



**Abbott
Marshlands
Stewardship
Council**

Annual Report
2013

**ABBOTT
MARSHLANDS**





Introduction

The Abbott Marshlands Stewardship Council was formed in October 2011 with the signing of the cooperating stewardship agreement by the following organizations:

- State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection
- State of New Jersey, Department of Transportation
- New Jersey Transit
- Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission
- County of Mercer
- Township of Hamilton
- City of Trenton
- PSEG
- D&R Greenway Land Trust
- Friends for the Marsh

The purpose of the Council is to support the goals and vision of the signatories in preserving the Abbott Marshlands, namely:

- protection and preservation
- stewardship
- education
- Marsh identity and interpretation
- coordinated management and organization.

This report highlights the activities and achievements of the Council and its members over its first year of implementing its plan.



Signing of the Stewardship Agreement

On October 3rd, 2011 ten organizations vested in the natural, historic and recreational attributes of the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh (now the Abbott Marshlands) came together to execute a visionary plan to guide the future: the 2011 Cooperative Stewardship Plan for the Marsh. Standing on the rooftop of PSEG's Mercer Generating Station, the partners included corporate, state, local government and nonprofit entities. Signatories include: PSEG, New Jersey Dept. of Environmental Protection, New Jersey Dept. of Transportation, New Jersey Transit, the D&R Canal Commission, Mercer County, City of Trenton, Hamilton Township, D&R Greenway Land Trust and Friends for the Marsh.

With multiple owners and users, coordination of stewardship for the Marsh can be a complex task. The milestone agreement on vision, goals and communication will ensure cooperation in protecting and preserving the Marsh. The Marsh will benefit with enhanced recreational activities and educational opportunities, and the partner organizations will help to establish a recognizable identity, celebrating its 13,000 years.

“We are extremely proud to be a long-standing member of this partnership, which has made great progress in restoring the marsh,” said Eric Svenson, VP Policy & Environment, Health & Safety, PSEG. “Signing onto this agreement is a great opportunity for us at PSEG to live up the first two words in our name – public service. This pact brings together the right mix of stakeholders – environmentalists, government agencies and businesses – to preserve and protect this important natural and cultural



Dr. Mary Leck of Friends for the Marsh (left) signs the stewardship agreement

resource. Together, these Friends for the Marsh are connecting the dots to provide greater understanding and awareness of this environmental and educational jewel.”

“This agreement reflects what we can achieve when we pool our resources and work cooperatively,” said Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes. “Mercer is very proud to have been the lead public agency

“ Together, these Friends for the Marsh are connecting the dots to provide greater understanding and awareness of this environmental and educational jewel.”

FACT:

The Point Breeze estate was originally put together in 1816 by Joseph Bonaparte, the exiled King of Spain and Naples, who enlarged the house at the site. The home was destroyed by fire in 1820. Bonaparte rebuilt on a grander scale but that mansion was razed by its new owner after Bonaparte returned to Europe in 1839. One original feature of the estate still visible is the iron gate at the former entrance.



in bringing together the many landowners and organizations that have an interest in this vital habitat. This plan will serve as a road map for the use and protection of the Marsh and its natural and historic resources so that generations of people to this region can benefit from its beauty.”

“We’re pleased to be partnering with these groups to ensure that this diverse landscape, home to more than a thousand species of plant and animals, and which holds so much historical significance to the State, is preserved,” said New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob

Martin. “The DEP will help to implement the Stewardship plan, along with providing expertise and technical support to facilitate its goals.”

Abbott Marshlands Stewardship Council Field Trip

A May 11, 2012, half-day field trip introduced the newest members of the Council to the areas that comprise the Abbott Marshlands. The trip was organized and led by Lisa Fritzingler, Mercer County council representative, and Dr. Mary Leck, of Friends for the Abbott Marshlands. The walking tour portion began



The staircase from the White City Amusement Park, part of the John A. Roebling Park.



at the N.J. Transit Light Rail station in Bordentown City, where Dr. Leck gave an overview of the uniqueness of the Marshlands within an urbanized/suburbanized setting that spans several municipalities as well as public and private ownerships. She discussed the natural and historical significance of the Marshlands, from its diverse wildlife and plant habitats and varied open space to its connection to Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark, the most significant Woodland Indian site along the east coast.

The walkers progressed from Bordentown City's boat launch area and pedestrian walkway to the D&R Canal State Park section of the Marshlands. Here, Council members were able to view and walk across the recently completed Lock 1 Bridge project, designed by the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection. The group then proceeded on a brief driving tour of the former Point Breeze estate, privately owned by the Divine Word Missionaries, with a DEP conservation easement.

Bordentown Township's portions of the Marshlands were toured next. At Northern Community Park, a popular location for tours conducted by the Friends, the beauty of the bluffs over the Crosswicks Creek can be appreciated. The other section visited is known as the Bordentown Bluffs on Stanton Avenue, and is administered by D&R Canal State

Park. In the past, archaeological looting at this important site caused damage along the shoreline of Crosswicks Creek, highlighting the continuing need for an improved local and state government agreement for the protection and interpretation of the area.

