

New Jersey Conservation



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PEOPLE AND
NATURE** SEE STORY
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Michele S. Byers

ON THE COVER

Participants from the Camden YMCA's Watershed Education by Bike program joined Justin Dennis, our Urban Parks Manager (wearing neon green shirt), during a River Days event in Camden, sponsored by the Alliance for Watershed Education. The ride began in Gateway Park and continued through Camden's Parkside neighborhood, with stops to allow the riders to observe nature – including a bald eagle flying overhead!



From Our Executive Director

Michele S. Byers

With land conservation projects, few things happen quickly or easily.

A property we hope to preserve might not become available for years. Cobbling together enough money to buy a large chunk of wildlife habitat might require a major fundraising campaign with many partners and donors. An otherwise fabulous property might be covered with trash and contamination dating back decades, requiring expensive cleanups.

Despite these obstacles and more, opening new parks and nature preserves is so rewarding once the ribbon is cut and the community makes the new green space their own.

One of the most rewarding new park openings in recent memory was Gateway Park in Camden, a part of the Cooper River Park first envisioned in 1925. This year, the 25-acre Gateway Park was finally unveiled.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation is partnering with the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority, Camden County Freeholders and City of Camden to manage Gateway Park and provide nature, health and recreation programs for the community.

Read all about how the opening of Gateway Park and other new parks are helping revitalize the City of Camden, starting on page 4.

Thank you to our members, partners and friends for your steadfast support. With your help, we will continue to work for beautiful parks and preserves throughout the Garden State!

Michele S. Byers

All maps were created by Tanya Nolte, GIS Manager, NJ Conservation

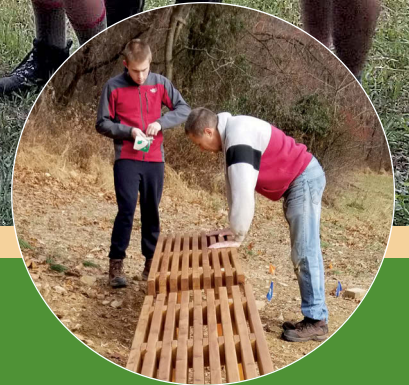


New Jersey Conservation Foundation is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve land and natural resources throughout New Jersey for the benefit of all.

We protect strategic lands through acquisition and stewardship, promote strong land use policies, and forge partnerships to achieve conservation goals. Since 1960, we have worked to protect the state's farmland, forests, parks, wetlands, water resources and special places.

For membership information, please visit our website at www.njconservation.org or call us at 1-888-LANDSAVE. Our mailing address is 170 Longview Road, Far Hills, NJ 07931.





Eagle Scout improves Hill & Dale Preserve

"I wanted to do something outside in nature, so this was the perfect project for me," explained Matt, now a student at Bucknell University. "Hill & Dale is my favorite place in town, especially now that it has the benches."



The Hill & Dale Preserve in Tewksbury Township, Hunterdon County, lives up to its name, stretching from the bottom of the Rockaway Creek valley up the steep slope of Hell Mountain. But something was missing: a comfortable place to sit and admire the panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.

Until now! Thanks to the efforts of local Eagle Scout Matt Nowell, the preserve is a welcoming place. Matt completely transformed the apex of the Hill & Dale Preserve into a beautiful resting spot with four hand-crafted wooden benches and an interpretive sign.

Many thanks to Matt for his hard work!





Throughout its history, Camden has been defined by water. A wide bend in the Delaware River curves around the city, and the Cooper River splits it nearly down the middle.

The Lenni Lenape people hunted, fished and grew crops along the banks of the Cooper River. In colonial days, Camden was a landing for passengers and cargo on ferries to and from Philadelphia. The city began industrializing in the late 1800s when the Campbell Soup Company and other manufacturers built factories.

As Camden developed, residents were cut off from the rivers. A landfill and a state prison were built on the Delaware River waterfront. Access to much of the Cooper River was blocked by commercial buildings along bustling Admiral Wilson Boulevard.

But today, the Camden community is gaining access to the waterfronts and improved connection to nature – and New Jersey Conservation Foundation is a partner in that effort!

This spring, we cut the ribbon on Gateway Park, a half-mile-long, 25-acre park nestled between Admiral Wilson Boulevard and the Cooper River. We are managing the park in partnership with the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority (CCMUA), the owner of the land.

