

1960s



Grassroots opposition mobilizes against Port Authority plan for 10,000-acre international "jetport" in the Great Swamp of Morris and Somerset counties.

1960



Helen Fenske and other conservationists go to Washington to convince federal officials to support a national wildlife refuge in the Great Swamp.

1961



We help Somerset County acquire 749 acres along the Passaic River in the western section of the Great Swamp; it becomes Lord Stirling County Park.

1966



Helen Fenske, Russell Myers of Morris County Parks, Hugh Stearns of the Morristown Rotary Club, and the Junior League of Morristown develop idea for Patriots' Path, a greenbelt along the Whippany River in Morris County, an area rich in Revolutionary War history. Over more than four decades, it would grow to become one of the county's signature parks.

1961



We make first open space gift to newly-established New Jersey Natural Lands Trust, an agency created to accept donations of land from private property owners, donating 36 acres along the Rockaway Creek in Readington Township that were given to us by Mr. and Mrs. Gurdon Wattles.

1968

1961

The Great Swamp Committee of the North American Wildlife Foundation is officially established, led by housewife-turned-activist Helen Fenske.



1964



Preservation effort succeeds; the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge is dedicated with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall in attendance.

1965



The Great Swamp Committee extends its vision to become the North Jersey Conservation Foundation.

1965

North Jersey Conservation Foundation makes its first purchase, the 77-acre Dismal Harmony Preserve in Mendham Township, which is later turned over to the town. It's the first time a nonprofit partners with the state Green Acres program.



1966



Our first newsletter, *Footprints*, debuts.

1969

David Moore replaces Helen Fenske as Executive Director.



1970s



1970

We begin weekly column, "The State We're In," commenting on environmental topics in New Jersey. The column is still published today, running without a gap for 40 years.



1972

An 84-acre parcel in Chester Township, given to us by Corinne and Percy Chubb, was transferred to the township, forming Chubb Park. Later, 42 adjoining acres in Chester Borough were turned over to that municipality, enlarging the park. This creates our first conservation easement, and one of the first in Morris County.



1974

North Jersey Conservation Foundation becomes New Jersey Conservation Foundation to reflect growing statewide focus.



1979

After years of helping preserve land in Monmouth County, we help found the Monmouth Conservation Foundation. Edward and Joanne Mullen donate Walnford Mills, an 18th century house and gristmill on 41 acres in Upper Freehold Township, Monmouth County, to us. We transfer the property to the Monmouth Conservation Foundation, which later ensures its preservation as a county historic park.

Landmark property tax assessment decision won by us; State Division of Tax Appeals rules that assessments must be lowered to reflect reduction in market value of properties with conservation easements.

1976



1979

We preserve the 60-acre McBride celery farm in heavily developed Bergen County. It is later turned over to the town of Allendale as the Celery Farm Natural Area.

1970

We unveil new environmental curriculum, "Education for Survival," at a national educators' convention in San Francisco. At the time, few schools incorporated environmental education into their curricula. Thousands of books were distributed nationwide.



1974



We acquire the 165-acre Cross Estate in Bernardsville and transfer it to Morristown National Historical Park. Basketball star Bill Bradley, just beginning his run for U.S. Senate, speaks at the dedication.

1974



The first one-mile section of Patriots' Path opens in Mendham Township; a master plan for the 27-mile greenbelt park is finished the following year.

1975

We build Newark's first "instant" park on a vacant half-acre lot across from City Hall. It is designed by our trustee Robert Zion, a noted landscape architect. Despite its temporary design, the park is still there today.

