



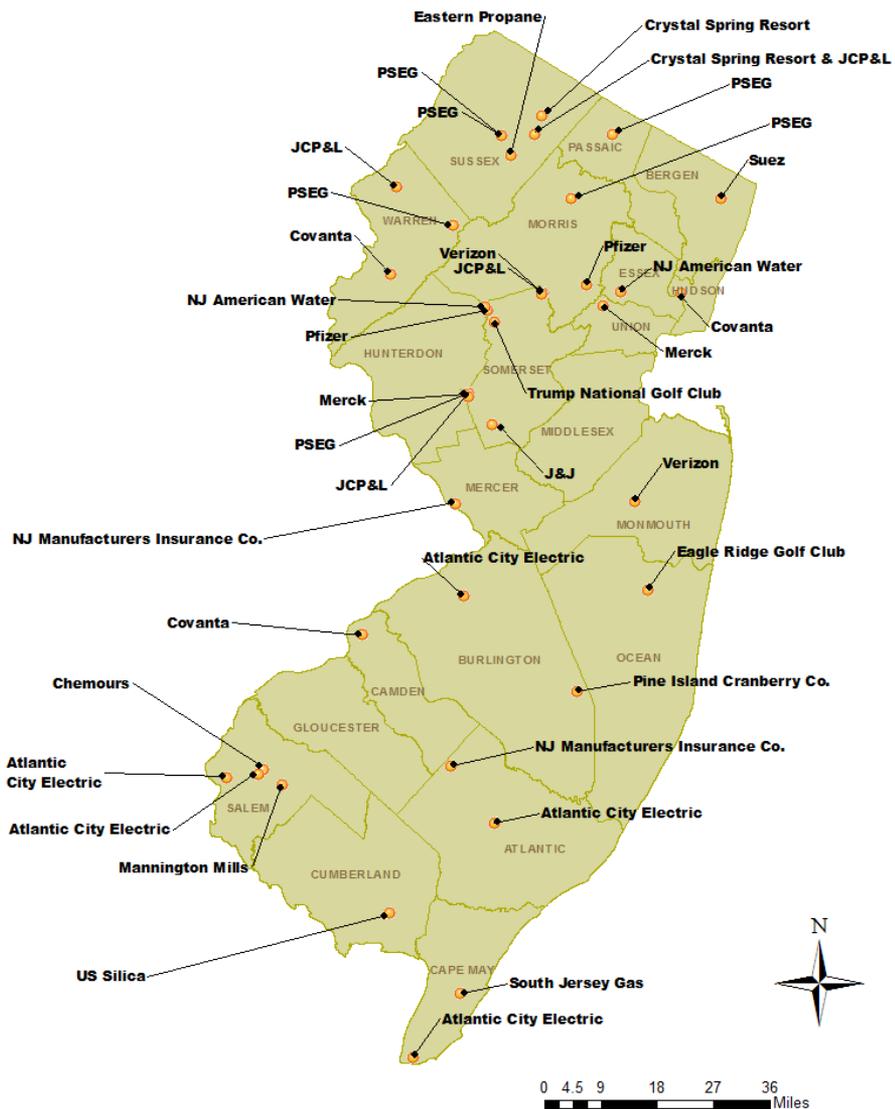
NJ AUDUBON SOCIETY
**CORPORATE
STEWARDSHIP
COUNCIL**

ESTABLISHING THE ROOTS OF CONSERVATION WITH OUR CORPORATE LEADERS

NJ AUDUBON
CORPORATE STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
ANNUAL MEETING

NJM INSURANCE GROUP HEADQUARTERS
WEST TRENTON, NJ
NOVEMBER 29, 2017

CORPORATE STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS THROUGHOUT NEW JERSEY



CSC Executive Brief

The Corporate Stewardship Council (CSC) is a unique group of 18 New Jersey companies united behind a common goal of environmental sustainability and responsibility. Member companies include co-chairs **PSEG** and **Mannington Mills**, as well as **Atlantic City Electric/Pepco Holdings**, **Covanta Energy**, **Chemours**, **Eastern Propane**, **JCP&L**, **Johnson and Johnson**, **New Jersey American Water**, **New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance**, **Pfizer**, **Suez**, **Verizon**, **Trump National Golf Club-Bedminster**, **South Jersey Gas**, **Pine Island Cranberry Co. Inc.**, **U.S. Silica** and **Crystal Springs Resort**. Former CSC members include New Jersey Natural Gas, Merck, and Eagle Ridge Golf Course. Ex-officio CSC members are the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Many companies own or manage land in New Jersey that is located in ecologically sensitive or valuable areas. The Council recognizes the opportunity for these lands to play a critical role in the restoration of valuable habitats and recovery of declining populations of threatened plants and animals and offers a means for member companies to participate directly in habitat conservation.

