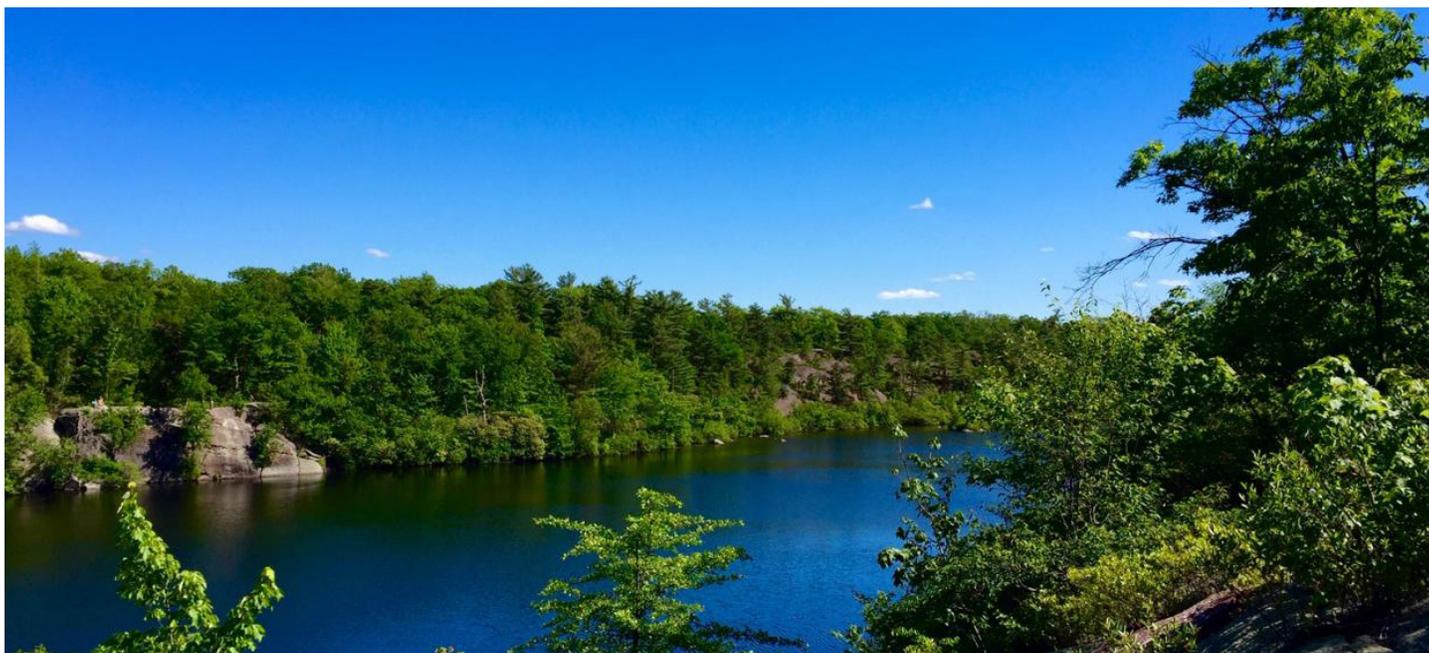


Wawayanda State Park Expanded, Habitat Preserved, Public Trail Access Secured



Nestled between Wawayanda State Park and Abram S. Hewitt State Forest is a lush rhododendron forest full of mountain laurel, eastern hemlock, oaks, birches, and striped maple. The Land Conservancy recently completed the purchase of this small but important tract of land that secures permanent public access for the Terrace Pond North Trail, which runs through the property. It will also act as a buffer for the timber rattlesnakes and northern copperheads that live in the nearby cliffs. The 2.5 acres were purchased from private owner Norma Schadegg with open space funds from the NJDEP in partnership with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Green Acres, and private donors. It will be donated to the State of New Jersey and become an addition to Wawayanda State Park.

Many players worked together and made compromises to achieve this result. Bob and Estelle Jonas of the

Trail Conference emphasized that “moving the trail was not an option, losing the section of trail and access to Terrace Pond was definitely not an option. Thanks to The Land Conservancy for stepping in to preserve this property.”

