



New Jersey Conservation  
F O U N D A T I O N

2022

Annual Report



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## OUR MISSION

New Jersey Conservation Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide organization devoted to preserving land and protecting nature throughout New Jersey's rural, suburban, and urban landscapes for the benefit of all. Since 1960, we have preserved more than 140,000 acres of open space, farmland, and parks. We also manage more than a dozen nature preserves, conduct public outreach and education programs, and advocate for sensible land use and climate policies that will protect the health of New Jersey communities for generations to come.

For more information, go to [www.njconservation.org](http://www.njconservation.org).

**ON THE COVER**  
Michael Huber  
Preserve by  
Richard Lewis

# FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

**2022 was a year of significant change at NJ Conservation Foundation as our new leadership team took the reins after the retirement of long-time executive director, Michele S. Byers.**

We are excited to share with you, our supporters, this overview of the organization's 2022 work to advance the mission of preserving land and natural resources for the benefit of all.

It was a year of learning - and a year of rewarding accomplishments. Here are a few highlights:

- New Jersey Conservation Foundation completed 15 land transactions totaling 984 acres, working with many longtime preservation partners, and a few new ones. Among the newly preserved acres were family farms, open space, wildlife habitat and a parcel to help expand an African American history museum.
- We expanded our urban work with projects focused on adding more parks, trees and outdoor programs in Trenton, Camden, and Elizabeth. We secured a \$1.3 million climate grant to work with local partners to plant 1,000 trees in Trenton, and are partnering on another tree-planting grant in Camden. We organized birding and other nature events, helped launch a free cut flower program at a community garden in Trenton, guided Groundwork Elizabeth in planting an urban micro-forest, and much more.
- We stewarded more than 27,000 acres of land around the state - all preserved for the protection of natural resources and open to the public to enjoy. These properties contain more than 75 miles of trails. We worked with farmers and other private landowners to ensure the responsible management of more than 5,600 acres of conservation and agricultural easements.
- We completed a project to enhance our 1,100 acre wetlands restoration project at the Franklin Parker Preserve.
- We fought an intense legal battle over one of the worst property encroachments on one of our preserves in our history. We stopped the illegal activity and secured a settlement that will ensure restoration of the damaged property.
- Staying at the forefront of statewide policy initiatives, we co-chaired a Forest Stewardship Task Force to develop recommendations to the State Legislature for protecting and managing public forestlands; served on the NJDEP's "Outside Together" committee to develop the next Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; and helped launch the Fix Our Parks campaign with Pinelands Preservation Alliance and other partners to build support for increased funding for state parks, forests and wildlife management areas.
- We awarded \$30,000 in Franklin Parker Community Conservation Grants to support organizations working in communities of color; and formed a new partnership with the Foodshed Alliance to lease our preserved farmland in Hunterdon County to underserved farmers committed to organic and climate-friendly agriculture.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without the steadfast support of you, our members and friends. Your generosity makes great things happen! We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all you do to protect New Jersey's parks, open spaces, clean air and water, wildlife, and healthy, locally-grown foods for the benefit of all.



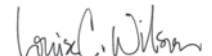
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# TREES

are an incredibly important part of our landscapes. They purify our air, filter our water, and slow storm surge and flooding. They sequester carbon and help combat climate change, provide homes to countless species, cool our city streets, and so much more.

In the following pages you will read about four native trees, their importance, and how they connect to New Jersey Conservation Foundation's work.

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# ATLANTIC WHITE CEDAR

stronghold aims  
to expand

Before the first Europeans arrived in New Jersey, ancient Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) swamp forests blanketed well over 100,000 acres. These towering cedars were centuries old, with trunks four to six feet in diameter. Even the Hackensack Meadowlands – now associated with industrialized, urban New Jersey – was once an impenetrable Atlantic white cedar swamp.





By the early 1800s, the ancient cedars were gone from New Jersey — felled for their strong, lightweight, rot-resistant timber. Cedar wood was used for everything from building sailboat masts for the British navy to making shingles used in home construction.

Only about a fifth of the original cedar forests that were repeatedly clear-cut have regenerated. Yet, amazingly, New Jersey remains the national stronghold of Atlantic white cedar habitat, with some of the largest contiguous stands in the country.

“This forest type is important because cedar forests filter water, buffer stream flows from stormwater and droughts, provide thermal cover for wildlife, and provide habitat for rare species such as the Hessel’s hairstreak butterfly, whose larva feed exclusively on Atlantic white cedar,” said Bill Zipse, supervising forester at the New Jersey Forest Service.

New Jersey’s current 20,000 acres of rather youthful Atlantic white cedar forest house tremendous biological treasures – not only rare plant and animal species, but also deep ancient sphagnum peat bogs that sequester millions of tons of carbon that has been accumulating since the end of the last ice age.

These cedars face many threats. Salt water from sea level rise and storm flooding are killing coastal cedar forests. Atlantic white cedars can’t survive wildfires during droughts, unlike some other Pine Barrens trees. Even beavers can be a menace, plugging culvert pipes under roadways and drowning cedar forests.

Recognizing the ecological value of Atlantic white cedars, New Jersey has embarked on an ambitious plan to restore almost 20 square miles of cedar swamps along the headwaters of Pine Barrens rivers — all at elevations safe from sea level rise and storm tides, and in locations where wildfires are less likely to assault these unique ecosystems.

*“Atlantic white cedar forests are important carbon sinks as these forests can grow at extremely high densities and are associated with thick layers of organic peat soils that store carbon for very long periods of time. These forests can play an important role in mitigating climate change, if they are fostered where they are safe from salt water intrusion.” — Bill Zipse*

Since 2005, New Jersey Conservation Foundation has experimented with planting Atlantic white cedar seedlings on former cranberry fields at the Franklin Parker Preserve. Grown from seeds collected on-site and protected from deer browse, the young trees have done well and so far we have successfully restored cedar swamps on about 15 acres.

