Somerset County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update

The Somerset County Park System for the 21st Century
December, 2000
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INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the Somerset County Park Commission and County Planning Board realized that the County was poised at the beginning of a new era. With the enactment of the County's dedicated open space trust fund, the County began to plan for the future accordingly. These plans, which were formalized in the 1994 *Somerset County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan*, remain as a valid foundation. Much progress has been made during the last five years in attaining the high standards sought for the County parks and, due to aggressive preservation efforts, the County is within reach of its original open space goal of 10,500 acres. Once again, the time has come to reassess and update the County's original goals.

County residents have a long history of supporting open space, farmland, and historic preservation. This is reaffirmed by the increase in the County's open space tax rate, the proliferation of municipal open space trust funds, the public's emphasis on growth management, and the freeholders' decision to partner with the private sector in the creation of a ballpark. County residents have recognized the importance of the County Park Commission in sustaining the quality of life. Companies, large and small, are now very concerned about being located in an area with the high quality of life necessary to attract and keep a qualified and well-educated workforce.

Somerset County has been identified as one of the most desirable places in New Jersey and in the country to live, work, and locate a business. The resulting development pressures and suburban land conversion present a constant challenge to Somerset County and its land preservation efforts. With the State's goal of acquiring one million acres of open space and the municipal decisions to lower residential densities to reduce traffic and control school costs, developers are steadily trying to acquire buildable land to assure an adequate future land inventory - one beyond just satisfying the current housing market demand. Developers seek to construct at least 50 units in a development to maximize profits. Factoring in wetlands and zoning restrictions, often calling for a density of one lot per two acres or greater, developers are searching for tracts of 100 acres or greater. As these are the very same tracts of land that the County Park Commission would like to acquire, opportunities for open space acquisition on
the scale of a County park are diminishing. The result is that the race for Somerset County’s open space has increased its pace since 1994.

This Plan is intended as a companion document to the 1994 Somerset County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, serving to update the sections contained herein. The update has been organized by sections that are summarized below.

**An Update of the Somerset County Park System Today** includes updated information on land acquisition, recreation programs, and facility improvements and additions. General County Park System issues from 1994 are reexamined and additional issues are introduced. New administrative and planning initiatives are outlined.

**Progress on Other Open Space Opportunities** provides updated information on initiatives taking place on the municipal and state levels, and in adjoining counties. A section on private open space covers preservation efforts of non-profit groups.

**Revised Goals and Objectives for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space in Somerset County** has been supplemented with new objectives and corresponding criteria, indicated in italic.

**Rethinking the Somerset County Parkland Goal of 10,500 Acres** is a new section that proposes a goal of 20,500 acres, reflecting the County’s expanding role as an open space provider.

**The 21st Century Plan for the Somerset County Park System** is based on the open space recommendations from the 1994 Plan, but has been expanded to create an optimum Somerset County Park System plan.

**Implementation** includes updated information on state funding and new information on County bonding authorizations. Estimated acquisition costs have been rewritten to reflect current calculations and to take into account the increased open space goal.

**Appendices** include an amended County Park Classification System, updated Park Descriptions, and a new list of Historic Resources Under the Control of the Somerset County Park Commission.
AN UPDATE OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

THE COUNTY PARK SYSTEM TODAY

Established in 1956 by County Freeholders under the authorization of N.J.S.A. 40:32-79 et. seq., the Somerset County Park Commission is directed by a nine-member board of commissioners who currently oversee a staff of 161 full-time employees and 322 part-time and seasonal employees. The annual budget for 1999 was $13,181,774, comprised of an operating budget of $10,956,774 and a capital budget of $2,225,000.

The County park system consists of 21 sites totaling 8,406.36 acres, shown on Map 1 and Table 1. There are seven General Use Area parks (1,744.16 acres), offering both active and passive recreation facilities, including four golf courses (685 acres); two Special Use Area parks (68 acres) devoted to horticulture and fine arts; three Developed Natural Area parks (1,757 acres), one of which features an environmental education center and equestrian facility and nine Undeveloped Natural Areas (4,837 acres).

Map 1 shows the current County park system, depicting parkland acquired prior to 1994 in dark green and parkland acquired since 1994 in light green.
Table 1 - Total Acreage for County Park System - 8,406 acres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Total acreage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Colonial Park/Spooky Brook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duke Island</td>
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<td>East County Reserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lord Stirling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Knoll</td>
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<td>Quail Brook</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Branch Greenway</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raritan River Greenway</td>
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<td>Ralph T. Reeve Cultural Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schafer Tract</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Watchung</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sourland Mountain Preserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous other holdings</td>
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<td>84.8*</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>8406.36</strong></td>
<td><strong>3061.98</strong></td>
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*Includes parcels under contract that have not been surveyed
PROGRESS SINCE 1994

Land Acquisition

Since the beginning of 1994, the Somerset County Park Commission has acquired 34 parcels of land, consisting of a total of 3061.98 acres\(^1\) at a cost of approximately $24,000,000.\(^2\) With a range of $2,601.30 to $56,381.24 per acre, the median acquisition cost was $11,800 per acre. The new acquisitions bring the total acreage in the County park inventory up to 8406.36 acres.

A major financial commitment to open space acquisition has been made by the public. In 1997, an overwhelming majority of the public voted to double the Somerset County Open Space Tax from $0.015 per $100 to $0.03 per $100 of assessed property valuation. The amount of money generated from this tax was boosted from $3 million in 1994 to over $8 million in 1999. With the anticipated growth in the County's real estate assessment base, this revenue source is estimated to increase about $160,000 each year.

County Recreation Programs

One of the roles of the Somerset County Park Commission is to provide programming to satisfy the recreational needs that are beyond the resources or scope of an individual municipality. One of the best examples is Therapeutic Recreation, which provides a variety of recreation opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities. Its programs include adapted sports, summer camps, a drama troupe, social groups for teens and young adults, crafts, games, cooking and travel. Due to maximum capacity enrollment levels, Therapeutic Recreation has continued its program expansion. More than 220 activity sessions were offered in 1998, as compared to 167 in 1994. Over 2,000 County residents are served each year in a manner that would not be possible on a local level.

A number of Somerset County park programs work towards fulfilling other regional recreation needs. Warrenbrook Pool offers seasonal swimming lessons

\(^1\) This acreage total includes parcels under contract as of 10/31/99.

\(^2\) This cost does not include parcels under contract as of 10/31/99.
and water exercise classes. Green Knoll and Colonial Park Tennis Centers provide facilities for league play, tournaments, clinics, and numerous local high school fall and spring seasons. The In-line Skating Rink has been utilized for school hockey seasons since its opening in 1996. In addition to the four County golf courses, Colonial Park has incorporated a miniature golf course into the County park system. Paddleboats have been reintroduced at Colonial Park as well. Lord Stirling Stable has a variety of equestrian programs such as horse shows, pony parties, horse rentals, and riding lessons.

Educational programming is offered through the Environmental Education Center. This facility plays host to many science and nature-based programs including the Garden State Mycological Association, the science and technology program AWESIM KIDS, and Eco-Explorers.

The Somerset County park system continues to offer the free outdoor Summer Concert Series. The summer music series consists of weekly concerts in the band shell at Duke Island Park, with an annual attendance of more than 20,000 people.

Other popular annual events and programs include the Antique Car Show, the Fourth of July Family Festival, the Pro/Celebrity Golf Tournament, the Youth Fishing Derby, the Turkey Trot, Family Fun Day, Drive-In Movies and Wildlife Art and Carving show.

Facility Improvements and Additions

New facilities have been added to the County park system since 1994 and significant improvements have been made to existing facilities, many in response to needs noted in the 1994 Master Plan. Major maintenance projects have been undertaken and completed at many of the Somerset County parks. Based on the analysis of a trails assessment, erosion problems were located and corrected. The Park Rangers, with the assistance of volunteers, have continued to maintain the many miles of trails used by both hikers and bikers.

Outlined below is a list of improvements undertaken at each County park since 1994.

Buck Garden
  - A new greenhouse has been added.
  - A boardwalk has been constructed along the lake.
  - A computerized plant records data base program has been installed.
Colonial Park

- An 18-hole putting course (miniature golf) with a control building has been added.
- Paddleboats were reintroduced to the pond.
- A park map has been developed.
- Four parking lots within the park have been expanded and improved.
- Older playgrounds have been replaced with equipment meeting ADA and CPSC requirements.
- New identification signs, information kiosks, and park entrance treatment have been added.