Each member company works closely with staff at the New Jersey Audubon Society to evaluate habitat restoration or enhancement potential on its property or affiliated sites. Once identified, the partners work together to develop and implement a conservation plan intended to improve upon existing conditions and enhance habitat for rare wildlife and plants. The New Jersey Audubon Society will work with each member company to identify potential sources of outside funding for restoration projects. Member companies may also choose to take advantage of a number of other benefits available to their employees including volunteer work days with New Jersey Audubon staff, onsite environmental programming, and access to New Jersey Audubon staff for advice on shared environmental concerns.

Please enjoy the enclosed summary of the extraordinary projects and accomplishments realized by our members during the third year of the Corporate Stewardship Council. Many other members continue to work with NJAS to develop their projects. In the near future, implementation of these plans in preparation will greatly enhance the diversity and impact of these projects that help to achieve the mission of New Jersey Audubon.



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Atlantic City Electric

In 2017, Atlantic City Electric (now Pepco Holdings) began working in partnership with NJ Audubon, NJDFW and the Landis Sewerage Authority of Cumberland County to create habitat enhancements along its transmission lines that run through the Landis property and into state-owned wildlife management areas. The project site is located within the newly available USDA-NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Bobwhite Quail Program focal region (see Pine Island Cranberry Company for related story).

Utilizing research conducted by NJ Audubon via a recent USDA-NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant on the use of a commodity crop Spelt (*Triticum aestivum* var. *spelta*), as an alternative crop that can provide grassland bird habitat, ACE approved its use on the line to replace the growing of annual rye. From a wildlife resource perspective, spelt is similar in structure to many of the native warm-season grasses and more importantly spelt is typically harvested AFTER July 15. This harvest time will not impact the critical breeding bird months (*i.e.*, April – Mid July); unlike the harvesting of cool-season grass hay crops or other grain crops such as rye, oats, barley or wheat. Thus, the spelt grain can provide agricultural producers with economic diversity and stability while also providing critical habitat for grassland dependent birds.

Spelt (*Triticum aestivum* var. *spelta*) is a sub-species of common wheat. Spelt is used for both human consumption, as well as an alternative livestock feed. Spelt is similar in physical structure and growing-season to the typical native warm-season grasses and can accommodate the needs of grassland dependent birds and other wildlife including pollinators. Like most wind-pollinated plants, spelt produces large quantities of pollen. Bees are particularly attracted to the pollen and will collect it readily. The use of this surrogate crop also provides the producer with a viable commodity crop that already has an established and growing market in the United States, unlike the native warm-season grass for biofuel here in the Northeast. Furthermore, it can be planted with conventional equipment and is completely harvestable without the reliance on and/or restrictions of harvest presented under current USDA programs.

From an agriculture production standpoint, incorporating spelt into an existing crop rotation has benefits to natural resources overall with improvement to soil and water quality. Spelt typically uses less fertilizer (*e.g.*, Spelt requires about 25-50% less nitrogen than wheat) and chemicals for weed control than conventional crops and it can be utilized as an alternative cover crop. Spelt is drought tolerant and does not require irrigation, making it similar to native grasses.

Since Landis Sewerage Authority only harvests the spelt for straw production in late summer, the grain seeds of the spelt will also provide nutritious wildlife forage, as well as, critical cover during breeding season and winter for many birds. Combined with the land management practices implemented by Landis in corporation with NJ Audubon, NJDFW, and the USDA-NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Program the project has significant potential to be a model to resolve how to provide critical wildlife habitat, especially for Bobwhite Quail and other early successional reliant wildlife, on agricultural production land without sacrificing agricultural commodity (food) production.



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Mannington Mills & Chemours

During a cold and wintery weekend in early December 2016, over 80 volunteers put on their hats and gloves and came out to help New Jersey Audubon's Stewardship staff plant 1,320 native trees and shrubs on a working farm in Salem County owned by Mannington Mills. The agricultural land that Mannington Mills owns is managed by a local farmer, who grows peppers, corn, soybeans, and spinach on site. The volunteers helped plant the bare root trees and shrubs along an irrigation pond that eventually connects with Fenwick Creek. This newly planted area will help to protect the waterway by filtering out runoff while providing food and cover for wildlife.

