

New Jersey Conservation



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From Our Executive Director

Alison Mitchell

Stewardship for Tomorrow

When we preserve land, we celebrate the victory of setting aside important landscapes for the future. The stewardship that follows that initial success is what ultimately ensures that the special places we protect will endure.

Stewardship is both a responsibility and a perpetual promise to defend and nurture the values that inspired us to protect land in the first place. It is an opportunity to heal places that may have been compromised and to ensure that healthy landscapes remain that way. Every day, with your support, we are in the field restoring wildlife habitats, maintaining trails, tending farmland, and shutting down illegal off-road vehicle riding - ensuring that protected land truly remains protected. This is all essential to caring for the ecological health of the lands entrusted to us. It is this ongoing work that transforms preservation into a lasting legacy.

Across New Jersey, from the forests of the Highlands to the marshes of the Delaware Bayshore, stewardship efforts make a tangible difference. Through careful management and long-term planning, we are strengthening climate resilience and ensuring that these lands continue to provide clean air and water, and natural beauty for all who depend on them.

This work has never been more important. Development, climate change, and shifting public policies continue to challenge the integrity of the landscapes we work so hard to protect. Preserving land is only the beginning; the urgent and continuous need for caretaking is a challenge we will need to meet as a community.

Looking ahead, stewardship efforts will need to expand because with every land acquisition success comes additional responsibility and possibility. With your help, we will continue to nurture the places that make New Jersey special.

Thank you for standing with us and for supporting this essential work. Together, we will ensure that the lands we protect today remain healthy, accessible and resilient for tomorrow.

With gratitude,

Alison Mitchell



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

We protect strategic lands through acquisition and stewardship, promote strong land use policies, and forge partnerships to achieve conservation goals.

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



Hooded warbler by Tom Halliwell



JOIN US **OUTSIDE!**

SIGN UP AT: NJCONSERVATION.ORG/EVENTS
Check back often for more events!

FAR HILLS

Spring migration bird walks
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

Butterfly walks with
North American Butterfly Association
FRIDAY, JULY 10
FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

Autumn migration bird walks
WEDNESDAYS, SEPTEMBER 9 & 30
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

RAINBOW HILL

at Sourland Mountain Preserve

Spring bird walk
SATURDAY, MAY 9

JERSEY CITY

Liberty State Park Big Day of Birding
SATURDAY, MAY 9

Liberty State Park Birding Big Sit
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4



Liberty State Park Big Day
by Harriet Bailey

STOCKTON

32nd Annual Donald & Beverley Jones
Memorial Hike
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8



American snout by Tom Halliwell



The work of

RENEWAL

at Rainbow Hill

Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve is a mosaic of mature forests and former agricultural fields spanning 1,150 acres. Rich with natural resources but also shaped by long-term ecological decline, the land reflects both the resilience of nature and the challenges it faces.

As the preserve was being assembled, New Jersey Conservation Foundation staff observed that the forests on the property, as well as the old farm fields, were dense with invasive shrubs and plants such as autumn olive, multiflora rose, and barberry. Native plant communities were struggling to survive and a lack of forest regeneration posed severe threats to the ecological health of the site. Deer overpopulation was taking a toll on the land.



Robyn Jeney, Regional Manager, plants trees alongside other staff and volunteers. Photo by Geo Fellema

In response, we have embarked on a number of restoration efforts.

With the help of a grant from Natural Resources Conservation Service, we have been transitioning a majority of Rainbow Hill's old farmlands to warm-season grasses and meadow habitats, which support an abundance of wildlife – especially birds – and help with native plant regeneration. The property is situated on the border of two important bird areas: Amwell Valley Grasslands and Sourland Mountain Preserve, providing a unique opportunity for essential contiguous habitat.