Duke Island Park

- Since the October 1996 fire, the Visitors Center has been reconstructed and expanded to include classroom space and park staff offices.
- A sand volleyball court has been installed.
- A park map has been developed.
- Older playgrounds have been upgraded with equipment meeting ADA and CPSC requirements.
- New identification signs, information kiosks, and park entrance treatment have been added.

Green Knoll Golf Course

- The clubhouse and deck have been enlarged.
- The bathrooms have been upgraded.
- A new automated irrigation system and pump station have been installed.
Lord Stirling Park

Stable
- A multi-purpose viewing room and ADA restrooms have been added.
- A new roof, new footings, and an irrigation system have been added to the existing ring.
- A new maintenance barn and isolation stall area have been installed.
- A run-in shed to house the ponies has been built.
- The indoor ring has been wired for sound and the speaker system has been upgraded.
- A pony party pavilion has been constructed.
- The pasture has been expanded to include a 115’x287’ jumping ring.
- The parking area has been enlarged to accommodate larger groups.
- Box stalls and a new storage area have been added in the barn.

Environmental Education Center
- A compost garden has been introduced.
- A pole barn for canoe storage has been built.
- A classroom has been converted into a computer lab to accommodate science and technology programs.
- A Paleo-Indian archeological site near the Passaic River has opened.
- “Secrets of the Great Swamp: A Permanent Exhibition” has been built.
- The Swamp Tank, a vivarium of reptiles, aquatic the Great Swamp has been built.
- Carpeting has been installed in the auditorium and exhibit hall.
- Solar heating and air conditioning roof was replaced with standard roof and the ceiling of the auditorium was replaced.
- A seasonal storage area for canoes and kayaks has been constructed.
- A new observation dock has been added to the Lily Pad Pond.
North Branch Park and Greenway Park
- A new playground (Kids Kingdom) has been donated and installed by Saturn Corp.
- Park Headquarters has undergone a complete exterior renovation.
- New identification signs, information kiosks, and park entrance treatment have been added.
- The horse trailer parking lot has been expanded.
- A park map has been created.
- The North Branch Greenway Park, a gift of Hovnanian Developers, has been incorporated into the County park system. This new fourteen-acre facility contains an in-line hockey rink and a basketball court. It also affords access to fishing on the North Branch of the Raritan River.

Raritan River Greenway
- Phase I of the Bikeway Plan was completed, providing for a future bicycle path along the river from Duke Island Park to Raritan Borough.

Sourland Mountain Preserve
- The park Master Plan has been completed, and steps have been taken to improve public access.
- A trail map has been developed.
- New trails have been introduced and older trails have been improved.
- A parking area has been installed.
- Construction of a pedestrian bridge has been completed.
- Two boardwalks over wetlands have been built.
- A handrail along a steep area has been installed.

Spooky Brook Golf Course
- A new automated irrigation system and pump station have been installed.
- New and enlarged tees have been constructed on all 18 holes.
Warrenbrook Park
- New concrete decking, diving board, and accessible handrail for the main pool have been added.
- The men and women’s locker rooms have been renovated.
- The exterior of the Senior Center building has undergone renovation.
- A new practice putting green and golf cart pen have been built.

Washington Valley
- The park Master Plan has been completed.
- New parking lots at Chimney Rock and Newmans Lane have been installed.
- A trail map has been developed.
- An overlook with a railing has been built at Chimney Rock to improve safety and accommodate the annual Hawk Watch activities.
- In an ongoing effort to maintain the trails, water control devices such as water bars have been employed.
GENERAL COUNTY PARK SYSTEM ISSUES REVISITED

Park expansion

Each year the popularity of the Somerset County park system has increased. It is estimated that the annual attendance of Somerset County parks is now more than 2 million. Some County parks are approaching maximum use during peak season. Many of the County park sites have facilities underwater in the peak demand season because of seasonal flooding. In the case of the Environmental Education Center, holdings consist of extensive wetlands. In order to prevent conditions of destructive overuse, some parks, such as North Branch Park, would greatly benefit from the expansion of existing facilities or the creation of a new County park nearby.

Many County parks are nearing the limit of their ability to handle crowd management and facility maintenance at popular special events. Although the ballpark has expanded activity opportunities, crowd management remains a problem for activities that must be held at other sites. As noted in the 1994 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, there is still a need for a new park larger than North Branch and Duke Island Park for big special events like a circus or a horse show.

Golf Courses

The four golf courses within the County park system continue to grow in popularity and provide a major weather-dependent revenue source. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the revenue from County park facilities in 1999 was from golf. 214,707 rounds of golf were played in 1999 and, as a result, an adjusted tee time policy has been initiated to handle the heavy attendance.

All of the County park system's golf courses have also undergone major maintenance efforts. A special projects crew has been formed to focus solely on maintaining and upgrading the courses and facilities. Green Knoll has installed a new irrigation system, pump house, footbridges, tee signs, and cart paths and upgraded collars, bunkers, and nighttime lighting. Quail Brook has addressed various drainage problems, constructed a concrete tee area at the driving range, installed new carpeting in the clubhouse, and maintained the wooded border around the course. Spooky Brook has added 140 new trees, new culverts for better drainage, a new septic system, an automatic irrigation system, and a new pump house. As well, the starter shed and bunkers have been renovated. Warrenbrook has improved drainage in problem areas, added cart paths, re-decked two bridges, and replaced dead trees.
Three of the four County-operated golf courses have rounds nearing or exceeding 50,000 a year, a point at which the quality of the experience begins to suffer. A market analysis for additional public golf facilities in Somerset County concluded that the market is strong enough to support a fifth County golf facility. The study predicted that one new County golf course and four other new private or semi-public golf courses within Somerset County would satisfy the primary market. Since 1994, three new private/semi-public golf courses have been constructed: Royce Brook Golf Course in Belle Mead (36 holes), NJ National semi-public golf course at the Hills in Bernards (18 holes), and the Hamilton Farms golf course in Bedminster (18 holes). Consequently, the County is involved in the initial engineering and planning stages for a fifth course on extensive County holdings on the South Branch in Branchburg.

Miniature Golf

In 1995, Colonial Park established a miniature golf course and reintroduced paddleboats to Powder Mill Pond. The putting course features fairways from 25 to 70 feet long in naturally landscaped aquatic and horticultural settings. It has won several awards for design and ADA accessibility. Combined attendance in 1999 was 14,037 and the combined revenue of miniature golf and paddleboats for this same year was $49,849.

Indoor Facilities

Therapeutic Recreation continues to operate without a much-needed permanent, centralized facility. Throughout the year, the programs are held at Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School, public schools, and other facilities. During the school year, Therapeutic Recreation's reliance on other facilities is a problem in terms of competing organization scheduling and cost considerations. The Park Commission has been unable to find a suitable facility.

Given the popularity of rink facilities in the County and the need for sheltered activities in the winter, Somerset County should reconsider the development of an indoor arena. In 1970, the County planned for an ice-skating arena, but the bids were too high. Should studies indicate viability, an indoor arena could be an appropriate facility for a public-private partnership arrangement.

As identified in the Sourland Mountain Preserve Master Plan, another possible project for long-range consideration is an environmental center in the southern part of the County. This facility would ideally be funded, maintained, and

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3 Prepared by John LaPoint, Golf Facilities Consultant, 2/99.
programmed in conjunction with another municipality or with assistance from the State or Federal level.

**Group Picnic Areas**
The demand for group picnic areas is greater than availability; each year, hundreds of requests cannot be satisfied. Group picnic permits for Colonial Park are sold out by mid-March. It is estimated that the county needs five more group picnic areas and accompanying support facilities, sufficient to accommodate up to 400 people each, to remedy the current shortage. Active recreation facilities should be constructed along with the picnic sites to ensure a full-day recreation experience. Plans for the Chipman Tract, Washington Valley, and Sourland Mountain Preserve propose the dedication of land in each of these parks for group picnicking.

**Campsites**
There are currently less than 100 campsites in Somerset County, compared to, for example over 700 in neighboring Union County. Recognizing this dramatic shortage, the Sourland Mountain Preserve Master Plan proposes both walk-in and group and family campsites.

