Hunterdon County
Open Space, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Plan

Prepared for the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders
by the Hunterdon County Division of Planning Services
Adopted March 15, 2016

Hunterdon County

"Ensuring Our Quality of Life Now and for the Future"

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State legislation enacted in 1989 (C.40:12-16) and then amended in 1997 (C. 40:12-15.1 et. al.) introduced exciting opportunities for advancing the interests of preservation in New Jersey. It authorizes counties and municipalities to submit to their voters a proposition imposing an annual levy which can be used for several purposes. These include: 1) acquisition, or development and maintenance of recreation or conservation lands; 2) acquisition of farmland; 3) acquisition or preservation of historic resources; or 4) payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred for any of the above purposes except for property maintenance.

Once an annual levy is approved, a county or municipality may spend the money on lands identified in an adopted open space plan, farmland preservation plan, historic preservation plan, or to develop, improve or maintain the acquisitions according to an adopted recreation, development and maintenance plan. A county also is authorized to distribute revenue to municipalities and qualifying charitable organizations for uses consistent with its proposition.

Since the enactment of this legislation, 15 municipalities in Hunterdon County, and the County itself, obtained voter approval to institute trust funds for any or all of the authorized purposes. Even prior to the legislation, the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders demonstrated a long history of supporting both land and historic resource preservation. Prior to the levy, this had been accomplished strictly through the use of capital funding and, when necessary, issuance of bonds. Funding sources were substantially broadened with the institution of the County levy.

Although public support for preservation is certainly not a new phenomenon in Hunterdon County, support has grown far stronger in recent years. It is no surprise that voters in Hunterdon County and throughout New Jersey supported a state ballot question in 1998, calling for an unprecedented level of funding for land and historic resource preservation.

In 1999, the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders took action, cognizant of public sentiment and opportunities presented by new State funding. It placed before the voters a ballot question on November 2nd asking the following:

Shall the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders establish the "Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund" to raise money for the purchase of lands for recreation, conservation, general open space, farmland preservation and historic preservation of County owned structures, properties, facilities, sites, areas, or objects, or the payment of debt service or indebtedness issued or incurred by the County for any of the purposes described above to be funded by an annual tax assessment not to exceed the amount of Three ($.03) Cents per one hundred ($100.00) dollars of total County equalized real property value limited to a five

year period commencing January 1, 2000 and terminating December 31, 2004?

The ballot question was approved by a margin of 2 to 1.

In November 2004, another ballot question was posed to the voters of Hunterdon County extending the Open Space Tax through December 31, 2009. This ballot question continued the same allowable uses as the previous ballot question, but also allowed for municipalities to use County grant money for the preservation of municipally-owned historic structures.

This ballot question also passed by a wide margin.

In November 2008, a third ballot question was presented to the voters of Hunterdon County, this time expanding the definition of what the Open Space Trust Fund could be used for, specifically allowing for historic preservation by entities other than the County, as well as the absence of a sunset of the tax. The ability to fund development, improvement or maintenance of open space land was also included. The question asked the following:

Shall the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders continue the current "Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund" for the purposes of protecting drinking water sources and water quality; preserving open space, natural areas, farmland and historic sites; to acquire, develop, improve and maintain county and municipal lands for recreation and conservation purposes; and preservation of historic structures, properties, facilities, sites, areas, or objects; or for the payment of debt service or indebtedness issued or incurred by the County for any of the purposes described above, with projects to be selected through a fair and open process and to be acquired from willing sellers only, to be funded by continuing the existing annual tax assessment not to exceed the amount of Three ($.03) Cents per one hundred ($100.00) dollars of total County equalized real property value commencing January 1, 2010, with all funds subject to an annual independent audit?

Again, the ballot question passed by a wide margin.

The Open Space, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Plan (hereafter referred to as the Open Space Trust Fund Plan) permits the Freeholder Board to supplement existing resources, both from the County as well as from preservation partners, thereby strengthening aggressive preservation campaigns. It must be noted that all activity that is funded by the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund must comport with state statutes as well as the ballot questions passed by the voters of Hunterdon County. The following plans must also be in place to proceed:

The Open Space Trust Fund Plan offers strategic procedures to operate a successful trust fund program in Hunterdon County. The Open

Space Trust Fund Plan also includes a Recreation, Development, and Maintenance Plan to guide the County in the standards of care, development and maintenance of its open space parcels. As the inventory of County-owned open space and parkland is increased, stewardship responsibilities also increase.

For the purposes of this document, stewardship is defined as repairing, restoring or improving lands acquired or developed for recreation and conservation purposes or farmland preservation purposes for the purpose of enhancing or protecting those lands for recreation and conservation purposes or farmland preservation purposes.

To further explain the definition, as explained in the statute governing county open space trust funds (N.J.S.A. 40:12-15), "'recreation and conservation purposes' means the use of lands for parks, open space, natural areas, ecological and biological study, forests, water reserves, wildlife preserves, fishing, hunting, camping, boating, winter sports, or similar uses for either public outdoor recreation or conservation of natural resources, or both, or the use of lands for public indoor recreation."

Please refer to the Recreation, Development, and Maintenance Plan on page 51 for full and additional details.

Also included in the Open Space Trust Fund Plan is a Historic Preservation Plan that outlines how a portion of the Open Space Trust Fund may be utilized to protect the history of the County. The Historic Preservation Plan was updated in 2015 to include the County's successful Historic Preservation Grant Program; an avenue for municipalities and non-profit organizations to take advantage of the Open Space Trust Fund to help preserve the history of Hunterdon County.

The County Agriculture Development Board has completed a Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan and complies with the relevant State rules governing selection of lands for the State Farmland Preservation Program.

For the varying uses of the Trust Fund, the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders determine the breakdown of Trust Fund spending, specifically the allocation of funds to the grant programs offered. The Board revisits the allocations annually to take into account program needs and matching outside funding sources. For 2016, the Open Space Trust Fund revenue is distributed as follows:

- 30% - Farmland Preservation
- 25% - Cooperative Open Space Grant Program
- 15% - Non-profit Open Space Grant Program
- 15% - County Open Space (purchases and stewardship)
- 10% - Municipal Grant Program
- 3.5% - Historic Preservation Grant Program
- 1.5% - County Historic Preservation

Preservation in Hunterdon County – Where We Are Where We're Headed

Voters Approve County Trust Fund

On November 2, 1999, November 2, 2004 and again on November 4, 2008, Hunterdon County residents cast their votes on "The County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland Preservation and Historic Trust Fund" (Open Space Trust Fund) ballot questions. The ballot questions were approved on nearly all three occasions by a margin of 2 to 1 – a clear indication of the overwhelming commitment residents have toward preservation in Hunterdon County.

The Open Space Trust Fund authorizes the Board of Chosen Freeholders to raise up to three cents per hundred dollars of equalized real property value. Starting with the 2008 ballot question, funds can be used for the following purposes:

- purchase of lands for recreation, conservation, general open space, and farmland preservation;
- develop and maintain county and municipal lands for recreation and conservation purposes;
- historic preservation of public structures, properties, facilities, sites, areas or objects; and
- payment of debt service or indebtedness issued or incurred for any of the above purposes.

A trust fund provides a stable source of funding that follows the values in land and ratables.

A History of Strong Support for Preservation in Hunterdon County

It is no surprise that voters approved the ballot question that created the County trust fund. Hunterdon County residents have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to preservation initiatives. In 1980, for instance, they supported a $2.2 million bond referendum for agricultural preservation in Hunterdon County. Continued support for county preservation funding was evident in a public opinion survey conducted by the Planning Board in 1993; fifty-four percent of respondents indicated their willingness to pay higher taxes for farmland and open space.

In 1998, Hunterdon County voters supported the Garden State Preservation Trust Act which provided a stable source of funding statewide for farmland, open space and historic preservation. Over the past several years, residents in 15 Hunterdon County townships approved the adoption of local preservation trust funds.

There are several reasons why Hunterdon County residents are so fervent in their support for funding open space, farmland and historic resource protection. These resources define the character of our communities. Virtually every municipal master plan cites the need to protect "community character" as a principal goal. By community character, they mean the visual and his-

toric character as well as the environmental integrity of their communities. Rolling hills, farm fields, stream corridors, woodlands, centuries old hamlets and villages – all of these features contribute to community character.

At the same time, Hunterdon County is faced with unique development pressures as builders look toward the open land of Hunterdon as a prime candidate for new homes. As residents witness the conversion of open land to homes, shops and office parks, there is a growing sense of urgency to achieve a balance between growth and preservation.

In the same public opinion survey cited earlier, residents expressed a strong willingness to pay higher taxes not only for preservation of farmland and open space, but also for a clean, natural environment. Among eleven quality of life considerations, a clean, natural environment ranked most important to the survey respondents. Preservation of woodlands, grasslands, stream corridors, hillsides, etc. contributes to water quality, air quality, and other factors that comprise "a clean natural environment."

There is another important reason as well. Numerous studies have been conducted throughout the nation and they reach the same conclusion - land preservation makes economic sense and is a critical balance to residential development. Residential development tends to create an economic burden on communities because, in many cases, the costs of services they demand far exceed the tax revenues generated. Such costs may include education, road maintenance, fire, police, emergency services, recycling, and libraries, among other services. The American Farmland Trust analyzed five communities in New Jersey. For every dollar raised in revenues, homes generated an average of $1.30 in costs. Farms, forestland and open space generated costs of only 45 cents.

A study done in 1991 in Princeton Township showed that despite the initial outlay of funds necessary to purchase easements, it was far more cost-effective than a residential subdivision on the same property. A similar study in Tewksbury Township conducted in 1997 arrived at the same conclusion.

<u>Freeholders' Commitment to Preservation</u>

The Hunterdon County Freeholders' response to the strong show of resident support is reflected in a track record of preservation planning and investment. This track record applies to farmland, open space, and historic preservation.

Farmland

The Agriculture Retention and Development Act of 1983 established New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program. Even prior to that, Hunterdon County positioned itself

to institute what would become one of the most successful farmland preservation efforts statewide. In 1980, the voters approved a $2.2 million bond referendum for farmland preservation. Since then, the County has invested approximately $30 million to preserve over 30,000 acres of farmland. To aide in accomplishing this task, Hunterdon was able to leverage over $185 million of state dollars to use toward the purchase of those easements. Hunterdon County was the first to appoint a County Agriculture Development Board, charged with developing a countywide program to assist in agricultural retention. It was also the first to adopt criteria for establishing Agriculture Development Areas (ADA's).

ADA's are areas considered most viable for future agriculture based on a set of guidelines established in the Agriculture Retention and Development Act and criteria developed by each County.

Parks

The Freeholders have shown a strong commitment to the County Park System as well. Since the Park System's inception in 1973, the County has spent approximately $47.3 million on parkland acquisition. Today, the Park System maintains approximately 8,400 acres dedicated to conservation and active and passive recreation.

History

In 1971, the Freeholder Board created the Hunterdon County Cultural and Heritage Commission. The Commission is charged with cultivating public understanding and interest in history, arts and culture. Among the numerous activities it undertakes, the Commission teamed up with the County Planning Board to prepare a comprehensive inventory of historic resources (*Sites of Historic Interest*, 1979). During the 1990s, it collaborated with the Planning Board and Engineering Department in a study and evaluation of 108 stone arch bridges. This study included an assessment of the historic significance of each bridge and maintenance recommendations.

During the following 10 to 12 years, the County spent approximately $2.5 million on repairs and enhancements to eight truss bridges, all of which are over 75 years old. Most of these bridges are either on or deemed eligible for the State and National Register of Historic Places. Another $600,000 was invested into the restoration and repair of the exterior of the historic courthouse in Flemington (matched by $600,000 from the State).

<u>Purpose of a Open Space Trust Fund Plan</u>

Before implementing the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund, the resolution authorizing the trust fund requires the development of a

countywide acquisition plan. The Freeholder Board directed staff to prepare the Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Plan.

