

# Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark

## Interpretive Plan



Prepared for the Mercer County Planning Division by

JANE CLARK CHERMAYEFF & ASSOCIATES LLC

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# Preface

In 2007 several projects associated with Mercer County's Roebling Park and the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh came together in support of an Interpretive Plan for the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark. With the update of the 1999 Marsh Management Plan and the development of the 2007 Master Plan for the Mercer County Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center at Roebling Park, it was the perfect time to develop a Plan that would bring the Landmark's natural and cultural resources together into an organized and comprehensive framework for visitor interpretation.

The "Marsh" is a natural oasis in an urban environment and provides extraordinary visitor experience and educational opportunities beyond the classroom. Despite the excellent nature programs that exist today, a common vision for education and the visitor experience is needed.

When the County applied for a New Jersey Historic Trust Sites Management Grant, the goal of the Interpretive Plan was to spell-out a coherent framework to ensure that education and interpretive programs continue to thrive. The Plan would identify common goals for future programming within the Landmark and in context with the greater Marsh.

As the work began, and the complexities of the Landmark and the "layers of history" were revealed, the more it became apparent that the cultural landscape was very much defined by the natural environment. Everyone involved in this exciting planning process began to see the meaning of the cultural landscape and the interdependency that exists between humans and nature. The Landmark and Marsh are the perfect places to explore this relationship. Now, the Landmark takes on a richer meaning and the opportunities for interpretation are tremendous. There is a greater role now for local citizens, scientists, and educators to work together for the Landmark's long-term stewardship.

**Lisa Fritzinger, Supervising Planner, PP, AICP, Mercer County**  
**Marisa Wieczorek, Senior Planner, PP, AICP, Mercer County**

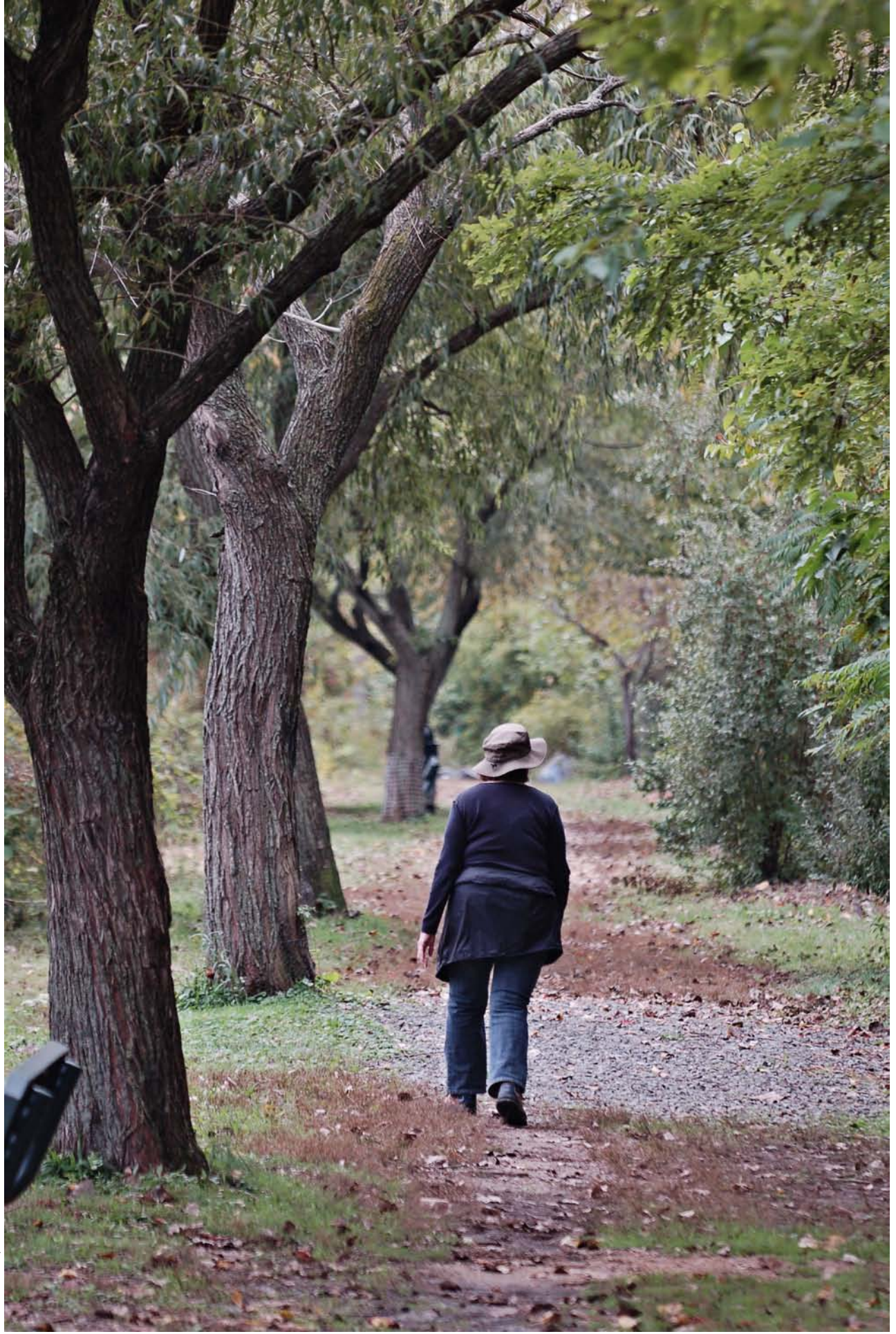




# Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
• Role of interpretation	
• The site	
• Plan goals	
• The team	
• Timeline of planning	
<b>APPROACH AND RESEARCH</b>	<b>16</b>
• Approach	
• Scholarship	
• Audiences and tourism	
• Stakeholders	
<b>ANALYSIS</b>	<b>27</b>
• Summary of challenges	
• Summary of access points	
• Site highlights	
<b>VISITOR EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>36</b>
• Developing the story	
• Site identity	
• Interpretive themes	
• Guiding outcomes	
• Interpretive methodologies	
• Recommendations and priorities	
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
• Hunter Research, Cultural Resource Technical Document	

Carole Hanes, "Marsh Walk"





“It is a long look backward from the electric railway to the Indian’s trail, yet the life of this old oak more than encompasses it all.”

-C.C. Abbott, *Rambles of an Idler*



# Acknowledgements

This Plan was created through the diligent work of the following individuals:

## **Mercer County**

**Kevin Bannon, Executive Director, Park Commission**  
**Donna Lewis, Planning Director, PP, AICP, Planning Division**  
**Lisa Fritzinger, Supervising Planner, PP, AICP, Planning Division**  
**Marisa Wieczorek, Senior Planner, PP, AICP, Planning Division**

## **Hunter Research Team**

**Richard Hunter, President, Principal Archaeologist, Hunter Research**  
**Damon Tvaryanas, Architectural Historian, Hunter Research**  
**Cheryl Hendry, Historian, Hunter Research**  
**Gail Hunton, Historic Preservation Consultant**  
**David Byers, Landscape Architect, ASLA**  
**Richard Michael Stewart, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Temple University**

## **Jane Clark Chermayeff & Associates LLC**

**Jane Clark Chermayeff, Principal, Interpretive Planner**  
**Julia Rousakis, Associate, Interpretive Planner**  
**Jill Gilmartin, Associate, Interpretive Planner**  
**Christina Tam, Research Assistant**

We also acknowledge the photographic contributions from members of the Friends for the Marsh organization.

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Prepared by Jane Clark Chermayeff & Associates LLC

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

In March of 2008 the Planning Division of Mercer County, New Jersey, undertook an interpretive planning process to develop, for the first time, formal guidelines and strategies to interpret the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark (AFNHL or “Landmark”), located in Hamilton and Bordentown, New Jersey. Supported by a Garden State Historic Preservation Trust grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust, the Planning Division engaged the firms of Jane Clark Chermayeff & Associates (JCC&A) and Hunter Research to collect relevant research and develop an Interpretive Plan for the Landmark.

The AFNHL is comprised of a collection of sites that together are classified as a district, which received the national designation of a Landmark in 1976, in recognition of its rich archaeological heritage. The Landmark encompasses significant prehistoric excavation sites, notable historic homes, and the remains of transportation achievements—the Delaware and Raritan Canal and lines of the Camden and Amboy Railroad. With its diversity and wealth of archaeological resources, the Landmark is considered one of the most important archaeological sites on the East Coast of the United States, yet even for area residents it remains a little known and underappreciated treasure.

Within the Landmark, as designated, also sits a portion of the 1250-acre Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh (Marsh), the northernmost tidal wetland on the Delaware River. An ecological wonder and valuable recreational resource for the urban area it neighbors, the Marsh is remarkable for its abundance of biodiversity. The Marsh includes the 406-acre John A. Roebling Park, as well as other publicly owned lands along Crosswicks Creek, offering a variety of recreation.

Mercer County recognized the need for an Interpretive Plan to establish site significance and bring together the existing and varied Marsh educational and recreational programs with new opportunities to present the Landmark’s cultural and archaeological resources. What has not been done, until now, is to undertake an inclusive examination of how the Landmark and its surroundings can be presented to the public in a comprehensive way. To accomplish this task, the County invited JCC&A—an interpretive planning firm based in New York City—to develop the interpretive plan, and Hunter Research—a Trenton-based archaeological and historical research firm—to create a companion technical report comprising the site significance and relevant research on the AFNHL. This report is included in the Appendices to the Plan.

To engage visitors with this place and its diverse cultural and ecological stories, JCC&A undertook a robust interpretive planning process, involving stakeholders and partners throughout. Stakeholder feedback about the Landmark and preliminary interpretive concepts helped to identify key issues and opportunities for the site. Some of the salient issues that emerged included:

**Increased awareness:** There was consensus that the Landmark is not well known, particularly by locals residents; it should be a priority to increase awareness of the AFNHL. The site is an underutilized but valuable and important resource, and its neighbors could better understand this place. While there is a constituency of supporters for the Marsh, the Landmark is in need of stronger advocacy.

**A new name:** Stakeholders agreed that re-naming the site will help people to better understand the AFNHL. While there was much debate about the choice of names, it is clear that the new name should help bring together two resources—the Marsh and the Landmark.

**Land ownership:** The issue of land ownership came up several times in stakeholder meetings and discussions, as the AFNHL area contains land owned by several entities—including Mercer County, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT), the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Public Service Electric



and Gas company (PSE&G), and private residents. Stakeholders advised that the County should make it a priority to protect and preserve this land in the Landmark and to educate private landowners about owning property in a “national landmark” site.

**Levels of access:** Stakeholders requested that the Interpretive Plan identify and recommend primary access points as well as secondary access points. Primary access points would serve as welcoming orientation areas providing information on site features and recreation. If the site is to also function as an “oasis of a backyard” for urban audiences, it should also have secondary access points that encourage local urban residents to discover nature at the edge of their city.

## Plan goals

The vision of the Plan is for Mercer County to create a cohesive interpretive program for the Landmark and the Marsh as a whole and to enhance the public understanding and enjoyment of this place. To accomplish this effort, the Interpretive Plan builds on related planning efforts conducted for the County—including the 2007 Master Plan for the Mercer County Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center at Roebling Park, and the 1999 Marsh Management Plan—and makes recommendations for how to carry out the objectives articulated in these two plans.

The goals of the resulting AFNHL Interpretive Plan are to incorporate the comprehensive site significance and research (provided by Hunter Research), tourism and audience information, and stakeholder feedback to:

- Identify target audiences and recommend appropriate programs and media for target audiences
- Recommend public and private partners for the long-term management, presentation, and stewardship of the site
- Expand the scope of programs beyond the Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center into the Marsh and to the area within the National Historic Landmark boundary, tying interpretation to existing recreational programs and infrastructure
- Provide initial recommendations that will lead to a future comprehensive heritage tourism plan and recreation initiatives for the site
- Recommend improvements within the Landmark site that will utilize existing and proposed land and water trails, tie existing historic structures and archaeological sites to the Center, and identify additional interpretive resources that are needed to carry out programs such as interpretive media and signs.

By offering new views, programs, experiences, and tools for uncovering the natural and cultural layers that make up the AFNHL, it is anticipated that the recommendations in the Interpretive Plan will inspire people to take an active interest in the site and its ongoing stewardship.

## Themes

A key step in planning the visitor experience at the AFNHL is to identify the main message for the experience—the single most important idea—and the best supporting messages to illustrate that big idea. An interpretive theme is primarily a tool that planners use to delineate what will—and will not—be included in the site interpretation. Themes are not intended as text for visitors. Using the lens of the amateur (Abbott) working in his own backyard (the Marsh and bluff), the following are proposed as the unifying themes for the site:

**Core theme** – The AFNHL and Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh (new working title: the “Abbott Marsh and Landmark”) is one of the most important and unexpected places in the region to see and experience layers of archaeology, history, rich biodiversity, and the dynamic inter-relationship of people and nature.

### Supporting themes

*Abbott and his times:* An amateur naturalist and archaeologist, Charles Conrad Abbott is an important historical figure whose life connects many of the stories in the Marsh from prehistory to today. With findings from his own backyard, Dr.

Abbott put this place on the map 100 years ago and sparked an ongoing debate that helped shape American archaeology.

*Marsh:* The Marsh is more than what you see: its amazingly diverse wetland ecosystems are as productive as a tropical rainforest, home to a rich array of plants and animals.

*Archaeology:* This place is one of the most significant prehistoric sites on the East Coast, containing evidence from ten thousand years of continuous human habitation.

*Humans and nature:* The site's diverse landscape and stories reflect our changing views of nature over time.

We refer the reader to the full plan for an in-depth discussion on these selected themes.

## Major recommendations

The following section highlights some of the major recommendations of this plan. We refer the reader to the full plan for a detailed discussion of priority recommendations for the AFNHL.

### Enhance Awareness and Visibility of the Site

#### *Implement a clear identity*

The AFNHL and Marsh have been described by stakeholders as “a series of interesting places not necessarily connected or understood.” To respond to this challenge, a priority is to create a clear identity that is more bold, specific and place-based, connects directly to the community, and creates personal relevance. For more popular appeal and recognition, a new name is recommended for the AFNHL and Marsh: The “Abbott Marsh and Landmark” (AML).

#### *Communicate site identity*

Important steps to communicate the site identity and enhance brand recognition include:

- Develop a new visual identity for the site that characterizes the new name
- Create a design standards manual including templates for signage, to visually unify the site
- Create the Abbott Marsh and Landmark website, as a central repository for all current information about the site
- Design a new way-finding map for the Marsh and Landmark in a user-friendly form; feature all of the important historic elements and destinations within the AML and all existing trails
- Ensure project partners are consistently using the new name and logo and following the design standards.

#### *Increase awareness of Charles Conrad Abbott's life and work*

The new name includes “Abbott” in its title, after one of the Landmark's most important residents—Charles Conrad Abbott. Abbott was a skilled naturalist, astute archaeologist, and versatile author who sparked an international debate and forty year controversy concerning the antiquity of man in the New World. Abbott is an important historical figure whose life connects many of the stories in the marsh; unfortunately, he is not well known outside archeological academic circles. The renaming of the site presents an opportunity to introduce his legacy and writings to new audiences. In order to increase awareness of Abbott, it is recommended to

- Create a weekly newspaper column in the local press (such as the *Trenton Times*, the *Hamilton Post*, or the *Hamiltonian*) featuring Charles Conrad Abbott's observations about the Marsh, timed so that they are in line with the season
- Include Abbott prominently in the recommended website and on-site signage. Use salient Abbott quotations and consider providing downloadable writings by or about Abbott on the website
- Create a writing and/or photography contest for local high school students to compose a written or photo essay on the legacy of Charles Conrad Abbott and what can be learned from him today.

#### *Rename the Nature/Interpretive Center*

Give the planned Nature/Interpretive Center an inclusive title to be consistent with the new site identity: “The Abbott Marsh and Landmark Center” (AML Center). The title provides for consistency with the name of the site and for visitor comfort in being able to connect and understand the natural and historic resources of the Marsh and Landmark.

- Exhibitions and content should include not only the ecological topics, but also the cultural and historical stories of the AML
- Visually and conceptually connect the Landmark and the Marsh throughout the exhibitions in the new AML Center

## **Access**

### *Create a main campus for the site*

As a first priority, it is important to expand and enhance the primary access point to the Landmark (the Abbott Marsh and Landmark “main campus,” which includes the new Westcott Avenue AML Center, the Watson House and grounds, parking area, and the Watson Woods entrance into Roebling Park). This access point should become a “hub”—with its many layers of historical, natural, and cultural stories—and should present connections to all interpretive themes to begin orienting the visitor to the multidisciplinary stories of the site (refer to the section on interpretive themes).

## **Program and Outreach** (Local and Regional awareness)

### *Nexus for programming*

Make the AML Center the nexus of all programming and pertinent information (including visitor amenities, special programs, tide charts, and events).

- Provide public opening hours
- Offer public toilets
- Install an outdoor public notification board, updated weekly with new information and nature sightings.

### *Programs and events for local awareness*

Work to increase local and regional awareness and understanding of this valuable place and its resources.

- Hold special events targeted at reaching local, neighborhood audiences
- Target school audiences
  - Offer teacher training programs and curriculum materials that frame the stories of the Landmark and Marsh within the K-12 history and science New Jersey state core curriculum
  - Offer essay and photography contests for students that promote a multi-disciplinary understanding of the Landmark and Marsh.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Groundwork for an alliance*

Set the groundwork for establishing an Alliance (governing board or organizational structure) for the Landmark. This could be in the form of a new organization that comprises Hamilton, Bordentown, and Trenton townships and citizen groups, as well as scholars and key partners. Building an organizational structure such as an Alliance is most important for the long-term stewardship and management of the AML. This Alliance could be responsible for raising funds, making decisions about the site, owning and updating the website, and hiring staff for interpretive programming and event planning. “Chicago Wilderness” is one successful model for an Alliance governing board.

### *Dedicated staff*

Consider retaining a full time staff person in charge of the new AML Center and all site interpretation and programming. This person could have the title Director of Interpretation at the Abbott Marsh and Landmark.

### *Communication plan*

Establish a communication plan for the AML. Develop a system for communication with all levels of site partners, stakeholders, and target audiences. Create a plan to identify how and when each group should receive information about the site or provide information and feedback on the site. Means of communication and frequency of communication should be indicated clearly.

### *Partnerships*

It is recommended to explore university partnership(s). Identify prospective university partners who can work with the Abbott Marsh & Landmark to advance programming, research and exhibits for the site and Center.



Latha John



Richard E. Mistler, "Skating on Spring Lake"





# Introduction

Mercer County, New Jersey's Capital County, holds some of the state's greatest cultural and historic sites. The County has demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving and maintaining these diverse places, while also providing greater access and recreation for the public. The Interpretive Plan for the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark (AFNHL or "Landmark") is an initiative of the County to preserve and present one of its most important cultural sites. The County recognizes the potential of the Landmark area to become an outstanding educational and recreational resource for area residents, including a significant urban population in greater Trenton. In commissioning the Plan for the Landmark, the County, and with adjoining counties and municipalities, aspires to reinvigorate and enhance this significant site, connect it with other area cultural and natural resources, and elevate this place as a heritage tourism destination for the benefit of both local and national audiences.