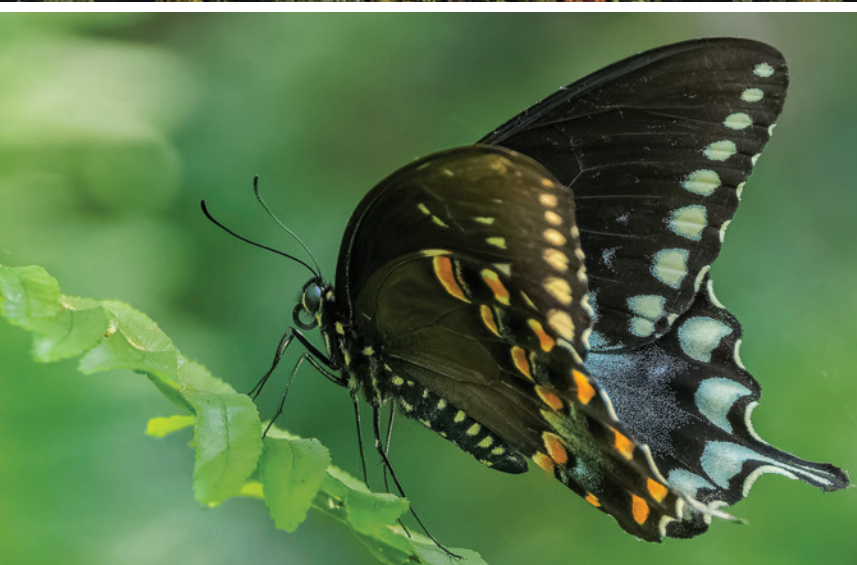
Another key part of the restoration is managing deer numbers, which has a profound impact on forest regeneration and native plant survival. Surveys show that deer populations on the property are significantly high, with counts of 125 and 110 deer per square mile over the past two years. Alongside these findings, farmers who previously worked on the land reported severe crop damage due to deer browsing, to the point that growing some crops, like soybeans, was no longer viable.

The scale and location of Rainbow Hill allow for a more comprehensive approach to deer management than is

possible on smaller, fragmented properties. NJ Conservation is continuing to refine and strengthen its approach to managing deer populations, building on years of experience, adapting new and creative practices and working in coordination with the stewards of neighboring preserved lands.



Spicebush swallowtail caterpillar by Colleen Prieto



The preserve has also revealed unexpected ecological gifts. In some areas, abandoned farmland had grown into red cedar stands that were then followed by ash trees that rose above the cedars. When the ash trees later died, red cedars were able to rebound, expanding their canopies. These red cedar stands now play an important role in sustaining the landscape by maintaining forest cover in areas where ash trees have died.

Tree plantings, an important element of the restoration plan, can be found in various places around the property. In collaboration with Sourland Conservancy and Raritan Headwaters Association, NJ Conservation planted over 500 native trees and shrubs along Rainbow Hill's riparian corridor tributary to the Neshanic River. Of the 20 species planted across the former farm fields, three stand out as star hosts for their ability to support biodiversity. Pin oaks (*Quercus palustris*), black willows (*Salix nigra*), and black cherry trees (*Prunus serotina*) can support more than 100 of New Jersey's native species of moths and butterflies at various stages in their development. *Lindera benzoin*, also known as Northern spicebush, was planted specifically as a host plant for the spicebush swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*), whose iconic caterpillar stage is dependent on this fragrant shrub as well as a handful of its aromatic tree cousins, like sassafras and tulip poplar, which are present in the landscape.

Over time, these plantings will help fill gaps in the canopy and support the gradual transition toward a healthier, more self-sustaining ecosystem. This spring, NJ Conservation and its partners are continuing to expand the riparian restoration upstream with 500 more native trees and shrubs.

The work to manage invasive species, support native plant communities, create essential habitat, and manage deer populations reflects a long-term commitment to renewal. The goal is to care for the entire landscape in all its interconnectedness so that recovery is possible, and the preserve can thrive for generations to come.

At Rainbow Hill, the work is ongoing, and the story is still being written.

From top:
Elise Cavicchi, Land Protection Coordinator, planting trees.
Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve by Jay Watson.
Spicebush swallowtail by Gary Leavens.

NJ Conservation Supports Community-Led Campaign to Halt Tower in Ramapo Reservation

A strong grassroots group of dozens of individuals rallied to stop construction of a 500-foot communication tower in Mahwah, New Jersey – this past January, they succeeded!

New Jersey Conservation Foundation’s manager of science and stewardship, Emile DeVito, joined community members and activists in successfully arguing that the integrity of the Ramapo Reservation shouldn’t be sacrificed for a tower advancing the interests of Wall Street.

