



## NEWS

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# 835-acre property on track to be added to Black Run Preserve in Burlington County

The property, on the western edge of the Pinelands National Reserve, is the source of the Black Run, an important freshwater tributary that feeds into the Rancocas Creek.

EVESHAM TWP., NJ — New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJ Conservation) is excited to announce it has entered into a binding contract of sale with the owners of approximately 835 acres in southwestern Evesham Township, Burlington County known as the Black Run Headwaters Property.

Linda Samost, on behalf of her family's company, Kettle Run Investments LP, a joint owner of the Property, has agreed with the other owners to sell the Property to NJ Conservation for \$15 million, which is approximately \$2.4 million less than the Property's full market value. Evesham Township has agreed to subsequently accept ownership of the Property from NJ Conservation and incorporate the Property into its existing 1,300-acre Black Run Preserve, one of the state's environmental treasures and a popular site for hiking, birdwatching, and other permitted low-impact activities.

"We are thrilled that our property will soon be added to the Black Run Preserve through our agreement with NJ Conservation," said Samost. "We are eager to move forward with the project so that the community can experience and appreciate the natural beauty of this land for years to come."

The Black Run Headwaters Property is located on the western edge of the state-designated New Jersey Pinelands Area and the federally designated Pinelands National Reserve. The Property has been a long-time conservation priority, due to its high ecological value based on research by Pinelands Commission scientists and other experts over the last several decades. Since the Property contains the headwaters of Black Run, an important freshwater tributary that feeds into the Rancocas Creek, permanently protecting this land will also help protect the rest of the watershed downstream.

"Preserving the Black Run Headwaters Property means water quality, critical plant and animal habitat, and the overall ecological integrity of the area will be protected for generations to come. This effort is a testament to the conservation values of the property owners, who have been a pleasure to work with," said Robyn Jeney, NJ Conservation's South Jersey Regional Manager.

Jeney added, “We’re also deeply grateful to the Pinelands Commission, Burlington County, and the New Jersey Green Acres Program for establishing a strong foundation of funding that places the Property’s purchase price within reach. Although we are still finalizing the purchase, NJ Conservation and the sellers are committed to completing the work as quickly as possible to ensure the Property will be permanently preserved.”

With a contract of sale now in place, NJ Conservation, in cooperation with the sellers, will move forward with the due diligence process that is typical of a conservation acquisition. This process is expected to take several months due to the size of the Property.

NJ Conservation must also secure the remaining funding needed before taking ownership of the Property. A fundraising campaign led by NJ Conservation and a coalition of conservation partners will be announced soon, allowing members of the public to contribute to the Property’s acquisition and future stewardship. More information about the campaign will be available at [njconservation.org](http://njconservation.org).

“Open spaces like the Black Run and its watershed are a big part of what makes Burlington County special, and we are thrilled to partner with NJ Conservation, Evesham Township, the Pinelands Commission, New Jersey Green Acres and the property owners to make sure it remains protected for current and future generations,” said Burlington County Commissioner Deputy Director Allison Eckel. “Partnerships like this one allow us to preserve this ecologically-sensitive property while also making it more accessible so people can visit and enjoy what makes it so unique and exceptional.”

“The Green Acres Program congratulates NJ Conservation for reaching an agreement on this important preservation effort in the Pine Barrens, and we are proud to support it,” said Martha Sullivan Sapp, director of Green Acres. “This beautiful property is the headwaters for the Black Run and provides habitat for oak-pine forest, wetlands, and numerous plant and animal species of ecological significance. Additionally, this property provides Climate Change resilience and lies within an area that is important for our CHANJ (Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey) initiative to preserve critical contiguous wildlife habitats that support wildlife breeding, feeding, and sheltering.”

"This agreement marks a historic milestone for Evesham Township and a victory for every resident who treasures our natural landscape. Working to bring this property into our protected lands means more than just saving 835 acres from development — it means securing the heart of our local ecosystem for generations to come,” said Evesham Township Mayor Jaclyn Veasy. “We are incredibly proud to partner with Burlington County and NJ Conservation to prove that when we prioritize stewardship over sprawl, everybody wins.”

“At the Black Run Preserve, one comes not only to walk, but to listen to water moving through cedar and sand, to the quiet workings of a landscape still whole. Here, students and neighbors alike learn the language of the Pinelands, where clear streams and rooted forests reveal the relationships that sustain life,” said Jane Dean, board president of the Friends of the Black Run Preserve. “With the permanent preservation of the headwaters, we can trust that this place will remain as it should be, unbroken, instructive, and alive, continuing to shape those who pass

through it. The Friends of the Black Run Preserve look forward to working alongside our partners to support this acquisition and to care, together, for this land for generations yet to come.”

“Permanent land protection is perhaps our most powerful tool to ensure the protection of forests, wetlands, and habitat for rare plant and animal species in the Pinelands,” said Susan R. Grogan, executive director of the Pinelands Commission. “This is the best possible outcome for this property, which the Commission has studied in-depth and long recognized as a top target for permanent protection. We are thrilled to provide funding to help make this extraordinary project a reality.”

“The effort to protect the Black Run headwaters began in 2004, when the Pinelands Alliance joined a sub-regional planning initiative led by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. After more than 22 years of sustained advocacy, partnership, and community commitment, that vision is becoming a reality, preserving a rare intact landscape within an otherwise densely developed region, where clean water, forest habitat, and connected ecosystems continue to support both people and wildlife,” said Jaclyn Rhoads, executive director of the Pinelands Alliance. “This achievement reflects the power of long-term dedication and collaboration. We are proud to stand alongside our partners in this generational effort, ensuring the Black Run headwaters remain protected for generations to come.”

"Protecting the headwaters of the Black Run is vital to the health of the Rancocas watershed, which begins in the forests and aquifers of the Pinelands. These upstream lands shape the quality, flow, and resilience of the waters that sustain downstream communities and ecosystems," said Rick Brown, president of the Rancocas Conservancy Board of Trustees. "With opportunities for lasting conservation rapidly disappearing, this achievement is especially meaningful. We commend NJ Conservation for advancing this effort and carrying forward a vision first outlined in the sub-regional planning initiative led by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission over 20 years ago."

Brown added, "That vision was championed by conservation leaders including one of Rancocas Conservancy's founders, Barbara Rich, representing the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions; Emile DeVito, NJ Conservation's Manager of Science & Stewardship and a Rancocas Conservancy trustee; and Richard McDonald of the Rancocas Conservancy. Their foresight continues to guide this work. As a committed partner, the Rancocas Conservancy is proud to stand with our community in safeguarding the Rancocas watershed as a living legacy for generations to come."

#### About New Jersey Conservation Foundation

Recognizing that a healthy environment is critical to the well-being and survival of all living things, New Jersey Conservation Foundation is devoted to preserving land and protecting natural resources throughout New Jersey's rural, suburban, and urban landscapes.

Since 1960, the nonprofit, nonpartisan, statewide organization has preserved more than 140,000 acres of open space, farmland, and parks. The organization manages more than a dozen nature preserves, conducts public outreach and education programs, and advocates for sensible land use

and climate policies that will protect the health of New Jersey's plants, wildlife, and people for generations to come.

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