

## Nonprofit Open Space Initiatives

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There are nearly two dozen organizations dedicated to land conservation and environmental protection in Hunterdon County. The goals of these nonprofit groups vary from international to local in scope. Of these organizations, thirteen are directly involved or have interest in land acquisition and preservation. They have contributed to the preservation of more than 2,500 acres in the County (Map 3) and continue to pursue acquisitions and land protection within their respective target regions. (Map 8)

### *Bethlehem Township Preservation Association*

The Bethlehem Township Preservation Association, founded in 1995, is a nonprofit organization advocating actions to preserve the natural resources, farmland, open space, and cultural resources of the Township. The Association conducts educational programs for the community and encourages farmers to enter the State Farmland Preservation Program. It was also instrumental in the adoption of a right to farm ordinance in Bethlehem Township.

### *Citizens for Parkland (CFP)*

Citizens for Parkland is an independent association created in 1978. Its mission is to educate residents of the Flemington/Raritan area about the need for greenways, wildlife habitats, parks, and open space.

Citizens for Parkland was instrumental in the preservation of the 46-acre Dvoor farm in Raritan Town-

ship, a project 10 years in the makings (Figure 13). CFP teamed up with the South Branch Watershed Association and Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance to raise the necessary money and support. Funds were raised through special events, private foundations, and support from Raritan Township, Flemington Borough, Hunterdon County, the State (through a Green Acres grant), and the federal government (through an ISTEPA grant). The landowner provided a donation for property maintenance as well.

HLTA will take ownership of the property and buildings. The property will connect existing parks to the north via a trail along the Walnut Brook. The acquisition helps to fulfill CFP's goal of creating a greenway system through Raritan and Flemington.

*Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc.* Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc. (D&R Greenway) facilitates land conservation in a 400 square mile region, encompassing the watershed of the Delaware & Raritan Canal and the streams that flow to it. Within Hunterdon County, the D&R Greenway focuses on the Sourland Mountains, tributaries to the Delaware River and D&R Canal, and the Stony Brook watershed (whose headwaters are in East Amwell Township).

Since its inception in 1989, D&R Greenway has secured 2,400 acres of woodlands, wetlands, open fields, stream corridors, and scenic vistas in Central New Jersey. In Hunter-

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don County, it has preserved over 600 acres (including several pending properties).

Like many other nonprofit land trusts, D&R Greenway facilitates land preservation through a variety of creative partnerships. It often negotiates bargain sales or donations with private property owners. Also, it applies to Green Acres for grants and sometimes approaches municipalities and/or counties to cost share.

### *Delaware River Greenway Partnership, Inc. (DRGP)*

The Delaware River Greenway Partnership (DRGP) formed in 1990 as a partnership of more than 140 public and private groups in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. It functioned under the auspices of the Heritage Conservancy, in Doylestown, PA until it became an independent nonprofit organization in 1998.

The mission of the DRGP is to preserve significant natural, cultural, historic, recreational, and scenic resources along the River corridor extending from the Delaware Water Gap south to the Delaware Estuary.

The DRGP advocates a comprehensive approach to greenway protection through planning and public outreach. It facilitates land preservation projects by helping to bring together partnership organizations with interested parties. The DRGP was instrumental in the protection

of four islands in the Delaware River totaling 150 acres. Although all protected islands are located in Pennsylvania, Hendricks Island is situated in Bucks County, across from Delaware Township.

### *Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance (HLTA)*

The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance (HLTA) incorporated and organized as a countywide land trust in 1996. The mission of HLTA is to preserve and protect the rural character of Hunterdon County. It aims to accomplish this through a variety of mechanisms. For example, HLTA pursues the following:

- acquisition of property or easements through purchase or gifts;
- partnerships with government agencies;
- creation of linkages between preserved lands and community facilities; and
- implementation of regional open space projects.

To date, HLTA has completed two preservation projects. One was an easement acquisition on a 37-acre property in West Amwell Township, achieved in partnership with the D&R Greenway, County, State, and landowner. The other was the preservation of the Dvoor Farm in Raritan Township. Currently, HLTA is facilitating four acquisitions involving 300 acres.

HLTA maintains acquisition interests throughout the County, how-

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ever it is currently focusing on three regions within the County. These areas are the Delaware River Bluffs, the Lockatong Creek watershed, and the Alexauken Creek watershed, including adjacent portions of the Sourland Mountains.

### *New Jersey Natural Lands Trust (NLT)*

The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust formed in 1968 when the State Legislature created an incorporated independent agency. The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust operates under the Division of Parks and Forestry as an independent land trust. Its mission is to:

- Preserve land in its natural state for the public's enjoyment and protect biodiversity; and
- Manage and improve wildlife habitat on Trust preserves.

NLT manages nearly 350 acres in Hunterdon County. These properties are located in Alexandria, Bethlehem, Holland, Kingwood, Lebanon, Readington and Union Townships. About 90 percent of the land obtained by NLT is secured through private donations. The remainder is land transferred from Green Acres.

Future areas of interest include additional lands in the Milford Bluffs area, located along the Delaware River in northern Hunterdon County; and Sweet Hollow, located within the headwaters of the Hakihokake Creek.

### *New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF)*

The New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) is a nonprofit or-

ganization that promotes conservation of land and natural resources. Since 1960, NJCF has preserved over 75,000 acres in the State for conservation and recreational uses. Approximately half of its funding is derived from private sources, with the balance obtained through public sources.

NJCF has facilitated the protection of 42 properties comprising close to 1,000 acres in Hunterdon County. This was accomplished through a combination of fee simple acquisitions as well as easement acquisitions. The properties are located in East Amwell, Delaware, Holland, Kingwood, and Tewksbury Townships.