The strategies that the County currently uses to employ the Open Space Trust Fund and recommendations presented in the plan are intended to guide the Freeholders' future spending decisions to achieve a variety of preservation goals in the most cost-effective and administratively efficient manner possible. Please refer to the Goals and Recommendations section on page 34 for further details on each topic. These strategies and goals include the following:

- *Continue to support the Farmland Preservation Program administered by the County Agriculture Development Board;*
- *Support the continued expansion of the County Park System by seeking not only Green Acres funding, but also municipal contributions, nonprofit support, and/or other potential funding sources;*
- *Continue the support of nonprofit organizations pursuing land preservation projects that are consistent with the County's park, open space, and farmland preservation goals;*
- *Provide a stable source of funding to advance municipal open space plans and preservation initiatives;*
- *Support the county's economic growth through open space initiatives;*
- *Strengthen open space and parks planning through interdepartmental coordination and shared services management; and*
- *Determine the overall preservation goals of the county and develop a long term strategy to address stewardship.*

The Open Space Trust Fund Plan describes the following actions and policies to support these goals:

- *Allocate the available funding to appropriately match the funding levels available from preservation partners;*
- *Allocation of available funding among the numerous recommended trust fund programs should be determined on an annual basis to meet the funding needs of each program and use;*
- *Continue to encourage nonprofit open space preservation activity within the county as a way to leverage funds for the preservation of natural resources;*
- *Support the open space and*

recreation action items discussed and outlined in farmland, parks and open space planning documents;

- *County departments responsible for County Open Space and Parks programs should convene periodically to review program needs and issues, and to offer recommended changes to the Freeholder Board as necessary. Create and maintain systems for data sharing among all government and private entities engaged in open space and farmland preservation planning; and*

- *Complete and adopt a Strategic Parks and Open Space Plan to solidify the County's direction in regards to total open space spending and to provide a structure for implementation.*

It is important to distinguish the Open Space Trust Fund Plan from other related plans that are in place or in preparation. This plan is not intended to replace other county plans, such as the Hunterdon County Farmland Preservation Plan. Rather, it views these and all other relevant planning activities around the County collectively in offering various financial and administrative recommendations. It does so within the context of a 10-year planning horizon.

An Open Space Recreation, Development, and Maintenance Plan is contained within the Open Space Trust Fund Plan. This element is designed to guide the county in its efforts to steward the lands owned by the county for open space and recreational purposes.

The Open Space Trust Fund Plan also contains a Historic Preservation Plan. This element provides background information, goals and recommendations for the preservation of the historic resources of Hunterdon County.

Hardly a day goes by that the local newspapers fail to report on a preservation effort somewhere in Hunterdon County. Whether initiated by the County, State, municipality or nonprofit organization, there are literally dozens of projects, programs and plans underway in Hunterdon County.

As we continue to plan for open space, farmland and historic preservation, we must be fully informed of the plethora of initiatives that will potentially affect future County spending decisions. In this way, we can anticipate where priorities and goals may overlap among the various players and thereby identify possible "partners" with whom to collaborate in the future.

The following is a description of existing and planned County and State efforts.

Farmland Preservation Program

Hunterdon County maintains the largest number of farms and second highest amount of farmland-assessed property statewide. Roughly 57 percent of the land base is farm-qualified under New Jersey's Farmland Assessment Act. Additionally, Hunterdon County ranks second in permanently preserved farmland acreage acquired through the State Farmland Preservation Program. Approximately 30,000 acres have been preserved since the first acquisition which occurred in 1985 (Table 1).

Nonetheless, total acreage preserved through the State Farmland Preservation Programs comprise only 5.6 percent of farmland assessed properties and 10.9 percent of the total land area in the County.

Given overwhelming public support for farmland preservation, the County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) has established an aggressive agenda for itself in the coming decade. This is articulated in its Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan.

The CADB hopes to preserve 50,000 acres of farmland in total, including existing preserved land. To plan for this, the CADB has mapped Agriculture Development Areas (ADAs) and Project Areas (Map 1).

State-mandated regulations require the identification of Agriculture Development Areas (ADAs) within which farms meeting certain requirements are eligible to apply for farmland preservation funding. ADAs were initially identified by the CADB in the early 1980's. The CADB adopted criteria by which to evaluate possible ADAs, which have been amended over the years. In order to be considered an ADA, the subject area must be a minimum of 250 contiguous acres, contain a predominance of prime or statewide important soils, be reasonably free of nonfarm development, and outside of a public sewer service area. Additional lands have been added to ADAs over time, upon demonstration that they meet the criteria.

More recently, the CADB developed a Targeted Farms List which identifies properties that should be actively pursued for farmland preservation. These farms were identified using the following criteria:

- farms equal to or greater than 40 acres;
- farmland assessed properties;
- a portion of the properties include prime farmland soils; and
- at least 50 percent of the farm is tillable (no more than 50% tree cover).

The CADB will rely on easement purchases through a combination of the County Planning Incentive Grant, Municipal Planning Incentive Grant applications, and non profit applications to preserve roughly

50,000 acres. It anticipates that landowner donations and acquisitions by the State will supplement the County's efforts to achieve its ambitious goal.

Easement Purchase Program
The easement purchase programs rely on a cost-sharing arrangement between the State, County and municipality to purchase the development rights on a farm property. The County Agriculture Development Board (CADB) ranks applications for easement purchases that are submitted either by individual property owners, through the County Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) program, by municipalities through their own PIG program, or by non profit organizations through the non-profit grant program. (In the instance of municipalities, they can purchase development rights initially and then apply through the PIG program to receive reimbursement if development pressure is imminent). The CADB then forwards selected applications to the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) for a final determination on eligibility.

The Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) program is administered by the State and offers grants to municipalities and counties that identify project areas consisting of reasonably contiguous farms. This program aims to preserve large areas by qualifying blocks of farms – called project areas – for funding.

The program also emphasizes the need for planning. Municipalities and counties must undertake a comprehensive planning process to identify project areas and targeted farms and include them in a farmland preservation element of the municipal and county master plan.

Hunterdon County has pursued a variety of creative opportunities to

Table 1. Preserved Farmland in Hunterdon County

PRESERVED FARMLAND IN HUNTERDON COUNTY

	Total Acres	State Cost	County Cost	Municipal Cost	Other	Total Cost
						TC = State + County + (Municipality)
County donation	109.30	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
County EP	15,179.63	$63,695,057.07	$17,893,733.60	$17,262,165.24	$178,296.00	$98,292,764.91
Non-County	185.11	$1,987,216.00	$0.00	$106,836.00	$128,704.00	$524,498.00
Non-Profit	641.25	$3,709,846.90	$870,462.50	$1,235,937.00	$1,975,925.00	$7,546,198.90
Municipal PIG	5,082.92	$34,744,436.28	$8,943,461.63	$9,366,873.23	$2,693,315.00	$55,748,086.00
SADC donation	245.51	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
SADC fee simple	1,521.82	$19,600,190.20	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$19,600,190.00
SADC EP	5,037.03	$46,283,445.98	$0.00	$137,259.00	$0.00	$46,420,704.98
ROSI TOTAL	28002.57	$170,020,192.43	$27,707,657.73	$28,109,070.47	$4,976,240.00	$228,132,442.79
Recently acquired land	2250.95	$14,438,826.57	$2,165,386.27	$1,598,949.53	$2,736,601.00	$23,623,512.21
TOTAL (as of June 2015)	30253.52	$184,459,019.00	$29,873,044.00	$29,708,020.00	$7,712,841.00	$251,755,955.00

Source: NJ Department of Environmental Protection, NJ State Agricultural Development Committee (7/2015)

facilitate easement purchases. Most notable was the acquisition of an 826-acre farm straddling the borders of Readington Township, Hunterdon County and Branchburg and Hillsborough Townships, Somerset County. The Hunterdon CADB teamed up with the County Park System, the Somerset CADB, the Somerset County Park Commission, Readington Township and the SADC to ensure that the $6.8 million acquisition would succeed.

In the end, the State preserved 328 acres of farmland by purchasing the land in title. Easements were purchased on another 160 acres of the Kanach Farm (plus 100 acres on an adjacent farm within Hunterdon County) through a combination of local, County and State contributions. The Hunterdon County Park System acquired nearly 10 acres for a linear park along the South Branch of the Raritan River. The Somerset CADB purchased 118 acres and the Somerset County Park Commission purchased 210 acres to preserve the flood plain along the river. Preservation of this property would not have been possible without the creative partnership that formed among multiple government entities.

The Hunterdon CADB is also realizing the benefits of teaming up to preserve farmland with nonprofit conservation organizations. These organizations, working in collaboration with the County and property owner, can sever the non-tillable portion of the farm property from the application and seek Green Acres funding to preserve it as conservation or recreational land. This increases the ranking of the farm parcel in the farmland preservation application process because it removes that portion of the property with less desirable soils. Nonprofits are also better suited to leverage funding from a variety of sources to help bring a preservation project to fruition.

Additional Farmland Preservation Techniques

Three additional avenues are utilized to complement the PIG programs. The SADC administers a fee simple program whereby the State purchases the entire farm from a willing seller, imposes development restrictions so that it is permanently preserved, and then sells the farm at a public auction to the highest bidder.

The Municipality Approved Farmland Preservation Program requires land to be actively farmed for eight years. This program makes a landowner eligible for state soil and water conservation cost share grants.

Landowners also participate in farmland preservation by donating development easements on part of all of their farm either to the SADC or to the County.

While none of these programs alone have had as much participation as the easement purchase program, they are certainly important components of farmland preservation in Hunterdon County.

Summary

Thus far, the County has contributed on average approximately $960 per acre toward the cost of purchasing easements on farmland. The CADB projects the County cost to increase to nearly $1,400 per acre over the next decade. This is due to anticipated increases in land values as well as uncertain levels of cost share funding available from the state and municipalities. As such, the County could spend up to $19,200,000 to meet the CADB's 10 -year goal of securing 20,000 additional acres of farmland.

Hunterdon County Park System

The County acquired the Wescott Nature Preserve in Delaware Township through a private donation in 1966. This served as the beginning of what would eventually become the Hunterdon County Park System.

The first County Park and Recreation Plan was adopted in 1972. In 1980, the Hunterdon County Planning Board prepared a management plan for parks and open space in consultation with the Park system. The second plan proposed additional policies for the Park system. It called for the goal of maintaining a total of 19,284 acres as County parkland. It also identified the need for several additional active recreation parks, preservation of 13 unique sites, and protection of five major ridgelines.

Today, the Hunterdon County Park System maintains approximately 8,400 acres of parkland (Map 3). Parks fall into one of five classifications:

1) Unimproved Natural Areas – areas retained in their natural state with no improvements or off- street parking;
2) Improved Natural Areas – areas with limited development to accommodate off-street parking, trails, rest rooms, campgrounds and picnic facilities;
3) Linked/Greenway Areas – corridors with natural features along rivers, streams or abandoned rail lines which are part of a linked open space system featuring rails and limited development;
4) General Use Areas – areas developed for active and passive recreation and made available for general public use; and
5) Special Use Areas – areas developed for one or several unique uses (such as the Arboretum), requiring special care and made available for public use in a controlled manner.

The Planning Department is in the process of developing a new County Strategic Parks and Open Space Plan to update previous plans developed in 1972, 1980 and most recently in 2000. The plan will identify additional acreage for county parkland and a targeted timeline for achieving those goals. The acreage goal will be consistent with the standard established by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for county-owned parkland (seven percent of developable land in a county).

The 2000 plan envisioned future parkland acquisitions to consist of the following:

- Bioregion Preserves – Bioregions are defined as areas with distinct physiographic and biological features that are representative of the County's landscape. These areas are exemplary of the particular region's unique geological and vegetative characteristics and would be managed as undeveloped natural areas;

Figure 1. The Kanach Farm in Readington, Branchburg and Hillsborough Townships was preserved through a joint effort involving eight government agencies.

- Improved Natural Areas;
- General Use/Special Use Parks; and
- Linked Greenways and Trails

In addition, the Park system has mapped conservation zones. These are broad areas within which the County Park System should collaborate with other County and State agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit groups to preserve exemplary properties. Conservation zones are considered worthy of preservation and limited development due to their distinctive environmental features. The Sourland Mountains, Delaware River Bluffs, stream and river corridors, and portions of the Highlands comprise the 17 conservation zones that have been identified.

