

# New Jersey Conservation

Photo by Blaine Rothhauser

PRESERVING  
THE HARRIS FAMILY'S  
**Cowtown property**  
IN SALEM COUNTY  
protects grassland birds  
and keeps agriculture strong

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**New Jersey Conservation**  
FOUNDATION

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## ON THE COVER

Thank you to New Jersey-based photographer Blaine Rothauser for providing the cover photo of a male bobolink in breeding plumage. Breeding male bobolinks are distinctive for the straw-yellow patch on their heads, and their white back and black underparts resembling a reverse tuxedo. Bobolinks are a threatened species in New Jersey and breed in pastures and grasslands, including the ones recently preserved near the Cowtown Rodeo in Salem County. They're also impressive long-distance migrants, traveling to and from Southern South America.



## From Our Executive Director

**Michele S. Byers**

If your summer plans include the New Jersey shore, you probably love sun and wind!

Not only do bright sunshine and cooling breezes make for a great beach day – swimming, sailing or kite-flying - they also point the way toward a clean energy future for New Jersey.

Our new governor, Phil Murphy, recently signed a historic clean energy bill, which mandates an increased reliance on clean energy sources like solar and off-shore wind. It's part of a plan for New Jersey to get half of its energy from renewable, non-polluting sources by 2030 – and 100 percent by 2050!

New Jersey Conservation staff attended the bill signing at a solar facility in Monmouth Junction and returned with a feeling of optimism. For the first time in years, New Jersey is on course to regain its national environmental leadership status.

With a new landmark clean energy bill and a new leadership team at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in Trenton, we have the opportunity to vastly improve our efforts to protect clean water and air, better steward the land, and prepare for climate change.

Read about the clean energy bill and new New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection leadership on page 12.

Thank you very much for your continued support of New Jersey Conservation Foundation. It's because of YOU that we're able to preserve family farms and natural lands that protect our drinking water and wildlife habitat.

*Michele S. Byers*

All maps were created by Tanya Nolte, GIS Manager, NJ Conservation



New Jersey Conservation Foundation is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve land and natural resources throughout New Jersey for the benefit of all.

We protect strategic lands through acquisition and stewardship, promote strong land use policies, and forge partnerships to achieve conservation goals. Since 1960, we have worked to protect the state's farmland, forests, parks, wetlands, water resources and special places.

For membership information, please visit our website at [www.njconservation.org](http://www.njconservation.org) or call us at 1-888-LANDSAVE. Our mailing address is 170 Longview Road, Far Hills, NJ 07931.







## DANCING THE NIGHT AWAY FOR LAND'S SAKE



Fun, food, disco dancing and glittering costumes were the order of the evening at the Field & Fashion fundraiser on May 19. More than 300 guests danced the night away to the disco sounds of the New York Bee Gees while supporting a great cause. Thank you to all who helped raise \$300,000 to preserve natural lands and farmland throughout New Jersey! A huge thanks to the Johnson family for the use of their Cedar Lane Farm in Oldwick, to incredible event chair Penelope Ayers, and to talented photographer Dwight Hiscano.



# Cowtown grasslands forever!

374 ACRES SURROUNDING



Cattle grazing in the extensive Cowtown property pastures are watched over by a cowboy on horseback. Inset, Pilesgrove Mayor Kevin Eachus presents a plaque thanking Cowtown owners Betsy and Grant Harris for their contributions to preserving agriculture in Salem County.





**There are some things that money can't buy – like a beloved family business that's part of the fabric of the community. That's how Grant and Betsy Harris feel about the Cowtown Rodeo in Pilesgrove Township, Salem County.**

Not only has it been in the Harris family since 1929, it's also the oldest weekly professional rodeo in the country. Five generations of Harris family members have been involved in running the rodeo, the adjacent Cowtown farmers market and the farm's cattle operation.

About 15 years ago, a developer offered what Grant describes as "a ridiculous amount of money" for their land. Although Grant and Betsy seriously considered it, they found they couldn't imagine ever parting with their land. What they really wanted was to pass their legacy on to the next generation.

## RODEO PRESERVED IN SALEM COUNTY >



Photo by Blaine Rothauer

Breeding bobolinks, like this male and female pair, depend on open grasslands and pastures like the ones preserved on the Cowtown property.