Michele S. Byers, executive director, said, “Gateway Park will be a great place for Camden residents to walk, exercise, picnic, fish and enjoy nature. We look forward to the park becoming a vital part of this thriving urban community.”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

TOP LEFT – The ceremonial ribbon was cut during the grand opening of Gateway Park on March 12. Taking part were, from left, John T. Hanson, chief executive officer of the Delaware River Port Authority; Andy Kricun, executive director of the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority; Camden County Freeholder Jeffrey Nash; Martha Chavis, executive director of the Camden Area Health Education Center; Michele S. Byers, executive director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation; Camden Mayor Frank Moran; and Camden native Olivia Glenn, director of the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry.

TOP RIGHT – The New Jersey Tree Foundation organized three volunteer tree plantings at Gateway Park this spring, summer and fall.

CENTER – This aerial photo shows Gateway Park bordered by the Cooper River and Admiral Wilson Boulevard, at the intersection of Baird Boulevard.

BOTTOM LEFT – Armed with shovels and mulch, volunteers from the Camden community planted 50 new trees at Gateway Park in early May.

BOTTOM CENTER – Olivia Glenn, former New Jersey Conservation Foundation staff member and current director of the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry, speaks at the Gateway Park grand opening.

BOTTOM RIGHT – This 1965 photo shows the crowded commercial strip along Admiral Wilson Boulevard, where Gateway Park is now located.





A group of 60 enthusiastic volunteers gathered in Gateway Park in early May to get their instructions for planting trees.

Gateway Park has hosted a number of community events, including the City Nature Challenge, a tree planting, bicycling, yoga and a movie night.

Other new parks include the Cramer Hill Nature Preserve and Cooper's Poynt Waterfront Park on the site where the Riverfront State Prison once stood. The long-abandoned Harrison Avenue landfill will become a new park adjacent to the Kroc Center, and the formerly industrialized Petty's Island will become a 400-acre urban nature preserve.

Our Camden team includes Stephanie Monahan, Assistant Director for South Jersey; Julia Raskin, Camden Parks & Greenway Outreach Manager; and Justin Dennis, Urban Parks Manager.

"I'm not a city guy, but I've fallen in love with the city," says Justin. "There's an energy,

a vitality and a charisma that I don't think you see in other post-industrial cities. There's really a strong optimism."

"People in Camden have been through difficult times and they keep fighting for their city; it's truly inspiring," added Julia. "Every resident here deserves to have access to the parks and natural areas that Camden has to offer."

Twenty-Year Effort

The opening of Gateway Park was two decades in the making. The land was originally acquired by the Delaware River Port Authority in the lead-up to the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia. Wanting to improve the appearance of Admiral Wilson Boulevard – which serves as a gateway between Philadelphia and New Jersey – the Port Authority bought and demolished a strip of seedy, run-down buildings.

The Port Authority planted grass and built a walkway, but the park was not open to the public. Parts of the property had been occupied by gas stations whose tanks leaked petroleum products into the ground, and soil remediation and testing were needed to make the park safe for the community.

During the past few years, an extensive environmental cleanup of the property was completed and the Port Authority turned the land over to the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority at no cost. The Utilities Authority entered into a partner-

"There's an energy, a vitality and a charisma that I don't think you see in other post-industrial cities. There's really a strong optimism."

**- JUSTIN DENNIS
URBAN PARKS MANAGER**

"This journey to open the park has been a dream for me for decades. ... Gateway Park will be a shining success for current and future generations."

**- OLIVIA GLENN
DIRECTOR, NEW JERSEY DIVISION
OF PARKS AND FORESTRY**

ship agreement for us to manage the park and create public programs.

Gateway Park's grand opening in March was attended by many local, county and state officials, including Olivia Glenn, director of the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry.

"I am both a Camden city native and a current Pennsauken township resident," said Olivia, who previously served as New Jersey Conservation's South Jersey Metro regional manager. "This journey to open the park has been a dream for me for decades. This accomplishment proves that environmentalism fosters democracy and civic engagement. Build upon these gains and Gateway Park will be a shining success for current and future generations."

Gateway Park connects to and is part of the Circuit Trails, a network of pedestrian and bicycle trails throughout the greater Camden-Philadelphia area.

Active in Camden since 1986

We began work in the City of Camden in 1986, with the long-term vision of establishing a greenway along the Cooper River and improving the quality of life for the community.

