AGENDA
VILLAGE OF MAMARONECK COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
Sept. 16, 2025, at 7:30 pm,
Regatta Conference Room, 123 Mamaroneck Ave.

Open meeting & approve minutes of July 15, 2025, meeting. Discuss timing of future minutes (7:30 - 7:35)

Update on Ongoing Activities & Initiatives (7:35 -8:50 pm)

- **Revisiting goals of CFTE members**
- **Summer Garden Tour**, debrief of event (Julie & participants)
- **Community Garden** –Status of DEC grant & other possibilities, location (Alli, Rene)
- **Maintenance of CFTE gardens & Greenway Parks:** Adopt a Park Concept; Outreach for more volunteers; Parks Dept support (Bob, Julie, Lindsay, Kate)
- **Mamaroneck Greenway** –Assemblage to present at 9/25 BOT, RFP received for County grant (Kate)
- **Improving CFTE communications & messaging** – Update of CFTE section of VOM Website (Kate, Alli), County networking (Bob), Tri-municipal (Alli), neighborhood groups (Matt)
- **Village Sanitation** – garbage pick-up, food scraps, leaves, etc., existing study (Kate, Matt)
- **CSC Taskforce** – updates (Matt, David)
- **Meighan Park** – update on status (Jen)

Upcoming Events & New Initiatives (8:50– 9:20 pm)

- **Monarch Festival** – on hiatus (Lindsay, Jen)
- **Repair Café**, Sunday October 26, need for knowledgeable repair people, Native Plant Swap (Debbie)
- **Clean & Green community clean up** - November date and location (Christi, Kate)
- **Ribbon Cutting Nostrand-Howard Riverside Park**, Need for a sign and additional bench, (Kate)
- **Residential Solar** – Someone to raise awareness and share information w community?
- **Plastic Pollution** – Discussion of growing use in our community & policy recommendations (Ellen, Kate)
- **Mosquito Control in village** – Education on dunks, Larvicide application (Kate, guests)

Other Ongoing Topics (9:20-9:30 pm)

- **Taylors Lane** –update (Kate, Ellen)
- **LULA training** – Fall date for presentation (Alli)
- **Need for new members**

Public Comment: At the end of each meeting, 3-minute per person unless otherwise permitted.
Close Meeting

The Committee for the Environment
Village of Mamaroneck

July 15,2025 Meeting Minutes
Courtroom, 169 Pleasant Ave., Mamaroneck, NY 10543

Members Present: Katherine Dehais (Chair) Renee Crabtree, Julie Rubin, Debbie Sullivan, David Freeman, Robert Heiss, Lindsay Reitzes. Jen LeClair, Trustee Liaison Ellen Silver. Absent: Matt Ahrens, Christi Young, Allison May

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 pm. The minutes of the meeting on May 20, 2025 were unanimously approved.

There was a motion to skip the August Meeting. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Update on Ongoing Activities and Initiatives

Summer Native Plant Garden Tour:
The tour is scheduled for 7/20/25 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm with multiple garden locations including Nostrand and Rockland pocket parks. Julie Rubin led a general discussion on logistics including yard signs, informational tables with sign-up sheets, clipboards, coordinating volunteers, etc.

Maintenance of CFTE Gardens:
Jen LeClair said she needed more help with gardening maintenance, particularly with bump outs. In a general discussion, the Committee discussed asking Parks to take over the bump outs since it was a Village initiative. Jen suggested that CFTE should maintain the bump outs through the summer given many small natives that Parks might mistake for weeds. Bob suggested forming volunteer teams to adopt gardens, getting local businesses to adopt gardens (like the model used for roads). He will research & report on the model for getting businesses to adopt parks.

Meighan Park:
Nothing new to report. There was no discussion.

Greenway:
A $25k Climate Resiliency grant from the Nature Conservancy was approved and the money is forthcoming for the village to acquire a small strip of land in the floodplain of the Mam'k River. Kate reported working on a NYS Green Resiliency Grant with an Aug 15 deadline which would have been a close fit for the Fenimore Rd to TOM border segment at 90% funding of the ~$4mm project, and County funding providing a possible match. An engineering feasibility study is required which would have to be funded in advance. Following a June meeting with the VM, AVM and Assemblage

designers the village determined they did not have the time or capacity to apply this summer but were committed to the Greenway project.

Improving CFTE Communications:
In a general discussion, the need to improve CFTE communications was revisited. It was agreed that setting up a countywide Slack group would be a help and should be investigated. Bob Heiss will look into and report on that possibility. The Village website needs to be regularly updated which Alli will spearhead. Kate will write the village to authorize.

CSC Taskforce:
There has been no intern hired, and at this date it is unlikely to find and hire anyone. The focus should shift to finding resident volunteers instead. There is a DEC grant proposal being worked on that would support the Village's capital budget, particularly for vehicle request that will fund fleet inventory, fleet policy, fleet right-sizing, etc. It would also fund smart thermostats at the Pavilion and ongoing work on solar panels. David said an intern can be funded from these monies. A motion was made to write a letter of support for Fleet right-sizing and staff support. The vote was unanimous in favor. Separately, Debbie reported that work is ongoing on the NYSERDA grants already obtained which will be used to install smart thermostats in the Pavilion and solar panels on the Pavilion.

Community Gardens:
The status of Community Garden grant applications for the approved location in HI Park was discussed. The T Mobile and AARP applications were denied. Alli will reapply for both. We are still waiting to hear about the DEC grant. In the meantime, Renee is managing the plots in the old location at Bub Walker Park.

Village Sanitation:
It was suggested that the Village's Sanitation Department's pickup frequency be reviewed and recommendations made to the Village since changing sanitation arrangements had the potential for significant cost savings as well as being more sustainable. Since there is such a high cost associated with maintaining equipment, the potential for consolidation with neighboring towns should be considered. Kate will circulate a previous village study which members should review.

Upcoming Events & Initiatives

Mamaroneck Block Party:
CFTE will have a table at the 7/23 event to share information with the public. Debbie, Alli, Kate, and Julie will participate.

