

New Jersey State Lands Management Report

April 2022

Prepared for



PINELANDS
PRESERVATION
ALLIANCE

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State Parks and Forests: Introductory Information (Primary source – FY2018 Annual Parks Report)

Facilities and Amenities

Acreage: 450,000 acres

Properties include:

Parks, Forests, Recreation Areas: 51

Marinas: 6

Golf Courses: 3

Number of Historic Sites: 48

Number of Structures: 1,600+

Number of Overnight Facilities: 1,300+

Located across 19 parks

Number of Reservoirs: 4

Number of Swim Areas: 14

Trails: 485 totaling 1,070 miles

Visitation

Day Visitors: 17 million per year

Liberty State Park tops 5 million

D&R Canal State Park, Stokes State Forest and Wharton State Forest each top 1 million

Overnight Visitors: 175,000 per year

Wharton State Forest and Stokes State Forest each top 20,000

Additional Division of Parks and Forestry Activities

Forest fire protection:

Conducted on state, county, municipal, non-profit and private lands throughout New Jersey

Private lands:

NJ Forest Service administers Forest Stewardship Plans with 2,500 landowners covering 155,000 acres. There are 5,700 landowners covering 260,000 acres under Farmland Assessment

New Jersey Urban and Community Forestry Program:

Awarded \$2.1 million in grants - 224 municipalities have Community Forestry Management Plans - 160 Tree City USDA Communities

Native Biodiversity

Plant Species: 2,100 including over 800 rare species (four found nowhere else in the world)

Animal Species: Land Mammals – 62, Marine Mammals – 28, Reptiles – 44, Amphibians – 35, Freshwater Fish – 85, Marine Fish – 336, Dragonflies and Damselflies – 180, Butterflies – 151, Birds - 480

Executive Summary

The problem of insufficient staffing and funding for the care and stewardship of public lands, from national to local levels, is a nationwide problem. Efforts to partially ease this problem through the creation of private foundations and friends groups occurs at the national, state, and local levels. While many of these statewide non-profit partners have significant accomplishments, there are none that can completely meet the challenges created by habitually understaffed and underfunded park systems. Generally, successful statewide partners raise about 0.5% (or up to 10%) of funds already provided by their respective states. This is not only a state issue. For example, the National Park System and US Fish & Wildlife Service have significantly reduced staff in ways that mirror changes for New Jersey state parks (i.e., reduced superintendents leading to assignment of multiple properties by a single manager and steep staff reductions over the last three decades).

The specific example provided from California is illustrative of the larger problems found in park systems throughout the country. California has the oldest park foundation in the country, with significant accomplishments. Despite the successes of the foundation, a 2015 report entitled “A New Vision for California State Parks” (Appendix A) noted that the system is under severe stress and recommended significant changes to the structure, function, and culture of state parks along with recommending the creation of a new foundation (which was established several years ago). This case study strongly suggests that foundations, no matter how successful, cannot alone fix the problems of state park systems, most of which require additional dedicated state funding and fundamental structural changes along with supplemental support of a statewide non-profit partner.

At the national level there are three foundations that receive a portion of their funding through federal funds along with private funds and/or environmental damage penalty funds. These include the National Park Foundation (NPF), National Forest Foundation (NFF), and National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Funding from NFF and NFWF can be available for state park lands. There are also a number of other national, non-federally funded groups that facilitate management of public lands. These groups range from friends-type groups that cooperatively work with government agencies to watchdog groups that monitor and respond to activities on federal parks and refuges.

Across the country, there are 40 statewide foundation or friends groups that supplement state funding with private donations. There are a number of successful models including California, Florida, Pennsylvania, Montana, Texas, and Washington. In New Jersey, there are 20 friends groups across 51 state parks, forests, and recreation areas (some of these are Officially Recognized Friends Organizations - ORFO's). In addition, there are at least 40 friends groups associated with county park systems or individual county or municipal parks.

The NJDEP – Division of Parks and Forestry consists of NJ Forest Service, NJ State Park Service, NJ State Park Police, Office of Natural Resource Restoration and Office of Natural Lands Management. State parks and forests are rich with recreational, educational, historic, and natural values (see Section II and III). Access to outdoor spaces improves the quality of life for residents and provides economic benefits. Outdoor recreation contributes \$17.8 billion in consumer spending, \$6.1 billion in wages and salaries, \$1.3 billion in state and local tax revenue annually, as well as 158,000 direct New Jersey jobs (outdoorindustry.org).

New Jersey parks face significant challenges. Staffing has decreased by 28% since 2006, leading to reduced services including seasonally staffed or closed nature centers, swim areas closing early, and delayed storm cleanup. There are now only 15 Park Superintendents responsible for over 50 parks. For naturalists and historians, there are now less than ten full-time staff across the entire system, which leads to an undervaluing of parks by the public. The ratio of Park Service staff to visitors is 1 to 36,000 and there is 1 Forest Service staff for every 5,500 acres of land. In addition, there has been a 13% increase in acquired park acreage since 2008. The combination of reduced staffing and increased lands requiring management is severely stressing the park system. Some have said that ‘collapse’ is inevitable and these trends are demoralizing remaining staff. It is certain that the integrity of park resources has been significantly reduced.

Historic structures are crumbling despite efforts of local friends groups that care deeply about the state's history. The State Park Service has never had natural resource professionals, and most parks are under assault by invasive species and other serious threats that have significantly degraded biodiversity. Deficiencies in state law enforcement staffing contributes to significant Off-road Vehicle (ORV) damage throughout state lands with particularly devastating impacts in the Pinelands. Many parks struggle to provide basic support for operations and maintenance. There is an estimated \$400 million backlog in deferred maintenance including parking area paving/repair, bathroom facility repair, accessibility improvement, historic building repair, and storm damage repair.

New Jersey parks per capita operational and capital expenditures are significantly lower than our two neighboring states but are more similar to the national average. New Jersey operating budget is 1/3 of Pennsylvania, 1/6 of New York, and 2/3 of the National Average. New Jersey capital budget is 1/9 of Pennsylvania, 1/11 of New York, and similar to the National Average. For trail miles per capita, New Jersey is similar to Pennsylvania and 1/4 of New York. For campsites per capita, New Jersey is 1/2 of Pennsylvania, 1/4 of New York, and less than 1/3 of the National Average. This may account for reduced visits per resident, which are approximately 1/2 of Pennsylvania and New York, and about 2/3 of the National Average.

The dedicated availability and recent reallocation of Corporate Business Tax (CBT) funds marks a significant advantage that New Jersey has over many other states that rely on annual appropriations, one-time bond issues, or emergency contributions, but as stated above, capital expenditures in New Jersey are lower than our neighboring states. CBT funds have led to construction of nature centers and is beginning to ease deferred maintenance backlogs. However, CBT funding does not remedy the insufficient number of state park staff or cover costs related to operations and maintenance.

We suggest that the vision for state parks and forests is to provide a model of stewardship for natural, recreational, educational, and historic resources that provides broad public benefit. The three primary recommended goals include (See Section IV for details): 1) Establish New Jersey Statewide Parks Officially Recognized Friends Organization ("Statewide ORFO"), 2) Increase State Staffing and Improve Efficiency through Partnerships, and 3) Improve Mitigation of Threats. Complete realization of the vision and goals for state parks can only be met through efforts of public and private partnerships, driven by deep appreciation of the natural world and historic resources.

It is vitally important that the park system re-evaluate the structure, function, and culture of the state park system. This process should begin with a comprehensive statement of vision included within a detailed plan considering overarching park system goals, along with plans for individual parks, in order to increase efficiency and maximize public benefit. The plan should address critical threats including deer overabundance, invasive species, and illegal off-road vehicle activities. The state's relationship with non-profit conservation groups and philanthropic foundations, as well as corporate partners, should be strengthened to establish parks as a highly valued asset to New Jersey's residents.

The formation of the "New Jersey Statewide Parks ORFO" should play an integral role in transforming the state park system. The Statewide ORFO would be an independent non-profit organization that can assist with the management of state parks and forests with the goal of significantly improving the quality of state-owned lands and increasing their value to the residents of New Jersey. However, there are no existing models across the country where similar groups significantly solve the problem of insufficient park staff. We recommend significant staffing increases in addition to the formation of a Statewide ORFO to assist parks in order to avoid the impending failure of the state park system.

This report provides multiple models that may be considered to create and sustain a robust Statewide ORFO in New Jersey, including initiation, fundraising, and expenditures that define the Statewide ORFO's relationship to the state. Although various options for Statewide ORFO structure and function are described in this report, we recommend a Statewide ORFO that is broadly defined with the following attributes:

- **Initiation, Structure and Relationship with the State**

- Clearly define the relationship with the state, including utilization of private donations on state lands, through a carefully constructed Memorandum of Understanding.
 - The Statewide ORFO would be self-formed, but the legislature should provide an annual appropriation for at least 5 years to assure initial success. This funding should support the minimum required staff consisting of an Executive Director, Development Director, and Administrative Assistant. Housing of Statewide ORFO staff within existing state offices would reduce overhead costs and foster communications.
 - Statewide ORFO by-laws should be comprehensive, clear, and concise.
- Initial board should be appointed by private stakeholders with informal advice provided by NJDEP, with ongoing board membership determined by the Statewide ORFO. A representative from NJDEP will be an ex officio member.
- Board membership should be bipartisan, with interests that encompass uses of state lands.
 - Board members should represent varied interests including biodiversity protection and enhancement, natural resources, equity and inclusion, passive and active recreation, historic resources, education, and wildlife management.
- The primary board purpose is fundraising toward implementation of well-defined and publicly vetted state priorities.
 - The state should elucidate priorities by developing a comprehensive plan for its parks that align with the public interest and need to improve ecological health. This plan should include a gap analysis involving available funding from the General Fund, CBT and predicted funding contributions from the Statewide ORFO. Plan preparation may be assisted by the Statewide ORFO, under the direction of the state.

- **Fundraising**

- Raise funds from private sources and federal grant funds.
 - Private sources include individuals, foundations, and corporations.
 - Ensure that all state-Statewide ORFO-donor relationships are predictable and transparent.
 - Support state efforts to obtain federal funding and seek opportunities not directly available to the state, but applicable to state lands through non-profit applications.

- **Functions and Expenditures**

- Perform advocacy for state lands to the legislature and public.
 - Advocate for additional state park staff, as this is the most critical limiting factor
 - Assist with development and review of proposed legislation impacting parks.
 - Perform outreach and seek understanding of services desired by the public.
- Recruit and coordinate volunteers and support individual park friends groups.
 - Develop and manage volunteer programs for projects that enhance public amenities and land stewardship, minimizing burdens on limited state parks staff.
 - Assist individual park friends groups with fundraising, administrative support, and development of universal agreements with state parks. The Statewide ORFO is not intended to replace, but only support, existing friends groups.
- Expend funds to support special projects and new initiatives that increase public benefits and improve ecological health.
 - Fund and administer contracts with private entities for defined functions that focus on activities that are not currently performed or are underperformed by existing Park staff. Examples include land stewardship and tasks requiring specialized trades or equipment.
 - Fund Statewide ORFO staff at a level necessary to complete tasks outlined above; Statewide ORFO staffing should be minimized to the extent possible.

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Section I. Overview

Introduction

The vision for state parks and forests is to provide a model of stewardship for natural, recreational, educational, and historic resources that provides broad public benefit. The three primary recommended goals include: 1) Establish New Jersey Statewide Parks Officially Recognized Friends Organization (“Statewide ORFO”), 2) Increase State Staffing and Improve Efficiency through Partnerships, and 3) Improve Mitigation of Threats. Complete realization of the vision and goals for state parks can only be met through efforts of public and private partnerships, driven by deep appreciation of the natural world and historic resources.

Economic Value / Natural Capital

State lands provide significant economic value and natural capital to the residents of New Jersey, justifying proportionate investment in state parks to fully realize and expand these benefits for public benefit. This report does not provide an exhaustive review, but two comprehensive examples are provided below.

