



SCHIFF NATURAL  
LANDS TRUST

Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Inc  
**Strategic Plan**  
2021 - 2025

## Introduction

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The Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Inc. is the steward of nearly 850 acres it owns, manages, or over which it holds conservation easements in the Morris County, New Jersey, communities of Mendham Township, Mendham Borough, and Chester Township. In addition, Schiff's assets include several buildings and sites, some with historical significance.

Schiff Natural Lands Trust is guided by a volunteer board of trustees, led by a President and an Executive Committee. Schiff's staff now includes a part-time non-salaried Executive Director, a part-time non-salaried Land Steward and assistants. We rely on hundreds of volunteer hours provided by local residents and groups each year to help Schiff meet its mission to protect and preserve this land.

Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Inc. is a private, not-for-profit corporation; it qualifies as a 501(c)3 organization under the Internal Revenue Service Code.



Our address is:  
339 Pleasant Valley Road Mendham, NJ 07945

This plan was adopted by the Board of Trustees of Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Inc. ("Schiff") on January 28, 2021.

## **Strategic Overview**

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As stated in our 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, Schiff has been shifting its focus away from land acquisition and toward stewardship—taking responsibility for maintaining the property and assets under our trust, and finding new ways to engage the public to enjoy and learn about our beautiful lands. We achieved numerous accomplishments in our 2016-2020 plan including new connections with local businesses, schools and groups, ongoing success with our Summer Nature Program for Kids and signature events such as our Environmental Film Fest and Music in the Woods, and enhanced fundraising initiatives. We look to build on these successes with this five-year strategic plan.

## **Our Strategic Plan**

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Our strategic plan articulates a common purpose and direction for the organization, grounded in the important mission of protecting, preserving and providing access to our land. The plan provides a framework for setting goals and allocating resources. It includes the following elements:

- Mission Statement
- Key Objectives
- Strategies for Success

## **Mission Statement**

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Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Inc., a non-profit organization, fosters an understanding and appreciation of the natural world through land preservation, environmental stewardship, education, and passive recreational activities.

## **Key Objectives**

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- **Our Land:** To preserve and enhance the ecological value of our land for people and wildlife.
- **Stewardship & Education:** To educate and engage the public on good stewardship practices and celebrate our heritage.
- **Recreation & Events:** To promote passive recreation within our preserves and offer programs and events consistent with our mission.
- **Sustainability:** To ensure long term financial and operational sustainability.

## Strategies for Success

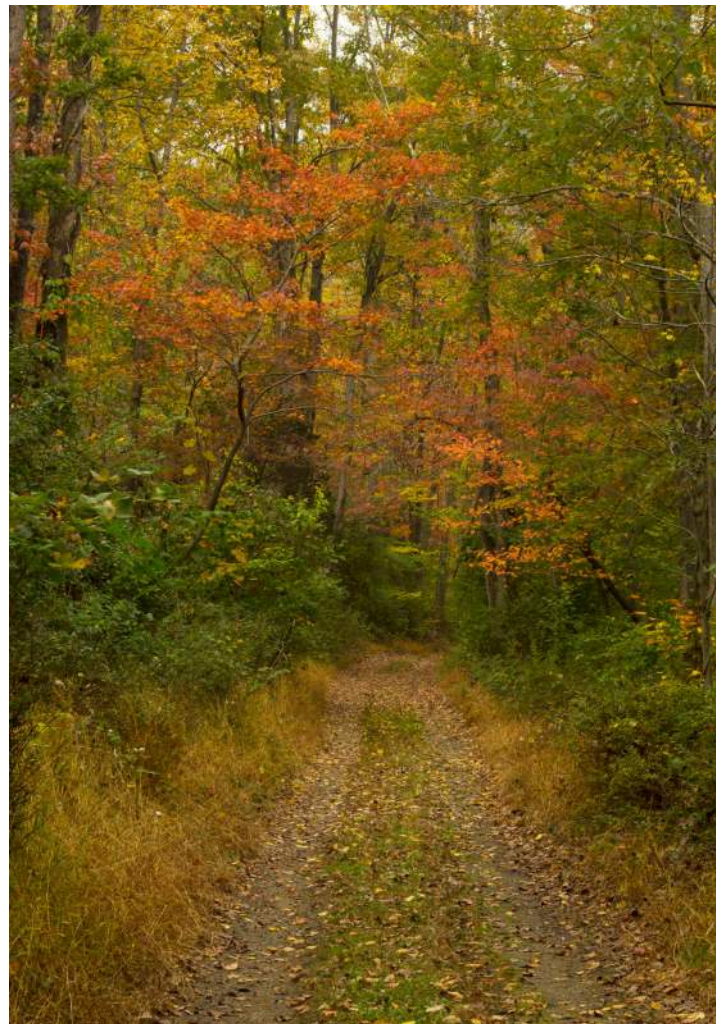
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### 1. Our Land

