



NEW JERSEY NATURAL LANDS TRUST



Goats—a benefit to turtles at the Trust's Wallkill Preserve

1999

A N N U A L R E P O R T

Statement of Purpose

The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust was created in 1968 by the Legislature as an independent agency with the mission to preserve land in its natural state for enjoyment by the public and to protect natural diversity through the acquisition of open space. The Trust preserves land primarily by donations of open space through acquisition of title in fee simple or of conservation easements, and manages its properties to conserve endangered species habitat, rare natural features, and significant ecosystems. Access to Trust lands is generally not restricted. The Trust invites passive use by the public for recreational or educational purposes wherever such use will not adversely affect natural communities and biological diversity.

The Trust also recognizes that ownership and management alone are not enough to achieve its mission. Public education is an integral function of protecting natural diversity. The Trust distributes printed information and sponsors interpretive programs and seminars designed to convey a conservation ethic for the protection of open space and its natural values.

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Mixing Business with Pleasure

First and foremost, Nathan Nathanson is a businessman. He buys and sells properties for a profit. However, life has been good to "Nate" and Evelyn, his wife of over 50 years. They don't mind sharing some of their good fortune by participating in land donations or "bargain sales" to protect environmentally significant lands. Besides enjoying the personal satisfaction of making a charitable donation, as an astute businessman,

Mr. Nathanson also recognizes the financial benefits of conservation land donations. These attractive benefits include favorable capital gains impacts, no State real estate transfer taxes, no municipal farmland assessment rollback taxes, and the ability to offset other income for tax purposes. In 1995, the Nathanson's donated 146 acres in Hamilton Township, Atlantic County, now known as the Thompsonstown Preserve. In 1999, the Nathanson's offered

the Trust a second donation of lands totaling 15+ acres, located within one mile of their previous donation. The Trust accepted this offer, which will serve to expand the Hamilton Preserve's protection of the Miry Run stream corridor. The property, located just downstream from other Trust Hamilton Preserve lands, is a mix of upland open scrub oak savanna, upland pitch pine forest, and Atlantic White Cedar wetlands associated with the Miry Run which flows along the property's western edge.

A barometer of "good business" is repeat business. In the year 2000, Mr. Nathanson will be working with the Trust's sister organization, the NJDEP Green Acres Program, on a potential bargain sale of "infill" lands also located within the Trust's Hamilton Preserve. Because State funds will be used, the lands will be purchased and deeded in the name of the NJDEP for management by the Trust. ☺

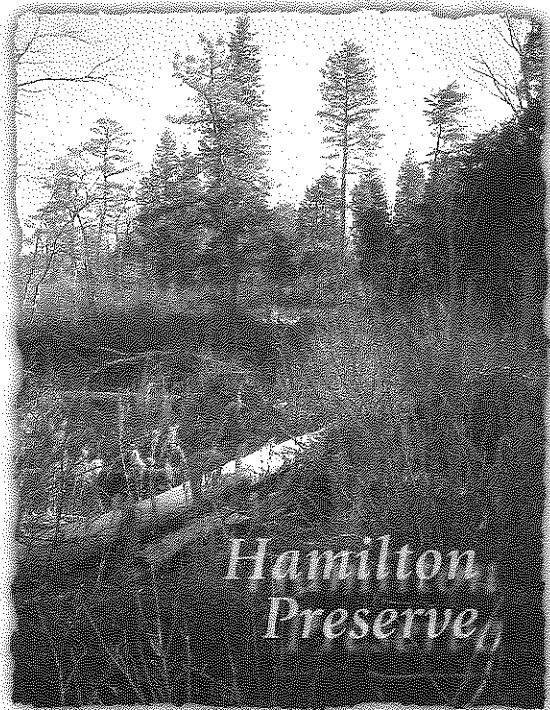


Photo by Martin Rapp

Atlantic white Cedar wetlands within the Miry Run stream corridor at the Hamilton Preserve.

In 1999...

... the Natural Lands Trust completed seven individual closings, bringing approximately 365 additional acres under Trust stewardship. The smallest and largest of our 1999 acquisitions were located in Atlantic County, in Hamilton Township and Buena Vista Township, respectively. The sizes ranged from the 9.26 acre Oakwoods Preserve, a property acquired through the Pinelands Limited Practical Use (LPU) Program, to a 123-acre addition to the Trust's Pancoast Preserve, which was transferred to the Trust for management from the State's Green Acres Program.

Five of the seven new Trust holdings represent additions to existing Trust properties and one additional acquisition is located within a mile of a Trust property.