**Swimming Pool**
One thousand summer seasonal badges are sold out almost immediately at Warrenbrook Pool, but there is no space for expansion. In addition, Therapeutic Recreation does not have sufficient pool time for its programs. According to a United Way survey, the number three need in Somerset County is for affordable recreation opportunities such as swimming. It is recommended that further studies be conducted concerning the need for an additional swimming facility. If applicable, possible prototypes for a future County pool complex include the Waterworks in West Windsor and the playground water facility at Van Saun Park in Paramus.

**Sports Fields**
The County has a conceptual idea for a sports field complex, consisting of five fields that would serve a regional need for industrial leagues and senior softball. This could be an ideal reuse of the Cyanamid site in Bridgewater, which is proposed to be part of the Raritan River Greenway. As well, the County could arrange with municipalities to jointly operate sport fields and facilities. Rocky Hill and Hillsborough will be using portions of the County-owned Schafer Tract and Woodfurn Farm, respectively, for athletic fields.
Bicycling
Biking is a recreational opportunity that could be further developed within Somerset County. The velodrome once considered for the Chipman Tract is being reconsidered for the Cyanamid site near the stadium in Finderne. The County is planning to expand its multi-use trail system in Washington Valley Park, the Sourland Mountain Preserve, and the Chipman Tract. In the future, a bike plan connecting scenic County roads with County park trails should be developed.

Parking Lots
In response to the demand for parking at Undeveloped Natural Area parks, a parking lot has been added to the Sourland Mountain Preserve. However, several other Undeveloped Natural Area parks are still without parking, thus inhibiting activities requiring minimal developed facilities such as hiking and bird watching.

Steps have been taken to improve the parking situation at some General Use and Special Use County parks. New parking lots have been added to the Ralph T. Reeve Cultural Center and Washington Valley Park (Chimney Rock area and Newmans Lane). Colonial Park, North Branch Park, and Lord Stirling Park have improved and expanded many existing lots.

Capital Improvement Program
In 1994 the County Park Commission initiated a long-range capital improvement program. The preparation of up-to-date base maps, a design manual dealing with park fixture details, and park Master Plans were recommended in 1994. Since then, several facilities have been improved and three Master Plans have been completed. In order to maintain the quality and maximize the efficient use of each park site, the other long-range planning projects should be addressed in the near future.

Park Entrance Treatments
The improvement of County park entrances was a goal proposed in the 1994 Master Plan. All of the entrances to General Use Areas and Special Use Areas and a few of the Developed Natural Areas within the Somerset County park system have been designed to better announce the transition into a special domain where one will find natural beauty, relaxation, and enjoyment.

Park Buffers
There is a need for park buffers at General Use Area parks. Available properties surrounding these parks should be considered for priority acquisition. Park
buffers serve two major functions: 1) They separate nearby neighbors from accompanying recreation activities. 2) They help maintain a naturalistic quality within the park, even as development encroaches.

Garden Attractions
Garden attractions within the County park system have proven to be extremely popular. The perennial gardens have solid wedding bookings. Future County parks should have similar horticultural features.

Adventure Facilities
Adventure facilities that include a ropes adventure course and a climbing wall should be developed. This type of facility encourages cooperation and team building. This facility could be popular with teenagers and corporations.

Personnel Needs
Additional personnel are needed proportional to the growth of the County park system, in order to patrol and maintain newly acquired undeveloped sites. Although maintenance levels are minimal for low visitation natural areas, an inspection/patrol once a month is advised. Litter patrol is on a demand or complaint basis. It is estimated that a full-time employee could patrol 787.5 acres on a monthly basis, inspecting 4.5 acres per hour and working 175 hours a month.4 If litter problems or other special needs arise, additional personnel might be necessary in addition to the personnel criteria outlined here.

Headquarters Expansion
The freeholders have approved funds to upgrade and expand Park Headquarters. Currently, this facility is out-of-date and is too small to accommodate staff needs. As well, the building sustained damage during the flood in 1999.

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4 Calculations are based on examples from Park Maintenance Standards: National Recreation and Park Association, 1986.
ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES
Since 1994, several County administrative initiatives have been implemented and formalized, with much success. The County administration has been able to tap into the resources available in Somerset County and utilize them in cost-effective ways. The following are examples:

Volunteer Committee
The Volunteer Committee was created in 1997 to formally oversee the recruitment, training, monitoring, promotion and management of the individual and group/corporate volunteer programs. The role of the volunteer has evolved and expanded to include assisting rangers at special events, maintaining trails, and attending to visitor services. Its success can be demonstrated through its numbers. In 1999, 11,000 individual hours and 1,500 group project hours were volunteered to the Somerset County park system. In this same year, there were 364 volunteers, contrasted with 79 in 1993. Individuals have volunteered their time and resources to the Environmental Education Center, Lord Stirling Stable, Therapeutic Recreation, the Horticulture Department, and the Recreation Department and as Volunteer Park patrols and junior golf volunteers. Group volunteers have participated in trail maintenance, river clean-up projects, garden planting, and property and building renovation.

Corporate Sponsorship Program
In 1995, this program was formalized to provide assistance in the funding of existing County park programs and the development of new initiatives. Since the formalization of the Corporate Sponsorship program in 1995, over $120,000 in financial contributions and in-kind services has been donated to the Somerset County Park Commission. Revenue generated for Therapeutic Recreation by the corporate-sponsored annual Pro/Celebrity Golf Tournament has allowed the Park Commission to purchase a 15-passenger van, emergency cellular phones, and a video camera and has continued to provide funds for scholarships and programming. Another volunteer group, the Friends of Lord Stirling Stable, has donated more than $20,000 annually in financial contributions and new equestrian facilities to the Lord Stirling Stable. Saturn Corp. provided North Branch Park with a new playground, Kids Kingdom. Hovnanian Development, Inc. donated the land and facilities for the creation of the North Branch Greenway Park for the Somerset County Park Commission. The fourteen-acre North Branch Greenway Park contains an outdoor in-line skating rink, an outdoor basketball court, and waterfront access for fishing.
Customer Service
As outlined in the Strategic Business Plan, emphasis on customer service has been the focus since 1997. All employees receive a full day of training in this area and the majority of employees also receive training in conflict resolution, cultural diversity, and communication.

Customer Response Policy
This policy, implemented in 1996, entitles people to free or discounted admissions, in the form of "Leisure Pursuit" cards, to a County Park facility or program as a thank you for alerting the Park Commission to public safety issues, suggesting improvements in service delivery, or volunteering. Between 1996 and 1999, over 2,100 Leisure Pursuit cards were issued.
PARK MASTER PLANNING

Initiatives undertaken by the Somerset County Park Commission since 1994 include the completion of three master plans: the Washington Valley Park Master Plan, the Sourland Mountain Preserve Master Plan, and the Chipman Tract Master Plan. The following are summaries of these plans.

The Washington Valley Park Master Plan

The Master Plan provides a framework for the expansion and development of the Washington Valley Park, which is to be implemented in phases over the next twenty years. In response to the unmet demands on the County park system, this Master Plan proposes the introduction of additional recreation opportunities including picnicking, biking, boating, and fishing.

The Washington Valley Park, a 687-acre site located in Bridgewater Township between the First and Second Watchung Mountains, currently provides passive recreation opportunities and access to varied geographical features, such as pine and hemlock forests, freshwater wetland, stream corridors, farmland, and the 21-acre Bound Brook Reservoir.

The Washington Valley Park has a rich cultural heritage, with archaeological sites from prehistoric and historic periods and standing historic structures connected with 18th century Dutch settlements, the Revolutionary War, and early industry based on grain, wood, rock, and copper. George Washington’s troops camped twice in the area known as the Middlebrook Encampment, an important site listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Using the guidelines of the National Recreation and Park Association, Washington Valley Park has been classified for park planning purposes as a Regional Park Reserve. This means that 80% of the land is to be set aside for conservation and natural resource management, while 20% can be developed for recreational use and accompanying facilities. Potential facilities include group picnic sites, a multiple use trail network, an indoor center, and water dependent recreation facilities. In order to continue to protect natural and historic resources, future development will be concentrated in previously disturbed areas.

The group/corporate picnic sites will have spacious open areas and support facilities that can accommodate groups of 50 to 200 people. They will be located near existing roadways.