Proponents of the structure, planned to be half the size of the Eiffel Tower, suggested it would speed up the transmission of stock trading data from Manhattan to Canada. “This tower was never about benefitting the people of Bergen County,”



Emile DeVito, manager of science and stewardship, points out native flora in Ramapo Reservation, including the American Holly pictured here. Photo by NJ Advance Media – The Star Ledger

DeVito said. “It would have destroyed forest canopy and been a threat to migratory birds and endangered species in the Ramapo Mountains.”

The 4,000-acre Ramapo Reservation is a wooded oasis that contains wetlands and high-quality streams, and provides habitat for threatened and endangered species. It was preserved for people to experience and appreciate its natural beauty, offering a place for hiking, wildlife observation, and quiet refuge from surrounding development.

Repurposing the parklands for the tower would have required approval from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the State Green Acres Program, the New Jersey Highlands Council, and the State House Commission. The residents and their partner advocates, including NJ Conservation, delivered strong testimony at the Bergen County Board of Commissioners meetings about the need to reject the tower, making it loud and clear that they would not allow the Ramapo Reservation to be compromised.

Protecting land requires constant vigilance. Large-scale industrial projects like the proposed Ramapo tower threaten the very purpose of New Jersey’s parklands. This victory demonstrates that when communities stand up, special places can remain protected.

Invasive Species Act STRENGTHENS PROTECTIONS for New Jersey's native ecosystems

On his final day in office, Governor Phil Murphy signed the Invasive Species Management Act into law. Its passage marked a hard-earned victory following more than two decades of deliberation and planning among policymakers, scientists, land managers, agricultural interest groups, and environmental organizations – including New Jersey Conservation Foundation.



Purple loosestrife by Vilseskogen

The new law does two critical things: it bans the sale of certain invasive plants and brings back the New Jersey Invasive Species Council, which was eliminated in 2010. The Council will consist of 19 members representing a cross-section of expertise and interests, including state agencies, environmental organizations, agriculture, the nursery industry, and academic institutions. Its main function is to advise the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on how to identify and manage invasive species, ensuring that decisions are guided by science and expertise. Enshrining the Council in the law helps make sure decisions about invasive species stay consistent and transparent.

The law also requires the DEP to create an online hub where residents and local leaders can find clear, practical information on identifying and managing invasive species and choosing native plant alternatives.

The action is long overdue. Invasive plant species are degrading our ecosystems. Across the Garden State, they are taking over forests, fields, wetlands, and waterways, often driving native species into extinction. Plants like common reed (*Phragmites australis*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), Japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*), and mile-a-minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*) crowd out the native vegetation that wildlife and pollinators depend on. Once established, invasive species can outcompete native vegetation, alter soil chemistry and hydrology, reduce wildlife habitat, and complicate land management and restoration efforts.

Non-native species have also had a serious economic toll on our state in the form of agricultural crop losses and increased pest management costs. These plants have also reduced recreational and tourism revenue in degraded natural areas where they have caused hiking, birding, fishing, and other outdoor activities to become more difficult.

With this new law, New Jersey joins the broader movement of 45 states that are adopting measures to address invasive species.

This is a big step forward and a moment worth celebrating for the landscapes we call home! With sustained commitment and partnership, we can begin to reverse some of the cumulative damage to our natural systems.

