



NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

# BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT

A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2018-2026







NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION

# BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT

A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS, 2018-2026





AN INTRODUCTION FROM  
**Commissioner Shawn LaTourette**  
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection



Friends, Colleagues and fellow New Jerseyans,

Over the past eight years, New Jersey has made great strides in improving and protecting public health and the environment we all share. Since 2018, tireless Department of Environmental Protection professionals have advanced sound science, thoughtful policy and wise investments that have and will continue to improve quality of life for millions of New Jerseyans. Their exceptional work has enabled our neighbors across New Jersey to drink safer water, breathe healthier air, enjoy cleaner lands and experience plentiful green, open and recreational spaces. Investments have increased markedly in the environmental infrastructure that is so critical to our health, safety and economy; degraded natural resources are being steadily restored; environmental justice has become an institutional imperative and a statutory mandate; New Jersey has begun to do its part to stabilize our changing global climate; many communities are on a path to become more climate resilient; and today, we have more tools to keep New Jerseyans safer from increasing episodes of extreme heat, flooding, wildfire and drought.

While serious environmental, health and safety challenges still lie before us, these eight years have been among DEP's most effective and productive. The progress we have made has set New Jersey on a determined march toward the healthier, more just and resilient environment that each of our neighbors expects and deserves. The pages that follow tell the story of just some of those accomplishments. They reflect what I have been fortunate to see every day as Commissioner: the hard, thoughtful work of more than 3,000 professionals who have made the improvement and protection of our health and environment the

cause of their lives. Thanks to this team of bright, industrious and steadfast public servants, and the many partners in business, industry, academia, advocacy and government who support their important work, we have left New Jersey and its environment better than we found it.

Look behind any of these accomplishments and you will find countless contributors both within and beyond DEP; many hours, days, weeks, months and even years of effort; and most importantly, resolve.

Just as New Jersey's resolve has characterized the achievements we mark here, it will power the hard work necessary to address the many environmental, health, and safety challenges that still lie ahead. It is the same resolve that led New Jersey to heal its once-derided beaches, restore its water quality, clean up Superfund site after site, bring our bald eagle population back from the brink and preserve the most open space for parks and wildlife in the contiguous United States.

We resolve to leave the place better than we found it. That is the DEP legacy.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Shawn M. LaTourette, Esq.**  
Commissioner of Environmental Protection  
January 9, 2026

In the chapters that follow, we reflect on DEP's accomplishments in:

### **Safeguarding Our Water**

DEP has facilitated over \$3 billion in water infrastructure improvements since 2018, while leading the nation in protecting New Jerseyans from exposure to PFAS "forever chemicals" and lead in drinking water; deploying technical assistance programs to help communities plan and design long-deferred water system improvements; and building a community of water leaders prepared to meet drinking water challenges, including drought conditions.

### **Ensuring Cleaner Waterways**

DEP has worked to improve waterway quality, including by reducing untreated sewage discharged from legacy combined sewer overflow systems; embracing green infrastructure that reduces treatment costs and beautifies landscapes; improving lakes management; addressing harmful algal blooms; and setting standards that protect the state's pristine waterways.

### **Building Resilience to Extreme Weather and Climate Change**

While investing over \$500 million in flood control infrastructure and shore protection measures, fighting longer and more intense wildfire seasons, and supporting victims of several major flood events since 2018, DEP has also advanced significant climate science, climate resilience planning and supportive regulatory reform initiatives necessary to reduce and respond to the effects of climate change in New Jersey.

### **Expanding Access to Nature and Outdoor Recreation**

DEP resolved to expand access to high-quality open and recreational spaces across the state. To ensure that all New Jerseyans have an opportunity to connect with nature and one another, DEP Green Acres has facilitated nearly \$700 million in local

open space acquisition and parks development projects since 2018, reaching every county in New Jersey. In addition, DEP has welcomed 17+ million visitors annually to our network of state parks, forests and historic sites and launched the Urban State Parks & Initiatives program, commencing two major park development projects: the 9-mile greenway through Essex and Hudson counties, and the revitalization of Liberty State Park in Jersey City.

### **Improving Air Quality and Reducing Climate Pollution**

DEP has improved and protected air quality by expanding the monitoring of air pollution emissions; enforcing the use of air pollution controls that prevent or reduce criteria and hazardous air pollutants from entering the atmosphere; and limiting the emission of climate pollution from aging stationary and mobile sources of greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, DEP has invested \$300+ million in clean air technology since 2018, including by providing funding for zero-emission buses, garbage trucks, and port and cargo-handling equipment that reduce localized air pollution in communities across New Jersey.

### **Protecting Our Fish, Wildlife & Habitats**

DEP has expanded stewardship activities to improve habitat at DEP-administered Wildlife Management Areas and amplified its efforts to promote habitat connectivity across New Jersey, including through strategic open space acquisitions to create wildlife corridors that can help terrestrial species to more safely navigate New Jersey's densely developed landscape. To enhance marine environments, DEP has embraced innovative new initiatives such as its Shell Recycling Program, where DEP Fish & Wildlife staff members collect discarded shells from New Jersey restaurants, preventing them from becoming landfill waste, and reusing them as hard substrate in the rebuilding of oyster reefs that are crucial habitat for our Eastern oysters. And, in a win for avian species habitat protection, DEP removed the bald eagle and the osprey from the state's endangered

species list in 2025, reflecting more than 40 years of work to restore the iconic birds to our landscape.

### **Furthering the Promise of Environmental Justice**

Since 2018, DEP has committed to improving quality of life in New Jersey's most vulnerable communities through reforms to DEP regulatory and funding programs, by routinely engaging with and empowering residents who may lack access to government decision-making processes, and by offering guidance to other state departments and agencies in their work to further the promise of environmental justice. DEP played a leading role in New Jersey's 2020 enactment of the most empowering environmental justice law in the United States and, in 2023, adopted permitting process rules intended to avoid and reduce disproportionate levels of pollution in overburdened communities. DEP's 2025 EJ Action Plan charts a course for continuous improvements to programs and policy to ensure that every New Jerseyan — regardless of income, race, ethnicity, color or national origin — enjoys the right to live, work, learn and recreate in a clean and healthy environment.

### **Cleaning Up and Building Forward**

The unintended environmental harms of New Jersey's industrial legacy left later generations to clean up hazardous substances released into our environment. Today, more contaminated sites are being actively remediated and at a faster rate than at any other point in state history. Since 2018, New Jersey has reduced the number of cleanup sites to a historic low, launched remediation process improvements to reduce administrative burdens and accelerate the pace of cleanups, and expanded official Brownfield Development Area designations to bring public cleanup resources into more communities — measures that will position more contaminated sites for remediation and redevelopment into new community assets and engines of economic growth.

### **Restoring Our Natural Resources**

DEP has maximized its efforts to restore and enhance natural resources across New Jersey since 2018 while enforcing polluter-pays laws to hold responsible parties accountable for restoring natural resources injured by contamination events. Over the past eight years, DEP has pursued restoration projects ranging from forest restoration, groundwater aquifer recharge, habitat enhancement, and public and recreational access improvements to complex and transformational multi-media projects. Examples of major complex projects include the creation of Cramer Hill Waterfront Park in Camden out of what was a derelict abandoned landfill, and the cleanup and restoration of the 200+ acre interior of Liberty State Park that has been off-limits to the public for generations due to legacy contamination, where native ecology will be reintroduced and the landscape reshaped to become one of the nation's foremost outdoor urban environments with world-class ecological, educational and recreational features.

### **Honoring History and Preserving Heritage**

Through historic preservation reviews and grantmaking, DEP helps to strengthen neighborhoods, encourage local economic growth and bolster heritage tourism. Since 2018, DEP has launched and expanded online tools to promote awareness of and access to statewide historic and cultural resources. And, DEP has been gearing up to play a major role in the U.S. Semiquincentennial, i.e., the 250th anniversary of American independence. Since 2021, DEP has invested more than \$25 million in improvements at historic sites and secured New Jersey's Semiquincentennial gift to the visiting public and the nation: a new, state-of-the-art Visitor Center & Museum at Washington Crossing State Park, the site of General George Washington's legendary crossing of the Delaware River from Pennsylvania to New Jersey on Christmas night in 1776 – widely regarded as a critical turning point in the Revolutionary War.

### **Delivering More Accessible and Efficient Environmental Governance**

DEP's commitment to continual program and process improvements since 2018 has led the agency to embrace innovations and deploy new online services for residents and regulated entities alike. Today, DEP offers hundreds of online services, including 360 online services to digitally receive permit applications, forms, reports and certifications. These online services are used by 89,000 individual users who process an average of 400 transactions per day across 157,000 unique regulated facilities, saving users time and money. DEP is also a custodian of significant environmental, health and safety data that is of interest to residents and market actors who routinely seek information about the condition of industrial, commercial and residential property in New Jersey. To promote the accessibility of such information, DEP routinely develops and updates online tools relevant and accessible to both practitioners and the general public. Today, DEP hosts 146 community-facing GIS applications and mapping tools, which are viewed an average of 4,700 times per day.

### **Toward a More Sustainable New Jersey**

Since 2018, DEP has expanded several of its regulatory and funding programs to reduce waste generation, promote the reuse of end-of-life materials and develop a more circular economy, including by supporting crosscutting solutions that can achieve multiple environmental, social and economic benefits (i.e., the triple bottom line). As the agency responsible for implementing multiple new laws since 2018 aimed at improving materials management and promoting sustainability, DEP has

concentrated on efforts to maintain and increase curbside recycling rates, reduce food waste, recycle food waste from large institutional generators and develop end-of-life management paradigms for new classes of materials, including solar panels and electric vehicle batteries.

### **Building Community & Empowering Environmental Leaders**

DEP recognizes that improving and protecting the interconnected environment we share demands that we build relationships of trust across all regions of the state and sectors of our economy. Since 2018, DEP has redoubled its outreach and engagement efforts, and routinely partners with local governments, community-based organizations, businesses, academic and research institutions, and professional organizations to build and broaden problem-solving capacity. As one example, DEP has expanded its place-based Community Collaborative Initiative, where on-the-ground DEP liaisons work with municipal leaders to help them achieve local goals with the support of DEP regulatory and funding programs. DEP has been similarly focused since 2018 on recruiting and developing the talent that is critical to fulfilling our mission. Through our award-winning Youth Inclusion Initiative, Spark Professional Internship Program, Inspire Mentorship Program, EPIC High School Program and others, DEP is attracting new talent to the environmental field and supporting new recruits as they grow into environmental quality and natural resource management professionals who will help lead us into the future.



# Acknowledgments

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is grateful to the many private and public sector partners whose support has helped to advance our important mission to improve and protect the public health and environment we all share. We offer sincere thanks to the people and communities we serve for their engagement, and to those in business, industry, academia, advocacy, and government for their partnership. There are no thanks enough for the 3,000+ tremendously talented DEP professionals whose exceptional work lifts us all.

## New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

**Shawn M. LaTourette**

Commissioner

**Megan Brunatti**

Chief of Staff

**Katrina Angarone**

Deputy Commissioner

**Kimberly Cahall**

Chief Advisor and Chief Enforcement Officer

**Paul Baldauf**

Assistant Commissioner | Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability

**John Cecil**

Assistant Commissioner | State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

**Bryana De Veaux**

Director | Legislative Affairs

**Elizabeth Dragon**

Assistant Commissioner | Community Investment & Economic Revitalization

**Pat Gardner**

Assistant Commissioner | Water Resource Management

**Dave Golden**

Assistant Commissioner | Fish and Wildlife

**David E. Haymes**

Assistant Commissioner | Contaminated Site Remediation & Redevelopment

**Adrienne Kreipke**

Chief Financial and Operations Officer

**Jennifer Moriarty**

Assistant Commissioner | Watershed & Land Management

**Kandyce Perry**

Director | Office of Environmental Justice

**Nicholas Angarone**

Chief Resilience Officer | Office of Climate Resilience

We are grateful to DEP senior leadership and the numerous staff members of these programs, who generously shared their time and knowledge, which informed the content showcasing our accomplishments during the past eight years.

**Project Manager/Content**

Kelley Heck

Chief Communications Officer | Office of Communications & Outreach

**Editor/Photo Coordinator**

Bailey Lawrence

Deputy Director | Office of Communications & Outreach

**Writer**

Debra La Quaglia

Content Strategist | Office of Communications & Outreach

**Design and Layout**

Joshua Chomik

Assistant Commissioner's Office | State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

James Douglas

Assistant Commissioner's Office | State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites

Emily Nanneman

Communications Coordinator | Office of Communications & Outreach

We also thank Communications' Mandy Futey, Maria Scimone, Erin Brodel and Harley Zaraza for their contributions to the successful completion of this narration of DEP accomplishments

*This project was conceived by Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette. All photographs and graphics are provided by the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, unless otherwise credited.*

# Table of Contents

10	SAFEGUARDING DRINKING WATER
26	ENSURING CLEANER WATERWAYS
40	BUILDING RESILIENCE TO EXTREME WEATHER AND CLIMATE CHANGE
62	EXPANDING ACCESS TO NATURE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION
76	IMPROVING AIR QUALITY AND REDUCING CLIMATE POLLUTION
86	PROTECTING OUR FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITATS
98	FURTHERING THE PROMISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
108	CLEANING UP AND BUILDING FORWARD
116	RESTORING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES
126	HONORING HISTORY AND PRESERVING HERITAGE
136	MORE ACCESSIBLE AND EFFICIENT ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE
144	TOWARD A MORE SUSTAINABLE NEW JERSEY
156	BUILDING COMMUNITY AND EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS
168	CONCLUSION

# CHAPTER ONE:

## SAFEGUARDING DRINKING WATER



In New Jersey, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is the statewide agency responsible for improving and protecting public health, safety and the environment we share. Using the best available science, DEP implements laws to reduce and regulate pollution. Pollutants that are deposited onto our land, released into our air or discharged into our waters in harmful amounts can contaminate natural resources such as soil, sediment and groundwater. Such pollutants can be taken up by animals and plants or be carried in surface waters, including sources of drinking water.

Every day, DEP Water Resource Management professionals work hard to protect sources of our water supply and ensure that every New Jerseyan has access to reliably clean and safe drinking water. DEP monitors waterways for pollutants, undertakes science and research to identify and protect against new and emerging contaminants, ensures adequate water quantity and enforces water quality and safety standards. And, to help keep our families healthy and our businesses humming with clean water, DEP administers New Jersey's Water Infrastructure Investment Plan, investing hundreds of millions of dollars each year to improve the infrastructure that brings clean, safe drinking water from our aquifers to our faucets.

### Protecting Against Chemical Contamination

Over the past several years, DEP has led the charge in identifying the risks associated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a class of chemicals that have been used for decades in industrial processes, textiles and consumer goods to create products that are resistant to heat, stains, oil and water. PFAS have been used to make nonstick cookware, flame-retardants, waterproof fabrics, cosmetics and even toilet paper. Over the years, PFAS have been released into waterways, on land and in the air during manufacturing processes, and when products containing PFAS have been used or discarded as waste in landfills or incinerators. The unique chemical properties of PFAS have made them very persistent in the environment. PFAS do not break down naturally in the environment like other chemicals, and we find PFAS cycling widely in water supplies, leaching from landfills and in soils around the state. PFAS are also known to bioaccumulate — meaning that they build up over time in the bodies of fish, wildlife and people exposed to them. Because PFAS are so persistent and hard to destroy, they have been called “forever chemicals.”



In approximately 15% of New Jersey, people and businesses are not connected to a public water system and, instead, get drinking water from onsite private wells. To ensure their health is protected, DEP also set PFAS standards for private well testing. This means that when a home is sold or leased, private wells must be tested for PFAS so the contaminants can be removed.

Getting contaminants like PFAS out of our drinking water systems and private wells can be expensive, and DEP has committed to helping homeowners who find PFAS in their private wells and supporting drinking water systems by defraying the cost of upgrades and the resulting increased costs added to customer water bills. DEP does this by providing low- and no-interest financing to water systems and also by funding point-of-entry treatment systems for homeowners with contaminated private wells. Since 2018, DEP and the New Jersey Water Bank<sup>1</sup> have facilitated \$222.6 million in capital projects to address PFAS, while the DEP Spill Fund Damage Claims program has invested \$12.2 million to deploy 1,971 point-of-entry treatment systems to address PFAS in private wells.

Toxicologists and environmental scientists at DEP have been studying PFAS for over 20 years, finding a higher-than-average occurrence rate of the forever chemicals in New Jersey. As DEP learned that some PFAS are toxic and can harm the environment or pose health risks to people who are exposed to them, especially over long periods of time, the agency acted swiftly to set drinking water safety standards for PFAS most commonly found in New Jersey water supplies.

In 2018, New Jersey became the first state in America to fully address PFAS in drinking water, setting us on a course to rid our water of these forever chemicals. Today, public drinking water systems are required to regularly test the water they serve for PFAS, and systems must take timely action to remove PFAS from the drinking water supply if found above levels that could compromise public health.



In 2024, Ridgewood Water was presented with the first Our Water's Worth It award for its efforts to conserve water and to protect public health by addressing PFAS contamination.



The Wanaque Reservoir is along the Wanaque River and is a tributary of the greater Passaic River watershed, which includes areas in both New York and New Jersey.

# Better Than We Found It

## 1. Safeguarding Drinking Water



A water release at Spruce Run Reservoir in Clinton. This reservoir is considered one of the first water supply facilities to be constructed and operated by the state.



A water pipeline located in the Paterson Great Falls National Historic Park in Paterson.

DEP has also refused to allow companies that manufactured and released PFAS into our environment to pass on the cost of cleaning up their mess solely to New Jersey taxpayers. Since 2018, DEP, with New Jersey's Attorney General, has successfully prosecuted multiple enforcement actions to hold accountable those responsible for contaminating water supplies and other natural resources with PFAS:

- In August 2025, DEP reached a historic environmental settlement with chemical manufacturer DuPont and related entities valued at more than \$2 billion — the largest ever environmental settlement by a single state. DuPont was a major manufacturer of PFAS and is responsible for cleaning up multiple contaminated sites in New Jersey. DEP's case began in 2019 and centered on the release of PFAS and other pollutants, including at the massive Chambers Works site in South Jersey. After a month of trial in federal court, DEP reached the proposed settlement that, once finalized, will provide a continuing source of funding for PFAS abatement, water treatment and natural resource restoration projects during the next 25 years. (See Box 1)
- DEP also pursued enforcement actions against 3M Company, another major manufacturer of PFAS products that were released into New Jersey's environment. Rather than face trial, in May 2025, 3M agreed to a settlement of up to \$450 million that will enable DEP to support PFAS abatement, water treatment and natural resource restoration projects during the next 25 years.
- PFAS manufacturers Solvay Specialty Polymers and Arkema also made and released PFAS and other pollutants at a site in West Deptford, Gloucester County. DEP took action against these companies in 2019 and, between 2023 and 2024, reached settlements of up to \$500 million, which will ensure the cleanup of the contaminated site, fund PFAS treatment upgrades at water systems and private wells in the vicinity, and support natural resource restoration projects in the Delaware River and Bay estuary where the site is located.



Credit: NJ Office of the Attorney General

### In The Courts

A more than \$2 billion environmental settlement – the largest environmental settlement ever achieved by a single state – regarding [PFAS](#) contamination, as well as other pollutants, originating from four industrial sites, was announced in August 2025 following a month of trial proceedings in U.S. federal court. The settlement resolves multiple 2019 lawsuits against chemical giant DuPont and related entities for statewide PFAS contamination and pollution emanating from industrial sites in Pompton Lakes (Passaic County), Sayreville (Middlesex County), Greenwich (Gloucester County) and Pennsville/Carney's Point (Salem County). Under this settlement, the companies will fully clean up contamination emanating from the four sites and pay \$875 million to fund contamination abatement projects (such as drinking water treatment) and to restore natural resources to compensate for the harm that was caused to land, water and the ecology.

### Addressing the Scourge of Lead in Drinking Water

[Lead](#) exposure is a very serious public health and safety concern, especially for children. While lead is not typically found in source water, people can be exposed to lead in drinking water due to the corrosion of certain aging water service lines and plumbing that can leach lead into drinking water over time. Materials affected by corrosion can include lead service lines, internal home plumbing and fixtures such as old faucets.

To reduce the potential risks from lead in drinking water, New Jersey enacted a law in July 2021 that requires drinking water systems to inventory service lines, notify residents of the potential presence of lead in their service lines and plan for the replacement of all lead services lines within 10 years, by 2031.

As of 2025, New Jersey water systems have reported approximately 115,000 lead or galvanized service lines that must be replaced, and approximately 688,000 lines of unknown material that must be investigated.

Since 2021, DEP has facilitated \$338 million in lead service line replacement projects through the New Jersey Water Bank.

DEP has also developed the New Jersey Lead and Copper Rule (NJ LCR), which will provide greater protections against lead in drinking water as service lines are replaced in the years ahead. The NJ LCR takes a proactive approach to addressing lead in drinking water, exceeding baseline federal standards for drinking water safety by strengthening lead and copper monitoring and water quality parameter monitoring, while ensuring effective corrosion control and expanding lead risk public education.



## Swift Action In Newark

DEP supported Newark in executing an ambitious plan to replace all 23,000 lead service lines in the city. Initially predicted to take 10 years, the project was completed in less than three and has been hailed as a national model for how such major infrastructure projects can be done quickly and successfully, while placing residents and communities at the forefront of the conversation.

## National 'GET THE LEAD OUT' Initiative

DEP became a founding member of a national "Get the Lead Out" initiative, launched by the Biden-Harris White House. In January 2023, DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette joined Vice President Kamala Harris at a White House summit to announce New Jersey's participation and launch the federal Lead Service Line Replacement Accelerator community initiative to help local governments identify and replace lead service lines. The initiative includes assisting communities in developing community engagement plans, an LSL inventory, LSL replacement plans and State Revolving Fund applications. The first New Jersey municipalities to participate in the program were East Newark and Harrison.



### Investing in Drinking Water Infrastructure

Every New Jersey resident and business depends on access to safe and clean water, but the infrastructure that brings us our drinking water and carries away our wastewater does not take care of itself. Since 2018, DEP has focused on improving and modernizing the state's aging water infrastructure to protect our drinking water and improve the quality of our waterways. DEP has facilitated more than \$1,399 million in projects to upgrade drinking water infrastructure through the New Jersey Water Bank and adopted the Water Quality Accountability Act rules to strengthen water infrastructure planning.

In 2022, DEP launched the Water Infrastructure Investment Plan (WIIP), New Jersey's program to optimize the use of limited federal and state resources to address high-priority water infrastructure needs throughout the state. The WIIP is dedicated to identifying and supporting projects that address New Jersey's aging water infrastructure and deliver safe drinking water, which include protection of drinking water supplies and reduction of the risk of exposure to lead and synthetic chemicals. In addition, DEP holds WIIP sessions focused on topics such as Intended Use Plans, public hearings and Technical Assistance information sessions.

Across New Jersey, local governments have long faced water infrastructure demands and DEP has been there to help, with both funding and technical assistance, because our state relies on water system assets to ensure that our people, communities and businesses can thrive. Recent Clean Water and Drinking Water needs surveys estimate 20-year nationwide needs of more than \$1.2 trillion, including \$31.6 billion in needs in New Jersey.



## Local Progress

Local projects to ensure reliable, clean and safe drinking water have been a cornerstone of DEP's infrastructure investments.

Water systems must store an adequate amount of drinking water for use on demand. Historically, some treated drinking water was stored in open air reservoirs, which have been phased out over time because this mode of storage leaves clean water open to the elements and vulnerable to urban runoff and microbial contamination from wildlife. In 2025, the Water Bank authorized nearly \$53 million for the Passaic Valley Water Commission (PVWC) Levine Reservoir covering project in Paterson, which will better protect against microbial contaminants and reduce the risks of lead exposure by containing the reservoir's open finished water in two newly constructed 2.5-million-gallon water tanks. DEP joined PVWC to break ground on the project in August 2025. Financing of the nearly \$53 million project includes \$10 million in principal forgiveness and \$43 million in low-interest loans.

In 2024, Camden broke ground on a \$55 million improvement at the Morris-Delair Water Treatment Plant, where a new Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) treatment system will help to remove PFAS forever chemicals and support compliance with drinking water safety standards. The Water Bank provided \$55 million in financing, including \$20 million in principal forgiveness and \$35 million in low-interest loans.

Monksville Reservoir is in Long Pond Ironworks State Park in the New Jersey Highlands. The reservoir and state park are considered great spots for fishing, hiking and wildlife watching.

## Water Work Financing

The New Jersey Water Bank is a partnership between DEP and the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank (I-Bank) that provides low-cost financing for the design, construction and implementation of pivotal water projects. The Water Bank administers the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, focused on drinking water infrastructure and technologies; and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which addresses public wastewater and stormwater systems.



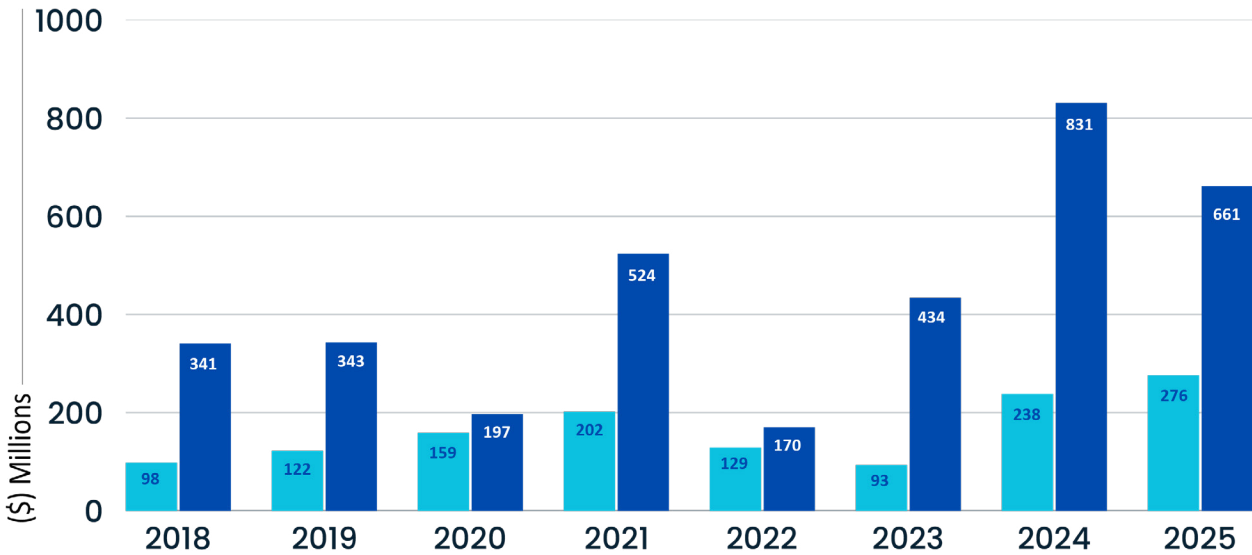
**DID YOU KNOW?**

**The New Jersey Water Bank...**

- Opened 39 years ago to help fund the state’s water infrastructure needs
- Has served 422 water systems as of June 2025
- Has received 926 project requests in FY2025 totaling \$10,920,912,191
- Has issued \$11.85 billion in loans, with \$9.28 billion in long-term projects and \$2.57 billion in short-term efforts
- Has saved more than \$3.43 billion on long-term financing costs
- Has seen an estimated 174,172 jobs created



**WATER BANK INVESTMENTS**





Event to mark water infrastructure investments



PFAS Water Treatment System



Water infrastructure investments in North Jersey



Wanaque Reservoir

## Building a Community of Water Leaders

To help make sure every New Jersey community is prepared to meet its drinking water challenges, DEP has engaged partners across the water sector to build a community of practice, with a special focus on establishing innovative technical assistance programs and recognizing water resource leadership.

In 2023, DEP launched the New Jersey Technical Assistance Program (NJ-TAP) to provide resources and enhanced technical expertise to water systems — including those in small, rural and disadvantaged communities — at no cost to the system or its customers. Through NJ-TAP, water systems get support in inventorying lead service lines, developing asset management and capital improvement plans, and identifying sources of state and federal funding for water infrastructure improvements. NJ-TAP also offers a toolbox of resources that water systems and local governments can utilize for community outreach and engagement.

Coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the landmark federal Safe Drinking Water Act, DEP launched Our Water's Worth It (OWWI), a campaign to raise public awareness about the fundamental importance of our water supplies, the water challenges we must face and the work that each of us can do to ensure that all New Jerseyans have access to clean drinking water and healthy waterways. OWWI recognizes and celebrates water leaders—including public and private water systems and their partners—who go above and beyond to protect water resources, improve water quality, and ensure service and reliability for the people and communities they serve.

## 'QUALITY' Effort

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, DEP presented its third Our Water's Worth It award to the New Jersey Drinking Water Quality Institute (DWQI), whose scientists play an especially crucial role in studying drinking water contaminants and recommending drinking water safety standards. Their work has positioned New Jersey as a national leader in setting rigorous standards for drinking water that protect public health from exposure to PFAS and other contaminants.



## The Future of New Jersey's Water Supplies

In September 2024, DEP released the latest New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Plan, which water sector practitioners and the public can explore [through an interactive website](#). The Plan contains the most up-to-date water supply data, analyzes risks to healthy and reliable water supplies, and

identifies the infrastructure, governance and public policy supports necessary to ensure the state's water needs are met in the decades ahead. The Plan examines water supply challenges resulting from climate change and offers climate resilience solutions. Of particular concern are temperature, precipitation and sea-level changes, which will significantly impact water quantity, where and when it is available, and its quality. The plan also examines how emerging contaminants may impact water supply. The new [interactive website](#) outlines key plan information for specific audiences, including residential users, water professionals and others, on topics such as climate change and environmental justice.

### Responding to Drought

Recent years have shown a trend of increasingly intense rainfall events followed by periods of little or no rain, with some leading to drought conditions. As our climate changes, New Jersey can expect these trends to continue, which will necessitate water providers, residents and businesses to manage through periods of water scarcity.

For example, New Jersey experienced a period of prolonged drought in the summer and fall of 2024, and the significantly below-average rainfall continued for several months, contributing to diminished streamflow, reservoir and groundwater levels through 2025 (with a brief respite from historic rainfall in May 2025). October 2024 was New Jersey's driest month since record-keeping began in 1896. This period of drought was worsened by major water infrastructure failures that prevented billions of gallons of water from being pumped and stored. The state had experienced another period of drought just two years prior. Amid the 2022 Drought Watch, a major water supply source was further endangered when a 9-mile harmful algal bloom (HAB) threatened the water supplies of more than 800,000 residents, and a major city experienced a significant water main break, resulting in loss

of water and boil water advisories for more than 200,000 people.

DEP is assisting water supply managers as they manage drought, extreme weather conditions and the complicated task of upgrading aging infrastructure. Professionals in DEP's Division of Water Supply and Geoscience closely monitor drought indicators to help keep water supply managers, local governments and the public informed and ready to manage through more severe conditions. For example, DEP's [Conserve Water Toolkit](#) provides public education and informational materials, including infographics, fliers, video and social media resources to help distribute information about drought conditions and water conservation.



### Water Saver

DEP launched "Every Drop Counts," a campaign to raise public awareness of the need for water conservation. As drought gripped the state in 2022 and 2024-25, Every Drop Counts was especially impactful, as DEP, partner organizations and members of the public shared the campaign's tips on how "we all can do our part to conserve water" -- from fixing a leaky faucet to taking 5-minute showers and watering plants with rainwater captured in a rain barrel.



Delaware and Raritan Canal  
lock control gears in Bulls  
Island Recreation Area.

Water treatment in Veolia's  
Haworth Water Treatment  
Plant in Haworth.



Round Valley Reservoir is in Round Valley Recreation Area. It's the state's largest reservoir and can hold up to 55 billion gallons of water at full capacity.



# CHAPTER TWO:

## ENSURING CLEANER WATERWAYS



Our small, densely populated state is home to one of the nation's longest coastlines and largest ports. We boast breathtaking bays, large freshwater lakes, long rivers, meandering streams and urban waterfronts. The famed Jersey Shore is home to millions, a cherished getaway for millions more, and an economic engine that helps to power our state and region. Our pristine beaches and iconic Shore towns drive \$50 billion in annual travel and tourism spending, and this robust economic activity depends on one thing: the quality of our waterways. From the Delaware Water Gap through our northwestern lakes, east to Newark Bay and the New York/New Jersey Harbor, down along the Jersey Shore and out to the Delaware Bay, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection remains hard at work restoring and protecting the state's waterways for current and future generations.

