With your help, our ambitious 2015 – 2020 conservation goals are in sight – and in a few cases achieved early!

This year has seen some big conservation achievements, including the largest dam removal to date in the state of New Jersey. Our efforts to focus statewide protection of lands and waters on the highest-priority areas are gaining momentum. And, as always, we are planning for the future, preparing to raise the bar on our conservation impact.

How can we have an even bigger conservation impact? Certainly, it will involve leveraging our strengths – our foundation in science, our experience bringing together collaborative partnerships, and our track record of delivering tangible, lasting results. Consider Bobcat Alley: it not only contains critical habitat for our state’s last remaining wild feline, it is a key link in a larger greenway stretching from Alabama into Canada that will be a vital migratory corridor as temperatures continue to warm. And we will be applying what we’ve learned implementing nature-based solutions for coastal resilience, not only along the Jersey Shore, but also in cities and other communities where nature can help address flooding and other impacts from climate change.

But first, let’s take a moment to celebrate the conservation progress that you made possible this year - thank you!

Yours in conservation,
Dr. Barbara Brummer

The Nature Conservancy in New Jersey
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For more information about The Nature Conservancy and ways to support it, please call 908-879-7262 or email scourtney@tnc.org

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The Nature Conservancy in New Jersey ended FY2019 on a high note, having reached 89% of our goal for the Campaign for the Real Nature of New Jersey, which we will wrap up in 2020. Operating expenses stood at $6.7 million and capital expenses were $5.4 million. The pie chart below shows primary sources of operating and capital revenue. Private donors accounted for 43% of the total. Strong public sector support for the Columbia Dam removal project represented 41.5% of overall revenue, an unusually high percentage for public funding. Other public funds and contracts represented 3% of total revenue.

For more information, please contact Betsy Wullert at 908-955-0360.
Driven by science and focused on identifying the most critical lands to protect for people, wildlife and resilience to climate change, the New Jersey Chapter built on its legacy of collaboration, resulting in 2,624 newly protected acres.

**Bobcat Alley Land Protection**

The Nature Conservancy continues to protect land in Bobcat Alley, a 32,000-acre corridor linking the Highlands to the Appalachians that provides vital habitat for species like the endangered bobcat and serves as a key link in a larger east coast greenway.

In the summer of 2018, we acquired 109 acres in the heart of Bobcat Alley that exemplify the corridor’s ecological significance. This hilly property in Hardwick Township is quintessential “ridge and valley.” Its rich variety of terrain — open glades, rock outcroppings, forested slopes and wetland valleys — make the parcel a high-ranking site for climate resilience, setting the stage for species to adjust to changing climate conditions. Vernal pools and seasonal headwaters provide clean water for the Paulins Kill, the key Delaware River tributary where our freshwater restoration is focused. This property will become part of a new preserve named in memory of our founding Trustee, Elizabeth “Betty” Merck.

**Tracking Wildlife**

The New Jersey Chapter has teamed up with New Jersey’s Endangered and Nongame Species Program to track wildlife on the move. The Conservancy is monitoring wildlife along roads within a 17-mile stretch of Bobcat Alley, which connects the Highlands to the Appalachians, and within a nine-mile corridor between the Highlands and our High Mountain Park Preserve to support an effort called Connecting Habitats Across New Jersey (CHANJ). The goal of CHANJ is to improve conditions for animals as they navigate the dense road network in our state.

The summer of 2018 was our first of three field seasons with weekly on-the-ground assessments of wildlife crossing roads in the targeted corridors; our second season is now underway. We’ve also installed motion-activated wildlife cameras to...
Four Decades Saving a New Jersey Treasure

To protect New Jersey’s lands and waters at a pace and scale that matters, collaboration with other conservation organizations is an essential strategy for us. This year, the Chapter was excited to collaborate with partners to protect land in important places throughout the state including the Highlands, Pine Barrens and Sourlands.