- Valuing New Jersey’s Natural Capital: An Assessment of the Economic Value of the State’s Natural Resources (NJDEP 2007, Appendix B). This comprehensive report includes all lands in New Jersey regardless of ownership and protection status.
 - Total value of natural capital is \$20 billion annually
 - Contributors to this value include:
 - Wildlife-related Tourism produces \$3 billion in annual gross economic activity and creates 37,000 jobs.
 - Wetlands provide over \$10 billion annually from flood protection.
 - Marine systems provide over \$5 billion annually from waste dilution.
 - Forests provide over \$2 billion from habitat, water supply, and recreation.
 - Urban green spaces provide nearly \$0.5 billion from aesthetics and recreation.
- Return on Environment: The Economic Impact of Protected Open Space in Mercer County, New Jersey (Mercer County Planning Department 2021, Appendix C). This report details numerous benefits of open space and assigns monetary value to each benefit. The following is a summary published by New Jersey Conservation Foundation (“The State We’re In” by Michele Byers, November 2021).
 - Economic Activity
 - Preserved open space and farmland generate jobs and promote spending by visitors. It’s estimated that \$104 million in annual economic impact occurs on and because of protected open space in the county. This includes buying goods produced on preserved farmland, and ecotourism revenues from park visitors. Protected open space contributes an estimated 980 jobs to Mercer County, including maintenance workers, park administrators, rangers, farmers, guides, and hospitality professionals.
 - Environmental Benefits
 - Protected open space in Mercer County provides huge environmental benefits for local communities, including replenishing water supplies, improving water quality, mitigating flooding during storms, protecting wildlife habitat, and removing pollution from the air. Combined, these nature-based ecosystem benefits would cost more than \$97 million a year to replicate if lost. In addition, protected lands avoid \$9 million and \$102 million, respectively, in annual stormwater system

maintenance and pollutant removal costs. And the thousands of trees in Mercer County parks store carbon that would otherwise contribute to climate change, a service worth nearly \$108 million.

- Recreation and health
 - Preserved open space provides low cost or free recreational opportunities to residents and promotes health and wellbeing. The report estimates that residents who participate in recreational activities on county open space reap over \$47 million worth of benefits a year. This number represents the amount that they would have to spend in the private market for the same activities that they currently enjoy at little or no cost. In addition, physically active people who use outdoor open spaces benefit with lower incidences of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, depression, certain cancers, and obesity. It is estimated that the physical activities on protected open space accounts for about \$84 million in avoided medical costs annually, plus another \$65 million in avoided losses from reduced productivity at work.
- Property values
 - The study found that protected open space increases the value of nearby homes, since buyers are willing to pay more for properties near and adjacent to green spaces. The increased value of homes located up to a half-mile from open space averages about \$7,100 a house. These higher home values generate increased property tax revenues for local governments and higher transfer taxes when the homes are sold.

State Park Recreation, Education, Historic, and Natural Values with Threats

Summary of Values

Lands administered by the Division of Parks and Forestry are a significant resource, providing public benefit for the residents of New Jersey (also see Introductory Information and Section III). There are 17 million day visitors annually. The most visited parks include Liberty State Park (5 million), and approximately 1 million day visitors each at D&R Canal State Park, Stokes State Forest, and Wharton State Forest. There are nearly 200,000 overnight visitors annually, with Wharton State Forest and Stokes State Forest each with over 20,000 visitors.

There are 48 historic sites administered by the Division. These sites contain significant national history because New Jersey is exceptionally rich its Revolutionary War history.

Educational services are provided through nature centers (seven year-round and six seasonal). Nature programs are available at multiple parks – provided year-round at fourteen parks and seasonally at nine parks. Friends groups provide valuable services at particular parks, especially those with the most significant historical resources.

State parks provide a generous number of hiking trails across all physiographic regions. They include 485 trails totaling over 1,000 miles. This resource has been particularly important for New Jersey residents to enjoy and unwind from the stresses of COVID-19 that led many people to strengthen or begin establishing a relationship with nature.

Natural values are numerous and difficult to quantify and there are no known reports summarizing values specific to parks. However, parks and forests harbor the full diversity known to occur in the state and are particularly important reservoirs of biodiversity given that over 50% of the land in New Jersey is developed or agricultural. New Jersey's biodiversity includes approximately 2,100 native plant species

(over 800 are considered rare - see various tabs under <https://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/natural/index.html>), 62 land mammals, 28 marine mammals, 44 reptiles, 35 amphibians, 85 freshwater fish, 336 marine fish, 180 dragonflies and damselflies, 151 butterflies, and 480 birds.

Threats to Values

The greatest threat to all park values is insufficient staffing. At the most basic level, a lack of resources toward general operating and maintenance is leading to degradation of infrastructure and meeting the minimum expected park experience (e.g., clean bathrooms). Most parks have had precipitous declines in maintenance staff over the past two to three decades. There is currently a \$400 million maintenance backlog. The application of Corporate Business Tax (CBT) funds can significantly address this issue over time, but these funds cannot be applied to staff or operational support leading to contradictions (e.g., new nature center construction but insufficient staff to provide regular programming). Given the circumstances, addressing threats would benefit from the creation of a statewide vision for parks (see Appendix A that summarized recent efforts in California) including plans to manage each park in a coherent prioritized manner.

Threats to recreation and education include incomplete trail maintenance and delays in storm cleanup. The death of millions of ash trees across the state due to infestation by the invasive Emerald Ash Borer has created an extreme challenge for all stewards of natural lands that will continue to intensify as dead trees continue to fall over the next several years. Trail maintenance requires dedicated regular maintenance but is typically considered by the public to be a baseline service to access public lands. Nature programming has declined along with staff decreases, but there has been some effort to utilize seasonals to bridge the gap. Trail maintenance and educational programs are critical because they are directly associated with visitation rates and public perception of the value of state parks.

Threats to historic values include reductions in regular physical maintenance of structures and reduced interpretive programming to present the value of historical resources to the public. There are numerous examples of crumbling buildings that may need to be demolished unless addressed (CBT funds may be utilized to ease this problem). There are excellent interpretive programs at selected parks, and multiple friends groups provide support, which does ease demands on state staff. But overall, additional state staff could significantly improve the public benefit from historical resources.

Threats to natural resources include overabundant deer, invasive species, and illegal off-road vehicle (ORV) activity. Each is summarized below.

Overabundant Deer – The deer population in New Jersey ranges between 4-times to over 10-times the historical population of 10 deer per square mile. Since deer prefer to eat native species over invasive plants (partially defined as non-native species that are not preferred by deer), natural lands have suffered from dramatic reductions in native plants and dramatic increases of invasive plants. These changes in flora have led to cascading food web issues with reductions in both insect and bird populations over the last 50 years. A significant reduction in the deer population would allow native plants, freed from excessive deer browsing, to compete with invasive plants more effectively, thereby improving ecosystem health in a wholesale fashion and reducing the need for future land stewardship efforts aimed at directly controlling invasive plants.

Importantly, native trees are not establishing themselves across New Jersey. The combined impacts of deer, coupled with climate change-driven storm damage, brings significant uncertainty to the future of our forests. This problem is particularly troubling given that our forests can play a key role in climate mitigation through carbon storage.

Invasive Species - The New Jersey Strategic Management Plan for Invasive Species provides detailed background on the problem (New Jersey Invasive Species Council, 2009, Appendix D). Invasive species control is virtually absent on park lands because the Division of Parks does not have any staff with the responsibility to address the problem.

Not coincidentally, invasive plants have dramatically increased over the last 50 years in concert with the dramatic increase in the deer population. Increasing amounts of invasive forest pests and pathogens has similarly increased over the last decades due to significant increases in global commerce that coincidentally introduces organisms from around the world (primarily from parts of Europe and Asia with similar climate conditions). The extent of invasive species infestations in parks is extreme, especially on lands with a former agricultural history where soils have been fundamentally altered from their natural condition. Unfortunately, problems continue to compound with the addition of emerging invasive species that can further degrade natural lands.

Off-road Vehicles – Illegal ORV riding can significantly degrade natural lands through direct disturbance/destruction of habitat ([See comprehensive report conducted for Bureau of Land Management](#) that documents wide-ranging impacts to natural resources). Riding can degrade existing trails, and creation of new trails harms plants and wildlife. Noise disrupts wildlife activities such as feeding, breeding, nesting, and resting. This occurs because many riders seek exciting experiences including traversing water bodies and navigating challenging terrain. In 2017, the Pinelands Commission published a report quantifying extensive ORV damage to ponds and basins (Appendix E). Although ponds and basins are numerous (ca. 6,000 mapped), they have a relatively small footprint on the landscape. However, they are disproportionately important for biodiversity.

A highly significant aspect of illegal ORV activity is that it discourages other users of the parks. Activities such as fishing, hiking, birding, bicycling, hunting, etc., are all reasonably compatible with each other. Illegal ORV activities, on the other hand, introduce a kind of exclusive use; they hamper or even make impossible these other ways of enjoying the land.

Developing legal ORV riding opportunities cannot occur because none of the parks have a motorized access plan depicting which avenues of travel are legitimate, which makes enforcement problematic in many instances. Meanwhile, public demand for riding is significant throughout the state, with particularly high demand in the Pine Barrens where illegal riding has been met, generally, with official sympathy and leniency because riding is considered to have cultural significance. This illegal activity has never been effectively addressed, despite past legislation aimed at alleviating the problem (see Section IV). Limitations of state law enforcement resources, political considerations for the public demand for legal riding locations, and official apathy has led to reduced enforcement by multiple law enforcement jurisdictions.

It appears that ORV problems have increased, possibly due to the advent of cell phones with GPS and aerial photography to guide riders to previously unknown locations. This has likely facilitated ongoing and increasing participation from many out-of-state riders in the Pine Barrens.

Section II. Models of Foundations and Friends Groups

Introduction

This section provides models at the national, statewide, and local levels that enhance governmental resources toward managing parks. The majority of text for the national models comes directly from their websites with little modification. There are many subtleties to consider in the formation of a foundation. This review is intended to provide enough models to consider elements most relevant for New Jersey. Additional information on numerous foundations and friends groups can be found in Appendices F-I.

National Models

All national models are listed in Appendix F. There are three major national models where private foundations are associated with federal partners. These include the National Park Foundation (NPF) associated with the National Park Service (NPS), National Forest Foundation (NFF) associated with the US Forest Service (USFS) and others, and National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) associated with multiple federal agencies including the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Comparison of Three National Foundations (taken from NFWF website)

These three foundations are similar in that they are all federally chartered as 501(c)(3) organizations. The fourth federal land management agency, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM, in DOI) has no associated foundation. If Congress were to establish a foundation to support the work of BLM or to create other foundations supporting the work of other federal agencies, NFWF, NFF, and NPF might serve as three different examples of how to structure additional foundations. All three have managing boards that include specified federal employees as ex officio members; those federal employees do not constitute a majority of the board. No board is chaired by a federal employee. However, the three foundations have important differences in their missions and approaches, reflecting the various missions and histories of the three federal agencies. NPF's mission is to accept gifts "either absolutely or in trust of real or personal property or any income therefrom or other interest therein for the benefit of or in connection with, the National Park Service, its activities, or its services.... ". Of the three agencies, NPS is the one whose activities and responsibilities are most closely tied to the lands it manages in the National Park System. Although NPS may solicit the input of state, tribal, or local governments or local organizations, it typically does not share management of National Park System lands with other organizations, nor does it have as many responsibilities apart from those lands as do the other two agencies. Reflecting this mission, the NPF primarily manages donations that support the National Park System in various ways, either directly on NPS lands or indirectly on projects that affect NPS lands. In contrast, NFF's mission is somewhat more similar to the multifaceted purposes of NFWF. USFS manages the National Forest System; cooperates extensively with state and private forestry interests; and works on forestry research, wildland fires, range and watershed protections, and other programs related to the nation's forests and grasslands, whether federal or not. This broader mission of USFS is reflected in the three statutory purposes of the NFF:

- (1) encourage, accept, and administer private gifts of money, and of real and personal property for the benefit of, or in connection with, the activities and services of the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture;
- (2) undertake and conduct activities that further the purposes for which units of the National Forest System are established and are administered and that are consistent with approved forest plans; and
- (3) undertake, conduct, and encourage educational, technical, and other assistance, and other activities that support the multiple use, research, cooperative forestry and other programs administered by the Forest Service.

Only the second of these purposes is tied directly to the National Forest System; the other two are clearly related to the agency but not necessarily related to the forests and grasslands in the National Forest System.

In contrast to the management of forest resources and national parks, the management and conservation of the nation's fish and wildlife has long been a widely shared responsibility, with many efforts predating the existence of FWS. Every state has an agency responsible for managing its sport fisheries and its game species. Most states also play some role in managing nongame species, and many have some program for the conservation of rare species. In addition, tribal managers work to conserve resident fish and wildlife, particularly those with sacred or ceremonial functions. Moreover, the wildlife and fish species move across all of these jurisdictions, and many are migratory; a foundation focused on the species under only one federal jurisdiction would lose many opportunities to advance conservation. NFWF was created by Congress with statutory purposes that reflect the administrative complexity of fish and wildlife conservation. The first purpose ties NFWF to both USFWS and NOAA. The remaining two purposes are not tied to these agencies or to any other federal agency. In that respect, NFWF is substantially different from NPF and NFF, and NFWF's name suggests a stronger connection to a federal agency than actual fact.

National Park Foundation

It is important to note that the National Park System has been subject to constant budget cuts over the last 30 years. At the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, staff has been reduced from 100 FTE to 75 FTE. While their budget has remained stable over the last 10 years, there has been no accounting for increased costs and significant portions of their budget now consist of 'soft money' for special projects.

The information below comes directly from the Foundation website with little modification.