As we enter the year 2000, the Trust has responsibility for nearly 11,965 acres throughout the State. In the new millennium, the Trust will continue to identify and protect land for present and future generations. Also, with the advent of the Trust's Volunteer Stewardship Program, Trust properties will be more efficiently monitored and managed as the natural land acreage the Trust cares for continues to grow.

In late 1999, Vice Chairperson James Hall left his position as Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources in NJDEP to become superintendent of the New Jersey section of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission. He served as Assistant Commissioner since February 1991 and as a Trustee to the NJ Natural Lands Trust since 1989. Cari J. Wild was appointed to replace James Hall as Assistant Commissioner. She has also filled his position on the Board of the Natural Lands Trust.

Cari had previously worked as counsel for the Department of Environmental Protection as a Deputy Attorney General with the Division of Law and as an Enforcement Attorney. She also has experience as an environmental attorney and law clerk with two South Jersey law firms. Her law experience, which is focused on environmental issues, will be a valuable asset to the Board.

Also in 1999, Alyssa Pearlman Wolfe, DAG, temporarily filled Trust Counsel Judeth Piccinini Yeany's position as legal advisor while Judeth was on maternity leave. Judeth is back now, and congratulations on her baby boy, Ethan!

The Garden State Preservation Trust Act ... Helping to Make "Our Town" the Place We Want to Be

By Sally Dudley, NJNLT Chairperson

In the fall of 1998, the public sent a clear message to New Jersey's legislators. By a two to one margin, voters supported amending the State constitution to establish a stable source of funding for open space, farmland and historic preservation.

Governor Whitman signed the Garden State Preservation Trust Act in mid-1999. It established the goal of preserving an additional one million acres and the financial mechanisms to raise up to \$200 million annually over the next 10 years. With the establishment of the Garden State Preservation Trust, opportunities for open space preservation have multiplied many times over. The Natural Lands Trust, along with private land trusts throughout the state, should reap significant benefits.

The Act continues Green Acres' very successful local and non-profit preservation programs providing important incentives for open space protection. The standard 25% local grant grows to 50% (or even 75% under exceptional circumstances) for municipalities and counties with open space taxes of at least one half cent (\$.005) per \$100 assessed valuation and approved open space plans. And non-profit organizations like the Nature Conservancy and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation are eligible for 50% grants for acquisition and development projects.

To help municipalities with large portions of public open space, the law also expands the authorization of a formal Payment In Lieu of Taxes program, known as PILOT. This provides a 13-year

payment based on a declining percentage of the last year's private property tax bill for lands acquired with state funds by state agencies or non-profit organizations for conservation or recreation purposes. In addition, the Act provides, as an alternative to the traditional PILOT payment, that a municipality can receive an annual payment on a sliding scale of \$2-\$20 per acre depending on how much of the town is protected open space owned by the state or non-profits, if the payment is greater than what they would receive from the PILOT Program. The yearly payment will provide a municipality with an annual stipend for each and every permanently protected property tax exempt open space acre owned by the State (including the Natural Lands Trust), or a qualified non-profit conservation organization. Funding for the "in-lieu" payment comes from the General Fund and does not deplete the funds constitutionally dedicated toward open space acquisition. With the above programs, municipalities have an additional incentive to dedicate surplus environmentally important lands for conservation.

Foresight, creativity and cooperation among all levels of government, corporations, non-profits, landowners and citizens will be critical to accomplishing the one million-acre goal. The good news is that the options are endless. Each and every one of us must do our part to work to achieve a high quality of life for our children and grandchildren. As we enter the new millennium, the Trust looks forward to meeting new challenges with new partners. Please join us in protecting New Jersey's unique and irreplaceable natural diversity. 🌿

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With a Little Help from our Friends

To preserve natural land, the NJ Natural Lands Trust accepts land donations. Sometimes a landowner wishes to protect his land, but is unable or unwilling to make a donation. If the property appears to meet Trust acquisition criteria, Trust Staff will keep in touch with and inform the landowner of potential funding opportunities.

Funding opportunities sometimes become available through the Trust itself. For example, on occasion, a friendly benefactor may remember the Trust with a cash donation. Benefactors may also remember the Trust in their wills. Some Trust benefactors provide "dedicated funds" to be spent by the Trust in specific regions of the State or on specific habitat types. Funding opportunities may also arise from the Trust's cooperation with other organizations.

If Trust funding and cooperative funding opportunities are unavailable for a land purchase of interest, "bargain sales" can be a way to resolve the situation of a landowner who cannot make an outright donation. Although the demand for public funds is great, "bargain sale" offers using public funds have been proven to create a "win-win" scenario for the parties involved. "Bargain sales" can also be accomplished using private funds, when available.