Restoration ecology must become the most important conservation undertaking of the 21st century, and Atlantic white cedar swamp forests will be a key habitat for maintaining biodiversity, ecological processes, and carbon storage.



Volunteers plant Atlantic white cedars at Franklin Parker Preserve





# PRINCETON ELMS

## vital in recovery from the *Nightmare on Elm Street*

A century ago, main streets throughout New Jersey — including some in the capital city of Trenton — were lined with stately elm trees, whose leafy canopies provided cooling shade on hot summer days. The popularity of these trees is the reason so many towns and cities have Elm Streets!

Then came the “Nightmare on Elm Street” — Dutch elm disease arrived, caused by a deadly fungus that prevents water flow through the trunk and branches of infected trees, causing them to wilt and die. First identified in the Netherlands in 1921, Dutch elm disease landed in Cleveland in 1930 and spread to New Jersey within two years. Millions of elms in the Garden State were wiped out by the disease.

But not all elms were vulnerable. A variety known as the “Princeton elm” had been developed by Princeton Nurseries in 1922, and it turned out to have excellent resistance to Dutch elm disease.

Princeton elms will be among the 1,000 trees that will be planted in Trenton under a climate grant awarded to New Jersey Conservation Foundation and our partners in 2022. The NJDEP’s Natural Climate Solutions Grant Program is funded by proceeds the state received through its participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

The trees will be planted along city streets and in parks over a three-year period beginning this fall, and will increase shade for residents while reducing the urban heat island effect and helping mitigate the impacts of climate change.







Planting Dutch elm resistant  
"Princeton Elm" trees on  
Trenton's Elm Street

As part of the tree-planting effort, city residents will be engaged to assist with the care and stewardship of the trees. Public programs will be offered to heighten awareness about the environmental importance and value of urban trees to the quality of life in neighborhoods and the associated health benefits of the urban forest.

Our "tree ambassador" in Trenton is Elijah Dixon, a city resident and entrepreneur. "Trees are the lungs of our cities, filtering the air we breathe while keeping us cool in the midst of an increasingly hot climate," said Dixon.

There will be elm trees on Elm Street in Trenton! But Princeton elms aren't the only kind of trees that will be planted. One of the lessons of Dutch elm disease – which spread partially through the intertwined roots of adjacent elm trees – is that a diversity of species should be planted to avoid a tree monoculture. Other trees that will be planted in Trenton include red maples, sugar maples, willow oaks, honey locusts and other street tolerant selections that will cool and beautify our capital city.

The Princeton elms for Trenton's Elm Street were grown on a farm in Bedminster Township that NJ Conservation preserved in 2019. Street trees present special challenges, as they must be able to thrive in the narrow strips of soil between sidewalks and curbs. Grower Whit Parker is experimenting with an innovative growing method to produce Princeton elm saplings and other urban-thriving species to increase their survival and success rate in city conditions.

*"As we continue our efforts to green and beautify our City, none of our initiatives would be successful without the input, work, and support of our fellow residents."*

— Elijah Dixon



Photo by NJPRB Forestry





# TRIDENT RED MAPLES

## thrive as South Jersey preserve expands

Think maple leaf, and you likely picture the iconic five-lobed leaf on Canada's flag or a logo on a bottle of syrup made from the sap of sugar maple trees.

But if you look around wetland forests throughout New Jersey — especially on the sandy, muck soils of our coastal plain — you'll notice a red maple variation with dainty three-lobed leaves. Trident red maples (*Acer rubrum* variation *trilobum*), like their swamp companion American holly, can grow through the deep shade of a sweet gum or willow oak forest and eventually dominate the landscape.

Often called "swamp maples", they can be seen at one of New Jersey Conservation Foundation's newer preserves, the Menantico Creek Preserve in Vineland, Cumberland County. Mature trident red maples — "old giants," as staff biologist Dr. Emile DeVito calls them — are thriving.

The Menantico Creek Preserve was established five years ago on 600 forested acres, located a few miles outside of Vineland's downtown area. This spring, it expanded by 85 acres with the acquisition of an adjoining property.

In keeping with its name, the preserve is crossed by 2.2 miles of the Menantico Creek and its tributaries, all part of the federally-designated Maurice Wild and Scenic River system.

The preserve's old-growth forests protect the health of local water supplies. Their dense system of tree roots and undisturbed soils filter out pollutants, helping to recharge the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer, South Jersey's main source of clean drinking water.





Red maple flowers by Tyler Smith

“We need to protect the land to protect the water,” explains Tim Dillingham, Executive Director of the American Littoral Society, which preserved the new 85-acre parcel in partnership with NJ Conservation and others.

In addition, both the original and new sections of the preserve provide outstanding wildlife habitat.

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***“It’s hummingbird heaven, as well as habitat for sensitive, forest-interior species like worm-eating, hooded, and Kentucky warblers, white-eyed vireos and Acadian flycatchers, broad-winged hawks and barred owls.”***

***— Dr. Emile DeVito***

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Red maple swamps like those at the Menantico Creek Preserve are some of the oldest forests in New Jersey. “Since their wood is not highly sought after, our society tends to let them be,” said Dr. DeVito. “You’ll know when you are in an old forest, because the maples grow slowly upward, twisting and turning toward the smallest canopy gaps of increased brightness.”

The old swamps are composed of massive curving maple trunks with wide canopies, casting dense shade over a thick array of fragrant shrubs and small trees like magnolia, azalea, and pepperbush. As forests age they undergo ecological succession, with shade-tolerant species slowly replacing the early, sun-loving species that dominated after colonists repeatedly clear-cut the landscape. Shade-tolerant trees like red maples and river birch are less susceptible to deer browse and will also protect soil moisture in the face of climate change.