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5 Prepared by Lord, Anderson, Worrel & Barnett, 2/97
The multi-use trail system will be centered around the proposed Middlebrook Trail. It will connect all facilities, activity areas and surrounding neighborhoods. The trail network will include handicapped accessible routes and a trail classification system. Viewing platforms, some with educational signage, will also be a feature of the trail network.

An indoor center could provide space for environmental and heritage education programs, group meetings, and special events. Outdoor areas for environmental education classes should also be available, as this is an anticipated future need in this part of the County.

The establishment of water dependent recreation facilities will work towards fulfilling a regional need. Facilities will include fishing piers, boat-mooring piers, a canoe and sailboat rental kiosk, restrooms, parking and access drives. An increase in the area and depth of the reservoir might be a required future action.

The analysis undertaken for the Washington Valley Park Master Plan has documented that there is insufficient land within the existing 600 acres of the park to accommodate all of the recommended development. According to the analysis, there is suitable land adjacent to the park that could satisfy the park’s full potential.

**Sourland Mountain Preserve Master Plan**

The Sourland Mountain Preserve Master Plan was completed in order to propose recreational facilities and document environmental and historical constraints within the Park. The Sourland Mountain Preserve, a region of over 2,500 acres in Hillsborough and Montgomery Township, is currently an undeveloped natural area with trails and gravel parking areas. The Master Plan proposes to introduce passive and limited active recreation and accompanying facilities, while protecting and preserving this area’s natural features.

The Master Plan recognizes two distinct Sourland Mountain Preserve regions: the Preserve-West and the Preserve-East. The Preserve-West is primarily an environmentally sensitive mature forest. Recreation facilities proposed for this portion of the park include trails for cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, and hiking; two specialized camp areas for walk-in tent sites and for wilderness sites; an observation tower; and trail-head facilities including a paved parking lot, a shelter building, and a picnic area.

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6 Prepared by T&M Associates, 4/96
The Preserve-East contains mostly level land, with portions in active farms. Facilities proposed for this part of the Sourland Mountain Preserve include a fully developed visitor center, large fields for group picnicking and camping, two softball fields, hiking and equestrian trails, a new pond, nature interpretation areas, parking areas, and a screened maintenance yard.

The Master Plan notes that the placement of facilities will be based on environmental constraints and locations of existing utility systems. Significant constraints to development include steep slopes, shallow depths to bedrock, a high seasonal water table, freshwater wetlands in portions of the Preserve and an extremely low groundwater yield in other parts.

The imperative of protecting the Preserve’s natural features, such as mature forests of native species, habitats of endangered or threatened species, critical slope areas, and “Roaring Rocks”, is stressed in the Master Plan. Archeological investigations prior to any groundbreaking activity are recommended to locate prehistoric and historic cultural resources that may be in the Sourland Mountain Preserve.

Chipman Tract Master Plan7

The Master Plan assessed the potential of developing facilities on the Chipman Tract, a 109-acre parcel of undeveloped land already owned by the County Park Commission. The site, located in the southwester corner of Bridgewater Township, borders the North Branch of the Raritan River and is also close to Duke Island and North Branch Parks.

The Master Plan envisioned few historical or environmental restrictions on the Chipman Tract toward achieving its intended use: primarily a park for low-impact recreation. Separate active and passive recreation areas are proposed with limited access afforded by a single road for public vehicular traffic, leading to the sole parking lot. This handicapped accessible lot is to be located near the picnic area, facilities building, and pedestrian trails. Patrol and maintenance vehicles would utilize a separate service road.

The bike trail system is proposed to consist of existing trails supplemented by some proposed additions. The trails would maintain their rugged character. The walking/hiking trails would be a circulatory system on the perimeter of the entire site. The existing trails would be used as a base, with the development of additional branches. This system would provide access to the picnic groves and the waterfront area, as well as a possible future connection to Duke Island Park.

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Areas for picnicking are proposed located along the waterfront to maximize scenic opportunities. Open play areas would be situated near the picnic groves and parking lot. These areas would consist of open meadows for informal recreation activities.

The development of the facilities outlined in the Chipman Tract Master Plan will work toward fulfilling some of the recommendations of the 1994 "Somerset County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan", including the need for picnic areas and bicycle trails, as well as aid in relieving nearby parks of overuse.

COUNTY OPEN SPACE PLANNING

Scenic Corridors and Roadway Study
The Somerset County Master Plan Circulation Update, adopted in 1994, states that the County will "implement design approaches that are sensitive to the natural and man-made environments, particularly along designated scenic corridors." As a result of the County Circulation Plan, more sensitive guidelines have been adopted calling for a reduced roadway width of 30 feet in historic districts less than one mile long instead of the standard 34 foot width, open railings with sidewalks on bridges and culverts, belgian block curbing, weathered steel guide rails with reflectors, landscaping with native vegetation, and a special signage program.

These modifications to the County road guidelines have resulted in improved bridge aesthetics, a reduced cartway along the scenic River Road, a more sensitive County road treatment along the new Hamilton Farm golf course, and the preservation of major trees along County roads.

County Bikeways and Walkways
Although Somerset does not have a County Bikeways Plan, in 1998 the County Planning Board partnered with Ridewise, the County's transportation management association, in a mapping effort that rated County roads for their compatibility with cycling. The map clearly shows that many County roads offer linkage opportunities between major population centers and County park facilities. In order to advance safe non-vehicular transportation and the utilization of County roads as linkages, the Divisions of Planning and Engineering need to work cooperatively on an on-road County Bikeways Plan. Funding is currently available to assist in the effort through such programs as TEA 21, NJ Transportation Trust Fund, and the Surface Transportation Program.
The County should continue its efforts, and should be encouraged to work with Bridgewater Township to link bicycle trails to the existing trails along the Middlebrook. Transportation enhancement grants could be used for creating off-road bikeways like the Power Canal bike trail. A future bikeway plan should focus on linking established neighborhoods to County parks and trails running through County parks.

The County Planning Board has created an inventory of sidewalks on County roads, identifying critical missing links. Sidewalks should be part of the greenway/pedestrian linkage policy to County parks in built-up neighborhoods. The County should work cooperatively with municipalities to see that such sidewalks are either built or designed into residential and commercial developments.

**County Agricultural Development Board**

To date, 3,319 acres of farmland have been preserved in Somerset County, with an additional 820 acres under consideration. There are 56,000 acres of land in farmland assessment in Somerset County, of which 46,000 acres are in cropland or pastureland and represent the basic acreage for future farmland preservation. The Somerset County Agricultural Development Plan seeks to preserve 16,000 to 20,000 acres of farmland in the County, with 25 acres as its minimum acreage for farmland preservation. The locations of purchases are dependent upon farmer participation. In addition, all purchases must be within a designated Agricultural Development Area and first attention is given to parcels identified by the Board as being within high priority areas.

The Farmland Preservation and Agricultural Viability Enhancement Master Plan for Somerset County will be completed in 2000. The Plan will outline current economic conditions for agriculture, recommendations for the enhancement of local agriculture, and the Farmland Preservation Program's goals for the next ten years.

Like parkland, farmland preservation is another way of keeping open space in Somerset County. The challenge is finding a way of making preserved farmland, which is paid for with public dollars but remains private property, work with the County park system for the recreational benefit of the public. A preserved farm adjacent to a County park provides a compatible buffer but does not necessarily mean the public can use these farms other than for visual enjoyment. Contrary to popular belief, there is no restriction in the farmland preservation program against public use in the form of a recreational trail across a farm or other kinds of agricultural-compatible recreation facilities, if the landowner agrees to it. The challenge is solving the hesitant farmer's problems with public access, the threat
of crop and livestock vandalism and liability claims against the farmer. A trail could be rendered less of a potential nuisance to the farmer by creating a clearly delineated and fenced trail area with possible seasonal restrictions and by indemnification of farmers from public lawsuits.

More likely, future cooperation between the farm community and the County park system may come with the creative evolution of Somerset farms, as farmers begin taking advantage of their unique metropolitan market location. Farms could provide recreation opportunities compatible with agriculture in the form of living farms, equestrian facilities, and vineyards or organic produce farms with accessory restaurants and outlets for tasting and savoring the harvest. Using some of Somerset’s preserved farmland in this fashion to broaden the range of adult-style recreation opportunities would be compatible with the mission of the Somerset County Park Commission.

Ultimately, farmland and large parkland purchases both serve as a counterbalance to development and provide watershed protection, improved air quality, and open space vistas.

