

2023

ANNUAL REPORT



New Jersey Conservation
FOUNDATION



'23 FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

In 2023, New Jersey Conservation Foundation dug into a dynamic set of goals to guide the organization's work over the next five years.



We embraced a new plan — striving to make the most of the organization's resources and capabilities to advance critical initiatives in preserving land and natural resources for the benefit of all, including future generations of New Jerseyans.

Between now and 2029, with your support, New Jersey Conservation Foundation will pursue an ambitious agenda to achieve critical conservation outcomes that center upon the following:

- **Completing at least 75 new land protection projects, directly conserving thousands of acres of land that will safeguard irreplaceable open space, green our cities, and preserve precious farmland** — and adding to the 140,000 acres protected over the past 64 years since the organization was founded. Preserved land protects and enhances the health of our native plant and animal species, and provides parks and trails for all New Jerseyans. Stewardship of these lands safeguards drinking water, mitigates the effects of climate change and air pollution, and secures farmland that supplies food for the region.
- **Passing and implementing landmark legislation to protect and enhance our state's invaluable investment in forests.** New Jersey's public forests are epicenters of the biodiversity we count on for our health and very survival. They filter our water, store carbon, cool our communities, and provide refuge for our incredible plants and wildlife. But they face significant risks and we need a new approach to ensure those values are protected and fostered into the future — especially on lands held by the public!
- **Planting 2,000 shade trees, 10 micro forests, and 10 pollinator meadow lots in Camden, Trenton and Elizabeth.** At New Jersey Conservation Foundation, we not only respect and work to preserve trees, we know they're quiet saviors in the fight against climate change and environmental degradation. And a lot more of them are needed in our cities. This work has really taken off, and we are on track to plant hundreds of trees in 2025! These plantings will advance storm water storage, neighborhood cooling, and habitat creation, while also engaging the community and empowering local tree ambassadors to care for the trees now and into the future.
- **Breaking through barriers to accelerate land preservation, and imagining a New Jersey "Green and Healthy Cities" campaign.** In addition to the land preservation projects led by NJ Conservation Foundation, we are **advocating for an ambitious overarching goal of protecting 50% of the remaining acres in the state vulnerable to development** — nearly 1 million of which are ranked highly for ecological, water, and agricultural values. If New Jersey is going to meet that goal, the pace of conservation will need to increase substantially. And that goal needs to be coupled with a major effort to advance green investments in our urban areas so that all residents can enjoy the benefits of conservation.

In 2023, because of supporters like you and with help from conservation partners, New Jersey Conservation Foundation preserved 14 properties across New Jersey, totaling 1,433 acres. We made important strides in addressing the serious problems of dwindling wildlife habitats and loss of farmland and forests, and in advancing the promise of nature for all. Thank you for your dedication to pushing forward the mission to protect our precious open spaces, and to maintain the beauty and natural capital of the Garden State. Together we will continue to make a difference!



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Jay Watson
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OUR MISSION

New Jersey Conservation Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve land and natural resources throughout New Jersey for the benefit of all. Through acquisition and stewardship, we protect strategic lands from the Highlands to the Pine Barrens to the Delaware Bayshore. We promote strong land conservation policies at the local, state and federal levels, forge partnerships to achieve conservation goals, and provide support and technical assistance to partner groups. Since 1960, we have helped protect more than 140,000 acres of natural areas, farms, parks and water resources.

ON THE COVER

Row 1: Bobcat - Tyler Christensen; Great egret - Penelope Ayers; Monarch on goldenrod - Bill Lynch

Row 2: Cedar waxwing on pepperbush - Ann Bender; Eastern box turtle - Bill Lynch;

Cownose stingrays - Lisa Ann Fanning; Hermit thrush - Marie Sheraden; Bottlenose dolphins - Lisa Ann Fanning

Row 3: Red-tailed hawk - Geo Fellema; Mayapples - Julie Gause; Baltimore oriole - Preeti Desai; Trout lily - Julie Gause

Wolf Spider by Ryan Francis Curry



BIODIVERSITY

... is more than shorthand for the variety of life on Earth, from bacteria to bald eagles, plants to people.

It's something we rely on to survive. Without a natural world that is complex, resilient, and full of variety, we wouldn't have clean air or water. Our food supply would dry up. And biodiversity is in trouble across the planet. The causes are many; all are incredibly consequential. In the pages ahead, a look at New Jersey's biodiversity and how it affects us all.

WEIRD

(and wonderful)

New Jersey

Life here in the most densely populated state in the nation is abundant. Some of that abundance, thriving in our forests and swamps, our fields and meadows, is pretty odd! Check out this handful of weird and wonderful species that speak to the miracle of biodiversity here in New Jersey.



CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

Like the legendary Jersey Devil, a mythical flying biped said to lurk in the Pine Barrens, bladderworts, pitcher plants, and sundews – also residents of the Pine Barrens – have an appetite for meat. Instead of earning themselves a menacing reputation for raiding chicken coops and farms, though, these plants eat bugs.

Bladderworts – flowering, slender plants that dine on tiny aquatic creatures like mosquito larvae and water fleas by capturing them underwater and sucking them into vault-like structures called “bladders” – are especially adept; they’re the fastest known carnivorous plants in the world.

Pitcher plants and sundews hunt their prey differently. Pitcher plants drown their insects in leaves shaped like pitchers that collect rainwater. Bugs, attracted by the plants’ nectar, fall in and can’t escape. Sundews, meanwhile, are more like flypaper: their leaves are covered in stalks slicked with a sticky dew that captures insects. Once the stalks close around the victim, the plant starts digesting.

WASP MANTIDFLY

Sightings of the tiny wasp mantidfly are uncommon, but these little critters are airborne in our suburbs. The insect’s weirdness is strictly skin (or membrane) deep, resembling a mixed bag of body parts from different insects: wasp, praying mantis, and fly.

CRANEFLY ORCHID

Found in moist, deciduous forests around the state – including NJ Conservation Foundation’s Burden Hill Forest Preserve and Evert Nature Trail – the cranefly orchid displays a weird characteristic: It produces a single, dark green leaf in autumn on the forest floor. That leaf functions through winter and decomposes in early spring. In late summer, the orchid’s tiny, brownish flowers bloom on a leafless stalk and are pollinated by moths.

“STRAWBERRY” BUSH

American Strawberry Bush is a native woody shrub that has declined due to deer browsing. It can be grown easily in protected gardens, and is still found naturally in a streamside forest within a New Jersey Conservation Foundation easement in Salem County. The bush provides oil-rich berries for birds, but beware. Its bark, leaves, and berries are poisonous to humans and can cause severe diarrhea and even cardiac arrest.

FIERCE FUNGI

Nina Burghardt, who arranges monthly fungal forays as a board member of the New Jersey Mycological Association, sometimes comes across hedgehog mushrooms in her travels. Instead of gills or pores on the underside of their caps, she said, they have short, vertically hanging “teeth.”

Diaz Puffballs, found in New Jersey Conservation Foundation’s Franklin Parker Preserve, are a fungi often referred to as dog’s turd, Burghardt said. Instead of messing up your shoes when you step on them, though, they demonstrate their weirdness by displaying what she calls spore-holding “pimples” when cut open at the base.

Devil’s tooth fungus, one more species that demonstrates the breadth of New Jersey’s odder species, is sometimes called the bleeding tooth fungus. Emile DeVito, Ph.D., manager of science and stewardship at New Jersey Conservation Foundation, said it looks like a raspberry cheese Danish. But you won’t find it at any bakery – not one that passed a recent health inspection, anyway. Instead you’ll find it where we find so much of the curious splendor that surrounds us: in the damp, dark forests of New Jersey.



Pictured right top to bottom:
Cranefly orchid by Matt Jones
Bladderwort consuming mite by Keara Giannotti
Devil's tooth fungus by Bill Lynch

Earth is *THE ONLY* planet with **BIODIVERSITY**

**Protecting
ecosystems
is absolutely
essential**



Preserving biodiversity is not simply about restoring ecosystems or conserving future economic opportunities. We further our humanity as we care for our families, gardens, neighborhoods, forests, and streams. Being able to foster life beyond our species is a great gift to humanity and an obligation we must embrace.

Consider the humble American chaffseed, a perennial in the snapdragon family: Not long ago, its existence in New Jersey was limited to a cluster along a Pine Barrens roadside, vulnerable to wayward cars, road salt, mowing and herbicides. Fortunately, researchers, led by a Rutgers graduate student who landed a part-time job monitoring the endangered plants, didn't give up on efforts to revive it. Chaffseed is still on the endangered list. And Jay Kelly, the one-time graduate student – now a biology professor at Raritan Valley Community College – is still nurturing the species back from the brink, in part by planting chaffseed at Franklin Parker Preserve. “I'm grateful for the chance to keep doing it,” he said.

Kelly and scientists like him don't work to help dwindling plant and animal species thrive because those species will one day bring them glory or riches. An investment in seeing life flourish in all its variations, from majestic bald eagles to sodden clumps of moss, is its own reward.

Emile DeVito, Ph.D., the manager of science and stewardship at New Jersey Conservation Foundation, thinks of it this way: “We definitely are a better society when we protect, enhance, and restore rare species, even if the rare species has no specific benefit to humans other than us knowing of its subtle beauty and existence,” he said.