In 1987, we helped preserve a priceless historic site: the block of row houses where poet Walt Whitman spent the last two decades of his life. Only four row houses were left in the Mickle Street block containing Whitman's residence, so when one of them came up for sale, the Walt Whitman Association and the state asked us to move quickly and buy it. After completing needed repairs and restoration, we transferred it to the state in 1989 to become part of the Walt Whitman Historic Complex.

"Helping city residents connect with nature in their own neighborhoods is important to human and environmental health," said Stephanie. "We are so grateful to the local community, our partners, and funders including the William Penn Foundation, for working with us to create these connections."

Earlier this year, we received a New Jersey Health Initiatives grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to improve health and health equity in Camden. We are using new mapping and planning tools to help our Camden partners ensure that all residents have access to clean air, clean water, safe parks and trails, community gardens and places to enjoy nature.



ABOVE – The map above shows the location of Gateway Park in relation to other parks in Camden; it also shows both existing and proposed trails.

BELOW – The map below shows the Gateway Park Trail, which runs parallel to the Cooper River and Admiral Wilson Boulevard. The trail is part of the Circuit Trails, a regional network that will eventually include 750 miles of trails in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.





*'My parents
would be delighted'*

Conservationist couple's land added to Morris County park

**Nearly 18 acres were added to the Lewis Morris County Park
in Mendham Township this spring, thanks to the Bartenstein family.**

The land was purchased by Morris County from the estate of the late Frederick Bartenstein, who passed away in 2018 at the age of 100. Mr. Bartenstein and his wife, Isabel, had been avid conservationists and historians.

When their son, Frederick Bartenstein III, contacted us for help with preserving the family's land, we agreed to seek funding for the purchase to ensure it was passed to Morris County.

"My parents would be delighted," said Frederick Bartenstein III of the land's preservation. "They were both interested in history and conservation. It became an important passion to them."

"The Bartenstein property protects water resources in the Great Swamp Watershed, and also provides habitat for

migratory songbirds and other wildlife. We're pleased it will be in the good hands of the Morris County Park Commission," said Michele S. Byers, executive director.

The land is entirely forested and slopes toward a pristine tributary stream in the headwaters of the Passaic River. It is surrounded by preserved lands, including Lewis Morris County Park, the Morristown National Historic Park at Jockey Hollow and the Morris Area Girl Scout camp.

The Bartensteins grew up in rural Virginia and moved to New Jersey in the 1950s. "As soon as they could afford it, they started looking for rural properties," their son said. They found the land they were looking for in Mendham Township.

Mr. and Mrs. Bartenstein were leaders in efforts to preserve both the Great Swamp and

the New Jersey Brigade Revolutionary War Winter Encampment Site, now part of Morristown National Historical Park.

"Mom and Dad were in the thick of that early work to save the Great Swamp," recalled Frederick Bartenstein III. "They worked closely with Helen Fenske," one of the main organizers of the effort, and the founding director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

They spent many years acquiring land, ultimately assembling about 100 acres. In 2009, Mr. Bartenstein sold 73 acres to the Morris County Park Commission and Mendham Township to create the original section of the Leddell Preserve. The recent land purchase brings the Bartenstein total to 91 acres.