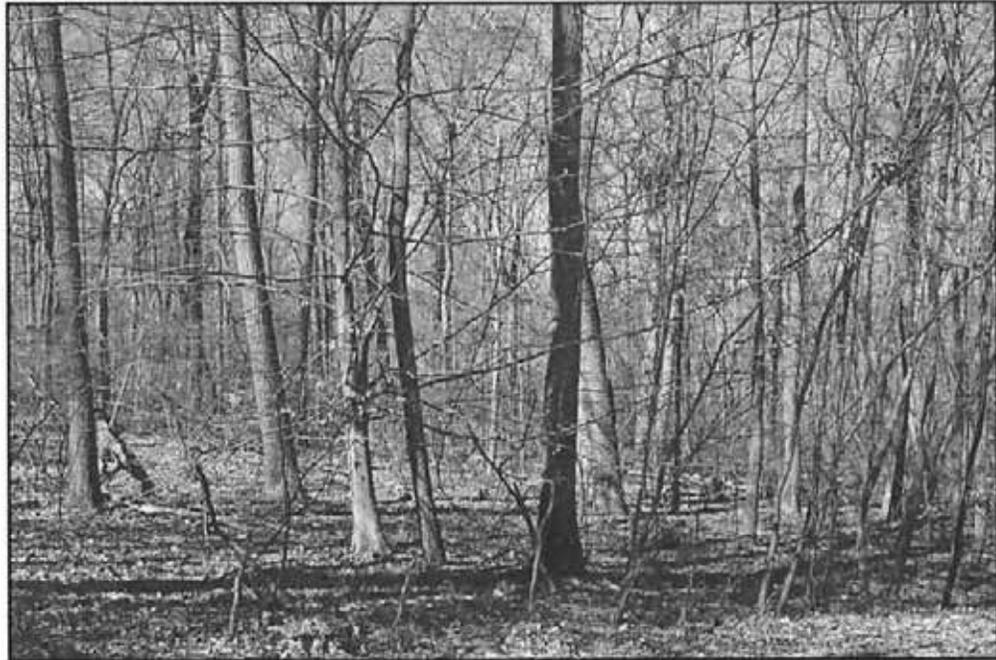
For several years, NJCF focused much of its efforts along the Wickecheoke Creek in Delaware and Kingwood Townships, where roughly 180 acres of farmland and natural areas have been preserved thus far. The Wickecheoke Creek stream corridor continues to be one of its key priority areas in Hunterdon County. Additionally, NJCF seeks to protect farmland in many municipalities through acquisition and advocacy.

### *New York-New Jersey Trail Conference*

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a nonprofit federation of individuals and hiking and environmental organizations working to construct and maintain foot trails and preserve open space in its bistate area. Today, 1,300 miles of foot trails are maintained by various member organizations.

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*Figure 11.*

*Charlestown Reserve, Bethlehem Township. In 1981, the Hunterdon County Park System secured a 203-acre property known today as the Charlestown Reserve. Subsequently, NJCF assisted in obtaining the deed for life rights on an additional 12 acres which it then sold to the Park System. NJCF received the property at 50% of the appraised value. The County purchased it at full market value. The landowner donated a portion, which was available for investment in an account held by NJCF. This account was then used to pay off a low-interest Green Acres Loan.*

The Trail Conference is creating a Highlands Trail, which will extend from the Hudson River to the Delaware River via Hunterdon County (Map 5). It is collaborating with the Office of Green Acres, the Hunterdon County Park System and interested municipalities on this project. The organization conducts negotiations with private landowners and then government agencies facilitate the purchases.

### *South Branch Watershed Association*

The South Branch Watershed Association (SBWA) is a nonprofit

environmental organization founded in 1959 to protect, conserve and restore water resources of the South Branch of the Raritan River and its tributaries. This encompasses a 296 square mile area in three counties, including 16 municipalities (or portions thereof) in Hunterdon County.

The SBWA offers technical and educational assistance to communities and individuals on ways to protect water resources. The SBWA does not generally hold title or easement on preserved lands. However, it was one of many

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partner groups facilitating the protection of the Dvoor Farm in Raritan Township.

Recently, the SBWA completed an open space plan for the watershed region. The Plan outlines four primary goals:

- Increase awareness of the importance of preserving the watershed;
- Develop partnerships with others working to protect shared resources;
- Prioritize critical areas for protection; and
- Improve the ability of those in the watershed to obtain additional funding for land acquisition to preserve open space.

The Plan encourages counties, municipalities and nonprofit organizations to protect critical natural resources in the watershed for groundwater recharge and surface water quality. In addition, it advocates recreation, habitat protection, historic resources protection, and farmland preservation.

A land preservation priority system was developed to help communities implement the Open Space Plan. The priority system evaluates properties based on six environmental features, all related to protection of water resources. The SBWA encourages municipalities to protect these properties by including them in their own respective open space plans. The more resources present on any given parcel, the higher the priority it should receive. Thus, those with two or more features rank especially high according to the SBWA.

The Plan offers additional recommendations specifically in Hunterdon County. It calls for the extension of the Columbia Trail, managed by the Hunterdon County Park System, southward to the South Branch via Spruce Run. From there, it envisions connections to the Lower Landsdowne Trail, Capoolong Creek Trail and Black River and Western Corridor. The Plan encourages the County to establish a greenway and adjacent forest buffers along the South Branch and to prioritize preservation of properties associated with recharge and surface water quality.

### *Tewksbury Land Trust (TLT)*

The Tewksbury Land Trust (TLT) was founded in 1994 as a nonprofit organization actively promoting preservation of the Township's agricultural and open space resources. TLT encourages donation or sale of conservation easements or fee simple title of lands. It has preserved five properties so far through donation of easements.

### *The Nature Conservancy (TNC)*

The Nature Conservancy was established in 1951 as a private, international nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving plants, animals and natural communities and biodiversity. The New Jersey Chapter, chartered in 1988, has protected nearly 40,000 acres.

In Hunterdon County, TNC protects 37 acres of land in the Milford Bluffs along the Delaware River. Future land preservation will focus both on the Milford Bluffs and along the Black River (Lamington River).

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### *The Trust for Public Land (TPL)*

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit organization that coordinates with municipalities, local groups and landowners to preserve open space. TPL has helped to protect over 12,000 acres in New Jersey in partnership with municipalities and counties.

TPL participates in land preservation projects by acting as a third party to conduct landowner negotiations. It also helps to facilitate administrative and legal matters involved with land acquisitions.

TPL assembles both public and private foundation funds to acquire the land. Often, it will acquire land and

hold it until a public entity or nonprofit group has the necessary funds to acquire it. When a project is complete, TPL conveys the property to the interested entity. Private landowner contributions to the organization cover the costs of the transaction, which allows the organization to convey preserved land at appraised value.

