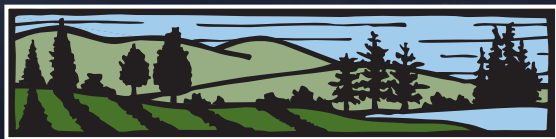




2025
ANNUAL
REPORT



New Jersey Conservation
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ABOUT THE COVER

New Jersey Conservation Foundation's largest preserve, Franklin Parker Preserve, sits in the heart of the Pine Barrens. It is a rare ecological treasure, and its cedar swamps, shallow lakes, and pristine tributaries of the Wading River showcase the value of our waterways. This image was created by Richard Lewis, who teaches photography courses at the preserve every spring and fall.

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP



Dear friends,

Water is a mighty force that shapes New Jersey's landscapes and sustains the incredible diversity of life found across our state. From forested freshwater wetlands to rivers and lakes, to the tidal marshes of the Delaware Bay, water is a fundamental resource that connects habitats, communities, plants, and animals. After all, our planet is mostly made up of water, and so are we!

The lands we protect provide habitat for wildlife, sequester carbon, grow food and offer recreation and respite. But we can't overstate how much preserved land contributes to the quality, quantity and management of clean water. Land conservation is water conservation — and both are essential to New Jersey's future.

That understanding is core to Nature for All: A 2050 Vision for New Jersey, an ambitious vision for the next generation of land conservation. After taking stock of six decades of investments in preserving open space, farmland and urban parks, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and its partners have set a new goal: by 2050, New Jersey should preserve 50 percent of the most critical remaining lands — roughly 500,000 acres — for their ecological, water resource, and agricultural values.

The ecosystems we preserve today provide services we depend upon and will need all the more tomorrow. There are many challenges, from climate change to human development. Yet, New Jersey landscapes keep on giving, providing habitat for wildlife, opportunities for people to experience and connect with nature, and holding and filtering drinking water for the millions that make their home here. Once these lands are developed, many of the essential functions are lost.

Many of New Jersey's urban communities were built along rivers and waterways that are increasingly vulnerable to flooding, and rising temperatures intensify the impacts of the urban heat island effect. Protecting natural areas and bringing nature into our cities are both essential parts of building a healthier, more resilient New Jersey.

We are pleased to share some of 2025's highlights in the pages that follow, and to explore some of the many ways water and conservation are intertwined. Read on to learn about our stewardship team's work to remove aquatic invasive species at our preserves, efforts to plan for marsh migration in the Delaware Bay watershed, the importance of protecting freshwater wetlands and other lands that provide habitat for rare species, and more.

These stories illustrate why the work of conservation goes well beyond adding acres to the preservation map. New Jersey has a long history of leading the nation in land preservation and environmental protection. Through Nature for All, we are building on that legacy with a vision for the future!

With your support, New Jersey Conservation Foundation will continue working to make this vision a reality and ensure that the Garden State remains a place where nature and people thrive together.

Thank you for being part of this critically important work.

With gratitude,

Alison Mitchell
Executive Director

Kathleen Bourke
Board President

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The mission of New Jersey Conservation Foundation is to preserve land and natural resources throughout New Jersey for the benefit of all. As a private, not-for-profit, nonpartisan, statewide organization, advancing this work depends on philanthropic support and grants from a host of public and private organizations and individual donors.

Recognizing that a healthy environment is critical to the well-being and survival of all living things, New Jersey Conservation Foundation is devoted to preserving land and protecting natural resources throughout New Jersey's rural, suburban, and urban landscapes.

Founded in 1960, New Jersey Conservation Foundation has spurred the preservation of more than a million acres of open space, farmland and parks through the creation and defense of some of the strongest environmental laws, programs and regional plans in the nation. This includes the direct, hands-on protection of over 145,000 acres around the state. The organization manages more than a dozen nature preserves, conducts public outreach and education programs, and advocates for sensible land use and climate policies that will protect the health of New Jersey's plants, wildlife, and people for generations to come.

To realize this mission, New Jersey Conservation Foundation is focused on a set of core strategies:

- Preserving thousands of acres of open space, farmland, and urban land
- Restoring key habitats and conducting important stewardship work to protect natural resources and benefit people, plants, and wildlife
- Mitigating effects of climate change, helping pull carbon from the air and provide buffers from natural disasters
- Securing strong state legislation to protect and steward forests
- Working with partners to create "Green & Healthy Cities," creating and maintaining parks, planting shade trees, micro-forests, and pollinator meadows in urban communities
- Increasing access to nature for a better quality of life – clean air, clean water, health, and recreation





MARSH MIGRATION

**in the Tidal Delaware Bayshore:
A LAND PROTECTION PLAN**

For generations, New Jersey's Delaware Bayshore has been a place of beauty where wide-open marshes line the land, turtles bask in the sun, and migratory birds return year after year. But today, this landscape is changing faster than ever.

Sea levels in New Jersey are rising faster than almost anywhere else in the world, more than twice the global average. As salt water steadily moves inland, we are losing vast swaths of vital marshland each year. And existing tidal salt marshes are becoming permanently inundated – submerged entirely. Many of these wetlands could disappear within our lifetimes. **Without action**, all of this current marshland will eventually be lost to open water.

Marshlands are a critical asset for the Garden State. They absorb some of the carbon that drives climate change and they provide critical habitat for birds like the piping plover and saltmarsh sparrow. They serve as natural buffers that protect coastal communities from flooding by absorbing storm surge during extreme weather. Sometimes considered “nature’s nursery,” they also provide a haven for young fish, crustaceans, and other spawning aquatic animals that are essential to our habitats and economy.