2019

GAINING GROUND

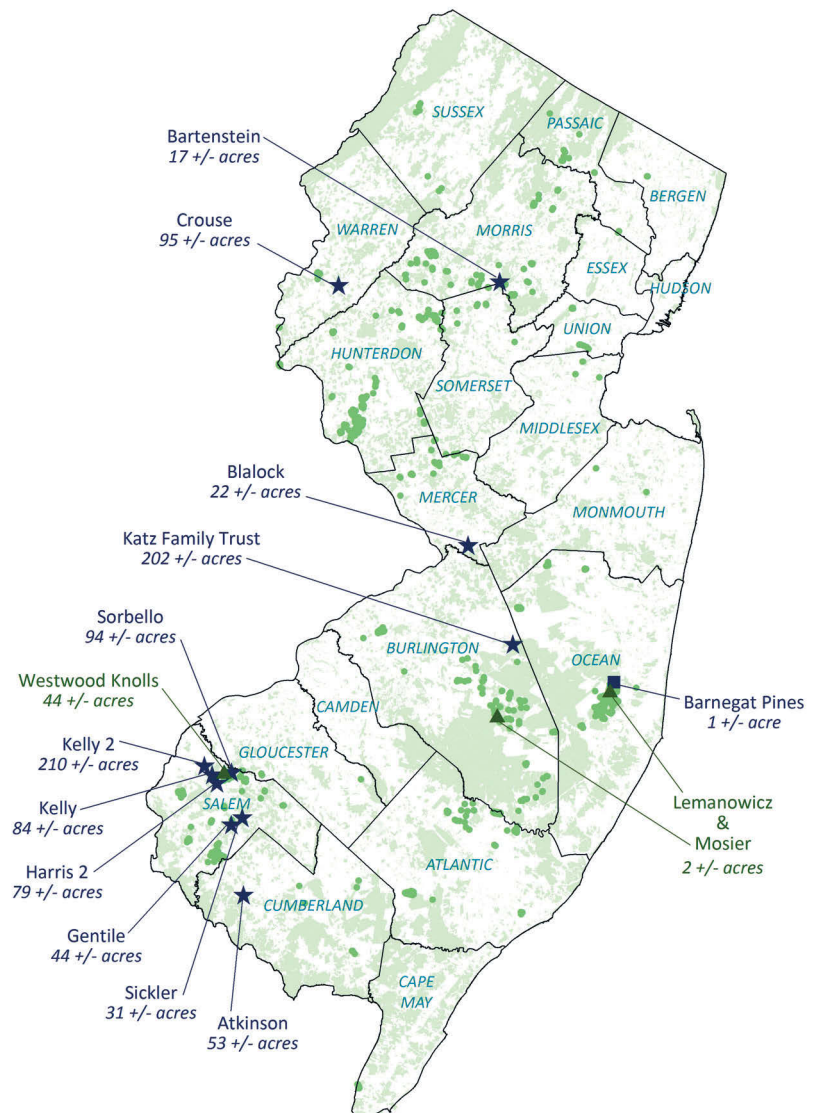
New Jersey Conservation Foundation and its partners permanently preserved 978 acres from January 1, 2019 through August 31, 2019. These lands include family farms, grasslands for grazing horses and cattle, and natural areas that safeguard clean drinking water, protect wildlife habitat and offer scenic beauty and outdoor recreation.

THANK YOU TO ALL MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS FOR HELPING TO PRESERVE THESE LANDS!

15 Projects (Jan 1 - Aug 31, 2019)

▲ NJ Conservation Owned: (Fee or Easement)	46 acres
★ Preserved in Partnership:	931 acres
■ NJ Conservation Land Transfers to Other Entities:	1 acre
TOTAL:	978 acres

- NJ Conservation Foundation Owned & Managed Properties (Fee or Easement)
- Preserved Land (Open Space & Farmland)



It's easy to join New Jersey Conservation Foundation online – visit the website at www.njconservation.org

Become a Member Today!

Farmland preservation boosts Cowtown total to over 1,000 acres

The Harris family, owners of the Cowtown Rodeo in Salem County, recently preserved another 80 acres of prime farmland.

Grant Harris and his family sold the development rights on 79.3 acres of corn and hay fields, bringing the total preserved land at their Cowtown farm to over 1,000 acres. The family still owns the land, but its uses are limited to agriculture.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation spearheaded the preservation project, contributing funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. The State Agriculture Development Committee also provided funding, and Salem County will hold the agricultural easement.

According to Grant, the newly-preserved land is used to grow feed for cattle raised at Cowtown. “We’re not in the hay and corn business, but our animals are,” he said. “We try to be self-sufficient.”

Preserving the 80 acres is the second phase of a project that began in 2018, when we helped the Harris family preserve nearly 375 acres of grasslands for grazing. The grasslands also serve as habitat for rare grassland birds like bobolinks, grasshopper sparrows, Eastern meadowlarks and savanna sparrows.

But even before the grasslands were preserved, Harris had purchased about 600 acres of preserved farmland to expand the family’s holdings. The entire Cowtown property is about 1,325 acres.

The Cowtown Rodeo – New Jersey’s only rodeo and America’s oldest weekly rodeo – has been owned by the Harris family for 90 years. Five generations of Harris family members have been involved in running the rodeo, the farm’s cattle business and the Cowtown farmers market.

Two more family farms preserved in Salem County

With the help of New Jersey Conservation Foundation and partners, Salem County purchased the development rights on the 33-acre Sickler farm and the 44-acre Gentile farm. The two farms remain in private ownership but are now permanently restricted to agricultural use.

Owners Kurt Sickler and Ben Gentile both decided to preserve their farmland out of a desire to keep the township agricultural.

“I didn’t want to see any more houses built around this area,” explained Sickler, whose family has been farming in Alloway Township for five generations.