In New Jersey, TPL's preservation interests lie primarily in the Highlands region and Barnegat Bay. In Hunterdon County, TPL has helped to preserve 150 acres, including properties in Clinton and Readington Townships. These properties were preserved through partnership



*Figure 12.*

*Brays Hill Preserve in Clinton Township. This 94-acre property was considered prime for preservation due to its recreational, ecological, and historic values. Clinton Tp hired TPL which negotiated a purchase price at bargain sale and secured \$1 million in State funding. Bray's Hill was the first project statewide to receive Green Acres Planning Incentive (PI) program funding.*

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Figure 13.  
Dvoor Farm,  
Raritan Town-  
ship, preserved  
through a pub-  
lic-private part-  
nership.

arrangements with the municipalities and the State.

### *Upper Raritan Watershed Association (URWA)*

The Upper Raritan Watershed Association (URWA) is a nonprofit organization that serves the 190 square mile area drained by the North Branch of the Raritan River and its tributaries. This includes Lebanon Borough and portions of Tewksbury Township, Clinton Township, Readington Township, and Califon Borough.

Among its many activities, URWA serves as a land trust, acquiring and holding properties in fee and conservation easements. It also helps other entities preserve lands within the watershed.

Presently, URWA holds easements or title to 100 acres in Tewksbury

Township. Funding for land preservation is derived primarily from donations. Approximately 25 percent of the funding is acquired through private foundation grants.

URWA has identified three areas in Hunterdon County where future preservation activity will be focused. These include the creation of a Black River greenway and two greenbelts around the villages of Oldwick and Pottersville.

### Summary – Land Preservation Among Public and Private Bodies

Between 35,000 and 40,000 acres of land are protected in Hunterdon County as a result of public and private action. These lands are held by a variety of parties, including municipalities, the County, the State, Boards of Education, private individuals, and nonprofit organizations. They are owned outright or pre-

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served through easements or deed restrictions. In total, this comprises just over 10 percent of the entire land base in Hunterdon County.

Throughout Hunterdon County, government and private entities are continuing to plan in earnest to achieve their respective land preservation goals. Goals include expansion of existing preserved areas, linkages between existing and future preserved areas, preservation of exemplary natural areas, active and passive recreation, and, of course, farmland preservation. Many entities have overlapping areas of interest. Most notable are regions such as the Sourland Mountains in East and West Amwell Townships, the Highlands in northern Hunterdon County, and numerous river and stream corridors.

Not all entities engaged in land preservation may be fully aware of the similar or complementary goals that others may share. While the goals of many groups are laudable, they are also tremendously ambitious. Given limited available resources, it is absolutely critical that organizations be fully apprised of each others' interests, viewing land preservation at a greater-than-local level, and team up where mutual interests will best be served. This inventory provides an important source of information not only for the County, but for all of these groups.

# Map 1

## ADA's and Farmland Preservation Priority Areas

### Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:

Hunterdon County Planning Department

Data Sources:

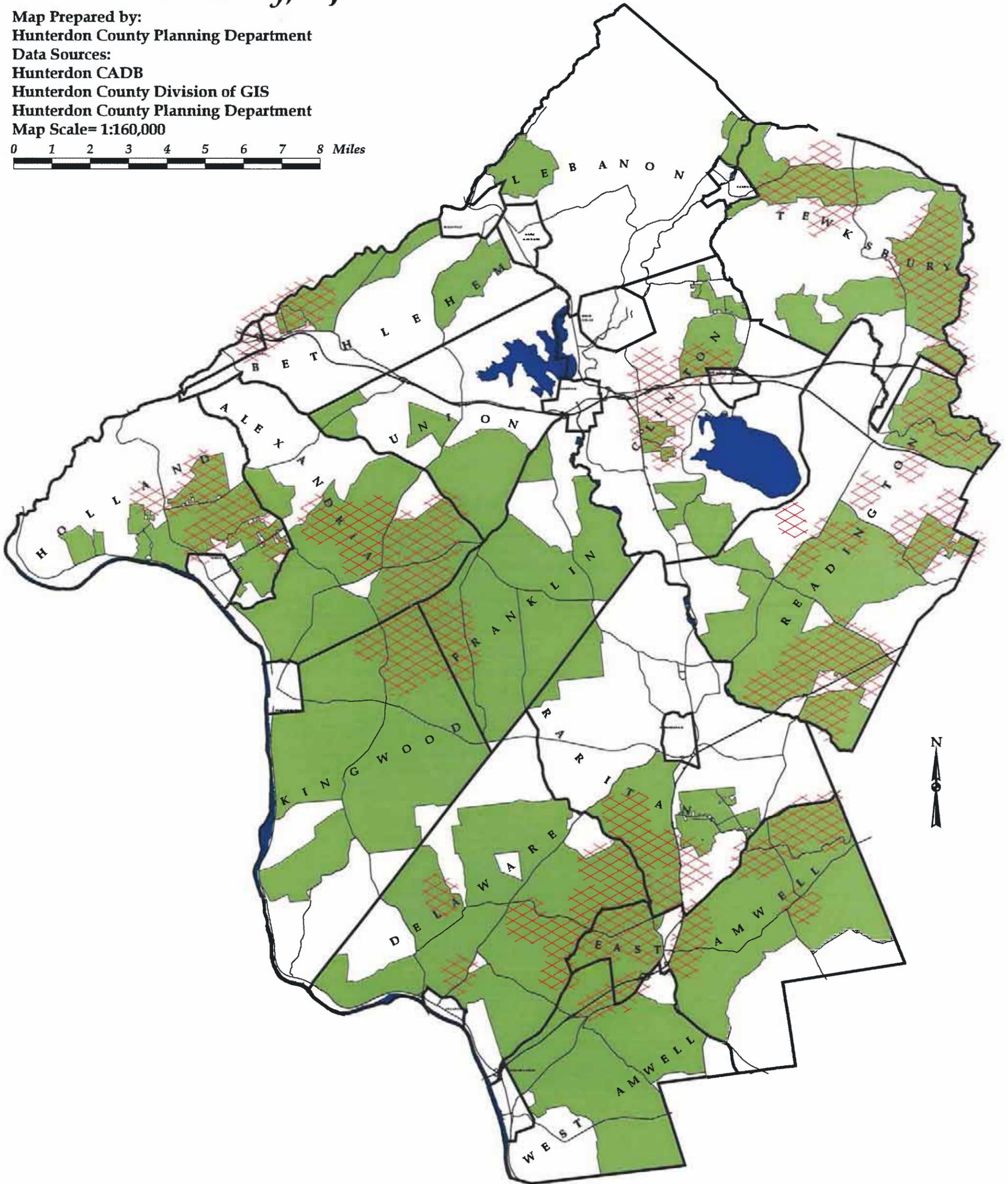
Hunterdon CADB

Hunterdon County Division of GIS

Hunterdon County Planning Department

Map Scale= 1:160,000

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Miles



- CADB Priority Preservation Areas
- Agriculture Development Areas
- Lakes, Rivers and Streams

Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.



