

2021 ANNUAL REPORT





COVER: Milkweed in autumn at South Branch Preserve, Mt. Olive. Photo by Kate Munning.
THIS PAGE: The West Brook flowing freely at Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve. Photo by Steve Aaron.

2021

THE LAND CONSERVANCY
OF NEW JERSEY

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Our staff once again accomplished many remarkable things in 2021, proving that whether they are working in an office, at home, or in a field or forest, their enthusiasm for our work knows no bounds. We completed 14 acquisition projects to preserve a total of 584 acres, including additions to our Ramapo Mountain, Nancy Conger West Brook, and Yards Creek preserves. We secured three farmland easements, including the 224-acre Murlan Farm in Frelinghuysen. We helped acquire the 74-acre former right-of-way for a planned expansion of Route 24 in Hanover, which will now become a nature preserve and hiking trail. We also assisted the Ramapough Lenape Indian Nation in establishing a new land trust and accessing land stewardship funding.

Thanks to the generosity of our members and friends, we were able to set up new endowments for the Nancy Conger West Brook and South Branch preserves, which will generate annual income to help us maintain these two gems. Our partner City Green completed an amazing third year at South Branch Preserve, growing 52,789 pounds of fresh organic vegetables and donating 3,912 pounds of the harvest to local food pantries. The community garden plots sold out once again, and gardeners donated 385 pounds of what they grew to local food pantries.

Our amazing planning staff completed 10 open space, farmland preservation, and environmental resource inventory plans, and they were excited to help Edison educate residents about an Open Space Trust Fund referendum, which was overwhelmingly approved! We were delighted to host the 12th annual Gray Cup Classic, which brought in \$110,000 to acquire and care for new properties. We updated and redesigned The Conservancy’s website, developed a great new video overview of our work, and dramatically increased our social media following. We renewed our national accreditation to ensure we continue to meet the highest national standards for ethical practices and technical excellence as a land trust. The Conservancy also doubled its scholarship program, awarding \$30,000 total to four students, and hosted 10 interns as well.

While this was not the easiest of years, thanks to our members, supporters and friends, it was certainly a memorable one.

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THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

Since 1981, we have been dedicated to protecting land and water resources throughout the state in order to build environmental resilience and fight the climate crisis. Here’s how we did in 2021.

Land Preservation

We preserved 584 acres, including 74 acres that were once slated to become an extension of Route 24 in Hanover.



Stewardship

An \$80,000 grant from Green Acres allowed us to develop the next phase of our restoration plan on the West Brook.



Training Future Leaders

We awarded \$30,000 in scholarships to four New Jersey students studying for careers in conservation. We also established the year-long Planning Fellowship for graduate students.



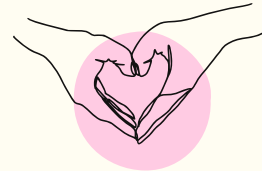
Greening New Jersey

We helped nine towns secure \$4,191,518 in state grants and \$661,000 in county grants for land acquisition and trail projects.



Building Community

Educational workshops, happy hour hikes, and volunteer events brought together like-minded people and helped us grow our membership.





LAND PRESERVATION

PRESERVED FARMLAND

Murlan Farm in Frelinghuysen, pictured above, was the largest farm we preserved in 2021. This farm had once been on track to become a residential subdivision. But we worked diligently alongside our partners for years to keep it undeveloped—and finally succeeded.

We also preserved 102 acres in Frelinghuysen once known as Camp Wasigan. Now Hidden Woods Farm, it is a family business that uses organic methods and provides locally raised meat to the community.

The Land Conservancy has preserved 7,330 acres of farmland over the last 24 years. Each new farm deal remains a satisfying endeavor, especially as western New Jersey continues to lose productive farms. With the number of family farms dwindling, it's especially critical to lend our expertise to new ventures like Hidden Woods.

YARDS CREEK PRESERVE

We expanded Yards Creek Preserve in Blairstown to 286 acres, further protecting the Delaware River Watershed's forest and water resources.

Our goal is to preserve 1,000 acres to act as a carbon sink using native vegetation, mature forests of oak and hickory, and healthy soils. Conservation of this ecologically sensitive land is creating a resilient ecosystem that will better adapt to climate change while supporting diverse populations of native plants and animals. Thanks to funding from the Open Space Institute and the William Penn Foundation, our efforts are connecting significant amounts of forested habitat along the slopes of the Kittatinny Ridge to enable the movement of wildlife without interference by human activity.