The web of life is complex. Some species have been intertwined by co-evolution, and they need each other to survive, such as certain pollinators and wildflowers. Other species regulate ecosystems, such as wolves in the west keeping large herbivores at low levels, allowing riparian woodlands to regenerate and stabilize eroding riverbanks. But many obscure species play no special role in ecosystem regulation and may not even support the existence of other species. Some species, especially diminutive rare plants like Chaffseed, may just be there because they work in an ecosystem dominated by wildfire.

By protecting and preserving our state's diverse ecosystems, we honor our ethical obligations to other living beings, future generations, and the natural world. We follow an instinct to respect and care for the Earth and all its inhabitants.



“Getting to watch these seedlings come up and flourish is the thanks I'm getting. And that's all the thanks I need.”

— Jay Kelly

The **NATURE** of New Jersey's cities

New Jersey has it all! From Cape May Point to High Point - miles and miles of sandy beaches along the Atlantic coast, unique forested woodlands in our Pine Barrens, Highlands and Sourlands; globally important migratory stopovers for birds and butterflies along our Delaware Bayshore - we marvel at its diversity.



The most densely developed state in our nation is also home to many cities and developed communities that make up the beautiful mosaic of this place.

And while there is generally good access to our important public suburban and rural open spaces, many more 'green investments' must continue to be made in cities throughout the State. Our city residents – people, plants, and wildlife – benefit from a diversity of landscapes even in the built environment. Urban parks, small forest parcels, tree lined streets, streambanks and vacant lots all support biodiversity.

When people lack access to that biodiversity, it can affect their health and well-being.

In addition to supporting a wonderful array of wildlife, our trees and plants filter pollutants from the air, reducing the negative effects of respiratory conditions like asthma and allergies. Parks and urban greenways get people moving, encouraging the kinds of physical activities that help reduce the risk of chronic diseases like obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. A Jersey City resident who spends quality time exploring the salt marshes and meadows of Liberty State Park, for example, might notice benefits to their mental health – natural settings within urban areas provide a calming, anxiety-abating respite from the built environment. These benefits are clear and science has documented their value.

Creating and enhancing green spaces in cities also guarantees accessible places for recreation and civic engagement. These areas lend themselves to events built on traditions and practices that reinforce a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Parks, nature trails, and wildlife observation sites also open doors for learning about ecology and sustainability, perhaps our best tool for cultivating and nurturing a conservation ethic among young people.

That conservation ethic can help counter the effects of climate change in our most densely populated settings. Unless we invest more in greening our cities, the urban heat island effect – where buildings, roads, and other infrastructure absorb and re-emit the sun's heat – will continue, unabated in future years, making cities even hotter. New Jersey Conservation Foundation is working with partner organizations and community members to plant thousands of trees in Trenton, Camden, and Elizabeth to help combat this problem.

We need more greenspaces to absorb the increased runoff and flooding we are already experiencing. Even noise pollution in cities will be amplified if we don't make a commitment to growing and maintaining greenspaces, because vegetation acts as a sound barrier.

Our lives get richer when we invest in urban biodiversity. From the smallest organisms like bacteria and fungi in our soils to the teeming life in our waterways, urban forests and along our streets; all of it creates a wonderful and diverse tapestry of existence.



New Jersey:

The

BIODIVERSITY

State

The fifth-smallest state in the country squeezes an incredible variety of both cold-adapted northern and warm-adapted southern species into a tiny area.

From the rugged hiking trails of Ramapo Mountain to the rare bird sightings that bring binocular-toting watchers to Cape May, we're a state whose natural beauty draws visitors. Tourism is a multi-billion dollar industry here, the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism says, thanks in large part to our nature-based attractions. Our lakes and shores are magnets for bluefish and bass anglers as well as families packing floaties and sunscreen. The popularity of our recreational sites attracts businesses. With those businesses come jobs.

For a hands-on look at another way biodiversity in New Jersey makes your life better, take a road trip to any of the state's pick-your-own farms. Without a constellation of pollinators, including bees and butterflies, we wouldn't have local farmers' markets or flats of strawberries to fill in summer or pumpkin patches to roam come fall.

Many NJ food crops for people require pollinators, but those crops occupy a relatively small acreage compared to the grains and grasses grown for animal feed. Almost all soybeans and corn are genetically modified to be Roundup ready, so virtually nothing else survives in those thousands of acres across the state. Hay requires far less fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide treatment, and is plowed infrequently so as not to lose soil to erosion, but has few benefits to native biodiversity.