Mountain laurel by Rob Ferber





# RED OAKS dominate Highlands forests, but are they protected?

Since 1950, the majestic northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), has been New Jersey's official state tree. It's one of 19 native oak species in Garden State forests, and a dominant species in North Jersey's Highlands.

After centuries of being repeatedly cut for firewood and timber, oak forests are getting a chance to mature, towering above the rocky slopes of Highlands hillsides, such as Bearfort Mountain in Wawayanda State Park and the Newark Watershed lands. Besides being beautiful, these forests are incredibly valuable in sequestering carbon to mitigate climate change, and protecting drinking water supplies.

Many Highlands oaks are now between 120 and 150 years old, and current studies show they are growing faster than ever and sequestering carbon at very high rates. Left alone, they'll continue to do so for at least another century!

The loss of American chestnuts to a deadly blight – coupled with the end of frequent clear-cutting for charcoal and firewood as fossil fuels became our staple energy source, and the absence of white-tailed deer in New Jersey in the late 1800s – allowed oak trees to become the dominant forest tree across our landscape. Today, oak seedlings barely stand a chance, since deer are 10 to 30 times more abundant than our forest can tolerate.

Though our state tree and other oaks in our public forest canopies are having a heyday in the Highlands, their future is not assured. Thousands of forested acres have been preserved in the Highlands and beyond using state Green Acres funds, but commercial logging of large, mature trees can happen on

virtually all parklands without any public notice or input!

Recent science is demonstrating the carbon benefits of allowing intact forests to mature into old growth forests, a process called “proforestation”. New Jersey Conservation Foundation has advocated for greater protection of mature forests on our public lands as one of our best defenses against climate change.

In 2022, NJ Conservation's Tom Gilbert was one of four environmental leaders appointed by Senator Bob Smith to co-chair a Forest Stewardship Task Force charged with making recommendations to the State Legislature for protecting and managing the state's public forestlands.

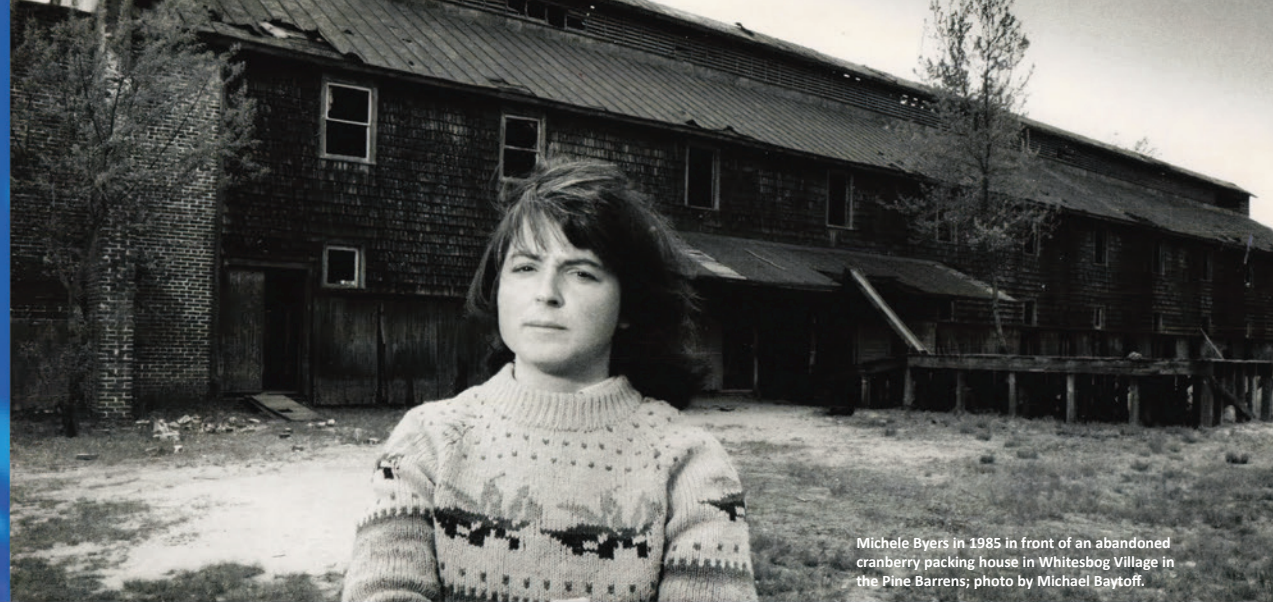
Earlier this year, the Task Force made over a dozen recommendations for managing public forests to fight climate change, prevent forest fires, improve ecosystems, and protect soil and water quality. Among them were establishing carbon reserves to protect mature trees and provide for future old-growth forests for their carbon benefits; not allowing commercial profit as a goal in any forest management plan on public land; and reducing deer densities in public forestlands to ecologically sustainable levels.

If we protect our mighty oaks, they will continue to protect us for many years to come!



# THANK YOU

to the following friends and supporters that made a gift to the fund honoring former executive director Michele S. Byers and her 40 years of service to New Jersey Conservation Foundation.



Michele Byers in 1985 in front of an abandoned cranberry packing house in Whitesbog Village in the Pine Barrens; photo by Michael Baytoff.

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## 2022 INTERNS

New Jersey Conservation Foundation welcomed five interns and fellows who worked throughout the state in 2022: **Willie Grosch** of Warren, **Kailey Purnell** of Haddonfield, **Allyson Schmieder** of Oxford, **Alyssa Schramm** of Springfield, and **Vicky Vega** of Trenton.

