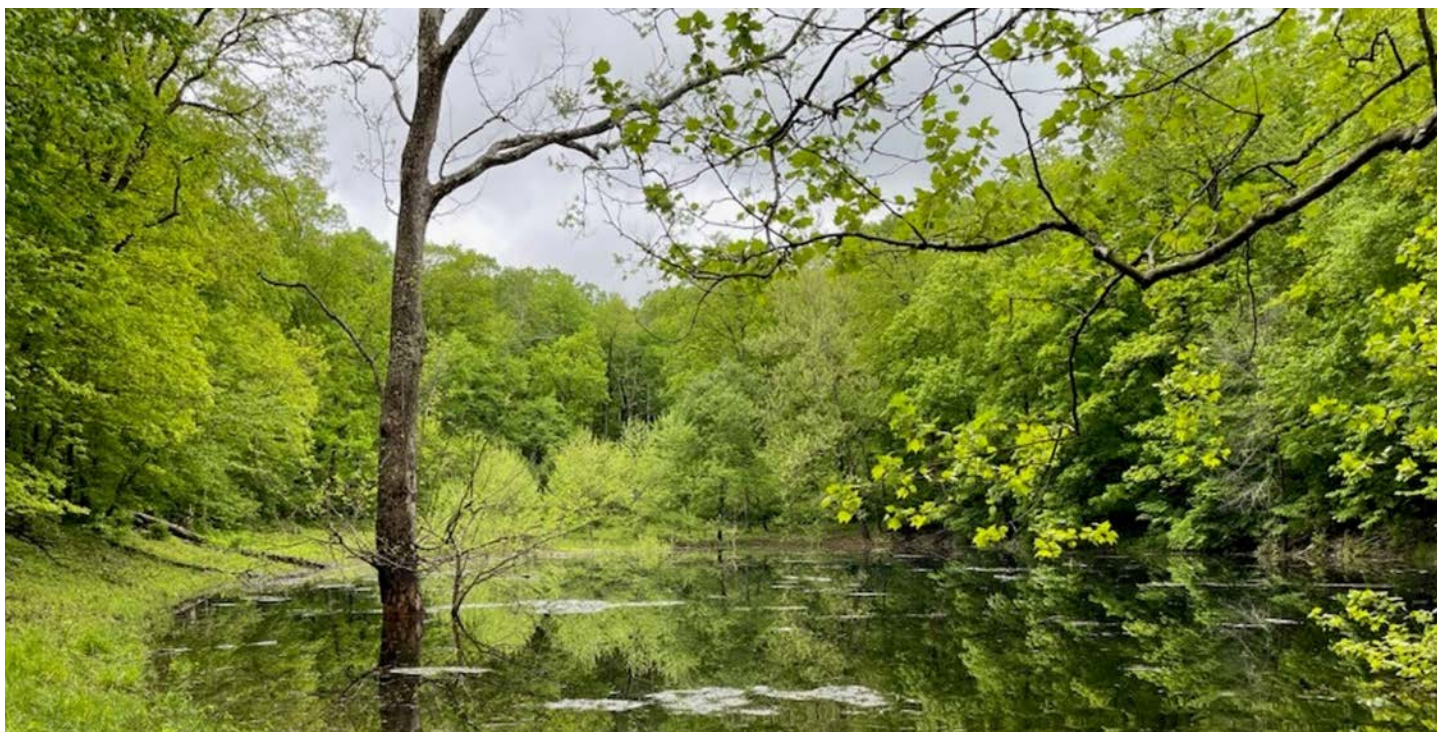


Limestone Forest Preserve Completes Sussex County Greenway



They say good things come to those who wait, and this most recent accomplishment takes that sentiment to the extreme. After 22 years of effort, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey finally closed on 248 acres in Sussex County's Hampton Township in June. Dubbed Limestone Forest Preserve because of its limestone ridges, this acquisition has us celebrating for a number of reasons.

Importantly, 95 percent of Limestone Forest Preserve is forested, with a classic ridge and valley terrain of rolling hills and valleys. In addition to wonderful species like maidenhair fern and yellow-spotted salamander there are several endangered plant species and even two globally rare plants that thrive in calcareous habitats, on this property. In addition, two significant

sinkhole ponds contribute to a high-quality and globally rare wetland community.