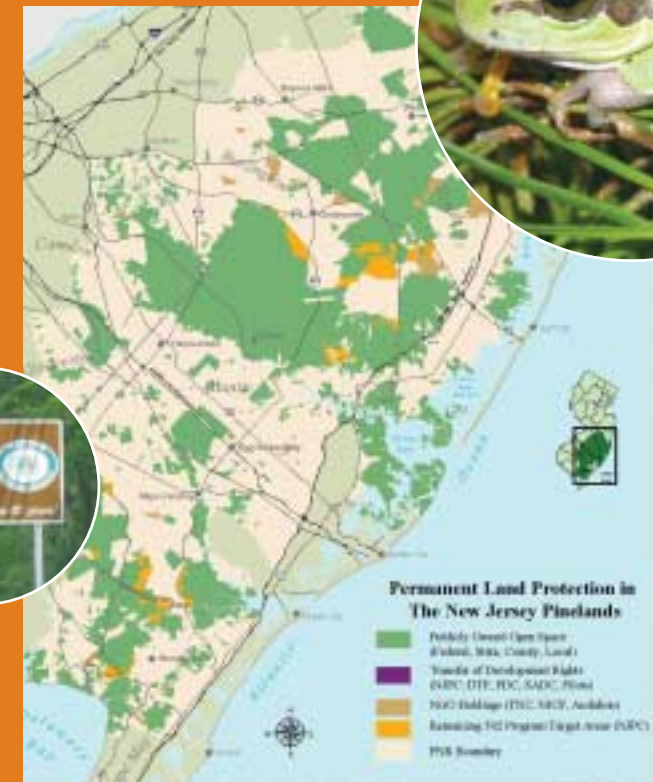


1976

We propose "Rails for Trails" program to turn abandoned railway corridors into hiking and biking paths.

1979

The New Jersey Legislature approves the Pinelands Protection Act, one year after Jimmy Carter signs bill creating the million-acre Pinelands National Reserve. We were among the leading advocates for the Act, and had spent three years fundraising for Pinelands preservation. By year's end, we hold nearly 2,000 acres in Pine Barrens.



1980s



1981

We launch project to restore the state-owned but neglected Pine Barrens community of Whitesbog, home to Elizabeth White, who began cultivating native wild blueberries there in 1912. We help establish Whitesbog Preservation Trust.

1982



The 180-acre Van Doren farm in Tewksbury Township is sold to Hunterdon County as a park, along with easements forming a green belt surrounding historic Oldwick. We purchased the farm four years earlier to prevent a housing development from being built.

1983

We save land near the Forked River Mountains of Ocean County that later becomes Wells Mills County Park.

1985



Grover's Mill Pond in West Windsor Township, Mercer County, site of Orson Wells' fictional 1938 "War of the Worlds" Martian invasion, is acquired by us, and later passed to the township along with funds to maintain the dam.

1986

Assisting the city of Camden with plans for a greenway along the Cooper River, we begin seeking land and easement donations from private, corporate and nonprofit landowners.

1987



NJ Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act becomes law, three years after we and our partners launch campaign to protect the state's freshwater wetlands.

1987



We agree to help residents of northeastern Morris County save a forested ridge known as Pyramid Mountain. The land, which contains evidence of occupation by prehistoric people, eventually becomes Pyramid Mountain Natural Historical Area.

1981

We purchase 234 acres in Roxbury Township, Morris County, which eventually become Morris Canal Park. It contains sections of defunct canal bed and towpath.



1981



Gov. Brendan Byrne and State Senator Raymond Zane peruse our poster highlighting the persistent loss of farmland in New Jersey. The New Jersey Agriculture Retention and Development Act and a bond issue providing \$50 million for farmland preservation are subsequently passed by voters.

1984

We begin new project in cooperation with Delaware Twp, Hunterdon County, to protect an eight-mile stretch of the Wickecheoke Creek. We save an 89-acre farm, one of the first to be preserved through the State Farmland Preservation Program.

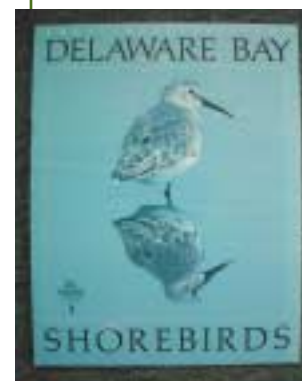


1985

The State Planning Act is passed, affirming that New Jersey needs sound and integrated statewide planning to conserve its natural resources, revitalize its urban centers and protect the quality of its environment.

1985

Campaign launched to protect habitat along the Delaware Bay where migratory shorebirds stop each spring to replenish their energy by feasting on horseshoe crab eggs. We accept donation of a stretch of Bayshore beach in Cape May County, later turned over to state Natural Lands Trust.



1987

We acquire a Camden row house on the block where poet Walt Whitman once lived, and later transfer it to the state as part of Walt Whitman Historical Complex.



1989

We found the Pinelands Preservation Alliance to serve as watchdog in the Pine Barrens.