Alyssa and Willie worked with Land Steward Melanie Mason and other stewardship staff to implement an Invasive Species Management Plan at NJ Conservation's Apsawa Preserve in West Milford. Both internships were funded by the Garden Club of Morristown.

Intern Allyson attended meetings and helped coordinate the NJ Forest Stewardship Task Force. Tom Gilbert was one of the Co-Chairs of the Task Force, which worked to develop forest management recommendations to the NJ Senate Environment and Energy Committee. This internship was funded by the Langdon Palmer Memorial Internship Program.

Vicky ran the cut flower operation at Capital City Farm in Trenton, growing flowers and creating beautiful bouquets to share with local residents and assisting others that wanted to create their own bouquets. Vicky's fellowship was funded by the Mary Owen Borden Foundation with support from NJ Conservation Foundation and Mercer County Park Commission.

Kailey, Camden Fellow from the Alliance for Watershed Education, designed a survey of Camden residents to better understand park usage and learn which programming is most popular. She designed and led an environmental fair at Gateway Park and helped partners in the City lead kayaking programs.



Vicky Vega at Trenton's  
 Capital City Farm





Friends of NJ Conservation helped us celebrate preserved land on June 23, 2022, during a gala fundraiser at the historic Brick Farm Tavern in Hopewell. The Summer Solstice Celebration of the Land featured fun auctions, music, and farm-to-table fare and spirits.



1 Nancy Smith, Oye Olukoton, Barb Webb, Tim Smith, Jim Webb;  
2 Purba and Anupurba Lahiri, Pam Hirsch; 3 Oliver Rosenthal, Neil Grossman,  
Josh Rosenthal, Michelle Rosenthal, Nancy Wolff, Cambria Grossman



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## DON'T SEE YOUR NAME? LET US KNOW!

Those who donated in 2023 will be included in next year's annual report, so stay tuned!

Share your thoughts and questions with Bo Humprey, Director of Development & Major Gifts, at [bo.humprey@njconservation.org](mailto:bo.humprey@njconservation.org).



# GAINING GROUND



The Harris Farm



## CUMBERLAND COUNTY

### ALESZCZYK

24 acres, Downe Township

New Jersey Conservation Foundation was contacted in 2012 by a group of landowners in Downe Township about preserving their land, which totaled about 576 acres. We referred the Aleszczyk family to Cumberland County's Farmland Preservation Program. Their property was preserved with Cumberland County's farmland preservation Planning Incentive Grant from the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC).



## HUNTERDON COUNTY

### ROCKAWAY CREEK

74 acres, Tewksbury Township

In a win for the environment and clean water, this wooded property with a half-mile of frontage along the Rockaway Creek was permanently protected.

New Jersey Conservation purchased the land and transferred it to Hunterdon County, to be kept in its natural state to protect water resources, safeguard wildlife habitat and provide opportunities for passive recreation like hiking and bird watching. It is now part of the Hunterdon County Park System and is known as the Rockaway Creek Preserve. Funding was provided by the New Jersey Highlands Council, with the New Jersey Green Acres Program and New Jersey Water Supply Authority contributing toward costs.

### CRC MINE HILL

97 acres, Bethlehem Township

We assisted our partners, Hunterdon County and the Hunterdon Land Trust, in acquiring this forested property whose headwater streams and wetlands flow to the Musconetcong River, a federally-designated Wild and Scenic River. The property serves as a connector between preserved open space and farmland. New Jersey Conservation Foundation made the initial contact with the seller, and helped inspect and remove waste from the property to facilitate the acquisition.



## MONMOUTH COUNTY

### THOMPSON

28 acres, Upper Freehold Township

This forested parcel is adjacent to preserved farmland and near the state's Pleasant Run Wildlife Management Area. Due to its outstanding soil quality, the property had been used as an orchard and nursery, and to grow field crops, and for orchard and nursery production. The land was determined to have high conservation value for ecological assets, community green space, agriculture and protecting water resources, using the Conservation Blueprint mapping tool. New Jersey Conservation made the initial contact with the seller and referred the project to the New Jersey Green Acres Program.





## MORRIS COUNTY

### TURNQUIST 3

37 acres, Washington Township

This wooded property consists of oak, hickory and tulip forest, with headwaters streams that flow to the Musconetcong River, a federally-designated Wild and Scenic River. Located in the preservation area of the New Jersey Highlands, the property is valuable for its ability to recharge groundwater supplies. It also helps connect township-owned open space, and will serve as the entry point of a trail system. New Jersey Conservation Foundation purchased the property and will transfer it to Washington Township to add to the town's preserved land holdings. Funding for the acquisition came from the Morris County Open Space Trust Fund and state Green Acres funds awarded to the nonprofit Washington Township Land Trust.