A "bargain sale" consists of a landowner offering a discount to a public or private funding agency for the purchase of a property. The discount offered, along with the environmental significance of the property, are factors a funding agency will use to determine purchasing "priorities"; thus, selling an environmentally significant property by "bargain sale" may tend to speed up the real estate process.

In 1999, the Trust cooperated with and was assisted by the Green Acres Program, through its general state land acquisition program and its Pinelands Limited Practical Use Program. Due to the efforts of and interaction between Trust Real Estate Coordinator, Bev Mazzella, and Howard Wolf of Green Acres Pinelands Limited Practical Use Program, the Trust added over 56 acres to holdings in Hamilton Township, Atlantic County, resulting in further expansion of the Trust's Costa Preserve and the establishment of the Oakwoods Preserve. The

Oakwoods Preserve is a mixed oak woodland with a black huckleberry and bracken fern understory located within the South River watershed.

The Green Acres Program also assisted with the acquisition of 292.27 acres of additional landholdings associated with the Pancoast, Budd Lake Bog, Clarks Landing, and Crossley Preserves. The new addition to the Pancoast Preserve is important because it connects two previously



Hardwood swamp forest at Budd Lake Bog Preserve

separated parcels of that preserve. The Budd Lake Bog addition is significant because it includes a large part of the bog adjacent to Budd Lake and lies within the Budd Lake Bog Project Area. Besides Green Acres' involvement in the purchase of the Budd Lake Bog addition, Mt. Olive Township and the Morris Parks and Land Conservancy were partners in preserving the Bog's important ecological community. Thomas F. Hampton, the Trust's Executive Director, wrote to the Morris Parks and Land Conservancy concerning the acquisition of infill properties within the Budd Lake Bog Project Area, "... it seems critical that we join together, using both private and public resources, in order to accomplish our mission to protect (the) open space and natural diversity of this great state for the enjoyment of the future generations of New Jersey." ♦

The Trust generally relies on donations of land; however, monetary donations can be of definite assistance to the Trust in its efforts to preserve and manage natural lands. Cash donations can allow the Trust to close a troubled deal by paying back taxes or by supplying the finances to turn a "no sale" into a "bargain sale" of an important parcel. Besides cash donations to the Trust's Land Acquisition Fund, cash donations can be given to the Trust to offset land clean up and management costs, or earmarked for public education and outreach.

This past year, monetary donations came from a variety of sources. In one case, fifth grade school children from the Rutherford School System collected money and made a donation to make sure that "open natural places" will be available to them when they grow up. This "seed" money could result in the expansion of Trust preservation efforts providing outdoor "classrooms" for the enhancement of the quality of life for New Jersey's students and their families. Money

was also donated by friends of a well-respected Rutgers professor, who passed away in January 1999. The memorial gifts are a fitting tribute to Dr. Teuvo M. Airola. "Tev", the Director of Rutgers GIS Remote Sensing Center, enjoyed hiking and nature observation in his free time. From his back patio, he would often look out and observe nature at the Trust's neighboring Isenberger Preserve. The memorial money has been added to the Trust's

Acquisition Fund and is slated for the preservation of open space, possibly in the vicinity of the Isenberger Preserve.

Additional cash donations came to the Trust in 1999 from the Audubon Wildlife Society through a tax sale redemption, from Albert A. and Mary M. Pramuk in support of Governor Whitman's open space initiatives, and from Jeffrey and Geeta Torno, and Florence Walker to be used for land management and clean up.

Cash donations, small or large, further the Trust's ability to acquire and protect New Jersey's open space, wildlife habitat, and natural lands for today and for the future. ☼

**So you want to
help preserve New Jersey's
natural areas, but you don't
own any land to donate?**

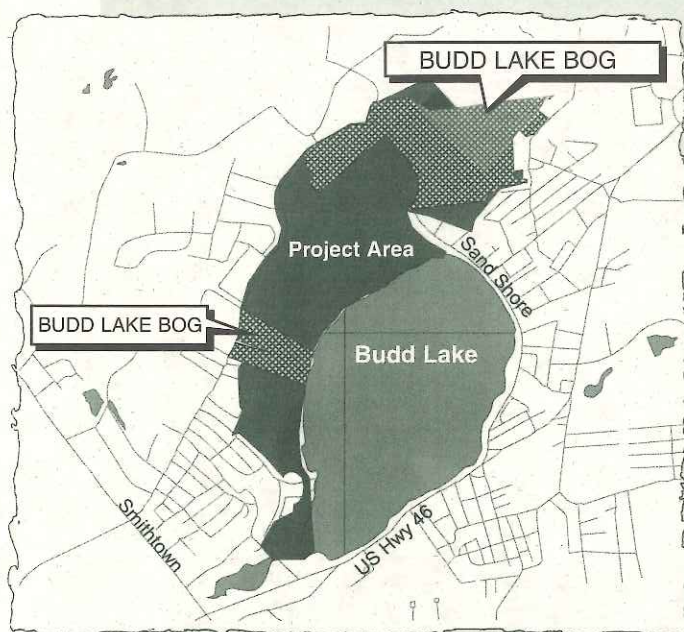
**In 1999,
individual cash donations
added up to support Trust
preservation efforts.**



