

Group Ballots

Each of the Chapter's eleven Groups is required to hold an election, at the beginning of each year, for half the members of its Group Executive Committee (ExCom). Elected members serve for two years, and select the Group officers: Chair, Vice-chair, etc. The ballot is required to include at least two more names than the number of vacancies. Please return **ONLY** the ballot(s) for the Groups in which you participate. The first column of boxes is for "individual" members. Family (joint) members are entitled to express two opinions by using both columns. The best ways to learn about candidates are probably to attend Group meetings and to ask them questions by phone or e-mail.

NORTHWEST JERSEY GROUP (Warren & Sussex Counties):

Please vote for up to three candidates.

- Debbie Hambright
 Donna Rubin
 Dean Shememski
 Write in:
 Write in:

Please write in your membership number (from address label on p. 1)

Please return your ballot by Feb. 28 to the Chapter Secretary:

Northwest Group Ballot
c/o Bonnie Tillery
389 Sawmill Rd.
Hamilton, NJ 08620

HUNTERDON GROUP (Hunterdon County):

Please vote for up to five candidates:

- Ruth Prince
 Lois Zarish
 Jeannie Geremia
 Rosemary Yaecker
 Kate Spann
 Rob Parente

Please write in your membership number (from address label on p. 1)

Please return your ballot by Feb. 28 to the Chapter Secretary:

Hunterdon Group Ballot
c/o Bonnie Tillery
389 Sawmill Rd.
Hamilton, NJ 08620

SOUTH JERSEY GROUP:

Please vote for up to two candidates:

- Julie Akers
 Tom Boghosian
 Jim Tartola
 Gary Roman

Please write in your membership number (from address label on p. 1)

Please return your ballots by Feb. 28 to the Chapter Secretary:

South Jersey Group Ballot
c/o Bonnie Tillery
389 Sawmill Rd.
Hamilton, NJ 08620

ATVs a Growing Problem

by Fred Akers, Conservation Chair of the South Jersey Group.

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are small, two and four-wheeled motorized vehicles that can be driven "off-road" by unlicensed children, that cost in the range of \$2000 to \$5000, and that are being promoted for recreational use on public lands by the manufacturers, dealers, indulgent parents, and by law enforcement organizations such as Police Athletic Leagues (PALs).

For example, there is a current battle taking place over their use in Betsy Skulls Trails Park, a NJDEP Trails Grant-funded land acquisition in Egg Harbor Township (EHT), Atlantic County.

The special interests know that the majority of the public does not want the noise, air pollution, fire risk, and guaranteed environmental destruction that always results from motorized thrill seekers tearing up the land for their own personal enjoyment. ATV use is not "family oriented", and it is not an organized sport like soccer. It is all about making profits on expensive toys, and offering "incentives" to those who support the industry and pressure the public for free new places to tear up.

The State Division of Parks and Forestry has developed a very restrictive policy that prohibits the leasing of state lands for ATV use, and channels ATV users away from sensitive natural areas and state lands. I believe that the granting of state money for constructing ATV trails on non-state-owned lands without requiring the same restrictive use policies is a way for the State to cater to the ATV interests and channel this destructive use away from state owned land onto locally owned lands.

ATV use is also about extortion, as once the big money is invested in the machines, many users will trespass on public and private property to "get their money's worth," no matter what. Meanwhile, law enforcement officers either look helplessly the other way, or jump on the industry band wagon and support the false notion that the real problem is not enough places to ride. This then puts public pressure on local politicians to solve the problem and subsidizes the industry by designating ATV use areas, with little or no regard for impacts or controls.

Some of us have already testified to the EHT committee concerning the negative impacts and hidden costs of ATV recreation, but evidently the special interests have the ear of the politicians, who are basically misleading the public, and catering to PAL and the ATV industry. They don't understand all the issues, and are being misled.

One argument against ATVs is that, like Howitzers, and atomic weapons, they are too destructive to be allowed in civilized society. We should just say "no".

In my efforts to fight ATV use in Egg Harbor Twp, I would appreciate support from anyone who is working against ATVs elsewhere in New Jersey. Please send me information on hearings, rulings, and popular opposition in other communities.

Fred Akers can be reached at akers@gowebway.com.

Issue Coordinator's Report (North!): HACKENSACK MEADOWLANDS UPDATE: Good News!

by Hugh M. Carola and Capt. Bill Sheehan, Meadowlands Issues Coordinators

On October 31, 2001 an historic meeting took place at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morristown. Hosted by the New Jersey Field Office of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the "Stakeholders Work Session for the Conservation of the Hackensack Meadowlands" brought together representatives of every group that is concerned with the future of the Meadowlands. In a scenario that was literally unthinkable just six months ago, representatives of the federal and state governments, the environmental community and the region's premier charitable foundations sat down together to chart the preservation of the 8,500-acre ecosystem. Before reporting on the outcome of the meeting, please allow us to provide a little background information:

You may recall our article in the April-June issue of *The Jersey Sierran* where we described the role of the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission (HMDC) in facilitating wetlands destruction since the early 1970s. That's the bad news. The good news is that the thirty-year development nightmare is over. In September, Acting Governor DiFrancesco signed a bill changing the name of the HMDC to the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC). The change, approved by unanimous votes in both the State Senate and Assembly, has provided the impetus for the Commission to revisit its mission. As you read this, they are rewriting their Master Plan to reflect conservation, not development. Times have changed.

