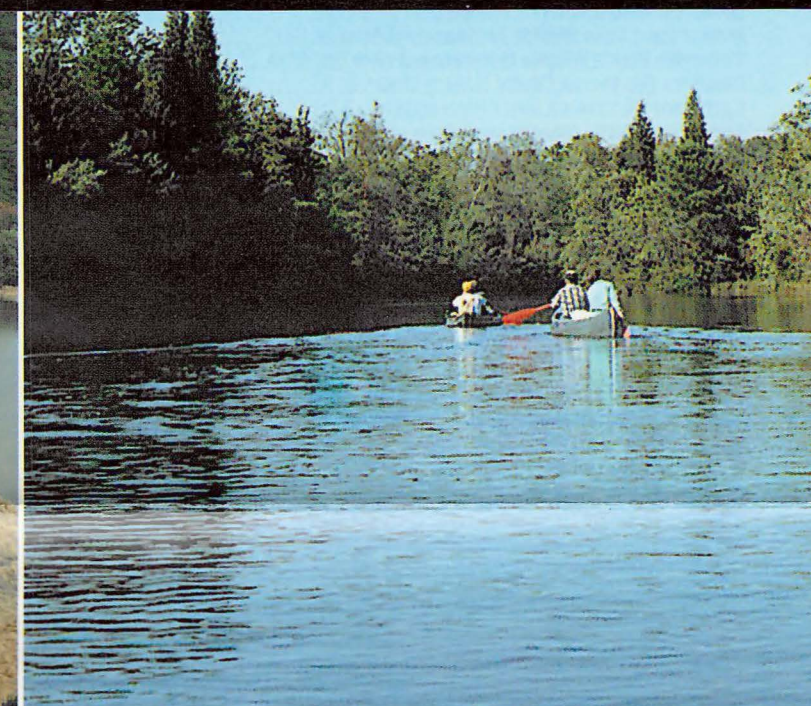


Maurice River

Maurice National Scenic
and Recreational River
New Jersey

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



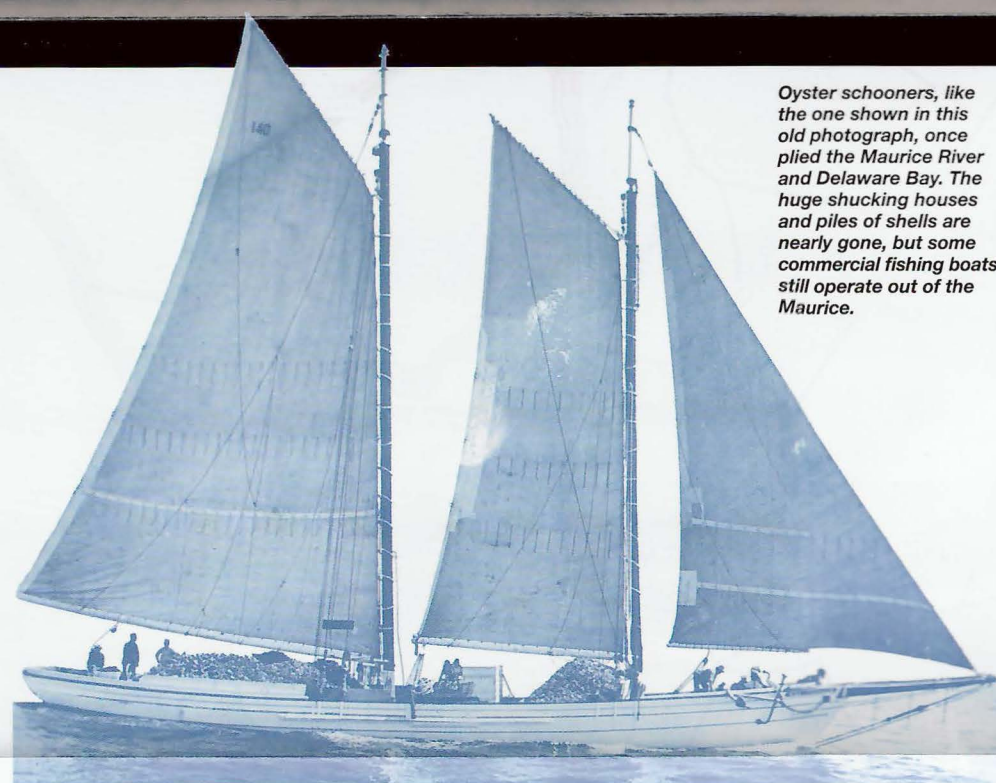
A stillness pervades the marshlands along the Maurice River. At first glance, inactivity seems to reign. But then, a bald eagle leaves its perch, swoops down over the waterway, and snatches a fish in its talons. Tiny fiddler crabs climb out of their holes and scurry across the peat. A family of wood ducks paddles by in perfect formation. A green heron gingerly stalks the shallow mudflats looking for morsels. Horseshoe crabs inch their way onto the shore and deposit their eggs. A muskrat emerges from its riverbank burrow, looks about, and commences its watery patrols for crayfish. Elsewhere along the river, a fisherman unloads his catch of weakfish at Bivalve. A canoeist drifts by the waterfront park in Mauricetown. A bird watcher focuses her binoculars on a flock of snow geese at Turkey Point. A glassblower patiently creates an elegant vase to the delight of schoolchildren visiting Wheaton Village. Upon a closer look, the seemingly serene Maurice brims with all kinds of activity and pleasures.

