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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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**DEP'S GREEN ACRES PROGRAM PURCHASES 190-ACRE ADDITION
TO ALLAIRE STATE PARK IN MONMOUTH COUNTY**

TRENTON – The Department of Environmental Protection’s Green Acres Program and the nonprofit Monmouth Conservation Foundation have completed the \$3.8 million purchase of 190 acres of forests and forested wetlands that will be added to Allaire State Park in Monmouth County.

“Acquiring this land and adding it to Allaire State Park has long been a priority for the New Jersey State Park Service,” said Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe. “We are excited to be able to expand the park by purchasing land that offers opportunities for fishing, hiking, biking, bird watching and other outdoor activities. In addition, this purchase protects coastal habitats in the headwaters of the Manasquan River.”

Protecting land and natural habitats is a key priority of the DEP. The closing took place Aug. 29, with the Estate of Fred McDowell Jr. The Green Acres Program provided \$3,618,000 for the purchase, using a matching grant from the National Park Service. In addition, the Monmouth Conservation Foundation provided \$201,000 toward the purchase, of which \$100,500 was provided by the Green Acres Program as a nonprofit grant to the foundation.

“This didn’t happen by chance,” said Monmouth Conservation Foundation Executive Director William Kastning, “Both the Foundation and the state have had a long-held interest in seeing this land preserved. When the property heirs became interested in selling, we were proud to present the opportunity to the state and initiate conversation. It’s very exciting to see this land protected forever as an addition to Allaire State Park.”



At more than 3,200 acres, Allaire State Park is best known for its historic 19th-century iron-making town, Allaire Village, and its antique steam trains on the Pine Creek Railroad. The Manasquan River, which winds through the park, attracts canoeists and anglers. Its forests are popular with hikers, mountain-bikers, bird watchers and nature lovers.

The state park provides habitat for more than 200 species of wildflowers, trees and plants, much of it evocative of a Pine Barrens ecosystem, as well as habitat for birds and other wildlife. An existing network of trails provides access to much of the newly acquired property.

“The State Park Service is always looking for opportunities to expand state parks and forests throughout the state,” said Division of Parks and Forestry Director Olivia Glenn. “These acquisitions demonstrate our

commitment to providing opportunities for the public to enjoy the outdoors while protecting important ecosystems, wildlife habitat and water quality. We are extremely grateful to the estate of Fred McDowell Jr. for working with us to expand Allaire State Park, a place that is special to many of us.”

“Fred and Jeanne McDowell were animal lovers,” said estate executor Frank Fine. “Having the property become part of Allaire State Park will preserve the habitat for deer, turkeys, and other animals that have always lived on the property. I felt that they would have approved.”

The visitor center and museum, housed in a restored workers’ row house, feature exhibits on the 19th century bog iron industry, the Howell Works (the original name for Allaire Village), and its owner, James P. Allaire. Located along the Atlantic Flyway, the park provides a feeding and resting place for migrating birds.

A network of trails winds through the park. Several moderate hiking trails are in the main day-use area of the park, accessible from the main parking area. The “South Side” area of the park is marked by some 800 acres of varying terrain, miles of unmarked trails, and four marked multi-use trails. The South Side trails are accessible from a trailhead at a large gravel parking lot located on Hospital Road.

Trails traverse areas of bogs with sphagnum moss, skunk cabbage and cinnamon fern, as well as oak and pine forests and old farmland, as well as sandy hills that support forests of pitch pine, scrub oaks, blueberries and mountain laurel. Visitors are likely to capture glimpses of red-winged blackbirds, great blue herons, ducks, pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers, and the northern flicker, among many other species of birds.

Among the rarer animals found on the property are the state-endangered bog turtle and timber rattlesnake and the state-threatened barred owl and black-crowned night-heron.

In the early 19th century, the Howell Works was a thriving industrial community, producing pig and cast iron from the bog iron found in wetlands and along waterways. Buildings that survive today include a general store, blacksmith shop, carpenter’s shop, manager’s house, foreman’s house and church.

Half of the Green Acres Program’s contribution to the purchase came from the National Park Service’s Land and Water Conservation Fund, which assists in land acquisitions that secure public access, improve recreational opportunities and preserves ecosystems for the benefit of local communities.

Half of this amount was from a grant from the National Park Service through the Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance Program, which funds projects that provide outdoor recreation opportunities to the public.

The DEP’s Green Acres Program works with local governments, nonprofits and other state agencies, including the State Park Service and New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, to preserve land and New Jersey’s natural heritage and to develop local parks and recreational facilities.