After working so long on this project, our land team is relieved and pleased. Project manager Linda Glosinski summed it up well: “Although small in size, preserving the land was key in securing the last section of the Terrace Pond Trail North. This trail should be on everyone’s bucket list, as the vistas are breathtaking, especially in fall. Working with the owner, Norma Schadegg, was a pleasure and we thank her for the bargain sale. We also want to thank our partners at the NYNJTC, and the generous donors who made this a reality.”



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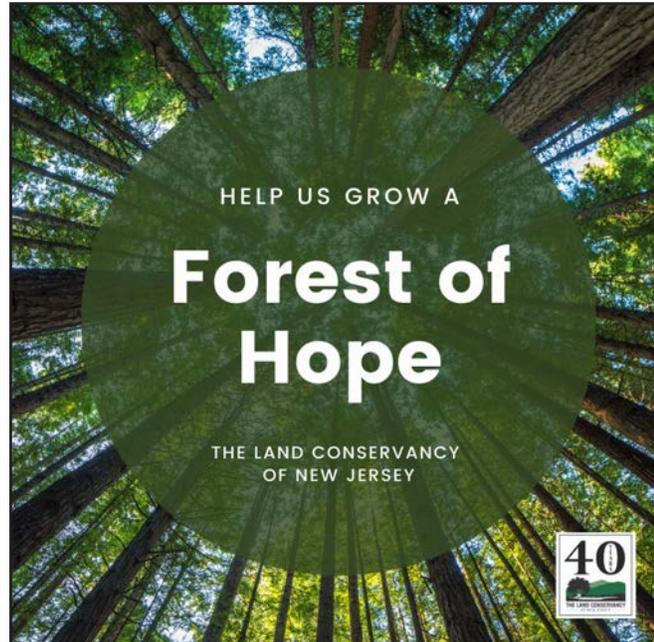
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THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY
19 BOONTON AVENUE | BOONTON, NJ 07005
PH: (973) 541-1010 | WWW.TLC-NJ.ORG



South Branch Preserve in Mt. Olive is an important site for both ecology and recreation. It contains the headwaters of the Raritan River's South Branch, as well as forest restoration areas, butterfly meadows, trails, a bird blind, the South Branch Community Garden, land art, a farm managed by City Green, and more.

Currently, we do not have a permanent fund to help maintain the continuous care of South Branch Preserve. We're planting a Forest of Hope so The Land Conservancy has the resources to care for this land into the future.

Donors can choose from a variety of trees—oak, maple, poplar, pawpaw, or persimmon—that will be planted in the reforestation area of the preserve. We will recognize donations with a sign on site as well as a dedicated webpage. Donations will be placed in the Jason Andris Stewardship Fund and will be used exclusively for stewardship purposes.

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE



Vice President of Land Preservation Sandy Urgo

American humorist Mark Twain, who had a knack for turning simple words into iconic phrases, once said, “Buy land, they’re not making it anymore.” We really get that!

We have preserved 500 acres so far this year. The properties range from a .15 acre parcel in East Hanover to a sprawling 224 acre farm in Frelinghuysen. Each was thoughtfully led into preservation by our staff.

We acquired the last small piece in West Milford necessary to secure the north access to Bearfort Mountain and Terrace Pond. We relied on a beloved donor whom we have come to know as Uncle Bob, because like a favorite uncle, he is dedicated to our success—and he’s very generous! The landowner and two longtime Trail Conference volunteers also recognized the importance of securing this segment and made generous contributions. No matter how knowledgeable and enthusiastic our staff is, we need friends we can rely on.

Murlan Farm, another property we recently preserved, will always be a farm because of our hard work. But we would not have had the opportunity were it not for its owner, Rick Murphy, who understood the intrinsic value of the land and committed significant resources toward acquiring it.

We also added 50 acres to Ramapo Mountain Preserve this year. We had assistance from dozens of volunteers, provided by the Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO). Working countless hours, they are helping us clean up Houvenkopf Mountain, one parcel at a time.

We also expanded our Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve, a fitting tribute to our beloved past chairwoman. As we continue to nurture this land, we hope that Nancy’s family and friends will keep visiting and finding solace. We are very grateful for their support, which has enabled us to care for this special place.

Finally, we were able to bring the Route 24/NJDOT project in Hanover Township to a close. Administrator Joe Giorgio stuck with it and believed in our staff’s ability to seal the deal. This land, which was once considered for highway purposes, will now forever be maintained as open space.

