

Watershed Watch

Association

For Members of the Natural Lands Network and Concerned Citizens



Mercer County a Critical Source of Funding

"Mercer County has been the savior for local open space preservation.

Partnering with the County is the only way to successfully acquire good open space parcels that provide regional benefits.

This can only be achieved with a long-term stable source of funding and the energy and support from the local residents and communities."

Ted Stiles, Chairman
Friends of Hopewell
Valley Open Space

A Ballot Question We Can All Support

Pollsters are predicting two things for the November elections 1) a record number of people coming out to vote, and 2) an evenly divided presidential race.

One Ballot Question that we can all support is the preservation of open space, especially with the tremendous development pressures in our region.

On November 2nd, Mercer County residents can increase funding for open space preservation and recreation by voting for an additional penny for the county budget. The referendum would increase the tax from 2 to 3 cents per \$100 of assessed property value, and provide \$9 million annually to the Mercer County Open Space Trust Fund.

"A penny pledged can be an acre preserved."

Exciting Improvements

Brian Hughes, the Mercer County Executive, met with various open space groups and explained that the Mercer County open space tax has not been raised in 6 years, but many exciting projects have been undertaken. Through partnerships with the NJ Green Acres, state agriculture programs, municipal open space committees, and many non-profit land trust groups several local woods and farms have been preserved or enhanced including: the purchase of Carson Road Woods in Lawrence and Coventry Farm in Princeton, and improvements to parks in Trenton and Baldpate Mountain in Hopewell.

Community Benefits We All Enjoy

Open space preservation benefits our communities, the environment, and the economy. Open space provides critical wildlife habitats, but it also refreshes the air we breathe and water we drink,

and reduces noise pollution. Our region is blessed with many scenic landscapes where we can enjoy hiking, bicycling, birding, fishing, and boating, as well as activities such as golfing, soccer, baseball, football, lacrosse, ice skating. Preserved lands in the Sourland Mountains and along the Delaware River provide nesting sites for birds migrating each year from Central America.

Mercer County also offers world-class facilities that have hosted regional and national events such as east coast tournaments for lacrosse and soccer, Revolutionary War Reenactments, and host the US Olympic Rowing Team. Our residents and communities share the pride of hosting these wonderful events, and share the economic benefits.

"Having wonderful local parklands not only enhances our daily lives, but it also preserves a high quality of life in Mercer County. To support these opportunities we need to have steady funding to purchase and enhance our open space facilities."

Brian Hughes, County Executive

Future Needs

The County has preserved over 13,000 acres of open space and farmland, which provide recreational opportunities for approximately 350,000 people living in Mercer. But much of the existing Mercer County 2-cents tax for open space is obligated to pay the debt service on open space properties already acquired, and little is available for future acquisitions or improvement projects. Since property values have increased by 15% each year, additional funding will ensure that sufficient open space is preserved as we grow.

Vote Yes for Open Space on Nov 2!

Controlling A Growing Menace

Maintaining a diverse habitat of native plants, increases the vitality of wildlife that relies on these plants.



Stony Brook Watershed River-Friendly Resident Program

By joining the River-Friendly Resident program you obtain one-on-one assistance for:

- ◆ Create a healthier living and playing environment and reduce family and pet exposure to pesticides and other chemicals.
- ◆ Produce a beautiful and environmentally responsible yard.
- ◆ Protect surface and ground water drinking sources.
- ◆ Reduce the amount of chemicals entering our environment.
- ◆ Protect natural resources and native landscapes.

For more information visit our website at www.thewatershed.org/WSM/riverfriendly.html or contact Amy Weaver at 609-737-3735



Throughout our region, invasive plants like multi-floral rose, purple loosestrife, autumn olive, Norway maples, Japanese stilt grass and phragmites have overrun our landscapes. With greater growth and reproductive functions, invasive plants can out compete more fragile native plants such as sugar maples, spice bush, and wetland sedges.

Ken Thoman joined our September NLN workshop to share his experiences managing invasive plants with local gardeners and open space groups. Mr. Thoman directs property management for the 14,000 acres of the Monmouth County Park System since 1988.

Ken explained that a successful management plan must address the plants biology, phenology and ecology, in order to incorporate the best methods and timing.

- A plants' biology refers to its structure, growth, function, such as whether a plant is an evergreen or deciduous.
- Phenology refers to the biological response to seasonal changes such as flowering or seed production.
- Ecology refers to its preference in the environment or landscape, such as edges of forests, fields, or wetlands, and how it spreads.

Cutting Tips: Mechanical removal methods such as cutting, mowing, or weed whacking places stress on the plant, and may reduce its vitality. But it has to be right time. For example, the garlic mustard plant is best cut in early July prior to seed development. Cutting it too soon will cause it to re-grow and produce more seeds; cutting it too late and the seeds will be dispersed. Woody stem plants should not be cut in the winter, because they grow back with a vengeance in the spring.

Composting Tip: Don't send your clippings off site because you cannot control where seeds may go. If possible allow the brush to decompose in a heap on site and control any reseeding there at the source.

Monmouth County Success Stories

Eighteen acres were cleared of thick *multi-floral rose and autumn olive trees* and replanted with warm season grasses to encourage field nesting birds for a cost of \$20,000. Warm season grasses are fluffy and require specialized equipment or seeding by hand. These grasses cannot be mowed in the July or they will die back.

Trees along the edge were saved to close the canopy over portions of the field, while the rose were cut back and their stems were sprayed.

Monmouth County uses herbicides in their control measures, only after mechanical processes such as mowing or cutting are employed.

Keep in mind that these removal and restoration plans are long term projects, which may take 3-5 years to successfully modify the landscape.