## OCEAN COUNTY

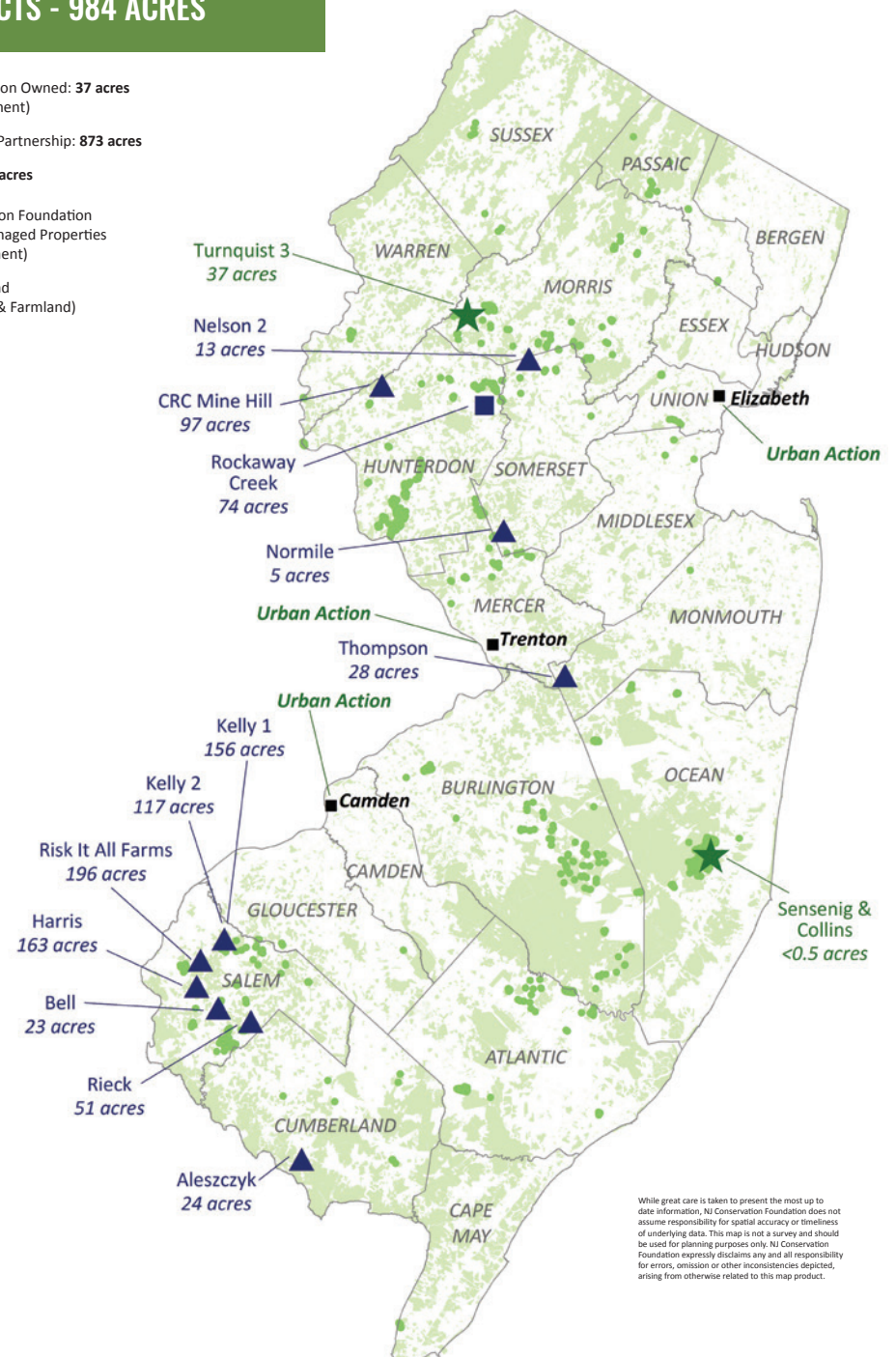
### SENSENIG AND COLLINS

0.5 acres, Lacey Township

The donation of these small, undeveloped parcels expands the nearly 4,000-acre Candace McKee Ashmun Preserve at Forked River Mountain, and are part of an unbuilt "paper street" subdivision called Barnegat Pines, dating back to the early 20th century. The area is a mix of pine/oak uplands, pitch pine lowlands, and cedar swamps. Ownership enables New Jersey Conservation Foundation to better manage and protect natural resources.

## 15 PROJECTS - 984 ACRES

- ★ NJ Conservation Owned: 37 acres (Fee or Easement)
- ▲ Preserved in Partnership: 873 acres
- Transfers: 74 acres
- NJ Conservation Foundation Owned & Managed Properties (Fee or Easement)
- Preserved Land (Open Space & Farmland)



While great care is taken to present the most up to date information, NJ Conservation Foundation does not assume responsibility for spatial accuracy or timeliness of underlying data. This map is not a survey and should be used for planning purposes only. NJ Conservation Foundation expressly disclaims any and all responsibility for errors, omission or other inconsistencies depicted, arising from otherwise related to this map product.





Rieck farm in Salem County

## 2022 PUBLIC PARTNERS

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Bedminster Township	Peapack Gladstone Borough
Bethlehem Township	Pilesgrove Township
Cumberland County	Quinton Township
Downe Township	Salem County
Hunterdon County	Somerset County
Lacey Township	State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC)
Mannington Township	Tewksbury Township
Mercer County	Upper Freehold Township
Montgomery Township	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Monmouth County	Washington Township
Morris County	
NJDEP Green Acres Program	
NJ Highlands Council	
NJ Water Supply Authority	



## SALEM COUNTY

### BELL

23 acres, Alloway Township

The Bell farm contains about 16 acres of hay fields and pasture, with the remainder in woodland management. The Bell family raises beef cattle, as well as horses for their personal use, primarily rodeo competitions. The farm contains high-quality soils, and was identified as a preservation target in Alloway Township's farmland preservation plan. The farm is partly within William Penn Foundation's Delaware River Watershed Initiative (DRWI) Lower Salem River Focus Area. Funding for the farmland easement came from a State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) grant to Alloway Township, and an Agricultural Conservation Easement Program partnership agreement between the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Salem County.

### HARRIS

163 acres, Mannington Township

The Harris farm has been in the same family for multiple generations, and includes a brick farmhouse built in the 1700s, where the owner and his father were born. The farm currently has about 50 head of beef cattle and grows corn, hay and soybeans. It's located adjacent to the Mannington Marsh Wildlife Refuge, in an area predominated by preserved farms. The land is composed mostly of "prime" soils, the highest quality for agricultural production. Preservation partners included The 1772 Foundation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), and the Land Trust Alliance.