Monarch Festival:
Lindsay provided an update including the need for vendor onboarding and the challenges of securing Certificates of Insurance. Ellen suggested that the popular event

could be monetized, and several ideas were discussed including entry fees, donation boxes, etc. Also discussed were the need for volunteers and the challenges promoting the event. Ellen will discuss reducing the insurance requirement with the VM.

Ribbon Cutting at Nostand-Howard Riverside Park:
This park still needs a sign. Kate will discuss a date for a ceremony with Parks.

Repair Cafe:
Since there is adequate planning time left until the event, details will be discussed in future meetings. The most immediate need is for fixers.

Taylors Lane:
No new updates.

LULA Training:
No discussion.

Complete Streets:
There was an update on the Complete Streets project. The Committee agreed on the importance of making the streets more bike able and pedestrian friendly particularly on Boston Post Road. More detailed planning and community input is needed with an emphasis on safety concerns.

Flood Mitigation Committee:
In a general discussion, the difficulty of balancing flood mitigation efforts with the Village's pro housing policies was acknowledged. The importance of a moratorium on building in flood zones to protect the Village from further damage was also discussed.

Public Comments:
Tadej Znidarcic discussed monetizing events with donations with the use of QR codes. It was pointed out that the Committee is not allowed to solicit donations per the previous Clerk Treasurer. Ellen Silver will check to see if that is still true.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Heiss

The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/20/opinion/microplastics-health-environment.html

OPINION
GUEST ESSAY

Our Way of Life Is Poisoning Us

By Mark O'Connell
Mr. O'Connell is the author, most recently, of "Notes From an Apocalypse: A Personal Journey to the End of the World and Back."

April 20, 2023

There is plastic in our bodies; it's in our lungs and in our bowels and in the blood that pulses through us. We can't see it, and we can't feel it, but it is there. It is there in the water we drink and the food we eat, and even in the air that we breathe. We don't know, yet, what it's doing to us, because we have only quite recently become aware of its presence; but since we have learned of it, it has become a source of profound and multifarious cultural anxiety.

Maybe it's nothing; maybe it's fine. Maybe this jumble of fragments — bits of water bottles, tires, polystyrene packaging, microbeads from cosmetics — is washing through us and causing no particular harm. But even if that was true, there would still remain the psychological impact of the knowledge that there is plastic in our flesh. This knowledge registers, in some vague way, as apocalyptic; it has the feel of a backhanded divine vengeance, sly and poetically appropriate. Maybe this has been our fate all along, to achieve final communion with our own garbage.

The word we use, when we speak about this unsettling presence within us, is "microplastics." It's a broad category, accommodating any piece of plastic less than five millimeters, or about a fifth of an inch, in length. Much of this stuff, tiny though it is, is readily visible to the naked eye. You may have seen it in the photographs used to illustrate articles on the topic: a multitude of tiny, many-colored shards displayed on the tip of a finger, or a lurid little heap on a teaspoon. But there is also, more worryingly still, the stuff you can't see: so-called nano-plastics, which are a tiny fraction of the size of microplastics. These are capable of crossing the membranes between cells and have been observed to accumulate in the brains of fish.

We have known for a while now that they are causing harm to fish. In a study published in 2018, fish exposed to microplastics were shown to have lower levels of growth and reproduction; their offspring, even when they were not themselves exposed, were observed as also having fewer young, suggesting that the contamination lingers through

the generations. In 2020, another study, at James Cook University in Australia, demonstrated that microplastics alter the *behavior* of fish, with higher levels of exposure resulting in fish taking more risks and, as a consequence, dying younger.

Last month, The Journal of Hazardous Materials published a study examining the effects of plastic consumption on seabirds. The researchers put forward evidence of a new plastic-induced fibrotic disease they call plasticosis. Scarring on the intestinal tract caused by ingestion of plastics, they found, caused the birds to become more vulnerable to infection and parasites; it also damaged their capacity to digest food and to absorb certain vitamins.

It's not, of course, the welfare of fish or seabirds that makes this information most worrying. If we — by which I mean human civilization — cared about fish and seabirds, we would not, in the first place, be dumping some 11 million metric tons of plastic into the oceans every year. What's truly unsettling is the prospect that similar processes may turn out to be at work in our own bodies, that microplastics might be shortening our lives, and making us stupider and less fertile while they're at it. As the authors of the report on plasticosis put it, their research "raises concerns for other species impacted by plastic ingestion" — a category that very much includes our own species.

Because just as fish must swim through the blizzard of trash we have made of the seas, we ourselves cannot avoid the stuff. One of the more unsettling elements of the whole microplastics situation — we can't really call it a "crisis" at this point, because we just don't know how bad it might be — is its strangely democratic pervasiveness. Unlike, say, the effects of climate change, no matter who you are, or where you live, you are exposed. You could live in a secure compound in the most remote of locations — safe from forest fires and rising sea levels — and you would be exposed to microplastics in a shower of rain. Scientists have found microplastics near the summit of Everest, and in the Mariana Trench, 36,000 feet below the surface of the Pacific.

In this context, most of the changes we make to try to protect ourselves from microplastic ingestion come to seem basically cosmetic. You can, for instance, stop giving your toddler water in a plastic cup, and it might make you feel like you're doing something about her level of exposure, but only until you start thinking about all those PVC pipes the water had to pass through to get to her in the first place.

In a study conducted last year, in which researchers in Italy analyzed the breast milk of 34 healthy new mothers, microplastics were present in 75 percent of the samples. A particularly cruel irony, this, given the association of breast milk with purity and naturalness, and given new parents' anxieties about heating formula in plastic bottles. This research itself came in the wake of the revelation, in 2020, that microplastics had been found in human placentas. It seems to have become something close to definitional: To be human is to contain plastic.

