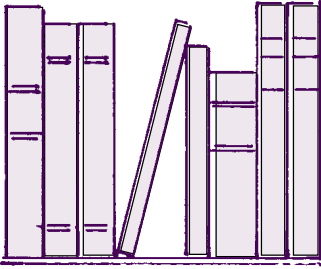


RESOURCE P A P E R



ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONS

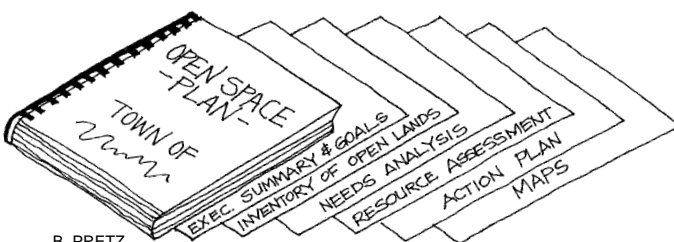
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Open Space Plan

What is an Open Space Plan?

An open space plan is a comprehensive document that serves as a guide for open space protection and preservation in a municipality, a county or some other defined region like a watershed. The plan tells why and how open space will be protected there. Because open space preservation is generally pursued over a long period of time, through many successive administrations, it is imperative that a comprehensive plan be in place to assure continuity and policy consistency.

Ideally, an open space plan contains text, maps, tables, aerial photos and other materials. A plan examines a community's needs and goals, analyzes all open spaces (both preserved and unpreserved) in the project area, and then lays out a set of priorities and strategies for preservation. An open space plan is the tool that will enable a community to pursue open space preservation in a systematic, cost-effective manner that best meets its social needs and protects natural resources. It is also a "wish list" that articulates the community's vision of its future in terms of open space.



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Benefits of an Open Space Plan

An open space plan is a big undertaking. Volunteers from an environmental commission or open space committee can easily spend a year or more doing the necessary research and writing. Even if volunteers do most of the legwork, there will be costs for acquiring maps and data, and for layout and printing when the plan is finished. It is not unusual for a town to pay an environmental consultant several thousand dollars or more to put together its open space plan. Is it worth it?

The biggest payback on the investment of time and money in an open space plan will be orderly, cost-efficient preservation of open space. The money spent is miniscule compared to the cost of just one parcel of land in a high-priced state like New Jersey. With a comprehensive open space plan in place, a municipality is more likely to spend its precious dollars on the land that offers the most benefits to the community and the environment. It will not waste money on hasty purchases made in response to a development proposal or political pressures. By the same token, crucial lands (for example, those with special environmental characteristics or in strategic locations that make them particularly desirable to preserve) are less likely to "fall through the cracks" if they are included in a municipal open space plan. With specific parcels targeted for preservation, the environmental commission and the open space committee will be more likely to be ready with the necessary funding before a specific development proposal threatens the land.

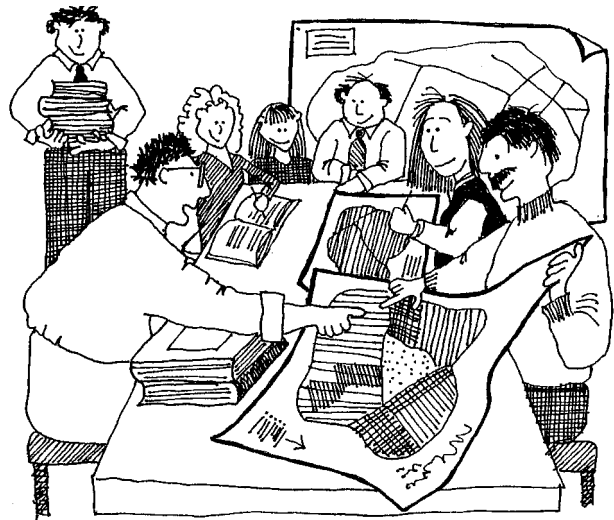
The very process of collecting and evaluating the information for an open space plan helps focus community attention on the issue. This can result in greater support for open space spending or for establishing an open space tax. For example, contacts with large landowners can lead to donations to the town or a land trust. And involving interested citizens in the process can turn up creative ideas for identifying, preserving and maintaining open space.

Parcels identified for preservation on a municipality's official map or master plan have some protections against development under the Municipal Land Use Law (*N.J.S.A 40:55-44*). However, the municipality must compensate the landowner for the loss of use of the property during any period of time the parcel is held in limbo by the town's actions.

Towns and counties with an open space tax (or other stable funding source) and an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) are eligible for larger Green Acres acquisition grants (50% of the purchase price instead of 25%) under the Planning Incentive Program. Once a town meets the Planning Incentive criteria, it receives funds in the form of a special block grant, similar to a credit line, that can be used for any parcel listed in its approved OSRP. The block grant enables a municipality to react quickly when a market opportunity arises, instead of waiting to see if an individual grant will be approved for a given parcel. It also reduces the amount of time that municipal staff has to spend writing and submitting individual grant applications.

The Department of Agriculture, in its administration of the state's Farmland Protection Program, offers similar Planning Incentive Grants (called "PIGs") for *agricultural* open space planning. Hopefully, through comprehensive planning, municipalities will carry out local farmland preservation in a manner that will not only preserve open areas, but also help to sustain agriculture as an industry in New Jersey.

