

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER: FIVE QUESTIONS

A column featuring insights from FOBI's Board Chairperson, Patrick W. Mulhern.

Pat was voted to assume this role by his fellow Board of Trustees members.

Five Questions!

1. What is your favorite hidden gem or secret spot on Burlington Island that you love to visit? With four hundred acres, it is hard to choose just one favorite spot. However, the southern tip, known as Highpoint Lookout, sits just across from Burlington Bristol Bridge and can be seen when crossing, just above the clay face. It sits thirty-five feet above the water and has a 230-degree view of the mouth of the Delaware River. At sunset, known as the Golden Hour, the sky lights up with vast colors and spectacular views of Burlington, NJ, and Bristol Borough, Pennsylvania, and the bridge that connects these sister towns.

2. If you could only recommend one thing or activity to do to a first-time visitor to Burlington Island, what would it be? Without question, make sure you see the spring-fed lake! The lake is a 97-acre lake that stretches 750 yards across and consumes a quarter of the island. You often find people, ospreys, and American Bald Eagles fishing in this clear, pristine lake.

3. Who owns and maintains Burlington Island? The Island is owned and managed by four stakeholders, although nearly the entire island is owned by the Citizens of the City of Burlington, NJ.

The four stakeholder groups oversee segments of the Island. The northern half of the island is managed by the Board of Island Managers (BOIM) and maintained by a small group of BOIM Rangers and volunteers, including FOBI.

The southern half of the island, facing the Burlington Bristol Bridge, up to and including the lake, is managed by an unfunded agreement with the State of New Jersey, Green Acres Program, which preserves open space, protects New Jersey's environment, and provides for public recreation and a small group of BOIM Rangers and FOBI volunteers. And the fourth stakeholder is the NJ DEP Bureau of Tidelands Management, which claims ownership of nearly all island shorelines.

The tidelands are maintained by several volunteer groups, including FOBI, Spearhead Project Earth, and Red Dragon Canoe Club. These groups keep the shorelines clear of single-use plastics, tires, barrels, and other unnatural debris and litter left behind from the flowing tide changes. The 4.5 miles of safety trails are maintained by BOIM Rangers and FOBI volunteers.

At last report, the 4-acre parcel of land known as the turnaround basin remains under the control of Matrix Reality Holding Company.

4. What aspect of Burlington Island's unique history interests you the most?

In 1624, Dutch colonies settled on Manhattan Island, which we know today as New York City. The same ship that delivered settlers to Manhattan Island dropped off eight families on Matinicum Island, or as we know it today, Burlington Island. These explorers did not have a full season to plant and harvest before winter set in. If it were not for the guidance of the Lenape, the Dutch West India families of French-speaking Dutch Walloon traders would not have survived.

5. What is the most important part of the island's culture or identity that should be preserved for future generations?

Without question, hands-on experiential education is important. Classrooms do not always need to be between four walls. Fresh air, walking, learning, paddling, exploring, discovering, relating to nature, and how we fit in with nature are equally important as any classroom curriculum. We are fortunate to have this natural gem, four hundred acres of uninhabited land, an island in the Delaware River between two vibrant communities. The island is a training ground for knowledge. To me, the island's culture and identity are clear. FOBI's focus is to continue to make Burlington Island safe and accessible.

DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

As we prepare for the 2026 season, your support can make a real and lasting difference. Together, we can preserve this unique island experience for generations to come.

As you are working on your 2025 tax return, we invite you to consider supporting Friends of Burlington Island. Your tax-deductible donation will help fund trail maintenance, shoreline cleanups, and stewardship efforts that keep the island safe, accessible, and protected for all.

Donate here: <https://book.peek.com/s/2febaf33-faf0-42d0-bcc4-985bff916e1a/WR4w4>

For more information about Friends of Burlington Island, contact us at info@FriendsofBurlingtonIsland.org