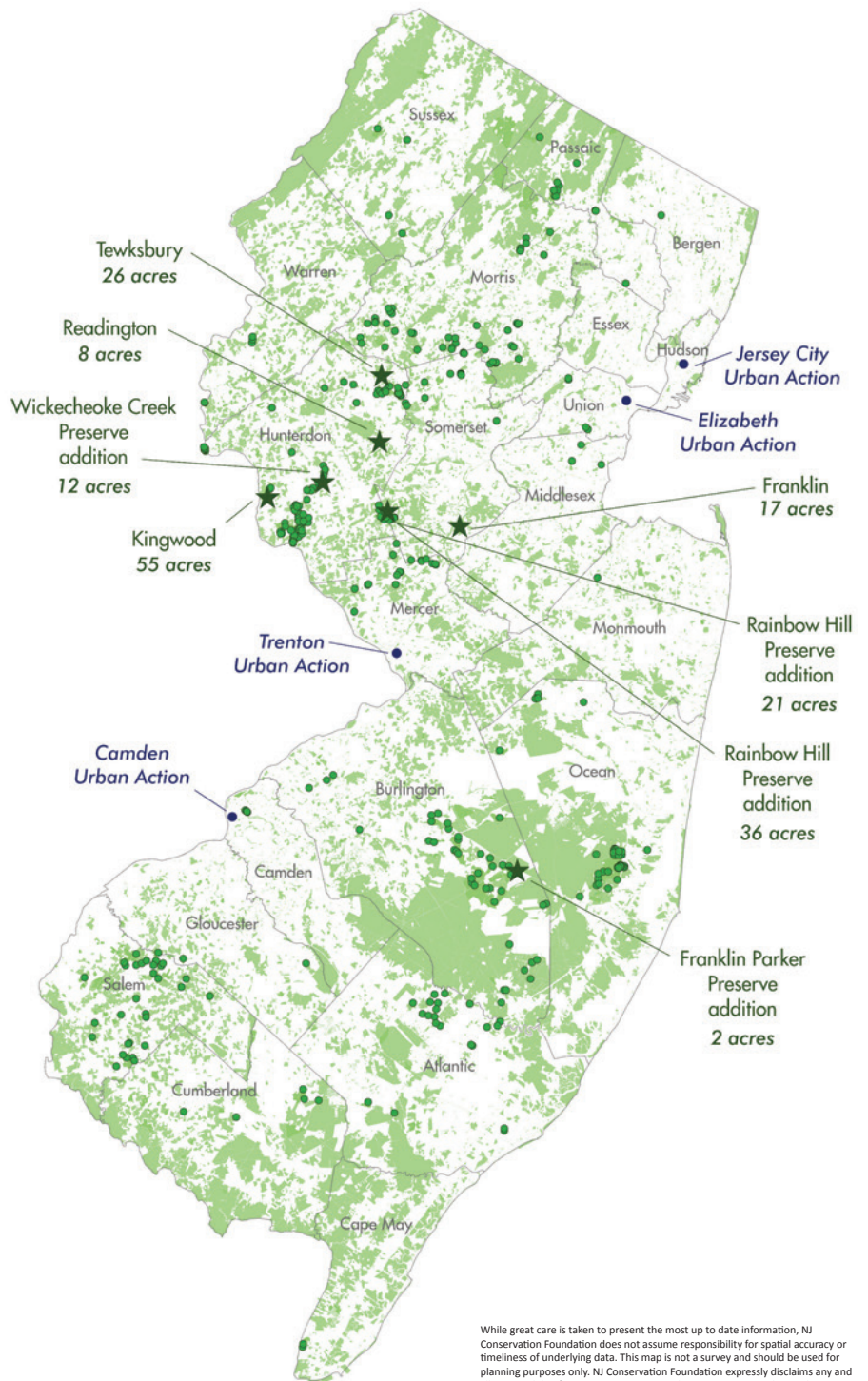
25/26

GAINING GROUND

November 2025 - March 2026
8 new projects
177 acres preserved

- NJ Conservation Foundation Owned & Managed Properties
- All Preserved Land

New Jersey Conservation Foundation and its partners permanently preserved 177 acres from November 2025 through March 2026. These lands include family farms as well as natural areas that safeguard clean drinking water, protect wildlife habitat, and offer scenic beauty and outdoor recreation.



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

Become a Member Today!
 Visit the website at:
NJConservation.org



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Over 50 acres added to Wickecheoke Creek Preserve

New Jersey Conservation Foundation's Wickecheoke Creek Preserve – affectionately known as “the Wick” — spans three historic landmarks and more than 4,000 acres of protected land.

NJ Conservation recently expanded the Preserve with the addition of more than 50 acres, encompassing a rich mixture of mature forest, shrubland, meadows, ponds, and bucolic farmland. The two newly acquired pieces in Raritan Township build upon a 40-year effort to protect land along the Wickecheoke Creek and its tributaries.

Rising on the Croton Plateau and winding through the rolling hills of southwestern Hunterdon County, the

Wickecheoke Creek flows through bits and pieces of the Preserve, spilling over rocky ledges as it makes its way to the Delaware River. Along its journey, the creek and its tributaries play a vital role in the region's water supply. Their waters ultimately feed into the Delaware & Raritan Canal, helping provide clean drinking water for surrounding communities.

