

April 2025

## Dam Renovations at NJAES Specialty Crop Research and Extension Center



Irrigation dam at the Rutgers NJAES Specialty Crop Research and Extension Center in Cream Ridge, NJ.  
Photo: Courtesy of Rutgers IP&O.

The dam at the NJAES **Specialty Crop Research and Extension Center** in Cream Ridge, NJ, [provides an important irrigation source for the Rutgers off-campus farm](#), which conducts research focused on increasing production efficiency and the protection of fruit crops like apples, strawberries, peaches, from disease. The \$4 million renovation of the dam, which was originally built in 1968, was made possible through funding from the New Jersey State Legislature to the experiment station as part of a larger initiative to improve NJAES' off-campus research and extension facilities.

## Rutgers Hosts 34th Annual Turfgrass Symposium

The [34th Annual Rutgers Turfgrass Symposium](#), hosted in March by the **Center for Turfgrass Science**, provided university, state, national, and international participants with the opportunity to exchange ideas and encourage collaboration on research topics in turfgrass science. The symposium focused on modern approaches to research in turfgrass and featured the keynote, "40 Years of Cool-Season Turfgrass Improvement and Goals for the Future—The Importance of Rutgers-Industry Cooperation."

## A Closer Look at the Impact of Tariffs on Produce and Wine in New Jersey

Ramu Govindasamy, professor and extension specialist in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, [examines the potential impacts of tariffs on the produce and wine industries](#), which rely heavily on international trade for both supply and demand. These impacts would be pronounced in New Jersey, with its vibrant food distribution hubs, diverse culinary markets, and extensive food and beverage manufacturing sector.

## SEBS Partners with Pacific Island Nation on Landmark Food Security Policy

Since 2020, an interdisciplinary food system science team from the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) has worked closely with Pohnpei State, part of the Pacific Island nation of the Federated States of Micronesia, to develop sustainable local food production. [Several members of the SEBS team were present when the government of Pohnpei State announced the release of the landmark food security policy](#), representing the state's food system development goals and aspirations.

## Whale Research Powered by AI

**Josh Kohut**, dean of research at NJAES and professor in the Department of Marine Sciences at SEBS, [co-led research using AI-powered tools to improve on present abilities to monitor the ocean for the distribution of important marine species](#), such as the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale.

## Of Interest

The following new bulletin and updated fact sheet are available on [NJAES Publications](#):

[E002: 2025/2026 New Jersey Commercial Tree Fruit Production Guide](#)

[FS385: Broadleaf Weed Control in Cool Season Lawns](#)

**Elmore, M.**

## Recent Hire

Ramandeep Sharma [joined RCE's Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources as agricultural agent, Salem County](#), effective April 1.

## Recent Honors

**Maria Gloria Dominguez-Bello**, the Henry Rutgers Professor of Microbiome and Health in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology was named a [Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS), one of the most distinctive honors within the scientific community.

**Cesar Rodriguez-Saona**, extension specialist in blueberry and cranberry entomology, has been recognized for Excellence in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and **Changlu Wang**, extension specialist in urban entomology, for Distinguished Achievement in Extension. [The awards are presented by ESA to scientists who have distinguished themselves through their contributions to entomology.](#)

Nutritional Sciences faculty **Joshua Miller**, professor and department chair, and **Sue Shapses**, professor, have been named to the 2025 Class of Distinguished [Fellows of the American Society for Nutrition](#) (ASN), and **Harini Sampath**, associate professor, has been named to the inaugural cohort of Excellence in Nutrition Fellows of the ASN program.

## Grants

**Matthew Elmore**, associate extension specialist in the Department of Plant Biology, is principal investigator (PI), and **James Murphy**, extension specialist in the Department of Plant Biology, is co-PI, of the project, "Regulator for Annual Bluegrass Suppression in Bentgrass," funded at \$139,213 by the U.S. Golf Association.

**Travis Miles**, associate professor in the Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences (DMCS), is the principal investigator, and **Joseph Gradon**, post-doctoral associate at DMCS, is co-PI, of the project, "Caribbean Water-mass Transformation Processes and their Role in the AMOC," funded at \$676,526 by the National Science Foundation.

**Christopher Obropta**, extension specialist in the Department of Environmental Sciences, received an 18-month grant in the amount of \$187,187 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for the project, "Assessment and Design of Nature-based Green Infrastructure Solutions for the Mill Creek Watershed in Willingboro, Westampton, Burlington, and Edgewater Park Townships, Burlington County, New Jersey."

**Christopher Obropta**, extension specialist in the Department of Environmental Sciences, received a 24-month grant award in the amount of \$119,993 from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for "Bioswale Implementation Project for Franklin Street, Newark, NJ."

*Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station is an equal opportunity program provider and employer.*