

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST



Richard P. Kane Natural Area

2018 ANNUAL REPORT





Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area

OVERVIEW

The Meadowlands Conservation Trust (MCT) was established by an act of the New Jersey State Legislature in 1999 and empowered to obtain land through fee simple acquisitions and conservation easements for the purpose of permanently preserving wetlands, waterways, woodlands and other environmentally sensitive open space in the New Jersey portion of the Hackensack River Watershed.

The watershed in New Jersey encompasses 60 towns in Bergen and Hudson counties. The MCT currently owns or manages nine properties totaling more than 800 acres.

Land acquired by the MCT is preserved in perpetuity so that residents and visitors, both human and wildlife, may benefit from the many advantages that such dwindling ecologically sensitive tracts offer. For instance, wetlands provide a home for fish and waterfowl and absorb floodwater and runoff. Green spaces also provide the public an opportunity for passive recreation and tranquil relaxation.

To fund land preservation in the Hackensack River Watershed, the MCT may apply for grants, receive donations (money and land), and generate other forms of revenue, including from the sale and yearly renewals of specialized Meadowlands Conservation license plates sold by the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission.

The MCT welcomes the opportunity to work with public and private property owners on transferring land rights. The many benefits of donating your land and easements for preservation include:

- Preservation protects the natural beauty and ecological value of the property in perpetuity.
- Conservation helps to maintain habitats that exist on the property today for generations of wildlife to reside on and migrate through in the future.
- Open space requires little or no municipal services so the tax burden to the town is much less than development of the site. Preserving land may amount to federal and/or state income tax deductions, as well as property tax relief.
- Preserving property adds to the pool of open space owned and managed by the Meadowlands Conservation Trust and may enhance recreational areas identified in your municipal and county Open Space and Recreation Master Plans. Land for passive recreational opportunities is at a premium in this densely populated part of the state.
- A conservation easement provides the landowner with the opportunity to retain some of the accrued value on the land while adding a layer of conservation protection to all or part of the property. This is done without having to sell the land outright.
- A conservation plan or strategy can be tailored to fit your land and your financial needs.

If you would like to discuss a piece of land that may be suitable for donation, or a conservation easement, please contact Colleen Mercado at cmercado@njsea.com or 201-460-3722.

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST BOARD OF TRUSTEES



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MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST LICENSE PLATE



By purchasing a Meadowlands Conservation Trust specialized license plate, you can both help support the MCT and let others know about the importance of conserving the Hackensack River Watershed. The plate's colorful design incorporates the juxtaposition of the human and natural elements that make the Meadowlands such a unique and important urban ecosystem.

A Great Egret and a Diamondback Terrapin, two of the many wildlife species found along the Hackensack River, are in the foreground while the New Jersey Turnpike is seen at a distance, exemplifying the interaction of nature and man in this critical urban wetland region.

Funds raised from the purchase of license plates help the MCT to acquire open space in the Hackensack River Watershed, and to protect and enhance its existing inventory of woods, wetlands, natural areas, passive recreation spots and other important properties throughout Bergen and Hudson counties.

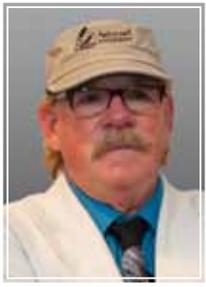
The Hackensack River Watershed is an extremely important urban watershed system, especially in the Meadowlands. The waterway has been getting cleaner following decades of illegal dumping in the region that polluted the river. This improvement has helped lead to a remarkable environmental and wildlife renaissance in the area.

The Meadowlands, where the most prevalent birds were once seagulls picking at garbage, is now a birding hotspot. More than 285 species of birds have been seen

throughout the region, including 34 on the State's threatened, endangered and species of special concern lists. This would not be possible without improvements to the Hackensack River that include preserving its wetlands and surrounding green spaces.

Meadowlands Conservation license plates cost \$50 and a portion of the proceeds support the Trust's preservation efforts. Sales of the plate have raised more than \$318,000 since being introduced in 2004. The plates can be purchased over the counter at any Motor Vehicle Commission office, online at www.state.nj.us/mvc/vehicles/meadowlands.htm, or by calling 609-292-6500. ■

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



William Sheehan

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Meadowlands Conservation Trust (MCT), I am pleased to present our 2018 Annual Report. The past 12 months have been an exciting time. We have seen great progress in furthering our steadfast commitment to preserving and maintaining environmentally sensitive open space and increasing public access to green space in the New Jersey portion of the Hackensack River Watershed.