The National Park Foundation is the premier national model assisting the National Park Service. Vision, mission, charter, and guiding principles are summarized below. Annual budget, staffing, and programs can be found at <https://www.nationalparks.org/about-foundation/our-team> and <https://www.nationalparks.org/our-work/programs>.

- **Initiation:** Chartered by Congress in 1967, the National Park Foundation is rooted in a legacy that began more than a century ago, when private citizens from all walks of life took action to establish and protect our national parks. Today, the National Park Foundation carries on that tradition as the only national charitable nonprofit whose mission is to directly support the National Park Service (NPS's mission is to “preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.”).
- **Vision:** Inspiring all people to connect with and protect America’s national parks.
- **Mission:** As the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, the National Park Foundation generates private support and builds strategic partnerships to protect and enhance America’s national parks for present and future generations.
- **Guiding Principles:**
 - **Stewardship:** We foster a culture of stewardship of our national parks and the investments we make in them.
 - **Strategic:** We work with the National Park Service to identify, fund, and advance priority initiatives.

- **Impact:** We invest in critical projects that provide lasting, measurable benefits to national parks.
- **Common Ground:** We represent common ground where all those who love the national parks can support a shared agenda.
- **Partnership:** We convene strategic partnerships to amplify our efforts and achieve broader impacts within our national parks.
- **Innovation:** We employ an entrepreneurial approach to address the complex challenges facing our national parks.
- **Diversity:** We encourage inclusion and diversity of people, beliefs, and viewpoints among National Park Foundation staff, board, and partners.
- **Future Orientation:** We help the National Park Service to anticipate future challenges and create long-term solutions.

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

- **Initiation:** The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) was chartered by Congress in 1984 to aid in the conservation of plants, animals, and ecosystems; many of its projects involve work with federal agencies. By statute, NFWF is a “charitable and nonprofit corporation and is not an agency or establishment of the United States.” Registered under the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3), NFWF is not a part of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS, Department of the Interior), though it does have certain links to that agency, as well as to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- **Mission:** According to its enabling legislation, NFWF supplements not only the work of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS, in the Department of the Interior [DOI]) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA, in the Department of Commerce) but also the conservation of the nation's plants, animals, and ecosystems more generally. This broad mission is specified in the purposes of the foundation:
 - (1) to encourage, accept, and administer private gifts of property for the benefit of, or in connection with, the activities and services of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to further the conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources;
 - (2) to undertake and conduct such other activities as will further the conservation and management of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources of the United States, and its territories and possessions, for present and future generations of Americans; and
 - (3) to participate with, and otherwise assist, foreign governments, entities, and individuals in undertaking and conducting activities that will further the conservation and management of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources of other countries.
- **Funding Mechanism:** NFWF supports conservation efforts in all 50 states and U.S. territories. Our projects – more than 19,700 since our founding – are rigorously evaluated and awarded to some of the nation’s largest environmental organizations, as well as some of the smallest. We neither advocate nor litigate. Instead, NFWF focuses on bringing all parties to the table, getting results, and building a better future for our world. Financial commitments to our conservation mission since our founding now reach \$6.8 billion.
- NFWF specializes in bringing all parties to the table – individuals, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporations. Together, we protect and restore imperiled species, promote healthy oceans and estuaries, improve working landscapes for wildlife, advance sustainable fisheries and conserve water for wildlife and people. NFWF currently works with 15 federal partners and more than 45 corporate and foundation partners.
- The Foundation's IDEA (Impact-Directed Environmental Accounts) department manages a nationwide portfolio of accounts arising from legal and regulatory actions involving natural

resources and the environment. The portfolio consists of several hundred distinct accounts reflecting underlying proceedings at the federal, state, and local levels. Most IDEA accounts are established to manage funds arising from the settlement of enforcement actions involving natural resources and the environment or funds arising in connection with permit-required mitigation for environmental impacts.

- NFWF offers opportunities to individuals and corporations to make tax-deductible contributions to promote plant, animal, and ecosystem conservation in peer-reviewed projects. It also allows federal agencies to seek partners who wish to aid in such projects, and it sometimes serves as a conduit for the management of fines or funds resulting from court settlements to mitigate damage to fish and wildlife. NFWF projects may benefit conservation on federal lands, but other ownerships also may receive benefits. NFWF differs from such other federal foundations as the National Park Foundation and the National Forest Foundation in having much more tenuous links to federal agencies; many NFWF projects have no link to any federal agency. NFWF activities are supported through gifts of property and capital and through funds arising from regulatory actions or from requirements for project mitigation or legal settlements. These contributions come from a variety of sources, both federal and nonfederal. See "[NFWF Projects and Partners: Recent Examples](#)," below, for various examples of funding sources. Since its inception through FY2015, NFWF has managed a total of \$3.5 billion in grants. In FY2015, NFWF provided \$87.6 million in support from various federal agencies; \$0.4 million in other public funds; \$38.0 million in private funds; and \$132.4 million in directed funds, primarily related to an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. (See "[Legal Settlements: Example of Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund](#)", below.)

The NFWF Acres for America conservation program began in 2005, when Walmart made an initial \$35-million commitment to purchase and preserve one acre of wildlife habitat in the United States for every acre of land developed by the company—about 100,000 acres today. The program has far surpassed that 10-year goal, protecting an area 10 times larger. In fact, by conserving private lands that connect national forests, parks and other protected lands, the program has benefited wildlife habitats and migration corridors over an even larger area—more than 10 million acres. In fiscal year 2015, Acres for America awarded grants that will protect more than 235,000 acres of forest, riparian and coastal habitats in Alabama, California, Florida, Texas, and Washington. Including these latest projects, the program has funded 61 projects in 33 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In addition to permanently protecting some of the country's most important wildlife habitats, these projects have provided new public access to some of America's most pristine natural areas, all the while ensuring that ranchers, farmers, and foresters can continue to work their lands. As these examples illustrate, some grants have no direct federal funding involvement, although federal lands may benefit from NFWF projects.

Legal Settlement: Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund - In addition to voluntary contributions, NFWF may be chosen by a range of interested parties—whether federal, state, local, or private—to manage funds to support mitigation requirements for projects that harm fish or wildlife. NFWF also may receive funds that are settlements or penalties resulting from lawsuits that find damage to fish and wildlife resources. In the history of NFWF, by far the largest such settlement occurred as a result of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

Pursuant to the criminal settlements between BP and the Department of Justice (DOJ) and between Transocean and DOJ in early 2013, NFWF is to receive more than \$2.54 billion for Gulf Coast restoration over the five-year period from 2013 to 2017, for disbursement in each succeeding year. The funds are placed in the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF). Both criminal plea documents direct NFWF to use the GEBF funds in the following manner:

- 50% (approximately \$1.27 billion) of the funds are to support the creation or restoration of barrier islands off the coast of Louisiana and the implementation of river diversion projects to create, preserve, or restore coastal habitats. These projects will "remedy harm to resources where there has been injury to, or destruction of, loss of, or loss of use of those resources resulting from the [Deepwater Horizon] oil spill." (The Louisiana project cited in "[State Partner](#)," above, was supported by these funds.)
50% of the funds are to support projects that "remedy harm to resources where there has been injury to, or destruction of, loss of, or loss of use of those resources resulting from the [Deepwater Horizon] oil spill." NFWF will support such projects in the other Gulf states based on the following proportions: Alabama, 28% (\$356 million); Florida, 28% (\$356 million); Mississippi, 28% (\$356 million); and Texas, 16% (\$203 million). Of these funds, the vast majority are expected to be made available to NFWF in the fourth and fifth years (2017 and 2018). For both the BP and Transocean settlement allocations, NFWF is directed to consult with "appropriate state resource managers, as well as federal resource managers that have the statutory authority for coordination or cooperation with private entities, to identify projects and to maximize the environmental benefits of such projects." For the Louisiana projects, NFWF is directed to consider the State Coastal Master Plan, as well as the Louisiana Coastal Area Mississippi River Hydrodynamic and Delta Management Study, as appropriate. Once funds become available, NFWF obligates them according to the terms of the settlement.
- Structure: The NFWF Board of Directors has 30 members who are approved by the Secretary of the Interior. The director of FWS and the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Wildlife are included as ex officio voting members of the board. The members of the board are to "represent diverse points of view relating to conservation and management of fish, wildlife, plants, and other natural resources." The chairman is elected by the board for a two-year term. Membership on the board, by itself, does not constitute federal employment, although some federal employees are members of the board.
- Early Years: When NFWF was chartered in 1984, the Secretary of the Interior was authorized to provide NFWF with personnel, facilities, and other administrative services, including per diem expenses at federal government rates, for up to five years after enactment. After that authorization expired in 1989, DOI was authorized to continue such services or facilities but only based on available space and with reimbursement by NFWF of DOI costs. The foundation moved out of its offices at DOI after the five-year authorization expired, and it no longer receives direct administrative support from DOI.
- Current Links Between NFWF and Federal Agencies: As noted above, one of the three purposes of NFWF is to work with both FWS and NOAA in the conservation of plants and animals; the chartering act specifically authorized funding for DOI and the Department of Commerce to carry out the purposes of the act. The most recent funding level was set at \$25 million for DOI and \$5 million for the Department of Commerce to be used in matching grants for wildlife conservation related to the mission of both departments. NFWF also is authorized to work on projects to benefit wildlife with other federal agencies in addition to FWS and NOAA, when such agencies seek nonfederal partners to carry out the activity. Projects with federal participation need not necessarily occur on federal lands. The act specifies that funds provided to NFWF from all federal agencies are to be administered by NFWF as matching grants, with the federal funds constituting no more than half of the grant and the nonfederal partner(s) providing at least half. Federal funds may not be used to pay salaries, travel, or other overhead expenses of the foundation. When these projects are funded, their federal contributions are part of the sponsoring agency's budget rather than that of FWS or NOAA. NFWF projects with no federal grant funds may occur on federal lands, state or tribal lands, or private lands. Any project supported by NFWF funds must undergo peer review.

- NFWF Projects and Partners - Recent Examples: The range of projects sponsored by NFWF is broad. These projects have governmental and nongovernmental partners. When a taxable nonfederal entity provides matching funds to NFWF, a 501(c)(3) organization, the funds are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.
- The following examples illustrate various donors and types of partnerships and are quoted from NFWF's most recent annual report.
 - State Partner Example – Louisiana: A colossal effort to rebuild and restore 13 miles of coastline along the Gulf of Mexico ranks as the largest conservation project ever undertaken by the state of Louisiana and NFWF. This massive conservation project is unfolding on the Caminada Headlands, a beach and marsh system that serves as a barrier between the Gulf of Mexico and Port Fourchon, Louisiana's southernmost port and one of the nation's most important energy hubs.... When the NFWF-funded portion of the project is complete, workers will have dredged more than 5 million cubic yards of sand from Ship Shoal, an 8,000-year old submerged barrier island 27 miles away in the Gulf of Mexico. Sand fencing and planting of native vegetation will help stabilize the new dunes, providing stopover sites for migrating songbirds and nesting habitats for shorebirds. The historic project has been divided into two stages; NFWF funded the second phase with \$144.5 million from its Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund in 2014. A significant portion of the dredging and construction work for this phase was accomplished in 2015.
 - Monarch Butterfly Example: In the spring of 2015, NFWF and one of its largest federal partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, developed a bold plan to quickly address the causes of the monarch butterfly's decline. The federal agency committed \$1.2 million in 2015 so that NFWF could create the Monarch Butterfly Conservation Fund and begin guiding conservation investments across the insect's U.S. range. Through a variety of private- and public-sector partners, including Monsanto, NFWF quickly leveraged this initial commitment and more than doubled the funding immediately available. Working with monarch experts, the Foundation then launched a competitive grant program to increase vital monarch habitat. By early fall, NFWF had received 115 proposals and awarded \$3.3 million in grants to 22 of the most promising projects, in the process drawing another \$6.7 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of \$10 million in its first year.

National Forest Foundation

- Mission: The National Forest Foundation, chartered by Congress, engages Americans in community-based and national programs that promote the health and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System, and administers private gifts of funds and land for the benefit of the National Forests.
 - Chartered by Congress, the National Forest Foundation was created with a simple mission: bring people together to restore and enhance our National Forests and Grasslands. The National Forest Foundation is the leading organization inspiring personal and meaningful connections to our National Forests, the centerpiece of America's public lands. Working on behalf of the American public, the NFF leads forest conservation efforts and promotes responsible recreation. We believe these lands, and all they provide, are an American treasure and are vital to the health of our communities.
- Managed by the U.S. Forest Service, our National Forests host 170 million visits every year. Visitor spending pumps \$13.5 billion into our economy annually, sustaining nearly 223,000 jobs in gateway communities. These lands are the foundation of America's outdoor recreation heritage and sustain our way of life. They provide water to millions of Americans in

thousands of communities, clean our air, store carbon, and provide timber, minerals, oil and gas and other resources for industry and communities.