While the established plans have mapped the general locations for future parks, site-specific land purchases will be subject to a variety of criteria. For example, the land must exhibit regional significance. To be regionally significant, the property must satisfy one or more of the following:

- adjacent to an existing/imminent park;
- enhances public access to an existing county park;
- contains a significant specimen of fragile flora and cannot be preserved by any other means;
- contains habitat significant enough to support endangered plans or animals;
- links preserved open space, public trail corridors or alternative transportation corridors;
- contributes to an existing greenway;
- contains sufficient acreage for active recreation, provides good access, and has the potential to fill an identified public recreation need; located convenient to areas of population concentration;
- located in a major viewshed of an existing County Park or other public preserve;
- affords an opportunity for cooperative ventures with little or no management responsibility.

The Park System currently contains many acres in conservation easements. However, the vast majority of park properties have been purchased in fee simple. In the past, the County secured 50 percent grants, coupled with two percent loans from the Office of Green Acres to help facilitate acquisitions on a property-by-property basis. Subsequently, the County has been eligible to receive and has utilized Green Acres Planning Incentive grants.

Figure 2. The Teetertown Nature Preserve was able to be acquired by the County by grants made available through the Green Acres Program.

The Green Acres Green Trust Planning Incentive (PI) program offers 50 percent grants to counties with approved Open Space and Recreation Plans and with either an open space trust fund or other dedicated funding source. Green Acres rewards proactive planning by streamlining the

preservation process. Rather than submitting individual funding requests for each property, an approved Planning Incentive application receives funds for multiple parcels identified in the plan.

The PI program was developed in 1996. At that time, funding packages generally consisted of 25% grants and 75% low interest loans. Again, the Garden State Preservation Trust Act has enhanced the program by making qualifying applications eligible for 50 percent grants rather than the aforesaid combination of more modest grants combined with low interest loans.

Future acquisitions will hopefully involve more partnerships with nonprofit conservation organizations and municipalities to help defray costs even further. The 2000 plan acknowledged the benefits of partnerships, not only in terms of acquisitions but also in terms of shared management. An example of this is the Hoffman tract in Union Township, which was purchased jointly by the County and municipality and will be jointly managed as well (the County will manage the land and the Township will maintain the buildings).

Thus far, the County has spent roughly $47.3 million on parkland—or $5,631 per acre. Assuming a projected cost of $7000 per acre for parkland (based on prices over the last five years), the target goal of about 10,000 additional acres may require $35 million in acquisition funds. Assuming half is secured over the next 10 years, $17.5 million would be necessary. This assumes 50 percent State grants but does not include administrative costs (e.g. appraisals, legal fees, survey costs, etc). It presumes no additional leveraging through municipal or nonprofit contributions.

Furthermore, as the County adds acreage to the Parks System and general open space holdings, the County will need to focus it's attention toward the stewardship of these parcels. Continued upkeep of the parks is necessary for the public to use, access and enjoy what they parks have to offer. Funding from the Open Space Trust Fund is divided between acquisition and stewardship and a balance must be sought to ensure that future acquisition needs are met while existing parks are maintained to the highest standards. Farmland preservation easements that are held by the county must also be monitored to ensure that the integrity of the program is guaranteed.

State Open Space Priorities

Several state agencies and offices are actively involved in planning, funding and managing State-owned parks and conservation lands. These include the Office of Green Acres, Division of Parks and Forestry, Division of Fish and Wildlife, and D&R Canal Commission. All of these entities reside within the Department of Environmental Protection.

Office of Green Acres

The Office of Green Acres directly purchases or assists in the purchase of open space. It provides grants and low interest loans to municipalities and counties for property or easement acquisition. It also administers a grant program for non-profit organizations.

In addition, the Office of Green Acres buys land on behalf of the Division of Parks and Forestry, Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Natural Lands Trust to incorporate into the State system.

The Office of Green Acres has established a series of preservation goals and priorities for future parks and open space throughout the State. To meet their goals, the Office seeks to accomplish a number of objectives, among them, the following:

- Create an interconnected system of public and private lands and greenways;
- Preserve large parcels to protect biodiversity, scenic landscapes and water supplies;
- Foster partnerships with public and private entities through cooperative projects, funding, planning and technical assistance;
- Support open space preservation and park development to assist in urban revitalization;
- Complement sustainable natural resource-based businesses;
- Provide accessible recreation, retain community character and historic landscapes and preserve important natural and historic resources;
- Increase efficiency and flexibility in the administrative process; and
- Implement open space policies consistent with the State Plan.

It is important to note that while the State Agriculture Development Committee and County Agriculture Development Boards have primary responsibility for farmland preservation, Green Acres also provides funding for farmland to preserve landscape character, connect existing open space parcels and provide trail linkages.

The Office of Green Acres has also identified geographic areas throughout New Jersey considered high priority for open space and recreation funding. Those including portions of Hunterdon County are:

- Highlands – This includes nearly one million acres in northern New Jersey, much of it forest land, farmland, and potable water supplies, including all or portions of 14 municipalities in Hunterdon County;
- Delaware River and Delaware and Raritan Canal Corridors – The goal is to protect scenic values, retain the river as a major flyway for migratory birds, broaden the width of public holdings, protect historic resources of the Delaware River, afford greater protection to resources adjacent to the Canal;
- Revolutionary War Landscape Corridors – Broad corridors of

open space will be secured to link Washington's Crossing on the Delaware River (in Mercer County) to Monmouth Battlefield and the Atlantic Coast, from Trenton to Morristown. This could involve a path through the Sourland Mountains in Hunterdon County, eventually connecting to the South Branch and/or Lamington Rivers.

Additionally, the Office of Green Acres has interest in several river corridors within Hunterdon County.

Office of Natural Lands Management; Division of Fish & Wildlife
The Office of Natural Lands Management (ONLM) resides within NJDEP's Division of Parks and Forestry. There are two projects of interest to Hunterdon County managed by ONLM. The first is the New Jersey Trails Plan.

The purpose of the New Jersey Trails Plan is to preserve and expand trails and provide a mechanism for creating State-designated trails. Such trails are not necessarily State-owned. They are managed and owned by other levels of government but receive a state designation if they meet certain management and maintenance standards. Such trails may receive higher priority for State funds in the future.

The New Jersey Trails System was created in 1974 by the New Jersey Trails System Act. At that time, the only existing trail receiving designation was the Appalachian Trail. Twenty-six trails and trail systems have been found eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion in the State Trails System. They include land-based trails and waterways. The Delaware River from Trenton to the border of New York State, the D&R Canal State Park, the Musconetcong River, and the South Branch of the Raritan River are among existing trails and waterways in the New Jersey Trails Plan deemed eligible or potentially eligible.

The second project of interest is called the Natural Heritage Priority Sites. ONLM maintains the Natural Heritage Database. This database identifies areas representing some of the best habitat for rare species and exemplary natural communities in New Jersey, referred to as Natural Heritage Priority Sites. These are considered top priorities for preservation of biological diversity. The Natural Heritage Priority Site database is available for use in public and private land protection efforts. ONLM updates maps as new information becomes available.

New Jersey hosts many Natural Heritage Priority Sites, 15 Sites of which occur in Hunterdon County.

The Landscape Project is a related but separate effort, managed by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The Landscape Project identifies critical wildlife habitats within large landscapes based on rare species locations as well as land cover classifications.

The project identifies five landscape

Figure 3.
This 213-acre property in West Amwell Township known as Goat Hill was preserved through a partnership between West Amwell Township and the Office of Green Acres. In addition to its woodland and spectacular river views, it is an important link within State-envisioned Crossroads of the American Revolution land preservation initiative. According to local legend, Washington stood on a rock atop the palisade to oversee preparations for the attack on Trenton during the Revolutionary War.

regions in New Jersey, including the Highlands and Piedmont in Hunterdon County. Within these broad regions, the project develops maps identifying critical rare species habitats. These maps assist programs like Green Acres, the State Farmland Preservation Program, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service's refuge system to prioritize parcels for future acquisition. Likewise, they are available to municipalities, counties and private organizations to locate important habitats and protect them as desired.

Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission

The Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission is coordinating with the Office of Green Acres and Division of Parks and Forestry to accomplish several important goals. The northernmost point of the Canal Park along the Delaware River Feeder Canal is located at Bulls Island. This is technically where the Canal begins. However, the Division of Parks and Forestry also maintains the towpath that continues north of Bulls Island, ending approximately two miles north of Frenchtown. Partial funding has

already been secured to extend the path all the way into Milford, through a combination of fee simple purchases and easements through private property.

In general, the Canal Commission follows three principles in identifying acquisition priorities. Priorities include:

- widening the Canal Park for enhancement as a recreation area and wildlife conservation area;
- creating large blocks of open space along the Canal Park at intervals - The Delaware River Bluffs, including land adjacent to the Delaware River extending to the high point, roughly 400' in elevation, is an example of this.
- creating linkages to other natural and historic sites in the region.

The extension to Milford is one example of a linkage. Others in Hunterdon County include the Lockatong Creek corridor, Wickecheoke Creek Corridor and Sourland Mountains (to connect to a greenway system in Somerset County through which the Main Canal passes).

Summary

County and State parkland priority areas are largely complementary. This should serve the Hunterdon County Park System well, as it pursues grants and partnerships to acquire additional properties.

Parkland and farmland preservation goals are not always compatible, depending on the types of recreational activities offered and their proximity to farm activities. Similarly, habitat protection goals on a park property can present crop management problems on the neighboring farm. However, examples of successful partnerships have already been demonstrated. Future opportunities will undoubtedly continue to avail themselves and will hopefully be pursued.

Figure 4.
Milford Bluffs in Holland Township, managed by the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust and The Nature Conservancy. The New Jersey Office of Natural Lands Management considers this the best natural red shale cliff community in New Jersey. Numerous State rare and endangered plant species are located on the cliff face and adjacent ravines. The Bluffs are also managed for rare grasslands birds.

Local farmland and open space preservation efforts have gained great momentum in recent years. Some municipalities rely strictly on their purchasing power while others complement purchase of land or easements with other tools. Municipalities with approved open space trust funds have prepared and adopted implementation plans.

The following is a brief summary of municipal projects and plans in the County:

Alexandria Township
In 1995, Alexandria Township voters approved an Open Space Trust Fund earmarked specifically for farmland preservation. The Township began imposing a levy in 1999. These funds were supplemented by approximately $73,000 appropriated through the budget process in 1998, coupled with a $3 million bond issue for farmland preservation approved in 1997 to begin the process of acquiring land and easements to preserve the rural nature of the township.

Bethlehem Township
Through its own Open Space Trust Fund, Bethlehem Township imposes an annual levy of five cents per $100 assessed valuation for farmland preservation, recreation, conservation and historic preservation.

The Township has adopted an important document that will guide open space preservation efforts in the Township for the foreseeable future. This is the Greenway and Open Space Plan.

The principle goal of the Greenway and Open Space Plan is the permanent preservation of open space to maintain rural character and preserve the Township's natural resources. To accomplish this, the Plan recommends that in the future, lands be preserved through two mechanisms: 1) acquisition and 2) the development review process.

Like several other communities in Hunterdon County, Bethlehem Township developed a ranking system to evaluate the merits of various properties for acquisition.

Bloomsbury
Bloomsbury Borough's Master Plan (1979) and Reexamination Report (1990) began to advocate the development of passive and active recreation areas throughout the Borough, including small neighborhood parks in new open space developments and affordable housing developments. The Borough also seeks to preserve environmentally sensitive areas such as flood plains and stream corridors and to create a greenway system along the Musconetcong River. According to its planning documents, this should be accomplished through zoning requirements and through coordination with the County.

Califon
In 2001, Califon Borough voters approved a ballot question calling for an annual levy of two cents per $100 assessed valuation for the purposes of buying and maintaining open space and for farmland preservation.

The Califon Borough Master Plan Update evaluates future park needs according to state and national standards. Based on New Jersey's standards, Califon lacks adequate municipal open space. However, the Master Plan notes that the County's Columbia Trail System helps to provide additional parkland. Similarly it notes the contribution of the local fire company's fairgrounds which supplement existing publicly owned open space in the Borough.

Clinton Town
The Town of Clinton is looking toward expanding its park and recreation amenities that are both adjacent to natural resources and within the compact developed areas of the Town. Past acquisition has been focused on the land surrounding the State owned Spruce Run Reservoir, the third largest reservoir in the state.

