

# The New Meadowlands

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*2005/2006 Annual Report*



**New Jersey Meadowlands Commission**



*I want to thank the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission for their continual effort to promote responsible redevelopment and enhance open space. They are constantly working to support our communities by aiding emergency responders, helping to teach high school students and establishing specialized programs for the elderly and disabled.*

*Northern New Jersey, while the most densely populated part of our state and country, is also home to important and expansive urban wetlands. The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission has envisioned a future for this area with safer infrastructure, better transportation, more public parks and renewable energy. Their dedication to this end is generating a new Meadowlands that is serving as a model for what good government can do.*

A handwritten signature in orange ink, which appears to read "Jon Corzine".

Jon S. Corzine  
Governor, State of New Jersey

# Board of Commissioners

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Susan Bass Levin  
Commissioner,  
New Jersey  
Department of  
Community Affairs

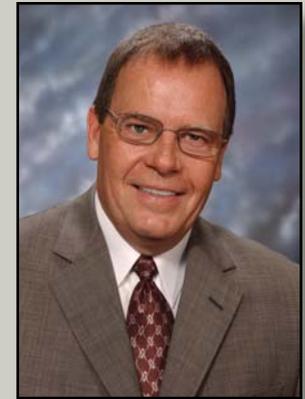
Chairwoman,  
New Jersey  
Meadowlands  
Commission



James A. Anzevino  
Commissioner  
Treasurer



Michael J. Gonnelli  
Commissioner



Leonard R. Kaiser  
Commissioner



Mia M. Macri  
Commissioner



Eleanore S. Nissley  
Commissioner  
Vice Chair



Arleen F. Walther  
Commissioner

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# Message from the Chairwoman

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*On a weekday morning in the near future, a Meadowlands resident gazes over the horizon at a panorama of balance. He sees a flock of birds crossing a marsh, a group of eco-tourists canoeing past sport fishermen along the banks of the Hackensack River, the sun rising over the New York City skyline and reflecting on a grid of solar panels. An hour later, he's taking the train to Manhattan, or working in the Meadowlands, eager to return home and jog along his favorite trail.*

*This is the new Meadowlands. This vision of the future is highlighted by responsible development balanced by environmental preservation, envisioned by the Master Plan two years ago and put forward tirelessly by the New Jersey Meadowlands Board of Commissioners and NJMC employees ever since.*

*This new Meadowlands is the shared hope of environmental advocates, business and civic leaders, public officials, residents and stakeholders who we've reached out to for input each step of the way, and who, with our gratitude, have reached back. Our employees are at the service of our stakeholders, reinforced by strong ethics, better budgeting, and efficiency analysis designed to hold the NJMC up to the highest standard.*

*With this philosophy comes outreach to all residents of the District. This year saw not only identification and early mitigation work on flood zones, but emergency response to save area businesses from going underwater. Not only was \$1.4 million provided to our Meadowlands municipalities for emergency and public works equipment, but regional computer technology was developed to help first responders save lives.*

*Continued dedication to the needs of residents today and ambitious foresight for the residents of tomorrow are just a part of the Meadowlands' reclamation of its rightful identity as a symbol of balance and prosperity. Our work is far from over, but with your continued support, it shows no signs of slowing.*

*Susan Bass Levin*

*Susan Bass Levin*

*Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs  
Chairwoman, New Jersey Meadowlands Commission*

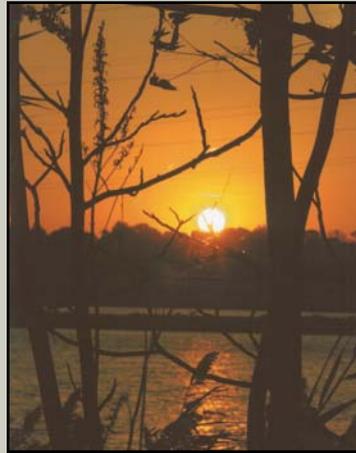
# Message from the Executive Director

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*T*hanks to our Master Plan and a number of ambitious initiatives, “A New Meadowlands” is truly taking shape. An internal review of the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s accomplishments since implementing that Master Plan shows that we’ve met or exceeded a number of goals already.

*E*nvironmental preservation is occurring through wetlands acquisition and the creation of new parks and recreational areas. Redevelopment projects in eight of our Meadowlands District towns are a sure sign that economic growth is taking root here.