But marshes now need “room to move,” only surviving sea level rise if they have somewhere further inland to go. Amazingly, these systems can slowly travel inwards, but development and land use often block that movement, leaving these ecosystems trapped between rising water, hardened shorelines, and residential and industrial areas. Without space to shift, they will disappear.

There is still time to act!

NJ Conservation is developing a plan to identify and preserve spaces for these ecosystems to shift and survive. The goal of this project is to set a strategy for the preservation of marshland habitat along the tidal

Delaware Bayshore, looking to drier lands adjacent to current marshlands that rising water levels can convert to marsh. NJ Conservation has completed a data analysis of areas from Trenton to Cape May Point that can provide space for wetlands to “migrate” inward to help save this natural defense system and the wildlife that depends on it. The next step is to work with partners to prioritize and protect lands that will have the greatest impact.

This work builds on decades of conservation along the Delaware Bayshore and its watershed, in partnership with dedicated allies who share a commitment to safeguarding this extraordinary region, and addressing the impacts of climate change right here at home.

By preserving these critical areas now, we can help ensure that marshlands continue to protect our communities, support wildlife, and remain a defining part of New Jersey's natural heritage.





TINY WORLDS OF WATER

in Sphagnum moss

Often overlooked due to its small size, Sphagnum moss plays a foundational role in storing and regulating water, and in our ecosystem's capacity to function and thrive.

Found in highly acidic and damp soils, Sphagnum is a powerhouse. These mosses can absorb and retain 20 times their weight in water, acting like nature's sponges.

Sphagnum moss may be small, but its impact is immense.

By slowing the movement of water through the landscape, they help to curtail flooding and stabilize hydrological cycles upon which both wildlife and human communities depend.

Sphagnum's relationship with water is a two-way street. While it stores and regulates water across wetland systems, it also depends on constant moisture to survive and reproduce.

These mosses are bryophytes – which means they have no roots or vascular system and absorb water directly across their tissues. They even require a thin film of water for fertilization, creating a tightly linked cycle in which water sustains the moss, and the moss, in turn, sustains the wetland.

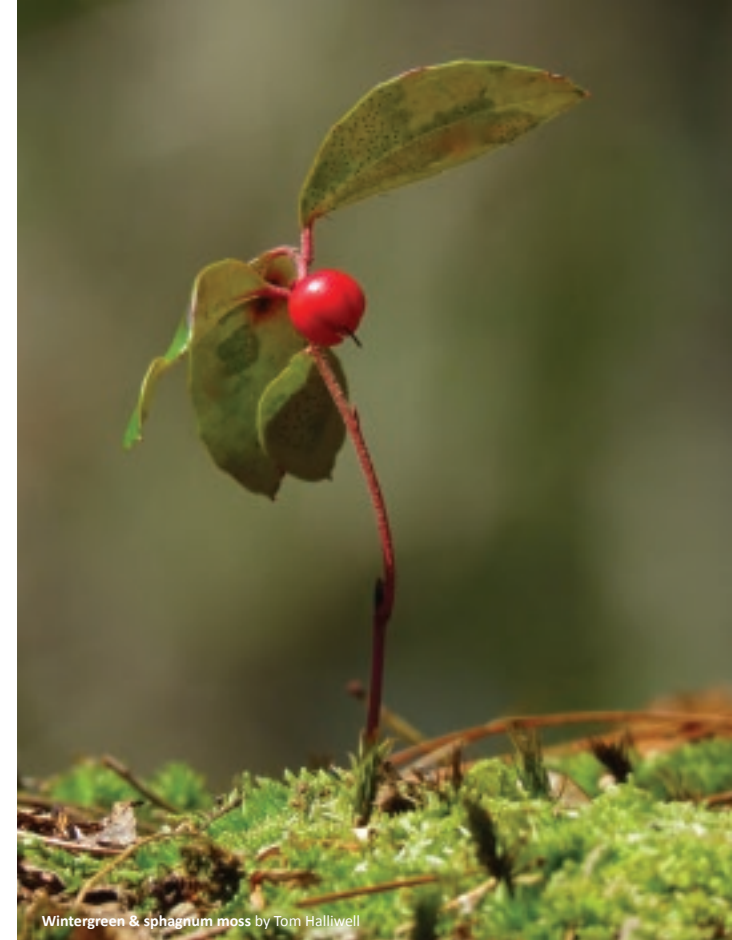
New Jersey is home to about 50 species of Sphagnum moss, and they are especially abundant in the Pine Barrens. Over time, these mosses actively shape the environment by building peat – accumulated layers of partially decomposed plant material that form the foundation of bogs and wetlands. This process stores and filters water, improving water quality by trapping sediments and influencing nutrient levels.

Sphagnum is also a critical player in climate resilience. Wetlands rich in moss store significant amounts of carbon, helping to mitigate climate

change while buffering ecosystems against extreme weather. This mighty moss creates the acidic conditions that define many of New Jersey's unique wetland habitats, supporting specialized plant and animal communities.

But these systems are under pressure and the threats are increasing. Changes in land use and climate, drought, and overdevelopment threaten the delicate balance that Sphagnum requires to survive. Because these mosses are so closely tied to water conditions, their decline can serve as an early warning sign to scientists and researchers of broader ecological disruption – often long before changes become visible at larger scales.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation's work to protect land and water resources directly supports Sphagnum moss and the forests and wetlands it sustains. By preserving critical landscapes like those in the Pine Barrens, we help maintain the web of life that our ecosystems need to thrive, from tiny mosses to celebrated species like Atlantic white cedar and bald eagles. The stewardship practices we employ every day sustain natural water retention that supports irreplaceable habitats, while allowing essential research and monitoring to better understand our changing environment.