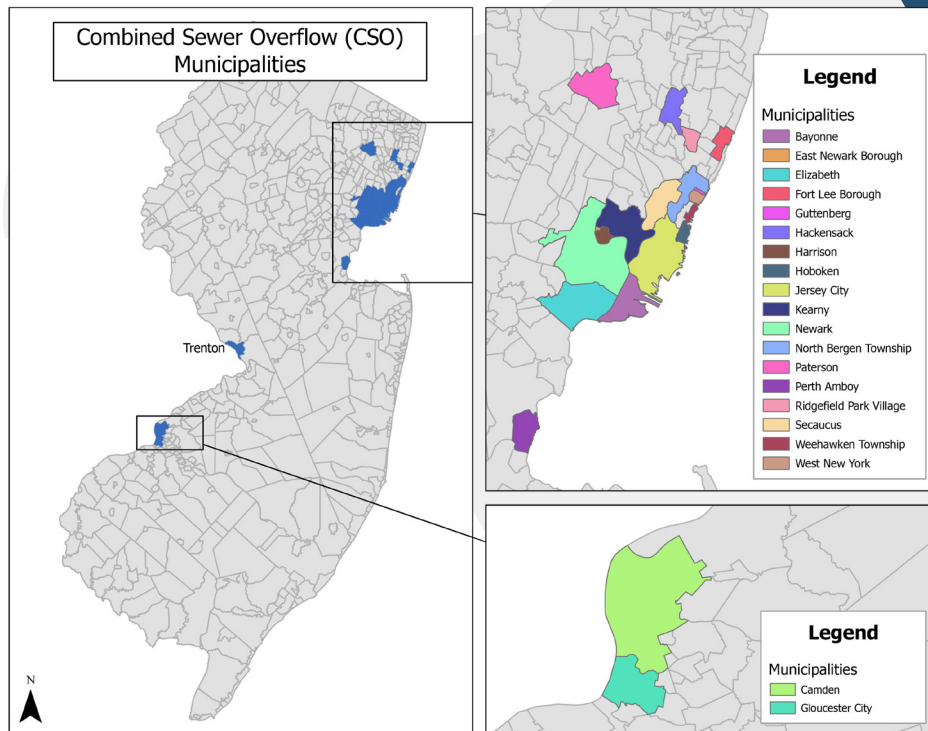
### Reducing and Eliminating Combined Sewer Overflows

The responsibility to ensure cleaner waterways begins right on local streets, where some municipalities still have combined sewer systems that collect rainwater, melting snow runoff, domestic sewage and industrial wastewater in the same collection and conveyance system. When the volume of mixed waters in these systems grows too big, the combined sewer overflow (CSO) is

discharged into nearby water bodies without treatment (beyond capturing debris bigger than a half inch through screens and netting). CSOs may contain high levels of pollutants that can pose significant threats to public health.

Although New Jersey no longer constructs sewer systems that capture sanitary wastewater (the water we flush) and stormwater (the water that falls) in the same piping system, historic combined systems are still present in 21 of our older urban centers. Over the past several years, DEP has worked closely with these communities and utilities to develop [Long-Term Control Plans](#) for separating stormwater and wastewater lines through New Jersey Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NJPDES) permits, and to help communities secure low-cost funding from the New Jersey Water Bank to implement CSO control measures that reduce discharges. These efforts continue to restore water quality and improve quality of life in CSO communities.

At the end of 2025, DEP marked a major milestone when it issued final NJPDES permits, affecting 20 of the 21 CSO communities.



<b>CSO Communities</b>	<b>Final Permit Issued</b>
<b>Bergen County Utilities Authority</b> 1. Fort Lee 2. Ridgefield Park 3. Hackensack	<b>1/30/25</b>
<b>Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority</b> 4. Camden 5. Gloucester	<b>11/4/25</b>
<b>Joint Meeting of Essex &amp; Union Counties</b> 6. Elizabeth	<b>2/28/25</b>
<b>Middlesex County Utilities Authority</b> 7. Perth Amboy	<b>Draft Permit Issued 11/3/25</b> (final undergoing DEP review)
<b>North Bergen Municipal Utilities Authority - Woodcliff</b> 8. Guttenberg	<b>5/25/23</b>
<b>North Hudson Sewerage Authority - Adams Street</b> 9. Hoboken 10. Union City 11. Weehawken	<b>2/7/24</b>
<b>North Hudson Sewerage Authority - River Road</b> 12. West New York (Plus Union City and Weehawken mentioned above)	<b>12/23/25</b>
<b>Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission</b> 13. Jersey City 14. Paterson 15. North Bergen 16. Kearny 17. Harrison 18. Bayonne 19. Newark 20. East Newark	<b>10/28/25</b>
<b>Trenton Sewer Utility</b> 21. Trenton	<b>2/5/21</b>

## Reducing Discharges

The Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority (CCMUA), which provides wastewater treatment for about 500,000 residents, has been working for a decade to reduce combined sewer discharges in Camden and Gloucester City. CCMUA was honored by DEP in April 2025 when DEP Commissioner Shawn LaTourette presented an Our Water's Worth It award to the utilities authority (see photo below right) in recognition of its efforts to diminish discharges and localized flooding through gray and green infrastructure improvements, as well as its public education and engagement efforts. Presently underway is a CCMUA project to separate stormwater and wastewater lines to address the largest combined sewer outfall in the system, alleviating flooding in Camden's Cramer Hill section. This \$24 million project will significantly improve water quality in the Delaware River, directly upstream from the nature preserve at Petty's Island.



## OUR WATER'S WORTH IT

The DEP launched the [Our Water's Worth It](#) campaign in 2024 to raise public awareness about the fundamental importance of our water supplies, the threats they face and the steps DEP is taking to ensure all New Jerseyans have access to clean drinking water and healthy waterways.



## Embracing Green Infrastructure

Green roofs, rain gardens, vegetated swales, bioretention basins, permeable pavements and urban forests are collectively known as green infrastructure (GI) – measures that manage stormwater close to its source by using vegetation and soil to naturally filter out pollutants from runoff and store runoff for reuse. By engineering with nature, the volume of stormwater can be decreased and flooding can be reduced. GI improves water quality of downstream channels because stormwater runoff, which can carry fertilizers, pesticides, automotive fluids and other pollutants,

never reaches them. Additionally, GI improves New Jersey's resilience to storm and flood impacts from climate change by creating carbon-sequestering green space, and provides additional benefits that include mitigation of the urban heat island effect, decreased energy use, removal of air pollutants through greater use of vegetation, beautification of public spaces and even increased property values.

To encourage use of GI, in 2020, DEP adopted groundbreaking amendments to New Jersey's Stormwater Management Rules, which now require that major development projects employ GI to reduce stormwater runoff and achieve water quality goals. The GI rule improves environmental outcomes, while reducing the cost of constructing 'gray' stormwater solutions, such as systems of drains, pipes and hard retention basins.

*DEP has invested more than \$20 million in green infrastructure projects across New Jersey.*

Between 2020 and 2022, DEP supported multiple projects in communities with environmental justice concerns, including \$1.5 million to add streetside bioretention basins in Camden's Cramer Hill neighborhood; \$770,000-plus to add tree trenches and stormwater curb extensions in Jersey City; more than \$560,000 to bring trees and pervious surfacing to downtown Trenton; and more than \$1 million for 31 green infrastructure installations, including stormwater planters and rain gardens, in Newark's University Heights neighborhood.

In 2023, DEP provided more than \$4 million for 18 green infrastructure projects to reduce and manage stormwater runoff, including \$228,000 to build a 400-foot-long bioretention swale with native vegetation in Lake Hopatcong; \$32,000 for a rain garden in Waldwick; and \$438,000-plus to install green streets, tree pits, cisterns, pervious pavement and stormwater curb extensions in Perth Amboy.

DEP's support continued in 2025, with a pledge of \$3.5-plus million to help counties undertake stormwater infrastructure mapping and project planning. A portion of the 2025 funding – ranging from \$75,000 to \$150,000 per county – will advance efforts to increase resilience in communities through green streets, which use GI to manage stormwater runoff while providing safe and accessible routes for all road users. Green infrastructure along streets can include stormwater planters, tree trenches, pervious pavements, vegetated curb bump-outs and bioswales.

### In The Green

Water has always been a key piece of Hoboken's identity, but its location on the Hudson River has left the city historically vulnerable to rainfall flooding and coastal storm surge. Working with DEP, Hoboken created ResilienCity Park, which offers more than 5 acres of public open-space amenities and can hold 2 million gallons of rainfall stormwater in above- and below-ground infrastructure. The park, which opened in 2023, is a former industrial site that now includes a multipurpose athletic field, a playground and a community gathering space. It also has an underground detention tank that can hold 1 million gallons of stormwater and green infrastructure – including a rain garden and a cistern for on-site irrigation – that can absorb another 1 million gallons. Hoboken has two other, smaller resiliency parks to handle stormwater and another — Harborside Park – under construction in the north area of the city that will address coastal surge.



## Improving Lakes Management and Addressing Harmful Algal Blooms

DEP's enduring commitment to restoring and preserving water quality is critical to protecting public health and ensuring that our waterways are available for use and enjoyment. To promote health and recreation, DEP has established several grant programs, including stormwater management and water quality restoration grants, to advance lakes management and ensure cleaner waterways and water quality across New Jersey. Stormwater grants focus on managing stormwater and nonpoint source pollution to improve public lakes for recreation and conservation, while water quality restoration grants address nonpoint source pollution. By focusing on activities such as stormwater management, riparian buffer restoration and erosion control, these programs help address

critical water quality issues in both urban and rural areas. Since 2018, DEP has made more than \$43 million available for watershed restoration, including grants for lake management and harmful algal bloom (HAB) mitigation.

In 2019, nearly 40 HABs were identified statewide. Since then, DEP has been working with communities to reduce the risk of HABs through prevention and mitigation. To help address the economic, environmental and public health impacts of HABs, DEP has adopted a multipronged Harmful Algal Bloom monitoring and response strategy, which helps lake communities protect public health and their local environments. Tens of millions of dollars in funding has been made available for local projects to mitigate and reduce the impacts of HABs; an interactive mapping tool was created to help lake communities better protect public health and keep the public informed about blooms

occurring across the state; and a color-coded health alert index and signage system was designed to provide the public with strong and clear guidance on suitable recreational activities in freshwater lakes and other water bodies impacted by HABs. All the while, DEP has collected data – from shorelines, boats, monitoring buoys and a state-of-the-art aerial sensor.

In 2020, DEP hosted its first annual Harmful Algal Bloom Summit to share information and receive feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders, including local, state and federal government officials, lake and other environmental commissions, watershed associations, environmental nonprofits, businesses, academics, and lakes management and HAB treatment experts. The sixth annual HAB Summit, held in April 2025, moved beyond crisis-driven responses and toward proactive, long-term solutions for managing HABs.



### What Are HABs?

Harmful algal blooms (HABs), a key focus of DEP’s lake management work over the past eight years, are the result of excess growth of cyanobacteria. They are usually caused by increased nutrients, sunlight and warmer water temperatures. Systemic nonpoint source pollution and hotter, wetter conditions due, in part, to our changing climate, have resulted in persistent and recurring HABs throughout New Jersey’s lake communities.

Increased runoff carries excessive nutrients and negatively impacts water temperatures, which can harm ecosystems and contribute to persistent HABs. The blooms can have a devastating impact on lakes, not only in terms of local economies and tourism but also with respect to the health risks they pose. Exposure to cyanobacteria cells can cause rashes, allergy-like reactions, flu-like symptoms, gastroenteritis, respiratory irritation and eye irritation. Accidental ingestion of water containing the toxins these bacteria can produce, known as cyanotoxins, can result in more serious health effects, such as liver toxicity and neurological effects. Children and pets are especially vulnerable.

# WARNING

HIGH HEALTH RISK

## HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM (HAB)

FLORACIONES DE ALGAS NOCIVAS

Always keep children and pets away from areas with blooms or scums.

				<div style="text-align: center;">                   OK             </div> <hr/> <div style="text-align: center;">                   Use Caution             </div> <hr/> <div style="text-align: center;">                   Advise Against             </div>



## Swift Response

In 2019, with reports of nearly 40 harmful algal blooms (HABs) on New Jersey waterbodies, DEP mounted an aggressive monitoring and public notice campaign to respond to their widespread occurrence, particularly on the state's lakes. Monitoring efforts were increased by 50 percent, and DEP worked closely with communities to understand public health risks and to identify and develop preventive actions. DEP made \$13 million available to assist lake communities in planning and implementing preventive measures, including \$10 million in principal forgiveness grants through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for sewer and stormwater upgrades to reduce the flow of nutrients to affected waterbodies; \$2.5 million in matching funds for lake and HAB management grants; and up to \$1 million in watershed grants for projects to reduce nonpoint source pollution.

## Monitoring Water Quality of Surface and Groundwater

To improve and protect our water resources, we must actively monitor water quality. In recent years, DEP has expanded its comprehensive approach to monitoring the state's water quality, integrating field sampling, laboratory analysis, and

real-time data collected from buoys and gliders. Through this sampling, DEP professionals examine the chemical, physical and biological criteria in surface waters, groundwater and coastal areas. These efforts help us to protect and manage public drinking water supplies and recreational uses, and promote aquaculture (e.g., shellfish harvesting) by monitoring the health of aquatic organisms.



### DEP Does That?

DEP's Bureau of Freshwater & Biological Monitoring assesses the quality of New Jersey's groundwater, rivers, streams and lakes through statewide and regional monitoring networks, and also implements the HAB Freshwater Recreational Response to protect public health, drinking water and recreational uses. DEP's Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring evaluates New Jersey's coastal water quality and monitors nutrient loads to ensure the safe consumption of shellfish, in accordance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program, and to identify potential pollution sources.

DEP's aerial water quality surveillance has been expanded to serve both the Jersey Shore and our northern lakeshore during peak beach and lake season. Each year between May and September, DEP conducts coastal surveillance flights six days a week (weather permitting) to obtain a visual assessment of coastal water and beach conditions. During these flights, trained observers identify wastewater treatment plant discharges, floatable debris, possible pollution sources, algal blooms, marine life, changing coastal conditions and issues that may be potentially harmful to swimmers. At the same time, the aircraft's sensors estimate chlorophyll levels in coastal and lake waters, as well as cyanobacteria cell counts in lakes to detect potential algal blooms. The data can indicate when and where water samples should be collected for analysis, which will determine if any algal species and cyanotoxins are potentially harmful to humans and animals.



In 2019, DEP extended its longstanding coastal Beach Monitoring Program flight path to cover several northern lakes and reservoirs.



Commissioner LaTourette on a coastal monitoring flight of the Jersey Shore.



The Millstone River experiences a bloom of cyanobacteria. Discoloration is noted throughout the water, but is most notable closer to the shoreline.



## Advancing Science and Setting Standards to Improve Water Quality

Through rigorous study and the application of sound science since 2018, DEP has advanced important protections for human health and ecosystems.

### Surface Water Benchmarks

Surface Water Quality Standards (SWQS) provide the policies, stream classifications and surface water quality criteria that protect the condition of New Jersey's rivers, lakes, reservoirs, oceans and ponds. The standards are a framework for controlling pollution, preventing health risks from contaminated drinking or recreational waters, and maintaining the economic and ecological health of our communities. These standards establish designated uses of our waters, such as drinking water supply and recreation, and ensure that beach waters are safe for swimming, water supplies are suitable sources of drinking water, and that fish and shellfish harvested from our waters are safe to eat. The standards also protect waters for other uses, such as trout production and maintenance, and agricultural and industrial use.

### 600 More Miles of Pristine Category One Waterways

For the first time in more than a decade, in 2020, DEP adopted anti-degradation rules to protect 600 miles of New Jersey's pristine waterways. By declaring them Category One waterways, these 600 miles — from the Ramapo River in the north to the Maurice River in the south — are now protected from degradation due to their exceptional ecological, drinking water supply, or aquatic resource (fisheries) values. These guidelines will ensure that any wastewater or other regulated

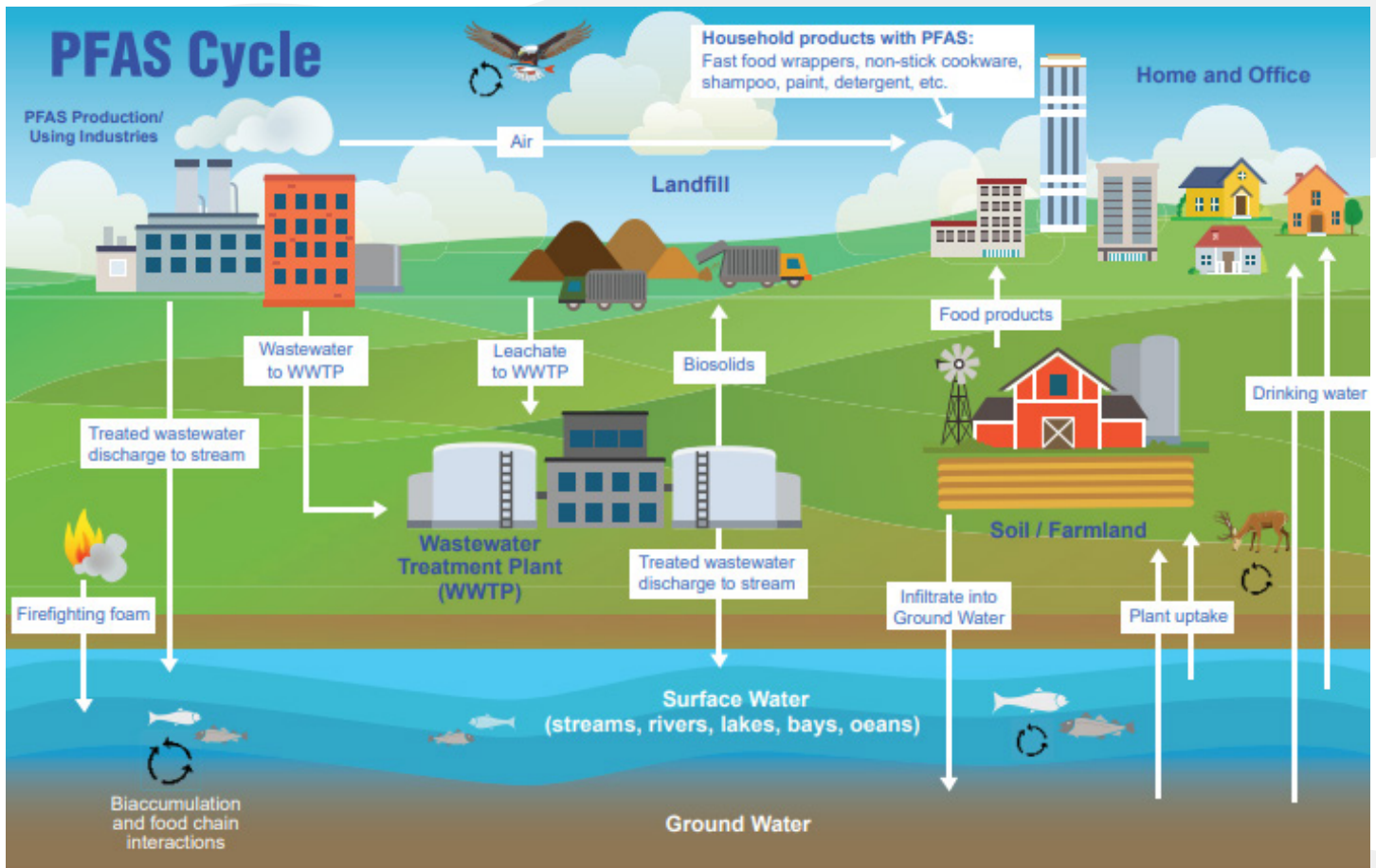
discharges impacting the waterways will meet stringent water quality standards. These areas also will be afforded 300-foot development buffers under the Flood Hazard Area Control Act, better protecting water quality, lives and property. By ensuring these pristine waters remain free of degradation, DEP is helping to protect ecosystems that provide important wildlife habitats and improve our quality of life.



### Addressing the Water Quality Risk of PFAS

To better control PFAS pollution in wastewater and reduce the discharge of PFAS into our waterways, DEP has developed numeric SWQS that would govern several PFAS forever chemicals in fresh and saline waters. These standards are among the first of their kind in the United States and were developed by using New Jersey-specific bioaccumulation factors, a scientific measurement of a contaminant in an aquatic organism. Once fully instituted, the SWQS will enable DEP to place enforceable water quality-based effluent limits (restrictions on the quantity, rate and concentration of pollutants that can be discharged from a point source into navigable waters) for PFAS in industrial and other wastewater discharge permits. This important science and rulemaking are critical to reducing and eliminating PFAS from the water cycle.

To further address New Jersey's PFAS contamination challenges, DEP's Division of Water Quality has



established a comprehensive PFAS Water Quality Strategy, which includes expanded testing for PFAS in wastewater; collection and analysis of data to identify PFAS at their source; and development of methods to reduce and eliminate industrial discharges that may contain PFAS. Two of DEP’s staunchest allies in its PFAS efforts are the PFAS Water Working Group and the Clean Water Council. The Working Group, which kicked off in 2024, includes DEP representatives and members from the regulated water and wastewater sector who, together, explore common PFAS inter-related issues and help develop policy and guidance to benefit all in the water sector. The Clean Water Council is an advisory board to DEP focused on water resource related issues, particularly seeking public input on the impacts of PFAS.

### Local Actions are Critical to Water Quality

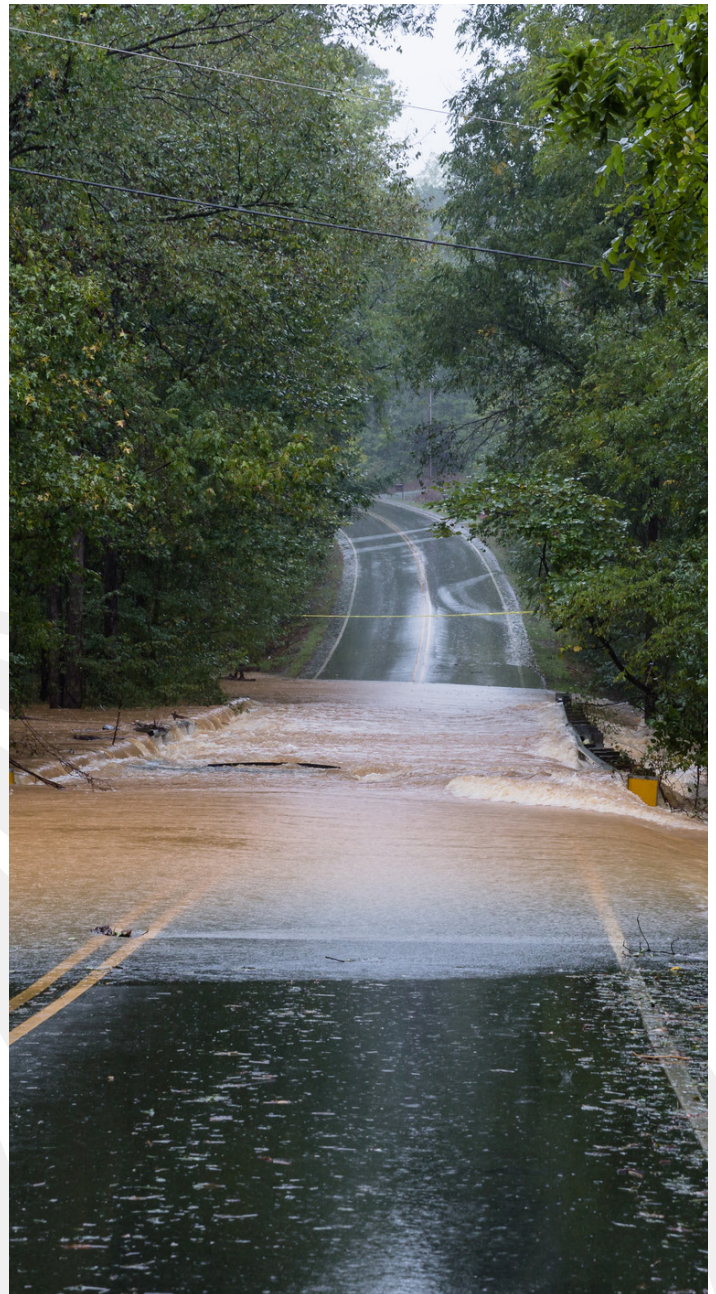
Another effort to boost water quality involves the evolution of Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits. The MS4 permitting program, just over two decades old, addresses water quality and flooding issues in municipal stormwater systems. In 2021, all permittees were required to adopt more stringent measures for reducing pollutants and nutrient impacts to waterways. The most recent permit renewal, in January 2023, requires a map of all of the natural channels and pipes in a system handling stormwater runoff, as well as plans to reduce pollutants in certain waterbodies. MS4 permittees also must implement any stormwater management rule changes, such as a 2021 requirement for the use of green infrastructure and the 2023 inland flood protection

rule that requires climate change updates and future projected rainfall data be incorporated in stormwater system design. DEP made available \$19 million in grants to help municipalities transition to these requirements.



## Improving Water Quality in Every Community

To preserve green spaces and promote smart growth, many New Jersey laws and policies favor the redevelopment of previously developed but underutilized sites. One consequence of these well-intended policies has been to exempt redevelopments from complying with water quality requirements. This has meant that, for decades, redeveloped sites have not been required to remove impurities from runoff leaving redeveloped sites. Through its Resilient Environments and Landscapes (REAL) reforms, DEP is closing this longstanding loophole to ensure that stormwater leaving reconstructed sites gets the same water quality treatment as required for newly developed sites. Every New Jersey community deserves excellent water quality, and this important reform will help to restore and protect waterways all across New Jersey, regardless of zip code.



Credit: Getty Images

Stormwater management practices based on historical rainfall patterns will become increasingly unable to manage storm events, increasing the risk of flooding to surrounding communities.



Monksville Reservoir in Long Pond Ironworks State Park in the New Jersey Highlands.

# CHAPTER THREE:

## BUILDING RESILIENCE TO EXTREME WEATHER AND CLIMATE CHANGE



Credit: Getty Images

Climate change is the single greatest long-term threat to New Jersey's people, property, businesses, economy, communities and way of life. As a low-lying, densely developed and populated state, New Jersey is particularly vulnerable to adverse impacts of our changing climate. Many of these impacts are already familiar to New Jerseyans, including increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, extreme precipitation, urban heat island effects, and more frequent and intense storms. New Jersey has seen the evidence of climate change in our increasingly mild winters, more frequent heavy rains, flooding along inland streams and rivers, and more "sunny day" tidal flooding along areas of the coast. Such impacts have already threatened and will continue to threaten public health and safety, destroy property, undermine critical infrastructure and damage New Jersey's economy, including the vibrant tourism industry supported by our beloved Shore and lake communities. Guided by the latest and most reliable scientific information, DEP is acting now to safeguard New Jersey's 9.5 million residents, our environment and our economy. Since 2018, DEP has been hard at work designing sustainable policy, regulatory and financial solutions that are helping to reduce the climate pollution that fuels warming while building greater resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change that we cannot completely avoid.

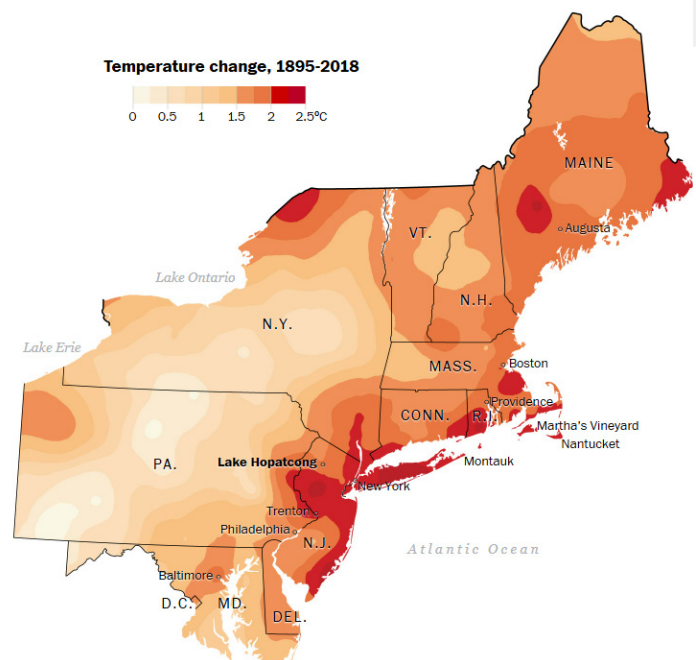
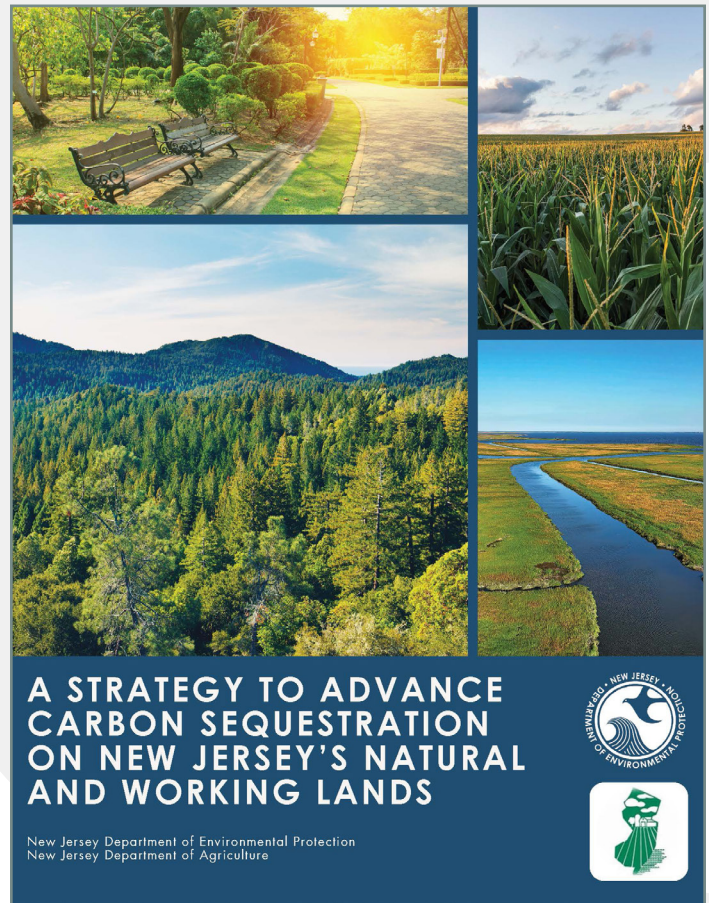
### Sharing Science and Providing Tools to Assess & Promote Climate Resilience

Over the past eight years, DEP has pursued ambitious plans to curb emissions of climate pollution, build climate resilience and steer New Jersey toward a cleaner, more sustainable future. To ensure our policy, regulatory and financial solutions are informed by the best available science, DEP developed and published the 2020 [New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change](#), the first state-led compilation of the most up-to-date science on current and projected climate impacts. With updates to be released in 2026, the Report is intended to help state and local decision-makers understand and respond to climate change in New Jersey. These impacts are significant and wide-ranging, and require forward-thinking responses from all sectors of our economy and every level of government. As our climate continues to change, it is urgent that New Jerseyans understand which future impacts are likely to occur, and when. Informed by sound science and empowered by a willingness to make hard choices, New Jersey can plan for and adapt to those changes, helping all of us to keep our communities safe and our economy strong.

Building on the inaugural 2020 Report, DEP published [Climate Change Impacts on Human Health and Communities: Addendum to the Scientific Report on Climate Change in 2022](#), which examines how human health is impacted by the direct and indirect threats of climate change; and followed with [Economic Risks of Climate Change in New Jersey](#) in 2025, examining how climate change is currently impacting New Jersey's economy and how experts anticipate a changing climate may affect New Jersey's future economic vitality.

To further support statewide efforts to build climate resilience across sectors, DEP's Division of Science and Research (DSR) has conducted numerous studies and published reports on sea-level rise, rainfall, and mitigation and adaptation science, focused on New Jersey. Among the publications is the 2024 [Natural and Working Lands Strategy](#) (NWLS), developed by DEP and the N.J. Department of Agriculture, to mitigate climate impacts by protecting, restoring and strategically managing natural and working lands. These lands include those that store and capture greenhouse gases: forests, agricultural lands, wetlands, developed lands, and aquatic resources and habitats. The NWLS offers policies and recommendations to manage natural and working lands – as well as actions to implement the recommendations – while detailing the benefits of carbon sequestration. Additional research by DSR and the Green House Gas Management Institute is underway to modernize and refine the state's method of estimating carbon sequestration and emissions.

Most recently, in July 2025, DSR published A [30-year Heat Wave Analysis](#), examining whether there has been a significant increase in the frequency and duration of heat waves in New Jersey from 1994 to 2023. Overall, there is a trend toward more heat waves in recent years and less daily cooling associated with each one.



Temperature change in the Northeast between 1895-2018.  
Source: The Washington Post

## Climate Change Effects

### Rising Temperatures



New Jersey is warming faster than the rest of the Northeast region and the world.

Heatwaves are expected to impact larger areas, with more frequency and longer duration by 2050.

### Increasing Precipitation



Annual precipitation in New Jersey is expected to increase by 4% to 11% by 2050.

The intensity and frequency of precipitation events is anticipated to increase due to climate change.

### Sea-Level Rise



Sea-levels are increasing at a greater rate in New Jersey than other parts of the world.

By 2050, there is a 50% chance that sea-level rise will meet or exceed 1.4 feet and a 17% chance it will exceed 2.1 feet. Those levels increase to 3.3 and 5.1 feet by the end of the century (under a moderate emission scenario).

### Ocean Acidification



Since the industrial age, ocean pH levels have declined and the ocean is now 30% more acidic.

If carbon dioxide emissions continue at current rates, ocean pH levels are expected to fall, creating an ocean that is more acidic than has been seen for the past 20 million years.

Source: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. 2020. *New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change, Version 1.0.* (Eds. R. Hill, M.M. Rutkowski, L.A. Lester, H. Genievich, N.A. Procopio). Trenton, NJ. 184 pp.

### What Will Happen In New Jersey?

#### Decreased Water Quality



Surface and groundwater quality will be impaired as increased nutrients and contaminants enter waters due to runoff from more intense rain events.

Freshwater intakes and aquifer recharge areas may be threatened if sea-level rise pushes the salt front further upriver.

#### Extreme Weather



Tropical storms have the potential to increase in intensity due to the warmer atmosphere and warmer oceans that will occur with climate change.

Over the last 50 years, in New Jersey, storms that resulted in extreme rain increased by 71% which is a faster rate than anywhere else in the United States.

#### Drought



Droughts may occur more frequently due to the expected changes in precipitation patterns.

It is anticipated that droughts lasting three to six months and longer may slightly increase in frequency in the Northeastern United States under a low emissions scenario and will significantly increase under a high emissions scenario.

#### Decreased Air Quality



Despite on-going efforts to reduce ground-level ozone precursor emissions, New Jersey's air quality will be impacted due to changes in meteorological conditions, often referred to as the ozone-climate penalty which is "the deterioration of air quality due to a warming climate."

## Climate Change Impacts - How Will New Jersey Be Affected?



### **SOCIALLY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

- Young children, elderly, socially or linguistically isolated, economically disadvantaged, and those with preexisting health conditions will be more at risk to health impacts from the combination of heat stress and poor urban air quality.



### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Aging public water supply infrastructure is vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.
- Existing water treatment infrastructure in New Jersey is not designed to treat elevated salt levels and drinking water standards do not exist for the primary components of saltwater.



### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

- The effects of climate change are likely to contribute to an increase in air pollution, lead to increased respiratory and cardiovascular health problems.
- Urban populations are particularly vulnerable as climate models predict an increase in the number of days per year with temperatures affecting human health due to heat stress.



### **ECOSYSTEMS AND WILDLIFE**

- Climate change is likely to facilitate expansion of invasive plant species.
- 29% of New Jersey's bird species are vulnerable to climate change.



### **COASTAL COMMUNITIES**

- "Sunny day flooding" will occur more often across the entire coastal area of New Jersey due to sea-level rise.
- Coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to flooding from storm surge and increased intensity of coastal storms.



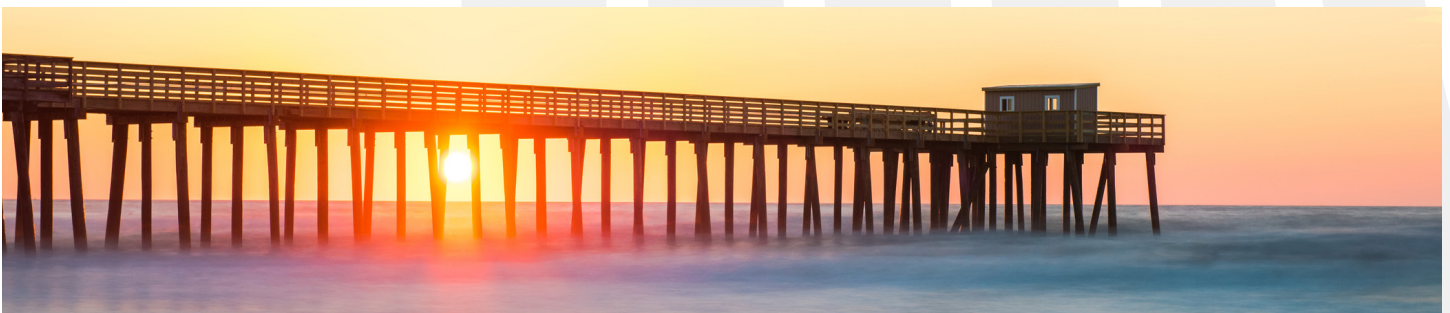
### **AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SUPPLY**

- The productivity of crops and livestock are expected to change due to the climate-induced changes in temperature and precipitation patterns.



### **OCEANS AND MARINE LIFE**







- Ocean acidification not only threatens the health of the oceans, but also the economic value that people and industries depend on.



Credit: Robert D. Barnes via Getty Images

## Reach For These Tools

DEP has developed a variety of guidance and tools to assist communities, businesses and decision-makers in understanding climate risks across our state, including:

-  **Sea-Level Rise:** As identified in New Jersey's Rising Seas and Changing Coastal Storms: Report of the 2025 Science and Technical Advisory Panel and the 2020 [New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change](#) (which will be updated in 2026), sea levels are increasing at a greater rate in New Jersey than other parts of the world.
-  **Water Infrastructure:** In April 2023, DEP published [Building Resilient Water Infrastructure: Climate Change Resilience Guidance for New Jersey's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds](#), which aims to integrate climate change considerations into the Water Bank program. Drawing upon the best available and most geographically relevant climate information, projections and standards, the Guidance ensures that funded projects comply with state and federal climate resilience policies, while contributing to the goal of mitigating climate impacts, enhancing the resilience of water infrastructure and promoting sustainable development.
-  **Extreme Precipitation:** Launched during Earth Week in 2022, [the New Jersey Extreme Precipitation Projection Tool](#) is an interactive online tool to help planners, local governments, developers and residents better understand that extreme precipitation events are increasing, so they can take actions to adapt to a changing climate. Users can view a range of rainfall depths, with options for frequencies, emission scenarios and time periods. The Tool also allows users to zoom in to local areas and see the likeness of precipitation depth that would occur in various storm scenarios.
-  **Flood Risk:** [The Flood Indicator Tool](#) details indicators of potential flood risk on or near a property. Flood indicators include waterbodies, water pathways, FEMA Flood Zones and State Flood Hazard Areas. Launched in 2024, [The New Jersey Flood Risk Notification Tool](#) provides basic information on a property's current and future flood risk. Users can search by mailing address to find flood risk information, including whether the property is in the FEMA Special or Moderate Risk Flood Hazard Area.
-  **GIS:** Through [NJ-GeoWeb](#), DEP provides access to the Department's Geographic Information Systems data to give users a better understanding of environmental issues. It includes the Near Me tool to find features in a specific area. [NJDEP Open Data](#) allows users to discover and explore web maps and mapping applications, as well as download GIS data. There is an [NJ-GeoWeb Overview playlist](#) on YouTube, and DEP's GIS program offers free online [NJ-GeoWeb training](#) to the public.
-  **Wildfire Risk explorer:** DEP launched the [New Jersey Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal \(NJWRAP\)](#) in early 2024 to provide data and resources that assist residents, community leaders and fire professionals in taking actions to mitigate the threat of wildfire risk, including assisting the New Jersey Forest Fire Service in identifying areas where prescribed burning may help reduce such risk.

## Engaging the Public

Building resilience to climate change starts with each of us, and public education and consistent outreach by DEP have been key to helping New Jerseyans better understand climate science, recognize climate impacts and learn what we each can do to protect our property, communities and environment from the adverse impacts of climate change. DEP's public outreach, education and engagement initiatives have included state park exhibits, digital tools, social media campaigns, and educational materials for the public and schools.

Since declaring the state was "Jersey Strong on Climate" in 2020, DEP has marked Climate Week each year in late September.

During Climate Week in 2023, DEP unveiled [Climate Change Learning Stations](#) at four state parks along shorelines to provide visitors with a snapshot on climate change, changing shorelines and coastal resilience. Each learning station features a [MyCoast](#) photo documentation station that encourages visitors to participate in a project to chronicle climate impacts over time.

In 2024, DEP installed an informational [Climate Change Exhibit](#), with displays spotlighting sea-level rise, harmful algal blooms, extended wildfire seasons and ghost forests, in state parks to educate the public about how these specific climate change impacts affect our state parks and forests. The exhibit is now on display at Island Beach State Park.

In 2025, DEP presented the fifth Our Water's Worth It Award to The Watershed Institute for its efforts to engage and assist municipalities in reducing flooding and improve regional stormwater management, while inviting all New Jerseyans to celebrate and share the work being advanced across sectors to combat the climate crisis. DEP also launched observance weeks that include, most recently, the first-ever [NJ Extreme Heat](#)

[Awareness Week](#) and first-ever [NJ Flood Safety Week](#), both in 2025. These observances help the public better cope with the dangers of hotter summers, and to be aware of and better prepared for flood risks that are increasing due to climate change, respectively.

Through a public outreach campaign in 2024, DEP focused public education and engagement efforts on heat-related illness, sea-level rise and flooding. More than 13 million impressions were recorded through radio public service announcements, on billboards and on [social media](#), with Facebook, Instagram and X ads; visitors to DEP's [climate change webpage](#) averaged about 20,000 per month. The 2025 campaign, which addressed extreme heat and flooding, earned more than 15.4 million impressions through digital billboard and social media messaging, with more than 2.7 million impressions on Facebook, more than 1.4 million on Instagram and more than 4.6 million on X. Additionally, the climate change webpage averaged about 4,000 visitors per month.

To equip students with the knowledge needed to help them respond to the climate crisis, in 2020, New Jersey became the first state to incorporate K-12 climate change education across subject areas such as visual and performing arts, comprehensive health and physical education, science, social studies, world languages and computer science. DEP also has prepared these resources for teachers: [Summary of Climate Change in New Jersey for Educators](#) and [Climate Change Resource Library for Educators](#).





### Celebrating Earth Week

Each April, marking Earth Week is an opportunity for DEP to raise public awareness of the significance of environmental protection and our agency's efforts – from improving air trends to upgrading our water infrastructure to restoring natural resources. It's also an opportunity for the public to get involved in local efforts like neighborhood cleanups.

Earth Day, on April 22, is particularly significant to DEP because the first Earth Day – declared in 1970 – was also the day the agency was established. In 2025, the state announced a \$131 million Green Acres investment in community recreation projects and open space acquisitions across New Jersey, made \$13.4 million available in water quality improvement and planning grants, and held a daylong, family-friendly festival at Liberty State Park in Jersey City.

Since 2018, during Earth Week, DEP has awarded urban and community forestry grants to overburdened communities; introduced an initiative on inclusive playgrounds; launched the

Trees for Schools grant program; introduced the [New Jersey Extreme Precipitation Projection Tool](#); announced the start of the "[Outside, Together!](#)" Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; released the draft of the state's first [Climate Change Resilience Strategy](#); offered online resources like virtual tours of state parks and distance-learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic; and organized cleanups, beautification projects and forest seedling plantings, as well as nature walks, hikes and other outdoor activities.



## Planning for a More Resilient New Jersey

DEP is working to build a climate-ready New Jersey by ensuring our communities, infrastructure, ecosystems, and economy are better prepared for and able to recover rapidly from the adverse impacts of our changing climate. These efforts are guided by the first statewide [Climate Change Resilience Strategy](#), developed by DEP and the state's [Interagency Council on Climate Resilience](#), and released in 2021. The Strategy outlines policy options to promote long-term resilience, with 127 actions across six priorities: building resilient and healthy communities; strengthening the resilience of ecosystems; promoting coordinated governance; investing in information and increased public understanding; expanding resilience funding and financing; and creating a Coastal Resilience Plan. The priorities include recommendations to guide state and local officials in protecting vulnerable areas from climate change, including New Jersey's unique risks from sea-level rise, chronic flooding, rising temperatures and more frequent and intense storms.

As part of the Strategy, the Coastal Resilience Plan (CRP) addresses climate threats and flooding specifically in New Jersey's coastal zone. DEP is using the CRP to evaluate how our policies and programs allow for local, regional and state response to climate change within this zone. It guides action from policies to funding that focus on reducing coastal hazard impacts, increasing resilience, aiding socially vulnerable populations and attracting investment.

New Jersey is warming faster than the rest of the Northeast region and the world, having experienced the second warmest year on record, as well as the third warmest summer, in 2024. Building on the Strategy, the 2024 [New Jersey Extreme Heat Resilience Action Plan](#) - published in 2024 and updated in 2025 - focuses on mitigating the effects of extreme heat, one of the deadliest

climate impacts. High temperatures are associated with immediate and long-term health concerns, diminished air quality and increased pressure on food and water supplies. This plan identifies the challenges linked to rising temperatures and the actions of state departments and agencies to address them. One of the key areas in the plan is [Heat Hub NJ](#), a user-friendly online resource to help the public better understand and become more resilient to the impacts of extreme heat in New Jersey, providing key information on extreme heat's impact on daily life and the environment, its adverse effects on human health and well-being, and guidance for protecting particularly vulnerable residents.

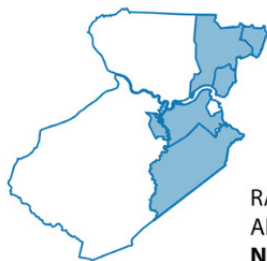
Since community resilience and readiness is significantly determined by New Jersey's local governments, DEP's [Resilient NJ](#) planning program is helping local leaders determine where to go from here. The program provides technical assistance, resources and funding to help municipalities and regions develop resilience planning solutions to address climate-related hazards, environmental resource protection and promotion of sustainable/smart-growth development in both inland and coastal communities. Local governments learn to develop creative solutions for advancing resilience and enhancing their ecological and economic resources, as well as addressing unique community needs, and getting support in developing grant applications for funding.

DEP also created the [Resilient NJ: Local Planning for Climate Change Toolkit](#), with resources to develop community-specific, science-based strategies and actions for protecting homes, businesses, critical infrastructure and natural resources. An additional component of Resilient NJ is an online [training effort](#) called "A Seat at the Table: Training for Whole-Community Climate Resilience Planning," which aims to improve climate resilience planning by considering the needs and perspectives of populations especially vulnerable to changing climate conditions.

### 2022 Regional Resilience Project Areas



ATLANTIC COUNTY  
COASTAL REGION  
NEW JERSEY



RARITAN RIVER  
AND BAY  
NEW JERSEY



RESILIENT  
NORTHEASTERN  
NEW JERSEY



LONG BEACH  
ISLAND  
NEW JERSEY

### Resilient NJ Projects

Across Regions: Twenty-four municipalities across four state regions released Regional Resilience Action Plans in 2022 that prioritized actions and strategies, identified funding sources, set timelines and identified opportunities to enhance regional and community resilience. The planning effort received a \$10 million boost in federal funding in 2025, providing grants of up to \$300,000 to as many as six regional teams. In December 2025, two regions – made up of 13 municipalities – were selected to join the program, with additional opportunities planned for 2026. Projects bring together teams of municipalities, counties and community-based organizations with a strong emphasis on community engagement.

In Municipalities: Resilient NJ's Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) is a technical assistance program providing municipalities with support to develop their resilience action plans and climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessments. Eight municipalities (Ocean Township, Stafford, Upper Township, Harrison, Lambertville, Trenton, Salem, and Montclair), as well as the 11-municipality region along the Burlington County Rt. 130 corridor, have participated in – or are in the process of participating in – MAP projects. These projects range from preparing a vulnerability assessment to building community preparedness and education on climate risks.



Credit: Getty Images



## Investing in Flood Control and Shore Protection Infrastructure

New Jersey is highly vulnerable to chronic coastal and inland flooding that is exacerbated by climate impacts, including sea-level rise, increased frequency and intensity of storms, coastal erosion and storm surge. DEP has developed cutting-edge initiatives to mitigate these risks, designing innovative and resourceful regulatory and investment strategies to reduce the emission of climate pollutants and build resilience to the climate impacts we cannot avoid.

### Down The Shore

Along the coast, beach and dune systems are the first line of defense against ocean waves and storm surge for vulnerable residences, businesses, infrastructure and habitats. In New Jersey, shore protection is overseen by DEP's Office of Coastal Engineering, and involves designing and reconstructing eroded dunes and beaches by

adding sediment and other protective structures. Since Superstorm Sandy struck in 2012, more than \$1.8 billion has been spent rebuilding New Jersey's beach and dune system along the Atlantic Ocean coastline. From 2018 to 2026, two beach construction projects and 23 beach nourishment projects were completed, using 39 million cubic yards of sand.

DEP's Office of Coastal Engineering is also responsible for shore protection projects to reduce flood damage during coastal storm events and, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), has embarked on three Coastal Storm Reduction Projects along Raritan Bay in Monmouth County. The Office also works on shoreline restoration and stabilization, living shorelines, and protective structures such as breakwaters to absorb wave energy. OCE has 34 active projects and studies, and has completed 26 projects since 2018. These efforts include restoration work at Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area on the Cape May peninsula to restore more than 400 acres of critical habitat to support threatened and endangered species, as well as migratory birds using the Atlantic Flyway. Other projects include Bay Point Shoreline Stabilization Project, the Harrison Avenue Shoreline Stabilization and Landfill Closure Project, and bulkhead construction at the Joseph G. Minish Passaic River Waterfront Park in Newark.



### Reducing Storm And Flood Risk

- The Port Monmouth Hurricane and Storm Damage Reduction Project is a vital component of the comprehensive flood risk management plan for the region. The project, which began after Hurricane Sandy, is aimed at enhancing the safety and well-being of residents, businesses and infrastructure in Middletown's Port Monmouth community. To reduce flood damage from future hurricanes and storm surges, a beach and dune system, a tide gate and pump stations, as well as utility upgrades, road closure gates and road raising were completed. Levees, floodwalls and additional measures are under construction.
- The Union Beach Coastal Storm Risk Management Project involves flood damage reduction work designed to protect the 1.8-square-mile borough along the coast of Raritan Bay. Union Beach was devastated by Hurricane Sandy, and this project is intended to safeguard the community with a beach and dune system, and other protective features.
- Additionally, there is an ongoing Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study for other coastal towns on the Raritan and Sandy Hook bays to identify a plan to reduce the risk of storm and flood damage.

### Emergency Response

Since 2018, DEP's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has handled situations ranging from COVID response to disaster cost recovery to fires and spills. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, OEM obtained and distributed personal protective equipment for DEP employees and for availability at state parks. During the past eight years, OEM coordinated with FEMA on cost recovery related to several disasters, including Hurricane Ida in 2021, totaling \$4.9 million. The program also responded to emergency situations, including tar balls from a 2023 oil spill in Bayonne that impacted New Jersey's coastline from Sandy Hook to Asbury Park, and a scrap yard fire in Camden in 2025 that required air monitoring support.





Flooded streets in Bound Brook on Sept. 2, 2021, after record rainfall from the remnants of Hurricane Ida.

Credit: Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



An emergency responder evacuates residents by boat from a flooded neighborhood in Little Ferry on Oct. 30, 2012, after Hurricane Sandy.

Credit: Andrew Burton via Getty Images



Flooded streets in a residential community in Middlesex after Hurricane Ida caused flash flooding across the East Coast.

Credit: Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



Flooded streets and submerged vehicles in a residential neighborhood in North Plainfield on July 14, 2025.

## Further Inland

Flooding from inland waterbodies, including flash flooding, that sends water surging over their banks and into streets, homes and businesses has become more frequent as our climate changes.

In central New Jersey, DEP has been working with its partners at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to advance two major projects that reduce risk in the highly flood-prone Green Brook watershed. The first project is concentrated on the Green Brook Sub Basin, which is continually subject to severe flood damage that affects suburban, commercial and industrialized areas in municipalities in Middlesex, Somerset and Union counties. Protective efforts include levees and floodwalls; bridge, road and channel modifications; and pump stations. The second project, involving the Green Brook Upper Basin, is in the study stage. DEP and USACE are conducting a General Reevaluation Report on the area, which includes the municipalities of Plainfield and Scotch Plains in Union County, and North Plainfield and Watchung in Somerset County. A severe flash flooding event from riverine flooding during intense rainfall in the area in July 2025 resulted in two deaths and significant property damage. DEP supports exploring a combination of structural and nonstructural solutions to ensure comprehensive flood protection.

In northern New Jersey, DEP has advanced critical projects to reduce the risk of storm surge and improve resilience in regions affected by Superstorm Sandy. The Rebuild by Design projects underway in the Meadowlands and Hudson River areas focus on flexible solutions to increase regional resilience. The Rebuild By Design Meadowlands Project centers on 5,000-plus acres on the Hackensack River to protect infrastructure, businesses, residences and ecological resources, and increase awareness of resilience and water management. Major project components being designed and constructed include a pump station



and force main in Little Ferry, and a second pump station with channel improvements in Carlstadt and Moonachie. The Rebuild By Design Hudson River Project (RBD Hudson River) is a comprehensive urban flood risk reduction strategy to overcome flooding challenges in Hoboken, and portions of Weehawken and Jersey City. The project includes a combination of hard engineered features, such as reinforced concrete floodwalls and retractable floodgates, and softer, urban landscape features such as seating, planters, lighting and more attached to or near the floodwalls, as well as resilience parks that use green space to store and release floodwaters. Additionally, the [New Jersey Water Bank](#), a partnership between DEP and the New Jersey Infrastructure Bank, provides low-interest financing for a variety of stormwater and wastewater projects that enable communities to build resilience to flooding and climate change. These low-cost, long-term loans allow communities to upgrade aging water and wastewater systems, tackle lead service lines, manage stormwater and clean up contaminated sites – all while protecting public health and saving money. The Murphy Administration has provided more than \$212 million through the Water Bank to help communities upgrade antiquated stormwater infrastructure to better handle increased and more intense precipitation events.

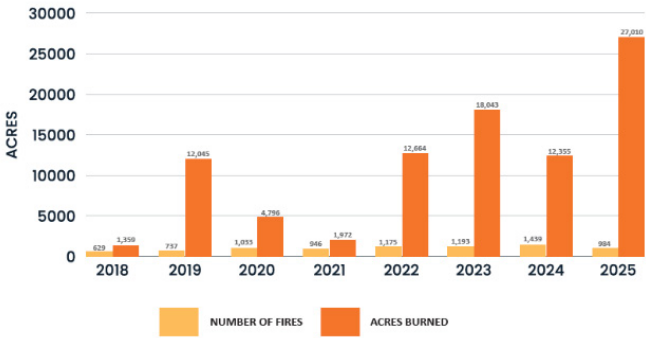
As just a few examples: In Bayonne, approximately \$2 million in loans for clean water improvements

to the city’s stormwater system to address its combined sewer overflow issue has resulted in about 24 new construction jobs and is estimated to save ratepayers \$1.958 million – or 95% of project cost – over the 30-year loan term. The city of Hoboken received just over \$22 million in loans to build ResilienCity Park, a state-of-the-art green infrastructure project that is both a recreational area and a flood mitigation solution, and will save ratepayers approximately \$13 million over the loan’s 30-year term, or 59% of the project cost. The Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA) utilized \$296,150 in loans to purchase a removable and reusable flood protection barrier system to be deployed around its wastewater treatment plant and pumping stations as protection during severe weather events and improve resilience from future storms, and will see an estimated \$95,926 in savings over the 13-year term of the loan, or 32% of the project cost.

### Protecting New Jersey from Increasing Wildfires

For nearly a decade, wildfires in the Garden State have increased in frequency, intensity and acres burned – just as the length of wildfire season has expanded. On average, 1,100 wildfires damage or destroy about 5,000 acres of New Jersey forests each year. Peak wildfire season is from mid-March through May, though New Jersey Forest Fire Service officials note wildfires can occur in any season.

#### WILDFIRES IN NEW JERSEY



### Notable NJ Wildfires Since 2018

- 🔥 The Spring Hill Wildfire in the Pinelands; the April 2019 blaze consumed 9,021 acres in remote sections of Penn and Bass River state forests in Burlington County.
- 🔥 The Mullica River Wildfire in June 2022, which burned 11,970 acres in Wharton State Forest, Burlington County; about a dozen park visitors and 50 others in an adjacent private campground were evacuated, and approximately 18 structures were threatened.
- 🔥 The Jones Road Wildfire that broke out in April 2025 in Waretown (Ocean Township) and spread into Lacey Township; it took Forest Fire Service personnel more than two weeks to fully contain the blaze, which destroyed 15,048 acres and a commercial building; a camper in the woods where the fire started also had to be rescued.



The 2020 Scientific Report on Climate Change notes that “wildfire seasons could be lengthened, and the frequency of large fires increased due to the hot, dry periods that will result from increased temperatures.” Responding to such challenges has required additional funding and, with support from the Governor and Legislature, DEP secured appropriations for investments in additional wildland firefighters, new equipment, radio/communications supplies, expanded contract aviation support and protective gear.

In recognition of New Jersey’s growing wildfire threats, and following the extended wildfire season in fall 2024 due to unprecedented dry conditions, in February 2025, DEP launched NJ [Wildfire SMART](#) (Safety, Mitigation, Awareness, Resources, Training), a series of actions that emphasize steps and information resources for reducing wildfire risk and spread.



## Supporting New Jerseyans Affected by Flood Events

The remnants of Tropical Storm Ida in September 2021 brought New Jersey some of the deadliest flooding in recent history. It resulted in the loss of 30 lives and millions of dollars in damages. More than 10 inches of rain was documented in parts of Hunterdon, Essex, Middlesex and Union counties, and more than 12 rivers exceeded their 100-year flood levels. Governor Phil Murphy declared a state of emergency in all 21 counties, allowing resources to be deployed throughout the state during the duration of the storm. In the immediate aftermath, DEP focused on disaster response and recovery: coordinating with federal and state agencies, as well as municipalities, to address emergency needs; guiding municipalities on how to safely collect, stage and dispose of large amounts of storm debris; and overseeing impacted water systems until they could return to supplying clean water to residents.

Post-Ida, DEP continued support of local recovery with funding and programs, and expanded flood mitigation and climate resilience strategies – including the launch of Blue Acres 3.0. The Blue Acres initiative is a voluntary buyout program for homeowners whose properties are prone to flooding and is a critical component of the state’s climate resilience efforts. It has been hailed as a national model for managing flood-prone areas. With the establishment of Blue Acres 3.0, DEP aims to move beyond disaster recovery to focus on identifying and purchasing land that may be vulnerable to future damage from storms or sea-level rise as a climate resilience planning and preparedness function. During the buyout process, in-house case managers guide homeowners and, once properties are purchased, they are cleared and restored to natural floodplains.

Since 2018, Blue Acres has acquired 277 properties, more than 123 of which occurred after Tropical Storm Ida. Blue Acres activities are funded through

a combination of federal grants and dedicated state funding through the Preserve New Jersey Act. Following severe flash flooding in July 2025, Blue Acres held outreach sessions for homeowners who were affected by the flooding, and the state approved 18 new buyouts for severely impacted properties and socially vulnerable households.

### Building a More Resilient New Jersey

DEP’s ongoing support for climate resilience planning and continued funding of resilience infrastructure are critical to the long-term success of our communities and health of our economy. However, planning and infrastructure initiatives alone are not enough to ensure that New Jersey residents and businesses are able to adapt and respond to the adverse impacts of our changing climate. It is also incumbent upon DEP to instill future-focused regulatory reforms to ensure that what we build today will stand the test of time amid a changing climate. Since 2020, DEP has shared and expanded the relevant science and convened a broad cross-section of stakeholders from across New Jersey to develop regulatory reforms that will help all New Jersey communities to become more resilient. DEP’s major resilient reforms include the [Inland Flood Protection Rule](#) and the [Resilient Environments and Landscapes](#) regulatory reform.

DEP adopted the Inland Flood Protection Rule in 2023 to address riverine flooding threats and stormwater runoff by updating preexisting flood hazard and stormwater regulations with modern data that accounts for current and projected precipitation estimates. The Inland Flood Protection Rule ensures that areas at the most significant risk of fluvial (riverine) flooding are better defined, and that new and reconstructed assets in these areas are designed and constructed using the best available climate-informed precipitation data to protect New Jersey’s assets, economy and, above all, its people from the catastrophic effects of worsening floods.



The Resilient Environments and Landscapes, or REAL, reforms use the best available climate science specific to New Jersey to modernize the state’s coastal flood safety and land resource protection rules, which do not reflect current and future sea-level rise and chronic flooding risks. The REAL reforms were developed to better protect lives, property and infrastructure, while preserving the economic vitality of coastal communities as sea-level rise, storms and flooding become more intense with a changing climate. The reforms, which are expected to take effect in 2026, are aimed at ensuring that buildings and infrastructure in New Jersey’s coastal zone are built to be resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change — most notably, the effects of sea-level rise upon coastal communities.

The USACE-funded Port Monmouth Hurricane and Storm Risk Reduction Project is under construction and will deliver beach, dune, floodwall, levee and pump station improvements—including the Pews Creek Tide Gate.



# Better Than We Found It

## 3. Building Resilience To Extreme Weather & Climate Change








Middlesex County Utilities Authority's Sayreville Pump Station with a flood wall constructed around the facility.

An elevated house rests on newly constructed pilings nearly a year after it was damaged by Hurricane Sandy.



Credit: Ramin Talaie/Corbis via Getty Images

## New Jersey's Coastal Zone

-  1,792 miles of coastline
-  Stretches from the Hudson River (at the interstate border with New York) south along the Raritan Bay, then from Sandy Hook to Cape May Point, turns north along the Delaware Bay and River, and continues to Trenton
-  Includes parts of 17 counties and 239 municipalities
-  42% of N.J. municipalities are considered coastal municipalities
-  Home to 53% of New Jersey's approximately 9 million residents, or about 4.77 million people

Credit: Getty Images



What's left of the boardwalk at Spring Lake, after Superstorm Sandy in 2012.

Credit: Getty Images



### New Jersey's Inland Floodplains:

#### New Jersey's Inland Floodplains:

At the time of the IFPR's adoption, according to the 2019 State Hazard Mitigation Plan, New Jersey had:

- \$241 billion of general building stock exposure to the 1% annual chance flood
- Roughly 3 million properties not covered by an NFIP policy
- 16,809 repetitive loss properties (73% are single family homes)
- 1,238 severe repetitive loss properties (83% are single family homes)
- 1,707 critical facilities and infrastructure located in the 1% flood hazard area
- \$15.3 billion in obligations under post-disaster grants (1990-2021)
- Highest foreclosure rate in the nation, with one in every 605 properties in some stage of foreclosure (Experian, 2018)

#### Damage Claims:

- Approximately 24% percent of FEMA flood insurance claims (1,502 claims out of 6,281) submitted for the remnants of Tropical Storm Ida-related damages were from outside FEMA's 100-year floodplain
- Many owners of properties that flooded outside the mapped flood hazard areas did not carry flood insurance, believing they were not at risk



Demolition of a Blue Acres buyout property.



Credit: Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Route 440 flooded in Jersey City. Hundreds of cars were stuck in water from flash floods caused by Hurricane Ida.

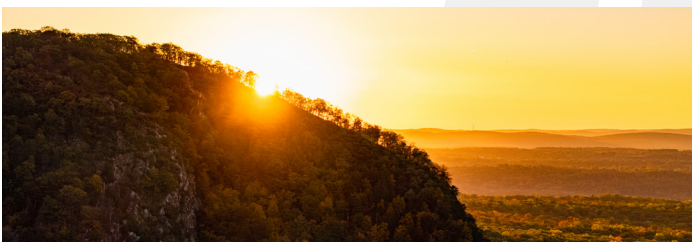
# CHAPTER FOUR:

## EXPANDING ACCESS TO NATURE AND OUTDOOR RECREATION



Over the past eight years, DEP has worked to expand access to high-quality open and recreational spaces across the state to ensure that all New Jerseyans have an opportunity to connect with nature and one another. Green and open spaces have immeasurable benefits for our physical, mental and environmental health. They provide opportunities for exercise and recreation, reduce stress, improve air quality, build community, promote social connections and enhance local ecology and economies.

New Jersey now leads the nation in land preservation with 1.6 million acres, having safeguarded more than 30% of our state's total land – the most conserved open space in the contiguous United States. Across its varied landscape of rolling hills, dense forests, meandering rivers, long coastline, stunning beaches and breathtaking bays, New Jersey offers its residents and visitors an exciting 52 state parks and forests, 51 historic sites and 122 wildlife management areas to explore.



### From the Skylands through the City to the Shore: Your New Jersey State Parks

From High Point State Park in our northwestern forests to Cape May Point State Park on our southeast shore, DEP welcomes more than 17 million visitors annually to our state parks, forests and historic sites, plus five recreation areas. New Jersey residents and visitors can enjoy hiking, camping, swimming, kayaking, bird watching, wildlife photography, boating, fishing, hunting and more.

In late 2025, we rolled out new branding for our state parks. In fact, we even changed the name to New Jersey State Parks (from the former “State Park Service”) to reflect the welcoming and friendly experience that our parks offer visitors. The new “primary” logo for New Jersey State Parks features a bird representing the nearly 300 bird species found throughout our parks and nods to the DEP logo; a tree paying homage to Parks’ previous yellow-and-green shield and the Pine Barrens, which cover 1.4 million acres in our state; rolling hills representing landscapes found across central and northern New Jersey; and a wave symbolizing coastal parks like Island Beach, Barnegat Lighthouse and Cape May – all tucked into the outline of our beautiful

state – plus our new name. We’ve also developed additional individual logos for select state parks and forests. So next time you’re out and about at one of our stunning state parks, check out these new logos.



### Changes for the Better

Since 2018, DEP has invested \$180 million-plus in capital improvements in our vital public spaces, including restoration projects at the historic Central Railroad of New Jersey Terminal at Liberty State Park in Jersey City and the iconic Barnegat Lighthouse in Barnegat Light; a new beach complex at Bass River State Forest in the Pine Barrens; and the addition of inclusive playgrounds at multiple state parks. As New Jersey prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a new, state-of-the-art visitor center at Washington Crossing State Park in Titusville will open in 2026, and investments also have been made at Revolutionary War historic sites statewide. Nearly 4,000 acres have been added to DEP’s State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites portfolio since 2018, including a 473-acre expansion of Allamuchy Mountain State Park to support DEP’s Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) initiative, the 9-mile greenway and several smaller acquisitions.

To ensure that the benefits of green and open spaces reach even the most densely developed areas of New Jersey, DEP launched its Urban State Parks & Initiatives program in 2022, expanding the reach of our state parks. The program focuses on urban state parks to increase access to green space, particularly in open space-constrained

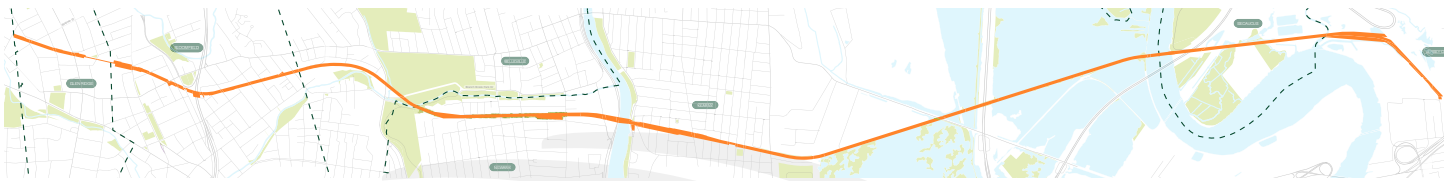
communities. Major park development projects under the program are the greenway in Essex and Hudson counties, the revitalization of Liberty State Park and exploration of other future urban state park opportunities.



## The Greenway

The greenway, a nine-mile former rail line, is being transformed into New Jersey's newest state park. The linear park, spanning eight communities in Essex and Hudson counties, will offer paths for walkers and cyclists, abundant green space, community gathering spaces and a transportation corridor. When completed, it will pass through Montclair, Glen Ridge, Bloomfield, Belleville, Newark, Kearny, Secaucus and Jersey City.