A student from Rutherford Sylvan School's fifth grade class presents a check to Governor Whitman to be utilized in accomplishing the million-acre goal.

The Trust Enters the 21st Century with its Preserves Mapped on GIS!

Keeping an accurate inventory of the New Jersey Natural Land Trust's preserves and resources is a key to effective management. In 1996, the Trust began mapping its holdings on the computer using a Geographic Information System (GIS). In 1999, Martin Rapp, Ecologist and Land Manager for the Trust, added the Trust's project areas to the GIS database. As a result, maps of the Trust's approximately 130 preserves and 50 project areas can now be accessed via computer.



GIS Map of the Budd Lake Bog Preserve and project area

GIS will allow the Trust to share information with other open space managers and acquisition agencies. It will also permit the Trust to take advantage of the physical and natural resource information available through the GIS. For example, the Trust will be able to view a single map depicting not only a preserve's boundaries, but also the surrounding roads, developed lands, agricultural lands, additional preserved open space, streams, wetlands, and endangered species habitat.

The Trust's GIS database will continue to be updated on a regular basis to depict new landholdings and additions to previously delineated Trust preserves. The Natural Lands Trust joins the NJDEP in welcoming this new era of data-sharing management.

Good News for Our Donors

Donors of natural land reap several types of benefits. Although some may contribute a beloved piece of family property without compensation in mind, they reap the satisfaction that their land will, in perpetuity, enhance the State's natural diversity through the resulting protection of its native plants and wildlife for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Besides a donor's personal satisfaction in doing something right for the environment, the NJ Natural Lands Trust offers a word of "Thanks" to our donors both spoken graciously and in writing. The Trust recognizes current donors in our Annual report; and, also presents our proud donors with a frameable certificate in appreciation for their generous gift to help preserve and protect the State's natural heritage.

More immediate, tangible benefits to the donors themselves are realized through a reduction in their tax obligations. Prior to the year 2000, only the IRS allowed a federal income tax deduction for the donation of conservation lands. In 1999, bill A-1918 sponsored by Assemblyman Leonard Lance (R-Hunterdon, Warren, Mercer) authorizing a New Jersey income tax deduction for charitable donations of natural lands made its way through the General Assembly and the Senate. This legislation to further encourage individuals to transfer property ownership to governments or other agencies for conservation, was approved by the General Assembly on June 24, 1999. It was then approved by the Senate. The Governor signed the bill in early 2000.

**The NJ Natural
Lands Trust offers
a word of "Thanks"
to our donors.**

As quoted by Assemblyman Lance, "Open space and land conservation initiatives have flourished in New Jersey over the last decade...By offering a State tax benefit, my bill (will) give landowners an added incentive to preserve land, rather than allowing it to be developed..."

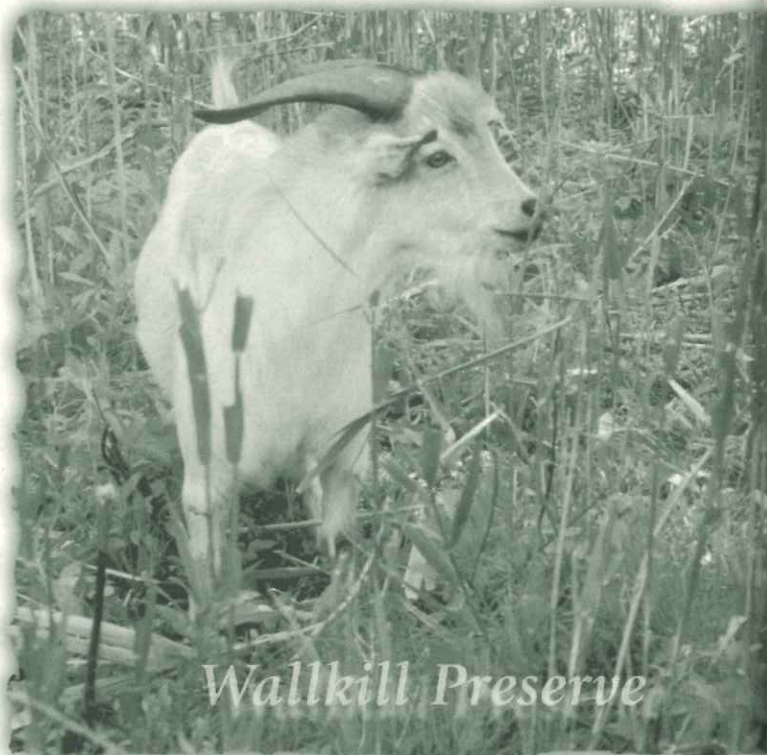
WHIP Update—the Relationship between Goats and Turtles, Cool Grasses and Prescribed Fire