**Highlands**

Somerset County contains a small portion of the Highlands Region, a million acre area in Northern New Jersey and adjacent New York State critical for the future supply and quality of water. The Palisades Interstate Park Commission is spearheading major property acquisitions in the Highlands. Somerset County has not yet purchased any significant amount of parkland in this region: the northern half of Bernardsville, Far Hills, and Peapack-Gladstone. The County, working with Green Acres, should identify potential acquisition opportunities in this area which are consistent with the Master Plan.

**The Great Swamp Watershed Advisory Committee**

A plan created by the Great Swamp Watershed Advisory Committee has been adopted, recommending a limit to development within the Great Swamp watershed. The preservation of land along the Passaic River in Somerset would be consistent with the goal of protecting the Great Swamp ecology. This and other Great Swamp conservation efforts will continue to maintain the high quality of the Great Swamp’s water.
OTHER OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE

Like the County, municipalities have been active since 1994 in making open space acquisition a priority. Today twelve Somerset municipalities have established local open space trust funds supported by tax levies, allowing them to generate more than $5 million annually to act decisively in acquiring available open space.

Since 1994, Bedminster, Hillsborough, and Montgomery have added substantial amounts of land to their local open space and parklands. Bedminster added 115.55 acres, bringing its municipal park total to 409.3 acres. Hillsborough, through a combination of land donations and purchases, added 479 acres, for a new municipal open space total of 1489 acres. Montgomery more than doubled its amount of municipal open space from 507 acres to 1,117 acres.

The Somerset County Planning Board is currently conducting a survey to update its 1991 open space inventory. Results are anticipated early next year and will be added as a supplement to the County Park Plan Update.

Table 2 - Municipal Open Space Tax Rates (1999)

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<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Open Space Tax Rate</th>
<th>Estimated revenue generated annually</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bedminster</td>
<td>$0.02 per $100</td>
<td>$249,588</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assessed property valuation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernards</td>
<td>$0.02 per $100</td>
<td>$626,114</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bernardsville</td>
<td>$0.02 per $100</td>
<td>$226,516</td>
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<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branchburg</td>
<td>$0.01 per $100</td>
<td>$132,537</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridgewater</td>
<td>$0.04 per $100</td>
<td>$1,036,751</td>
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<td>Franklin Twp.</td>
<td>$0.03 per $100</td>
<td>$1,085,431</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Brook</td>
<td>$0.015 per $100</td>
<td>$73,798</td>
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<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>$0.04 per $100</td>
<td>$910,122</td>
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<td>Montgomery Twp.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peapack/Gladstone</td>
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<td>Warren Twp.</td>
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<td>Watchung</td>
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Estimates are based on 1998 real property valuation
ADJOINING COUNTY PARK SYSTEMS

There are opportunities for the Somerset County Park Commission to work cooperatively with the park commissions of the adjoining five counties in order to create regional greenways, bikeways, trails, and canoe runs. This section provides an update on the acquisition of open space and the development of parkland that is likely to have an effect on Somerset County.

Mercer County

The Mercer County Park Department and the Planning Board are in the process of updating their open space and recreation plan. The East Coast Greenway, a national greenway planned from Canada to Florida, includes the D&R Canal in Mercer and Somerset counties. In addition, open space and parkland in the Sourland Mountains, near the Somerset County border, has been acquired through partnerships between municipalities and through cooperative effort of non-profit organizations.

Middlesex County

Middlesex County has recently completed its Open Space and Park Plan Update. Its park department has expressed an interest in cooperating with Somerset County to encourage the State to develop the Six Mile Run State Park and has proposed a greenway that would link up to trails in the Six Mile Run State Park. In addition, the East Coast Greenway will link Somerset with Middlesex and continue through Piscataway, Highland Park, Edison, and Perth Amboy.

Hunterdon County

The Hunterdon County Park Commission has, in a joint effort with the Somerset County Park Commission, acquired the 900-acre Kanach Farm. The additional acquisition of another large acreage tract straddling the boundary between Somerset and Hunterdon Counties along the South Branch is proposed. This acquisition would involve the use of State funds and would encompass both park and farm lands.

Within the next ten years, Hunterdon is anticipating the preservation of nearly all of the lands bordering the South Branch of the Raritan River, forming a continuous greenway with Somerset’s open space corridor. The concentration of both County park systems on the South Branch corridor offers the potential open space preservation efforts for joint recreation projects such as a canoe run with a series of launches and dock areas. Another possible future regional greenway linkage exists as Hunterdon is proposing substantial additional acquisitions in
the Sourland Mountains. The combined efforts of the three counties containing the Sourlands- Hunterdon, Mercer and Somerset- and the State present an opportunity to implement a regional preserve, like the Pinelands, in the heart of growing Central Jersey.

**Morris County**
Within the past five years acreage has been added to the Passaic River County Park bordering Somerset County, bringing Morris County’s total open space acreage to 13,300 acres. Facilities in the Willowwood Arboretum have been upgraded. A portion of the arboretum is located on Somerset County lands, providing a linkage between Somerset County and the other counties adjacent to Morris County via the 50-mile Patriot’s Path, a trail running across Morris County. Also likely to have an impact on regional recreation opportunities, the William G. Mennen Sports Arena is installing a third ice surface.

**Union County**
One of Union County’s larger projects, the renovation of the deserted village at Feltville in the Watchung Reservation, is located close to the border of Somerset. The Master Plan for this historic site has been completed and $5 million has been budgeted for the project. Existing parks are also undergoing changes, including Green Brook County Park, which lies in both Union and Somerset Counties.
STATE LANDS IN SOMERSET COUNTY

Delaware and Raritan State Park

The Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, a 3,600-acre regional greenway stretching 77 miles from Frenchtown to New Brunswick, offers a continuous towpath of multiple use trails. Almost half of the Park lies within Somerset County, including 21 miles of towpaths. Along with hiking and biking, the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park offers opportunities for canoeing and sightseeing at restored canal features.

The State currently administers the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park through a unique agency, the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission. This Commission reviews all development plans within a designated area around this park. Within the past five years, there have been improvements and new initiatives for parkland within Somerset County. Two hundred acres have been acquired in Franklin Township along Canal and Suydam Roads. This land is not along the towpath, but provides a link to Six Mile Run State Park via multiple use trails. Zarepath House, a historic canal house in Franklin, has been restored. The towpath between the New Brunswick Foundry and Blackwells Mills has been resurfaced; the remainder of the Somerset County path will be resurfaced this year. Three new parking lots (in South Bound Brook, at Van Wickles House in Franklin, and in Rocky Hill) have been installed along the canal in the County, bringing the total to eight. The site in Rocky Hill contains a 30-car lot, restroom facilities, canoe docks, and a second path on the east side of the canal.

There are future plans for the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park that are likely to affect the Somerset County park and greenway system. The Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission has applied for and has been assured of federal funds to plan and build a bridge across the Millstone River in Montgomery, near its confluence with the Bedens Brook. Within the next five years, this bridge is planned to link the canal towpath to the Montgomery Greenway. As well, the Canal Commission has endorsed the Somerset County application for a transportation enhancement grant to construct a bridge across the canal to link the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park to Colonial Park.

In 1996, the Towpath was designated as the first segment of the East Coast Greenway, a 2,300-mile greenway passing through fifteen states and the District of Columbia from Key West, Florida to Caleis, Maine. The multi-user urban complement to the Appalachian Trail is an alliance of local trails being organized by the East Coast Greenway Alliance. It will connect all the major urban centers along the East Coast, and in New Jersey will run between the cities of Trenton.
and Perth Amboy. Designation as a segment of the Greenway makes the D&R Towpath a part of a national system of trails extending beyond the borders of the County and State. In 1999, the White House Millennium Council designated the East Coast Greenway as one of sixteen National Millennium Trails. The sixteen trails were honored as symbolizing our nation’s history and helping to create a positive vision of our future.

Confluence Reservoir
The County had sought a favorable State decision allowing Somerset to use the Confluence Reservoir land, a 502-acre tract in Branchburg, Bridgewater, and Hillsborough where the North and the South Branches of the Raritan River join, for recreational facilities under a long-term lease agreement. The County Park Commission is not seeking the use of this land at this time.

