

The Nature  
Conservancy



New Jersey

**NEW JERSEY** | **ANNUAL REPORT**

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# Dear Friends,

As you read about the conservation accomplishments that your generous support made possible, I hope that you are inspired by how these projects are making tangible progress toward tackling the *interconnected biodiversity and climate crises*. Yes, biodiversity loss and climate change are dire challenges. But we have the science, the tools, and the partnerships to create solutions. Importantly, we are not working alone; we work in concert with local communities, we collaborate with other organizations and government agencies, and we are part of regionwide efforts to achieve large-scale impact.

crisis, whether they live along the Jersey Shore or in densely populated cities, use nature-based solutions designed to abate climate impacts like flooding and poor air quality. These techniques also benefit biodiversity by restoring coastal habitat and increasing green space in cities.

Thank you! Our work—work that addresses both biodiversity loss and climate change, work that touches down in our home state and extends beyond our borders, work that benefits from and contributes to a wide variety of partnerships—is made possible by you and others dedicated to conservation. Together, we are making New Jersey a place for people and nature to thrive!

The chapter's land protection priority, Bobcat Alley, is a critical link in the Appalachian natural highway, a resilient, connected corridor that allows species to migrate northward and to higher elevations as temperatures warm. And, in addition to protecting habitat and species, safeguarding forested lands in Bobcat Alley also stores carbon. Our efforts to help people on the front lines of the climate



Yours in conservation,

Dr. Barbara Brummer

## The Nature Conservancy New Jersey

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ON THE COVER View from Kittatinny Ridge © Jared Flesher THIS PAGE TOP TO BOTTOM Bobcat pounces in snow © Charles Robertson/Paula Levay; NJ State Director, Dr. Barbara Brummer © Bernard DeLierre

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# WHERE WE WORK

## BOBCAT ALLEY

Working with partners and expanding outreach to landowners, we are making progress toward our goal to protect 3,500 acres in this vital wildlife migration corridor connecting the NJ Highlands to the Appalachians.



Johnsonburg Swamp Preserve

High Mountain Park Preserve



## PAULINS KILL WATERSHED

Our comprehensive monitoring program in the Paulins Kill watershed—now in its seventh year—uses instream survey methods, data loggers, and remote sensing stations to measure watershed health and the impacts of our restoration work.



## POLICIES FOR NATURE

We are working with lawmakers to enact legislation like Dam Hazard Classification regulations, which consider damage to natural resources as hazards from potential dam failure.

Maurice River Bluffs Preserve



## OFFSHORE WIND

TNC scientists and policy experts are working to ensure that offshore wind is deployed to provide maximum benefits to people and nature.

South Cape May Meadows

Garrett Family Preserve at Cape Island Creek

## CITIES

Guided by Greenprint data, we are identifying locations in Newark to plant trees, which will improve air quality and reduce temperatures—just one facet of Greening Our Cities.

## COASTAL

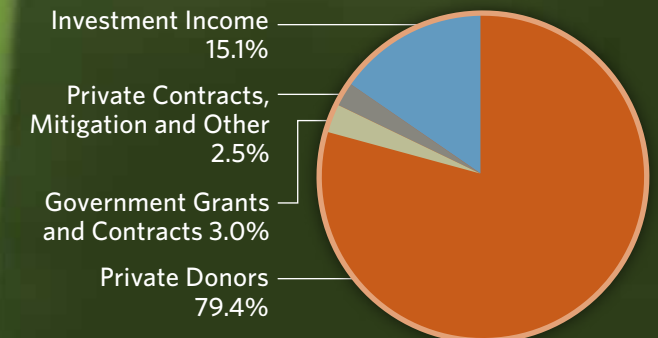
We are using pilot projects to demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative marsh restoration techniques and advance coastal resilience.

# Financial Overview

The Nature Conservancy in New Jersey ended FY22 on solid financial ground. Total operating revenue was \$6.2 million, almost 80% of which came from private contributions. Operating expenses stood at almost \$6.7 million, a 12% increase from FY21, influenced largely by filling open positions. The pie chart below shows sources of operating and capital revenue. Our endowments portfolio lost value (-13%) due to market conditions, ending the year at \$24.4 million. The investment income from endowments contributed about \$939K to our operating revenue (15%).

For more information, please contact Betsy Wullert at [ewullert@tnc.org](mailto:ewullert@tnc.org).