Groundbreaking on the first phase, in Newark, took place in July 2025 and marks the largest investment in a new state park in state history – construction totaling \$69.2 million. With approximately 1.5 million people in the surrounding area, the greenway will provide outdoor recreation and alternative transportation opportunities to more than 16% of New Jersey's population.



### Liberty State Park

Welcoming nearly 5 million visitors annually, Liberty State Park is a green oasis looking out at the Statue of Liberty, one of the world’s most recognizable landmarks. It is home to a two-mile waterfront promenade with sweeping views of the Hudson River; the NJ Empty Sky 9/11 Memorial; picnic and playground areas; a Nature Center; and the CRRNJ Terminal, as well as open fields, miles of pathways and an outdoor performance area. The [Liberty State Park Revitalization Program](#) will guide improvements over the next decade and beyond, focusing on restoring natural habitats to increase resilience to flooding and climate change, developing athletic fields and rehabilitating historic structures, including the CRRNJ Train Shed. It will bring more than 100 acres of active recreational, arts and cultural improvements to the park. The LSP logo also has been redesigned and features the Statue of Liberty’s torch formed from leaves.



# LIBERTY STATE PARK NEW JERSEY



## Growing Wildlife Management Areas – for the birds, the bees and you!

In New Jersey, more than 44 percent of state-owned public open space is set aside to protect and conserve fish and wildlife habitats, and provide spots for outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, birding and wildlife photography. These Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) comprise more than 360,000 acres in 122 locations statewide and are governed by the DEP Fish & Wildlife's Bureau of Land Management.

WMAs are maintained and supported with funding from hunting and fishing license sales, the Federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program, and DEP's [Wildlife Habitat Supporter Program](#). The latter initiative, launched in 2021, is sustained through public donations, which fund efforts to protect diverse wildlife habitats across the state. DEP Fish & Wildlife also is working to increase public awareness of the WMAs for passive recreation with its [WMA of the Month](#) social media campaign, which kicked off in 2023. Each posting shares information about the wildlife and recreational activities at the featured WMA, as well as information on how to access the space. Learn about any – or all – of our WMAs with the [New Jersey Wildlife Management Area Explorer](#), which shares interactive maps and information on these areas and opportunities within them.

Since 2018, DEP has acquired more than 11,000 acres that have become part of the WMA system. The Bureau of Land Management also has invested about \$7 million for equipment to maintain and operate WMA lands during the past eight years and has trained five employees who are now certified to delineate wetlands.

## WMA Improvements

### **Holly Farms Office Renovation Project – Menantico Ponds WMA**

In a project supporting DEP Fish & Wildlife's operational needs and aligning with DEP sustainability goals, the main building on the Holly Farms property was modernized to improve functionality, energy efficiency and accessibility; an addition also was constructed for staffing – all with minimal disruption to conservation activities.

### **Wildlife Resource Center at the Highlands – Clinton WMA**

To Integrate five DEP Fish & Wildlife field offices into one Northern Region Office complex, this project will create a reception area, visitor center and educational displays highlighting New Jersey's wildlife, habitats and natural resources, as well as DEP Fish & Wildlife's role as steward and manager of these resources.

### **Point Pleasant Fishing Access WMA**

This 7-acre property in Point Pleasant, purchased with funding from hunting and fishing license sales, recently was improved with new fencing along the Point Pleasant Canal, a concrete boat ramp with parking for trailers and anglers accessing the fishing area, an extended fishing dock and a boat launch space.

### **Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center Bulkhead – Sedge Islands WMA**

Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center, located in Barnegat Bay in New Jersey's only Marine Conservation Zone, offers residential environmental education programs to participants 12 years of age and older. The bulkhead protecting the facility critically needed replacement, and a new structure was installed in 2025.

### Local Parks and Open Space for Every New Jersey Community

The Green Acres program, the oldest continuous program of its kind in the nation, was created in 1961. To date, Green Acres has protected more than 726,000 acres of open space and provided hundreds of recreational facilities around the state. Protected open space, parkland and farmland across New Jersey exceeds 1.5 million acres.

Since 2018, Green Acres has awarded more than \$690 million in funding to local governments and nonprofit organizations for land acquisition and park development projects in every county. This funding has preserved and/or improved more than 700 sites throughout New Jersey.





Liberty State Park



Batsto Village Historic Site, Wharton State Forest

# Better Than We Found It

## 4. Expanding Access To Nature And Outdoor Recreation



Stokes State Forest



Twin Lights Historic Site

## Safeguarding Forested Land

Green Acres provided funding to the New Jersey Conservation Foundation to acquire a 118-acre parcel in Vineland, Cumberland County, that borders DEP's Peaselee WMA. The property, now part of a network of more than 3,500 public and nonprofit preserved acres, contains headwaters of the Manumuskin River, a tributary of the Maurice River, which is federally designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The forested property supports a wide variety of habitats, provides for carbon sequestration and protects water quality.



## Preserving History

The [Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum](#) (SSAAM) used Green Acres funding to acquire the 5.11-acre True Farmstead property in Montgomery Township, Somerset County, in 2022. The site is in the extremely sensitive and ecologically important Sourland Mountain Region. Home to African Americans in the Sourlands for generations, the purchase preserves open space, as well as historic and recreation resources. Preservation of the site and its structures will allow for events, educational programming and tours, meeting space, and an area to train stream monitor volunteers. The preservation effort was done in partnership with Somerset County.

## Waterfront Promenade

A decade of work along its waterfront has brought Newark's Riverfront Park to life, its latest section officially opening in October 2024. The area creates new public access, extending along the Passaic River from Dock Street to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, including the continuation of the riverfront walkway with accessible features, seating areas, an art wall, food kiosks and an amphitheater – all tucked into "The Notch."



## Standing On Stewardship

Mendham restored a 7-acre tract of the historic Pitney Farm property, converting it into a public park with the first ADA-accessible trails in the township. A \$374,159 grant from Green Acres helped with landscape and historic garden restoration, construction of ADA-compliant trails, removal of invasive plants, planting Highlands Council-approved native plants and meadow grasses, woodland enhancement and grassy areas for passive recreation in the park, which opened in 2021.



To better meet outdoor recreation and conservation needs in communities across New Jersey, DEP moved from biennial to annual Green Acres funding cycles in 2023. Yearly Green Acres funding rounds enable applicants to better plan their recreation and conservation projects and ensure they have more timely access to funds as opportunities arise. In addition, Green Acres introduced a new Jake’s Law category, bringing approval for nearly 100 completely inclusive playgrounds around the state for children and adults of all abilities. Green Acres also reduced its loan interest to zero percent to make land acquisition and park development projects more cost-effective for local governments.

The Green Acres State Land Acquisition program also has implemented several strategic initiatives to optimize the use of allocated funds and improve efficiency. These strategies aim to accelerate land acquisition efforts, meet environmental goals and enhance quality of life for residents by protecting our natural resources and expanding access to recreational spaces.

- **Collaborative Pursuit of Open Space Opportunities:** Green Acres is using new technology in its efforts to identify acquisition opportunities and involve local governments in managing state-acquired properties. This initiative complements DEP’s commitment to expanding urban parks and protecting key habitat. Sharing operational responsibilities helps DEP expand open spaces sustainably while maximizing resource efficiency and fostering local involvement.
- **Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ):** This strategy enhances habitat connectivity for wildlife by identifying and acquiring key properties in high-need areas. Through targeted landowner outreach and collaboration with nonprofits and municipal officials, DEP aims to create a more connected landscape, supporting biodiversity and ecological health.
- **Expansion and Creation of Urban State Parks:** DEP is actively seeking land in urban areas suitable for future parks. By collaborating with local governments, efforts align with municipal planning efforts to enhance close-to-home recreational opportunities and use public funds more efficiently.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** The Department aims to enhance carbon sequestration by strategically acquiring land, as detailed in the Department’s September 2024 report, ‘A Strategy to Advance Carbon Sequestration on New Jersey’s Natural and Working Lands.’ This initiative focuses on high-priority areas with significant current carbon storage and future carbon sequestration potential to promote long-term environmental sustainability and resilience.



The Work Group, a Camden-based Youth Conservation Corps, completes trail maintenance at the Dr. James Still Historic Site. The program trains youth from underserved urban areas in trail maintenance while giving them the opportunity to explore NJ's preserved open spaces.

4. Expanding Access To Nature And Outdoor Recreation



For generations, Barnegat Lighthouse has helped vessels safely traverse the shifting sandbars and swift currents of the New Jersey coastline. It continues to serve as an educational and scenic landmark for the public.

DEP and the N.J. Department of Transportation are developing the New Jersey Trails Playbook – a series of statewide trail planning guidance documents.

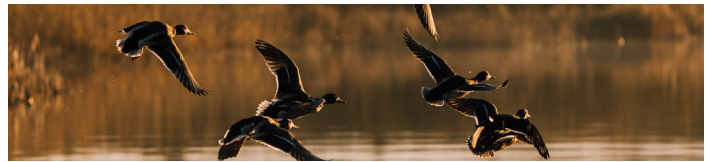


## Making CHANJ

During DEP’s 2024 Summer of CHANJ (Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey) – a multiplatform, public outreach campaign highlighting the importance of protecting habitat connectivity for wildlife – DEP acquired the 131-plus-acre Glass property in White Township, Warren County. The land, purchased for just over \$1 million, is a large and important linkage to Buckhorn Creek WMA. The property includes critical habitat, fields, forest, diverse wildlife, migratory bird species, amazing views and a portion of Buckhorn Creek (a Category 1, trout-production stream). It also is within a CHANJ Core and will permanently protect forested and early successional habitats for many wildlife species, including New Jersey’s state-listed species such as bobcat, veery and wood thrush.

## River Access

In 2023, Green Acres, in partnership with Camden County, acquired the 7.22-acre Sadler Marina property in Camden, seen below. This waterfront tract is adjacent to Camden County’s existing Pyne Poynt Park, and will provide additional public access to the Delaware River in an overburdened community.



## Outside, Together! and New Jersey Trails

DEP launched the *Outside, Together!* initiative to update the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for New Jersey. The SCORP outlines a comprehensive five-year strategy (2023-2027) to enhance outdoor recreation and conservation across New Jersey, focusing on improving residents’ quality of life through accessible and sustainable outdoor spaces. Incorporating community insight and developed with the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee, the plan was officially approved by the National Park Service on March 1, 2024, and maintains New Jersey’s eligibility to receive federal funding through the National Park Service.

SCORP prioritizes expanding open space, enhancing environmental stewardship, advancing climate resilience, empowering communities, promoting equity and leveraging innovative technology to cultivate a sustainable and resilient environment. In May 2025, DEP marked the acquisition of a 473-acre portion of the Mount Allamuchy Scout Reservation. This addition to Allamuchy Mountain State Park not only adds forested areas, scenic views, wetlands and streams, but enriches public recreational opportunities with 12 new trail segments totaling nearly 5 miles. The purchase also increases wildlife habitat connectivity, creating a more connected landscape for wildlife.

In New Jersey, you can hike, bike, climb and explore the great outdoors on more than 4,500 miles of trails. Since 2018, the New Jersey Trails program has awarded more than \$13 million in federal funding to 91 projects in state parks, forests, recreation areas and WMAs. These projects include:

- **Trenton D&R Greenway Bridge and Trail Improvement:** This project involves repairing an existing bridge along the D&R Canal State Park greenway in Trenton to allow trail users to safely walk, bike or ride on the trail, and to prevent future damage to the bridge. A deteriorating section of the trail adjacent to the bridge also was repaired, with work to the trail surface and culvert to prevent future erosion.
- **Forest Resource Education Center Sensory Awareness Trail and Trailhead projects:** The Sensory Awareness Trail at the [Forest Resource Education Center](#) in Jackson was restored and updated to provide a safe, immersive, educational trail experience to users of all abilities. The trail offers features for visitors with visual, auditory, mobility and developmental disabilities, and the trailhead kiosk provides tactile, visual and auditory features to help trail users navigate and enjoy the trail.
- **Southern Region Kayak and Canoe Access Improvements:** To improve public access and emergency response to four rivers within the SPFHS Southern Region that are popular kayaking and canoeing destinations, trail maps and corresponding water trail markers were installed to help water trail users identify their location on the rivers.

Other program initiatives offer public access to trail information and ensure greater representation in trail planning. For instance, the [Statewide Trails Dataset](#), launched in 2022, is an inventory of existing trails used for trail and open space planning that the public can access and use to pinpoint interesting potential trails. In 2024, two seats were added to the New Jersey Trails Council to ensure trail users in overburdened, underserved and indigenous communities are represented in trail funding, policy and statewide trail planning decisions.



# CHAPTER FIVE:

## IMPROVING AIR QUALITY AND REDUCING CLIMATE POLLUTION



Clean outdoor air is vital to the health of every New Jerseyan and the quality of our environment. DEP works to improve and protect air quality by monitoring criteria, hazardous and climate pollutants released to the atmosphere; enforcing the use of controls that reduce criteria and hazardous air pollutants; and limiting the emission of climate pollution. Through education, environmental enforcement and investments in clean air technology deployed by DEP, New Jersey's air is cleaner and healthier.

DEP regulates three types of air pollution: (1) criteria air pollutants, (2) hazardous air pollutants and (3) climate pollution. Criteria air pollutants refer to six common pollutants that can cause respiratory issues, heart problems and other more general health risks. Criteria pollutants include carbon monoxide, ground-level ozone, lead, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and sulfur dioxide. Hazardous air pollutants (air toxics) refer to a larger but less common class of chemicals that are known to cause serious health problems such as cancer, and these chemicals include benzene, dioxins, formaldehyde, mercury and vinyl chloride. Climate pollution refers to greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane.

### Improving Protections Against Exposure to Air Toxics

Exposure to air toxics is a widespread problem throughout New Jersey. These pollutants come from a variety of sources, including traditional industrial and utility sources; smaller manufacturing and commercial sources; mobile sources, such as diesel trucks, cars and buses; construction equipment; and residential activities, such as oil burning for home heating or using gas-powered lawn equipment.

In February 2022, DEP adopted new regulations to limit air emission of toxic pollutants. The regulations involve fumigation operations employing a pesticide that is a vapor or gas, and clarify when an air permit is required. The rules also added two air toxics as New Jersey Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs): sulfuryl fluoride, a colorless, odorless gas used as a fumigant to control pests like termites, rats and bedbugs; and hydrogen sulfide, a colorless, flammable toxic gas with a characteristic rotten egg odor that is primarily a by-product of many waste/wastewater treatment operations.

Lastly, the change added 13 HAPs to the [New Jersey Emission Statement](#), an annual report submitted to DEP on actual amounts of air pollutants –

including carbon monoxide, ammonia and lead – emitted by major facilities. The report monitors New Jersey’s progress toward emission reduction goals and attaining [National Ambient Air Quality Standards](#). Two of the 13 new HAPs, naphthalene and ethylbenzene, repeatedly show up as pollutants of concern. Naphthalene, produced when fossil fuels, wood and other organic materials are burned, is part of vehicle exhaust, and chronic inhalation has been associated with damage to the eyes, liver and kidneys. Ethylbenzene, a naturally occurring hydrocarbon found in crude oil and often added to gasoline, is released in fuel vapors and car engine exhaust and can irritate the eyes and throat. Both HAPs are classified as potential carcinogens in humans.

Further, in December 2022, DEP enacted regulations to curtail GHG emissions, specifically, carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel-fired electric generating units (EGUs) through emission limits; and by banning combustion of certain fuels. Reducing carbon emissions from EGUs and eliminating more carbon-intense fuel oil not only cuts climate pollutants, but also improves air quality by reducing air toxics that tend to be higher with dirtier fuels such as coal and fuel oil.



### Driving Down Air Pollution from Mobile Sources

Mobile source air pollution, including from cars and trucks, is the largest contributor of air toxics emissions in New Jersey. Transportation is also the state’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions that fuel climate change.

In recent years, the New Jersey Legislature passed a series of laws to help reduce mobile source pollution and fight climate change, including:

**July 2019:** [Amendment](#) to update the Global Warming Response Act to establish new implementation timeframes and certain requirements in the Act

**January 2020:** [Law](#) setting goals for EV adoption and air pollution reduction.

**July 2021:** [Law](#) requiring most new construction to include EV charging infrastructure

**August 2022:** [Law](#) requiring DEP to develop and implement an electric school bus program

**January 2024:** [Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Battery Management Act](#), making New Jersey the first state with an extended producer responsibility (EPR) law for EV batteries, holding manufacturers responsible for the recycling, reuse or repurposing of used batteries.



New Jersey's EV laws establish goals and incentives for increased use of plug-in EVs and infrastructure. Through our It Pays to Plug In (IPPI) program, DEP has dedicated \$35 million to fund Level 1, 2 and DC fast-charging stations, enabling New Jersey to meet its first goal of 1,000 Level 2 charging stations. As of December 2025, DEP has also established 200 DC fast-charging spaces in private and public locations such as workplaces and multiunit dwellings, as well as along highway corridors and in destination communities. DEP provided \$8 million to NJ Transit for eight electric transit buses in Camden, led 19 Electric Ride and Drive events, which provided more than 1,400 test drives for interested drivers, and attended more than 50 public events to educate the public on the benefits of driving EVs.

The agency also is leading by example with 150 plug-in hybrid and battery EVs in its fleet.

Signed in 2022, the [Electric School Bus Law](#) provides \$45 million in funding over three years to replace diesel-powered school buses with battery-electric school buses. In October 2024, DEP announced a \$15 million investment in zero-emission school buses – grants for schools, school districts and bus contractors for the purchase of 48 electric school buses and the installation of charging infrastructure, including in communities overburdened by pollution to further the promise of environmental justice. The Electric School Bus Grant Program is an investment in the health, safety and future of our children, families and communities.



DEP has also advanced regulatory reforms to reduce greenhouse gases from the transportation sector, and cut nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter (PM), which contribute to poor air quality and public health risks:

- The [Mobile Cargo Handling Equipment at Ports and Intermodal Rail yard regulation](#) focuses on reducing NOx and PM from diesel cargo handling equipment at ports and intermodal rail yards.
- The [Advanced Clean Truck](#) regulation requires manufacturers to sell zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles as an increasing percentage of annual sales.
- The [Low NOx Omnibus](#) regulation adopts California's emission standards and requirements for gasoline and diesel engines and medium- and heavy-weight vehicles, beginning in 2027, to ensure vehicles using fossil fuels are held to the most stringent emission standards over a longer period of time.
- [The Advanced Clean Cars II](#) regulation requires manufacturers of passenger cars and light-duty trucks to meet an annual zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) requirement, increasing the percentage of ZEVs sold in New Jersey that meet new minimum technical requirements. This regulation also requires more stringent exhaust emission standards.

Enforcement of our air quality laws is similarly critical to improving and protecting public health and the environment. As one example in recent years, DEP has been recognized nationally for its [Anti-Tampering initiative](#) to prevent illegal modifications to vehicle emission systems. Established in 2018, the initiative focuses on diesel pick-up trucks, which can be modified to enhance vehicle performance. New Jersey has successfully used this initiative to conduct 547 inspections, assessing approximately \$720,000 in penalties since 2018, and, more importantly, preventing the release of tons of NOx and PM. To share the success of these efforts and expand the protection of air quality beyond New Jersey's borders, DEP also provides information and training to other states in developing anti-tampering programs.

### Collaborating on Clean Air

Reducing air pollution through regional collaboration also fuels DEP's efforts to make our air healthier and improve the quality of life in communities across New Jersey.

New Jersey has seen some of its most remarkable successes with the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative \(RGGI\)](#), a program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector. In the first multistate program of its kind in the U.S., 10 participating states put a price on carbon emissions from power plants and invest the funds in projects that reduce GHG emissions. The states have reaped numerous benefits, including a significant reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. To date, New Jersey has received more than \$1 billion in funding to invest in climate action, clean energy and environmental justice programs across the state.

Current RGGI states:  
New Jersey, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont,  
Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New  
York, Delaware and Maryland.



Through funding provided by DEP, Lawrence Township, Mercer County, added EV chargers to its municipal complex for employee and public use. It's among the first communities in the country to sign the national Charge@Work pledge.



Through the [Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management](#) (NESCAUM) regional association, New Jersey and other member states in 2020 committed to expediting the use of electric trucks and buses, particularly in communities overburdened by higher levels of pollution. Separately, NESCAUM announced in 2025 that more than 3.3 million EVs were on the road in 10 member states, including New Jersey, meeting and exceeding an ambitious goal set in 2013. In 2024, New Jersey joined several other NESCAUM states and Washington, D.C., in an agreement to accelerate the transition to zero-emission residential buildings. In 2025, the states released a [Multistate Action Plan](#), detailing more than 50 recommendations for speeding up the transition.

In 2024, DEP partnered with Maryland, Connecticut and Delaware on a nearly \$250 million project through the [Clean Corridor Coalition](#), a multistate effort to place medium- and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicle charging infrastructure for freight electrification along the I-95 corridor and adjacent roads from Connecticut to Maryland. The corridor, from Connecticut to Maryland, is one of the most densely populated freight corridors in the U.S. Cutting air pollution from trucks in this region could improve quality of life for millions, reducing particulate emissions that can exacerbate childhood asthma and cardiovascular disease.

## Investing in Cleaner Technology to Promote Air Quality and a Stable Climate

Better air quality and a stable environment are benefits of cleaner technology that reduces pollution from sources such as vehicles and power plants, lowering overall emissions to reduce greenhouse gases.

With RGGI providing the funding for a climate-smart future, data as of December 2024 shows New Jersey has invested \$205 million in 384 projects across

New Jersey – with 88 percent of the proceeds used to advance environmental justice by improving air quality in overburdened communities. For example, RGGI dollars are restoring 155.5 acres of tidal wetlands and restoring/reforesting 46 acres of forests, as well as financing the planting of more than 7,500 trees in urban areas. RGGI funding also supports programs like fleet advisor assistance, community transportation needs assessments, eMobility planning and natural climate solutions projects.

### [The NJ Fleet Advisor Program:](#)

Launched in 2024, Fleet Advisor is a free technical assistance program developed to aid groups aiming to transition their fleets to all-electric vehicles. The program includes an on-site utility infrastructure assessment, cost projections and total cost of ownership analysis to help with navigating key decisions.

### [Community Transportation Needs Assessments and eMobility Planning Grants:](#)

Planning tools assist local leaders in determining community transportation needs, with a preference toward shared electric transportation solutions. In 2025, DEP awarded eMobility Planning Grants for 11 projects to discover viable electric shared-use transportation solutions.



### **eMobility Grant Program:**

Launched in 2021, the program funds zero-emission transportation solutions in overburdened communities, providing clean transportation options to residents who may not own a vehicle. DEP has funded 10 eMobility projects, such as EVs in rideshare, carshare and on-demand shared ride programs, and electric shuttle buses and high-speed charging stations.

### **Natural Climate Solutions Grant Program:**

Launched in 2022, this program funds on-the-ground projects that create, restore and enhance natural carbon sinks – such as salt marshes, seagrass beds, forests, urban parks and woodlands, and trees on streets. Natural resources that capture and store carbon play a critical role in meeting the state’s 2050 goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gases below 2006 levels.

### **Trees for Schools:**

DEP, partnering with Sustainable Jersey and The College of New Jersey, kicked off this program on Arbor Day in 2023. The program provides grants to New Jersey public school districts, county colleges, and state colleges and universities for planting trees on school grounds and campuses, and includes the cost of planning, site preparation, tree purchases, watering, monitoring and maintenance over a three-year period. Trees combat climate change by storing carbon pulled from the atmosphere and mitigating the effects of rising temperatures and rainfall. They also provide shade, habitat, beauty and educational opportunities; filter pollutants from air and water, reduce stormwater runoff, and lower carbon emissions and costs by saving energy.



A combination of funding, including RGGI dollars, federal money and proceeds from New Jersey's share of the [Volkswagen Mitigation Trust Settlement](#), have aided DEP programs such as [It Pay\\$ to Plug In](#) and the [Diesel Modernization Program](#).

### **It Pay\$ to Plug In:**

Funds Level 1, Level 2 and DC fast EV charging stations. The program began as a workplace charging program since the majority of EV owners charge their vehicles at home or at work. As the number of registered EVs in New Jersey increased, it expanded to fund charging stations throughout the state to combat driver range anxiety.



### **Diesel Modernization Program:**

Focuses on replacing on-road and non-road diesel equipment/vehicles with cleaner alternatives, many of which are new battery electric equipment/vehicles. The program supports a broad range of vehicle types, such as construction equipment, port and airport equipment, refuse trucks and ferry vessels.

## **Leading by Example**

DEP is working to convert our entire light-duty, non-emergency fleet to plug-in electric vehicles by 2035. We ensure that vehicle purchases adhere to the following order of priority: 1) battery electric vehicles, 2) plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, 3) hybrid electric vehicles and 4) only where strictly necessary, the most fuel-efficient combustion engine vehicles. DEP has 59 battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and 91 plug-in, hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs). The agency is adding EV charging stations throughout the state to accommodate our increased EV fleet. We have two DC fast chargers and 20 Level 2 chargers around the Trenton campus, and are in the process of adding 50 additional Level 2 chargers throughout the state parks system for fleet use.

DEP has also initiated an At-Home Charging Pilot program under which staff who are assigned a battery electric vehicle (BEV) or plug-in, hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) can charge their vehicle at home and be reimbursed for charges incurred. DEP vehicles are equipped with a device that collects and transmits data to exactly identify the electricity used.

Additionally, DEP is implementing a Workplace EV Charging pilot program that allows DEP staff to charge their personally owned electric vehicles at their worksite. This pilot encourages employees to explore plug-in vehicle options for personal use. The pilot includes 16 charging stations around DEP's Trenton campus – eight are off-grid, solar-powered stations and eight are hard-wired to the grid. Over the past 24 months, nearly 100 employees have participated in the pilot.

## The Air That We Breathe

Raising public understanding of air quality and encouraging simple changes the public can make to reduce air pollution, improve their health and combat climate change are a key part of DEP’s efforts during [Air Quality Awareness Week \(AQAW\)](#) each May. DEP promotes actions such as choosing an electric vehicle (EV); using alternate travel options like public transportation, ridesharing, cycling and walking to reduce transportation emissions; and switching to renewable energy for home and business. DEP also highlights its initiatives on climate change and clean vehicles, and encourages use of the New Jersey Air Quality Flag program, brightly colored flags (schoolchildren, in photo at right, hold the flags) representing how clean or polluted the air is daily.



## NEW JERSEY AIR QUALITY FLAG PROGRAM



### New Jersey Air Quality Flag Program

Pollutants like ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter (PM2.5) occasionally reach levels that can impact public health. Ground-level ozone can cause health issues such as asthma, reduced lung function and respiratory irritation. PM2.5 can penetrate deep into the lungs and affect both respiratory and cardiovascular health, particularly in vulnerable populations like children and older adults. Staying informed about daily air quality conditions is essential for protecting health, especially when engaging in outdoor activities.

The [New Jersey Air Quality Flag Program](#) is a tool to indicate air quality in communities. The set of colored flags (see illustration) are based on the EPA’s Air Quality Index and are used to notify residents about outdoor air quality conditions. Each day, participants display a flag that corresponds to their local air quality forecast. Community members can then modify outdoor activities, if needed, to protect their health. The flags and an educational toolkit are available at no cost to eligible institutions such as schools, senior centers, camps, community and day care centers and local governments.



# EnviroFlash

## Your Environmental News Flash

### DEP Does That?

Our Air Quality Forecasting team issues daily forecasts year-round that the public can receive through [EnviroFlash](#)! These forecasts are particularly important in the summer months when air quality can become unhealthy due to elevated levels of ozone, and, in some cases, when there is pollution from wildfires. New Jersey operates 29 air monitoring stations throughout the state, which reflects DEP's commitment to improving air quality and safeguarding public health.

### Promoting Air Quality Awareness

In June 2023, as smoke from Canada wildfires filled the skies over New Jersey and created an unprecedented air quality emergency, DEP provided statewide guidance and public information. Air quality information and updates supplied by DEP's Bureau of Air Monitoring were available on DEP's social media accounts, and followers also were encouraged to check local air quality through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's [AirNow.gov](#). DEP experienced a significant increase in visitors, likes and impressions across our social media platforms, allowing the agency to connect with the public in real time during a climate crisis.

### Building Community Through Participatory Science

The DEP Bureau of Air Monitoring (BAM) began a [Community Science](#) program in 2018 to educate the public about low-cost sensors for local air quality monitoring projects. Data from low-cost sensors can supplement DEP's network of air monitoring data and can help identify areas of concern (but cannot be used for comparison to health standards or for making air quality decisions). Partnerships and collaboration between BAM and community groups led to benefits such as the development of a low-cost sensor loan program; creation of training videos, guidance and resources. BAM supports one to two projects each year and has worked with groups including the Newark Green Team, Jersey City, Rider University, the city of Trenton, Newark's South Ward Environmental Alliance, Clean Water Action and Friends of the Earth.

The Bureau of Air Monitoring also launched a mobile monitoring project in October 2025 that will measure air toxics in overburdened neighborhoods in Camden and Elizabeth, as well as Newark's South Ward and Ironbound sections. The [Geospatial Mobile Air Monitoring Project](#) aims to identify air pollution sources in overburdened communities by connecting real-time air measurements with real-time locational data. Measurements of air toxics and criteria pollutants will be collected via a mobile van containing air monitoring equipment over two weeks in the summer and winter for two successive years (through 2027). BAM is working with community groups on the monitoring routes. At the conclusion of the project, BAM will present the results to each community.



DEP staff set up PurpleAir monitors — compact, low-cost sensors that track neighborhood air pollution — for a two-week study to support the South Ward Environmental Alliance’s community air project in Newark.

# CHAPTER SIX:

## PROTECTING OUR FISH, WILDLIFE AND HABITATS



DEP Fish & Wildlife (F&W) works to ensure the protection, management and wise use of New Jersey's fish and wildlife resources to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic values. The three primary goals of F&W are to:

1. Maintain New Jersey's rich variety of fish and wildlife species at stable, healthy levels and to protect and enhance the many habitats on which they depend.
2. Educate New Jerseyans on the values and needs of our fish and wildlife, and foster positive human/wildlife co-existence.
3. Maximize the recreational and commercial use of New Jersey's fish and wildlife today and for future generations.

### Better Connecting and Protecting Our Wildlife and Habitats

Regardless of their size and range of movement, wildlife must be able to move through the landscape, including to find food, shelter, mates and other resources. Without mobility, healthy wildlife populations can suffer and even blink out locally. New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the nation, which means that our wildlife must navigate an environment of steady urbanization, and a large and congested network of roads and highways. Like us, our wildlife must also adapt to a changing climate that is bringing New Jersey higher temperatures and oscillating between periods of prolonged drought and sudden extreme precipitation that floods homes and habitats alike. These and other factors put the connectedness of our habitats and wildlife populations in jeopardy.

CHANJ – or [Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey](#) – is a longstanding project administered by the F&W Endangered and Nongame Species Program that works to make the landscape easier for wildlife to navigate as they meet habitat and biological needs. From bobcats and bears, to salamanders, turtles, and more, CHANJ identifies important habitats and where restoration must be done to restore movement corridors and make roads safer for animals to cross. CHANJ features an interactive [Mapping tool](#) and a [Guidance Document](#) to help prioritize land protection, inform habitat restoration



and management, and guide mitigation of road barrier effects on wildlife and their habitats. When riding along New Jersey roadways, travelers can use the F&W NJ [Wildlife Tracker](#) to report wildlife on roads, as well as rare species sightings across the state.

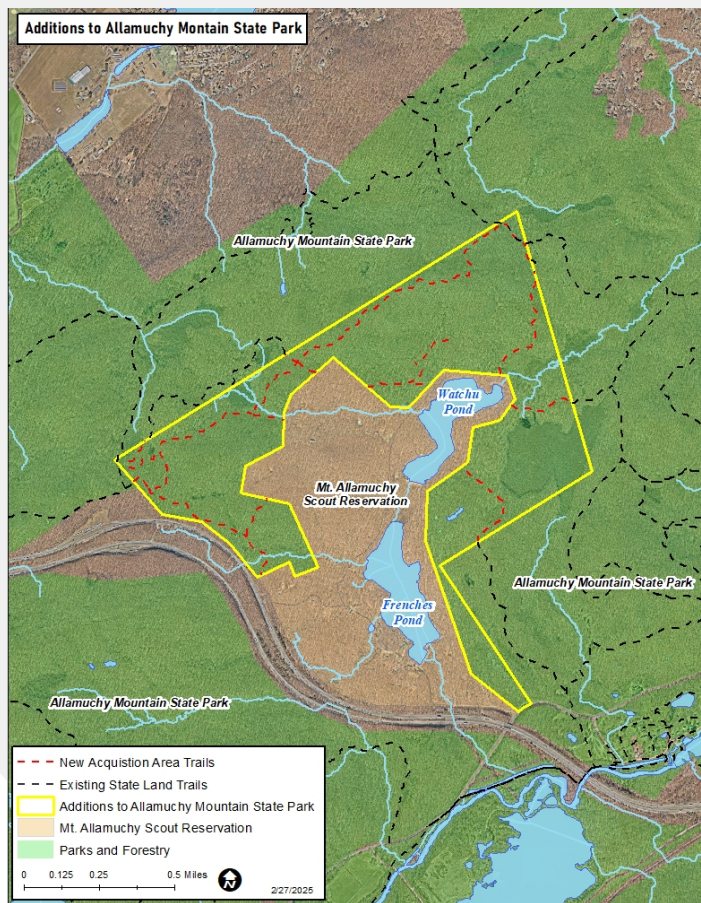
## New Focus on Habitat Preservation

In 2025, DEP launched a new land acquisition and preservation initiative that focuses specifically on advancing wildlife habitat connectivity through open space preservation. Led by DEP's Community Investment and Economic Revitalization (CIER) program, this initiative strengthens partnerships with nonprofits and municipalities to better engage with residents about property purchases; and, using CHANJ mapping tools, identifies priority areas for habitat acquisition that align with properties that come on the market. By identifying and acquiring key properties, this initiative creates a more connected landscape for wildlife, supporting biodiversity and ecological health across New Jersey.

