



AVALON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

3100 Dune Drive, Avalon, N J 08202

Annual Report 2023

December 31, 2023

The Avalon Environmental Commission accomplished the following in 2023:

- Continuing implementation of the Dune Vegetation Management Plan (DVMP), which had been approved by Avalon Borough Council on December 23, 2009. During 2023 there were 12 DVMPs followed in different phases of their evolution. The following is a description of their status:

DVMP Monitoring of completed projects

30th to 31st St.—3rd year (to be decommissioned)

9th St. N—3rd year (to be decommissioned)

37th St. N—1st year

13th St. N—2nd year

New Projects Completed/to be completed in 2023

36th St. N and S. (completed in spring)

33rd to 34th St. (to be completed in spring)

5609 Dune Drive (completed in fall)

5499 Dune (completed in fall)

78th to 80th (completed in fall)

32nd to 33rd St. Maintenance Pruning

72nd to 73rd St.

Approved and expected to be completed in spring 2024

4099 Bayberry Rd Maintenance Pruning

- The Tree Committee developed a Commemorative Tree Program as a fill in for the Memorial Bench Program and as a potential revenue source for the Borough to plant new trees. A resolution was passed by the Council, but we are still waiting to hear from the state of New Jersey regarding financial management.
- The Commission set up 8 lectures to educate homeowners and visitors about our unique ecosystem, native plants and the weather in South Jersey. Programs were held at Surfside Park, the Avalon Community Center, the Tennis Court Building at 39th Street or the Pollinator Garden. Speakers and lectures included Doug Tallamy—Homegrown National Parks, Mike McGrath, Joe Martucci the Cape May Bubble, Pat Sutton—3-part Pollinator Lecture Series, and Erin Rawls Wetlands Institute—Diamond Back Terrapins and Monarchs and Fall Migration. The AEC set up all the lectures, but the Avalon Free Public library co-sponsored the programs and paid the honoraria for Doug Tallamy and Mike McGrath. Additionally, the library, the Dept of Public Works and Scott Wahl, Avalon Information Officer, helped to promote all of the programs electronically and in paper.
- Dune Grass Planting Program--The Commission provided the background information on the importance of Dune Grass planting to attendees as well as the tutorial on planting dune grass culms. The semi-annual event drew over 100 volunteers on April 21st and 60 volunteers on October 21st.
- Avalon Public School—Three (3) activities were held at the school including: 1) Grasses in Classes program with all grades including preschoolers. Dune grass culms are planted by the students in cups and cared for over the winter. 2) On Earth Day in mid-April the students plant mature grasses in the dunes. 3) On October 24th, a local naturalist Jack McDonough gave a lecture on Monarch Butterflies and fall migration. The students tagged 5 butterflies and set them free.
- The Commission held the New Jersey Tree Recovery Free Seedlings Program at the Avalon Community Center on April 21st. (During the Dune Grass Planting Event.) Five Hundred (500) native tree seedlings were given out during the event.
- The Commission reviewed 31 notification letters/ plans from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for Land or Waterfront Development. Two letters were written to the DEP requesting specific construction considerations for the properties in question.
- The Tree Committee received approval of its Community Forestry Management Plan from the DEP-- New Jersey Urban and Community Forestry. Additionally, the Tree Inventory electronic version-- I-Streets is up and running and will be used as a management tool by the Borough to oversee its public tree canopy.
- The Environmental Commission continued to update its website during 2023 on

an as-needed basis. The website was launched in January of 2022.

- Attendance at the Shade Tree Federation Conference for mandatory CEU's for the Borough was completed by three volunteers from the Tree Committee October 26, 2023.
- The Pollinator Garden was overseen by Jack McDonough, naturalist, and an expert in mug wart eradication from Mid-April to mid-August. During that time several Commission members and other volunteers helped to weed and lay down salt hay in the garden to protect the work that was done. Moving forward into 2024, similar work efforts will be continued.
- The Cape May Technical School came with 19 students to plant native plants and to weed in the Avalon Pollinator Garden. Since that time the school contacted the Environmental Commission and indicated that they have a new program in Environmental Science and Sustainability and are looking for communities and organizations to partner with. We have since attended 1 school meeting and a site visit was made by the instructor to assess the Living Classroom Potentials offered by Avalon.
- The Environmental Commission attended Community Connections and promoted a "Wheel of Fortune" quiz on water conservation. Prizes for correct answers were awarded including hose nozzles or watering cans.
- The AEC established The Armacost Restoration Committee in June 2022 chartered to make recommendations for site restoration. The Team consists of Joe Lomax, Tom Thornton, Jamie McDermitt, Donna Rothman, Bill McCormick and Chairman, Steve Malyszka. The last meeting was held on March 20, 2023 when we were told by Joe Lomax and Tom Thornton that they could not generate a Statement of Work without approval from the Borough. This was confirmed by Jamie McDermott on 3/21/2023. No further activity occurred until a meeting in May 2023 when it was decided that a video should be made to educate Avalon homeowners regarding the state of Armacost Park and the need for Restoration. That initiative is underway by Dave Coskey and the 7 Mile Times.
- The AEC has booked 5 environmental speakers for 2024. Programs will be held at Surfside Park, The Avalon Community Center, the 39th Street Tennis Court Building and the Pollinator Garden. Included will be Doug Tallamy for August 26th, Pat Sutton, Erin Rawls Wetlands Institute, Joe Martucci, Susan Slotterback. Confirmed dates and lecture summaries will be forthcoming.
- The AEC developed a pamphlet entitled *Avalon—Sustainable Landscaping and Flowering Native Plant List*. The pamphlet has received accolades from many people including requests from neighboring communities for copies. Copies of the booklet are in Public Works, Avalon Community Hall, Chamber of Commerce, the Municipal Building and members of the Avalon Garden Club.

- The AEC has begun work to update an outdated Plant list. This is a comprehensive project since we have 4 different lists to update. Ultimately the list will be consolidated in a pamphlet to give to homeowners, landscapers, building contractors et al. It will be titled Volume II to follow the first booklet titled Sustainable Landscaping and Flowering Native Plant List. It will also be available on the AEC website.
- The AEC has developed a native plant garden plan for the Island at 70-71st and Dune Drive. This will be an experiment to promote the esthetic and environmental benefits of native plants and a no mow, no water initiative. (Saving the Borough \$\$\$) The Avalon Garden Club will provide some financial assistance and a potential grant is being pursued. The students from Cape May Technical School will grow the plant material and plant it as well. Maintenance will be developed and accomplished by students, garden club volunteers, the AEC and the newly hired landscapers. Estimated price for the entire project is between \$4500--\$5,000.
- A survey was developed by the AEC to see what environmental topics most interest Avalon homeowners. The objective was to gain insight for development and planning of future educational programs. The survey was sent to 1400 AHLOA members electronically. Although 141 individuals began the survey only 60 completed and sent responses. What was most interesting is that 84% of responders checked flooding, drowning wetlands, and beach erosion as a topic of interest, the highest response ratio of any topic offered.
- The AEC has received more than 15 e-mails or telephone calls during 2023 regarding environmental issues. Questions included the types of street trees to plant on the island, questions about restoration of Armacost Park, no mow may and mistreatment of sea gulls. All questions were answered in a written format.
- The AEC gave an Oak Tree seedling to the Avalon Public School. The seedling was given to Donna Rothman by Doug Tallamy at the time of his lecture in August of 2023. The concept is to have a class plant the tree and to follow its growth each year with pictures.