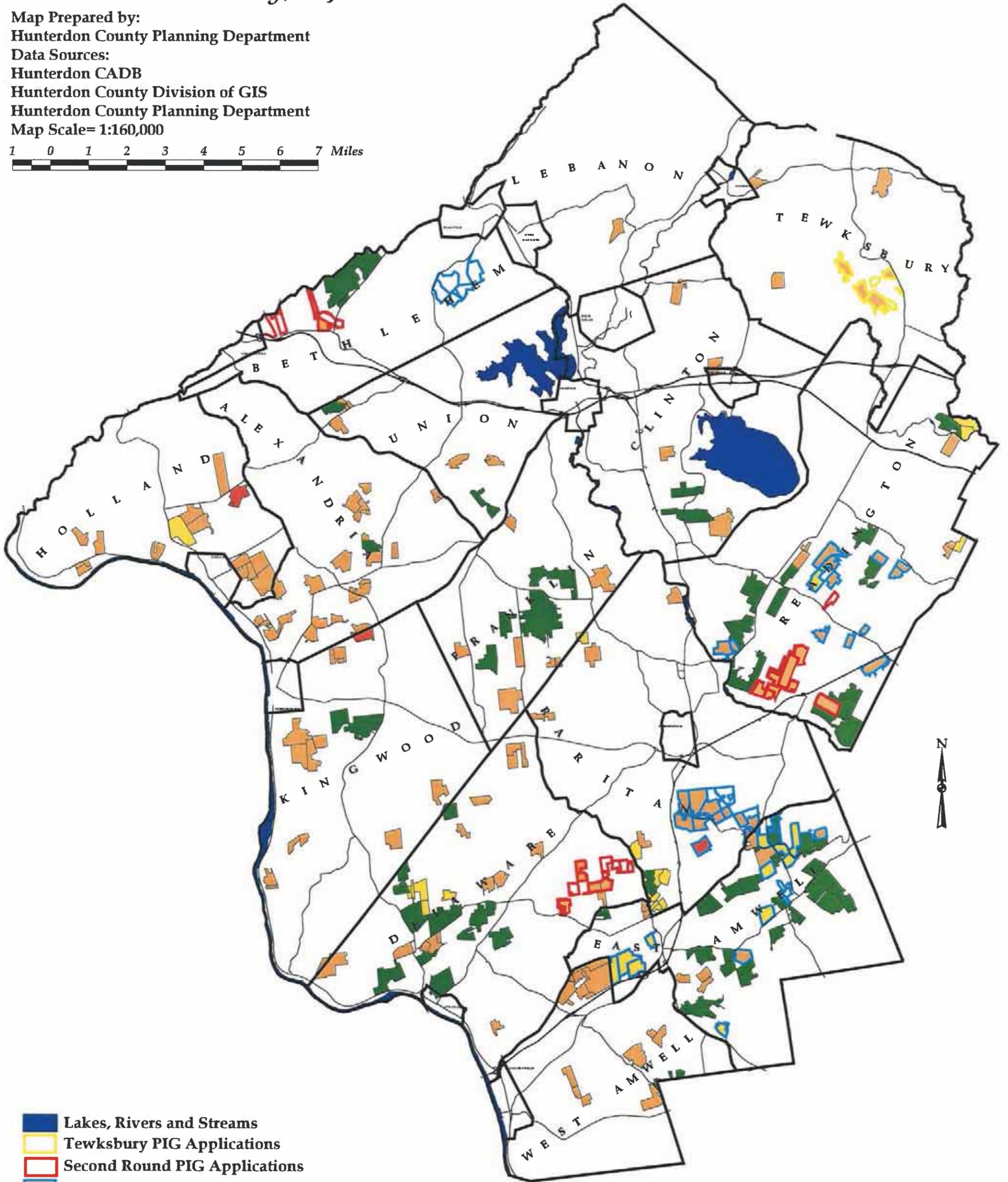
# Map 2

## Preserved Farmland and Applicants

### Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:  
 Hunterdon County Planning Department  
 Data Sources:  
 Hunterdon CADB  
 Hunterdon County Division of GIS  
 Hunterdon County Planning Department  
 Map Scale= 1:160,000

1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Miles

-  Lakes, Rivers and Streams
-  Tewksbury PIG Applications
-  Second Round PIG Applications
-  First Round PIG Applications
-  2000A Applicants
-  2000B Applicants
-  2001A Applicants
-  Preserved Farmland