In March of 2008 the Planning Division of Mercer County initiated a formal interpretive planning process to develop, for the first time, official guidelines and strategies to interpret and preserve the AFNHL. What has not been done, until now, is to undertake an inclusive examination of how the Landmark and its surroundings can be presented to the public in a comprehensive way. The Division saw the need to produce a formal interpretive plan that would provide an assessment of existing programs, as well as recommendations for new opportunities to present the Landmark's cultural and archaeological resources. The timing of this interpretive initiative enabled the County to coordinate the Plan with two related efforts—the recently completed Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center Master Plan and the Marsh Management Plan, currently under revision from its 1999 version.

The interpretive planning project for the AFNHL is supported by a Garden State Historic Preservation Trust grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust. Key aims of the project are to assess and collect site significance and identify strategies for the AFNHL to become a more visible and accessible cultural resource. To develop the plan, the County engaged two consulting firms: JCC&A—an interpretive planning firm based in New York City—and Hunter Research—a Trenton-based archaeological and historical research firm.

The Plan is a result of more than a year's collaboration between the County, JCC&A, and Hunter Research to convene stakeholders, gather research, and analyze and plan opportunities for the Landmark. Under direction of the Mercer County Planning Division, JCC&A guided the interpretive planning process and authored the resulting Plan. Hunter Research compiled the supporting historical, archaeological, and cultural resources data on the AFNHL. Hunter also collected relevant tourism and recreational information and developed a series of maps to inventory and locate all of the pre-historical, historical, and tourism and recreational sites within the Landmark. Presented in a stand-alone final report, Hunter Research's work appears in a supplementary volume (see Appendices). The report provides the technical underpinning for the Interpretive Plan and is referred to throughout.

In all stages of the planning process, the County and JCC&A actively involved project stakeholders to reach consensus on goals and ensure the Plan reflects current initiatives and includes the opinions of the long-term stewards of the AFNHL. This approach assumes the view that interpretation is a process—both for the site and the public. Interpretive planning creates an opportunity to explore ways to present the significant features of the Landmark and to involve audiences, stakeholders, and partners in the ongoing presentation and preservation of the site.

This Interpretive Plan is a living document. The guidelines and recommendations for interpretation should be continually reevaluated based on administrative needs and using ongoing stakeholder consultation. By defining interpretation as an ongoing process, the County is committed to understanding its audiences and ensuring that the interpretation of the AFNHL reflects diverse interests and learning styles. The Plan's recommendations are introduced in phases in order to ensure that the visitor experience at the AFNHL remains dynamic and realistic.



## Role of interpretation

The Interpretive Plan for the AFNHL begins with the visitor in mind. Freeman Tilden (1883–1980), considered by many to be the father of heritage interpretation, defined interpretation as “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships...rather than simply to communicate factual information.” Interpretation, he said, should provoke and engage. Interpretation is concerned with changing the attitude and opinions of visitors so that, ultimately, they feel committed to what they experience.

Interpretation is more than signage, exhibits, or programs. For the administrators of a site, interpretation is a way of thinking, of connecting with visitors. It is a thread connecting all aspects of a successful visitor experience. It begins with visitors’ first introduction to a place—whether on a website or on the road—and extends beyond the visit itself.

The role of interpretation at the AFNHL is to enhance the visitor experience of the physical and human aspects of the environment. People of varied backgrounds will visit the site, and interpretation must address the needs of diverse audiences. At the same time, any program of interpretation must remain flexible enough to respond to new ideas, changing audience needs, and the evolving requirements of site planning.

The Interpretive Plan for the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark provides a philosophical, conceptual, and thematic framework for public presentation and programming for the Landmark and the included areas of the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh (Marsh). It offers strategies and recommendations for implementation over the next decade.

## The site

The AFNHL received national designation in 1976, in recognition of its rich archaeological heritage. The Landmark comprises an approximately 2,000-acre tract of freshwater tidal marshland and adjoining upland at the confluence of Crosswicks Creek and the Delaware River. The site includes significant prehistoric excavations, most especially a concentration of sites of the Middle Woodland period (circa A.D. 1 – A.D. 900), as well as notable historic homes and the remains of transportation achievements—the Delaware and Raritan Canal and lines of the Camden and Amboy Railroad (for details on the excavations, see Cultural Resource Technical Document, Hunter Research, Appendix). With its diversity and wealth of archaeological resources, the Landmark is considered one of the most important archaeological sites on the East Coast of the United States, yet even for area residents it remains little known and underappreciated.

Within the Landmark also lies a part of the 1,250-acre Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh (Marsh), the northernmost tidal wetland on the Delaware River. An ecological wonder and valuable recreational resource for the urban area it neighbors, the Marsh is remarkable for its biodiversity and pleasant waterways. The Marsh includes Mercer County’s 406-acre John A. Roebling Park, as well as adjacent publicly owned lands along Crosswicks Creek, which offer many opportunities for walking, hiking, birdwatching, fishing, and canoeing. (See Plate 1.1, Appendix)

The site’s tremendous natural and historic value is visually obscured by unsightly and developed areas. The low marshland portions of the Landmark are largely undeveloped, but the upland bluff sections are built up with a densely suburban landscape. The site is crisscrossed by the highway interchange of Routes I-195, I-295, and N.J. 29. Additionally, a large sewage treatment plant, a PSE&G power generating plant and power lines, an oil pipeline, and capped landfill can be viewed within its boundaries. It is challenging for audiences to see past these inelegant features, making it especially imperative to find new ways to draw people into the site through defined and welcoming access areas. (See Fig 1.2, page 1-3, Appendix)

Ownership of the AFNHL land is fragmented. West and north of the Crosswicks Creek, the AFNHL lies within Hamilton Township in Mercer County; south and east of the creek, it is within Bordentown Township and the City of Bordentown in Burlington County. Property within the Landmark is owned by: Mercer County; Hamilton Township; Bordentown City; Bordentown Township; Divine Word Missionaries; New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP); Delaware & Raritan (D&R) Canal State Park; New Jersey Transit; Public Service Electric & Gas Company (PSE&G); the New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT); and also by private land owners. Refer to the map of the Landmark on page 11 for additional understanding of the boundaries and key resources. (See also Fig 1.3, page 1-5, Appendix)

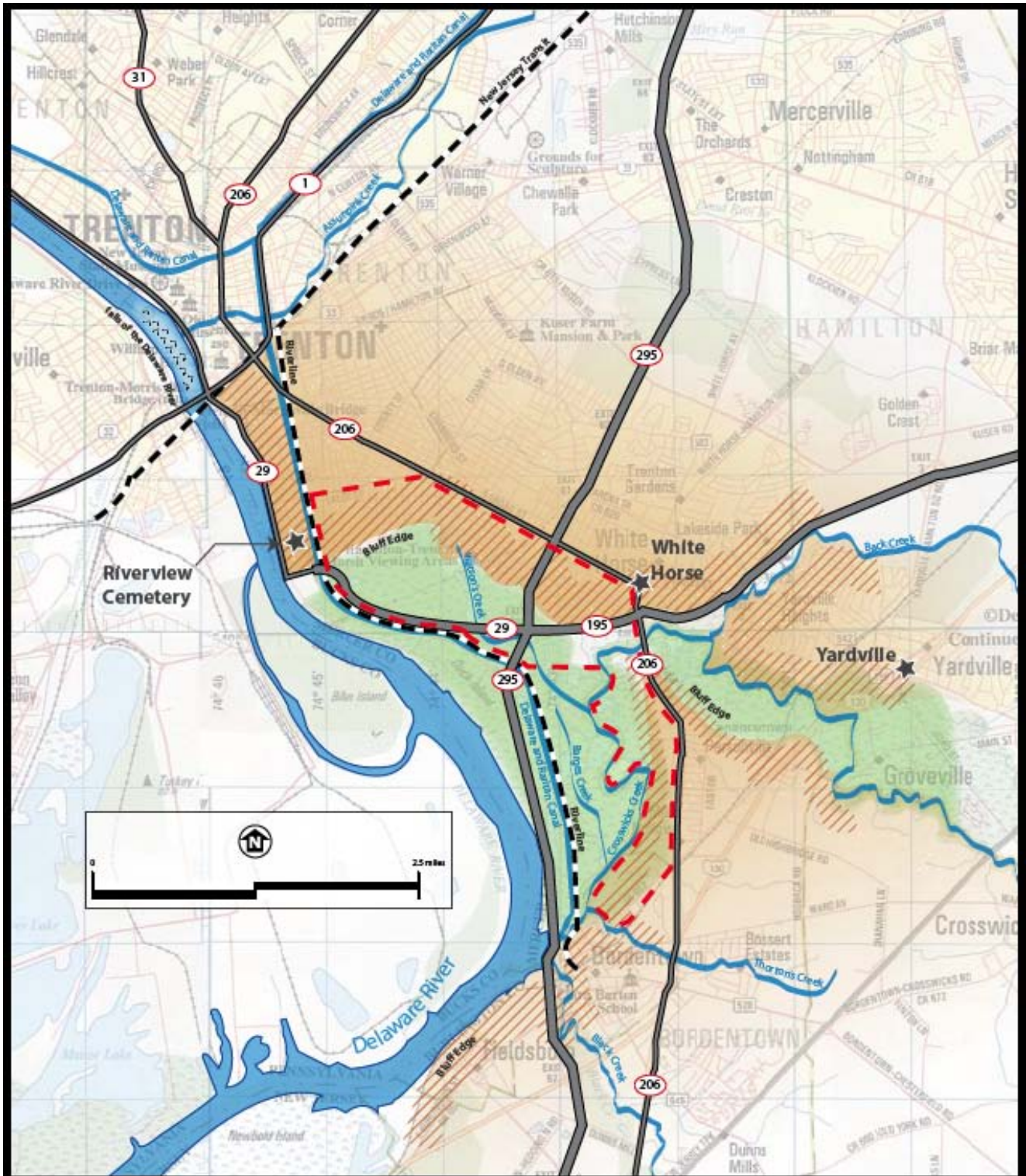


**The AFNHL is traversed by Routes I-195, I-295, and NJ 29 (below). A large sewage treatment plant (above right and bottom left), PSE&G power lines (top left), an oil pipeline, and capped landfill can all be viewed within its boundaries**





## Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark Map



Map showing main geographic features in the vicinity of the AFNHL created by Hunter Research, Inc. Approximate boundaries of the AFNHL indicated with dashed line.

## Plan goals

The vision of the Interpretive Plan is to create for Mercer County a cohesive interpretive program for the Landmark and the Marsh as a whole and to enhance the public understanding and enjoyment of this place. The goals are to:

- Identify target audiences and recommend appropriate programs and media for target audiences
- Recommend public and private partners for the long-term management, presentation, and stewardship of the site
- Expand the scope of programs beyond the Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center into the Marsh that lies within and borders the Landmark, tying interpretation to existing recreational programs and infrastructure
- Provide recommendations that further heritage tourism and recreation initiatives
- Recommend improvements within the Landmark site that will utilize existing and proposed land and water trails, tie existing historic structures and archaeological sites to the Center, and identify additional interpretive resources that are needed to carry out programs such as interpretive media and signs.

By offering new views, programs, experiences, and tools for uncovering the natural and cultural layers that make up the AFNHL, it is anticipated that the recommendations in the Plan will inspire people to take an active interest in the site and its ongoing stewardship, and to give this place the recognition it merits.

### *Related planning efforts*

To accomplish these effort, the Interpretive Plan builds on related planning efforts. They include:

- Delaware & Raritan Greenway, *Hamilton/Trenton Marsh Management Plan*, the Hamilton/Trenton Marsh Management Plan Committee, Princeton, New Jersey, 1999.
- Delaware River Greenway Partnership, *Delaware River Heritage Trail: State of the Trail Report*, Burlington, New Jersey, 2003.
- F.X. Browne, Inc., *Crosswicks Creek/Doctors Creek Watershed Greenway Plan*, prepared for Crosswicks Creek/Doctors Creek Watershed Regional Planning Group, New Jersey, 2004.
- The RBA Group, *Delaware River Scenic Bynway Corridor Management Plan*, prepared for New Jersey Department of Transportation, Trenton, New Jersey, 2006.
- Preservation Partners, *Assessment of State Historical Marker Programs*, prepared for the New Jersey Historical Commission, New Jersey, 2007.
- SSP Architectural Group, *The Mercer County Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center at Roebling Park, Master Plan*, 2007-2012, Somerville, New Jersey, 2007.
- Hunter Research, *Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark Interpretive Plan: Cultural Resource Technical Document*, prepared for the County of Mercer, New Jersey, 2009.

These planning efforts helped provide context for understanding the current conditions and related initiatives at the site.

## The team

The Interpretive Plan reflects several years of concerted energy on the part of the staff of the **Mercer County** Planning Division. The Planning Division provides for the development of Mercer County using strategies relating to land use and development. Directing the AFNHL interpretive planning efforts for the County are:

- Lisa Fritzinger, Supervising Planner, PP, AICP, Mercer County Planning Division
- Marisa Wieczorek, Senior Planner, PP, AICP, Mercer County Planning Division

The Division worked closely with the New York-based interpretive planning firm of **Jane Clark Chermayeff & Associates** (JCC&A). Since its founding in 1984, JCC&A has developed recognized expertise designing visitor experiences focused on learning outdoors. The firm works regularly with heritage sites, museums and science centers, nature reserves, community organizations, and developers to make complex subjects accessible and interesting to diverse audiences. For this project the team included:

- Jane Clark Chermayeff, Principal, Interpretive Planner
- Jill Gilmartin, Associate, Interpretive Planner
- Julia Rousakis, Associate, Interpretive Planner
- Christina Tam, Research Assistant

**Hunter Research, Inc.** is a consulting firm specializing in a full range of cultural resource services to public and private organizations throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast United States. The company has been in existence since 1986 and provides historical research, architectural history, archaeology, preservation planning, exhibit development and educational outreach. Hunter Research has worked at many of the region's best known historic sites, such as Ellis Island, Central Park, Historic Morven, Crown Point and Fort Delaware. Team members included:

- Richard Hunter, President, Principal Archaeologist, Hunter Research
- Damon Tvaryanas, Architectural Historian, Hunter Research
- Cheryl Hendry, Historian, Hunter Research
- R. Michael Stewart, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Temple University
- David Byers, Landscape Architect, ASLA
- Gail Hunton, Historic Preservation Consultant

The team worked in concert with stakeholders and met regularly to ensure an inclusive and thorough planning process.

## Timeline of planning

### Phase I: Project Definition and Background Review (Spring 2008)

The first phase of work was devoted to establishing a clear and mutual understanding among Mercer County staff, JCC&A, and Hunter Research on the planning work completed to date, the research goals, and the desired outcomes of the visitor experience. JCC&A began with a preliminary review of existing plans and programs (including the current master plan for the Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center), and an initial assessment of stakeholders, audiences, resources, and research needs. After this brief review, the team held its first on-site project coordination meeting to define the roles of the County staff, consultants, stakeholders, and others involved in the project; refine the project goals and scope of work; coordinate work activities and project milestones; and determine the goals and parameters of the interpretive planning research requirements. This session also included a series of site visits to understand the scope and features of the Landmark and Marsh.

### Phase II: Research (Summer and Fall 2008)

During this phase JCC&A conducted interviews with key stakeholders to ascertain existing programs and partnerships associated with the Landmark. Hunter Research began its intensive collection of the existing historical, archaeological, and cultural resources and bibliographic information about the AFNHL. Hunter also began development of two inventories: a detailed inventory of historic sites and documented archaeological resources on public and private lands within the



AFNHL, and a list of existing educational and interpretive programs or places relevant to the historical, cultural, and archaeological significance of the AFNHL. JCC&A coordinated efforts with Hunter Research so that the research Hunter compiled informed JCC&A's stakeholder and program research.

### **Phase III: Conceptual Framework and Educational Program (Fall 2008)**

This phase of work required collaboration with JCC&A and County staff to develop and refine interpretive messages, methodologies, and visitor outcomes based on the research. JCC&A worked with staff to define content priorities based on the research compiled, and outlined directions for typical as well as critical elements of the visitor experience. JCC&A conferred with Hunter Research for input into these content priorities and began to map out themes as a starting point for creating design, program, and heritage tourism guidelines.

During this phase, Hunter Research worked to collect information on recreational amenities and tourism trends in the area surrounding the AFNHL, with a focus on publicly accessible historic sites, museums, and environmental/natural resources, such as parks and wildlife areas. The Hunter Research team also produced maps showing the locations of specific historic sites, archaeological resources, and recreational amenities identified during the information gathering process outlined above.

### **Phase IV: Community Stakeholder Meetings (Winter 2009)**

JCC&A worked with County staff to test themes with stakeholder groups in a series of stakeholder meetings held at the site of the planned Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center. The purpose of the meetings was to identify stakeholder interests and ways to inspire a greater sense of ownership of the site. JCC&A analyzed the feedback and refined the concept narrative and interpretive messages based on these results. The purpose of this phase was to ensure that selected themes, interpretive media, programming, and tourist experiences reflected essential audience input.

### **Phase V: Strategies and Methodologies (Winter 2009)**

Throughout this phase, Hunter Research refined and completed the technical document in support of the Interpretive Plan. The document provided the informational underpinning for the Interpretive Plan. It also included a selection of illustrations (historic and present-day photographs). Parallel to this effort, JCC&A researched and analyzed a range of appropriate tools and techniques for conveying interpretive messages and drawing in new audiences. To allow for maximum flexibility in the future, JCC&A recommended applications and defined benefits and constraints for each interpretive methodology.

### **Phase VI: Interpretive Plan (Spring 2009)**

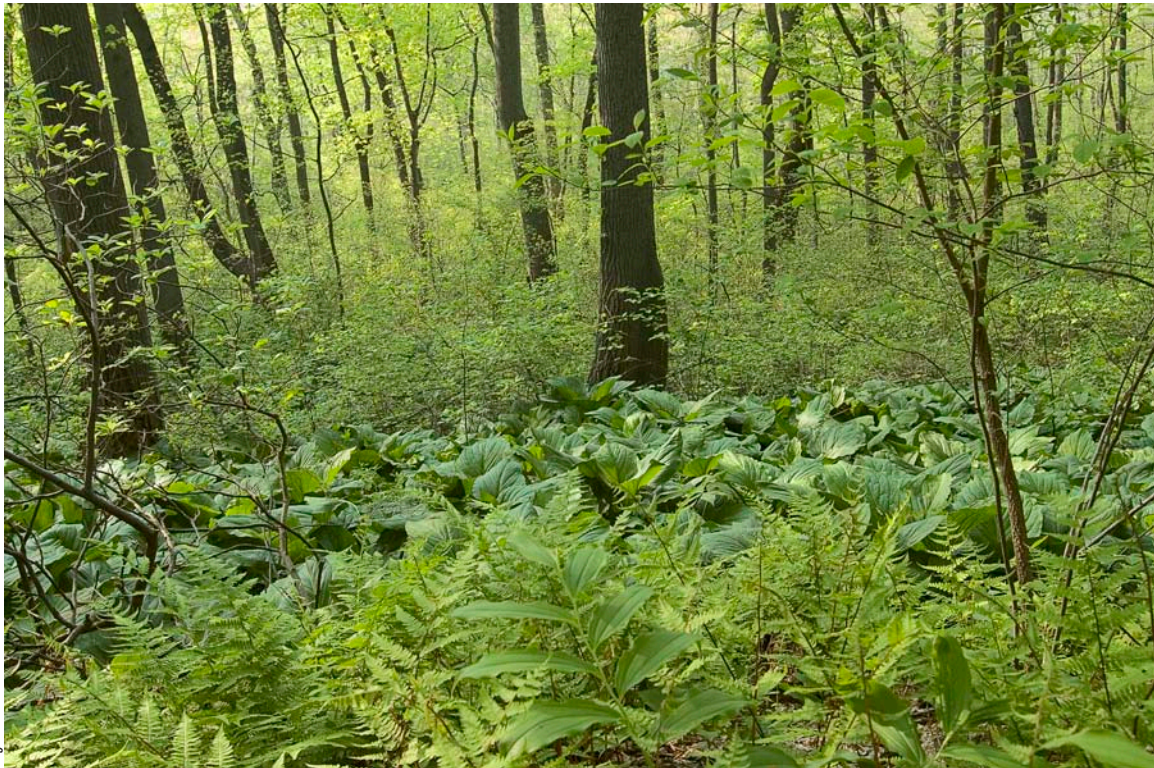
In this final phase of work, JCC&A prepared the Interpretive Plan, which will serve as a blueprint for ongoing interpretation, education, and tourism initiatives at the AFNHL.