The Morristown meeting was the result of a growing dialogue presided over by the USFWS since the late 1990s, and a follow-up to a high-level discussion called last Spring by Congressman Steve Rothman (D-9th). The Congressman supports the preservation of all the remaining open space of the Meadowlands, all of which lies within his district. Rep. Rothman had planned to attend, but due to the situation in Afghanistan was forced to remain in Washington. In his videotaped keynote address, he referred to "drawing a thick black line" of preservation around the Meadowlands.

"Trust is earned and I am here to say that we want to earn the trust of everyone in this room," said NJMC Deputy Executive Director Bob Ceberio to the nearly one hundred participants at the meeting. (This from a state entity that we had been fighting for years, and that owns about half the Meadowlands!) Representing the environmental community, in addition to us and Chapter Director Jeff Tittel, were Baykeeper Andrew Willner, Carolyn Summers and Jennifer Danis from the Natural Resources Defense Council, NJ Audubon Society's Vice President Rich Kane, environmental attorneys Ed Lloyd of Columbia University and Susan Kraham of the Rutgers Environmental Law Clinic, and Dennis Miranda from the NJ Conservation Foundation among others. It became apparent as the day progressed that a partnership was being formed — a partnership that could both acquire the other half of the Meadowlands and manage all of it as a single ecosystem.

Lest you think the meeting was just a love-fest, reality checks were provided by ample representation from government agencies and regulatory authorities including the US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, and the NJ Dept. of Transportation. In the past, all of these agencies have supported development in the Meadowlands, but they now appear willing to assume new

roles. One example was the announcement that Rep. Rothman had secured a one-million-dollar Congressional appropriation for the Corps to study potential restoration sites in the Meadowlands. The USFWS will assist in the study, set to commence in early 2002.

Also at the meeting was Bob McDowell, Director of the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife. He referred to the Meadowlands as a "globally important ecosystem" and said, "It is imperative that we save it." Now that the Meadowlands Commission is changing its focus, Fish and Wildlife has the opportunity to assume a greater role, especially since it already administers the 900-acre Sawmill Creek Wildlife Management Area on the Lyndhurst/Kearny border. Representatives from the Garden State Preservation Trust and NJ Green Acres Program also offered their expertise and knowledge of funding mechanisms.

The biggest announcement of the day came from Mr. Ceberio who declared, "SAMP is dead!" — referring to the controversial Special Area Management Plan which, if enacted, would have caused the destruction of over 500 additional acres of wetlands. There remains that nasty problem that has yet to go away: the Mills Corporation and its proposed megamall. Despite the admission that the Continental Arena site would be acceptable to it, Mills has not withdrawn its application to the Army Corps for a wetlands fill permit. However, we fully expect that the Corps will deny Mills' application or else it will be rendered moot when and if a deal is struck to build a new sports arena in Newark.

Meadowlands restoration will not take place overnight. The government too often moves at a glacial pace (which is sometimes to our benefit) and there are many issues to contend with before we can all attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The following is what we believe the final product will look like: A "Meadowlands Wildlife Refuge" that will comprise 8,500 acres of open water, mudflats, vegetated wetlands and upland buffers. Some of those acres may be owned by the USFWS or a non-profit organization like NJ Audubon or Hackensack Riverkeeper, but the vast majority will be owned by the State of New Jersey. Refuge management will be a shared responsibility between Fish and Wildlife personnel, the Meadowlands Conservation Trust and a cadre of volunteers brought together by Hackensack Riverkeeper and NY/NJ Baykeeper (and the Sierra Club?). The Refuge will be governed essentially by the same rules used by the USFWS in the National Wildlife Refuge System: balancing wildlife habitat requirements and public access.

One last thing. Know that Hugh, Bill and Jeff attended the October meeting on your behalf and that we spoke on your behalf. Only because of constant support from you, our Sierra Club colleagues, will the Meadowlands Refuge will become a reality.

Hugh Carola can be reached at hcarola@aol.com. Bill Sheehan can be reached at captain@keeper.org.

At press time, we learned that the Mills Corporation is attempting to move forward with plans to destroy up to 206 acres of wetlands for a 2.1 million-square foot mega-mall. BE READY: for public hearings at the offices of the NJ Meadowlands Commission, 1 DeKorte Plaza, Lyndhurst, on January 15 and 30. For further information, please call Hackensack Riverkeeper at 201-692-8440.]

LOSING A BATTLE IN THE WAR ON SPRAWL

by Ed Pfeiffer, Central Jersey Group

For me, it's very hard to admit that we've lost the fight to stop a major dumb growth development project like the Hamilton Marketplace. Judge Feinburg's decision earlier this year, and the denial of our appeal, effectively defeated our attempt to force Hamilton Township (Mercer County) and JDN Realty to do the right thing on wetlands, arsenic, and historic preservation. But let this letter also serve notice that we will continue the struggle elsewhere in Mercer County and

New Jersey. And from the mistakes we made over Hamilton Marketplace we may have learned how to fight the better fight. In brief, future battles should draw on more public support (especially to pressure legislators), more publicity to refute biased newspaper coverage, and more funding for lawsuits. We also learned that fighting this developer by trying to get the state and federal agencies to enforce laws on the environment and historic preservation was only somewhat effective.