Gentile feels the same way about his land, which he eventually hopes to sell to a local farmer. “It’s a nice piece



Longstanding efforts to protect the rural character and agricultural heritage of Alloway Township, Salem County, were boosted this summer with the preservation of two family farms totaling 77 acres.

of property and I didn't want to see a builder come in," he said.

The Sickler farm is used for hay and soybeans, and borders preserved farmland and open space. The land includes critical habitat for several endangered and threatened grassland bird species, and is valuable for its ability to recharge underground water supplies.

The Gentile farm is used for growing hay and pasturing horses.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation helped finance both farmland preservation projects by providing funding from a U.S. Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service grant. The rest came from a grant to Alloway Township from the NJ State Agriculture

Development Committee.

"Preserving family farms is very important to Alloway Township, and we're excited to add another 77 acres," said Alloway Township Committeeman Warren Morgan III, liaison to the township's Agricultural Advisory Committee. "The township now has over 4,100 acres in farmland preservation, and we thank New Jersey Conservation Foundation for working with us on these and other farmland projects."

New Jersey Conservation Foundation has partnered with Alloway Township on several previous farmland preservation projects in the past five years, including the 55-acre Robbins-Williams farm and the 42-acre McAlonan farm in 2018.



WILD FOR A DAY!

This popular program invites children to explore the Pine Barrens with Senior Land Steward Russell Juelg.

We'll venture out into the Franklin Parker Preserve and learn how to build a shelter, navigate the land, safely build and enjoy a campfire, and much more!

JOIN US ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16
AND GO "WILD FOR A DAY".

MORE DETAILS AND REGISTRATION
FOR THIS FREE EVENT ON
NJCONSERVATION.ORG

New Jersey Conservation Foundation welcomes new members and gratefully acknowledges donors who made contributions between January 2019 and August 2019. With your support, we work hard to preserve and protect New Jersey's lands.

New Members

(from January 1, 2019
through August 31, 2019)

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Aetna Foundation, Inc.
Grace Agnew
Joanna Ambrosio
Samantha Atherley
Anita Austenberg Shotwell
Susan Becker
Elizabeth Bennett
Mr. Michael Billig
Sean Bittner
Dr. David and Phyllis Bloom
Chris Boraski
Barbara Briemer
Evelyn Carter
CNA Insurance Companies, Inc.
Jaimie Costa
Ward Dasey
Debra Davis
Preeti Desai
Alexandra Desipris
Ditschman Flemington Ford
Anthony Dominic
Ms. Lisa Downs
Gary Dunn
Willard Dye
Edmund Optics
EMR Eastern, LLC
Vaughana H. Feary
Jessica Ferguson
Robert Fleck
Cynthia Focarino
Sagri Frierber
Keara Giannotti
Sherry Gilroy
Giving Cycle
Ms. Ellen Goldberg
Heather Golinski
Tara Grenz
Nikki Griffiths
Ms. Mary Harrington
Margaret Harris
Ms. and Mr. Lois Harrod
Jahday Hartage
Glenn Havelock
Alan Hollowell
Janet Horton
Suzann Johnson
Jane Johnston
Rose Joy
Laura Juergens
Junior Woman's Club of Sparta
Gabor Kiss
John and Mary Koehn
Kenneth Kolanko
Mr. and Mrs. Lucas Kornbluh
Joel Lambert
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Naomi Loneragan
David Mack
Karen MacNaull
Carol Martin
James McKenna
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Nick Morolda
Edward J. Morrison
Lauren Morse
Mary Murphy
Valerie Nixon
Ryan Norman
Barbara Patterson
Ruvani Perumal
Thomas Potterfield
Presbyterian Church at
Shrewsbury, Inc.
Kelly Price
Michael and Nancy Puleo
Nancy Putnam
Karin A. Quagliato
Syed Rahman
Carol Raposo
Jennifer Rosania
Noah Rosen
Sherry Sackie
Paul R. Sanner
Meg Schultz
Ellen L. Seward
Niki Silverstein
Debra Smith
Paul Sohar
Brian Storms
Lillie Suabedissen
Tracey Sutch
Chris Torsilieri
Suzanne G. Towey-Pelkaus
Andrew J.F. Tucker
Mr. John Van Schoick
Linda Vogt
Michelle Walker
Andrea Weinsheimer
Carol Wendel
Crystal Whitehead

\$500 and Above Members

(from January 1, 2019
through August 31, 2019)