The Schiff Nature Preserve is a 500-acre tract of preserved land located in Mendham Borough and Mendham Township, Morris County, NJ. Schiff owns and maintains additional land throughout the area, including the adjacent McVickers Brook Preserve in Mendham Borough and the Mt. Paul Preserve in Chester Township with land holdings totaling over 780 acres. Schiff also holds approximately 50 acres in conservation easements in the surrounding communities. Schiff's land assets include 14-miles of blazed trails through fields, forests, hills, wetlands, and along the headwaters of the Raritan River. Schiff maintains and implements detailed management plans for our preserves. These plans help to address some of the land management challenges and opportunities that we face.

To preserve and enhance the ecological value of our land for people and wildlife, we strive to:

- a. Adopt and implement a new comprehensive land management plan for our properties.
- b. Manage Schiff habitat to conserve the biodiversity of native plants and animals found on our preserves, including rare species.
- c. Reduce the abundance of non-native invasive species at Schiff through strategic control measures.



## 2. Stewardship & Education

The present Schiff Nature Preserve comprises part of what had been the Mortimer L. Schiff Scout Reservation that was acquired by the Boy Scouts of America (“BSA”) in 1932 through a generous grant from Therese Loeb Schiff in memory of her son, Mortimer, who had been a founder of the Boy Scouts in the United States and had been elected president of the BSA in May 1931, just one month before his untimely death. The Schiff Scout Reservation was dedicated in 1933, and until 1979 it served as the BSA’s National Training Center. It was at Schiff that “Green Bar” Bill Hillcourt, founder and scoutmaster of the famed Mendham Troop No. 1, and others developed the Boy Scout handbooks, “Boys’ Life” (now “Scout Life”) magazine, and numerous field manuals and nature guides.

For some twenty years before becoming the Schiff Scout Reservation, the land had been part of the 600-acre “Brookrace” country estate of Richard H. Williams Jr.; his wife, Julia Lorillard Edgar, and their children. During much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the land along the North Branch of the Raritan River and McVicker’s Brook had formed a rural industrial district featuring iron forges, gristmills, sawmills, cotton and woolen mills, and lime kilns. During these years much of upland acres of what is now the Schiff Nature Preserve had been timbered and used for the grazing of sheep, the planting of orchards, and the raising of crops.

Schiff Natural Lands Trust, Inc. was created in 1984 and played a leadership role when the Nature Preserve property was acquired from developers with the help of the Trust for Public Lands and others.

Our goal is to raise more awareness of our land and its history and generate an active interest in Schiff from Scout constituencies, historians, and others in the community. Educating the wider community about the land, its preservation, and its history is an essential part of Schiff’s mission, and in furtherance of this goal we offer a wide range of programs for people of all ages.

To educate and engage the public on good stewardship practices and celebrate our heritage, we strive to:

- a. Engage with the public so as to share best practices in land management, promote the preserve, and grow membership.
- b. Regularly offer programs that educate the public, including Scouts and students, about our stewardship and history.
- c. Expand volunteerism to increase engagement in the community to support operations at Schiff.



### 3. Recreation & Events

One of Schiff's primary goals for its system of nature preserves is to provide the best public access possible. We accomplish this by maintaining and expanding our network of multi-use trails and maintaining our buildings and infrastructure. Our main building for public access is the Schiff Nature Center, which is the headquarters for our part-time staff, our popular Summer Nature Program for Kids, and the site of various educational programs and events. The Nature Center was built in the early 1960s as Patrol Cottage No. 8, the last constructed, and only remaining, bunkhouse for people attending training programs at the Schiff Scout Reservation.

To promote passive recreation within our preserves and offer programs and events consistent with our mission, we strive to:

- a. Effectively maintain trails, buildings, and infrastructure for the benefit of the public and Schiff staff.
- b. Conduct fundraising events consistent with our mission that generate sufficient revenue to maintain recreational assets.
- c. Increase and diversify engagement methods with members, business partners, grantors, and donors.



#### 4. Sustainability

Working without an operating endowment fund, Schiff's board of trustees and part-time staff are challenged to cost effectively raise awareness about Schiff's mission, deliver a variety of programs, and maintain our aging facilities. We successfully met this challenge in our 2016-2020 plan.

To ensure long term financial and operational sustainability, we strive to:

- a. Enhance operational integrity and effectiveness by improving coordination and communication among Trustees, Executive Committee, and staff.
- b. Continue to diversify and expand the skill set of our Board of Trustees.
- c. Periodically review our fundraising and programmatic activities to ensure high levels of effectiveness and financial viability.

