



# MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM GREEN HERITAGE

The Newsletter of Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks & Recreation Agency

Vol. 46 No. 2 Summer 2012

## NEW BRIDGES "COMPLETE THE LOOP" AT THOMPSON PARK

**W**hile the final section of Thompson Park's highly popular, 4.4 mile paved loop trail was completed a few years back, park visitors were not able to hike, run or bike the trail uninterrupted because of two unfinished water crossings...that is, until last winter. Two bridges in development along Route 520 were finished in February and March, so trail users can now "complete the loop," without any breaks.

Since inception, this trail project has been a dual undertaking of the Monmouth County Park System and the county's Division of



Engineering. Each completed different sections of trail, and also managed one of the two remaining bridge projects, over Marlu Lake and Thompson Pond, respectively.

Completed March 2012, the 34 ft. long, 8 ft. wide Thompson Pond Bridge crosses a 0.7 acre water body fed by run-off from adjacent fields.



Visitors enjoy the new 550 ft. long, 10 ft. wide Marlu Lake Bridge which crosses a 22-acre manmade lake. It was completed in February 2012.

**Thompson Park is open  
365 days/year! Trail maps,  
park hours & directions:  
[www.monmouthcountyparks.com](http://www.monmouthcountyparks.com)**

## A Trail for All Seasons

In addition to new bridge crossings, this paved loop trail also features an extra **accessible** 1.2 mile "Inner Loop" (with a 0.8 mile shortcut) in the heart of the park. Individuals in wheelchairs, as well as those with strollers, bicycles and roller blades are seen using the trail all year, along with walkers, runners and to a lesser extent, equestrians (who seem to prefer the park's natural surface trails).



Walk the paved trail slowly, so you can take in all the scenery, such as these magnolias in bloom during spring.



A not-so-lazy summer day might include a bike ride along a portion of the paved loop.



Dogs need exercise too! Perhaps they enjoy the crisp fall air and autumn colors as much owners do.



Hundreds of runners take to this trail (and environs) each March for the E. Murray Todd Half Marathon.

## A NEW SHELTER AT OLD ORCHARD

Think you may be hungry after riding or walking all 4.4 miles of the newly completed Thompson Loop? Why not arrange for a family outing or large group picnic at the site's new shelter, conveniently located just off the trail. Situated along the woods that once held the orchards for this former horse farm and estate, this new, rentable shelter holds up to 125 people. It features grills and picnic tables, with easy access to trails, fields, a playground and Visitor Center ...everything you need to enjoy a beautiful and active day in the park.



A new picnic shelter at Old Orchard, Thompson Park.

## GOLF ON COURSE: Bridge, Bunker and Pond Improvements

Adding to recent renovations at Bel-Aire Golf Course, Howell Park and Hominy Hill also received some noticeable improvements.



41 of Hominy Hill's original 138 bunkers were renovated last winter.



There's a new boardwalk on the 16<sup>th</sup> hole at Howell Park (shown here, under construction last summer).

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Check out these before and after photos of pond dredging at Hominy Hill's 14<sup>th</sup> hole. BEFORE: After the water—and resident fish—were removed, it was evident how much this pond needed dredging.



AFTER: By early spring, the pond had been dredged and re-filled, but work continues as staff put the final touches around the edges, such as seeding and plantings.

## NEW! Golf Specials for 2012

Here are some highlights from this season's golf incentives. Visit [www.monmouthcountyparks.com](http://www.monmouthcountyparks.com) for promotional details:

• **Full Privilege Card, All Courses:** Non-Residents may purchase a one year card for \$340 to pay resident fees on all courses, seven days a week. Available for purchase at any course.

• **Ladies Players Club, Pine Brook:** May through September, Thursday mornings. Call 732-536-7272 for details.

• **Non-card Holders Can Now Make Reservations, Pine Brook and Charleston Springs:** Call the Golf Center directly or visit in person, no more than 2 days in advance of play.

• **Super-Twilight Rates at Shark River:** 7 days/week during peak season, times vary; power cart mandatory; no golf card required.

• **Teen/Child Specials, Pine Brook:** Extra forward tee markers and adjusted score cards for juniors; children (12 & under) play for \$7 with paid adult during matinee times. Golf ID Cards **not** required.