*O*ur renewable energy and green building initiatives are setting an example for the nation. We’re leading by example by having our administrative building and the Meadowlands Environment Center registered with the USGBC and retrofitting them to meet green building standards. Our

*renewable energy plan is one of the most ambitious in the nation. On our buildings, parking lots and landfills, we want to generate 5 megawatts of energy by using photovoltaic cells. With the help of our District municipalities, fellow agencies, businesses and others, we will reach 20 megawatts of renewable energy by the year 2020.*

*All of these projects show the idea of "A New Meadowlands" is real. In the years ahead, it will take continued innovative thinking to make new advances, but I am confident that this agency will meet the challenges the future will present.*



*Robert Ceberio  
Executive Director*

# Overview

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*Saw Mill Creek Wildlife Management Area*

The Meadowlands was once considered a wasteland beyond recovery. Consensus on what to do seemed out of reach. But all of that changed when environmentalists, businesses, mayors, state agencies and federal agencies joined with the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission to author the Master Plan in 2004. Now, the Meadowlands of the past is being replaced by a new vision of environmental recovery and responsible redevelopment.

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After the Master Plan's approval in January 2004, the Commission divided its goals into the four policy areas: aiding municipalities, improving environmental stewardship, jumpstarting economic success with an eye on eco-tourism and job growth, and expanding the NJMC's special services, educational and cultural programs.

By early 2006, the Commission's first Strategic Review of the Meadowlands Master Plan had found success in nearly every area. Highlights included the preservation of 987 acres of open space, five waterside parks being opened or planned, redevelopment plans under way in more than half of the District municipalities, and new goals set for alternative energy and mass transportation.



*View of Berry's Creek in the Meadowlands.*

MAGNET, (Meadowlands Area Grants for Natural and Economic Transformation) was created to provide a five-year funding plan supporting the goals outlined in the Master Plan. In October 2005, the plan was furthered by a \$25 million infusion of funds, paving the way for even greater progress and community outreach.

The employees of the NJMC's Finance and Management Division maintain the agency's budget, carry out accounting and ensure the efficiency of operations. In addition, this division operates the Meadowlands District's tax sharing formula and oversees the MAGNET program which funds the NJMC's four-pronged support for District-wide revitalization.

## *Milestones of 2005-2006:*

### Good Government

Answering New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine's call for more efficient and effective government, the NJMC Board of Commissioners approved an initiative in March 2006 to make the agency one of the first to use performance-based budgeting. This system saves time and money by linking dollars with results. Each division must outline its goals, the funds needed to meet those goals, and the goals' ultimate outcomes. The NJMC also supported an initiative to draft multi-year budgets to authorize expenditures and anticipate revenues for two or more years. These systems will take effect in the 2007 fiscal year. The NJMC will also work with the National Center for Public Productivity at Rutgers University to create a Performance Evaluation System.

# MAGNET

The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission set a positive course for the future with an infusion of \$25 million into the MAGNET (Meadowlands Area Grants for Natural and Economic Transformation) program in October 2005. The infusion is part of a larger \$33 million, five-year plan for continued economic and environmental growth in the Meadowlands.



*View of Richard W. DeKorte Park from Kingsland Overlook.*

MAGNET directs revenue to serve the NJMC's four major policy areas: \$14 million for a Municipal Support Fund, \$14 million for an Environmental Fund, \$2.5 million for an Economic Growth Fund and \$2.5 million for a Commission Capital Improvement Fund.

- The Municipal Support Fund provides continued tax relief through the Municipal Assistance Program (MAP). This program helps municipalities purchase vehicles and equipment for emergency responders, supports flood management, provides scholarships for students and funds for senior citizen programs.
- The Environmental Fund provides resources to protect and restore wetlands and open space, develop new trails and parks and finance important research, including the scouting of locations throughout the District for a solar energy grid.
- The Economic Growth Fund underpins the Meadowlands Employment Opportunity Center, the Meadowlands Liberty Convention and Visitors Bureau to draw tourism dollars and a Transportation Planning District to disentangle the transportation chokepoints in the District.
- The Commission Capital Improvement Fund provides funds for NJMC program development and public resources. Funding has been set aside to construct a new Science Center and Observatory in Lyndhurst and promote green building throughout the District.