Clinton Township
Clinton Township voters approved an Open Space Trust Fund in 1994. Monies can be used for open space, farmland and recreational purposes.

Delaware Township
Delaware Township has successfully pursued a variety of avenues to preserve farmland and open space. The Township has preserved land through private bequests.

Since 1993, the Township has been

setting aside funds for open space and farmland preservation in its municipal budget. In 1996, Township voters approved an Open Space Trust Fund. Delaware Township began imposing the levy in 1999.

Long term goals include preservation of all prime agricultural soils and actively farmed land, and preservation of the most environmentally sensitive areas. Second priority is given to open space preservation for future recreational use.

East Amwell Township
Open space and farmland preservation have dominated East Amwell Township's planning agenda for many years. In 1988, voters approved a $2 million bond referendum – the Township's first stable source of funding for farmland preservation.

In 1998, Township voters approved a Farmland Preservation Trust Fund calling for up to four cents per hundred dollars of assessed value.

Flemington
Flemington Borough's Master Plan contains an inventory of existing parks and acknowledges a deficit in recreational facilities. It suggests that the deficit be addressed partly through joint ventures with Raritan Township, since Flemington lacks sufficient vacant land. The two communities already share in park maintenance and operation.

Franklin Township
In 1998, the Franklin Township Committee appointed an Open Space Advisory Committee charged with four tasks:

1) Inventory all land parcels at least 15 acres in size;
2) Develop criteria to identify high priority open space parcels;
3) Develop a program to inform residents of the benefits of preserving open space; and
4) Develop an open space and recreation plan.

The Plan was completed and approved by the Township Committee in 1999. Among its recommendations was a ballot question calling for an Open Space Trust Fund, in the amount of 5 cents per $100 of assessed value. The ballot question was approved in 1999. It permits funding for farmland preservation, conservation and recreation. In November of 2015, Franklin residents voted to amend its Open Space Tax uses to include historic preservation and Blue Acres acquisition.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan serves as a long range 20 to 50-year planning guide. Its ultimate goal is 4,891 acres of preserved open space for active and passive recreation and farmland, one third of the Township's land base. The Township has been very successful in its farmland preservation efforts.

Frenchtown
Frenchtown hopes to improve and expand its existing municipal park and acquire additional parkland along the Delaware River.

Glen Gardner
Glen Gardner's Master Plan addresses open space preservation through its Conservation Plan Element and its Recreation Plan Element. The Conservation Plan Element recommends the creation of a continuous network of open space along streams, steep slopes, scenic areas and critical environmental areas. It also recommends identifying suitable wildlife habitats through open space preservation.

Hampton
Hampton Borough owns a 10-acre property along the Musconetcong River developed as a park and picnic area. The Borough Master Plan recommends acquisition of several additional small parks or playgrounds.

High Bridge
The High Bridge Environmental Commission is focused on the creation of trail networks within the community as well as beautifying common areas and mini parks and open spaces within the Borough.

Holland
The Township Master Plan recommends improvements to outdoor recreational facilities but does not suggest specific acquisition priorities. It does, however, acknowledge the use of creative development techniques such as lot size averaging and compact development patterns to preserve farmland and environmentally sensitive areas.

Kingwood
Kingwood Township instituted an open space trust fund and began collecting funds in 1997.

Kingwood Township relies on an Agriculture Advisory Committee, Open Space Advisory Committee and Environmental Commission to make informed decisions on farmland and open space preservation in the township.

To help guide development the Environmental Commission divided the Township up into regions, each reflecting unique characteristics. These areas are: the Delaware River Bluffs; the Lockatong Creek watershed; the Wickecheoke Creek watershed; and two regions designated for farmland preservation.

Lambertville
In 2008, Lambertville voters approved a ballot question calling for an annual levy of two cents per $100 assessed valuation for the purposes of buying and maintaining open space.

Lambertville also seeks to secure additional open space and conservation land in part through its cluster ordinance.

Lebanon Borough
The Borough is open to reserving, acquiring or controlling lands along the South Branch of the Rockaway Creek that are subject to flooding.

Lebanon Township
In 2002, Lebanon Township voters approved a ballot question calling for an annual levy of two cents per $100 assessed valuation for the purposes of buying and maintaining open space and for farmland preservation.

Lebanon Township has an extensive system of parkland, mostly owned by the County and State. Public holdings, including municipal parkland, exceed 2,000 acres.

The Master Plan of Lebanon Township acknowledges the County Park System's goal of preserving additional lands – principally floodplain property and steep slopes - along the Musconetcong River and South Branch of the Raritan River.

Milford
Milford Borough's vision for future open space and park acquisitions is articulated in their Conservation Plan element and expands on the greenway concept so that open space corridors will include steep slopes and connect existing public and private preserved lands.

Raritan
In 1996, Raritan Township voters approved a ballot question calling for an annual levy of two cents per $100 assessed valuation for the purposes of buying and maintaining open space and for farmland preservation.

The Master Plan for Raritan Township evaluates parks and recreation needs in the Township and supports the creation of greenway corridors along flood plains and stream corridors to link environmentally sensitive areas and recreation lands.

The Township also established a series of goals and needs outlined as follows:

- farmland preservation
- stream corridor preservation
- corridors and linkages
- preservation of vistas
- watershed protection
- historic preservation
- active recreation, and
- passive recreation

Readington
Readington Township was the first community in Hunterdon County to hold an Open Space Referendum and has since lead the county in open space and farmland preservation. To accomplish this, the Township has utilized numerous techniques to preserve both farmland and open space through the State, Green Acres funding, partnerships with nonprofit organizations, and municipally-acquired easements.

Stockton
Much of Stockton Borough's riverfront property is owned by the State and maintained by the NJDEP Division of Parks and Forestry. The Stockton Borough Park abuts the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

Tewksbury
Tewksbury Township's Open Space Trust Fund was approved initially in 1997. Tewksbury Township prioritizes those parcels deemed of greatest benefit and importance to the community. The Township will partner with the Office of Green Acres and coordinate with nonprofit groups as well as neighboring communities where appropriate. It will also pursue conservation ease-

ments and encourage landowner participation in the State Farmland Preservation Program.

Union
Union Township approved an open space trust fund in 1998 to assist in achieving its land preservation goals. The trust fund collects two cents per $100 assessed valuation and can be used for acquisition and development or open space, conservation and farmland preservation.

Union Township's system of preserved land is extensive, covering over 4,000 acres. State lands, including Spruce Run Reservoir and Recreation Area, and Fish, Game and Wildlife properties comprise the vast majority of preserved land.

To supplement these properties the township recommends linking community facilities, neighborhoods, recreation areas, historic villages and open space by a system of multi-purpose trails, bicycle and pedestrian routes, and scenic corridors. It also recommends the creation of a continuous network of open space along streams, slopes, scenic areas and critical environmental areas.

West Amwell
In 1999, West Amwell Township residents approved the creation of an Open Space Trust Fund for open space, farmland, conservation, recreation, or historic preservation. The township initially collected two cents per $100 of assessed value. Subsequently, in 2001 voters approved four cents per $100 and in 2004 approved the current six cent per $100 tax.

The township envisioned a series of greenways along stream corridors and especially the Sourland ridge, linking existing parks, natural areas, trail systems, cultural resources and "nodes" of open space. The township also recognized the value of preserving our many large farms.

The Open Space program in West Amwell continues to be very active. Current preserved farmland and open space from all state, county, nonprofit and municipal programs covers approximately 6,000 acres.

Summary
Many Hunterdon County municipalities have participated in cooperative ventures with the County, State and nonprofit organizations in land preservation projects over the years. Such partnerships are critical to continued local successes.

Partnerships between municipalities are equally advantageous. The map of municipal preservation priorities reveals potential linkages that could result from joint initiatives between neighboring communities, particularly where it involves greenway and stream corridor preservation, and the connections they provide to other open space resources. Both local and regional benefits could result from heightened coordination between municipalities.

Figure 5. Forest ferns located on a property preserved in Tewksbury Township by New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

There are many organizations dedicated to land conservation and environmental protection in Hunterdon County. The goals of these nonprofit groups vary from international to local in scope. 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.

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).

Like many other non-profit 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.
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.

Hunterdon Land Trust
The Hunterdon Land Trust (HLT) incorporated and organized as a countywide land trust in 1996. The mission of HLT is to preserve the integrity of the rural landscape in Hunterdon County region by protecting and enhancing natural resources, and the cultural landscape of the historic Dvoor Farm, for public enjoyment and education. It aims to accomplish this through a variety of mechanisms. For example, HLT 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.

HLT's preservation efforts are focused in throughout Hunterdon County with an emphasis on the following project regions: Delaware River Scenic Corridor, Delaware River Tributaries, Musconetcong Highlands, North Branch Raritan River, South Branch Raritan River and the Sourland Mountain Region.

HLT also owns and stewards the historic Dvoor Farm which is an iconic property that reflects the historical and agricultural heritage of Hunterdon County.

New Jersey Natural Lands Trust
The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust (NLT) 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.

Future areas of interest for NLT 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

The New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) is a nonprofit organization that promotes conservation of land and natural resources. Since 1960, NJCF has preserved over 150,000 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.

For several years, NJCF focused much of its efforts along the Wickecheoke Creek in Delaware and Kingwood Townships. 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 bi-state area. Today, 2,000 miles of foot trails are maintained by various member organizations.

Tewksbury Land Trust

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.

The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was established in 1951 as a private, international nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving

Figure 6. Preserved farms in Delaware Township.

plants, animals and natural communities and
biodiversity. The New Jersey Chapter, chartered in 1988, has protected nearly 50,000 acres.

The Trust for Public Land
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.

Raritan Headwaters Association
The Raritan Headwaters Association (RHA) is a nonprofit organization that serves the 470-square-mile area that makes up the headwaters region of the Raritan River Basin. This includes Lebanon Borough and portions of Tewksbury Township, Clinton Township, Readington Township, and Califon Borough.

RHA was formed in 2011 when the South Branch Watershed Association (SBWA) and the Upper Raritan Watershed Association (URWA) merged to form one organization which would address water quality issues throughout the upper Raritan River Watershed. The activities and interests of the SBWA have been incorporated into the work of RHA. Among its many activities, RHA serves as a land trust, acquiring and holding properties in fee and conservation easements. While RHA focusses primarily on water quality, they continue to partner with other non-profits and governmental entities to help preserve environmentally significant open space.

Figure 7. Dvoor Farm, Raritan Township, preserved through a public-private partnership.

<u>Summary – Land Preservation Among Public and Private Bodies</u>
Over 50,000 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 non-profit organizations.

They are owned outright or preserved through easements or deed restrictions. In total, this comprises over 15 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.

Hunterdon County is fortunate given the high degree of preservation activity that is occurring. It is also fortunate in that so many of the organizations — both public and private — have years of experience and success in obtaining funding, negotiating with property owners, and creating partnerships with each other to leverage funding. This presents a tremendous opportunity – an opportunity for groups to work together, to cost-share, and thus to stretch their dollars in advancing common goals.

The trust fund is currently best utilized to supplement funding that is brought to the table by all the preservation partners active within the County through the various grant programs created and funded by the County's Open Space Trust Fund. It is also instrumental in the stewardship of the lands that are acquired through its use. With the proper care and attention, the public's utilization of the open space and parks system is greatly enhanced.

With the continued support of Hunterdon County residents, the County can make great advances toward achieving its preservation goals.

This chapter offers goals and recommendations to guide the Board of Chosen Freeholders in its annual and long-range budget and program decisions.

Goal: ***Continue to support the farmland preservation program administered by the County Agriculture Development Board.***

The Farmland Preservation Program represents perhaps the most successful preservation program in Hunterdon County. Development rights, or easements, are far less costly than lands purchased in fee. Furthermore, local and County contributions are modest for the return that the program is able to provide. The State absorbs the lion's share of the purchase price, which is indexed according to easement values and averages about 60 percent per acquisition.

There are additional reasons to aggressively support the Farmland Preservation Program. Paramount is the ability to capitalize on the State funding available to preserve large, relatively contiguous masses of farmland.