PINELANDS PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

As a result of lobbying by us and our partners, a Green Acres bond referendum is amended to allow nonprofits to apply for funding directly for the first time.

1989

1990s



Actor Christopher Reeve, Gov. Jim Florio and former Gov. Brendan Byrne are special guests at our 30th anniversary dinner at the AT&T headquarters in Basking Ridge.



1990



We build a nature trail on one of our properties in Burlington County as a memorial to the late conservationists Brooks and Dorothy Evert. The property is now known as the Evert Preserve, one of the first of our properties to be actively managed.

1991

Walkill River National Wildlife Refuge in Sussex County is established; its nucleus is formed by the first property donated by us.

1992



The Donald and Beverley Jones Footpath in the Wickecheoke Creek Preserve is named to honor dedicated preservationists from Hunterdon County. Donald Jones is a former president of our board.

1993



First part of the 150-mile-long Highlands Trail opens, as a result of efforts by us, the NY-NJ Trail Conference and National Park Service.

1995

We save 3,000 acres in the Forked River Mountains of Ocean County, the largest acquisition by a nonprofit group in New Jersey to date.



1995

We successfully rally with partners to save Riverbank Park in Newark, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, from being developed into a baseball stadium.

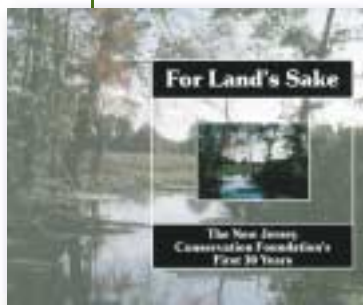
1997

David Moore retires after 30 years; Michele Byers becomes our third executive director.



1999

1990



For Land's Sake, a history of our first 30 years, is published. At this point, we have helped save some 50,000 acres.

1992

Four influential New Jersey Conservation Foundation publications, starting with *The New Jersey Highlands: Treasures at Risk*, helped shape land use policy in key regions during the '90s and beyond. The special reports that follow are: *Greenways to the Arthur Kill*, *Charting a Course for the Delaware Bay Watershed*, and *Gaining Ground: Preserving New Jersey Farmland through Effective Tax Policy*.



1994



The "Songbird Connection" educational curriculum is published, teaching youngsters about the need to protect habitat along the migratory routes of songbirds, from their nesting areas in New Jersey to their wintering grounds in Central and South America.

1994

We become the first nonprofit to make a grant to a county to preserve farmland. Salem County used the funding to buy an agricultural easement on the dairy farm owned by Vera and Elmer Pettit.



1996

New Jersey Conservation Foundation offices move to the Bamboo Brook Outdoor Education Center in Chester Township, a property that was once home to Martha Brookes Hutcheson, one of America's first female landscape architects.

1997

First annual New Jersey Land Trust Rally offers educational workshops for people involved in land conservation. We're now planning for the 15th annual Rally.

1998

Garden State Preservation Trust Act passes, launching New Jersey's ambitious initiative to preserve one million acres.



2000s



2000

A joint effort between us and the NJDEP's Green Acres program preserves over 450 acres in the Burden Hill Forest of Salem and Cumberland counties – the Delaware Bayshore region's only large, intact forest.



2004

In partnership with Green Acres and Rutgers University, we launch Garden State Greenways, an online planning tool dedicated to the idea that every New Jersey resident should have easy access to parks, trails and protected lands. It builds upon a greenways project begun 15 years earlier.

2004

We add 68 acres to Passaic County's Apshawa Preserve and become a partner in managing the rugged, mountainous 576-acre property surrounding Butler Reservoir.



2005

The circa 1795 Prall House in Stockton, Hunterdon County, is preserved, becoming a regional office for New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Delaware River Mill Society.



2006

The largest freshwater wetlands restoration project in the northeast begins at the Franklin Parker Preserve. A year earlier, we received more than \$5.4 million from the federal government to preserve and restore the wetlands.

2006



We become the first nonprofit to bring federal farmland preservation funding to New Jersey when we preserve an 85-acre vegetable farm in Pilesgrove Township, Salem County. We also launch the Tri-County Agricultural Retention Partnership (TARP) to support farmers in Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland counties.