## Sources of Operating and Capital Revenue



MAP TOP TO BOTTOM Bobcat in Warren County, NJ © Jim Thomson; Water quality monitoring in the Paulins Kill © Michelle DiBlasio/TNC; Volunteers plant trees as part of a community event © Devan King /TNC-KY; New Jersey State House, Trenton © Marion Touvel; Surveying marsh regrowth after sediment placement © George Steinmetz; Wind Towers © iStock RIGHT Eastern tailed-blue butterfly at Johnsonburg Swamp Preserve © Jeff Burian/TNC



# LANDS



## Envisioning a Conservation Future

The New Jersey Conservation Blueprint is an interactive, online mapping tool that pools a wide variety of data to identify the most important lands to protect before all remaining land in New Jersey is either developed or conserved. More than 22 partners statewide came together to develop this platform, launched in 2016, and its popularity continues to grow, with more than 38,000 users to date and counting!

TNC and our partners are continually upgrading the Blueprint, not just to make it more user-friendly, but to refine our conservation goals. Over the last year, we launched a series of visioning sessions to engage local partners in assessing New Jersey's most iconic landscapes, potential barriers to land protection within these landscapes, and the best ways to overcome them together. We have hosted three workshops so far: one focused on the Highlands and two on the Kittatinny Ridge and Valley. More than 80 stakeholders participated in these sessions, and we have already seen new collaborations as a result. Our next series of workshops will focus on the Delaware Bayshore.

**6,154** ACRES

### Tracking Blueprint Results

Over the last two years, the New Jersey Conservation Blueprint has influenced protection of 6,154 acres statewide!



**NEW JERSEY  
CONSERVATION  
BLUEPRINT**

engage. protect. restore.





## Bobcat Alley and Beyond

New Jersey's real estate market has been booming since the pandemic began, particularly residential housing. But we can't forget that our wildlife populations also need places to call home. Enter Bobcat Alley: a 32,000-acre corridor connecting the Highlands to the Appalachian range at Kittatinny Ridge. As our climate continues to warm, species like bobcats migrating northward need Bobcat Alley—and its connection to the 2,000-mile Appalachian greenway stretching from northern Alabama into Canada—more than ever. The Nature Conservancy and our partners have protected 1,540 acres in Bobcat Alley thus far, and we are working with local organizations like the Land Conservancy of New Jersey and the Ridge and Valley Conservancy on new acquisitions that will protect more land in this vital corridor.

Bobcat Alley doesn't just benefit wild creatures, but people too. Its protection helps improve water quality in key Delaware River tributaries like the Paulins Kill and adds to popular Sussex and Warren County hiking trails. Stay tuned for some exciting announcements over the year ahead!







## Forked River Mountain Preserve Transfer

What do you get when you combine 3,100 acres of pristine pine forests and wetlands with the largest property ever acquired under Ocean County's open space program? An 11,000-acre nature haven in the heart of New Jersey's Pinelands.

More than 20 years ago, the Leone family donated 3,100 acres in Lacey Township to The Nature Conservancy, creating the Forked River Mountain Preserve. In keeping with our practice of transferring some TNC properties to partners managing large adjacent lands, we are in the process of donating the preserve to Ocean County as an addition to a 7,800-acre tract that the county had acquired. Adding TNC's preserve to the adjacent property will create Ocean County's largest park and ensure permanent preservation and stewardship of this critical habitat.



# RIVES



## Swipe Right for Nature

The greeting shed at South Cape May Meadows now boasts an exciting new feature and longtime dream of our marketing team: a digital kiosk! The kiosk has a four-foot touchscreen that, with a tap, provides access to a wealth of information about the preserve: trail maps, the history of the preserve, even audio bird calls. In the works: a donation processing component. True to our reputation for “firsts,” the New Jersey Chapter’s kiosk is the first of its kind at any TNC preserve!



## Rolling Out the Welcome Mat

TNC’s ongoing efforts to make our five flagship preserves welcoming and accessible to all are producing exciting and innovative results. South Cape May Meadows, whose location along the Atlantic flyway and diversity of habitat make it a haven for migratory birds, attracts thousands of visitors every year, from all over the globe. To enhance the visitor experience, we have added QR codes to the interpretive signs; a quick scan of the code with a smartphone links the user to the preserve webpage, where one can find Spanish, Chinese, and French translations and preserve information. We have also added ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant ramps to the bridges along the trails to allow for wheelchairs and strollers to navigate more easily.