# Map 3

## Existing Parks, Open Space and Farmland\* Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:

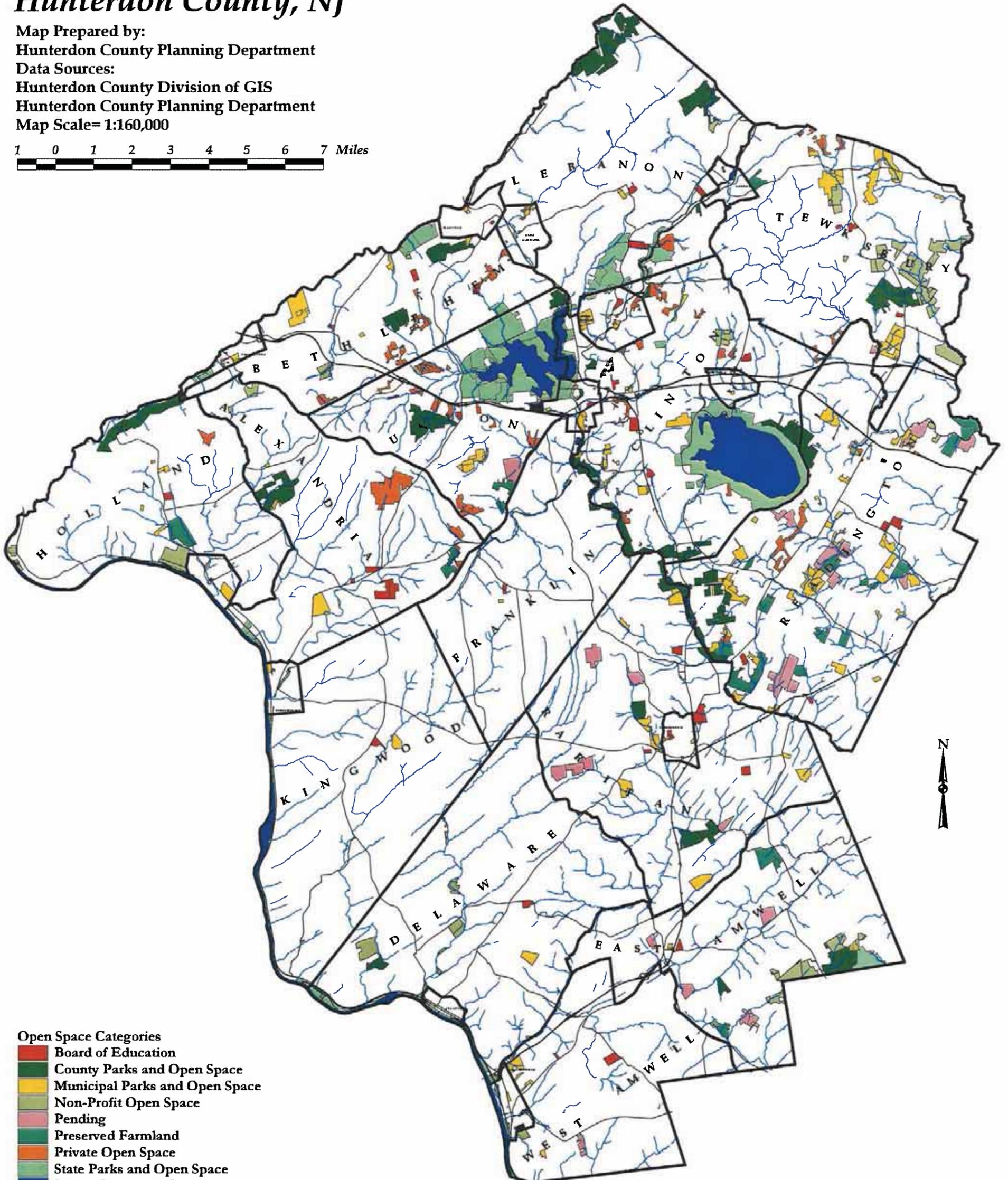
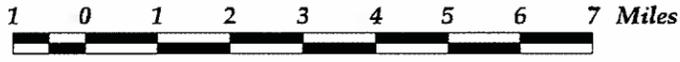
Hunterdon County Planning Department

Data Sources:

Hunterdon County Division of GIS

Hunterdon County Planning Department

Map Scale= 1:160,000



### Open Space Categories

-  Board of Education
-  County Parks and Open Space
-  Municipal Parks and Open Space
-  Non-Profit Open Space
-  Pending
-  Preserved Farmland
-  Private Open Space
-  State Parks and Open Space
-  Lakes, Rivers and Streams

This map is for planning purposes only.

\* Includes lands devoted to farming which have been preserved through means other than the State Farmland Preservation Program.

Please note that some properties shown on this map may be only partially preserved. Unless further information was available delineating the portion of these properties that are preserved, the entire property is so designated.