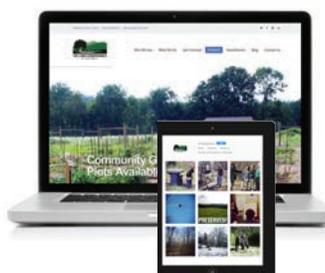
Our enthusiasm for this work knows no bounds, and our appreciation for the many friends who enable it, enrich it, and applaud it is similarly boundless. They may not be making land anymore, but thanks to the support of our many generous friends, the staff of The Land Conservancy of New Jersey continues to enthusiastically work to preserve what is left!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Sandy Urgo".

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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Edison Passes Referendum for Open Space Trust Fund

In the November 2 election, Edison Township gave residents an opportunity to create a stable source of funding for parks, recreation, and open space by establishing an open space trust fund. In 2018, an effort to do so lost by only 300 votes. The township enlisted The Land Conservancy to educate voters and get the word out.

In densely populated Edison, green spaces are precious, and industry has claimed much of the scenic property on the Raritan River. For example, developers are looking to build a warehouse on Silver Lake Road, but the township can purchase this land and transform it into a public park—if they can raise the money. A fund to improve and expand parks and recreation seems like a no-brainer, but since this measure came with a small tax increase, voter education was essential.

Thanks to a team of TLCNJ staff and dedicated community groups, the message was widely distributed and well received. The ballot question passed by a comfortable margin.

Keeping the “Garden” in the Garden State

The Land Conservancy’s planning department, headed up by Barbara Heskins Davis, worked on 18 different open space and farm plans this year, all the way from Vernon up in Sussex County down to Franklin Township down in Gloucester County.

These towns run the gamut from small to large, agricultural to industrial, and their needs are all different. Verona and Montville are trying to figure out how to make the most of their parks and add more green spaces to their bustling suburbs, while Warren County is adopting a preserved farmland plan for the first time in order to maintain the bucolic countryside its residents love so much—helping them preserve the “garden” in the Garden State we all love so much. What all of these projects have in common is that they will improve the quality of life for their residents and communities.

It’s especially gratifying to see so many of the entities we work with receiving funding from the state to leverage their contributions. In October, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection announced the recipients of Green Acres funding for 2021, and we are proud that many of our friends are on that list. In addition, The Land Conservancy received \$1 million to use for future land acquisition, as well as \$60,000 for our Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve.



TLCNJ planning intern Hiyabu Habtemichael (far right) toured farms for potential preservation in Washington Township (Warren County) with Rachel DeFlumeri, SADC; Joel Schmetzer, Agricultural Advisory Committee; and Councilman Ralph Fiore.

A Path to Restore the Ramapo Munsee Nation

Momentum is building across all sectors to return Split Rock Mountain to the indigenous Ramapough Munsee people. It's a complex process, but The Land Conservancy is up for the challenge, eager to help this community we've worked with for over a decade gain back some of what they lost centuries ago.

One significant step toward success is establishing the Ramapo Munsee Land Alliance, a nonprofit land trust that will allow the nation to conduct business, care for the land, and establish gathering places where they can educate future generations. Indigenous-led groups have found that blending cultural practices and traditions with Western science provides the most effective approach to protecting and stewarding the land and waters. This newly formed land trust will allow the Ramapough Lunaape Nation to have full ownership and decision making on their lands, allowing them to honor their culture and traditions.

Local government is investing in this as well, illustrated most recently by the Rockland County legislature's hearing for the Sewer District to sell Split Rock Mountain to The Land Conservancy of New Jersey. About 50 people were in the audience, mainly tribal members, and every speaker spoke in favor of preserving the property. Archeologist David Johnson spoke persuasively on the importance of preserving the



property's unique archeological features. Chief Perry described its troubled history and emphasized the importance of securing this area for the tribe's future. The legislators listened intently, and afterwards several of them spoke from their hearts about the importance of returning this land to the tribe. A motion to allow for the sale of the land was unanimously approved, and they received a standing ovation from the crowd. It is now a matter of public law that The Land Conservancy will be purchasing Split Rock Mountain, though the timeframe remains unclear.

Finally, across the border in Mahwah, the community has been showing up to enthusiastically demonstrate their support for the Ramapough by cleaning up decades of illegal dumping at Stag Hill, week after week. The Land Conservancy has partnered with MEVO (Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization) for a series of eight cleanups, the most recent of which boasted over 100 volunteers who carried hundreds of tires down the mountain after previous efforts had collected many dumpsters full of trash, from car entire car frames to household rubbish.