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American Conservation
Association, Inc.
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Jacquie Asplundh
Peter and Sofia Blanchard
John and Rosanne Bornholdt
Roger Byrom
Mrs. Catherine A. M. Cavanaugh

Ruth Charnes
Chris Chickering
Jack and Ronnie Cimprich
Dr. Richard H. Colby
Donald Conklin
Unni Cooper
Brenda and Thomas Curnin
John and Margo Dana
Rev. Julia S. Dawson
Linda Winsor Delap and
Robert J. Delap
Ditschman Flemington Ford
The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation
Anna Drago
EarthShare of New Jersey
Edmund Optics
Joanne Elliott
EMR Eastern, LLC
Energy Foundation
Robert L. Foester
Austin and Gwen Fragomen
The Fund for New Jersey
Christine Gallucci
Frederick and Gael W. Gardner
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Neil Grossman and Nancy Wolff
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William H. Thornburg, Jr.
Andrew J.F. Tucker
Victoria Foundation, Inc.
Michelle Walker
Mary Walter
Harry and Joannah Wilmerding
Elizabeth and Robert Wilson

Memorials

(from January 1, 2019
through August 31, 2019)

Dr. Edward Babbott
Helen Beglin
Andrea B. Bent
Mrs. Catherine A. M. Cavanaugh
Nancy Deren
Elizabeth A. Keat
Caroline Maillard
Joan Millsbaugh
Janet and Daniel E. Murnick
Joy Petzinger
L. Keith and Lisa Reed
Nancy P. Thomson
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Mae Barringer
Lee and Katherine McCracken
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Arla Cahill
Keith Condit
Catherine Bacon
Florence Faul
Joseph Albertini
Mrs. Shirley Frey
John and Barbara Rafter
Herbert Hannah
Mr. Douglas Vitale

John W. Hermann, Jr.
Dan Joraanstad and Bob Hermann
Faith in the Future Fund

Albert F. Knight
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Terence J. Morgan
James Edward Morgan

Tyler James Rodimer
Anne Coons

Mr. W. Bryce Thompson
Kirk and Anne Craig Bobo
Brendan Furlong
Frederick and Gael W. Gardner
Janet Place
Marcel Rozenzweig
Austin C. Starkey, Jr.

Mary-Ann Thompson
Bull and Karen Gervasi

Ingvald Tjørnholm
Kate Katz

Kenny Washington
Lynn Hewitt

Tributes

(from January 1, 2019
through August 31, 2019)

Claudia Cuca
Melissa Miller

Dr. Rosina B. Dixon
Wanda Whyte

John Murphy
Mary Murphy

Gregory Romano
Sandy Damiano
David DeBevoise
Donna Hope
Thomas Leyden
Kim Maialetti
Charles Middleton
Steve and Liz Parker
Leigh Povia
Joseph and Cindy Romano
Carol L. Romano
Jill Ross
Kelly Shipp
Bonnie Tillery
Louise C. Wilson



After bonding on trails, couple gives back to New Jersey Conservation Foundation

Research shows that being outdoors in nature is a great stress reducer. People feel more relaxed, happy and focused – even after they go back inside.

Michelle Walker and Brij Patel learned that for themselves when she was a medical student and he was a graduate student at Rutgers University pursuing a doctorate in cancer biology.

The couple, now married and living in New Brunswick, met in 2011 at a laboratory where both were conducting research. Soon they discovered a shared love of hiking, kayaking, and the outdoors.

“We tried to do as many things as we

could outside, like picnics and hikes,” recalled Michelle, now a third-year resident in internal medicine at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. “We hiked all these different trails.”

“Because of the long hours, you could start your day and end your day without ever seeing the sun,” added Brij, now a medical writer specializing in cancer studies. “Access to all these trails really helped.”

As Michelle and Brij explored New Jersey’s park and preserves, they noticed that New Jersey Conservation Foundation was actively preserving many local landscapes and trails.

When they married in May 2018, they decided to show their gratitude by contributing to New Jersey Conservation Foundation to help fund future conservation projects.

“We received money from wedding guests and opted to donate to New Jersey Conservation Foundation, as it is a foundation that means a great deal to my husband and me,” said Michelle.

“We were interested in giving back because of our experience in New Jersey that brought us together,” said Brij.

Michelle and Brij are as busy as ever in their respective careers, but they still try to hit the trail together when their schedules allow. “We like to get out whenever we can, in every season,” noted Brij.