The landscape of a 39-acre addition provides a haven for wildlife, helps absorb floodwaters, and protects



clean surface water. It is also home to remarkable species including the Eastern box turtle, the federally endangered Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat, and the tricolored bat which is proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

In the southeastern part of the property, a largely undisturbed, mature oak–hickory forest rises overhead, with a lush understory of native plants thriving below. To the northeast, land once used for agriculture is making a comeback – growing into a younger forest of red maple and hickory, where white oaks now stand among winding old stone walls that hint at the past. Together, these landscapes invite exploration while protecting the rich habitats that make “the Wick” so special.

Nearby, a tranquil 12-acre property also contributes to the protection of the headwaters of the Wickecheoke Creek, running along the eastern edge of the property, reducing stormwater problems downstream and improving the future connectivity of a local trail system.

The preservation of these properties strengthens the ecological health, scenic beauty, and public values of the Wickecheoke Creek Preserve. Continuing to grow the Preserve helps ensure that the area remains a vibrant, resilient landscape where nature and wildlife thrive and where future generations can explore, learn, and be inspired.



Photo by Robyn Jeney

Conservation victory in sight

In March, New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJ Conservation) signed a contract to purchase approximately 835 acres in southwestern Evesham Township, Burlington County known as the Black Run Headwaters Property.

For years, the forests surrounding the Black Run Preserve have been vulnerable to development, despite their importance to water quality, wildlife habitat, and the health of the Rancocas Creek. Now, after decades of sustained advocacy, those lands are finally on track for permanent protection.

The Rancocas' 360-square-mile watershed covers about a third of the land area in Burlington County and is key to the health of the larger Delaware River estuary. It is one of the state's environmental treasures and a popular site for hiking, birdwatching, and other low-impact activities.

In the early 2000s, scientists assembled water quality and ecological data documenting the exceptional importance of this area of the Rancocas Creek watershed. Since then, various planning and advocacy efforts supported increased development restrictions and acquisition of the property to permanently protect the land, with limited success. Then, in 2020, as part of a coalition of local advocates, NJ Conservation staff initiated promising conversations with the landowner about purchasing the pristine forested area.

Early this year, Linda Samost, on behalf of her family's company, Kettle Run Investments LP, a joint owner of the Black Run Headwaters Property, agreed with the other owners to sell the property to NJ Conservation for \$15 million, which is approximately \$2.4 million less than the Property's full market value. Evesham Township has agreed to subsequently accept ownership of the Property from NJ Conservation and incorporate the Property into its existing 1,300-acre Black Run Preserve.

“*Preserving the Black Run Headwaters Property means water quality, critical plant and animal habitat, and the overall ecological integrity of the area will be protected for generations to come.*”

- ROBYN JENEY

NJ Conservation's South Jersey Regional Manager

Jeney added, “This effort is a testament to the conservation values of the property owners, who have been a pleasure to work with. We're also deeply grateful to the Pinelands Commission, Burlington County, and the New Jersey Green Acres Program for establishing a strong foundation of funding that places the Property's purchase price within reach. Although we are still finalizing the purchase, NJ Conservation and the sellers are committed to completing the work as quickly as possible to ensure the Property will be permanently preserved.”

With a contract now in place, NJ Conservation, in cooperation with the sellers, will move forward with the due diligence process typical of a conservation acquisition as we continue working with partners to finalize funding, ensuring that this vital landscape remains protected and accessible for future generations to enjoy.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation welcomes new donors and expresses our thanks to all who made contributions between October 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025. With your support, we preserve and protect New Jersey's lands and natural resources.

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Ruth Charnes and
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Alexandra Warren
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Lynne Montella
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Leigh Grosfils
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Foundation staff and
all they do
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Theresa Krahenbuhl
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Carol L. Pfeiffer
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www.njconservation.org

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

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

Welcome New Trustees!



BRIAN QUINN

Brian C. Quinn brings his extensive background in health policy analysis and innovative program development to the board. As Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Associate Vice President for Research and Evaluation, he helps lead a team dedicated to understanding and measuring the key health and health care issues that are part of

the Foundation's strategy, as well as assessing organizational performance.

