



Strategic Plan 2026-2031



A Rich History, A Healthy Community

From the **Lenape** living, hunting and fishing here, to **Colonial farmers** making use of the fertile soil and adjacent waterways to grow food, to the **Williams family** who moved during the estate era for the clean air and natural beauty, creating an equestrian and dairy farm, to the **Scouts** who found the perfect site for their National training reservation, to the **town residents** who saw the need to save it from overdevelopment, to now, once again, a natural area preserved in perpetuity and enjoyed by many for hiking, environmental educational programs,

snowshoeing, cycling and listening to music outdoors. **Schiff Natural Lands Trust** is a treasure to be valued by our greater community. With development continuing in the area, support of these 800 acres is vital.

Our health is determined by the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. Maintaining the health of this land and the streams that meander through it protects the health of our community, wildlife and local farms.

Since 2020, Schiff has accomplished an array of initiatives and projects, including:

- 1. Commissioned a 10 Year Land Management Plan to direct our approach to managing invasive species, deer browse and environmental threats like the ash leaf borer.**
- 2. Conducted prescribed burns on 200 acres to reduce the impact of invasives and followed these with the planting of over 500 native saplings to reforest the areas.**
- 3. Purchased key pieces of equipment to improve efficiency for our part time land steward, including a golf cart, UTV, tractor, and brush hog, funded through grants and donations.**
- 4. Preserved an 11-acre parcel along the North Branch of the Raritan River.**
- 5. Educated over 600 children in our Summer Nature Program.**
- 6. Engaged with hundreds of adult and youth volunteers in exploring, learning about and caring for our natural world each year.**
- 7. Expanded the size of our Board of Directors to increase the breadth of skill sets needed to ensure the success of our organization.**
- 8. Broadened our network of community partners.**

Schiff will continue our mission of stewardship, education and maintaining access to open space for public recreation. From 2026 to 2031, we will work toward three objectives:

- 1. Fulfill our mission to protect and steward Schiff's land, resources, and facilities for current and future generations.**
- 2. Promote Schiff's mission and programs to inspire more visitors, volunteerism, and giving.**
- 3. Strengthen Schiff's team and operations for mission-driven, financially sustainable growth.**

This plan underscores Schiff's commitment to our treasured land and our treasured community.

I hope you will join us in supporting these endeavors.

***With gratitude,
Marissa S. McDonnell, M.D.
Board President***



Objective 1 **We're On a Mission**

Objective Fulfill our mission to protect and steward Schiff's land, resources, and facilities for current and future generations.

Strategy Complete priority projects in our 2022-2032 Land Plan to sustain our preserves, trails, habitats, and visitor infrastructure.

Strategy Increase community participation in nature-based learning at Schiff.

Strategy Grow community use of Schiff's trails, natural spaces and programs for recreation.

Strategy Conduct a feasibility assessment for land use, infrastructure, and potential new programs.

Groundwork for Growth

In Year 1 Expect to see improved trails and guest amenities as well as increased partnerships with local health and science organizations.

Objective 2 **We're Building Our Community**

Objective Promote Schiff's mission and programs to inspire more visitors, volunteerism and giving.

Strategy Grow recognition of Schiff as an essential and unique part of the local landscape.

Strategy Ensure long-term impact by increasing annual support and strengthening our endowment.

Strategy Build and sustain a strong volunteer base to support key programs and operations.

Groundwork for Growth

In Year 1 You should see more of Schiff in the community, including signs to get more hikers here. We will make some changes to our membership program and expand our amazing core of volunteers.



Objective 3 We're Building Our Team

Objective Strengthen Schiff's team and operations for mission-driven, financially sustainable growth.

Strategy Build Schiff's organizational capacity with increased staff and more professional development.

Strategy Transition Schiff's board from a hands-on working model to one focused on oversight, strategy, and resource development.

Strategy Implement systems and adopt nonprofit best practices to enhance effectiveness and impact.

Strategy Strengthen partnerships with local governments to advance shared community goals.

Groundwork for Growth

In Year 1 We will expand our team to increase outreach and engagement with the community and give them - and our board - the tools they need to succeed.

Here's How We Planned

1. On the heels of our 40th Anniversary, we asked:
What's next?
2. 253 Schiff members, donors, and friends contributed their voices through interviews or e-surveys (thank you!)
3. In the winter/spring of 2025, a dedicated committee (see below)
 - Reviewed community input, ideas and questions
 - Analyzed performance on the current strategic and land plan
 - Envisioned how we can best fulfill our mission and meet our community needs by 2030
 - Drafted the plan that was approved by the Board"

Plan Committee

Marissa S. McDonnell, M.D., *Board President*

Dorian von Aulock, *Executive Director*

Mark Decker, *Trustee*

Ken Rendall, *Trustee*

Janis Slutsky, *Secretary*

W. Barry Thomson, *Trustee*

Tom Wells, *Trustee*



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