Through this effort, DEP purchased 473 acres of the Mount Allamuchy Scout Reservation that increases the size of [Allamuchy Mountain State Park](#) in Sussex County by nearly 20 percent and adds wetlands, streams and important wildlife habitat.

## Promoting Sustainable Aquatic Habitats

DEP's habitat protection and enhancement efforts also extend to marine life and aquatic habitats. For example, New Jersey's [Shell Recycling Program](#) helps to rebuild oyster reefs that are crucial habitat for our Eastern oysters. DEP's Marine Resources Administration has been collecting discarded oyster shells from restaurants in Atlantic, Cape May and Ocean counties and then using them to replenish the hard substrate of the reefs by placing the shells back in the water column. The effort, which began



in 2019 through a partnership with Atlantic City eateries, recently expanded through a partnership with the Sysco Corporation. This work creates critical habitat in our coastal waters and can improve water quality. Hundreds of tons of recycled oyster shell – including over 700 tons in 2025 alone – have been planted on these reefs since the program’s inception.

### Growing Partnership

In November 2025, DEP announced a groundbreaking partnership with food distributing giant Sysco Corporation, creating opportunities to significantly expand our shell recycling program. Sysco now collects discarded oyster and clam shells from restaurants they service across the region and provides them to DEP, substantially broadening the reach of our shell recycling program and potentially expanding reef restoration work to multiple bays along the state’s coastline. The reefs provide clean habitat for oysters to grow, and the oysters provide a nature-based solution for protecting our coastal ecosystems as they filter water, improve water quality and sequester carbon dioxide through the formation of their shells.

### Planning for the Long-Term Protection of Fish and Wildlife

Our protection efforts also include the completion of the 2025 [New Jersey State Wildlife Action Plan](#) (SWAP). A product of more than two years of effort by F&W, partner organizations, and stakeholders, the Plan serves as a voluntary guide to focus conservation actions on wildlife and plants that are in greatest need of attention. The Plan includes information about at-risk species, habitats in regions across the state, threats that affect species and habitats, and actions that focus on mitigating those threats. In this revision, F&W reassessed the Species of Greatest Conservation Need, identified and prioritized threats and – with more than 150

partners – developed actions that would address threats and improve conditions for at-risk species. The 2025 SWAP includes plants for the first time and identifies 614 wildlife and 128 plant Species of Greatest Conservation Need that were categorized using data on population status, trends and regional responsibility.



### Summer of CHANJ Campaign

In June 2024, DEP launched [Summer of CHANJ](#), a public outreach campaign highlighting the importance of protecting habitat connectivity for wildlife. The campaign featured a series of social media posts, online materials and email blasts about various facets of habitat protection and species needs. Messages spotlighted featured species that are highly dependent on habitat connectivity, such as swallowtails, monarch butterflies, bog turtles (pictured), spotted salamanders, bobcats, and river otters. The effort was aimed at helping the public better appreciate the diversity of wildlife New Jersey supports, while also helping New Jerseyans understand how diverse habitats provide essential services to these animals.



### Nesting on the Beach

Every spring, scores of beach-nesting birds return to New Jersey's shores. They set up territories, dig shallow nests in the sand, defend chicks and successfully produce the next generation in just a few months. This is an especially critical task for New Jersey's endangered species – the piping plover (pictured at right), least tern and black skimmer. In addition, special concern species such as the American oystercatcher, common tern and, occasionally, gull-billed tern and royal tern use the beachfront as nesting grounds. F&W's Endangered and Nongame Species Program staff work to protect the birds by delineating nesting areas with fencing, monitoring predator activity and educating the public. The New Jersey Beach-nesting Bird Report is an annual summary about the breeding season for vulnerable shorebirds, tracking nesting success, population counts and factors like predation and human disturbance. In 2024,

[the report](#) indicated that predators remain a major challenge, so F&W experimented with efforts such as lines of brightly colored flags on polywire to create a perimeter around sensitive areas and triangular exclosures around nests to ward off intruders.

A separate 2024 report focused on [Horseshoe Island](#), an offshore island just southeast of the Little Egg Inlet that is closed to all human use from March 1 to Sept. 30 each year. In its third year of management under F&W, extremely high numbers of birds continued to utilize the entire island – a total of 50 avian species were documented using the island for migration, breeding or roosting. Six species were documented breeding, including piping plover (first year they nested at this site), black skimmer (largest skimmer colony in the state), least tern (second largest colony in the state), American oystercatcher (third largest concentration for the state), royal tern (northernmost colony in the Western Hemisphere), and common tern. Among the migratory species that utilized the island in 2024 were roseate tern and red knot (both federally and state-listed species), whose numbers represented a significant migratory flock on the New Jersey Atlantic coast.



Credit: Teri Bowers

Habitat fragmentation and roads are huge challenges for New Jersey's endangered bobcats, emphasizing the importance of protecting and linking their remaining habitats.





In our road-crossed landscape, many amphibians face traffic hazards each year as they move to reach their breeding ponds, highlighting the need for safe crossings and connected habitats.

Wildlife tunnels under a central New Jersey road are monitored with cameras, revealing a variety of animals using them to safely navigate the area.





## Bald Eagle Bounces Back

New Jersey celebrated a meaningful milestone when the bald eagle and the osprey were removed from the state's endangered species list in January 2025, reflecting more than 40 years of work to restore the iconic birds to our landscape. A DEP rule adopted on Jan. 6, 2025, changed the bald eagle's status from endangered to special concern and the osprey from threatened to stable. The status upgrades, determined by the F&W program, indicate the populations of these birds have recovered to the point at which their survival in the state is no longer in jeopardy.

In the 1970s and into the early 1980s, New Jersey had just one remaining bald eagle nest, a pair in a remote part of Cumberland County. The state's bald eagle population had been devastated by widespread use of DDT and other threats, including habitat degradation and human disturbances. DEP worked closely with the [Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey](#) for many years through the state's [Bald Eagle Project](#) to protect bald eagles and their habitat. Today, [bald eagles](#) can be found in virtually every area of the state, with their highest numbers found along Delaware Bay, rich in protected marshlands and coastal creeks that provide ideal habitats. In 2024, New Jersey boasted a record 293 nesting pairs of bald eagles, of which 264 laid eggs.

[Ospreys](#), also known as fish hawks, are typically found along the coast, where they hunt fish from saltmarsh creeks and bays. Also affected greatly by DDT use, the number of osprey nests left in the state dwindled to about 50 by the early 1970s. Recovery efforts included placing young and eggs into nests that failed to produce young and supplying nest platforms for the birds. In 2023, a record 800 occupied osprey nests were documented.

## Investing in Habitat Conservation

To further advance species conservation, F&W has developed a comprehensive five-year Habitat Stewardship Plan to improve habitat quality across New Jersey's network of Wildlife Management Areas and other DEP-owned lands. Investments under the Habitat Stewardship Plan will begin in 2026 and are structured to progressively expand, beginning with \$2 million in 2026 and increasing to over \$14 million in 2030, investing over \$42 million in habitat improvements benefitting species-specific habitat and recreational opportunities for the public. The Plan is funded by constitutionally dedicated stewardship dollars pursuant to the Preserve New Jersey Act.

The Habitat Stewardship Plan will make significant improvements in preserving biodiversity and resilience of New Jersey's public lands through collaborative projects focused in five key habitats, with projects designed to benefit specific focal species in each of the following habitat categories:

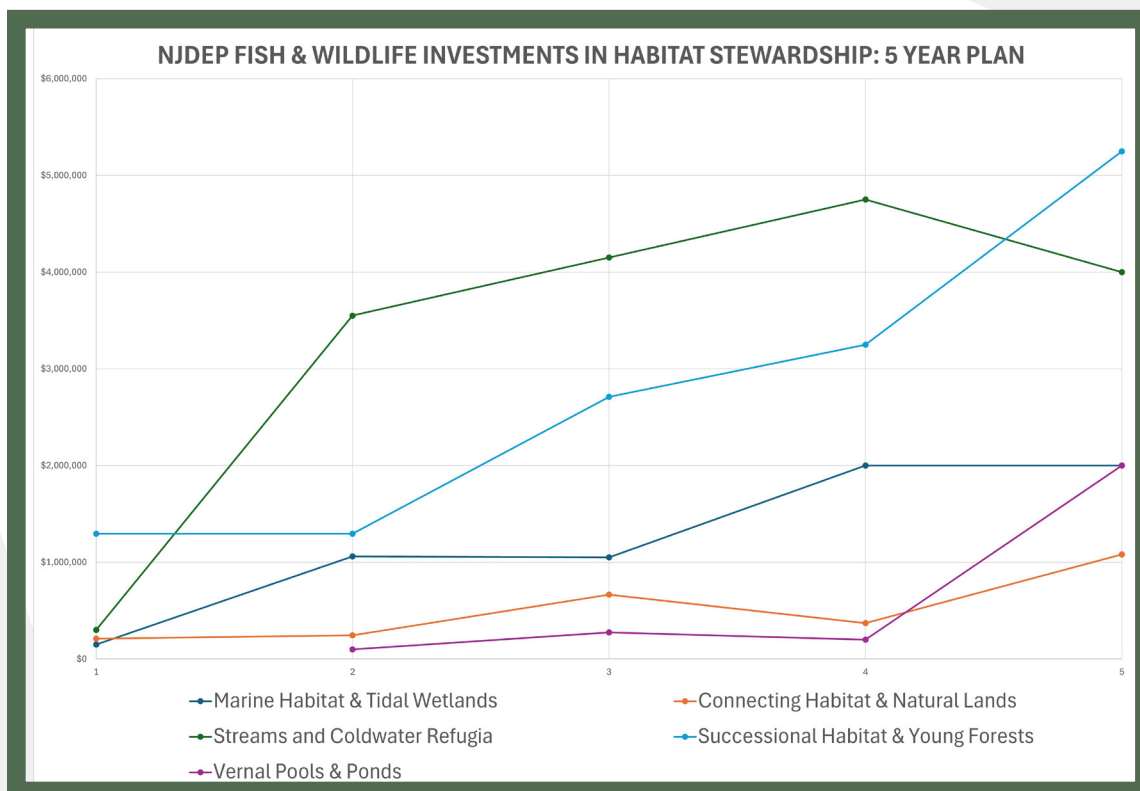
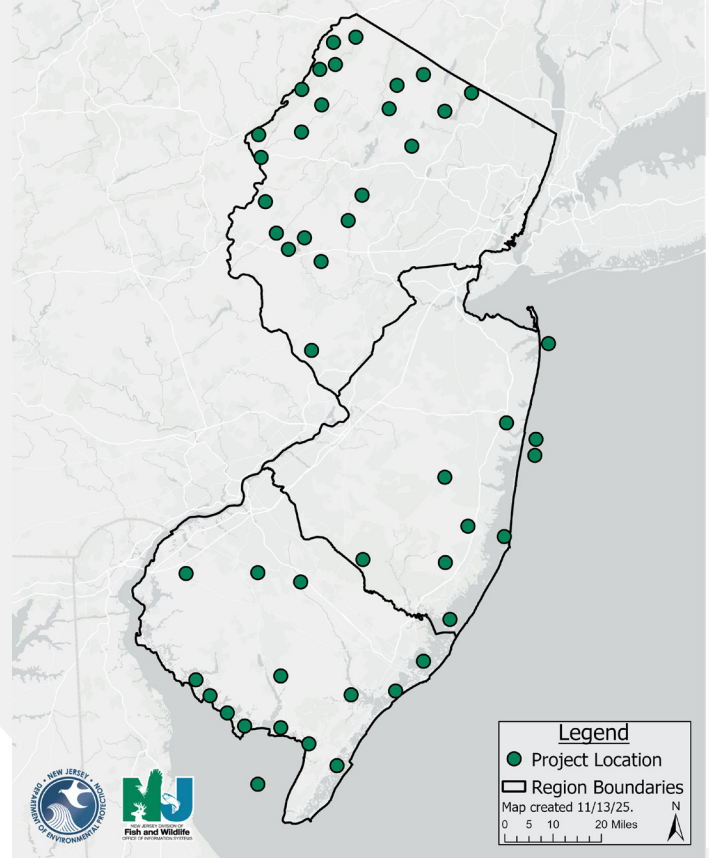
1. Streams and Coldwater Refugia
2. Vernal Pools, Ponds and Nontidal Wetlands
3. Successional Habitat & Young Forests
4. Connecting Habitat & Natural Lands
5. Marine Habitat

For example, a project in the Successional Habitat & Young Forests category involves the Bureau of Land Management and focuses on maintaining successional habitats, which depend upon periodic

management to maintain their specific habitat characteristics, benefitting upland game, grassland birds and pollinators in our Wildlife Management Areas. The Bureau will continue to closely manage approximately 30,000 acres per year on a rotational schedule to balance wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for hunters and anglers with a target of 150,000 acres over five years. In another project, to increase colonies of endangered Little Brown, Indiana and Northern Long-eared bats, F&W will install artificial summer maternity roosts in areas of open canopy near water to supplement natural roosting options (i.e., trees) in optimal locations for pup-rearing and may reduce human conflicts stemming from bats alternatively roosting in structures like buildings or bridges.

Combined, projects proposed within this plan will enhance 155,000 acres, restore 20 stream miles, and install 1,583 structures that support fish and wildlife. As these projects expand, they will maximize impact and leverage additional partnerships from user groups, benefitting outdoor recreation and hunting and fishing access.

**5-Year Habitat Stewardship Project Locations**





as well as highlighting the role that hunters and anglers play in conservation. The trailer, which debuted in August 2019 at Liberty State Park, has had more than 50,000 visitors.

Additionally, F&W's aquatic [education programs](#) stress the importance of healthy water, native species and handling fish safely. Since 2022, new programs include fly fishing at the Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Oxford, and kayak fishing at Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center in Barnegat Bay, off Island Beach State Park. In 2023, the Sedge Island center added "Artists Off the Grid" workshops focused on the importance of New Jersey's saltmarsh ecosystem and the flora and fauna found there, with participants learning through sketch, photography and other media.

## Promoting Conservation Through Recreation & Education

One simple but powerful way of getting New Jerseyans involved in conservation efforts is the [Wildlife Habitat Supporter](#) program. Officially launched in 2022, the program invites supporters of wildlife and habitat conservation to help fund important initiatives in wildlife management areas (WMAs) throughout New Jersey. Donations from the public support and maintain New Jersey's rich diversity of fish and wildlife species at stable, healthy levels, and protect and enhance their habitats on more than 360,000 acres across 122 WMAs. This popular program, which generates about \$35,000 annually for conservation, also aims to raise awareness about the WMA system and the opportunities they provide for fishing, hunting, bird watching, wildlife viewing and hiking.

F&W also takes its work on the road with a [Mobile Education Trailer](#). The 27-foot traveling exhibit features interactive presentations, educational videos and informative displays on F&W efforts to manage and protect New Jersey's natural resources,



## Safeguarding Wildlife and the Public

The job of enforcing laws and regulations that protect New Jersey wildlife and habitats falls to our Conservation Police. Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) make up F&W's Bureau of Law Enforcement, which patrols the state's natural areas – on land and in the water – to enable visitors to safely enjoy wildlife and to ensure the lawful harvest of fish and game.

Among CPOs' most diligent efforts are enforcement actions to thwart animal trafficking and misuse/mistreatment of exotic species. In October 2023, during black bear hunting season, the Bureau received a tip that someone was seeking to purchase black bear body parts from hunters in Sussex County. The individual eventually was charged with several instances of unlawful purchase of wildlife and, in 2025, among other penalties was fined \$20,000.

Violations do not always occur in the wild. In April 2023, the Bureau was notified that Northern Cardinals were being held in cages at a residence in Orange (Essex County). An investigation by state CPOs, a local Animal Control Officer and Orange police led to the seizure of 35 birds, including Northern Cardinals, house finches and some exotic species. During a second search of the property, 77 additional birds were removed. One individual was charged with violating New Jersey's Endangered and Nongame Species Conservation Act, and in 2024, in addition to other penalties, was fined \$50,000 and ordered to pay \$4,800 in restitution to wildlife rehabilitators who cared for the birds.

In 2021, NJ Conservation Police seized 64,000 freshwater clams from individuals collecting them from a polluted creek, preventing the clams from entering the food supply and endangering public health.





Sedge Island WMA visitors can enjoy a variety of recreational activities including fishing, clamming, birding, waterfowl hunting and kayaking.

The Pequest Trout Hatchery raises over 600,000 rainbow trout for stocking in more than 180 public waters throughout the state each year.



# Better Than We Found It

## 6. Protecting Our Fish, Wildlife And Habitats

F&W staff unload and stock trout from a hatchery truck during a seasonal fish release.



# CHAPTER SEVEN:

## FURTHERING THE PROMISE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



All New Jersey residents – regardless of income, race, ethnicity, color or national origin – have a right to live, work and recreate in a clean and healthy environment. Unfortunately, New Jersey’s low-income communities and communities of color have historically faced a disproportionately high number of environmental and public health stressors and, as a result, suffer from increased adverse health effects. Since 2018, DEP has redoubled its efforts to improve the quality of life in New Jersey’s most vulnerable communities through reforms to DEP regulatory and funding programs, by routinely engaging with and empowering residents who may lack access to government decision-making processes, and by offering guidance to other state departments and agencies in their work to further the promise of environmental justice.

### Leading the Nation with Empowering Environmental Justice Reforms

In September 2020, New Jersey enacted the most empowering environmental justice law in the nation. An outgrowth of years of advocacy by social and environmental justice champions, and collaboration between Legislative sponsors and DEP professionals, the New Jersey Environmental Justice Law is the first in the United States to directly address the cumulative effects of pollution that can disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color.

The EJ Law is premised, in part, on the recognition that existing environmental standards are often formulated based on the effect that pollution has upon general populations spread over wide geographic areas, which may fail to fully consider localized impacts and erode a community’s fundamental right to live, work, learn and recreate in a clean and healthy environment. Under the law, DEP must consider whether certain facilities seeking permits to locate or expand in overburdened communities will contribute to environmental or public health stressors in that community in a manner that is disproportionate as compared to its neighbors.





To implement the EJ Law, DEP developed specific EJ Rules, along with the [Environmental Justice Assessment, Mapping and Protection \(EJMAP\) tool](#). The rules, which took effect in April 2023, require facilities to directly and meaningfully engage with residents of a host community before a facility seeks a covered permit from DEP to locate or expand in the community. That engagement, like the design of the facility itself, must reflect an assessment of environmental and public health stressors that already affect the host community. In other words, the intent of the EJ Law is to center the lived experiences of overburdened communities in the industrial facility siting and operations approval process.

The rules require covered facilities to first avoid causing or contributing to environmental or public health stressors in the community and then, if necessary, to minimize such stressors. To effectuate the avoidance or minimization of cumulative impacts, DEP may add special EJ conditions to facility permits, and a facility may be required to make other environmental improvements directly in the community.

## Engaging for the Purpose of Action

Since 2018, DEP has been on the road throughout New Jersey, hosting live and hybrid (live/virtual) engagement sessions to meet residents at home in their communities and to hear from them about their lived experience of their environment. Deeply committed to being in community, Commissioner LaTourette and DEP professionals from our air, land and water quality programs shared our message of environmental stewardship, community and service across the state.

Through our statewide tour, we explored dozens of communities alongside local leaders and met with more than 1,000 residents. With each stop, we invited residents, community-based organizations, and local political and faith leaders to join us on the ground to view environmental conditions, projects, challenges and opportunities in their neighborhoods. After touring a community, DEP's Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) facilitated an open public forum where DEP turned the mic over to the public – creating an opportunity for real, unfiltered community engagement during which we listened to residents' concerns and ideas for improving their environment, provided resources and simply connected with the people and communities we serve.

The importance of our OEJ-led engagement sessions cannot be understated: these in-community experiences and frank discussions have provided DEP with valuable local insights on environmental, public health and sustainability issues at the neighborhood level. The physical issues we explored, resident feedback we received and relationships we built have informed the development of policy and administration of programs across the DEP portfolio – from calibrating the deployment of environmental enforcement to address pollution concerns, to ensuring the availability of environmental infrastructure funding for communities in need.

DEP will continue visiting communities across New Jersey to hear directly from residents and local leaders about their concerns and explore ways to maximize the positive impact of DEP programs.

## On The Ground

To further the promise of environmental justice for all New Jerseyans, government agencies like DEP must build relationships with those who may have historically lacked access to decision-making processes that inevitably affect public health and environmental quality in their communities. Showing up in our communities, exploring conditions on the ground and hearing directly from residents connects DEP professionals to the people and places we serve and also enables us to improve the delivery of environmental services for the benefit of all people, especially those who may experience a greater burden of the pollution that we all together create.



Kandyce Perry (at left), Director of DEP's Office of Environmental Justice, attends a 2024 community engagement session with Deputy Commissioner Kati Angarone.

## Essex County

U.S. Senator Cory Booker and Then-Administrator Michael Regan, former head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, joined Commissioner LaTourette, OEJ Director Kandyce Perry, and partners from the Ironbound Community Corporation and other community-based organizations for an environmental justice tour of Newark's Ironbound section in August 2021, after which they held a roundtable to discuss how legislative and regulatory reforms to avoid and reduce disproportionate environmental burdens in New Jersey could serve as a foundation for advancing environmental justice at the national level.



**Union County**

DEP partnered with Groundwork Elizabeth, the local chapter of the NAACP and community leaders in 2022 to tour neighborhoods impacted by flood events and those with active industrial and commercial port operations. DEP heard from residents about their experiences of flooding, including during Tropical Storm Ida, which struck New Jersey in late 2021, and shared flood recovery resources. We heard from mothers and young people about compromised air quality from neighboring major ports that disproportionately affects children, and shared information about DEP programs to help reduce port air pollution.



**Salem County**

While visiting New Jersey’s southwestern most county in 2023, DEP toured struggling water treatment plants and recycling centers, and heard from residents who were worried about the potential impacts of PFAS “forever chemicals” affecting water supplies, who expressed needs for equitable access to public waterfronts and who shared concerns about the potential siting of new waste management facilities in overburdened communities.



## Gloucester County

Pillars of the community of Paulsboro and neighboring towns led DEP on a 2024 tour of industrial sites and areas that have suffered repeated riverine flooding. A standing room-only crowd at the Sons of Italy Lodge shared concerns about the cleanup of chemical manufacturing sites, and DEP shared its progress in securing corporate accountability in the courts and committed to deploying polluter-pays settlement funds to improve local drinking water quality.



## Passaic County

In 2025, DEP toured brownfield cleanup sites and explored opportunities for creating riverside open space capable of reducing increasing flood risk. We then heard from residents concerned about repeated potable water emergencies due to failing water mains, and DEP shared its plans to increase investments in water infrastructure. At this community engagement session, DEP also partnered with the Paterson Alliance to bring together 11 organizations for an environmental resource fair. The participants were part of the newly formed Greater Paterson Region Environmental Justice Affinity Group, which was created to advance local environmental justice initiatives and respond to issues that are affecting their community.



### Institutionalizing Environmental Justice

DEP has long acknowledged the intractable nature of environmental injustice and, in decades past, the agency has convened advisory bodies and pursued compliance and enforcement initiatives aimed at reducing pollution that impacts vulnerable and underserved populations more than others. Informed by past efforts and their limitations, in 2018, DEP set a new and sustained course toward a more just environment – for all. Recognizing that difficult challenges often require planful, systemic change, Commissioner LaTourette established environmental justice as an institutional imperative that must consistently inform each and all of DEP’s responsibilities to protect public health, improve environmental quality, conserve natural and historic resources, and invest in environmental infrastructure.

DEP’s systemic approach is born of a deeper and more urgent commitment to equity and justice, which does not simply require more compliance by private actors and regulated industries. This approach requires more of those who perform the critical work of environmental governance. Institutionalizing environmental justice requires recurring organizational self-assessment, action planning and execution of policy, program and process changes keyed to more equitable and sustained outcomes. In other words, environmental equity is not achieved by stating it as a priority. Its achievement requires resourceful, often iterative, adjustments to longstanding environmental management programs that are reexamined as a matter of routine.

DEP’s Environmental Justice Action Plan, expected to be released in early 2026, reflects this systemic approach, with its cross-cutting focus on engaging communities, ensuring environmental quality, investing in environmental improvements, managing equitable and accessible natural

resources, and institutionalizing environmental justice in DEP’s planning and policy operations. In the years between regular Plan updates, the actions it prescribes will serve as the foundation of EJ workstreams administered by specified DEP programs. The staff of DEP’s Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), which was formally established by Commissioner LaTourette in 2021, will continue to support Plan implementation, adding capacity to DEP programs in fulfilling their EJ responsibilities. OEJ, together with the longstanding Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC), will serve as accountability partners supporting and ensuring the Plan’s implementation.



## Establishing the Office of Environmental Justice

Prior to 2021, DEP had one dedicated Environmental Justice Coordinator, but no EJ office within its organizational structure. To support a sustained course toward a more just environment, DEP formally established the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), and Commissioner LaTourette appointed Kandyce Perry as its inaugural Director and fully staffed OEJ, which has two primary operational elements: (1) an internal-facing EJ policy development and implementation element and (2) a community-facing outreach and engagement element.

### *How We Change Ourselves*

#### **Embedding Environmental Justice in Programs and Policy**

The EJ Law and Rule shift the way DEP approaches its permitting processes for pollution-generating facilities in overburdened communities to avoid and reduce disproportionate levels of pollution. EJMAP was developed as a tool to assist the agency and permit applicants in identifying overburdened communities (OBC) and the existing environmental and public health stressors that affect them. The use of EJMAP as an informational and planning tool has expanded across DEP programs and is now a point of consideration in DEP's non-regulatory programs and initiatives, including outreach and funding prioritization strategies. Starting with an EJMAP analysis to locate and assess impacts to OBCs will be a continuing and commonplace practice at DEP.

In 2024, DEP allocated more than \$108 million to 141 local governments and nonprofit land trusts for open space acquisition, park development and stewardship throughout the state, including \$33.1 million for 49 inclusive playgrounds. Priority ranking and grant incentives resulted in more than 60% of these awards being allocated to projects in or near



OBCs. Providing easy access to safe and appealing neighborhood parks and trails helps all residents, especially those in communities that need them most.

DEP issued a revised [Supplemental Environmental Project \(SEP\) Policy](#) in 2024. The policy allows entities that have been assessed compliance or enforcement violations to voluntarily perform an environmentally beneficial project, which can reduce a penalty payment when settling an enforcement matter. The updated policy strongly encourages responsible parties to consider community input in development of a SEP, including the potential for full penalty reduction if a detailed Community Needs Assessment is completed as part of the SEP proposal. The Community Needs Assessment requirements are modeled after the public participation requirements in DEP's EJ Rule.

DEP has consistently applied an EJ lens to its deployment of funds generated by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), ensuring that

environmental improvements benefit OBCs. The Department has invested more than \$154.5 million in RGGI funding in projects throughout the state that will reduce and sequester GHG emissions, 85% of which has been dedicated to projects in OBCs. One example is the [Trees for Schools](#) program, which provides grants to New Jersey public school districts, county and state colleges, and state universities to fund planting of trees on their campuses. The grant sets aside a portion of funding for applicants in OBCs, with preference given to schools with the highest impervious surface coverage (i.e., surfaces such as paved areas and buildings) and lowest tree coverage. As of today, more than \$7 million (or 82%) of the grant funds have been awarded to plant more than 5,500 trees at schools in OBCs.



DEP has also administered more than \$121 million in transportation electrification projects with RGGI funds. About 93% of that investment will fund projects that will reduce more than 260,000 metric tons of GHG emissions, and more than 861 metric tons of toxic and criteria air pollutant emissions in New Jersey's OBCs over the next 15 years. In the City of Newark, eight electric garbage trucks will replace 30-year-old diesel garbage trucks, and three, 16-year-old school buses will be replaced with battery electric school buses.

EJ was also incorporated into DEP's [Outside, Together! A Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#), a collaborative effort to enhance outdoor recreation and conservation across New Jersey, focusing on improving residents' quality of life through accessible and sustainable outdoor spaces. The plan was guided by an Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee, of which a member representing the interests and perspectives of EJ communities has been appointed.



Credit: Sustainable Jersey

## How We Motivate Change Beyond DEP

Environmental justice at DEP is about reshaping our internal programs and policies to achieve equitable and just outcomes for OBCs. But such outcomes cannot be achieved by the DEP alone. Sister agencies within the Executive Branch, the state Legislature, county and local governments, industry, nonprofits, academia and philanthropy are all partners in advancing environmental justice as well. The DEP has two main strategies to help advance EJ outside of our immediate jurisdiction: encouraging the regulated community to advance justice and sharing our own example to influence other governmental and non-governmental actors to prioritize environmental justice as well.



For example, online tools and resources like [EJMAP](#), the [Potential Lead Exposure Mapping Tool \(PLEM\)](#), [HeatHubNJ](#), and [Healthy Community Planning NJ](#), which incorporate data on environmental and public health stressors at the municipal level or finer scale, educate and equip New Jersey residents and those in the private and public sectors with important data to identify and prioritize issues impacting their communities, particularly OBCs. Using this data can shape municipal planning actions, business decisions, and more. For example, information made available through these tools can inform land use planning and siting decisions, such as how to create the appropriate distance between certain industrial sources of pollution and sensitive receptors like senior housing, schools and daycare facilities.

DEP additionally works with philanthropic partners like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to create grant programs that offer technical assistance to OBCs as a first step to obtain funding from DEP or other sources to aid critical efforts like lead service line replacement.

## How We Help to Build Community Capacity

We work to build a community's collective ability to solve problems and improve its well-being in several ways, including by facilitating meaningful public engagement and providing training for EJ advocates through informational online tools, tutorials and communications.

In 2024, we launched the Environmental Justice Seminar series "[Navigating the DEP System](#)." OEJ, with guidance from the Environmental Justice Advisory Council and the support of staff across the agency, hosted seven EJ seminars between 2024 and 2025. The goal of this series was to train advocates across the state in how DEP's rules, regulations and online tools work. The training allows environmental justice advocates to actively participate in processes that might be confusing or difficult to understand, so they can better advocate for their communities.





We have also provided online tools to facilitate community engagement. One tool is the [Environmental Justice Directory](#), launched in 2024. This allows anyone who is interested to sign up to be included in a public list of environmental justice advocates across New Jersey. Through the tool, advocates can also list their location and areas of interest. This provides DEP and other organizations with a regularly updated list of community members who they can reach out to when community input is needed on a project, or to spread the word about important meetings or announcements.

For example, online tools and resources like EJMAP, the Potential Lead Exposure Mapping Tool (PLEM), HeatHubNJ, and Healthy Community Planning NJ, which incorporate data on environmental and public health stressors at the municipal level or finer scale, educate and equip New Jersey residents and those in the private and public sectors with important data to identify and prioritize issues impacting their communities, particularly OBCs. Using this data can shape municipal planning actions, business decisions, and more. For example, information made available through these tools can inform land use planning and siting decisions, such as how to create the appropriate distance between certain industrial sources of pollution and sensitive receptors like senior housing, schools and daycare facilities.

### Aid of Advisers

The [Environmental Justice Advisory Council](#) is an advisory body to DEP that provides a forum for discussions on integrating EJ into DEP programs, policies and activities. All members are appointed by the DEP Commissioner.

Throughout the Murphy Administration, the 18-member Council has included more than a dozen new members, each bringing their expertise and representing broad-based constituents across the state. In addition to their advisory role, members also identify priority issues in New Jersey's environmental justice communities and work to address them through the Council's established Air, Land and Water, and Environmental Education & Communication Working Groups.

In 2025, EJAC also began holding public meetings to allow community members to raise their environmental justice issues with the Council. Residents from municipalities across the state who attended an April 2025 meeting, for example, spoke about issues ranging from odors in their communities to the history of fires at a Camden metal recycling facility. Being able to hear directly from residents improves EJAC's ability to advocate for them, as well as to advise DEP on critical issues.

Lastly, we are grateful to EJAC for its members' aid in the passing and adoption of the EJ Law. Through ongoing efforts led by EJAC members, the mandatory public engagement efforts of facilities undergoing the EJ Rule process continues to be well utilized and amplified.

# CHAPTER EIGHT:

## CLEANING UP AND BUILDING FORWARD



For decades, New Jersey industries — textiles, metals, electronics, chemicals, life sciences, machinery, and more — powered America and improved quality of life for millions. Our industrial history also created unintended environmental harms, leaving later generations to clean up hazardous substances that were released into New Jersey’s environment. DEP’s Contaminated Site Remediation & Redevelopment (CSRR) program has been at the forefront of holding responsible parties accountable for cleaning up spills of hazardous substances and preparing brownfield sites for redevelopment.

Remediation of a contaminated site under New Jersey’s cleanup programs includes identifying the source, nature and extent of contamination, and conducting appropriate cleanup work. New Jersey’s contaminated site cleanup laws, which are among the strongest in the nation, address a wide variety of site conditions—from leaking underground home heating oil tanks to large industrial sites, such as those used for chemical production and petroleum



### Ensuring the Remediation of Contaminated Sites

Today, more contaminated sites are being actively remediated than ever before and are being cleaned up at a faster rate. Since 2018, New Jersey has reduced the number of contaminated sites to a historic low.

In 2019, New Jersey amended the landmark [Site Remediation Reform Act](#) (SRRRA) to improve the effectiveness of the cleanup program and further streamline the contaminated site remediation process while maintaining the stringent cleanup standards necessary to best protect public health and the environment. First enacted in 2009, SRRRA established the Licensed Site Remediation Professionals (LSRP) program whereby experienced professionals oversee the rehabilitation of contaminated sites on behalf of a responsible party. SRRRA requires that LSRPs comply with all DEP rules and guidance when making remediation decisions.