Thanks to a federal grasslands preservation program designed for livestock farmers, that's exactly what they're doing.

In March, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and its partners permanently preserved nearly 375 acres of grasslands surrounding Cowtown Rodeo by purchasing the development rights from the Harris family. Proceeds allow Grant and Betsy to keep Cowtown in the family, as well as purchase additional land that they've been leasing for years.

"I get to make my living at my hobby every day – it doesn't get any better than that," said Grant, who competed professionally in the rodeo for years before shifting his efforts to managing Cowtown full-time. "The opportunity to make a living doing this means more to me than money."

Grant and Betsy plan to pass Cowtown – which encompasses a total of 1,700 acres – on to their daughter and son-in-law, Katy and RJ Griscom, and their young son Nate.

Most of the funding for the land preservation project came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, a program administered by the Department's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Under this program, owners retain their land but agree to permanently restrict its use to agriculture. The preservation of the Cowtown property marks the first time the program has been used to preserve grasslands in New Jersey.

Additional funds came from the Open Space Institute and the William Penn Foundation. Natural Lands of Media, PA provided strategic technical and financial assistance, and Pilesgrove Township assisted with transactional costs. And the Harris family helped by discounting the price.

Because the Harris property is used primarily for breeding and grazing horses and cattle, it has become some of the best grassland habitat in New Jersey.

"In addition to protecting a viable and profitable agricultural operation, this preservation project provides conservation benefits," said State Conservationist Carrie Lindig of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. "Large blocks of well-managed grasslands like the Harris property support groundwater recharge and bird habitat."

Bobolinks, grasshopper sparrows and savanna sparrows – all classified by the state as threatened species – breed in the Cowtown pastures. Brown thrashers and eastern meadowlarks – species of special concern – also breed there, and endangered upland sandpipers may breed there on occasion. The pasturelands also support a breeding population of American kestrels, a threatened falcon. Bald eagles forage year round, and northern harriers and short-eared owls hunt there seasonally.







LEFT: Patriarch Grant Harris, left, with the next generations of Cowtown owners: Son-in-law RJ Griscom, grandson Nate Griscom and daughter Katy Griscom.

ABOVE: Eastern meadowlarks, a species of special concern in New Jersey, breed in grasslands like the ones surrounding the Cowtown Rodeo.

## ANATOMY OF A LAND PRESERVATION PROJECT

*By Francis Rapa  
Regional Manager  
Delaware Bay Watershed*

Anyone who has bought or sold real estate knows it takes time, patience, planning and lots of paperwork. Preserving open space and farmland is just the same!

Here are some of the nuts and bolts of the preservation of 374 acres of Cowtown grasslands.

### 1. Find a willing seller.

The Harris family had already preserved hundreds of acres of their land and wanted to preserve the grasslands for horses and cattle. Willing sellers are needed because land preservation programs are voluntary and require cooperative and trusting relationships.

### 2. How important is preserving the land?

The property is inspected and researched to determine its agricultural and natural resource values. Environmental, scenic and other benefits are assessed.

### 3. Find the funding.

Because of the high cost of land in New Jersey, government agencies, other non-profits and charitable foundations are all needed. For the Cowtown project, funding partners included the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Open Space Institute, William Penn Foundation, Natural Lands and Pilesgrove Township.

### 4. Get the facts.

Surveys are conducted to determine the exact acreage of the property, and appraisals to determine the current value.

### 5. Negotiate.

In the case of conservation lands, sellers are sometimes willing to accept a reduced price to make sure their property is permanently preserved. In this case, the Harris family gave NJ Conservation a ten percent discount.

### 6. Schedule a closing.

With multiple funding partners – each with their own requirements and timetables – it often takes longer to wrap up a land preservation project than a typical home sale.

### 7. Celebrate!

We celebrated the land's preservation at Cowtown in April with dozens of elected officials, preservation partners, neighbors and press.



# Olivia Glenn becomes head of state Parks & Forestry

**Congratulations to Olivia Glenn, NJ Conservation's former South Jersey Metro regional manager, on her new position as director of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Parks & Forestry.**

Olivia began her new job with the State of NJ on May 14 after managing Camden projects for three-and-a-half years.