Having an official open space plan also helps facilitate good regional planning. Neighboring communities can plan their open spaces to work in concert with each other. For example, if a town knows that its neighbor plans to preserve a greenway or other block of open space on its border, it will get more open space value for its money by purchasing adjoining lands. One long greenway or large tract of preserved land provides more natural resource and recreation value than two smaller, unconnected tracts. Research



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for the plan should also include an examination of the county's open space plan, if one exists, to see how the local preservation efforts can fit into or capitalize on county preservation efforts.

Who Creates the Open Space Plan?

Depending on the area of interest, municipalities, counties, land trusts and watershed associations develop open space plans, often working in concert with each other. Environmental commissions and open space committees have important roles to play in developing local open space plans, especially if their municipalities are interested in qualifying for the Green Acres' Planning Incentive Program or the Department of Agriculture's Planning Incentive Grants. Usually at least one environmental commission member serves on the open space committee. Sometimes the environmental commission is the local open space committee. Whatever the case, the environmental commission should participate fully in the open space planning process.

Open space preservation is a primary environmental commission responsibility. The State enabling legislation requires commissions to "...keep an index of open areas..." and authorizes them to "...recommend to the planning board...plans and programs [pertaining to open areas] for inclusion in a municipal master plan, and the development and use of such areas." (*N.J.S.A. 40:56A*).

Most commissions have put together an environmental resource inventory (ERI), also called a natural resource inventory (NRI). Based on data from aerial photography and scientific reports,

these documents use maps, text, charts and graphs to identify and describe a community's important natural resources, like wetlands, water bodies, forested areas, and steep slopes. The ERI provides the basis for evaluating which lands should be preserved.

Members of the open space committee and environmental commission, depending on their skills, may choose to do all of the work on the plan (research, community outreach and writing). Or, with financial support from the governing body, they may assign some tasks to the municipal planner or other staff, or they may hire an environmental consultant. In any case, the plan should be formulated with participation from residents, municipal officials, boards, commissions and staff, county park or open space representatives, and local land trusts and watershed associations. Any local boards with an interest in open space and recreational lands, such as the parks and recreation commission, board of education, and planning board, should be consulted and kept informed. It is important to build consensus throughout the process so that residents and local officials will support the plan's adoption into the master plan.

Funding the Open Space Plan

The NJDEP's Environmental Services Program awards matching grants of up to \$2500 for environmental commission projects, including the preparation of an open space plan or open space inventory. The grants can be used to cover the commission's expenses, or to hire a consultant to perform some or all of the tasks involved. (NJDEP Environmental Services Program: 609-984-0828)

The NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) administers a program for "Smart Growth" matching grants. Under certain circumstances (such as multi-jurisdictional planning, or as part of an application for "center" designation) a Smart Growth grant may be awarded for preparation of an open space plan. (DCA Office of the Commissioner: 609-633-6057).

Elements of an Open Space Plan

The NJDEP's Green Acres Program requires seven categories of information in an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) for the Planning Incentive Program. The category headings and the information specifically re-

quired by Green Acres are covered by the open space plan format outlined below and detailed in the following pages. (For a copy of the Green Acres OSRP Guidelines, call the Green Acres Program at 609-984-0570, or check the website at: www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres.)

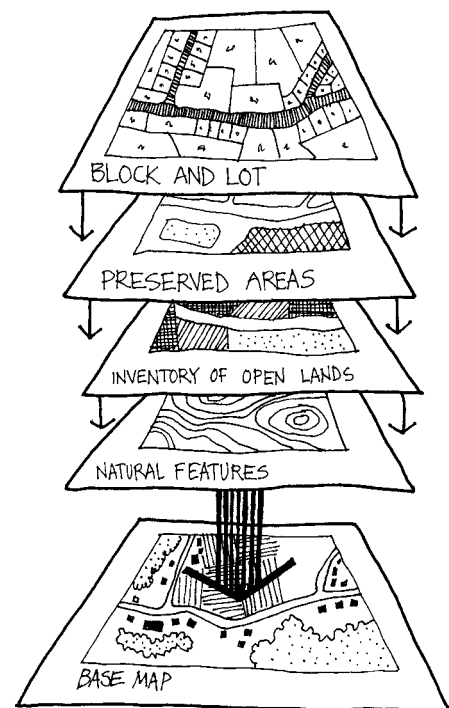
- EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- INTRODUCTION /BACKGROUND
- GOALS & POLICIES
- INVENTORY OF OPEN LANDS
- NEEDS ANALYSIS
- RESOURCE ASSESSMENT
(EVALUATION OF OPEN LANDS)
- RECOMMENDATIONS /ACTION PLAN
- SYSTEM MAP

Executive Summary

An open space plan, like any other comprehensive plan, should begin with a description of its origin and purpose. It should provide the reader with a brief overview of the project and the way it was carried out, including a description of how the public was included in the process. The executive summary should briefly present the plan's significant findings relative to recreation and open space needs, and the actions proposed by the plan.

