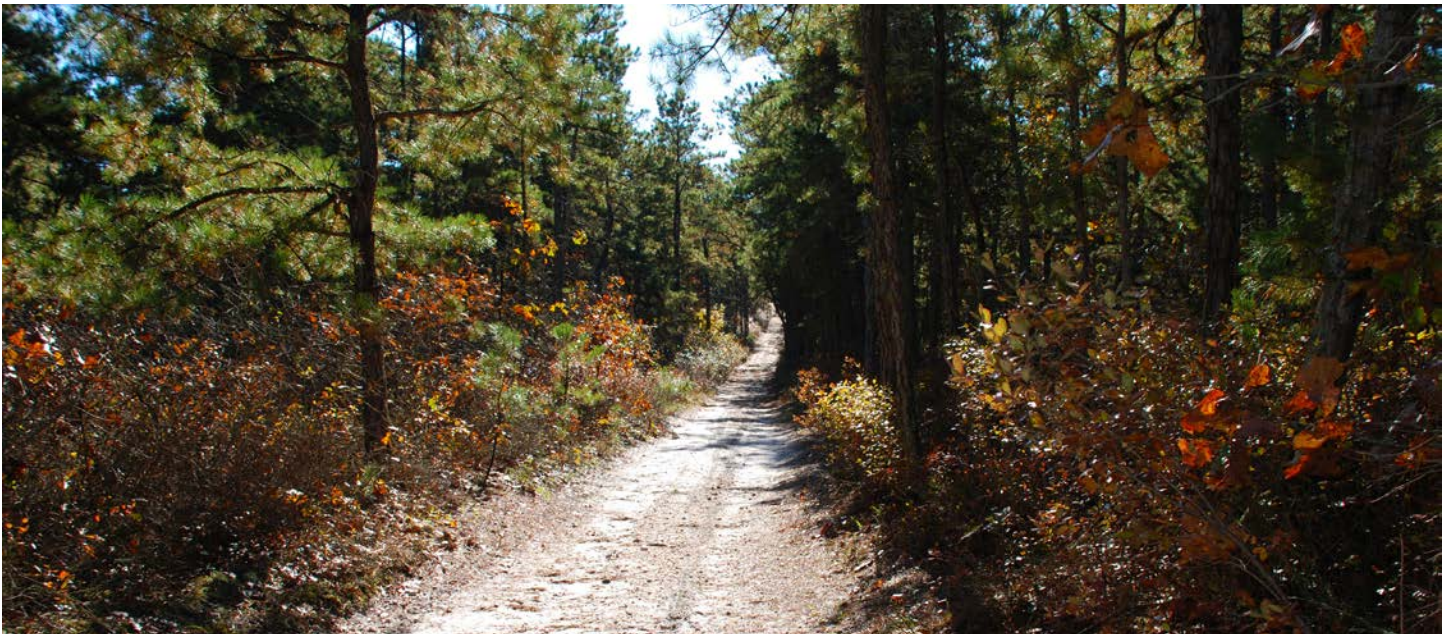


National Grant Award Launches Pinelands Efforts



This year, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey expanded its land preservation focus to include the Pinelands region, which contains vast pine forests, endangered plant and animal species, and miles of undisturbed streams and rivers overlaying one of the largest freshwater aquifers in the nation. We are pleased to announce that we have been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Land Trust Alliance and Open Space Institute to create a land protection plan in the northern and western Pinelands.

The grant represents a major step forward as we begin conserving land in this region. The funds will be used to map sensitive areas so we can focus our efforts on the identification of properties which provide the greatest natural capacity to protect against climate change through the ability to capture and store carbon.

The Pinelands is a 1.1-million-acre treasure, encompassing 22 percent of New Jersey's area over seven

counties and 56 towns. It is the largest body of open space remaining on the eastern seaboard between Richmond and Boston. It is home to the Pine Barrens, the ecological term for habitats that are comprised of sandy, acidic soils where pines, oaks, cedars, blueberries, and cranberries grow. This region was designated as the nation's first national reserve, and also a UN biosphere region. It is also the last place in New Jersey where large tracts of land remain in private ownership and land prices are reasonable, which leaves the area vulnerable to development.

We have established the Pinelands Preservation Fund to purchase and care for properties that The Land Conservancy will own in the Pinelands, including those that we acquire and transfer to partners such as state, county, and local governments for permanent protection. This new fund is the critical catalyst for new land preservation and restoration projects in the Pinelands to mitigate growing threats from development and climate change.



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OUR WARRIOR SANDY

Sandy Urgo, our VP of Land Preservation and Stewardship, recently marked 20 years with TLCNJ. Her indomitable spirit and depth of experience has been a key part of our organization's success in that time.