As Olivia bid farewell to NJ Conservation, she pledged to continue her efforts to provide more parks in urban areas. "I'm not saying goodbye, because I know we'll all still be working together for a common purpose," she said.

A resident of Pennsauken, Olivia became South Jersey Metro regional manager in August 2014. In that position, she focused on preserving and restoring Gateway Park along the Cooper River in Camden. The park is scheduled to open later this year, and will

be managed by NJ Conservation under an agreement with the Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority.

"We are sad to lose Olivia as a valuable staff member, but we're so proud of her and know she will do a wonderful job for New Jersey," said Michele S. Byers, executive director. "Olivia is a staunch advocate for urban parks and conservation, and in her new position she will have the opportunity to make a positive impact throughout New Jersey."

Olivia worked closely with the William Penn Foundation, overseeing a grant in support of NJ Conservation's work in Camden: building local collaborations,

managing conservation transactions, promoting parks and greenways to enhance recreational opportunities for residents, and protecting the area's land, water and natural resources.

She served as New Jersey vice-chair of the Circuit Trails Coalition, which is working to create a 750-mile network of connected bicycle and pedestrian trails in the greater Philadelphia-Camden area. In November 2014, she received a Sustainability Award from the Camden County Board of Freeholders for her role in making the county a more sustainable place to live.

*join*  
**NEW JERSEY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION!**

Whether it's farmland, woodland or wetland, New Jersey Conservation Foundation protects open spaces in your towns, cities and the places you love to visit.

But we can't do it alone. We need you to help us save lands at risk.

As a private, not-for-profit organization, we rely on donations from members who care about preserving New Jersey's precious land and resources for future generations.

Help keep nature in New Jersey! Join New Jersey Conservation Foundation to preserve land and natural resources.

**BECOME A MEMBER TODAY.**

Visit our website at [www.njconservation.org/donate.htm](http://www.njconservation.org/donate.htm)



# 2018 GAINING GROUND

New Jersey Conservation Foundation and its partners permanently preserved over 500 acres from January through May 2018. These lands include family farms, grasslands for grazing horses and cattle, and natural areas that safeguard clean drinking water, protect wildlife habitat and offer scenic beauty and outdoor recreation.

**THANK YOU TO ALL  
MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS  
AND PARTNERS FOR  
HELPING TO PRESERVE  
THESE LANDS!**

## 11 Projects

Jan 1 - May 30, 2018

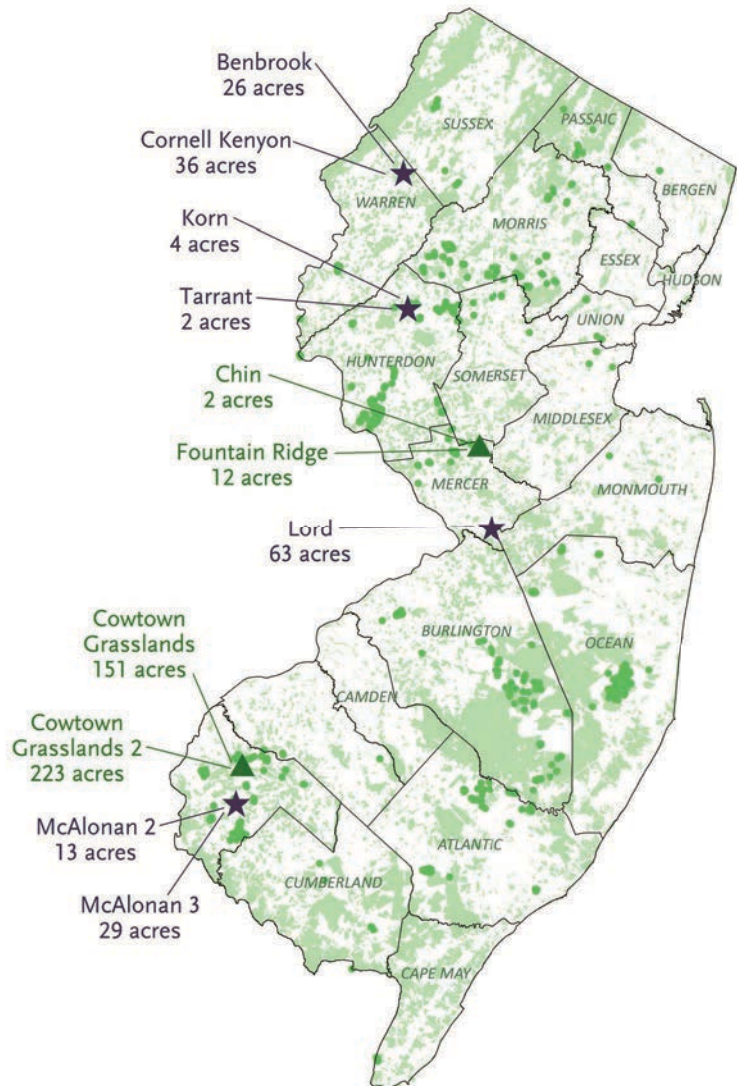
▲ NJ Conservation Owned: 388 acres  
(Fee or Easement)