- National Forests and Grasslands provide Americans with 193 million spectacular acres of wildlands including: More than 9,000 miles of scenic byways to drive; Almost 150,000 miles of trails to hike; More than 4,400 miles of wild and scenic rivers to float; At least 5,100 campgrounds in which to pitch our tents; And 328 natural pools to swim in.
- Core Values: Our National Forests and Grasslands are at the core of America's natural riches, and yet, today these treasures are threatened by unprecedented challenges. Working with the U.S. Forest Service and partners, our goal is to leverage our best thinking, conservation capacity, and community action to measurably improve the health of our National Forests and Grasslands.
 - Unite: Stewarding our National Forests and Grasslands is a complex venture. These lands are often the center of controversy over both management objectives and practice. When people with conflicting views sit down together and work toward a zone of agreement, their joint commitment to the land leads to more creative and lasting restoration and stewardship strategies. We encourage and support collaborative processes and strive to improve the relationships between communities and the Forest Service.
 - Restore: Restoration blends an understanding of historical natural conditions with science and the need to adapt for our changing future. To ensure that our forests, watersheds and habitats can persist and are resilient through diverse impacts over time, effective restoration also demands that we care for the whole system. We believe in the power of on-the-ground conservation efforts to restore our National Forests and Grasslands, acre by acre and stream by stream. The most sustainable strategies involve people who make their living from the lands as well as those who advocate for its protection.
 - Engage: Our National Forests and Grasslands are the people's lands. Now and in the future, these lands depend on enduring public trust and engagement. As we pursue our mission, we reach out to communities, individuals, and partners, to create ownership and support collective efforts that preserve and embrace these national treasures. People who have spent time by their favorite creek, explored a new trail, or spend a Saturday pulling weeds or cleaning a campsite, understand that our forests are fundamental to our national identity and are a legacy we must pass on to future generations.
 - Sustain: We believe in the importance of investing in the strength of communities of interest and of place, helping people to convert their passion for forests into meaningful and sustainable conservation solutions and actions. We value collaborative community organizations and recognize that building their capacity is key to maintain their engagement and stewardship of National Forests and Grasslands. In addition, we believe that lasting impact is achieved when creative solutions target ecological, economic and community objectives.
 - Add Value: As a key nonprofit partner of the U.S. Forest Service, the NFF is the only conservation organization solely focused on our National Forests. We don't duplicate the responsibilities of this important federal agency; rather, we complement its daily work beyond the status quo. We take advantage of our ability to respond in a timely and flexible manner, filling the conservation and stewardship gaps across our treasured forests and grasslands.

National NWR Friends Association

- Refuge Friends are dedicated community members who magnify the power of conservation efforts and help national wildlife refuges meet conservation goals that would otherwise be out of reach. They do this by donating tens of thousands of volunteer hours and raising millions of dollars for local refuges. In the process, Friends help engage the American public in wildlife conservation, improve access to outdoor recreation and strengthen relationships between refuges and neighboring communities.
 - 185 Refuge Friends organizations support 280 wildlife refuges and wetland management districts.
 - Some 40,000 people belong to refuge Friends groups nationwide.
 - An estimated \$15 million raised for conservation.
- At many wildlife refuges across the country, Friends members: lead tours; staff refuge visitor centers; organize bird festivals; sponsor photo contests; operate nature shops; drive habitat restoration and trail maintenance projects.
- New Jersey Examples:
 - [Friends of Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge](#)
 - [Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge](#)
 - Very robust group with a \$100,000 annual budget; 15,000 volunteer hours annually (includes running refuge store). The Great Swamp Strike Team performs large amounts of control efforts and is a model that should be replicated for all natural lands.
 - [Friends of Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge](#)
 - [Friends of Cape May National Wildlife Refuge](#)
 - [Friends of Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The National Wildlife Refuge Association

- Founded in 1975 by retired U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service employees, the National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only conservation organization solely dedicated to protecting and enhancing the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest system of lands and waters set aside for wildlife conservation. The Refuge Association works in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Refuge Friends organizations, sportsmen and women, farmers and ranchers, students, urban constituencies, and other conservation organizations.
- Mission: As the leading independent voice advocating on behalf of the National Wildlife Refuge System, we protect, promote, and enhance America's wildlife heritage through strategic programs that serve the System and wildlife beyond its boundaries.
- Vision: Inspire nationwide support for the National Wildlife Refuge System, its wildlife, and habitats.
- Our Work: The National Wildlife Refuge Association is a non-profit exclusively focused on protecting and promoting the 850-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest network of lands and waters set aside for wildlife conservation. Our work is largely focused in Washington, DC. We vigilantly watch for policies and legislation that undermine the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System, while advocating for efforts that advance wildlife conservation. The National Wildlife Refuge Association addresses Refuge System funding, management, and strategic growth, while also promoting programs that maximize the system's conservation impact.

National Recreation and Park Association

- The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant, and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this mission by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being. NRPA is the voice for the park and recreation profession — we provide training, share best practices, create community, and lift up their stories. We know and advocate that an investment in park and recreation professionals is an investment in communities that thrive.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates there are more than 165,000 full-time employees of local park and recreation agencies throughout the United States and several hundred thousand more part-time and seasonal workers.¹ In 2017, park and recreation agencies generated more than \$166 billion in U.S. economic activity and supported 1.1 million jobs through their operations and capital spending.² Park and recreation professionals represent a diverse workforce that not only manages valuable infrastructure, such as parks, trails, recreation centers and nature preserves, but also provides vital services — ranging from childcare and nutrition programs to workforce development, youth sports, emergency response and more. Like all essential workers, park and recreation professionals have a unique set of skills sharpened through training, certification, accreditation and more. Park and recreation professionals help solve some of our most pressing challenges all while bringing people together — they are our community makers.
- 2021 NRPA Community Investment Highlights \$3.64M invested in local communities 2,676 certifications awarded to park and recreation professionals 966,932 people impacted through partnerships and programs, including: 64% people living in low-income households 48% people of color 22% Hispanic or Latino 94 communities (168 active projects) supported through health, access and resiliency grants, and technical assistance 31,678 online courses delivered to professionals.
- Programs include - Build a Movement NRPA: Drove more than 12,000 conversations around parks and recreation across traditional and social media. Ensure Access for All: Two-thirds of park and recreation agencies currently have established formal diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities or plan to do so in the next year. Advance Community Health and Well-Being: Nine in ten park and recreation agencies take specific actions to ensure their health and wellness programs and services promote health equity. Build Community Resiliency: Nearly all U.S. adults (93 percent) believe it is important to protect natural resources, including fresh air and clean water, through the acquisition and maintenance of local parks, trails, and green spaces. Prepare the Profession for the Future: Professional Development is consistently ranked as the #1 member benefit by NRPA members.

National Parks Conservation Association

- Mission: We're protecting and enhancing America's National Park System for present and future generations.
- With more than 1.6 million members and supporters beside us, we are the voice of America's national parks, working to protect and preserve our nation's most iconic and inspirational places for present and future generations. We celebrate the parks — and work tirelessly to defend them — whether on the ground, in the courtroom or on Capitol Hill.
- From our national headquarters in Washington, D.C., and 27 locations nationwide, we call on our program and policy experts, committed volunteers, staff lobbyists, community organizers and communications specialists to inform and inspire the public and to influence decision makers to ensure that our national parks are well protected.

- The Association’s work does not overlap that of the Department of the Interior; it begins where the Governmental function ceases, for Congress provides only for the physical development of our National Parks. Their enormous value to popular education, to the increased pleasure which comes only with understanding, to outdoor living and to travel in America is left for the people to develop. It is to help reap this important harvest and to bring together in a common endeavor the helpful citizens of every part of the land that the National Parks Association was founded.
- Its opportunity, however, is much greater, and the Association is availing of this to the full. Unconnected with the Government and absolutely independent of political or other adverse influences, it has become the fearless and outspoken defender of the people’s parks and the wildlife within them against the constant, and just now the very dangerous, assaults of commercial interests.
 - A historic park funding bill will dedicate \$6.5 billion over five years to priority projects in the National Park Service’s nearly \$12 billion backlog of needed repair work.
 - On July 22, 2020, Congress passed the Great American Outdoors Act, legislation that will dedicate \$1.3 billion per year for five years to deferred maintenance projects in the National Park Service’s nearly \$12 billion backlog of needed repair work. President Trump signed the bill into law on August 4, 2020.
 - NPCA and thousands of advocates worked for 20 years to secure this support, leading the way to this landmark victory.

National Association of State Park Foundations

- The National Association for State Park Foundations provides a national voice as advocates for all state parks. There are more than 8,500 state parks and forests covering 18.6 million acres with 52,600 miles of trails. In 2019-20, state parks attracted more than 800 million visitors. On average nationwide, state parks’ expenditure is less than 1 percent of their annual state’s budget, yet they generate billions of dollars to their respective state economies and create hundreds of thousands of jobs.
- With more than 6500 state parks and tens of millions of acres of state forests located in every state in the nation, Americans are rich in outdoor recreation opportunities while these lands protect critical cultural and natural resources. Many of these places depend heavily on a vast army of volunteers and nonprofit Friends groups. These volunteers and groups support the work of park managers and staff, raise funds for projects in the parks, help run educational and environmental programs, provide camper services, and much more.
- Formation: The National Association of State Park Foundations (NASPF) established in 2020 as a 501(c)3 incorporated organization. It was formed by leadership of park foundations seeking to support one another and the vast networks of volunteers and friends’ groups, while also providing a national voice as advocates for all state parks.
- Mission: The National Association of State Park Foundations is organized exclusively for charitable, scientific and education purposes. Its mission is to: Connect, build, elevate, and empower state-wide non-profit partners of America’s State Parks.
- Priorities: Share Partnership Best Practices, Provide online training and education resources for staff and volunteer leaders, Provide toolkit and training for state park advocacy, Provide a research library/information service.
- Membership: There are two categories of Membership – Full Membership and Affiliate Membership. Full Membership is open to all 501(c)3 statewide park foundations or statewide friends’ groups. Members have full voting rights, are eligible for election to the board of directors and to stand as officers. The annual membership fee is \$300. Affiliate Membership is open to non-commercial and commercial members. Affiliate Members are non-voting and must be approved by the Membership Committee. Non-commercial affiliate membership is open to

individuals and 501(c)3 organizations that have some part of its mission to support state parks or are non- 501(c)3 statewide organizations tasked with supporting their state's park system. The annual membership fee is \$200. Commercial affiliate membership is open to all corporate entities and other commercial organizations that wish to support the work of the Foundation. The annual membership is \$500.

- Value of State Parks: State Parks Nationwide Report Record Number of Visitors During COVID. While much of the nation was shut down last year due to COVID 19, state parks and forests provided a safe haven for tens of millions of people, the National Association of State Park Foundations said today. "Many state park systems reported record visitation - in some cases up more than 50 percent over the previous year," said NASPF chair Marci Mowery, who is also president of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. "Some state park systems closed down for a short time, but many others stayed open and saw huge increases in visitation. Minnesota for instance, saw a 50 percent increase in visitors last March over the same month in 2019. In Pennsylvania, the number of visitors over the year was 23% higher than the previous year, and it was a similar story in states nationwide." In January 2021, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, speaking about the record numbers, said, "our outdoor spaces hold even greater value than we could have imagined before the challenges of last year." People realized that state parks provided a safe, healthy and enjoyable way to experience the great outdoors," said Mowery. "The more than 6,500 state parks nationwide offer thousands of miles of biking, hiking, nature, fitness and paddling trails allowing people to get out and enjoy the great outdoors in a safe environment," she added.
- General Value: "Numerous studies have shown that nature is actually good for our health and well-being and state parks are the ideal place to commune with nature, reduce stress levels and unwind," said Gil Ziffer, President of the Florida State Parks Foundation. "And by being vigilant in practicing social distancing, our parks also provided a safe outlet for so many." Being stuck indoors tends to reduce exercise levels while visiting a state park allows you to walk, jog, cycle, canoe and maybe swim – all activities that improve health and well-being. Another benefit is that you become more relaxed. According to research, it only takes five minutes to experience the relaxing effects of nature. Your concentration also improves. Studies show that spending time outside can also improve creative thinking, he said.

Statewide Models

A full listing with descriptions for all 40 state park foundations and friends groups is provided in Appendix G. There is a diversity of models throughout the country, elements from many of them have been incorporated into this reports' recommendations, and these models should be utilized in development of a New Jersey foundation. Additional highlights from particular states are provided below, but this is not exhaustive (see Appendix G to explore further).

California – They have the oldest park foundation in the country, with significant accomplishments. They are unique and many aspects may not be applicable to New Jersey's efforts to start a new foundation, but they are worth exploring in detail as a model. Despite the successes of the foundation, a 2015 report entitled "A New Vision for California State Parks" (Appendix A) notes that the system is under severe stress and recommended significant changes to the structure, function, and culture of state parks along with recommending the creation of a new foundation (which was established several years ago). This new foundation is to provide operational, financial, and strategic support for organizations that manage or operate parks and other protected lands in California by obtaining governmental and non-governmental funding. This case study strongly suggests that foundations, no matter how successful, cannot alone 'fix' the problems of state park systems, many of which require fundamental internal changes along with supplemental support of foundations.