Wintergreen & sphagnum moss by Tom Halliwell



Sphagnum moss by georgep008



The incredible value of New Jersey's

FRESHWATER WETLANDS

There is an irrefutable link between land conservation and water. When we protect land, we're also protecting our water systems and ensuring a balanced, sustainable environment – preserving the very fabric of life on earth.



Franklin Parker Preserve by John Beetham

New Jersey has lost over half of its original freshwater and saltwater wetlands. Until the later part of the 20th century, it was common practice to drain or fill wetlands to make land suitable for development and agriculture, and freshwater wetlands were often used as garbage dumps.

By the mid-1970s, 20 percent of New Jersey's wetlands had been destroyed, with losses as high as 72 percent in Hunterdon County and 50 percent in parts of the Passaic River basin.

Although wetlands gained some protections when the federal Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, many freshwater wetlands fell through the cracks because of the way the law was crafted. In 1983, New Jersey Conservation Foundation teamed up with concerned citizens, other conservation groups, and the late Assemblywoman Maureen Ogden, on a campaign to enact a freshwater wetlands protection law. We rallied for four years for limits on wetland destruction during development projects. Lawmakers debated and stalled, until Governor Tom Kean took the remarkable step of issuing a moratorium, or complete halt, on building in wetlands in New Jersey. The governor essentially forced the state legislature to act. Seventeen days later, the New Jersey Senate and Assembly unanimously passed the New Jersey Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act of 1987. With the governor's signature finalizing the measure, New Jersey adopted some of the strongest wetlands protections in the country, even stronger than federal regulations.

Now, most of the state's more than 600,000 acres of freshwater wetlands (and nearly 300,000 acres of saltwater wetlands) have some degree of protection under federal and state laws. But they are still vulnerable – threatened by climate change, contamination, and human-induced destruction that still occurs all too often despite regulations.

Our state's remaining wetlands are vital to water quality, flood control, and rare flora and fauna. Often underappreciated and misunderstood, freshwater wetlands are havens of biodiversity and play a critical role in supporting and stabilizing ecosystems. They provide essential breeding habitat for fish, birds, and a multitude of other species. Of the 15 species on the federal threatened and endangered list in New Jersey, about half depend directly on wetlands, including bog turtles and blue-spotted salamanders.

They also protect communities by drawing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, soaking up runoff from heavy rains and snow melts, and providing natural flood control. Wetlands also release stored flood waters during droughts and help protect drinking water by filtering out chemicals, pollutants, and sediments that would otherwise clog and contaminate our waterways.

Local economies benefit from freshwater wetlands as well. Hunters and anglers, birders, and other outdoor enthusiasts spend millions of dollars every year in New Jersey's soggy paradise.

NJ Conservation continues to protect freshwater wetlands and the incredible benefits they provide through the care of our many preserves and the preservation of important tracts around the state, like an 835-acre piece of land in Burlington County – part of the Black Run headwaters – that we are currently working to protect. This key parcel includes freshwater wetlands that are within the Delaware River Basin and flow into the Delaware River. Along with many other

important natural features, its sheer size means its preservation impact will be substantial.

Once protected, the way we care for land has tremendous implications for wetland health. In the heart of the New Jersey Pine Barrens, NJ Conservation's Franklin Parker Preserve protects cedar swamps, shallow lakes, and pristine tributaries of the West Branch of the Wading River. At nearly 12,000 acres, it is a rare ecological treasure for the entire East Coast, containing some of the most beautiful wetlands in the Pine Barrens and providing critical habitat for more than 50 rare, threatened and endangered species.

Further north, in Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve stretches out over a thousand acres and features a sparkling freshwater lake with surrounding wetlands that support butterflies, trees, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and other wildlife. This diverse preserve is carefully stewarded to protect and restore a beautiful landscape of central New Jersey.

Your support helps NJ Conservation to keep remaining freshwater wetlands healthy and flourishing so they can continue to provide tremendous benefits for generations to come.



Beaver by Blaine Rothausen

PROTECTING WATERWAYS

from aquatic invasives in NJ



At New Jersey Conservation Foundation, stewardship of land and water is an active, ongoing commitment. That sometimes includes removing fast-spreading plants that weren't part of the original ecosystem.

Similar to invasive species found on land, aquatic invasives pose a parallel danger beneath the surface. They profoundly alter the health of waterways, making early recognition and response essential to protecting our natural systems.

Given its impressive array of water features, the monitoring and removal of aquatic invasives is an integral aspect of stewardship work at NJ Conservation's Apshawa Preserve. Spanning nearly 600 acres in the Highlands of northern New Jersey – a region that supplies clean drinking water to nearly 70 percent of the state's population – the preserve encompasses a rich diversity of habitats and striking natural vistas. Apshawa Brook winds through the landscape to the Pequannock River, connecting the preserve to a broader watershed that supports both wildlife and communities. The scenic Apshawa Reservoir

lies at the center of this rugged and beautiful destination which is co-owned and managed with Passaic County.

Given the important role of Apshawa's water bodies, the discovery of invasive water chestnut called for swift, targeted management and sustained stewardship. By displacing native plants, degrading fish habitat, and depleting oxygen levels, water chestnut has the power to damage the ecological and recreational values of Apshawa Preserve's streams and lakes.

As part of our response, Rebekah Buczynski, project manager and land steward, often works by kayak to carefully pull water chestnut from the water's surface. These removal efforts, combined with monitoring, help reduce the spread of invasives and create space for native plants and wildlife to recover.

Other invasives are less visible but equally disruptive. Species like the silty pond mussel, found at NJ Conservation's Wickecheoke Creek Preserve in Hunterdon County, alter aquatic food webs by filtering out the microscopic organisms that native species rely on, weakening ecosystems from the ground up. Once established, they are extraordinarily difficult to remove.