To ensure the steady success in cleaning up contaminated sites, DEP joined efforts with LSRPs, the regulated community and other stakeholders in 2023 to launch the Remediation Process Improvement Initiative (RPII), aimed at further improving and streamlining remediation work in the state. Through this effort, DEP resolved hundreds of

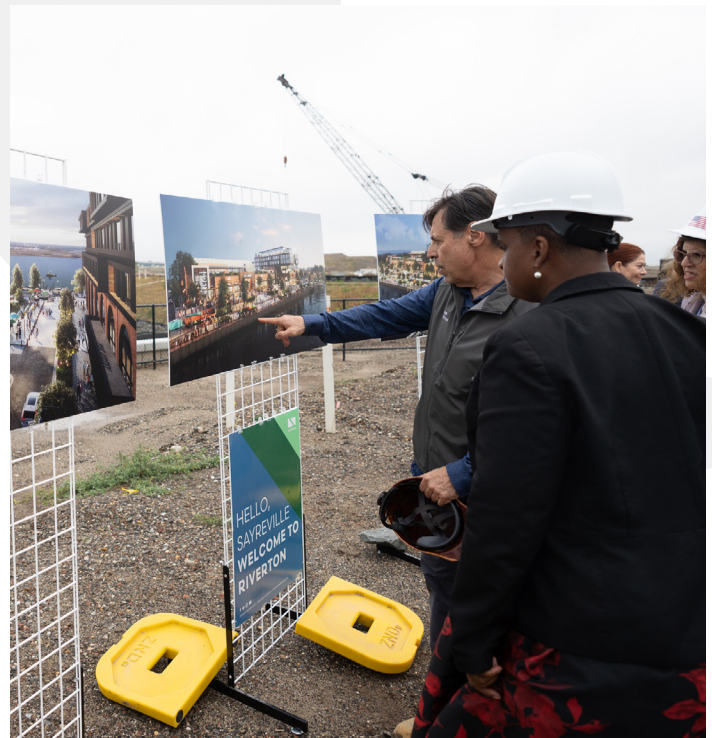
outstanding Remedial Action Permit concerns and decreased processing times while reconstituting the Technical Review Panel to address complex technical issues through consistent dialogue with the regulated community.

From 2018 to 2025, more than 28,000 contaminated site cases were closed. Completed cases are those for which a final remediation document has been issued, either a DEP-issued No Further Action (NFA) letter or an LSRP-issued Response Action Outcome (RAO). Of those sites, 19,908 were NFAs related to unregulated heating oil tanks, typically lower-risk cleanup projects often associated with real estate transactions. During that time period, LSRPs issued 11,485 RAOs, certifying that a remediation was completed in accordance with New Jersey's statutes and DEP's rules and standards. DEP, LSRPs and the regulated community are efficiently addressing historical contamination, and sites are being returned to beneficial community use.

Reclaiming post-industrial land once thought of as lost to contamination has many advantages—helping to revitalize communities, improve public safety, promote economic growth, establish clean open space, and cultivate new centers of community pride. DEP looks forward to building on the success of the LSRP program and exploring innovative approaches to advance remediation projects that best protect public health and the environment while encouraging sustainable economic growth.

## What is a Brownfield?

A brownfield is a current commercial or industrial site that is vacant or underutilized and which is, or is suspected to be, contaminated. Underserved and overburdened communities with environmental justice concerns often have the highest density of brownfield sites. The cleanup and revitalization of these sites present unique opportunities to reduce environmental and public health stressors while creating new hubs of economic activity that together spark community renewal.



## From Contaminated Blight to Economic Might

To help return contaminated brownfield and landfill sites to productive use, DEP's Office of Brownfield and Community Revitalization works directly with communities to design and implement remediation and reuse plans. Since 2018, DEP technical and financial support for brownfield redevelopment has enabled new projects and empowered thriving communities.



Over the last several years, DEP has expanded its nationally recognized [Brownfield Development Area](#) (BDA) program for the first time since 2009, adding 12 new BDAs in nine communities across New Jersey (see sidebar, “12 New Brownfield Development Areas”). The program spurs revitalization and economic development by helping communities implement environmental investigation, remediation and redevelopment activities for areas that encompass multiple individual brownfield sites. The BDA designation qualifies local municipalities and redevelopment authorities to receive up to \$5 million annually in state Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund (HDSRF) grants, including remedial action matching grants that provide up to 75 percent for remedial action costs for any site reuses within the BDA. In addition, DEP dedicates one of its professionals in the Office of Brownfield and Community Revitalization to work closely with municipal officials, stakeholders, developers and Licensed Site Remediation Professionals (LSRPs) to coordinate investigation, remediation and redevelopment plans.

To date, the BDA program has transformed more than 1,000 acres of blighted brownfields into productive reuses that have created stronger, fairer communities while improving local, regional and state environments.

## Thriving After Remediation

### **Thomas Mundy Peterson Park, Perth Amboy Brownfield Development Area**

Thomas Mundy Peterson Park is a 10-acre redevelopment site in Perth Amboy. The park is named in honor of Thomas Mundy Peterson, a city resident and the first African American in the United States to vote. Situated on three former industrial brownfield sites along the Arthur Kill waterfront, remediation of the area consisted largely of the removal of contaminated soils. Funding for the remediation



**PALMYRA BEFORE**



**PALMYRA AFTER**

and park construction included \$2.5 million from DEP’s Green Acres program, \$1.35 million from the Office of Natural Resource Restoration and more than \$8 million from the Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund (HDSRF). The park includes multiple ball fields and provides waterfront access to the community.

### **Palmyra Brownfield Development Area**

This 180-acre redevelopment is part of the Palmyra Brownfield Development Area. For decades, it was a collection of underutilized contaminated sites, including a landfill and a former World War II-era rifle testing range. Site investigations uncovered thousands of munitions debris items and more than 300 unexploded ordinances. The former landfill and munitions areas are now developed with two state-of-the-art warehouses and distribution centers, providing more than 700 permanent jobs and more than 100 new affordable housing units, adjacent to the beautiful 250-acre Palmyra Cove Nature Park. Palmyra used \$7.4 million in HDSRF grants for remedial work. This project is a [2025 EPA Phoenix Award](#) recipient.



**SOMERVILLE STATION BEFORE**



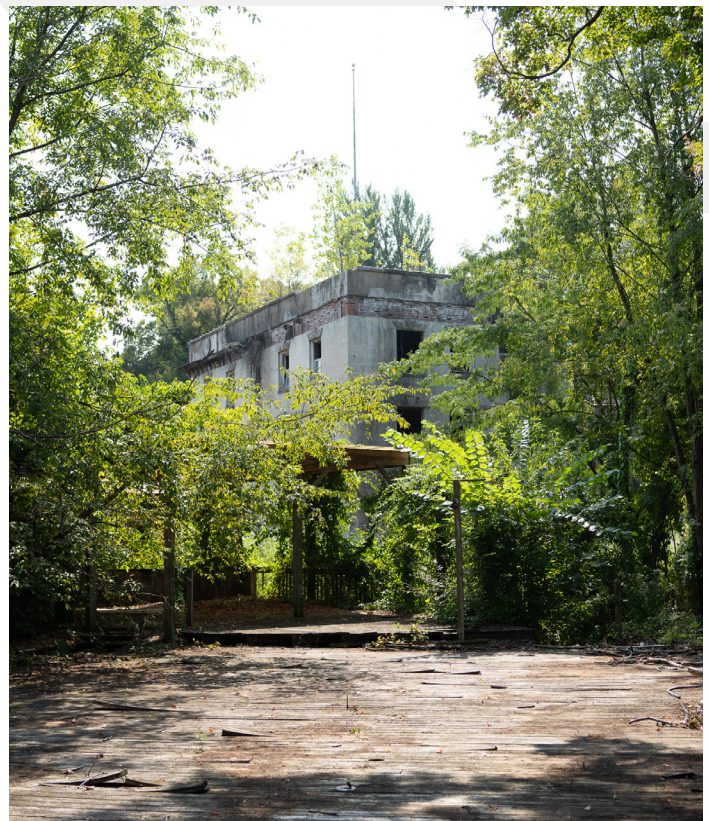
**SOMERVILLE STATION AFTER**

### **Somerville Station and Landfill Brownfield Development Area**

Somerville envisioned transforming a large swath of contaminated sites surrounding the borough train station – including a landfill – into a transit-oriented community. The municipality decided to remediate and restore the stream corridor bisecting the former landfill. As a result, developers focused on Richards Fuel Oil Site and NJ Transit properties, with plans to transform them into residential and mixed-use spaces near the transit center. Through hard work and a successful partnership between the borough, developers and DEP, boosted by \$27 million in HDSRF grants, the Landfill Redevelopment Area BDA has brought significant economic benefits for Somerville. Today, the Somerville BDA is a walkable community that includes a residential neighborhood centered around the train station, with beautiful views of the Green Seam Wetland Corridor.

## **12 New Brownfield Development Areas**

- Atlantic City: Bader Field BDA, Riverside BDA, Carson Point BDA
- Bayonne: Constable Hook BDA
- Burlington City: U.S. Pipe Foundry BDA
- Camden: Federal Street BDA
- Egg Harbor City: Agassiz Street Properties BDA, Antwerp Avenue Properties BDA
- Hainesport: Hainesport Gateway BDA
- Passaic: Pulaski Park Extension BDA
- Paulsboro: Riverview Avenue BDA
- West Orange: Lakeside Avenue BDA



U.S. Pipe & Foundry in Burlington City

## Powering Forward

In addition to brownfield redevelopment, DEP also facilitates solar development on publicly funded landfills. This innovative approach not only transforms previously unusable land into productive renewable energy sources but also contributes to environmental remediation and sustainable development goals. The Combe Fill North Landfill in Mount Olive, for example, was capped and redeveloped into a solar farm, with completed installation of solar panels in late 2022. The 25.6-megawatt project provides clean power to more than 4,000 homes while also creating new jobs and generating tax revenue.

## Accountability Our Communities Deserve

DEP works to hold all parties responsible for spills of hazardous substances accountable to their cleanup obligations. Cleanup enforcement can range from administration actions, such as penalty assessments, to lawsuits where necessary. Where there is a potential for imminent harm to public health, DEP may step in and conduct the remediation if the responsible party is unable or unwilling, and subsequently, pursue those responsible through the courts.



Solar panels installed at Combe Fill North Landfill in Mount Olive.

In recent years, DEP has also worked with the New Jersey Attorney General to hold polluters accountable for contamination. Since 2018, DEP and the Attorney General have pursued a multiyear enforcement initiative to ensure cleanups are properly conducted by recalcitrant parties and to recover the cost of publicly funded cleanup actions from those responsible. Together, Commissioner LaTourette and Attorneys General Grewal and Platkin pursued dozens of high-impact enforcement actions to ensure the cleanup of legacy pollution and reduce the harm to public and environmental health wrought by emerging contaminants like PFAS. Settlements in some of these lawsuits have generated over \$3 billion in site cleanup and remedial projects.

A landmark settlement with DuPont and related companies in August 2025, valued at more than \$2 billion, requires the companies to remediate all contamination at and emanating from four industrial sites where a variety of pollutants and hazardous substances were discharged: Pompton Lakes Works site in Pompton Lakes and Wanaque, Passaic County; the Parlin site in Sayreville, Middlesex County; the Repauno site in Greenwich Township, Gloucester County; and Chambers Works site in Pennsville and Carney's Point, Salem County. In addition, the companies will pay hundreds of millions of dollars in natural resource and other damages to the State for the harm that was caused to land, water and other sensitive natural resources, and will fund abatement projects, which will include drinking water treatment.



## ***The DuPont agreement is the largest environmental settlement ever achieved by a single state.***

A settlement with Solvay Specialty Polymers USA, LLC, announced in June 2023, ensured the remediation of contamination, particularly PFAS, in drinking water near its facility in West Deptford, Gloucester County. The nearly \$393 million settlement requires commitments by Solvay to pay for and implement comprehensive remedial activities at, and in the vicinity of, its facility, where industrial plastics, coatings and other chemicals were manufactured for more than 30 years. It also requires Solvay to address PFAS impacts to public water systems and private potable drinking water wells in the vicinity and to compensate the public for natural resources injured by discharged hazardous substances. In May 2024, co-defendant Arkema Inc., a prior owner of the West Deptford site, agreed to pay DEP almost \$34 million for natural resource damages and to fund remedial efforts, including treatment of drinking water impacted by pollutants discharged from the site.



Credit: NJ Office of the Attorney General



DEP is leading the publicly funded cleanup of cadmium-contaminated soil at the EPSCO site in Lumberton to protect public health and the environment.

Cleanup efforts at Pure Earth Recycling in Vineland removed more than 87,000 tons of petroleum-contaminated soil, advancing future development.



DEP-led remediation at the Alexander Cleaners site in Hillsdale focuses on removing contaminated soil and protecting water quality.



# CHAPTER NINE:

## RESTORING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES



The conservation, restoration and protection of natural resources are crucial to safeguarding public health, improving environmental quality and ensuring economic vitality. Strong and biologically diverse ecosystems provide indispensable services for people, communities and businesses. From the wetlands that filter our water to the riparian vegetation that holds together our riverbanks and helps to prevent flooding, to fisheries and shellfisheries that provide sustenance, to the coastlines that host our vibrant tourism and recreation industry, our natural resources are always doing something for us that we cannot do without.

All of our natural resources — including our rivers, streams, springs, bays, ocean and groundwater aquifers, as well as our fish, wildlife, habitats, public lands and air — belong to the people of New Jersey. The state holds these natural resources in trust for the benefit of its people, and it is DEP's job to ensure

their good care. We must protect natural resources from pollution and ensure their recovery. Those who spill hazardous substances or other contaminants are always required to clean up after themselves, but mere cleanup does not always restore injured natural resources. Thus, New Jersey's natural resource restoration policy is twofold: 1) injured natural resources must be returned to the same quality, quantity, function and value that existed prior to the injury – known as primary restoration; and 2) the public must be compensated for the time that natural resources remain injured – known as compensatory restoration.

### Natural Resource Restoration Policy

New Jersey's [Natural Resource Restoration Policy](#) reaffirms the DEP Commissioner's duties as natural resource trustee; encourages those responsible for hazardous substance discharges to voluntarily assess and resolve their natural resource damage liabilities; and establishes mechanisms for public engagement in the planning, design and implementation of natural resource restoration activities through improved collaboration with a cross-section of stakeholders and members of the general public. The order also created the [Natural Resource Restoration Advisory Council](#), which assists DEP in engaging directly with the public.



Credit: Getty Images

Through its Office of Natural Resource Restoration (ONRR), DEP works to restore injured natural resources by ensuring that responsible parties conduct restoration activities, recovering monetary payments for natural resource damages that are constitutionally dedicated for reinvestment in restoration projects, and by constructing or contributing to restoration projects across New Jersey.

### Improving the Natural Resources that Sustain Us

To restore and enhance natural resources across New Jersey, DEP pursues projects ranging from forest restoration, groundwater aquifer recharge, habitat enhancement, and public and recreational access improvements to complex and transformational programs like the cleanup and restoration of the more than 200-acre interior of Liberty State Park. DEP ensures that monetary natural resource damage recoveries benefit local environments and landscapes, including through grant programs that fund construction of rain gardens to capture and filter urban and suburban stormwater runoff, the removal of culverts to improve stream connectivity and aquatic habitat, and the expansion of waterfront public access improvements.

### Nature Restored

**Restoration projects involving DEP since 2018 include:**

#### Cramer Hill Waterfront Park

A project in which \$48 million in Natural Resource Damage (NRD) settlement funding transformed 62 acres of a former landfill in Camden into [Cramer Hill Waterfront Park](#), a public park that opened in late 2021. Main components of the work included the construction of 7 acres of tidal freshwater wetlands, living shorelines and 3,000 linear feet of shoreline protection where municipal solid waste had once

been exposed on the surface of unstable slopes and interacted with the tides. The project also involved creation of a 2-acre tidally influenced fishing pond, with a fishing plaza that connects to the Cooper River through a 1,000-foot tidal channel. Other park features include a grassed amphitheater, exercise stations, 3 miles of hiking/biking paths and trails, a kayak launch, historic and educational signage, a picnic area, a playground, shoreline observation areas and a summit with panoramic views of the Delaware River and the Philadelphia skyline. .



### Columbia Lake Dam Removal

The Columbia Dam, located in Knowlton, Warren County, was the first of three dam removals that were part of a watershed-wide restoration initiative. [Columbia Lake Dam](#) had created a 32-acre impoundment, disrupting more than 1.5 miles of upstream river and blocking access to historic spawning grounds for several migratory fish species. The dam's removal in 2018, funded by \$3.6 million in joint NRD funds from ONRR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was led by The Nature Conservancy and aimed to restore fish passage and improve aquatic habitat by reconnecting 11 miles of the Paulins Kill mainstem and 20 miles of tributary habitat. Its removal restored these critical habitats, reestablishing natural fish migration and spawning runs.



### Paulina Dam Removal

As part of the Paulins Kill and Pequest Watershed Grant Program, The Nature Conservancy was awarded \$4,765,905 to support the removal of the [Paulina Dam](#) — the lowermost dam on the Paulins Kill — located in Blairstown, Warren County. The dam was successfully demolished in July 2024, resulting in the reconnection of 7.6 miles of mainstem river and tributary habitat. This project is a key component of a broader, watershed-wide restoration effort that has now reconnected a total of 45 miles of aquatic habitat. These efforts directly benefit several migratory fish species, restoring aquatic connectivity. Additionally, the dam removal and associated riparian restoration activities have improved habitat quality, water quality and public safety, while also enhancing recreational opportunities along the river corridor.





### Raritan River Floodplain Reforestation Project

In April 2025, a 112-acre restoration project was started on floodplain wetlands adjacent to the Raritan River that were lost or injured by hazardous substance contamination from the nearby American Cyanamid Superfund site in Bridgewater. The [floodplain reforestation project](#) is being completed on retired agricultural fields owned by Duke Farms in Hillsborough. A total of 38,000 native trees and 14,000 native shrubs will be planted, along with the construction of 3 acres of interspersed ephemeral pools. The work will enhance habitat for wildlife, improve water quality of the Raritan River, bolster flood storage capacity and storm resilience, and improve ecosystem services benefitting local communities. The project is the result of a NRD settlement between DEP, USFWS, NOAA (these agencies are the Natural Resource Trustees of the American Cyanamid site) and Wyeth Holdings, LLC (Wyeth was purchased by Pfizer Corporation several years ago). Completion is scheduled for summer 2026; then, a 15-year monitor and maintenance period supported by Wyeth will begin.



### Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area Restoration Project

In partnership with DEP Fish & Wildlife and the Office of Coastal Engineering, ONRR is leading the restoration of approximately 290 acres of tidal marsh and upland maritime habitat at the [Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area](#) in Cape May County. Launched in February 2024 and funded by \$37 million in NRD recoveries, the project aims to restore degraded habitats, enhance climate resilience and protect freshwater ecosystems. Key features include reestablishing tidal hydrology and constructing a 6,861-foot earthen berm with water control structures to manage tidal flooding, along with a smaller 851-foot berm to support seasonal habitat management for migratory birds. Located along the Atlantic Flyway, the Pond Creek marsh provides critical stopover habitat for migratory birds such as osprey, peregrine falcons and kestrels, while also supporting diverse aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. The project integrates public access enhancements, including new trails, a pedestrian bridge, wildlife viewing platforms and educational signage to promote ecotourism and community engagement. These improvements are expected to bolster Cape May's reputation as a premier birding destination and contribute to the local economy through increased sustainable tourism.





Completed in 2024, the Paulina Dam removal reopened miles of river for fish passage, strengthened watershed health and expanded recreational opportunities along the Paulins Kill.  
Credit: The Nature Conservancy

The Higbee Beach WMA Restoration Project is renewing tidal flow and hundreds of acres of wetland and upland habitat to support migratory birds, fish and threatened species while enhancing public access at this critical Atlantic Flyway site.





The restoration of more than 200 acres of the interior of Liberty State Park involves removing pollution and rebuilding native habitats.

## Liberty State Park Natural Resource Restoration Project

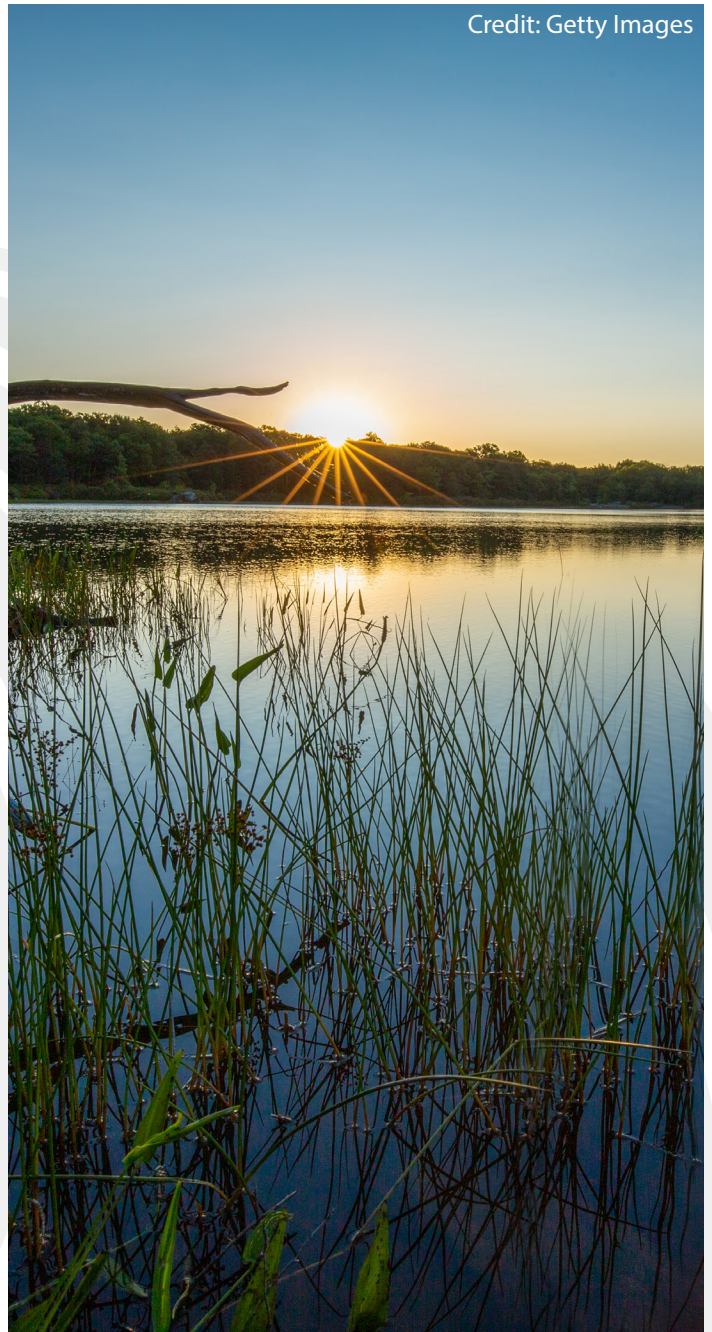
The [Liberty State Park Interior Project](#) focuses on removal of legacy pollution of 200-plus acres at the center of New Jersey's most visited state park and the reestablishment of native ecology that once characterized this part of the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary but was lost to industrialization and blight. Part of the larger [Liberty State Park Revitalization Program](#), restoration of the currently inaccessible park interior will provide nature-based flood resilience solutions for the park and neighboring community, creating and enhancing critical habitat and making hundreds of acres of reestablished natural areas available to the public for recreation and education. The restoration program was shaped through an extensive public engagement process from 2018 through 2023. DEP broke ground in October 2023 on initial cleanup activities. Upon completion of that effort, construction will begin on habitat restoration and public access enhancements, including the creation of tidal marsh, nontidal wetlands, scenic overlooks, outdoor classrooms and more than 5 miles of trails.



## Protecting Groundwater Aquifers

Healthy groundwater resources are critical to ecological and public health. To preserve these resources and promote groundwater recharge, DEP has preserved 810 acres of land in 9 counties through settlement agreements with responsible parties and by utilizing \$12.5M in polluter-pays recoveries to ensure the long-term protection of this vital resource.

Credit: Getty Images



## Protecting the Public's Right to Quality Natural Resources

As trustee of New Jersey's natural resources, DEP must ensure that the public is compensated when natural resources are injured. While DEP encourages parties responsible for natural resource injuries to voluntarily assess and resolve their natural resource damage liabilities, DEP also pursues legal action when necessary to ensure natural resource restoration. Since 2018, DEP has brought fourteen such cases, resolving six by 2025, including:

### **Pechiney Plastic Packaging, Inc.**

Filed in August 2018. A proposed settlement of \$49.5 million with six companies, including Pechiney Plastic Packaging, Inc. (PPPI), for natural resource damages (NRD) and cleanup costs resulting from the discharge of hazardous chemicals into soil and groundwater in the Pohatcong Valley was announced in November 2025. It represents a significant groundwater NRD recovery. The nearly 10,000-acre Superfund site where the contamination occurred spans several municipalities in Warren County: Washington Township, Washington Borough, Franklin Township and Greenwich Township. The proposed settlement recovers \$45 million for NRD and \$4.5 million for past remediation costs incurred by the state.

### **E.I. DuPont de Nemours**

Filed in March 2019. A settlement valued at more than \$2 billion was announced in August 2025 to address long-standing contamination stemming from PFAS, also known as forever chemicals, as well as other pollutants originating from four industrial sites. This settlement includes \$225 million in natural resource damages from DuPont and related entities.

### **3M**

Filed in March 2019. In May 2025, 3M settled with DEP for up to \$450 million, including \$140 million in natural resource damages, for liability associated with PFAS statewide and with New Jersey sites in Pennsville/Carneys Point and Sayreville.

### **Solvay**

Filed in August 2022. DEP reached a settlement with Solvay Specialty Polymers USA, LLC in June 2023 that provides nearly \$393 million to ensure the remediation of contamination, including PFAS and \$75 million in natural resource damages at its facility in West Deptford, Gloucester County. In June 2024, co-defendant Arkema, Inc. also settled with DEP, for \$12,700,000 in natural resource damages for liability at the site.

### **Handy & Harman**

Filed in December 2019. The complaint against Handy & Harman involved contamination of groundwater with trichloroethylene (TCE) in Montvale, Bergen County. The May 2024 settlement included \$14 million in natural resource damages and cleanup costs.

### **Exxon Lail**

Filed in March 2019. The lawsuit sought compensation for natural resource damages related to PCBs and other hazardous substances in drums disposed at the Lail property in East Greenwich Township and Paulsboro. A settlement with Exxon for \$9.5 million was announced in August 2022.





### Providing funding

DEP's commitment to ensuring accountability for natural resource injuries has resulted in significant monetary natural resource damages recoveries between 2018 and 2025, which will provide a consistent source of funding for restoration projects over the next two decades. For example, New Jersey reached settlements with DuPont and 3M in 2025 that will result in \$365 million in natural resource damages payments over a 25-year period. Under New Jersey's State Constitution, these recoveries are dedicated to the restoration of natural resources and will be administered by DEP to support restoration projects in each of New Jersey's water regions. In doing so, DEP will engage with communities affected by the underlying pollution to understand their natural resource restoration needs, identify restoration opportunities, pursue DEP-led restoration projects and structure grant programs to fund local restoration efforts.

## Restoring Resources Today and Tomorrow

### Building opportunities

To consistently engage stakeholders and members of the general public in identifying restoration opportunities, Commissioner LaTourette established the Natural Resource Restoration Advisory Council, which is contributing valuable input to the development of an interactive [Project Viewer Map](#) to catalogue restoration opportunities and outcomes. The map will enable the public to learn about potential restoration projects and display features such as a project's name, sponsor, restoration type, project goals and a brief project description. Additionally, the public will be able to submit potential restoration project ideas. Once vetted, projects would appear on the map.





The New Jersey Forest Service’s Atlantic White Cedar Restoration Project is working to restore, reinforce and enhance 10,000 acres of Atlantic white cedar forests across southern New Jersey.



Funded by natural resource damage monies, restoration along the North Branch Raritan River is stabilizing streambanks and rebuilding habitat in the Raritan watershed.

# CHAPTER TEN:

## HONORING HISTORY AND PRESERVING HERITAGE



One of the original 13 Colonies, New Jersey officially became the third U.S. state on Dec. 18, 1787. It was the third state to ratify the U.S. Constitution and the first to approve the Bill of Rights.

During the War of Independence, New Jersey's unique location between the British stronghold in New York and the rebel capital in Philadelphia made it the crossroads of the American Revolution. By the war's end, more than 600 battles and skirmishes were fought on New Jersey soil – more than anywhere else in the former British colonies.

Throughout the war, Gen. George Washington spent more time in New Jersey than in any other colony. Some historians describe Washington's victory at Trenton in 1776 as the most important American military victory ever, as it revived the nation's conscience, spirits and determination. During the winters of 1776-1777 and 1779-1780, Washington maintained his headquarters in Morristown, where the Continental Army contended with harsh weather, disease and mutiny. Washington and the Continental Army's successes in New Jersey helped the fledgling nation to succeed in its fight for independence.

### Preparing for America's 250th Birthday

DEP's State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites program has been planning for the United States' Semiquincentennial since the start of the Murphy Administration. Known as the Crossroads of the American Revolution, New Jersey has more Revolutionary War historic sites than any other state, several of which are under the stewardship and interpretation of the New Jersey State Parks.

Celebrations for the Semiquincentennial began at New Jersey's historic sites on April 24, 2025, as part of the nationwide "Two Lights for Tomorrow" initiative. Two lights were displayed in the windows of historic sites across the state to represent the "one by land, and two by sea" lanterns that were lit prior to the battles of Lexington and Concord to warn the Boston countryside of the arrival of British forces to the coast. These battles were the first skirmishes of the American Revolutionary War, which set the stage for what was to ensue over the next eight years (1775-1783). While the battles of Lexington and Concord occurred on April 19, 1775, word did not reach New Jersey until April 24, 1775.

The 250th anniversary celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence and all of the accomplishments of the United States that followed.

Celebrations, reenactments, events and ribbon cuttings will take place throughout New Jersey's state parks, forests and historic sites during the entirety of the American Revolution's eight-year anniversary through 2033.

## Landmark Events Include:

**2026:** Ribbon cutting at the [Washington Crossing Visitor Center & Museum](#)

**Jan. 1, 2026:** New Jersey State Parks' annual First Day Hikes program features an [America 250](#) theme, along with the launch of a yearlong hiking challenge

**January 2026:** 250th anniversary of the arrest of Royal Governor William Franklin. Franklin, a son of Benjamin Franklin, remained loyal to the crown, and the New Jersey Assembly ordered the Royal Governor held under house arrest at Proprietary House in January 1776. He was removed for trial in June of the same year. Soon convicted of treason, Franklin was imprisoned in Connecticut.

**June-July 2026:** [FIFA Fan Festival](#) at Liberty State Park, which coincides with the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and other national celebrations, including [Sail250](#), global gathering of tall ships and military ships on the Hudson River.

**June 14, 2026:** 50th anniversary of the opening of [Liberty State Park](#) as New Jersey's "bicentennial gift to the nation."

**July 4, 2026:** 250th anniversary of the signing of the [Declaration of Independence](#)

**November 2026:** 250th anniversary of battle at [New Bridge/Steuben House](#) in River Edge, Bergen County

**Dec. 25, 2026:** 250th anniversary of Washington crossing the Delaware

**2026-2027:** 250th anniversary of the 10 Crucial Days campaign

**2027:** 250th anniversary of the [Battle of Princeton](#)

**2027:** [Barnegat Lighthouse State Park's](#) 70th anniversary

**2027:** [Stokes State Forest's](#) 120th anniversary

**2028:** 250th anniversary of the British raid ("massacre") at [Hancock House](#)

**2028:** 250th anniversary of the [Battle of Monmouth](#)

**2028:** [Brendan T. Byrne State Forest's](#) 120th anniversary

**2028-2029:** 250th anniversary of General George Washington using the [Wallace House Historic Site](#) as his winter headquarters for the 1778-79 Middlebrook Cantonment

**2033:** 250th anniversary of General George Washington using [Rockingham Historic Site](#) as his final wartime headquarters



## Rehabilitating Historic Sites

DEP is investing \$25 million in restoration and upgrades to enhance visitor experience at 10 Revolutionary War historic sites. Project sites include Washington Crossing State Park; Princeton Battlefield State Park; Old Barracks Museum and Trenton Battle Monument Historic Site in Mercer County; Monmouth Battlefield State Park in Monmouth County; Proprietary House Historic Site and Rockingham Historic Site in Middlesex County; Indian King Tavern Historic Site in Camden County; Wallace House Historic Site in Somerset County; and Boxwood Hall Historic Site in Union County.

### Major Undertakings

#### Washington Crossing State Park:

New Jersey's Semiquincentennial gift to the visiting public and the nation is a new state-of-the-art Visitor Center & Museum at Washington Crossing State Park—the site of then General George Washington's legendary crossing of the Delaware River from Pennsylvania to New Jersey on Christmas night in 1776, which is widely regarded as a critical turning point in Revolutionary War.

The Visitor Center & Museum features exhibits on the Revolutionary War from 1775 to 1783, an immersive 4D experience that places visitors on a "ferry" with video reenactments of the crossing projected on the walls, a 125-seat multipurpose theater, a flexible gallery for rotating exhibits, a sustainable green roof and an observation deck overlooking the site of the crossing. Several historic structures throughout the park have also been restored, including the Johnson Ferry House, the Stone Barn and Bear Tavern. The project also included the repaving of park roads, along with new wayfinding and interpretive signage.





### **Wallace House Historic Site:**

Significant investment has been made in restoration of the Wallace House Historic Site in Somerset County, which served as General George Washington's winter headquarters for the 1778-79 Middlebrook Cantonment. The interior and exterior are being restored, along with developing a cultural landscape plan for the site. The cultural landscape plan will guide rehabilitation and interpretation of the grounds, with a key focus on a feasibility study for partially restoring a buried waterway to enhance storm resilience, ecological restoration and historical interpretation. Additional upgrades include parking improvements, ADA accessible paths, improvements to the on-site visitor center and restrooms, and upgraded interpretive signage. Similarly, the neighboring Old Dutch Parsonage Historic Site has seen restoration of the building's exterior, installation of stormwater drainage and ADA access improvements.