The year's highlight came in April when the MCT opened the Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area in Little Ferry. This beautiful, new green space provides public access to a significant wildlife and plant habitat. The site includes a fully accessible wildlife observation blind, interpretative wildlife and historical displays, and hundreds of new native plantings. It is a great spot for birdwatching and simply enjoying the Meadowlands' natural beauty.



This was an especially satisfying project as it involved several governmental and environmental groups working together to help the environment and benefit the public. The Trust thanks its partners in this initiative: the Bergen County Utilities Authority, the County of Bergen, the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority and the Bergen County Audubon Society.

In addition, the MCT extends its gratitude toward the organizations,

corporations, Scouts and students whose cleanup efforts over the past 12 months have helped beautify our properties while raising awareness of the vital importance of environmental preservation. Community engagement is fundamental to fostering environmental conservation and we commend those who donated their time to help the environment.

The Trust in 2018 also saw significant advancement in crucial wetland mitigation work at the Richard P. Kane Natural Area, our largest property. The Kane Tract's wetlands provide significant habitat and breeding grounds for many species of animals and vegetation. In October, the MCT completed an improvement project at the Skeetkill Creek Marsh in Ridgefield. The comprehensive initiative involved new plantings, regrading work and the creation of two public viewing areas of the marsh.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our Board of Trustees and the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority operational staff, the MCT is in an excellent position to continue achieving its goals. We look forward to another great year ahead. ■



Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area Ribbon Cutting

MEHRHOF POND WILDLIFE OBSERVATION AREA

In April the MCT celebrated the opening of the Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area in Little Ferry. The project is in keeping with and further promotes the MCT's vision of increasing open space and raising awareness of the importance of environmental conservation within the Hackensack River Watershed.

The Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area is a significant wildlife and plant habitat that includes watershed, wetlands, forestry and other sensitive ecological resources of great environmental importance.

The site features a fully accessible wildlife observation blind looking out onto the pond, colorful and informative wildlife and historical signs, and hundreds of new native plantings such as Coneflower, Black Eyed Susan, Arrowwood Viburnum and Switchgrass. It is also a great place for bird watching. Species that can be seen include Mallards, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and Black-crowned Night Herons.

The collaborative project involved governmental and community groups pooling their resources to benefit wildlife and the public. It was made possible through generous contributions by the MCT, the Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA), the County of Bergen, the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA), and the Bergen County Audubon Society (BCAS).

The MCT spearheaded the project and provided funding to clear the site of overgrown and invasive vegetation, install plantings beds, and enclose the area with protective fencing. The BCUA, through a site access agreement with the Trust, made its property available for creation of the park. The BCAS funded the construction of the observation blind, the site's centerpiece.

NJSEA staff was instrumental in the design of the Observation Area, produced the interpretive and historical signs, and planted the vegetation accenting the observation blind. The County of Bergen funded design and construction of the accessibility ramp to the observation blind, removal of decaying trees, and the placement of recycling receptacles. They also refurbished the park's benches.

The Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area is open from dawn to dusk daily. It is located on Mehrhof Road between Dietrich Street and McCabe Court in Little Ferry. ■

PHOTOS TOP TO BOTTOM: Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area Entrance; View of Mehrhof Pond through the Bird Blind; New bench and interpretative signs; Wildlife information sign



SKEETKILL CREEK MARSH IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The MCT completed an improvement project at Skeetkill Creek Marsh in Ridgefield. The 16-acre wetland site is an important habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and fish. It also serves a place of relaxation and enjoyment for the public, supporting the MCT's goal of preserving and providing public access to green spaces.

THE INITIATIVE INCLUDED:

- Mowing and cutting vegetation on the path that runs along the wetlands and creating two open areas for viewing the marsh.
- Restoring conditions at the site entrance by planting native shrubs and filling in eroded spaces around benches.
- Placing new red barn stone in the walkway to refresh the existing stone.
- Placing new topsoil to level and regrade the lawn area.
- Removing cement blocks and adding soil to level the ground at the west end of the lawn area.
- Removing and replacing two damaged benches. ■

