

Michele Bakacs

Michele joined Rutgers Cooperative Extension in 2009 as a County Agent/Associate Professor for Middlesex and Union Counties. She has more than 22 years of experience in natural resource management and conducts research, education, and provides technical assistance in the areas of invasive species control and native plants, sustainable/environmentally friendly land care, and water quality protection. Michele's clientele includes landscapers, municipal employees, urban gardeners, and watershed groups. Part of Michele's work focuses on teaching invasive species ID/ control and eradicating invasives from gardens and forest ecosystems while promoting increased use of native plants. Michele also works on citizen science efforts in the urban watersheds of central New Jersey helping reduce water and soil contamination. Along with local watershed partners, she developed a pathogen river monitoring and outreach program to let the public know about the safety of water recreation activities. Michele received the 2014 Diversity/Multicultural Individual award from Epsilon Sigma Phi for her work on garden soil contamination in underserved immigrant communities. She has collaborated on numerous state and federal grants including researching the water quality of rainwater harvesting and bioretention systems, and helping municipalities disconnect impervious surfaces utilizing green infrastructure. Michele helped develop and coordinate the Rutgers Organic Land Care Certificate Program for professional landscapers, recognized by the state's top industry organization, the NJ Turfgrass Association, with their 2014 Environmental Stewardship Award. Michele also coordinates the Environmental Stewards program in Middlesex and Union Counties, which teaches volunteers about local environmental issues and enables them to solve problems in their own communities.



Scott Breeman

Scott Breeman has been working in habitat restoration and conservation for over 15 years. A certified arborist through the International Society of Arboriculture, Scott is very passionate about trees, dendrology, and forest ecology. As the Conservation Coordinator for Duke Farms, he is responsible for managing the native plant nursery on site, producing locally sourced native shrubs and trees which are used in restoration projects that he designs and implements. Scott also manages the arboretum of Duke Farms, maintaining a level II accreditation through ArbNet, an endorsement he was instrumental in attaining. Before his work at Duke Farms, Scott worked for a variety of institutions including the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the National Park Service. Scott received his Bachelor of Science from Stockton University in Environmental Science with a minor in Geology.



Beth Craighead

Beth graduated from Delaware Valley College in Doylestown with a degree in Environmental Science. She is the Senior Land Steward for Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, where she has worked for 13 years. Her prior work experience includes Stony Brook Millstone Association, Washington Crossing State Park and Nature Center and Hunterdon County Parks.

Beth works with private landowners to implement stewardship strategies on their property for the Community Conservation Program and surveys for the removal of invasive plants. She helps participants with layout of their plantings and recommendations for care. Beth leads workdays with volunteers to remove invasive plants and maintains the trails system.

Beth takes the lead on Citizen Science, she coordinates volunteers for the Christmas Bird Count, the Great Backyard Bird count and the Fourth of July Butterfly Count. Beth leads the American Kestrel Nest Box Program, which includes communicating with landowners and coordinating with state experts. She coordinates volunteers to monitor nest boxes through the spring and summer. Beth trains and supervises the FoHVOS summer interns. Beth assists with restoration plantings and maintenance and recruits volunteers for special projects. She is responsible for maintaining FOHVOS meadows by getting them mowed on a regular basis and keeping them free from invasives. Beth is responsible for the Summer Triangle Project and the restored garden at Baldpate, she maintains the triangles and the garden with the assistance of volunteers. Beth also assists with the planning and implementation of the NJ Invasive Species Strike Team.



R.J. Curcio

R.J. is an Ecologist in the Natural & Historic Resources Department at the Monmouth County Park System. He has a B.A. from Drew University where he studied animal behavior with a research focus on the impact of deer overpopulation on various New Jersey ecosystems. He has a diverse range of work experiences surveying, consulting, and conducting outreach on emerging invasive species and deer management. In his current role, he works to protect and restore the diverse habitats of Monmouth County and provide sustainable recreational opportunities for park visitors. In his free time, R.J. is an avid birder, gardener, and wildlife photographer.



Don Donnelly

Don holds a B.S. in Natural Resource Management with a concentration in forest management from Rutgers University. He has been employed as a professional forester for 30 years with a work emphasis on applied ecological forestry practices. Don currently serves as the NJ State Forester for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, providing statewide technical support for forestry and agroforestry programs.



Ian Gray

Ian Gray is the Senior Land Steward with the Mercer County Park Commission. He started working in stewardship at MCPC as a Seasonal Steward and Environmental Educator while doing his undergraduate work. Ian received his BA in Ecology from The College of New Jersey in 2021.



Darrell Jones

Darrell studied Ecology, Evolution, and Natural Resources at Rutgers University in New Brunswick where he first got his start as a land steward for the University's Eco-Preserve. He is now the Superintendent of Natural Resources Management for the Morris County Park Commission which manages over 20,000 acres of parkland across its 38 parks and facilities.



Michael Long

Mike Long has served as the Director of Stewardship for the Mercer County Park Commission since 2022. He received his BA in Environmental Studies from St. Lawrence University in 2008 and has been a licensed Commercial Applicator in NJ since 2019. Prior to his time with Mercer County, he spent 12 years as a restoration ecologist for a private consulting firm.



Tama Matsuoka

Tama is the author of *Foraged Flavor*, which was nominated for a James Beard Award, and co-author of *Scraps, Wild and Weeds*, which won the IACP Food Matters award. As a master forager for some of New York City's most prestigious restaurants, her deep knowledge of wild produce informs her impeccable taste in their flavors and uses. Tama's work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg*, *CBS Sunday*, *TedX Manhattan*, *CNN Great Big Story*, *Martha Stewart Magazine*, *Oprah* magazine, and *Edible Manhattan*. At her property, Tama received the NJ Forest Stewardship award in 2007.



Mike Van Clef

Mike is the FoHVOS Stewardship Director and Program Director of the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team. He co-founded the Strike Team in 2008 with the goal of bringing greater efficiency and effectiveness to invasive species management. Mike has a Ph.D. in ecology from Rutgers University and over 25 years of experience in land stewardship, planning and research, working extensively in the evaluation and management of rare and invasive species and deer management. He has consulted with over 30 organizations in NJ including the NJ Invasive Species Council for which he prepared the New Jersey Strategic Management Plan for Invasive Species.

Most recently, Mike was a member of Senator Bob Smith's Forest Task Force working toward consensus on the stewardship of public forest lands. He also serves on the Task Force's related Invasive Species Workgroup that is providing suggestions to regulate invasive species.



Maggie Wasacz

Maggie holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the College of Charleston and a master's degree from Rutgers University, where she studied Plant Biology. Maggie's graduate studies focused on botany, weed science, and noxious plant management, fostering knowledge and passion for NJ native flora and environmental protection. In 2019 Maggie began working in academic research, where she authored several scientific journal articles and honed her expertise in applied plant ecology. In 2021, Maggie joined the Natural & Historic Resources department at the Monmouth County Park System as an Ecologist. Her work centers around land stewardship and restoring native habitats throughout the county that are welcoming to both wildlife and park visitors.