The Land Conservancy has been working to preserve this property for 22 years, working with three generations of landowners. We began negotiations with the property owner in 2003, then worked with his son and grandson after his passing to preserve the property. And it's worth the effort: these 250 acres fill the "hole in the donut" of a greenway that The Land Conservancy has been building for decades, preserving 1,000 acres in 14 different projects over the past two decades. It is a key part of a longtime Conservancy effort to preserve limestone forests and establish a greenway to connect the Paulinskill Wildlife Management Area to Swartswood State Park.

(Continued on page 2)



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Limestone Forest Preserve, cont'd

Now that the land deal is finished, we are working towards preparing the preserve to host the public. Eventually the property may be transferred to the NJ Natural Lands Trust for long-term ownership and management. Many times, it seemed this day would never come. But this property is now preserved in perpetuity and wow, it was worth waiting for!



Hampton Twp., NJ

Hike 'n Slide ~ Limestone Forest

© 2008 Sandy Urgo

2008 hike at Limestone Forest Preserve. Pictured: Tricia Aspinwall, Laura Sz-wak, Sandy Urgo, Tanya Nolte.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE



I am extremely passionate about the study of nature. I started becoming a self-taught naturalist in my early teens, and it has kept me aware of the natural world. As a birder, I am always listening for different bird calls. I never get tired of watching the progression of spring as it moves along. I grew up mostly in northern New Jersey, and I really enjoy the diverse habitat of our state: the beaches, bays, pinelands, rivers, and forested mountains. Every day is a nature adventure.

I have been the Stewardship Manager for The Land Conservancy of New Jersey since 2007. My

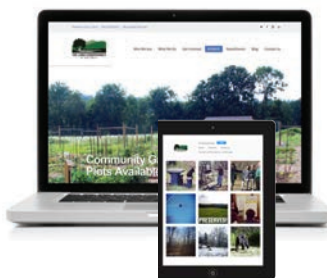
job is to take care of the 2,000+ acres of land that we either own or have easements on in Passaic, Bergen, Sussex, Warren, and Morris counties. I periodically inspect each property, do baseline inspections of new potential preserves, and perform regular trail maintenance, tree planting, property restoration, community garden maintenance, posting of each property we manage, and many other tasks. I keep a growing list of flora and fauna on our preserves. From spring through fall each year, I work with and teach interns how to maintain these preserves so that after they graduate they can look back and see how everything in nature fits in.

I look forward to further contributing to the great work that TLCNJ does, and I can't wait to check out our next preserve—wherever it might be. Find some time in your life to get outside and take a hike on one of our preserves. Enjoy the peacefulness that we all need for a sound mind and body. Immerse yourself in nature. Listen to the birds. Smell the flowers. It is extremely important for everyone to have places that we can go to get away from the everyday grind.

Dennis Briede
Stewardship Manager

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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\$70,000 in Scholarships Awarded; Meet the Winners!

We are thrilled to introduce the winners of this year's Land Conservancy scholarships. In 2025 we were able to award seven scholarships of \$10,000 each! For 41 years our organization has been proudly supporting future environmental leaders who are training for careers protecting our natural resources. Our scholarship program started in 1983 with the Russell W. Myers Scholarship, followed by the Rogers Family Scholarship in 2005, and it has grown exponentially since then. Let's meet the impressive group of students who will be shaping the future of conservation in New Jersey.

Cora Attias-Inzano from Hillsborough is a senior at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, studying forest ecology and conservation. She is saving American beech trees, which are currently threatened by the rapid spread of beech leaf disease—a new and deadly threat. Cora aspires to test management plans and treatments that might save American beeches. This photo shows Cora at the Watershed Institute in Pennington with the first beautiful beech in which she discovered infection, inspiring her work to save others like it.



Dylan Cawley, a native of Long Valley, is a senior at Duke University studying public policy and environmental science. His research looks at how state systems for disaster response can become more efficient and equitable for communities across the United States. A Voyager Scholar and Udall honorable mention, Dylan has spent two summers fighting dozens of wildfires and



hopes to transform how the government prepares for, responds to, and manages disasters. After graduation, Dylan will commission as a second lieutenant out of Air Force ROTC and attend grad school before entering officer training.