This forward-thinking project helps local people, too, by providing resource-based recreation opportunities, especially for people who live nearby and can now walk off-road through a forest in their leisure time.

RAMAPO MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

We scored a significant victory in securing 40 acres of land in the Ramapo Mountains of Mahwah in northern Bergen County from the New Jersey Department of Transportation. With help from several partners, including New Jersey Audubon, New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, this property once slated to be a highway will be preserved in perpetuity. The parcel will be added to The Land Conservancy's Ramapo Mountain Preserve, which now totals 92 acres.

This acquisition, with vistas of northern New Jersey and the Manhattan skyline, buffers 13,000 acres of county and state parkland that comprises the largest area of undeveloped land in Bergen County. It's a critical wildlife habitat and refuge from the hustle and bustle of northeast New Jersey's highways, commercial real estate, and densely populated areas. The property is also an important watershed, providing clean water to the Ramapo River—a significant drinking water source for northern New Jersey.

NANCY CONGER WEST BROOK PRESERVE

We purchased an important tract of land in West Milford that adds 43 acres to our preserve there, allowing us to move forward with plans for the next phase of restoration on the West Brook. The preserve now totals 241 acres.

This new property contains a pond and waterways that feed the West Brook. The newly acquired land has been seriously impacted by manmade changes to the landscape and will require significant remediation. These efforts will build on the work we've done so far in this area, improving the ecosystem for resident plants and animals, protecting the wetlands from further degradation, and making them more resilient to flooding and drought.

In 2020, we redirected the brook back into its original stream bed and reflooded the wetlands for this major source of clean water for the Wanaque Reservoir, which 3.5 million



New Jersey residents rely on for drinking. The benefits of this natural open space for local residents is magnified by the importance of protecting waters so critical to our state's urban populations.

STEWARDSHIP



SOUTH BRANCH PRESERVE

In the spring, we planted 1,000 native seedlings in the pollinator meadow with the help of staff, interns, and volunteers.

All 145 plots at the community garden were sold out, and members collected 385 pounds of food from their own harvests to donate to local food pantries. The community garden has donated 3,431 pounds of fresh produce over the past seven years.

We also launched a campaign to ensure we have the resources to care for this land into the future. Donors to the Forest of Hope can choose from a variety of trees—oak, maple, poplar, pawpaw, or persimmon—that will be planted in the reforestation area of the preserve. Donations will be marked with a sign on site as well as a dedicated webpage. All gifts will be placed in the Jason Andris Stewardship Fund and will be used exclusively to care for South Branch Preserve.

YARDS CREEK PRESERVE

We received \$121,583 in grants from the New Jersey Office of Natural Resources Restoration and the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service to make improvements and remove manmade features including a driveway, telephone poles, and culverts in the stream. We are now able to create a parking area between the road and the stream as well.

In October, our staff hiked out to the sites where volunteers planted 575 trees in 2020 to check how they had fared one year later. The seedlings, which stabilize these wetlands in the Delaware River Watershed, had a surprisingly high 70-80% survival rate.



NANCY CONGER WEST BROOK PRESERVE

An \$80,000 grant from Green Acres and the New Jersey Corporate Wetlands Partnership will be used to remove a dam on the stream that flows into the West Brook, plant wetland plants, remove invasives, take down a dilapidated barn, and reforest the barnyard.

On the heels of the preserve's grand opening in 2020, we installed a sign describing the preserve and the restoration project we completed there. The sign also includes a map of the trail with a QR code and an acknowledgement of Nancy Conger.

We also installed new stream monitors in the West Brook to monitor the quality, quantity, and temperature of the water in this critical stream.

With so much work ahead of us at this preserve, we established the Nancy Conger Stewardship Endowment to provide annual funds to care for the land and make it safe and welcoming for visitors.

