



MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

2019 ANNUAL REPORT





Richard P. Kane Natural Area North, Carlstadt

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. In addition to preserving new properties, the Trust works to maintain, improve and enhance its existing inventory of natural spaces.

The Hackensack River begins in Rockland County, N.Y., and flows south, emptying into Newark Bay. The watershed in New Jersey includes 60 towns in Bergen and Hudson counties. The MCT owns or manages nine properties totaling more than 800 acres.

Such land offers many important benefits for residents and visitors, both human and wildlife. For instance, MCT properties include ecologically critical wetlands that provide a home for birds and fish while filtering pollutants. Marshes also absorb stormwater, helping to mitigate flooding in nearby areas. Green spaces protected by the Conservation Trust also provide an opportunity for passive recreation and tranquil relaxation. Properties include walking trails, benches and views of ponds and streams.

In the southern section of the watershed, the Meadowlands is a prime example of the importance of the Trust's work in protecting dwindling, ecologically important marshes and open space. Set against an urban backdrop, the Meadowlands hosts a unique ecosystem that includes more than 8,400 acres of vital wetlands less than 10 miles from New York City and in close proximity to major highways. Once an urban wasteland, the Meadowlands today is a natural oasis set within one of the busiest economic corridors in the country.

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 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 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 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



Chairman
WILLIAM SHEEHAN
Hackensack
Riverkeeper



Vice Chair
GREGORY REMAUD
NY/NJ Baykeeper



Delegate
KIMBERLY HOLMES
New Jersey
Department of
Community Affairs



Delegate
STEVEN CATTUNA
New Jersey
Sports and Exposition
Authority



Delegate
HON. ANTHONY SUAREZ
Mayor of Ridgefield

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.

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, with an annual renewal fee of \$10. A portion of the proceeds support the Trust's preservation efforts. Sales of the plate have raised more than \$340,000 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/dedicated.htm
or by calling
609-292-6500, extension 5061

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



William Sheehan

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Meadowlands Conservation Trust, I am pleased to present the MCT 2019 Annual Report. The past 12 months have been an exciting time. The Trust over the past year saw a substantial

increase in funding that will help shape our ongoing work in preserving, acquiring and maintaining environmentally sensitive open space in the New Jersey portion of the Hackensack River Watershed.

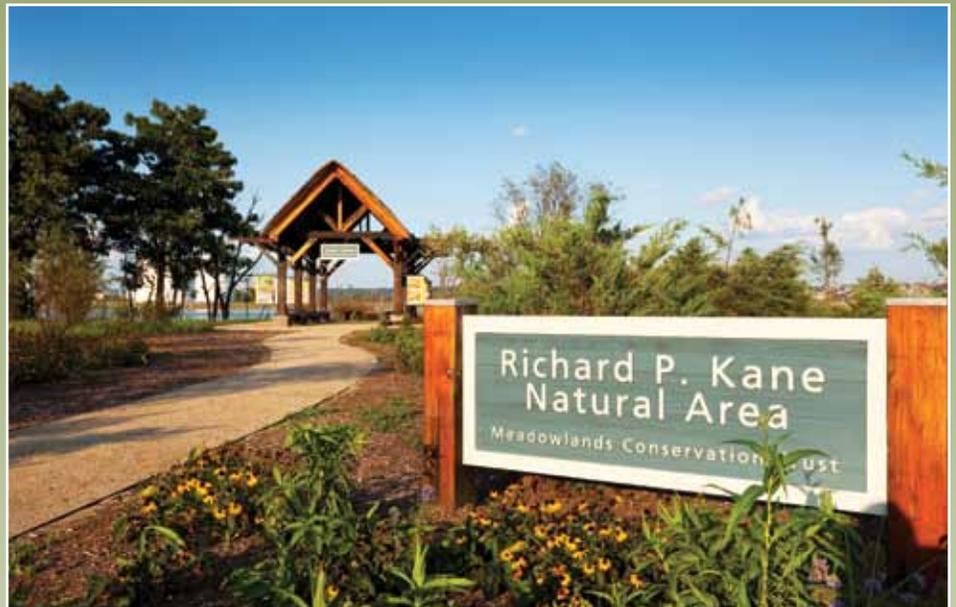
Thanks to the leadership, foresight and hard work of Governor Phil Murphy and State Senator Paul Sarlo, \$1.5 million was allocated to the Trust in the State Fiscal Year 2020 Budget. This funding was part of \$3 million that had been reappropriated from MCT's Trust Fund in 2017. The MCT will request that the remaining \$1.5 million be appropriated in the FY2021 State Budget.