We are especially proud to be among the partners that assisted New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Cumberland County in protecting 600 acres at Menantico Creek. This is the latest, but not last, piece of a 40-year land protection effort that covers tens of thousands of acres, including more than 5,300 acres protected in Nature Conservancy preserves (see map). Located in the Wild and Scenic Maurice River system, long threatened by development of industrial ports and massive housing developments, the area’s forests are breeding grounds for migratory songbirds including ruby-throated hummingbirds, scarlet tanagers and yellow-throated warblers. Its acquisition helped protect more than two miles of Menantico Creek and its tributaries, pristine waterways that attract ospreys and bald eagles. What a wonderful addition to the thousands of acres that New Jersey’s land conservation community has worked together to protect in this rich expanse of forest!

understand how animals use existing structures like culverts and bridges to go under or over roads.

We have observed a wide variety of animals including bobcat, fox, raccoon, great blue heron, long-tailed weasel, river otter – and, of course, many deer. The wildlife cameras are particularly helpful in capturing data on nocturnal species and those that shy away from human contact and observation; bobcats fall into both those categories. The monitoring data will inform future planning by transportation officials and help identify places for targeted land protection and retrofitting of passageways to encourage more animals to use them.
With increasing evidence that nature-based solutions like oyster reefs and marsh grasses can help protect our coastline from erosion, flooding and other risks to people and property, the Chapter continued its push for use of these green alternatives to options like bulkheads and seawalls.

This year, through our Living Shoreline Incentives Program, we awarded incentive grants to jump-start four new projects. These projects demonstrate the variety of forms that living shorelines can take. In Beach Haven, we are helping with the construction of an oyster reef breakwater. Marsh sills, which include a low reef of rocks and rebuilt marsh running parallel to the coast, will be used in Ship Bottom and on the Navesink River in Red Bank. And an array of Wave Attenuation Devices® will be incorporated into a project in Waretown on Barnegat Bay. In addition to grants, we assist recipients by reviewing designs, supporting agency relationships and helping to identify potential funding.

To reach the broader coastal management community, TNC and Rutgers University led a standing-room only workshop aimed at helping municipal planners incorporate nature-based solutions into their plans and also conducted a webinar focused on securing funding. Since we launched our coastal program, we have engaged an unexpectedly wide variety of professionals and more than two dozen communities through workshops and trainings and are sensing a groundswell of interest in using nature to address flooding, erosion and other hazards.
Enhancing Habitat for Beach-Nesting Birds

In addition to helping our towns become resilient to rising seas and a changing climate, we also want to help our iconic beach-nesting birds thrive. The Nature Conservancy’s South Cape May Meadows Preserve is a popular destination for both people and birds. But over the past several years, most nests along the beach have been lost to predators, while encroaching vegetation has diminished nesting attempts.

This season, our staff came up with creative ideas to improve habitat, encourage nesting and thwart predators. On the beach, they removed vegetation, added 45 tons of crushed shell to create habitat beach-nesting birds prefer, and added fencing above and below ground to keep digging predators out. In a marsh further inland, the team added 75 tons of shell to an island less accessible to predators. Staff constructed a custom, solar-powered system to play piping plover and least tern calls and built plover and tern decoys, along with painted wooden eggs, to attract beach-nesters and confuse predators like crows.

So far, least terns have established two colonies on our beach: one inside the fence with at least 10 nests and another just outside with at least 6. We have also observed three American oystercatcher nests. While proof of success will come from the number of chicks fledged at the end of the season, we’re seeing many more birds than in recent years, so we are hopeful that our experiment is making a difference!

Strengthening our marshes

When it comes to reducing risks to people and property, we know that nature can be part of the solution and that marshes play an important role. But with sea level rise, many of our precious marshes are drowning.

To help marshes (and the flood protection they offer) survive farther into the future, the Conservancy and partners have been testing an innovative technique that elevates sinking marshes using sand and soil dredged from nearby clogged boat channels. The technique was employed at marshes in Avalon, Stone Harbor and Fortescue between 2014 and 2016. Since then, staff and volunteers have been tracking vegetation recovery and elevation changes to ensure that the marshes are benefitting as expected; measurements from the 2018 field season were encouraging!

Data from this project will identify factors driving marsh recovery and contribute to the recently-launched Seven Mile Island Living Laboratory, designed to advance techniques that marry dredging of the Intracoastal Waterway and restoration of marshes. Given our experience, The Nature Conservancy is serving on the Army Corps of Engineers’ Laboratory advisory group.
We have reached several exciting milestones toward our goal to restore the health of the entire Paulins Kill watershed: completing the largest dam removal in New Jersey history, exceeding our ambitious tree-planting goal, and designing a restoration plan for the degraded headwaters of this key Delaware River tributary.

