



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
news releases

January 31, 2017

CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION PRESERVES DELAWARE BAY WETLANDS IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY 204-ACRE TRACT TO BE ADDED TO HEISLERVILLE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

TRENTON - The Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program has completed the \$620,000 purchase of a wetlands area along Delaware Bay in Cumberland County that will protect habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

The DEP used \$462,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program and \$158,000 from the Green Acres Program to purchase 204 acres of bay wetlands and upland buffers in Maurice River Township. The land will be added to the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Heislerville Wildlife Management Area.

"We are very happy to preserve this land for use by a wide variety of wildlife species, including various types of waterfowl, shorebirds, bird of prey, and wading birds," said DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "The Delaware Bay region is truly a special place, remarkable for its beauty and opportunities for diverse wildlife-related activities, including hiking, fishing, hunting and bird watching."

Ecotourism is a growing industry in New Jersey, especially in places such as the Delaware Bay region, where nature lovers converge to watch migrations of shorebirds, birds of prey such as eagles, osprey and hawks, and even butterflies and dragonflies. The Delaware Bay region is home to the state's largest concentration of bald eagles and is a critical stopover for migrating shorebirds.

"Coastal wetlands are among the richest and most important natural places on the planet," said Wendi Weber, Northeast Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "They are habitats for fish and wildlife, but also play an important role for people - such as providing clean water and special places to get outside and enjoy nature. National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants are critical to our work with states and partners to protect and restore these important places."

The Heislerville Wildlife Management Area currently protects 7,231 acres of Delaware Bay shoreline, wetlands and uplands - including some of the most important beaches used by migrating shorebirds such as red knots, which fuel up on horseshoe crab eggs as they fly to breeding grounds as far north as the Canadian Arctic.

Although comprised of numerous separate parcels, the Wildlife Management Area includes two major sections. One flanks the east bank of the Maurice River and fronts a portion of Delaware Bay known as Thompson's Beach, and the other is just to the east, along a gently curving swath of nearly pristine bay front that includes Moore's Beach. The Maurice River is on the federal inventory of National Wild and Scenic Rivers.

The Wildlife Management Area provides numerous parking areas and access points for recreational activities, as well as a boat ramp. The Wildlife Management Area also offers an auto-trail driving loop. The area around the Maurice River is an important wintering area for birds-of-prey, also known as raptors, including numerous pairs of bald eagles.

"It is important that we continue to add to our inventory of Wildlife Management Areas across the state," said Richard Boornazian, DEP's Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources. "These special places provide awe-inspiring opportunities to enjoy nature and solitude."