As New Jersey's remaining natural places become scarcer, natural resource management becomes more and more necessary to assure that the required components of habitats such as food, shelter, and cover are available for species of concern. The Trust continues wildlife habitat improvement projects at its Wallkill Preserve, its Milford Bluffs Preserve, and its Game Branch Preserve. In 1999, some interesting habitat improvement techniques were initiated. Using WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program) funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Trust was able to undertake projects it otherwise might not have been able to accomplish on its limited management budget.

Habitat improvement for the federally threatened bog turtle has been an important focus at the Wallkill Preserve in Sussex County. With the assistance of the NJ Endangered and Non-game Species Program (ENSP) and WHIP, the Trust took a new and creative approach in the management of this turtle's unique wetland habitat. The turtle's habitat was becoming overgrown with an aggressive invasive plant known as phragmites, or the common reed. Besides threatening to block the turtle's basking area sunlight, the phragmites' matted roots had begun to damage the turtle's feeding areas.

When other cases such as this were studied, herbicide use had been effective, along with mechanical control. Because the Trust chose to handle this fragile area and invasive plant problem with sensitivity, the decision was made against herbicide use, with mechanical control continuing as an option. The Wallkill Preserve, like most bog turtle sites in northwest New Jersey, was once a wetland cow pasture. The cows controlled the growth of the grasses and bushes, and the turtles sunned on the resulting grass tussocks and hid in the pasture's wet areas. With this in mind, the ENSP decided to introduce livestock to Wallkill's critical turtle habitat.

Goats were the chosen livestock because they eat all types of vegetation, particularly enjoying the young trees and bushes that infringe on turtle habitat. ENSP also hoped that the goats would enjoy eating phragmites for "dessert".



A goat enjoys eating the invasive phragmites at the Wallkill Preserve.

The goat program got underway as fencing was installed; two goats were purchased from a local farmer/breeder. The hungry goats immediately started eating grasses, branches, and sumac. They even enjoyed eating the phragmites. In order to scientifically ascertain the goats' progress, vegetation monitoring plots were designed. By October, with ENSP routinely checking on the goats' welfare and monitoring the plots, the results were in—the goats had successfully placed the invasive phragmites under control. The phragmites stems, which were once over six feet tall now stood at six inches or less.

The goats spent the winter with the farmer/breeder, but due to their great success, will be back again next year, maybe with some friends, to enjoy the "delicious" phragmites. The goat-dining program may take three to four years before their browsing kills the phragmites by depleting the energy reserves stored in the thick roots. Next year, an even larger patch of bog turtle habitat will be available for the goats' culinary delight.

At the Milford Bluffs Preserve in Hunterdon County, the Trust used WHIP funding to plant "cool season" grasses and also to "turn up the heat" with prescribed fire, improving habitat for grassland birds. Two one-acre patches of switchgrass, bluestem, and other native grasses were planted to benefit grassland songbirds and other wildlife. The grasses planted are known as "cool season" grasses, meaning that they flourish from late summer into the cooler seasons. These grasses grow tall and sturdy to provide cover and a valuable seed source for wildlife into the winter months. The grass seed mixture was planted by Trust staff using the Trust's old tractor to plow, disc, and sow. In certain fields, the tractor was also used to create a variety of habitats by mowing a patchwork pattern of successional stages. Other fields were kept uncut to produce further variety between fields.

"Turning up the heat" was accomplished by prescribed burning, which, like mowing, adds variety to the field habitat. At Milford Bluffs, a 17-acre field was burned by a professional fire crew from the NJ Forest Fire Service. After a burn, vigorous spring plant growth occurs due to the ashes providing quick nutrients to the soil and the blackened soil absorbing the sun's warmth. Besides bringing greener new-growth to old fields, prescribed burning also limits the risk of wildfire by reducing the dead grass and brush fuel load. As to the success of the burn, Martin Rapp, Trust Ecologist, said, "I see turkey, deer, and bluebirds in that burned field each time I visit the Preserve." The fire also killed unwanted shrubs, making future mowing easier. The Trust plans to have an additional eleven-acre field burned next year, continuing the improvement of Milford Bluffs' grassland bird habitat.