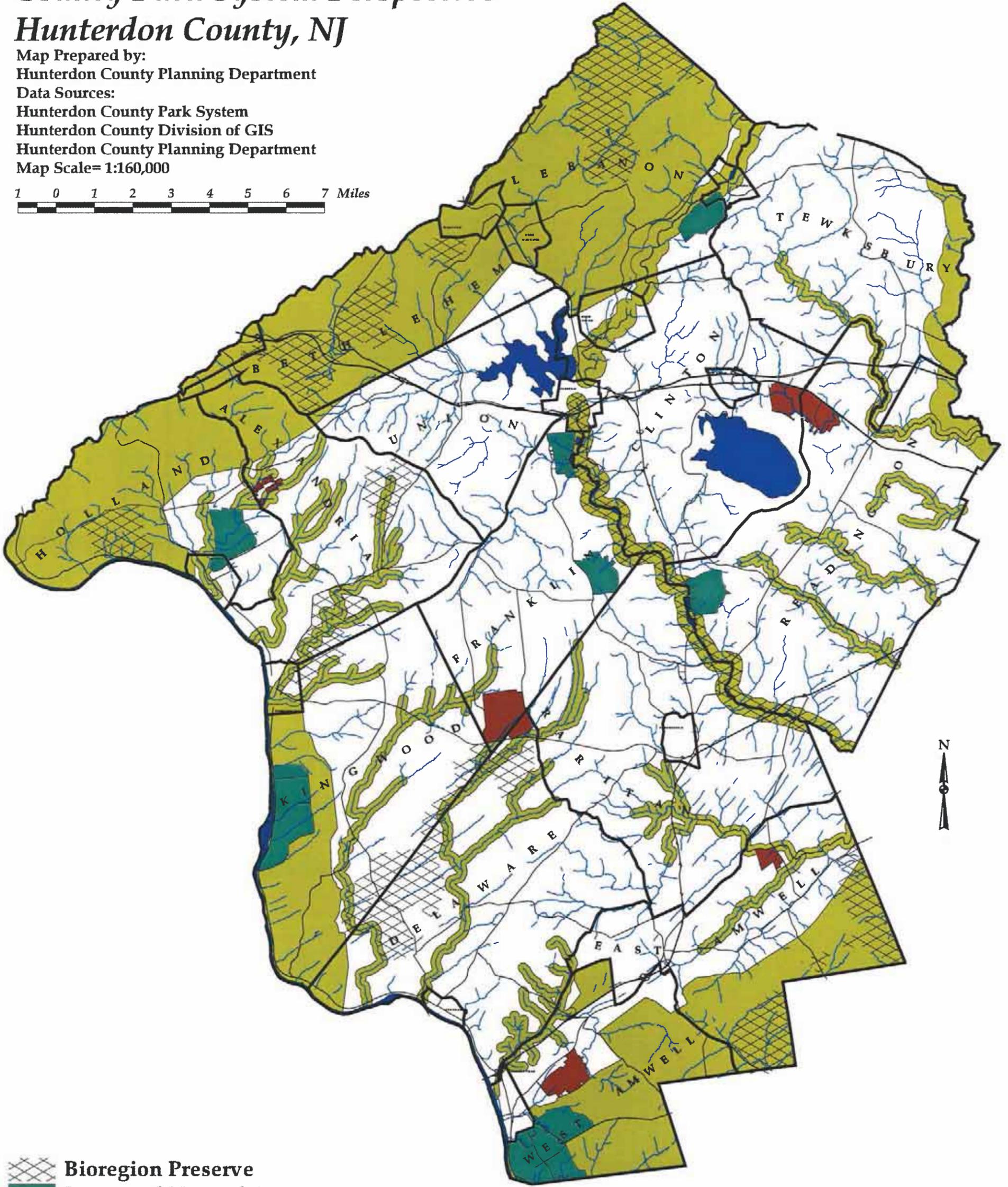


# Map 4 Areas of Preservation Interest - County Park System Perspective Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:  
Hunterdon County Planning Department

Data Sources:  
Hunterdon County Park System  
Hunterdon County Division of GIS  
Hunterdon County Planning Department  
Map Scale= 1:160,000

1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Miles

-  Bioregion Preserve
-  Improved Natural Area
-  General Use Park
-  Conservation Zone

Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.

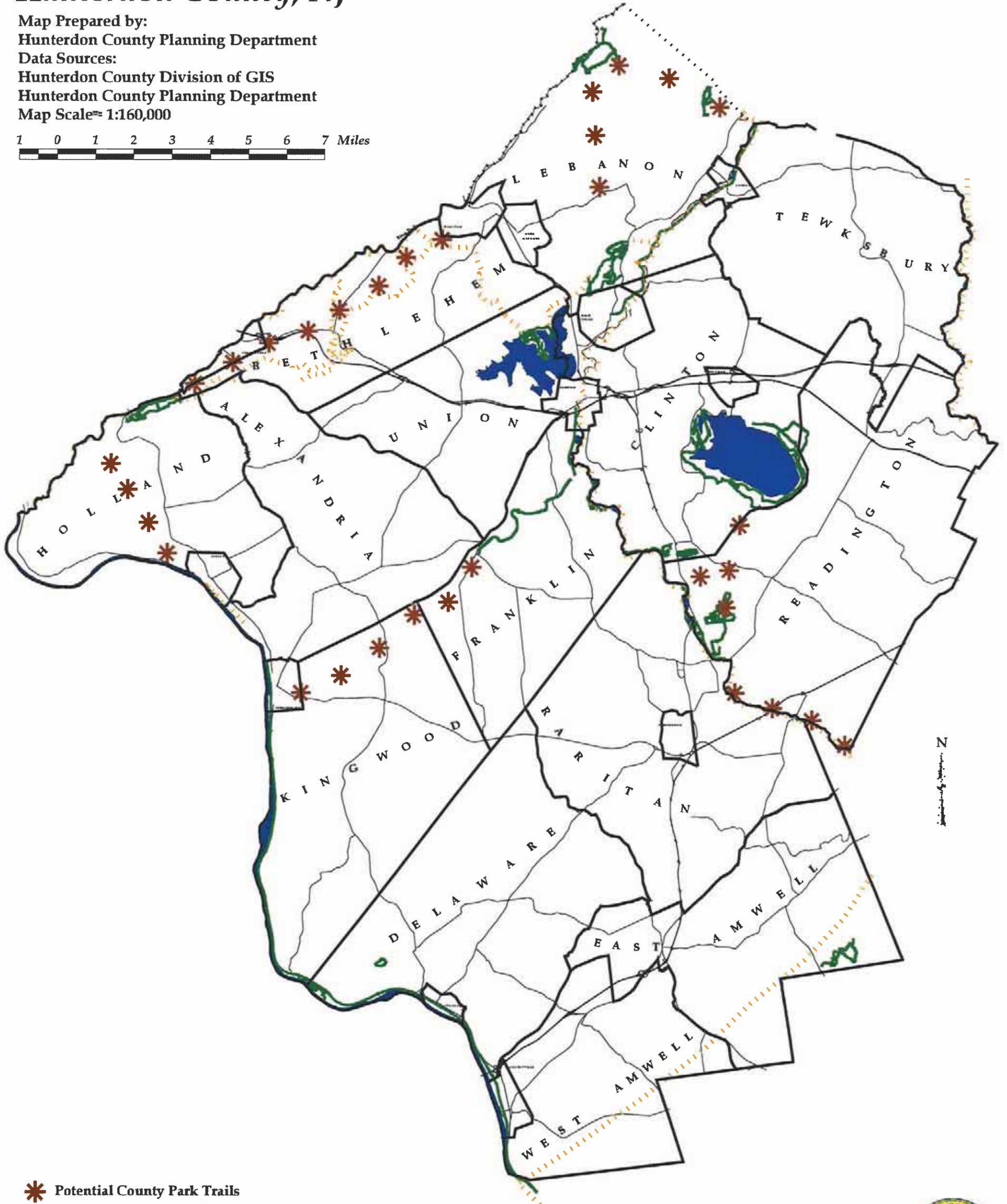


# Map 5

## Trail Priorities

### Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:  
 Hunterdon County Planning Department  
 Data Sources:  
 Hunterdon County Division of GIS  
 Hunterdon County Planning Department  
 Map Scale= 1:160,000



-  Potential County Park Trails
-  Potential Municipal, State and Non-Profit Trails
-  Existing Trails
-  Lakes, Rivers and Streams

Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.