Ray Chiste, "Cattail"



Byron Lum



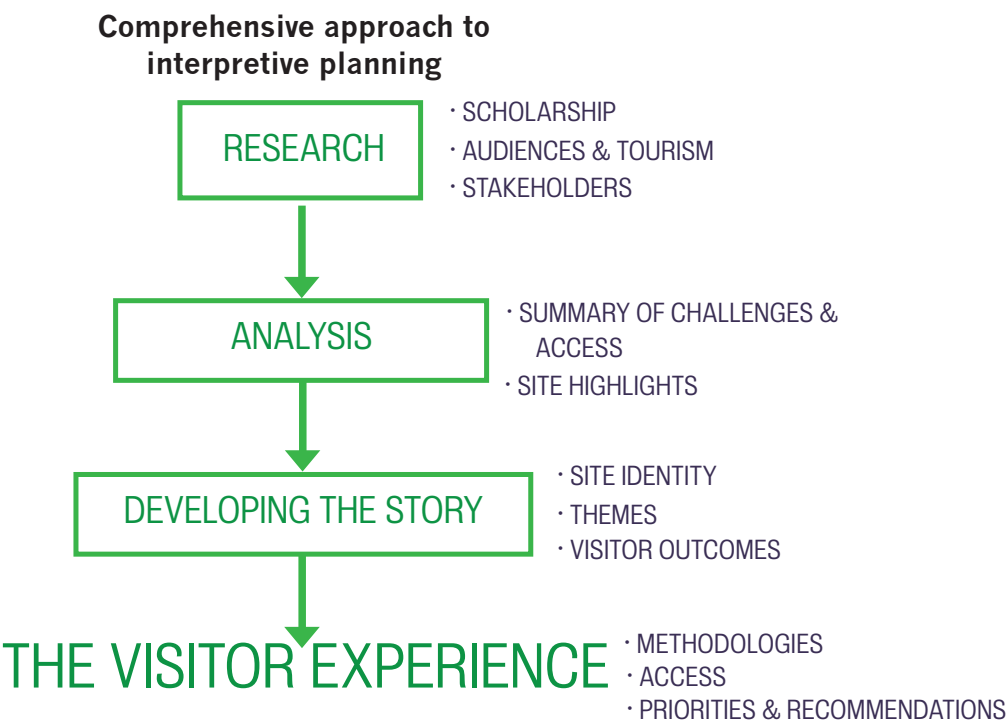
# Approach and Research

This interpretive planning effort follows on the long-standing ambition of Mercer County and local organizations, most notably the D&R Greenway Land Trust and Friends for the Marsh, to create a formal plan to better serve the surrounding communities and a broader constituency. The Garden State Historic Preservation Trust grant award from the New Jersey Historic Trust presented Mercer County with a timely opportunity to hire interpretive planning consultants to develop a strategy for the site that could integrate with past planning efforts, help to unify the Landmark with its surrounding Marsh, and create a vision for future efforts.

Interpretation – with its multidimensional structure of defining site significance with stakeholders; assessing visitor and site needs; selecting, testing, and implementing strategies – provides a framework for ensuring the resources and stories of the site will be communicated effectively and creatively to users and preserved in a meaningful way. This interpretive plan is a product of this philosophy and of significant research and ongoing consultation with project stakeholders (described in the next section), volunteers, Mercer County colleagues, and the community. Details on the project team, timeline of planning, and thematic approach are presented in the following pages.

## Approach

The power of interpretation is that it can shape history. Taking the form of an illustrated sign, a script for a tour guide, or on-site events, interpretive messages about a site become the basis for a visitor’s memory of a place. Visitors will glean interpretive information and experiences from many different sources, at many different locations during their visit to the AFNHL. All of these elements should be conceptually connected. Throughout the plan we define interpretation as going beyond signs and extending to a comprehensive, overarching approach that helps visitors experience and connect with a place. To develop a meaningful visitor experience at the AFNHL, the team undertook a comprehensive approach to interpretation.



This comprehensive approach to interpretation is best understood as a process with many nodes for consensus-building with stakeholders.

**Research** comprises three critical elements: **scholarship**, **audiences and tourism**, and **stakeholders**.

- An emphasis on multidisciplinary **scholarship** ensures that what gets presented to the public is founded on strong research and incorporates all aspects of the site's significance including its natural and social histories.
- Interpretive planning that is integrated with research on **audiences and tourism** ensures the visitor experience offered at the heritage site is carefully situated within the greater framework of tourism trends and visitor needs.
- Ongoing involvement with **stakeholders** enables those who have the greatest effect on the long-term preservation to participate throughout the decision-making process and voice their interests in and concerns about presenting and benefiting from their neighboring heritage site.

**Analysis of Findings** follows from the completed research. JCC&A analyzed the site significance and scholarship produced by Hunter Research and audience, tourism, and stakeholder research and feedback. After this detailed review, JCC&A produced a "Summary of Challenges," a "Summary of Access Points," and identified site highlights.

From this analysis, the team set out to **Develop the Story**. A selected set of interpretive themes will serve as the conceptual structure of the visitor experience. From these themes, the team can begin to shape an overall narrative and recommendations for unified programming and methodologies for the site.

An early focus with this comprehensive approach can produce sustainable benefits for the site, the local communities, and the **Visitor Experience**. While conservation will ensure that the physical memory of the AFNHL is preserved, interpretation provides a framework for ensuring that the physical and intangible heritage of the AFNHL is communicated and preserved in a meaningful way.

## Scholarship

The interpretive process included rigorous interdisciplinary research, with an understanding that the period of relevance does not end with the most known historic period, but continues through to the present day. For the scholarship component of the AFNHL, Hunter Research provided the primary body of archeological and cultural research that supports the Interpretive Plan. Hunter's research also included significant, well-known stories and artifacts of the Landmark and related tourism and recreational resources in the surrounding area.

Hunter collected three main types of research and compiled it into a database:

1. **Prehistoric:** Comprises findings from periods up to the 17th century (pre-contact period)
2. **Historic:** Comprises information from the last 300 to 400 years, including research on existing buildings, roadways, canals, and landscape features of the AFNHL and relevant areas
3. **Recreational and tourism:** This data includes approximately 300 separate database entries on parks, programs, and cultural and historic sites within a ten-mile radius of the AFNHL.

Another important aspect of Hunter's research work included mapping the prehistoric, historic, and recreational and tourist sites onto two maps:

- A map delineating prehistoric, historic, and recreational resources within 1-mile of the AFNHL (see page 20)
- A map delineating recreational and tourism resources, extending 10-miles beyond the landmark area (see page 22).

## Key Prehistoric Resources

Map Number	Name	Inside Landmark Boundaries	Public Access	Status of Interpretation	Description
400	Abbott Bluff Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
404	Area D Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The remains of camps inhabited for the purpose of seasonal fishing activities occupied during the late Middle Archaic to the early Late Archaic period. Occupations are marked by diagnostic triangular projectile points and associated debris.
411	Bunting Park Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Woodland pits, Archaic in subsoil
415	Cross Excavation #14	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Site documents a sequence of human occupation at the base of the bluff. Features included pits, hearths and burials.
416	Cross's Upland Archaeological Excavations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		This is the site of the primary WPA/New Jersey State Museum excavations carried out under the supervision of Dorothy Cross circa 1940 and published in 1956. Site includes upland excavations 1-4, 6, 9-13 and 19.
423	Isaac Watson House Prehistoric Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
424	Lalor Field Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		The site is part of the continuous chain of village sites which occupies bluff and marks the headquarters of the Unami division of the Lenni Lenape. Volk found a single wigwam site surrounded by ten graves and a fragment of bison bone.
428	Mile Hollow Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Collectors report finds of a wide variety of artifacts from Paleo-Indian to Late Woodland periods. Much of site has been looted, but some portions remain intact.
429	Point Breeze	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
430	Point Breeze Site B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

A sample of the Hunter Research database list of key prehistoric resources within the AFNHL

Map No. 404	Name Area D Site	Type of Resource Prehistoric	Inside Landmark Boundaries <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Publicly accessible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Key Resource <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Interpretive Theme
----------------	---------------------	---------------------------------	---	--	---	--------------------

State  
New Jersey

County  
Mercer

Municipality  
Hamilton Township

USGS Quad  
Trenton East

SPCS X  
428751.7549

SPCS Y  
492016.3879

Latitude  
40 11 02.37277

Longitude  
74 43 36.60161

Description of Location  
N.J. Route 29 alignment, between Independence Avenue and Watsons Creek

Publicly Owned  
☒

Nonprofit organization  
☐

Privately Owned  
☐

Multiple Owners  
☐

State  
☒

County  
☐

Municipality  
☐

Owner's Name  
State of New Jersey, Department of Transportation

Owner's Address  
David J. Goldberg Transportation Complex  
1035 Parkway Avenue  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Owner's Phone Number  
609-532-2000

Site Number  
28Me1-D

National Register  
☐

State Register  
☐

DOE  
☐

SHPO Opinion  
☐

Individually Designated  
☐

National Register Date

State Register Date

DOE Date

SHPO Opinion Date

Contributing Resource  
☐

Regulatory Comments  
Within the boundaries of the Abbott Farm NHL. Subjected to archaeological data recovery as mitigation for construction of the Trenton Highway Complex

Period

☐ Paleo-Indian
 ☐ Early Archaic
 ☐ Middle Archaic
 ☒ Late Archaic
 ☒ Early Woodland
 ☒ Middle Woodland
 ☒ Late Woodland
 ☒ Contact Period
 ☒ Unknown

Current Site Conditions  
N.J. Route 29 Right of Way

Soil Type(s)  
Alluvial Land-Freshwater Marsh association

Stratified  
Yes

Evidence of Looting?  
☐

Nearest Water Source  
Watsons Creek

Distance to Nearest Water Source

Elevation

Additional Comments  
The remains of camps inhabited for the purpose of seasonal fishing activities occupied during the late Middle Archaic to the early Late Archaic period. Occupations are marked by diagnostic triangular projectile points and associated debris.

Previous Work

By Whom	Date
Pollak	1975
Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.	1981
Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.	1985, 8

A sample entry in the Hunter Research database for the archaeological site, "Area D"



Hunter Research marked the relevant prehistoric and historic sites on the maps based on staff's knowledge of the area, experience gained from previous archaeology-based projects, and from locations indicated on historic maps and records. It is important to note that several of the prehistoric site locations marked on the 1-mile radius map are large and encompass areas greater than the markers indicate. Several of these prehistoric sites have one or more points of access.

The comprehensive research provided by Hunter Research was then compiled into a stand-alone technical document, *Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark Interpretive Plan: Cultural Resource Technical Document*. The body of data as a whole will be useful to the County as a complete inventory. For the Interpretive Plan, data was filtered and prioritized, and is referred to throughout. The technical report provides a detailed description and analysis of the significance of the AFNHL. The report treats the site in a holistic and multidisciplinary way, including sections on the following:

**The geographical setting of the AFNHL:** its topography and physical landscape; drainage and relationship to the Delaware River; geology and soils; and current land use

**A prehistoric overview of the site:** the Native American community at the site and in the nearby Delaware Valley and Mid Atlantic regions; evidence of native hunting, farming, and fishing practices and affects on the landscape; and the contact period in the early 17th century with European colonists and traders

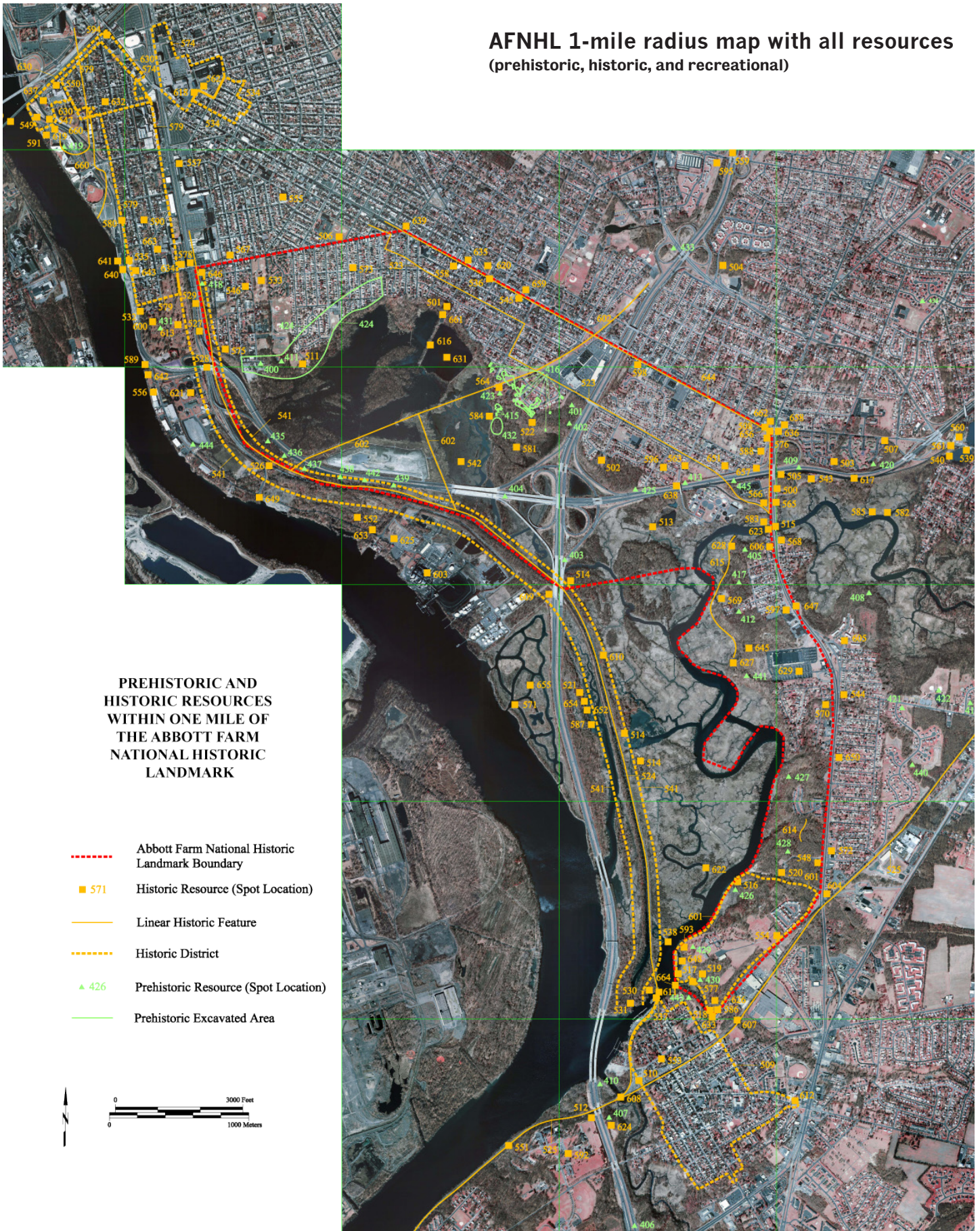
**Land use history:** colonial settlement of the area; the role of the region during the America Revolution; the Bordentown estate of Joseph Bonaparte, former King of Spain, and Bonaparte's lasting legacy in the region; the construction of the Delaware and Raritan Canal and the Camden and Amboy Railroad in the 1830s; the archaeological discoveries of Charles Conrad Abbott; and recent uses and changes to the site's landscape, including impacts on natural ecosystems, suburban sprawl, designation of park lands, and increased use of the site for recreation

**Archaeological history:** the site's importance to the history of American archaeology; key archaeologists who excavated on-site: Charles Conrad Abbott, Ernest Volk, Dorothy Cross and the New Jersey State Museum and Works Progress Administration (WPA); recent archaeological efforts including excavations for the Trenton Complex; and current excavations and studies underway at the site of the planned Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center and Monmouth University studies on the site of former bluff-top property of Joseph Bonaparte's "Point Breeze."

We refer the reader to the complete report (see Appendix) for an in-depth look at these topics as well as a summary of the site's cultural resources and a bibliography on the relevant scholarship about the site.



## AFNHL 1-mile radius map with all resources (prehistoric, historic, and recreational)





## Audiences and tourism

Situating the AFNHL within the greater framework of tourism trends and audience needs and interests enables interpretation to become the basis for managing tourism and facilitating a successful visit to the site. Mercer County is committed to serving people of all ages and cultures, particularly from the County and the surrounding region. As a County and government funded initiative, interpretive planning for the AFNHL should create a welcoming environment for all audiences and make special efforts to reach out to underserved urban audiences.

### *Audiences*

As confirmed by County staff and stakeholders, the current AFNHL audience primarily includes people engaged in birding and fishing; participants in organized kayaking and canoe trips and nature walks; a variety of school groups; and some regional families. Cultural and ecological organizations such as the Friends for the Marsh, the D&R Greenway Trust, the South Jersey Outdoor Club, and the Brownie and Girl Scouts sponsor nature walks and field trips, while several university programs bring students from wetland and ecology classes into the Marsh; the excellent efforts of these institutions should be organized and augmented by this comprehensive plan.

In assessing current audiences, it is clear that interpretation should help the County to better target urban and underserved audiences. Census information shows that underserved audiences may include lower income families, minorities (African Americans and Latinos), and foreign-born, non-native speakers of English.

In order to better understand these potential new audiences, we need to be aware of some key demographic trends in the region. Although the Mercer County population is 10% above the national average in its college education level, Trenton is 15% below the national average. These kinds of discrepancies are across the board. Like many inner cities in the United States, Trenton, N.J., has a significant vulnerable population in need of learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom. While the AFNHL sits physically within the Hamilton and Bordentown townships, the northwest area of the Landmark offers direct access for Trenton residents to enter the Marsh. With expanded access to this geographical area and awareness of its offerings, the site has potential to be an important educational and recreational resource for the urban Trenton area.



Another key audience that new interpretation should target is local school groups, especially in Trenton, which several stakeholders noted have little exposure to the Marsh and Landmark, despite proximity. Private initiatives like Rider University's "PROBE at the Marsh," which serves up to 300 students annually from High Schools as close as Trenton and Bordentown to as far away as Long Branch and Riverside, need to be augmented by widespread public interpretation proposed by this plan. Additional audiences to be cultivated include recreational users of the D&R Canal State Park, naturalists (especially birders), kayakers and canoeists, Revolutionary War enthusiasts, and multigenerational family groups.

In planning the visitor experience and interpretation, the needs of audiences identified above and the supporting statistics have been considered. These considerations include: providing interpretive opportunities that address different levels of prior knowledge and learning styles; having these target audiences reflected in marketing efforts; developing marketing that is accessible all socio-economic backgrounds; and representing these audiences in volunteers and staff.