Pine Brook is an affordable, playable and picturesque Executive 18-hole Golf Course in Manalapan.

## ...And Now For Something Completely Different

# STRANGE SPECIES OF THE JERSEY SHORE

While there are many beautiful species of sea life to admire in our coastal waters—dolphins, blueclaws and striped bass to name just a few—there are also some decidedly less-attractive ones. Let's get to know a couple of the more unusual shore residents you may bump into this summer.

Puffer Fish



The whole body bloat of this little swimmer can be off-putting.



Flounder

With both eyes oddly positioned together on one side this fish too, can seem off-kilter, despite its wonderful taste.

Oyster Toadfish



As if the big head, lumps, bumps and squishy, mucous covered skin aren't enough, the toadfish makes a grunting noise when held out of water.



Sea Jellies

These are not called "jellyfish" anymore because technically they are not fish; they are closer to corals, sea anemones, and hydra. It's probably the menacing sting more than the creepy looks that keeps people away.



Fiddler crab

The enlarged claw on just one side can seem a little unbalanced.

## UPDATE: White-nose Syndrome In Bats

In just 6 short years, more than 5.5 million bats have succumbed to the fatal disease known as white-nose syndrome (WNS).<sup>1</sup> Since its 2006-2007 discovery in one small cave in upstate New York, WNS has spread quickly to 20 US states and 4 Canadian provinces. Biologists expect the spread to continue. WNS currently affects 11 cave hibernating bat species, including 4 endangered species. More than half of US bat species rely on cave hibernation for winter survival and may be susceptible to WNS.



A bat with WNS

The WNS fungus, *Geomyces destructans*, thrives in the cool, damp conditions found in the hibernation sites of many bat species. Affected bats are identified by the white powdery-looking fungus growing on their noses, wings, ears, forearms, and tails. Those afflicted often exhibit unusual behavior, such as flying during the day in the cold winter months (when they should be hibernating), and may freeze or starve

to death before warm weather returns if the fat reserves needed to survive the winter are depleted too rapidly.

Bats play an essential role in helping to control insects. According to US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, they "provide tremendous value to the US economy as natural pest control for American farms and forests."

## What Can YOU Do to Help the Bats?

- Stay out of caves/mines where bats hibernate to avoid spreading the fungus.
- Report unusual bat behavior to the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife.
- Provide a home for bats by installing a bat house in your yard or community.
- Become a bat ambassador to learn more visit our website and search for upcoming bat programs [www.monmouthcountyparks.com](http://www.monmouthcountyparks.com)

For more information, visit [www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome](http://www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome)

## TONY'S PLACE WINS DESIGN AWARD

The Park System is pleased to announce that its 2<sup>nd</sup> universal access playground at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in Long Branch recently received an *Excellence in Design Award* from the NJ Recreation and Park Association (NJRPA).

Tony's Place is located just feet from the Atlantic Ocean, a setting that offers both a stunning backdrop and a unique set of environmental challenges. Conceived and designed as a barrier-free facility with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) standards in mind, the success of this playground exemplifies how creative planning can address special user challenges as well as the harsh sun, wind, sand and salt conditions of a coastal site.

### Unique Features, Inspired Landscape

Tony's Place features ground level access to play elements as a natural part of the design, so there is no distinction between able-bodied children and those with special needs. Also, the two age zone areas (2-5 and 5-12) share a common area with 3 sets of swings—including a popular saucer swing that encourages group play.

The design of this playground also captivates visitors with a clear "sense of place," taking cues from its oceanfront location. Tony's Place is loosely configured as a cozy "fishing village" for the 2-5 age group and an adventurous "pirate ship with rock outcroppings" for the 5-12 age group.



Fun on the saucer swing.



Ground level play features.



Ground level climbing elements.



Tony's Place, completed in November 2009.



Colorful flags fit this site's seaside motif and take advantage of windy conditions.



This site was inspired by the memory of County Recreation Commissioner Tony Musella, who was dedicated to providing recreation for children with disabilities through Challenged Youth Sports, Inc, an organization which also provided funding for this playground.