Since 2019, a coalition of partners (see left) has expanded efforts to remove the mussels. The project has utilized environmental DNA testing to detect their presence, followed by targeted treatments.

When introduced, these interlopers enter an undefended system that lacks the biological

control agents – predators, parasites, and competitors – that keep them in check in their original ranges. Silty pond mussels from China were brought into both the Delaware and Raritan watersheds on the bodies of nonnative bighead carp raised in fish farms.

Prevention and early intervention are central to NJ Conservation's approach. Removing a small patch of invasive plants is far easier than restoring an entire lake once they've taken hold. Likewise, eliminating an invasive species in a small stream can prevent it from colonizing downstream in rivers or lakes.

The places we inhabit and enjoy are living systems with pieces that evolved together for millennia! We need to make sure that this rich diversity isn't replaced by a few stealthy actors that dominate the playing field. The creation of a new Invasive Species Council under Governor Mikie Sherrill offers a hopeful sign. Reestablished at the start of the year when former Governor Phil Murphy signed the Invasive Species Management Act, the newly forming council signals that New Jersey may turn attention to addressing invasive species on a much larger scale.

With vigilance, public awareness, and sustained stewardship, it is still possible to protect the ecological richness that defines New Jersey's waterways. At NJ Conservation, our work is rooted in the belief that every stream, lake, and wetland is part of an interconnected system. Protecting what lies beneath the surface ensures that New Jersey's biodiversity, natural heritage, and larger landscape continues to thrive.

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New Jersey Conservation Foundation is grateful to the Earl Family for donating a two-acre property that has expanded our Franklin Parker Preserve in the heart of the Pine Barrens.

The property is of high ecological value and located within a “core area” designated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) project. Preserving contiguous wildlife habitat, like these CHANJ core areas, is critical for wildlife to breed and find food and shelter.

A variety of species call the property home, including famous residents of eastern North American pine forests, like the pine warbler and the threatened Pine Barrens tree frog. The property also houses a section of the Biddle Branch, a tributary of the Wading River.

THANK YOU, EARL FAMILY, FOR YOUR GENEROUS GIFT!



Pine warbler singing by Michael Marsh

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As NJ Conservation's intern during the summer of 2025, Katie Wetter spent much of her time at the Wickecheoke Creek Preserve working with land steward Melanie Mason. The Wickecheoke Creek Greenway is one of NJ Conservation's oldest project areas and Katie's internship focused on enhancing and cataloging the area's resources into a new stewardship database. This was a unique opportunity to experience hands on stewardship work, as well as learn new technologies and understand what happens behind the scenes at a non-profit organization.

Katie also assisted with trail maintenance, refreshing trail blazes, and identifying infrastructure that may need updating or repair. Thank you, Katie!



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DON'T SEE YOUR NAME? LET US KNOW!

Those who donated in 2026 will be included in next year's annual report, so stay tuned!

Share your thoughts and questions with Bo Beshar, Director of Development & Major Gifts, at bo.beshar@njconservation.org.



Boat-throated grackle by Bill Lynch

2025

GAINING GROUND

Addition to the Schiff Nature Preserve in Mendham Township by Elise Cavicchi



Burlington COUNTY

162 acres, Tabernacle Township

NJ Conservation preserved (with the Pinelands Alliance) the 162-acre Pine Tree Center in Tabernacle. We were delighted to oversee the acquisition process to protect the Center and see it repurposed as the new home of the Pinelands Research Institute, a science-based field station launched by the Pinelands Alliance in early 2025.

2 acres, Woodland Township - Franklin Parker Preserve Addition

The Earl Family generously donated property that expanded our Franklin Parker Preserve in the Pine Barrens. Famous residents of eastern North American pine forests, like the pine warbler and the threatened Pine Barrens tree frog make their home there. The property is of high ecological

value and houses a section of the Biddle Branch, a tributary of the Wading River.



Cumberland COUNTY

118 acres, Vineland

This forested property, near the downtown areas of Vineland and Millville, lies in the Delaware Bay Watershed and plays a critical role in wildlife habitat connectivity and climate change resilience. NJ Conservation preserved the property in 2025 and transferred it to the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) in April 2026. The State owns and manages the property as part of NJDEP's Peaslee Wildlife Management Area. NJ Conservation secured grants from the Open Space Institute's Delaware River Watershed Protection



Hunterdon COUNTY

5 acres, Delaware Township

This five-acre property is bordered by the Wickecheoke Creek. Given that the property and house on the land were flooded during Hurricane Ida in 2021, NJ Conservation assisted the landowner with an application to NJDEP's Blue Acres Program. Blue Acres works to protect public safety and the environment by purchasing homes that are subject to repeated flooding, protecting the properties as natural flood storage areas, parks, and community open space.

57 acres, East Amwell Township

Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve Additions

The addition of two properties totaling 57 acres expanded the Rainbow Hill at Sourland Mountain Preserve to 1,205 acres of protected land spanning Hunterdon and Somerset Counties. The preserve in the Sourland Mountains of Central Jersey offers sweeping views of the rise known as Rainbow Hill. The new acquisitions, which include open fields and woodlands, were funded by Hunterdon County and NJDEP's Green Acres Program.

55 acres, Kingwood Township

The property, adjacent to Horseshoe Bend Park, was preserved in partnership with Hunterdon Land Trust (HLT). The project was funded through a grant from the Hunterdon County Open Space program to HLT and a Green Acres Program grant to Kingwood Township.

