

NATURE

PENNSYLVANIA DELAWARE

Spring 2021 • nature.org/pennsylvania

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Profile of a Conservationist **Richard Laird, Trustee** *Build Healthy Cities Committee Chair*

Richard Laird joined the board of trustees for The Nature Conservancy's Delaware chapter in 2017 and now serves as the chair of the Build Healthy Cities committee for the newly merged Pennsylvania/Delaware chapter.

Richard enjoys nature photography, especially while exploring the Delaware Bayshore. Richard is also passionate about TNC's urban conservation efforts in Wilmington and in nearby Philadelphia. In those cities, TNC works to implement natural solutions to a variety of urban challenges, including flooding and stormwater pollution.

"The South Wilmington Wetlands Project is another wonderful example of how we partner with others to bring nature's benefits to urban residents," says Richard.

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An aerial view of the partially complete South Wilmington Wetlands Park, taken during the summer of 2020.

The project will help address local flooding for thousands of residents in the surrounding community. Photo © Diamond Materials

Southbridge Wilmington Wetlands Park

A new public greenspace is coming to the Southbridge neighborhood this spring

During nearly every major storm event, residents of the Southbridge neighborhood in Wilmington, Delaware, find their streets and sidewalks flooded with nearly 2.1 million gallons of raw sewage and stormwater. Situated within a tidal floodplain of the Christina River, Southbridge has experienced chronic flooding, intensified by sea-level rise.

Since the early 2000s, the residents of Southbridge have been advocating for solutions through the Southbridge Civic Association. In 2014, the community's decades-long efforts paid off with the city's approval of the Southbridge Wilmington Wetlands Park project. Now nearly complete, the project has reengineered the neighborhood's aged plumbing to separate 36 acres of combined storm and sanitary sewers.

Once the sewer is separated, the storm sewer overflow will run into an engineered wetland, where it will supply water for a nearly 30-acre "wetland park." This award-winning community park includes a range of natural habitats, from freshwater tidal marsh to shrub meadows and upland forests. A boardwalk traverses the park to connect Southbridge with the bustling riverfront to the west. This project illustrates how restoring nature in cities can offer healthy natural ecosystems while addressing community challenges such as flooding.

"TNC provided critical funding to backstop the city's acquisition of a final parcel, which expanded the project footprint from 17 to 27 acres."

Jeffrey Flynn

Director of Economic Development, City of Wilmington

To learn more, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/SouthWilmingtonWetlands>



A TNC forest scientist marks trees in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania as part of a forest management plan. © Melissa Farlow

Conserving Pennsylvania's Forests

For people and nature through "Working Woodlands"

Around the country, states like Pennsylvania are losing healthy, mature forests to development, pests, wildfires and unsustainable timber operations. The Nature Conservancy's Working Woodlands program helps landowners ensure that their forests remain healthy, productive and profitable for future generations. Landowners who enroll their forest in TNC's Working Woodlands program enter into a forest management plan that focuses on creating a diverse, native ecosystem that is capable of withstanding current and future forest threats that are exacerbated by a changing climate.

"Working Woodlands is based on a simple principle. Landowners agree to keep enrolled acres in a healthy forested state. In return, they benefit from assistance with improving the value and diversity of their forest."

Josh Parrish, Director of TNC's Working Woodlands Program

Once a forest management plan is in place, the forest can provide a stable and predictable source of income for the landowner through sustainable timber harvesting and carbon credit sales tied to the additional carbon that will be stored by the forest. As the Working Woodlands easement holder, TNC receives a percentage of the income generated by the forest, which goes entirely back into

work that advances the protection, management and restoration of Pennsylvania's forests. Businesses that participate in the Working Woodlands program through the purchase of carbon offset credits are only eligible to participate if they are also working to reduce their own carbon emissions resulting from business operations.

In a landscape like Pennsylvania, where the forests we enjoy today were clear-cut within the last 150 years, the value of long-term and permanent land protection that comes along with a Working Woodlands easement will keep our forests healthy for future generations to enjoy.

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Snowshoe Hare Habitat



PA Game Commission Technician Rosie Liao tags and releases a snowshoe hare.

© PA Game Commission

Snowshoe hares are famous for turning stark white in winter to better camouflage with white snow, but in Pennsylvania's Pocono mountains, they're a little different. "We've found populations of snowshoe hare with brown ears, or brown rings around their eyes in the winter. You don't find these variations anywhere else," says Emily Boyd, small mammal biologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission. "We've even found fully brown hares in winter when they should be white."

The Poconos are thought to be a stronghold for Pennsylvania's snowshoe hare population, which have been studied for years, including a recent project from the Game Commission. Technicians Rosie Liao and Sarah Pesi are examining how controlled burns are affecting hare behavior and populations. The hares are trapped and fitted with GPS collars that allow Sarah and Rosie to track their movements before and after controlled burns that are conducted with TNC assistance.

The goal is to better understand how controlled burns are influencing habitat for the hares, particularly in a state where populations may be declining. "As climate change continues to impact our landscapes," says Emily "we need to focus on improving our habitat management for species like the snowshoe hare."