Thank you, Michelle and Brij, for your thoughtfulness and generosity. Congratulations and happy trails!

join
NEW JERSEY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION!

Whether it’s farmland, woodland or wetland, New Jersey Conservation Foundation protects open spaces in your towns, cities and the places you love to visit.

But we can’t do it alone.
We need members
to help us save lands at risk.

As a private, not-for-profit organization, we rely on donations from members who care about preserving New Jersey’s precious land and resources for future generations.

Help keep nature in New Jersey! Join New Jersey Conservation Foundation to preserve land and natural resources.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY.

Visit our website at www.njconservation.org

Rosina Dixon elected Board of Trustees president

Rosina “Nina” Dixon, M.D., of Bernardsville, a strong advocate of land preservation and the health benefits of spending time in nature, is the new president of New Jersey Conservation Foundation’s Board of Trustees.



“It is exciting to be starting this job at the start of a new, comprehensive strategic plan that is grounded in our roots but aspires to take access to nature for all to the next level,” said Nina, a member of the board since 2011. “As a physician, I am particularly excited about extending the health benefits of getting out in nature to people in urban areas.”

She replaces Kenneth Klipstein II of Tewksbury Township, who retired from the board after serving for ten years.

Nina earned her B.A. degree from Radcliffe College and M.D. degree from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. She was employed in the pharmaceutical field for nearly 40 years, retiring as senior director of pharmacovigilance and epidemiology at Sanofi-Aventis in Bridgewater in 2011. She is a former instructor in medicine at Columbia University and, since 1979, has been a preceptor, or mentor, to medical residents at Overlook Hospital in Summit.

Nina also serves on the board at Daytop New Jersey in Mendham, a nonprofit substance abuse treatment and education program for adolescents; and as president of the board of the Jointure, a nonprofit provider of child enrichment and adult education in Raritan. She is active as senior warden in the Church of St. John on the Mountain in Bernardsville.

Welcome New Trustee

LESLIE M. FICCAGLIA

New Jersey Conservation Foundation welcomes Leslie M. Ficcaglia of Port Elizabeth, Cumberland County, to our Board of Trustees.

A retired school psychologist, Leslie is now a portrait artist who works from her studio overlooking the gorgeous Wild & Scenic Manumusk River.

She has a long history of community involvement. For 18 years, she served as Cumberland County’s representative on the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. She was a member of the Maurice River Township Planning Board for almost 20 years, including seven years as chair, and served as vice-chair of the Cumberland County Planning Board.

Leslie was active in efforts to obtain federal Wild & Scenic status for the Maurice River and its tributaries.

She is a trustee of Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and its Tributaries, a member of the Delaware Bayshores Advisory Council of The Nature Conservancy, and is past trustee for the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. She also sits on the county Tourism Council and has chaired the Maurice River Township Environmental Committee.

Leslie has a bachelor’s degree from New York University and a master’s degree in psychology from Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington.



Happy Retirement, Greg Romano!



Greg Romano, left, served as assistant director and head of our land acquisition program for 15 years, during which time we preserved 35,000 acres. Greg was honored at a retirement party at the Prallsville Mills in Stockton on June 9. Among the friends, family members and colleagues wishing Greg a happy retirement were Executive Director Michele Byers; Michael Catania, executive director of Duke Farms; Art Brown, former state Secretary of Agriculture; Don Applegate, former director of the State Agriculture Development Committee; his brother, Joseph Romano; and his wife, Carol Shipp Romano.

Welcome New Staff

JOHN “JAY” WATSON



This summer, New Jersey Conservation Foundation welcomed John “Jay” Watson of Lawrenceville as Senior Director of Statewide Land Protection and Community Relations.

In this post, Jay will continue and strengthen New Jersey Conservation’s work preserving land throughout the state. He will also deepen the foundation’s efforts to develop partnerships and engage New Jersey’s diverse communities.

Jay took over many of the job responsibilities of Greg Romano, who retired from New Jersey Conservation Foundation after 15 years.

Jay has been working to protect New Jersey’s landscape and environment for nearly 40 years. Most recently he served as vice president for the D&R Greenway Land Trust, where he worked on a variety of land preservation, land stewardship and environmental projects.

Prior to joining the nonprofit conservation sector, Jay spent nearly 30 years in various roles in the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. He served as the Department’s Deputy Commissioner, reporting directly to the Commissioner. He also served as Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources, and led the Green Acres Program, which is recognized as a national model for land preservation and park development.

