



****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

New Jersey Audubon Announces Award Recipients of the Watershed Restoration and Community Engagement Program

June 5th, 2024 – Bernardville, NJ – New Jersey Audubon is delighted to announce the selected projects for the Watershed Restoration and Community Engagement Program. This year, the program recognizes and supports innovative initiatives that demonstrate outstanding commitment to watershed restoration, environmental stewardship, and community involvement. Through a grant with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, New Jersey Audubon was able to award six projects with a total of \$228,000.

The Watershed Restoration and Community Engagement Program is a pivotal initiative aimed at fostering sustainable environmental practices and engaging local communities in the preservation and restoration of the Delaware River Watershed. This Program is designed to support smaller organizations or those needing less than \$75,000 to work on community-based projects throughout the Delaware River watershed. Additionally, New Jersey Audubon will provide mentorship and capacity building of basin stakeholders to strengthen future applicants for the program to support larger-scale restoration initiatives either individually or with partners.

Award Recipients and Projects:

1. Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Inc. – Beach Lake, PA. \$30,000 for “Enhancing Conservation and Community Engagement in the Delaware Highlands”. Delaware Highlands Conservancy will expand conservation efforts and community engagement in the Delaware River Watershed through capacity building, combining outreach activities, annual monitoring visits, and strategic planning. DHC will work to uphold conservation goals, including improving fish and wildlife habitat, while fostering a deeper connection between people and nature.
2. Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FoHVOS) – Hopewell, NJ. \$50,000 for “Student Empowered Conservation Planning for College Campuses and Parkland”. Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space and Outdoor Equity Alliance (OEA) will support diversification of the stewardship workforce and the stewardship of ecologically and socially important public and private lands by empowering students to co-design college campus and parkland conservation plans, practice stewardship skills, and participate in professional development.
3. Lake Hopatcong Foundation – Landing, NJ. \$30,000 for “Early Detection Aquatic Invasive Species Plan for Lake Hopatcong”. Lake Hopatcong Foundation will develop an Early Detection Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Plan to evaluate current and emerging technologies for their applicability and cost-effectiveness in detecting AIS at Lake Hopatcong. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and environmental DNA (e-DNA) are two emerging technologies to be assessed relative to unique features of the lake.
4. People Enjoying Active Conservation of the Environment in New Jersey (PEACENJ) – Glen Gardener, NJ. \$53,000 for “Designing an Inclusive Riparian Restoration in Hackettstown, NJ”.



PEACENJ will engage the Hackettstown community, including historically marginalized and excluded populations, in the design of a high-priority riparian restoration project along the federally designated Wild & Scenic Musconetcong River in a walkable public park at the heart of this watershed's largest and most diverse population center.

5. Riverfront North Partnership – Philadelphia, PA. \$25,000 for “Building Capacity for Community Fishing on the Delaware River”. Riverfront North Partnership (RNP) will build capacity to provide free fishing programs for underserved and environmentally challenged communities on the north Delaware River watershed in Philadelphia and northeast Montgomery County. The project will expand community partnerships, introducing bilingual programs, and offering free equipment and instruction each week.
6. Save the Environment of Moorestown (STEM) – Moorestown, NJ. \$40,000 for “Swede Run at Swede Run Fields Geomorphic and Ecological Study”. STEM will perform complete environmental analysis of Swede Run as it travels through Swede Run Fields. This will include the riparian forest, and wetlands. This analysis will focus on water quality, invasive plants, as well as native wildlife and plants with the goal of determining the most valuable habitat restoration goals.

Kelly Wenzel, Interim Director of Stewardship, New Jersey Audubon, commented on the announcement, "We are incredibly proud to support these outstanding projects that reflect our commitment to environmental conservation and community engagement. Each initiative not only addresses critical issues within our watersheds but also empowers local communities to take ownership of their natural resources."

New Jersey Audubon is a privately supported, not-for-profit, statewide membership organization dedicated to fostering environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among New Jersey's citizens; protecting New Jersey's birds, mammals, other animals, and plants, especially endangered and threatened species; and promoting the preservation of New Jersey's valuable natural habitats. New Jersey Audubon fosters environmental awareness and a conservation ethic among New Jersey's citizens and protects the state's birds, mammals, and other animals and plants, especially endangered and threatened species.

For more information about the Watershed Restoration and Community Engagement Program or New Jersey Audubon, please visit www.njaudubon.org or contact:

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