



FRIENDS FOR THE ABBOTT MARSHLANDS



STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

2024 - 2026

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BACKGROUND



Home to the northernmost freshwater tidal marsh on the Delaware River, the Abbott Marshlands is an amazing wild oasis in a developed urban area. Over 3,000 acres of open space provide valuable habitat for plants and animals as well as opportunities for outdoor recreation and education to a large and diverse population.

For millennia the Lenape lived here in the marshlands, sometimes in large settlements. European colonists in the 1600's brought conflict and disease, disrupting the Lenape relationship with the land and ultimately forcing them to migrate north and west.

In the late 1800's Charles Conrad Abbott published information about stone tools found here, claiming a significant antiquity for man in North America. Although Abbott was wrong about some of his claims, the controversy he started made the Abbott Farm an important center of archaeological research for many years and ultimately led to the recognition of the Abbott Farm National Historic Landmark District for Archaeology.

As recently as the 1970's, research by a group of Rider University professors first recognized the marshlands as an invaluable ecological

asset. By this time the marsh was home to a canal, a railroad, and a proposed interstate highway interchange. In spite of these assaults on the natural setting, the richness of the marsh persists today. It remains an important area for ecological research and education as well as recreation.

Thanks to the efforts of the D&R Greenway Land Trust, Mercer County, the State of New Jersey and a small group of dedicated volunteers, several adjacent parcels of land have been preserved since the 1990's. Those volunteer efforts continued and recently culminated in the establishment of Friends for the Abbott Marshlands in 2020, an independent nonprofit organization that works to engage the public in the promotion and stewardship of this valuable resource.

In 2023 the Friends began working on a Strategic Plan for the years 2024 through 2026. This document is a summary of that plan.

We wish to express our gratitude to The Bunbury Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation who helped to make this possible and also Allison Trimarco of Creative Capacity who facilitated our planning process.

Abbott Marshlands



In addition to the National Historic Landmark District, the Abbott Marshlands is also recognized as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and a Natural Heritage Priority Area by the State of New Jersey. Historical political and ownership divisions within the area make stewardship and protection challenging. The marsh is located in two counties and four municipalities. Multiple landowners and state agencies are responsible for its stewardship.

The Friends for the Abbott Marshlands owns no land, but works in partnership with government agencies and landowners to advocate for the continued promotion and protection of the entire marshlands.



VISION

The Abbott Marshlands is a unique regional destination for outdoor recreation, environmental education and stewardship.

The Friends for the Abbott Marshlands brings diverse people together to enjoy the natural and cultural resources of the marshlands and works to ensure that everyone feels welcome.

MISSION

Engage and inspire a diverse community to experience the unique nature and history of the Abbott Marshlands and to advocate for its stewardship.

CORE VALUES

Outdoor experiences contribute to the health and wellness of the community.

Science illuminates the importance of the marshlands and generates strategies to ensure its continued viability.

Education builds awareness and commitment to a sustainable future.

Art inspires new ways of looking at the natural world.

Historical awareness enhances our understanding of the marshlands and encourages participation in future stewardship.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



**ENGAGE
A DIVERSE COMMUNITY**

**PROMOTE THE
MARSH AS A DESTINATION**



**ENHANCE
VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP**

**STRENGTHEN THE
FRIENDS' INFRASTRUCTURE**





Strategic Priorities

ENGAGE A DIVERSE COMMUNITY

The Abbott Marshlands is an underutilized resource in the community. Opportunities to get outside, exercise, enjoy nature, and engage in community activities abound.

We are committed to increasing the number of people who appreciate the natural and cultural history of the marshlands, enjoy its recreational opportunities and take part in its stewardship.

- Provide varied opportunities for the local community to engage with the Abbott Marshlands.
- Identify diverse groups within the local community and develop committed relationships that inform the Friends' programs and stewardship activities.
- Work with appropriate staff to establish the Tulpehaking Nature Center as a center for local community and special interest groups.





Strategic Priorities

PROMOTE THE MARSH AS A DESTINATION

According to a recent survey of individuals in the Trenton area conducted by the Alliance for Watershed Education, only 24 percent of those surveyed indicated that they were familiar with the Abbott Marshlands.

We are committed to expanding our marketing efforts in a way that reaches a wider audience and builds awareness of the many opportunities available in the marshlands.

- Elevate the public’s perception of the Abbott Marshlands and what it has to offer through a series of short videos.
- Utilize social media platforms to reach diverse audiences to increase awareness, boost engagement, and grow membership.
- Optimize online presence across multiple internet resources.
- Attract more visitors through improvements to trail maps and other trail information.





Strategic Priorities

ENHANCE VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP

Volunteers are a valuable asset in the stewardship of the Abbott Marshlands. Their contributions supplement the limited resources of the landowners to maintain, protect, and preserve these lands.

We are committed to working with the owners of preserved public space in the Abbott Marshlands to organize and coordinate volunteer efforts to enhance the trails and public spaces for the benefit of the community.

- Improve volunteer maintenance of existing trails and expand the trail network.
- Increase the effectiveness of volunteer efforts to control invasive plants along trail corridors.
- Expand environmental monitoring to detect, analyze, and report significant changes in relevant variables.
- Engage community groups and educational institutions in efforts to maintain and study the marshlands.





Strategic Priorities

STRENGTHEN THE FRIENDS' INFRASTRUCTURE

The Friends for the Abbott Marshlands is still a relatively new organization. As we take on new strategic challenges, we need to review and improve our board infrastructure to assure it is ready to meet our goals.

We are committed to building a sustainable long-term organization that promotes and protects the Abbott Marshlands through building a diverse and welcoming community.

- Build a larger and more diverse Board of Directors with skillsets appropriate to the needs of the Friends.
- Increase our fundraising capabilities, efforts and results.
- Affirm the value of volunteers and effectively apply their services.
- Review and enhance board structure and processes.





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