Designated by Congress in 1993, the Maurice National Scenic and Recreational River officially consists of 10.3 free-flowing miles of the Maurice River and nearly 25 miles of the Menantico Creek, Manumuskin River, and Muskee Creek. But biologically and culturally, the river corridor embraces the full extent of all four waterways and their nearby communities, most of which are in Cumberland County. In partnership with the National Park Service, local jurisdictions continue to administer the lands along this national river. Beginning with a spring that feeds Willow Grove Lake near Franklinville, the

Maurice (pronounced Morris) marks the western edge of New Jersey's Pinelands as it meanders south through pine, cedar, and maple woodlands in Vineland to Union Lake in Millville. From that point, the Maurice loops through expanses of flat grassy marshlands, picks up its tributaries, and becomes increasingly brackish with the influx of tidal saltwater from the Delaware Bay. Besides the Delaware River, the Maurice is the largest tributary feeding the bay. The Maurice and its tributaries are known for the purity of their waters and for their abundant wetlands that are critical

to the survival of fish and shellfish, to songbirds and raptors migrating along the Atlantic Flyway. One half of all the rare, threatened and endangered species in the state exist in Cumberland County. The Maurice supports New Jersey's largest stand of wild rice. Sometimes called wild oats, it is not harvested for human consumption, but the sora rail, or mud hen, stops here to feed on the wild rice as it makes its way south for the winter. The Maurice River corridor protects natural habitats for such rare plant and animal species as the sensitive joint vetch, bald eagle, striped

bass, and shortnose sturgeon. The decline of the once-plentiful sturgeon in the Delaware Bay area has been likened to the killing of the buffalo in the West. Close to but relatively isolated from the cities of Camden, Philadelphia, and Wilmington, the Maurice River corridor links the life and folkways of South Jersey with the oystering, fishing, and seafaring communities across the bay in Delaware and along Maryland's Eastern Shore. In many ways, the Maurice is a bridge between the North and South.



Oyster schooners, like the one shown in this old photograph, once plied the Maurice River and Delaware Bay. The huge shucking houses and piles of shells are nearly gone, but some commercial fishing boats still operate out of the Maurice.



Its World Was the Oyster

For centuries much of the human activity along the Maurice River revolved around the once-bountiful oyster. Native Lenape Indians had been enjoying oyster roasts at the mouth of the river long before the storm-damaged Dutch ship *Prince Maurice* ran aground and sank there in 1657. Huge rings of oyster shells mark the places where they ate the sweet raw or roasted oysters and tossed the shells over their shoulders. Equally impressive are huge piles of shells left behind by European settlers and successive generations

of watermen. From the 1700s to the mid-1900s, the Maurice hummed with oystering activity as boats and ships left its wharfs, piled the Delaware Bay, and returned with their harvests.

Shucking houses, canneries, shipyards, and other marine facilities sprung up at such places as Port Norris, Shellpile, Bivalve, Leesburg, Dorchester, Mauricetown, and Port Elizabeth. Wagons and ships, then railroads and trucks hauled thousands of pounds of oysters to markets in Philadelphia, New York, and other places. At one time as

many as 90 boxcars of oysters rolled out of Port Norris in a week. But then, in 1957, a parasite struck and within just a few years killed off the once prolific Delaware Bay oyster beds. Since scientists at Rutgers University Shellfish Research Laboratory at Bivalve identified the parasite, they have been seeking ways to halt the blight. Today, watermen devote their energies to crabbing and fishing.



A basket of crabs and (left) oysters on the half shell

Marsh Grasses

The lower Maurice River and its tributaries meander through extensive marshlands characteristic of the many Delaware Bay estuaries, areas where freshwater of the rivers mix with the saltwater of the ocean.