### Unique Environmental Challenges

For all of its thematic inspiration, designers had to contend with a unique set of restrictions from the beachfront location. Wood was chosen as a primary building material because of corrosive wind, sand and salt conditions (the site's previous wooden playground withstood these coastal conditions for 25 years). Similarly, the number of moving parts and metal materials were kept to a minimum.



Close-up of the Pirate Ship shows how wood features prominently in the design.

In addition to the customary permits required for a project of this size, another special permit was needed because of proximity to the beach. Playground designers were required to limit the amount of impervious (non-draining) ground cover and, not adversely impact the erosion-protecting dunes and coastal bird habitats,



Endangered Least Tern nests nearby.

including two federally endangered bird species nesting at the site: the Least Tern and the Piping Plover.

The end-result is a colorful, crowd-pleasing destination playground for county residents and beach visitors to enjoy. NEW THIS SEASON! Shade umbrellas to cover the centrally located tables, where parents are often seen talking.

**Tony's Place** is free most of year, and after 4pm during peak summer season. Parking/admission fees are charged 8am-4pm, Saturday June 16, 2012 through Labor Day weekend. Need year-round access to a barrier free playground? **Challenger Place** at Dorbrook Recreation Area in Colts Neck is free all year.

## Other Good News...

**New Jersey Magazine** Readers of **NJ Monthly Magazine** selected Hominy Hill in Colts Neck as the best public golf courses, while Deep Cut Gardens in Middletown was selected as a runner up for one of the state's best public gardens.



Hominy Hill Golf Course is frequently recognized for its outstanding playability and beautiful conditions.



Bass fishing at the Manasquan Reservoir.

Also, the Manasquan Reservoir in Howell was selected by **Bassmaster Magazine** for their list of the top 100 places for bass fishing in the U.S.

And, speaking of great fishing sites, when trout season opened in NJ this past April, anglers were notified that the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife would be stocking more than 100,000 hatchery-raised trout into 200 rivers, streams and lakes across the state. As an added bonus, nine lakes and ponds received between 30-50 breeder trout that measure 17 to 24 inches during the preseason stocking and this year one of these "Bonus Broodstock" waters was the pond at Holmdel Park, in Holmdel.



The fishing pond at Holmdel Park received "Bonus Broodstock" of large trout this year.

## The REVISED 2012 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map – What Does it Mean for Gardeners?

Diane Allen, Staff Horticulturalist

In January, the USDA released the long-awaited revision of its Plant Hardiness Zone Map. It is used by many gardeners and growers east of the Rocky Mountains to determine which plants will be able to survive winter in a given region. Notable is the northward shift of many zone boundaries. Most hardiness zones are now designated as slightly warmer than on the previous map, which won't come as a surprise to most gardeners.

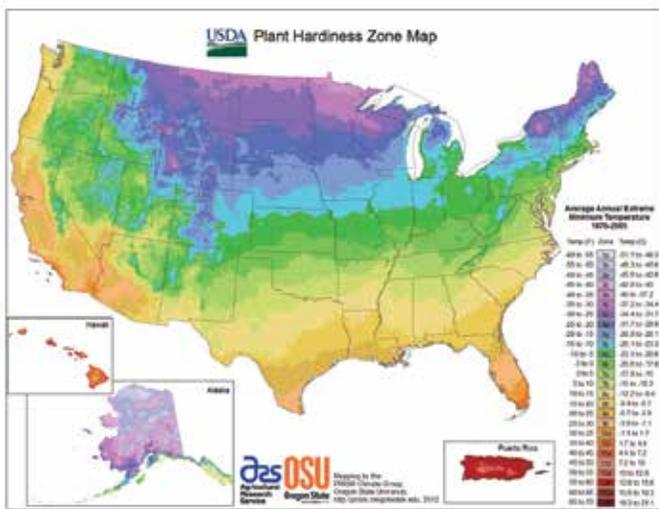
The recently released 2012 map is generally one 5°F half-zone warmer than the previous map throughout much of the US, with a shift to a colder zone in a few cases and no change in some areas.

**The 2012 map is generally one 5°F half-zone warmer than the previous map for much of the US.**

### 2012 Map Changes, Explained

The USDA attributes these modifications to better data and technology. In addition to data collected over a longer time span (30 years of weather data vs. 13), the 2012 map is based on data from more weather stations (7,983) and is the result of a highly sophisticated climate mapping technology. Also, for the first time the mapping procedure took into account such factors as elevation, prevailing winds and proximity to bodies of water, all of which can influence temperature.