★ Preserved in Partnership: 173 acres

**TOTAL: 561 acres**

● NJ Conservation Foundation  
Owned & Managed Properties  
(Fee or Easement)

■ Preserved Land  
(Open Space & Farmland)



It's easy to join New Jersey  
Conservation Foundation  
online – visit the website at  
[www.njconservation.org](http://www.njconservation.org)

**Become a Member Today!**





# Expanding Warren County's White Lake preserve

62 acres connect  
natural area to  
Paulinskill River



**Warren County's scenic White Lake Natural Resource Area has been expanded by 62 acres to connect with the Paulinskill River, thanks to a public-private partnership. Two parcels in Hardwick Township were added to White Lake using funding from Warren County, the New Jersey Green Acres Program, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Open Space Institute, The Nature Conservancy and the Ridge & Valley Conservancy.**

The 62 acres expand White Lake to 469 acres, and link it directly to the Paulinskill River for the first time. The newly-preserved land – the 26-acres Benbrook LLC property and adjoining 36-acre Cornell Kenyon property – includes a half-mile of river frontage.

In addition to offering river fishing access, the newly-preserved land will include a new hiking trail connecting to the park's existing trail network.

"This property is vitally important to wildlife in northwestern New Jersey. White Lake is part of the Great Limestone Valley, home to a multitude of rare plant and animal species," said Michele S. Byers, executive director of NJ Conservation. "Preserving a corridor between White Lake and the Paulinskill River, encompassing a variety of habitats, will help protect our state's native plants and animals and water quality, and provide public access to nature."