Ultimately, a switch to regenerative agriculture with healthy, living soil that stores water and carbon is essential to retaining pollinators, storing CO₂, reducing flooding, and ameliorating the threats posed by climate change. Sustainable, low-chemical agricultural landscapes are key to rescuing the American kestrel from its decline due to a chemical intensive agricultural landscape. NJ Conservation Foundation is working to protect and bolster this endangered falcon in the Wickecheoke Creek Greenway Preserve by shifting to more responsible agricultural practices that support healthy biodiversity.



Investments in biodiversity protection and restoration are investments in prosperity. The restoration of natural habitats is critical to our quality of life – and it helps the State's economy flourish.



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Thank you to all who contributed in 2023

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Grasshopper by Geo Fellema

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Friend and supporter Penelope Ayers showcased her incredible wildlife photography at the Somerset Hills Art Collective. All proceeds from images sold - \$2,700 in total - were donated to New Jersey Conservation Foundation to help us continue our work across the state. In the image above, a great egret and a gull fight over their next meal. Thank you, Penelope!



Samuel W. Lambert III was honored at our 2023 gala in recognition of his land preservation efforts in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Among them is the preservation of the incomparable Franklin Parker Preserve.

“Sam Lambert is a true conservation champion, and his leadership was absolutely crucial to buying this property and preserving it as an unspoiled gem,” said Alison Mitchell, co-executive director. “Twenty years later, we thank Sam again for all he has done for New Jersey Conservation Foundation, and for everyone who loves the beauty of the Pine Barrens.”



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Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve by Mark Barrick

2023 INTERN HELPS DEVELOP NEW TRAILS

With generous support from the Garden Club of Morristown, New Jersey Conservation Foundation welcomed intern **Alex Nayfeld**, a current Rutgers University student studying Human Ecology at the School of Biological and Environmental Sciences. Alex assisted with the implementation of a 12-mile hiking trail system throughout the 1,150-acre Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve. Alex's work focused on ensuring that the trail system benefits natural resources and the people who visit the preserve.

ESTATES

Estate of Joanne Elliott*
Estate of Maureen Ogden*

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Noah Yaskulka



DON'T SEE YOUR NAME? LET US KNOW!

Those who donated in 2024 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.



BURLINGTON COUNTY

RANCOCAS CRANBERRY CO. II

185 acres, Southampton Township

Nearly 200 acres of a cranberry farm dating back over 90 years in the Pine Barrens was permanently preserved as open space. Preservation of this property protects water quality and wetland habitat for critical species, and greatly enhances outdoor recreational opportunities in the area. The property has been part of the Mehler family cranberry farm for generations. Family member Craig Mehler continues to grow cranberries at the Rancocas Cranberry Company, which encompasses 33 acres of active cranberry bogs adjacent to the new preserve. Funding for NJ Conservation's purchase of the land came from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program, Open Space Institute, Pinelands Preservation Alliance, and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. also contributed toward the costs associated with acquiring the property.

UNITED TALMUDICAL ACADEMY TORAH OF LAKEWOOD

697 acres, Woodland Township

Our Michael Huber Prairie Warbler Preserve in the Pine Barrens has grown 50 percent larger, thanks to the acquisition of an adjacent 697-acre former cranberry farm. NJ Conservation purchased the property from the United Talmudical Academy Torah of Lakewood (UTA), which had received the land as a donation nearly six years earlier. The addition of the UTA property increases the size of NJ Conservation's Michael Huber Prairie Warbler Preserve from 1,227 to 1,918 acres. The

property is crossed by several tributaries of the Burrs Mill Brook, and contains approximately 65 acres of mature Atlantic white cedar. The property also provides connectivity to large swaths of protected land and likely habitat for threatened and endangered species, and is of the highest importance for protecting water quality, with 8.6 miles of streams and 29 acres of open water. Funding for the purchase came from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program, Open Space Institute, and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Act – Ducks Unlimited grant.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

CAMPBELL, 6 ACRES AND ERICKSEN, 10 ACRES

Maurice River Township

Surrounded by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife's Heislerville Wildlife Management Area, the NJ Conservation Campbell and Ericksen properties were transferred in 2023 to the State of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection. The protection of these properties in the 1990s added to the Maurice River Greenway. The Maurice River and three of its tributaries were designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers by the US Congress in 1993. Natural resource values of the properties include the Atlantic Flyway, pristine habitats that sustain rare species and provide crucial food and resting areas for migratory birds, waterfowl, and fish. The Maurice River is also the second largest tributary of the Delaware Bayshore, an ecosystem of national and international importance.

14 PROJECTS - 1,433 ACRES PRESERVED

- ★ NJ Conservation Owned: 971 acres (Fee or Easement)
- ▲ Preserved in Partnership: 462 acres
- Transfers: 53 acres
- Urban Action

● 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.