# Map 6

## Areas of Preservation Interest - State Perspective

### Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:

Hunterdon County Planning Department

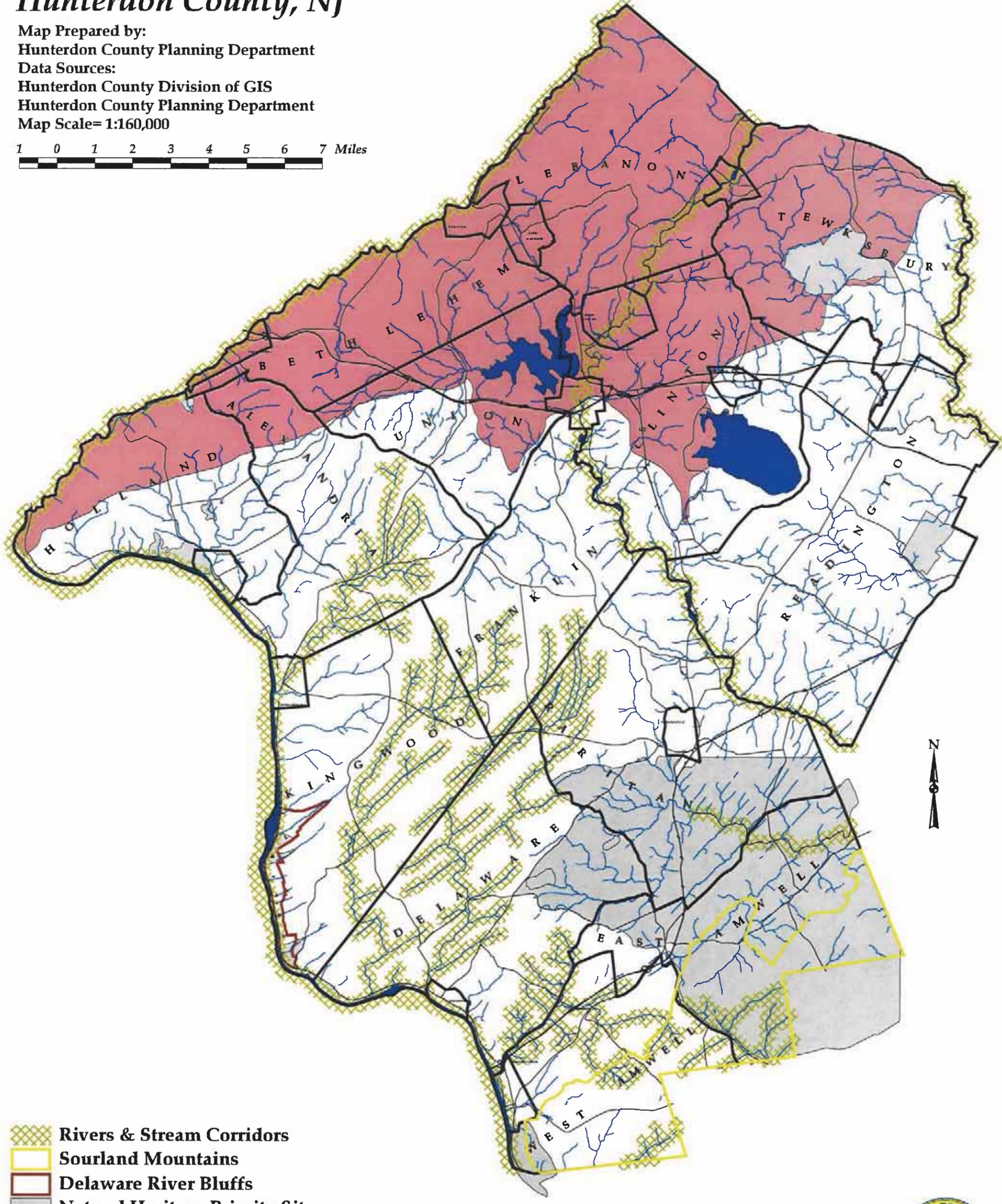
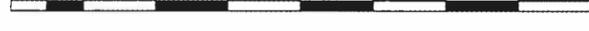
Data Sources:

Hunterdon County Division of GIS

Hunterdon County Planning Department

Map Scale= 1:160,000

1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Miles



- Rivers & Stream Corridors
- Sourland Mountains
- Delaware River Bluffs
- Natural Heritage Priority Sites
- The Highlands Region

Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.



# Map 7

## Areas of Municipal Preservation Interest Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:

Hunterdon County Planning Department

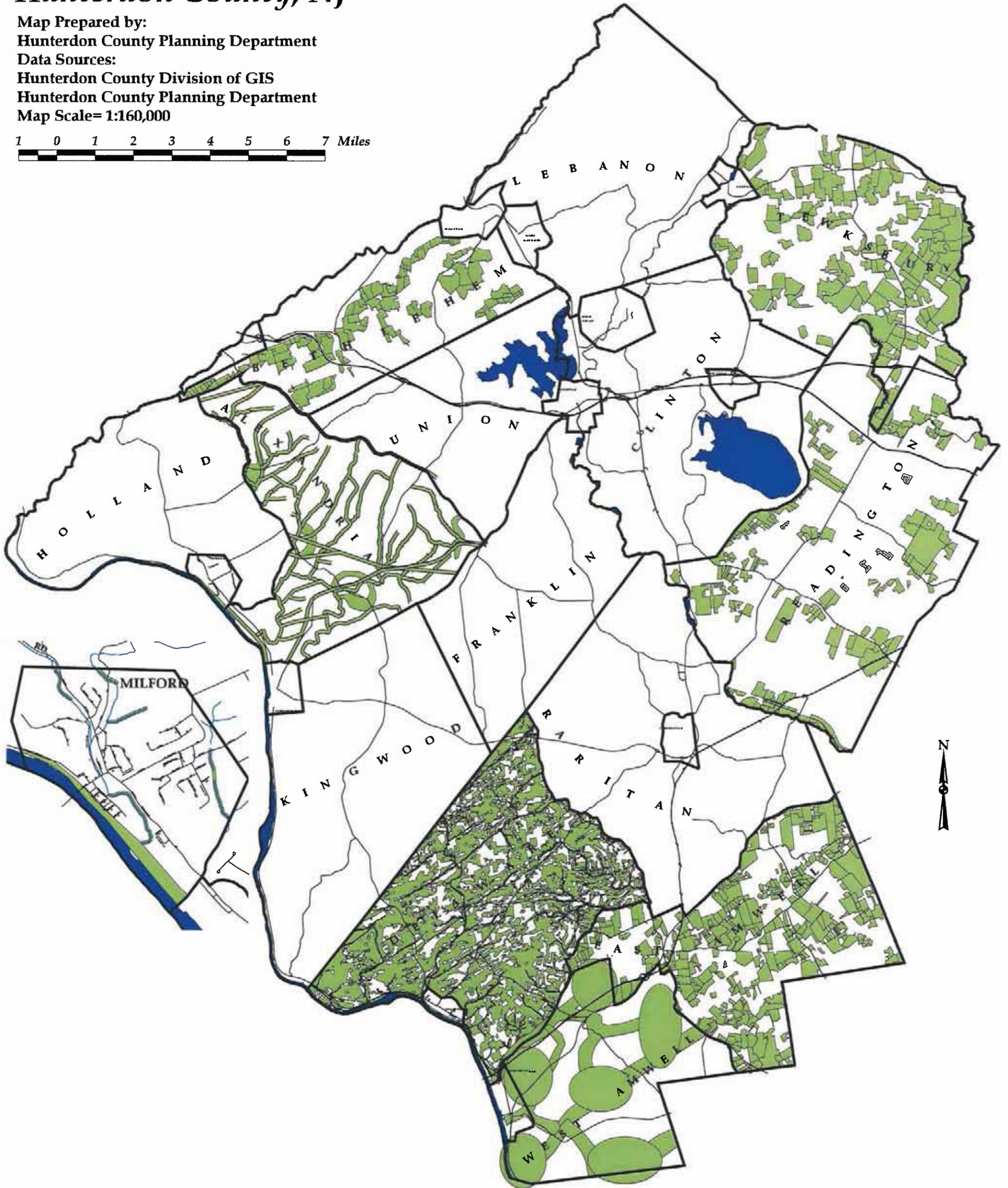
Data Sources:

