

“A Conversation with Greenable Woodbridge”.....Understanding the climate question and what we can do about it?

## **Sustainability Pillar: Climate Mitigation & Resiliency**

**Introduction:** Back in 1975 a Columbia University professor is credited with first using the term “Global Warming” in an article ironically entitled “Climatic Change: Are We on the Brink of a Pronounced Global Warming?” Since that time, a national and even international debate has raged over the term global warming. Former Vice President Al Gore’s campaign to raise awareness even resulted in an award winning 2006 documentary film by Davis Guggenheim called “An Inconvenient Truth.” Unfortunately, debate over terminology and data has distracted focus away from the clear need for better preparedness, adaptation and resiliency in the face of more frequent and severe weather events.

Over the past decade, the term “climate change” has grown in popularity to better connect to an indisputable fact – the world, our nation, our state and our region are experiencing more frequent extreme weather events. Greenable Woodbridge has adopted a format for communication with Township residents called “The 12 Pillars of Sustainability.” Our July Pillar is Climate Mitigation & Resiliency. Each week in July we will post topical summaries on the Climate question. These summaries will address:

- What is Climate Change and why do we care about it?
- What is the State of New Jersey doing to address climate change?
- What have we done in Woodbridge Township to combat climate change?
- What can each of us do to help the fight?

The narrative summaries will also be supplemented by companion You-Tube videos and links to additional reference materials for those interested in more detail.

***Week 4: What can I do to help the fight?***

Facing such daunting terms as “global climate change” or “global warming” can leave individuals with a feeling of helplessness. To the contrary, we can all contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions both in the context of climate change, as well as being good stewards for our environment at home, at work and in our community. Here are some recommendations from the New Jersey Climate Adaptation Alliance, a diverse network of businesses, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and government agencies who have voluntarily collaborated to enhance the State’s ability to adapt to a changing climate:

- Have an emergency plan to prepare for storms, flooding and heat waves. See [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) and [www.ready.nj.gov](http://www.ready.nj.gov) for tips.
- Review your transportation needs. Do you rely on public transportation systems or routes that could be affected during floods? Plan accordingly if other modes of transportation may be needed;
- Plan to help elderly residents or families with small children who may need assistance during a high heat or flooding events.
- When constructing or improving a home, consider ways to reduce environmental impacts that can help mitigate the impacts of climate change: purchase appliances and materials that decrease energy and water consumption and waste; reduce paved surfaces and build rain gardens to capture storm water and reduce runoff; use low- and non-toxic building materials to decrease exposure to your family and reduce pollution.
- Identify how a changing climate may affect the stability of operations for your business. Will changes in temperature and precipitation affect manufacturing equipment? Can your supply chain respond to increases in disruptive events? If not, what will it cost to address the above in the future?
- Identify how a changing climate affects your employees and colleagues. Are the critical routes and transit systems employees use susceptible to disruption from events such as extreme heat or flooding? Does your business have an emergency notification system to alert employees in the case of a storm related event?
- Pinpoint the critical services that your business may provide during extreme weather events including food, shelter, transportation and banking services.
- Support or volunteer with not-for-profit and faith-based organizations working to restore natural areas to increase resilience (decrease flooding potential), create healthy communities, and increase awareness of climate adaptation.
- Incorporate climate change projections into your municipal master plans, hazard mitigation plans, and everyday municipal operations tasks. Does your master plan discourage new development in flood prone areas? Do your building and zoning codes include shade tree provisions to reduce heat as well as provisions to reduce paved surfaces to allow water to soak into the ground?
- Does your town have a plan in place for continuity of operations for storms, flooding and heat waves? Are critical facilities such as firehouses, police stations, schools, evacuation routes and shelter locations in safe areas? Does your town have a plan in place to communicate with residents?
- Encourage your community to identify contaminated sites that may be in flood prone areas and monitor those sites carefully in the event of a flood.

**To Learn More:** If interested, please check out the following websites and You-Tube videos:

**Websites and Literature:**

- “Sustainable Community Plan and Climate Action Plan – Woodbridge Township, New Jersey,” May 6, 2015 Revision  
<http://www.twp.woodbridge.nj.us/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=9k99EGuWWb4%3d&tabid=751>
- Website of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Sustainability and Green Energy Program: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/sage/climate-energy.html>
- Website of the New Jersey Climate Adaptation Alliance: <http://njadapt.rutgers.edu>
- NJ Climate Brochure: <http://njadapt.rutgers.edu/nj-climate-brochure/file>
- “Resilience – Preparing New Jersey for Climate Change: Policy Considerations from the New Jersey Climate Adaptation Alliance”: <http://njadapt.rutgers.edu/docman-lister/resource-pdfs/120-resilience-preparing-new-jersey-for-climate-change-policy-considerations/file>
- New Jersey Global Warming Response Act: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/sage/docs/gw-responseact-07.pdf>
- “New Jersey’s Global Warming Response Act Recommendations Report” – December 2009: [http://www.nj.gov/dep/sage/docs/njgrwa\\_final\\_report\\_and\\_appendices\\_dec2009.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/dep/sage/docs/njgrwa_final_report_and_appendices_dec2009.pdf)

**You-Tube Videos:**

- Climate Science: What You Need To Know (PBS Digital Studios)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation\\_id=annotation\\_4055255825&feature=iv&src\\_vid=y2euBvdP28c&v=ffjIyms1BX4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_4055255825&feature=iv&src_vid=y2euBvdP28c&v=ffjIyms1BX4)
- Why People Don't Believe In Climate Science (PBS Digital Studios)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2euBvdP28c>
- Climate change just hit home (NBC documentary)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8EXhJmUkNE>
- Climate Change Is Happening Faster Than You Think (DNews)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8-9U-MF1Ko>

- Morgan Freeman's Powerful Climate Change Short Film (The Daily Conversation)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YQIaOldDU8>