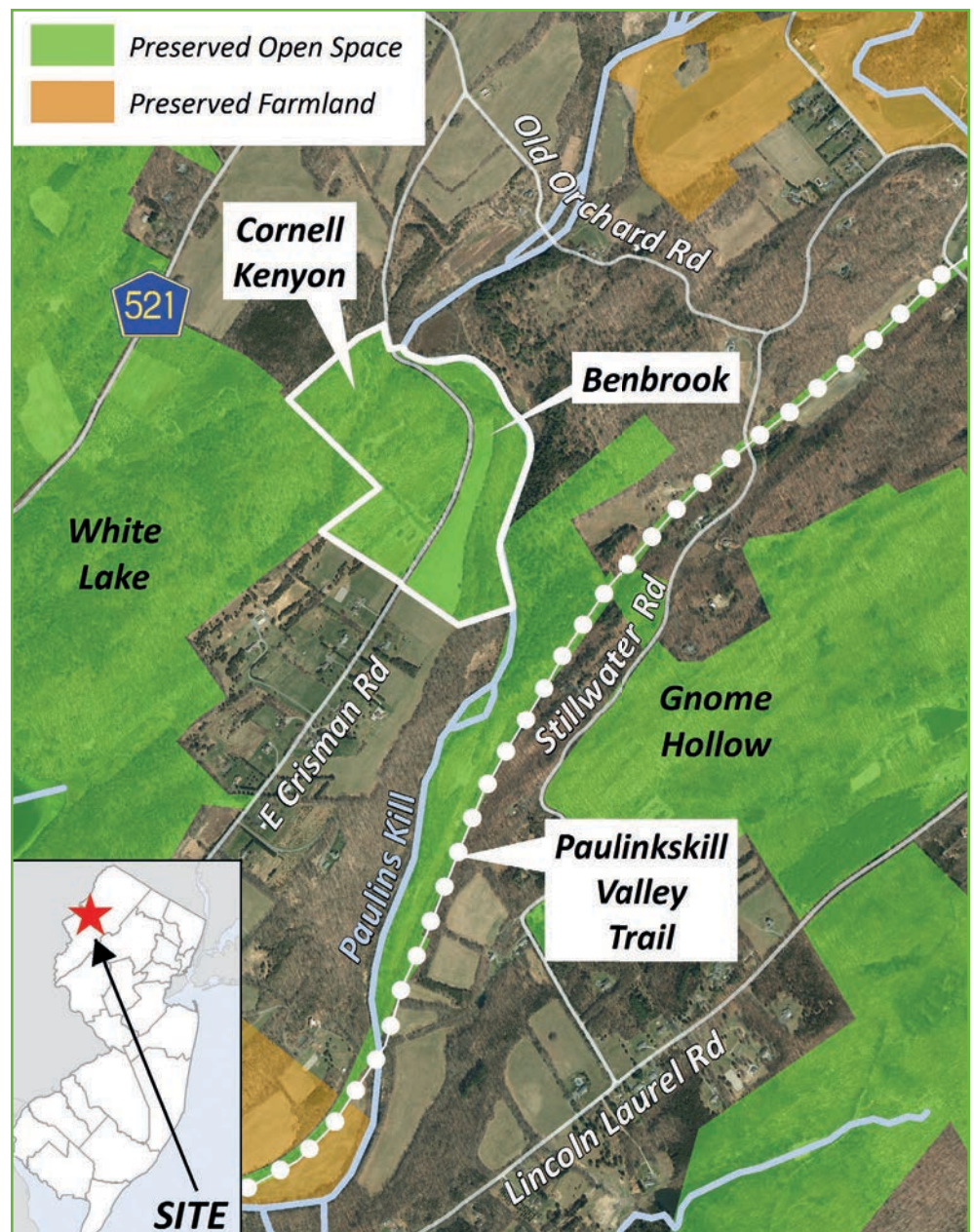
The White Lake Natural Resource Area's most notable feature is a deep spring-fed lake that gets its name from the white chalky marl bottom, made of freshwater mollusk shells and clay. A variety of habitats surround the lake, including meadows, karst limestone exposures, sinkhole ponds, and stands of mature hemlock and hardwood trees.

"This is a really beautiful stretch of the Paulinskill and a very important piece of property to preserve," said Corey Tierney, Director of Land Preservation for Warren County. "Not only does this property connect to other county parkland and offer additional fishing and recreational opportunities for the public, but from a conservation standpoint, preserving this site will also help protect the watershed and the endangered bobcat, along with other species. So we're really excited to

see this preserved and extremely grateful to the state and our nonprofit partners for making it possible."

White Lake will be managed by the Ridge

and Valley Conservancy under a stewardship agreement with Warren County. Riparian and habitat restoration projects are planned in the near future.