Second, this program not only requires a relatively modest outlay of funding from the County (and municipality) compared to other State-supported preservation programs, but also it retains the land on the tax rolls. It is true that the County has the responsibility for monitoring most preserved farms to ensure that the easement restrictions are upheld. However, unlike developed parkland, there are no operation and maintenance requirements.

Third, prime farmland is perhaps the most vulnerable resource in the

County. Generally, prime farmland soils are particularly well-suited for development. As development pressures mount, this resource will be increasingly at risk.

Finally, County residents have voiced ongoing support for farmland preservation for years. The Freeholder Board should respond accordingly, by continuing to contribute its local cost-share for the purchase of development rights.

Recommendation: ***Allocate the available funding to appropriately match the funding levels available from preservation partners.***

The farmland preservation programs have been largely successful in Hunterdon County as a result of leveraging funds from multiple sources; be that from the state through the SADC, municipality, nonprofits, or through the federal preservation programs. The County should assess our funding levels through the Open Space Trust Fund to ensure that all available matching funds are leveraged appropriately toward the overall preservation goals of the County.

In addition, numerous municipalities and nonprofit organizations are able to make use of funding sources that the County does not have access to. Using grant funds from the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund to supplement outside sources allows the Trust Fund to have a greater effect than it would otherwise. The State Green Acres program has been instrumental in the preservation of a large portion of the open space in the county.

Goal: ***Support the continued expansion of the County Park System by seeking not only Green Acres funding for future acquisitions, but also municipal contributions, nonprofit support, and/or other potential sources.***

Some County parks have been acquired through a combination of funding sources, however County funds are also stretched much further as the County partners with municipalities and/or nonprofit organizations.

In those instances, the properties in question advance the goals of all parties involved. Therefore, each participant agrees to share in the acquisition and/or maintenance responsibilities.

The County Park System should continue to view future park acquisitions in much the same way that the Farmland Preservation Program functions. By sharing resources with other entities having common preservation goals, the County will be able to stretch its dollars further.

Recommendation: ***Allocation of available funding among the numerous recommended Open Space Trust Fund programs should be determined on an annual basis to meet the funding needs of each program and use.***

The County Open Space Trust Fund permits the Freeholder Board to raise up to three cents per $100 of total equalized real property valuation on an annual basis. The Board of Chosen Freeholders has elected to establish a predetermined percentage allocation of the trust fund to be distributed among the various programs supported by the trust fund on an annual basis.

Annual determinations provide the Board greater flexibility to respond to unanticipated needs in any particular year and to shift funding around accordingly to address such needs and to provide cost-sharing opportunities for many interested parties.

Funding for the Park System and for the Farmland Preservation Program should be determined annually. It should be based on budget requests, projected needs, and a demonstration that the requests complement and advance the County's vision and goals for open space, parkland and farmland preservation contained in the Farmland Preservation Plan, the Parks and Open Space Plan and the Open Space Trust Fund Plan.

To ensure a stable and reliable source of funding for Farmland Preservation, the Cooperative Assistance Grant Program, the Nonprofit Grant Program, County Open Space initiatives, Historic Preservation, and the Municipal Grant Program, the Freeholder Board allocates a certain percentage of the Trust Fund annually toward each. With regard to the Municipal Grants Program, a set percentage of each municipality's annual contribution toward the County Open Space Trust Fund has historically been allocated for local use.

Any change to the annual percent allocation would require at least one public hearing identifying the distribution of monies governing the County Open Space Trust Fund.

In addition to acquisition of farmland, open space or parkland, according to the last ballot question, the municipal and County allocations also may be used to "develop, improve and maintain county and municipal lands for recreation and conservation purposes." Once property is acquired, proper attention and care must be given towards stewardship to protect the natural environment and the public's use of the land.

Goal: ***Continue the support of non-profit organizations pursuing land preservation projects that are consistent or dovetail with the County's parkland, open space and farmland preservation goals.***

Hunterdon County has entered into many successful partnership arrangements with non-profit land conservation organizations that have requested County support on specific land preservation projects. This they have done after thorough review of the project's merits and feasibility, on a case by case basis. There are several non-profit organi-

zations, active in Hunterdon County, with demonstrated capabilities in packaging and facilitating acquisitions.
The benefits of entering joint funding arrangements can be significant. Non-profit organizations typically secure funding from a variety of sources on a given project. This reduces the amount that any single participating partner must provide. Furthermore, ownership and maintenance responsibility may be transferred to the lead non-profit organization or another participating partner organization.

These arrangements help the County to fulfill its goals more effectively by spreading limited resources among many more project areas, while relieving it of long-term management costs. Furthermore, for projects where the non-profit organization wishes to deed the property to the County, the County may be able to expand the Parks System at a considerable discount.

Given the numerous potential leveraging opportunities that exist or may avail themselves to the Park System, the Freeholder Board's future funding decisions should take into consideration whether other partners and funding programs are utilized to acquire additional property.

Recommendation: ***Continue to encourage non-profit open space preservation activity within the county as a way to leverage funds for the preservation of natural resources.***
Non-profit organizations are in a unique position; they have the ability to pull together funding from a variety of sources, both public and private that the County cannot access. Non-profit organizations utilize these funds to complete preservation projects that protect the County's natural resources, in addition to providing new recreational opportunities. This makes these organizations ideal preservation partners.

The County's Non-Profit Grant Program helps support the efforts of the organizations that are active within the county and provides a stable source of funds. The continuation of this grant program affords the organizations the consistency that is needed in order to plan for future expenditures and projects.

Goal: ***Support the county's economic growth through open space initiatives.***

Open space and recreational opportunities are essential parts of the overall economic health of the county. The Open Space Trust Fund can aid in funding open space purchases and improvement initiatives that will draw people to Hunterdon County to enjoy our open spaces for recreation or in choosing to make Hunterdon County their home.

Economic growth can be supported in a number of ways. The County can look at future open space and

recreational needs and make strategic choices about where open space purchases and recreational development should occur to better meet the needs of its residents and visitors alike. In addition, the County can help our preservation partners achieve goals that are also aide economic growth by providing grant opportunities for open space initiatives.

Recommendation: ***Support the open space and recreation action items discussed and outlined in farmland, parks and open space planning documents.***

Hunterdon County has many planning documents that are designed to foster the preservation efforts of the county with a well balanced but nuanced perspective. The County Parks & Open Space Plan, as well as the County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan provide a researched framework of goals and objectives that will lead the county toward an improved future.

Open space and recreation play a large role in the community of Hunterdon County and contribute to the community in many ways. The various plans provide the backbone for initiatives that the County and municipalities can take to enhance open space and farmland preservation programs and allow the county to make the best use of the Open Space Trust Fund.

Enjoying the rural nature of the county is a pastime shared by Hunterdon County residents and visitors alike. Proper planning, and adherence to those plans are essential to maintaining the county's character while aiding in the county's economic growth.

Goal: ***Strengthen open space and parks planning through interdepartmental coordination and shared services management.***

The Hunterdon County Planning Board is equipped with a myriad of resources and capabilities critical to open space and parks planning and to farmland preservation. Its resources should be shared among the various boards and departments responsible for related planning programs.

One of many tools available to the Planning Board is a computer-based tool known as Geographic Information Systems (GIS). GIS is a powerful planning tool because it allows spatial data such as wetlands, soils, geology, slopes, and land use to be visually displayed, interrelated, and mathematically analyzed. GIS can assist with short-term land use decisions as well as long-term master planning issues.

Data maintained by the County Division of GIS provides valuable information used for the analysis of potential farmland preservation and open space decisions.

Future open space and parks planning initiatives may benefit from increased coordination between the Planning Department, the Parks Division and the Division of GIS.

Recommendation: ***County departments responsible for County Open Space and Parks programs should convene periodically to review program needs and issues, and to offer recommended changes to the Freeholder Board as necessary. Create and maintain systems for data sharing among all government and private entities engaged in open space and farmland preservation planning.***

The County has several programs and administrative procedures that are administered and funded through the Open Space Trust Fund. The continued success of these programs will only be assured by fine-tuning the administrative practices and procedures used.

The Freeholder Board should stay apprised of progress and issues as the trust fund programs are utilized.

To provide necessary guidance and input, it is recommended that the departments involved in the use of the trust fund, either by administering the grant programs or through the use of its funding, convene annually to review and discuss respective financial and administrative issues, accomplishments, and anticipated future program needs or modifications.

Those involved should include representatives from the Hunterdon County Planning Board, Hunterdon County Park System, Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board, Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee, Cultural and Heritage Commission, and Hunterdon County Public Works Department, as well as county administrative staff. Findings and recommendations should be conveyed through an annual status report prepared by the Planning Board and submitted to the Freeholder Board.

Coordination should also come from the County's Shared Services Advisory Committee; a group that contains various county departments capable for providing assistance , either interdepartmentally or to municipalities.

Over three dozen organizations – both public and private –are actively involved in open space and farmland preservation within Hunterdon County. They own and/or manage preserved land and target future possible acquisitions. The ability to share such information can be extremely valuable for all such players. They can utilize these resources to prioritize potential future acquisitions and identify possible partners with which to pursue future projects. It is recommended that the Planning Board continue to serve as the clearinghouse on land preservation plans, properties and priorities in Hunterdon County.

Goal: ***Determine the overall preservation goals of the county and develop a long term strategy to address stewardship.***

Since its inception, the County Open Space Trust Fund has been utilized solely for the preservation of

open space, farmland and historic properties; however as more properties and easements are acquired, stewardship responsibilities also increase. Just as future acquisitions should be planned for, so should the role of stewardship so that a proper balance between acquisition and stewardship is achieved.

As responsible stewards of the land the County will develop a Strategic Parks and Open Space Plan to not only determine how best to prioritize expenditures in terms of acquisition, but also how best to keep the lands in optimal health for all to enjoy. The Open Space Recreation Development and Maintenance Plan, contained within this document, offers a baseline for such policies and recommendations for County owned facilities and properties.

Recommendation: ***Complete and adopt a Strategic Parks and Open Space Plan to solidify the County's direction in regards to total open space spending and to provide a structure for implementation.***

An overall analysis of the open space and recreational opportunities location within Hunterdon County will allow for the identification of areas that preservation should be focused as well as provide a breakdown of where the open space and recreational needs of the county residents are not being met.

An implementation schedule and funding examination will give the Board of Chosen Freeholders the tools necessary to make decisions regarding potential purchases, improvements and general funding levels of both county spending of the Open Space Trust and the grant programs funded through it.

As part of this funding examination, stewardship responsibilities must be factored in. It is recommended that a small separate allocation, under the County's Open Space Trust Fund apportionment, be dedicated solely to county stewardship projects. This would ensure adequate funding, planning, and predictability for the County's stewardship activity as is present for the grant programs funded by the Open Space Trust Fund.

Historic Preservation Plan

Preface

The Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund is an opportunity for Hunterdon County to further its contribution towards the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction of historic sites within the county. The expenditures of Trust Fund monies, however, must be planned wisely and efficiently so that the Hunterdon County program complements other historic preservation programs and maximizes the use of limited funding. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to have a general understanding of the history of Hunterdon County, historic preservation programs within the County, and the organizations that administer these programs. Recommendations for the expenditure of tax monies follow this background discussion.

Introduction

Historic preservation may be described as the planned comprehensive effort to help protect properties, buildings, structures, facilities, sites, areas and objects of historic importance, including setting priorities for accomplishing preservation activities. In the United States, historic preservation began with the Antiquities Act of 1906 that permitted the *designation* of national monuments and the preservation of archaeological sites. In 1935, the National Historic Sites Act permitted the *acquisition* of these national monuments or lands by the federal government.

Over the next couple of decades, a few state and city historic regulations followed; however, these were the exception and not the rule. Historic preservation was not widely embraced yet by the public. Urban renewal projects replaced entire neighborhoods with towering build-

Figure 8. The Hunterdon County Historic Courthouse was built in 1828 and is located in downtown Flemington Borough.

ings, razing many historically significant homes and commercial buildings. The general state of mind was "new is better".

The popularity of the urban renewal programs soon waned and was replaced by a surging interest in environmental policy – which included historic preservation. In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act was signed into law and fostered new and renewed interest in historic preservation.