The new map, available online, is interactive. Users can enter their own ZIP code to find their zone down to half-mile segments. Visit: [www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov](http://www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov).



The 2012 USDA Zone Map for the US. Lighter colors are warmer, darker colors are cooler.

### Map Methods & History

To put this in perspective, let's take a look at the map's history and methodology. The map's plant hardiness zone designations represent the **average annual minimum temperature** at a given location. Each zone is a 10° F band, further divided into 5° F zones, A and B.

The USDA published its first zone map in 1960, based on data from the 1930s-1950s, a period of very mild winters. A map with minor revisions was released in 1965, based on feedback from farmers and horticulturists. The next major map revisions were released in 1990, based on data from 1974-1986. Interestingly, that map showed some significant southward "zone creep", reflecting cooler winters over the 13-year data-collection period, and prompting some to warn of a coming "ice age."



The updated map of NJ. Note that most of Monmouth County is in Zone 7a, with a slightly cooler zone 6b region in Upper Freehold & Millstone.

## Cold Map, Heat Map

The USDA zone map is **based solely on winter temperatures**, and plant hardiness involves many different factors. The map does not account for beneficial effect of snow cover, the frequency or severity of freeze-thaw cycles, or soil drainage. Other factors are frequency and duration of precipitation, humidity, seasonal winds, day length, and summer heat. Importantly, summer heat can be just as deadly as winter cold, although the symptoms are more subtle and varied, usually causing a slow decline before the plant expires.

The American Horticultural Society (AHS) has developed The Heat Map, with 12 zones that indicate the average number of days each year that a given region experiences temperatures over 86°F, the point at which, according to the AHS, plants begin to suffer physiological damage. You may already have already seen this heat zone designation along with the hardiness zone designations in some garden publications and on plant tags.

View The Heat Map at

[http://www.ahs.org/publications/heat\\_zone\\_map.htm](http://www.ahs.org/publications/heat_zone_map.htm)

## Tools for Temperature Success

Most plants found at your local nursery or garden center will be well-adapted to our overall climate. Use the maps as guidance when making selections, but go with your own experience and keep the following tools and tips in mind.

- Know your plants' cultural needs. Plants grown with proper light, soil fertility, water and pH conditions will be more vigorous and more resistant to stressors.

- Maintain good garden hygiene. Warmer winters may mean more pests, diseases and weeds surviving from one season to the next. Clean up old plant parts that might harbor problems, rotate crops in vegetable and annual beds, and provide habitat for predators to keep pests in check.



*Frost cloth over lettuce transplants is rated for protection down to 27°F.*

- Organic matter acts as a buffer to extreme water conditions. It will improve the soil's water-holding capacity in a drought and improve the soil structure, allowing more oxygen to get to plant roots during wet periods.
- Mulch well to stabilize soil temperature and moisture levels, reduce weeds and conserve water.

- Water at the roots. Drip irrigation conserves water and puts it directly at the roots where plants can more efficiently absorb it. Keeping water off the leaves can also help prevent disease problems.

- Be prepared with water storage systems to collect rainwater in the event of a drought, frost cover in the event of an untimely frost.



*Soaker hose helps water at the roots.*

- Be aware of microclimates on your property. Slopes, walls and banks of evergreens will protect or expose plants, affecting growth and viability.
- Consider varying sowing times, or sowing a back-up crop in case the first fails. Also, plant a few different varieties – some may be less susceptible to this season's stresses.

Finally, get to know phenology, the study of recurring biological events such as flowering, breeding, and migration, in relation to weather. We've all heard the advice to prune roses when the forsythia blooms. Natural event indicators are more accurate and reliable than a calendar for timing gardening activities.

Data from the Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist shows a repeat of the warmer weather patterns experienced in the 1930s to 1950s, so long-time gardeners have been down this road before. While these maps are certainly important tools, keep in mind that gardening is as much an art as a science; your observations, creativity and resourcefulness will serve you – and your garden – well.



