

Down Jersey — Celebrating Our Sense of Place is a teachers’ curriculum designed to help teachers and students learn more about the region they call home. Unlike many other areas, New Jersey’s Delaware Bayshore retains the character of an earlier time, and people continue to rely extensively on livelihoods related to local natural resources. This curriculum complements the New Jersey Network film, ***Down Jersey***. Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc., the National Park Service’s New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route, and PSE&G hope this film will help build local pride and introduce both residents and visitors to the Delsea Region of the NJ Coastal Heritage Trail Route. ***Down Jersey*** explores the unique qualities and heritage of this bayshore region. We hope increased awareness will inspire each of us to become active stewards working to maintain the special character of this area for future generations.



The Delsea Region encompasses an area that begins south of Route 49 in Salem County at the Delaware Memorial Bridge and continues through the lower two thirds of Cumberland County. It then cuts diagonally from Route 49 to Route 9 and west of Route 9 to Norbury's Landing, essentially the northwestern bayshore section of Cape May County. However, you certainly need not restrict your lessons to these arbitrary boundaries. Most of the main concepts pertain to a larger area.

The half-hour *Down Jersey* film was produced by Citizens United, the National Park Service's New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route, and New Jersey Network. The film evolved from the National Park Service's book, *Historic Themes and Resources*, and its Delaware Bay Special Resource Study, which surveyed the 300-year history of the interrelationships between man and nature. The *Blue Book* is included in your curriculum packet and may be utilized as a text for the lessons.

Since the release of the film in 1997, it has received enormous praise. In its first month, it sold more copies than any NJN film of the previous year. The National Park Service and Citizens United have provided copies to educators, teachers, and administrators, many of whom have told us that *Down Jersey* should be a required part of a school's curriculum. In planning a teachers' curriculum to accompany the *Blue Book* and film, we discovered that you, the local teachers, had already begun without us. Over the years a creative, enthusiastic, and inspired group of teachers has developed and taught lessons that explore our local heritage, challenging students to view the area from a fresh perspective. Our task was compiling these lessons so that they would highlight the four main themes of the Park Service's study: agriculture, architecture, natural resources, and maritime history; and then identify the NJ Core Curriculum Standard each lesson plan addressed.

And did we forget money? Besides the dollars from the partners, and hours of donated time from local teachers, conservation groups, public and private agencies, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection—Watershed Management Public Education and Outreach Grant funded the production of the guides. Many others also helped in the creation of the film: historic societies from Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties; County Planning offices; and numerous conservation groups (see credits).

We envision *Down Jersey — Celebrating Our Sense of Place* as a work in progress. If the response to *Down Jersey* leads to a demand for more lessons, we hope to create a means of adding to the existing packet of materials. We also hope to create a web site to which each of you can post new lesson plans. The success of the present packet is due primarily to the efforts of our educational consultant, Christine Raabe. She coordinated the ideas, meetings, reviews, editing, and compilation that enabled us to provide our packet to local teachers. Her sincere interest and skill provided the leadership necessary to complete this curriculum.

As we look over the packet, it is hard to imagine the range of creativity that each instructor will bring to the material. It is exciting to consider how teachers will bridge the gap in understanding between the things we use every day and their connection to the natural resources that surround us. When we think back to our student days, we are struck by the memories of courses that inspired us, the courses where our self-image grew because we were connected to the material. What better way is there to make that connection than to start where things are relevant — in our own back yards, where our culture emerged from the available resources? The information in the lesson plans, the *Blue Book*, and the film only consists of words or pictures without the inspiration, creativity, humor, sincerity, enthusiasm, pride, and the connections that you, the teacher, can provide.

Foreword

The conservationists, educators, historians, and naturalists who have helped develop *Down Jersey — Celebrating Our Sense of Place* are like the teachers who bring their subjects to life. They are the inspired ones: teachers who still embrace students, are eager to take their classes for a sail on a schooner, are willing to make owl sounds, sing songs about oysters, and send *Down Jersey* home to introduce a new student's family to the area. These teachers cheer when students come up with new ideas, or make backyard habitats in the front yard of the school. They go to bat for their students, dress up like historic characters or as their long lost French cousin, create ponds in their classes, and wear snakes to the lunchroom. They aren't afraid to laugh so the whole school can hear, say, "no" softly and shout, "YES, YES, YES," and make kids want to get up on cold January mornings to go to school. Such teachers have a quiet sincerity or a hand that goes on a student's shoulder to acknowledge a job well done. You remember the kind of teacher you dreamed of having — the kind of teacher you dreamed of being, and probably are.