The field trip wrapped up with brief driving tours of Hamilton and Trenton sections of the Marshlands, including the Isaac Pearson House and Abbott-DeCou House Historic Sites. The tour concluded at Roebling Memorial Park in Hamilton Township, administered by Mercer County Park Commission. The Council learned about the former White City Amusement Park located at the site, now a passive recreational park that includes Spring Lake and is a refuge for wildlife situated within the Abbott Marshlands tidal freshwater wetland.

Abbott Marshlands Branding

Its official! Abbott Marshlands is the new name and identity developed for the Hamilton, Trenton, Bordentown Marsh and Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark. The purpose of the new name and identity is to increase the awareness of the entire site among a wide range of stakeholders and potential users, including neighboring communities, by creating a name and identity



“It is a comfort to know that always within reach is some nook or corner in Nature's realm when one's real self can come to the surface; so, when the chickadee warbles, Hear me! you can whistle back to it, in the same earnest and fraternal spirit.”

- CC Abbott
on his time in
the marsh



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The official logo for the
Abbott Marshlands

that both unifies and is evocative of this place. In addition to the new name, a visual graphic/logo was created. It will be used for signage and other written and web based informational materials. Tulpehaking (Land of the Turtles) will be the name of the new interpretive center.

The Abbott Marshlands logo represents both the natural and archaeological legacy of the area. The development of the branding was a cooperative process with valuable insight and input from the county and other stakeholders. The professional and creative design team includes the firms Stantec, Russell Design and Hunter Research.

The county is currently producing a prototype sign for the Abbott Farm site. This first sign will introduce visitors to Charles Conrad Abbott and the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark. Based on this prototype, a complete signage manual providing all the signage specifications and materials will be produced. This signage manual will be used by Mercer County to create Abbott Marshlands signage at county facilities including Roebling Park and the Interpretive Center. In support of the branding and identity, the expectation is that this signage will be used by all partners and incorporated throughout the Abbott Marshlands to direct visitor to, and inform them about, this remarkable cultural and



New interpretive sign at Spring Lake, Roebling Park

environmental resource. Mercer County received funding from the New Jersey Historic Trust for the development of the banding. The branding was a recommended outcome of the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark Interpretive Plan, also funded by the Trust.

Progress on the Tulpehaking Interpretive Center

After many years of planning, numerous archaeological studies and extensive archaeological field work, the Marshlands Interpretive Center is at long last under construction. The existing house next to Mercer County Roebling Park, on 157 Westcott Ave will



be renovated and expanded and become a place to learn, gather and experience the many wonderful environmental and cultural resources throughout the Abbott Marshlands.

Designed by SSP Architectural Group and RBA Group Inc., the Center will include exhibit and gallery space, indoor classrooms and meeting space, public rest rooms, plus an outdoor pergola and native garden for outdoor learning. The design is sensitive to the residential character of the neighborhood with parking and access from the park to the rear of the Center. The existing house, not including the garage or the basement, is 2,800 square feet. The addition for the indoor class room and indoor space is 2,000 square feet. The center will be ADA compliant and the design incorporates many sustainable materials and energy efficient systems.

Construction is being funded by a Green Acres grant to the D&R Greenway Inc. and by the Mercer County Open Space Preservation Trust fund. The Center will be owned by the County and education programs and events will be overseen by County staff and volunteers. Construction is scheduled for completion by Thanksgiving 2013. As a result of the branding process the Center is to be named The Tulpehaking (Land of the Turtles) Center.

Development of sub-committees for stewardship and education

In determining the membership invitations for both committees the following factors were considered:

- professional experience
- knowledge and enthusiasm for the marsh
- representation of the partners on the Stewardship Council

The executive committee of the Friends for the Abbott Marshlands met first and brainstormed a list of possible candidates for each of the committees. This list included those who had previously served on the committees and others who might be interested. The committee tried to include representatives from different levels and interests of those using the marsh. For example, the education committee should include someone from the elementary, high school and university levels in science as well as in art, history and archeology. These lists were then forwarded to the Stewardship Council. The members of the Council added to the list of candidates with suggestions of those who might be interested and represent the knowledge and expertise of the members' organizations. The members of the council then determined the order of invitations and who would ask each candidate to join the committees.

Goals for 2013

The Stewardship Council has identified the following goals for this year to build on the successes of last year.

- Open the interpretive Center
- Complete the placement of Abbott Marshlands signs
- Get the education and stewardship sub committees up and running
- Identify specific tasks and goals for the education and stewardship sub committees to undertake
- Begin to identify funding needs and sources for priority projects
- The Council will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to conduct its business, and will continue to participate with Friends for the Abbott Marshlands and other concerned stakeholders to preserve and protect this vital piece of urban open space.

To learn more about the Abbott Marshlands and its history, and to review its cooperative stewardship plan, you can visit www.marsh-friends.org or the Mercer County Park Commission website

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marsh-friends.org