

# THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

# OUTDOOR ISSUES

SUMMER 2020

## MAPPING THE WAY FORWARD WITH A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN



At the end of May, our board approved a new five-year strategic plan to guide the organization through 2025. One highlight is a clean, clear new mission statement; another is an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion. And of course, to raise the bar on what we've been doing for the past 39 years—preserving and caring for land across the state of New Jersey.

Our goal is to preserve 31,000 acres by 2025—adding 3,500 to the current total of 28,000 acres. In addition, targeted objectives include expanding Yards Creek Preserve and continuing to work with the Ramapough

Lenape Indian Nation to secure their sacred land at Split Rock Mountain.

On the planning front, we aim to complete 45 additional open space, farmland preservation, trail, environmental resource inventory, and flood buyout plans to facilitate land preservation by government agencies. We are eager to continue our leadership role in the William Penn Foundation Delaware River Watershed Initiative (DRWI), as well as partner with efforts like Sustainable Jersey and the Highlands Council, pooling our resources to accomplish more together.

We will achieve all this and more while using a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion to help ensure our message reaches as many different populations as possible, and to make our programs beneficial for everyone. We are excited about all these possibilities on the horizon, and we look forward to sharing our progress with you.

### NEW MISSION STATEMENT

**We preserve, restore, and care for land and water resources, inspiring and empowering individuals and communities to protect open space.**



## THE LAND CONSERVANCY OF NEW JERSEY

### OFFICERS

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David Epstein *President*  
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Sandy Urgo *Vice President, Land Preservation & Stewardship*  
Danielle Wolfrum *Vice President, Development & Communications*  
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Aaron Cela *Land Preservation Specialist*  
Linda Glosinski *Land Preservation Specialist*  
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Kate Munning *Communications Manager*  
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John Ursin, Schenck Price *Counsel*

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## WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING

Our Highlands Hawks team saw 130 birds during what was by far the coldest World Series of Birding ever, at 29 degrees with driving snow and wind. But our intrepid birders prevailed and encountered a flyby American bittern in the dark, some calling swamp sparrows, Canada geese, Eastern screech owl, and many more. A big thank you goes out to our supporters and birders for this event, which helped us raise \$20,000!

# FROM MY PERSPECTIVE



David Epstein recently met with Todd Pride, managing director of The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County, to discuss how our organizations can work together to expand diversity, equity, and inclusion in conservation.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on everything in northern New Jersey, including The Land Conservancy, it has not stopped us from continuing to preserve more land. We closed our offices on March 16, and our staff and interns began working from home. Although we have worked from home on occasion over the past 15 years, this was the first time that we have done so on a large scale or for more than a few days at a time. We have invested in the hardware and software necessary to ensure that our employees can work effectively from home—and it paid off. We are happy to report that our staff has remained very productive.

We cancelled all of our spring and summer events, including our board retreat and cocktail party, and moved our 12th Gray Cup golf event from September 2020 to June 28, 2021. We adapted our board of trustees meetings to Zoom conference calls and

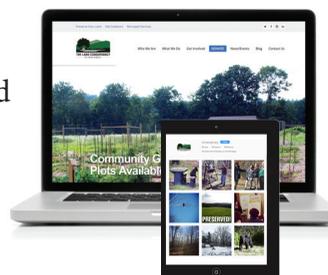
actually saw attendance increase. We kept our community garden open, requiring gardeners to wear masks and gloves and stay at least six feet apart at all times. Our World Series of Birding team competed for the 24th consecutive year, but for the first time they did not meet together and counted the birds they saw from their own areas.

We kept our preserves open and found more people out enjoying them than we have ever seen in the past. Our Chew Crew of goats and City Green's farmers are once again out at the South Branch Preserve, and our major stream restoration project at the Nancy Conger–West Brook Preserve is under way. We continue to work on a dozen preservation projects that will add land to our preserves and the parklands of our partners.

There will undoubtedly be obstacles during the year ahead. But thanks to the preparations undertaken over the past few years, combined with the expertise of our staff and dedication of our board and members, I remain confident that The Land Conservancy will emerge from this downturn stronger than ever and primed to thrive in its aftermath. I thank each of you for your continuing support during this challenging time.

## GET MORE FROM THE LAND CONSERVANCY

If you enjoy this newsletter, follow us on social media and visit [www.tlc-nj.org](http://www.tlc-nj.org) to read the blog or sign up for our email 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.



# MINIATURE HORSE FARM PRESERVED IN LIVINGSTON



This spring The Land Conservancy preserved 19 precious acres of open space for the town of Livingston in two real estate deals, both a long time in the making. These acquisitions create a significant asset for this bustling community in Essex County.

The first property was Evergreen Miniature Horse Farm, a deal in the works for nine years. This me-

ticulously manicured, picturesque farm boasts rolling hills, a stream, several barns, and a gazebo. It has been a notable landmark in Livingston for decades, even more so now that almost all of the land around it has been built up for residential and commercial use. So it was cause for celebration when Anthony and Viola Licari decided to sell their farm to the town.

