



★ **CONNECTING
CONSERVATION IN
BROKENSTRAW
CREEK**

Ducks Unlimited (DU), the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Game

Commission (PGC), and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources permanently protected 108 acres in the Brokenstraw Creek watershed. The property, purchased for just over \$200,000, is a mix of wetlands (90 acres) and upland (18 acres) habitat. Many migratory and nesting birds, such as the American black duck, mallard, and wood duck, rely on this site during their annual migration. Threatened and endangered species, including the northern long-eared bat, also rely on this property for survival. PGC will manage the site as part of State Game Lands (SGL) 197. Adding the property to SGL 197 will establish a 500-acre corridor of connected conservation lands within the Brokenstraw Valley Seepage Flat Natural Heritage Area, increase public access at SGL 197, and eliminate the possibility of future residential or commercial development within this vulnerable watershed.

★ **PROTECTING CRITICAL
HABITAT AT CUSSEWAGO
BOTTOMS**

A joint venture between DU and the French Creek Valley Conservancy (FCVC) protected 168 acres within the Cussewago Creek Important Bird Area. The project

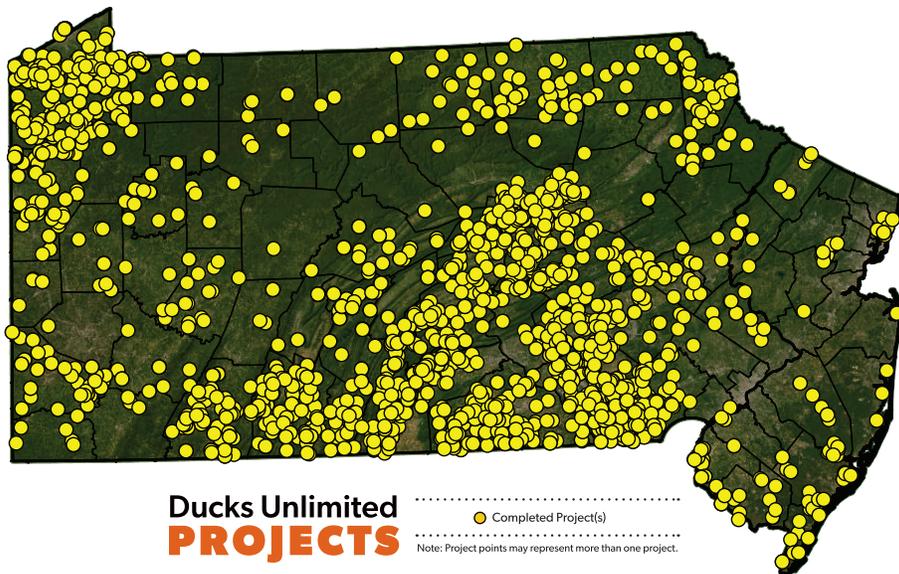


included acquiring the 102-acre Huber property and FCVC's matching 66-acre Burkholder acquisition in Crawford County, Pennsylvania. Over 90 acres of floodplain wetlands and 75 acres of upland habitat have been conserved. The area is significant for numerous migratory and nesting bird species, such as the American black duck, mallard, and wood duck, as well as threatened, endangered species, including the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat. The project will aid in meeting the goals of the Cussewago Bottom Important Bird Area, North American Waterfowl Management Plan, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, BCR 13, Atlantic Flyway Council, and PGC's Wildlife Action Plan to protect threatened wetland habitat and provide quality waterfowl and waterbird breeding, migration, and wintering habitat. The property acquisition eliminates the threat of residential and commercial development. It protects the stream, associated wetlands, and native flora and fauna, to maintain a forested wetland buffer adjacent to Cussewago Creek.

★ **INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES REVITALIZE JOHN HEINZ NWR**

With a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and matching contributions from project partners, DU and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service improved the management of 180 acres of wetlands at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge in Philadelphia. New water structures and a pump system were installed to better manage tidal flows and habitat for more than 85 wetland-dependent birds and many other wildlife species. The water structures also allow site managers to control water levels so that the water can be drawn

down in late spring to promote natural vegetation growth, which serves as food for migrating waterfowl in the fall. Part of the Delaware River Basin, the work at John Heinz NWR created a more natural flow of water while increasing water quality and flood control, critical to the safety of nearby communities in an urban setting such as this one.





★ **CRANBERRY FARM PRESERVE
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJ Conservation) purchased more than 180 acres of a Southampton cranberry farm in Dec. 2023 to protect water quality and wetland habitat for wildlife and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities. The property was part of a farm belonging to the Mehler family. Craig Mehler, the company’s president, retained 33 acres of the farm that includes active cranberry bogs. The company joined Ocean Spray as a cooperative in 1966

and remains one of its 700-member growers. The preserve, which is 98% wetlands and used by waterfowl during the migration, is located across from NJ Conservation’s 170-acre Evert Trail Preserve and adjacent to Brendan Byrne State Forest. It also adjoins Blueberry Acres, a 205-acre property preserved by Trust for Public Land and transferred to NJ Conservation in 2021. One hundred percent of the land is within the headwaters of the South Branch Rancocas Creek, which flows through the property and supplies water to a reservoir on site. Pinelands Adventures, an initiative of Pinelands Preservation Alliance, will use the farm to provide guided trips to the public.



PA’S NEW BIOLOGIST

As of February 2024, Lisa Clark is Pennsylvania’s Regional Biologist. She came to DU from New Jersey Fish and Wildlife where she worked as a migratory game bird biologist for seven years. In her new role, Lisa is tasked with building partnerships and assisting with the delivery of DU’s conservation and restoration programs across the state. Lisa grew up in southeastern Pennsylvania and attended Villanova University, graduating with a degree in Environmental Studies and Geography. She went on to receive a master’s in Natural Resources Management at Texas Tech University.

PGC’S PUBLIC HABITAT INITIATIVE

Pennsylvania Game Commission and DU are partnering to improve 1,600 acres of wetland habitats on 61 state game lands. Known as the Pennsylvania Wetland Habitat Initiative (PWHI), the project is a \$6 million investment that will replace water control structures and rebuild existing spillways and levees over the next three years at sites in 31 counties. PGC has been an excellent partner in helping DU advance continental support for critical waterfowl habitat. Under the leadership of Executive Director Bryan Burhans, PGC and DU have advanced a state-level wetland restoration program and met the Association of Fish and Wildlife Fall Flights goal. DU would like to thank Bryan and the PGC team for their continued partnership.



DUCKS UNLIMITED conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

NEW JERSEY/PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVATION STAFF

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**GREAT LAKES /
ATLANTIC REGION**

**7322 NEWMAN BOULEVARD
BUILDING 2 SUITE 200
DEXTER, MI 48130**

ACCOMPLISHMENT NUMBERS

2023

- 1,872 acres conserved
- \$4,712,071 invested

HISTORICAL

- 49,965 acres conserved
- \$29,391,648 invested

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WWW.DUCKS.ORG**