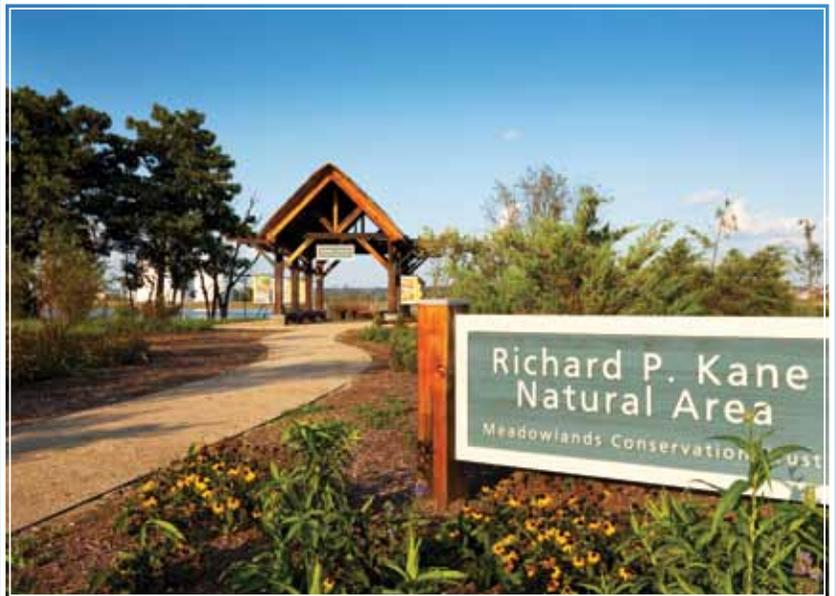


KANE TRACT MITIGATION

One of the MCT's most significant properties is the 587-acre Richard P. Kane Natural Area that traverses Carlstadt, South Hackensack and Moonachie. The Kane Tract is one of the largest remaining contiguous pieces of open space in the Meadowlands.

Ongoing wetland mitigation work on a portion of the property in Carlstadt and South Hackensack continued in 2018 with great progress. The mitigation area is managed by Kane Mitigation, LLC. The 217.49-acre site was designed to establish and maintain aquatic resource habitat through the enhancement of tidal marshes, channels, and mudflats, and the restoration of tidal wetlands.

Native vegetation including saltmarsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) has replaced much of the invasive common reed *Phragmites*. Total vegetation coverage has increased from 27 percent in 2014 to 86 percent in 2017. Recent coverage was comprised mainly of saltmarsh cordgrass and additional native species including little-head spikerush and horned-pondweed. There has been an accompanying increase in water quality, wildlife and fish habitat in the marsh. ■



EARTH DAY CLEANUPS



RICHARD P. KANE TRACT

In April, volunteers from the Secaucus-based FEMA/AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) program performed a cleanup at the edge of the Kane Tract in South Hackensack. AmeriCorps NCCC members, accompanied by MCT staff, filled 30 garbage bags with debris from the site. FEMA/AmeriCorps NCCC reached out to the MCT to help the environment as part of its Global Youth Service Day. ■



SKEETKILL CREEK MARSH

Sanofi staged an Earth Day cleanup of Skeetkill Creek Marsh in Ridgefield. The pharmaceutical company is located across the street from the environmentally-sensitive property and holds annual events to keep it green. Employees removed a tire from the area and filled 20 bags with bottles, plastic milk containers, coffee cups, cigarettes and other litter. ■

STUDENT INTERN

Dillon Negrón, an environmental science student from Ramapo College in Mahwah, spent 10 hours in the field in the latter part of 2017 with Don Smith, the Trust's consultant. Dillon assisted with trail maintenance at Skeetkill Creek Marsh and accompanied Don during his monthly monitoring of Trust properties. ■

FINANCIAL REPORT

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST STATEMENT OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES DECEMBER 31, 2017

OPERATING REVENUES

Richard P. Kane Tract - current year *	100,000
NJDMV - License Plate Sales	20,346
Cash Donations	3,401
Interest Income	21,173

TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES **\$ 144,920**

OPERATING EXPENDITURES

Administrative Services	175,000
Program Expenses	27,625
Insurance	11,136
Professional Fees	53,864
Other	361

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES **\$ 267,986**

OPERATING GAIN/ (LOSS) PRIOR TO NON-OPERATING REV/EXP **\$ (123,066)**

NON-OPERATING REVENUES/EXPENDITURES

Richard P. Kane Tract - prior years *	\$ 600,000
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NET OPERATING GAIN/(LOSS) **\$ 476,934**

* Revenues for Richard P. Kane Tract are restricted for perpetual preservation of Kane Tract.



MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

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