Our staff honored Sandy at a recent meeting and Aaron Cela, who works on Sandy's team, offered a wonderful tribute.



"Sandy is our warrior. She has faced and conquered more things in her life than the average person will in two lifetimes. She has been a mayor, a lawyer (disclaimer: she has not passed the bar), a mother, a wife, a confidant, a boss, a colleague, and most importantly a champion of the land. She will never rest until every rolling farm, every pristine forest, every stream, wetland, and lake in New Jersey is protected and safe from those who would destroy them. She has taught us that idealism and realism can exist at the same time, and that both are necessary to make effective change in this world.

"So congratulations Sandy, our warrior, on 20 years of fighting for all of us, but most importantly fighting for the land."

REMEMBERING JOHN YINGLING

We were saddened to learn of the passing of John Yingling, who served on the board of The Land Conservancy for 15 years. The son of educators, John went on to serve as the CFO of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for almost two decades. This work dovetailed with his interests in the arts, the natural world, and philanthropy. Once retired, John filled his time contributing to causes dear to him, including our organization, and spending time with friends and family. He will be missed.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE



David doesn't shy away from manual labor! Here he is dismantling a hunter's shack with volunteers from REI.

For the past two years, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey has been building a cadre of dedicated volunteers—people who will come out to do the dirty work of land conservation. While purchasing critical open space may appear to be a series of real estate transactions conducted inside sterile offices, often it's quite the opposite.

To prepare the Split Rock Mountain property for closing, we first had to coordinate the clean-up of debris left behind from decades of dumping. Fortunately, our volunteers and many brought in by our friends at Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO), jumped into the fray. They removed a dozen old cars, 1,000 tires, and six dumpsters of garbage from a property we are purchasing on the Mahwah border. It took 300

volunteers 11 separate clean-up days to get it all done, but we are now ready to complete the purchase of a clean property.

Once The Conservancy owns a property, there is often significant work required to protect the natural values that we treasure. When the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offered us hundreds of large native trees late in the season, we once again contacted our volunteers, who were eager to spring into action. Twenty volunteers braved the rain, mud, clay, and boulders to plant 162 native trees and 90 shrubs at our Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve to establish an overstory that will shade out invasive plants in an overgrown meadow. Their help was critical, as we had to get the trees in the ground before the start of cold weather. A week later, 25 volunteers helped us plant 97 trees at our South Branch Preserve in Mount Olive as well.

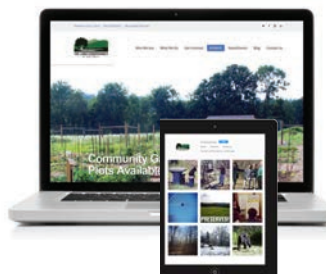
Our dedicated volunteers are the unsung heroes of our conservation work—willing to selflessly lend a hand when we need them most. Their efforts have been instrumental in our ability to clean up and maintain many of our most sensitive properties in a timely manner. If you are interested in joining this effort and making a real difference (and don't mind getting dirty), contact Breanna at bdurkin@tlc-nj.org and she will plug you into this important effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Breanna".

GET MORE FROM THE LAND CONSERVANCY

If you enjoy this newsletter, follow us on social media and sign up for our mailing list. You'll receive occasional dispatches from the field and learn about conservation issues, our preserves and programs, the people and organizations we partner with, and what we're working on in your area. You can also visit tlc-nj.org to read our blog.



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Strike Up the Band!

Awards Abound in 2022



Barbara Heskins Davis and Ken Fung accept the 2022 New Jersey Planning Official Achievement in Planning Award award on behalf of TLCNJ at a ceremony in October.

Here at The Land Conservancy, our staff works hard, and we're proud of their efforts all the time. And the support of members and donors keep our wheels in motion. This year, everyone's contributions have paid big dividends—even bigger than usual. Rounding out 2022 with these awards and accolades is propelling us into the next year with some serious momentum.

At the end of September, TLCNJ was awarded the 2022 New Jersey Planning Official Achievement in Planning Award for our role in expanding farmland protection efforts in the region, and for assisting county and municipal partners in updating and adopting farmland preservation plans. We have completed over 40 of those plans to date, with more in the works!

We are very proud of our planning team, whose hard work and expertise made this award possible. The Land Conservancy is all in when it comes to supporting the work of the work of the state, county, and towns to preserve to preserve New Jersey's beautiful and productive agricultural lands.