### KELLY 1 & 2

273 acres, Pilesgrove Township

Former New Jersey Conservation Foundation staff members Greg Romano and Janet Eisenhower first met with landowner Jaqueline Kelly in 2005 to discuss preserving her farm. Years later, after she passed away, the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) reached an agreement with her estate to preserve a significant portion of her land. The two Kelly properties are surrounded by preserved farms, many of which were protected through the work of NJ Conservation.

### RIECK

51 acres, Alloway Township

The Rieck farm is dominated by cropland and pasture, with about 25 percent covered by woodlands. The farm contains mostly high-quality "prime" and "statewide" soils, and is located next to the state's Thundersgut Pond Wildlife Management Area. The woods on the property are important for protecting water quality in the Carlisle Run, a tributary of the Alloway Creek. Funding for the farmland easement came from a State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) grant to Alloway Township, and an Agricultural Conservation Easement Program partner agreement between the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Salem County.

### RISK IT ALL FARMS

196 acres, Alloway, Mannington and Quinton townships

Spanning parts of three municipalities, Risk It All Farms is located within the William Penn Foundation's Delaware River Watershed Initiative's Lower Salem River Focus Area, a priority area for land preservation. New Jersey



Conservation Foundation referred this project to the State Agriculture Development Committee, which took over and preserved the farm through a direct easement purchase. The farm is near other preserved farmland and the state's Salem River Wildlife Management Area.



## SOMERSET COUNTY

### NELSON 2

#### 13 acres, Peapack-Gladstone Borough

This wooded property near the borough's municipal complex was permanently preserved to protect wildlife habitat and provide a place for residents to enjoy walking and nature observation. The land is across the road from municipal ballfields and a short walk from Liberty Park in the town center. In addition to its recreation value, the property was considered a high priority for preservation because it recharges groundwater, safeguards water quality, and protects habitat for rare species. The land was preserved by a partnership of Peapack-Gladstone Borough, the Lamington Conservancy, the New Jersey Green Acres Program, Somerset County and New Jersey Conservation Foundation. NJ Conservation's role was to provide land preservation expertise to facilitate the transactions.

### NORMILE

#### 5 acres, Montgomery Township

The Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM), which is dedicated to documenting and celebrating the Black history of the Sourland Mountains, got a boost when New Jersey Conservation Foundation helped it and the Sourland Conservancy acquire an historic farmstead next to the museum. The Normile property – which once belonged to the True family, one of the region's first Black landowners – consists of an existing house, garage and shed that will be used to support the Sourland Conservancy and SSAAM's staff and programs. NJ Conservation provided technical support for the land acquisition.



## URBAN ACTION

New Jersey Conservation Foundation worked with local partners in Camden, Trenton and Elizabeth to plant trees along streets and in parks, and engage citizens in learning how to care for them. In Elizabeth, we helped Groundwork Elizabeth design and plant an urban "microforest," which will cool the surrounding air, soak up stormwater and improve air quality. In Trenton, we assisted with Capital City Farm, which provides food and cut flowers free to local residents. In both Camden and Trenton, we offered outdoor nature and wellness programs, including birding, yoga, fishing, nature walks and bicycle rides.



Raven George, NJ Conservation's Cut Flower Production Manager at Trenton's Capital City Farm



## POLICY UPDATES

### GREEN ACRES RULES

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is updating the rules governing the use of properties preserved through the state Green Acres Program. Strong rules are critical to ensuring that land preserved with taxpayer dollars remains protected for present and future generations. NJ Conservation provided oral comments and submitted detailed written comments signed by some of our environmental partners recommending measures to protect against inappropriate diversions of parkland to other uses, to advance sustainable agriculture, to foster sound deer management to reduce deer impacts on our forests, and to prevent commercial timber harvesting on public lands. To see a copy of our comments, please contact us at [info@njconservation.org](mailto:info@njconservation.org). New rules are expected to be published in the NJ Register sometime in 2024.

### CLIMATE-FRIENDLY AGRICULTURE

We are working in partnership with the Foodshed Alliance's Sustainable Agriculture Enterprises (SAGE) program to provide affordable long term leases on preserved farmland to underserved farmers practicing organic agriculture and growing methods that do not use synthetic chemicals. Such farming operations can improve water quality and soil health while decreasing erosion and sequestering more carbon. With the help of a grant from the USDA, we will assist in establishing several small

farm enterprises on preserved farmland that we own in Sergeantsville, Hunterdon County.

### NJ FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

After years of advocacy by NJ Conservation, the State Agriculture Development Committee is poised to adopt Soil Protection Standards for farms preserved with funding from the state Farmland Preservation Program. The rules will allow up to 15% of soil disturbance on preserved farms with various waivers for those farms already at or near the limit. NJ Conservation has been calling for impervious cover limits within the program for decades, so this is a step forward, but the disturbance allowances are too lenient and will not provide stringent enough protections for this precious resource.

### WAREHOUSE SPRAWL

Rampant warehouse development is the latest threat to New Jersey's farmland, forests and open space as demand for warehouse space has risen along with online shopping. Poorly planned warehouse development not only threatens open space, but also communities already overburdened by pollution and traffic. The farmland preservation program cannot compete with the big dollars that warehouse developers are offering farmers for their land. With our partners, we are developing legislation to address this issue, including limiting the use of the Redevelopment



Illegally cleared wetlands and wetland transition areas within the Glassboro Wildlife Management Area  
photo by Rob Ferber



Law by municipalities to declare farmland, forests and open space as redevelopment areas for warehouses. The State Planning Commission issued guidance to municipalities to better plan for warehouse development, but these voluntary guidelines won't be enough to stem the tide of warehouse sprawl.