Prior to his current role, Quinn was the team director of the Foundation's Pioneer Portfolio, which promotes innovative projects marked by their ability to affect transformational change in health and health care. He was also instrumental in establishing the Foundation's initial perspectives and approaches to the issue of global health.

Quinn holds a PhD in health services and policy analysis from the University of California, Berkeley, and a BA in economics from Colby College in Maine. His training includes a certificate of study from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



DANA SAPORTA

Dana A. Saporta is a macroeconomist and a lifelong resident of New Jersey. Before her retirement in 2019, she was a Director at Credit Suisse in the Chief Risk Officer division. She led the Macroeconomic Risk team, developing recession scenarios for internal risk management, business planning, and regulatory stress tests. Previously, as

a member of the Credit Suisse Economics Research group from 2010-2016, she specialized in the analysis of Federal Reserve policy, money markets, and financial flows. Dana has over 30 years of experience analyzing the US economy, including 14 years as an economist at Stone & McCarthy Research Associates in Princeton. She also worked as an economist at the former Dresdner Kleinwort Investment Bank and at Citicorp (now Citigroup) in New York. Dana received B.A. degrees in Economics and Spanish from Rutgers University and an M.A. in Economics from New York University. She also earned the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation. Still active in several nonprofit financial organizations, Dana served as president of the Money Marketeers of NYU (2007-2008) and of the New York Association for Business Economics (2013-2014). She was named a Fellow of the National Association for Business Economics in 2018.

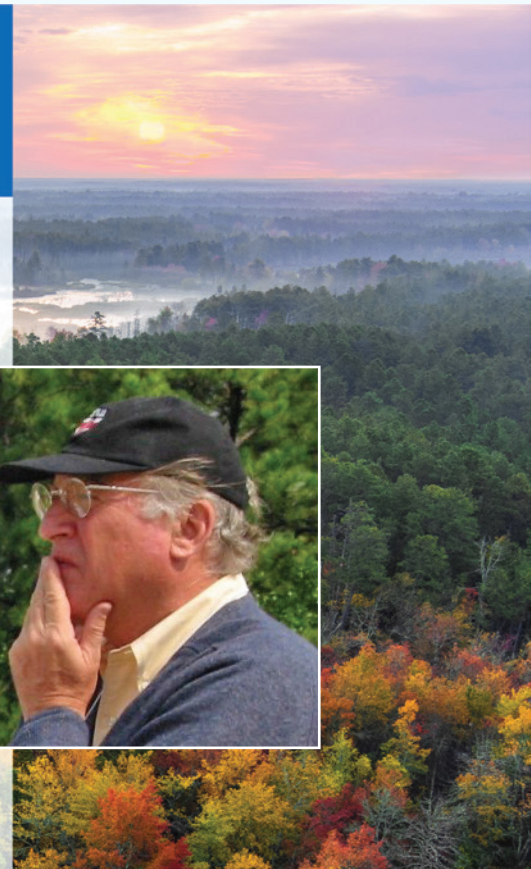
REMEMBERING SAM LAMBERT

This past January, New Jersey Conservation Foundation lost one of our most dedicated friends and supporters, and a former president of our Board of Trustees, Samuel W. Lambert.

In 2003, Sam led the organization through an ambitious and successful effort to purchase a nearly 10,000-acre cranberry farm in the Pine Barrens, now known as the Franklin Parker Preserve: the largest land purchase by a non-profit organization in the history of New Jersey. Sam understood that preserving this beautiful landscape with its unique and fragile ecosystem was vitally important, and his guidance and leadership were essential.

In 2024, the Red Trail at Franklin Parker Preserve was dedicated to Sam. Now known as the Sam Lambert Trail, it winds through scenic vistas and varied habitats over its six miles, giving hikers a taste of the region's incredible diversity.

Over the years, Sam played a pivotal role in supporting many organizations in and around New Jersey. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his tremendous contributions to protecting land and natural resources in the Pine Barrens and beyond.



Welcome, Katherine!



KATHERINE STIEH joined the New Jersey Conservation Foundation staff earlier this year as Events and Development Manager, where she supports donor engagement, fundraising initiatives, and event coordination to advance the organization's mission. She brings experience in event planning, stakeholder communications, and cross-team collaboration, with a background supporting development and engagement efforts. Katherine is a firm believer in clear communication, thoughtful coordination, and collaboration to help strengthen relationships and support the organization's mission-driven work. Katherine holds a BA from Seattle Pacific University.