Students from the Salem County Vo-Tech School and Mannington Township School, along with staff from Corporate Stewardship Council members Mannington Mills and Chemours, came out and planted hundreds of trees and shrubs on just the first day. On the following day, the Quinton Boy Scouts, Alloway Daisy Girl Scouts, Salem County 4-H Club, and the Adventure Aquarium's Community & Urban Science Enrichment Program (CAUSE) came out to finish planting the remaining trees and shrubs.

The project is a part of the Delaware River Watershed Initiative, a multi-state effort designed to improve water quality and quantity throughout the watershed. In support of the DRWI, at this same site in Salem County, earlier in 2016 warm season grasses were installed between the field and the wetlands and pollinator habitat was planted along the roadside. Like the trees and shrubs, these strips of vegetation will help protect the waterways by catching eroding soil or nutrients that may runoff from the fields.

The work done on this property is supported by Mannington Mills, the local farmer, and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency. Work within the Delaware River Watershed is supported by the William Penn Foundation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



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Pine Island Cranberry Co.

According to the National Audubon Society, the Northern Bobwhite Quail (NBW) has suffered the most severe population decline of any North American bird (a rate of 82% in the last forty years). In New Jersey, Northern Bobwhite population trends are among the most negative of any state, in fact the species is believed to be functionally extinct in the state. This is primarily due to a change in farming practices, conversion of farmland to suburbia and an overall lack of early successional habitat, including young forest. This young forest-early successional habitat is critical for nesting, resting, escape cover, and food resources for the Bobwhite, as well as other species. However, according to the most recent (2015) Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) Program of the U.S. Forest Service statewide data for NJ, the 0-20 year-old forest age class (young forest) acreage has declined from 511,845 acres in ~ 1955, to the current level of 111,526 acres (2015). This represents a long-term average decline of roughly 6,672 acres/year. If the average continues, young forests (0-20 YO age class) will be statistically non-existent by the year 2032. This decline in young forest habitat does not bode well for sustaining species that rely on this habitat type for survival, including the Bobwhite Quail.

To address the loss of critical habitat to support Bobwhite in NJ and to bring attention to the need for active forest management in NJ, NJ Audubon (NJA) identified the Pine Island Cranberry Company (PICC), a member of the NJA Corporate Stewardship Council, as the model site in NJ to participate in a multiyear/multistate study on evaluating translocation of wild Bobwhite quail as a viable method of creating a sustainable wild population of Bobwhite back to its historic range.

Beginning in 2015, PICC, along with project partners NJ Audubon, Tall Timbers, NJDFW, the University of Delaware and Pine Creek Forestry conducted the first release of wild Bobwhite translocated from Georgia to the PICC study site. Since then, a total of 240 wild birds have been released and radio tracked via telemetry at the PICC site, a total of 39 nests have occurred (1st confirmed nesting of wild Bobwhite in NJ since the 1980s), 116 confirmed chicks have hatched, birds were confirmed to over-winter from year to year, a confirmed nest success of double-clutching and confirmed nest success of a male incubating nest to fruition were also achieved.

This success reflects the quality of habitat on the PICC site that was achieved through their land management. By performing active management on the land, a balance of different cover types for nesting, brood rearing, and foraging allowed for the translocated Bobwhite to take advantage of their naturally high reproductive potential. These positive preliminary project results coupled with the outstanding forestry stewardship practices at the PICC site were directly responsible for, the first time ever in New Jersey, the allocation of federal funding in 2017 through the USDA-NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Program specifically for quail habitat restoration in NJ. This is significant for NJ, when you consider that the only other states that have pine savannahs (Al, FL, GA, KY, IL, IN, MO, NC, OH, SC VA) BUT have an established Bobwhite quail population were the only other recipients of the federal funding. This is a major opportunity for other private landowners and farmers to be part of the recovery of the Bobwhite in NJ and take advantage of a cost share program, that had never been offered in NJ before, and will help establish additional quality habitat for quail and other species, while also helping to address forest health issues such as fuel load reduction, control of forest diseases and pests, and ultimately successful regeneration and forest function.

In 2017 Pine Island Cranberry Company was awarded NJ's first ever Firebird Award by the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) for their contributions to New Jersey's efforts toward habitat-based restoration of wild bobwhite populations.



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