Florida - The Florida Parks Foundation was established in 1993 to assist the state with management of 174 parks. It has been guided by a very active volunteer board. In 2015, it received a \$15 million unsolicited bequest that now serves as an endowment. They currently have a small staff accompanied by its still active volunteer board. The foundation raises private individual and corporate funds, including DMO's (Destination Marketing Organizations) and corporate workdays accompanied by donations to the foundation. The foundation assists local Friends groups with administrative functions including insurance and bookkeeping/audits. The foundation has frequent communications with the state to assure that its projects are aligned with state goals. Projects include broadening access to parks by a wide variety of the public (e.g., handicap access, Yellow Bus Program).

Montana - The Montana Parks Foundation raises funds from private individuals and corporations and expends funds on trails, events, equipment, repairs, and restoration of historic buildings. They do not fund state staff or equipment / supplies for state staff. The foundation selects projects and priorities at the direction of the state. They do not manage large numbers of local Friends groups or volunteers, feeling that the real solution is state hiring of additional staff. They advocate on issues that are supported by parks, legislature, and administration, and avoid partisanship. Building trust and relationships with the state is considered vital to their success. Over the last several years, the foundation has significantly increased its annual budget from less than \$100,000 to over \$1 million.

New York - There has significant contributions from the state and non-profits since 2008 when the financial crisis led to budget cuts and the threat of park closures (documented in Parks at a Turning Point created by Parks & Trails New York and the Open Space Institute – see Appendix J). The Governor provided \$100 million and more recently committed \$1 billion over 10 years to state parks (“Parks 2020”). The New York park system is supported by the [Natural Heritage Trust](#) (NHT) that acts as a statewide foundation. The [State Council of Parks](#) also raises private funds for parks (\$20 million in 2021). NHT is a quasi-state non-profit entity. Staff are state employees, and its non-profit status facilitates trust from its donors. It receives \$20 million per year from the state and raises \$50 million per year from private donations for park projects. The NHT was led by Rose Harvey beginning in 2011, leading to significant accomplishments (private fundraising mentioned above), leading to improvements such as renovation of 30 nature centers and partnerships with the Appalachian Mountain Club and New York / New Jersey Trail Conference. The NHT emphasizes public-private partnerships, including concessions, to support parks (concessions are tightly controlled by the state with parks receiving a percentage of profits). NHT also administers state environmental damage mitigation funds. Individual parks also have 75 associated friends groups that collectively teach 20,000 students per year. The work of partners and volunteers focus on work not completed by state staff and therefore are not perceived as replacing them.

Pennsylvania - The state established its foundation in 1999 with the hopes that it would ‘raise millions of dollars that would be directly given back to the state’. This strategy failed as donors were unwilling to donate to the state. Currently, the foundation has a staff of five (two are full time) and an annual operating budget of \$500,000. Their work focuses on being an umbrella for local Friends groups through MOU's. They organize and advertise specific park project needs and provide administrative support through insurance and bookkeeping/auditing. In addition, the foundation has its own volunteer projects. Collectively, parks receive over 75,000 hours of volunteer assistance annually with work focusing on access and stewardship. While they provide funding for specific projects (e.g., pedestrian bridge construction), they are careful to avoid taking on expenses that should be performed by unionized state employees. The foundation also advocates for parks, including a recent objection to proposed legislation that would have broadly opened parks to privatization. Pennsylvania also suffers from insufficient park staff and a \$1.4 billion maintenance backlog; this is not directly addressed by the foundation.

Rhode Island - In Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Community Foundation recently established the Fund for Rhode Island State Parks. This included conversations and negotiations with the state and the

Community Foundation resulting in a structure that would allow private donations to be applied to state-identified projects within the context of a completed state plan for parks. Funds were only to be used for projects related to improving public benefit (e.g., access, education) and improving ecological health; capital projects and operations would not be funded. Local Friends groups were to be supported by the foundation staff. However, the current state administration did not favor this arrangement and does not support efforts of the state employee leading fundraising efforts, essentially ending the program just as it was beginning. This situation emphasizes the frailty of efforts solely based on the discretion of changeable administrations' support and emphasizing the need for park foundations to maintain independence while still working closely with their state under recognized agreements (e.g., MOU or empowering legislation). It should be noted that Indiana and Michigan both have successful foundations staffed with state employees, but again, this can be subject to differing priorities of future administrations.

Texas - The Texas State Parks Foundation is one of the largest foundations in the country. It raises funds, receiving advice from non-profit fundraising methods and targets. The Foundation has raised \$215 million since 1991, sources include private entities including individuals and corporations. It also distributes environmental damage mitigation funds. The Foundation expends funds to buy land, provides competitive grants, funds Game Warden interns, purchases equipment, and funds building construction and repair. It does not fund state staff or park operations. The state identifies publicly vetted priorities with input from stakeholders that lobby for projects. The Foundation itself does not lobby for projects and its board and staff are focused on fundraising. It does not act as a state "Watchdog".

Washington - The Washington State Park Foundation is a 501c3 with twelve board members (including an ex officio state representative) and nine staff. It was created through state legislation. They raise funds from private individuals and corporations. Funds are expended on previously vetted state-selected projects that the Foundation board selects for action. These projects are often capital, focusing on accessibility, education, and improving ecological health. The Foundation provides support to individual park Friends groups, acting as their fiscal agent, serving as an advisor, providing technical support, and administering an annual grant program. They actively encourage public use of parks through an interactive park visitation website. The Foundation maintains an impressive database of state park funding across the country. They also perform advocacy with the state legislature to improve park resources and voice concerns over proposed projects that they feel do not serve parks. Interestingly, the state of Washington does allow direct donations from private individuals to the state parks, but this is not considered very effective as donors are typically unwilling to provide funds directly to a state.

West Virginia - In 2018, the Governor and legislators issued bonds to address \$60 million of the estimated \$100 million backlog of infrastructure work and repair needs for West Virginia's State Park System. While this was undeniably good news at the time, many questions remained about where funding for the rest of the sizable backlog would come from and how we could prevent such issues in the future. Now that Senate Bill 517 has passed in the Senate by a vote of 33-0 (1 abstention) in January and then in the House by a unanimous vote of 100-0 on March 6th, we finally have some clarity and peace of mind regarding how the government will fund, maintain, and protect the West Virginia State Park System for the foreseeable future. [You can read the full bill here.](#)

Additional States – There are several states that provide funding for states to hire staff, examples include Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, and Missouri. Arizona funds state staff and operations but has only raised \$1.8 million since 2004. Arkansas raises private individual and corporate funds for state parks, primarily focusing on special trails projects. Colorado has a very limited role, raising money and providing grants to park superintendents. They have limited donors and annually expend funds from an endowment. Missouri primarily focuses on raising private donations for trails projects but is also currently raising funds for land acquisition (raising \$7 million toward a \$16 million project).

New Jersey Models

New Jersey has models of statewide, regional, and local foundations and friends groups that can be considered in forming a parks foundation.

Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey

- **Mission:** Keeping New Jersey's Wildlife in our Future. We do this by: Carrying out research on species, populations and natural communities; Implementing conservation plans on species or populations to stall declines and start recovery; Restoring habitat so that it can be as productive as possible for wildlife and other natural communities; Educating everyone who lives in New Jersey about our shared wild heritage and our shared responsibility to protect it; Engaging partners to make us effective and efficient in the use of our resources; Developing a committed corps of volunteers connected to our state's wonderful biodiversity and working hard to protect it.
- **Vision:** We are looking, and working, towards a future where New Jersey is home to greater numbers of rare species, stronger populations, and enough good habitat to support them.
- New Jersey has a rich biodiversity that belies its small size and urban reputation. In every corner of our state, species of wildlife, considered rare and imperiled enough to be protected by state or federal law, are woven into the tapestry of life in our state. Rare wildlife species live, much like New Jersey residents, in the mountains of the north, the pastoral farmland of central New Jersey, the bays and swamps along our coasts as well as on skyscrapers, bridges and at the edges of suburban subdivisions. These species live a challenged life where roads represent impenetrable obstacles, developments spell the demise of habitat and contamination in wetlands can wipe out an entire generation. It is our duty, and our privilege, to protect these species. We gather the best science, tried and true conservation techniques, innovative education activities and an engaged corps of willing volunteers in pursuit of the right combination of activities that will preserve a species before it disappears from our state; help another population recover or; highlight some bird, fish, mammal or insect that must be protected before it slides towards extinction.
- Foundation was established in 1998 by Larry Niles as a friends group for the Division of Fish & Wildlife, Endangered and Nongame Species Program
 - ENSP is funded with state grants and federal grants and license plates but could not hire staff. CWF, under Linda Tesauro, raised money from foundations and corporations to hire its own staff that reported to Mr. Niles.
 - Initial fundraising was jump started by the existing database of license plate owners. A strong board bolstered fundraising efforts.
 - Initially, CWF was housed within NJDEP offices at no cost, and daily communications with ENSP helped foster strong collaboration
- CWF is currently housed within the offices of D&R Greenway Land Trust and continues its work protecting primarily rare animal species throughout the state in partnership with ENSP.

New Jersey Natural Lands Trust

- **Mission:** To preserve land in its natural state for enjoyment by the public and to protect natural diversity through the acquisition of open space.
- The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust was created in 1968 by the Legislature as an independent agency in but not of the Division of Parks & Forestry in the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). In creating the Trust, the Legislature's goal was to establish an agency with the protective power of the State that would have the support of private-sector open space preservation and conservation organizations. The Trust's autonomy is a key factor in garnering the confidence of individuals interested in preserving their land and that of the

conservation community. When the State decided to sell a portion of diminutive Mount Laurel State Park to a public utility, in spite of a deed restriction barring such a sale - and when it tried to negotiate Sunfish Pond for a silted-in reservoir and some cash - conservationists knew there must be a better way to protect state lands. At the direction of then Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Economic Development Robert A. Roe, legislation was drafted to create the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust – an organization that could accept land donations and ensure their protection in perpetuity by resisting the exercise of eminent domain by public agencies.

- The Trust manages its properties to conserve rare plant and animal species habitat and rare ecological communities. The Trust invites passive use by the public for recreational or educational purposes wherever such use will not adversely affect biological diversity. Currently, the Trust is responsible for over 26,000 acres of open space, including over 2,500 acres of conservation easements.
- The powers and duties of the Trust are vested in an eleven-member Board of Trustees. The Board is comprised of six representatives from the private sector with expertise in open space and conservation, and five from State government (the DEP Commissioner and two DEP staff members designated by the Commissioner; the State Treasurer; and a member of the State House Commission). Employees of the Office of Natural Lands Management, Division of Parks & Forestry, serve as staff to the Trust and implement the policy set by the Board.
- The Trust has adopted very strict guidelines against the transfer/diversion of Trust lands unless the transferee is a local government unit, nonprofit, or state or federal agency whose primary purpose is to acquire, administer, protect, develop, and maintain lands for recreation or conservation purposes. See the Trust's **Guidelines for Conveyance of Land** for further information.
- The trust has not received state funding in over 10 years, relying on donations, grants, and an active board.

New Jersey Recreation and Park Association

- Mission: The New Jersey Recreation and Park Association is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting parks and recreation; enhancing the professional development of its members; advocating sound policy and stewardship related to parks, recreation, resource management, and leisure services; and increasing public awareness of the value of play and preservation of the environment to interested citizens and the public.
- They primarily focus on promoting outdoor recreation opportunities and providing professional education and training.
- The Association is active in advocating for policies and providing opinions on proposed legislation that impacts natural lands.
- They are an active participant in the New Jersey Trails Council that is involved with the state trails plan and distribution of federal DOT grant funds for trails.

Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association

- Mission: To protect and restore the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Great Egg Harbor River Watershed; To promote research and action to determine and secure a healthy river system; To expand public awareness, education and appreciation of the watershed's many valuable and unique resources; To serve as the host organization for the local management and implementation of the **Comprehensive Management Plan for the Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River**; To coordinate and/or facilitate permanent preservation of land along or in close proximity to the river and its tributaries, or preservation of any land within the watershed that is of high benefit to wildlife or rare plants, for groundwater recharge or reduction of nonpoint pollution. The acquisition and preservation of land or water areas or of a particular land or water area, or either thereof, in a natural, scenic, or open condition.