Beyond the Columbia Dam

Five years after the first meeting of a coalition to remove the Columbia Dam, the project is complete, and the Paulins Kill is flowing freely into the Delaware River! While record-breaking rain required constant and creative problem-solving, the last piece of the dam was removed in March. Just weeks later, on Earth Day, American shad were documented swimming upstream in Blairstown—the first time in over 100 years that they were able to access their historic spawning grounds! In addition to removing the dam, we stabilized three nearby bridges and planted over 10,500 native trees and shrubs in floodplains formerly inundated by the dam.

Inspired in part by our success with the Columbia Dam, the Town of Blairstown has asked The Nature Conservancy to take the lead on removal of the Paulina Dam, 10 miles upriver from the Columbia. Its removal will open another seven miles of river for migratory fish like shad and reduce risks for paddlers and anglers, as well as landowners downstream. We are also working with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on a feasibility study to remove the County Line Dam, a smaller, privately owned dam upstream from the Paulina. In total, these three dam removals will reopen nearly 45 miles of mainstem river and tributaries!
Goal Exceeded!

We are delighted to report that the extensive floodplain plantings at the former Columbia Dam site have helped us to exceed our goal to plant 50,000 trees in the Paulins Kill watershed by 2020 - a full year early! Since 2012, the Conservancy, our partners and volunteers have planted 54,689 native trees and shrubs along the banks and floodplains of the Paulins Kill. These plantings are establishing a root system to stabilize the stream banks and prevent erosion, providing habitat for a variety of species, and filtering nutrients and other pollutants. As they mature, they will provide a canopy to cool the waters. And our planting efforts in the Paulins Kill are still going strong!

A Design for Headwaters Restoration

The Paulins Kill’s headwaters, in an area known as Hyper-Humus after a mining company that once operated there, were seriously degraded by decades of peat mining. After extensive community outreach and site surveys, we have developed a concept design to restore the 1,000-acre site, now part of a wildlife management area owned by the State of New Jersey. In addition to re-creating a more natural, meandering flow to the river that will significantly improve water quality, the design will create varied wildlife habitat and add amenities such as bird blinds and pedestrian bridges for the many visitors to this popular site.
Focusing Action on Land Protection

In this most densely populated state, there has long been strong public support for protecting the lands that safeguard our drinking water, clean our air, sustain wildlife, grow our food, provide places for people to enjoy the outdoors and, more recently, help us adapt to a warming climate. Because land here is expensive and resources are limited, in 2016 The Nature Conservancy, Rowan University and New Jersey Conservation Foundation came together with 22 conservation-focused groups to accelerate preservation of our state’s most important remaining natural and cultural land resources. The result was the NJ Conservation Blueprint, an interactive mapping tool that provides access to the most current data on New Jersey’s lands.

Enthusiastically adopted early on by the major land protection agencies and nonprofits, the Blueprint has continued to gain users, attracting 9,000 users over its lifetime. We were excited to release a new website interface this spring designed to shorten the training curve for new users. And we will continue to work to make it even more useful to an even broader audience, including government and land trust professionals, open space committees, planning boards, environmental commissions, and interested people like you! The graphic on this page can only give an inkling of the richness and accessibility of the data. Take a look at www.njblueprint.org and let us know what you think at newjersey@tnc.org.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

To address climate change and the threats it poses to our world, every chapter in The Nature Conservancy is pursuing actions that, given the unique circumstances in each state, stand the best chance of success at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The New Jersey Chapter’s new Climate Change & Energy Policy Manager began by exploring the state’s climate change landscape to find the best niche for us to add value to existing nonprofit initiatives. Research and outreach to nonprofits, universities, legislators and companies identified a substantial need to engage New Jersey’s corporate sector, especially since corporate practices can have an outsized impact on emissions. We have engaged with 25 corporations and convened two roundtables, generating a valuable exchange of ideas and validating the potential for corporations to be part of the solution. At TNC’s invitation, the CEO of a $10 billion multi-national company joined environmental groups at a Trenton press conference to celebrate the one-year anniversary of New Jersey’s clean energy law, becoming the first corporate leader to so publicly support implementation of this landmark statute.
Planting Roots for Rivers

The Nature Conservancy is nearing our ambitious goal to plant 100,000 trees in New Jersey’s floodplains, the critical lands adjacent to our riverbanks. In addition to filtering water, absorbing floodwaters, and supplying habitat for wildlife, trees’ root systems stabilize stream banks. Tree canopies will provide shade to cool the water, helping fish and other aquatic life to thrive as the climate warms.