Finally, at the Trust's Game Branch Preserve in Salem County, WHIP funding was used to improve bobwhite quail habitat. The South Jersey Chapter of Quail Unlimited partnered with the Trust by contracting to mow five acres of field. The mowing,

done in a patchwork pattern, served to maintain the habitat of mixed cover types preferred by bobwhite quail.

The above management projects are important for maintaining and improving wildlife habitats at Trust Preserves. With funding from various sources and a creative mindset, the Trust is able to carryout projects such as these. ♣



Fire crew starts a prescribed burn at the Milford Bluffs Preserve.



The Milford Bluffs Preserve "up in smoke" with a prescribed burn.

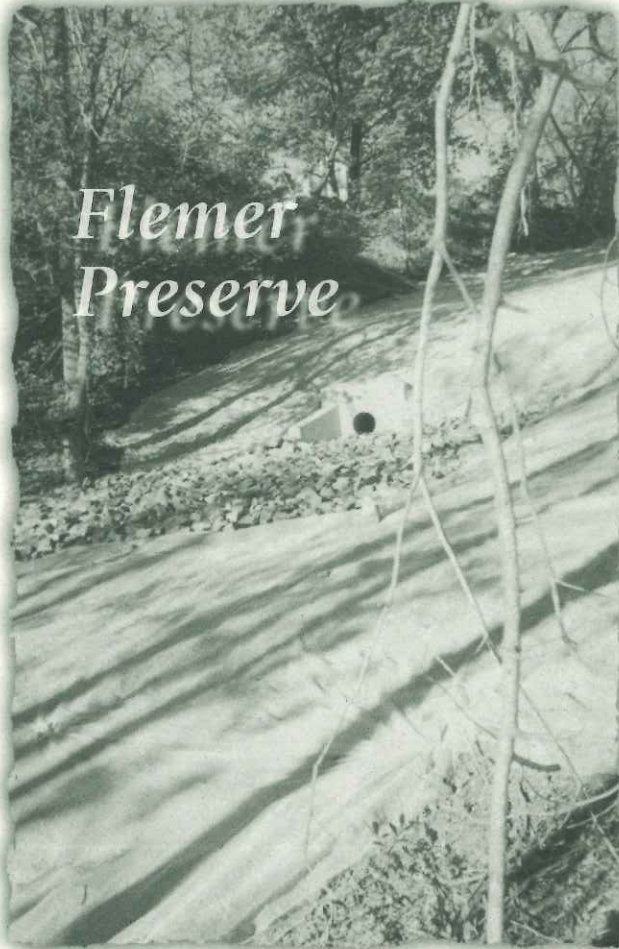
Photo by Martin Rapp

Photo by Martin Rapp

Photo by Martin Rapp

Preventative Management

Trust staff is aware that management projects initiated today can prevent problems in the future. Sometimes this can entail creating a visual presence through something as simple as posting signs. However, on occasion, due to misuse of certain Trust Preserves by a few, gates are needed to enhance the enjoyment of the Preserves by respectful



Erosion control project at the Flemer Preserve.

visitors. In 1999, gates were installed to block vehicular access to John's Woods Preserve in Atlantic County, and Crossley and Tilton's Creek Preserves in Ocean County. The gates are intended to curtail dumping and other problems related to vehicular access, while allowing hikers to enjoy nature without confronting the eyesores caused by improper and inconsiderate use.

Besides installing gates to prevent future problems, preventative management can be used to stop a current problem from becoming worse. At the Trust's Flemer Preserve, Rick Goeke, a neighbor of the Preserve, had noticed a poorly designed storm drain causing serious erosion on a steep slope within the Preserve. Because of Rick's steadfast action in encouraging Franklin Township engineers to alleviate the problem, the site has been stabilized due to a new well-designed storm drain, riprap stones, and the roots of plants on the newly seeded hillside protected by erosion-control blankets. Due to this bit of preventative management, future visitors to the Flemer Preserve will see this steep hill as a part of this scenic natural area with abundant vegetation instead of a barren gully and mudslide. ♻️