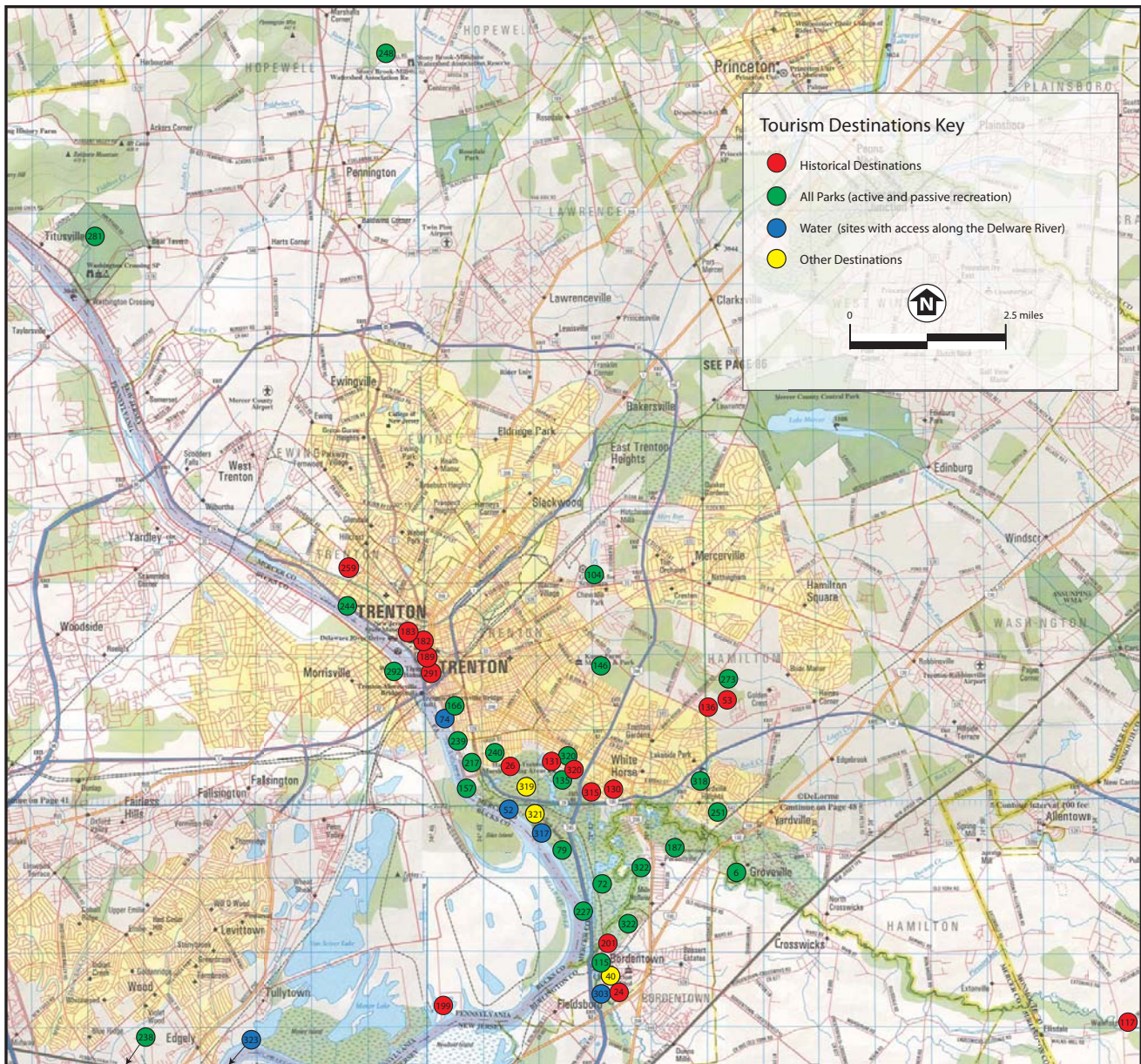


## Tourism

Successful tourism cannot be measured by the number of tourists alone. Other key benchmarks include economic benefits to the communities, impacts on the preservation of the site, and quality of the visitor experience. A review of tourism patterns in sites nearby the AFNHL revealed tremendous potential for the Landmark and Marsh to become destinations for regional tourists and professionals with an interest in archaeology. While the AFNHL site also holds incredible value for the people it neighbors, it is still largely unknown and underutilized. There is a great need to educate local residents about the AFNHL, increase its presence and visibility, and promote its historical and ecological importance.

Consultation with stakeholders and research into nearby tourism and recreational resources helped frame interpretive programs based on existing patterns of visitation. The Hunter Research Tourism Destinations Map (see below) and Tourism report (see Appendix) offer a list of tourist destinations that have various linkages to the AFNHL and Marsh due to either close proximity or thematic relevance. We refer the reader to this report to understand how the AFNHL site can and should be connected to several of these places in future marketing efforts (refer to section on Recommendations) and in recommendations for tourist itineraries in the region, including the possible future preparation of a Heritage Tourism Plan for the site.

**AFNHL 10-mile radius map  
with tourism and recreation resources**



## Stakeholders

Another essential element to the interpretive planning process is stakeholder involvement. The benefit of engaging stakeholders during the planning process is that interpretation provides an excellent meeting ground for public and private partners, and invites community involvement at all levels. No specialized knowledge is needed in the way that speaking about conservation or archaeology requires an understanding of tools and materials. Interpretation is about telling stories, and it relies on stakeholder involvement to ensure that stories being told reflect the interests, traditions, and outlooks of the people whose heritage the site represents.

### *Stakeholder interviews*

As part of the Background Review and Project Definition phase of Interpretive Planning, JCC&A conducted interviews with advisers, naturalists, historians, educators, agency representatives, and other individuals and groups affiliated with the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh and the historic Landmark itself. The purpose of the interviews was to ensure that planning takes into account the expertise and recommendations of a range of people with experience relevant to and involvement in the development and use of the site. The Mercer County Planning Division selected the interviewees, and JCC&A conducted the interviews by telephone in the summer of 2008.

### *Stakeholder forums*

Additionally, two stakeholder forums, titled the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark (AFNHL) Workshops on Public Interpretation, were held on January 20, 2009 to offer an overview of the interpretive planning process and to encourage a dialogue about key issues and elicit feedback on preliminary interpretive concepts and site-specific recommendations.

The workshops brought together a group of local stakeholders from a range of organizations to discuss preliminary plans for the interpretation of the AFNHL. JCC&A presented some of the conceptual plans for the site and moderated the sessions. The workshops were part of Mercer County's comprehensive plan for interpretation, stewardship, and management of the Landmark.

To insure that the interpretation of the Landmark covered complexities and nuances related to all aspects of the site's significance, Mercer County and JCC&A designed the workshops to help guide the strategy for presenting the story of the Landmark and nearby Marsh. Discussions with stakeholders enabled the County and the planning team to gather the most current thinking on this important site and its related resources. Outcomes from these meetings have been incorporated into the plan, particularly in the sections "summary of challenges" and "summary of access" and "site highlights."

Stakeholder groups that provided input in the interpretive planning process include the following:

### **Bordentown Historical Society**

The Bordentown Historical Society works to preserve the area's rich history and maintain the its various historical buildings and collections.

### **City of Bordentown Planning Board**

The Planning Board is responsible for setting goals and strategies to develop, redevelop, and preserve the City of Bordentown. In February 2005, the City of Bordentown adopted a Master Plan Open Space Preservation Plan Element prepared by the City of Bordentown Planning Board and the Burlington County Department of Economic Development and Regional Planning, which set goals for preserving environmentally sensitive lands and open space.

### **Boys and Girls Club of Trenton**

The Boys & Girls Club of Trenton aims to inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring citizens. The Club works to provide a safe, fun, and learning environment for its members, including students from Trenton elementary schools.



## **County of Mercer**

Mercer County's Planning Division and the Mercer County Park Commission have been actively involved in all aspects of the interpretive planning process. The Planning Division directs the interpretive planning and will be the managing group behind its implementation. The Park Commission maintains facilities and amenities within the County's more than 9,700 acres of parkland space. The Park Commission will be actively involved in the implementation and maintenance of any facilities or physical interventions recommended in the interpretive planning.

## **D&R Canal Commission**

The Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission assists with the development of the D&R Canal State Park. It administers a land-use regulatory program that aims to protect the Canal Park from any harmful impacts of new development in central New Jersey.

## **D&R Greenway Land Trust**

The Greenway, central New Jersey's non-profit land preservation organization, has partnered with Mercer County on the Marsh Education Center and is the umbrella organization for the Friends for the Marsh. The Greenway is also the author of the 1999 Marsh Management Plan.

## **Daughters of the American Revolution**

The members of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) have dedicated themselves to historical preservation, promotion of education, and encouragement of patriotic endeavor. The New Jersey State Society of the DAR has its headquarters at the Watson House, located within the AFNHL. The DAR restored the house as part of the New Jersey Tercentenary Celebration in 1964.

## **Friends for the Marsh**

Friends for the Marsh seek to preserve and protect the Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh and to advocate and educate on its behalf in partnership with the D&R Greenway Land Trust. The group organizes educational activities for children and adults at the Marsh.

## **Hamilton Township Historical Society and Historic Preservation Advisory Commission**

The Hamilton Township Historical Society is a volunteer-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the past and keeping alive the spirit that built the Township of Hamilton and Mays Landing areas. The Historic Preservation Advisory Commission, with similar goals, is comprised of members appointed by the Township governing body.

## **Hamilton Township Community Planning**

Hamilton Township Community Planning has developed an Open Space and Recreation Plan to articulate the local government's vision of open space and recreation for the community; the plan is also necessary for Hamilton Township's full participation in the Green Trust Planning Incentive category of the State Green Acres Program.

## **Hamilton Township Environmental Commission**

The Township of Hamilton has many ordinances pertaining to property maintenance, littering, recycling, illegal dumping, storage of abandoned vehicles, junkyards and other concerns. These ordinances are enforced through the Environmental Commission under the Public Works Department.

## **Hamilton Township Public Schools**

Hamilton Township Public Schools is the eighth largest school district in the state. The district has 24 schools, which includes 3 high schools, 3 middle schools, 17 elementary schools and one school for special education, and it was named a New Jersey District of Character for three consecutive years in 2007, 2008, and 2009.



## **Monmouth University**

Monmouth University is a private, moderate-sized, coeducational, comprehensive University in West Long Branch, New Jersey. Dr. Richard Veit, archaeologist, and his students from Monmouth conducted a survey of the Divine Word Missionaries property within the AFNHL and excavated the site of Joseph Bonaparte's mansion, Point Breeze.

## **New Jersey Boat & Safety**

For the past 11 years, NJ Boat & Safety has taught safe boating practices to boaters throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The organization administers testing centers where all power vessel operators must obtain boating safety certificates.

## **New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection**

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) provides open-space funding to municipalities and funding, low-interest loans to buy land for conservation and historic preservation.

## **New Jersey Historic Preservation Office**

New Jersey's Historic Preservation Office, located within the Department of Environmental Protection, brings expertise in a variety of fields essential to preserving historic resources.

## **New Jersey Historic Trust**

The mission of the Trust is to advance historic preservation in New Jersey for the benefit of future generations through education, stewardship and financial investment programs that save the state's heritage and strengthen communities.

## **SSP Architects**

SSP Architectural Group is a state leader in the development of progressive public planning and design principles. SSP created the Master Plan for the proposed Marsh Nature and Interpretive Center.

## **Trenton Department of Recreation, Natural Resources and Culture**

The City of Trenton Department of Recreation, Natural Resources and Culture is responsible for the care and maintenance of the City's parks, gardens, trees and open spaces. It is also responsible for coordinating the development and operations of cultural and heritage activities. The purpose of the department is to enhance the quality of life for residents of Trenton by promoting active and passive recreational opportunities and establishing natural resource management programs including park maintenance, recreation maintenance, and urban forestry.

## **Trenton Public Schools**

Trenton Public Schools encompass 24 schools. The mission of the Trenton Public School District is that all students will graduate with a vision for their futures, motivated to learn continually and prepared to succeed in their choice of college or career.

JCC&A also met with a number of individuals including business owners, historians, archaeologists, art historians, and naturalists. Including stakeholder perspectives early on in the planning process creates opportunities for buy-in and consensus building that make it easier to implement a plan. Stakeholder interviews and meetings also help to corroborate research and weight the research findings.

Elizabeth Mistler, "Tree"



Elizabeth Mistler, "Geese Family"



# Analysis

## Summary of challenges

Some of the key challenges that emerged from the research and in discussions with stakeholders include:

**Need to increase awareness:** There was consensus among stakeholders that this site is not well known, particularly by local residents. It should be a priority to increase awareness of the AFNHL. The site is an underutilized, but valuable resource. The Plan should identify ways to help AFNHL neighbors to understand this place.

**Site identity:** Stakeholders consistently reported that the AFNHL is “a series of interesting places not necessarily all connected.” It is conceptually challenging to link the sites, stories, and features of this area. It is also challenging from the perspective of physical access and geography to understand this place as a whole.

**New name:** Stakeholders discussed how re-naming the AFNHL would help people to understand this place better. While there was much debate about the choice of names, it is clear that the new name should help bring together two resources—the Marsh and the Landmark.

**Land ownership:** The issue of land ownership came up several times in stakeholder meetings and interviews, as the AFNHL area contains land owned by several entities—including Mercer County, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (DOT), the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Public Service Electric and Gas Company (PSE&G), and private residents. A map reflecting these various ownerships looks like a “checkerboard” of properties, but all within one historic landmark designated area. Stakeholders advised that the County should continue make it a priority to secure available land in the Landmark (including key historical properties such as the Bow Hill mansion) to unify the site. They also recommended educating private landowners about owning property in a “national landmark” site.

**Limited access:** There is a perception that the AFNHL is difficult to access and that many of its historical homes are not open to the public. Even the Watson House, which has been restored by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), has very limited times it is open to the public (one afternoon per month during only six months of the year). Similarly, the Divine Word Missionaries and seminary site, the former location of the Joseph Bonaparte estate, is privately owned with a conservation easement and is made available to the public upon request. It will be important for the interpretive plan to help recommend ways to increase access and improve public perception of how to access the AFNHL.

**Promoting stewardship:** As this place is relatively unknown to its nearby neighbors, there is a great opportunity for the interpretive planning efforts to help create a broad base of residents who know, understand, and can protect the site. Stakeholders reported, “we need to build the constituency base of people who will understand [the Landmark] and respect it.” It was recommended that if planning efforts can engage the community, the site will be in a much better position to begin to welcome tourists and new audiences.

**Relationship to other planning initiatives:** The Delaware River Heritage Trail Report proposes trails that could in the future be very relevant to the AFNHL. It is recommended by stakeholders that any planned access points and related parks and trails be referenced in the Interpretive Plan, even if they do not yet exist, as it is helpful to take advantage of existing and planned resources in the counties and townships of the Landmark.

**Cultivating new audiences:** Stakeholders identified current primary audiences as people engaged in birding and fishing, and participants in organized kayaking and canoe trips and nature walks, primarily those organized through the Friends for the Marsh advocacy organization. Audiences to be cultivated include recreational users of the D&R Canal State Park, naturalists (especially birders), kayakers and canoeists, Revolutionary War enthusiasts, and multigenerational family groups. A key audience to target with new interpretation is local elementary and secondary school groups, which several stakeholders noted have little exposure to the Landmark and Marsh, despite proximity.

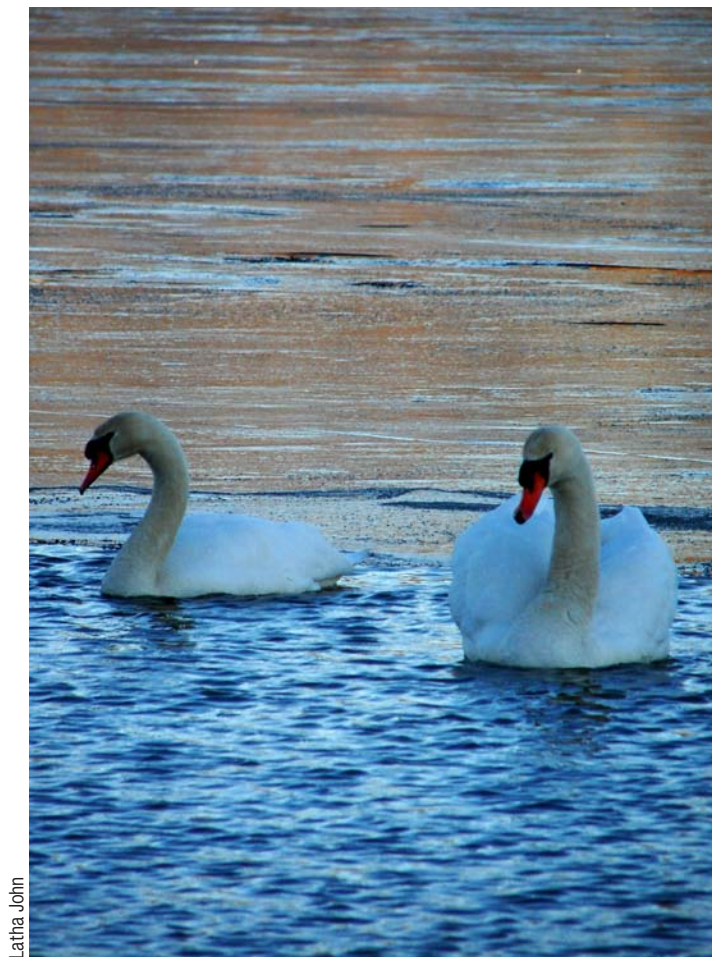


**Looting:** Looting of archaeological sites, most likely by knowledgeable hobbyists, has been a problem at the AFNHL. Posted signs do not always deter people from digging around the archaeological sites within the Landmark. Stakeholders discussed a culture of collectors whose parents and grandparents collected items by digging, and the resulting perception that amateur digging is permissible. Because supervision on these archaeological sites is limited, it is necessary to create a community of people who are proactive about looting prevention and who are willing to help educate neighbors about the importance of a structured and organized approach to archaeology.

**Visitor safety:** People who do know the AFNHL often have significant concerns about safety. Stakeholders advised that there is a perception the AFNHL is not particularly safe, especially because many of the access points seem isolated and unmanaged. Cleaner paths, orientation areas, and greater access and signage would help make the site more welcoming.

**Visually unattractive:** The AFNHL is also perceived as visually unattractive. Most people who see the Marsh see it from entering Route 29. The view from this angle includes a power-line easement, high-tension power lines, and a closed landfill. It will be important to open up access points and views that offer a more attractive vantage point for viewing the site.

**Levels of access:** Stakeholders requested that the Interpretive Plan identify and recommend primary access points as well as secondary access points. If this place is to be enhanced as a national site, it will need primary access points to serve as welcoming, public access areas. If the site is also to function as a backyard oasis for urban audiences, it should have secondary access points geared towards local urban residents to discover nature at the edge of a city.



Latha John



“The best defense for our fragile archaeological heritage is an educated public that is involved in and aware of the uses and importance of archaeology and preservation for their communities. This awareness should start in elementary schools. If you don’t know what archaeology is, it’s hard to care about it.”

-Dr. Richard Veit, archaeologist, in *Digging New Jersey’s Past*

## Summary of access points

The Landmark falls within Mercer County and Burlington County, comprising an approximately 2,000-acre tract of freshwater tidal marshland (the Marsh) and adjoining upland at the confluence of Crosswicks Creek and the Delaware River. It is bisected by several major roadways, including Interstate 295 and 195, US Routes 206, 130, 29 and South Broad Street. The following is a summary of access points to the Landmark. (See map on page 33) Due to the bisecting nature of major roadways, access points and parking areas are widely separated. Multiple access points to the site must be considered.