We are proud to introduce the Braille Trail, a half-mile loop around the core of the Garrett Family Preserve. Signs in Braille, combined with a voice-guided app that uses GPS to describe the preserve, its history and ecological importance, provide a multisensory experience for visitors with impaired vision.

Meanwhile, at Johnsonburg Swamp, considered one of the most important and species-rich natural areas in the state, conservation staff have been hard at work creating enhancements to align the preserve with ADA standards. Gravel paths have been replaced with cement sidewalks, providing easy access to picnic tables and viewing areas; these areas have been widened to allow plenty of room to maneuver a wheelchair. A dedicated parking spot provides wheelchair accessible vans with a direct path to the sidewalk. And finally, the field adjacent to the pavilion has been transformed into a pollinator’s paradise by removing invasive species and seeding native plants.

At High Mountain Park Preserve, in addition to QR codes to access translations, new trail signs provide directions and distances to landmarks, parking, and other trails, and benches offer a spot to take a break.



Scan to see our new interpretive sign translations!





# RIVERS

A large, colorful illustration of a fish, likely a trout or salmon, jumping out of the water, integrated into the letter 'I' of the word 'RIVERS'.

## A New River

As we continue our long-term effort to restore the health of the entire Paulins Kill watershed, The Nature Conservancy has also set our sights on the Delaware River tributary just downstream of the Paulins Kill: the Pequest River. TNC is working with two private landowners and the state's Division of Fish and Wildlife to lead the design, engineering, and permit submission to remove the Upper and Lower E.R. Collins Dams on the Pequest River in the center of Belvidere. Houses and commercial buildings back right up to the river, and the dams exacerbate flooding with every severe storm. Removing the dams will reconnect three miles of river to the Delaware and help to minimize flooding, benefiting the community as well as fish and other aquatic species. Conducting the pre-removal work for both dams simultaneously will provide significant cost savings.

We are also looking upriver to two smaller, privately owned dams on the Pequest. Our goal there is to work with small business contractors to help them gain dam removal experience, building capacity to remove more and more dams.

## Out, Damned Dam!

The Nature Conservancy continues to lead the 16-member Statewide Dam Removal Partnership, which aims to identify the most important New Jersey dams to remove and to streamline dam removal policies and processes. Since 2020, the partnership has held 12 webinars on the variety of steps required in dam removal, from permitting and funding to conducting community outreach. All webinars are accessible for free on [www.njdams.org](http://www.njdams.org). We are now working with state legislators on a bill to include damage to natural resources when classifying the hazard levels of New Jersey's 1,700-plus regulated dams.







## One Fish, Two Fish

The summer of 2022 was the seventh season that TNC staff has monitored water quality in the Paulins Kill to measure the impact of our floodplain restoration and dam removal. We use instream data-loggers to take continuous water readings and conduct in-person surveys of aquatic macroinvertebrate species that indicate stream health just by their presence. In 2021, we started working with Rutgers and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection to collect data on migratory fish in the lower Paulins Kill. The new eDNA process monitors the presence or absence of American shad, river herring, and sea lamprey adults and young born within the last year to confirm that the species are successfully breeding. We plan to collect this data through 2025 to help document how the Columbia Dam removal has enabled migratory fish to return to their historic spawning grounds.



# CLIMATE



## Marsh Restoration Momentum

Healthy marshes can play a powerful part in helping coastal communities adapt to rising sea levels and more intense storms, so TNC continues to take a multi-pronged approach to advancing this nature-based solution to climate impacts. Over the last year, we built momentum for improved salt marsh management through pilot projects, learning exchanges, and coalition building. Results from the beneficial use pilot projects where TNC, together with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers, raised marsh elevation with dredge sediment at Avalon, Fortescue and Ring Island will be presented at a national conference in 2023. More than 150 representatives from state and federal agencies, conservation organizations, and engineering and consulting firms from northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states have participated in the TNC-led Beneficial Use Learning Network's bi-monthly webinars. Through the Network, restoration practitioners, regulators and dredging experts sit down at a virtual table to collaborate on viable marsh restoration techniques. The NJ Department of Transportation has contracted with TNC to lead an important consensus-building project: facilitating the development of a Regional Sediment Management Plan for New Jersey's Atlantic coast estuaries. These plans reflect agreements reached among federal, state, and local agencies and nonprofits on goals, targets, and policies for handling sediment and dredging within an ecological region. Marrying the need to maintain navigable waterways and the