## PROTECTING AND STEWARDING PUBLIC FORESTLANDS

Formed in 2022 by Sen. Bob Smith, the Forest Stewardship Task Force identified ways in which New Jersey can best protect and manage its forests to fight climate change, prevent forest fires, improve ecosystems, and protect soil and water quality, among other things. The Task Force was co-chaired by NJ Conservation's Tom Gilbert, Eileen Murphy from New Jersey Audubon, Andy Bennett from NJ Forestry Association, and Anjuli Ramos-Busot from NJ Sierra Club.

In February 2023, the co-chairs of the Task Force presented its recommendations to guide the protection and management of New Jersey's public forestlands to a joint meeting of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee. The recommendations include directing the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to conduct a statewide planning and mapping process for forested public land and to commence a formal rulemaking process for the development of management plans for public forests; revitalizing the State Natural Areas Program; establishing carbon reserves on public forestlands; reducing the deer population to ecologically sustainable levels; addressing the widespread impacts of invasive species; and increasing funding for all of these activities through a number of existing and potential new funding sources.

## HOLDING NJDEP ACCOUNTABLE

We joined with other conservation groups to stand up for critical natural habitat in South Jersey by blowing the whistle on the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for violating the Freshwater Wetlands Act. Together, we successfully urged the Department to cease a project that removed all trees and stumps and bulldozed an area within the Glassboro Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in order to create habitat for American Woodcock, a game species. NJDEP's missteps drew national media attention.



Cabbage Throw Farm, Asbury, NJ by Emily Stocker

Our efforts with Pinelands Preservation Alliance, South Jersey Land and Water Trust, and Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River resulted in the NJDEP's Bureau of Coastal & Land Use Compliance & Enforcement issuing a Notice of Violation to another division of NJDEP, the Division of Fish & Wildlife, for illegally clearing nearly 15 acres of protected wetlands and wetlands transition areas at the Glassboro site. To prevent future mismanagement of public lands, we called on NJDEP to put the proper guardrails and protocols in place. We partnered with ecological experts to recommend the most effective approach to restoring the site.

## FIX OUR PARKS

Over the past year, we have been working with our partners in the Fix Our Parks coalition — Pinelands Preservation Alliance, New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, New Jersey Highlands Coalition and D&R Canal Watch — to ensure that New Jersey's public lands are protected and enhanced for future generations. Our efforts include advocating for increased funding dedicated to the protection and restoration of New Jersey's state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas. These lands are in desperate need of protection from destructive activities like illegal off-road vehicle use and illegal dumping, as well as invasive plant species. We continue to urge the legislature to allocate more funds in New Jersey's annual budget to increase staffing on public lands, including law enforcement officials to crack down on the unlawful behavior that damages these unique natural areas.



## GRANT AWARDS

Since 1989, the Franklin Parker Conservation Grants Program has awarded nearly \$2 million to 486 conservation projects throughout the state.

- In 2020, New Jersey Conservation added a racial equity lens to the grant program and has since awarded more than \$120,000 through 36 grants to benefit communities of color across the state and improve equitable access to quality open space and places to grow food locally.
- In 2022, eight nonprofits were awarded Franklin Parker Community Conservation Grants totaling \$30,000 to help provide essential resources for addressing environmental challenges and improving the quality of life for communities of color in New Jersey. Funding for the 2022 grants was provided by the Victoria Foundation.

Underrepresented communities in New Jersey face disproportionate hardships resulting from impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. Increasing access to green spaces in urban areas provides health and environmental benefits. Green spaces keep surrounding areas cooler, clean the air and water, and make urban areas more resilient to extreme weather from climate change, such as heat waves, floods and wildfires. Additionally, people with safe access to parks and trails exercise more and are generally healthier.



### 2022 FRANKLIN PARKER COMMUNITY CONSERVATION GRANTS

#### APPEL FARM ARTS AND MUSIC CENTER

##### Environmental Arts and Wellness

Appel Farm's new Environmental Arts and Wellness program engages community members from Salem, Gloucester, and Cumberland counties. During Make and Take events, participants learn to tend to and harvest from the Appel Farm garden, using the yield both for healthy meals prepared and enjoyed on-site and for innovative art projects using sustainable, non-traditional materials.

#### BRANCH BROOK PARK ALLIANCE

##### Park Ambassador Program – Invasive Species Eradication

Through the youth workforce development program, Park Ambassadors work with subject-matter experts to design a thoughtful plan to address the invasive species, Japanese Knotweed. Together, the young adults remove this invasive species and plant native species to control re-infestation.







Branch Brook Park Alliance's Park Ambassadors

## 8 PROJECTS: TOTAL AWARDED \$30,000

### CATA (COMITÉ DE APOYO A LOS TRABAJADORES AGRÍCOLAS)

#### CATA's Bridgeton Organic Community Garden

CATA's Bridgeton Organic Community Garden was established by farmworkers and low-wage immigrant workers to provide access to organic produce and engage children and community members to learn about sustainable agriculture through traditional organic farming practices. High school interns learn about the food system, agro-ecological farming practices, nutrition, and the intersection of this work with broader issues like labor rights, immigration, and the environment.

### FOODSHED ALLIANCE

#### Shared Farm Equipment to Facilitate Conservation Practices

At the Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise (SAGe) farm in Andover, 71 acres of farmland are leased to nine organic farms that support regenerative/organic enterprises using conservation methods to protect the integrity and health of the land and waters. Many of the farmers are from underrepresented communities.

### FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE

#### The Outdoor Equity Alliance Agrihood Internship

The Outdoor Equity Alliance Agrihood Internship project provides 20 students from underserved communities with an opportunity to get hands-on experience and to critically think about environmental stewardship, agriculture, and social welfare, guided by Leah Penniman's book entitled *Farming While Black*.

### GREAT SWAMP WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

#### Paterson Adopt a Catch Basin Program

GWSA is working with the Paterson Green Team to implement an Adopt a Catch Basin program, which will help reduce waste going into the sewers and eventually rivers, reduce site specific flooding related to blocked catch basins, and educate residents about the importance of reducing pollution and flooding.

