

## WETLANDS ACT

The Manasquan River, as well as its accompanying wetlands, is undoubtedly one of the most important natural resources of both Brielle and of the surrounding area. The qualitative and economic benefits (scenic beauty, sportsfishing, marine industries, etc.) are of vital importance to the Borough. What hardly anyone realizes, however, is that the river's wetlands are even more important than the river itself.

Those relatively innocuous areas, seemingly unproductive and dotted with marsh grasses, are the most important in the world. Not only are they the beginning of the food chain for most marine life and water fowl (witness the fact that an acre of wetlands can produce five to six tons of organic material, compared to one-half ton for a comparable field of wheat), but they also, therefore, contribute indirectly to the more than 5,000 jobs in the area related to marine fisheries.

Other qualitative benefits and considerations of the wetlands are as outlined below:

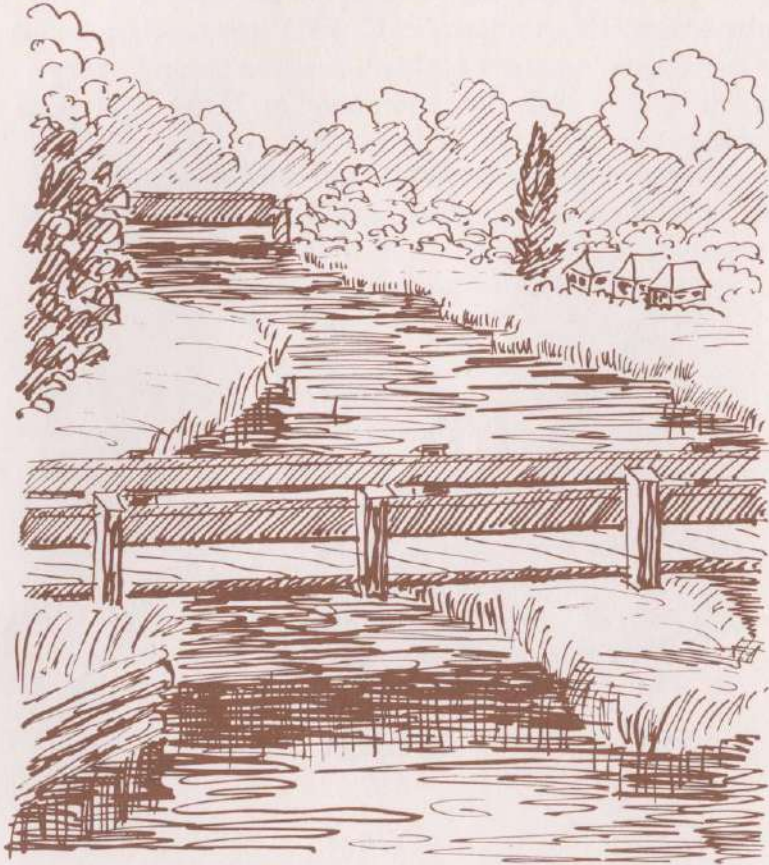
They provide the essential environment and nutrients for fish, shellfish, waterfowl, and many other forms of wildlife.

They catch various types of sediment, which might otherwise pollute waters and clog channels.

They act as a buffer zone against flooding caused by storms.

This last item is probably the most noticeable of all the economic benefits. Wetlands areas had historically been developed without proper regard to their natural functions. Storm damage to such improperly developed areas have not only caused insurance rates of such properties to spiral upwards, but also have necessitated increases in corresponding Federal funds to rebuild damaged areas.

Partially because of such fiascos as the situation described above, the State of New Jersey passed pertinent legislation, known as the Wetlands Act. The Act regulates the possible alternate uses of wetlands areas, prohibiting uses that could be detrimental from either an environmental or economic standpoint. Thus, its intended purpose is to stop the indiscriminate destruction of the vital wetlands area for purely profit objectives.



Debbie's Creek  
A typical Wetlands area found in Brielle.

Presently, any act that occurs within the wetlands controlled by the above legislation is carefully monitored by the government. Construction, dredging, and similar acts within such properties all require permits issued by the Department of Environmental Protection. Even alterations in kind, such as the *repairing* of existing *bulkheads* or *docks* by the *residential property owner*, now require such a *permit*.

To determine exactly what lands fall under the jurisdiction of this legislation, certain definitions were employed. In spirit, these lands include any which are tidal connected and capable of growing certain species of salt, cord, or meadow grasses; and/or are one foot above the extreme high water mark.