To consider this reality is to glimpse a broader truth that our civilization, our way of life, is poisoning us. There is a strange psychic logic at work here; in filling the oceans with the plastic detritus of our purchases, in carelessly disposing of the evidence of our own inexhaustible consumer desires, we have been engaging in something like a process of repression. And, as Freud insisted, the elements of experience that we repress — memories, impressions, fantasies — remain "virtually immortal; after the passage of decades they behave as though they had just occurred." This psychic material, "unalterable by time," was fated to return, and to work its poison on our lives.

Is this not what is going on with microplastics? The whole point of plastic, after all, is that it's virtually immortal. From the moment it became a feature of mass-produced consumer products, between the First and Second World Wars, its success as a material has always been inextricable from the ease with which it can be created, and from its extreme durability. What's most useful about it is precisely what makes it such a problem. And we keep making more of the stuff, year after year, decade after decade. Consider this fact: Of all the plastic created, since mass production began, more than half of it has been produced since 2000. We can throw it away, we can fool ourselves into thinking we're "recycling" it, but it will not absent itself. It will show up again, in the food we eat and the water we drink. It will haunt the milk that infants suckle from their mothers' breasts. Like a repressed memory, it remains, unalterable by time.

Writing in the 1950s, as mass-produced plastic was coming to define material culture in the West, the French philosopher Roland Barthes saw the advent of this "magical" stuff effecting a shift in our relationship to nature. "The hierarchy of substances," he wrote, "is abolished: a single one replaces them all: the whole world can be plasticized, and even life itself since, we are told, they are beginning to make plastic aortas."

To pay attention to our surroundings is to become aware of how right Barthes was. As I type these words, my fingertips are pressing down on the plastic keys of my laptop; the seat I'm sitting on is cushioned with some kind of faux-leather-effect polymer; even the gentle ambient music I'm listening to as I write is being pumped directly to my cochleas by way of plastic Bluetooth earphones. These things may not be a particularly serious immediate source of microplastics. But some time after they reach the end of their usefulness, you and I may wind up consuming them as tiny fragments in the water supply. In the ocean, polymers contained in paint are the largest source of these particles, while on land, dust from tires, and tiny plastic fibers from things like carpets and clothing, are among the main contributors.

In 2019, a study commissioned by the World Wide Fund for Nature found that the average person may be consuming as much as five grams of plastic every week — the equivalent, as the report's authors put it, of an entire credit card. The wording was somewhat vague; if we *may* be consuming the equivalent of a credit card, we can assume that we may equally be consuming much less. But the report was widely circulated in the media, and

its startling claims captured an anxious public imagination. The choice of the credit card as an image had some role to play here; the idea that we are eating our own purchasing power, that we might be poisoning ourselves with our insistent consumerism, burrows into the unconscious like a surrealist conceit. When I think of it, I can't help picturing myself putting my Visa card in a blender and adding it to a smoothie.

David Cronenberg's recent film "Crimes of the Future" opens with a startling scene of a small boy crouching in a bathroom and eating a plastic wastepaper basket like an Easter egg. The film's premise, or part of it, is that certain humans have evolved the capacity to eat and take nutrition from plastic, and from other toxic substances. "It's time for human evolution to sync with human technology," as one such character puts it. "We've got to start feeding on our own industrial waste; it's our destiny."

As grotesque as the plot device is, it's also a perversely optimistic one: Our best hope might be an evolutionary leap that allows us to live in the mess we've made. (Although arguably it's only optimistic in the way that Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is optimistic.) In interviews around the time of the film's release, Mr. Cronenberg revealed a preoccupation with the recent news about the presence of microplastics in human bloodstreams: "Maybe 80 percent of the human population has microplastics in their flesh," he said in one interview. "So our bodies are different than human bodies have ever been before in history. This is not going away."

As a parent, I am suspended between the desire to shield my children from microplastics — along with all the other things I want to shield them from — and the suspicion that the effort might be largely futile. A quick Google search revealed that these anxieties are increasingly common among parents and are the subject of a growing abundance of online content. In one article about protecting kids from microplastics, I read that the snuggling of soft toys in bed is to be avoided, and that such unexpectedly menacing beasts, rather than being left lying around the room or in the child's bed, should be kept safely in a toy chest. (Later in the same article, the environmental scientist who makes this recommendation also counsels against instilling fear in our children.) As much as I would like to minimize ambient threats to my children's health, I also don't especially want to be the kind of parent who insists on their soft toys being stored safely in a chest when not in use — because of all the ambient threats to my children, the one I am most keen to offset is my own neurosis.

And although concern about microplastics is obviously compatible with the larger discourses of environmentalism and anti-consumerism, it's not exclusively of interest to lefty, liberal types like myself. Joe Rogan, perhaps our culture's foremost vector of meathead masculinity, has been talking about the topic for several years. In an episode of his podcast last year, Mr. Rogan expressed concern about an alarming effect of

phthalates, a chemical used to increase the durability of plastics, in human bloodstreams: Babies, he said, were being born with smaller "taints." (The taint, he clarified, was the distance between one's penis and one's anus.)

Not only were the taints of infants shrinking at an alarming rate; so, too, were penises and testicles themselves. "This is wild," he said, "because it's literally changing the hormonal profile and the reproductive systems of human beings, and making us weaker, making us less masculine." A guest pointed out that there was something of a trade-off at play, in that while living in the modern world meant unprecedented exposure to such chemicals, it also meant living much longer. "Sort of," said Mr. Rogan, "but you live like a bitch." Just as climate change and pollution are the traditional concerns of the left, the demographic effects of falling birthrates are a source of anxiety to conservatives. Whatever your preferred apocalyptic scenario, in other words, microplastics have it covered.

Microplastics have established themselves in the cultural bloodstream, and their prevalence in the zeitgeist can partly be accounted for by our uncertainty as to what it means, from the point of view of pathology, that we are increasingly filled with plastic. This ambiguity allows us to ascribe all manner of malaises, both cultural and personal, to this new information about ourselves. The whole thing has a strangely allegorical resonance. We feel ourselves to be psychically disfigured, corrupted in our souls, by a steady diet of techno-capitalism's figurative trash — by the abysmal scroll of inane TikToks and brainless takes, by Instagram influencers pointing at text boxes while doing little dances, by the endless proliferation of A.I.-generated junk content. We feel our faith in the very concept of the future liquefying at broadly the same rate as the polar ice caps. The idea of microscopic bits of trash crossing the blood-brain barrier feels like an apt and timely entry into the annals of the apocalyptic imaginary.