### **Princeton Battlefield State Park:**

On this field in 1777, General Washington defeated the British and successfully concluded what came to be known as the "Ten Crucial Days" campaign, a series of pivotal military actions during the American Revolution between Dec. 25, 1776, and Jan. 3, 1777. Projects include upgrades to improve accessibility of the Thomas Clarke House, which served as a hospital during the Battle of Princeton. It was there that General Hugh Mercer was treated and ultimately died nine days after the battle. Restoration was also completed for the park's iconic Colonnade, which was originally part of Mathew Newkirk's Philadelphia home before being moved to Princeton in 1900 as the entrance to Mercer Manor. Additionally, upgrades have been made to the park's entrance, wayfinding and interpretive signage. In partnership with the American Battlefield Trust, the battlefield itself is undergoing historic landscape restoration and interpretive enhancements.

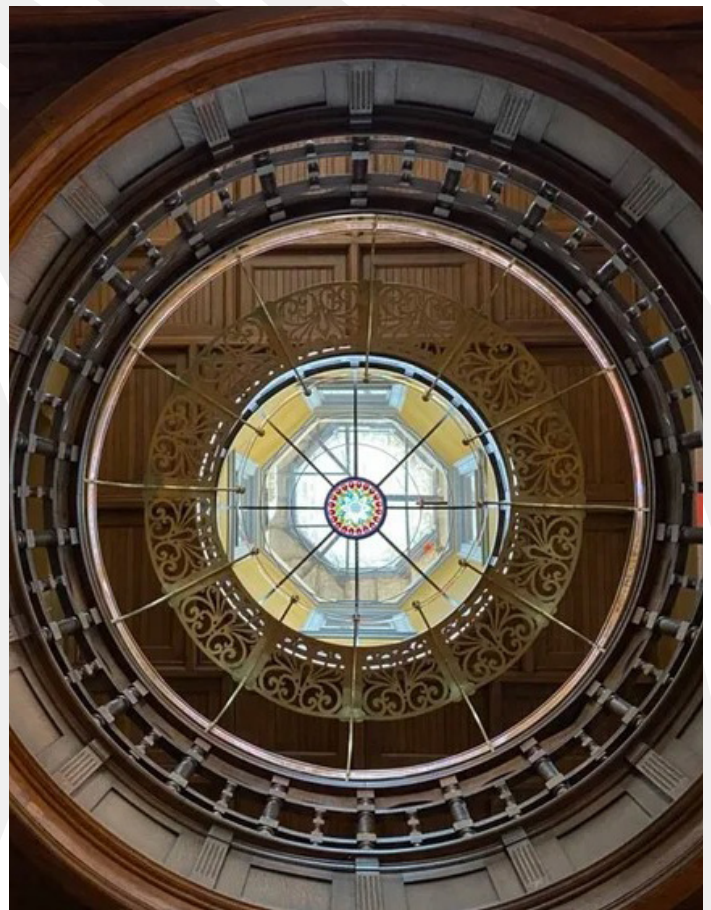


## Preserving Our History as We Build Our Future

Historic preservation strengthens neighborhoods, encourages local economic growth and bolsters heritage tourism. It also conserves natural resources and provides opportunities for community revitalization, all while retaining the identity and sense of place that make the Garden State a desirable place to live, work and visit. By participating in the review of various projects, the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office balances historic preservation with the revitalization of a property's future use.

### **Krueger-Scott Mansion in Newark, Essex County:**

After sitting vacant for decades, the historic [Krueger-Scott Mansion](#) has returned to its former glory through utilization of the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit. Built in 1888-89, the Romanesque Revival-style mansion was home to Gottfried Krueger, one of Newark's famed beer barons, and was among the most elaborate in Newark at the time of its construction. It later was owned by Newark's first African American female millionaire, Madame Louise Scott. The rehabilitation involved repair and reconstruction of damaged and missing building elements, including the main staircase and decorative plaster ceilings. Historic Preservation Office (HPO) staff provided technical assistance to the project team. The rehabilitation was completed at an estimated cost of \$11 million, and the building now serves as an active community space in the Springfield-Belmont neighborhood, accommodating co-working, offices and events as part of Newark Makerhoods project.



Credit: Newark Makerhoods at Newark Krueger Scott Mansion

### **Tax Credit Projects in Trenton, Mercer County:**

Over the past several years, the New Jersey HPO has worked in tandem with developers and the NPS to review and approve multiple federal rehabilitation tax credit projects across Trenton: Building 101 of the John A. Roebling's Sons Company on Clark and Elmer streets (2017); the Trenton Watch Company Building at 70 Culbertson Ave. (2019); 228 East Hanover St. (2023); and the Trenton Central Office of the Bell Telephone building at 214-218 E. State St. (2025). These successful preservation projects do much more than restore historic buildings; they also revitalize neighborhoods by putting vacant buildings back into service, creating jobs and adding much-needed housing. The Bell Telephone building, for example, sat vacant on Trenton's main corridor for more than 20 years before its conversion to an apartment building containing 85 housing units. Construction was completed in 2024, with a total estimated project cost of \$13 million.

In addition to these projects, the HPO continues to work with the NPS on tax credit application reviews for Old City Hall, 2-8 North Broad St.; the former Division of Motor Vehicles building at 25 South Montgomery St.; and First Presbyterian Church at 120 E. State St. Several of these projects intend to leverage both the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit program and the new state rehabilitation tax credit administered by the NJ Economic Development Authority, which also consults with HPO staff during the application review process. The rehabilitation was completed at an estimated cost of \$11 million, and the building now serves as an active community space in the Springfield-Belmont neighborhood, accommodating co-working, offices and events as part of Newark Makerhoods project.



### **Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, Passaic County:**

Built by the city of Paterson in 1932 near the Great Falls, [Hinchliffe Stadium](#) is historically significant for its associations with Negro League baseball, serving as the home field of the New York Black Yankees in the 1930s and '40s. The stadium closed in 1996 after years of disinvestment and deterioration, and sat vacant until 2020, when the city leased the property to a developer. Utilizing federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, the developer undertook an estimated \$29.2 million rehabilitation of the stadium that included construction of a new building on-site to house the Charles J. Muth Museum, which features exhibits showcasing the stadium's rich history and a restaurant with views of the Great Falls. HPO staff provided technical assistance to the project team and reviewed the project in partnership with the NPS. The project was part of a \$100 million redevelopment project within the Great Falls National Park that also included affordable senior housing and a parking garage. Hinchliffe Stadium reopened in 2023 and is home to the New Jersey Jackals minor league baseball team. The National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded [The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Award](#) to Hinchliffe Stadium in 2024.



### **Historic Resources for the Public**

The New Jersey HPO has long worked to improve constituent access to the statewide cultural resources inventory. Key milestones include:

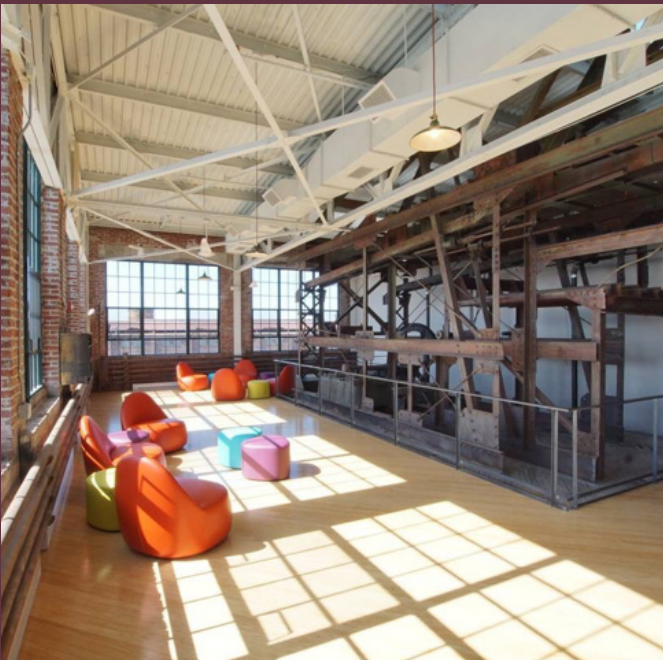
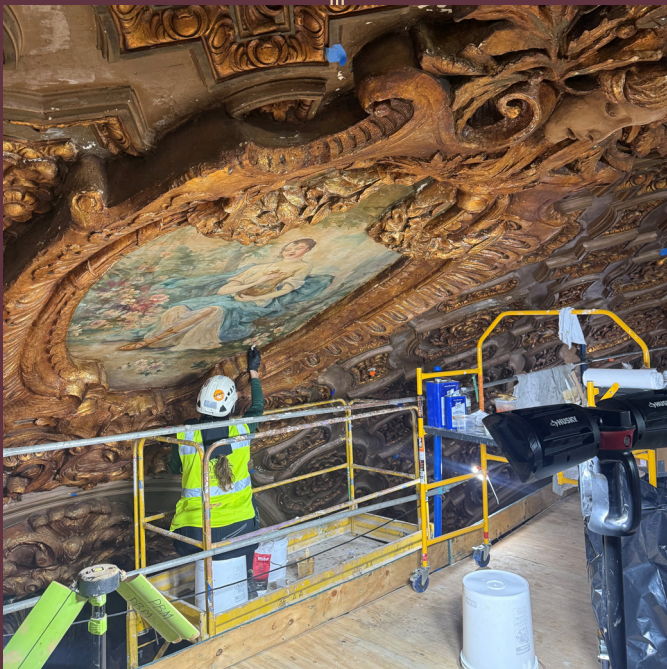
Online reference lists for historic properties and cultural resource survey reports  
Since 2002, HPO's [Known Historic Properties](#) listings provide comprehensive entries by county and municipality for all resources listed, or formally determined eligible for listing, in the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places and all National Historic Landmarks. In 2015, HPO added [Survey Report Bibliographies](#) that contain comprehensive listings by county and municipality for all reports accessioned into its report collection. These lists serve as a starting point for researching New Jersey's historic and archaeological resources.

# Better Than We Found It

## 10. Honoring History And Preserving Heritage

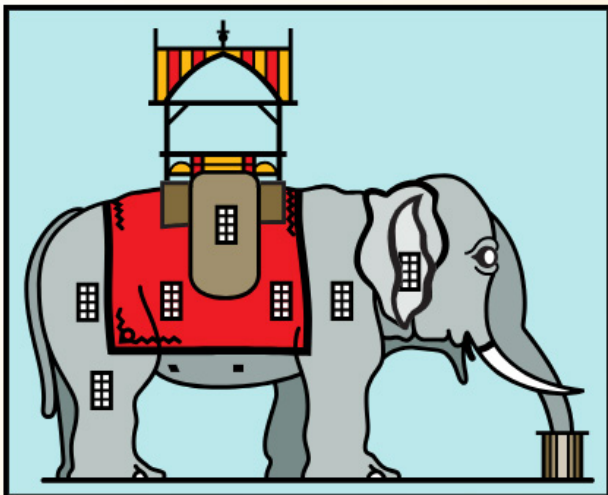
Over the past several years, the New Jersey HPO has partnered with developers and the National Park Service to advance federal rehabilitation tax credit projects in Trenton, including Building 101 of the John A. Roebling complex.

Support from Historic Property Reinvestment Program tax credits helped fund the restoration of the historic Loew's Jersey Theatre in Jersey City.



## Report Scanning and DataMiner Report Search:

In 2019, HPO began digitizing its cultural resources survey report collection to make it more accessible to the public. The office launched a search tool in 2021 for these scanned reports in DEP's [DataMiner](#) application. HPO's DataMiner tool includes searches by municipality, shelf code, report ID number and report name. Search results provide listings of the cultural resource surveys and links to digitized documents. The report collection now totals more than 14,500 volumes. Detailed guidance for searching in DataMiner are available in HPO's [Dataminer FAQ](#).



## · LUCY · NJCRGIS ONLINE VIEWER

*"The elephant never forgets..."*

HPO is providing a means for users to "Look Up Cultural-resources for Yourself," and what better represents the diversity of NJ's cultural landscape than one of our most iconic National Historic Landmarks, Lucy, The Margate Elephant?

The screenshot shows the DEP DataMiner website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Search', 'Contact', and 'Help'. Below this, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Search By Category > Historic Preservation'. There are two tabs: 'Category' and 'Keyword'. Under 'Search by Category', a welcome message states: 'Welcome to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's online reports portal, NJDEP Data Miner. Within you will find a variety of reports that will provide you with up to the minute results from many different environmental media and subjects. In order to provide flexibility, many of these reports require the user to enter some criteria, which will result in a customized document.' Below this is a 'Report Category' dropdown menu currently set to 'Historic Preservation' and a green 'Submit' button. A section titled 'Historic Preservation' follows, with a sub-header 'PLANNING AND COMPLIANCE SURVEY REPORTS (4)'. The text below explains that NJHPO maintains a library of cultural resources documentation prepared pursuant to compliance, planning, and mitigation needs throughout NJ. It notes that linked reports will download a PDF and that larger reports may require additional download time.

## Mapping Cultural Resources in GIS:

Mapping historic resources using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology has long been a priority for HPO. The [LUCY Online GIS Viewer](#) debuted in 2017 and LUCY Version 2.0, an updated and revised viewer for New Jersey's cultural resources inventory, was launched in June 2023. LUCY fulfills an important mandate to share cultural resources inventory data with constituents and the public. The updated application expands the list of available data layers, provides lists of related reports and typologies, and offers tools for better search and export of cultural resources data. As a result, LUCY Version 2.0 allows the public to query the inventory to find specific property types, architectural styles, and associated individuals and organizations. The public can also access scans of cultural resource survey reports through direct links added to the GIS database.

## Better Than We Found It

### 10. Honoring History And Preserving Heritage



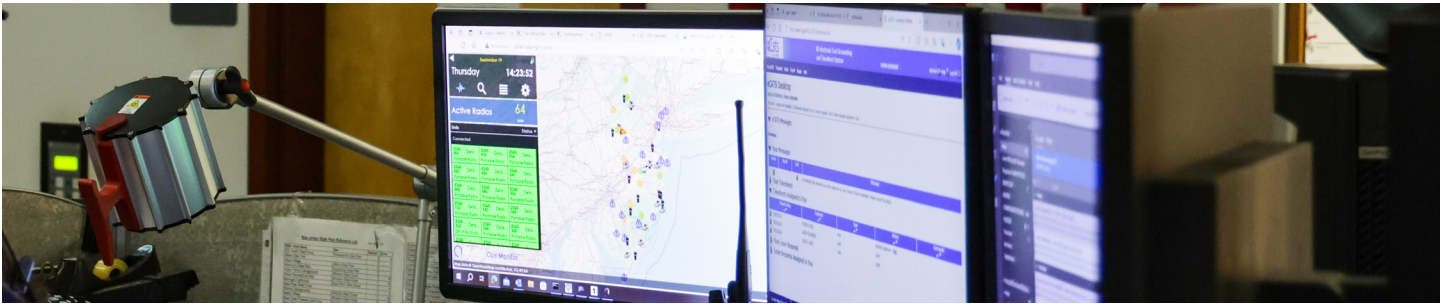
The Dr. James Still Office Historic Site was carefully restored to reflect its original design, preserving an important chapter of New Jersey's African American history.



HPO staff toured the NJ State House during its renovation, which restored historic features while adding modern infrastructure.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN:

## MORE ACCESSIBLE AND EFFICIENT ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE



Sound environmental governance requires that regulators and natural resource managers like DEP embrace new technology and expand its use in serving the public. In recent years, the DEP has been at the forefront of State government efforts to not simply keep pace with technological change, but to ensure that we harness such advancements to improve the services upon which regulated entities and the people of New Jersey depend to improve and protect public health and the environment we all share.

### Improving the Business of Environmental Protection

The DEP has remained tireless in its efforts to improve its programs and services for residents and regulated entities alike. By implementing innovative technologies and simplifying processes, DEP continues to reduce wait times and mitigate administrative burden through a wealth of digitized information and an array of online services.

Today, DEP offers more than 650 online services to the public, which include 360 online services to digitally receive permit applications, forms, reports, and certifications; 150 e-payment services, and 146 community-facing GIS applications and maps. DEP's online and e-payment services are used by

89,000 individual users who process an average of 400 transactions per day across 157,000 unique regulated facilities, while our community-facing GIS applications and maps are viewed 4,700 times a day on average.

Furthermore, the DEP meets with the NJ Business Experience Initiative Team regularly to ensure that it is easier to start, operate and grow a business in New Jersey. This cross-agency effort helps State government deliver a simplified, one-stop digital experience for businesses.

### Numbers at a Glance



**650+** online services



**89,000** individual users



**400** transactions a day

**eSubmission Case Study:  
Division of  
Land Resource Protection**

As part of its continued commitment to optimizing customer service and efficiency, in April 2021 the DEP adopted an eSubmission rulemaking that requires coastal zone management, freshwater wetlands, and flood hazard area authorizations to support electronic submissions. This effort has saved extensive paper resources for applicants and the Department, improved communication with applicants and their representatives, simplified internal coordination, and shortened processing timelines.

Keeping our lands and water clean is a collective endeavor, one that aligns DEP and regulated entities in pursuit of a shared goal: healthier communities and natural environments for generations to come. Within this partnership, DEP offers an array of user-friendly online services that support the regulated community. The most highly utilized online services by members of the regulated community are well permitting services, solid/hazardous waste vehicle registration services, and licensed site remedial professional (LSRP) services:

**Well Permitting Services**

Allow for the submission, payment and approval of well permits across ten categories. For 2024, 25,000 well permit applications were processed online.

**Solid/Hazardous Waste Vehicle Registration Services**

Seven online services that allow large and small solid and hazardous waste companies to renew, replace and/or cancel their DEP-issued decals for transporting waste.

For the biannual registration period of 2023-2025, there were 7,250 registrations processed online.

**LSRP Services**

LSRP Services – Twenty-six online services that allow for the submission and processing of Remedial Investigation Reports, Remedial Action Work Plans and Reports, Preliminary Assessments, Site investigations, Response Action Outcomes, LSRP Release/Retentions, Public Notification, and Remediation fees. An average of 1,700 submissions are received per month, and more than 150,000 submissions have been received to date.

DEP also hosts an assortment of GIS applications that support forward-looking community planning and sustainable development. The table below demonstrates DEP’s most frequently visited applications, as of November 2025:

GIS Application	Total Views
NJ GeoWeb	2,498,171
NJFFS Fire Danger Public Dashboard - Desktop	1,376,601
NJ Deer Management Zone Explorer	325,632
Trail Tracker - The Interactive Trails Map of NJ State Parks	252,318
Wildlife Management Area Explorer Application	232,452
Great Fishing Close to Home in New Jersey	199,455
New Jersey Hunting & Trapping Explorer - Mobile	141,487
Heat Hub New Jersey	136,151
New Jersey Flood Notification Report Tool	125,739
NJ Trout Stocked Waters	116,176



## Promoting Accessibility of Environmental Data and Records

Recognizing the importance of ensuring transparency and preserving the trust of the communities we serve, data accessibility has remained one of the hallmarks of DEP under the Murphy Administration.

Building upon that commitment, in October 2025 DEP launched the online [DocMiner](#) tool to enable users to access public records more quickly and reliably than ever before. DocMiner organizes DEP's available electronic documents and automates the records request process through an online, self-service tool. Users can view publicly available documents such as site remediation records and air, water and land use permit records.

The tool complements DEP's [DataMiner](#) online application, which has been available for years to provide access to information on facilities and sites regulated by DEP. DocMiner may help the public avoid filing Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests, especially in cases where information is needed prior to digitization of records within the DataMiner platform.

Since the enactment of OPRA in July 2002, the DEP has received over 386,500 record requests (over 20,000 record requests per year). Furthermore, DEP receives approximately 60% of all OPRA record requests submitted to the State. This immense volume is comparable to the number of records requests that a federal government agency receives under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

## An App for Every Part of Your Environment

To ensure the online accessibility of critical data, tools, and resources, DEP has launched an array of online applications to help residents and businesses better understand environmental conditions, invest in environmental improvements, track the cleanup of contaminated sites, plan and build more resilient communities, protect public health against environmental exposures, and connect our communities to every aspect of New Jersey's natural and historic resources.

### *Climate Resilience*

#### [Blue Acres Application](#)

DEP has expanded accessibility and simplified the buyout experience for homeowners and program staff by moving the voluntary buyout process online. The digital platform streamlines intake, enhances DEP's ability to analyze submissions, and makes it easier for homeowners to take the first step toward a voluntary buyout. Since the launch of the online application in summer 2022, the program has received 683 digital submissions, including 11 through the Spanish-language portal.

#### [Climate Change in New Jersey: Impacts & Effects Storymap](#)

Builds on the findings of the [2020 New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change](#) and the [2022 Climate Change Impacts on Human Health & Communities Addendum](#) by including updated scientific information. It provides the current scientific understanding of how climate change will likely affect New Jersey's environment and communities, the impacts of climate change that are already happening, and those that are expected to come.



Credit: Adobe Stock

### [Flood Disclosure Tool](#)

Provides basic information regarding a property's current and future flood risk. Users may search for their property by mailing address to find flood risk information necessary to complete certain sections of the Flood Risk Notice and/or property condition disclosure statement, including whether the property is in the FEMA Special or Moderate Risk Flood Hazard Area.

### [Heat Hub NJ](#)

Developed in tandem with the Extreme Heat Resilience Action Plan, Heat Hub NJ provides the public with information on extreme heat's impact on daily life and the environment, its adverse effects on human health and well-being, and ways to protect those particularly vulnerable to its effects.

### [Know Your Flood Risk](#)

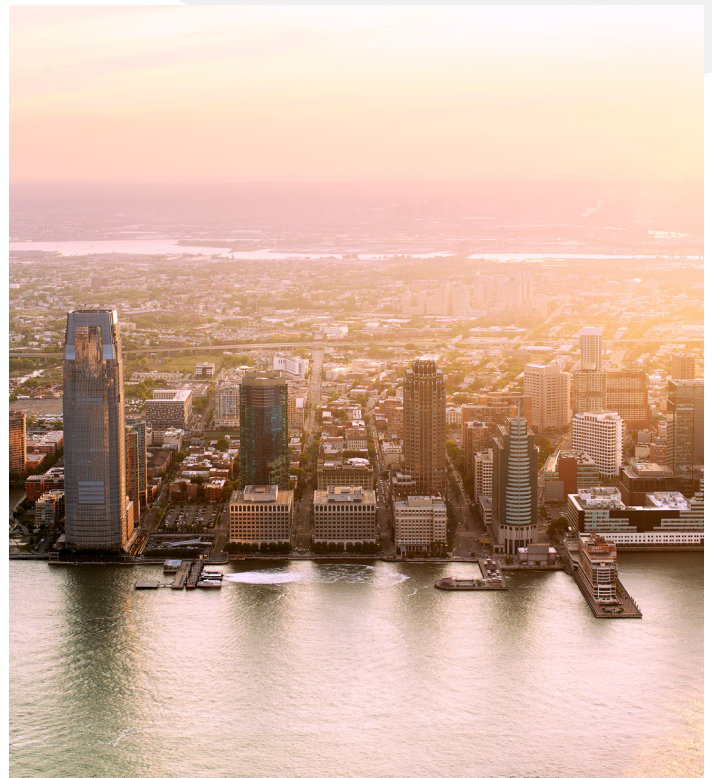
To support flooding preparedness and in conjunction with New Jersey's first Flood Safety Week in August 2025, the DEP launched a new user-friendly tool to help residents understand their flood risk and take action to protect themselves.

### [Resilient NJ Climate Resilience Funding Directory](#)

Helps municipalities, community-based organizations and state agencies identify resources for funding climate resilience projects, including local infrastructure improvements, hazard mitigation efforts and community resilience planning opportunities.

### [Resilient NJ Local Planning for Climate Change Toolkit](#)

Provides a compilation of guidance and resources to support local climate resilience planning.



Credit: Tony Shi Photography via Getty Images

## Climate Mitigation

### [New Jersey Funding One Stop Shop](#)

A user-friendly interactive tool that identifies federal, state, local and utility funding resources that can help reduce project costs (see sidebar, "Funding for a Green Future").

### [New Jersey RGGI Climate Investments Dashboard](#)

This interactive dashboard application provides information on New Jersey-specific investments in clean energy, clean transportation, and equity programs utilizing proceeds from quarterly auctions of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) by the DEP, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

### [Solar Siting Analysis](#)

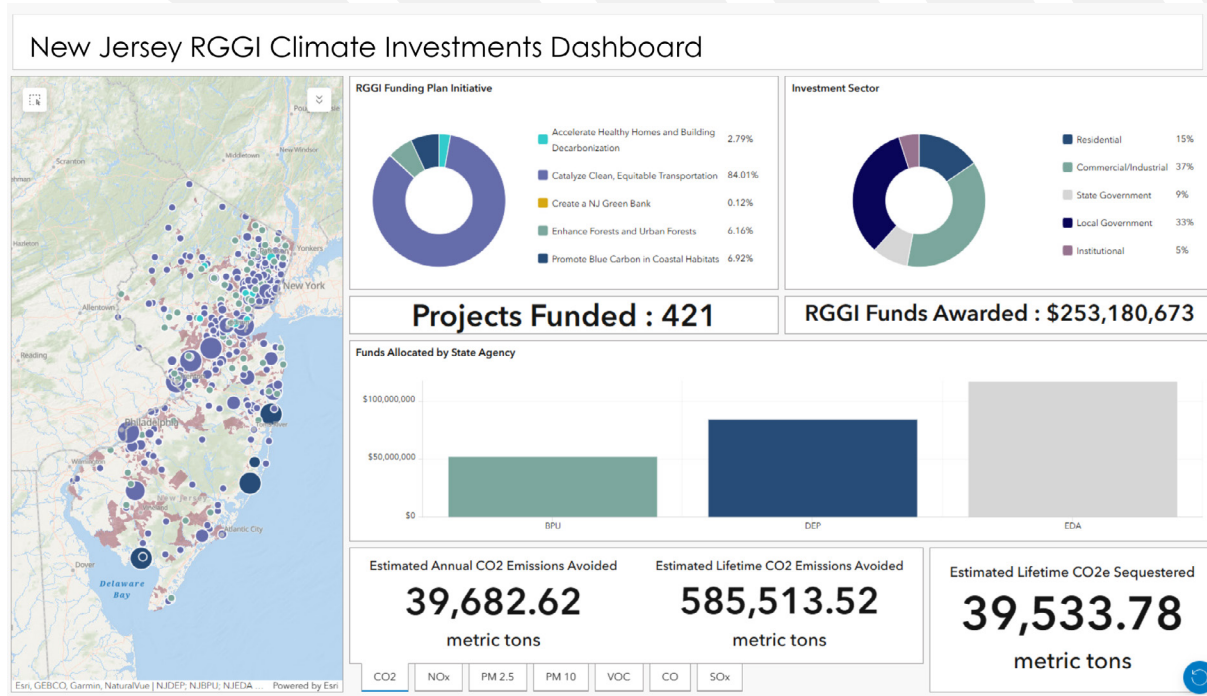
Assists solar developers, municipalities, and business owners with identifying the most preferred locations to site solar photovoltaic systems.

## [Transportation Needs Index](#)

A collaborative effort between DEP and the New Jersey State Office of Innovation, this tool helps users identify where transportation gaps exist, especially in historically underserved communities. It analyzes factors such as poverty, car ownership, transit access and other key data to highlight areas that may benefit from additional mobility investments.

## [Trees for Schools Siting Tool](#)

This web mapping application was developed to support the Trees for Schools: Tree-Planting Grants for New Jersey Public Schools, Colleges & Universities program, and the identification of public school locations that best meet the criteria for grant funds. The tool shows the location of each public K-12 school in the state, as well as overburdened communities and the top 75 municipalities that are priorities for tree plantings due to a high percentage of impervious surface and lack of tree canopy.



### Funding for a Green Future

Launched in October 2025, the [New Jersey Funding One Stop Shop](#) was developed by the DEP to help residents, local governments, nonprofit organizations and businesses easily identify funding opportunities for clean energy projects. After the user chooses the project type, they are then directed to relevant grants, rebates, financing options and technical assistance programs that are open and accepting applications.

### Cleaning Up Past Pollution

#### [Contaminated Site Explorer](#)

A web mapping application designed to provide the public with detailed information about contaminated sites (see “Cleaning Up Together”).

### Cleaning Up Together

The Contaminated Sites Explorer web mapping application enables users to access the NJDEP Known Contaminated Site List (KCSL) GIS layer to learn about specific contaminated sites within a given locale. Information about a known contaminated site is presented in a user-friendly format designed specifically for the general public.

### Outdoor Recreation

#### [New Jersey’s Statewide Trails Dataset](#)

Compiles existing data from trail managers and regional trail organizations to create a comprehensive dataset of the state’s public trails.

### Public Health

#### [NJ’s Beach Monitoring Program](#)

In addition to providing information on water quality testing for coastal waters, this website has been expanded to include results of water quality testing for inland lakes with licensed and lifeguarded swimming beaches.

#### [NJ EJMAP](#)

Assists the DEP and permit applicants in identifying overburdened communities (OBCs) and the existing environmental and public health stressors that affect them.

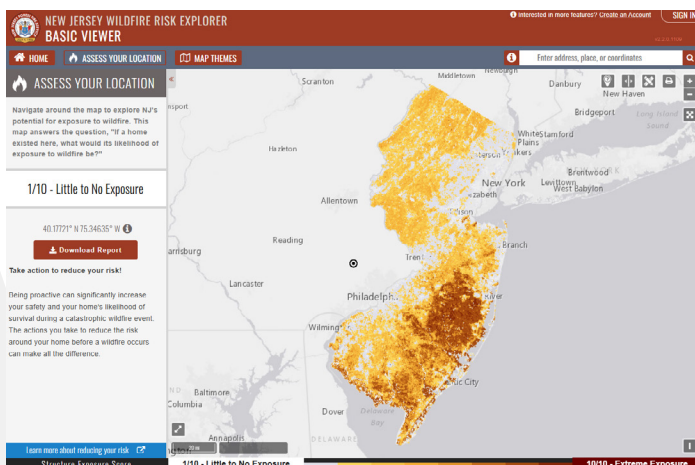
#### [Potential Lead Exposure Mapping Tool](#)

Provides new publicly available data that indicate potential sources of lead exposure.

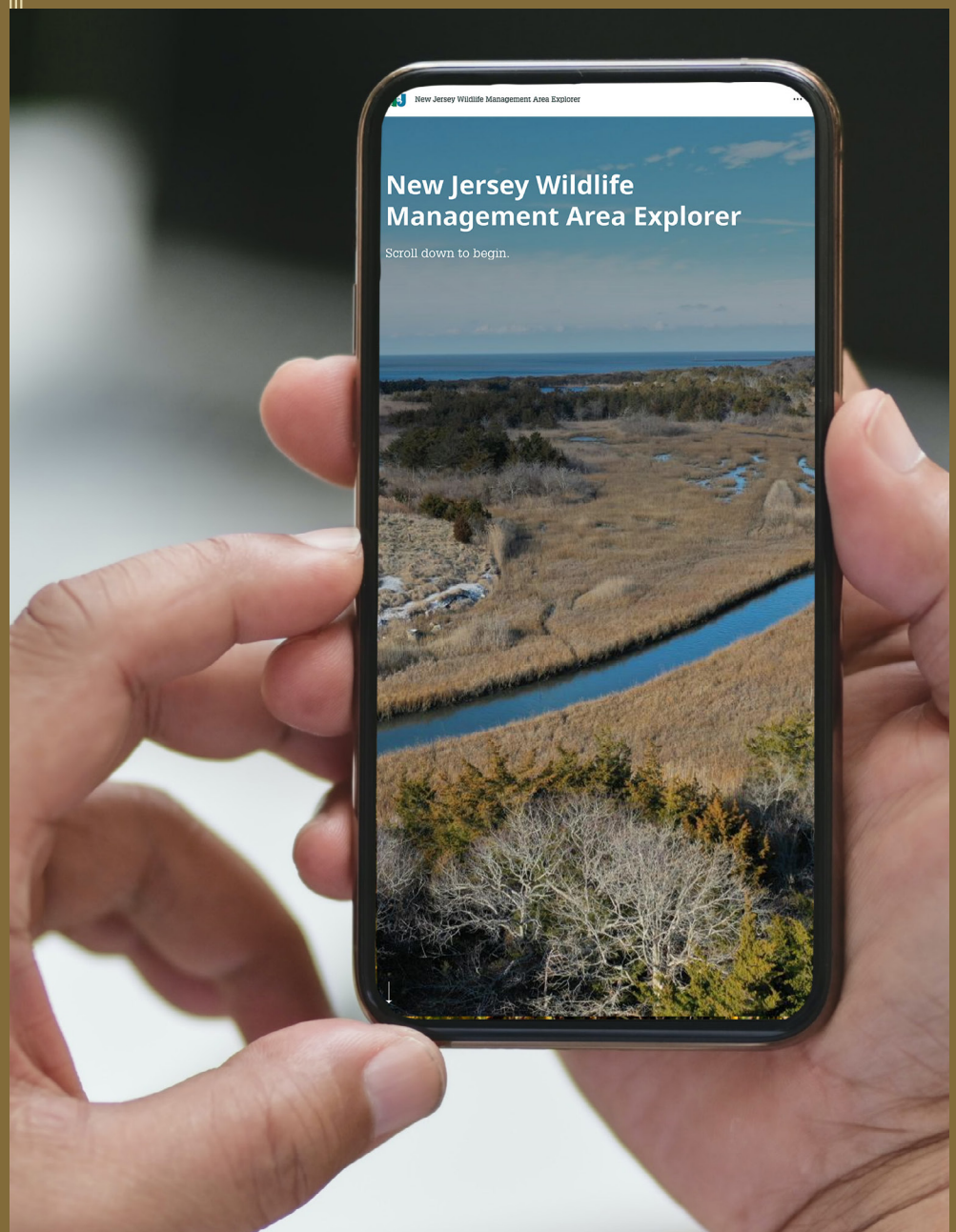
### Wildfire Awareness

#### [New Jersey Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal \(NJWRAP\)](#)

Compiles data and resources to assist residents, community leaders and fire professionals in taking actions to mitigate the threat of wildfire. Data in the portal also helps the Forest Fire Service identify areas where prescribed burning may help decrease wildfire risk.



