

January 10, 2025

Northern New Jersey Council (NNJC) Announces Recapitalization Plan and Camp Consolidation to Ensure Scouting's Future in Our Communities

Scouting remains a unique and critically important program for youth development and NNJC is committed to ensuring that Scouting continues to be offered in our communities for the foreseeable future. The Council is announcing several significant steps to create a more solid foundation for its finances and program infrastructure.

Specifically, the council will further consolidate its camps from four to three by selling Camp Turrell in New York. All Scouting programs at Camp Turrell will cease by March 15, 2025. Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation is larger than we require as a property to support the high adventure trek programs operated there. We are in discussions about selling all or the majority of the property. As part of this initiative, we are exploring alternatives with the State of New York, Adirondack Land Trust and the Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation Association to be able to continue to offer high adventure treks from this location. Work is continuing on this option with the decision to be made later this year, Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco and Camp Yaw Paw, both in New Jersey, will remain open and deliver full programs for Scouts BSA and Cub Scouts. Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation will operate in Summer 2025, with future seasons to be determined as previously outlined. The Council will use the sale proceeds to recapitalize its endowment which supports council operations and retire its outstanding operating debt that was incurred as a result of the National Bankruptcy and COVID-19.

Council camp consolidation has been discussed for years and the process for making these recent decisions was inclusive and collaborative. Council staff, Executive Board members, volunteer leaders, alumni, and subject matter experts were included in information gathering, analysis and final recommendations. We appreciate that there are intense emotions surrounding the closure of camps that have been enjoyed by so many for so long. Council leadership will host a virtual forum on Monday, February 10 for our Scouting community to further review these decisions.

Consolidating the council's outdoor programs and properties has become a necessary financial action. The required payments arising out of the National Council bankruptcy have eliminated any ability to defer these decisions. Camp expenses have often exceeded camp revenues throughout the years. The decline in attendance parallels the decline in membership and cannot be ignored. Competition for summer camp remains strong in our area and a good number of our units go outside of our council. While our preference would be to see the properties conserved, the council must maximize the financial benefit to ensure the continuation of the Scouting program in Northern New Jersey. Other councils across the country have made similar and, in some instances, more dramatic decisions to restore their financial health following national membership declines and the payments required as part of the National Council bankruptcy.

We are proud of the Scouting program offered in Northern New Jersey and look forward to leveraging our improved financial position to further invest in our programs and remaining properties. The Yaw Paw Foundation, Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation Association and the Sand Pond Society continue to be great partners in helping improve our outdoor adventure offerings at their respective locations. Council staff will work with units, leaders and parents to help transition those Scouts and units who planned to attend camp at Turrell to our excellent programs at Camps No-Be-Bo-Sco and Yaw Paw.

Closing a Scout camp is a difficult decision. We remember that our true legacy lies not with any camp but in the lives that we are able to positively impact through the delivery of our programs. We invite you to attend the webinar on February 10, review our FAQ, and reach out with any questions you might have.

Thank you for all you have done and will do for Scouting and the youth we serve together.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah T. Murnane III
Council President

Steven Remington
Council Commissioner

Rebecca Fields
Scout Executive

Recapitalization Plan and Camp Consolidation

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

► What is changing and staying the same with our camps?

a. Camp Turrell, while an amazing experience, simply doesn't have enough Scouts attending for us to continue to operate it. We do not have the financial resources and membership to support multiple camps. The property is being marketed for sale. All Scouting programs at Camp Turrell will end on March 15, 2025.

b. Outdoor programs, including summer camp will be consolidated into Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco and Camp Yaw Paw from January 1, 2025; both properties will continue to serve Scouts BSA and Cub Scouts respectively. We're excited that we'll be able to focus even more on these two great camps, and we encourage our entire council to take advantage of the great programs each have to offer.

c. Floodwood will continue to operate its high adventure trekking program during 2025. Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation is larger than we require as a property to support the high adventure trek programs operated there. We are in discussions about selling all or the majority of the property, and we are working with the Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation Association (FMSRA) to determine whether we can offer the program in the future from a much smaller footprint. FMSRA has been generous enough to provide funding in support of the 2025 season.

► Why was the decision made now?

Alongside the entire Scouting America organization, we have experienced significant financial headwinds following the National Council bankruptcy and the significant decline in our Cub Scout Programs a result of COVID-19. We have spent the past few years taking a hard look at our mission and purpose and the resources we need to achieve both. Our decision to right-size the number of camps we operate is one outcome of that process and aligns with many similar decisions in councils across the country.

► What specific factors drove the decisions?

a. Our ability to serve Scouts in our council was our guiding light. Ultimately, we knew that we could invest more in our Scouts if we focused our efforts and resources in the right number of camps to serve our Scouting Programs.

b. We have reviewed our financial position alongside the utilization of these camps and realized that we could no longer support the operating costs incurred by maintaining underutilized properties.

c. We must replace the endowment funds that were required to be paid out as part of the National Council bankruptcy.