### Existing access points

Access point	Location/ description	Benefits	Constraints
<b>Lalor Street Area</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flat, open space, contiguous to Route 29 and Light Rail</li> <li>• This area approaches the Landmark/Marsh from the northwest</li> <li>• Currently there is access to the Marsh from the municipal park located between Bunting and Jeremiah Avenues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great access from Trenton</li> <li>• Connects to urban audience (close to the ball park and Sovereign Bank Arena)</li> <li>• Connects with heritage trail from north (Trenton)</li> <li>• Expanded access could connect with access to Roebling Park</li> <li>• Leads directly to Marsh land and Sturgeon Pond</li> <li>• Would enhance and connect 18th century mansions on the bluff</li> <li>• There are vacant and abandoned properties along the light rail and the western side of Roebling Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would need to purchase land to open up this access point</li> <li>• Much of the land in this area contains environmental contamination</li> <li>• The County would be obligated to clean the land if they purchased it (projected high cost of clean up)</li> <li>• Currently this area is considered unsafe; there is evidence of drug use and homeless population use of vacant areas</li> <li>• Will require some clean up, safety, reinvigoration</li> <li>• Costly to reinvigorate this area</li> </ul>
<b>Spring Lake</b> (part of Roebling Park)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roebling Park is a 406-acre natural area in an urban setting with a fresh water marsh connected to the tidal portion of the Delaware River</li> <li>• Spring Lake lies in the center of the Park</li> <li>• Access by right turn to Sewell Avenue and a left turn to Spring Lake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roebling Park is open dawn to dusk, 7 days a week, 365 days a year</li> <li>• Friends for the Marsh care for the Park and organize recreation, including hikes, bird watching, canoeing, etc.</li> <li>• Strong connection to layers of history</li> <li>• Stories: White City Amusement Park, archaeology, Native American fishing</li> <li>• Great water access</li> <li>• School groups use the Lake for recreational purposes</li> <li>• Picnic tables and benches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parkland was donated on the condition it remain a passive environment with no active recreation.</li> <li>• Some parts perceived as unsafe</li> <li>• Sensitive archaeological areas</li> <li>• Area needs more amenities; portable toilets only available in summer</li> <li>• The Sewell Avenue turn is difficult for people to find</li> <li>• Could be better connected to bluffs</li> <li>• Traffic and narrow streets.</li> </ul>
<b>Interpretive Center, Watson House</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Interpretive Center and Watson House are located off of Westcott Avenue in Hamilton, before the entrance to Watson Woods in Roebling Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located at the nexus of three major trail networks</li> <li>• Parking is available</li> <li>• The Interpretive Center and Watson House are two important educational resources</li> <li>• Convenient access to bluffs, Watson Woods, Spring Lake, and Abbott Farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need additional parking and a new bus drop off/pick up section for larger groups/schoolchildren</li> <li>• In residential area; residents may have complaints with crowds/traffic</li> <li>• While the Watson House is County owned, it is currently leased by the Daughters of the American Revolution with limited public access</li> </ul>
<b>Abbott House Site</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Former home of Charles Conrad Abbott</li> <li>• Located west of Independence Plaza</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An important spot to understand Charles C. Abbott</li> <li>• Bluff site that connects to the Marsh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsignificantly</li> <li>• Right off a heavily trafficked road</li> <li>• Little visible remains</li> <li>• Likely better to connect from this site through trail access, not from main road</li> </ul>

Access point	Location/ description	Benefits	Constraints
<b>Watson Woods</b> (part of Roebling Park)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watson Woods covers the eastern end of Roebling Park</li> <li>• Enter from Westcott Avenue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits of being in Roebling Park as stated above also apply to Watson Woods</li> <li>• Trails through Watson Woods connect to over 8 miles of walking trails and 11 miles of water trails around Spring Lake and throughout Roebling Park</li> <li>• Parking and canoe launch areas are located down the hill at the entrance to Watson Woods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See constraints of Spring Lake in Roebling Park listed above</li> </ul>
<b>Isaac Pearson House</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in Hamilton near Interstate 195</li> <li>• House built in 1773, listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places</li> <li>• Owned and maintained by Hamilton Township</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House is well intact</li> <li>• Recommended to restore and open the Isaac Pearson house to the public for historic interpretation, programming, and as an access point into the Marsh</li> <li>• An interpretive connection of the House to the AFNHL would elevate the structure's eligibility for grants for restoration</li> <li>• Road to DEP owned land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would need to work on the interior of the house</li> <li>• Site is very close to I-195; not inviting location</li> <li>• Parking challenges</li> <li>• Requires stronger collaboration between Hamilton Township and the County</li> <li>• Close to sewage treatment plant (though this offers connections to modern stories about the AFNHL)</li> <li>• In order to access the Marsh from the House requires a short walk across the Hobson Avenue bridge</li> <li>• Potentially requires development of trails with boardwalks</li> </ul>
<b>Stanton Avenue</b> (Bordentown Township, off of Route 206)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a state-owned piece of land off of Route 206 that connects to trails in the Landmark, with views and access to the Marsh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are trails throughout the site, and great view of the Marsh from the bluffs</li> <li>• The road belongs to Bordentown Township</li> <li>• There is the potential to connect these trails to the Russ Ayres hot dog stand, and also to the Bordentown boat clubs</li> <li>• Limited space for parking at the site</li> <li>• There is some space on the State land to create an area for parking since the town does not like cars parked here</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived as unsafe, uninviting</li> <li>• Town does not like cars parked here</li> <li>• Needs amenities and bathrooms</li> <li>• Needs signage</li> <li>• Not connected to open areas, looks very hidden and dark</li> <li>• Would need buy-in from township and the state to open up this area</li> <li>• Property is outside the boundaries of Mercer County</li> </ul>
<b>Divine Word Missionaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located off 101 Park street in Bordentown on the bluff</li> <li>• Divine Word Missionaries purchased the Bonaparte property Point Breeze as a retirement home for priests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding view of the Crosswicks Creek and Marsh</li> <li>• Connections to Bordentown trails</li> <li>• Rich in archaeology</li> <li>• Divine Word Missionaries has a Green Acres easement which provides for limited public use of their grounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms of the easement currently allow public access only after a request is made to the D&amp;R Greenway.</li> <li>• Interpreting pre-historic sites here may encourage looting</li> <li>• Right off a main road, difficult to access without going through the Divine Word complex</li> <li>• Property is outside the boundaries of Mercer County</li> </ul>

Access point	Location/ description	Benefits	Constraints
<b>Riverline Light Rail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train line running from Trenton to Camden, which traverses the AFNHL and Marsh</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great view of the Marsh in between the Cass Street stop and the Bordentown stop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While it has a great view of the Marsh, there is no physical access to the Marsh from the Light Rail</li> <li>• There is potential to create a future train stop in the Marsh itself</li> <li>• In the future, visitors may be able to access the Canal trail from the Bordentown station once a pedestrian bridge is created near Lock 1</li> </ul>
<b>Delaware River Scenic Overlook (I-295)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenic overlook off of Interstate Highway 295</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great view from up high looking down on the Marsh</li> <li>• Provides a panoramic view of the river to the north and west and south and the Marsh to the east</li> <li>• Pedestrian bridge connects the Route 295 northbound and southbound parking areas and the D&amp;R Canal State Park trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed, but non-existing connection to Bordentown City and the city's Waterfront</li> <li>• Since it is off an Interstate, will need adequate (and costly) signage to signal to people to stop</li> </ul>
<b>Bordentown City Waterfront</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area adjacent to the water comprising Bordentown City Boat Ramp and River Line Station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This area can be accessed by boat, canoe, and train</li> <li>• Pedestrianism is being considered in the Bordentown City Master Plan and is related to the Heritage Trail, along the river</li> <li>• Bordentown City applied for a New Jersey Transit grant to expand the light rail platform to provide marsh access</li> <li>• Existing canoe launch and interconnecting waterway trails for kayaks and canoes along the Crosswicks and Watson Creeks</li> <li>• A hiking trail along the bluffs in the Marsh area is currently accessed from Orchard Avenue</li> <li>• There are five or six canal boat wrecks near the beach, near the boardwalk bridge. Tide fluctuation is dramatic; it goes down five to six feet. A visitor can see a lot more in low tide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To access the water area requires a knowledge of the tides</li> <li>• The submerged Revolutionary War boat nearby could be interpreted but is difficult to access. It can be reached by canoe, not by foot. Interpreting this area will draw attention to this archaeological find, which may not be desirable</li> <li>• Property is outside the boundaries of Mercer County</li> </ul>
<b>[Proposed] Pedestrian bridge over D&amp;R Canal Lock 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed pedestrian bridge would be located at the south end of the trail adjacent to Lock 1 and a path would lead to the existing pedestrian bridge (attached to the light rail bridge) over the Crosswicks Creek</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D&amp;R Canal Commission started part of canal trail from Lock 1&amp;2</li> <li>• Makes connection between Bordentown and Trenton</li> <li>• Ernie Hahn mentions that wild rice grows in this spot and it has great natural views</li> <li>• The spot highlights transportation history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is strong interpretive potential for the outlet area, but dense undergrowth would be costly to remove</li> </ul>





- 1, Lalor Street Area
  - 2, Spring Lake (Roebling Park)
  - 3, Watson House
  - 4, Interpretive Center
  - 5, Abbott House Site
  - 6, Watson Woods (Roebling Park)
  - 7, Isaac Pearson House
  - 8, Stanton Avenue
  - 9, Divine Word Missionaries
  - 10, Riverline Light Rail
  - 11, Delaware River Scenic Overlook
  - 12, Bordentown City Waterfront
- Abbott National Historic Landmark Boundary
  - Trails
  - Public
  - Private/Under Contract w/Mercer County
  - Private w/Conservation Easement

## Existing Access Points to the Abbott National Historic Landmark





**Isaac Watson House, located off Westcott Avenue in Hamilton**



**Stanton Avenue**



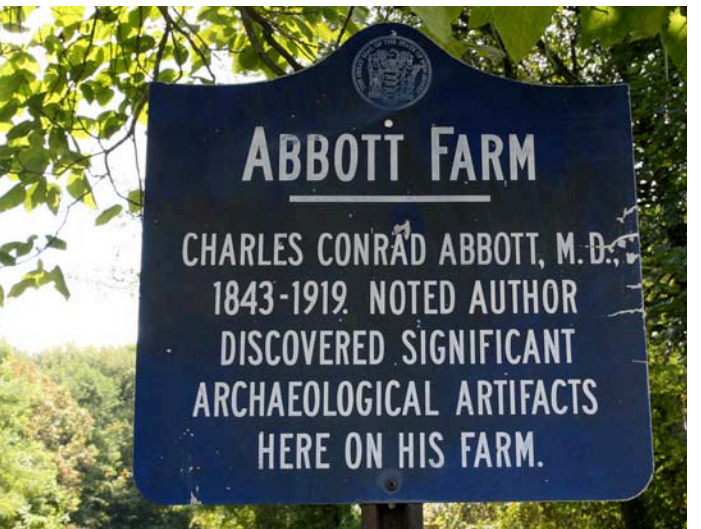
**Bordentown City Waterfront**



**Riverline Light Rail entering the Marsh**



**Spring Lake in Roebling Park**



**Signage at Abbott House site**

## Site highlights

In addition to analyzing challenges and access points, the interpretive planning team reviewed the site significance and developed a list of site highlights. Some of the more important, but perhaps unknown, highlights of the AFNHL are listed below:

### 1. Native American connections

You can still find marsh plants here that were mainstays of Native American life here: duck potatoes, cattails, and arrowwood, not to mention largemouth bass and sturgeon.

### 2. Deep discoveries

In the late 1930s, Dr. Dorothy Cross contributed greatly to the archeological examination of the AFNHL site through an initiative led by the NJ State Museum, funded by the WPA. Over several years, Dr. Cross excavated hundreds of thousands of cubic feet of earth to create a more accurate timeline of human habitation throughout the site. Also uncovered at the AFNHL: A garbage pit filled with bones of sturgeon, bear, and beaver dating back more than one thousand years to the Middle Woodland Period (1AD-900AD).

### 3. Layered landscapes

You can see traces of 19th-century floodgates on Watson Creek, sometimes visible at low tide, that were installed to create farmland and the resulting erosion from European farming practices

### 4. Home to royalty—well, ex-royalty

At Point Breeze, the estate of Joseph Bonaparte, a former king of Naples and Spain, archaeologists have found remains of the estate's structures, networks of roads, and a system of underground passages. Nearby museums house paintings Bonaparte commissioned to show off the romantic landscape he created there. The estate's foundations are literally two feet beneath today's surface—and we are learning more from Dr. Richard Veit and his current archaeological work on the Divine Word Missionaries site.

### 5. Stairway to the past

A remnant of the glorious White City Amusement Park at Spring Lake connects to a former trolley stop.

### 6. Transportation treasures

You can find remains of the Delaware & Raritan Canal, one of America's busiest navigation canals for nearly a century, and the Camden & Amboy Railroad, the third formal railroad to be built in the United States, which at the time of its construction may have been the longest route.

### 7. Twin giants

On view at the Landmark: The immense interchange of the Trenton Complex (which, when built, was one of the largest interchanges east of the Mississippi) and also Duck Island, the largest DOT wetland mitigation project in New Jersey.

### 8. A rainforest rival

Some would say that local marsh ecology is as productive as a tropical rainforest. The marsh supports an astonishing 550 plant species and 230 birds, with greater than 100 nesting species, including endangered species such as the cliff swallows that nest under the highway bridges.

### 9. Super natural powers

The Marsh contains floodwaters, removes pollutants like nitrogen and phosphorus, and provides food for plants and animals.

### 10. A wilderness on the edge the city

The Landmark offers a unique and tranquil experience, a natural oasis only a few miles from bustling Trenton.



# The Visitor Experience

This section articulates decisions and recommendations for the visitor experience at the AFNHL. The first pages focus on understanding visitors’ needs at each stage of their visit to the AFNHL—before, during, and after the on-site experience. This is followed by a presentation on the main story and themes that the team has identified for the Landmark and Marsh. Ensuing pages consider strategies for communicating these messages to diverse audiences representing a variety of skill and ability levels, including first time visitors to the site as well as those who have a sustained relationship with the AFNHL.

The Plan concludes with a comprehensive “roadmap” of actionable steps for Mercer County and partners to implement a cohesive program for the Landmark and Marsh as a whole. These clearly phased and prioritized recommendations build on past planning efforts and aim to enhance the public understanding and enjoyment of this place. The long-term hope for the new program of interpretation is that visitors will become better stewards of the site and view it as a place of discovery.



MA Leck, PROBE participants



## Determining visitor needs

Once visitors arrive at the site, their experience of the AFNHL is the result of an intersection of a variety of contexts and needs. Without preliminary needs met, conditions are not in place for the optimum visitor experience. The following hierarchy, developed by the Intellectual Access Trust in the United Kingdom, extends beyond interpretation and demonstrates an important intersection of all aspects of a visitor experience. While the hierarchy was developed with museum visitors in mind, the same underlying principles can be applied to the experience at an outdoor site like the AFNHL:

1. The primary need for visitors is *physical access*. Physical access refers to both architectural access and exhibition and signage design access. Can people enter the facility or access a trail? Are informational panels and labels at viewing level?
2. Once these needs are met, *comfortable access* is required. Is adequate information or signage available to guide visitors through the site? Can visitors find places to rest on their visit?
3. The hierarchy then addresses *emotional access* such as providing a non-threatening, welcoming environment, and creating exhibitions, kiosks, programs, and signage that acknowledge the intellectual levels of visitors.
4. *Personal/social access* must then be taken into account. Do the exhibitions and programs reflect the demographic and ethnic diversity of the general public? Do the exhibitions draw from visitors' prior knowledge and allow them to discover a relationship between the site's stories and themselves? Are the site and its amenities affordable? Do the exhibitions and building structure facilitate social interaction?
5. With all of these needs met, visitors can then achieve the ultimate level of the hierarchy—*intellectual access*. Intellectual access considers the diversity of visitors' learning styles, and accommodates for people's levels of knowledge and accessibility needs. Providing intellectual access also requires acknowledging the site and its facilities as an informal learning environment where visitors can learn at their own pace and direct their own path<sup>1</sup>.

While interpretation begins even before visitors come to the AFNHL site, it is important to keep in mind that the on-site experience must consider visitors' needs at all stages of the visit. The chart on the following page, developed by JCC&A, illustrates the needs of the site's visitors in each stage of their visit to the AFNHL—from before, during, and after the visit. The chart is a starting point to consider which interpretive experiences (such as websites, kiosks, or programs) will be most appropriate and helpful during each stage of the visit.

<sup>1</sup>The Intellectual Access Trust (INTACT), established in 1995 in the United Kingdom, translated Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for the museum setting. Meeting these needs is considered by INTACT a fundamental access issue for all visitors. Ann Raynor and the Intellectual Accessibility Trust, *Access in Mind: Toward the Inclusive Museum* (Edinburgh: NMS Publishing, 1998).

## Conceptualizing the entire visit at the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark

	Before the Visit Pre-Arrival	At the Entrance On Site	The Visit On Site	Concluding the Visit On Site	After the Visit Off Site
What are the visitor's needs?	Set expectations		How do I navigate this place?	Have a lasting memory	
	Pique interest	Comfort & orientation	Authenticity of experience		Have a good story to tell friends
	How am I going to get there?	What is this place?  How long will the visit take?  How do I behave on-site?	Learn about concepts, stories and the place  Amenities  Safety & comfort		Reinforce learning
What are the interpretive experiences to address these needs and tell the story?	Web site	Visitor orientation area	Exhibits & interactives		Web site
	Marketing	Map & site model	Wayfinding signs		Friends network
	Publications	Panels & kiosks Personal media device Tour guide	Programs & recreational adventures Real objects & reproductions		Audio updates
	Podcast introduction			Gardens & landscaping	Conferences & special events
	Site guide & brochure			Printed & electronic interpretive materials	Publications
				Donation & volunteer opportunities	

## Developing the story

The visitor needs identified by the team and the issues facing the site (addressed in summary of challenges) provide a starting point for developing a visitor experience and story for the AFNHL. As the AFNHL and its surrounding Marsh have been described by stakeholders as “a series of interesting places not necessarily connected or understood,” one of the key tasks of the Interpretive Plan is to make this place easier for people to understand and to give it a name that people can connect with and remember. Currently the Landmark has no clear identity, making it difficult for audiences to conceptually link the stories and features of this place. For Mercer County to engage diverse visitors with this place and its layers of cultural and ecological stories, it is necessary to focus on unifying the stories of the Landmark. JCC&A developed a three-level approach that addresses these concerns and that will form the basis of a new visitor experience at the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark site. The three elements are:

**Site identity**—a signature name or visual expression indicating what this place is and how it is to be identified

**Interpretive themes**—clear statements that unify the most important aspects of site significance

**Guiding outcomes**—supporting concepts that will weave through all interpretation

The following pages present these components in more depth.

## Site identity

A first step is to create a clear identity for the Landmark that is more specific and place-based, connects directly to the community, and creates personal relevance. For more popular appeal, a new conceptual identity is recommended<sup>2</sup> for the site: “Abbott Marsh and Landmark.”