And the aura of scientific indeterminacy that surrounds the subject — maybe this stuff is causing unimaginable damage to our bodies and minds; then again, maybe it's fine — lends it a slightly hysterical cast. We don't know what these plastics are doing to us, and so there is no end to the maladies we might plausibly ascribe to them. Maybe it's microplastics that are making you depressed. Maybe it's because of microplastics that you have had a head cold constantly since Christmas. Maybe it's microplastics that are stopping you and your partner from conceiving, or making you lazy and lethargic, or forgetful beyond your years. Maybe it's microplastics that caused the cancer in your stomach, or your brain.

I myself am susceptible to this tendency. A few years back, I was diagnosed with I.B.D., a chronic autoimmune condition. As is typically the way of such ailments, it came out of nowhere, with no known cause. It's not life-threatening, but there have been periods when it has made me ill enough to be unable to work for a week or two at a stretch, and when I have been so tired I could barely haul myself off the couch to go to bed at night.

Every eight weeks, I present myself at a hospital infusion suite, where I am hooked up to a bag containing a liquid solution of a monoclonal antibody. (These bags are, of course, made from some kind of polyethylene, a fact that you must imagine me relating with an elaborate shrug, indicating great reserves of stoic irony.)

In 2021, a study published in the journal Environmental Science and Technology found significantly higher levels of microplastics in the stool samples of people who were diagnosed with I.B.D., but who were otherwise healthy, than those without I.B.D. No direct causation was established, but given that earlier studies conducted on laboratory animals established microplastic ingestion as a cause of intestinal inflammation, it seems not unreasonable to assume that there might be some link.

The more time I spent researching this essay, the more I found myself wondering whether microplastics might be at the root of my condition. My point here is not to make a factual claim either way, because I just don't know enough to do so. My point, in fact, is precisely that the not knowing generates its own peculiar energy. I think it's at least plausible that my illness might be caused by microplastics, but it's also equally plausible that it might not. And I am aware that this ambiguity is itself strangely seductive, that it is on such epistemological wasteland that great, rickety edifices of conspiracy and conjecture are raised.

Until we know a good deal more than we currently do, at least, talking about microplastics can feel weirdly like holding forth on the harmful effects of cellphone radiation. (If you liked chemtrails, you'll love microplastics!) The time will come, sooner or later, when we know what microplastics are doing to us, but until then the subject remains an ambiguous one, and therefore a richly suggestive one.

But isn't there something obviously absurd in the claim that we don't know whether we are being harmed by the plastic in our blood? What standards of harm are these, that we must await the test results before deciding how concerned to be about the thousands of little fragments of trash pulsing through our veins? Surely the fact of their presence is alarming enough in itself; and surely this presence, in any case, registers at least as strongly on a psychic as on a physiological level.

Among the most indelibly distressing images of the damage done to nature by our heedless, relentless consumption of plastic is a series of photographs by the artist Chris Jordan, entitled "Midway: Message From the Gyre." Each of these photographs depicts the body of an albatross in some or other state of advanced decomposition. At the center of each splayed and desiccated carcass is the clustered miscellany of plastic objects the bird had consumed before dying. The horror of these images is in the surreal juxtaposition of organic and inorganic elements, the sheer bewildering volume of plastic contained in their digestive tracts. The bodies of these once beautiful creatures are returning slowly to the earth, but the human trash that sickened them remains inviolable,

unalterable by time: toothpaste lids, bottle caps, entire cigarette lighters that look as if they would still work perfectly well, tiny little children's dolls and a thousand other unidentifiable traces of our deranged productivity and heedless hunger.

The whole subject of microplastics is possessed of a nightmarish lucidity, because we understand it to be a symptom of a deeper disease. The unthinkable harm we have done to the planet — that is done to the planet on our behalf, as consumers — is being visited, in this surreal and lurid manner, on our own bodies. When we look at the decomposing bodies of those trash-filled birds, we know that we are looking not just at what we are doing to the world, but also at what our damaged world is doing to us.

Mark O'Connell (@mrkocnnll) is the author, most recently, of "Notes From an Apocalypse: A Personal Journey to the End of the World and Back." His forthcoming book is "A Thread of Violence: A Story of Truth, Invention and Murder."

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A version of this article appears in print on , Section SR, Page 6 of the New York edition with the headline: What Are the Plastic Particles In Our Bodies Doing to Us?

Plastic bottles at the Carola mineral water factory in Ribeauvillé, France. SEBASTIEN BOZON / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

INTERVIEW

Inside the Plastics Industry Playbook: Delay, Deny, and Distract

In an interview with e360, Saabira Chaudhuri, author of a new book on the history of the plastics industry, discusses how petrochemical companies worldwide have molded consumers to embrace convenience and disposability – no matter the environmental and public health costs.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

Over the decades, scientific studies have highlighted the environmental and human toll of making, using, and discarding disposable plastics, and yet activist campaigns, international treaty negotiations, and government regulations have done very little to curb its use. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development expects plastic production and waste to triple by 2060.

In Saabira Chaudhuri's recently published *Consumed: How Big Brands Got Us Hooked on Plastic*, the London-based journalist explains how consumer goods companies have for decades dodged regulation in their efforts to maintain the status quo. In an interview with *Yale Environment 360*, Chaudhuri talks about the plastics industry playbook, which she says stokes fears that a curb on disposables will raise consumer prices and presents false solutions that shift responsibility for plastic litter from producers onto municipalities. She explores the history of manufacturing demand for disposables and offers hope that a critical mass of concerned individuals can turn the plastics tide.