Introduction/Background

Because a municipal or county open space plan is a long-term plan, the document will serve as an official reference long after it is written. Some or most of its authors may no longer be available to provide institutional memory. There-



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fore, it is worth the effort to include background and introductory materials that will give future users insight into the document. It is also a good idea to include the names and titles of the individuals who worked on the plan, the roles they played (research, mapping, community outreach), the span of time over which the work was done, and data sources.

Some towns preface their open space plans with a brief history of the community *relative to its land use*, relating environmental, historic, cultural or recreational trends that have affected or will affect the town's open space needs and goals.

Goals and Policies

This section should present the principles, assumptions, goals and policies that are the basis for the open space plan. These are necessary to "get everyone on the same page." They also establish that federal, state and local tax money spent to carry out the open space plan will be used for proper public purposes.

Appropriate goals or principles would reflect the community's desire to:

- provide adequate active and passive recreation;
- provide recreational and open space opportunities on an equal and accessible basis for all citizens;
- maintain water quality and groundwater recharge areas;
- protect sensitive environmental features;
- protect historic areas;
- maintain biodiversity;
- minimize erosion or damage from flooding;
- maintain rural character; and/or
- coordinate programs with other local boards or surrounding communities.

The goals and principles stated in the plan should correlate closely with and reference those in the master plan. If they do not, this is a signal that a re-examination of either the master plan or the open space plan project is in order, to bring it in line with the community's current views. The ultimate goal is to have the open space plan adopted into the master plan, and the two must be in agreement in order to provide a clear roadmap for local officials. As a land use planning document, the local open space plan should also be consistent with the county open space, conservation and/or recreation plan and the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

Inventory of Open Lands

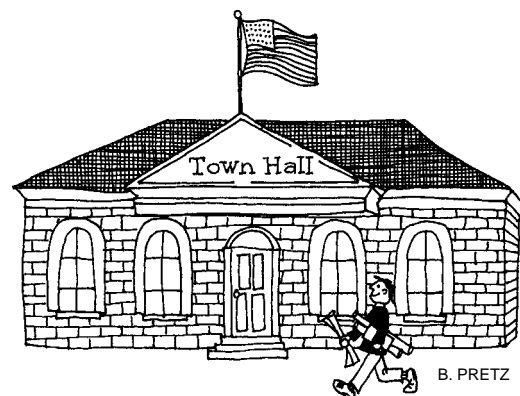
For this section, you will need to compile a list of every parcel of vacant or undeveloped land, public or private, within the municipality. For each parcel, collect information on type, size, location (lot and block, street address, directions as needed), facilities, use, degree of current protection (conservation easement, deed restriction, etc., or lack thereof), form of ownership or control, owner, recreation opportunities and natural resource characteristics.

In rural areas with a lot of undeveloped land, some municipalities limit their search of privately owned lands to parcels of a certain minimum size, for example, only parcels of an acre or more. Obviously, this is not advised for more developed areas and cities, where space is limited and neighborhood and pocket parks are a primary form of open space. Even in rural areas, limiting the search to larger parcels could result in a missed opportunity. A small parcel might be important as part of a greenway corridor, or might provide access to, or buffering for, a stream or lake. If it becomes apparent during the research and mapping phase that small parcels in a certain area might be strategically desirable, these parcels could be incorporated as needed into the inventory.

Occasionally, communities opt to include in their open space plans a parcel that has a structure on it. For land that is particularly valuable in an environmental, historic or strategic way (say, for access or buffering), the possibility of preservation should not be ruled out simply because a parcel is not vacant. (See *References* for contact information on funding for historic preservation.)

GETTING STARTED

You can pursue the information on open lands in several ways. First, you will need access to up-to-date tax data and maps. *Before beginning any*



research you should consult with the local tax assessor. He or she is intimately familiar with the tax records and maps of your town, and will be able to advise you of the most efficient way to approach your search. The assessor also may be able to provide anecdotal information about certain parcels or property owners that could prove helpful in evaluating the potential to preserve specific properties.

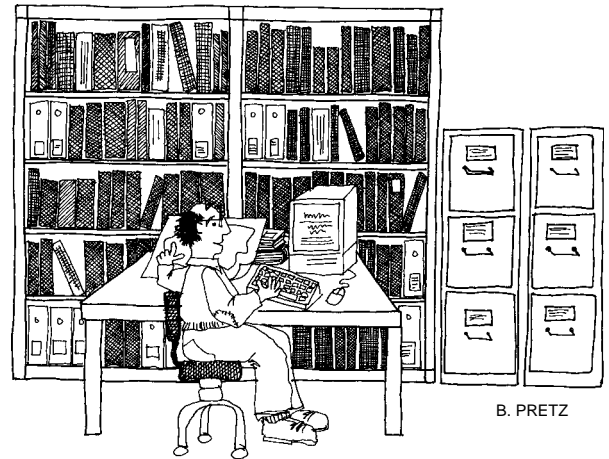
For small, developed municipalities, most open spaces and vacant parcels are probably known, or can be easily identified through a “windshield survey.” They can then be identified by block and lot numbers on the tax map. Large municipalities and rural towns require more research because property boundaries may not be obvious, and much of the land cannot be seen from a roadway.

