Watershed News

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For Immediate Release
Greater Culver Lake Conservation Foundation, November 19, 2026.

65 acres preserved as open space in Sussex County

The property, named Lone Wolf Preserve, borders Stokes State Forest and includes important habitat for rare species.

Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation

FRANKFORD TWP., NJ — The Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation (GCLWCF) announced today that it has permanently protected 65 acres of forested land in Frankford Township, Sussex County. With this property, GCLWCF has established Lone Wolf Preserve, which is open to the public for hiking, birdwatching, and other permitted low-impact activities. The Preserve is located at 21 Maple Lane, Branchville, NJ 07826.



GCLWCF will own the property, and Lone Wolf Preserve will be managed by GCLWCF in partnership with the Lake Owassa-Paulins Kill Headwaters Conservation Foundation. The Preserve contains an outlet stream from Lake Owassa, which becomes a tributary to Culver Lake.

GCLWCF's purchase of the property was made possible through the assistance of Conservation Advising Services, which led efforts to secure grant funding for the project and worked with the landowner, GCLWCF, and their attorneys to bring the project to fruition.

Photo Left: Lone Wolf Preserve
Photo Below: Culver Lake

Funding for the project was provided by donations from local residents and grants to GCLWCF from the New Jersey Green Acres program, The Nature Conservancy, and New Jersey Conservation Foundation through the Open Space Institute's (OSI) Delaware River Watershed Protection Fund.



"Protecting this 65-acre property from development of its forested upland areas is a monumental victory for our local environment," said Rick Ferruggia, president of GCLWCF. **"Lake Owassa and Culver Lake are both substantial bodies of water foundational to Frankford Township's natural heritage, economy and clean water supply."**

"We're grateful to have been able to contribute grant funding to preserve this beautiful and ecologically important property through our longtime partnership with the Open Space Institute," said Alison Mitchell, executive director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation. **"This is the third land preservation project we've funded through this partnership in the Greater Culver Lake Watershed over the last three years. Previous funding permanently protected 268 acres nearby, establishing Culver Brook Preserve and Culver Brook Preserve East."**

Launched in 2014 with funding from the William Penn Foundation's Delaware River Watershed Initiative, OSI's Delaware River Watershed Protection Fund (DRWPF) has protected more than 35,000 acres of forested land to safeguard water quality in the Delaware River Watershed. Draining 13 million acres across four states, the Delaware River is the source of drinking water for 15 million people, a web of diverse plant and animal life, a recreational destination, and the foundation of the region's economy.

"OSI was happy to support the continued protection of the Culver Lake Watershed," said Bill Rawlyk, OSI's senior program manager Mid-Atlantic. **"This effort accomplishes numerous goals at once: it gives people a great new place to explore nature, it preserves important green space for people and wildlife, and it protects forested wetlands and feeder streams around Lake Owassa that will help maintain and improve water quality in Culver Lake, Dry Brook, and the Paulins Kill River downstream. We congratulate New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation, who helped make the Lone Wolf Preserve a reality."**

"We congratulate Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation on preserving this beautiful forest and freshwater wetlands property," said Martha Sullivan Sapp, director of Green Acres. **"This acquisition helps protect an important watershed area and critical wildlife habitat, while providing a beautiful haven for people to explore and enjoy."**

The preserved land, which borders Stokes State Forest, has been designated as a "core area" by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's ***Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ) project.*** CHANJ represents a strategic plan for wildlife conservation by identifying key areas and actions needed to achieve habitat connectivity throughout New Jersey. Rare species that could be found on the property include the bald eagle, red-shouldered hawk, and bobcat.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has prioritized land conservation within the Appalachian Mountains range, a critical wildlife migration corridor in eastern North America and one of the most species-rich and resilient landscapes on the planet. In 2023, GCLWCF received funding from TNC's Resilient and Connected Appalachians Grant Program to protect this portion of Lone Wolf Preserve, which lies within the Appalachian footprint in New Jersey.

"The Nature Conservancy's grant program exists to accelerate conservation within the Appalachians, including here in our own backyard," said Tricia Aspinwall, TNC's New Jersey land conservation manager. **"New Jersey's slice of this ancient mountain chain is of outsized importance as a pinch point for species migration, so we are thrilled to see this project solidify another strong anchor of habitat connectivity."** TNC is working regionally in northwestern New Jersey to create Bobcat Alley, an approximately 100,000-acre greenway for wildlife to live in and pass through.

About the Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation

The mission of the Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation (GCLWCF) is to protect and preserve the greater watershed environment of the Northern Paulinskill River including the subwatersheds of Lake Owassa and Culver Lake.

GCLWCF was formed in 2017 to help protect the water of Culver Lake as well as that of other lakes, streams and rivers found in its watershed. The Foundation is a community-based volunteer tax exempt public charity under IRS 501(c)(3).