## Clean Energy Bill signed into law

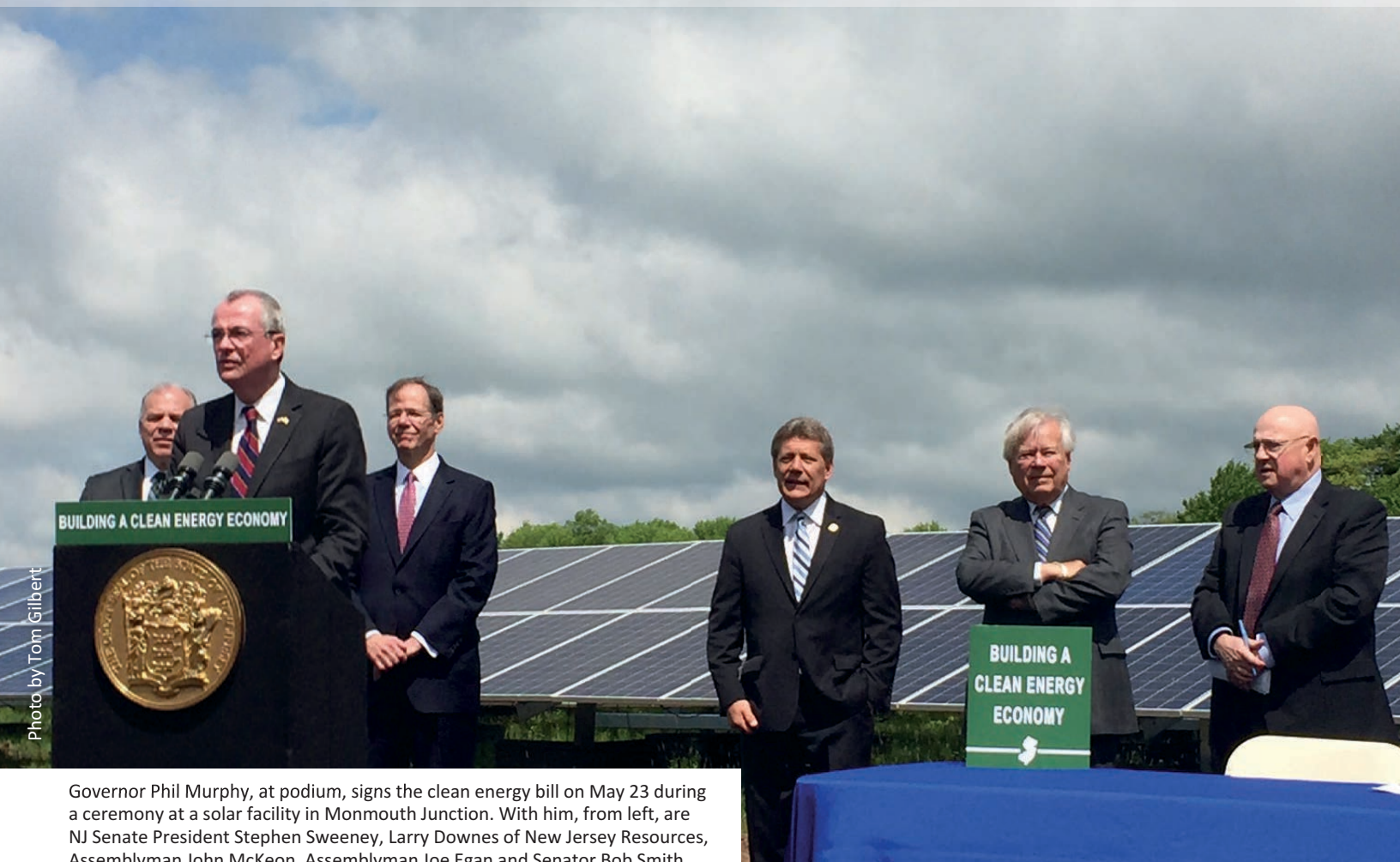


Photo by Tom Gilbert

Governor Phil Murphy, at podium, signs the clean energy bill on May 23 during a ceremony at a solar facility in Monmouth Junction. With him, from left, are NJ Senate President Stephen Sweeney, Larry Downes of New Jersey Resources, Assemblyman John McKeon, Assemblyman Joe Egan and Senator Bob Smith.

In late May, Governor Phil Murphy signed sweeping clean energy legislation that will create good, local jobs, reduce harmful air emissions, and make New Jersey a national leader in clean, renewable energy technologies.

Governor Murphy also announced an executive order directing the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to develop a plan for the state to achieve 100 percent clean energy by 2050.

The new law:

- Mandates that New Jersey get more than half of its energy from renewable sources like solar and wind by 2030 – more than a threefold increase over the progress

made since 2001. It will also protect customers with a cap on the cost.

- Establishes an energy efficiency program that will decrease harmful emissions from the power sector by approximately 350,000 metric tons per year, the equivalent of removing approximately 75,000 cars from the roads each year.

- Creates a community solar program to ensure all customers will have access to the benefits of solar energy for the first time, including low-income and multi-family residence customers.