If your town has a Geographic Information System (GIS) (computer-mapping) database that includes block and lot information, producing maps of open land parcels identified by block and lot number will be much easier. Even if the municipal GIS database does not include block and lot information, you can use GIS to show land cover and other surface features that should be protected. From there, you can use tax maps to identify individual parcels that encompass these features, and then research those parcels in the tax records.

If your town does not have GIS but has computerized its tax data, ask the tax assessor to help you sort properties by class to locate vacant lands and agricultural lands. If your town is still on a manual system of tax records, you may need to look at tax maps to identify block and lot numbers within open areas, then look up individual property listings in the tax assessor’s field book(s) to determine ownership and other information. County planning departments and some county libraries also maintain municipal tax and block and lot information.

If your municipality has an “official map” (most towns do not), obtain a copy. If not, find the largest, most complete map available that shows your municipality all on one sheet, because each paper tax map will probably show only a small slice of the municipality. Orienting and referencing the individual maps can be a challenge.

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has aerial maps of the entire state, available in paper form (last updated in 1992)



and in CD-ROM/GIS format (updated 1995-1997). Aerial views provide a “big picture” that may help you locate open space. More importantly, aerial views show the natural features and patterns (surface waters, vegetation, green corridors, etc.) that will be the foundation of your preservation plan.

ORGANIZING THE DATA

For inventory purposes, open areas can be organized in a variety of ways: by location or region (such as a watershed); by natural features; or by category of ownership. A list organized by type of ownership would be broken down into:

- **Public lands:** municipal, county, state or federal parks, trails, natural areas, school grounds, sports and recreation areas, public land leased for farming, reservoirs, military reservations, capped municipal or county landfills;
- **Private lands owned by non-profit organizations:** camps, trails, natural areas, recreational/sports areas, private school grounds, historic sites, lakes;
- **Private lands owned by individuals or corporations:** agricultural, utility-owned (such as railroad or power line corridors), undeveloped real estate purchased on speculation; large corporate campuses; homeowners’ association-controlled dedicated open space; recreational lands (camps, rifle ranges, private lakes, ski trails, etc.); natural areas (tourism, ecotourism); capped private landfills.
- **Lands already preserved through purchase of development easements** by state/local governments or non-profits (land trusts).

Tax records will indicate which lands are farmland-assessed. Check with your county Agricultural Development Board to confirm

which agricultural lands are protected by easements. You will also need to identify all vacant lands for which development plans have been approved, because these parcels are much more challenging to preserve. The properties with pending applications may be out of reach, although development plans do, on occasion, fall through.

Ideally, information about each parcel on the open space inventory should be entered into a spreadsheet database. This will make it easy to collate and print the data in a table or report, and will also allow you to update information on any parcel (for example, changes in ownership or use) as time passes. It is important to keep the parcel information current because changes can affect a parcel's priority level on the preservation list.

In addition to listing parcels by block and lot number, you should show the inventory of open spaces on a map or series of maps. If you do not have access to GIS-produced maps, paper tax maps shaded manually with different colors (or with colored acetate overlays) showing various types of uses and ownership will work just fine.

Needs Analysis

From the complete inventory and map(s) you can get an accurate picture of the existing open space network of active recreational, passive recreational and natural resource lands. For a needs analysis, you will examine the amounts and types of preserved open space, and determine the extent to which these lands satisfy present and projected needs in each category. These determinations should be made with input from public officials, municipal staff, community leaders and the public.



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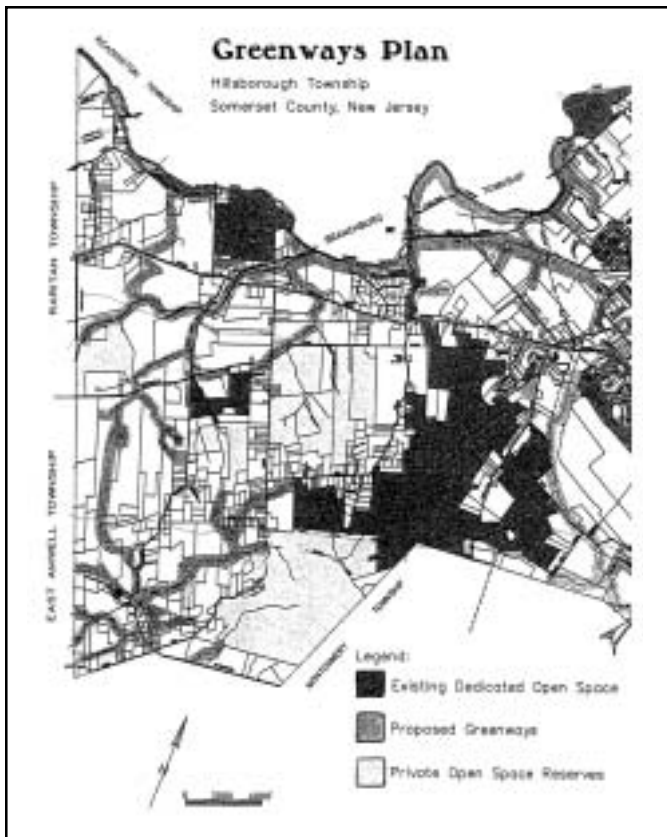
Although various categories of public and private lands make up the existing open space network, for purposes of an OSRP, the Green Acres Program advises that you focus your plan on the need for facilities and open spaces for which the local government assumes primary responsibility. The status of private open space, even if open to the public (such as a campground, ski resort or nature preserve), is not necessarily permanent. If private lands do not have deed restrictions, they may at some point be sold for development. Even public lands with no covenants can be sold off for development. However, other levels of government, and private, non-profit organizations, such as land trusts, watershed and conservation associations, can play a significant role in protecting land for natural resource purposes and can be important partners. Although open space is vital for passive and active recreation, it is equally important for the protection of water resources, wildlife, vegetation and other natural features that society often takes for granted