URBAN ACTION

New Jersey Conservation Foundation kicked off a major tree planting initiative we're leading in Trenton to promote tree equity in neighborhoods and increase shade for residents, while also reducing the urban heat island effect impacting the city. The planting began in May with 100 trees planted in Cadwalader Park. In total, 1,000 shade trees will be planted throughout Trenton over the next three years. The planting is made possible by a \$1.3M+ state grant through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. In addition to those being planted through the state grant, we've already planted nearly 100 other shade trees along the streets of Trenton in areas that were in critical need of trees. These areas were identified using a mapping tool designed to show where trees are needed in urban areas across the country. This "Tree Equity Score" tool was created by the national nonprofit conservation organization, American Forests, who we've partnered with on past tree planting projects.

In other news, our Co-Executive Director Jay Watson launched the 'Conservationist of Color Playbook'. Developed over several years with partners and content experts, it is a resource to help engage communities of color more in environmental issues, natural resource protection, and enjoyment outdoors.

We also continued our work with local partners in Camden and Elizabeth on tree planting efforts; assisted with Capital City Farm in Trenton, which provides food and cut flowers free to local residents; and once again offered outdoor nature and wellness programs in Trenton, Camden, and Jersey City, including birding, yoga, fishing, nature walks and bicycle rides.



MENANTICO CREEK PRESERVE ADDITION

89 acres, Vineland

NJ Conservation's Menantico Creek Preserve grew significantly in 2023, thanks to a public-private partnership led by NJ Conservation, the American Littoral Society, and Cumberland County. Together we teamed up to acquire 89 forested acres adjoining the preserve that will provide space for recreation, as well as protect wildlife and water quality. Henry and Abe Feigenbaum's heirs honored their memory by selling the land to expand NJ Conservation's Menantico Creek Preserve. The Feigenbaum property on Panther Road in Vineland was purchased using funds from the New Jersey Green Acres Program, Cumberland County and the Open Space Institute. NJ Conservation owns and manages the property as an addition to the original 600-acre preserve protected in 2018.

HUNTERDON COUNTY

ROCKAFELLOWS MILL

16 acres, Readington and Raritan Townships

NJ Conservation joined a coalition of nonprofit conservation organizations, as well as local, county, and state governments to permanently preserve critical lands along the South Branch of the Raritan River. The parcels are adjacent to the South Branch Wildlife Management Area and help preserve a larger contiguous natural area west of Three Bridges village in Readington. Preservation of these lands also contributes to stream restoration and the overall protection of the South Branch of the Raritan River. NJ Conservation, Raritan Headwaters Association, and the Hunterdon Land Trust acquired the parcels and then transferred sole ownership to Readington Township. The land was purchased by the three nonprofits using funds from the New Jersey Department of Environmental

Protection's Green Acres Program, matched by funds from the Hunterdon County Open Space Program. In addition, both Readington and Raritan townships contributed funds raised by their municipal open space taxes.

THOMPSON REALTY CO. OF PRINCETON II

69 acres, Frenchtown

This wooded property directly across the street from Borough Park was permanently preserved as public open space, effectively completing a green belt around Frenchtown. The site, which is in close proximity to the Borough's population center, will provide space for passive recreation, as well as habitat for native plants and wildlife. NJ Conservation assisted the Borough of Frenchtown in acquiring the property with funds from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program and Hunterdon County Open Space Trust. The property on Creek Road was previously owned by Thompson Realty Co. of Princeton, and was one of the last remaining large tracts of land identified as a priority for preservation in the Borough's open space plan. The new preserve contains a tributary of the Nishisakawick Creek and provides habitat for endangered species. The property also will provide climate change resiliency through flood control, groundwater protection, and recharge of groundwater supplies.

MORRIS COUNTY

TURNQUIST III

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

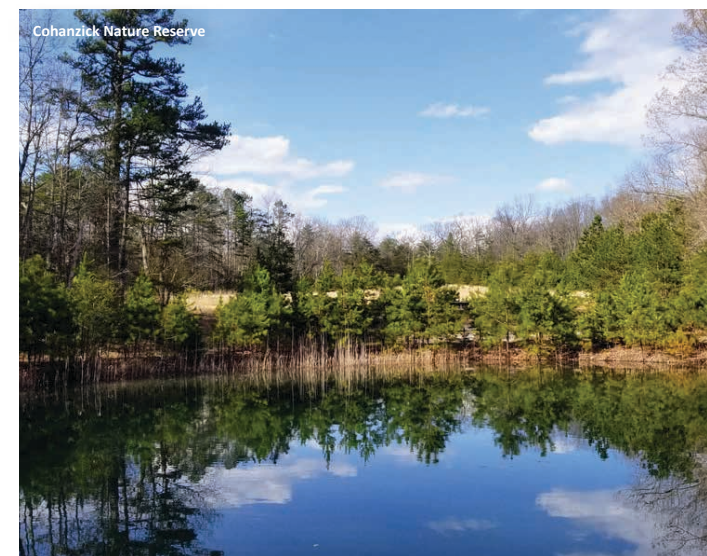
area of the New Jersey Highlands, the property is valuable for its ability to recharge groundwater supplies and serves as the entry point of a trail system. NJ Conservation purchased the property in 2022 and transferred it to Washington Township in 2023, to add to the town's preserved land holdings. 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

LEGG

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 is 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 NJ Conservation to better manage and protect protect the natural resources of the surrounding preserve.