## Municipal Assistance Program

The NJMC's Finance and Management Division reviews applications and disburses grants allotted by the Board of Commissioners to municipalities through the Municipal Assistance Program (MAP). The fund was established to assist the 14 Meadowlands municipalities in providing a better quality of life for their residents by taking on special tasks like flood management or buying key pieces of equipment that would otherwise come at the expense of taxpayers.

Some of the items supported by 2005/2006 MAP grants include:

- Hot tar paving equipment, a police chief vehicle and a patrol car for Carlstadt.
- New soccer fields at Losen Slote Creek Park in Little Ferry.
- A new ambulance for East Rutherford.
- Engineering and design work to combat flooding on Polito Avenue in Lyndhurst.
- A hooklift truck in Moonachie.
- A new ambulance in North Arlington.
- An updated web site for borough services and emergency equipment for South Hackensack.
- A bus and a police vehicle for Rutherford.
- Funds towards the West River Ditch project in Teterboro.
- Reconstruction of athletic fields in Secaucus.
- Pump station maintenance and turnout gear for the Fire Department in Kearny.
- Emergency management equipment in Jersey City.
- Police vehicles and the lease of a garbage truck in North Bergen.

## Staying ahead of the technology curve

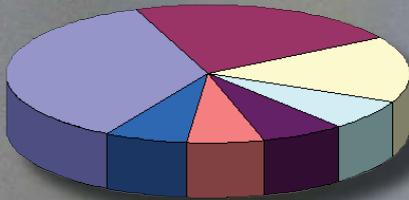
**I**n the wake of 9/11 and the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the NJMC Board of Commissioners has brought first responders online with cutting edge Geographic Information System technology. Through individual \$50,000 MAP grants, police and firefighters in Secaucus, Teterboro, Carlstadt, Moonachie, Rutherford, East Rutherford and Ridgefield were given the training, hardware, and wireless laptops they need to access vital maps, databases and emergency management information in times of crisis. The remainder of the 14 Meadowlands municipalities are scheduled to follow.



*GIS employees fine tune equipment for emergency workers.*

# Finance and Management

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## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES GOVERNMENTAL FUNDS

December 31, 2005

### Funding Sources

Solid Waste Overhead	5,695,023
Grant Revenues	3,471,105
Golf Course Project Revenues	2,440,000
Fees & Charges	1,157,443
Investment Income	1,042,867
Methane/Composting Fees	953,596
Other Income	1,072,538

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<b>Total Funding Sources</b>	<b>15,832,572</b>
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### Expenditures

Commission Operations	10,006,405
Environment Center Operations	1,800,391
Contributions to Restricted Funds	489,091
Other Expenditures	3,536,685

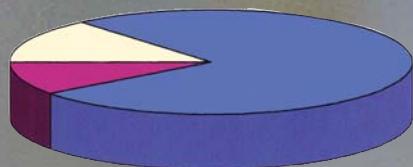
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<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>15,832,572</b>
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## SOLID WASTE OPERATIONS STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

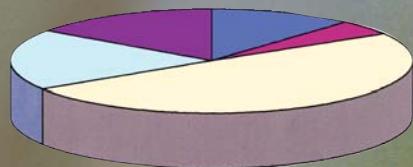
December 31, 2005



Operating Revenue - 76%

Transfers from Operating Funds - 14%

Non-operating Revenues - 10%



General Operating - 49%

Landfill Operations - 12%

Payments to County Utility Authorities - 5%

Other Expenses - 19%

Contributions to Reserve for Landfill Closure - 15%

### Revenues:

Operating Revenue	21,971,092
Non-Operating Revenues	3,046,874
Transfers from Operating Fund	4,000,000

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<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>29,017,966</b>
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### Expenses:

General Operating	14,369,397
Landfill Operations	3,402,452
Payments to County Utility Authorities	1,315,031
Other Expenses	5,533,088

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<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>24,619,968</b>
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<b>Contributions to Reserve for Landfill Closure</b>	<b>4,397,998</b>
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*View of the New Jersey Turnpike, wetlands and industry.*

The Land Use Management Division's employees are organized into two groups. One group is responsible for establishing and enforcing the zoning and subdivision regulations of the Meadowlands District. The second group is responsible for enforcing New Jersey's Uniform Construction Code. Together, they preside over the primary land use regulations that govern the 32 square-mile Meadowlands District. Redevelopment plans and changes to a property are all checked by this department against the new Meadowlands Master Plan, its underpinning regulations, and statewide regulations ensuring orderly development.