► **What was the process, who was involved?**

a. This was a lengthy process which has been underway for quite some time. We formalized the process in 2023 and 2024 through two successive volunteer committees that were asked to first make sense of the data in front of us, and ultimately to make a recommendation.

b. In 2023 the committee included Council Executive Board members, volunteers and staff as a start to explore all options. The return of Camp Alpine and Camp Lewis to the Lessors were two of the initial decisions.

c. In 2024 we formed a second committee of Executive Board members to review the outcomes of our 2023 explorations and create final recommendations for the Board.

d. While much of the data reviewed - including attendance, budgets, and history - were specific to our Council, we were also guided by councils across the country. Nationwide, we have noted that most successful councils have moved or are moving to a one or two camp model to serve their Scouts.

► **Couldn't we just reduce expenses and keep the camps?**

The financial commitment NNJC was required to make to the Survivor's Trust went well beyond our annual operating budgets and required us to pay out the majority of our unrestricted endowment. Those funds generate income that supports operations and need to be replaced in a timely manner; there is no viable way to do so without selling one or more of our properties.

► **Can we reduce Council employees to save money?**

We have been running with many open positions for several years and this has prevented us from serving units and unit leaders in the field. The Council is currently understaffed and there is no room to reduce further. Rather the opposite - we need to increase staffing to support our unit volunteers and expand the reach of our program.

► **Why is this news just being shared now?**

There are many details that we wanted to make sure we had right before we shared this news. While there are still many steps to go before the sales are final, we are now at a point where we can communicate with some degree of certainty.

► **Is NNJC selling all of its properties?**

a. NNJC will retain Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco and the Council Service Center. In addition, the council will operate Camp Yaw Paw which is leased from and generously supported by the Yaw Paw Foundation.

b. Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation will be sold at least in part, and potentially in full. Continued operation of the trek programs on a smaller footprint is under consideration, pending further discussions with the State of New York, Adirondack Land Trust and the Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation Association.

► **Why these properties specifically?**

a. We listened to our Scouts and parents. Attendance at Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco is consistently the highest of any of our camp properties.

b. The Yaw Paw Foundation has generously supported the physical plant and our programs for Cubs and Scouts at Camp Yaw Paw, making it possible for us to run programs at a second camp.

c. We are still discussing the potential for the Floodwood Mountain Scout Reservation Association to support continued trek activities from that location from a smaller footprint.

► **How did we get to this point?**

a. The National Council bankruptcy local council obligations effectively eliminated the Council's unrestricted endowment funds. The income from those funds provided a significant amount of operating support to the Council for many years. Membership and related operating support have declined over the years and was significantly impacted by the pandemic, particularly with respect to the Cub Scout program. As such, we are required to make these difficult decisions in order to refocus on growth.

b. The expenses associated with running multiple camp properties (owned and leased) (summer and year-round) for many years despite declining program enrollments, decreased attendance and increasing maintenance and capital requirements have become untenable. Inflation has significantly impacted on our budgets over the last few years and hiring multiple summer camp staffs has become significantly harder and more costly.

► **NNJC has been through this process before. Why is this time different?**

We will be, for the first time in many years positioned with the right number of properties to serve our youth. We can now focus on managing those properties efficiently and effectively and focus our limited resources on program growth.

► **What will happen to the land from the NNJC camps that are being sold? Will it be sold to developers?**

a. Our goal is to work with responsible buyers who understand the community value of these properties. While the land sale will be open to various buyers, including developers, we are actively prioritizing buyers who are aligned with the Council's values and the needs of the community. As an example: we are in discussions for the sale of Floodwood acreage to the State of New York (which holds a right of first refusal), which sale would result in conservation of the land as forever wild.

b. We would be happy to work with any organization that is interested in preserving the land for recreational or conservation use provided the financials make sense.

► **Will this sale impact the ability of Scouts to access outdoor experiences?**

No. The camps we are in the process of selling have been underutilized for some time, and we will be able to meet the needs of all of our Scouts through our two remaining properties, Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco and Camp Yaw Paw.

► **What are you going to do with the funds raised through the sale of these two camps?**

First, we will pay off the debt accumulated since the National bankruptcy commenced. Once that is complete, we will be funding our endowment, which was significantly depleted by the related legal action.

Rebuilding the endowment will enable us to better support all aspects of the Scouting program in the Council. This includes investing in our retained properties with needed maintenance and improvements and the related outdoor programs as well as expanding the reach of our program in the communities that we serve so that more Scouts and families can benefit from Scouting.