Jay also served as co-chair of Governor Phil Murphy’s Environmental Transition Team and as co-chair of Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora’s Transition Team for Greening, Sustainability, Natural Resources and Recreation. He represented Governor Jon Corzine on the Delaware River Basin Commission, co-chaired the New Jersey Invasive Species Council, and served on the NYNJ Harbor Estuary Program Policy Committee.

Jay has an AAS degree from Mercer County College and a BS degree from Florida A&M University in horticulture and landscape design. He is a former trustee of the Princeton Area Community Foundation and currently serves on the Lawrence Hopewell Trail Corporation board, the Bunbury Fund, and Trenton Cycling Revolution.

Staff

Michele S. Byers, *Executive Director*

Erica Arles, *Administrative Assistant, Land Acquisition & Stewardship*

Alix Bacon, *Regional Manager, Western Piedmont*

Mark Barrick, *Information Technology/Office Manager*

Tim Brill, *Central Jersey Project Manager*

Erica Colace, *Development Manager*

Beth Davisson, *Project Manager, Black River Greenway*

Justin Dennis, *Urban Parks Manager*

Emile DeVito, Ph.D., *Manager of Science & Stewardship*

Wilma Frey, *Senior Policy Manager*

Jane Gardner, *Campaign Project Assistant*

Tom Gilbert, *Campaign Director – Energy, Climate & Natural Resources*

Jane Halsted, CPA, *Accounting Manager*

Amy Hansen, *Policy Analyst*

Maria Hauser, *Personnel Manager/Executive Assistant*

Steven Jack, *Associate Land Steward*

Russell Juelg, *Senior Land Steward*

Seth Kantor, *Development Assistant*

Bill Lynch, M.S., *Assistant Director, Education Programs & Communications*

Lisa MacCollum, *Assistant Director of Land Acquisition*

Melanie Mason, *Land Steward*

Alison Mitchell, *Assistant Director & Acting Director of Development*

Stephanie Monahan, *Assistant Director, South Jersey*

Timothy Morris, *Director of Stewardship*

Marie Newell, *Project Coordinator, Acquisition*

Tanya Nolte, *GIS Manager*

Sandy Stuart Perry, *Staff Writer*

Francis Rapa, *Regional Manager, Delaware Bay Watershed*

Julia Raskin, *Camden Parks & Greenway Outreach Manager*

Karen Richards, CPA, *Director of Finance & Administration*

Heidi Marie Roldan, *Corporate & Foundation Relations Manager*

Susan Schmidt, *Administrative Assistant/Receptionist*

Bill Scullion, *Land Steward, South Jersey*

Connor Stone, *Development & Communications Coordinator*

Laura Swzak, *Director of Outreach & Education*

Ingrid Vandegaer, *Manager, Highlands Region*

John S. Watson, Jr., *Senior Director of Statewide Land Protection & Community Relations*

Allison Williams, *Conservation Coordinator*

ESMERALDA PEÑA: Hoping to ‘fuel a fire’ in others

Why would a business major looking to enter the fashion, beauty and entertainment industry want a summer fellowship with a conservation organization?

For Esmeralda G. Peña, who worked in our Camden office as the Fellow for the Alliance for Watershed Education of the Delaware River, it was because of her deep interest in environmental justice and love of nature’s beauty. She explains:

“A clue to answering this question was the strong urge I always felt to advocate for others,” said Esmeralda, a Rutgers University student who previously worked at local community gardens. “It surprised me over the years how many conversations are had regarding the so-called welfare of my community and yet no one has a seat at the table to weigh in.

I read several articles over the summer that spoke about the many environmental burdens that are placed on communities of color, specifically those that are made of low-income households. This only validated the many experiences my family, neighbors, and I have had.

Another clue was the anxiety that starts to rise within me when thinking about the environmental issues that we are currently situated with

and how little the government is doing to deal with them. I found myself doing many things to minimize my carbon footprint, such as reducing the amount of plastic I use on a daily basis and opting instead for better alternatives.

I guess the answer is that I simply want to do my part to improve this world and preserve its beauty for many generations to come. I want them to find the same peace I feel when I am near clear water and beautiful trees. My hope is to fuel a fire in others to advocate for the wellbeing of the Earth that has given us all that many of us continuously take for granted.”

Thank you, Esmeralda, for your dedication and commitment!



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25TH ANNUAL DONALD & BEVERLEY JONES MEMORIAL HIKE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10 AT THE PRALLSVILLE MILLS IN STOCKTON, NJ



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