These estuaries are rich feeding and breeding grounds for shorebirds, waterfowl, shellfish, shrimp, turtles, raccoons, and muskrats.

Early settlers soon realized they could use some of the drier marshes as pastures. Over the years farmers harvested salt hay for such uses as insulation for ice, bedding for stables, protective packaging for glassware, mulch for gardens, and a special rope used in casting iron.



Marshes extend up to the East Point Lighthouse

Some farmers built dikes around the lower marshes to improve hay yields or to convert the fertile wetlands into fields on which to raise oats, corn, and wheat.

In the late 1800s, farmers in South Jersey started to focus their operations more on vegetables, fruits, and blueberries, and by the mid-1900s most of the farms along

the Maurice River and its tributaries had been abandoned or left idle. Some of these lands have returned to their natural or near-natural state. But many marshes have been taken over by phragmites, a common reed called foxtail that can grow up to 13 feet tall and spread about 30 feet every year choking small ditches and displacing other marsh

vegetation. Phragmites is low in food value, so wild animals that depend on native grasses are forced out. As part of a program to restore tidal marshes and expand spawning and nursery areas for fish and other aquatic life, a local utility company is restoring previously diked and degraded wetlands on the west side of the mouth of the Maurice River.



Great blue heron



On the Atlantic Flyway, the area attracts thousands of birds. The osprey, great blue heron, and bald eagle are frequently spotted here.



Osprey



In the 1870s Thomas Eakins painted a series of hunting scenes along the Delaware Bay and its tributaries where his father owned a boat-house. At that time residents of the Philadelphia area journeyed across the bay to the South Jersey marshes to hunt small, chicken-like birds called rails that build nests in dense marsh grasses and reeds. Eakins gave up the sport after contracting malaria on a rail hunting trip.

(left) "Rail Shooting," by Thomas Eakins, 1876, oil on canvas



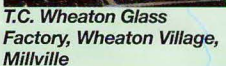
Bald eagle

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service photo by John and Karen Hollinsworth

Beaver Swamp Wildlife Management Area off NJ83	• • • • •
Belleplain State Forest off Rt550	• • • • •
Buckshutem Lake Wildlife Management Area off NJ49	• • • • •
Cedarville Ponds Wildlife Management Area off Rt553	• •
Delaware Bayshores Center NJ47 in Eldora	• • •
East Point Lighthouse Glade Road off NJ47	•
Fortescue Wildlife Management Area off Rt553	• • • • •
Glades Refuge off Rt553	• •
Heislerville Wildlife Management Area Glade Road off NJ47	• • • • •
Manumuskun River Preserve Schooner Landing Road	• • • • •
Menaticto Wildlife Management Area access by canoe & boat	• • • • •
Millville Army Air Field Museum Rt610, Millville	• •
Millville Wildlife Management Area Rt555	• • • • •
Nantuxent Wildlife Management Area off Rt553	• • • • •
Parvin State Park Rt540	• • • • •
Peaslee Wildlife Management Area NJ49, Rt552	• • • • •
Peek Preserve NJ47	• • • • •
Tuckahoe Wildlife Management Area NJ50	• • • • •
Turkey Point/Egg Island-Berrytown WMAs off Rt553	• • • • •
Union Lake Wildlife Management Area of Rt552, Millville	• • • • •
West Side Park Maurice River Parkway off NJ55	• • • • •
Wheaton Village off NJ55, Millville	• • • • •
Willow Grove Lake Preserve off NJ55, Willow Grove	• • • • •
National Park Service Passport Stamp can be obtained at the Bridgeton-Cumberland Tourist Center.	

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Most of the Maurice River corridor is located in Cumberland County, which borders the Delaware Bay in south-central New Jersey. Day-to-day life traditionally revolves around farming the lands or farming the waterways. Some residents do both, changing with the seasons, for instance, from berrying to crabbing to trapping to lumbering.

Signs of past and present lifestyles and a variety of ethnic influences are evident as you travel along the byways from one community to another and stop at historic sites and wildlife areas or do a little boating on the waterways.

Vineland, created in 1861 by Charles K. Landis, is one of the earliest planned communities in America. The city is known for its annual Jersey Fresh Festival, which features vegetables, fruits, and other

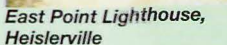
Oyster schooner A.J.
Meerwald, *Bivale*

agricultural products from the region. Stop at the Vineland Historical Society museum to see exhibits about Landis and local Indian artifacts. Call the Vineland Chamber of Commerce at 856-691-7400.