SALEM COUNTY

COHANZICK NATURE RESERVE

63 acres, Quinton Township

In 2023, Native American Advancement Corporation (NAAC) acquired the Cohanzick Nature Reserve within the Burden Hill forest area, the traditional homeland of the ancient Cohanzick Lenape people, who have cherished and cared for this land for thousands of years. NJ Conservation is honored to have partnered on this conservation initiative with deep historical and ancestral significance. NAAC, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program, NJ Conservation, and The Nature Conservancy acquired the former Morningstar Fellowship Church property in Quinton Township. The land was then transferred to the sole ownership of NAAC. NAAC will hold Indigenous conservation education programs at the reserve, providing a unique opportunity for the public to engage with and learn from the land's original stewards.

DICKINSON

26 acres, Upper Pittsgrove

The Dickinson Farm is surrounded by thousands of acres of preserved farmland and is comprised of excellent soils. Located in the Muddy Run watershed, the farm was preserved with Upper Pittsgrove Township's farmland preservation planning grant through the State Agriculture Development Committee.

WIBLE

71 acres, Lower Alloways Creek Township

The 71-acre Wible Farm is adjacent to a major expanse of open space, including New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's 1,100-acre Maskells Mill Wildlife Management Area. This picturesque parcel is comprised of rich and productive soils. Wildlife species of significance that can be found on the property include the state endangered bald eagle, along with state-designated Species of Special Concern, the great blue heron and wood thrush. NJ Conservation's significant work in the area with a group of farms in Lower Alloways Creek led to a State easement purchase through the State of New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program.

SUSSEX COUNTY

CULVER BROOK PRESERVE II

172 acres, Frankford Township

The Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation (GCLWCF) acquired 172 acres in 2023 with the help of New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Conservation Advising Services. Funding was provided through the Open Space Institute's Delaware River Watershed Initiative, New Jersey's Green Acres Program and Sussex County. The preservation of this forested tract provides optimal wildlife habitat and is part of the GCLWCF's larger watershed protection strategy for the headwaters of the Paulins Kill Watershed.



Michael Huber Prairie Warbler Preserve

'23 PUBLIC FUNDING PARTNERS

Alloway Township
Bedminster Township
Burlington County
Cumberland County
Frankford Township
Frenchtown Borough
Hunterdon County
Morris County
Maurice River Township
NJ Water Supply Authority
NJDEP Green Acres Program
NJ Department of
Environmental Protection
Peapack Gladstone
US Fish and Wildlife Service
Upper Pittsgrove Township

Raritan Township
Readington Township
Salem County
Somerset County
Sussex County
Southampton Township
State Agriculture
Development Committee
(SADC)
USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service (NRCS)
Quinton Township
Lacey Township
Ocean County
Washington Township
Woodland Township

POLICY UPDATES

2025 STATE BUDGET WINS!

Funding for Open Space and Farmland Preservation, NJ Transit:

New Jersey is fortunate to have stable, dedicated funding for land preservation. As members of the Keep it Green Campaign, NJ Conservation worked to successfully restore an additional pot of funding for farmland and open space preservation that had expired in 2023. This funding comes via a Corporate Transit Fee, which not only funds public transportation, but also land preservation – helping to protect important habitat for animals and plants, mitigating flooding and stormwater runoff, providing clean drinking water and ensuring that all New Jerseyans have access to high quality open spaces, no matter their zip code.

Trenton: Capital Park: We are grateful to Senator Shirley Turner and Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, and the many cosponsors who led the charge in securing passage of a resolution to fund Capital Park in the new budget. Once completed, Capital Park will provide a healthy, active and vibrant green oasis behind the State capitol building. It will also connect important historic and cultural assets including the Old Barracks Museum, State Library and State Museum, enhancing the experience for visitors and neighbors alike.