Hunterdon County Division of GIS

Hunterdon County Planning Department

Map Scale= 1:160,000

1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Miles



-  Areas of Municipal Preservation Interest
-  Lakes, Rivers and Streams

Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.



# Map 8

## Areas of Non-Profit Preservation Interest

### Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:

Hunterdon County Planning Department

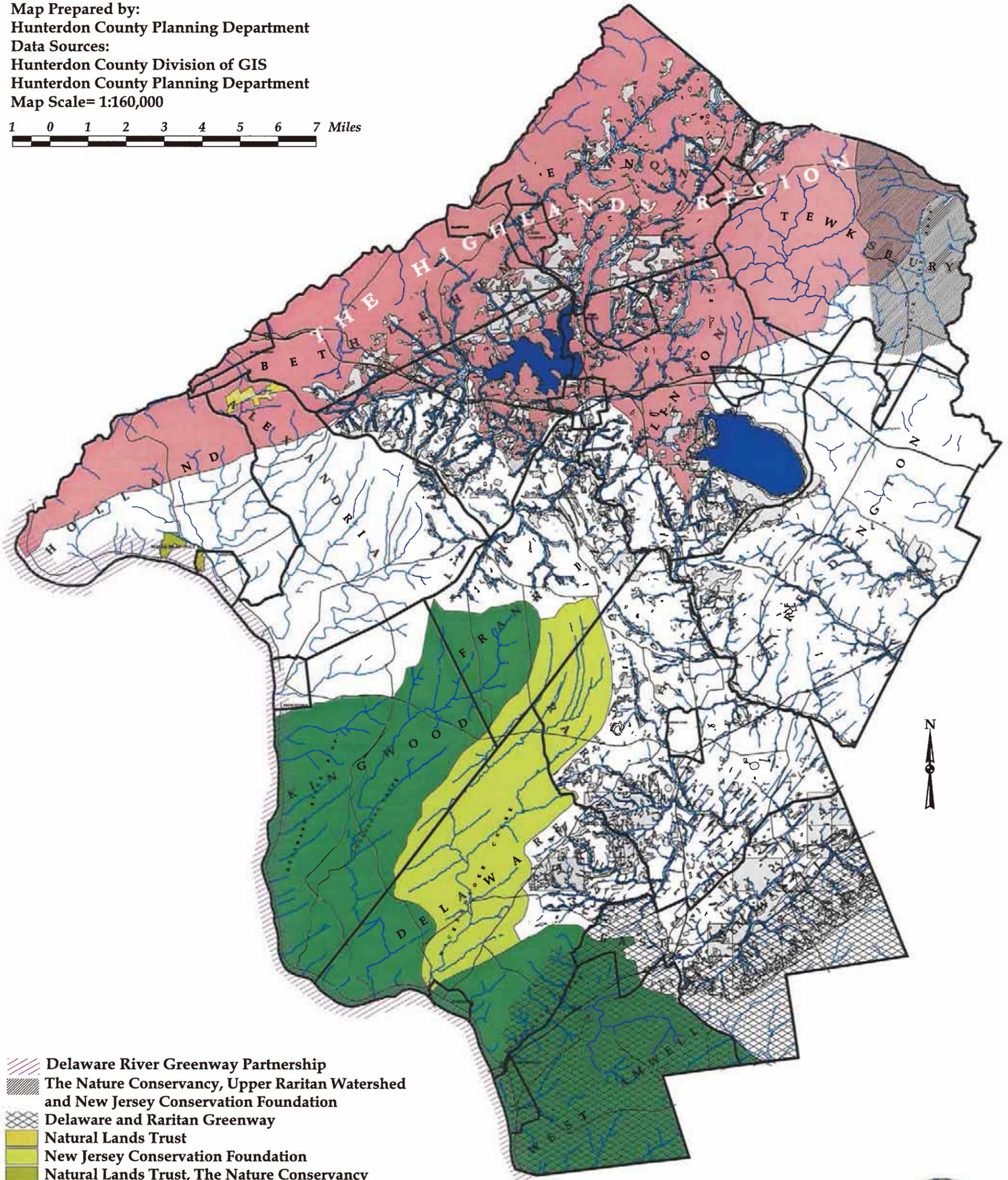
Data Sources:

Hunterdon County Division of GIS

Hunterdon County Planning Department

Map Scale= 1:160,000

1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Miles



-  Delaware River Greenway Partnership
-  The Nature Conservancy, Upper Raritan Watershed and New Jersey Conservation Foundation
-  Delaware and Raritan Greenway
-  Natural Lands Trust
-  New Jersey Conservation Foundation
-  Natural Lands Trust, The Nature Conservancy
-  South Branch Watershed Association
-  Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance
-  The Trust for Public Land

Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.

