



Watershed Fest

A River Runs Through...

Come celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Watershed Fest at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association Reserve.

**Saturday
October 1
6:00 PM**

Cocktails
Silent Auction
Dinner
Live Auction
Kayak Raffle Tickets

\$165 per person

**Call Candy Reed
for tickets.
609-737-3735**

Partner to Preserve Local Green Acres

This July, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) proposed major revisions to the Green Acres rules. The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, joined 23 civic and environmental groups and endorsed comments prepared by the NJ Conservation Foundation that praised the rules and suggested some modifications. www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/rule_proposal_2005.pdf

The Green Acres Program provides matching grants and loans to municipal and county governments, and non-profit organizations to acquire open space, protect natural resources, and provide recreation. To date, 1.29 million acres of open space and farmland have been preserved.

Improving the Rules

Overall the proposed Green Acres rules improve and clarify the application process and the various submittals including: surveys, preliminary assessment, well testing, demolition, deed restrictions, and land appraisals (based on current and 2004 zoning).

The rules also increase public notices and hearings, clarify procedures to change parkland use, restrict parkland diversions, and emphasize updating Open Space & Recreational Plans (OSRP) to obtain funding. (See pg 2).

Prioritizing Green Acres Funds

The proposed rules prioritize funding for urban communities and recreational uses.

- **Densely Populated Communities** = 5,000 people per square mile
- **Highly Populated Communities** = 1,000 people per square mile

Local governments with an *open space tax* can apply for 50% matching grants,

and applications are typically due in February.

Funding to develop recreational facilities is available through 2% loans, and 25% grants are available for urban areas. *In addition, non-profits are eligible for 50% matching grants for recreational projects in urban areas.*

Strong Competition

The Green Acres program receives hundreds of applications, which are evaluated and ranked using a priority point system.

Program priorities include funding to 1) satisfy the need for open space and recreation based on population densities; 2) satisfy environmental goals to protect wildlife habitat, link parklands, support regional plans, protect water resources, floodplains and stream corridors; 3) preserve historic resources; 4) demonstrate public support and consistency with local and state planning objectives; 5) improve public access, and be cost-effective; and 6) encourage private investment, ecotourism, and multiple uses.

Increase Your Odds

Obtaining Green Acres funding is a complicated process, and to increase your chances it would be wise to:

- Create partnerships among municipal open space committees, counties, and land trust groups.
- Prioritize land acquisitions that satisfy shared goals.
- Dedicate staff to oversee the work.
- Enact an open space tax or equivalent funding, and update your OSRP, to be eligible.
- Attend Green Acres workshops and pre-application meetings.

Diversions of Preserved Lands



Minor Diversions

The rules help to streamline minor diversions, described as:

- Surface or subsurface easements up to 1 acre
- Sale, transfer or lease up to 0.5 acres
- An exchange for at least equal acreage in the same area
- Construction of an indoor recreational facility less than 50,000 sq feet.

Congratulations

to *Dr. Andy Rowan* and his recent appointment as the Director of Geographic Information Services (GIS)

at the
NJ Office of Information
Technology
www.nj.gov/it/oit/gis/

Andy will oversee the GIS needs for the several offices including NJDEP, NJDOT, Treasury and the State Police.

We wish Andy great success!

In the past, conservation lands or parklands have been diverted or conveyed by local governments for other intended uses such as, the expansion of utility corridors, construction of roadways, bridges, schools, or other development projects.

The proposed Green Acres rules strongly discourage the diversion of parklands and encourage a net gain of land for recreation and conservation purposes.

Diversions of parkland for other uses must fulfill a compelling public need, benefit, or service.

Denying Diversions

The following adverse impacts may justify the denial of a diversion request (NJAC 7:36-26.1(e)):

- Impacts the use and enjoyment of the remaining parkland
- Fragments existing parkland or trails
- Loss of unique site features
- Impacts rare, or threatened and endangered species, or *their habitats*
- Impacts water quality or flooding
- Obstructs a desired buffer or views
- Does not support the goals or policies of the State Plan, not limited to conserving natural resources, or preserving historic, cultural, scenic, open space, or recreational areas.

Diversions Procedures

The rules apply to all public parkland regardless of their funding source, even donated lands. The rules help to streamline minor diversions (areas <1 acre), while restricting major diversions of parklands.

Public notices and signage on parkland will be required to increase public awareness of a proposed diversion or change of use for preserved lands. Local public hearings are required to solicit public concerns early in the process for local and state decision makers.

Stricter Compensation

There are also stronger compensation requirements for land appraisals, the quality and ratio of replacement lands, tree replacement, and the prohibition of using open space funds or qualified parklands as the replacement lands. (NJAC 7:36-26.10)

- Highway easements may only require a 1:1 replacement, while private utility easements may be 2:1, and diversions for private use may be replaced at 4:1.
- An **alternative analysis** is required for a major diversion of parkland, which also includes an assessment of the potential environmental impacts and cost analyses.
- Replacement lands *may include* lands encumbered by easements, from a subdivision approval, or managed by a homeowners associations.

Open Space & Recreational Plan(OSRP)

The proposed Green Acres rules emphasize the importance of updating your Open Space and Recreational Plan (OSRP). An updated OSRP must be adopted with your Master Plan, and must be approved by Green Acres to obtain funding.

