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## NJMC Re-introduces Valuable Marsh Grass to Boost Plant Diversity in the Meadowlands

**LYNDHURST, N.J.** - New Jersey Meadowlands Commission naturalists are reintroducing saltmarsh bulrush, a valuable wetlands plant, at the Mill Creek Marsh in Secaucus and Harrier Meadow in North Arlington, with more sites to follow.

“We are helping our marshes to rebound, and this is part of the effort,” said Robert Ceberio, Executive Director of the NJMC. “This bulrush is part of a long-term plan to increase plant diversity in the Meadowlands District.”

The bulrush was found throughout the district until the early 1900s. The construction of tidegates and dikes in much of the 30.4-square-mile Meadowlands District’s marshes drastically affected the marsh ecosystem, allowing an invasive plant called phragmites to colonize and choke out the bulrush and other plants.

But for the past 60 years, the tide has been turning. A storm in 1950 destroyed the dikes by Saw Mill Creek Marsh in Secaucus, and the tides have reclaimed that marsh. Through wetlands mitigation and restoration projects, the NJMC is restoring the tide to other marshes. The bulrush has made a comeback on its own at the Secaucus High School Marsh after the NJMC restored 42 acres of wetlands there.

To further that effort, NJMC is adding saltmarsh bulrush to other sites. *Scirpus robustus* was chosen for several reasons. The plant can withstand salt water, its shiny brown seeds are a favorite food of ducks and other waterfowl, and its stems and leaves are used by muskrats to build their lodges. The perennial, which grows to two to three feet tall, can typically be found in low-salinity marshes from Florida to Nova Scotia.

The bulrush being transplanted this week was grown from seeds from plants that survived at a site in Carlstadt over the years. The bulrush will be planted in plots 10 feet long by roughly two feet wide, and then fenced off with chicken wire to keep the muskrats and Canada geese at bay.

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