13 acres, Kingwood Township

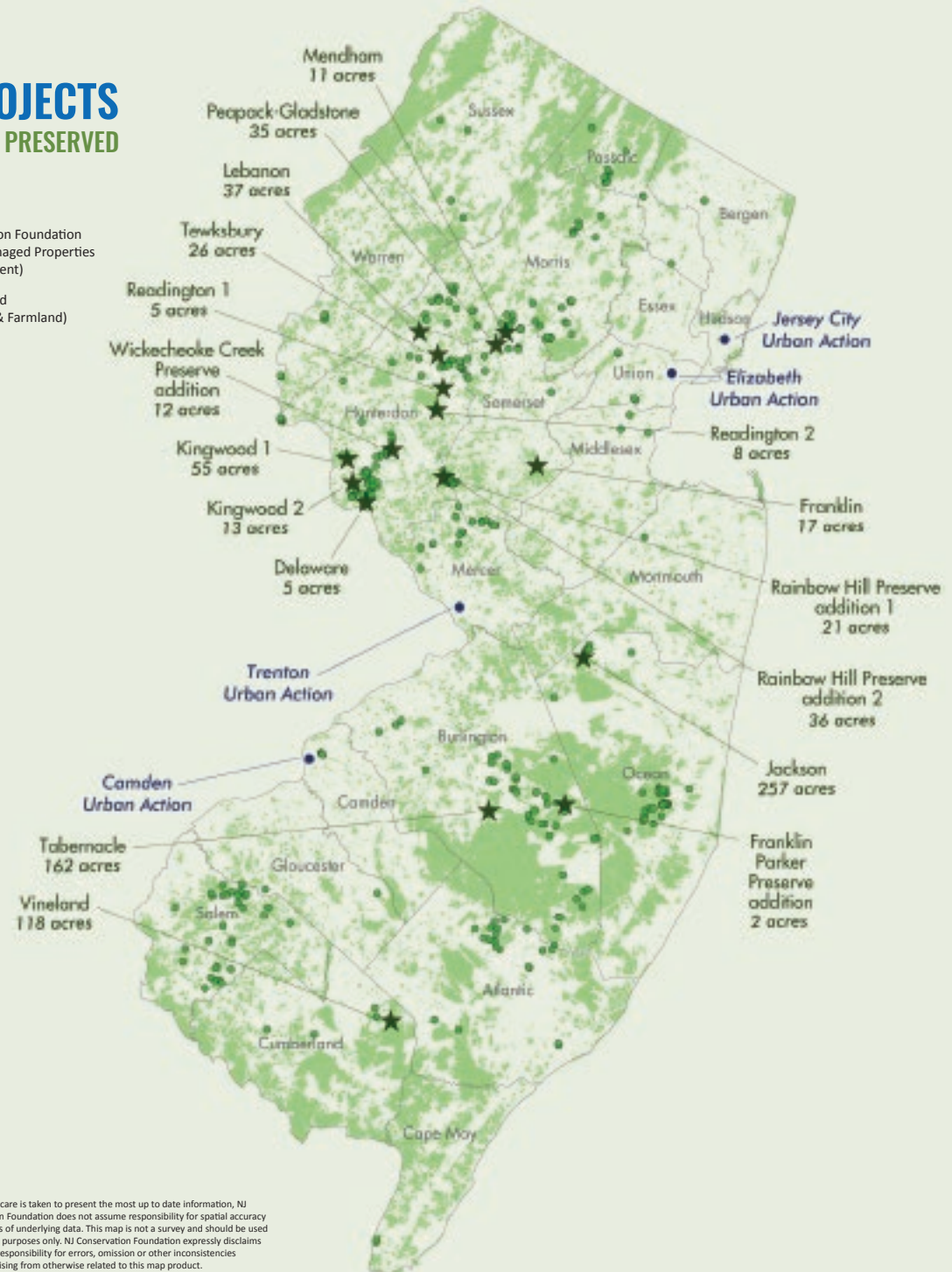
NJ Conservation assisted the State Green Acres Program in preserving 13 acres along the Lockatong Creek, facilitating the cleanup of the property. The land is bordered to the east by the Lockatong Creek and will become part of the State's Lockatong Wildlife Management Area.

37 acres, Lebanon Township

After meeting with the owner of the 37-acre Bassett farm to discuss preservation options back in 2023, NJ Conservation introduced them to the State Agriculture Development Committee so that they would work directly with the State to preserve the farm. In September of 2025, the land was preserved through the sale of an agricultural easement on the farm.

17 PROJECTS 820 ACRES PRESERVED

- 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.



Ironweed by Elise Cavicchi

2025 PUBLIC PARTNERS

LAND PRESERVATION/ URBAN ACTION

Burlington County	NJDEP Fish & Wildlife
City of Camden	NJDEP Office of Natural
Camden County	Resource Restoration
Camden County	NJDEP Regional
Municipal Utilities	Greenhouse Gas Initiative
Authority	NJ Highlands Water
Cumberland County	Protection & Planning
City of Elizabeth	Council
Delaware Township	Ocean County
East Amwell Township	Borough of Peapack &
Franklin Township,	Gladstone
Somerset	Princeton
Hunterdon County	Raritan Township
Jersey City	Readington Township
Kingwood Township	Somerset County
Mendham Township	State Agriculture
Mercer County	Development Committee
Morris County	Tewksbury Township
NJ Pinelands Commission	City of Trenton
NJ Water Supply	USDA Natural Resources
Authority	Conservation Service
NJDEP Blue Acres	US Fish & Wildlife
NJDEP Green Acres	Service
	Vineland City

STEWARDSHIP

NJDEP Green Acres
 NJ Department of Human Services Division of Disability Services
 NJ Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership
 Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic
 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

12 acres, Raritan Township - Wickecheoke Creek Preserve Addition

This tranquil property was merged with NJ Conservation's contiguous 18-acre property to the north that had been preserved in 2018. The additional 12 acres are an important habitat connector that provide wetlands for species like the box turtle and contribute to the protection of the headwaters of the Wickecheoke Creek, which runs along the eastern edge of the property.

