



**We Bring the World to New Jersey**

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## **NJSEA and Rutgers-Newark University Announce Partnership On Environmental Research**

*Union to Enhance and Expand Vital Scientific Research in the Meadowlands*

**LYNDHURST, N.J.** – The New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority (NJSEA) and Rutgers-Newark University today jointly announced a partnership that will join the Authority’s Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute (MERI) and Rutgers-Newark’s Department of Earth & Environmental Sciences to continue to advance and grow critical scientific research in the Meadowlands region.

“Both MERI and the Rutgers-Newark Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences are home to top-level scientists who are nationally and internationally recognized for their research capacity,” said Wayne Hasenbalg, President and CEO of the NJSEA. “Combining the exceptional intellectual ability and technological resources of these premiere research organizations will greatly benefit and continue the revitalization of the Meadowlands’ environment.”

MERI will continue to be housed in the NJSEA’s DeKorte Park campus in Lyndhurst, NJ and will be operated by Rutgers-Newark. MERI staff will begin transitioning to Rutgers-Newark in September under a final agreement. MERI began as an arm of Rutgers-Newark’s Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences in 1999 and became part of the former New Jersey Meadowlands Commission (NJMC) in 2004. The NJMC was consolidated into the NJSEA earlier this year.

MERI scientists continuously monitor the air, water and soil quality of the Meadowlands District and examine samples in the Institute’s state-of-the-art laboratory, allowing them to immediately observe positive and negative changes. Over the past 16 years the Institute has conducted a broad array of important research that has helped to significantly improve water quality in the Hackensack River and its surrounding marshes. This work has played an important role in the revitalization of the Meadowlands’ unique urban ecosystem, including the return of birds, fish and many other species of wildlife that now call the area home.

The Institute is currently working on a joint wetlands study with the NJSEA’s Natural Resources Department examining the biodiversity and pollutant levels in macroinvertebrates and the

sediments in which they live. The study will produce new knowledge about the ecological health of the Hackensack River system, its surrounding marshlands and the associated food web.

Over the past year a dozen academic papers by MERI staff were published in scientific journals. Several of the papers focused on ongoing studies measuring the amount of carbon both captured and emitted by Meadowlands District marshes. In October, the prestigious *Journal of Agriculture and Forest Meteorology* published the paper, "Carbon dioxide fluxes of an urban tidal marsh in the Hudson-Raritan Estuary." MERI this month submitted a study for journal publication that involves developing an index of flood hazard vulnerabilities within the Meadowlands District.

#### **About The Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute:**

In addition to performing field research, MERI provides important resources to Meadowlands District municipalities through its award-winning Geographic Information Systems group (GIS). The GIS group produces hi-tech, web-based digital maps of all properties in Meadowlands District municipalities as well as aerial and topographical images. The GIS group has regularly taken top honors at the annual New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection GIS Mapping Contest.

MERI's digital maps provide first responders in District towns with immediate access to critical information, including data on hazardous materials stored in warehouse facilities, fire hydrant locations, floor plans, turn-around space for heavy firefighting equipment, and current and historical aerial imagery. These maps also save time for municipal officials who use property data to manage municipal assets and plan for infrastructure and other improvements. Data stored on each facility or residential property include owner, block and lot, easements, address, zoning and land use, acreage, and building footprint.

The GIS group also provides a water level alert system and flood prediction maps to first responders and the public. The email and text-based alerts for Meadowlands District towns are sent when water levels reach 5.5 feet above sea level and continue to be relayed as the levels rise. The interactive, web-based flood prediction maps include the parts of Meadowlands District municipalities that may flood from sea surge levels of 4 to 8 feet.

The MERI Library collection includes more than 12,000 hard copy and digitalized books, engineering reports, research studies, photographs, maps, newspaper clippings and other current and historical documents related to the Meadowlands District.

MERI also maintains a weather station in DeKorte Park. In 2014, the station was included for the first time in the NJ Weather & Climate Network, which is managed by Rutgers University. Weather station data can be found at [www.njweather.org/station/111](http://www.njweather.org/station/111).

[meri.njmeadowlands.gov](http://meri.njmeadowlands.gov).

#### **About Rutgers-Newark Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences:**

The Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences (DEES) offers unique geoscience education and research opportunities. We focus on applied environmental education and research that serves well students wishing to pursue careers in the growing environmental consulting sector that is strong in New Jersey.

Our faculty strengths are in atmospheric chemistry, soil geochemistry, near surface geophysics, ocean biogeochemistry and structural geology. We have a well-established PhD program in Environmental Science. We collaborate closely with the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering at New Jersey Institute of Technology, the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Rutgers (Busch Campus) and the School of Environmental & Biological Sciences at Rutgers (Cook Campus) to offer broad educational-research opportunities for both faculty and students. The department is also heavily engaged in educational outreach programs that offer unique opportunities for minority high schools students within the Newark Public Schools system. The Department was ranked No. 49 in the country for its graduate program in 2014 by *U.S. News and World Reports*.

[ncas.rutgers.edu/ees](http://ncas.rutgers.edu/ees)

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