An Open Space & Recreational Plan outlines your community's goals, a needs analysis, and resource assessment. It also outlines an implementation framework to conserve open space and provide recreational facilities.

The Recreation & Open Space Inventory or ROSI, is an important component of this Plan and lists all funded and un-funded parkland. The inventory and mapping is required to be kept current to be eligible for Green Acres Funding.

Your OSRP should incorporate data and mapping from the NJDEP Landscape Project to identify areas serving as habitats for imperiled wildlife. The proposed rules value and increase protection of habitats for rare and *threatened and endangered species*. Ensure that your community also acts to protect these critical habitats as well.

www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/osrpg.doc

The Cost of Sprawl

This summer, two students came to the Watershed Association inquiring about the “impacts from sprawl” to complete a writing assignment for the *Governors School for the Environment*, a summer program held at Stockton College.

Needless to say, there was no simple way to explain these complicated issues. The Watershed provided maps and statistics illustrating the changes in land use, the increase in urban lands, and the loss of farmland, woodlands and wetlands that has occurred over the past decade.

The question stuck with me and I knew this information was incomplete.

The figures and maps show physical changes and quantify them, but the character changes in our towns are more sentimental, affect us more personally, and are not easily measured.

Remember when Quakerbridge Road crossed Route 1 without an over-pass?

Not long ago it was a four way intersection surrounded by farms and cows.

Today, box stores have replaced the meadows, the remaining forests are flooded from runoff, and complex interchanges require precise navigation.



The Princeton Twp. deer management program includes fitting deer with collars and tags.

Things I Miss

Below are some general observations that describe changes that are taking place in many of our communities. Our town’s character is being changed by the “cost of sprawl” from recent intense over-development occurring in central New Jersey.

- Remembering old weathered barns, landmarks on so many farmlands. Present only in our memories.
- Being the only car on a back road, and enjoying that solitude.
- Enjoying scenic sunsets and view sheds across farm fields that bring a peaceful closure to the day. Now these vistas are blocked by rooftops.
- Gazing upon countless stars from your yard, now only the most brilliant are visible.
- Frequenting local shops and restaurants where you knew the owner. Now replaced with chain stores.
- Enjoying a hike along a woodland stream, not littered with bottles, trash or ATV tire marks.
- Viewing wildlife without jewelry. Today many deer are wearing ear tags or tracking necklaces.
- Observing wildlife, rather than grimacing, as another fox becomes a traffic causality.
- Enjoying the uniqueness of each home, rather than blocks of conforming, cookie cutter sameness.
- Pondering the grandeur of mature trees, now pruned and grotesque for utility lines.

Please contact Chris Altomari at the Watershed Association to add your thoughts to this list of changes.

caltomari@thewatershed.org

Keep these features in mind when new developments are proposed in your community. Speak out and work to preserve your town’s character, not see it replaced.

Useful Website Resources On Sustainability

Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
www.thewatershed.org

American Planning Association
www.planning.org/policyguides/sustainability.htm

NJ Dept of Community Affairs /Office of Smart Growth
www.nj.gov/dca/osg/

NJDEP - Bureau of Sustainable Communities and Innovative Technologies (BSCIT) www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/bscit.htm

US EPA –Sustainability Page
www.epa.gov/sustainability/

USEPA Sustainability A-Z
www.epa.gov/sustainability/links.htm

USEPA Star Grants <http://es.epa.gov/ncer/grants/>
www.epa.gov/sustainability/grants.htm

US Green Building Council LEED Certification
www.usgbc.org

NJDEP Green Acres Program

NJDEP Green Acres Program
www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/

NJDEP Proposed Green Acres Program rules, N.J.A.C. 7:36
www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/rule_proposal_2005.pdf

Open Space Database—Listing of Municipal ROSI by County
www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/openspace.htm

Open Space and Recreation Plan Guidelines 2004
www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/osrpg.doc

Green Acres Program Forms
www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/pdflaunch.htm#localapp



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Watershed Watch

For Members of the Natural
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Concerned Citizens

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**Natural Lands Network Members
Getting Involved !**

Farmers Markets - Buying locally grown produce can improve your health, and supports farmland preservation in the region! Look for markets in Lawrence, Montgomery, West Windsor and the Trenton Farmers Market.

Sept 17 Sunset on Summer Event at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Reserve in Pennington. Pack a picnic dinner and enjoy a family hike and music with the BLAWENBURG BAND. Bring lawn chairs or a blanket. Sat Sept 17 starting at 4:00 pm. \$5 per person.

Sept 30 Flood Hazard Control Rules comment deadline for their re adoption. www.state.nj.us/dep/rules/notices/080105c.htm

Oct 1 Watershed Fest - A River Runs Through... Please join our Fest event, our most important fund raising event of the year! Starting at 6 PM with cocktails, a silent auction, dinner, live auction and music! \$165 per ticket. Call Candy Reed for tickets at 609-737-3735.



Oct 21 ANJEC Environmental Congress- Habitat Strategies for NJ: The Path to Sustainability. Mercer County College Conference Center, W Windsor. Register with www.ANJEC.org

Join NaturalLandsNetworksubscribe@yahoogroups.com