The 1966 Act created the National Register of Historic Places, which offered the protection of privately owned historic buildings and properties from federal government actions. It created National Register criteria to evaluate buildings for inclusion on the Register and established a review process for public projects that involved the encroachment or razing of registered properties. It also permitted States to set up a similar process that protected registered properties from municipal, county and state encroachments. New Jersey created its State Register of Historic Places in 1970.

In addition to these state and federal programs, municipalities in New Jersey were given express authority to regulate private encroachments on designated historic properties. In 1985, the NJ Municipal Land Use Law affirmed the ability of local governments to zone for the protection of historic resources. The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) amendments in 1992 outlined a specific planning process regarding the creation of local historic districts and the review of development activity within the districts. Clearly, with the passage of such important national and state legislation, the concept of historic preservation is deemed to be a legitimate and desirable public program.

Why Historic Preservation?

Historic preservation has gained the interest of both the public and private sectors for its cultural and tangible benefits. Historic buildings and properties are preserved to protect important historic events and architecture. This cultural benefit is important for historical documentation, visual and aesthetic character, and its contribution to future generations. For these reasons, historic preservation spurs a degree of civic pride and appreciation of local history.

Historic preservation also offers tangible benefits. The most obvious is the mere existence of the old structures – and the sense of permanence and community they provide. Recently, it has become apparent that the rehabilitation of a historic structure often increases not only the value of the property, but also the value of neighboring properties as well. As entire neighborhoods and downtowns have become involved in historic preservation efforts, their visually appealing landscape has spurred local tourism. Referred to as "heritage tourism", this new economic strategy is a welcome relief for Main Street

America whose demise began as early as the 1970s.

Studies throughout the nation are revealing that historic preservation is an economic asset not only for suffering downtown areas, but for all communities. In 1997, a Rutgers University study, authorized by the Governor's Task Force on History, reported that historic preservation - the rehabilitation of historic structures, objects and properties - has far reaching economic benefits to local communities and the State of New Jersey. It produces jobs, fosters heritage tourism, spurs reinvestment, increases tax revenue, and provides business income.

Historic Preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures also has the added benefit of reducing consumption and the related waste of new construction. More resources are consumed to create building materials and get them to the job site than typical adaptive reuse or through the preservation of existing buildings. New construction also sends debris to the landfill from leftover building material and/or from prior demolition to make space for new.

Historic Preservation in Hunterdon County: The Players

Historic preservation is most successful when it is a collaborative effort of public and private organizations. The most effective program includes:

- the protection of historic structures and objects from public and private encroachments;
- the study of historic events and structures, information sharing, and public outreach programs; and
- the restoration, rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse of historic structures and objects.

The following organizations are major players involved in historic preservation in Hunterdon County. This is not an exhaustive list.

Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission

The Cultural & Heritage Commission is appointed by the County Board of Chosen Freeholders and is responsible for promoting and developing local arts, cultural and historic programs. The Commission offers small grants to non-profit organizations for cultural and historic programs and projects.

Municipal Historic Preservation Commissions

Municipal historic commissions are created pursuant to enabling legislation in the Municipal Land Use

Figure 9. The Doric House was built in 1845 and is now the headquarters for the Hunterdon County Historical Society.

Law. Commissions are responsible for reviewing development activity within a designated historic district. Permitted activities within these designated sites or districts vary and are restricted in accordance with the ordinance.

Typically, local ordinances require that new development be compatible with historic structures by incorporating specific architectural and design elements into the new construction. The removal or destruction of historic structural or design elements of a building may also be restricted. There are several municipal historic commissions in Hunterdon County that operate pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law.

Municipal Historian
A municipality may appoint a person(s) to be the Local Historian, pursuant to the Local Historians Enabling Act of 1979. This volunteer position is responsible for acquiring and documenting information regarding local history. The Local Historian works cooperatively with other historic organizations and assists in the preparation of grant in aid applications. There are approximately 15 designated municipal historians in Hunterdon County and one volunteer County Historian.

Various Non-Profit Organizations
There are numerous non-profit groups that are active within the county working toward the express goal of preserving Hunterdon County's historical heritage.

Historical Societies and Museum Associations
Historical societies and museum associations are nonprofit organizations that have historic preservation work programs tailored to the needs of their community or museum. As nonprofit organizations, they may apply for grants for historic preservation projects. They typically sponsor fundraising activities to promote preservation projects and host seminars and presentations for the general public.

The Hunterdon County Historical Society has a large membership and is located in the 19th century Greek Revival Doric House in Flemington. The Society hosts regular activities, publishes a quarterly newsletter and has a library open to the public on a weekly basis for genealogical and local history research. Other historical organizations include the Hunterdon County Museum Association in the Town of Clinton.

Hunterdon County Planning Board
The Hunterdon County Planning Board is a repository for local historic preservation ordinances and maintains a current inventory of districts and structures listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The Board has a small library of historic preservation sources that may be circulated upon request. The Board also assists the County Board of Chosen Freeholders in the preparation of state and federal grants for historic preservation projects.

NJ Historic Preservation Office
The New Jersey Historic Preservation Office is in the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry. The Office reviews development activity that encroaches on State and Nationally Registered properties and reviews nominations for new registered properties. It reports its findings to the NJ Historic Sites Council and the NJ State Review Board for Historic Sites, respectively.

In New Jersey, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) is the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The SHPO gives final authorization for new State registered districts or structures and project authorization for encroachments upon New Jersey registered properties.

NJ Historical Commission
The NJ Historical Commission promotes historic research and education projects through information-sharing and grant programs. Commission members are appointed by the Governor. Four different grants programs are offered ranging from mini-grants (< $3,000) to larger research, general operating support and special project grants.

NJ Historic Trust
The NJ Historic Trust was created in 1967 by State law as a non-profit historic preservation organization. Trustees are appointed by the Governor. The Trust provides support and protection of historic New Jersey resources through several programs.

The NJ Historic Trust holds a Historic

Figure 10.

The County's Wescott Preserve is located in an area known for Lenni Lenape Indian settlements.

Preservation Revolving Loan Fund that requires matching funds and an easement program that ensures the permanent protection of private properties through deed restrictions.

The New Jersey Historic Trust is authorized by the Cultural Trust Act to make capital facilities grant award recommendations for funding by the New Jersey Cultural Trust. The Cultural Trust provides grants to support capital projects, endowments and institutional and financial stabilization of arts, history and humanities organizations in New Jersey. Funding for the grants comes from interest earned on the Cultural Trust Fund, which is a permanent investment fund.

What is historic in Hunterdon County?

Hunterdon County has a history steeped in American Indian settlements and traditional non-Indian agrarian life. Prehistoric indigenous people settled in Hunterdon County nearly 10,000 years ago and remained until the early 1700s when they were driven out of the County into other areas.

The earliest non-indigenous settlements occurred about 1700. Although many changes have occurred in Hunterdon County's landscape over the past 300 years, there is still plenty of evidence of rural heritage. The villages and small towns that flourished in the last half of the 19th century have remained virtually the same and many of the older farmsteads in the countryside still exist. Below is a brief overview of Hunterdon County's historic periods.

Paleo-Indian Period

Hunterdon County's earliest historic period dates back 10,000 years with Native American Indians, referred to as the Paleo-Indian period. Evidence of Lenni Lenape people may be found in existing archaeological sites in the County. In an archaeological site along Route 29 in Kingwood Township, a 1996-1997 dig revealed over 3,000 prehistoric American Indian objects, dating back at least 8,000 years. These indigenous people remained in Hunterdon County until the early 1700s when most of their land was acquired by European settlers and the American Indians were relocated to other areas.

Early Agrarian

The earliest settlers of European descent came to Hunterdon County around 1700 from the Netherlands, Germany, Scotland, England, Ireland, and other parts of New York and New Jersey. Woodlands were cleared and tilled and farmers planted a variety of crops and vegetables to be self-sufficient. Sawmills and gristmills were built along streams to create lumber for homes.

During the early 1700s, the majority of industries catered to the needs of the agricultural economy. By the time of the Revolution, successful mining operations in the County provided ammunition for the war and iron for tools and machinery. Before the 18th century, Hunterdon County was known for its fertile soils and the abundance of streams. In 1790, the County had

the highest population in the State of New Jersey. Of course, the County was also a very large land area at this time – consisting of portions of what are now other adjoining counties.

Late Agrarian and Industrialization
By 1852, railroad lines had been completed in Hunterdon County, connecting County farmers to markets throughout the East. This was a boon for Hunterdon County agriculture and advanced the fruit tree markets and later, eggs, poultry and dairy. Farmers also transported their goods locally. Streams and rivers were used for grist mills and products were carried to and from the mills across locally constructed stone arch bridges and, later, metal truss bridges.

Local merchants and artisans became less specialized during this time period and worked in general stores, notion stores and hardware stores in hamlets and villages. As farmers started to specialize to respond to local markets, new industries sprang up providing for home furnishings, clothing and tools. Iron manufacturers were important for tools and bridge building. New homes were constructed for industry owners, merchants and factory workers – mostly in the larger towns and Lambertville, the County's only "city".

Modern
While agriculture dominated the County in the 19th century, the more sophisticated tools and machines of the early 20th century improved the conditions of farming. During the first half of the 20th century, agriculture in Hunterdon County was at its best. Other industries did equally well, such as Lambertville's rubber factory, local mining operations and the several ceramics and pottery plants. But the iron industry declined significantly.

By the late 20th century, virtually all of the County's industries were gone and replaced with office and retail development. The last quarter of the 20th century also saw a dramatic change in agriculture with its loss of full time farm operations due to the marked increase in land values and the competition from large farm operations in other states.

Grants for Historic Preservation in Hunterdon County
The Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund may be used for the "preservation of historic structures, properties, facilities, sites, areas or objects." Since the Trust Fund accrues a limited amount each year, the expenditure of these funds must be carefully considered. As such, the County has developed two ways the Open Space Trust Fund may be utilized to preserve the history of Hunterdon County.

The first, a Historic Preservation Grant Program has been developed to specifically make historic preservation funds from the Trust Fund available to municipalities and charitable conservancies. The Grant Program also contains a review structure to ensure the expedient

and fair assessment of applications. Five percent of the collected open space tax is allocated annually to historic purposes. Seventy percent of those funds are then allocated specifically to the Historic Preservation Grant Program. This Program is exclusive for the preservation, rehabilitation, restoration or reconstruction of historic sites.

The second, the Municipal Grant Program has been designed to allow municipalities to apply for the use of municipal grant funding from the Open Space Trust toward municipally owned historic properties

The County Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee (POSAC) and Cultural & Heritage Commission are charged with the responsibility to review and evaluate all applications for the use of County Open Space Trust funds for historic preservation purposes and to make recommendations to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for approval of funds. All application requests shall be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the criteria established by the Cultural and Heritage Commission. These standards are appended to the Historic Preservation Grant Program Application located in the Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Program Procedures Manual.

The following minimum criteria ensure that the properties are "historic" in accordance with commonly accepted standards and that the expenditure of County tax monies is an efficient and appropriate use of public dollars. These criteria are meant to cover the County's expenditure of Trust Fund dollars allocated toward historic projects as well as those funds allocated to the Historic Preservation Grant Program.

All twenty-six (26) Municipalities in Hunterdon County and qualifying "Charitable Conservancies" are eligible to apply for Historic Preservation Grant Funds.

Historic properties that may be considered for the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund must be listed, eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While the definition of "historic" can vary, by using the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places, the County places itself on a level playing ground with other public programs that use the same criteria. "Potentially eligible" means that based on the information available, it is the opinion of the Hunterdon County Cultural & Heritage Commission that the property meets the criteria.

Projects that are unlikely to be funded entirely through any other source, including other County budgets, should be given priority. County-owned historic properties *may* be eligible for funds other than the County Open Space Trust Fund. For example, County historic bridge projects have been funded through the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA). This legislation has

been replaced with the Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA-21), which also funds historic preservation projects. It is important to take advantage of these grants and utilize County tax funds for projects that would otherwise not be eligible for funding.

Projects that may leverage monies from other programs, i.e. matching grants, should be given priority. State and federal grant programs often require local matching funds for historic preservation projects. For example, the Hunterdon County Courthouse was renovated with matching grants from the NJ Historic Trust Fund. Other smaller projects may also leverage State or federal monies and should be given priority consideration.