Kayla MacKinnon is from Bloomsbury and just graduated from Villanova University with a BS in environmental science and a BA in Spanish studies with a double major in geography. She will be completing her master's in climate science and engineering at Northeastern University. Kayla has a strong interest in aquatic biogeochemistry and found a passion in geospatial analyses such as ArcGIS and flying drones. She hopes to one day teach others through informal environmental education. Some of her most notable lessons came from playing outside and she hopes to increase access to environmentalism for others.



Claire Paul from Flemington is attending Western Colorado University's for a master's in environmental management. Claire's water quality research on Budd Lake with Raritan Headwaters Association dovetails with her interest in freshwater ecosystems. She spent the past two years with the AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassadors Program, holds a BS in biology from The College of New Jersey, and is a Kingston Greenways Association trustee. Claire hopes to continue her research mitigating harmful algal blooms as she works towards a PhD.



Dhruv Rungta, who hails from Edison, is studying economics, ecology, and sustainable development at Duke University. He's passionate about protecting ecosystems—and the human communities that depend on them—by bridging science and law. Most recently, he interned at the U.S. Department of Justice, serving on an interagency team with the FBI and EPA to investigate high-profile environmental crimes with significant equity implications. This summer he's supporting NOAA law and enforcement efforts in American Samoa and Hawaii. Dhruv aspires to become an attorney-scientist working to conserve our vital natural resources and advance stronger, more equitable protections.



Odera Umeh from Orange is a passionate and extraordinary PhD candidate in environmental science and management at Montclair State University. His expertise spans water resources management, environmental toxicology, aquatic species conservation, environmental policy, and sustainability. Odera is tackling some of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time, currently focusing on addressing PFAS crises in New Jersey drinking water systems and aquatic species, and how best to involve the community in sustainable remedial strategies. He is poised to dedicate his career to identifying and restoring threatened natural resources in New Jersey, while empowering communities to become active environmental stewards.



Lily VanWingerden of Ocean City discovered a love for conservation while creating a native plant garden at a county park to support local insect populations. Lily is majoring in environmental sciences with a GIS certificate at Oregon State University. Her projects also include transcribing ornithology field journals for the

Academy of Natural Sciences and collecting data on diamondback terrapins for Stockton University. In her current and future work, she hopes to prioritize environmental education and communication so she can encourage more individuals to take direct action for environmental issues.

Every year we're wowed by the achievements of our scholarship winners, who seem to keep getting more and more impressive in their accomplishments and goals.

And 2025 is no exception. Congratulations, everyone!



YOU HELPED US RAISE

\$226,368

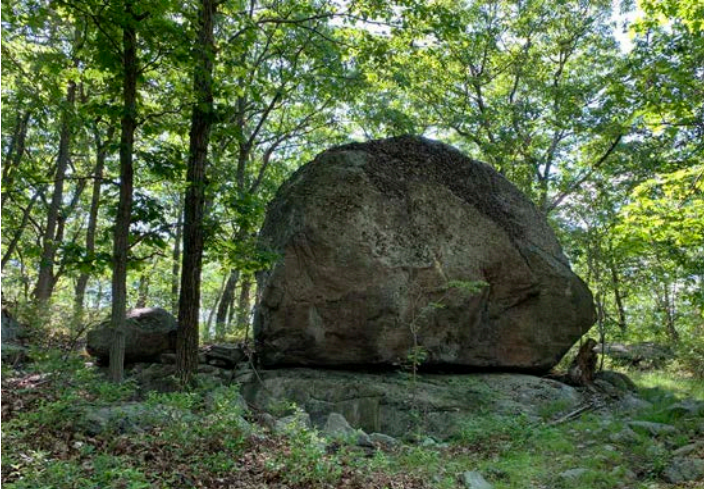
**FOR OUR END OF FISCAL
YEAR CAMPAIGN**

THANK YOU!

This campaign supports TLCNJ's most urgent projects like restoration efforts at the West Brook, expanding Wildcat Ridge Wildlife Management Area, and preserving land in West Milford to expand Wawayanda State Park.

With every contribution, you're voicing your support for protecting and restoring New Jersey's natural resources. And we're so grateful for it.

Split Rock Access Secured



The Great Turtle entrance to Split Rock Mountain.