Six Mile Run State Park
The Six Mile Run Reservoir site, a 3,307-acre tract in Franklin Township, was established as a permanent State park in 1989. At that time, a number of recommendations for this site were made, such as the structural rehabilitation of its historic farmsteads and Dutch barns and its potential recreation uses. At this point, no resolution has been reached, the barns have not been restored yet and the farmers who lease land within this park have expressed opposition to public access. The expansion of this state park was recommended in the 1994 Plan to assure that adequate lands are available in the future to fulfill this state park’s dual function as a water supply source and recreation facility. Opportunities still exist, in the form of undeveloped land adjacent to Six Mile Run’s current holdings.

Washington Rock State Park
There was a discussion by the Somerset County Park Commission about providing maintenance services for Washington Rock State Park in Green Brook on an informal basis. The State has agreed to improve maintenance of this park without County assistance.

North Princeton Developmental Center
The North Princeton Developmental Center, located on a 560-acre parcel of land currently owned by the State, is closed. The State Historic Preservation Office has deemed the site eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Montgomery Township is actively seeking a portion of this land for a hospital/continuing care facility, an assisted living facility, medical and professional offices, retail shops with residential flats, senior residences, a single-family residential cluster, a theater/cultural complex, maintenance buildings,
and the Montgomery Board of Education building. Approximately 50 acres are proposed for a village green, Montgomery parkland, and open space. The New Jersey Economic Development Authority is coordinating the redevelopment efforts of this property, which includes participation from Montgomery Township, the State of New Jersey, the Authority, and Somerset County. The open space component of the redevelopment plan, in which the County may participate, has not been specified, but will include a combination of active and passive open space resources.

Kingston Quarry
The potential reclamation plan for the Kingston Quarry is a long-term issue. There are no immediate prospects for its acquisition as a State park with a reservoir, as it is still an active quarry. However, it is recommended that this site remain a future consideration for a State recreational facility for the Somerset County area.

PRIVATE AND NON-PROFIT OPEN SPACE
Non-profit groups have played a cooperative role in the preservation of open space: as the identifiers of prime sites, as liaisons between landowners and government agencies, as grant recipients and as landholders of private open space.

Since 1989, Delaware & Raritan Greenway has protected and preserved environmentally sensitive lands along the Delaware & Raritan Canal and along the streams of central-western New Jersey. D&R Greenway has been buying land consistent with Somerset County Park Commission proposals adjacent to the D&R Canal in the southern part of the County.

The New Jersey Conservation Foundation was established in an effort to preserve the Great Swamp and has continued its conservation efforts. This foundation owns 112 acres of farmland near the Sourland Mountain Preserve, as part of a 500-acre grouping of preserved farms.

The South Branch Watershed Association (SBWA) serves as a liaison between landowners and a government or non-profit agency wishing to acquire (or hold) a fee simple deed or conservation easement. Currently, SBWA is preparing a regional plan of priority sites comprised of individual parcels identified for their

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8 "Township of Montgomery Master Plan Addendum" Coppola&Coppola, February 1996.
The Upper Raritan Watershed Association (URWA), in addition to assisting others in preservation of significant lands within the 190 square mile watershed area it serves, holds conservation lands of its own. There are several URWA sites that could be future linkages in a regional greenway in conjunction with lands owned or sought by the County.

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is the largest private landholder in the County, with over 2,700 acres in Hillsborough. This former estate and manor house of Doris Duke are on a varied landscape, consisting of farmland, estate grounds, numerous ponds, the renowned formally landscaped Duke Gardens, and wooded riverfront along the Raritan River.

The County would like to pursue the potential for a publicly accessible greenway along the waterfront land to be designed in a manner compatible with the Doris Duke estate. This greenway would link with an existing County greenway and be part of a continuous greenway planned along the Raritan River.

During her lifetime, Doris Duke took steps to have her property preserved forever as open space. She submitted an application for farmland preservation, but unfortunately, she passed away before her application was finalized. Her intentions have been made clear from her public actions. Doris Duke's estate is currently being managed and maintained by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Somerset County officials stand ready to assist in implementing Doris Duke's wish that this property be permanently preserved in her name.

There are other private landholders of large open space tracts throughout the County, with a concentration in the northern section. The County would like to encourage preservation efforts because of the scenic views that this open space provides from the County roadways. Preservation options include either properties being owned and maintained by non-profit organizations or as private properties with conservation easements.
Table 3 - Individual Private and Non-Profit Open Space Parcels By Municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Organization/Individual Land Owner</th>
<th>Acres</th>
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<td>Somerset Valley YMCA Lake Echo</td>
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<td>Basking Ridge Country Club</td>
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<td>National Golf Club</td>
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<td>Raritan Valley Country Club</td>
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<td>Washington Campgrounds</td>
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<td>Municipality</td>
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<td>Open Space Through Various Cluster Developments</td>
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<td>Mattawang Country Club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cherry Valley Country Club</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Homeowners Associations (various)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Green Acres</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Rocky Hill</td>
<td>John Robotti</td>
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<td>Pond (W. Bannard/D. Schafer)</td>
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<td>Warren</td>
<td>Elks Lodge (BPOE #2252)</td>
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<td>Watchung</td>
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Note: Table 3 from 1994 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan and not updated
GREENWAYS

Greenways remain an essential feature of the future open space network for the Somerset County park system. The County Park Commission continues to support the concept of acquiring parkland and open space that link natural private and public lands in a regional recreation and conservation network. The creation of a system of primary and secondary greenways throughout Somerset County, as shown on Map 2, is a major planning initiative that continues with this Master Plan update.

Primary greenways generally follow major stream corridors or ridgelines in Somerset County. They consist of the following linear open space proposals:

- Raritan River
- Millstone River
- North Branch River
- South Branch River
- Neshanic River
- Lamington River
- Green Brook
- Passaic River
- Roaring Brook
- Washington Valley
- Second Watchung Mountain Ridge
- Sourland Mountain

Secondary greenways are spurs or "reaches" off the primary greenway. The secondary corridors will link County parks with a primary greenway, or major municipal parks with a County greenway. Some of the secondary greenways which have been proposed for inclusion in the Plan are: Bedens Brook, Chamber's Brook, Holland Brook, Mine Brook, Middlebrook, Peapack Brook, Peter's Brook and Stoney Brook. Inter-municipal greenways connected to a primary greenway will also be considered secondary greenways. Secondary greenways will be identified over time in cooperation with the municipalities. As new County park sites are acquired, opportunities for additional secondary greenways will become apparent.
The Master Plan also encourages the creation of local greenways, generally those contained wholly within one municipality, which connect municipal facilities, neighborhoods or other areas of local interest; and which do not necessarily connect to a primary greenway.

THE COUNTY/MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE PARTNERSHIP

The County/Municipal Open Space Partnership Grants of Somerset County were established in 1995 to assist municipalities in the acquisition of open space, which would advance local planning initiatives. The program was developed by Park Commission staff in cooperation with the staff of the Planning Board, who now administer the program. Operating as a competitive grant process, applications are distributed on an annual basis and the program is open only to municipal governments in Somerset County.

Once received, the applications go through an extensive internal review that involves the Planning Board, Park Commission, and Open Space Advisory Committee. Staff from the Planning Board and Park Commission conduct field reviews of all applications and evaluate the applications, assigning point values to each based upon specific evaluation criteria. The points earned serve as the means to rank the applications. After the applications receive a numerical ranking, staff evaluates each application and recommends a grant award. The amount of the recommended award may be all or part of what is requested.

After staff completes its review and recommendations, presentations are made to committees of the Planning Board and Park Commission. The committees review staff recommendations, either accept or modify the points given by staff, and forward their ranking to the Open Space Advisory Committee. The Open Space Advisory Committee then considers the staff, Planning Board, and Park Commission recommendations, along with its own findings, and recommends specific awards to the Board of Chosen Freeholders. The Freeholders review the recommendations to determine who will receive awards and what the amounts will be. The decision is formalized by Freeholder resolution.

Following Freeholder approval, the awarded municipalities are notified of the award and provided with a grant agreement which must be executed by the municipal governing body. The agreement obligates the municipality to State statutory and County requirements. Once executed by the municipality, the agreement is returned to the County for Freeholder execution. The award monies are then deposited into a dedicated County account awaiting notification that the municipality has successfully negotiated the acquisition of the property and that
a closing date has been set. A check is then drawn from the account and made available to the municipality upon closing.