STANDARDS FOR DETERMINING NEED

To determine your municipality's future needs for recreational lands, you will need to establish the minimum acceptable standards for recreation for your community. You may choose to use a standard land-per-population formula or you may decide to be very specific, setting individual standards for numerous individual categories of recreational activity (specific sports, hiking, biking, etc.). The NJ Green Acres Program uses "balanced land use" guidelines for its 1999 recommendation that individual municipalities should set aside 3% of their developed and developable area for recreation. The guidelines also suggest 7% be set aside by each county, 10% by the state, and 4% by the federal government.

Once minimum standards are established, you can examine current activity levels and participation patterns, and project demographic trends (population, age structure, leisure time, income, etc.) that will impact recreation demand in the future. Make sure to factor in the condition of existing facilities and barriers to participation, such as user fees or crowding.

Setting guidelines for natural features is not as straightforward a process as for recreation, because the natural resources of each municipality are so varied. Although *all* natural resources are important, the most unique or critical are not distributed evenly between municipalities. It will not be easy to set a standardized figure, such



as acres per population or percentage of land area, of natural resource land that should be protected. You will need to know what you have (surface and subsurface waters, soils and bedrock, wildlife, vegetation, steep slopes, ridgelines and other natural characteristics) in order to decide how much will be a reasonable amount to protect. Likely, you will set natural resource lands preservation goals based on selected areas, rather than a specific amount.

Resource Assessment

Once you have compiled a complete list and map of open space parcels, the next task is to establish a system for analyzing and evaluating those parcels to determine the most important candidates for preservation. The recreation and open space needs and objectives need to be distilled into a set of guidelines or a ranking system for evaluating open parcels, with the goal of creating a prioritized list for acquisition or preservation.

Any ranking system must reflect the unique priorities and existing resources of the town or project area. A densely populated and growing municipality with few remaining open spaces will probably put a high priority on lands that are suitable for recreation. In a rural area, the preservation of prime agricultural lands may be high

on the list of objectives. Towns that rely heavily on recreational industries (ecotourism, beach activities, etc.) might wish to insure the preservation of open lands that support those industries. And towns with unique natural features, such as limestone aquifers or forested wildlife habitat, may choose to make those a priority.

PRINCIPLES OF PRESERVATION

Although each municipality has different needs, some general principles apply to all communities pursuing open space. For example, it is generally better for both natural resource protection and recreational purposes to preserve a large, contiguous area of open space (such as a greenway) than to preserve many small, scattered parcels. It is also generally true that the more development pressure on a parcel targeted for preservation, the more quickly the town will want to act. An open space ranking system should assign more weight to lands that are ripe for development.

Another common theme of open space preservation is the cost/benefit ratio. Although some municipalities have shelled out top dollar for small, strategic open space parcels, generally all strive to get the most land for the amount of money they have to spend. So, a ranking system must take relative cost into consideration. Of course, not all parcels must be purchased outright to be preserved. Some lands, particularly agricultural lands, can be preserved through the purchase of development rights. In other cases, a property owner may opt to donate a portion of the sale price, and then reap tax benefits from the contribution. Towns also must consider what they will save in services (schools, sewers, roads, etc.) over the long run, by purchasing land that would otherwise have been developed.

A comprehensive ERI (environmental resources inventory), usually compiled by the environmental commission, will be a municipality's primary guide for evaluating natural and environmental features of potential open space lands. One of the most important reasons to preserve open space is to protect water quality and supply. The ERI usually describes and maps the location of surface and ground waters (streams, lakes, rivers, aquifers) that need buffering. Sensitive features - steep slopes (where development causes erosion and results in sedimentation), floodplains, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas and wellhead areas - should also be included. The ERI should contain information on soil types (also important in

FACTORS FOR RANKING LANDS FOR PRESERVATION

WATER QUALITY:

- Has or abuts surface waters (lake, stream, reservoir, etc.)
- Has or abuts FW1¹ or FW2 streams or headwaters
- Groundwater recharge area
- Wellhead area
- Buffers wetlands
- Steep slopes (greater than 15% or 25%)

CONSERVATION:

- Plant and wildlife habitat
- Threatened species habitat
- Contiguous acres of desirable vegetative cover (mature hardwood, etc.)