*Collect water for drought conditions with a rain barrel under downspouts.*



# **FREE!** **DEEP CUT GARDENS SUMMER EVENTS**

## ***Daylily Day***

**Saturday, June 30, 10am-2pm**

Presented with the Garden State Daylily Growers. Free horticultural advice, displays, garden design ideas.



## ***Jersey Shore Rose Society 41st Annual Rose Show***

**Saturday, September 8**

See the many varieties of our national flower. Watch as roses are prepared for exhibition (8am-10am); entries will remain on exhibit for the public after judging is complete at 12:30pm. Plus, learn about the selection and care of roses, or take a Garden & Rose Show tour.



## ***Bonsai Day***

**Sunday, September 16, 12noon-4pm**

Enjoy the Bonsai experience! See demonstrations and exhibits, talk to the experts. Visit the site's Jane Scott bonsai collection.



## ***The Great Fall Perennial Plant Swap***

**Saturday, September 22, 10am-2pm**

It's the gardening event of the season! Just Bring your plants in 1-quart, 1 or 2-gallon containers and trade them in for different plants of the same size. Houseplants may also be exchanged, but no annuals, please. Please label all plants. Call 732-671-6050 for more information.



# It's Time To...



## July ✓

- Note any gaps in your garden, and which plants you will want to divide in the fall or next spring. If you aren't keeping a garden journal, consider starting one.
- Check plants for insects/disease and use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods for dealing with problems. (Visit the Deep Cut Library to learn more.)
- Apply/replenish mulch to conserve water and suppress weeds.
- After blooming finishes, dig and divide irises, lily of the valley, Oriental poppies and bleeding hearts.
- Water thoroughly before and after transplanting container-grown plants.
- To keep vegetable gardens producing, harvest ripe produce regularly and ensure plants have 1" of water weekly. Water deeply, early in the day, and try to keep water off the leaves.
- Start seeds for fall crops: beans, peas, summer squash, cabbage family.
- Keep lawns at least 3" high and do any watering in the morning, deeply, and less frequently, for a stronger, healthier lawn.
- Consider donating your extra garden produce to a local food bank.



*Iris (divide and replant every 3-5 years for plentiful blooms)*

## August ✓

- During dry spells, water your compost bin to keep it active.
- Fertilize late summer and fall flowers. Give your roses their last feeding of the season by Labor Day.
- Plant transplants of cabbage-family crops and sow late crops of radishes, beets, lettuce, kale, spinach, and turnips into September.
- Order spring-flowering bulbs for planting and forcing.
- Start planning for Deep Cut's Fall Perennial Plant Swap, September 22.



*Harvest ripe produce regularly to keep plants producing*

## September ✓

- Fertilize lawns late this month. Now is the best time to reseed or renovate.
- Plant hardy shrubs and trees; mulch and water well.
- After mid-month, leave some spent roses to produce hips and induce dormancy.
- Plant spring-flowering bulbs in groups or drifts for best effect next spring.
- Acclimate houseplants to lower light before bringing them indoors this month. Thanksgiving and Christmas cactus may be left out until just before the first frost.
- If you haven't already done so, remove diseased foliage now, before it gets hidden by autumn leaves.
- Early in the day, harvest herbs for freezing or drying. Dig and pot some of the plants to grow inside through the winter in a cool, sunny spot; allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings.



*Garden camps and programs are available all summer.*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTUARIES A Novel Teacher Workshop & Field Trip Funded by the EPA

*This view of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary, seen from Mount Mitchell Scenic Overlook in the Highlands, shows where New York City (back) meets Sandy Hook (front, note the lighthouse) surrounded by the waters of the Raritan & Sandy Hook Bay.*

Part of the Park System’s mission is conservation, which includes encouraging people to make responsible choices that help protect the county’s critical natural resources, such as water. To help carry out this mission, Park System Naturalists were recently awarded a \$12,400 environmental education grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help improve environmental literacy in the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary region.

**ESTUARIES—**  
**Where fresh and saltwater meet**  
*The resulting brackish water, often bordered by a peninsula, marsh or island, is especially nutrient-rich; attracting a large number of vital species to the region.*  
*Here in Monmouth County, freshwater from the Hudson and Raritan Rivers as well as many local creeks, mixes with the saltwater of the Atlantic Ocean to form the Bayshore Estuary.*

### The Bayshore: One of the “Least Understood” Estuaries

In 1988, the region known locally as the Bayshore (Raritan/Sandy Hook Bay)

was designated an “Estuary of National Significance” by the EPA, in response to a request by the two state governors. The Bayshore is one of the least understood from an ecological point of view by many local residents.

