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## **New Jersey Audubon Celebrates Nearly \$1 Million for Conservation and Restoration Efforts**

New Jersey Audubon receives over \$600,000 in federal monies from the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund for marsh conservation and small grants restoration program

Bernardsville, NJ (August 25, 2022) - New Jersey Audubon is celebrating \$630,247 in federal funds recently awarded as part of the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund 2022 grant slate. The federal funding will leverage \$292,677 in match amount for a total of \$922,924 that will conserve critical Black Rail and Saltmarsh Sparrow high marsh habitat in the Delaware Bay, as well as administer a small grants restoration program to provide peer mentoring opportunities to prospective grantees in the Delaware River Basin.

“At New Jersey Audubon, we are grateful to be awarded federal restoration dollars from the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund, which will provide matching funds for two projects, to increase critical habitat for the at-risk Black Rail and Saltmarsh Sparrow, located in Delaware Bay, as well as, build capacity for conservation projects through a mentored small grant program throughout the Delaware River Basin,” **said Alex Ireland, President & CEO for New Jersey Audubon.** “Both projects will contribute to the outcome of a cleaner, healthier and safer watershed for both humans and wildlife.”

The High Marsh Habitat Management for Nesting Black Rail and Saltmarsh Sparrows in the Delaware Bay (NJ) restoration project will leverage \$390,295 total funds to conserve critical Black Rail and Saltmarsh Sparrow habitat in the Delaware Bay at an unimpounded site currently farmed for salt hay. Black rail and Saltmarsh Sparrow populations are both in steep decline due to historical losses of salt marshes to coastal development and also marsh degradation from ditching, draining and other alterations. Populations are now susceptible to sea level rise, increased flooding events, more frequent coastal storms, and marsh erosion due to climate change. Without management and restoration interventions these species are in danger of extinction. This project will work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to modify existing practice scenarios that integrate salt marsh conservation into their incentive programs, which will allow the landowner to maintain some farming while providing critical habitat for at-risk marsh birds.

“Our project to conserve high marsh habitats for Black Rail (“threatened” under the ESA) and Saltmarsh Sparrow endeavors to work with Delaware Bay landowners to modify salt hay farming practices that accommodate the needs of these two high conservation priority species,”

**said David Mizrahi, Vice President of Research and Monitoring.** “We believe this kind of partnership can serve as a model through the mid-Atlantic region”

New Jersey Audubon, in coordination with the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, will leverage \$532,629 total project funds to administer a small grants program for conservation and preservation projects in the Delaware River Basin. The overall goal of the re-grants program is to build capacity and assist community groups implement on-the-ground restoration projects with an outcome of a cleaner, healthier, and more equitable and coordinated Delaware River Watershed.

“We are looking forward to working in coordination with New Jersey Audubon on this new re-grants program, which will not only provide funding for restoration and conservation projects, but also build capacity through an intensive peer monitoring and coaching program,” **said Kelly Knutson, Director of the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed.** “Historically, only organizations with the infrastructure to manage grant funding above \$75K and find matching funds can apply for the DWCF. However, through the new mentored small grants program, the Coalition aims to address this gap by providing smaller organizations, especially those in environmentally underserved areas, with mentoring on grant preparation and management and with appropriately sized grants.”

See the full list of 2022 Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund grants [here](#).

#### About the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF)

Grants were awarded through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund (DWCF), a program administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). The DWCF is funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to achieve the goals of the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act. The Act guides and supports federal, state, regional and local partners to collaboratively identify, prioritize, and implement habitat restoration and conservation activities within the watershed. In five years, the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund has funded 159 projects that provide vital support to fish and wildlife, help support economic vitality, and contribute to quality of life through public access and outdoor recreation opportunities. The Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed has advocated, year over year, for robust federal funding to support this essential program.

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#### About New Jersey Audubon

New Jersey Audubon is a privately supported, not-for profit, statewide membership organization. Founded in 1897, and one of the oldest independent Audubon societies, New Jersey Audubon fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among New Jersey's citizens; protects New Jersey's birds, mammals, other animals, and plants, especially endangered and threatened species; and promotes preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats. For more information, visit [www.njaudubon.org](http://www.njaudubon.org)

About Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed:

Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed protects and restores the land and waters in the Delaware River Basin. We amplify the collective power of 175+ member organizations and other stakeholders as we advocate for a healthy and protected watershed with an inclusive, unified voice. The Coalition convenes member and non-member organizations, builds capacity, coordinates communications, and advances policy at the federal and state levels. Click [here](#) to learn more.