### GROW IT GREEN MORRISTOWN

#### Farm Apprentice Program

The Farm Apprentice Program provides opportunities for underrepresented populations to pursue a

career in agriculture and its associated pathways. In addition to learning skills such as starting seeds, transplanting seedlings, pruning, harvesting, and crop rotations, apprentices work directly with community organizations such as local food distribution organizations to widen their perspective of a just food system. Apprentices also learn to be leaders as they guide the high school interns and volunteers during the summer.

### MONMOUTH CONSERVATION

#### DEI Training to Achieve Equitable Outcomes throughout Monmouth County

Monmouth Conservation Foundation enlisted the expertise of a professional consultant to undergo intensive analysis and training to initiate comprehensive strategies around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) across all functions of the organization including recruitment, acquisition and park development efforts, programming, and community engagement activities to better serve its diverse, evolving community.

Thanks to Victoria Foundation for funding the 2022 Franklin Parker Grant round.



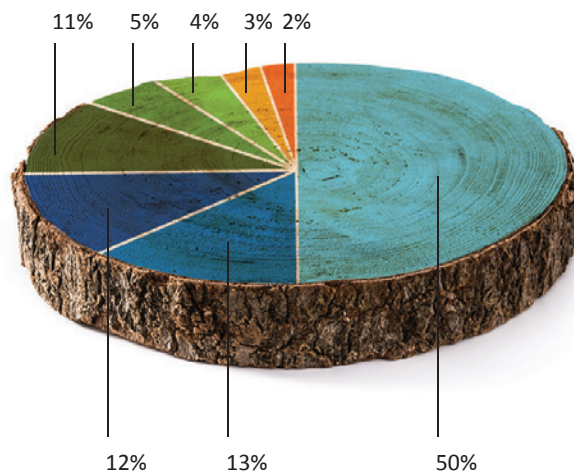
Emanuel, Grow It Green Farm Apprentice



# FINANCIAL POSITION

## Support and Revenue

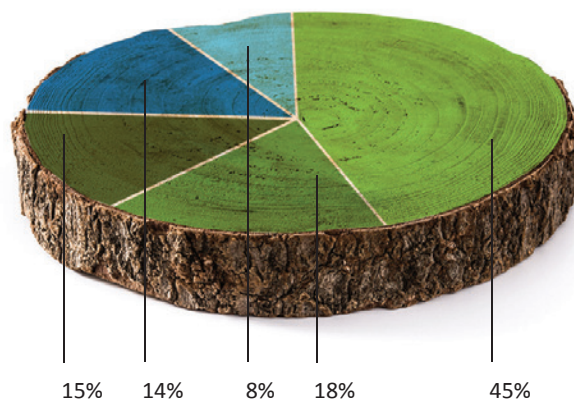
**\$9,290,975\***



Individuals	50%
Foundations	13%
Government Grants	12%
Planned gifts	11%
Investment Income	5%
Organizations	4%
Special Events	3%
Other	2%

## Expenses and Land Purchase

**\$6,461,739\***



Program management	45%
Program grants and contributions	18%
Purchase of land	15%
Fundraising	14%
Management and general	8%

## Assets

	December 31 2022 (1)	December 31 2021 (1)
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,473,330	3,187,209
Investments	15,210,938	17,471,096
Unconditional Promises to Give, net	1,555,669	387,250
Beneficial Interest in Split Interest Agreements	148,035	172,941
Grant receivable	128,356	
Other receivable	920,188	
Land, Buildings and Easements	41,151,672	41,115,111
Right of Use Assets	211,089	
Other Assets	262,995	255,088
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$63,062,272</b>	<b>\$62,588,695</b>

## Liabilities and Net Assets

### LIABILITIES

	December 31 2022 (1)	December 31 2021 (1)
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	380,575	271,094
Lease Liabilities	213,952	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>594,527</b>	<b>271,094</b>

### NET ASSETS

	December 31 2022 (1)	December 31 2021 (1)
Without Donor Restrictions	52,860,405	54,293,694
With Donor Restrictions	9,607,340	8,023,907
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>62,467,745</b>	<b>62,317,601</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$63,062,272</b>	<b>\$62,588,695</b>

\*Unaudited financial information

(1) Extracted from the December 31, 2022 audited financial statements.

To receive a copy of the complete audited financial statements, please send a request to [info@njconservation.org](mailto:info@njconservation.org)



# LEAVE A LEGACY for Future Generations



The Red Oak Society was founded in 2011 to recognize those who donate to New Jersey Conservation Foundation through planned giving. We thank the conservation-minded members who are preserving New Jersey's natural resources and lands for future generations.

To become a member of the Red Oak Society, please let us know if you wish to support New Jersey Conservation Foundation's mission by:

- Giving through your will or charitable trust
- Giving through IRAs, qualified retirement plans, insurance or donor advised funds
- Gifts of conservation easements, cash, securities and real estate

To discuss how your planned gift will help ensure the permanence of preservation, please contact Bo Humphrey, Director of Development and Major Gifts, at 908-234-1225 or [bo.humphrey@njconservation.org](mailto:bo.humphrey@njconservation.org). While it is not necessary to advise us in advance that you have included New Jersey Conservation Foundation in your estate planning, we encourage you to let us know of your plans so that we may thank you and learn more about your interests.

If you wish to add us in your will or estate plan, please use the following listing:  
New Jersey Conservation Foundation  
170 Longview Road, Far Hills, NJ 07931.  
Our tax identification number is 22-6065456.



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**BETWEEN EVERY TWO PINES IS  
A DOORWAY TO A NEW WORLD."**

- JOHN MUIR