NJ FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM REACHES A NEW MILESTONE

In 2023, New Jersey's farmland preservation program reached an important milestone – 250,000 acres preserved! NJ Conservation played an important role in achieving that milestone, helping to found and foster the state Farmland Preservation Program starting in the 1980s. Since then we have preserved approximately 24,000 acres of farmland. We are honored to work with strong partners throughout the state to help protect soil and other critical natural resources on farmland in perpetuity. In 2023, we helped push the number of protected acres over the top with the preservation of three farm parcels totaling over 140 acres in Morris and Salem Counties. Protecting farms and locally-grown foods isn't just about acreage – it's also about protecting the most fertile soils to sustain agriculture into the future. We continue to work to ensure soil conservation becomes a priority on preserved lands.

PROTECTING AND STEWARDING PUBLIC FORESTLANDS

Senator Bob Smith reintroduced a new forest bill in early 2024 aimed at changing the way our state forestlands are managed – creating a more comprehensive approach with broader input and backed by new scientific data and inventories. This legislation grew out of the 2023 recommendations



Destruction at Glassboro Wildlife Management Area;
Inset: Dickinson Farm in Salem County (see page 25)

from the Forest Task Force established by Smith and co-chaired by NJ Conservation, New Jersey Audubon, NJ Forestry Association and the NJ Sierra Club. It is critical that the Legislature passes comprehensive forest legislation to ensure our forests continue to combat the climate crisis as carbon sinks, provide clean air and water, and support diverse species of plants and animals.

HOLDING NJDEP ACCOUNTABLE

In early 2023, the State Division of Fish & Wildlife illegally cleared nearly 15 acres of protected wetlands and wetlands transition areas at the Glassboro Wildlife Management Area in order to create habitat for American Woodcock, a popular game species. The State has initiated some positive internal changes to avoid such missteps, but we have been pressing the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to publicly share its plans for ensuring that violations such as those that occurred at Glassboro never happen again.

In February 2024, NJ Conservation Foundation staff called the DEP hotline after discovering trucks dumping and filling wetlands on land located between two NJ Conservation properties in the Pine Barrens in Pemberton Township. Unfortunately, the dumping continued for several days. The NJDEP issued a violation notice and we are waiting to see if the owner of the land will be required to completely remove the material and restore the wetlands.

SUCCESS IN COURT! BARNEGAT BAY WETLAND FILL PERMIT REVOKED

On June 7, 2024, the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey revoked the NJDEP-issued Freshwater Wetlands General Permit that had authorized construction of a massive disposal facility for dredged sediment on top of wetlands contiguous to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and

Barnegat Bay. The revocation is irrespective of the fact that the dredge project has been nearly finished and the habitat destroyed with no need for restoration or mitigation under the illegal General Permit.

This court decision has been a long time coming! In September 2014, NJ Conservation joined litigation with Save Barnegat Bay and other groups to stop the environmental damage from dredge sediment disposal on the freshwater wetlands next to the Wildlife Refuge. Dredge spoil

should be re-used beneficially, to elevate the tidal marsh plain and build resiliency to sea level rise, not to continue the outdated method of piling up mountains of sediment in salt marshes. The NJ Department of Transportation may try to obtain an after-the-fact Individual Permit from the NJDEP to continue the project. It remains to be seen whether the site will be rightfully restored to serve as vital habitat and act as a natural buffer against coastal flooding.



'23 FRANKLIN PARKER CONSERVATION GRANTS

Since 1989, the Franklin Parker Conservation Grants Program has awarded nearly \$2 million to support 494 conservation projects throughout the state.

- In 2020, New Jersey Conservation Foundation added a racial equity lens to the grant program and has since awarded more than \$120,000 through 44 grants to benefit communities of color across the state and improve equitable access to quality open space and places to grow food locally.
- In 2023, 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.

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 and floods. Additionally, people with safe access to parks and trails exercise more and are generally healthier.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY (VINELAND)

YOUTH FOR CHANGE COMMUNITY GARDEN

This Community Garden connected youth to local resources in the community and engaged them in pollinator gardening, healthy eating, and nature activities.

BRANCH BROOK PARK ALLIANCE (Essex County)

Park Ambassador Program – Invasive Species Eradication

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

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

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 learned 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.

8 PROJECTS: TOTAL AWARDED \$30,000

FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE (Mercer County)

The Outdoor Equity Alliance Agrihood Internship

The Outdoor Equity Alliance Agrihood Internship project led 21 students from underserved communities to critically think about environmental stewardship, agriculture, and social welfare, through hands-on experiences guided by Leah Penniman's book entitled *Farming While Black* and Chris Van Tulleken's book, *Ultra Processed People*.

GROW IT GREEN MORRISTOWN (Morristown)

Conservation of Green Spaces for Pollinators and their Habitats in Urban Areas

This program provided middle and high school students from underserved communities with hands-on experience in an outdoor education and research program to discover the relationship between preservation of pollinators and conservation of land and habitats in urban environments.