## *Milestones of 2004-2005:*

### Redevelopment Areas

The hottest zones for economic growth in the Meadowlands are the District's 10 redevelopment areas. These plots range in size from the 2.5-acre Vincent Place Area in Teterboro to the 1,350-acre Meadowlands Golf Course Redevelopment Area stretching from Rutherford to Kearny. These areas cover 3,078 acres of potential redevelopment amounting to \$5.6 billion in investment over the next 25 years, the creation of 56,250 new permanent jobs, and more than \$73 million in positive fiscal impacts for the District's 14 municipalities.



*Construction of a new hotel on Paterson Plank Road in East Rutherford.*



*Saw Mill Park development*

The timelines for several projects have already been established, with work proceeding at a continuous pace.

- Phase I of the Meadowlands Golf Redevelopment Project is forging ahead. EnCap Golf Holdings is continuing intensive remediation of landfills that were open to the environment for many years and transforming them into a golf village. Phase I of the project includes mixed-use residential, retail, recreational, hotel and conference space in Lyndhurst and Rutherford, with a target date of completion in 2013.
- A request for proposals to revitalize Paterson Plank Road in Carlstadt and East Rutherford was issued in November 2005. The largely industrial area will be transformed with pedestrian-friendly frontage and other mixed-use redevelopment. Proposed redevelopment must address long-standing flood and transportation problems.
- Several state-of-the-art industrial buildings called Saw Mill Park are replacing a former brownfield site off the Belleville Turnpike in Kearny.
- Fraternity Meadows LLC is finalizing conceptual plans for the Riverfront Landing portion of the Secaucus Transit Village, a combination of residential homes and neighborhood retail shops minutes away from both Laurel Hill Park and the Secaucus Junction train station.
- Group at Route 3 LLC is completing preconstruction work in preparation of two residential buildings with indoor retail stores near Giants Stadium.

## Koppers Coke

In 2005, the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission began a formal analysis of Koppers Coke in Kearny with the hopes of turning it into a powerful economic engine for the region. Currently, Koppers Coke is marred by dilapidated and obsolete industrial buildings and dredge from Newark Bay. A meeting of the Land Use Management team, representatives from several levels of government, members of academia, transit authorities and real estate professionals concluded in December 2004 that the Koppers Coke site could be a boost to the region if properly remediated, utilized and managed. The ongoing investigation will attempt to determine if new zoning regulations are warranted.

## Working for a greener Meadowlands

In order to lead by example, the NJMC has drawn from the Commission Capital Improvement Fund to make its administrative offices and the Meadowlands Environment Center (MEC) compliant with U.S. Green Building Council standards. Upgrades will include photovoltaic cells for power generation, energy efficient lighting, greater water efficiency, better recycling, and converting the NJMC car fleet to hybrid vehicles, a process which has already begun. Regarded as a forerunner in smart growth, the Meadowlands Commission hosted the multi-agency Meadowlands Green Building Summit in November 2005 to begin encouraging developers to build and maintain properties in a more environmentally sound manner. Initiatives were passed to consider an expedited permitting process and a 15 percent discount in application fees for certified green building projects.

## Flood Management

**A** taskforce representing all of the Meadowlands District was created to establish an anti-flooding plan in October 2004.

After a year of work with local officials, emergency responders, business and home owners on chronic flood problems throughout the District, the Commission approved the Hackensack Meadowlands Floodplain Management Plan; identifying the hardest hit flood zones including Route 17 in Rutherford, Route 7 in Kearny, Bellman's Creek in North Bergen and the intersection of Broad and 16th streets in Carlstadt.

**T**he Board also passed a set of initiatives aimed at bringing relief to these and other areas prone to flooding. Drainage regulations for development were harmonized with state and federal standards and a grant was awarded to address flooding on Polito Avenue in Lyndhurst. An automated early flood warning system is being designed to alert emergency officials of flood areas along the Hackensack River.



*One of the many tributaries along the Hackensack River.*



*Specialized divers brought in by the NJMC's Stormwater Management Team respond to a clogged flood gate threatening Carlstadt businesses.*

In November 2005, the NJMC Stormwater Management Team took unprecedented steps to protect District residents and property owners by quickly responding to the failed Peach Island Creek Flood Gate and preserving 44 businesses along Carlstadt's Gotham Parkway. The gate had become blocked, preventing backflow into Berry's Creek at high tide. NJMC engineers and special divers brought to the scene restored the gates within 24 hours, at no cost to the borough. The effort was part of the Meadowlands Commission's rapidly expanding new role as a regional resource to avert flood crises. As a positive step towards cooperation along the Hackensack River watershed, the NJMC has agreed to draft a hazard mitigation plan, including flood planning, for Bergen County and for eventual submission to FEMA. NJMC engineers also responded to a request for help from the borough of Oakland when a storm devastated the northern New Jersey borough in the early fall.