The Tax should only be used to replace or repair structural elements that contribute to the historical significance of the property. As an example, the repair of 19th century windows on a historic building would be an eligible project, whereas the replacement of a 30 year old shingle roof - on an equally historic building - would not be eligible.

The Tax should not be used for the renovation or replacement of an entire building or structure. Due to limited monies available for this program, costly renovation or replacement projects should only be considered if matching grants are available or the award is deemed appropriate given the amount of applicants in that given year.

Additional details regarding the Historic Preservation Grant Program project limitations and cost shall be found in the Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Program Procedures Manual.

Recommended Procedures for County-owned Historic Structures, Properties, Facilities, Sites, Areas or Objects

Working with data provided by both the Division of Facilities and the Department of Planning, the Cultural & Heritage Commission should maintain an inventory of historical structures potentially eligible, or already listed on the National Register of Historic Places that are County owned. The list should be reviewed by the Commission annually and, after soliciting and considering comments from the County Park System, submit a list of structures to be funded by the Open Space Trust Fund to the Board of Chosen Freeholders in advance of their budgetary planning. The Freeholder Board should consider the Commission's recommendations in their budgeting process. If there are no projects proposed in any particular year, funding can be diverted to any of the other programs eligible to receive Trust funds.

To assure that the list is kept up-to-date, the Commission should program regular data exchanges from the Facilities Division and Planning Department.

Hunterdon County Historic Structures

Below are the major categories of County structures that might be considered for funding.

Farmhouses and Farm Buildings
Through its land acquisition program, the Hunterdon County Parks System has acquired several farms with farmhouses, barns and other outbuildings. The farmhouses and farm buildings may be historically significant individually or as they contribute to the traditional farm setting. While most of the farmhouses have undergone significant modern renovations, many of the barns have retained their historic integrity.

Wooden barns in Hunterdon County – as well as most other suburbanizing areas – are becoming scarce. With today's agriculture, the old wooden barn is being replaced by modern metal structures that are resistant to fire and are large enough to accommodate a variety of equipment and products.

Barns are of historic interest because they are a mark of individuality and handcraftsmanship. They were constructed of local materials and designed specifically for the farmer's needs – reflecting the topography of the land, the climate, the economic conditions and the actual use of the land. As farming has changed over the last 100 years – so has the appreciation for these old structures and their place in the County's agrarian history.

Public Buildings
Flemington has been the County seat since 1790. Still owned and maintained by the County are several important historic structures, including the Hunterdon County Courthouse and Jail, the Choir School, the Southard Building, the Hall of Records, and the Democrat building. These buildings are all located in the downtown section of Flemington, which is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and are located within a locally designed historic district. Other County-owned buildings are located in Raritan Township and on various parkland throughout the County.

Bridges
Hunterdon County has a wealth of historic bridges, presumably due to the number of stream crossings, the success of agriculture, and the materials available to construct the bridges. Over several dozen metal truss bridges, mostly from the 19th century, have been determined by the NJ Historic Preservation Office to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, there are over 100 extant stone arch bridges in the County, the largest concentration of stone arch bridges in the entire country – according to a bridge preservation consultant. Many of these stone arch bridges have been deemed either eligible or potentially eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Introduction

In 2009, the voters of Hunterdon County approved a ballot question that allowed collected open space funds to be used to "develop, improve and maintain" county and municipal lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes. In order to utilize Open Space Trust funding to develop and maintain open space lands, state statute requires the completion of an Open Space and Recreation Development and Maintenance Plan. As the County's open space acquisition program continues to meet key goals, the ability to utilize funds from the Open Space Trust Fund for stewardship of the open space and parks system can aid in better ecological management and improve the balance between often conflicting interests of public access and maintaining environmental quality.

While stewardship of the land is of utmost importance once open space or recreational lands have been acquired, it is also important to define the limits of those funds to insure a sensible methodology in its use as well as the compliance with statutory requirements and public law definitions. This plan allows for a informed, balanced approach to the expenditure of money within the County's Open Space Trust Fund and provides the guidance necessary to properly care for the County's open space and recreation lands.

The *Hunterdon County Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund Plan* was developed and adopted by the Hunterdon County Planning Board and approved by the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders in 2000. The *Trust Fund Plan* provides strategic guidelines and recommendations on the implementation of the Trust Fund program in Hunterdon County. Included within the *Trust Fund Plan* is the identification of key strategies to make best use of the limited resources of the Open Space Trust Fund.

What the *2000 Trust Fund Plan* did not include was the additional language in the 2009 ballot question that gave consideration to "develop, improve and maintain county and municipal lands for recreation and conservation purposes." Due to the evolving economic, cultural and environmental landscape of today's county, and to comply with state statutes, it is necessary to adopt and implement an *Open Space and Recreation Development and Maintenance Plan* to provide further

Figure 11. The pavilion sites at Deer Path Park provide great opportunities for the public to enjoy the open spaces of Hunterdon County.

Figure 12. The Columbia Trail is popular among hikers, bikers, and horseback riders as well as cross country skiing in the winter.

guidance on how the County effectuates the initiatives outlined in the ballot questions, supported by the plans approved by the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders and recognized by the voters.

It must be stressed, however, that the County also provides a portion of the Open Space Trust Fund to municipalities in the form of the Municipal Grant Program that maintains its own set of defined allowable and disallowable costs. The definitions and guidance contained within this plan is not to supersede or conflict with the established definitions or procedures of the Municipal Open Space Grant Program.

Objective

This Plan serves as a guideline and basis for the expenditure of Open Space Trust Fund money on developing, improving, and/or maintaining the County's open space and recreational lands in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.2.d.(b).

The meaning of develop, improve, and maintain shall include any improvement to or stewardship of land acquired for park, recreation or general open space preservation that is designed to expand and enhance the public's utilization for outdoor recreation and conservation purposes. This includes activities that are undertaken to ensure the ecological health of the environment.

In 2015, the New Jersey state legislature further addressed the definition of stewardship activity in numerous bills, namely the "Preserve New Jersey Act," that received overwhelming support. The definition is incorporated here, as taken directly from the Preserve New Jersey Act:

"Stewardship activity" means an activity, which may be beyond rou-

tine operations and maintenance, undertaken by the State, a local government unit, or qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization to repair, restore, or improve lands acquired or developed for recreation and conservation purposes or acquired for farmland preservation purposes for the purpose of enhancing or protecting those lands for recreation and conservation purposes or farmland preservation purposes.

Without limiting the above definition, examples of develop, improve and maintain projects may include:

- The development of public parks, playgrounds, trails, paths, and other recreational facilities including installation of fixed or semi-fixed equipment and structures on, or above ground that are designed to be incidental to the natural landscape and openness of the land.

- Maintain, repair or replace existing structures and other improvements necessary for the public's recreation and conservation use, access, and convenience.

- Engage in such soil and water conservation practices or activity as may be necessary providing: all activities protect the conservation values associated with the land included but not limited to removing vegetation that poses a health or safety hazard or to remove invasive plant species.

- Conservation practices such as meadow, woodland and watershed management activities shall be conducted in accordance with best management practices. From meadow and watershed activities, best management practices are those prescribed by the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service or Soil Conservation Service or the Rutgers Cooperative Extension. For woodland management activities, best management practices are activities that are conducted in accordance with a Forest Stewardship Plan prepared by a qualified forester approved by the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry.

Practices

The practices described and referenced herein shall apply to all of the County's open space and recreational lands that are maintained and managed by the County and are meant to establish a baseline of standards. The lands and facilities contained under the umbrella of the Open Space Trust and are maintained and managed by the County, either actively or passively, are identified by the Division of Parks and Recreation Services within the *County Park Areas and Facilities Guide*. Additional property may be identified in the County's Master Land Inventory and/or the County's Recreational and Open Space In-

ventory (ROSI). Future responsibilities may be added or agreed upon by the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders through recorded agreements to expand the County park system.

In 2007 the Board of Chosen Freeholders adopted the *Land Management at a Glance - 2007 Report,* prepared by the Hunterdon County Soil Conservation District, to serve as the County's land management practices manual. The manual identifies all the appropriate land management practices, and details land management plan examples for parcels in each of the specific categories mentioned in the plan. These categories allow for the utilization of certain practices appropriate or required to maintain the integrity of the individual parcels that are classified as such.
The practices and example land management plans outlined in this report remain as guidelines for how the County manages and maintains property. Please refer to the *Land Management at a Glance - 2007 Report* for more detail regarding the specific practices.

Additionally, *The Hunterdon County Park and Recreation Master Plan 2000* prepared by John Madden & Associates for the Board of Recreation Commissioners and accepted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders in 2000 serves as additional support for this plan as it also identifies and provides an overview of the parks system classification and defines the levels of public use sought and the management responsibilities needed. Future additions to the park system, planned or envisioned development, improvement, enhancement or maintenance initiatives for any one park or park area may use the above plans, in addition to other referenced guidance documents within this plan to ensure consistency with established practices and experienced staff recommendations.

While *The Hunterdon County Park and Recreation Master Plan 2000* was accepted by the Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Plan was never formally adopted as an element of the County's Growth Management Plan. The *2007 Hunterdon County Growth Management Plan*, adopted by the Planning Board and approved by Board of Chosen Freeholders in 2007, sets forth strategies in regards to the management of Open Space and Recreational lands owned and maintained by the

Figure 13. The pond at Echo Hill Park is used to introduce new boaters to the world of canoeing.

County and incorporates many of the fundamental points recognized and documented in the accepted *Park and Recreation Master Plan 2000*.

This *Open Space and Recreation Development and Maintenance Plan* is designed to dovetail with the aforementioned plans and act as a combined vision for the maintenance and management of the County's open space and recreational lands.

Hunterdon County strives to plan for the best management and care of natural ecosystems, as well as for the future needs of the public in regard to the use and utilization of open space and recreational lands. Individual projects and specific park development, improvement and maintenance plans may be devised, and the above referenced plans may be modified as needed as future public recreation and conservation uses dictate. County budgetary authorizations also play a factor in the balance of stewardship, development, improvement, and maintenance costs that the County must retain.

In 2015, the Board of Chosen Freeholders chose to combine the Parks Advisory Board and the Open Space Advisory Committee into the Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee (POSAC), tasking the newly combined committee with the administration of the County's Open Space Trust Fund Grant Programs as well as to review and make recommendations to the Board of Chosen Freeholders regarding County Parks operations and potential important, necessary, or desired development, improvement, or maintenance projects.

The POSAC may work with the Division of Parks, the Division of Land Use and Planning, or other agencies to make recommendations to the Board of Chosen Freeholders on individual projects, modifications or additions to existing plans, or the creation of new practices as the need arises. The Board of Chosen Freeholders may also take action to manage and maintain county lands as it sees appropriate within the confines of the Open Space Trust Fund.