EDUCATION



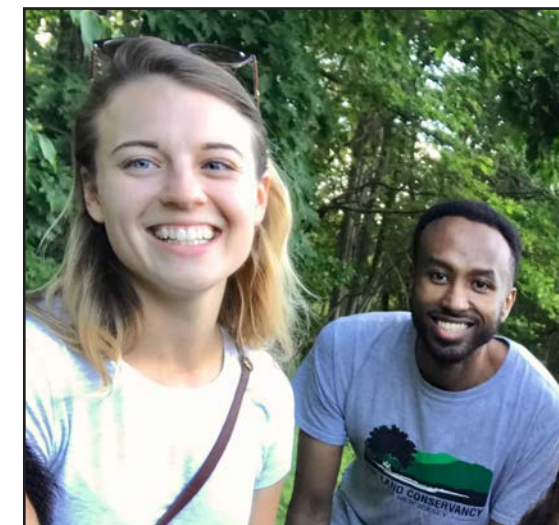
SCHOLARSHIPS

For 37 years, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey has been awarding scholarships to residents of New Jersey pursuing degrees in environmental science, natural resource management, conservation, park administration, and related fields. This program rewards environmental scholars who plan to pursue careers protecting the natural resources of their home state, and has disbursed over \$300,000 since its inception.

Thanks to a generous gift from the Rochkind-Wagner Foundation, we were able to double the number of scholarships awarded for the next three years. This year there were more applicants than ever, so the competition was tough. The four winners selected to receive scholarships of \$7,500 in 2021 were Andreia Resende (Montclair State), Danielle Dyson (Stockton), Kenneth Hamel (Montclair State), and Julia Galayda (American Military University). Congratulations to the winners!

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



RICHARD M. SARGENT INTERN

Students are an integral part of The Land Conservancy's work, and we are proud to offer interns a meaningful work experience that expands both their résumés and their perspectives. Each year, one outstanding intern or planning fellow is chosen to acknowledge the significant work they have done for the organization. This year Hiyabu Habtemichael was chosen for this honor.

Hiyabu's dedication to The Land Conservancy, and wanting to do the best he can possibly do, is the reason he was selected as our 2021 Richard M. Sargent Intern. Hiyabu makes sure the job gets done, and done well. He is not afraid to explore new areas and take on new projects, meeting with our farmers and recreation enthusiasts all over New Jersey to talk to them about planning and land preservation. It is a pleasure to have him work with us and our planning team.



MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Our planning department worked on 18 different open space and farm plans this year, all the way from Vernon up in Sussex County down to Franklin Township in Gloucester County. These towns run the gamut from small to large, agricultural to industrial, and their needs are all different. But 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 receive funding from the state to leverage their contributions. We helped many of these communities access Green Acres funding. In addition, The Land Conservancy received \$1 million to use for future land acquisition, as well as \$60,000 for the Nancy Conger West Brook Preserve restoration project.

EDISON OPEN SPACE REFERENDUM

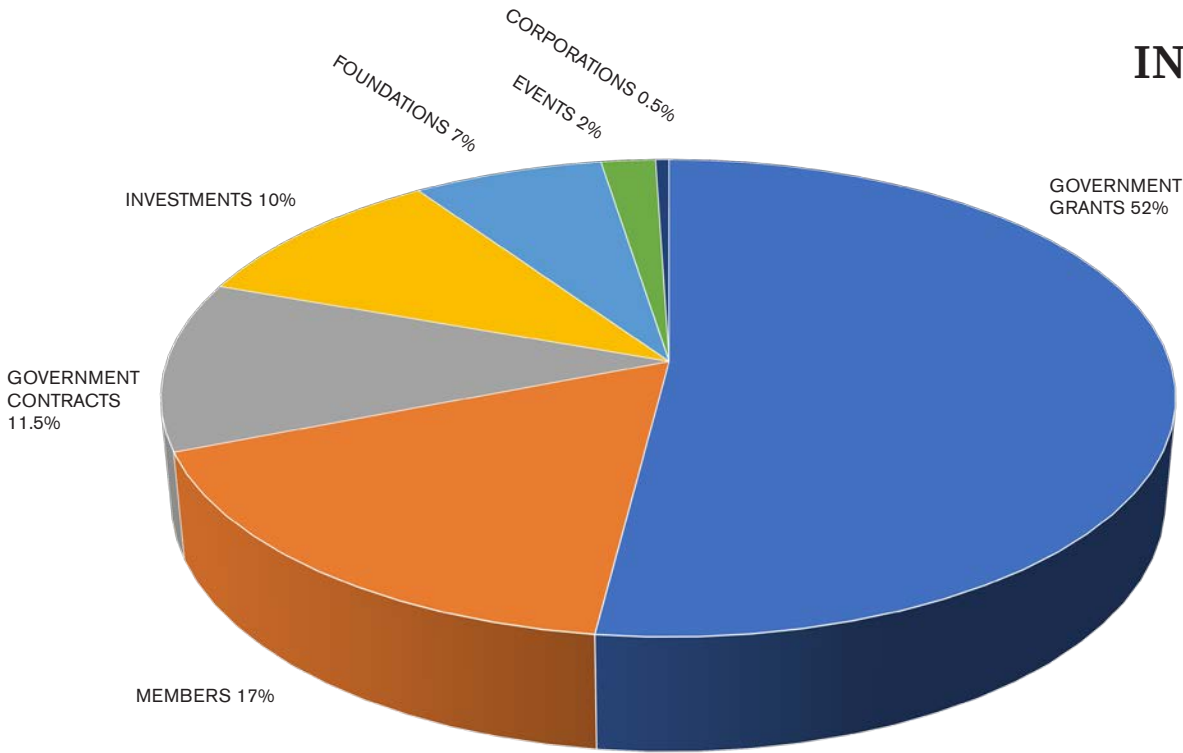
In the November 2 election, Edison Township gave residents an opportunity to create a stable source of funding for parks and recreation by establishing an open space trust fund. The township enlisted The Land Conservancy to educate voters and get the word out. In densely populated Edison, green spaces are precious, and industry has claimed much of the scenic property.