5 acres, Readington Township

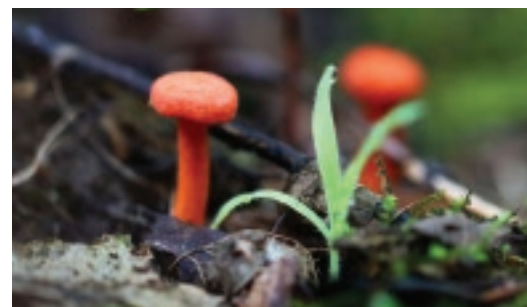
This five-acre property, preserved in partnership with Raritan Headwaters Association (RHA), borders Readington Township's Cushetunk Mountain Preserve and will primarily be used as an entrance to the Preserve. Funding for the project was provided by RHA and Readington Township through grants from NJDEP's Green Acres Program and the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund. Readington Township Open Space funds also helped bring the project to fruition.

8 acres, Readington Township

NJ Conservation facilitated the preservation of this land along a tributary of the Holland Brook as part of our partnership with RHA. The property borders Cornhuskers Park and bridges two of Readington Township's previously preserved properties.

26 acres, Tewksbury Township - Matarazzo Preserve

This Preserve is in the heart of Tewksbury Township's conserved open space, and is a testament to the partnerships that are key to preserving land. NJ Conservation worked with Tewksbury Land Trust (TLT) and the landowner, Jim Matarazzo, to ensure the property's protection and to secure public access. The



Cantharellus cinnabarinus by Elise Cavicchi

land includes mature oak forest, pine stands, a tributary of Rockaway Creek, meadow edges, and key wildlife corridors. The Matarazzo Preserve, managed by TLT, strengthens a contiguous greenway linking TLT's Christmas Tree Farm to a larger network of conserved lands leading toward the Township's Christie Hoffman Farm Park. Funding for the project was provided by grants from NJDEP's Green Acres Program and the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund.



**Morris
COUNTY**

11 acres, Mendham Township

NJ Conservation worked with Raritan Headwaters Association on securing the grant funding from Morris County that was essential to moving this project forward. This forested tract along the North Branch of the Raritan River provides critical wildlife habitat for several threatened and endangered species including the wood turtle, barred owl, bobcat, bald eagle, and Indiana bat. The entire parcel was subsequently donated to the Schiff Natural Lands Trust, ensuring its perpetual management as an extension of the Schiff Nature Preserve.



257 acres, Jackson Township

NJ Conservation collaborated with Save Barnegat Bay and other partners to secure landmark conservation easements that preserved 257 forested acres owned by the amusement park, Six Flags Great Adventure. The easements protecting the Six Flags property are held by Save Barnegat Bay and include wetlands at the headwaters of the Toms River — the largest and most ecologically vital tributary feeding Barnegat Bay.



17 acres, Franklin Township

NJ Conservation worked with partners over several years to preserve this addition to the Ten Mile Run Greenway, a protected corridor of more than 600 acres of open space. This parcel was donated by Larry Field of Franklin Field Ltd Partnership and is now owned by Franklin Township.

35 acres, Borough of Peapack & Gladstone

NJ Conservation coordinated a partnership to preserve the Tucker Farm in the Highlands. One of the Borough's highest priority farms for preservation, the land serves as grazing ground for locally-raised Black Angus cattle. Somerset County purchased an agricultural easement on the farmland from Andrew and Judith Tucker, ensuring permanent protection of the

property for agricultural purposes. The couple generously donated 25 percent of the value of the easement. NJ Conservation managed the preservation process on behalf of the Borough, securing a grant from the New Jersey Highlands Council for 50 percent of the value of the easement through the Council's Highlands Open Space Partnership Funding Program. The Council finances this program using federal funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Highlands Conservation Act Grant Program.

The purchase of the farmland preservation easement was also made possible with funding from Somerset County's Open Space Trust Fund, as well as a State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) Municipal Planning Incentive Grant. The Borough also contributed to the acquisition through its Open Space and Recreation Trust Fund. This is the first farm in New Jersey to be preserved using a combination of SADC and Highlands Council funding.



Urban Action

New Jersey Conservation Foundation is advancing exciting urban initiatives that expand access to nature, recreation, and connected green spaces across New Jersey's cities. Through partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and community members, we are helping revitalize underutilized spaces into public assets that strengthen neighborhoods and improve quality of life.

Jersey City, NJ Conservation, and its partners are working to transform the historic Bergen Arches into a vibrant greenway that will serve as a critical link in an 11-mile regional trail network connecting communities with the Jersey City waterfront. This is a one-mile abandoned railway corridor that runs through the heart of Jersey City and has evolved into an urban forest with tremendous potential as a public resource. By connecting the Bergen Arches to the Essex-Hudson Greenway to the west and the future Harsimus Embankment trail to the east, this project will create a continuous trail network linking Montclair and surrounding communities to Jersey City, expanding opportunities for walking, biking, recreation, and environmental connection.

In 2024, the partnership hosted a site tour of the Bergen Arches with elected officials and community leaders, providing a firsthand look at the corridor's scale and transformative potential. We then secured a temporary access agreement with NJ Transit and began environmental assessments and site investigations to guide future restoration and greenway development. Ongoing community input sessions and collaboration with local, state, and federal leaders continue to build momentum toward transforming this historic corridor into a safe, accessible, and connected public space.

In Camden, NJ Conservation continued to expand opportunities for residents to engage with parks, trails, and waterways through community-centered programming and partnerships. More than 250 residents participated in 10 events focused on trails, parks, water access, and open space, helping strengthen connections between Camden communities and the city's natural resources. NJ Conservation also provided free fishing licenses to Camden residents, creating new opportunities for families and community members to enjoy the outdoors.