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES:

- Development application filed
- Land is for sale
- Zoning
- Farmer-owner approaching retirement
- Proximity to other developed areas
- Sewer/septic potential

COST:

- Purchase price
- Alternative methods of protection
- Costs of services avoided by preservation

POTENTIAL FOR LINKAGES:

- Linear recreation (trails, bike paths)
- Greenways
- Other similar/preserved contiguous parcels

QUALITY OF LIFE/CULTURAL:

- Buffering land uses
- Development-limiting
- Scenic or distinctive landscape, ridgeline
- Floodplain
- Rural ambiance
- Farmland protection
- Historic

AGRICULTURE:

- Quality of soils
- Drainage
- Proximity to other farmland
- Proximity to conflicting land uses
- Proximity to agricultural support

RECREATIONAL/CULTURAL:

- User Accessibility
- Topography suitable for athletic activities
- Absence of environmental constraints
- Public access to coastal or inland water
- Potential for buffering between neighboring use (if level of recreational use would require it)

¹ FW1 and FW2 waters are "trout production" (high quality) surface waters as defined in the NJDEP's Surface Water Quality Standards.

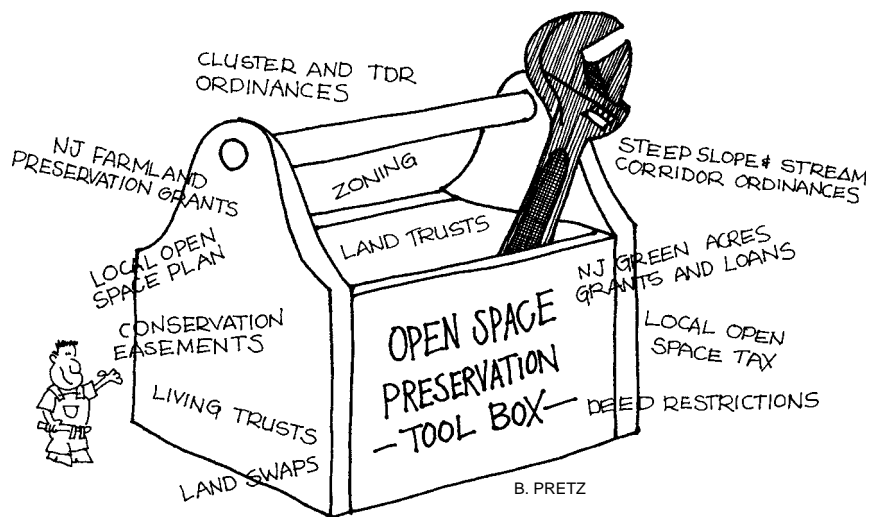
determining a parcel's value as preserved farmland), vegetation and species habitat information. If possible, consult with the people who gathered the ERI information, to benefit from their firsthand knowledge of local terrain and natural systems.

If there is no ERI, the environmental review of available open space parcels will require more legwork. The DEP can provide maps in paper or digital formats that show wetlands, surface waters, and elevations/slopes. The local soil conservation district can provide soil maps. (See *Resources* section, and also ANJEC's publication, *The Environmental Resource Inventory: ERI*, for detailed information on locating this kind of information and creating an ERI.)

Open space committees and planners across New Jersey have approached open space ranking systems in a variety of ways, from descriptions of four or five general priorities in a matrix, to mathematical formulas. The most common approach comprises a list of characteristics, giving a check or a point value for each, depending on the degree to which a parcel contributes to the community's open space objectives. Desirable characteristics are sometimes grouped into categories like recreational/cultural, agricultural, historic, cost, development-limiting potential, hazard reduction, linkages, conservation and protection of water quality. The scores in each category are averaged, then the averages are totaled to yield a final numerical rating for each parcel.

Ranking the parcels in the open space inventory gives the open space committee or other reviewing agency a prioritized list for preservation. Of course, the list as a whole may need some tweaking, because it will change over time as the availability of money and other conditions change. The list is an important and valid guide, but it is not static.

It is not common practice to publicize an official list or the numerical ratings of specific properties, because that could inflate the prices of the parcels high on the priority list. Only a small number of communities do specify their highest priority parcels in their published open space plan. However, the information is public, and must be provided to any individual who requests it. Either way, it is important for the committee to use the list as the primary guide for deciding how and when to spend open space funds.



Recommendations/Action Plan

This section should present an action plan for achieving the orderly and coordinated execution of the open space plan. The Green Acres Program requests a five-year time frame (with periodic updates and adjustments) for an OSRP. The action plan can range from general recommendations in a “menu” type of format, to very specific recommendations for each parcel.

The action plan should include a discussion and recommendations on:

- **Preservation techniques:** purchase; donation; conservation easement; deed restriction; lease-purchase; liens/bankruptcies; purchase by state or federal agency; land swaps (i.e.; trade of a donated or publicly owned parcel *not* suitable for open space for a parcel that *is* suitable); ordinances; preserved common open space as part of planned unit developments (PUDs); transfer of development rights (TDR); zoning and subdivision changes, protection of sensitive environmental features.
- **Funding sources:** Green Acres Program grants and low-interest loans; local open space tax; county open space tax program; non-profit organizations (land trusts, conservation organizations, watershed associations); private donations of land or funds; NJ Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program loans; NJ Department of Agriculture farmland preservation grants; and NJ Historic Preservation Trust loans. (See *References*, page 11, for contact information on funding sources for natural resource, recreational or agricultural lands, and historic preservation.)
- **Monitoring systems:** early-notice-of-sale agreements with owners of large undeveloped tracts; a system of communication with owners of priority parcels to keep

abreast of possible changes in ownership or use (i.e.; intention to file development applications); process for tax collector to inform the committee of all new tax liens or other status changes for parcels in the open space plan, such as entering or withdrawing from the farmland assessment program.