"This landmark legislation and executive order show that New Jersey is serious about

rapidly adopting clean, renewable energy," said Tom Gilbert, campaign director for ReThink Energy NJ and New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

"From far-reaching environmental benefits, to tens of thousands of jobs that strengthen our economy, to lower emissions that fend off climate change and improve our health, the advantages of clean energy are undeniable," he added. "With these actions, Governor Murphy is making New Jersey a national leader in the transition away from fossil fuels toward a healthier and more prosperous clean energy future."



# CONDEMNATION FIGHT CONTINUES



Preserved properties along the Wickecheoke Creek in Hunterdon County are threatened with condemnation by the PennEast pipeline proposal.

## Defending conservation land from unneeded pipeline

New Jersey Conservation Foundation and our conservation partners are vigorously fighting the condemnation of public and private land along the proposed PennEast pipeline route in Hunterdon and Mercer counties.

The PennEast pipeline would carry fracked shale gas from Northeastern Pennsylvania across the Delaware River and into New Jersey. Its route would cross thousands of acres of preserved land in New Jersey and some of the cleanest streams in the state that drain to the Delaware River.

After receiving conditional approval from a federal agency in January, PennEast filed condemnation papers in federal district court to seize 149 properties in New Jersey, including several New Jersey Conservation Foundation properties.

A third of the properties facing condemnation – a total of 50 – are open space and farmland preserved by the state, counties, municipalities and/or land trusts. Most were preserved using taxpayer dollars.

Represented by the Eastern Environmental Law Center (EELC), we are taking legal action to defend against PennEast's efforts to take rights-of-way on three properties we've preserved that are in the path of the pipeline.

We believe PennEast's attempts to condemn public and preserved land is premature. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's approval in January was conditional on permits from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and the Delaware River Basin Commission – which are pending and could ultimately be denied.

"We are expecting the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to stringently apply laws and regulations protecting water resources and rare wildlife," said Tom Gilbert, campaign director for energy, environment and climate. "We believe the pipeline application will fail on its merits, so it makes no sense to allow PennEast to condemn permanent easements for a project that may never be built."

## McCabe and Mans appointed to NJDEP

### NEW LEADERSHIP AT STATE'S ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY

Environmental leadership in New Jersey got a breath of fresh air with the appointments of Catherine McCabe as commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection and former NY/NJ Baykeeper Debbie Mans as deputy commissioner.

McCabe previously served as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Deputy Region 2 administrator in New York City, and Mans was head of the New York/New Jersey Baykeeper network, which protects and restores the ecological integrity of the NJ/NJ Harbor Estuary.

McCabe and Mans will carry out the Murphy administration's ambitious environmental goals, including addressing the impacts of climate change along the New Jersey coast, building a clean energy economy, and restoring the state's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.



Catherine McCabe, Commissioner of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.



Debbie Mans, Deputy Commissioner of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection





## REI helps trails with volunteer work day and equipment grant

**The section of the Batona Trail running through the Franklin Parker Preserve in the Pine Barrens was spruced up this spring, thanks to outdoor retailer REI, which helped organize a volunteer work day and awarded \$5,000 to purchase new trail maintenance equipment.**

According to Russell Juelg, senior land steward and Pine Barrens educator, the grant covered the cost of power and hand equipment for maintaining trails at the Franklin Parker Preserve and other preserves.

"It was a very generous gift, and the equipment will help us maintain our trails for years to come," said Russell.

Nearly seven miles of the Batona Trail – a 50-mile trail traversing the Pine Barrens – crosses through the 11,380-acre Franklin Parker Preserve.

The new equipment includes a versatile power tool with multiple attachments: a hedge trimmer, chainsaw and rotary string trimmer. "Sometimes we have to hike long distances with heavy equipment to maintain trails," said Russell. "This new piece of equipment is really great to have, because it allows us to carry one power tool instead of three."

The new equipment was used at a volunteer work day in late April by REI. A team of about 22 people trimmed brush

and cleaned up trash along the Batona Trail. Volunteers included REI staff and customers, members of the Outdoor Club of South Jersey, and hunters enrolled in our deer management program.

Thank you, REI and volunteers!

**To find out more about the trails at the Franklin Parker Preserve, go to <http://www.njconservation.org/franklin-parkerpreserve.htm>.**

### DONOR SPOTLIGHT

## 13-year-old raises \$1,200 for NJ Conservation

**Thirteen-year-old Amelia Barth of Montgomery Township, Somerset County, raised over \$1,200 to save land.**

Amelia just finished seventh grade at the Montgomery Upper Middle School and chose to support New Jersey Conservation Foundation for her Bat Mitzvah project.

