

# Creative Partnerships Facilitate Success



Photography USFWS/Gene Nieminen

A pair of ruddy ducks in the Meadowlands, June 2002

*Trevor H. Needham, Assistant Director, Northeast Region and Conservation Education, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation*

Despite the urban sprawl pushing at its boundaries, the Hackensack Meadowlands harbors and supports a remarkable array of wildlife habitats and species. Outdoor enthusiasts traveling its waterways marvel at the diversity and numbers of waterfowl and other wildlife. Equally remarkable, however, is the increasing and significant commitment among a diverse cadre of partners (public agencies, private entities, community-based conservation groups, political representatives, citizens, etc.) to make successful natural resource conservation and protection a reality in the Meadowlands. After decades of disagreement, this new commitment among the partners to work together to achieve a shared vision for the protection and restoration of the Meadowlands offers tremendous opportunities to see a real change in the near future. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation) supports this change.

Established by Congress in 1984, the Foundation is a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to advancing the conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and the habitats on which they depend. Thus, our goals are to promote healthy populations of fish, wildlife, and plants. We meet these goals by creating partnerships between the public and private sectors and by supporting conservation activities that pinpoint the root causes of environmental problems. We award challenge grants under a variety of programs, administer and manage special funds that help finance specific conservation objectives, and build support and leverage resources for strategic conservation efforts.

Working with our federal partners—in particular the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—the Foundation is committed to exploring opportunities to benefit restoration efforts within the Meadowlands. Beyond leveraging a variety of resources and providing challenge grants, the Foundation also makes a range of other services available to the conservation community. For example, the Foundation has worked with federal and State agencies and other partners to establish dedicated funds (e.g., legal settlement, restitution, mitigation) for on-the-ground conservation of fish and wildlife resources

and their habitats. To date, the Foundation manages over \$150 million under more than 140 of these dedicated funds.

Since its inception, the Foundation has worked with over 2,100 partners and awarded more than 5,600 grants committing \$230 million in federal funds that was matched with over \$475 million in non-federal funds. As part of our grant making in the lower Hudson River Ecosystem, the Foundation has provided grant support to partnership efforts to restore the Passaic River, a drainage adjacent to the Hackensack. A grant to the Passaic River Coalition and their partners is helping to restore a damaged urban riparian corridor along the Passaic River to its natural functions, using native vegetation. In addition the Foundation provided grant support to a community-based partnership effort with the International Youth Organization to restore the Hendricks Pond area of the Second River, a tributary to the Passaic, as well as to involve the community in ongoing stewardship activities on the river.

These efforts highlight the Foundation's interest in supporting community-based, on-the-ground conservation efforts. Through such creative partnerships, the Meadowlands may have a very bright future.



A black-crowned night heron in Sawmill Creek, June 2002