"I do think people are starting to worry about the health impacts from plastics, which could motivate a shift back towards more durable materials," she says.

"Nobody likes the idea of microplastics in our brains and in our lungs. People want to get [this] under control."

Saabira Chaudhuri. COURTESY OF SAABIRA CHAUDHURI

Yale Environment 360: Last month, negotiations on an international agreement to reduce plastic pollution failed, once again, after oil-producing nations refused to cut their plastics production. Will the oil states ever come around?

Saabira Chaudhuri: In 2024, the IEA said 70 percent of the growth from oil had actually come from plastics. And if you look at the future, [those nations] seem to be betting everything on the fact that plastics will continue to grow. So I think any agreement that tried to get the whole world on board was always doomed to fail. But the consensus seems to be that a smaller group of countries can still come together and commit to making big changes, phasing out dangerous chemicals, mandating minimum recycled content, designing for recycling and reuse, things that will naturally cut back on demand for virgin plastic.

e360: Do individuals have a role to play?

Chaudhuri: We have an immense amount of power to influence what consumer goods companies do by either buying or not buying their products, by speaking to them, whether it's their customer service people or calling them out on social media. If you start to change the culture of what's acceptable, and it starts to show up in the profit lines of these companies, they will be motivated to make changes that [will] trickle back to this whole very murky world of chemical companies, oil companies, and resin producers.

e360: What is the industry's playbook? How do companies manage to keep selling plastic, despite all that we know about its threats to our health?

Chaudhuri: The first tactic is to say [that abandoning plastic] will drive up prices for consumers. It's going to make everything more expensive. You also see them funding lifecycle analyses and studies that generally seem to be drawing conclusions, cherry-picking assumptions, that confirm that disposability is the best option, that plastic is the best option. And if you did anything differently, it would be really terrible for both consumers and the environment.

"Companies spent a lot of money pushing the message that plastic was necessary for hygiene, that unwrapped products were prone to germs."

And then the third thing is the long-running "plastics make it possible" campaign. And the whole idea is to showcase the many positives of plastics: how helmets protect children, and plastics make cars and planes lighter, and plastics are necessary for medical devices. Again, all things that are very true. But none of them are the areas that people are concerned about. People are most concerned about unnecessary single-use plastics – the straws, the bottles, the lids, the bags, all the food containers – that are rampantly overused.

And the fourth one is obviously putting forward solutions that sound very promising. Like, "We're going to make our bottles from recycled plastic. We're going to invest in collection infrastructure to raise recycling rates. We're going to make containers from compostable plastic." For a variety of reasons, all of these things have failed for decades and decades, but that hasn't stopped companies from offering up exactly the same solutions with a slightly different wrapper on them a few years later.

e360: How did the idea of disposability take hold?

Chaudhuri: The plastics industry made this very concerted shift in the 1950s when Lloyd Stouffer, the editor of *Modern Plastics*, said it is much better to sell a product 1,000 times over than to sell it once. The idea is that with disposability you have a consistent large market.

Disposability also allows you to expand your supply chains in a way that you couldn't otherwise do if you had to return a container to be washed and reused. With disposables, companies don't have to worry about the reverse logistics of how do I get something back. They cut out a hell of a lot of cost and complexity for themselves.

A 1990s print ad from the American Plastics Council.

The flip side, of course, is they just offload this [cost] onto taxpayers, because it's usually municipal governments, paid for by us, that have to deal with the waste. [For industry,] it's immensely profitable.

e360: Disposable plastic is ubiquitous today, but the industry had to build demand for it and teach people how to throw things away.

Chaudhuri: When plastics first came about, they were actually extremely expensive. People stored cellophane in a safe because it was used just for upscale chocolate and perfume, and then later cigarettes. As prices came down, that is when you started seeing plastics appearing absolutely everywhere. And companies spent a lot of money pushing the

message that plastic was necessary for hygiene, that unwrapped products were dirty and prone to germs. And I think that is not something that came naturally to people.

Companies pushed the idea that the way you are doing it is wrong, and here is a much better way of doing things. A lot of money was spent on ideas about convenience. A lot of money was spent on the idea that repairing things was unfashionable. Why repair something when you could just buy something new for cheap? Reuse was fusty, something your grandparents did, or your parents did. It wasn't something that the modern post-war generation should have to do.

> "Disposability existed before plastics, but plastics brought a level of affordability and functionality that other materials couldn't."

e360: And why did plastics eventually supplant other packaging materials, like glass or paper?

Chaudhuri: Its raw material, for the most part, was plentiful and pretty cheap. [Plastic feedstock] was a byproduct of [oil refining] that would otherwise just be thrown away. Disposability existed before plastics, but plastics brought about a level of portability, a level of affordability, a level of functionality that I think these other materials just couldn't.

One of my favorite examples is the paper coffee cup. Paper coffee cups had existed since the turn of the century, and they had been developed to curb diseases at shared water fountains. But they were never really used for hot drinks because their wax liner would make the coffee taste of wax.

Then in the 1940s, a company called Lily-Tulip added a plastic liner to the paper coffee cup. And all of a sudden, you could put hot coffee in a disposable container. And that was a game-changer. Hot coffee became the largest-selling beverage in the U.S. in the 1950s, bigger than every other beverage combined. And that was all down to the addition of the plastic liner.

DuPont chemist Hale Charch shows off a new kind of cellophane that is impermeable to water vapor, circa 1927.
KEYSTONE / GETTY IMAGES

e360: Companies like to promise that plastic goods are recyclable, but a lot of them aren't. Why is it so hard to recycle plastic?

Chaudhuri: Even though we use the word "plastic," there is no such thing as just plastic. There are many different types and subtypes. There is also the inclusion of color, which can't then be taken out.

It's too expensive to separate your orange plastics from your pinks, from your greens, from your blues. So anything that is a colored plastic, by and large, just gets downcycled into this gray mass of resin that can then be turned into pipes or construction material.

ALSO ON YALE E360

Plastics reckoning: PVC is ubiquitous, but maybe not for long. Read more.