Staff

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Erica Arles, Land Protection Program Manager
Alix Bacon, Project Manager, Sustainable Agriculture
Mark Barrick, Information Technology / Office Manager
Tim Brill, Regional Manager Central Jersey
Rebekah Buczynski, Project Manager, North Jersey Stewardship
Elise Cavicchi, Land Protection Coordinator
Anthony Cucchi, Assistant Director
Beth Davison, Highlands & Black River Acquisition Specialist
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Heidi Roldan, Director of Program Funding
Bill Scullion, Land Steward, South Jersey
Katherine Stieh, Development & Events Manager
John S. Watson Jr., Senior Fellow for Conservation Justice



Birds of a feather flock to art show

Bird and art lovers alike converged on SMUSH Gallery in Jersey City on Friday, March 13 for the opening reception of our NJ BIRDS x NJ ARTISTS show, featuring original pieces from our first series of trading cards. Attendees enjoyed a wonderful evening of art, conversation, and – of course – opening and trading bird cards! All the art was for sale and raised money both for the artists and for New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

You can continue to support the project by picking up your own packs before they sell out!

Visit: njconservation.org/njbirdcards



New Jersey Conservation Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and we are committed to building a diverse workforce and Board of Trustees.



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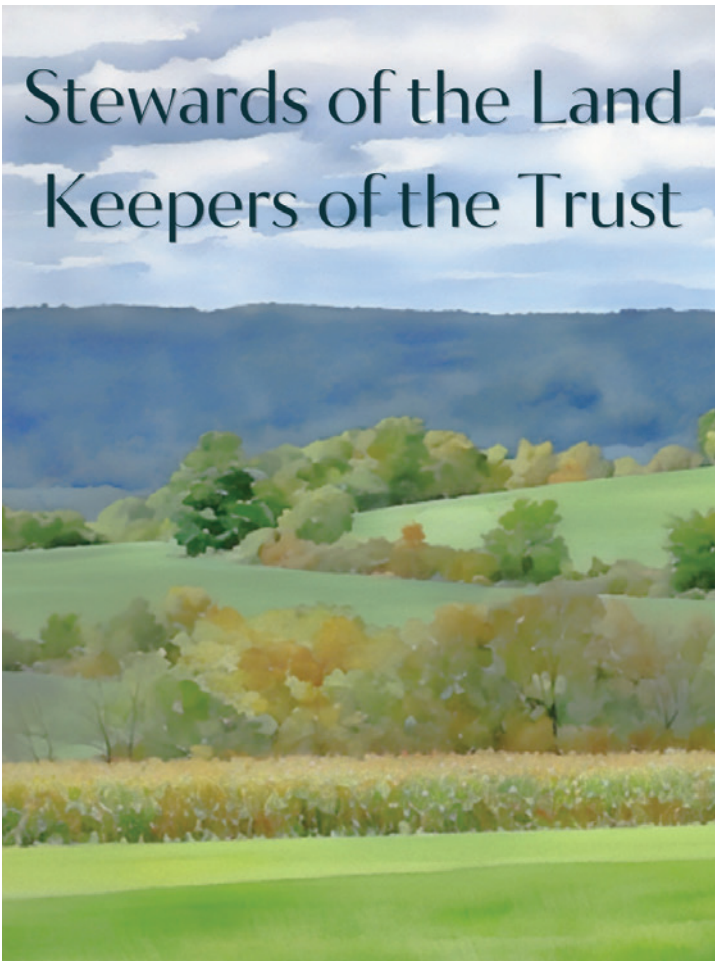
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Please send your email address to info@njconservation.org or call 1-888-LANDSAVE (1-888-526-3728).



Stewards of the Land
Keepers of the Trust

Please Join Us For A
Fundraising Gala

Wednesday, June 10, 2026
6:00 - 9:00 P.M.

Coach House at Ryland Inn
Whitehouse Station, New Jersey

Tickets Online Now



For sponsorship opportunities or general inquiries, kindly reach out to Katherine Stieh, Development and Events Manager, at Katherine.Stieh@njconservation.org