



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
NEWS



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**NJDOT & USFWS open the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Trail on Cedar Bonnet Island
Public access now permitted after completion of the environmental mitigation project**

(Trenton) – New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) officials in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) today announced the opening of the first public access to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge Environmental Trail on Cedar Bonnet Island.

"This project is a real example of how NJDOT adds to the quality of life here in the state in ways that are not necessarily intuitive," NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti said. "Through a partnership between NJDOT, the Fish & Wildlife Service, the DEP, and the US Army Corps of Engineers, we were all able to reach an agreement on how the required environmental mitigation could be accomplished and satisfy the goals of all of the stakeholder agencies. A win for all parties involved."

"We have been working on development of this project for several years. Creating nearly 20 acres of tidal salt marsh is a true feat and we are delighted with the results. Allowing the public to visit and enjoy this part of Forsythe Refuge is a great opportunity," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge Manager Virginia Rettig said.

As part of an environmental mitigation project for the NJDOT larger [\\$312 million federally-funded Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project](#), the Department and USFWS created an environmental trail providing the first public access to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on Cedar Bonnet Island.

Route 72 traverses a portion of the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, known as the Cedar Bonnet Island Conservation Unit (CBI), a portion of which was a former Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) that accepted dredge materials from adjoining marina construction and channel maintenance dredging dating back to the 1950s. The property was acquired by the USFWS in the 1990s, but has not been open for public use. As part of the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, CBI was identified as a priority for wildlife habitat restoration and passive recreational use.

NJDOT worked closely with the USFWS and other stakeholders on the [\\$9.6 million federal and state funded environmental mitigation work on Cedar Bonnet Island](#), which began in February 2015. The work performed included wetlands creation, mitigation for existing freshwater wetlands and

modification of two existing storm water basins within the Barnegat Bay watershed.

Public Access Improvements

Included in the public access improvements for the project is a one-mile walking path with pedestrian benches, two gazebo overlooks with picnic tables and interpretive signs located along the path. The path provides views of Atlantic City, the Manahawkin Bay Bridges, Long Beach Island and coastal marshes and Barnegat Bay, as well as opportunities to view shore-area wildlife.

Barnegat Bay watershed

The Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project is also located within the Barnegat Bay watershed, an area of significant ecological and recreational importance to the State. To help improve water quality within the Bay and comply with NJDEP Stormwater Management (SWM) Rules, NJDOT considered numerous traditional Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the Route 72 project that would have resulted in significant construction and maintenance cost, and constructability concerns.

Alternatively, with the NJDEP's approval, the NJDOT met the SWM requirements for the project through an innovative regional approach that retrofitted two existing NJDOT-owned detention basins within the Barnegat Bay watershed, as subsurface stormwater gravel wetlands. This is the first time stormwater gravel wetlands were constructed on a NJDOT project. This approach not only helped NJDOT exceed the water treatment requirements of the SWM Rules, it reduced construction and maintenance costs, and helped to accelerate the construction schedule. The subsurface gravel wetlands will help to improve the health of the Barnegat Bay by reducing the amount of total suspended solids and nitrogen being deposited into the Bay.

The Peregrine Falcon

NJDOT also worked with USFWS, NJ Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) to design a permanent [Peregrine Falcon Eryie \(nest\)](#) on a wooden tower next to the new Causeway to help give the falcons who attempt to nest there a decent shot at success in one of the most precarious of locations. These birds often make their homes under large bridges, utilizing tall structures in an urban setting to hunt.

About the Refuge

[The Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge](#) protects more than 47,000 acres of southern New Jersey coastal habitats which is actively managed for migratory birds. The refuge's location in one of the Atlantic Flyway's most active flight paths makes it an important link in seasonal bird migration. Its value for the protection of water birds and their habitat continues to increase as people develop the New Jersey shore for our own use.

Forsythe is one of more than 555 refuge locations in the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Wildlife Refuge System is a network of lands and waters managed specifically for the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat and represents the most comprehensive wildlife resource management program in the world. Units of the system stretch across the United States from northern Alaska to the Florida Keys, and include small islands in the Caribbean and South Pacific. The character of the refuges is as diverse as the nation itself.

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