Summary

The Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund is currently funded by a tax of $0.03 per $100.00 of assessed value. The *Park and Recreation Master Plan 2000* proposed various goals for land acquisition and capital improvements for major park projects to address challenges to the County Park System making use of this tax revenue through the Open Space Trust Fund. Historically, the majority of revenue has been solely focused on acquisition of land to bolster and expand the County's Park and Open Space inventory, in addition to providing grant opportunities to other agencies interested in preserving the open space and historical resources of the County. Much of the

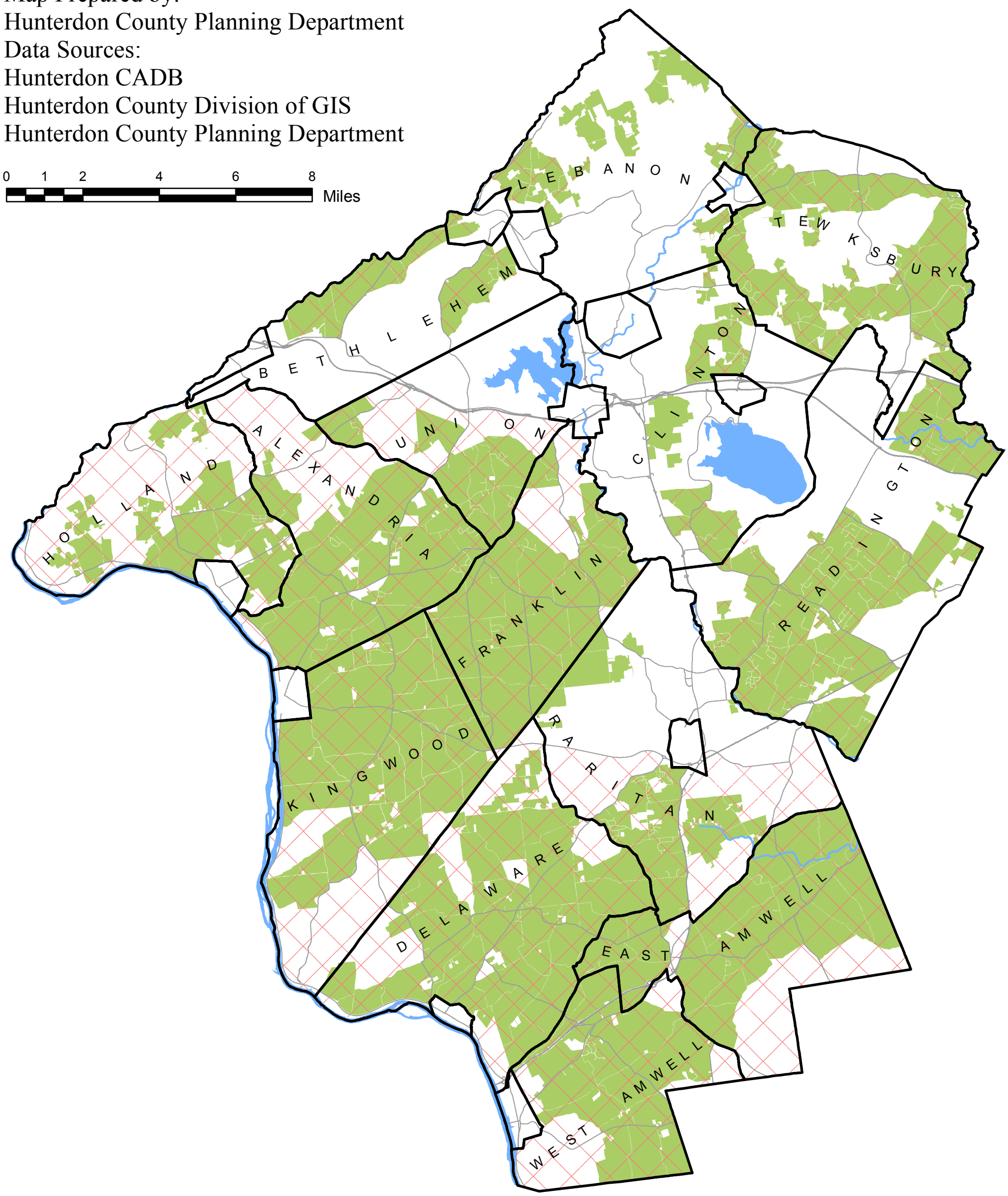
landscape of the County has changed since the *Park and Recreation Master Plan 2000* was developed, however many of the same concepts still apply.

As the County plans for its future Parks and Open Space system, it must continue to balance protection of environmentally sensitive areas and improvements designed to enhance the public's access and enjoyment of the parks. While acquisition remains the priority, county acquisitions will become more focused as land is added to the park system and these concepts become more important as the public seeks to get the most enjoyment out of the open space and recreational opportunities that it helped fund. The County has been very successful in the application of the Open Space Trust Fund for acquisition, but now must also plan for stewardship, improvement and maintenance. The Open Space Recreation Development and Maintenance Plan ensures a proper balance between acquisition, ecological management of the properties acquired and the public's use and enjoyment of the many open space resources the County has to offer.

Figure 14. The hiking trails at the Musconetcong Gorge Preserve feature beautiful vistas as they wind through a wide diversity of tree species.

Map 1
ADAs and Farmland Project Areas
Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:
Hunterdon County Planning Department
Data Sources:
Hunterdon CADB
Hunterdon County Division of GIS
Hunterdon County Planning Department

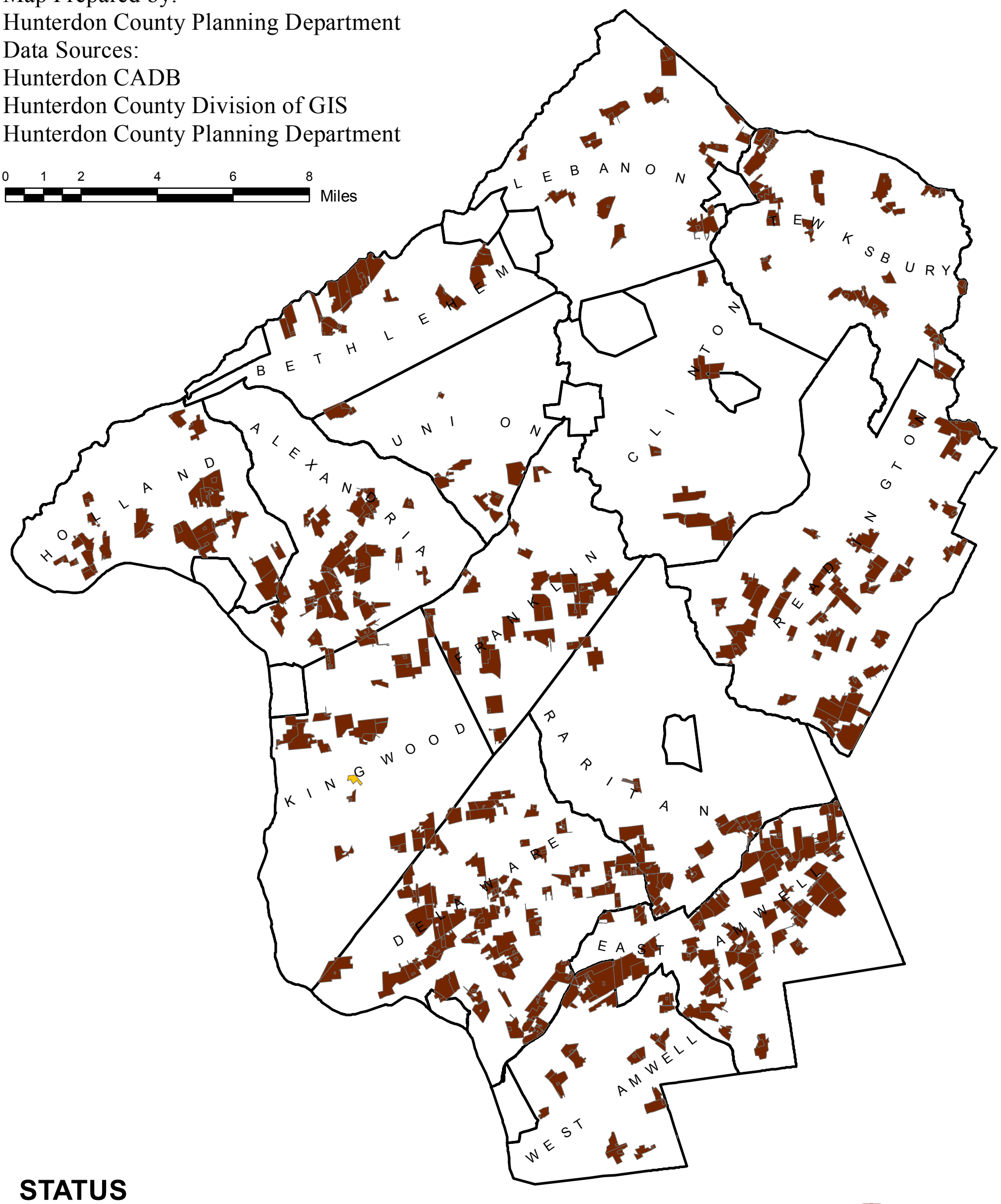


Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.

Map 2
Preserved Farms
Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:
Hunterdon County Planning Department
Data Sources:
Hunterdon CADB
Hunterdon County Division of GIS
Hunterdon County Planning Department

0 1 2 4 6 8
Miles



STATUS

8 YEAR

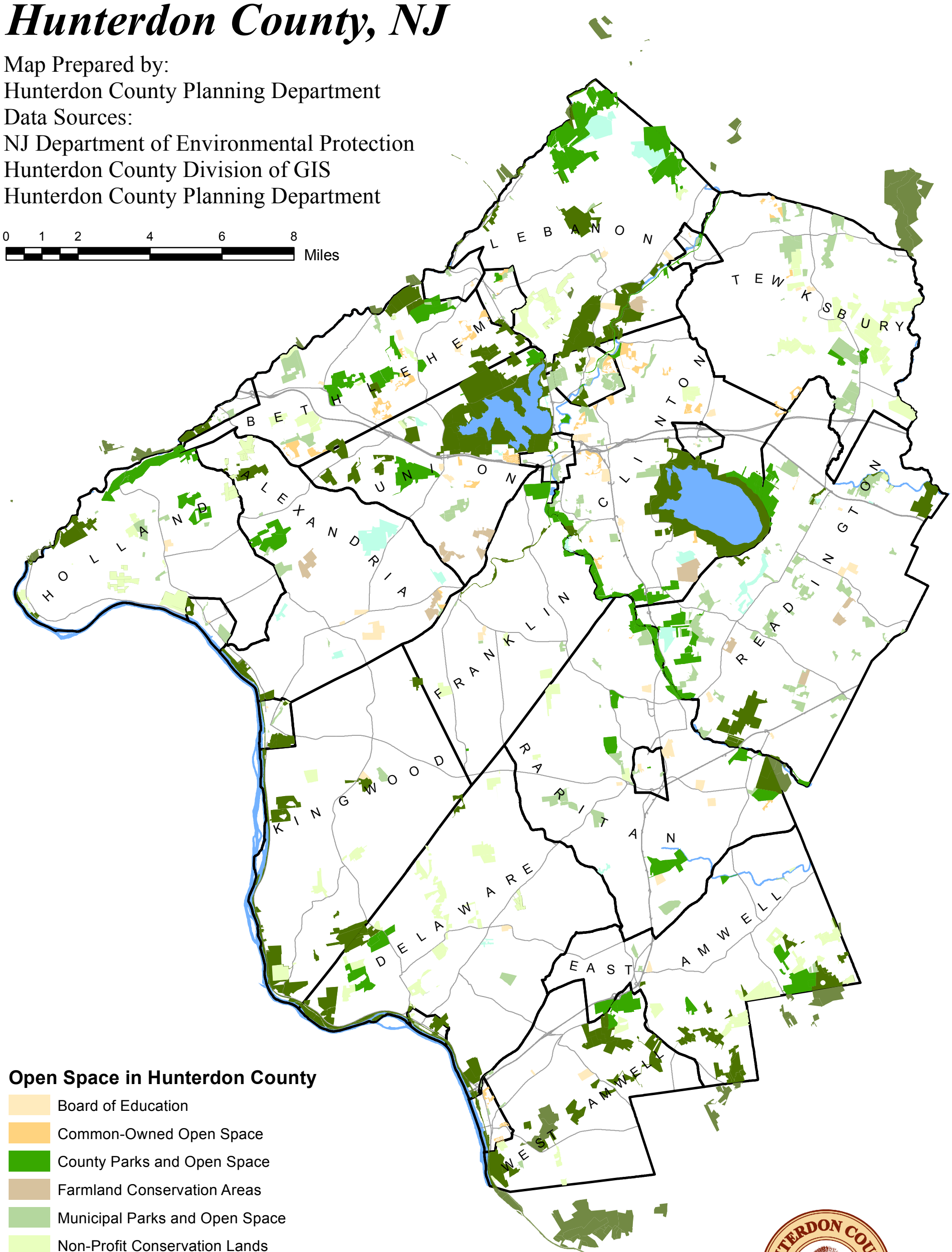
PRESERVED

Lakes, Rivers, and Streams

Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.

Map 3
Existing Parks and Open Space
Hunterdon County, NJ

Map Prepared by:
Hunterdon County Planning Department
Data Sources:
NJ Department of Environmental Protection
Hunterdon County Division of GIS
Hunterdon County Planning Department



Note: This map is intended for planning purposes only.