"My parents support New Jersey Conservation Foundation and other 'green' organizations with donations every year," she explained. "I picked NJ Conservation because it impacts the whole state of New Jersey rather than just my local area."

Amelia organized a bake sale at her town's Earth Day fair at Skillman Park, spending hours baking delicious goodies and

recruiting other bakers to help out. And she raised awareness about NJ Conservation's work by handing out newsletters, pins and brochures.

Amelia also contributed her allowance money, and pledged to donate 10 percent of cash gifts she received at her Bat Mitzvah.

Amelia's mother, Jackie, said she's "beyond proud" of her daughter's hard work for a good cause.

"I have been an environmentalist for a very long time. I am so happy and proud that I've instilled a love of nature in Amelia



and that she chose NJ Conservation to be the beneficiary of her bake sale," said Jackie. "She worked tirelessly baking for the sale and recruiting others to donate homemade baked goods. (Nothing store-bought was her rule.) Her lemon squares and brookies were a huge hit. All the leftover items were donated to Homefront in Hamilton, NJ."

A big thank you – and mazel tov – to Amelia!





Laura Szwak, director of outreach and education, was honored by the Foodshed Alliance at its annual gala on April 29. Surrounding Laura are Kendrya Close, Foodshed Alliance executive director, left, and Lisa Kelly, development and communications director.

## Laura Szwak named “Local Hero” by Foodshed Alliance

**Laura Szwak, NJ Conservation Director of Outreach & Education, was honored as a “Local Hero” by the Foodshed Alliance on April 29 for her work in promoting farming and farmland preservation.**

Laura was chosen as the Foodshed Alliance’s Partner of the Year for highlighting the Blairstown-based nonprofit’s programs to match young and emerging farmers with available land. Together, Laura and the Alliance convened several gatherings of the New Jersey Land Trust Network to look for ways to ensure that farming remains viable in New Jersey despite high land costs.

“For the past two years, Laura has worked closely with the Foodshed Alliance, the NJ Land Trust Network and other stakeholders to address the issue of land access for farmers,” said Kendrya Close, executive director of the Foodshed Alliance. “Thanks to Laura and the work of this group, we are organizing a team of Farmland Advisors that will be trained to help farmers find and acquire land in New Jersey. We are very pleased to present Laura with our 2018 Partner of the Year award.”

“To ensure that preserved farmland remains a part of New Jersey’s landscape, we need a steady stream of people who want to farm and who can make a living from agriculture,” said Laura. Preserving farmland helps, she said, because the development rights on the land are extinguished, thus reducing its cost.

Laura manages New Jersey Conservation Foundation’s conservation assistance program, which includes the annual New Jersey Land Conservation Rally, educational events through the Land Trust Network and the Franklin Parker Conservation Excellence grant program.

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy and Rowan University, Laura developed an online mapping tool called the NJ Conservation Blueprint, which identifies priority lands to preserve for agriculture, natural resource integrity and community green space in New Jersey.

A resident of Mt. Olive Township, Laura serves on the board of the Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority, vice chair of the Crossroads of the American Revolution, member of the NJ Trails Council, and builds trails as a member of the township’s Open Space Committee. Before joining New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Laura served as assistant director of Morris Land Conservancy (now The Land Conservancy of NJ) and as an outdoor recreation planner for the National Park Service.

## Staff

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**Emile DeVito, Ph.D.**, *Manager of Science & Stewardship*

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**Steven Jack**, *Associate Land Steward*

**Russell Juelg**, *Senior Land Steward*

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**Allison Williams**, *Easement Steward*





NEW JERSEY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

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[www.njconservation.org](http://www.njconservation.org)



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Please send your e-mail address to [info@njconservation.org](mailto:info@njconservation.org) or call 1-888-LANDSAVE (1-888-526-3728).

# MOTH NIGHT

## SATURDAY JULY 21 @ FRANKLIN PARKER PRESERVE

### SIGN UP AT [NJCONSERVATION.ORG](http://NJCONSERVATION.ORG)