Our intention in creating *Down Jersey — Celebrating Our Sense of Place* is to help you make a difference to the future of the New Jersey Delaware Bayshore region. We know that teachers can inspire students with an appreciation for this region — many already do. This appreciation can lead to pride of place and a commitment to preserve what is unique about our area. We wish you the best of luck as you embark on sharing your discoveries with your students. We can't wait to hear about your adventures!

Jane Morton Galetto

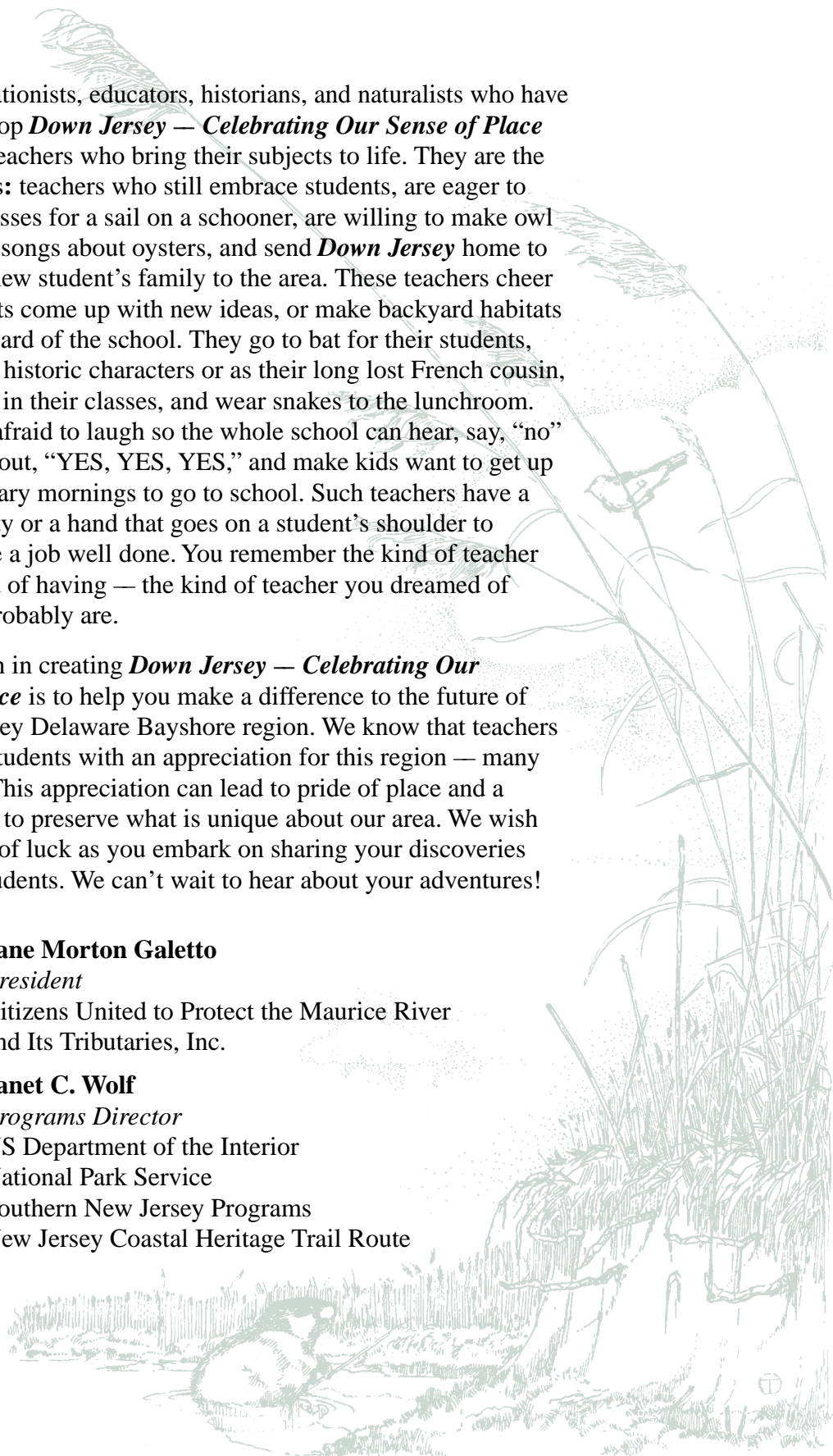
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Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River
and Its Tributaries, Inc.

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US Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Southern New Jersey Programs
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route



Courtesy of the National Park Service. Artist: David Taft.