- Designated one of 16 National Wild and Scenic Rivers that includes 12 municipalities and non-profits. The Association receives federal funding and is considered a contractor for the National Park Service

Friends of Monmouth County Parks

- Mission: The Friends of the Monmouth County Park System, Inc., is a member-based, 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides financial support exclusively for Monmouth County Park System enhancements including: preserving historical and natural resources, providing recreational opportunities for underserved youth, and providing activities for individuals with disabilities within our community.
- Established 40 years ago by James Truncer (current Monmouth Parks Executive Director) and others after inviting 35 people to dinner; 20 showed interested and helped to establish the Monmouth Parks Foundation, which eventually split into the Monmouth Conservation Foundation (acquisitions) and Friends of Monmouth County Parks (non-acquisition)
- Formation based on the California park foundation model started by Bill Mott
- Friends have two paid staff (Executive Director and Secretary) that are paid by Monmouth County Parks, and they are provided access to parks resources
- Friends board has resident members as well as corporate representatives
- Parks prefers having a system-wide friends group as opposed to individual park friends groups because it eases communications and coordination
- Fundraising includes memberships and events centered around golf, wine, corn hole, and volunteer recognition
- Parks requests fundraising based on their priorities, there is regular communication between friends and parks (cross-attendance at each other's meetings) facilitating a back and forth before they mutually agree on projects.
- Contracts initiated by Friends is subject to Parks approval, inspections, etc. Friends are especially valuable for contracts/purchases that are challenging under public bid laws that are highly specialized and hard to get bids (e.g., buying antiques, restoring masonry on historic structures)
- Friends contracts are subject to prevailing wage rates when work is completed on public lands (this wasn't the case in the past)
- Friends volunteers are separate from paid staff to avoid conflict; volunteers are most suited for specific jobs at particular times, not regular repeated work that is better for staff
- Friends group adds value to Parks – 'more gets done with them than without them'

Local Friends Groups

State parks have 20 friends groups, links to these groups are provided in Appendix H. In addition, there are at least 40 friends groups associated with county and municipal parks (see Appendix I). Two examples of state parks friends groups are provided below.

Washington Crossing Park Association

- Friends group for Washington Crossing State Park that meets regularly with park staff to agree upon priority projects
- Primary interest has been historic preservation of the Parks outstanding resources
- Park maintenance staff has been cut dramatically over last 40 years, from 75 to 3 and current staff are now responsible for three parks
 - Lack of staffing has led to degradation of multiple historic structures
 - There is no way that a volunteer group can make up for this loss, and more state staff are essential to restore and protect park resources

- Considers rental of structures (where renters perform upkeep maintenance in return for discounted rent) as a valuable strategy, but this is not currently allowed by the state
- Friends provide funding for particular restoration/repair projects (e.g., painting, hazard tree removal) – all projects completed by any Friends group must show public benefit
- Recently established a volunteer trails crew that has begun assisting park staff and they are working toward establishing a land stewardship program
- Favor a statewide foundation that can coordinate and support individual Friends groups, including small grants program

Friends of Monmouth Battlefield State Park

- Membership group (140 members) with an annual budget of \$10,000 raised from dues, donations, gift shop income, and annual reenactment event.
- Park suffers from insufficient staffing with 5 FTE for a 2,000-acre park. There has not been a full time Park Superintendent for over 10 years.
 - Park has four historic structures, three are crumbling. Friends provide \$5,000/year to preserve the Craig House
- Considers potential state interest/funding gain through formation of one regional park including major revolutionary war parks (Washington Crossing, Trenton, Princeton, Allaire, and Monmouth) to form a cohesive strategy to protect resources
- Park lacks a management/development plan which could focus/prioritize projects

Section III. New Jersey State Parks Resources and Challenges

Introduction

The NJDEP – Division of Parks and Forestry consists of the NJ Forest Service, NJ State Park Service, NJ State Park Police, Office of Natural Resource Restoration, and Office of Natural Lands Management. This section provides a summary of park resources, staffing, and funding to provide context for the need for increased staffing along with additional support from Statewide Parks Officially Recognized Friends Organization (“Statewide ORFO”).

State Park Resources

The following information was taken from the FY2018 Annual Parks Report and supplemented with the Division web site. Appendix H contains a listing of all parks and historic sites, along with information on associated friends groups, presence of nature centers and nature programming. State parks and forests account for 450,000 acres or 45% of all publicly owned land. The park system is large and provides many recreational opportunities.

Properties and Structures:

- State Parks and Forests: 51
 - Total Acreage: 450,000
 - Number of Structures: 1600+
 - Number of Overnight Facilities: 1,300+
 - Trails: 485; Trail Miles: 1,070
- Marinas: 6
- Historic Sites: 48
- Golf Courses: 3
- Reservoirs: 4; Dams: 17
- Swim Areas: 14
- Forest Resource Education Center: 1

Visitation:

- 17 million day visitors annually
 - Liberty State Park - 5 million; D&R Canal State Park, Wharton State Forest and Stokes State Forest each receive 1 million visitors annually
- 175,000 night visitors annually (camping available at 19 parks including pet-friendly camping at 13 parks)
 - Wharton State Forest and Stokes State Forest each receive over 20,000, Worthington State Forest and Bass River State Forest each receive 15,000

Sample of Amenities/Services/Fees:

- Events and Festivals (ca. 20 annually) include First Day Hikes, Blue Comet Day, Earth Day, and Arbor Day
- Nature Centers located at 13 parks (seven year-round and six seasonal)
 - Nature programs conducted at 23 parks (fourteen year-round and nine seasonal)
- Phone apps – Trail Tracker, Camp in Parks
- Recent additions: Allaire State Park – Disc golf, Worthington and Stokes State Forests – Kayak rentals, Belleplaine State Forest – Horse parking lot; Island Beach Red Fox Beach Bar and Grill

- [User fees](#) are minimal, there are only three parks with income that exceeds expenses (Liberty State Park, Island Beach State Park, and Leonardo State Marina). Park system related fees include:
 - State Park Pass (\$50/year) – Daily walk-in fees (14 parks, \$5-\$10)
 - Boat Launch Pass (7 locations, \$12/launch)
 - Camping and Cabins (19 parks, from \$20 to \$140 for group cabins)
 - Group Picnicking (14 parks, from \$80 to \$150)
 - Mobile Sport Fishing Vehicle Pass (3 parks, annual permits from \$50-\$195)

Staffing and Funding

It is important to note that trends in New Jersey are mirrored at the federal level, as well as nearly all other states, and the following is not intended to single out New Jersey. But it is important to note the severity of the problem to understand the scope required to alleviate stress on parks (see Section IV).

- Staffing is widely considered to be the most significant challenge toward managing state lands.

The FY2018 Annual Report notes that Parks staff has been reduced by 28% from 2006, while there was a simultaneous increase in park acreage of 13%. The State Park Service Staff to Visitor Ratio is 1 to 35,947 and the State Forest Service Staff to Acres Ratio is 1 to 5,457. One impact has been reduced public benefit due to nature centers staffed only seasonally or closed, and swim areas close earlier than in the past.

Deferred Maintenance (estimated at \$400 million, partially addressed through CBT) includes parking area paving/repair, bathroom facilities, accessibility improvement, historic building repair, dam repair, storm damage repair, and repairs to roads and areas damaged by illegal ORV activities.

The following highlights were provided through contributor interviews.

- NJDEP staff levels peaked in 1990 with 4,200. Currently, staff is at 2,600 with added responsibilities.
 - Park Superintendents have been reduced over time from 45 to 15 with management responsibility for 51 parks and forests, 6 marinas, etc. (see previous page).
 - Estimates for proper staffing of parks would include 300 additional staff system wide. Several examples of staff reductions over time are provided below.
 - Cheesequake State Park (maintenance): Reduced from 46 (1976) to 3 that are shared with two additional parks (2021)
 - Liberty State Park: Reduced from 42 (2002) to 17 (2021)
 - Wharton State Forest: Reduced from 25 (2002) to 8 (2021)
 - Related support staff (e.g., Purchasing, Treasury, etc.) also reduced, hindering functions at state parks
 - Staff morale is very low, many feel that they are part of a ‘failed park system,’ and it is possible that some parks will need to close if current trends continue.
 - Key functions not conducted, basic maintenance is a struggle
 - Too much reliance on seasonals
 - Strong restrictions on staff communications with public
 - No direct relationship between parks and legislature
- Funding

- Operating and capital funding, along with amenities per capita is provided in Table 1 below (Source: Washington State Park Foundation). The table compares New Jersey, New York, and National Averages.
 - New Jersey operating budget is 1/3 of Pennsylvania, 1/6 of New York, and 2/3 of the National Average
 - New Jersey capital budget is 1/9 of Pennsylvania, 1/11 of New York, and similar to the National Average
 - New Jersey trail miles per capita are similar to Pennsylvania and 1/4 of New York
 - New Jersey campsites per capita are 1/2 of Pennsylvania, 1/4 of New York, and less than 1/3 of the National Average
 - New Jersey visits per resident are approximately 1/2 of Pennsylvania and New York, and about 2/3 of the National Average
- Corporate Business Tax revenue funds state land acquisition and capital projects through the [Garden State Preservation Trust](#), revenue disbursement breakdowns are provided in Table 2 below. [An example is provided showing disbursements in 2020.](#)
 - While over \$33 million is potentially available for state parks, this is still significantly less than capital budgets of neighboring states (but similar to the national average)
 - Funds cannot be utilized to fund park operations and maintenance or any staffing costs; Funding cannot be utilized for land stewardship

Table 1. Comparative New Jersey Parks Budget and Per Capita Amenities

	New Jersey	New York	Pennsylvania	National Average
State Population	9,000,000	19,900,000	12,800,000	325,025,000
Year = 2018				
Operating - General Fund	\$24,000,000	\$129,000,000	\$51,000,000	-
Operating - Park Revenue	\$12,000,000	\$89,000,000	\$26,000,000	-
Operating - Other	-	-	\$28,000,000	-
Operating - Total	\$36,000,000	\$218,000,000	\$105,000,000	52,729,136
Capital - Total	\$20,000,000	\$200,000,000	\$163,000,000	15,112,143
Operating per Resident	\$4	\$24	\$12	\$6
Capital per Resident	\$2	\$22	\$18	\$2
Year = 2017				
Trail Miles	984	8,934	1,532	-
Trail Miles per Resident	0.00011	0.00045	0.00012	-
Campsites per Resident	0.00021	0.00081	0.00049	0.00071
Visits per Resident	1.73	3.53	3.13	2.48

Table 2. Corporate Business Tax Revenue Distribution (2021)**CBT Revenue and Relevant Broad Allocations**

	%	Amount
Total CBT Revenue (Rate based upon corporate income)	N/A	\$3,500,000,000
% Allocation of CBT Provided to Environmental Programs	6	\$210,000,000
% Allocation of Environmental Programs Provided to GSPT	78	\$163,800,000

GSPT Allocation Breakdowns

	%	Amount
Green Acres	62	\$101,556,000
Farmland Preservation	31	\$50,778,000
Historic Preservation	7	\$11,466,000
Totals	100	\$163,800,000

Green Acres Allocation Breakdowns

	%	Amount
Green Acres State Acquisition, Recreation, and Capital Projects	60	\$60,933,600
Local Government Acquisition, Recreation, and Stewardship	30	\$30,466,800
Non-profit Acquisition, Recreation, and Stewardship	10	\$10,155,600
Totals	100	\$101,556,000

Internal Green Acres Acquisition and Capital Breakdowns

	%	Amount
State Acquisition Projects	45	\$27,420,120
State Capital Projects	55	\$33,513,480
Totals	100	\$60,933,600

Section IV. Meeting the Challenge - Strategies and Actions

Introduction

This section summarizes consideration for potential additional revenue sources from state and federal government that may be considered for utilization by parks. State funding currently to parks are provided in Section III.

Potential State Revenue Sources

The following suggestions were primarily provided by plan contributors.

- The state could consider greater allocation to parks through the General Fund, emergency / special appropriations, or bond acts. In New York, \$1 billion was specially allocated to parks over a 10-year period to support their slumping state park system. A Statewide ORFO could assist in public advocacy campaigns to support such efforts.
- Although recently adjusted, future reallocation changes to the CBT could provide additional significant benefit to parks. Currently, funds are restricted to capital projects. While capital funding is essential (especially given deferred maintenance needs), significant needs remain unmet related to operations and maintenance. Staffing to conduct tasks related to recreation and land stewardship is severely restricted or essentially absent at many parks.

Land acquisition is absolutely essential in a quickly developing state, but continuing land acquisition without concomitant funding for staff is stressing the park system. Reallocation that allows a percentage of acquisition funding to be applied to staffing could improve the public benefit of newly acquired lands. For example, The Nature Conservancy has a policy of setting aside 20% of acquisition costs toward their land stewardship endowment. In addition, as New Jersey approaches build out over the next 10-20 years, funding set aside for acquisition will become increasingly difficult to spend, necessitating appropriate reallocation of these funds toward staffing to provide stewardship of past acquisitions.