HACKENSACK RIVERKEEPER (Hackensack)

Hackensack Riverkeeper Education and Advocacy Programs

The Junior Stewardship Program is a 25-week after-school program specifically targeted to middle school students. In addition to a deeper study of water resource and environmental curriculum, the program offered fishing excursions, watershed fieldwork, guest speakers and an eco-tour of the estuary.

URBAN PROMISE (Camden)

Monarch Butterfly Garden and Outdoor Classroom

The Butterfly Garden is an outdoor classroom where students engage in hands-on application of science curriculum. After more than 15 years of use, Urban Promise revitalized the butterfly garden to make it accessible to the local community and restored ecological balance within the space for the Monarch butterfly and other local species.

WEEQUAHIC PARK ASSOCIATION (Newark)

Young Urban Parks Professional Program

The Young Urban Parks Professional Program connects young people from Newark, ages 14-25, to Weequahic Park, their environment, and community, while building comprehension and awareness of environmental justice issues.



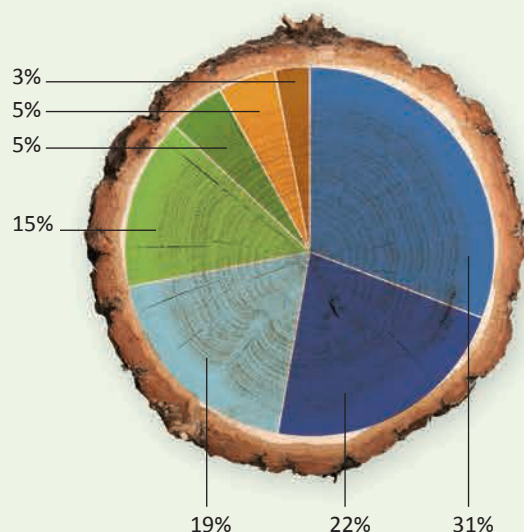
Prepping seeds for Urban Promise's upgraded and restored Monarch Butterfly Garden and Outdoor Classroom in Camden



Interns at CATA's Bridgeton Organic Community Garden market stand

Support and Revenue

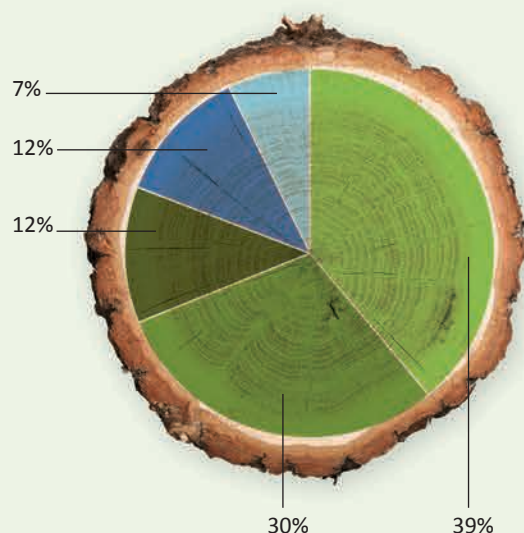
\$7,427,915*



Foundations	31%
Government Grants	22%
Individuals	19%
Organizations	15%
Investment Income	5%
Special Events	5%
Other	3%

Expenses and Land Purchases

\$8,054,717*



Program management	39%
Purchase of land	30%
Program grants and contributions	12%
Fundraising	12%
Management and general	7%

Assets

	December 31 2023 (1)	December 31 2022 (1)
Cash and Cash Equivalents	4,308,148	3,473,330
Investments	17,907,566	15,210,938
Unconditional Promises to Give, net		1,555,669
Beneficial Interest in Split Interest Agreements	125,852	148,035
Grant receivable	61,500	128,356
Other receivable	520,188	920,188
Land, Buildings and Easements	42,253,100	41,151,672
Right of Use Assets	159,520	211,089
Other Assets	203,907	262,995
Total Assets	\$65,539,781	\$63,062,272

Liabilities and Net Assets

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	346,449	380,575
Lease Liabilities	161,458	213,952
Total Liabilities	\$507,907	\$594,527

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	55,543,488	52,860,405
With Donor Restrictions	9,488,386	9,607,340
Total Net Assets	65,031,874	62,467,745
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$65,539,781	\$63,062,272

*Unaudited financial information

(1) Extracted from the December 31, 2023 audited financial statements.

To receive a copy of the complete audited financial statements, please send a request to 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 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. 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 ID number is 22-6065456.



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www.njconservation.org

Green frog, avianthic at Franklin Parker Preserve by Bill Lynch

“ UNIFORMITY
IS NOT NATURE’S WAY;

DIVERSITY

IS NATURE’S WAY.”

-VANDANA SHIVA