North Jersey Rivers Conference

The October 2026 Conference, held at the Lackland Center at Centenary University, marks a "Return to the Source" by exploring the forests and headwaters of New Jersey's water supplies, the latest research and innovation, and how you can get involved. Our own Emily Allen (Trustee for the Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation) presented on the topic: **Nonprofit Stewardship of Headwaters and Restored Wetlands.** She also discussed the Foundation's work to permanently preserve and restore the former Culver Lake Golf Course into a publicly accessible nature preserve.

Culver Brook Preserve has been listed as a NJ Birding Hotspot by eBird!

To find our listing type in:
https://ebird.org › hotspots

Click on header "Exlore Hotspots - eBird"

This will take you to a hotspot map page.

Type in Culver Brook Preserve, Sussex, US-NJ to read various posts and citings from the Preserve

eBird

PROJECT UPDATES











Photos from the top:
- *New parking lot off Ridge Road.*
- *Sussex Tech HS students planting trees.*
- *Floating treatment wetland islands.*
- *Trail signage.*
- *Treatment island up close.*

Culver Brook Preserve

By Nathaniel Sajdak, Director, Sussex County MUA - Wallkill River Watershed Management Team

The SCMUA - WRMWG Team is excited to have recently kicked off the second fall restoration season at the Culver Brook Preserve. After an extremely successful spring project season that saw a total of 193 students from Frankford School and Sussex County Technical School, eight volunteers from a group known as HomeGround-Realty Executives, and five volunteers from the Foundation and local Culver Lake community participate in the restoration efforts, 1,700 trees have now been planted and protected throughout the property. The Foundation funded the installation of a new visitor parking lot providing access to the preserve on Ridge Road.

In August, four floating treatment wetland islands were installed into the pond on the property. These floating treatment islands use native plants and microorganisms to process non-point source pollutants that wash into surface waters during rain events. These events can deteriorate water quality and introduce nutrients that can cause harmful algal blooms to develop. Pollutant removal occurs in two ways:

1. Microbes living in the water form colonies on the floating islands and can directly ingest harmful algal bloom causing cyanobacteria, and
2. Plant roots grow through the islands and take up nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen from the water reducing the likelihood of HAB development. The floating treatment islands also serve as a unique habitat enhancement feature for wildlife, pollinators, fish, and aquatic insects. Many thanks are due to the watchful eye of Anthony Cerbo, of Cerbo's Nursery. He aided in the planting of the islands back in March, cared for them as they grew for four months at the Hampton Nursery locations, and then donated time and resources to help deliver and launch them.

For the remainder of the current fall season, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service will be assisting with the mowing of some of the old fairways to create new areas for additional trees to to be planted as part of field days to be coordinated by the SCMUA-WRWMG. Additionally, visitors to the Preserve should keep on the look-out for three new interpretive signs that will be installed to provide educational information specifically highlighting the reforestation efforts, the floating treatment islands, and wildlife on the preserve.

Working Together for the Watershed

Residential Rain Garden Installed at Culver Lake

By Terry McQuillin



Last fall Culver Lake property owners were offered a free Rain Garden training program via a grant received by the Wallkill River Management Group and Rutgers Water Resources Program. The process started with a one-hour training session explaining how the gardens are used to prevent contaminated runoff from flowing into Paulins Kill Watershed lakes. The second session was a one-on-one custom design discussion with Rutgers Engineers and Landscape Architects.

Homeowner Kevin Slavin said that this was a very smooth process. The Rutgers staff asked about the Slavins vision for the garden and any issues that might exist on the property. Discussions included color schemes, plant shapes and sizes, dear proofing, etc. Wendy Slavin worked directly with the Rutgers staff to pick out all the plants for the project.

One property issue was a retention basin that overflowed during storm events. The new design included both a flower garden and a pond that replaced the retention basin. Neighbor Paul Cardinal provided the construction team and Anthony Cerbo helped recommend plant options.

Stay tuned for upcoming trainings offered by the Greater Culver Lake Conservation Foundation through the SCMUA-Wallkill River Watershed Management Group. Learn how you can reduce polluted runoff from your yard to the lake.

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!... besides planting trees we especially need folks willing to work on fundraising goals as well as keeping the website fresh and updated. Contact any Board member to volunteer, whether you have a little bit or a lot of time to share.

How you can help lakes and streams within the watershed area?

- Plant a Rain Garden or Riparian Buffer.
- Reduce Impermeable Surfaces in your yard.
- Maintain your Septic Tank.
- Install a Phosphorus Eliminator System (PES) in your home.

GCLWCF can further explain and assist you with the above recommendations.

Help us preserve and protect the precious waterways and lakes in the Upper Northern Paulins Kill River Watershed. GCLWCF is a 501(c)(3) environmental charity.

Send a Generous Gift to the Foundation NOW.
Visit the website to see how to use a simple tax-efficient strategy, called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), to donate.

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Greater Culver Lake Watershed Conservation Foundation

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DONATE NOW Visit the Website

Protecting the Lakes and Tributaries of the Upper Northern Paulins Kill Watershed

BOARD MEMBERS: Rick Ferruggia, *President,* Claire Allen, Emily Allen, John Fabian, Jay Higgins, Henry McNamara, Chris Venezia, and Dorothea Wefing

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