**Abbott Marsh and Landmark (henceforth abbreviated as the AML) offers immediate connections to two of the most salient stories of the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark:**

**Abbott** pays tribute to Dr. Charles Conrad Abbott, one of the area’s most celebrated inhabitants. Dr. Abbott is an important historical figure whose life connects many of the stories of the marsh—from pre-history to today. A curious amateur naturalist and archaeologist, he investigated findings in his own backyard (the bluff and the marsh) and discovered pre-historical finds that sparked an international debate—shaping the future of American archaeology. Abbott is a primary example of the ideal visitor to the site—someone who observes, researches, and cares about this place. (Refer also to the section on guiding outcomes.)

**Marsh** refers to this important setting, rich in biodiversity and the stage for many of the varied dramas of this geographical region, including the Revolutionary War and the Industrial Revolution. The biodiversity of the marsh, still thriving today, is the same bounty that first attracted pre-historic peoples and European settlers, fascinated Abbott and other naturalists, and continues to provide immeasurable benefits to those who live nearby.

Including **Landmark** in the site’s title is a helpful way to signal to visitors that the site encompasses more than the Marsh; the word immediately suggests the historical and cultural importance of this place. Strengthening the relationship between the “Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark” and the “Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh” by linking them in name reflects how continuously interconnected the two places have been. When there is a need to refer to the sites separately,

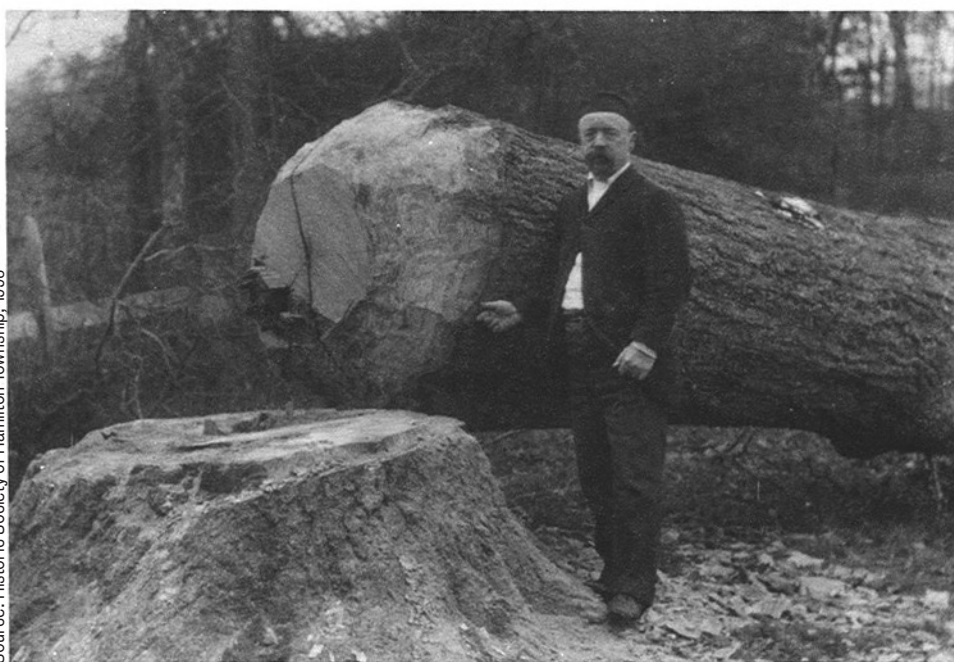
<sup>2</sup>There are other precedents for referring to Landmark sites with names that have more popular appeal. Examples include “Val-Kill,” the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic site, and “Pearl Harbor,” the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor.

Source: Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. 1996



**Charles Conrad Abbott at his Farmstead (date unknown)**

Source: Historic Society of Hamilton Township, 1998



**Charles Conrad Abbott stands beside a large pin oak that grew on the western boundary of the meadows at Three Beeches**



referring simply to the “Landmark”<sup>3</sup> or to the “Marsh” may suffice to delimit the properties. It is important to note that the official designation “The Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark” will still remain as a title for professional or official use.

Referring to the site as the “Abbott Marsh and Landmark” also reinforces the identity of this place as a cultural landscape. Cultural landscapes, in the language of heritage practitioners, are combined works of nature and humankind that express a long and intimate relationship between people and their natural environment.<sup>4</sup> It is constructive to reinforce these natural linkages by uniting the Marsh and Landmark in name, as this implies to visitors that the ongoing interactions between humans and their environment shaped this place over time.

## Interpretive themes

Successful site interpretation is built on a single unifying statement, or core interpretive theme. The core theme (and the main themes that support it) articulates clearly what is most meaningful about the resource. In the context of the “Abbott Marsh and Landmark,” on-site artifacts and historical and recreational locations serve as more than platforms for conveying messages. They are springboards for telling stories. A site dedicated to natural and cultural interpretation expands the possibility of narrative to include not only people but also animals, plants, landforms, and waterways as actors in the drama of this place.

An interpretive theme is primarily a tool that planners use to delineate what will—and will not—be included in the site interpretation. Themes are not intended as text for visitors. Using the lens of the amateur (Abbott) working in his own backyard (the marsh and bluff), the following themes are proposed:

**Core theme—The Abbott Marsh and Landmark is one of the most important and unexpected places in the region to see and experience layers of archaeology, history, rich biodiversity, and the dynamic inter-relationship of people and nature.**

**Supporting themes** should reveal aspects of the core theme:

**Abbott and his times:** An amateur naturalist and archaeologist, Charles Conrad Abbott is an important historical figure whose life connects many of the stories of the marsh from pre-history to today. With findings from his own backyard, Dr. Abbott put this place on the map over 100 years ago and sparked an ongoing debate that helped shape American archaeology.

**Marsh:** The Marsh is more than what you see: Its amazingly diverse and active wetland ecosystems are as productive as a tropical rainforest.

**Archaeology:** This place is one of the most significant prehistoric sites on the East Coast, containing evidence from ten thousand years of continuous human habitation.

**Humans and nature:** The site’s diverse landscape and stories reflect our changing views of nature over time.

<sup>3</sup> It may be necessary to refer to the Landmark alone, as it is a site recognized for its historical value by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

<sup>4</sup> From UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre

Herb Lord, "Dasher"



Herb Lord, "Great Egret"



Guiding outcomes

A visit to the Abbott Marsh and Landmark is more than a tour through an archaeological site or rich ecological preserve. It is an experience of a living place, animated with unexpected biodiversity and layered with historical homes, archaeological remains, and recreational areas still enjoyed by people today. Uncovering these aspects of the Landmark and its Marsh is essential to the visitor experience of the Abbott Marsh and Landmark as a living site to conserve and discover today.

Three concepts—**Observation, Recreation, and Discovery**—are proposed as guiding outcomes of the visitor experience.

Inspired by the life of Abbott, these concepts have been identified as important outcomes of the visitor experience. Interpretation should impress on visitors that through **observation** and **recreation** they are more apt to **discover** the wonders of the site. Reinforcing these three ideas throughout the experience will enable visitors to recognize and experience the Abbott Marsh and Landmark’s ecological and human importance through encounters with the plant and animal life and personal connections to the site’s use and conservation. Over time these elements can help lead visitors to become stronger stewards of the site.

Summary chart

The chart below summarizes the proposed interpretive framework for the site.

Site Identity	Abbott Marsh and Landmark	
Core Theme	The Abbott Marsh and Landmark is one of the most important and unexpected places in the region to see and experience layers of archaeology, history, rich biodiversity, and the dynamic inter-relationship of people and nature.	
Supporting Themes	<i>Abbott and his times:</i> An amateur naturalist and archaeologist, Charles Conrad Abbott is an important historical figure whose life connects many of the stories of the marsh from pre-history to today. With findings from his own backyard, Dr. Abbott put this place on the map over 100 years ago and sparked an ongoing debate that helped shape American archaeology.	<i>Marsh:</i> The Marsh is more than what you see: Its amazingly diverse and active wetland ecosystems are as productive as a tropical rainforest.  <i>Archaeology:</i> This place is one of the most significant prehistoric sites on the East Coast, containing evidence from 10,000 years of continuous human habitation.  <i>Humans and nature:</i> The site’s diverse landscape and stories reflect our changing views of nature over time.
Guiding Outcomes	<i>Observation, Recreation, and Discovery</i>	

## Interpretive methodologies

While the themes are the conceptual backbone of the visitor experience, the actual on-site visit relies on programs, signs, and events to animate the site and communicate the main messages. Interpretive methodologies are the tools for the County and its partners to use to express and elaborate on the messages identified for the AML. There is a remarkable range of methodologies available that can be used to connect visitors with the site's stories in compelling and personally meaningful ways.

In selecting the methodologies that are most appropriate for the stories of the Abbott Marsh and Landmark, it was necessary to consider visitors' different learning styles and needs. Current educational research in interpretation supports a multilayered approach to site interpretation that allows visitors to become active learners and choose the format and amount of information received. Research also demonstrates that visitors want to establish a connection between an experience and their own lives, which necessitates recognition of individual needs and subjective responses. As such, interpretive methodologies need to acknowledge and anticipate initial reactions and enable visitors to discover additional layers of meaning. The diversity of the AML's audience—including but not limited to age, ethnicity, physical and cognitive abilities, and education was also considered. Additionally, printed materials could be offered in bilingual versions to connect with Spanish-speaking audiences.

This section briefly describes the choices of interpretive media and methods that are appropriate for use at the AML, and then presents them in a matrix form on page 46. Selected methodologies are based on four distinct types of desired visitor experiences—**Active educational**, **Active recreational**, **Passive recreational**, and **Passive educational**. The selection takes into account that at various times during their visit visitors will have strong preferences for a given experience style.

### Active educational

These experiences are selected to encourage visitors' participation in and contributions to the interpretive content, and to inspire inquiry and provoke discussion. An active educational experience can help reinforce to visitors the sense that they themselves are part of the story being told here at the AML. These experiences reflect the belief that people, and especially children, learn better by doing.

Selected methodologies in this category include:

- Navigational and orienteering trainings
- A suite of AML programs designed especially for school-aged groups. This includes hour-long programs for school field trips and after-school programs; an ongoing "young naturalists" club, a seasonal fishing camp, and regular outreach to K-12 school classes in Mercer and Burlington counties to promote awareness of the AML
- Archaeological dig volunteer programs to train adult volunteers to help at excavation sites
- An outdoor demonstration area or outdoor classroom to document, observe, and present the wildlife and archaeology of the AML. At different times in the year, experts can show their finds or present species of birds that can be found on-site. At other times, teachers may use this space to show their class what can be found during a marsh walk or canoe trip, encouraging hands-on research-based explorations.
- Kids maps and trail guides
- Family scavenger hunts
- Historic house tours

### Active recreational

This category of experiences encourages visitor participation, fosters a sense of fun, and offers settings for cooperation, contribution, and memory making. Active, recreational experiences also encourage social interaction for family groups.

Selected methodologies in this category include:

- Organized canoe trips, hikes, or boating and biking excursions
- Trails (for biking, canoeing, boating, hiking, walking)
- Volunteer programs for upkeep and maintenance of the AML and its trails



- Trash pick-up events
- Night time marsh walks to discover what can be seen and heard in the AML at night
- Organized treasure hunts where participants discover notable locations or “treasure chest” containers with logbooks, using either maps and compasses (inspired by Orienteering) or Global Positioning Devices (GPS, inspired by Geocaching). These activities will encourage navigation and exploration of the AML and are non-invasive, with no intervention in the landscape or disturbance of archaeological sites
- Permanent installations on-site to encourage recreation and play, including a natural playground for children, and a stairway from the marsh to bluffs with lookout points and deck areas to gather groups
- Events to participate in including a Shad festival, a fishing tournament, and a “White City” themed festival

## **Passive recreational**

Passive recreational experiences encompass a less intensive range of activities that also have low impact on the site’s natural resources. These experiences enable reflection, observation, or inactive exploration for individuals or less active group visitors to the AML.

Selected methodologies in this category include:

- Permanent installations on-site to encourage observation and enjoyment, including a Native American garden, benches for quiet reflection, and a marsh observation deck and boardwalk
- Directional signage to guide visitors who are on foot
- Marsh poems or quotations from Charles Conrad Abbott interspersed on site signage, benches, or trail markers to provoke reflection
- Public access television spots featuring the AML
- Advertising and images of the AML on the River Line Light Rail for commuters to enjoy
- Art installations on-site and a commissioned statue of Charles Conrad Abbott
- A free ferry service from Bordentown to get a Crosswicks Creek view of the AML
- An AML fish and game shop to encourage informed fishing in the site
- Events to enjoy and observe including photography exhibitions and competitions

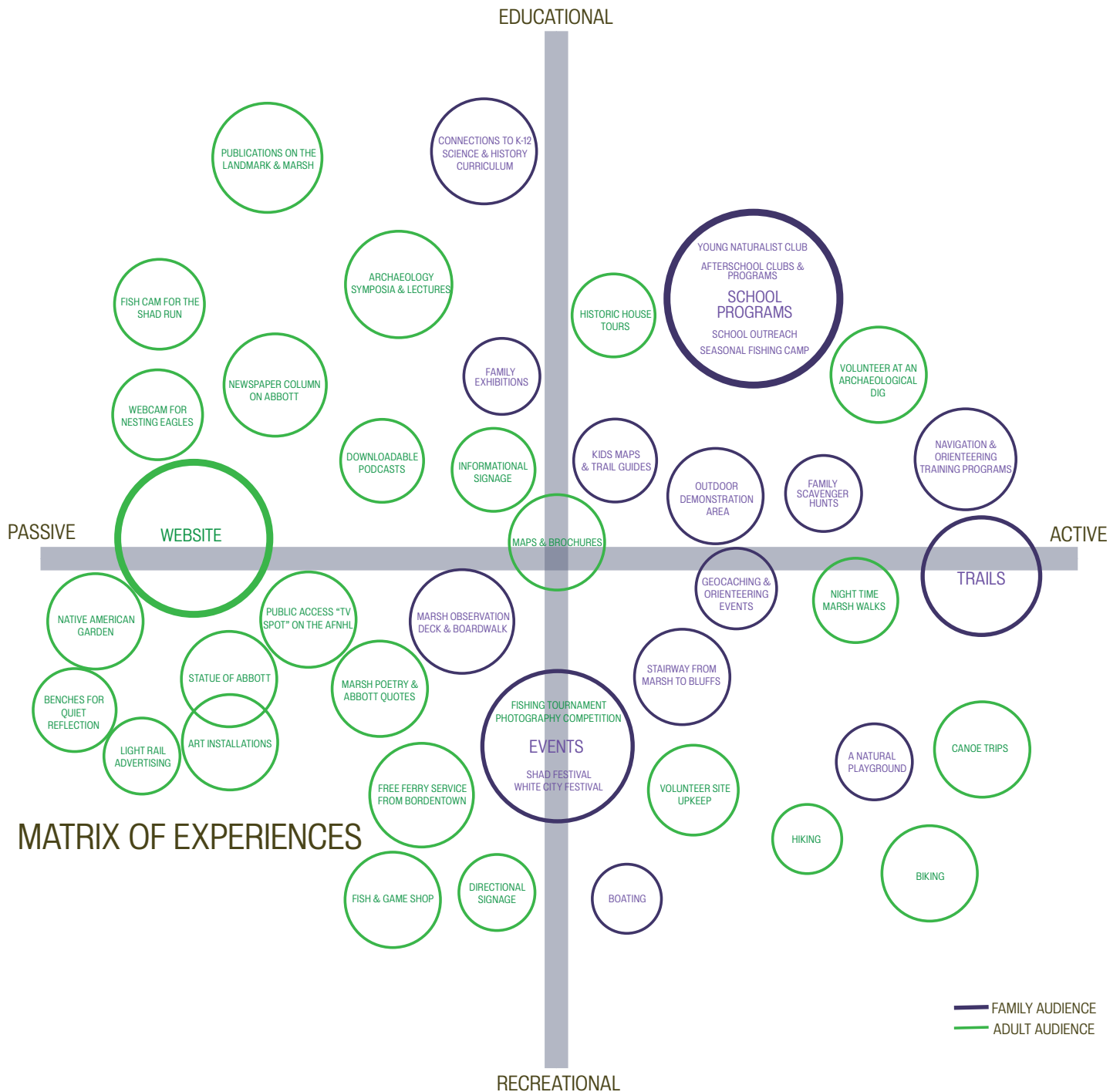
## **Passive educational**

Visitors often need or desire more guided, educational experiences where they have less interaction and more opportunity for reflection and listening. Passive, educational experiences are also selected to connect with or enhance school learning and to present in-depth information in a richer context.

Selected methodologies in this category include:

- Web cams monitoring important wildlife at the AML, such as nesting eagles or shad
- A regular newspaper column featuring Abbott’s writings and seasonal observations on the Marsh that compares what can be seen at the Marsh in the present day
- Archaeology symposia and lecture series
- Informational kiosks about the impact of looting at the AML, with images of its effects at sites that have been destroyed and tips on how to observe and enjoy archaeology without compromising the site
- Curricula and guides that connect to New Jersey State’s K-12 science and history core curriculum
- Family exhibitions and informational signage and brochures
- Downloadable podcasts on key aspects of the AML’s significance, such as a narrated story of Joseph Bonaparte, a brief history of the D&R canal, or a lecture on the biodiversity of the Marsh
- A dedicated AML website that acts as a nucleus of information and events at the AML. Publications on the Landmark and Marsh can eventually be downloaded from the website or displayed in a comprehensive bibliography. The website can also feature interactive trail maps and resources for school groups.

The Matrix of Experiences illustrates choices of interpretive media and methods that are appropriate for use at the AML. Selected methodologies are based on four distinct types of desired visitor experiences—**Active Educational**, **Active Recreational**, **Passive Recreational**, and **Passive Educational**.



## Recommendations and priorities

The ensuing pages present and prioritize recommendations for interpretation of the Abbott Marsh and Landmark. Recognizing that funds are limited, the recommendations have been classified into four levels to help Mercer County and its partners facilitate implementation in priority order:

### **Level 1 Priority Recommendations**

### **Level 2 Recommendations**

### **Level 3 Future Stages**

### **and Ongoing Recommendations**

Each level of recommendations is organized into categories:

1. Awareness and Visibility
2. Access
3. Program and Outreach
4. Infrastructure/ Governance

## Level 1 Priority Recommendations

### 1.1. Awareness and Visibility

#### *A new name*

As described in the “site identity” section of the Plan (page 39), implement a new popular name for the AFNHL and Marsh: The Abbott Marsh and Landmark (AML). Considering the AFNHL is described by stakeholders as “a series of interesting places not necessarily connected or understood,” to respond to this challenge, a priority is to create a clear identity for the Landmark that is more specific and place-based, connects directly to the community, and creates personal relevance. For more popular appeal, a new conceptual identity is recommended for the site: “Abbott Marsh and Landmark.”