2007



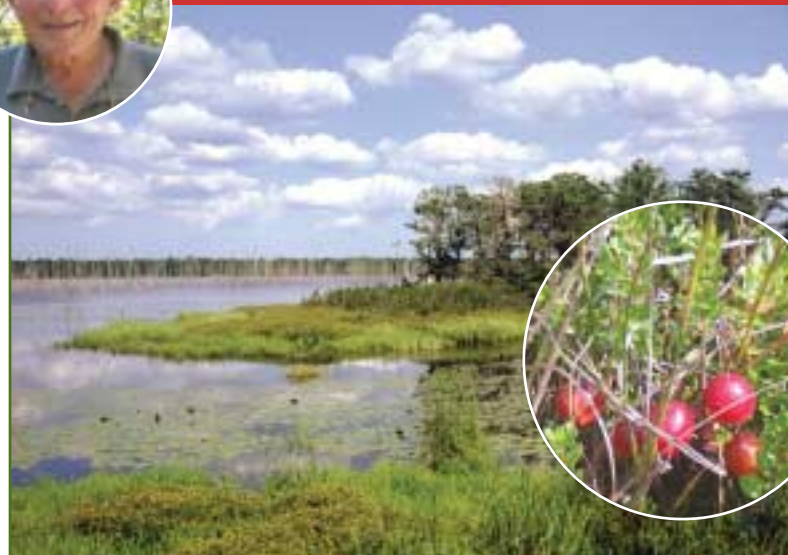
We help Ocean County preserve the historic Cedar Bridge Tavern in Barnegat Township, where the last battle of the Revolutionary War was fought.

2001

Our 40th anniversary is celebrated at Drumthwacket, the governor's mansion in Princeton. By now, we have helped save more than 100,000 acres throughout New Jersey.

2003

The 9,400-acre DeMarco cranberry farm in the Pine Barrens of Burlington County is preserved and later named for our trustee and former president Franklin Parker, the first chairman of the state Pinelands Commission. It is the largest property ever acquired by a New Jersey nonprofit.



2006



As part of our continuing effort to create a recreational link between the Delaware Riverfront and Cooper River Park, we open an office with full-time staff in the city of Camden.

2006

Research scientists discover 30 rare, endangered and threatened plants at the Franklin Parker Preserve. More discoveries follow in the coming years, including rare insects and frogs.



2006

On the heels of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act of 2004, we help form and fund a new independent watchdog group, the New Jersey Highlands Coalition.



2009

In a first-time partnership between a New Jersey nonprofit and the U.S. military, we preserve 107 acres next to the Air Force's Warren Grove Gunnery Range in Ocean County.



2010



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- Walter Wescott****
1960 to 1961

* North Jersey Conservation Foundation
 ** Great Swamp Conservation Foundation
 *** Great Swamp Committee (Co-Chairpersons)
 **** Upper Passaic Valley Conservation Committee (Co-Chairpersons)



We will celebrate 50 years of preserving natural areas and farmland throughout New Jersey on Saturday, October 30, at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morristown.

Six former New Jersey governors will be honored for their environmental legacies: Brendan T. Byrne, Thomas H. Kean, James J. Florio, Christine Todd Whitman, James E. McGreevey, and Jon S. Corzine.

We will also honor former Congressman Peter H.B. Frelinghuysen, who played a pivotal role in establishing the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

For more information about the 50th anniversary celebration, contact Elizabeth Bennett at 908-322-1100 or ebennett@evergreenpr.com.

Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen read a resolution into the Congressional Record on June 22, 2010 congratulating New Jersey Conservation Foundation for its 50 years of land preservation success. His father, former Congressman Peter H.B. Frelinghuysen, was instrumental in the fight to save the Great Swamp in the 1960s, and in the founding of this organization.



The 50th anniversary celebration was officially kicked off at a reception in June at the Far Hills home of trustee and event co-chair Ronnie Goldberg. From left are former Gov. Thomas H. Kean, former First Lady Lucinda Florio, Ronnie Goldberg, former Gov. Brendan T. Byrne, trustee and co-chair Wendy Mager and Executive Director Michele Byers.



A New Jersey-shaped cake with 50 candles was presented at the annual New Jersey Land Conservation Rally at Montclair State University in March. Here's wishing for 50 more years of land preservation!