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.

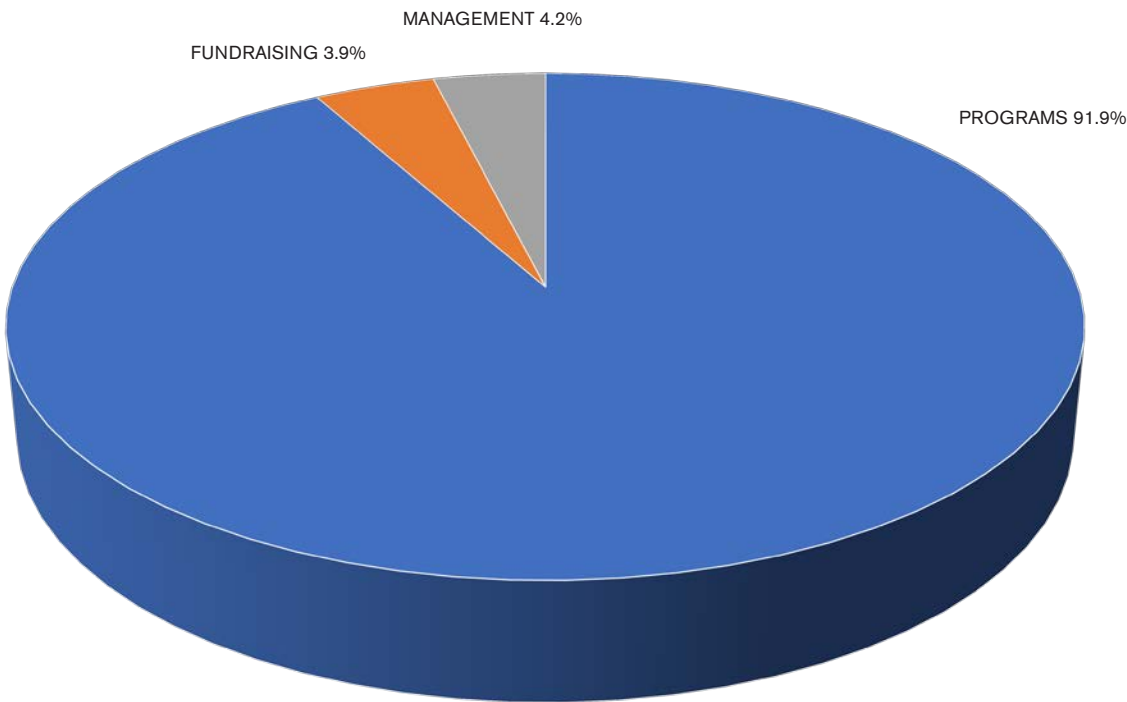
Thanks to a team of TLCNJ staff and dedicated community groups, the message was widely distributed and well received. The ballot question passed by a comfortable margin.

FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME



EXPENSES



SPECIAL EVENTS

COMMUNITY EVENTS

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 to encourage people to spend time out in nature, connecting with each other safely and learning new things.