## Lighthouse Center Learning Laboratory

TNC is excited to join the Natural Resource and Education Foundation, manager of the Lighthouse Center in Waretown, and other partners including U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program and Barnegat Bay Partnership, in demonstrating how different restoration techniques can address different marsh conditions. At the Lighthouse Center, the marsh shoreline has eroded significantly. About 10 acres of marsh have now completely transitioned to mud flat and another 30+ acres are threatened by their inability to keep pace with accelerating sea level rise. Wave attenuating devices were installed this spring with support from TNC. Our staff also helped the Foundation develop funding proposals for additional site assessment and restoration designs. Importantly, by including key regulators throughout the project, we hope to strengthen their confidence in using nature-based restoration techniques to help threatened marshes survive.

need for sediment to benefit impaired or threatened estuaries sets the stage for widespread restoration of our state's coastal marshes. TNC, along with partners Stockton and Monmouth Universities, will work with agencies over the next two years to develop this shared framework and pave the way for improved management of our salt marshes, which are so important in protecting people and wildlife.



### MARSH MAKEOVER

Style guru Carson Kressley joined TNC in coming to the rescue for coastal salt marshes. Check out the five-minute video on [nature.org/newjersey](http://nature.org/newjersey) and help us spread the word!



### OFFSHORE WIND FOCUS

TNC-NJ joined with other northeastern chapters to fund a new position focused on offshore wind energy, a critical component in the region's transition to clean energy. TNC's first Atlantic Coast Offshore Wind Policy Manager has already represented TNC in meetings with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and is serving on the Department of Energy's Transmission Planning Technical Review Committee for Offshore Wind. TNC is working to help rapidly deploy offshore wind so that it reliably reduces our dependence on fossil fuels while maximizing benefits to habitat, species, and vulnerable communities. To do this, TNC is supporting stakeholder engagement, access to good data, and creative solutions to ensure the best environmental outcomes.



# GREENING



## Project Greenprint + Planting Trees = A Healthier Newark

Trees provide many benefits: they filter our air and water, absorb carbon dioxide to help mitigate climate change, and boost our mental health. Their shade also cools surface temperatures, which is especially important in cities; neighborhoods with lots of pavement absorb more heat and can be 5 to 8 degrees hotter than surrounding areas.

The City of Newark recognizes that its neighborhoods need more trees to clean and cool the air and wants to be strategic in planting trees where they are needed most. The Nature Conservancy and Rowan University have been working with the City for the last two years to develop the Newark Greenprint, a mapping platform that incorporates data on parks and green spaces, waterways, flooding, community health, and more—including tree canopy cover. At the City's request, we have gathered additional tree data to incorporate into the Greenprint, and we are now identifying locations for the first 200 street trees that we will plant this fall: 100 provided by the City and an additional 100 by TNC. But that's just the beginning!

To see long-term changes like improved air quality, reduced urban heat islands, and better stormwater management, Newark will need many, many more trees. That's why we are working with the City on grant applications to support a robust, multi-year tree planting program citywide. Available online and designed to be accessible to the public, our hope is that the Greenprint will serve as a guide for the City, nonprofit partners, grassroots community groups, and local residents to implement projects like tree planting, Green Streets, and other nature-based solutions to meet their goals and improve the quality of life in Newark.



# OUR CITIES



## Green Streets in Paterson

A Green Street is a stormwater management practice that includes vegetation, soil, and engineered systems to slow, filter, and purify stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces like streets and parking lots. The green improvements are designed to capture rainwater and prevent it from flowing into storm sewer systems, which can lead to combined sewage overflows that discharge directly into local water bodies, such as the Passaic River. A Green Street has a multitude of social, environmental, and economic benefits: improved air


and water quality; reduced urban heat island effect; local economic growth; increased green space and city connectivity; and more.


TNC is working with a coalition of partners in Paterson including the City of Paterson, Habitat for Humanity, and the Paterson Flood Fighters to secure funding to implement the city's first Green Street, which we hope will be followed by many more!





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## LONG LIVE YOUR VALUES!

Make a lasting commitment to conservation by including The Nature Conservancy in your will or estate plans. Gifts can be designated to our work in New Jersey, other states, or international programs that align with your passions.

**TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT  
Kelly Grassi at [kgrassi@tnc.org](mailto:kgrassi@tnc.org)**