We also helped the town acquire Strahman Hill Park. Just half a mile away, this nine-acre property nearby has a similar story. Tucked away in a residential neighborhood on East Cedar Street, it has beautiful vistas on top of the Watchung Mountains, as well as rolling lawns and wooded areas. The township set its sights on this land back in 2003, and along with the Licari farm, all of it will be protected as public parkland, its natural beauty available to residents and visitors in perpetuity.

# SANTINI FAMILY CONTINUES LEGACY OF FARMLAND PRESERVATION IN WARREN COUNTY

The Santini family, which has been farming in Warren County for generations, has been preserving their farmland in cooperation with The Land Conservancy for the past decade. The most recent addition, in Harmony Township, is 63 acres that make up Heere's Farm, a rolling landscape with spectacular views of the Delaware Water Gap. Adding this farm, which will continue to grow corn and soy as it has for many years, expands the preserved farm belt in this area all the way to the Delaware River.

This farmland preservation easement will help to ensure the viability of farming in Warren County well into the future and protect its rural character. Aaron Cela, our land preservation specialist who oversaw this project, noted that "farming is an important part of Warren



County's heritage, and thanks to landowners like Bob and Sharon Santini, it will be a part of its future as well."



*“It is an honor to be this year’s recipient of the Russell W. Myers Scholarship. I am excited to use my education to continue advancing climate action and influencing policy in New Jersey and beyond.”—Jessica Zhao*

## 2020 SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

For almost as long as we have existed as a member-supported, nonprofit land trust, The Land Conservancy of New Jersey has been providing scholarships to residents of New Jersey pursuing degrees in environmental science, natural resource management, conservation, park administration, and related fields. For the past 36 years, this program has been rewarding environmental scholars who plan to pursue careers protecting the natural resources of their home state.

We have awarded \$300,000 in grants to 60 outstanding college students from nearly 40 different New Jer-

sey towns. Recipients have used their scholarships to obtain bachelor, master’s, and doctorate degrees at an array of institutions, including New Jersey’s own Rutgers and Stockton Universities. Their fields of study have included environmental law, policy, and planning, as well as chemistry, wildlife ecology, geography, landscape architecture, and forestry management.

This year the \$7,500 Russell W. Myers Scholarship was awarded to Jessica Zhao, a senior at Duke University majoring in environmental science and policy with a concentration in marine

conservation. The \$7,500 Rogers Family Scholarship goes to Toyosi Dickson, a recent Rutgers graduate who is pursuing a master’s degree in environmental justice at the University of Michigan—a place she has already gotten to know as a Doris Duke Conservation Scholar.

In our commitment to conservation, we believe training the next generation to continue this work is critical for the short-term and long-term health and well-being of every living thing on this planet. We are tremendously proud of these students and excited to see what they do next.

*“All my hard work is being valued and recognized; it’s earned me this scholarship and admission into graduate school. It tells me that professionals in my field value my research studying the impact of environmental decisions on underrepresented communities.”—Toyosi Dickson*



# EXPLORING SOUTH BRANCH PRESERVE

## COMMUNITY GARDEN

With people spending more time at home, the community garden is more popular than ever this year. Shares are sold out, plots are bountiful and well-tended, and members are cooperating with additional safety and social distancing measures. The garden is exploding with life and color thanks to the wide variety of vegetables, flowers, and herbs growing.



## QR CODES FOR LEARNING

Natural features on the trails are labeled with bright yellow QR codes that help you learn about the habitat around you. Simply point your camera phone at one and it offers a link to our website, where you can learn more about the flora, geology, and water all around you. It's an easy way to keep the learning going through summer!

# ERVE



## CITY GREEN FARMS

Clifton-based nonprofit City Green is growing vegetables on six acres at South Branch this year. Their mission is to provide access to local farm-fresh food, nutrition and nature education, and meaningful job and volunteer opportunities for urban residents in an agricultural setting. So far this year they're on track for another record-breaking harvest!



## BUD SCHWARTZ MEMORIAL

We installed cedar steps to the bird blind and named the trail in honor of Bud Schwartz, whose family made a generous gift in his memory to help us care for the preserve. The previously steep and muddy trail is much safer and more accessible, and we installed a stone memorial bench in honor of Bud, whose Franklin Lakes property we helped preserve in 2017.



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## WE'RE JUMPING FOR JOY!

We are thrilled to have raised \$210,000 and brought in 122 new members with our recent fundraising campaign. Our deepest gratitude to everyone who showed their support, especially the anonymous couple who set this in motion with their \$10,000 seed money.

In 39 years we have preserved 28,000 acres of land, benefiting millions of New Jersey residents. Even in these uncertain times, our staff is working harder than ever to protect natural resources for you and for future generations—whether your interest is clean water, scenic views, hiking and fishing, or locally grown food. Because of this successful campaign, we'll be able to continue long-term, critical work we're doing, such as:

- an ambitious stream restoration project on the West Brook, which feeds the Wanaque Reservoir;
- acquiring land sacred to the local Ramapough Lenape Indian Nation to add to Ramapo Mountain Preserve;
- protecting public access to Wawayanda State Park by preserving the Terrace Pond North Trail;
- safeguarding Newark's drinking water by adding to the Pequannock Watershed Preserve; and
- preserving nine farms covering 500 acres to help protect New Jersey's supply of fresh, locally grown food.

Thanks to our supporters, we can keep on preserving the landscapes you love.



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