- [Supplemental Environmental Projects \(SEPS\)](#) are settlement funds applied to NJDEP priorities. The use of a portion of these funds could be considered for application to state parks.
- [Office of Natural Resource Restoration](#) are settlement funds applied to NJDEP priorities. These funds may be utilized on state lands as described below, but perhaps greater emphasis could be placed on prioritizing state parks that are currently underfunded. “The Office of Natural Resource Restoration may coordinate restoration projects by partnering with federal trustees, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, as well as other NJDEP elements, such as the Green Acres program, the Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Division of Parks and Forestry, Water Resource Management, Land use Management, Site Remediation programs, and environmental organizations.”
- [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative \(RGGI\)](#) has generated over \$200 million since 2020. Spending is guided by a [strategic funding plan](#) that allocates 10% of funds for stewardship and restoration of forests and tidal marshes that provide opportunity to sequester or reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These funds could focus on nearly 500,000 acres of state parks and forests.
- Receipt of direct private donations to state parks. The Division of Fish & Wildlife launched its [private donation program](#) in December 2021, which confirms the legality of the state accepting private donations. The potential future success of this program is unclear as most private donors do not support direct contributions to any state, especially if not designated for particular projects.

Washington state allows for private donations but does not receive significant income. This may be due to the lack of fundraising expertise more often associated with non-profit groups.

- Curator leasing agreements for appropriate historic structures could help address insufficient maintenance that is leading to crumbling resources. Lessors would receive reduced rent for in-kind maintenance, thereby protecting structures currently receiving little attention without the need for additional state staff resources. This is currently not allowed by the state, but carefully defined arrangements would be beneficial.
- Although additional new taxes are typically politically unpalatable, an ‘Outdoors Goods Tax’ of as little as 0.5% could provide millions of dollars of revenue. This would be analogous to taxes on sporting arms that fund wildlife management, but would be more broadly assessed on items such as camping gear, hiking boots, etc.
- Increasing Park user fees could provide needed income and current user fees are modest (See Section III). However, this could begin to restrict use by those that cannot afford the expense, thereby restricting broader public benefit. Conversion of all fees to online and site-based electronic collection methods could reduce staff costs that could be better utilized elsewhere in the park system.
- Leases and Concessions
 - Currently, the Office of Leases and Concessions has two staff members, which limits potential innovation that may support state park funding. These funds are deposited into the General Fund, but ideally they would be earmarked for parks as they are in New York.
 - Increased leasing and concessions have the potential to improve the visitation experience and draw additional attendance (i.e., public benefit). While new development on park land is undesirable, opportunities could be provided to mobile vendors / food trucks and other limited amenities and services applicable to park users following careful review under the existing approval process. Increased flat fee or percentages of gross sales should be considered. New York rates are based upon a percentage of profits.
 - New concessions related to services not provided by the state could attract increased visitation and access to parks. These services could include new livery services, boat rentals, improved handicap access (e.g., all-terrain powered wheelchairs), cross-country skiing / snowshoeing, etc.
 - When compatible and not in conflict with public interest, leasing of buildings located on parks could provide funding for parks. Example: Liberty State Park contains the Central Railroad of New Jersey with 45,000 square feet of renovated office space that currently has no lease.
- Lost Economic Development Opportunities
 - The under investment in parks leads to missed economic opportunity for towns and counties. The lack of amenities in many parks results in reduced visitors that might support the local economy. The US Forest Service performed a study that showed more revenue from tourism than the combined leasing income from timber, mining, and grazing.

Potential Federal Funding Sources

The following project-based sources can be applied for directly by the State or in partnership with a Statewide ORFO or other non-profits. It is important to note that Federal, county, municipal, and non-profit organization sources of funding may not be directly accessible to the State. However, non-profit partnerships can be developed, allowing greater access to grant funds for projects conducted on State lands.

- The [United States Fish & Wildlife Service New Jersey Field Office](#) administers the [Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program](#). State, county and municipal governments, non-profit conservation groups and private landowners are eligible for the program. This program provides technical support, materials and project implementation services performed by USFWS staff, but does not include transfer of funds to the landowner. Landowners contact USFWS staff, who perform a site visit and develop a plan that is incorporated into a 10-year contract including required matching funds (cash or in-kind services) to complete the project.
 - The [New Jersey Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) administers the [Environmental Quality Incentive Program](#) that can be used to fund forest stewardship projects. Because only 50 to 75% of the cost is covered, participation is limited by landowner willingness to provide additional funding or labor to complete projects. Non-profit conservation groups and private landowners are eligible for the program. The cost-sharing program provides reimbursement for pre-defined practices that lead to improved forest health. Participants are expected to provide partial project costs (cash or in-kind services). Landowners must have an approved [Forest Stewardship Plan](#) (FSP) approved by the [New Jersey Forest Service](#) to be eligible to receive funds to implement practices outlined in the FSP. EQIP funds can be utilized for FSP preparation, which must be prepared by a [New Jersey Approved Consulting Forester](#).
 - The [United State Forest Service, Northeastern State and Private Forestry](#) program administers [Landscape Scale Restoration Grants](#) on an annual basis. The state and non-profit organizations interested in assisting the state with implementation of the [New Jersey State Forest Action Plan](#) are eligible for the program. Funding for forest stewardship work on private lands is encouraged. These national grants are highly competitive. Cooperative pest agreements are already utilized by NJ Forestry Services.
 - The [National Fish & Wildlife Foundation](#) is a non-profit organization (See Section II for details). They offer [multiple project-based grant programs](#) that fund stewardship projects that support fish and wildlife on all types of lands. These national grants are highly competitive.
 - The [National Forest Foundation](#) is non-profit organization (See Section II for details). They offer [multiple project-based grant programs](#) to support forests and grasslands, each with differing recipient types (non-profit, university, tribes, state and local governments). These national grants are highly competitive.
 - Explore potential for Land and Water Conservation Fund as a source of stewardship funding.

Recommendation #1: Establish New Jersey Statewide Parks Officially Recognized Friends Organization (“Statewide ORFO”)

The establishment of a Statewide ORFO could significantly improve public benefit provided by state parks and forests. This report section provides background information obtained through research and interviews with a wide range of professionals involved with natural land management, policy, and fundraising. The section is divided into several sections including 1)Initiation, Structure and Relationship with the State, 2) Fundraising, 3) Functions and Expenditures.

It is important to note that the NJDEP has been interested in supporting the creation of a statewide 501c3 organization for over 20 years, but interest has intensified in recent years. [New Jersey Keep it Green](#) has discussed the concept with the last several Governors and Governor Murphy’s transition team in 2018 was receptive to the concept.

In December 2021, Senator Turner proposed legislation to form a “New Jersey Parks and Forest Foundation” (S4205). The proposal includes the formation of a 501c3 organization with a board strongly influenced by state representatives with appointments made by the Governor. Lands include state parks,

state forests, and Wildlife Management Areas. It does not include any annual appropriation from the state. The following is taken directly from the proposed legislation:

- “The foundation would have the power to: solicit and collect monetary donations and receive gifts, grants, devises, and bequests of financial contributions for the development, including stewardship of lands preserved for recreation and conservation purposes; in consultation with the DEP Commissioner develop and oversee opportunities for the construction and operation of renewable energy generation systems at State parks and forests; advise the DEP concerning the preparation of master plans and management plans prepared by the department for each State park and forest pursuant to section 5 of P.L.1983, c.324 (C.13:1L-5) in order to enhance outdoor recreational activities and programs within State parks and forests for the benefit of the State's citizens; and enter into partnerships with qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organizations or local government units for the development, including stewardship, of lands preserved for recreation and conservation purposes.”
- “Under the bill, all funds received by the New Jersey State Parks and Forests Foundation, other than those necessary to pay for the expenses of the foundation, would be used exclusively for the development, including stewardship, and promotion of State parks and forests, and all expenditures by the foundation would be undertaken in consultation with the Division of Parks and Forestry or Division of Fish and Wildlife, as applicable.”

1) Initiation, Structure and Relationship with the State

The formation of the “New Jersey Parks ORFO” (Statewide ORFO) should play an integral role in transforming the state park system. The Statewide ORFO would be an independent non-profit organization that can assist with the management of state parks and forests with the goal of significantly improving the quality of parks and increasing their value to the residents of New Jersey.

However, there are no existing models across the country where a statewide non-profit partner organization significantly solves the problem of insufficient park staff. We recommend significant staffing increases and structural changes to improve efficiency (See Recommendation #2 below) in addition to the formation of a Statewide ORFO to assist parks and avoid continued degradation of the state park system.

- Statewide ORFO board member selection and bylaws critical to success
 - NJDEP should maintain an ex officio member, not a voting member
- Statewide ORFO is well-connected to potential funders through its board
- Other state non-profit partner organizations that have tried using state-appointed commissions or elected officials have not been as successful relative to more independent statewide non-profit partner models
- Statewide ORFO board includes members that tend to support Republican, Democrat, and Independent political viewpoints. Member interests should encompass state values and uses of state lands including biodiversity protection and enhancement, natural resources, equity and inclusion, passive and active recreation, historic resources, education, and wildlife management. A diverse board would create a durable institution that can resist any particular future administration that may or may not strongly support the Statewide ORFO or parks more broadly.
- The state should dedicate staff members to coordinate with the Statewide ORFO.
- The state-Statewide ORFO relationship requires trust, created through mutual respect and excellent communication. The generalized pitfall common to all governments that must be managed: state exerting excessive top-down control in combination with (and/or resulting in)

highly exercised, narrowly focused advocates distrustful and critical of nearly all state actions. Outside stakeholders could act as watch dogs (e.g., Keep it Green, individual non-profit groups).

2) Fundraising

The primary sources of funding would be sought through private individuals, philanthropic foundations, and corporations. Additional project-based funding could be sought from national entities. In discussions with interviewed professionals, it is assumed that a statewide ORFO should initially raise at least \$1 million per year to be robust. Ideally, an initial large donation would allow for a relatively smooth lift for a newly forming group. Initial funding from the state could facilitate establishment.

It is essential that the Statewide ORFO have a strong and compelling needs statement, which could result from a comprehensive state parks plan (see above). Private donors will have significant concerns related to the utilization of Statewide ORFO-raised funds on state lands. Private interests will, at least initially, assume that the financial responsibility for state land management should reside solely with the state. There would also be concern that the state may decide to reduce its current appropriations in response to funding obtained by the Statewide ORFO.

In order to counter these likely concerns, the Statewide ORFO must be able to demonstrate its independence from the state and its dedication to enhancing, complementing, and supplementing state resources applied to its lands. Interviewed professionals, especially those involved in philanthropy, universally agreed that private entities in New Jersey will not fund a Statewide ORFO that seems ‘too close to the state’, especially if those funds are directly transferred to the state to support parks.

Additionally, donors are likely to wonder how a Statewide ORFO will differ from competing land trusts. It could be emphasized that the Statewide ORFO would be seeking untapped resources / donors new to conservation-related causes. It could also be emphasized that the state is by far the largest holder of natural lands, and therefore representing exceptional conservation value, deserving special support.

- Managing expectations. Annual budgets of similar statewide non-profit partners, excluding those that actively fund capital expenditures and/or land acquisition, were not immediately available for most groups. Two successful are provided below. Generally, statewide non-profit partners raise only a small percentage of operating funds currently provided by their respective state park budgets.
 - Pennsylvania: 0.5% (likely a typical percentage across the country)
 - Montana: 11% (likely a maximum percentage because state funding is very minimal)
- State appropriation and potential redirection of existing funds toward parks
 - An annual state appropriation could stabilize the Statewide ORFO, especially initially, and provide a generous return-on-investment. New York provides \$20 million annually to their Natural Heritage Trust.
 - See Potential State Revenue Sources above – Multiple state revenue sources could be strongly re-focused on park projects, either managed through the state or through a Statewide ORFO
- Donors: Private Individuals
 - New Jersey parks generally lack interest among the wealthy because they are not as prestigious as National Parks. They tend to serve middle- and lower-income people without the ability to donate significant funds.
 - Planned giving is absolutely essential for long term survival, but this does not happen until non-profits mature.
- Donors: Private Philanthropic Foundations

- New Jersey has a small philanthropy community (i.e., philanthropy will not save a foundation).
 - Includes 3,000 foundations, but only 1,500 have assets; few staffed foundations; multiple small family foundations; handful of community foundations (fewest of all states in the US)
 - Both Dodge Foundation and Victoria Foundation have moved away from giving related to conservation.
- RWJ Foundation is by far the largest New Jersey foundation, but currently does not focus on parks. However, a case can be made that develops the link between parks and health.
- Donors: Private Corporations
 - Willingness may be low if they consider funding parks to be a state responsibility (i.e., ‘Statewide ORFO is a state add-on’). In addition, the recent CBT changes may further make corporations question why additional contributions to parks should be increased.
 - Corporate donors in New Jersey are not as reliable as in the past because many do not have home bases in the state.
 - An MOU between the state and Statewide ORFO should clearly define corporate donations and the state-Statewide ORFO-corporate relationship to avoid perceived influence (i.e., ‘Supporters of parks, not purchasers of parks’).