# *Solid Waste & Natural Resources Groups*

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**E**mployees organized into a Solid Waste Group, Wetlands Group, and Parks and Open Space Group comprise the Solid Waste & Natural Resources unit of the NJMC. These groups oversee the handling of construction debris and other waste in the District, preserve and protect the District's wetlands, and create and maintain parks.



*View from the Cove located in Richard W. DeKorte Park.*

## *Milestones of 2005-2006:*

### Solid Waste

**I**n support of the environmental portion of the four NJMC policy areas, the Solid Waste Group oversees the handling of construction debris in the District, provides oversight for transfer stations and recycling centers, and works to close abandoned landfills that threaten the Meadowlands ecosystem.



*Kearny Marsh*

### Kearny Green Space Initiative

**T**he Board of Commissioners furthered a \$53 million plan to save the Kearny Marsh, which has fallen victim to years of damaging water levels as well as contamination in the form of zinc, mercury, chromium, PCBs and other pollutants traced to the neighboring Keegan Landfill. The landfill was never properly sealed, and poses a continuous danger to the sensitive ecosystem of the marsh, which was called the best freshwater marsh in the state by the New Jersey Audubon Society.

The result of these efforts will be the recovery of the Kearny Marsh, one of the few freshwater marshes in the Meadowlands District, to a suitable habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife. A 500-acre park is planned for the Keegan Landfill, which will serve as the southern gateway to the 8,400 acre Meadowlands environmental preserve.

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Efforts to begin this restoration and recovery are underway. In the summer of 2005, scientists from the Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute began a 3 ½-year pilot study to seal off contaminated sediments in the marsh. MERI is using a \$385,700 grant from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency to study the ability of AquaBlok, a patented clay material, to trap and secure pollutants in the marsh floor while allowing plants and aquatic life to thrive above it.

The NJMC appropriated \$100,000 for a one-year study with Cook College at Rutgers University to identify all sources of pollution at Kearny Marsh in addition to the Keegan Landfill. This study will examine how contaminants from nearby areas could be transported into the marsh's waters.

## Phase II of the Meadowlands Golf Re-development Project

**I**n October 2005, the NJMC announced a partnership with Bergen and Hudson counties to turn the 450-acre 1-E Landfill, which stretches across North Arlington and Kearny, into a public golf course encompassed by hiking paths, parks and scenic overlooks. The golf course will become Hudson County's first public golf course, ending its status as the only county in New Jersey without a public course. The adjacent Erie Landfill will become an uplands habitat. The Solid Waste group, directed by Master Plan mandates, will properly close, remediate and grade the 1-E site, which is slated to hold its first tee-off in 2011.



*Artist's rendering of landfills turned to golf courses in the Meadowlands.*

## Wetlands

### Bird Pollution Study / Biodiversity Study

**I**n December 2005, the NJMC Board of Commissioners approved a companion study to the New Jersey Audubon Society's ongoing survey of the bird population in the Meadowlands. The new study will measure the impact of pollutants on Meadowlands birds. NJMC scientists will better understand how to restore marsh habitats in the region. The diverse ecosystems of the Meadowlands are visited by more than 260 species of birds, including Red-winged Blackbirds, Mallards, Barn Swallows, Tree Swallows, Marsh Wrens and Gadwalls. Twenty-six of New Jersey's endangered and threatened birds have been found in the Meadowlands.

The NJMC approved a unique biodiversity study with the intention of eventually nursing more than 1,070 acres of the Meadowlands urban wetland ecosystem back to health. The study will monitor key but often overlooked species throughout the District, including butterflies, dragonflies, grasshoppers, clam shrimp and floating marsh pennywort, a rare plant growing abundantly in Kingsland Creek and the Kearny Marsh, to represent the Meadowlands ecosystem's overall biodiversity.

Data from the studies will be added to an environmental report card by the Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute (MERI), the NJMC's scientific arm.

Photo courtesy of Anthony J. Rego.