Reaching Out to Neighbors at Four Mile Branch

When Hirair and Anna Hovnanian donated acreage to start the 148-acre Four Mile

Branch Preserve, they also donated funds for education and management. In 1999, a portion of the donated funds were used to place a one-ton granite stone with a bronze plaque identifying the Preserve and acknowledging the generosity of the Hovnanians for their contribution. The funds were also used to create a pamphlet to educate the residents of Holiday City at Monroe, the community adjacent to the Preserve, about the existence of the Preserve and about respect for the Preserve's natural environment. The pamphlets were supplied to H. Hovnanian Industries to be distributed to the neighboring Holiday City residents. ♻️



Photo by Martha Windisch

Volunteer & Outreach for the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust

In March 1999, using supplemental monies made possible by an appropriation introduced by Assemblyman Leonard Lance, District 23, the Trust hired Martha Windisch as the Volunteer Coordinator to concentrate on further implementation of the Trust's volunteer program and to promote local stewardship. Martha had previously worked for the Whitesbog Preservation Trust as their Naturalist, Interpreter, and Volunteer Coordinator.

Besides her duties in leading the growth and further development of the volunteer program, Martha has also been busy in her capacity as the Trust's Outreach Coordinator. The outreach components of her job include the necessary tasks related to Trust publications, keeping the mailing list up-to-date, and answering general information inquiries for the Trust. In 1999, the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust Brochure, the Crossley Preserve Brochure, and The Landowner's Options Handbook were revised. The Landowner's Options Handbook is a guide to land protection in New Jersey. This popular informational booklet serves as an introduction to various land protection techniques, and is slated for reprinting in 2000.

As the year 1999 and the last century came to an end, so also the revamping of the Trust's Volunteer Stewardship Program neared completion. The Volunteer Section within the Trustee Handbook has been revised and the Volunteer Handbook to be given to Trust volunteers has been written. Furthermore, a Volunteer Stewardship Program informational brochure, along with various Volunteer Program forms, including a volunteer interest form, a volunteer agreement, and volunteer monitoring forms, have been designed. Lastly, a computer database was developed for volunteer program recordkeeping.

The Volunteer Stewardship Program consists of a monitoring aspect, a management aspect, and an outreach aspect. Job descriptions were developed for each of the three volunteer jobs: Preserve Monitor, Management Assistant, and Preserve Outreach Guide. The Volunteer Coordinator has chosen twenty-five preserves for possible inclusion in the Trust's monitoring program. The selection of preserves for

monitoring was based on the preserve's monitoring needs, accessibility from a road, its use (medium to high), access within the preserve (moderate to easy), and also based on the preserve being protected by Trust ownership in-fee instead of through an easement. Eleven preserves were selected for possible outreach programs, based on their ease of access and suitability for public use. Finally, volunteer preserve management will take place at any Trust preserve where there's a pending management project that is suitable for volunteers and where volunteers suitable for the project are available. Initially, six preserves are on the possible management project list. Since the list of preserves chosen for inclusion in the volunteer program is a working list, it can be adjusted as the need arises or as appropriate opportunities present themselves.

In 1999, three volunteers were trained as Preserve Monitors at the Crossley Preserve. The goal for the year 2000 is to have volunteers conducting periodic monitoring and reporting about public use and management needs at a minimum of six Trust Preserves, to have volunteer outreach guides lead walks at various preserves, and to have volunteers perform several management projects. ☘

Cave Signs Welcome Hikers and Potential Spelunkers

A 1999 project of The New Jersey Cave Conservancy, a group that has successfully partnered with the Trust through the Crooked Swamp Cave management agreement, was to replace the Crooked Swamp Cave entrance signs at the Trust's Crooked Swamp Preserve. The Conservancy handled the details of design, artwork, funding and installation.

The signs inform all visitors that they are at an entrance of the Crooked Swamp Cave and that the cave is under the protection of the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust and

managed by the New Jersey Cave Conservancy. Because the cave entrances are sealed and locked for safety reasons, the signs tell those seeking access information to contact the New Jersey Cave Conservancy.

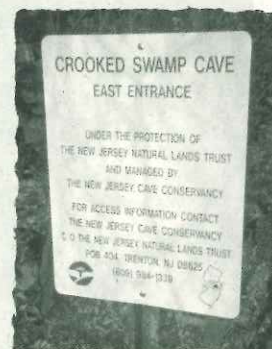


Photo by Martin Rapp

BIG Help from Volunteers and NICE Comments from Visitors at Crossley Preserve

In 1997, a wildfire burned 800 acres of the Crossley landscape. Although the landscape will recover naturally, the bridges and educational signs along the Crossley interpretive hiking trail were destroyed. To rebuild the interpretive trail, the Trust applied to the National Recreational Trails (NRT) grant program for funding. NRT grants, administered by the NJDEP Office of Natural Lands Management, provide funding for various outdoor, multiple-use trails throughout New Jersey. In 1998, the \$1,600 NRT grant to restore and improve Crossley's 1.5-mile

self-guided trail was approved. The grant proposal called for the creation of eighteen interpretive signs, construction of two bridges, and installation of a bench along the trail. The grant funded the building materials and signs, while Trust volunteers offered their services to cover the matching requirements of the grant.