Table 4 – County/Municipal Open Space Partnership Round Summary 1995-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant Round</th>
<th>Towns Participating</th>
<th>Submissions</th>
<th>Acres in Proposal</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Local Share</th>
<th>Other Share</th>
<th>Grants Requested</th>
<th>Amount Awarded</th>
<th>Number of Grants</th>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>116.13</td>
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<td>$1,505,750</td>
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<td>$471,500</td>
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<td>$1,084,400</td>
<td>$15,263,950</td>
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REVISED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE IN SOMERSET COUNTY

The goals and objectives are the most essential elements of the Somerset County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan Update. The goals and objectives stated in the 1994 Plan remain valid and appropriate. However, this section of the Plan has been supplemented with new objectives, indicated in italic, as the roles of the Somerset County Park system expand in keeping with an emerging vision of the County.

Goals are the ends to which all planning efforts are directed. The objectives are the milestones on the way to a goal; they are expressed in a form that is measurable by certain criteria. The specific facts and conditions for open space, park and recreation policy decisions will change over time but the general goals and objectives of this Plan should remain valid for the near future as a means of evaluating the soundness of specific proposals.

As Somerset County matures, the County Park Commission’s role should also mature beyond providing the traditional County-level recreation opportunities. As one of the County’s largest property holders, the County Park Commission can help create the natural setting for new development, be a stimulant to redevelopment, and provide the focus for a fragmented community. Some of those roles will be thrust upon the County Park Commission; others will represent a deliberate decision to use its experience and skills to serve the community’s evolving needs.

1. Create an open space system preserving lands of county-wide significance.
   a) Objective:

   The County should choose highly imageable lands which can be the setting for certain recreation activities like photography, nature walking, bicycling and jogging and the scenic backdrop for park activities.

   The Outdoor Recreation Resources Commission and the National Association of Counties suggest the prime responsibility for the County with regard to open space should be to “protect the scenic outdoor recreation values of the total environment of the County and acquire and develop for public use portions of the landscape of highest value for outdoor recreation”.

42
Criteria:
In broadest terms, the most significant natural features of Somerset County are the Raritan River and its main tributaries - the North and South Branches, the Lamington and the Millstone Rivers and the Green Brook; the Passaic River and the Great Swamp; and the Sourland and Watchung Mountains. Open space affording vistas or access to these features would satisfy a multitude of recreational needs and offer the basic ingredients for the aesthetic experience people seek from a County park.

The County should preserve lands offering the most interest and character by evaluating the scenic or image quality of specific sites. One approach would be to analyze the "edge quality" of a site. Edges are where different types of landscape elements meet and where the physical character of the landform changes. Land, water, vegetation and manmade development are the broad landscape elements. Where one finds a coincidence of at least two of these different landscape elements, an edge occurs and an image results — a much stronger image than would occur if only a single element were present. For example, landscapes that exist where land meets water, mountains meet flatland or forest meets an open field is more imageable than a dense forest or large open field. The water's edge and exceptionally abrupt topographical change are the most dynamic and imageable of all edges. The water's edge has an overwhelmingly strong attraction to people and it is where most active and passive recreation activities occur. The greater the number of edges that are coincident, the greater the quality, character and imageability of the environment, and as a result, the greater the recreational potential of a site.

b) Objective:

The County should preserve by either acquisition or acceptance of donation unique sites having unusual geological, botanic, cultural or historic qualities.

Criteria:

The natural and manmade treasures of Somerset County such as Buck Garden should be available for public enjoyment and education. Distinctive sites having features that are unusual, irreplaceable or rarely found in the rest of the State or County should be preserved for all future generations. Many of these features will occur on sites much smaller than
the typical General Use County park. Careful evaluation of each site need
be undertaken before the County accepts jurisdiction. The County does
not have to operate or administer every site of this nature. The County can
encourage volunteer groups or associations to own or operate them,
making them available for public visitation on a periodic basis. The most
distinctive sites as determined by an assessment of recognized experts or
public consensus may merit County acquisition and operation where
significant public visitation is anticipated.

c) Objective:

The County Park Commission has inherited the role of steward of some of the
County's historic structures. Recently acquired County parkland has included
historic buildings such as the classic Dutch barns on the Howe and Parker/Petree
farms. Although these remnants of the past entail extra maintenance costs, they
are assets to the County. It is not just open space that contributes to the County's
physical character. The ability to view restored features links us to preceding
generations. These buildings, especially well-built examples of a specific
architectural style, help distinguish the County from other places which seem to
be made up of generic products of corporate entities.

Criteria:

The County Park Commission should take advantage of funding available from
the New Jersey Historic Preservation Trust Fund along with the Somerset
County Historic Preservation Trust Funds designated for historic preservation to
plan, stabilize and restore its historic structures. The numerous historical
agricultural resources in the South Branch Greenway and the Duderstadt Barn
and the Linden Lane farm in the East County reserve should be preserved and
interpreted.

A separate historic preservation plan for the Park Commission needs to be
considered. This plan would fully outline the historic preservation policies of the
Commission. It would analyze the condition and preservation needs of the
Commission's historic resources and would recommend re-use plans and
interpretive strategies. The plan should be coordinated with the local historic
preservation groups and commissions, the D&R Canal Commission, and the
County Cultural and Heritage Commission.

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9 Appendix C contains a list of historic resources under the County Park Commission's control.
d) Objective:

The County Park Commission needs to extend its influence beyond the borders of the County parks. By partnering with other County departments and municipalities, the County Park Commission should work toward making the landscape between its parks part of a visually pleasing experience. As one of the County's major landholders, the County Park Commission is one of the primary creators of the ultimate landscape of Somerset County. County parks are more than just a place to recreate; they are also scenic resources that form the backdrop for suburban development. In order to protect its own investment, the County Park Commission must help shape the scenic quality of Somerset County's overall landscape. The experience of a County park will suffer if its surroundings become visually unpleasant. Several opportunities seem ready for the County Park Commission's involvement with other decision makers.

Criteria:

The Millstone River Valley presents a most attractive assemblage of landscape features: historic homes, farmscapes, the Millstone River and the Delaware and Raritan Canal, canal homes, and, of course, public parkland. The River Road Historic District in Montgomery and the Millstone Valley Agricultural Historic District in Hillsborough provide examples of private residential restoration efforts contributing to the County's scenic quality. Further study of the Millstone River Valley to identify historic features for preservation and the coordination of all interested agencies is recommended. The end product could be a district of permanent scenic quality, enhancing the quality of experience in the area's County parks.
2. Preserve open space to protect critical environmental resources of Somerset County.

a) **Objective:**

   Consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, the County seeks to preserve critical environmental features that have been delineated PA 5 (Environmentally Sensitive Areas), CES (Critical Environmental Sites), and Special Resource Protection Areas. Critical environmental resources comprise a variety of land and water resources: flood plains, stream corridors, wetlands, fish and wildlife habitats, mature woodlands, steep slopes, and surface and groundwater public water supplies (watersheds, headwaters, aquifer recharge areas and wellheads). Ultimately, all critical environmental areas in the County focus on water where they form an integrated system based on the County's hydrological regime. The County is the regional agency which pulls together the broad State and diverse local activities affecting water quality and quantity. One of the County's overall open space goals should be the permanent preservation of the open space pattern which will do the most to protect the County's hydrological system both from a water quantity and quality standpoint.

**Criteria:**

To fulfill its regional role, the County does not have to acquire or own all critical environmental lands to provide for an integrated and protected open space system. Some lands, such as wetlands, will be protected through environmental regulations; others can be preserved through cluster development design with common open space land owned by homeowners associations. The County should acquire key critical environmental resources only where necessary. The County should place higher priority on the acquisition or acceptance of lands which will stimulate preservation of other segments of a connected system of critical environmental features. It is not the County's role to maintain small, isolated open space parcels but it could provide incentives to municipal initiatives creating greenways which link up with County parkland. Incentives can range from planning grants, to stimulate the identification of greenways and open space corridors, to a policy of County acceptance of the donation of completed greenways.
b) **Objective:**

To fulfill its role of environmental stewardship and as the largest public landholder in the County, the Somerset County Park Commission should continue to play an active role in preserving flood plains and facilitating flood protection projects. The County Park Commission has assisted in lessening the impact of flooding by its past concentration on preserving the scenic land along major rivers of the County (the Raritan River and its main tributaries, the South and North Branches, and the Millstone River). As the County develops and additional coverage occurs in the watershed, the historic flood plains will increase in area, further underlining the importance of open space preservation of ever-widening flood plains.