NJ Conservation partnered in several important milestones in expanding public access to Camden's waterfront and recreational resources. The Cooper River Water Trail officially opened in June 2025, providing new opportunities for paddling, recreation, and connection to the river. The Water Trail received an award recognizing the collaborative effort to connect residents with the city's waterways and expand equitable access to outdoor recreation. In October 2025,



Cooper River Water Trail by Kara Foran

NJ Conservation and partners celebrated the groundbreaking of the Gateway Park Boat Launch, advancing efforts to improve public access to the Cooper River.

In 2025, with our "Trees for Trenton" partners, NJ Conservation planted nearly 600 shade trees throughout the city, focusing on heat island mitigation, carbon capture, and quality-of-life improvements for residents and visitors. While these newly planted trees will take time to reach their full potential, they have already transformed many neighborhoods.



Cadwalader Park bird walk in Trenton by Jay Watson

As a part of the initiative, we created a promotional video demonstrating the importance of Trenton's tree canopy. On multiple tours around the city, we demonstrated the irreplaceable value of green investments, identified new opportunities for trees and parks, and continued to build a constituency of supporters while also fostering the next generation of environmental and conservation leaders.

At New Jersey's largest urban community farm, Capital City Farm in Trenton, NJ Conservation's cut flower production provided over 450 bouquets to visitors, and offered "bouquet bars" to Trenton residents who created their own floral arrangements surrounded by beauty, open space, and fresh produce.

Progress towards the reconstruction of Trenton's Old Wharf Park continues, ensuring that Trentonians will have quality access to their river! Alongside our partners, our advocacy for the nearby Capital Park plan for the grounds beside the State House resulted in funding appropriations

totaling \$15 million to build this long overdue project.

We also worked with the Rescue Mission of Trenton to assemble a team to build Harlan Joseph Peace Park in the Rescue Mission neighborhood as a dignified space for Rescue Mission patrons to enjoy and have a place to stay cool on increasingly hot summer days.

Through urban action initiatives, NJ Conservation is helping create greener, healthier, and more connected cities across New Jersey. By investing in trails, parks, waterways, and community partnerships, we are advancing a vision where all residents have opportunities to experience and benefit from nature close to home.



Cooper River Water Trail opening by Kara Foran

Capital City Farm flower workshop by Jay Watson



2025

POLICY UPDATES

RAMAPO TOWER DEFEATED!

A strong grassroots group of dozens of individuals rallied to stop construction of a 500-foot telecommunications tower on Ramapo Mountain in the Highlands Preservation Area, and in January, we succeeded! NJ Conservation's manager of science and stewardship, Emile DeVito, joined community members and activists in successfully arguing that the integrity of the Ramapo Valley County Reservation shouldn't be sacrificed to advance the interests of a private company. The 4,000-acre reservation is a wooded oasis with 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.

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT ACT BECOMES LAW

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 NJ Conservation. The new law achieves 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. NJ Conservation's stewardship coordinator Allison Pieffer was officially appointed to the Council in the spring of 2026.



Ramapo Valley County Reservation by Bill Lynch

ROXBURY DETENTION CENTER CHALLENGED

In April 2026, NJ Conservation, with other environmental and public interest groups, filed a motion in federal court in support of Roxbury Township and the State of New Jersey's lawsuit to stop the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from converting a vacant warehouse in the environmentally sensitive Highlands Region into a mass immigration detention facility. DHS's approach to developing the facility violated federal laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires that federally funded projects be evaluated for their environmental impacts before they can proceed. In May, DHS agreed to the State's demand that they undertake an Environmental Assessment.

After an announcement that the project would not go forward in June, DHS stated the project may still proceed. We will continue to fight to protect the natural resources that would be impacted, including critical wildlife habitat.

NATURE FOR ALL NEW JERSEY ADVANCES

The Nature for All report, released by NJ Conservation in 2024, sets forth a fresh vision for land conservation over the next few decades with two important recommendations that are now a primary focus of our policy agenda.

First, New Jersey must preserve 500,000 additional acres of the most critical remaining lands by 2050, or roughly 50 percent of what's left in the state, focusing on ecological, water,



Invasive purple loosestrife by Vilseskogen

and agricultural values. Referred to as “50x50,” this initiative is vital for our quality of life and the ecosystem services these lands provide. These remaining areas – still vulnerable to development – store drinking water, control and mitigate flooding, supply local foods, sequester carbon, provide wildlife habitat, and protect air quality. If developed, their essential ecological functions and services will cease, leading to an overall erosion of environmental quality.

Second, we must establish a comprehensive Green and Healthy Cities Initiative aimed at greening the state’s under-resourced communities and rectifying decades of environmental injustice. The state has a long, distressing history of locating undesirable and polluting industries and facilities in low-income communities and communities of color. Antiquated water and sewer infrastructure facilities, built 200 years ago for smaller populations, are failing today’s residents. Many of New Jersey’s urban communities are located along key rivers and waterways and today are

increasingly vulnerable to flooding due to climate change. They also suffer from the “heat island effect” due to paved surfaces and not enough trees to provide shade. As a result, temperatures continue to rise in city neighborhoods, further threatening public health.

New Jersey must continue to lead the nation in land preservation, environmental protection and sustainability, and environmental justice to ensure a better future for all residents.

NJ Conservation is currently working on a series of bills that aim to speed up the pace of open space and farmland preservation in the state, including increasing incentives for landowners to sell land for conservation.

WHARTON STATE FOREST

NJ Conservation is working closely with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s (NJDEP) Division of Parks and Forestry on the management of State parks and forests, most

notably the Wharton State Forest Plan.