- The shortened and official versions should be combined in the logo design (see below)

#### *Communicate site identity*

To further develop the site identity, it will be important to communicate the site identity and enhance brand recognition of the site. Key steps include:

- Develop an RFP for a graphic design firm to accomplish the following tasks to communicate site identity and enhance brand recognition of the AML:
  - Develop a new visual identity for the site (that characterizes the new name of the site)
    - The visual identity should include a logo and color scheme
    - The visual identity should reinforce expectations that this place encompasses both history and nature
  - Create a design standards manual (including templates for signage)
    - The design standards manual should be distributed to project partners in a design launch meeting and used in a complementary way with the new interpretive center design and exhibition design approaches
  - Create the Abbott Marsh and Landmark website (in a phased approach)
    - Phase I of the website should establish a web presence for the site using the new logo and design scheme. The website should include basic content. Additional content and interactive elements can be added in later phases. Basic content can include: a compelling description of the site and its features, the map of the site [see below], and a page on history, recreation, partners and volunteering, and contact information
    - Please refer to the following pages for more direction and guidelines on the website
  - Create a new map for the Abbott Marsh and Landmark
    - The new map of the site should be designed in a user-friendly form. It should feature all of the important historic elements and destinations within the AML and illustrate all existing trails. Please refer to the following pages for more direction on the map and the destinations that should be included
- Enhance brand communication:
  - Ensure project partners are consistently using the new name and logo and following the design standards
  - Remove any previous web content with the old names
  - Remove signage with the old names

#### *Increase awareness of Charles Conrad Abbott's life and work*

The new name includes “Abbott” in its title, after one of the Landmark's most important residents. Unfortunately, Charles Conrad Abbott is not well known, but the renaming of the site presents an opportunity to introduce his legacy and writings to new audiences. To increase awareness about Abbott, it is recommended to

- Include Abbott on the main page or pages of the new website (use salient Abbott quotations and consider providing downloadable writings by or about Abbott)
- See page 51 about beginning a newspaper column on Abbott and his observations
- Create a writing or photography contest for local high school students to create a written or photo essay on the legacy of Charles Conrad Abbott and what can be learned from him today. Award scholarship or prize money for the winning essay.



### *Rename the Nature/Interpretive Center*

Give the Nature/Interpretive Center an inclusive title to be consistent with the new site identity: “The Abbott Marsh and Landmark Center” (AML Center)

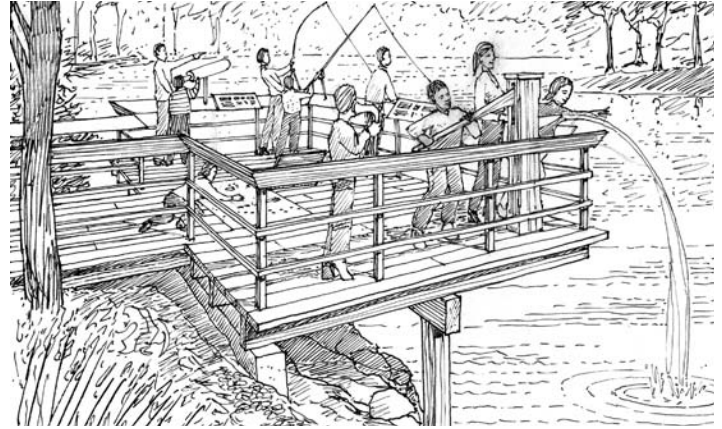
- The title provides for consistency with the name of the site and for visitor comfort in being able to connect and understand the various resources of the Marsh and Landmark
- Visually and conceptually connect the Landmark and the Marsh throughout the family exhibitions in the new AML Center
- Exhibitions and content should include not only the natural stories, but also the cultural and historical topics; these topics will strengthen each other and together create a richer experience for the visitor

## **1.2. Access**

### *Expand primary access point*

Expand and enhance the primary access point (the Abbott Marsh and Landmark “main campus” which includes the Westcott Avenue AML Center, the Watson House and grounds, parking area, and the Watson Woods entrance into Roebling Park). This access point or “hub”—with its many layers of historical, natural, and cultural stories—should present all interpretive themes to begin situating the visitor in the multidisciplinary stories of the site (refer to the section on Interpretive Themes).

- Phase I enhancement:
  - Work to identify the entire campus both visually and conceptually by using complementary signage and creating clear directional and parking signage
  - Change the welcome signage to indicate “Abbott Marsh and Landmark” more prominently than Roebling Park. Also add the AML Center on the main welcome sign (after Roebling Park). All signage should follow new design standards.
  - Remove the fence surrounding the Watson House. (If necessary, replace with a lighter, less obtrusive fence.) Use other, less visible, means of securing the site
  - Implement two vertical, interpretive kiosks (Three-sided kiosks with a map of the campus, map of the AML, and interpretive introduction text to the history and nature stories of the site) at the parking area, and down below in Roebling Park
  - Promote this primary access point on the new website and on the Abbott Marsh and Landmark Map
- Phase II enhancement:
  - Implement a railing with signage on the bluff looking out onto the Marsh (see page 50). This railing can later be enhanced with durable telescopes
  - Develop a connection/pathway from the bluff rim to Spring Lake and also to Watson Woods/ Excavation 14 area
    - Add a snaking staircase from the top of the bluff to the lake area and Watson Woods. Use the staircase as a place of interpretation and as access
    - Connect this staircase to a trail that leads to the Spring Lake parking area
    - The staircase should be enough wide so that people can stop and gather for views and vistas
  - Add a Marsh observation boardwalk or deck for access across wetlands
  - At Watson Woods, create a water trail and include tide sticks for greater water access. Add canoe racks
- Visually and conceptually connect the Landmark and the Marsh (history and nature) in the family exhibitions in the new AML Center
  - Also ensure that exhibitions reflect a multidisciplinary approach to the stories of this place (refer to the section on interpretive themes)



**Examples of observation boardwalks and decks to provide visitor access across wetlands**



Gilmartin, "snaking stairs," Cape of Good Hope

**A snaking staircase (such as the one pictured at left) will connect the top of the bluff to the Lake area and Watson Woods, and eventually connect to a trail that leads to the Spring Lake parking area. The staircase can also be used as a place of interpretation, wide enough to allow visitors to stop and gather for views**



### 1.3. Program and Outreach (Local and Regional awareness)

#### *Nexus for programming*

Make the AML Center the nexus of all programming and pertinent information (including behavioral information, special programs, tide charts, and events)

- Provide public opening hours
- Offer public toilets
- Install an outdoor public notification board, updated weekly with new information and nature sightings
- Inform visitors of behavioral expectations, including the legal and cultural implications of disturbing archeological sites

#### *Build local/ regional understanding*

Work to increase local regional awareness and understanding of this valuable place and its resources

- Support the Friends for the Marsh organization
  - Provide the Friends network of people with knowledge of the interpretive plan and site branding efforts (email blasts to members, open house meetings, distribution of the plan with cover memo from the County)
  - On the new website provide a dedicated space for information about the Friends events. Provide a link to the Friends website
  - Organize use of the AML Center for Friends events
- Create a weekly newspaper column in the local press (such as the *Trenton Times*, the *Hamilton Post*, or the *Hamiltonian*) featuring Charles Conrad Abbott's observations about the Marsh. Time the observations so that they are in line with the season. Create a "dialogue" between Abbott's writings on the Marsh and what can be seen today<sup>5</sup>

#### *Outreach events*

Hold special events targeted at reaching local, neighborhood audiences.

- Design special outreach events with the intent of developing them as annual events
  - Reach out to local businesses to fund these events/provide catering. Allow businesses who participate to advertise on the AFNHL website
  - Events may include:
    - Shad festival
    - Marsh festival
    - Photography contests
    - White City festival
- Outreach to local real estate agents
  - Send designated representative from the municipalities to meet with real estate offices to provide information on the landmark designation
  - Work with the real estate offices and professional affiliation groups to educate new buyers about the responsibility and opportunity of living in a national historic landmark site. Work to ensure the long-term protection of the many of hundreds of properties within the historic landmark boundaries that remain in active private use

<sup>5</sup>The column may begin with a dated entry of Abbott's that describes what he sees and experiences, such as the entry here: "It so happened I was in the immediate valley of Crosswicks Creek long after sunset, yesternight. The tide was well run out and long, low banks of mud were exposed. On these the night-herons were stalking or standing, sentinellike, and back on higher ground the toads were bellowing. Black clouds obscured the sky but left wide star-dotted spaces between them. There was no sight nor sound of man. Again it was the weird, wild country of the Indian or before his time. The mastodon might have sounded his shrill, trumpet-like cry and I would not have been disturbed."- Abbott from the *Rambles of an Idler*, p.77

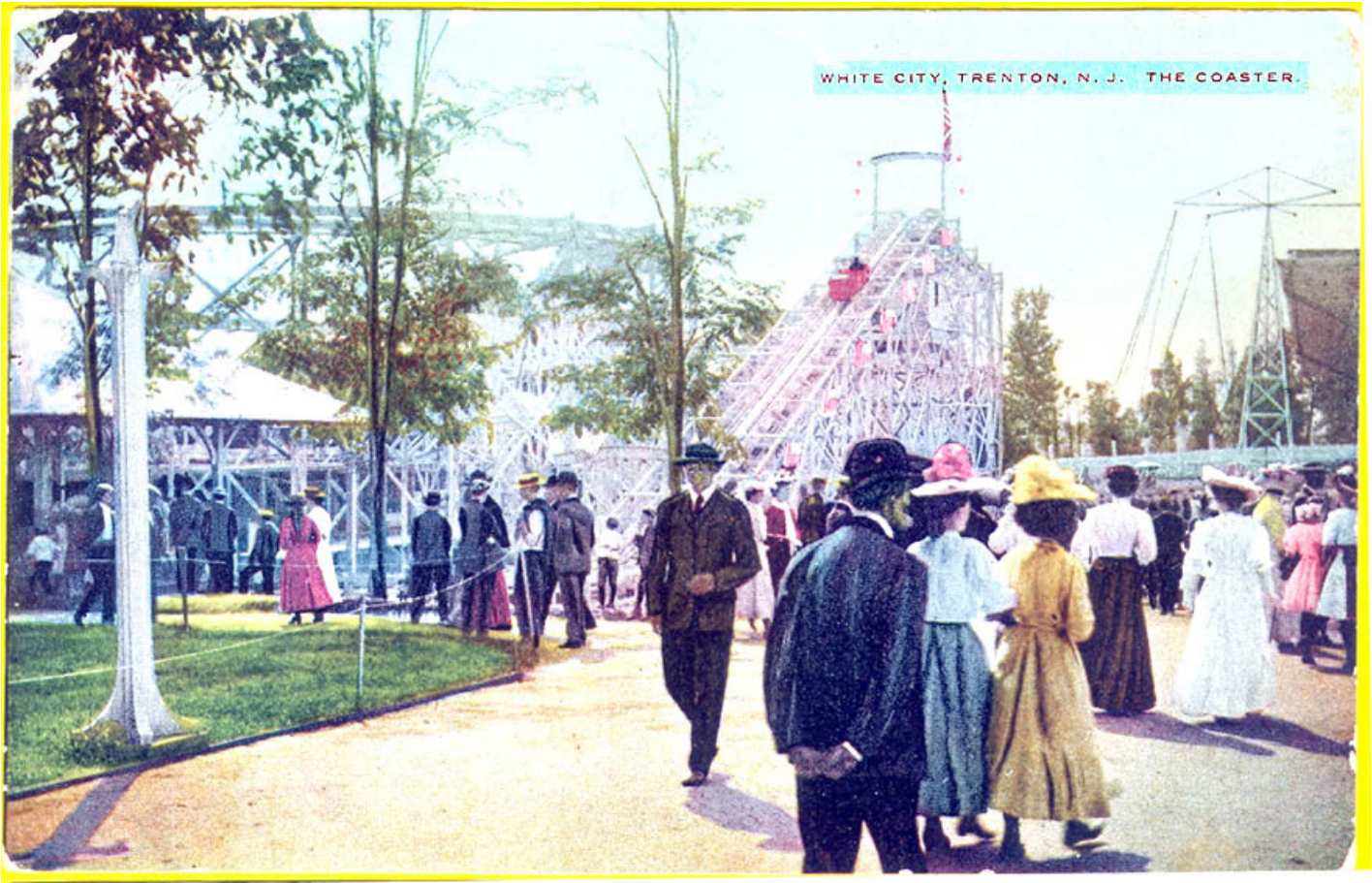


New events, similar to the Swamp Fest at the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans (pictured here), can help engage local audiences



Expanded kayaking and canoeing programs will give visitors a water-level view of the AML

Revive interest in learning about the historic amusement park that once thrived at Spring Lake. A “White City” festival, featuring authentic activities from the heyday of the park—including roller-skating, dancing, a “roller toboggan,” and a “laughing gallery”—can spark curiosity about this dream city park that stayed in operation until the 1920s





## 1.4. Infrastructure/Governance

### *Alliance*

Begin to set the groundwork for establishing an Alliance (governing board/ organizational structure) for the Landmark (see Nature Center Master Plan, p. 7). This could be in the form of a new organization that comprises Hamilton, Bordentown, and Trenton townships and citizen groups, as well as scholars and key partners. Building an organizational structure such as an Alliance is most important for the long-term stewardship and management of the AML

- This Alliance could be responsible for
  - raising funds
  - making decisions about the site
  - owning and updating the website
  - hiring staff for interpretive programming and event planning

### *Staffing*

Consider retaining a part-time or full-time staff person in charge of the new AML Center and all site interpretation and programming. This person could have the title Director of Interpretation at the Abbott Marsh and Landmark

### *Communication plan*

Establish a communication plan

- Develop a system for communication with all levels of site partners, stakeholders, and target audiences
- Create a plan to identify how and when each group should receive information about the site or provide information and feedback on the site. Means of communication and frequency of communication should be indicated clearly
  - Example: Site partners may be invited to biannual meetings, and receive letters and emails on a monthly or weekly basis; whereas other groups may receive less frequent email blasts

### *University partnerships*

Explore university partnership(s). During the phase of priority implementation, it will be important to identify prospective university partners who can work with the Abbott Marsh & Landmark to advance programming and research for the site. University departments to be approached include departments with relevant expertise and interest. Examples of university department partners and their potential contributions to the site:

- **Environmental education department** – can provide a naturalist training program, design curricula for K-12 science classes, and implement a satellite Marsh lab on-site with an outdoor demonstration area for visitors to observe or participate in collecting specimens and data
- **Archaeology** – digs and research, artifact identification, symposia, publications, volunteer dig program
- **English department** – Marsh poetry contest, reviews of Abbott's nature writing
- **History department** – publications on many of the Landmarks' historical layers, develop temporary interpretive exhibitions
- **Art department** – photography of the Landmark, Marsh sculpture or temporary outdoor art installations on-site
- **Biology department** – hands-on research utilizing the Marsh as a laboratory, publications on wetland ecology
- **Education department** – teaching and learning about natural history.

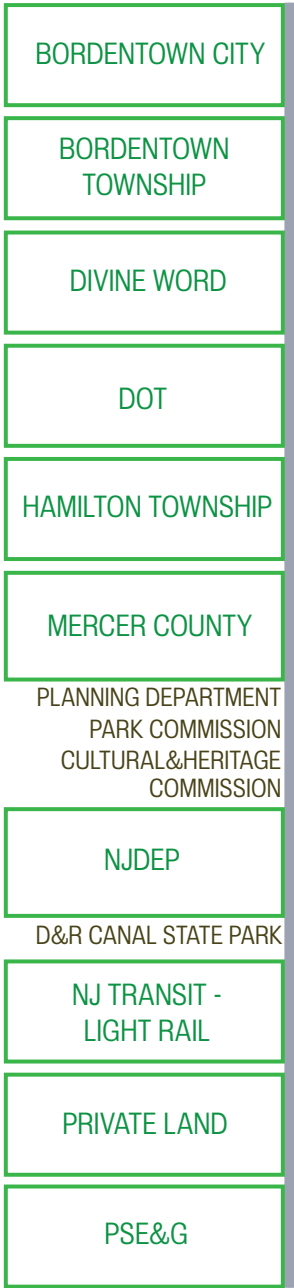
The chart below details groups involved or concerned with the AML project, delineating Landowners, Stakeholders, and Partners for the site. This chart can serve as the basis for establishing an Alliance of organizations that support the long-term stewardship and management of the AML.

# Existing Organizational Chart

## Abbott Marsh and Landmark

### Landmark Landowners, Stakeholders & Partners

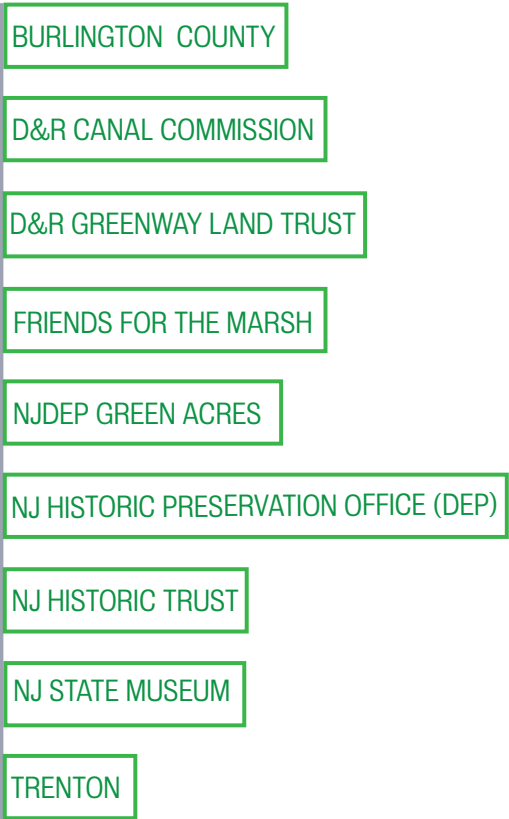
#### LANDOWNERS



#### STAKEHOLDERS



#### PARTNERS



## Level 2 Recommendations

### 2.1. Awareness and Visibility

#### *Enhance website*

Continue adding content to the new website and consider the following enhancements to make the website more attractive and user-friendly:

- Add an interactivity component to the map and website (see the following pages for website examples)
  - Enable the online map to be interactive for visitors. Create a capability to choose destinations based on themes and trails and available time for a visit
  - Enable different types of users to be able to use the map in the way they need: bikers, hikers, academics, adults desiring walking tours, family hikes, boaters, birders and canoers
- Expand the publication content of the site to broaden the reach of interest to a larger audience. Include publications on Abbott, Bonaparte, the Marsh, etc.
- Develop stronger social marketing connections
  - Create the ability for guest users on the website to share photos and comment on articles and events
  - Create a Facebook group and Flickr pages for the Abbott Marsh and Landmark
  - Encourage YouTube videos about features of the site. Maintain and update Wiki entries on the Marsh and Landmark and related topics
  - Provide opportunities for public input—including blogs or online forums related to key issues on the Abbott Marsh and Landmark

#### *Increase awareness of Charles Conrad Abbott's life and work*

- Include an exhibition on Abbott in the new Interpretive Center
- Create a public access TV clip on Abbott and the Landmark



## Sample Websites and Maps for the AML

### Center for Coastal Resources Management Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences



Features of this website ([http://ccrm.vims.edu/wetlands/teaching\\_marsh/index.html](http://ccrm.vims.edu/wetlands/teaching_marsh/index.html)) include a crisp design and clean navigational system (above). The site also offers an easy-to-use, online, interactive map (at right) to orient users to the Marsh ([http://ccrm.vims.edu/wetlands/teaching\\_marsh/visit\\_the\\_marsh/virtual\\_tour.html](http://ccrm.vims.edu/wetlands/teaching_marsh/visit_the_marsh/virtual_tour.html)). The map includes symbols for interpretive kiosks, and clearly outlines trails, parking, and amenities.