The MCT is appreciative and grateful to be represented by such outstanding environmental champions. Through their steadfast advocacy for the Trust and, by extension, critical green spaces in the Meadowlands and northern New Jersey, Governor Murphy and Senator Sarlo have tremendously improved residents' quality of life and the health of the environment.

In addition, the Trust continues to receive annual payments of \$100,000 for future maintenance of the Kane Tract. The combined influx of monies into the MCT allows the Board to both continue its steadfast commitment to preserving, acquiring and maintaining open space, and increasing public access to these crucial sites.

A prime example of the MCT's recent work in helping to open environmentally beneficial sites to residents is the Mehrhof Pond Wildlife Observation Area in Little Ferry. This beautiful spot was made public in 2018 through a joint effort between the MCT, the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA), the Bergen County Utilities Authority, the Bergen County Audubon Society and the County of Bergen. In 2019, hundreds of people visited the Observation Area to go birding, read, meditate or simply enjoy nature in its entire splendor.

In the fall naturalists from the NJSEA launched a pilot project at the Trust's



Skeetkill Creek Marsh in Ridgefield that seeks ways to reduce the use of herbicides to control the spread of invasive species, namely *Phragmites australis*. NJSEA staff used a cutting regime on one of the three islands within Skeetkill rather than spraying an herbicide. The island will be monitored in 2020 and data collected will form the basis of the cutting treatment's effectiveness to better inform future invasive species management.

The Trust in 2019 also saw the continuation of environmental improvement at the Richard P. Kane Natural Area in Carlstadt and South Hackensack. The Kane Tract's wetlands

provide significant habitat and breeding grounds for many species of animals and vegetation. The marshes also filter pollutants and absorb stormwater runoff, helping to protect the Hackensack River from harmful contaminants and to alleviate flooding in surrounding areas.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our Board of Trustees, NJSEA support staff, and our elected representatives, the MCT is poised to further build upon its solid foundation of permanently preserving environmentally sensitive open space in the Hackensack River Watershed for years to come. ■

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST
PERMANENTLY PRESERVED PROPERTIES IN THE HACKENSACK RIVER WATERSHED



Central Woods, Norwood



Pomander Walk, Teaneck

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST
PERMANENTLY PRESERVED PROPERTIES IN THE HACKENSACK RIVER WATERSHED



Emerson Woods, Emerson



Clarke Property, Demarest

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST
PERMANENTLY PRESERVED PROPERTIES IN THE HACKENSACK RIVER WATERSHED



Skeetkill Creek Marsh, Ridgefield



Skeetkill Creek Marsh, Ridgefield

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST
PERMANENTLY PRESERVED PROPERTIES IN THE HACKENSACK RIVER WATERSHED



Richard P. Kane Natural Area North, Carlstadt



Richard P. Kane Natural Area South, Carlstadt

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST
PERMANENTLY PRESERVED PROPERTIES IN THE HACKENSACK RIVER WATERSHED



Fox Hill West, Norwood



Pine Terrace, Demarest

FINANCIAL REPORT

MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST STATEMENT OF REVENUES & EXPENDITURES

DECEMBER 31, 2018

OPERATING REVENUES

Richard P. Kane Tract - current year *	100,000
NJDMV - License Plate Sales	17,326
Interest Income	9,515

TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES **\$ 126,841**

OPERATING EXPENDITURES

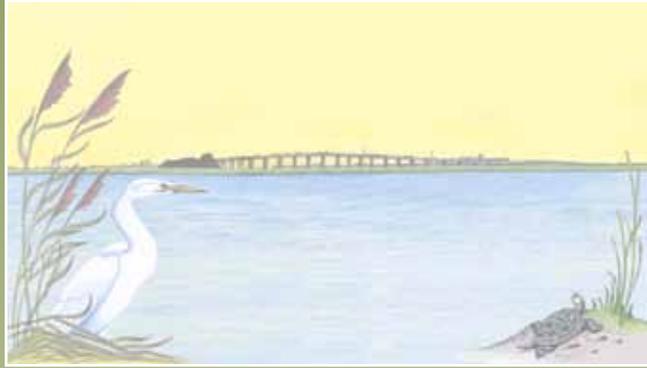
Administrative Services	175,000
Program Expenses	26,710
Insurance	11,304
Professional Fees	42,136
Other	11,074

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES **\$ 266,224**

OPERATING GAIN/ (LOSS) PRIOR TO NON-OPERATING REV/EXP **\$ (139,383)**

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





MEADOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

ONE DEKORTE PARK PLAZA
LYNDHURST, NJ • 07071 • 201.460.3722
MEADOWLANDSCONSERVATIONTRUST.ORG

