting tree seedlings at Anthony Campanella Park.
- April 16, 2022 Tree Seedling Giveaway: Residents were assisted with tree seedling selection through discussion of putting “the right tree in the right place.”
- April 29, 2022: Arbor Day was celebrated at the Southwest Mini Park on Landis Ave, with John Pedersen speaking to over 100 elementary school students about the importance of trees in our community.
- June 2, 2022: Members manned a table at the Vineland Green Fair and met with visitors and discussed a variety of education topics, including the Community Wildlife Habitat Program efforts.
- August 2, 2022: Members manned a table at National Night Out and met with visitors and discussed a variety of environmental topics.

5) **Maintenance of nature areas:** In 2022, the Commission continued to conduct ongoing maintenance at several natural areas for passive recreation, including Willow Oak Nature Area on E. Landis Avenue, Bennett’s Mill Natural Area on Mays Landing Rd, and Maurice River Conservation Area on S. Union Road. Volunteers kept trails clear, picked up litter, and installed signage as needed. The Commission also partnered and interfaced with Public Works and other City departments to keep up with the maintenance needs of these relatively remote areas.

6) **Maintenance of Riparian Buffers** At Giampietro Park on March 19, EC members along with 8 VHS students and 5 adult volunteers, removed invasive vines in the riparian buffer.

7) **Maintenance of Green Infrastructure:** In March of 2021, additional NJ State Stormwater Regulations went into effect increasing the requirements for use of green infrastructure to mitigate stormwater pollution and groundwater recharge issues. The Commission worked throughout the year to maintain three raingardens installed previously in 2020 at the City Hall Annex on Plum Street, the Vineland Public Library, and Giampietro Park. Volunteer events were held on April 23 and April 30 at the Library raingarden, and on October 8 at the Annex, where several Vineland High School students assisted with weeding and maintenance.

- 8) **Bluebird House Project:** Several bluebird houses are located at city parks, Board of Education sites, and in natural areas around Vineland. These are constructed, monitored, maintained, and cleaned out every winter by Commission member John Casadia. This was continued throughout 2022. The Commission was gifted several nesting boxes constructed by students at the Cumberland County Tech Center. The Commission presented the students with certificates and the nesting boxes have been installed at various locations throughout the City.
- 9) **Wildflower/milkweed areas:** Pursuant to the NJ State D.O.T. Guidance for roadside maintenance, the Commission has identified several areas where wildflowers and/or milkweed, necessary for feeding pollinators and Monarch butterflies, is growing roadside or near wooded areas. These areas have been marked off to encourage growth and discourage mowing. The Commission has been following up on these areas with maintenance and roping-off to prevent unintentional mowing.
- 10) **Site plan reviews:** The Commission continued site plan reviews at each meeting in 2022, utilizing new electronic plans rather than on paper, which allows for easier dissemination to members. Written comments were provided to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board for several project applications. John Casadia continued to serve throughout 2022 as the Planning Board Member of the Environmental Commission.
- 11) **Trees / Tree Committee:** The Vineland Tree Committee is a sub-committee of the Environmental Commission. Meetings were held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month, concurrent with the regular Commission meeting.

The Commission continued to maintain the City's Community Forestry Management Plan (CFMP), on file with the New Jersey State Division of Forestry, Community Forestry Program. The Commission uses this plan to work toward goals of replacing and maintaining our urban tree canopy, working toward an inventory of center city trees, and working in conjunction with the Public Works department to identify trees which need to be pruned or removed.

Continuing education credits are needed annually for the City to maintain the CFMP's "active" status. The City's CFMP must remain active in order for the City to be eligible for grants and assistance from NJ State for tree-related projects. In 2022, two Environmental Commission members earned enough credits to meet the City's annual requirements. The credits were earned by volunteers on their own time, and the City gets the credit, not the individuals.

### ***Tree committee Activities in 2022:***

- *Tree Seedling Giveaway on April 16* - Over 1000 seedlings were given to Vineland residents. Tree seedlings were provided by the NJ Division of Forestry through the State's "NJ Tree Recovery Campaign". This was held as a "drive-through" event. EC members and volunteers were available to discuss with residents the species information and planting directions, as well as how to put the right tree in the right place.
- *Planting of over 1800 additional seedlings obtained through the NJ State Nursery* - These additional seedlings were planted: 300 at Giampietro Park, 350 at Campanella Park, 100 at D'Ippolito School, 350 at Willow Oak Natural Area, 200 at Bennett's Mill Natural Area, 200 on city property near Normandy Lane Park, and 150 along the Blackwater Branch at the former Vineland Chemical Superfund Site. These plantings were coordinated by John Pedersen and took place over many months, with the assistance of many volunteers, Public Works, school groups, and EC members. Some plantings were lost due to the drought and high heat experienced this past summer. Watering was done as much as possible. There were also challenges with maintenance, as some smaller seedlings were mowed during regular park maintenance.
- *Over 100 trees planted at D'Ippolito and Dominick Pilla schools*- Small seedlings as well as larger nursery-purchased trees were planted during several different volunteer events. Other grounds maintenance and cleanup, raking, weeding, and pruning was also done at the schools on these days.
- *Arbor Day Ceremony on April 29, 2022* – This was done in conjunction with the VDID and was held at the South-East Mini-Park on Landis Ave. A member of the Tree Committee, John Pedersen, was a featured speaker at the event. He also facilitated the planting of the trees at that location. The event was well-attended, including over 100 students from Sabater School.



## **12) Training:**

The NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference in Cherry Hill, NJ on October 20 was attended by Diane Amico.

Rutgers: Municipal Shade Tree Management on November 22 was attended by Lisa Fleming.

Rutgers Green Infrastructure Champions 10-Course Series: was attended by Diane Amico, Lisa Fleming and Anthony Coffee.

Through the New Jersey Urban and Community Forestry Program, several members have previously been trained with CORE training for trees and forestry, which along with the continuing education mentioned above, qualifies the City of Vineland to maintain an “active” status through the NJUCF Program.

## **13) Partnerships:**

### ***ANJEC:***

The Commission continued its longstanding partnership with the Association of NJ Environmental Commissions by working on joint grant applications for green infrastructure and tree pits for center city Vineland.

### ***Sustainable Jersey:***

Diane Amico also serves as co-leader of the Vineland Green Team, and in 2022 continued to act as liaison between the two groups on environmental projects. Several of the Environmental Commission’s activities qualify for points under the Sustainable Jersey Program, helping the City to achieve and maintain its certification in that Program.

### ***NJ Audubon Society/National Wildlife Federation***

The Environmental Commission participates in the National Wildlife Federation’s Community Wildlife Habitat Program by educating residents on backyard habitat requirements for wildlife, and assisting them to receive certification through the program. The city receives credit by meeting goals for number of registered backyard habitats, as well as for education and assistance it provides to residents.

### ***Vineland Downtown Improvement District***

This year’s Arbor Day Ceremony was a joint effort between the EC and the VDI, where VDI planned the ceremony and coordinated with schools and guests, and the EC provided and planted the trees and had a member speak at the event.



**14) Membership:**

There were no changes to the member list in 2022.

The Vineland Environmental Commission is a member of the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) and the NJ Shade Tree Federation.

John Casadia serves also on the Vineland Planning Board and is the EC's Liaison member.

Diane Amico serves also on the Vineland Green Team for the Sustainable Jersey Program, and also served this past year on the State Plan Endorsement Committee for the City's Planning Office.



**VINELAND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**