Two Helpful Resources

1. *The NJDEP Report on Invasive Plants* highlights control measures for 27 common invasive plants in New Jersey. These measures may be helpful to improve your yard or community open space. Funding for mitigation measures was also made available this fall through the Landowners Incentive Program (LIP). www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/InvasiveReport.pdf
2. *The Nature Conservancy Handbook on Invasive Plants* outlines key management steps. 1) Establish your goals and targets, such as expanding forest buffers, providing habitat for field nesting birds, or develop a pleasing landscape. 2) Inventory the parcel to identify the plants or features you wish to maintain and the areas that need attention. 3) Assess control techniques and restoration plans and develop a management plan. 4) Outline and implement a restoration plan or the invasive plants will return. www.tncweed.ucdavis.edu/handbook.

Don't Let Your Money Go Down the Drain

Most residents who own a septic system also rely on a groundwater well for their drinking water. But, they may not fully understand the potential impacts of septic systems on local wells and streams.

To encourage proper septic maintenance and avoid failures that could impact your health and environment resources, Stony Brook is offering workshops for residents and local officials on **Septic Maintenance**.

Two successful programs were organized in Hopewell and West Amwell. The presentations included talks from Stony Brook staff, local officials, and the county Health Department. The program addresses:

1. Household Tips To Avoid Septic Troubles
2. What's Involved With Septic System Inspections
3. The Financial And Environmental Benefits For Maintaining These Systems
4. An Overview Of Local Health Regulations And Programs

Contact Angela Clerico with our Municipal Assessment Program to help organize a similar program in your community, call 609-737-3735 or aclerico@thewatershed.org

The Value of Maintaining Your Septic System

A new septic system can cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$50,000, depending on the type of system, the size of your home (# of bedrooms) and the soil suitability. Conventional systems generally cost \$20,000, while mound systems can cost up to \$30,000, and specialized evapotranspiration systems can cost up to \$44,000.

A series of handouts and guides that address Maintaining Residential Septic Systems are available on the Stony Brook website at www.thewatershed.org/WSM/library.html.

Routine septic maintenance can save you money, protect your drinking water and improve your property value. Your efforts will protect the health of your family, and local streams and groundwater from harmful contaminants.

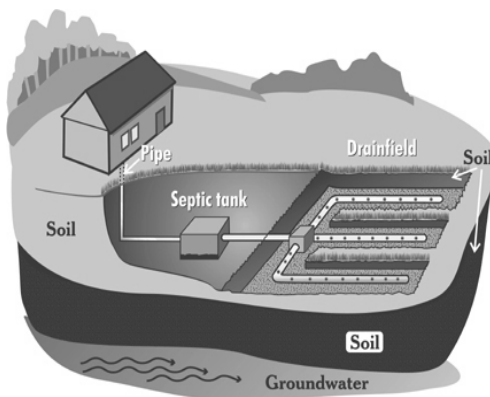
Septic Inspection Checklist

A septic system inspection should be scheduled every three years to assess all components of the system, and to address small problems before they become serious.

Have the "as-built" drawing or site plans on hand to help locate the various components of the septic system. The inspector may first check your property and drainfield for visible signs of trouble such as ponding or surface leakage; lush green grass surrounding the system site; slow toilets or drains inside the home; and any odorous areas.

The inspector will check the septic tank, distribution box, and pump tanks for leaks, corrosion, water tightness, and proper pump operation. The inspector may use dyes to locate leaks and to determine whether the drainfield is clogged and if the system is contaminating nearby wells, other drinking water sources, or surface waters.

Contact your local or County health department to obtain a list of licensed engineers, certified home inspectors, and septic professionals qualified to inspect your system.



Useful Websites

Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
www.thewatershed.org

Association of NJ Environmental Commissions
www.anjec.org

DCA Office of Smart Growth and the State Plan
www.nj.gov/dca/osg/

Save NJ Coalition
www.savenj.net

Invasives Plants Sites

The Nature Conservancy
<http://nature.org/initiatives/invasivespecies/about/index.html> and <http://tnc-ecomangement.org/Weeds/>

Invasive and Exotic Species of North America
www.invasive.org/

The St. Louis Declaration On Invasive Plant Species
www.centerforplantconservation.org/invasives/codesN.html

National Invasive Species Council
www.invasivespecies.gov

Federal Grants & Funding for Invasive Species Mgmt
www.invasivespecies.gov/toolkit/grants.shtml

NJDEP An Overview of Non-indigenous Plant Species in NJ
www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/InvasiveReport.pdf

Rutgers University Cooperative Extension
www.rcc.rutgers.edu/njriparianforestbuffers/nativeALL.htm

U.S. Fish and Wildlife
<http://invasives.fws.gov/>



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Natural Lands Network Members Getting Involved !

Below are several workshops and events that we hope you will attend.

Nov 6 Trail Clearing Day at Stony Brook. Volunteers are needed to help clear and maintain the trails at our Pennington reserve. Call Candy Reed to register at 609-737-3735.

Nov 9 and 16 GIS Training A two-day GIS workshop is sponsored by the Stony Brook GIS Center at The College of New Jersey from 8-4. Call Andy Rowan to register at 609-737-3735, and there is a registration fee of \$180.

Nov 16 -19 NJ State League of Municipalities Annual Conference in Atlantic City. Agendas and registrations forms are available at www.njslom.org

Nov 30 Support Special Protection Waters For The Delaware River
The Delaware Riverkeeper is encouraging residents to submit written comments to the DRBC in support of the federal Special Protection Water designation. Comments will be accepted by DRBC until Nov 30.
Email: paula.schmitt@drbc.state.nj.us Fax: 609-883-9522 and visit the website for more information www.delawareriverkeeper.org/

**Join the NLN Listserve:
NaturalLandsNetworksubscribe@yahoogroups.com**