One of the big reasons why plastics recycling rates are so low is this panoply of materials on the market, and the expense of sorting them all, cleaning them, reprocessing them. Why would you pay for this entire process and turn it into something new if you could get a higher quality version made from virgin plastic, which is cheap because of subsidies on oil? So without the demand, you don't have the markets.

"I think as consumers, we need to have a complete rethink of why we are consuming."

e360: Would the world be better off if plastic had never been invented?

Chaudhuri: If we took plastic away, what would our world look like today? It's unimaginable. We probably wouldn't have computers. We wouldn't have phones.

You and I wouldn't be having this conversation. We wouldn't have blood bags and IV tubes and all of these things.

If we all somehow switched from plastic to paper, there would be mass deforestation. Paper still uses chemicals. It's still very water intensive. As for compostable plastics, the whole point is that somehow, they will break down at the end of their life and turn into compost that we can then use to make our soil better. But for the most part, there is no infrastructure for these compostable plastics to actually compost.

Plastics have brought us these immensely good things, undeniably good things. They've also brought us these undeniably bad things. I think it's probably more useful to say, "Where do we go from here now that we are in this mess?"

People collect plastic waste from the Citarum River in Indonesia. TIMUR MATAHARI / AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

e360: So where do we go from here?

Chaudhuri: Going back to that 1950s pivot that the industry made where it went from reusables to disposables, that triggered a complete rewiring of supply chains. Everything was built around disposability. I think the shift that we could conceivably make is to start to unwind some of that so that we are going back to that moment in time.

I think that recycling has a role. I think reuse has a role. I think alternative materials have a role. And I think as consumers, we need to have a complete rethink of why we are consuming. There's a psychological dimension to this, which is this need to consume endlessly.

We'll probably always need some sort of plastic. It's just that the plastic we do use should ideally be highly recyclable and recycled many times over. It should be very standardized so that we're not using 100 colors. We might be using only two or three types of plastic.

I do think people are starting to worry about the health impacts from plastics, which could motivate a shift back towards more durable materials. Nobody likes the idea of microplastics in our brains and in our lungs. So I feel like in some ways everybody's on the same side. People worry about this, and they want to get it under control.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

MORE ON YALE E360

Microplastics are filling the skies. Will they affect the climate? Read more.

CLEAN WATER ACTION
PEOPLE • ACTION • JUSTICE

The Turf is Artificial, But the Harm is Very Real

Artificial or synthetic turf is finding its way onto more athletic fields and playgrounds, but it is not without controversy and real concerns of safety. When comparing natural grass to artificial turf, Clean Water Action believes the evidence is clear --- natural grass is a better and safer option for both people and the environment.

What is synthetic turf?

Synthetic or artificial turf is made up of several layers, including plastic grass blades, plastic backing that holds the blades in place, and infill that provides cushioning, weighs down the turf, and helps the blades stand upright. Until recently, all infill was made with recycled ground up tires called "crumb rubber".

Artificial turf contains hundreds of harmful chemicals like lead, heavy metals, benzene, arsenic, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), PFAS, and phthalates, some of which are cancer-causing (carcinogens), neurotoxins, and/or endocrine disruptors. Even new "safer" alternatives for the turf infill contain carcinogens and neurotoxins (e.g., lead, PAHs). Unfortunately, there are gaps in what we know about synthetic turf because manufacturers are not required by law to reveal all of the chemicals used.

The grass blades and backing in synthetic turf is made with the use of PFAS (known as "forever chemicals"). PFAS chemicals are endocrine (hormone) disruptors and linked to decreased sperm count, as well as increased rates of infertility, risk of cancer, immune disorders, and more. Some manufacturers claim that their artificial turf is now PFAS-free, but this has not been supported by research.

Children and athletes are most vulnerable as they play on these surfaces, breathe in, absorb through the skin, and even ingest turf dust, microplastics, and corresponding toxic chemicals. This is especially worrisome with indoor synthetic turf, as high levels of toxins are found to outgas within half an hour of air sampling (p 47-49).

One scientific review of synthetic turf research found that in 14 studies that tested for lead, including a virgin rubber sample – all contained lead, with the levels varying between playing fields. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there is no safe blood lead level.

Outdoor artificial turf has its own problems. It can get moldy over time and experience a buildup of animal/bird feces and related harms, thus requiring ongoing disinfection. This type of turf can also reach dangerous temperatures of over 160o F in the summer sun, while natural grass rarely exceeds 100o F. Kids have complained of skin burns and extreme heat penetrating their athletic shoes.

Plastic: Key Turf Ingredient and Global Contaminant

What is put on the field does not stay on the field. Synthetic turf breaks down into smaller pieces, including microplastics (less than 5 mm). They are carried long distances by the wind, leach into water systems, storm drains, and contaminate the soil. Barcelona, Spain found that artificial grass fibers "accounted for 15% of plastic pieces larger than 5 m within 1 kilometer from the shore."

Additionally, synthetic turf only lasts about eight to ten years. According to the Synthetic Turf Council, the average athletic field uses 400,000 pounds of infill and 40,000 pounds of artificial turf carpet. There is no known way to recycle artificial turf so this product is piling up, buried or burned, contaminating the environment.

Growing Opposition to Synthetic Turf is Very Real

Due to both environmental and health concerns, towns in several states (including Boston, MA) have banned new synthetic turf fields. Others like Scotch Plains and Westfield, NJ held a local vote and rejected proposals to install synthetic turf.

The NFL Players Association asked to only play on natural grass, stating that artificial turf causes "unnecessary injuries", especially non-contact injuries of the legs (e.g., meniscus tears) and abrasion burns ("turf burns"). The FIFA World Cup Soccer association and US national soccer teams always require grass playing fields.

Real grass playing fields are safer for humans, wildlife and the environment. Few, if any, chemicals are needed if field maintenance crews utilize Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques or organic lawn care, which is even better.