The Office of Fish and Wildlife Information Systems develops and maintains geographic information systems (GIS) data, provides geospatial analyses, develops web mapping applications, such as the New Jersey Wildlife Management Explorer app, pictured below, and provides GIS assistance to guide strategic habitat conservation and support fish and wildlife management throughout New Jersey.



### Tools of CHANJ

#### CHANJ Mapping

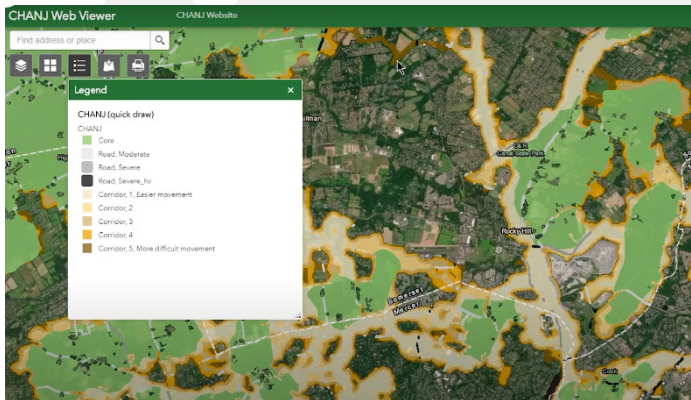
Highlights important areas for habitat connectivity across New Jersey, including large intact “Core” habitats, the best available “Corridors” between them, and “Road Segments” that bisect habitats and are likely to obstruct animal movement. Together, these Cores, Corridors, and Road Segments represent the most advantageous places to preserve and restore wildlife connectivity in New Jersey. CHANJ Mapping can be accessed by GIS users or via the interactive CHANJ Web Viewer on any computer or mobile device.

#### Guidance Document

A companion to the CHANJ Mapping, this guide offers information and resources to help New Jerseyans make strategic choices about preserving land, restoring habitat, and mitigating the effects of roads on wildlife.

#### NJ Wildlife Tracker

A mobile-friendly web app for reporting wildlife on roads, roadkill/road-crossing hotspots, and rare species sightings across the state.



### Wildlife Management

#### Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) Tools

Helps land managers, transportation planners, conservation groups, and the public to understand New Jersey’s habitat connectivity puzzle and to take meaningful steps to preserve and restore important linkages for wildlife across our landscape (see sidebar, “Tools of CHANJ”).

#### New Jersey Wildlife Management Explorer

Allows users to identify various resources available on wildlife management area (WMA) lands. It provides interactive maps of infrastructure assets such as shooting ranges, dog training areas, boat ramps, fishing access sites, roads, parking areas and more that are available to fish and wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. In addition, the application summarizes natural resources present on individual WMAs, including wildlife and plant species, habitat types, hunting and trapping zones, and state and regional habitat priorities relevant to conservation planning.



# CHAPTER TWELVE:

## TOWARD A MORE SUSTAINABLE NEW JERSEY



Credit: Robyn Beck/AFP via Getty Images

Sustainability finds its earliest roots in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which calls on all of us “to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.”

To become more sustainable, we must consider the long-term implications of our individual, corporate, and institutional actions for both their productive benefits and their depletive effects, i.e., the externalities that our endeavors create today and in the future. In other words, sustainability is a call to action to think beyond ourselves, our immediate needs and goals, and the present moment in time.

To create a more sustainable New Jersey, DEP supports efforts to reduce waste, promote the reuse of end-of-life materials, invest in crosscutting solutions that achieve multiple environmental, social and economic benefits (i.e., the triple bottom line), and develop a more circular economy.

### Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. *In that order.*

DEP has particularly achieved success in the areas of recyclable materials and unused food. In doing so, DEP promotes the three Rs of sustainable materials management – reduction, reuse and recycling.

In 2021, the statewide recycling rate was 54%, compared to the national rate of 32%, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

DEP has focused on strategies to maintain and increase recycling rates, such as [Recycle Coach](#). The online platform, which DEP has made available at no cost to local governments since 2018, is an information and education system designed to encourage recycling, reduce confusion about what can be recycled and, ultimately, reduce recycling contamination.

New Jersey also enacted its [Recycled Content Law](#) in January 2022, requiring manufacturers to include minimum percentages of post-consumer recycled materials in certain containers and packaging sold in the state.





Credit: Getty Images

DEP additionally created a Sustainability Enforcement Team (SET) in late 2022 to foster compliance with numerous product and packaging requirements, including:

- Reduction of single use products and polystyrene loose fill packaging
- Reduction of food waste
- Elimination of toxic materials in packaging; increased use of processed recyclable materials in new packaging and containers
- Increased recycling of electronic devices and batteries

In 2025, SET efforts resulted in 4,000 products removed from shelves in New Jersey, as well as significant numbers from other locations across the country, that were packaged in containers manufactured with excessive and unsafe levels of lead, which could pose a danger to public health, and especially the health of children.

## Toward a More Circular Economy

Recycling alone is not sufficient to achieve sustainability. In recent years, DEP has shifted its focus to waste reduction – the R with the greatest environmental impact. Incentives to reduce waste have been key to this effort, whether by eliminating single-use plastics, cutting back food waste or reusing materials.

# GET PAST PLASTIC

## Reducing Plastic Waste

On May 4, 2022, New Jersey moved to [Get Past Plastic](#) as it limited single-use plastics, including carryout plastic bags at retail and grocery stores. The campaign, implementing the [Single-Use Plastic Reduction Law](#) signed in November 2020, affects all New Jersey stores and food-service businesses, and is aimed at drastically reducing consumer use of such plastics, which also include polystyrene food containers and single-use plastic straws (provided only upon request). DEP has worked with the state's [Business Action Center](#) and the [NJ Clean Communities Council](#) to develop a successful statewide program to assist businesses in complying with the law.

In addition, the law established the [Plastics Advisory Council](#) (PAC), which is charged with monitoring the implementation of the law and evaluating its effectiveness. The PAC issued annual reports in [2023](#) and [2024](#) that highlight compliance trends and provide data to guide future plastics reduction strategies.

## Impacts of the Single-Use Plastic Reduction Law.

A highlight of the PAC's first year report in 2023 includes that approximately 16.5 billion single-use plastic bags and 110 million single-use paper bags were eliminated from entering the waste stream and environment by the supermarket sector alone. The 2024 report noted that a reusable bag collection program is underway to address the accumulation of bags by residents using at-home food delivery services.

Two other initiatives include solar panels, and electric and hybrid vehicle batteries.



Credit: Getty Images

## Circularity in the Clean Energy Economy

[End-of-Life Solar Panel Management](#), effective in 2019, established the New Jersey Solar Panel Recycling Commission to study and investigate options for recycling and other end-of-life (EOL) management options for photovoltaic and other solar energy generation structures. The Commission published its [report](#) in 2023 and initiated the process to amend the New Jersey Hazardous Waste Rules to classify EOL solar panels as a



Credit: Getty Images

universal waste and Class D recyclable material. Additionally, as an interim solution, DEP announced an initiative to support Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) projects to manage nonhazardous end-of-life solar panels.

## RD&D Projects: Commercial Solar Panel Recycling (CSPR)

To date, six facilities have applied for and received authorization for Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Projects. Commercial Solar Panel Recycling (CSPR), located in Phillipsburg, was the recipient of a certificate of authority to operate (CAO) in the State's first-ever authorization of solar panel recycling. The facility is emblematic of the initiative's success and demonstrates that environmental protection and economic growth can work hand in hand, paving the way for a sustainable clean energy future. DEP renewed CSPR's RD&D CAO in 2025

[The Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Battery Management Act](#) became effective Jan. 8, 2024. The law bans disposal of propulsion batteries after Jan. 8, 2027, and requires producers to manage end-of-life propulsion batteries. A propulsion battery is a rechargeable battery designed to power the motor that moves an

electric or hybrid vehicle. Beginning in 2026, registered vehicle manufacturers will be required to report the number of electric/hybrid vehicles and separate batteries sold into the state. Meanwhile, DEP is conducting a needs assessment to support implementation of the end-of-life management program.

# ERASE FOOD WASTE NEW JERSEY

## Reducing Food Waste

In October 2023, DEP published its [Food Waste Reduction Plan](#), which establishes actions needed to achieve the state's goal of reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. The plan includes creating educational materials and tools for reducing food waste, and coordinating outreach to raise awareness. Early indicators show a downward trend in food waste generation, demonstrating progress toward the 2030 goal.

In 2025, DEP enacted regulations implementing New Jersey's Food Waste Recycling and Food Waste to Energy Law. The law and rules require large food waste generators that produce 52 tons of food waste annually to source separate and recycle their food waste if they are located within 25 road miles of an authorized food waste recycling facility.

Beginning in 2026, large food waste generators will present annual reports detailing the amount of recycled food waste per year, information that will support further statewide planning for food waste management.

Lastly, the School Food Waste Recycling Law, which became effective on Dec. 21, 2023, allows schools to collect food waste for on-site composting, or, if a school does not have on-site composting, it can transfer collected food waste to another school equipped with an on-site system. [DEP Guidance](#) is available to support schools in developing food waste recycling programs.



Credit: Getty Images

Students at Raritan High School enrich their outdoor environmental learning center by spreading compost throughout gardens and planting beds.



DEP staff took part in the 2025 Barnegat Bay Blitz, working with volunteers to remove trash and protect local waterways.



DEP inspection of food waste recycling.



Credit: Getty Images

## Starting in School

To further DEP's food waste reduction goals, the Department awarded funding to Rutgers University to conduct a food waste management pilot program in three pre-K to 12 schools and to develop a toolkit from the lessons learned during the pilot. [Reduce, Recover and Recycle Food Waste - Toolkit for PreK-12 Schools](#), published in 2023 by [Sustainable Jersey](#), provides strategies for reducing food waste, as well as waste from food packaging and single-use items. The strategies include audits, share tables (kids can place unwanted whole foods, including fruits and vegetables like bananas or apples, or drinks, like unopened juice containers, on a designated table for others to take) and onsite composting.

## Toward Cleaner, Greener Communities

Efforts to support cleaner communities are contributing to improved quality of life for all New Jerseyans. The simplest actions, like cleaning up litter, can offer some of the greatest benefits. From 2018 to 2025, DEP invested more than \$181 million dollars in Clean Communities grants to aid municipalities. These grant dollars support litter removal programs that clean up neighborhood

streets, prevent trash from entering waterways, protect wildlife habitat and alleviate localized flooding. Municipalities and counties also can use them for litter-related education and enforcement of litter-related ordinances, as well as removing graffiti, and for stormwater management.

Most recently, DEP awarded more than \$27 million in Clean Communities grants in 2025, with \$24.1 million going to eligible municipalities and \$3 million to counties across the state. The investments, made through the nonprofit [New Jersey Clean Communities Council](#), help communities remove unsightly litter and beautify neighborhoods, educate people on the harms of littering and inspire all New Jerseyans to be stewards of the environment. The recipients can use the grant funding to organize volunteer litter cleanups on public lands, purchase litter removal equipment, clear trash from stormwater systems, educate the public, remove graffiti and enforce litter-related laws and ordinances.



## Urban and Community Forestry

Trees help to cool and beautify our communities. They filter air pollutants and mitigate flooding. They capture and store greenhouse gases. They provide habitat and shelter to wildlife. And all of these benefits occur naturally.

The [New Jersey Urban & Community Forestry program](#) encourages, promotes and supports local stewardship and effective management of trees and forest ecosystems. It offers [technical assistance](#) and [financial assistance](#) to New Jersey communities that are cultivating tree efforts. Municipal and county governments can become accredited with the New Jersey Urban & Community Forestry program by developing and implementing a New Jersey Forest Service-approved management plan for trees and forests, training and education, and annual reporting. Among other benefits, municipalities accredited with the New Jersey Urban & Community Forestry program have access to grants for development and implementation of their Community Forestry Management Plans. The purchase of New Jersey "[Treasure Our Trees](#)" license plates also helps to support urban and community forestry efforts. Proceeds from the sale of the license plates fund urban forest stewardship.



## Leafing Out Grants

Building upon our commitment to advancing environmental justice and addressing the impacts of climate change on public health, in 2024 the DEP awarded nearly \$8.7 million in Leafing Out grants to support tree management programs and urban and community forestry training for municipal employees and community volunteers in overburdened communities. Ten communities each received \$850,000 for tree management programs, while another 12 received a combined total of \$150,000 for municipal employees and community volunteers to attend urban and community forestry-related training events. The grants will allow municipalities to increase their resilience to the impacts of climate change, most notably extreme heat.

The following municipalities were each awarded \$850,000 in grants:

- Atlantic City, Atlantic County
- Camden City, Camden County
- Egg Harbor City, Atlantic County
- Hillside, Union County
- Kearny, Hudson County
- Newark, Essex County
- North Plainfield, Somerset County
- Orange, Essex County
- Trenton, Mercer County
- Woodbine, Cape May County

## Trees for Schools

Launched in 2023, the [Trees for Schools](#) program provides grants to New Jersey public school districts, county and state colleges, and state universities to fund planting of trees on their campuses. The grant sets aside a portion of funding for applicants in overburdened communities (OBCs), with preference given to schools with the highest impervious surface coverage (i.e., surfaces such as paved areas and buildings) and lowest tree coverage. The program has already resulted in the planting of nearly 3,000 trees at 33 educational institutions across New Jersey. It is funded through New Jersey's participation in the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#). In 2025, \$4.5 million in grants were awarded to 40 New Jersey public schools, colleges and universities, with more than half of the tree-planting projects located in OBCs.



## Illegal Dumping

Empty land across New Jersey often is used as dumping grounds. Litter, trash bags, old televisions, tires, appliances, yard waste and construction debris fill these spaces and threaten the local environment, wildlife and the public. Dumped objects decrease property value and cost New Jerseyans, whose tax dollars often are used for cleanup.

Efforts to protect communities from the scourge of illegal dumping include:

The [Guard Your Backyard](#) initiative assists local leaders, businesses and homeowners in understanding soil and fill requirements, ways to protect against inappropriate or illegal dumping of these materials, and to protect residents against receiving tainted materials. It also provides information on “Dirty Dirt” [legislation](#), which requires licensing of entities handling soil and fill materials, as well as listings of approved entities.

Launched in 2021, DEP’s Illegal Dumping Program – Collaboration and Deterrence (IDP-CAD) partners with municipalities to aid in combating illegal dumping and reducing cleanup costs for taxpayers, improve public health and the environment and protect property values. The program provides hi-tech cameras that are placed in strategic locations to capture illegal activity and provides training to municipal staff and police on prevention strategies, investigation techniques and prosecution requirements. The [Don’t Waste Our Open Space](#) initiative focuses on illegal dumping in state parks and Wildlife Management Areas. The program uses strategically placed surveillance cameras, signage and mapping strategies throughout these areas to identify illegal dumpers. Prosecution includes fines, confiscation and forfeiture of vehicles, and cleanup.

To encourage and simplify the public's ability to [Report Illegal Dumping](#), DEP developed a dedicated smartphone app to quickly document and report new or ongoing incidents. Photos of dumped material and locations can easily be reported to DEP for response and investigation.



### Bolstering Resilience

Communities also become more sustainable through stormwater and green infrastructure efforts that naturally filter runoff, reducing flooding and pollution, and promote resilience. Green infrastructure manages stormwater close to its source by treating stormwater runoff through infiltration into subsoil; through filtration by vegetation or soil; or storing stormwater runoff for reuse. Rain gardens, pervious pavement and bioretention basins capture and filter stormwater runoff, reducing the volume of runoff and pollutants that enter storm drains and local waterways, and improving water quality.

DEP has supported stormwater and green infrastructure efforts by providing resources, funding and training to municipalities for implementing green infrastructure in public

projects, collaborating with local authorities and modernizing overall stormwater management to create more resilient communities. DEP also assists local governments with forming stormwater utilities and incentivizes green infrastructure and related projects to improve the health of watersheds. DEP's Watershed and Land Management program's Division of Watershed Protection and Restoration provides stormwater grants for a variety of projects to improve sustainability. They include:

#### Ready to be Resilient Stormwater and Resilience Funding Program

##### **Local Technical Assistance-Regional Cooperative Extension (\$1.6M in American Rescue Plan funding) in 2024:**

Technical assistance for stormwater planning, design and implementation is offered regionally through the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program.

##### **Stormwater and Resilience Grant Program (\$5,025,000 ARP) in 2025:**

To promote stormwater management and increased resilience, funding will be offered to New Jersey Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NJPDES) stormwater permittees through grants to incentivize regional watershed management and for various activities, such as development of Watershed Improvement Plans, enhanced stormwater mapping and improved operations at municipal composting facilities. Disadvantaged communities are given priority. Funding will be awarded in the following areas:

["Green Streets" and Stormwater Infrastructure Mapping](#) (\$3,675,000)

[Wood Waste Recycling and Leaf Composting Permit](#) (\$1,350,000)

Credit: Getty Images



**Tier A MS4 Stormwater Assistance Grants (\$19M from Corporate Business Tax revenue) authorized in 2023:**

Approximately \$19 million in grants was made available for permittees to upgrade their Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) stormwater programs to better align with the 2023 Tier A MS4 Permit renewal requirements. So far, nearly \$12.9 million has been distributed.

**Stormwater Competitive Grant Program (\$5M ARP, \$2M CBT) authorized in 2022:**

Grants fall within four categories – Planning and Analysis of Stormwater Opportunity Studies, Green Infrastructure Projects, Improvement of Existing Stormwater Infrastructure and Management and Restoration. A total of 35 grants were awarded and are still active.

**Technical Assistance for Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study (\$2M ARP) authorized in 2022:**

In the summer of 2022, the Municipal Stormwater Permitting Unit began seeking interested entities to take part in a DEP-funded technical assistance program to create a stormwater utility. Thirteen towns and five entities were ultimately selected for the program, and four municipalities have gone on to establish stormwater utilities: New Brunswick, Raritan, Carlstadt and Maplewood.



Credit: Keith Durflinger via Getty Images



Credit: Darren LoPrinzi via Getty Images

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

## BUILDING COMMUNITY AND EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS



Each New Jerseyan, every organization, and all of our communities play an important part in our collective effort to improve and protect public health and the environment we share. Every person, business, and institution has a role in conserving our natural and historic resources, ensuring a stable climate and resilient communities, and securing clean and healthy air, water and lands today — and for future generations. Our concerted actions across sectors and landscapes will improve quality of life, deliver sustainable economic growth, and further the promise of environmental justice for all.

Through DEP's [Community Collaborative Initiative](#), DEP also connects with local businesses in communities.







### Environmental Stewardship is Local

DEP partners with the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) to inform and promote local environmental stewardship. Hundreds of New Jersey municipalities have established Environmental Commissions, which advise their local governing bodies on environmental concerns. At ANJEC's annual Environmental Congress, local environmental commission members engage directly with DEP professionals who provide real-time guidance on local environmental issues—from climate and flood resilience to open space, sustainable waste management, water quality and beyond. As DEP pros contribute their expertise on panels and through tabling at the Congress, Commissioner LaTourette has regularly delivered a keynote address to provide a statewide perspective on environmental concerns and strengthen the partnership between state and local environmental stewards.

## Building Partnerships for Environmental Improvement and Community Renewal

To improve and protect the interconnected environment we share, DEP routinely partners with local governments, community-based organizations, businesses, academic and research institutions, and professional organizations to build and expand problem-solving capacity.

One example is the [Community Collaborative Initiative](#) (CCI), a place-based partnership between DEP and communities that seeks to align social, economic, and natural resources needs and opportunities to facilitate improvements that promote quality of life, community revitalization, and equitable economic development. Through CCI, DEP dedicates on-the-ground staff to support local governments and community leaders in identifying and resolving environmental challenges that can help to transform distressed areas into centers for sustainable economic growth. What began as a pilot program to support three underserved communities was expanded by Commissioner LaTourette to become a statewide effort. DEP has now embedded CCI Liaisons in 12 underserved communities, where DEP professionals work alongside public and private partners to leverage resources, implement innovative solutions, and support local revitalization efforts.

<b>North Region</b>	
<b>Central Region</b>	
<b>South-West Region</b>	
<b>South Region</b>	

By working in-community, CCI Liaisons develop a deep understanding of community needs and unique local strengths. The partnership enables joint environmental projects and helps to attract investments, create jobs and foster more resilient, prosperous communities. For example, CCI Liaisons identify brownfield sites and funding for their cleanup and redevelopment, and bring partner agencies (such as the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and the Department of Community Affairs) to force-multiply local community development efforts. Accomplishments of the CCI place-based initiative include:

**Bayonne:** Supported the transformation of a former municipal complex in Bayonne into Fitzpatrick Park, which features underground flood control technology that protects against flood damage and reduces combined sewer overflows, improving water quality.

**Camden:** Assisted the Camden School District throughout the process to apply for funding through DEP’s electric school bus program. Funding was ultimately awarded to purchase a new electric school bus, which will reduce emissions and result in cleaner air for children in Camden.



**Jersey City:** The Jersey City Collaborative Initiative unites more than 10 nonprofit, community and public partners to enhance coordination and problem-solving in Jersey City and surrounding areas. By fostering regular communication, CCI helps these organizations align goals, share resources and identify service gaps, reducing duplication efforts. This collaboration enables partners to leverage support for grant opportunities, volunteer capacity and program delivery, resulting in a more connected ecosystem that amplifies impact and efficiently delivers community-driven outcomes for Jersey City residents.

**Perth Amboy:** Achieved the cleanup of legacy contamination at a former smelting site on the Arthur Kill in Perth Amboy and supported its redevelopment as Thomas Mundy Peterson Park, which provides the community with public waterfront access and recreation amenities.

**Salem City:** Helped secure \$2 million in federal funding through New Jersey's second congressional district for the Town Bank pump station in Salem City. This valuable use of taxpayer dollars, which will address major flooding in four lower-income municipalities in New Jersey, will also benefit economic growth and safety across the region.

## DEP at YOUR SERVICE

As part of our commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement, DEP staff are permitted to dedicate one day per quarter to volunteer for hands-on Employee Day of Service events, including tree plantings, invasive species removals, and trash cleanups. The program allows hundreds of DEP employees to step out from behind their desks and into the communities we serve where they often work alongside local residents and community-based organizations to improve the environment and quality of life. For example, enthusiastic DEP volunteers have taken part in the [Camden Strong](#) initiative, getting to work on multiple cleanups throughout the city, planting trees and assisting with bulk waste projects.





DEP staff participated in an Employee Day of Service event with the Hackensack Riverkeeper, helping clean up a shoreline in Bayonne.

## Empowering the Next Generation of Environmental Leaders

Improving and protecting the environment we share requires sustained effort by people and organizations across all sectors of civil society, and the consistent recruitment and development of environmental professionals eager to meet the challenges before us. Since 2018, DEP has focused its attention on the work at hand today while attracting new talent to the environmental field and helping them grow into the environmental quality and natural resource management professionals who will lead us into the future.



## Youth Inclusion Initiative

In 2021, Commissioner LaTourette launched the [Youth Inclusion Initiative](#) (YII) to engage young New Jerseyans in DEP's work to improve and protect public health and the environment. Through this innovative summer program, DEP partners with community-based organizations to give young people from open space-constrained communities an opportunity to learn about careers in a wide variety of environmental fields. Each year, beginning in July, participants from ages 16 to 20 spend six weeks working closely with DEP staff in partnership with private and nonprofit community-based organizations to learn about careers in water and air monitoring, natural resource management, wildlife conservation and more. In its first five years, youth participation in YII has grown from approximately 20 youth in the summer of 2021 to approximately 100 in 2025.





The [award-winning program](#) allows its young participants to gain experience through hands-on activities such as utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to collect and analyze survey data on park facilities; conduct field assessments of wetlands; build rain barrels; collect macroinvertebrates (aquatic insects) from a stream to determine water quality and more. In addition, they complete environmental projects in their home communities, ranging from cleaning up local parks to planting community gardens. DEP provides the funding for the projects to the community host organizations. To complement participants' exposure to environmental careers, each week of the program concludes with opportunities for professional development, such as resume and cover letter writing, as well as presentations from guest speakers.

### Watershed Ambassadors

The [New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program](#) (NJWAP) is a community-oriented AmeriCorps program hosted by DEP that places ambassadors at local host sites in 20 Watershed Management Areas where they serve their local communities through environmental stewardship that improves lives, strengthens neighborhoods, and fosters civic

engagement. Since 2021, DEP has added Source Water Protection Ambassadors in north, central and south Jersey locations to engage in outreach and education campaigns that protect drinking water supplies. And, since 2019, the Watershed Ambassadors have conducted annual "Projects in The Parks" each March, consisting of a series of public land improvement and cleanup projects in partnership with DEP's State Parks, Forests and Historic Sites program. Projects include litter cleanups, invasive species removals, tree planting and maintenance, rain barrel workshops, trail maintenance and more.

The Watershed Ambassadors also have engaged in biological and habitat assessment projects to fill data gaps in New Jersey's fresh, nontidal waters to assess, protect and restore water quality; the data is used to inform the DEP's biennial Water Quality Report submitted to USEPA. They engage in DEP's Earth Day celebrations, Take Your Kids to Work Day events and DEP's Youth Inclusion Initiative program, providing watershed education. Watershed Ambassadors also partner with the Hackensack Riverkeeper and provide assistance to the Watershed Education and Urban Fishing Program, which is designed to educate children from New Jersey's urban areas and overburdened communities about their local watersheds.





Watershed Ambassadors promote watershed stewardship through education and direct community involvement, and monitor stream health by performing visual and biological assessments.



At DEP's 2025 Earth Day Celebration, Watershed Ambassadors highlight the importance of clean water through interactive activities.

Youth Inclusion Initiative participants gain hands-on insight into recycling and renewable energy at a recycling facility.





## Spark! Professional Internship Program

DEP's [Spark Internship Program](#) is a paid professional development and work-learning opportunity designed to prepare the next generation of environmental leaders. Through Spark, qualified students are matched with DEP program areas, gaining real-world experience while contributing to meaningful environmental projects.

Launched in summer 2023, the program has already hosted 187 interns, 30 of whom have gone on to become full-time or hourly DEP employees. Our interns come from colleges across the region, with Rutgers University, Rowan University and Stockton University as the top three represented schools.

## EPIC High School Program

The [Environmental Pathways for Informed Careers](#) (EPIC) program is a new initiative designed to strengthen early career exposure and build a strong talent pipeline of future DEP professionals. Launched in spring 2025 with students from Trenton Central High School, the program provides high schoolers with meaningful, career-aligned experiences across several DEP program areas in their local community. Students are scheduled set hours of work after school, gaining hands-on experience in environmental protection while exploring potential pathways into Spark Internship Program and DEP careers. We are continuing our partnership with TCHS in spring 2026.



## Within DEP's Walls

### Celebrating the Diversity that Unites Us

DEP is committed to strengthening the Department by attracting and developing a workforce that reflects New Jersey's diverse population and by fostering a culture of equity, inclusion and belonging to improve outcomes for our residents, the public health and the natural resources we are charged to protect. Through our Diversity Advisory Council, employees have the opportunity to inform recruitment and professional development initiatives to help ensure that management meets new and existing employees where they are. And, through our Employee Resource Groups, DEP staff builds and creates community, and sows a culture of belonging among colleagues and the organization more broadly. In partnership with several other state departments, DEP began holding an annual Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Day celebration in 2024 – and followed with a second in 2025 – to foster community among employees of DEP and our sister agencies.



### Inspire Mentor Program

The Inspire Mentor Program is a dynamic initiative, organized by the DEP Division of Human Resources' Office of Organizational Development & Training, designed to empower our workforce through the wisdom of our most passionate and inspiring colleagues. This initiative fosters inter-programmatic connection through goal setting, engaging eLearning and meaningful conversations by focusing on selected success attributes that help to nurture professional development.

### Employee Appreciation

Taking good care of our DEP staff has been a concerted effort during the past eight years. DEP has made upgrades to our 401 Building headquarters, particularly a Green Infrastructure project in our Courtyard to remove impervious surface and replace it with pervious pavers and three bioretention basins that collect rainwater. The improvements also included plantings and trees to provide shade, benches and picnic tables with umbrellas for seating and a paver walkway to connect the Courtyard with Trenton's historic Mercer Cemetery, which has been made accessible as open green space. DEP also launched monthly barbecues in the Courtyard with tasty food truck lunch and dessert options, and offered opportunities for staffers who are also musicians to perform during the events; and shared giveaways like water bottles, lanyards and tote bags to show appreciation for our staff members during annual Public Service Recognition Week celebrations. DEP also added gender-inclusive restroom facilities to the 401 Building.



A tradition that began during the COVID-19 pandemic to boost employee engagement, our monthly broadcast over Microsoft Teams keeps staffers up to date on programs' work and features the DEP Does That? segment highlighting units like Bureau of X-ray Compliance, which registers all X-ray-producing equipment in the state, performs inspections on the units and licenses all New Jersey X-ray technologists.

Each month, DEP honors employees' outstanding work with "shoutouts" shared in an office-wide email and, near the end of the year, the Office of Communications and Outreach coordinates our Compliment a Colleague initiative – DEP staffers can send their coworkers a brief message letting them know how much they appreciate them.

### Engagement Endeavors

We also have worked to build our public engagement. DEP is proud of the growth and impact of our digital presence and online community. Throughout the past eight years, we nearly doubled our social media following, welcoming more than 5,000 new followers just in 2025. For example, we launched the Wild About NJ campaign in partnership with DEP Fish & Wildlife, highlighting how different species live in harmony with one another and spotlighting stories of wildlife protection throughout the state. We expanded how we share stories that highlight New Jersey's people, places and wildlife, and strengthened public engagement around the work being done every day to protect our environment.



**DEP  Does That?**

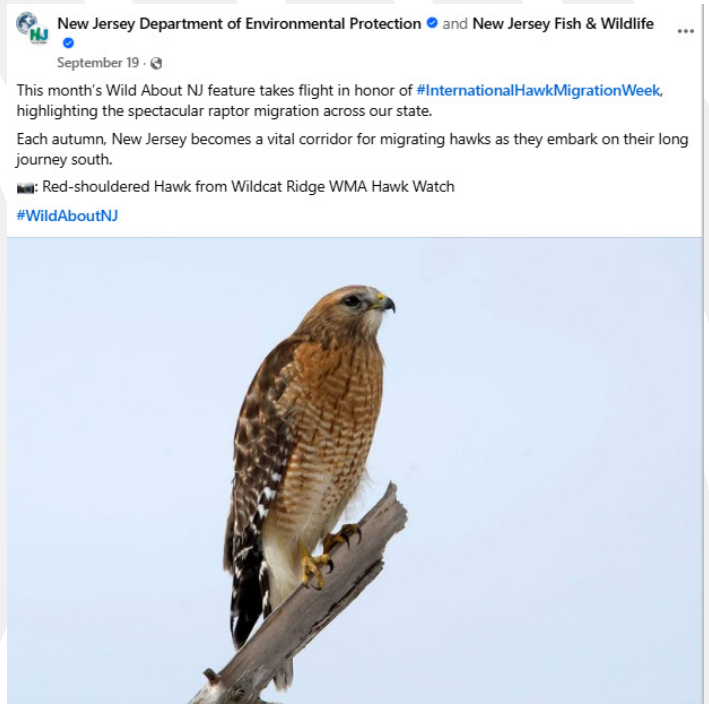
This monthly feature spotlights the important work of colleagues that often escapes the headlines.

**MONTHLY HIGHLIGHT**

*The Bureau of X-ray Compliance registers all X-ray producing equipment in New Jersey, performs inspections on all X-ray units – about 25,000 – and licenses all X-ray technologists. As we observe Women's History Month, the spotlight focuses on the Bureau's mammography inspection section.*







New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and New Jersey Fish & Wildlife


September 19 · 🌐

This month's Wild About NJ feature takes flight in honor of [#InternationalHawkMigrationWeek](#), highlighting the spectacular raptor migration across our state.

Each autumn, New Jersey becomes a vital corridor for migrating hawks as they embark on their long journey south.

🦅 Red-shouldered Hawk from Wildcat Ridge WMA Hawk Watch

[#WildAboutNJ](#)





DEP staff at one of the monthly barbecues.

## Better Than We Found It

This project highlights accomplishments of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection between January 2018 and 2026, and celebrates the critical work that DEP professionals perform every day for the benefit of the people of New Jersey, their health, safety and environment.

As you perused this magazine, we hope you were encouraged by the progress New Jersey has made in improving and protecting public health and the environment we all share. We also hope the stories here have given you a sense of the talent, dedication and thoughtfulness of the DEP staff members whose ingenuity and resolve have bettered the quality of our environment.

Through the channels below, you can follow DEP's important work to conserve natural and historic resources, ensure a stable climate and resilient communities, secure clean and healthy air, water

and lands, invest in communities and infrastructure, provide quality open and recreational spaces for residents and visitors, enforce environmental laws and further the promise of environmental justice for all.

-  [@NewJerseyDEP](https://twitter.com/NewJerseyDEP)
-  [@newjerseydep](https://www.facebook.com/newjerseydep)
-  [@nj.dep](https://www.instagram.com/nj.dep)
-  [@newjerseydep](https://www.linkedin.com/company/newjerseydep)
-  [@dep.nj.gov](https://twitter.com/dep.nj.gov)
-  [dep.nj.gov](https://www.dep.nj.gov)







NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION