



NETWC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The Northeast Transportation and Wildlife Conference bestows biennial achievement awards for projects that **exemplify innovative science, design, partnership or cost effectiveness in meeting the needs of fish & wildlife movement and safe and reliable transportation infrastructure. Nominations are due by July 15th, 2024.** Please complete the information below and email to Cathy Aikman at cathy@delaneymeetingevent.com. Winners will be notified in August and an award presented at the conference. It is encouraged that someone from the winning organization be present to accept the award.

NOMINATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Gretchen Fowles

Affiliation: NJDEP Fish and Wildlife, Endangered & Nongame Species Program

Email Address: gretchen.fowles@dep.nj.gov

PROJECT

Project Name: Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ)

What is the name of the project that you're recommending for the award? (Informal names are fine e.g. Monkton Salamander Crossing. Avoid jargon e.g. Monkton STP 1304(1))

Who is the best point of contact for this project?

Name: Gretchen Fowles

Email Address: gretchen.fowles@dep.nj.gov

Agency, Organization or Company: NJDEP Fish and Wildlife, Endangered & Nongame Species Program

Project Location (Town, State/Province, Country) : State

Project Partners

List any/all the agencies, organizations or groups that played a role in this project

Leads: Gretchen Fowles, Brian Zarate, and MacKenzie Hall (NJDEP Fish and Wildlife, Endangered & Nongame Species Program)

Over 100 individuals across 40 different agencies and programs participated in the CHANJ Kickoff meeting and subsequent CHANJ Working Group meetings over several years provided input on the development of the CHANJ products. These individuals are representatives from natural resource management groups, transportation planning agencies, conservation organizations, and universities and institutes. Since the public release of the products, many additional agencies and programs have become involved as well.

Total Project Cost

Please add any details about what the project cost number includes. For example: Is this the total cost of a bridge replacement that included a "wildlife shelf", or is this the cost of just the "shelf"

The development of CHANJ and subsequent outreach and implementation has all been done in-house using existing federal grant dollars used to fund the salaries of ENSP staff.

Project Description

Please describe the project; what, where, how.

In New Jersey, urbanization and roads have made a patchwork of our natural lands, making it increasingly difficult for wildlife to move across the landscape as needed to survive and thrive. An answer to this challenge, **Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey** (CHANJ) identifies key areas and actions needed to make our landscape and roadways more permeable for terrestrial wildlife. It was developed in collaboration with a multi-partner, multi-disciplinary working group, convened by the NJDEP Fish and Wildlife, Endangered & Nongame Species Program. CHANJ consists of a mapping tool (available for download and as an online [CHANJ Web Viewer](#)) identifying New Jersey's remaining intact habitats, "Cores", and the best opportunities to link them, "Corridors", across the state, as well as a companion [Guidance Document](#), that is interactively linked to the mapping and helps user make strategic choices about preserving land, restoring habitat, and mitigating the impacts of roads on wildlife. Additional CHANJ mapping layers are also available to assist with prioritization and decision-making, including Habitat Stepping Stones, Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat Preserved Lands, [North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative \(NAACC\) Culvert Inventories](#), and a [Road/Wildlife Mitigation Database](#). Now land managers, transportation planners, conservation groups, and the general public can visualize their place in New Jersey's habitat connectivity puzzle, enabling us all to work more collaboratively and ultimately improve the prospects for the long-term sustainability of our terrestrial wildlife. At least 127 terrestrial wildlife species in New Jersey stand to benefit from the CHANJ vision, including 82 Species of Greatest Conservation Need like the Bobcat, Blue-spotted Salamander, and Northern Diamond-backed Terrapin.

Importance

What is special about this project and why is it worthy of recognition? How does it exemplify innovative science, design, partnership and cost effectiveness in meeting the needs of fish & wildlife movement and safe and reliable transportation infrastructure?

The CHANJ tools have been publicly available since 2019, but great strides have been made in the last couple of years to advance the implementation of CHANJ, which is critical because analyses conducted since 2019 have made us increasingly concerned about the status of functional habitat connectivity in the state. For instance, a collaborative statewide genetic study has found that human modification (urbanization and roads) in NJ has a consistent negative impact on genetic connectivity across at least 10 species of mammals in the state with different life histories. We also know, looking at urbanization and protection of open space between 2012 and 2020, that areas in CHANJ mapped Corridors are being disproportionately developed compared to areas in CHANJ mapped Cores, while areas in CHANJ mapped Cores are being disproportionately protected compared to Corridors, so we are growing increasingly concerned about the Corridors in the state, which are the key to maintaining functional connectivity, particularly through the central, particularly urbanized region of the state.

New developments in the last couple of years:

- Held a State of CHANJ meeting in early 2024 with stakeholders for the first time since the release of CHANJ to provide an update on progress to date, identify gaps, needs, and opportunities, and to discuss ways to further build collaborations
- >30 road wildlife mitigation projects for terrestrial wildlife have been permitted since 2016
- Have assessed >700 culverts/bridges and counting using NAACC Terrestrial Passage Assessment in CHANJ mapped areas

- Released a new tool – NJ Wildlife Tracker – a mobile-friendly website that allows individuals from the public to report rare species observations as well as records on road of any species to us. Between data gathered through this new tool and data mined from F&W, we have >7,000 on-road wildlife records in our database
- Began a ‘Summer of CHANJ’ outreach campaign through the DEP and Fish and Wildlife social media posts, online content and email blasts this summer to the public, stakeholders, local officials, planning agencies, and others to help the public better understand the importance of habitat connectivity and to take steps to support and enhance connectivity in their communities
- Developed a prioritized acquisition layer using the CHANJ mapping that the state is using to be more strategic about open space acquisitions that support connectivity
- CHANJ mapping is being integrated into several statewide planning efforts, from preserving farmland to our State Plan, and is also being used in municipal master planning
- Collaborating with NJDOT and University of Delaware on a study evaluating terrestrial wildlife use of key culverts/bridges within CHANJ mapped areas using approximately 80 cameras under 6 major highways in the state.
- Got new SWAG (post cards, stickers, magnets) ;)

Project Pictures or Supplemental Documents

Please include any pictures of the completed project or other relevant documents that might help explain aspects of the project or its significance.

A one-stop shop for all things CHANJ is [here](#).

- Subscribe to our CHANJ [listserve](#) for updates, and see an archive of listserve posts on our website
- Watch our 3-minute promo [CHANJ video](#)
- Our interactive web-based [CHANJ Mapping](#) is easy to use from your computer or mobile device
- A step-by-step [video tutorial](#) walks you through the CHANJ Mapping
- The [Guidance Document](#) has a lot more background info on the need for CHANJ and helps you prioritize & design connectivity-minded projects
- Report rare wildlife and all ‘on road’ wildlife sightings using [NJ Wildlife Tracker](#)



Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey



A Project of
New Jersey DEP
Fish and Wildlife

Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ)

is an effort to make our fragmented landscape easier for wildlife to move through by protecting important habitats, restoring movement corridors, and making roads safer to cross.

Our interactive map and guidance tools show where and how to best support habitat connectivity across the state.

BE PART OF THE CHANJ! CHANJ.NJ.GOV

NEW JERSEY WILDLIFE TRACKER



Wildlife sightings from the public are incredibly useful to New Jersey DEP Fish and Wildlife - they help us map and monitor populations, manage rare wildlife species, and inform our habitat connectivity projects.

Use **NJ WILDLIFE TRACKER** to report your sightings of:

- 1) rare wildlife species
- 2) wildlife (of any kind) on roadways
- 3) other species of interest



Please practice "Safety First" in every situation, especially along roadways. Remember to respect wildlife and give them appropriate space.