Wharton State Forest is the largest single tract of land within the New Jersey State Park System. In November 2024, after a lengthy public process, the NJDEP created an official forest map, which establishes where visitors are allowed to drive motorized vehicles within the 124,000-acre preserve, and where the forest is too sensitive to allow for motorized access. Rare plant sites and fragile wetlands have been destroyed by illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) activity and not enough has been done to stop the perpetrators. Active enforcement of the map is now needed by State Park Police and other members of the law enforcement community.

The most recent Forest Plan increased the number of closures of illegal ORV trails that threatened critical endangered species habitat, with very positive impacts, especially for the Northern pine snake and Pickering’s morning glory. Atlantic White Cedar restorations are also advancing successfully.



Extensive off-road vehicle damage in the Pine Barrens

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 these generous individuals who are preserving New Jersey's natural resources and lands for future generations.

You can become a member of the Red Oak Society 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 Beshar, Director of Development and Major Gifts, at 908-234-1225 or bo.beshar@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.

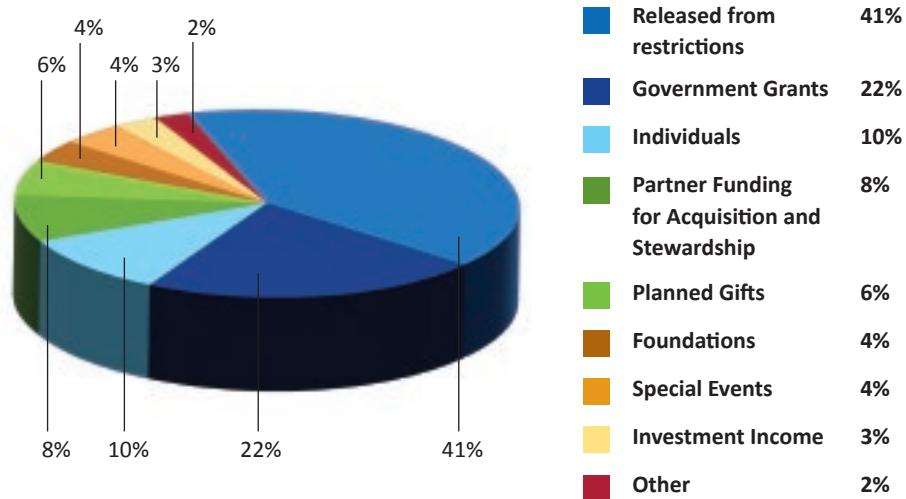
Our tax ID number is 22-6065456.



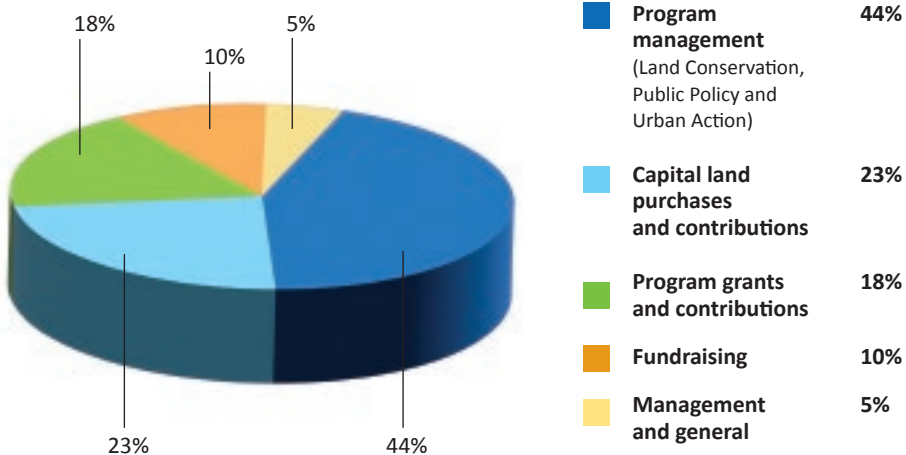
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Lillie DeBevoise*		Elizabeth H. Potter*	William T. Wyman
William D. deCamp*		James A. Quinn	Esther Yanai*
Hugo and Margaret deNeufville*			Robert L. Zion*
Rosina B. and Richard Dixon			

Operating Support and Revenue **\$10,905,908***



Expenses and Land Purchases **\$9,442,800***



Assets

	December 31 2025 (1)	December 31 2024 (1)
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,294,284	4,259,898
Investments	23,133,371	19,705,043
Unconditional Promises to Give, net	559,474	817,327
Beneficial Interest in Split Interest Agreements	94,371	98,852
Grant receivable		
Other receivable		521,143
Land, Easements, and Buildings held for conservation	42,259,973	41,793,951
Right of Use Assets	60,758	101,151
Other Assets	191,110	237,349
Total Assets	\$68,593,341	\$67,534,714

Liabilities and Net Assets

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	520,015	390,046
Grant Payable	197,034	342,711
Lease Liabilities	61,592	102,542
Total Liabilities	\$778,641	\$835,299

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	62,348,217	57,999,907
With Donor Restrictions	5,466,483	8,699,508
Total Net Assets	67,814,700	66,699,415
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$68,593,341	\$67,534,714

*Unaudited financial information

(1) Extracted from the December 31, 2025 audited financial statements.

This information should be read in conjunction with the 2025 audited financial statements and related notes.

To receive a copy of the complete audited financial statements, please send a request to info@njconservation.org or visit our website.



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



NEW JERSEY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION
Bamboo Brook | 170 Longview Road | Far Hills, NJ 07931

www.njconservation.org

Franklin Parker Preserve by Richard Lewis

**“Water is life.
No blue, No green.”**

- SYLVIA EARLE