3) Functions and Expenditures

The primary purpose of a Statewide ORFO is to complement and supplement existing state sources of operational and capital funding. A gap analysis of operating funds, CBT funds, and expected Statewide ORFO contributions is critical to setting expectations and determining whether these combined funding sources are appropriate to maximize desired public benefit of parks. Expenditures should be applied to state priorities, vetted through a public process, resulting from a comprehensive state park plan operationally coupled with annual work plans for individual parks.

- Develop comprehensive parks plan (performed by state or state directs Statewide ORFO to complete)
 - Elucidate a clear vision for parks based upon public interest determined through surveys aimed at understanding the desired functions and uses for parks. Generally, key functions include recreation, education, biodiversity, natural capital, and historic preservation with special attention paid to equity and inclusion. This should be geographically adjusted (i.e., accounting for rural, suburban, and urban parks).
 - Individual park plans should include an assessment for each key function noted above, along with cataloging current conditions of each and goals to improve public benefit over the next 10 years. New Jersey is rich in data related to biodiversity to inform planning (e.g., Landscape Project, Connecting Habitats Across New Jersey – CHANJ, Natural Heritage Database, State Forest Action Plan)
- Statewide ORFO will advocate legislature and general public to build interest and increase appropriations for state lands to increase public benefit
- Statewide ORFO assists existing individual park friends groups with fundraising, administrative support, and development of universal agreements with state parks. The Statewide ORFO is not intended to replace, but only support, existing individual park friends groups.
- Statewide ORFO assists state efforts to obtain federal funding and seek opportunities not directly available to the state, but applicable to state lands through non-profit applications.

Expenditure options below are not mutually exclusive

- State Staff and Contractors
 - As mentioned previously, it is not plausible for the state to hire hundreds of park staff lost over the last few decades. While notable staff increases are strongly recommended, parks are going to require contractors to maximize public benefit.
 - Statewide ORFO funding of state staff is uncommon and not particularly successful (see Section II). In Missouri, their private foundation hires quasi-state staff that are not eligible for pensions. The foundation expends funds from state tax revenue (0.1% is dedicated to conservation programs).
 - Contractors would complete projects currently not performed or under-performed by parks staff
 - Example: Non-existent function includes greening at parks (e.g., recycling, pervious parking lots, etc.)
 - Example: Under-performed functions include trail maintenance, educational programs (natural, historical), and land stewardship (e.g., invasive species control, deer management, restoration, etc.)
 - Project/task-based contractors have the ‘efficiency angle’ that funders appreciate
 - Statewide ORFO contractor hiring process can be streamlined relative to the state (while still following all state requirements)
 - The state can hire contractors, but this is primarily focused on construction projects. A significant exception is the Licensed Site Remediation Professionals (accredited, trained private firms review state applications under a contract with the state). While this has been controversial among environmental groups, functions such as stewardship, recreation, and education are likely to be less controversial.
 - Non-profit conservation groups have considerable expertise (e.g., land stewardship, education, etc.) but have restricted resources. However, funding provided through the Statewide ORFO could be quickly converted to additional staff to work at parks.
 - Individual park friends groups could receive contracts or grants, either matched from their own fundraising efforts or provided without a matching requirement (preferable for smaller friends groups)
- Statewide ORFO, over time, develops staff to perform activities
 - Statewide ORFO could evolve over time: 1) Executive Director, 2) Development Director, and 3) Administrative Assistant are considered minimum required staff. Additional staff could include directors of Historic Preservation, Stewardship, Recreation, and Education supported by their own staffs.
 - However, a Statewide ORFO with staff is difficult to maintain because it would require money just to support itself. This model does not seem to exist anywhere in the US.
- Statewide ORFO directly provides raised funds to parks to spend at their own discretion
 - This model is particularly unattractive to private donors of all types. It exists but is uncommon in the US (see Section II).

Recommendation #2: Increase State Staffing and Improve Efficiency through Partnerships

It is vitally important that the park system re-evaluate the structure, function, and culture of the state park system. This process should begin with a comprehensive statement of vision included within a detailed plan considering overarching park system goals, along with plans for individual parks, in order to increase

efficiency and maximize public benefit. The plan should address critical threats including deer overabundance, invasive species, and off-road vehicles. The states relationship with non-profit conservation groups and philanthropic foundations, as well as corporate partners, should be strengthened to establish parks as a highly valued asset to New Jersey's residents.

Staffing Levels and Efficiency

Significant reductions in state park staff over time have led to significant degradation of resource quality and the public benefits from parks. Some have estimated that as many as 300 new staff are required to restore full function of state parks. Short of hiring hundreds of new staff, the following factors and strategies could be considered to maximize staff efficiency:

- Hire grant writing and volunteer management staff or provide financial support to the Statewide ORFO to fill these roles
 - The state park system does not have either of these roles, leaving many lost opportunities to improve the park system without requiring significant increases in state staffing.
 - These positions could reduce burdens on stressed Park Superintendents.
 - Hire additional non-park state staff that support parks to increase efficiency (e.g., procurement, concessions, regulatory review)
- Increase communications between parks and the legislature to assure maximizing public benefit of park lands
- Minimize regulatory compliance-related time and expenses by addressing the challenging application of regulations for stewardship / recreation projects
 - This problem was noted by multiple volunteer groups where their services could not be fully utilized due to regulatory challenges even for projects that are relatively small. Compliance-related issues have significantly increased over the past 20 years, hindering their ability to provide free help to parks.
 - Establish 'pre-accepted' best management plans / guidelines / thresholds with regulatory entities to streamline installation of minor trail bridges, habitat restoration, and other typical land stewardship functions such as invasive species control to avoid lengthy project proposal review and reporting requirements
 - Example: Adopt/accept US Forest Service trail bridge standards
- Develop guidelines for the use of private contractors, including non-profit conservation groups, to avoid potential conflict with labor
 - Tasks should focus on activities not currently performed or underperformed by state staff (i.e., there is no reasonable expectation that state staff will have the capacity to perform now or in the future). This does not preclude earlier recommendations for significant staff additions to the state park system, but this should be considered an acceptance of limits that preclude expectations that state staff will ever be large enough to complete all necessary tasks (i.e., hiring of several hundred new staff).
 - Prevailing wage requirements should be expected as with other state contracts.
- Fully develop and support a shared resources model across all parks – “Roving Crews Model”
 - Each park should maintain a non-roving core staff to perform basic operations and maintenance. The size of core staff should be determined by factors including number of existing structures, park acreage, and visitation rates. The presence of historic resources should be an important factor in determining core staff size.
 - The concept of shared resources between parks has already been necessitated through staff reductions. This has applied at the level of Park Superintendents, operations and maintenance staff (including trail maintenance), and interpretive staff where individuals

- are required to cover multiple parks. With additional staff, this shared resource model could be more effective for all park functions.
- Roving crews must be scaled by park size, visitation rates, and geography (i.e., less than 1 hour travel to all assigned parks). In addition to reduced staffing needs to provide a quality park experience, it would also reduce the costs of equipment and supplies that would also be shared across parks.
 - Roving crews should include trails, education/programs, and stewardship (e.g., deer management, invasive species management, habitat restoration, rare species management, etc.)
 - Example: Deer Management Programs can be managed regionally by a single state staff member as opposed to individually at each park. This work would be guided by a statewide parks plan and park superintendents to assure that all park priorities are addressed while deer management occurs.
 - Example: Invasive species management and trail maintenance can be managed regionally by a single state staff member that prioritizes efforts and manages a crew of 3-5 staff members that work with volunteers.
 - Provide staff and volunteers with necessary tools and procedures for efficient trail maintenance (NJFFS model – one person, one tool)
 - Whenever possible, redirect operations and maintenance staff to other priorities (e.g., trail maintenance) by reducing mowing of areas that are not regularly utilized by the public, resulting in more habitat (e.g., meadows).

Partnerships

The park system already has 20 friends groups, some of these are ORFOs while others are not formerly recognized as ORFOs. These friends groups range in size and capability. Along with the formation of a new Statewide ORFO, the following strategies could improve effectiveness toward increasing public benefit of parks:

- Further develop partnerships with counties, municipalities, and non-profits (including individual park friends groups)
 - Develop arrangements with local law enforcement jurisdiction for long, linear parks/trails such as the D&R Canal State Park and the planned [Essex-Hudson Greenway](#) to reduce demands on State Park Police.
 - Note: The Essex-Hudson Greenway can provide immense public benefit but is not supported by some park staff because management is considered impossible under current staffing levels.
 - Fully develop models for management of smaller ‘orphan’ state lands currently assigned to larger non-contiguous parks
 - Examples: Edison State Park, state lands in Gloucester County, and Washington Rock State Park.
- Improve collaboration with non-profits and individual park friends groups
 - These partners perceive the state as ‘closed off’ and assume that insufficient staffing reduces the states capacity to benefit from stronger, more collaborative relationships.
 - Conversely, the adversarial nature of some groups creates caution among state park staff. Effective communication and understanding of each other’s positions are necessary.
 - Streamline relationships with friends to manage expectations of the relationship
 - Revise ORFO Division Order #30 (Appendix L)
 - Utilize Statewide ORFO to act as a friends umbrella group that facilitates the individual parks friends groups relationships

- Develop partnerships with statewide and regional user groups such as the New York / New Jersey Trail Conference and Jersey Off Road Bicycling Association (JORBA)
 - Interest groups can be associated with dedicated volunteers to maintain trails
 - Empower NJ Trails Council to coordinate statewide trail work
 - State should accept liability / indemnity related to volunteer trail work, rather than requesting sponsoring non-profits to bear this burden. A Statewide ORFO may be able to provide this function in support of volunteer and friends groups - this is done by multiple statewide non-profit partners.

Recommendation #3: Improve Mitigation of Threats

The mitigation of threats would be significantly improved through a thorough system-wide plan that identifies resources, threats, and prioritizes strategies to mitigate threats. But ultimately, an increase in park staff will be required to implement this plan. Given the significant shortage of park staff, the state should consider greater reliance on partners (Friends groups, non-profits, etc.) and contractors.

Overabundant Deer

The problem of overabundant deer is reported in Section I. Deer management on state parks is not uniform, with many parks lacking or having insufficient programs. Currently, deer management responsibilities fall under the responsibility of park superintendents, assuring significant duplication of efforts. The efficient and effective mitigation of this problem would require establishment of system-wide Deer Management Program (DMP) aimed at improved hunting access and focusing on the harvesting of does to reduce reproductive capacity of the herd. This should be done through a regional or statewide coordinator, with support and guidance from park superintendents to assure that all park uses are adequately maintained while deer management occurs. The most effective DMPs provide participating hunters with clear rules, sufficient access, time/locations to effectively harvest deer, and harvest goals that must be met to maintain their participation in the program. The success of any program should be monitored through measurement of ecosystem health (e.g., forest understory cover).

Invasive Species

The problem of invasive species is reported in Section I. The simplest no-cost step that can be taken at all parks is adherence to [Division Order 2004-02](#) related to the restriction on planting invasive species on park lands. Personal observation suggests that multiple parks persistently violate this order.

While there is no way to eradicate many infestations on parks, it is possible to mitigate existing infestations and prevent new infestations. Careful planning and prioritization of control efforts is essential before any direct control efforts are initiated. Plans should be created for every park in the system. These plans do not need to be extensive but should capture an understanding of conservation values and their threats through an understanding of invasive species distribution and intensity at the park. Mitigation should focus on a prioritized set of actions that focus on effective deer management (see above and Section I), eradication of emerging invasive species with small populations to avoid future damage, maintenance of areas with minimal existing invasive species cover (e.g., older forests without an agricultural tilling history), and long-term projects to reverse established infestations. Any control strategies should focus on particular resources of highest value with the greatest threat that can reasonably be ameliorated.

Off-road Vehicles (ORVs)

The problem of ORVs is reported in Section I. The mitigation of this problem would require compromise and careful planning due to the complexities of stakeholder interests, but this will not be an easy problem to solve.

Travel Management Plans (TMP) could reduce illegal riding by clarifying where motorized travel is considered legal, thus damage to other values (e.g., natural, recreational) could be minimized (see Appendix K for a plan created for Wharton State Forest). TMPs define allowable uses for every road and trail within a park. All modes of transportation (motorized, horses, bicycles, foot) would be restricted to pre-defined roads and trails. Roads/trails would be assigned uses based upon physical characteristics (i.e., ability to withstand particular modes), along with identifying presence of sensitive wildlife or plants where intensive modes would damage these values. Other considerations might include reasonable access, neighboring land uses or other identified attributes that may limit particular modes of transportation.

The TMP strategy makes clear exactly which avenues of travel are suitable for legal motorized use. As with the spirit of the existing ORV legislation, clearly mapped motorized access plans should help control illegal riding that can destroy sensitive plants and animals. But this will only succeed if it is accompanied by strict law enforcement. Enforcement would need to include regular patrolling, followed by issuance of summons, going as far as impounding vehicles for repeat offenders. Enforcement could be enhanced with greater reliance on cross-jurisdictional coordination as has occurred occasionally in south Jersey through the ATV Task Force.