*American Robin*

Photo courtesy of Elaine DeAnne.



*Double-crested Cormorant*

## Richard P. Kane Natural Area

The year 2005 was a banner one for 587 acres of wetlands stretching across Carlstadt, Moonachie and South Hackensack. The Meadowlands Conservation Trust took control of the former Empire Tract in March that year, changing its name to honor Richard P. Kane, former Vice President of Conservation and Stewardship for the New Jersey Audubon Society and one of the great defenders of the Meadowlands ecosystem. A \$3 million dollar project was announced for the site, divided into \$2.5 million to restore 45 acres at Carlstadt's River Barge Park and Marina and \$500,000 to determine appropriate wetlands enhancement for the Kane Area. In addition, the NJMC entered into an agreement with Bergen County to plan recreational opportunities for the site. The ultimate goal is to link the Kane Area with the NJMC's Meadowlands Path and Bergen County's Hackensack Greenway Trail, creating a corridor for residents and visitors to experience a pristine parcel of nature in one of the most densely populated regions of the world.



*Richard P. Kane Natural Area.*



*Tree Swallows nestling into a nest box.*

## Helping Tree Swallows in the Meadowlands

As part of ongoing conservation and outreach efforts, the NJMC Wetlands Group worked with local volunteers to build and install Tree Swallow nest boxes in the Meadowlands marshes throughout the spring of 2006. NJMC staff traveled to Ridgefield to teach local Girl Scouts about the 5 ½ inch, metallic blue Tree Swallow, a favorite of photographers and useful for its consumption of mosquito-like midges. At the Sawmill Creek Wildlife Management Area in Lyndhurst, staff also gave a lesson on the bird and its habitat to volunteers from Spectrum for Living. Hudson County's Pathways to Independence and a Wood-Ridge Boy Scout contributed to what grew to a total of nearly 500 boxes throughout the Meadowlands.

## Parks and Open Space



*View from the future River Barge Park and Marina.*

### River Barge Park

**I**n November 2005, the NJMC joined with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to announce plans for the first public marina on the Hackensack River.

The new park will be designed by the Parks and Open Space Group. It will feature a promenade, boat launch, environmentally friendly pump-out station, educational areas, and trails connecting to the 587-acre Richard P. Kane Natural Area.

It is the first park of its kind along the Hackensack watershed and will be designed to promote eco-tourism and recreational use of the Hackensack River.

# Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute

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*Aerial view of Saw Mill Creek Wildlife Management Area.*

**T**he Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute (MERI) runs the agency's Geographic Information System (GIS), whereby the maps and data the NJMC uses to carry out its business are stored digitally and new geographic information is assembled on demand. MERI staff also oversee the experiments and studies that guide the NJMC's policies and plans for the future. Several studies are currently under way for MERI to gain a full understanding of the ecological vitality of the Meadowlands region. Data from these studies will be compiled into an environmental report card which will help the NJMC determine further courses of action for environmental restoration.

## *Milestones of 2005-2006:*

### Aquatic Life Surveys

In March 2005, the NJMC released four studies on the fish population in the Meadows, which underpin the environmental portion of the agency's policy areas. Overall, the studies indicate that the ecosystem is healing. However, high levels of contaminants in the fish show that much work still remains, and that the fish are not edible due to mercury and PCB contamination. The research was conducted by MERI staff and professors and students from the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers University and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

The studies determined that a more diverse fish population had begun to retake Meadows waters since the 1980s, with specific increases in large predator fish including striped bass and white perch. The weight of the fish collected had increased 136 percent over the course of 15 years. Although the

actual number of fish had gone down, a more stable food chain had been established.



*A fish taken from the Hackensack River is measured, weighed, and then released.*



*This weather monitoring station is located at Richard W. DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst.*

## Continuous Water Monitoring Initiative

To further back environmental policies with good data, NJMC scientists have developed a 24-hour water quality monitoring system with instruments sending real time data to the agency's labs in Lyndhurst from throughout the District.

The initiative is designed to test theories on the origins of oxygen-depleted waters in the southern part of the Meadowlands.

## Air Quality

On another front, the first-ever District-wide air quality study is currently underway. The three-year study is being conducted by the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute, part of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey - Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

Measurements are being recorded systematically at key locations and at different times during the year. The results will establish data that can be compared with future data to measure progress on achieving air quality goals set by the Master Plan.