To help accomplish our goal, in 2017 TNC launched Roots for Rivers, a floodplain reforestation program through which we provide mini-grants to support tree-planting projects by organizations, municipalities, and school districts statewide. In addition to financial support, Roots for Rivers equips grant recipients with the tools they need to identify appropriate sites for restoration, develop and implement a project plan, and maintain the plantings over time.

Building on the success of that first year, our partnership with Sustainable Jersey, The Watershed Institute, and AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassadors has considerably expanded the program’s reach. In total, Roots for Rivers has funded 56 projects across 14 major watersheds, planting a total of 28,020 native trees and shrubs!

Combined with the 54,689 trees TNC has planted in the Paulins Kill watershed, we are on track to meet our 100,000-tree goal in 2020!
CAMPAIGN

Your enthusiastic response to our $500,000 Campaign Matching Fund allowed us to meet the match even earlier than expected. Thanks to all who participated and maximized the impact of their gifts, accelerating the pace of conservation in New Jersey!

- Mark DeAngelis, Chair, Campaign for the Real Nature of New Jersey

THERE’S SO MUCH MORE TO DO! YOUR SUPPORT CAN HELP:

- Take out two more dams on the Paulins Kill
- Protect our coast and its communities using nature
- Strengthen the natural corridor along Bobcat Alley
- Make clean energy part of New Jersey’s future
Awaiting the return of a tiny-but-bold hummingbird at the feeder, locking eyes with a fawn at dusk, it is the little things in nature that so often touch our hearts. Jack and Ellen Moskowitz both grew up chasing fireflies, and the glow of those humble little winged beetles illuminated their path to a lifelong love of wildlife and the outdoors. “Nature has always been important to us,” says Ellen. “It is literally what supports human life.”

Ellen and Jack have a lot in common. In addition to a penchant for Lampyridae, they both retired from careers in science, and they share three passions: whitewater kayaking, travel and nature photography. A kayak trip in the Adirondacks’ Hudson River Gorge introduced them to The Nature Conservancy, which played a major role in protecting the wilderness surrounding the gorge. Not long after, they were inspired to make provisions in their wills to support the organization’s work, citing an appreciation of TNC’s collaborative, science-based approach to meaningful conservation around the globe.

“As world travelers, we have seen first-hand how important it is to protect nature everywhere,” says Ellen. “We hope our legacy will spark the next generation to do even more to ensure that people and nature thrive.”

Jack and Ellen Moskowitz became Legacy Club members by including The Nature Conservancy in their estate plans.

The $80 million Campaign for the Real Nature of New Jersey was launched in 2014 to generate the resources needed to accomplish The Nature Conservancy’s ambitious conservation objectives. This Annual Report showcases exciting accomplishments resulting from this effort, with a year of fundraising still to go! The New Jersey Chapter thanks the following major contributors – along with all our other generous supporters – whose gifts and pledges are accelerating protection of lands and waters in New Jersey and beyond.

- Anela Kolohe Foundation
- Bill and Debbie Alexander
- Anonymous
- BAPS Charities, Inc.
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- Jonathan B. Bellack
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- Franta J. Broulik
- Dr. Barbara and Mr. Thomas Brummer
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- Christine A. Will
- William Penn Foundation
- Robert D. Wilson
- Sonia and Christian Zugel

*deceased

Background photo: Roadside tree, Great Meadows, NJ © Ellen and Jack Moskowitz

Inset Ellen and Jack Moskowitz © Jeff Bunun/TNC
LONG LIVE YOUR VALUES

Make a lasting commitment to conservation by including The Nature Conservancy in your will or estate plan. Gifts can be designated to our work in New Jersey, other states or an international program that aligns with your passions. To learn more, contact Kelly Grassi at (908) 955-0359 or kgrassi@tnc.org.

Rainbow over the Delaware River © Dwight Hisciano