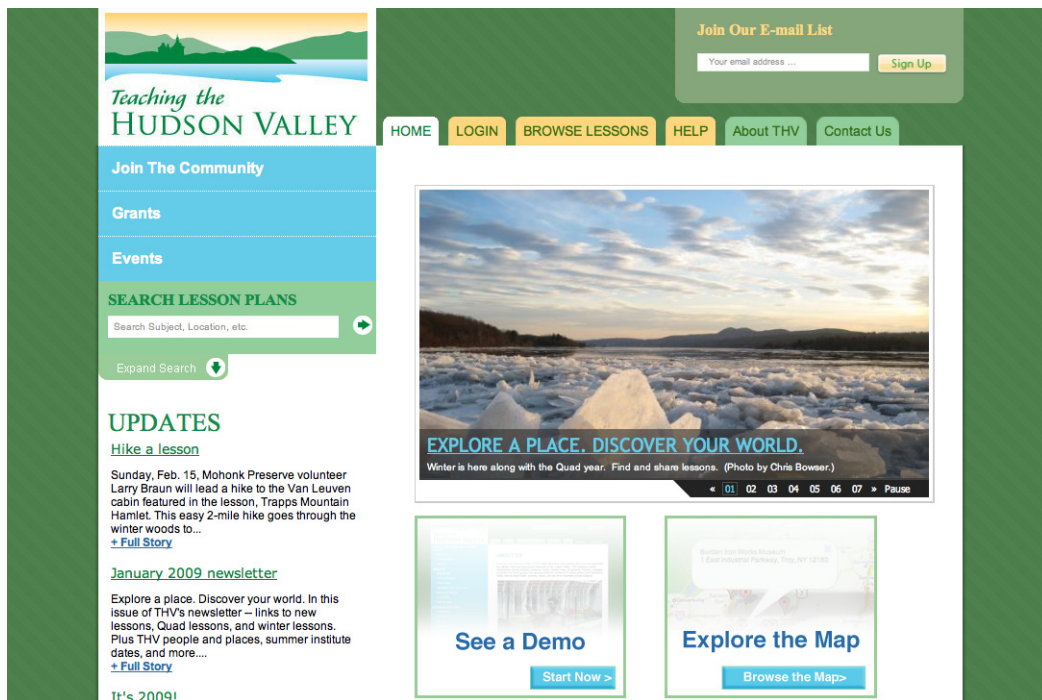
#### Teaching Marsh: Virtual Tour

Keys to symbols are below the map.



## Sample Websites and Maps for the AML

### Teaching the Hudson Valley



Features of this website ([www.teachingthehudsonvalley.org](http://www.teachingthehudsonvalley.org)) include a section called “We’re available” detailing how the organization “will come to your school, museum, or other site to talk about our place-based, curriculum-development grants and/or show you how to enter activities and lessons into our resource bank.” This site is a good model for outreach, as it will be important for the AML to connect directly with schools and after-school programs to eventually offer curriculum-based activities, field trips, and lesson plans.

This website also features lessons by age and grade level, an excellent resource for teachers who are looking for age-specific content.

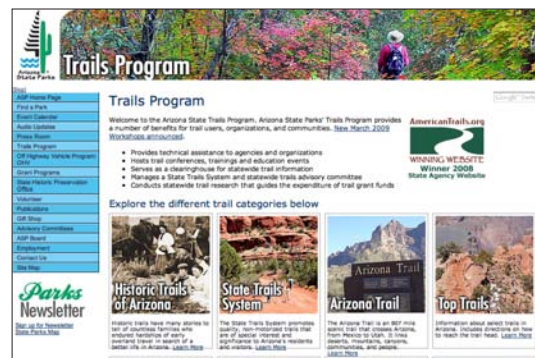
The site includes a great layout for showing its partner organizations: <http://www.teachingthehudsonvalley.org/About-THV/Partners/Partners.html>

## Sample Websites and Maps for the AML

### American Trails



American Trails



Arizona State Trails Program

The website of the American Trails <http://www.americantrails.org/webcon08.html> continues the first-ever contest to seek out the best websites in the cyber world of trails and greenways. The organization looks for sites that “really make trails come alive, and provide effective information delivery, support volunteers, and engage the public. In short, we want to showcase ways that advocates and agencies are making a difference for trails.”

This site will be an important resource for the AML to reference when developing the interactive component of its new website.

*Notable winners from 2008:*

**Arizona State Trails Program** provides many levels of information on trail resources for residents, land managers, trail advocates, and volunteers: <http://azstateparks.com/trails/index.html>

**Portland Trails, ME**, offers a timeline of the organization that has brought the 38-mile trail network to life; e-commerce activities to promote annual gifts; memberships; and the Portland Trails store, along with new multimedia offerings: [www.trails.org](http://www.trails.org)

**Alabama Scenic River Trail** is a National Recreational Trail stretching 631 miles from the Georgia border to Fort Morgan on the Gulf of Mexico: [www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com](http://www.alabamascenicrivertrail.com)



## 2.2. Access

### *Expand access*

Develop four interpretive kiosks (with maps) at four different access points to expand main access to the site

1. Spring Lake
2. Bordentown Waterfront
3. Bordentown-Train platform and trail
4. Delaware River Scenic Overlook (I-295)

### *Maintain and create thematic trails*

A well-maintained and more unified trail system is necessary for the AML to function as an adequate educational and recreational resource for the greater Trenton area. At present, the trail system is not well presented to potential users. Trails should be better defined, safe, and well marked; it should be clear whether routes are designed for pedestrians, runners, bikers, or vehicles.

- Creating and promoting a trail map is an essential first step
- Thematic trails can be promoted online (with the new interactive map) and then enhanced on-site with directional signage and wayside coordination
- Create a downloadable trail map and brochure; also provide copies of the map outside the AML Center
- Simple signage with quotations from Abbott's writings and poetry about the Marsh can provide more poetic, reflective experiences for visitors along these trails
- Enhance the Friends for the Marsh's relationship with the Mercer County Park Commission and create opportunities for additional volunteers

### *Signage*

Consider adding specific types of signs to enhance access and provide a welcoming experience of the site.

- Ensure the visibility of important historic resources and reinforce their connection to the Landmark. Add identifying signage to the following destinations:
  - Abbott House site (a new sign consistent with new signage should be placed where the old sign is now; the old sign should be relocated to the actual site of Abbott's home)
  - Watson House
  - Pearson House
  - Bow Hill mansion (if agreed by owners)
  - Abbott DeCou mansion (if agreed by owners)
- Consider also adding simple, complementary signage with quotations and poetry about the sites to provide for a more poetic, reflective experience for visitors

### *Other access*

- Coordinate with Bordentown City to enhance landing areas and access to waterways for canoes and kayaks at the Bordentown Waterfront
- Coordinate with Bordentown City to expand the train platform at the Bordentown station to connect with trails along the Crosswicks Creek



Three-sided, free-standing kiosks are recommended for the main access points of the AML, such as these (pictured above) from Central Park, which display a site map on one side and history and features on the other sides



Onoma LLC



Gilmartin, "Table Mountain," Cape Town

Durable, outdoor signage should be light on the landscape and draw visitors to engage with the surroundings

Behavioral signage and information on amenities help to welcome visitors and let them know what to expect and how to act during their visit



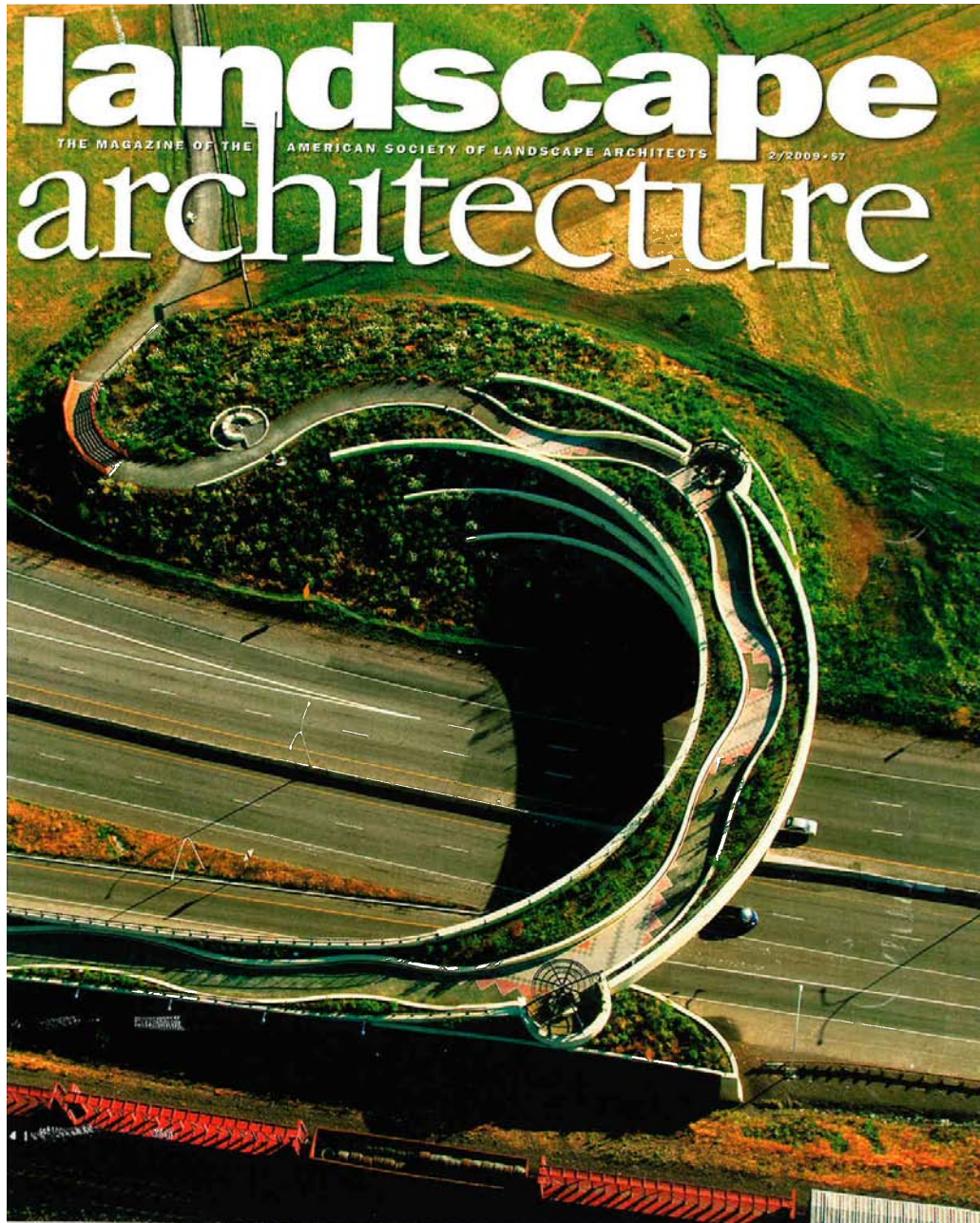
Observational view points and vistas are recommended for a bluff top view of the marsh



Onoma LLC, "Tredgar Ironworks"



One model for considering the expansion of the access point at the Delaware River Scenic Overlook (I-295) is the “Land Bridge” in Washington state (pictured below), a highway overpass that was transformed into a visitor experience. Featured in the February 2009 issue of *Landscape Architecture*, the earth and concrete Land Bridge is a wide, dignified path to the Columbia River. Along the pathway, there are panoramic views of the landscape. Plants that gave the native landscape its character and sustained people for thousands of years are right there, along the path and around the overlooks. Johnpaul Jones, designer of the Land Bridge describes it, “we grabbed the prairie and pulled it over the highway.” Such a model could be adapted at the Scenic Overlook, providing visitors with a natural pathway and view to the Marsh.





### 2.3. Program and Outreach (Local and Regional awareness)

- Light Rail advertising about the Abbott Marsh and Landmark
  - Ensure the AML appears on the River Line website as a historic destination
  - Develop a print ad campaign to appear on the River Line trains
- More robust programming
  - With the AML Center in full swing, consider offering new programs including:
    - Neighborhood outreach program where neighbors are invited bring in archaeological objects they may have found on their properties. Use this as an opportunity to educate local residents about looting and the benefits of professional archaeological excavation methods
    - Historic house tours of Watson House
    - Nighttime marsh walks
    - After-school clubs and programs, including a “young naturalists” club
    - K-12 curriculum integration
    - Seasonal fishing camp
- Continue special events
  - Add additional, non-annual special events, such as “Family scavenger hunts”
- Secure university partner (see Level 1 Priority Recommendations)
  - Encourage partner to create a 5-10 year plan of research and publications, programming, and outreach about the Landmark and Marsh
  - Encourage an active volunteer program run by the university to train laypeople to assist in archaeological excavation work and ecological monitoring



Saralee Pindar, "Boating on Spring Lake"



Saralee Pindar, "Munching a Water Lily"





Simple signage with quotations and poetry about the sites to provide for a more poetic, reflective experience for visitors. (Pictured above and right: interpretive signage using poetry from the Central Park Zoo)

Young naturalist clubs spark curiosity in children and teenagers to investigate the natural world



## Level 3 Future Stages

If the vision is for the Landmark to become recognized for its value as one of the most important archaeological sites on the East Coast, then the infrastructure will need to be expanded. Below are recommendations for these future stages of implementation. The recommendations keep in mind the need to preserve this place as a site of local and ecological value, but also expand it as a destination for ecotourism and archaeological enthusiasts.

### 3.1. Awareness and Visibility

- Expand understanding of the AML as a destination for ecotourism
  - Downloadable podcasts (that support interpretive themes)
  - Brochures (distributed statewide and at tourism/visitor centers)
  - Postcards of the site (available for purchase at local shops)
  - Also see below for recommendations on ecotourism offerings to be developed
- Expand knowledge of Charles Conrad Abbott's life and work
  - Commission a statue of Abbott from a local or regional artist
  - Approach national magazines or publications (including *Archaeology* magazine) to do a feature on Abbott and on the Abbott Marsh and Landmark

### 3.2. Access

- Develop two secondary access points geared towards local, urban audiences
  - Two interpretive kiosks (with maps) at two new access points
    - 1.) Isaac Pearson House
    - 2.) Lalor Street
  - Update the website to reflect these access points
- Enhance the infrastructure and educational offerings at the primary access point
  - Implement a Native American Garden with signage at the top of the bluff near the AML Center (looking out onto the Marsh)
- Enhance the main access points
  - Benches for quiet reflection
  - Informational signage
  - More observation points and decks for observing wildlife or getting Marsh access
- Expand site access for children
  - Create and publish kids trail maps and guides
  - Develop a natural playground and play area
    - This should include a kids digging area, for teaching basic techniques and fundamentals of archaeological excavation
    - Include water-play elements for connections to the Marsh and Crosswicks Creek
    - Include natural play materials to encourage child free-play experience with natural materials (dig in the dirt, children's garden, tree house)
- Enhance interpretation of the Abbott House site (when security is stronger and looting is less of a concern)
  - Include interpretive signage around the House site, so visitors can have a sense of where Charles Conrad Abbott's home stood and where he dug
  - Interpret the trails behind the House using signs with Abbott's own words that describe the nature and landscape he observed during his walks. Interpret the features of the site he mentions in his writings, such as "the great Crosswicks Oak" and the "three beeches"





**A natural playground can include archaeological dig areas for children to learn the basic techniques and principles of excavation**



**A playground can also emphasize the use of natural materials to encourage free-play experiences and enable children to connect with the Marsh and surrounding environment**





### **3.3. Program and Outreach** (Local and Regional awareness)

- Expand ecotourism offerings
  - Low impact activities—canoe and bike rental concessions
  - Ferry rides
  - Navigation and orienteering training programs
  - Fish and game shop with interpretive elements
  - Restore historical upland homes (referenced in the Nature and Interpretive Center Master Plan)
  - Provide Historic house tours
- Fish cam for shad run and web cam for nesting eagles
- Encourage additional publications on the Landmark and Marsh
- Provide support for volunteer corps of Friends for the Marsh
  - Enable Friends to expand this corps so that there can be a regular group of people volunteering to upkeep the site
- Regional, national and international archaeology symposia and lectures
- Ecological/wetland symposia and lectures

### **Ongoing Activities**

- Consider creating a strategic long-term plan to outline the purchasing of land and key historic house properties within or adjacent to the Landmark. It should be noted that the Mercer County Planning Division is making it a priority that urban audiences should have better access to park lands
- Consider researching the option of purchasing the house on the top of the bluff that connects to the historic stairway (from White City Amusement Park) and Spring Lake
- Encourage grassroots awareness campaigns about the Abbott Marsh and Landmark
- Communicate with landowners within the Landmark boundaries
- Be consistent with messaging and brand management—ensure that all interpretive elements, including the website, support the interpretive themes and use the design standards manual (to be developed by graphic designer)
- All interpretive elements in the AML should be designed to
  - protect the natural and cultural resources of the AML
  - protect the safety of users
  - minimize harmful physical, biological, and aesthetic impacts on the site
  - serve multiple audiences whenever possible
  - highlight and protect biological diversity in the AML
  - be made of durable, environmentally-friendly materials
  - be easy to maintain and be cleaned

## Review of access points listed in the recommendations

If the AML is to become a regional destination with local significance and national recognition, it will need primary access points to serve as welcoming, public access areas. If the site is also to function as a backyard oasis to urban audiences, it should have secondary access points geared towards local urban people who come to experience nature in a city. (Refer also to the summary of access points on page 30 and full map on page 33)

### Primary access point

1. The AML campus: AML Center/Watson House/Watson Woods

### Main access points

2. Spring Lake
3. Bordentown City Waterfront
4. Bordentown Train Platform and Trail
5. Delaware River Scenic Overlook

### Secondary access points

6. Isaac Pearson House
7. Lalor Street







Richard E. Mistler, "Stairs to Nowhere," Spring Lake



# Conclusions

A visit to the Abbott Marsh and Landmark is more than a tour through an archaeological site or rich ecological preserve. It is an experience of a living place, animated with unexpected biodiversity and layered with historical homes, archaeological remains, and recreational areas still enjoyed by people today. Uncovering these aspects of the Landmark and its Marsh is essential to the visitor experience of the Abbott Marsh and Landmark as a living site to conserve and discover today. Visitors can share a powerful experience of place that sparks questions, conversations, and memories. Whether by simple trail signage or using new media or on a kayak trip, visitors will discover the significance of the Abbott Marsh and Landmark over time through the interplay of environmental and human forces. From the moment they arrive, visitors will be encouraged to slow down and observe the Marsh and Landmark and participate in the discovery of the many wonders of the site.

This plan is the summation of a 12-month process that reflects the work of several years and the ideas of many people. It is meant not as a manual, but as a guide for Mercer County planners and partners as they take this collective vision and give it real dimensions. This plan, we hope, will lead the way to the creation of a visitor experience that embodies what Charles Conrad Abbott wrote of his time in the Marsh:

*It is a comfort to know that always within reach  
is some nook or corner in Nature's realm  
where one's real self can come to the surface;  
so, when the chickadee warbles, Hear me!  
you can whistle back to it, in the same earnest  
and fraternal spirit.*





Latha John

“Recently I chanced to pass by the three  
beeches as the sun was setting. Their massive  
trunks and far up-reaching branches  
impressed me, as they always do, and I stood  
for a moment reverentially, as one might  
in a great cathedral.”

-C.C. Abbott, *Rambles of an Idler*

**JANE CLARK CHERMAYEFF & ASSOCIATES**  
**137 EAST 25TH STREET, 7TH FLOOR**  
**NEW YORK, NY 10010**  
**T 212-213-6636**  
**F 212-213-6639**  
**[WWW.JCCA-NYC.COM](http://WWW.JCCA-NYC.COM)**



# **Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark**

## **Appendix**

**Hunter Research, Cultural Resource Technical Document**