Then in November came the news that the New Jersey American Planning Association selected South Branch Preserve as one of the state's 2022 Great Places. The

award recognizes the preservation and restoration of South Branch, and our efforts to open the Preserve to the public. The NJAPA reported that only four applications met the "gold standard" of planning and design. They cited these highlights that impressed them most:

- Importance as a source for drinking water for more than 1 million residents
- Restoration of South Branch from a 16-lot residential subdivision and eight eroding farm fields
- Installation of deer fencing, planting of more than 7,000 trees, a wildflower meadow, and community garden
- Conversion of four corn/soy farm fields into a vegetable farm using organic practices, managed by City Green and supporting SNAP and WIC in Paterson/Passaic
- Partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Paterson & Passaic
- Contributions of Boy Scouts (10 Eagle Scout projects) and Girl Scouts (Silver Awards)



A Pollinator Program student from the Boys & Girls Club of Paterson picks buckwheat at City Green Farm at South Branch Preserve.

- Hub for community outdoor activities—there is a horseshoe pit, land art, picnic benches, 1.5-mile hiking trail, wildlife blind, and community garden.

We are thrilled that the preserve is being recognized statewide as the outstanding outdoor space we all know that it is.

It has also been a good season for grants, which are very important for both general operations and for specific projects to keep moving forward. In an increasingly competitive fundraising landscape, it's gratifying that The Land Conservancy's legacy and strong relationships allow us to maintain a competitive edge, which then makes our work even stronger. This fall has brought a number of grant awards:

- \$30,000 from Victoria Foundation for general operations
- \$12,000 from the Stone Foundation for general operations
- \$15,000 from Johanette Wallerstein Institute for general operations

- \$10,000 from Hyde & Watson for technology upgrades
- \$5,000 from A.P. Kirby Foundation for general operations
- \$7,500 from PSE&G Foundation for Split Rock Mountain stewardship
- \$1,000 from Impact 100 for our Pollinator Program
- \$1,000 from the Frelinghuysen Foundation for general operations

Last but not least, there are the accomplishments of our partners that we celebrate along with them. We are proud of our role in updating Lincoln Park's Open Space Plan, which put them over the top in qualifying for Silver Certification through Sustainable Jersey. This is their third time in a row, which is a remarkable achievement.

From planning to preservation, our staff is committed to working with every stakeholder to keep the garden in the Garden State.

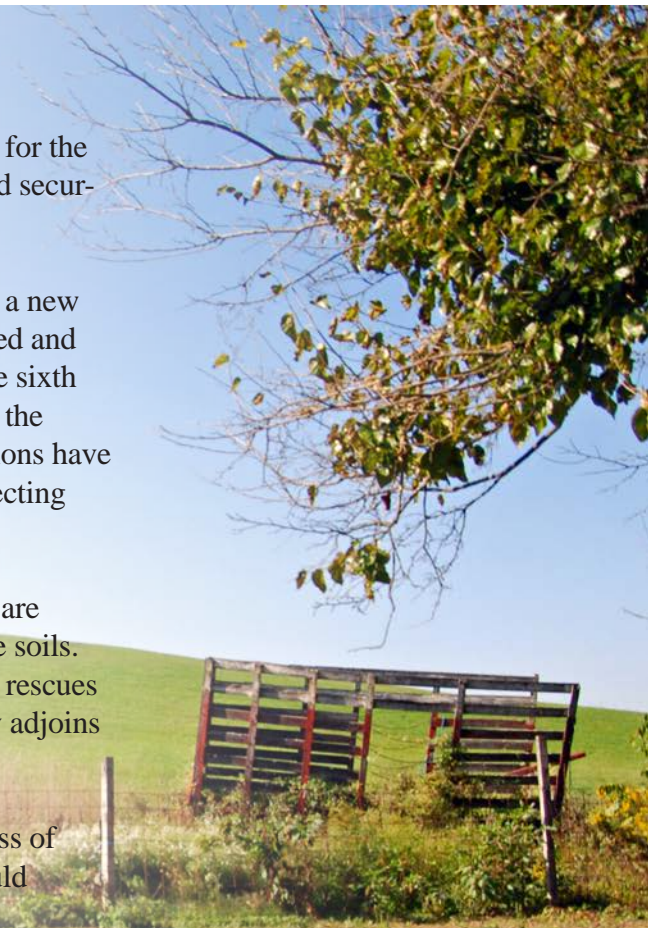
Conservation at the Core

As always, our core work continues: acquiring and preserving land for the public good. We continue to add precious acres to our preserves and securing farmland easements. Here's the progress we've made this fall.

Yards Creek Preserve in Blairstown is now at 301 acres thanks to a new addition from Blairstown Township. The property is entirely wooded and contains headwaters to the Paulins Kill River. This acquisition—the sixth one for Yards Creek Preserve—was made possible with the help of the Open Space Institute and The Nature Conservancy. Both organizations have targeted the Delaware River Watershed as a critical region for protecting climate resilient land and water resources.

On the farm front, we preserved **33 acres in Green Township** that are especially valuable because over half the property consists of prime soils. In Hope, we recently closed on a **45-acre farm** that grows hay and rescues animals. They have horses, donkeys and chickens, and the property adjoins another large, preserved farm next door.