- **Public education:** promoting public knowledge and appreciation of recreation and open space values or needs of the community.
- **Maintenance and management of preserved open space:** In most municipalities, active recreational open space is managed by a parks commission and maintained by the town’s department of public works or a separate parks department. But the maintenance of town-owned natural areas is another issue, especially when the town owns a significant amount of that kind of open space. Woods, swamps and meadows do not lend themselves to easy inspection or access by vehicles, and require a different sort of upkeep than the public works crew may be willing or able to provide.

In some towns, environmental commissions take responsibility for monitoring and maintaining trails in natural areas. “Friends” organizations can be established for the same purpose, or a town may decide to contract with an existing non-profit conservation organization to carry out that function. In cases where a conservation easement is in place, the property owner will likely be responsible for maintenance. However, municipal officials or volunteers should monitor all easement properties, visiting the sites at least once a year to make sure that the terms of the easements are being honored. The open space plan should recommend a system for

monitoring easements and dedicated private open space, or list the creation of such a system as one of the plan's goals.

- **Timetable:** The open space plan should suggest an action timetable that would correspond to the "Goals" section. Any timetable must be general and flexible, but time frames are necessary to keep the program moving and to have some basis for evaluating the plan and its execution. The plan should also contain recommendations, as needed, concerning open space taxes and the establishment or restructuring of the committee or other entity that will be responsible for implementing the open space plan.
- **Ordinances:** The plan should recommend any local ordinances that the town could adopt to further the goals of the open space program. For example, a clustering ordinance encourages developers to condense lot sizes and leave parts of a tract undeveloped, dedicated as common open space. A lot-size averaging ordinance allows some concentration of development in appropriate areas with more environmentally sensitive land left open. Lot-size averaging results in preserved open space at no cost to the municipality. Changes in zoning density or buildable-lot restrictions can also help to retain more open space.

Ordinances that protect water quality and environmentally sensitive features can limit development of open lands. Many municipalities have adopted ordinances to protect steep slopes, stream corridors, well heads and ridgelines.

System Map

The System Map shows the location and configuration of all existing recreation and open space sites listed on the inventory, with depiction of potential recreation and natural resource open spaces. The Green Acres Program suggests that municipalities combine the Executive Summary and the System Map into one document that can be reproduced and distributed as a public education tool.

Additional Materials

A summary or the complete text of open space ordinances, such as the ordinance that creates the open space committee and the one that establishes an open space tax and/or trust fund, should be included in the open space plan, either within a specific section or as an appendix.



Include or summarize other open space documents, such as a greenways plan or a management plan for a special area such as a lake or reservoir, and explain how they will relate to your overall plan for open space.

GETTING THE PUBLIC INVOLVED

Green Acres requires an OSRP to describe the public participation process that was used to gather citizen input and assess community open space and recreation needs. (A summary of this process is required in the Executive Summary.) Apart from two mandatory public meetings, the local government is free to use any method it believes is most effective for public participation. It is a good idea to include transcripts or summaries of the public meetings.

The Green Acres Program also requires that the local government adopt a resolution approving the OSRP and certifying consistency with the conservation and recreation elements of the local master plan.

Although only two public meetings are mandatory, it is wise to incorporate a high degree of community input and public education into the open space planning process. As the environmental commission and/or open space committee proceeds, its members should look for opportunities to make informal presentations, for example, to the PTA, church groups and other community organizations, and to keep the public updated through releases to the local press. When residents learn the benefits of open space preservation and understand the process for selecting parcels to preserve, they will be more likely to "buy into" the open space plan, to fund it, and to support it through the implementation phase.

RESOURCES

WITHIN THE TOWN

Your local tax collector, town engineer, town planner, environmental commission, planning board, and park and recreation agencies have a wealth of data and information

SPECIAL REGIONAL BODIES

A flood control commission, the Pinelands Commission or the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission (if your town is in one of those two areas) can be a good resource for maps and data.

COUNTY

Planning departments, open space committees, environmental commissions and parks departments have information. Check the "Blue Pages" of your phone book for county phone numbers.

County Soil Conservation Districts, NJ Department of Agriculture. Check "Blue Pages" of phone book for Soil Conservation District offices, or call the NJ Soil Conservation Service, (609) 292-5540, to get the number for your local office. District offices are also listed on the NJDOA's website: www.state.nj.us/agriculture/natsrc.

Soil surveys and soil maps, technical assistance with map interpretation to identify critical areas.

STATE

**NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Environmental Services Program (609) 984-0828
PO Box 402, 401 E. State St., Trenton, NJ 08625**

Open space planning matching grants for environmental commissions.

**NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Green Acres Program: (609) 984-0500
PO Box 412, 501 East State St., 1st Floor, Trenton, NJ 08625
Website: www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres**

Grant and loan programs for land acquisition/preservation (including "Blue Acres" shoreline parcels), and technical assistance for open space planning, land assessment, and GIS mapping.

