

MARSH MUSINGS

by Dr. Lenore Tedesco, Executive Director



I look out my window at the golden hues and the mosaic of color of the fall marshes. It is another very high tide so that the marsh is a mixture of open water pools and a maze of grassy patches that reach above the glassy water surface. Fall migration is in full swing and each afternoon, we marvel at the collection of shorebirds and waders that use the salt pannes at the Institute to rest before they continue on their long journeys to the warmth and plentiful food resources in their wintering grounds to the south. It really is inspirational and a time honored tradition that reminds me of the passing of seasons and gives me pause to reflect upon the past year. This October marked my second year in south Jersey. It's been both a trying year and a remarkable year.

This year many communities were rebounding from the effects of Hurricane Sandy. Our beaches and wetland ecosystems were no different. We undertook a transformational project with our partners to help restore critical habitat for wildlife on Delaware Bay. And The Wetlands Institute rebounded as well – and we rebuilt and continue to rebuild to be better than before. Prior to the storm, we chartered a course of growth and change for the Institute that involved building critical human resources and upgrading our facilities to better serve our constituents and embrace our mission. Then Sandy struck, destroying the dock and boardwalk and crippling our aquarium support infrastructure. The board and staff never flinched. Our rallying cry became: Stay the course and use this as an opportunity to be even better than imagined. It's been a difficult and exhausting year, but also an exhilarating one. As I sit and look out over the marsh, I can see and feel our progress.



In mid-September, we reopened the dock and it truly is built better than before. We have two work stations on the dock that allow us to expand our research efforts. We are planning a water quality monitoring station that will help us build baseline data sets to better understand the bays and estuary. Our research boats are in the water. The new Disney Conservation grant will allow us to buy sonar equipment to significantly upgrade our capabilities in terrapin and fisheries conservation. Our Education team now has the ability

to significantly enhance program offerings to the public and to school groups.

Dedicated philanthropic gifts are fueling the beginnings of our avian conservation work and our research director has been out working with the Delaware Bay Shorebird team to trap and band juvenile shorebirds on their way south for the first time. These birds were given a chance because of the remarkable beach restoration project that we were thrilled to help spearhead and that we continue to work on.

Our next big efforts are underway. The elevated boardwalk, with its research and education stations, is in final design stages and work is set to begin. The dormitories are undergoing a much needed renovation to accommodate new staff and better serve our summer interns and programs.

It's been a very busy year, and 2014 will no doubt shape up to be another whirlwind year. I am proud of all we have accomplished and look forward to continuing on our amazing journey. At The Wetlands Institute, we are only as strong as our members and supporters. As we grow and rebuild, our needs are great. We are ***Making No Small Plans*** and I sincerely hope you will be a part of our growth and support our efforts.