► **How does the Council plan to avoid financial issues like this in the future?**

a. We are optimistic that the challenges faced by the National Council which resulted in Chapter 11 bankruptcy and required significant financial commitments to be made by local councils, including NNJC, are behind us. By retaining a single local camp, operating a second camp with the generous support of the Yaw Paw Foundation, and possibly continuing to retain a smaller Adirondack property with its trekking program, this puts us in the best possible position to fund our outdoor programs. Our focus on growth will help us ensure that our operating costs are aligned with the size of the audience we serve.

b. By replenishing our endowment, we are creating a secure financial future so that we can serve Scouting youth in our community today and into the future.

▶ **Will the sale of these camps cause layoffs or affect current staff?**

- a. There are no layoffs planned at this time. In fact, we are currently short-staffed.
- b. We are shifting from a property-heavy operating model to a model that will support growth in youth and families served. This will eventually allow us to support programs that require more staff.
- c. Staff directly affected by the sale of camps, such as camp management personnel, may be retained by new owners or will be supported in finding alternative opportunities if there are not opportunities at retained locations.

▶ **Has the Council explored alternatives to selling the camps, such as public-private partnerships or community fundraising?**

These are options we have explored thoroughly. The only way forward in a timely manner to generate sufficient funds to replace the endowment, retire the deficit and ensure the Council is fiscally sound is to sell real estate owned.

▶ **What steps are being taken to ensure that the proceeds from the camp sales will be used appropriately and effectively?**

Management has responsibility for, and our Executive Board and Officers have oversight over the Council's endowment funds and the annual operating budgets. Each board member has the responsibility of voting for financial policies, the budget and significant expenditures. All members must ensure they understand the decisions to be made and vote in an informed manner. Management and the Board use the Council's financial policies, strategic plan, approved budget and financial reports, to properly fulfill their managerial and fiduciary responsibilities.

▶ **How can local government support the Council during this challenging time?**

- a. The best way to support NNJC is by supporting Scouting America through advocacy so that we can reach more youth in our service area.
- b. Please consider facilitating partnerships with schools along with local parks and rec departments to help us grow our program and provide space for local activities.

▶ **What impact will these sales have on the community's access to youth programming and other community events hosted by Scouting America and NNJC?**

Our core programming remains strong, and we are committed to serving as many youth and their families in the communities that we serve.

▶ **What can we do to support NNJC's efforts to reach more youth?**

We have several ways to make a meaningful impact. We are always looking for both volunteers and donors. To ensure that youth join Scouting, volunteers are needed to help in recruitment and starting Scout programs in communities where there are none. Units are encouraged to actively recruit new families year-round. To assist in ensuring that youth have a quality program, we encourage leaders to be trained and actively participate in district and council activities. Unit Commissioners are needed to help support unit leadership have a quality program.

▶ **Where are you going to store equipment from the camps?**

Equipment will be evaluated and re-purposed to Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco and Camp Yaw Paw to meet our needs at these two camps.

▶ **Can I get the stuff back that I donated?**

Unless there was something that had a specific reversion clause attached to it, we will be redistributing camp-owned equipment, including previously donated items, to Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco and Camp Yaw Paw. Any donations will be well used at these camps!

▶ **Where is Webelos provisional camp in 2025?**

The Webelos provisional camp will be held at Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco during Week 6.

▶ **Will rentals, programs and training for spring of 2025 still happen at Turrell?**

Camp Turrell will remain open for weekend camping through the weekend of March 15, 2025. Council events and training will be moved to Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco or Camp Yaw Paw.

▶ **How much capacity does Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco have to accommodate our unit and others?**

We are committed to ensuring that all units are able to enjoy Scouts BSA summer camp at Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco. Please reach out to us directly as soon as possible so that we can do our best to get each unit their preferred week.

▶ **Will my unit be able to do self-cooking at Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco?**

In-site cooking will not be available at Camp No-Be-Bo-Sco for 2025, but we will be reviewing it for future summers.

▶ **I thought Camp Yaw Paw was just a Cub Scout day camp?**

We are excited about improvements underway at Camp Yaw Paw. Thanks to the generosity of the Yaw Paw Foundation, the camp will have an updated kitchen and dining pavilion with bathrooms in 2025 along with the new trading post added in 2024. Additional improvements are being planned as well.

▶ **I have a reservation at Camp Turrell. Do I need to do something?**

Camp Turrell is honoring all reservations through the weekend of March 15, 2025.

▶ **I have a Troop/Pack/Crew/Post/Staff plaque in the Camp Turrell Dining Hall. May I have that back?**

Yes, your leader (SM, CM, NL) may submit a request for any plaque associated with your unit. We will be distributing the plaques after March 30, 2025. Requests may be submitted before that date to Marissa Sikder at 201-677-1000x126 or marissa.sikder@scouting.org.