

**Contact:**

Jessica Brown  
National Wildlife Federation  
802-522-4209  
[jbrowncommunications@outlook.com](mailto:jbrowncommunications@outlook.com)

Jennifer Dowd  
New Jersey Audubon  
908-292-8030  
[Jennifer.dowd@njudubon.org](mailto:Jennifer.dowd@njudubon.org)



## **Bernards Township School Joins Growing International Eco-Schools Movement**

*Eco-Schools NJ Welcomes It's 5<sup>th</sup> Member in Somerset County*

Basking Ridge, NJ. March 21, 2014 – This week, National Wildlife Federation and New Jersey Audubon welcomed William Annin Middle School to the growing network of Eco-Schools in New Jersey. This internationally acclaimed program which provides resources and support to schools working towards sustainability has been gaining in popularity in the Garden State. The program, in one year, has grown from 43 to 112 schools in New Jersey with 5 in Somerset County.

The partnership is an easy fit for William Annin Middle School who already demonstrates a commitment to the environment and to bringing eco-awareness into the classroom. The school has a garden, solar panels, and a robust recycling program, including projects in upcycling. Students turn to the garden when preparing food in their nutrition class and visit the schools wooded area, pond and stream to study biodiversity and inspire writing assignments. The solar panels were installed last year with a large monitor in the school hallway to track the reduction in energy use and carbon output for all to see.

Teacher Evona Mozulay says, “When you model environmentally sound practices, integrate healthy living, conserve resources, and promote sustainability, you really do become a major part of the solution. I hope we can empower students to influence others both older and younger than them, to also be part of the solution, contributing to this community and others, all the while enhancing their academic and personal achievement.”

Once registered, Eco-Schools can earn awards that recognize their progress towards some of ten sustainability pathways laid out by the program. William Annin will be going for their Silver award this year but hopes to eventually earn the highest certification, the Green Flag. Only three schools in the state hold claim to this prestigious award.

Curtis Fisher, Northeast Regional Executive Director, National Wildlife Federation says, “We are proud of the work that William Annin Middle School is doing to bring sustainability into the classroom and creating the next generation of conservation leaders. Thanks to support from PSE&G, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and the Horizon Foundation, we now have a staff person on the ground to support our schools and help them reach their goals.”

That staff person works out of the Scherman Hoffman Wildlife Sanctuary located less than 6 miles from the Basking Ridge School. “Eco-Schools USA is pleased to welcome William Annin Middle School to the growing number of schools in New Jersey who are working towards sustainability. Our positive impact on the environment increases exponentially with each new school joining the network and sharing best practices.” says Jennifer Dowd, Eco-Schools NJ Coordinator, New Jersey Audubon

Many schools like William Annin find that they are already taking measures to instill a sustainable mindset in the school and join the program in hopes of discovering new ways to deepen this experience and have a greater impact on the lives of their students. National Wildlife Federation’s Eco-Schools USA does just that by providing a framework to work with and a network for like-minded schools to share ideas and successes.

Students who are exposed to programs such as Eco-Schools USA that incorporate good STEM education see the world in a holistic way, gain skills in the process of inquiry, and become better problem-solvers and inventors who can utilize their knowledge of math, science and technology to design and engineer innovative solutions.

In addition to greening their school grounds, William Annin Middle School also strives to foster environmentally friendly behaviors in the students through increased conservation awareness. For Earth Day students will be tracking their conservation behaviors such as turning off lights, unplugging electronics when not in use, and walking to school and will compare before and after surveys to see how much their behaviors change simply by becoming more aware.

### **About Eco-Schools**

Eco-Schools USA is a holistic program for schools making progress towards sustainability measures. The program provides teachers with a framework to integrate sustainability practices within 10 pathways that deepen the curriculum, make connections across multiple disciplines, and engage children in authentic learning experiences resulting in increased student achievement, financial savings, and a positive impact on their environment. Eco-Schools provides students with STEM based educational opportunities where they gain skills such as inquiry, problem solving and the ability to use their knowledge in science, technology, engineering and math to design and engineer innovative solutions to environmental problems. Eco-Schools recognizes and rewards schools as they work to extend learning beyond the classroom and develop responsible environmental attitudes and commitments both at home and in the wider community.

Eco-Schools is an international program in 58 countries. The program is hosted by the National Wildlife Federation in the United States, and coordinated by New Jersey Audubon in New Jersey. Eco-Schools NJ is supported by PSE&G, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Horizon Foundation and other funders and now consists of a network of 112 schools throughout the state. Whether you are a teacher, student, administrator or facilities manager, the Eco-Schools USA program can benefit your school and local communities. For more information: [www.eco-schoolsusa.org](http://www.eco-schoolsusa.org)

### ***About National Wildlife Federation:***

*National Wildlife Federation is America’s largest conservation organization inspiring people to protect wildlife for our children’s future. NWF focuses its education and policy work on connecting children to nature for a nation of happier, healthier kids. NWF’s state affiliate is NJ Audubon. For more information: [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org).*

***About NJ Audubon:***

*The New Jersey Audubon Society is a privately supported, not-for profit, statewide membership organization that fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among New Jersey's citizens; protects New Jersey's birds, mammals, other animals, and plants, especially endangered and threatened species; and promotes preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats.*

*For more information: [www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org).*

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