If you've been following The Land Conservancy's work for the last few years, you've probably heard about the long journey to save Split Rock Mountain from public auction and return this sacred place to the Ramapo Munsee tribe, its original stewards.

A decade ago, TLCNJ was planning to acquire a trail easement over Split Rock Mountain, a little-known geological treasure brought by a glacier during the last ice age thousands of years ago, but found that the property was to be auctioned for development. During our research we started meeting with Ramapo Munsee tribal leaders, and they informed us that Split Rock Mountain was their most spiritually sacred site—the place their ancestors had cherished to look down upon

their homeland, to hold ceremonies and debate important matters. At this point, we knew we had to get more involved.

What we thought would be a few months of staff time turned into a four-year saga to stop the auction and help the tribe establish New Jersey's first indigenous land trust. TLCNJ and the Ramapo Munsee worked diligently with community groups, funders, and local government. We completed a cleanup of truly epic proportions, eliminated the steep taxes, and raised private funds to acquire the property and donate it to the newly formed Ramapo Munsee Land Alliance (RMLA).

But a thorny matter remained: the property did not include access to a road. There was no public access for the tribal members to reach Split Rock Mountain; the only route was through private property. So we worked for another two years to purchase and subdivide an adjacent ten acres of land that contained the ancient trail up the mountain. The landowners retain ownership of their home and five acres of land, and the rest was preserved. Known locally as Owl Woods, this property contains the ancestral path and Great Turtle entrance to Split Rock Mountain as well as mature forest and animal habitat.

We are proud to announce that this has been completed, and that permanent access to this remarkable site has been secured for the Ramapo people.

Gray Cup Tournament Raises \$170,000

Huge thanks to those who joined us for a day of golfing on a world-class course to raise money to support our work. A wonderful time was had by all! Most importantly, this event raised \$170,000 to support our conservation work, including \$117,000 to help purchase 123 acres in Rockaway Township that will connect Wildcat Ridge Wildlife Management Area to the West Morris Greenway—a planned 25-mile rail trail that will connect Rockaway Township in the north to Washington Township in the south. TLCNJ helped establish Wildcat Ridge Hawkwatch in 2000 to preserve populations of endangered hawks, owls, and increasingly rare songbirds, and 20 years later we're still hard at work here.



Connecting Through Community

The Land Conservancy's mission is to protect New Jersey's natural resources, of course, but it's also about connecting with the people who use them. We love connecting with our communities through volunteer days, education, and fun activities.

In June, the Wild Woods Restoration Project organized spring seedling potting days for the second year in a row. We were delighted that scholarship winner Odera Umeh showed up to help out and joined the folks getting their hands dirty to join the restoration effort at Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve.

A local Girl Scout troop did something similar at South Branch Preserve, planting American chestnut tree saplings and marking them to monitor as they grow up over the next few years. We're hoping they thrive in their new home!

Our team had the opportunity to go out into the community in July to participate in Warren County's bicen-

ennial celebration. We met so many of our neighbors and got to share with them the land and water preservation we've been doing in northwest New Jersey for the past 20 years. We made games to encourage folks to learn about invasive species, and we handed out lots of unique swag like the bandanas modeled by the cuties pictured above. So much fun!



FACING PAGE: Scholarship winners Kayla MacKinnon and Claire Paul were TLCNJ's guests at the Gray Cup dinner and shared a bit about themselves and their research with the attendees.

LEFT: Participants in the Gray Cup tournament enjoyed good food, good times, and camaraderie after a drizzly day on the links at Hamilton Farm.



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Join the Legacy Giving Circle

The Legacy Giving Circle celebrates those who have named The Land Conservancy of New Jersey in their estate plans, like Teresa Finlay. She says, “New Jersey has an incredible variety of beautiful open space that has been quietly preserved over many years, thanks to institutions like The Land Conservancy of New Jersey. I have committed to make a legacy gift to them knowing that my gift will be used effectively and responsibly, and that a little time and thought now will pay off far into the future.”

By joining our Legacy Giving Circle, you will play a vital role in safeguarding our state’s natural splendor, protecting its biodiversity, and nurturing a sustainable future for all. Visit bit.ly/TLCNJlegacy or click the QR code to find the form.



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