



**NJDOT
NEWS**



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Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project wins Federal Environmental Excellence Award

Cedar Bonnet Island Habitat Restoration and Management Plan recognized for innovation and cooperative approach

(Trenton) – The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has selected the New Jersey Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges - Cedar Bonnet Island Habitat Restoration and Management Plan Project as a recipient of the FHWA 2019 Environmental Excellence Awards.

"This award recognizes the innovative and collaborative nature of NJDOT projects that enhance the quality of life in our state in ways that are not necessarily intuitive," NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti said. "Through a partnership between NJDOT, the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), we were all able to develop a project to meet the required environmental mitigation while accomplishing the goals of all of the stakeholder agencies, and provide new public space for people to enjoy."

Since 1995, these FHWA awards have recognized leaders across the country who make outstanding contributions to environmental stewardship and partnerships above and beyond traditional transportation project outcomes. These awards aim to recognize and exemplify such leaders and project contributions as a means of knowledge sharing and information exchange among peers.

"This award recognizes NJDOT and partners noteworthy and creative approach to cooperative agreements that streamlined the environmental review processes while also broadening the discussion on in-kind mitigation and refuges," FHWA Executive Director Thomas D. Everett said in a release. "The innovative approaches satisfied the compensatory mitigation requirements accelerated project processes by avoiding significant NJDOT property acquisitions. It also helped restore the degraded Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge ecosystem on Cedar Bonnet Island and provided sensitivity to the project settings."

Project Information

As part of the environmental mitigation for NJDOT's \$312 million federally-funded Route 72 Manahawkin Bay Bridges project, NJDOT and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) created an environmental trail providing the first public access to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge on Cedar Bonnet Island, and used an innovative approach to help improve Barnegat Bay water quality while meeting DEP Stormwater Management (SWM) Rules.

The \$9.6 million federal and state-funded environmental mitigation work on Cedar Bonnet Island was designed by WSP USA and constructed by contractor, C. Abbonizio Contractors, Inc. Work began in February 2015, and in June 2018 the environmental trail opened to the public. It includes a one-mile walking path with pedestrian benches, two gazebo overlooks with picnic tables and interpretive signs providing information about the ecosystem along the path. The project included wetlands creation, mitigation for existing freshwater wetlands and modification of two existing storm water basins within the Barnegat Bay watershed.

With the DEP's approval, 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 helped NJDOT exceed the water treatment requirements of the SWM Rules, reduce construction and maintenance costs, and accelerate the construction schedule.

During the project, endangered peregrine falcons were found nesting under the bridge. NJDOT worked with USFWS, NJ Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and DEP's Endangered and Nongame Species Program to design a permanent peregrine falcon eyrie (nest) on a wooden tower next to the new Causeway to provide habitat for the rare birds.

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