



---

## Monthly Newsletter



Dear Friends,

We are enjoying a wonderful Fall at the School of Conservation.

In addition to a full schedule of day and overnight trips from students across the state, we are working on strengthening partnerships with our neighbors, as well as institutions of higher education.

We are particularly proud to have hosted the Ramapo College Leaders in Service training to kick off the academic year and to have presented to colleagues at the Northwest New Jersey Rivers Conference about our work pioneering accessibility in the outdoors.

And finally, we also want to give a special shout-out to our master educators, who are bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to bear as we introduce important concepts around conservation and climate change to the next generation.

To highlight the work of these master educators by celebrating their service to the School of Conservation in this newsletter, this month features a tribute to Robin Anderson.

In Friendship,

Kerry Kirk Pflugh

---



## North Jersey Rivers Conference

Since reopening, the New Jersey School of Conservation is leaning into its motto of “outdoor education for everyone.”

This has meant stepping up our focus on serving students of color and school districts serving lower-income families.

It has also meant ensuring that every person, no matter their physical ability, is able to enjoy our campus and take part in our activities.

Executive Director Kerry Kirk Pflugh was proud to share this approach for our future with Trustee Tenisha Malcolm-Wint. Together, they gave a presentation to the Northwest Jersey Rivers Conference called “Building Welcoming Spaces: Fostering Inclusion & Accessibility: The New Jersey School of Conservation as a Case Study.”

“Inclusion and accessibility are our foremost priorities as we welcome students and visitors to our school,” Pflugh said. “It is our hope that everyone feels safe and free at the School of Conservation and that no one feels left out of the learning and discovery that takes place on our campus.”

We are proud of the work we are doing to welcome historically marginalized communities to our campus. Our education programs feature speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds, welcome educators from groups like Black Science Teachers, extend grants to teachers to offset child care costs, offer Annual MLK Day of Service volunteering, and reach out to schools from Environmental Justice communities, Title 1 Districts, and Abbott Districts.

All of our hiring and marketing materials reflect New Jersey’s diverse population. We list job opportunities on diverse networks including Outdoor Afro and Latino Outdoors.

We also appreciate those who cared for our land before us. During welcoming orientations and school orientations, we affirm that our land was first cared for by Ramapough Lenape people.

Throughout our campus, we make sure that we are sending signals of inclusion to visitors. Our facilities and grounds feature pride stickers in key locations in Spanish and in English. We are updating bathrooms and showers to ensure they are fully ADA compliant and we are adding ramps for building accessibility.

Our food service is incorporating Special Diets options. When addressing groups, we use language that does not exclude, for instance, we use “students” and “campers” instead of the term “guys” to get group attention. We include privacy options for changing and bathroom options for all genders.

Our campus is being improved to meet the needs of all differently-abled persons. Our trail map now includes symbols to help color blind users. We also welcomed our first special needs high school back to campus and the group plans to return for overnight visits. Our pre-workshop teacher form includes accessibility questions so we are fully prepared to ensure that any visitor can enjoy their time with us. Our partnership with Nature: Outdoor Accessibility campaign will help us improve our trails and update our facilities for special needs visitors.

As part of the presentation, we received valuable input from community members to ensure we are meeting our mission: “to foster environmental knowledge and action through education programs delivered in a natural setting as a community of diverse, responsible stewards of the earth who promote sustainability practices, climate change mitigation and environmental justice.”

Participants also gave us excellent suggestions on affordability, directly involving those with mobility disabilities in the campus improvement process, support for private changing spaces, more detailed descriptions of trails especially regarding accessibility, sensitivity to LGBTQ individuals, Spanish language support, and partnering with the NJ Department of Agriculture on farming.

“We had a lively discussion with our session attendees,” said Malcolm-Wint. “Our community is eager to be part of the process of achieving full accessibility on the NJ SOC campus. Without community participation, so many of these initiatives and changes would not be possible.”

Our work is not done yet.

As we work to continue making our campus more inclusive and representative of our diverse state, we’re focusing on recruiting more diverse staff, improving our website for the visually impaired and diversifying our meal options.

As an educational institution, it’s incumbent upon us to keep learning so that we can serve an ever-broadening range of students and truly live up to our founding ideals.



## Ramapo Leaders in Service

The Ramapo College Leaders in Service program brings incoming freshmen together at the start of the academic year to gain leadership skills, participate in community activities and highlight the importance of civic engagement.

This year, a group of 37 incoming freshmen and 11 upperclassmen visited the New Jersey School of Conservation to practice trust-building exercises, connect with one another on the lake, and learn conservation skills.

We hope that this first visit by the program is the start of a long and fruitful partnership. We're proud of the strong relationship we're building with Ramapo and other colleges and universities across New Jersey.

And we're proud that NJ SoC can serve as a resource for students of all ages across our state.

---



## Celebrating Master Educator Robin Anderson

The School of Conservation is successful because of our world-class team of master educators. With this newsletter, we continue a series that spotlights members of our teaching staff that inspire students, educators and researchers who spend time learning conservation practices at our beautiful campus.

“What is the lake saying about climate change?” Robin Anderson asks students as they listen to the stillness of the lake. “The lake’s silence may be due to it trying to catch its breath.”

For decades Robin Anderson has inspired children to connect with the world around them through making art, writing poetry, or just by listening to and experiencing the grandeur of solitude with nature. One pair of students told her they love to float in the center of the lake and then envelope themselves in the serenity of their surroundings.

Robin loves bridging the gap between students and the environment at the SOC campus. “When they first arrive, there’s this incredible moment of wonder, interest, and a little bit of nervousness that the students experience.” Then over the course of their time here, whether it is one day or several, students begin to discover that they themselves are part of the environment and that they themselves are responsible for caring for it.

Robin cherishes all the ways that she learns from her Master Educator colleagues.



“Each one has an incredible background. I always gain something new every time I am up there. It’s a lot of fun. A great community of people that truly feels like a family.”

Robin is a master of many areas of education, from teaching Boating, to teaching Nature Art and Poetry, to teaching Climate: Change Makers! The common thread tying all these classes together: a passion for connecting students with the natural world around them. For fun and some deliciousness, Robin teaches a rustic bread baking class every now and then at the school’s campus as well.

In addition to these classes and more, Robin and colleague Michael Roche teamed up in recent years to link New Jersey’s Student Learning Standards, including the state’s new Climate Education mandate, with the courses taught at SOC. The result of their work enables educators and principals from all over the state to see how SOC classes go hand and hand with their school’s grade level curriculums, particularly fulfilling climate education mandates.

“There is a lot of talk about climate,” Robin says, “ and the students are always eager to offer solutions that they can put into action. Robin and her colleagues are doing just that, taking action to inspire the next generation of leaders to care for our environment, one field experience at a time.



## Our Mission

The mission of the New Jersey School of Conservation is to foster environmental knowledge and action through education programs delivered in a natural setting. We are a community of diverse, responsible stewards of the earth who promote sustainability practices, climate change mitigation and environmental justice.

[Visit Our Website](#)



Try email marketing for free today!