*A workstation in the lab at the Meadowlands Environment Center.*

## Partnership with Rutgers

**I**n early 2006, the NJMC Board moved to continue adding the expertise of Rutgers University professors and graduate students to MERI's research by reinstating the Rutgers Science Fellowship Program. The program also extends an invitation to high-profile scientists from other universities around the globe to become involved in Meadowlands research. For example, a Columbia University professor is currently studying the wetlands food supply for Meadowlands birds. In addition to other ongoing studies and reports, this fellowship program also furthers the Commission's commitment to science-based policy making.

# Meadowlands Environment Center

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The employees of the Meadowlands Environment Center (MEC) are professors, students and staff from Ramapo College of New Jersey. The MEC is an NJMC facility operated by Ramapo College and is probably the most public face of the Commission's work. Thousands of school groups take advantage of the MEC's range of educational programs year-round, in addition to the visitors and tourists that are attracted by its permanent exhibits and rotating art displays.



*Meadowlands Environment Center*



*Plan for the new observatory and science center that will be built in Richard W. DeKorte Park.*

## *Milestones of 2005-2006:*

### Meadowlands Science Center and Observatory

Continuing its push for environmental education in the Meadowlands, the NJMC announced plans in November 2005 to open a Pilot Field High School within the MEC's expansion. A new observatory and three laboratory classrooms will be used by Lyndhurst High School students to study earth sciences and sciences particular to the urban wetlands ecosystem. The program eventually will be open to high schools throughout the District, and curriculums will be mapped out for compatibility with each school's programs. The expanded facility, with a groundbreaking scheduled for 2006, will seek a gold standard of environmental friendliness through the Leadership in Energy and Design (LEED) program. The observatory will be one of only a handful of observatories in northern New Jersey and the only one associated with an environment center.

## Programming for visitors and students with disabilities

**T**he NJMC Board of Commissioners authorized establishment of a new curriculum at the MEC to develop an Educational Resource Center promoting new strategies and technologies to increase participation by individuals with disabilities. Programs and workshops educate teachers and supervisors from the public and private sector about new teaching techniques and technology available to assist those with disabilities.



*An MEC educator works with disabled visitors during a special program.*

## Scholarship program

**I**n the summer of 2005, the NJMC Board approved scholarships for 12 college bound high school seniors from the District. Students with bright futures in Rutgers University, Stevens Institute of Technology, Montclair State University, William Paterson University and other institutions were awarded the scholarships after earning high averages and writing essays about their interest in environmental science. The scholarships will be awarded again in Spring 2006.



*MEC educators work with a film crew in creating one of the modules used in the SEE program.*

## Outreach to senior citizens

The NJMC Board of Commissioners authorized a new series of programs for senior citizens which commenced last summer at the MEC. Staff created an ongoing series of recreational, social and educational programs. Activities included concerts, lectures and workshops by MEC staff and local experts.

On a high-tech note, Ramapo College, in partnership with the NJMC, has implemented a new learning tool to share with senior citizens the ecological wisdom gleaned from the Meadowlands. Thanks to a three-year, \$462,000 grant from the National Science Foundation, the new Senior Environmental Experiences (SEE) program will use video conferencing technology to allow environmental education and science programming to be brought in real time to seniors in community centers and assisted living facilities in the region. An added number of centers will participate through the distribution of CDs and videos.

# Executive

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The Executive Division supports the Executive Director of the NJMC and provides legal counsel, maintains intergovernmental relations and gives administrative support. The Executive Division also facilitates and maintains an open dialog with the press, respective governing bodies, and residents that keep the NJMC ever in the service of the public. In addition to these tasks, the Executive Division takes on special projects. For example, the decision by the NJMC Board of Commissioners to create a unified tourism marketing effort in the Meadowlands and a more vibrant art movement in the District was coordinated through this division. Broad initiatives are pursued that span several NJMC divisions, such as plans to improve transportation infrastructure to bring an end to overly congested roadways in the District and plans to create a permanent renewable energy source to reduce the cost of electricity in the years ahead.