Would you believe that we also have 1,500 more acres in the process of being preserved? In 2022 we hit 29,000 acres, and in 2023 we should see the milestone of 30,000 acres. Stay tuned!



Volunteers Put Down Roots at Preserves



ABOVE: A native oak tree seedling at Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve—one of 150 trees our volunteers planted this fall. BELOW: New volunteers contributed a youthful energy to the tree planting at South Branch Preserve.



Planting trees is one of the best tools we have to slow the connected crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Trees give off oxygen that we need to breathe. They reduce storm water runoff, which means less erosion and pollution in our waterways, and mitigate flooding in extreme weather. Many species of birds and mammals depend on trees for food, protection, and homes.

So when U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offered us 250 native hardwood trees plus various shrubs to plant at our preserves, we jumped at the chance. Over two weeks, 35 volunteers helped us install these seedlings at Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve in West Milford and South Branch Preserve in Mt. Olive.

The West Brook portion was especially arduous. Stony soil made shoveling difficult, so the work went more slowly than we expected. The second day it rained, which presented an additional challenge, but we got all the trees in the ground. We couldn't have done it without our hardworking contractor Rocky digging the holes with his earth mover, so big thanks to him!

Conditions were more favorable at South Branch, where we were adding to an existing forest, replacing seedlings that hadn't survived and digging far fewer holes. Everyone enjoyed the conversations sparked in the sunshine by our shared purpose, between shoveling dirt and staking seedlings.

The trees planted by our staff and volunteers were grown and cared for by inmates at Bayside State Prison in Cumberland County. The prison partners with USFWS to raise native plants for environmental projects all over New Jersey. Bayside's long-term horticultural program offers valuable job skills and apprenticeships that inmates can use upon their release. One greenhouse worker, set to be released soon, is a lifetime outdoorsman who looks forward to visiting the young forest his efforts helped to establish.

This season's tree planting complements the long-term conservation work under way at both locations, from the pollinator meadows at South Branch to the stream restoration on the West Brook. An essential component of this work is doing it in the context of this community of people who care about the land. It energizes us and helps keep us going. We're working hard every day to care for our environment, and we're so happy that you, our members and volunteers, are along for the ride.

Building Community Through Nature

Bringing nature lovers together for a purpose feeds The Land Conservancy's work in so many ways: it can raise funds, recruit new members, educate people about the importance of conservation work, and create new friendships. Our events this fall hit all those marks.

In September, a small but mighty group rode in the second annual Land Conservancy Fondo. The riders had spectacular weather, sunny and 58 degrees, when they left early from Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve. As they rode around the hills of Passaic County, a bald eagle greeted them at Greenwood Lake, and the ride back to West Milford offered breathtaking views of the Appalachian Trail. Thanks to our riders and their friends, we raised \$6,200 to preserve more of these beautiful places they rode past.

This season also saw the return of our Partners for Parks program, which went quiet in 2020 due to the pandemic. We offer corporations and civic organizations fun, satisfying service projects in public parks in their communities, and the land gets much-needed attention. Since 1996, Partners for Parks has completed 487 projects with more than 8,475 volunteers, winning awards all along the way. So we were delighted to revive it this fall with REI, who sent a team of volunteers out to do trail maintenance at our Ramapough Mountain Preserve in Mahwah. They even tackled the tough job of taking down an old hunting lean-to, so now hikers will have a clear view as they hike around the pond.

Some of our community events are all about fun—no work necessary. We continued our Happy Hour Hike series into October and November, with Linda showing an energetic group around Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve's fall foliage. The water was low because of this year's drought, but everyone got to see some interesting flora and fauna. Plus Linda always makes learning fun!

Then in November, we led a full moon hike through lesser-known South Branch Preserve South. The sky was perfectly clear as we walked a moonlit path to a meadow where we stargazed, called for owls, and snacked on hot tea and ginger snaps. Oh, what a night! The energy was so great that several people requested that we keep organizing hikes through the winter. We're happy to oblige, so we've scheduled a First Day hike of the loop at South Branch South on January 1, 2023. If you'd like to participate, please sign up on our website at tlc-nj.org.



This team from REI completed an ambitious trail cleanup at Ramapough Mountain Preserve.



Happy hour hikes with our house biologist Linda are always well attended. She's a great teacher!



The Land Conservancy Fondo team enjoyed a beautiful fall ride through the hills of Passaic County.

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Tell Us Your Thoughts!



The Land Conservancy of New Jersey is conducting a survey to find out more about our community and your needs.

Please take a few minutes to tell us how we can serve you better by using the QR code or visiting the link.

We'd like to hear from you!



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