Natural grass has the added benefit of mitigating climate change. It has a cooling effect, oxygenates the air, captures carbon, and absorbs water more readily, which helps to reduce flooding and stormwater runoff.

If you can't avoid artificial turf, here are some tips for playing safer and reducing your exposure to turf-related toxic chemicals.

- Avoid playing on synthetic turf on very hot days
- Always wear shoes on synthetic turf
- Wash hands before eating, drinking, or adjusting mouth guards
- Avoid using it for passive activities such as sitting, lounging, and picnicking
- Ensure good ventilation of indoor fields by opening doors and windows and using fans
- Monitor young children to prevent accidental ingestion
- Clean any cuts and abrasions with soap and water
- Brush hair thoroughly after play
- Shake out sports equipment and clothes outside or over the garbage
- At home, take off shoes before entering to avoid tracking in crumb rubber
- Shower immediately after playing on artificial turf
- Vacuum any infill that comes into your home

NOTE: All of the above concerns and tips also apply to playgrounds with rubber or recycled tire mulch. Best practice would be to utilize wood chips in place of rubber mulch.

Additional Resources

Icahn School of Medicine at Mt Sinai researchers have extensively studied and written about artificial turf, with a focus on the impact on children's health.

The Partnership for Healthy Playing Surfaces, an excellent resource for information on synthetic turf.

Environment and Human Health, Inc. has written a careful analysis comparing synthetic turf industry claims versus what studies actually show regarding the chemicals in synthetic turf.

SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 | By Mara Silgailis and Amy Goldsmith

States/Regions:

New Jersey

Related Priorities:

Toxic Chemicals

Related Campaigns:

Clean Water For All in NJ
Preventing PFAS Pollution
Safer Chemicals for Safer Families and Communities

Tags:

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September 5, 2025

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Mosquito Bucket Challenge

Control Mosquitoes – Protect Wildlife

A Safer Alternative to Fogging

HOW IT WORKS

1. Fill & Bait

Fill a 2–5 gal bucket 2/3 with water and add a handful of leaves or grass.

2. Add Mosquito Dunk

Use 1/4 of a mosquito dunk (wildlife-friendly & kid-safe). Replace dunk monthly.

3. Add Cover or "Rescue Stick"

Add wire mesh or a lid with holes to keep kids and pets out, or place a stick inside so small animals can climb out.

4. Place & Label

Set buckets in shady spots around your yard. Add our sticker or a sign to let neighbors know what it is.

WHY IT WORKS

The bucket draws in mosquitoes already nearby (not from far away), then stops the next generation before it hatches.

It works because of Bti, a natural bacterium that targets mosquito larvae but doesn't harm biodiversity like bees, birds, or butterflies.

WHY NOT FOG?

Fogging hurts more than it helps. It kills wildlife, is harmful to your pets and kids, and doesn't even stop mosquitoes at the source — it misses the larvae, where real control happens.

SPREAD THE WORD WITH A STICKER

Help your bucket teach your neighbors with the official sticker (vinyl or printable).

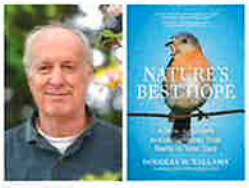
LEARN MORE

Scan for how-to, FAQs and advocacy tools:

MosquitoBucketChallenge.org

A project from HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARK

Cofounded by Doug Tallamy, author of *Nature's Best Hope*



Outlook

Re: Shore Acres mosquito problem

From Kathleen Gill <KGill@vomny.org>
Date Tue 9/9/2025 12:04 PM
To Beverley Sherrid <mrssherrid@gmail.com>
Cc Mark Sherrid <msherrid@gmail.com>; Mayor and Board <MayorandBoard@vomny.org>; Committee for the Environment <cfte@vomny.org>

Good afternoon,

Thank you for your email.

We will consider these concerns when we prepare the budget for next year.

Kathleen

Kathleen Gill
Village Manager
Village of Mamaroneck
123 Mamaroneck Avenue
Mamaroneck, NY 10543

Phone 914-777-7703
Fax 914-777-7760
E-mail KGill@vomny.org

From: Beverley Sherrid <mrssherrid@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 8, 2025 6:52 PM
To: Kathleen Gill <kgill@vomny.org>
Cc: Mark Sherrid <msherrid@gmail.com>; Mayor and Board <MayorandBoard@vomny.org>; Committee for the Environment <cfte@vomny.org>
Subject: Shore Acres mosquito problem

Dear Ms. Gill,

Here in Shore Acres we are having a very bad time with mosquitoes. It became worse as the summer progressed, so that now it is impossible to go outside without being attacked immediately and continuously by multiple mosquitoes. Usually several follow us into the house, regardless of how quickly we may close a door, so we're also suffering indoors.

The Shore Acres neighborhood is located between two marshlands, Otter Creek Preserve and Guion Creek. Marshlands are well-known breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

I recently learned that, this year, the Village eliminated its program treating these marshy areas with Bti, a biological, naturally occurring bacterium found in soils and specifically targeting mosquito (and black fly) larvae, with no damaging effects on other wildlife or on humans. I would like to know why this decision was considered appropriate when it has severely affected the quality of life and right to quiet enjoyment of our homes here in Shore Acres.

We have not had a problem this severe for nearly 10 years, when the Village began regular treatment of the Otter Creek Preserve with Bti. Bti is more effective than fogs or sprays that attempt to eliminate mosquitoes in their adult stage and are, at the same time, lethal to other wildlife. It is recommended by Dr. Doug Tallamy, the highly regarded entomologist from the University of Delaware.

I am particularly aware of the mosquito problem because I am a gardener and spend a fair amount of time outside. Their attacks make gardening unpleasant, even though I wear long pants and a long sleeved shirt and drench myself with Deep Woods Off (probably a health hazard in itself).

My husband and I have been placing buckets of water and Bti around our property for several years. Combined with the Village program, the mosquito problem during that period has not been significant until this year.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,

Beverley Sherrid
625 The Parkway
Mamaroneck NY 10543

Outlook

Re: Commercial Mosquito Fogging Services

From Fred Bartels <fredbartels@gmail.com>
Date Thu 9/11/2025 5:23 AM
To Kate Dehais <kdehais@vomny.net>

Thank you for looking into this!