It remains inspiring to help lead this movement striving for environmental justice, and to see how many people are joining us in this historic effort.



Go Outside & Play (& Learn, too!)

As part of our year-long 40th anniversary celebration, and to offer some relief from the anxiety and isolation of this long pandemic, we launched a slate of community events this year to encourage people to spend time out in nature, connecting with each other safely and learning new things.

We learned about the importance of chestnut trees in the spring, and in October there was a children's day celebrating the autumnal equinox where kids looked for gnomes in a scavenger hunt, made magic wands, and snacked on local apples. Many people came out for volunteer days to plant native seedlings in the pollinator fields at South Branch Preserve and to clean up decades of illegal dumping at Stag Hill in Mahwah.

Our staff may have been most excited about the Happy Hour Hike series. We invited people to come out on a weeknight for an easy guided hike to learn about the flora and fauna at our preserves,

and afterwards we enjoyed a refreshing beverage at a nearby craft brewery. Our resident biologist and eagle-eyed guide Linda Glosinski enthusiastically showed visitors the interesting frogs, salamanders, plants, and mushrooms hidden all over our Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve. We also got an in-depth look at how the West Brook has improved since last year's restoration.



These community events have been so successful that we'll be continuing them in 2022. Our aim is to raise awareness about the preserves we own and care for, reminding people that nature is for everyone to enjoy and learn from. We plan to continue the Happy Hour Hike series as well as introduce educational opportunities that will highlight some of the hidden and unusual features of New Jersey's landscapes and habitats. We have some terrific partner organizations with specialized knowledge like gardening, animal tracking, trailblazing, geology, managing invasive species, and so much more.

So keep an eye out for future events, and if you haven't joined us for any of these events yet, you should! Be sure to join our mailing list and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to get the latest information about programming and events.

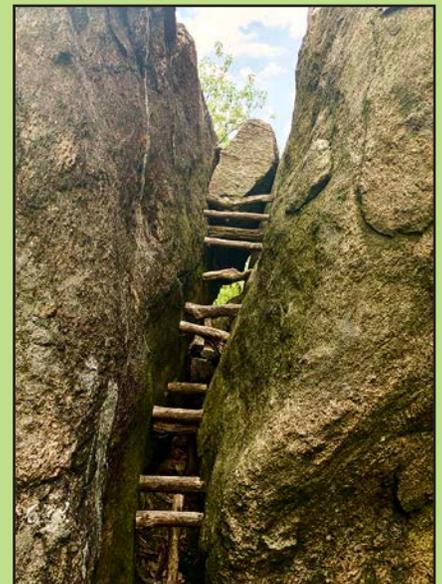


Also, don't forget that some of our preserves are great locations for community events and outdoor gatherings of your own. We work with those who do scout projects, hikes for the differently abled, outside yoga, native plants, and nature education for city kids. See you soon!

End of Fiscal Year Success

After the incredible success of last year's 2020 end of fiscal year campaign, we decided to run another. With the support of staff and board members, we were able to surpass last year's numbers and bring in a total of \$229,920 to sustain our projects and protect critical properties.

It began once again with a generous donation of \$10,000 from an anonymous couple, who urged us to challenge lapsed donors and recruit new members. The highlighted project of the campaign was Split Rock Mountain, a unique opportunity to preserve indigenous land and return it to the native Ramapough Lenape Nation. This project has sparked a lot of interest, and as a result we raised over \$160,000—\$40,000 more than last year—and the membership drive brought in 40 new members and 113 renewals. Overall, the campaign gave a huge boost to our fundraising efforts and helped secure a culturally significant site that we will work to return to its original inhabitants.



Introducing Our New Planning Fellowship!

We've given our internship program a glow-up, with two new full-year planning fellowships to individuals with a graduate degree who are starting careers in conservation. TLCNJ will be sharing valuable expertise, technology, and relationships for a solid year to benefit these fellows, and in turn they give us a boost with their energy and fresh perspectives.

We are pleased to announce Rachel Hammelman and Hiyabu Habtemichael as the inaugural class of Land Conservancy fellows. They're both sharp and enthusiastic, terrific to work with, and headed for great things.

Congratulations, Rachel and Hiyabu!