While students today may be more environmentally conscious in general, they often lack more than a basic knowledge of their local environment. They don’t fully identify with the function of an estuary or how pollution—such as plastic water bottles and cigarette butts—can influence water quality.

### Exactly how do plastic bags and water bottles harm an estuary?

To help improve awareness, 5th grade elementary students and teachers from the Bayshore region were invited to participate in a special, grant-funded project. Fifth graders were chosen to improve their knowledge of the local estuarine environment as they transition from the elementary to middle school learning setting.

### Education Begins With Teachers

The grant started in May 2011 with teachers attending a free workshop at Bayshore Waterfront Park, Port Monmouth to increase understanding about environmental issues impacting this region.

**WHO PARTICIPATED?**  
**400 Bayshore Residents; Students & Teachers from:**  
Atlantic Highlands  
Highlands  
Keansburg  
Keyport  
Union Beach



*Park System Naturalist Joe Reynolds talks with teachers about seastar adaptations.*

They practiced a variety of inexpensive, hands-on learning activities to use in the classroom year-round to help students appreciate the importance of an estuary. For example, the teachers learned methods to identify estuary plants, animals and their habitats by analyzing clues that describe water-related adaptations. They also performed a simple water quality test using plankton identification and abundance with a standard classroom tool, the microscope.



Teachers examine water clarity.

## Field-Trip Highlights the Problem With Pollution

The teacher workshop was followed by a free outdoor field trip for participating teachers and their students to two sites along the estuary: Bayshore Waterfront Park and Monmouth Cove Marina. Attendees rotated activity stations for seining, shell identification and plankton classification to:

- identify species that live in the estuary,
- learn how they interact to create a balanced ecosystem; and
- see firsthand how a balanced ecosystem is disrupted by pollution.



Sorting/analyzing seining finds.

Attendees then boarded a 41-foot catamaran to get an up-close view of life on the bay and learn how to evaluate water quality in the estuary and determine if the creatures living in it are impacted by pollution. This trip into the “field” advanced the educational experience for students as they were able to gain a first-hand sense of their own and others impact on the environment.



Students and teachers board the 41-foot catamaran for their “on the water” field trip.

## Follow-Up & Evaluations: Reinforcing the Lesson

Later in the school year, a Park System Naturalist conducted in-school visits to each participating 5th grade class. The visits provided students with a chance to review the biodiversity found earlier in the estuary field trip. It also gave park staff an opportunity to see how local ecology activities were incorporated into the curriculum.

Goals and activities were evaluated by questionnaires given to teachers and students. Here are some of the student responses (in their own words), when asked:

### “What Does it Mean to Be a Good Steward of the Bay?”

**“It means being a protector of nature.”**

–Atlantic Highlands student

**“Because if the water is clean, people can swim in the water again.”**

–Student from Union Beach

**“We all can make a difference to keep a clean place and respect the environment. That’s what you guys taught me.”**

–Highlands student

**“Being a good steward means a lot to me because I love the beach and I love animals. So we should work together and make this a better place to protect the shore. We need to do whatever we can for the bay to be clean.”**

–Student from Keyport

When students were asked what ideas they had to decrease the amount of trash found in the water and surrounding beaches, one Keansburg student summed it up best: “I would like to convince other people to try to clean up our beaches. I would love to be a marine biologist to help make a difference.”

According to teachers, the workshop was useful to better understand the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary, and the field trip was a valuable teacher-student experience. It allowed them to reflect together on common experiences from the integration of sounds and textures of the real world, and put those experiences into the educational system.

One teacher wrote that the field trip experience “was what all class trips should be – fun and educational.” Another wrote that “the trip was fun, highly interactive and educational.” Teachers said they were motivated to use topics related to the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary to educate students about science.



# GREEN HERITAGE

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*Ahhhhh, Summer...*  
**There's just something about a sunset.**



*Manasquan Reservoir in June*



Visit [www.monmouthcountyparks.com](http://www.monmouthcountyparks.com)