On Wed, Sep 10, 2025 at 10:32 PM Kate Dehais <kdehais@vomny.net> wrote:

Dear Mr. Bartels,

Thank you very much for your letter and for this information about the use of fogging machines against mosquitoes in your area which I had not previously been aware of.

Our committee also received a letter recently from Beverly Sherrid one of your neighbors. We support the use of larvicide as a more effective means of controlling mosquitoes and understand that foggers are destructive of all insects, including beneficial ones, and therefore hurt bird life. Their extensive use for that reason, along with the noise factor is disturbing to hear about, especially as Otter Creek Preserve is right next-door.

We will discuss this at our next Committee for the Environment, meeting this coming Tuesday, September 16 at 7:30 PM, at the Regatta conference which you are welcome to attend.

Best,
Kate

Kate Dehais
Chairperson
Village of Mamaroneck
Committee for the Environment

From: Fred Bartels <fredbartels@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2025 11:20 AM
To: Kate Dehais <kdehais@vomny.net>
Subject: Commercial Mosquito Fogging Services

Hi Katherine,

My name is Fred Bartels. I'm a long time resident of Mamaroneck living in Shore Acres on the Otter Creek Preserve side of Soundview Drive. I'm retired and in the warmer months love to garden, walk, kayak, and bike, so I spend a lot of time outdoors.

I've noticed in the last few years that as increasing numbers of residents are using commercial mosquito control services that the sound from the fogging machines, which are very similar in nature and noise to gas-powered leaf blowers, has become pervasive and intrusive. The treatment of some of the larger properties around the Otter Creek Preserve can go on for a half hour or

more, and like the sound of leaf blowers, the sound of the fogging machines carries a long distance.

Given that there are major questions about the effectiveness of the fogging treatments as well as the damage to beneficial insects (see articles linked below) it doesn't seem to me that the fogging companies should be exempt from the noise pollution restrictions that the village has placed on gas leaf blowers. I hope this is something your committee could look into this year.

On a related note, I recently became aware that the village, for budgetary reasons, did not treat any of the village marsh areas with mosquito larvicide this year. Even with many people using the fogging services the mosquitoes in Shore Acres have been particularly bad this summer, as has happened in previous summers when for one reason or another the village failed to do the larvicide treatment. For more on the history of treating the marshes with larvicide see this NY Times article.
https://www.nytimes.com/1989/08/13/nyregion/using-bacteria-mamaroneck-begins-to-triumph-over-mosquitos.html?unlocked_article_code=1.k08._cx_.eJnPi2utJZsm&smid=url-share

Thanks for considering,

Fred Bartels
755 Soundview Drive

Some articles about issues with commercial fogging services.

-https://www.xerces.org/blog/mosquito-management-at-home

-https://awaytogarden.com/best-practices-around-mosquitos-with-nancy-lawson/

-https://www.xerces.org/bug-banter/plastic-bands-pesticides-and-deadly-drift-study-on-mosquito-spray

Date Prepared: 06/12/2024 11:36 AM
Report Date: 06/12/2024
Account Table: AEXP
Alt. Sort Table:

VILLAGE OF MAMARONECK
Budget Preparation Report
Fiscal Year: 2025 Period From: 1 To: 12

Account Item Type Sub	Description	2022 Actual	2023 Actual	Adopted 2024 Budget	Adjusted 2024 Budget	2024 Actual Per 1-12	2025 REQUESTED Stage	2025 TENTATIVE Stage	2025 ADOPTED Stage	Variance To ADOPTED Stage
Dept 4086	**INSECT CONTROL**									
Group 1	**PERSONAL SERVICES**									
A.4086.0130	SEASONAL LABOR									
10 PESTICIDE APPLICATOR-				12,000.00			12,000.00	12,000.00	12,000.00	
		10,000.00	14,000.00	12,000.00	14,000.00	14,000.00	**12,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**12,000.00**	0.00%
Total Item 0130	**SEASONAL**	**10,000.00**	**14,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**14,000.00**	**14,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**0.00%**
Total Group 1	**PERSONAL SERVICES**	**10,000.00**	**14,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**14,000.00**	**14,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**12,000.00**	**0.00%**
Group 4	**CONTRACTUAL EXPENSE**									
A.4086.0410	SUPPLIES									
10 CHEMICALS/SPRAYING,LARVAE CONTROL,ECT.				2,000.00			2,000.00	2,000.00	2,000.00	
20 VILLAGE CATCH BASIN LARVI CIDE APPLICATION				6,000.00			6,000.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	
		5,974.21	7,288.06	8,000.00	8,000.00	5,460.15	**8,000.00**	**8,000.00**	**8,000.00**	0.00%
Total Item 0410	**SUPPLIES**	**5,974.21**	**7,288.06**	**8,000.00**	**8,000.00**	**5,460.15**	**8,000.00**	**8,000.00**	**8,000.00**	**0.00%**
A.4086.0421	INSECT CONTROL.CONTR ACT SERVICES									
20 MISC				250.00			250.00	250.00	250.00	
		500.00	559.00	250.00	250.00	0.00	**250.00**	**250.00**	**250.00**	0.00%
Total Item 0421	**CONTRACT SERVICES**	**500.00**	**559.00**	**250.00**	**250.00**	**0.00**	**250.00**	**250.00**	**250.00**	**0.00%**
Total Group 4	**CONTRACTUAL EXPENSE**	**6,474.21**	**7,847.06**	**8,250.00**	**8,250.00**	**5,460.15**	**8,250.00**	**8,250.00**	**8,250.00**	**0.00%**
Total Dept 4086	**INSECT CONTROL**	**16,474.21**	**21,847.06**	**20,250.00**	**22,250.00**	**19,460.15**	**20,250.00**	**20,250.00**	**20,250.00**	**0.00%**