NJ Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program (609) 292-6894 and 292-6840

**NJDEP Municipal Finance & Construction Element,
PO Box 425, 401 E. State St., Trenton 08625**

Grants for land acquisition that complements water quality initiatives by creating buffer areas around stream corridors to filter pollutants and sediments from stormwater runoff.

**NJ Department of Agriculture
Farmland Preservation Program: (609) 984-2504
PO Box 330, Health and Agriculture Bldg.,
Market & Warren Sts., 2nd Floor, Trenton, NJ 08625
Website: www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc**

Grant and loan programs for agricultural land preservation, Planning Incentive Grants (PIG), technical assistance for planning and assessment

**NJ Historic Preservation Trust (609) 984-0473
PO Box 457, Trenton, NJ 08625
Website: www.njht.org/**

Grants for historic preservation, restoration, acquisition.

**NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Maps & Publications Office (609) 292-2576
Sales Office, Box 417, Trenton, NJ 08625
Website: www.state.nj.us/dep/njgs**

GIS data and resources, USGS maps, aerial photographs, freshwater wetlands maps.

**NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Office of Natural Lands Management (609) 984-1427**

State natural areas, NJ Natural Heritage Database, rare species and natural community lists by county.

**NJ Office of State Planning (609) 292-7156
Box 204, 33 W. State St., Trenton, NJ 08625**

Website: www.state.nj.us/osp

Information about NJ State Plan and statewide planning areas.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency
FEMA Maps (800) 358-9616**

Website: www.fema.gov/msc

Floodplain maps.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

**Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)
(973) 539-7547**

PO Box 157, Mendham, NJ 07945

ANJEC's Resource Center has copies of Open Space Plans and Environmental Resource Inventories (ERIs) from many New Jersey municipalities, and a database of environmental ordinances. Website: www.anjec.org

**NJ Audubon Society (609) 861-1651
600 Rte. 47 North, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210**

Information on endangered NJ birds, their habitats and breeding sites.

**National Recreation and Park Association (703) 858-0784
2775 South Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22206**

Website: www.activeparks.org

*Publications on open space and recreation planning, including a standard reference, **Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, 3rd ed., 1996. (\$50)***

**NJ Conservation Foundation (908) 234-1225
170 Longview Rd., Far Hills, NJ 07931**

Website: www.njconservation.org

**NJ Recreation & Park Association (732) 568-1270
13 April Lane, Somerset, NJ 08873-5301**

<http://community.nj.com/cc/parksandrecreation>

**Preservation New Jersey (609) 392-6409
18 W. Lafayette St., Trenton, NJ 08808**

Website: www.preservationnj.org

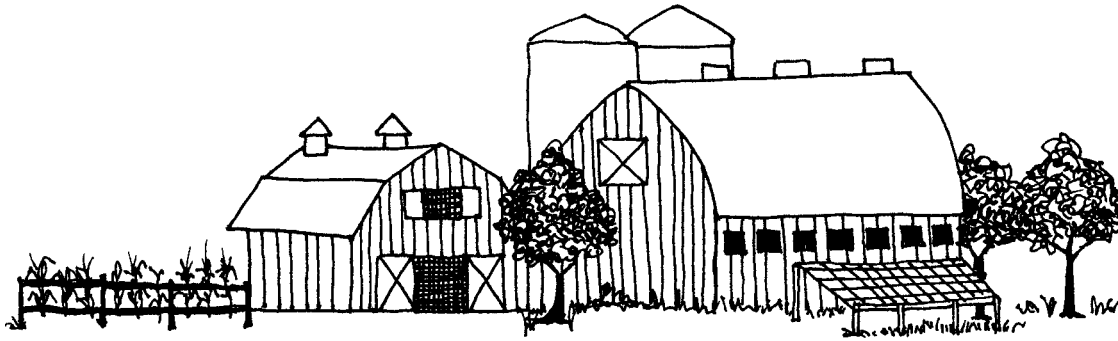
**The Nature Conservancy/NJ Chapter (908) 879-7262
200 Pottersville Rd., Chester, NJ 07930**

Website: www.tnc.org

**Trust for Public Land (973) 425-0360
1095 Mt. Kemble Ave., Morristown, NJ 07960**

Website: www.tpl.org

Local Land Trusts and Watershed Organizations



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The ANJEC RESOURCE CENTER offers the following services free to all members:

- unique reference collection of more than 7,000 books, pamphlets, documents and government publications ranging from academic texts to environmental resource inventories;
- more than 1,200 individual current material files covering topics from acid rain to zoning;
- extensive material and files on state and federal laws including current legislation and regulations;
- extensive file of municipal ordinances covering topics such as air and noise pollution, critical areas protection and hazardous materials;
- extensive file of chemicals and hazardous substances;
- extensive file of newsletters from national, federal, state and county groups and organizations;
- response and referral center for questions and requests for information and materials relating to local, state and national environmental issues, problems and projects.

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ANJEC is a statewide non-profit organization that informs and assists environmental commissioners and interested citizens in preserving and protecting New Jersey's environment.

For further information, contact ANJEC at

P.O. Box 157, Mendham, NJ 07945 (973-539-7547) FAX (973-539-7713)

or

P.O. Box 61, Titusville, NJ 08560 (609-737-7263) FAX (609-737-7264)

or

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