In Millville, tour the Museum of American Glass at Wheaton Village and learn about the community's longtime glass-making heritage and other crafts; 800-998-4552. Millville Army Air Field Museum recounts the airport's role in World War II; 856-327-2347.

Wander around historic Mauricetown, a picturesque 19th century shipbuilding and sea captain's village along the Maurice River. Today the town features holiday house tours, a Seafood Festival the last weekend in September, and antique shops; 856-785-0457.

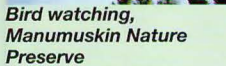
The *A.J. Meerwald*, an 115-foot restored oyster schooner, sails out of Bivalve and serves as a classroom with naturalists interpreting the life of the riverways and bay; 856-785-2060.



Stop at the East Point Lighthouse, which was built in 1849 at the mouth of the Maurice River on the New Jersey side of the Delaware Bay; 856-327-3714.

Bird watching opportunities abound at the Manumuskin Nature Preserve, Commercial Township Wetland Restoration Site, Turkey Point, Glades Natural Lands Trust Site, Moores Beach, and numerous wildlife management areas and other sites from Stow Creek to Fortescue and on to neighboring Cape May.

There are several places to visit in Cumberland County beyond the immediate Maurice River corridor. Tour restored 18th century buildings in Greenwich where American patriots in 1774 burned a shipment of British tea in a huge bonfire; 856-455-4055. In Bridgeton take the walking tour in the historic district and stop at the Cohanzick Zoo; 856-451-4551. North of Bridgeton, the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center interprets the heritage of Japanese Americans relocated to the area during World War II; 856-451-8393.



Services and Activities Information- For details about food and lodging facilities, recreational opportunities, historic sites, festivals, canoe rentals, and private campgrounds and marinas, contact or visit the Bridgeton-Cumberland Tourist Center at the intersection of NJ49 and NJ77 in Bridgeton; 856-451-4551. Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc., a watershed protection organization, provides information, educational activities, and volunteer opportunities; write to P.O. Box 474, Millville, NJ 08332.

Canoeing/Kayaking/Boating—Below Millville, the Maurice is rated as moderate to difficult for canoeing because of its many turns and rapid tidal current. Public access points to the Maurice are shown on the map and chart. Access the Menanticus, Manumuskinn, and Muskege tributaries from the Maurice by canoe. Boats may be launched on the Maurice at the public Fowser Road Boat Ramp near NJ47 in Millville or at one of several commercial marinas along the river.



Please respect the rights of private property owners while on the waterways. For excursions on the Delaware Bay, boats may be launched at Fortescue and Port Norris.

Camping—Public camping sites are noted on the map and chart.

Fishing—A fishing license is required in the freshwater sections of the Maurice River above the Millville Dam and north of its confluence with the Manumusk River, and at the ponds and lakes in the area. A license is not required in the saltwater section of the lower Maurice, south of the Manumusk River, or on the Delaware Bay. Day/charter boat trips are available in Fortescue.

Bird Watching/Hiking—South Jersey is known as one of the major bird-watching areas in the East. Several refuges and state wildlife management areas in the Maurice River corridor have trails and observation platforms.

Hunting—The hunting of deer, squirrels, and some birds is permitted in season at New Jersey's wildlife management areas. For information, call 609-292-1599 or write to the New Jersey Department of

Environmental Protection,
Division of Fish and Wild-
life, 501 East State Street,
P.O. Box 400, Trenton, NJ
08625-0400.

Festivals—Several communities hold festivals during the summer: June—Delaware Bay Day and Weakfish Festival at Port Norris; July—Cumberland County Fair in Millville; August—Jersey Fresh Festival in Vineland; September—Seafood Festival in Mauricetown. Buena Vista Township also holds a festival around the 4th of July.

Related Areas
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route
is a vehicular tour route interpreting cultural and natural history sites along the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean. Several of these sites are located within Cumberland County and the Maurice River corridor. Call 856-447-0103. Or write to the National Park Service, P.O. Box 568, Newport, NJ 08345. (www.nps.gov/neje)

**Great Egg Harbor
National Scenic and
Recreational River** pro-
tects critical habitat on the
Atlantic flyway along the
Great Egg Harbor River
to the east of the Maurice
River. Call 215-597-9175.

Cape May National Wildlife Refuge protects dunes, wetlands, and other habitats attracting songbirds, shorebirds, and raptors migrating along the Atlantic Flyway. Call 609-463-0994 or write to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 24 Kimbles Beach Road, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210-2078.