*NJMC administrative building with a Great Egret perched to the left.*



*View of the Meadowlands at sunrise.*

## *Milestones of 2005-2006:*

### Solar Energy in the Meadowlands

In a bold move that generated excitement at both local and national levels, the Board of Commissioners announced a search for rooftop and brownfield space throughout the District that could house a 5-megawatt photovoltaic energy grid. Projected benefits of bringing solar energy to the Meadowlands include less demand for damaging fossil fuel sources, less reliance on foreign energy, insulation from a constantly fluctuating energy market, and an influx of high technology jobs. Roof space owned by the NJMC, Meadowlands municipalities, and private property owners is eligible to host the grid, which the NJMC is hoping to increase to 20 megawatts by the year 2020.



*NJMC fleet of pontoon boats on the Hackensack.*

## Eco-Tourism

The second Meadowlands Festival of Birding was held in September 2005. The NJMC hosted the event, which was organized by Hackensack Riverkeeper and the New Jersey Audubon Society at Richard W. DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst. The day-long event featured an address by keynote speaker Marie Winn, author of “Red-Tails in Love,” as well on-site and off-site guided birding walks, pontoon boat tours of the Hackensack River and birding workshops for families. The enthusiasm of many birders was satisfied by a post-festival hawk watch the next day. The 2006 Festival of Birding will take place on September 16, 2006.



*Laurel Hill as seen from the Saw Mill Creek Wildlife Management Area.*

To continue developing the Meadowlands as a primary travel destination, the Meadowlands Liberty Convention and Visitors Bureau hosted MDEST05, a travel and tourism trade show and job fair, in November 2005. The region's destination leaders spoke on the theme of "My Dream for the Meadowlands," and "Meadowlands 101" was offered to train hotel front desk staff on transportation, community events, points of interest, trails, recreation and services within the District. Also in 2005, the MLCVB unveiled the first of many electronic visitor kiosks that will dot the Meadowlands and let visitors and residents know about the vast amount of attractions, hotels and restaurants the District has to offer.

To assist hotels and visitor centers in promoting the Meadowlands as a destination, the NJMC Board of Commissioners awarded a grant to the New Jersey Audubon Society to create the New Jersey Meadowlands Birding, Wildlife and Fishing Trails Guide. The guide will include half-day and day-long loop tours and points of interest suggested by wildlife experts, civic groups and residents across the 19,485-acre Meadowlands District. The guide, along with copies in Spanish, is slated for distribution by mid-2006.

The NJMC revived its annual river festival at Laurel Hill Park in Secaucus in June 2006. Meadowfest was made possible through a grant to the Meadowlands Liberty Convention and Visitors Bureau. The event offered educational booths on plants and animals living in the Meadowlands, as well as games, entertainment, music and food. For the first time, a Meadowlands Triathlon of bicycling, running and paddling was added to the day's schedule.

## The Arts

The NJMC is proud of the artists who hail from the District, whether they express themselves through plays, paintings, photographs, dance, film or other outlets. They are among the champions of the cause of fostering a sense of place in the Meadowlands region.

The Board of the NJMC has created an Arts Advisory Board, made up of one individual from each of the 14 District municipalities, one delegate from the environmental community and one from the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce, to oversee the beginning of a Meadowlands Sculpture Garden in Richard W. DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst, as well as to plan and organize exhibits for local artists.

The Flyway Gallery of the Meadowlands Environment Center hosted photographer and artist Warner A. Wada's "Works in Progress: Meadowlands, A Post-Industrial Resurrection" in the fall of 2005. Wada, commissioned by the MEC and Ramapo College to photograph the Meadowlands, contributed 18 pictures of Overpeck Park, the world he viewed traveling back and forth to the city for much of his life. Wada described that world as one of thriving estuaries next to abandoned freight containers, a myriad of access roads and turnpike extensions surrounding a rich environment.

Photo courtesy of Diane Cismowski.



*First Place Winner*

Photo courtesy of Laura Rodrigues.



*Second Place Winner*

Photo courtesy of Donna Hewa.



*Third Place Winner*

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A “Nature of the Meadowlands” photo contest was on display in the Flyway Gallery of the MEC in early 2006, displaying 92 entries from local artists with a keen eye for the Meadowlands (See the winning photographs above).

In March 2006, the NJMC honored area teachers with the first “Educator’s Art Exhibit,” offering men and women who inspire self-expression in their students a chance to tell their own stories.

## Arts Grants

The NJMC awarded arts grants in June 2005 to 15 applicants from across the District. Recipients included a non-profit physical therapy center in Carlstadt developing a dance program for children with autism, a Rutherford resident designing a “How to Draw the Meadowlands” nature guidebook, and the Moonachie Public School system for its Arts in Education Program.

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