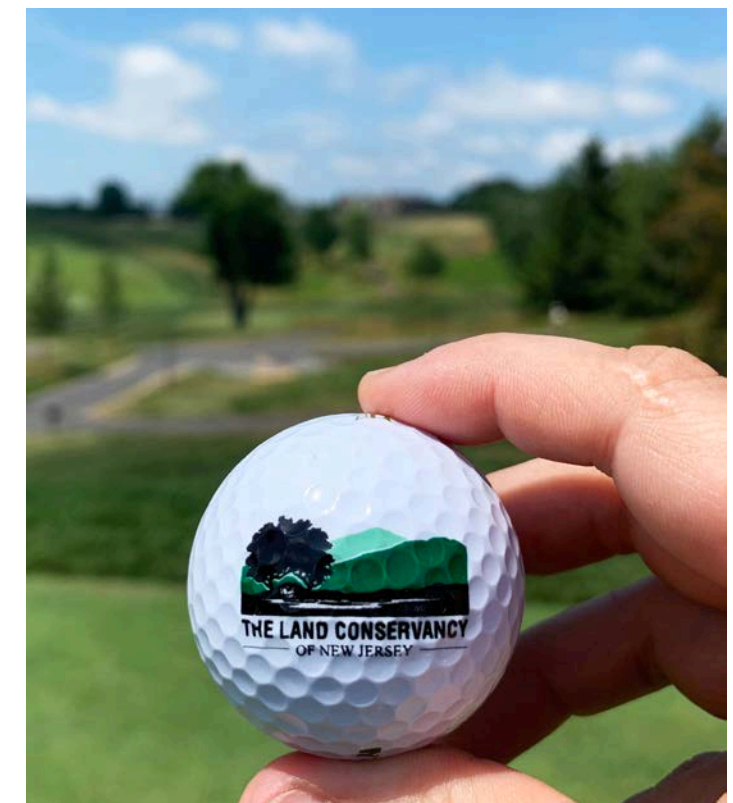
In July, we learned about the importance of chestnut trees. In October, there was a children's day celebrating the autumnal equinox where kids looked for gnomes in a scavenger hunt, made

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.

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.

THE 12TH ANNUAL GRAY CUP

Our biggest annual fundraiser returned to the renowned golf course at Hamilton Farm after a hiatus in 2020. Eighty golfers assembled for a noon shotgun start. Some foursomes were seriously competitive, while others took a more casual approach—but everyone had fun out on the course. One golfer came within inches of landing the nearly impossible hole-in-one challenge. At the end of a hot day, after cocktails and dinner, the event raised \$110,000 to support the Split Rock Mountain project and other land preservation efforts. Guests went home knowing they were supporting a good cause and having fun in the process.



Over 75 volunteers came out for our cleanup and planting events in 2021.

Chestnut tree workshop with Antinanco, South Branch Preserve, Mt. Olive

LEGACY GIVING

Join the dedicated individuals and families who have already taken steps to ensure open space and clean drinking water will continue for future generations. By directing your legacy gift to The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, you will continue to be an advocate for land preservation for years to come.

For every person that informs The Land Conservancy of their planned gift commitment, The Land Conservancy will receive \$1,000 today. This campaign was started to encourage and inspire supporters to make gifts for the future and, in return, help us immediately raise funds as well. To join today:

- Name The Land Conservancy of New Jersey in your will or living trust. New commitments and previously established bequest plans qualify. Additionally, you can name The Land Conservancy as a beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), or other qualified plan.
- Visit tlc-nj.org to fill out a form and let us know your plans, or contact Director of Development Amber Ray at at (973) 541-1010 x25 or array@tlc-nj.org to receive the form by mail or email.
- After your form is filled out and processed, The Land Conservancy will receive \$1,000 today!

We genuinely appreciate the support of our members . . .

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Japanese lantern husks at South Branch Preserve, Mt. Olive

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Collecting milkweed seeds at South Branch Preserve, Mt. Olive

CITY GREEN FARM

Our partner City Green completed an amazing third year growing 52,789 pounds of fresh organic vegetables at City Green Farm at South Branch Preserve. They exceeded last year's totals and donated 3,912 pounds to The Conservancy for distribution to local food pantries. As the pandemic increased food insecurity, this partnership became more relevant and needed than it has ever been. City Green, being excellent at what they do, has adjusted their farm plan to accommodate specific, pandemic-driven needs, as they were identified.



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Spring at the West Brook, West Milford

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We are immensely grateful to the many volunteers who gave their time to help us plant trees & flowers, pick up trash, & make our preserves better in so many ways. So to all the community members, scouts & scout leaders, trustees, & everyone else:

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