Trust staff quickly got to work drafting text for the interpretive signs. The history of Crossley, a "forgotten" town, was a major focus. Along the trail are remnants of the clay mining industry that once supported the little village of Crossley. Clay mining

left behind a landscape of ponds, wetlands, sandy trails and forest openings. The fact that these habitats have become a refuge for sensitive plants and animals is explained to Crossley Trail visitors through the interpretive signs. The questions that many visitors have about the Crossley forest fire and its aftermath are also answered. With sign text ready, Willie Greve, a talented artist, volunteered her services to illustrate each sign. Her illustrations provided character, action, and harmony to the text. "Willie's work adds a personal accent to our trail's conservation message", said Martin Rapp, Ecologist and Land Manager for the Trust.

The next volunteers to become involved in refurbishing the Crossley Trail were a group of Cub Scouts, Pack 156 from Lacey Township. The Scouts demonstrated

that "many hands make light work" during their enjoyable outdoor experience. On National Trails Day in June 1999, the twenty scouts and their leaders dug holes, toted lumber, cut brush, and hammered nails. When they were done, the job of installing the



Photo by Martin Rapp

Cub Scout Pack 156 working on a bridge on the Crossley Interpretive Trail.

signs and signposts and assembling the two twenty-foot bridges was complete. Thanks to the eager involvement of Trust volunteers, visitors, as they walk the trail, can better understand Crossley's unique cultural history, natural history, and fire ecology.

Once the trail work was complete, Trust staff along with volunteer Lois Morris publicized the "new and improved" Crossley Interpretive Trail. Trust staff redesigned a Crossley one-page flier into an informative pamphlet complete with clip-art illustrations, a Crossley map indicating the location of the trail and parking area, and an invitation for "you, your family, and friends to visit and discover the beauty at Crossley Preserve". Lois Morris provides Crossley pamphlets when she presents her educational Crossley slide show to local citizens groups who are encouraged to visit and help protect the preserve.

Now that the Crossley Interpretive Trail is "back in commission" and being publicized locally, visitors are coming to enjoy it. To keep the trail enjoyable by making sure it remains scenic, litter-free, and with interpretive signs and trail markers intact, Martha, the Trust's Volunteer Coordinator, has solicited volunteer trail monitors. Besides monitoring the trail and informing Trust staff of any problem areas, the monitors are also keeping track of trail visitation. In October 1999, volunteer Owen Heller met Trust staff at Crossley to help install a trail sign-in box. The trail monitors routinely collect completed sign-in cards from the box and make sure there's a fresh supply of cards for future visitors. Since the box's installation, nearly 50 visitors have signed in. They come from as near as next door, from surrounding local communities, and from communities throughout north and south Jersey. They come from as far as New York, North Carolina, Vermont, and even Colorado!

Here's what some of our visitors have to say about the Crossley Interpretive Trail. Several visitors from Toms River commented, "We use the trail about three times a week. We enjoy nature and this is a great trail." A local neighborhood visitor wrote, "My neighbors and I walk the trail as often as possible. I enjoy reading your signs. We love the new bridges and the terrific bench!" A visitor from North Carolina had to say, "I walk the trail once or twice a year while visiting my in-laws. Wonderful to see how

fixed-up the trail has become since last year!" A young boy from New York added, "It is NICE and BIG!" 🌱

For further information on the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust, including information on land donation, donation of monies for land acquisition or management, or information on the Trust's Volunteer Stewardship program, please call Martha Windisch, NJNLT Volunteer/Outreach Coordinator at 609-984-1339.



Trust Volunteer, Owen Heller, and Volunteer Coordinator, Martha Windisch, check the newly installed sign-in box at the Crossley Interpretive Trail.

"Wonderful to see how
fixed-up the trail has become
since last year!"

The New Jersey NATURAL LANDS TRUST

Board of Trustees

An eleven-member Board of Trustees sets policy for the Trust. Six members are appointed by the Governor from the recommendations of a nominating caucus of conservation organizations and five members are State officials. The Secretary/Treasurer is elected by the Board.

Michael Catania, Executive Director of New Jersey Field Office of The Nature Conservancy.

Emile DeVito, Director of Conservation Biology, New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

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