

When a Corporate Campus is Also Home to Rare Wildlife

BY TROY ETEL



Verizon New Jersey partnered with the Audubon Society to help it build a habitat for the Wood Turtle on its Basking Ridge campus near the Passaic River. PSE&G cleared brush under power line corridors so it would be a more ideal habitat for four species of rare grassland birds.



Photo, left to right: DEP Commissioner Mark Mauriello; Thomas Gilmore, NJ Audubon Society; Chamber Chairman Dennis Bone of Verizon New Jersey; and Ralph LaRossa of PSE&G.

Some of New Jersey's most ecologically fragile land can actually be found on the corporate campuses of the state's largest companies. That's why the New Jersey Audubon Society and some Garden State corporations have teamed up to form an initiative designed preserve the land and save threatened wildlife and plants.

Through the program, called the Corporate Stewardship Council, New Jersey companies that own or manage land that overlaps with sensitive property adopt a plan – with the help of the Audubon Society – to restore and improve that habitat.

“For private companies, this is an opportunity to demonstrate a new kind of environmental awareness,” said Tom Gilmore, president of the New Jersey Audubon Society. “Corporations could play a lead role in the recovery of declining populations of threatened plants and animals and can be proud of that connection.”

The program was launched in May with a breakfast event at PSE&G headquarters in Newark, with

60 people representing 20 companies. The event was presided over by Ralph LaRossa, president of PSE&G, and Dennis Bone, president of Verizon New Jersey. LaRossa and Bone also serve as co-chairmen of the Stewardship Council.

“As a company with a strong environmental commitment, we believe it is important to support sustainability initiatives like the Corporate Stewardship Council,” said Bone, who also is chairman of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

LaRossa added, “Our partnership with New Jersey Audubon Society as a member of the Corporate Stewardship Council has produced new and better ideas for how to preserve important habitat in our transmission rights of way and still achieve business goals.”

Other members of the initiative that attended the kick-off event include Mannington Mills, JCP&L, Merck, Johnson & Johnson, DuPont, Eastern Propane, Land Dimensions Engineering, Union Green, New Jersey Resources, Pfizer, Covanta Energy and United Water.

Mark N. Mauriello, acting commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, also attended. “I applaud all of you who have made a commitment to this important initiative that affords the private sector an opportunity to take a leadership role in conservation – especially in these challenging economic times,” Mauriello said. “I encourage everyone to participate.” ❖

Troy Eitel is director of conservation and stewardship at the New Jersey Audubon Society. For more information about the Corporate Stewardship Council, contact Eitel at (908) 420-7363, or troy.ettel@njaudubon.org.