**Criteria:**

It is the Somerset County Park Commission’s position that a high priority of the Garden State Preservation Trust fund and other Federal and State initiatives should be providing protection from future floods through the acquisition of flood prone areas and the conversion of these lands into parks and, where appropriate, with planned flood protection projects such as dikes and levees. The County Park Commission would be the appropriate agency in Somerset County to maintain flood plain lands as County parkland and to use County parkland for stormwater management projects that are compatible with the Park Commission’s role of providing recreational opportunities.

c) **Objective:**

In the near future, the State Department of Environmental Protection intends to use a watershed planning approach as the methodological framework for making decisions on environmental issues and the granting of permits, as opposed to the current project-by-project focus. As the County’s largest landholder, and one of the stewards of the County’s environmental resources, the Somerset County Park Commission can play an important role in facilitating better planning solutions. A watershed perspective should encourage more flexibility in the solution of development problems with regional consequences particularly involving stormwater management and water quality protection.

The County Park Commission has periodically played a role in forging regional solutions to cumulative development problems. For example, Washington Valley Park provides a major regional stormwater retention facility with the former Washington Valley reservoir which has been adapted by the County to serve the dual functions of stormwater management and outdoor recreation. In the future, by working with private entities and public agencies, the role of the County Park Commission can be expanded, in order to accommodate such activities as wetland
mitigation, regional stormwater control, mitigation of environmental impacts and the provision of open space to offset development coverage.

Criteria:

The County Park Commission, working with the County Planning Board and the municipalities, should identify opportunities where the County Park Commission could assist in solving local problems with regional implications. The County agencies could create an environmental management plan for accomplishing such objectives as establishing a wetlands mitigation program, renewing brownfields for open space use or organizing special improvement projects.

3. Provide open space for a diverse mix of quality recreational experiences appropriate for a County Park system.

a) Objective:

The Somerset County Park Commission should primarily concentrate on providing, within its staff and fiscal resources, recreational facilities of a regional nature in natural resource settings.

Each governmental level has a different responsibility when it comes to the type, size, and location of open space and recreational facilities it provides the public. The higher the level of government, the greater the percentage of its open space holdings that should remain relatively undeveloped and held for conservation purposes. Conversely, the lower the level of government, the greater the percentage of open space that should be developed for more intensive recreational use. At the Federal and State level, greater emphasis is on preservation of large natural or wilderness areas spaced 30 to 45 minutes from urban concentrations. At the municipal level, upwards of 75 percent of its open space system is typically devoted to more intense, user-oriented recreation facilities on relatively small parcels within walking distance of the neighborhood it serves.

Situated between the State and Municipal level, the County has some of the characteristics of both systems, but there are some distinctions:

- County parks give equal balance to recreation and conservation. The provision of recreation facilities such as picnicking in a bucolic or naturalistic setting is an essential part of the County park experience.

- County parks provide active and passive recreation facilities requiring large land resources such as nature walks, equestrian facilities or regulation golf; or an unusual recreation facility beyond the staff or fiscal
capability of any one municipality such as an environmental or horticultural center.

- County parks provide recreational facilities found in municipal parks and playgrounds only as ancillary activities to support its primary recreation activities. For example, ballfields and playgrounds are provided to assure a full day recreation experience for groups using picnic facilities in a County park.

- The County provides recreational services and facilities for special population groups and regional organizations.

Criteria:

The County should concentrate on adding to its existing parkland or acquiring new open space sites for general use parks with a minimum area of 100 to 200 acres to maximize its staff and fiscal resources.

- In view of the county-wide spread of suburbanization, greater priority should be given to acquiring larger, intact tracts of land with the highest amenity value and greatest amount of developable land area for active recreation facilities and supporting services.

- County parks should retain a balance of solitude and relaxation with a multitude of compatible recreational activities. At least half of the area in a general use park should remain undeveloped.

- Existing County parks should be enlarged to enhance experiences or expand use to prevent deterioration or excessive maintenance to sustain the system's standard of quality.

- County parks should be designed or retrofitted to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities.

- In planning for future recreational facilities, the County Park Commission should consider: 1) adding recreation facilities which have proven exceptionally popular with Somerset County residents such as water facilities, golf courses, and environmental education facilities, 2) conducting surveys to gauge public interest or support for certain recreational facilities appropriate to a County or regional park (attention should be paid to the degree the public would be willing to pay for exceptional recreational facilities), 3) matching recreation facilities with the interests of growing population groups in the County, and 4) relating
recreation facilities to the achievement of other recognized societal goals such as physical fitness or programs for young children and the elderly.

b) Objective:

Beyond properly caring for structures within its parks, the County Park Commission should play a part in illuminating the County's historic heritage. Presenting the County's history in a vivid way would provide a sophisticated recreation experience for a segment of the public not served by traditional County recreation activities. The County Park Commission can facilitate the emerging interest in the County's rich past which has been so successfully nurtured by organizations like the Heritage Trail Association.

Criteria:

Heritage tourism, one of the most popular tourist activities, could be increased by tying the Park Commission's historic resources with other historic sites opened to the public throughout Somerset County. The County Park Commission should make the interpretation of historic assets within its county parks a part of its future recreation program efforts. Two themes seem readily apparent: the Revolutionary War and the County's architectural heritage. The recent acquisitions of land containing fine examples of Dutch barns and other historic sites offer an opportunity to explore Somerset's varied architectural style. In addition, the important archaeological dig at Lord Stirling Park should be completed by a qualified archaeologist and the findings distributed in a scholarly report.

Washington Valley Park contains areas of the Middlebrook Encampment, which could be designed to tell Somerset County's considerable role in the American Revolution. Although Somerset County is at the heart of the State's "Crossroads of the American Revolution", the recent State initiative in Central Jersey intended to create greenway corridors linking Monmouth Battlefield with other Revolutionary War sites and the Morristown National Historic Park does not include any historic resources in Somerset County.

c) Objective:

Partnerships with private companies or non-profit groups extend the services of the County Park Commission for recreational activities and facilities. Public/private partnerships are a way of permitting the County Park Commission to satisfy the needs of large segments of the public without imposing costs on the entire public.

Through partnerships with municipalities and non-profit groups in acquiring open space, the County Park Commission can extend its fiscal resources and
enable it to respond when there are exceptional open space purchase opportunities that demand a prompt response.

Criteria:

The future County Park Commission should be flexible enough in its approach to open space preservation to allow it to be part of joint acquisition, development or maintenance situations that preserve open space and create recreation opportunities for the betterment of the public.

4. Provide County parks where they will most easily serve the greatest population concentrations in Somerset County.

a) Objective:

County parks are regional in nature and parkland acquisition is often based on resource values, market availability and cost. As such, County parks are not always located with accessibility to the greatest number of persons. However, the ultimate County park system should be readily accessible to all residents of Somerset County. Any potential County park site located close to population centers which is able to meet other standards of imageability, resource protection and recreation development capability should merit high priority for acquisition.

One approach to assure County open space within close proximity of most residents of the County would be to place an emphasis on the acquisition of greenways. Greenways are corridors or fingers of green that link people and resources threading their way along streams or utility rights-of-way through built-up areas and country sides. Greenways can connect new and existing recreation and conservation areas such as parks, forests, watersheds and wildlife management areas. They often serve as trail networks for jogging, bicycling, walking and hiking. Nine of the twenty most popular outdoor recreation activities according to a State study of recreation demand in New Jersey can be accommodated by a connected network of undeveloped open space served by a usable trail or path: bicycling, walking for pleasure, sunbathing, jogging, nature walking, fishing, bird watching, horseback riding, and roller skating. As linear park systems, greenways offer more access points bringing more people into contact with open space opportunities.
Criteria:
The Somerset County Park Commission should provide a County park within a 10 to 15 minute drive time, or approximately 4 to 6 miles distance, from the more densely settled communities in Somerset County. A refinement of this goal could be to use a 15 to 30 minute bicycle trip time instead of automobile travel time. The County Park Commission should encourage the creation of a network of primary and secondary greenways linked to County parkland, which would facilitate pedestrian access and potential bicycling to County parks.

b) Objective:
The County Park Commission can play a constructive role in the economic revival and redevelopment of the older established sections of the County.

Criteria:
A recent design charrette sponsored by the County Planning Board pointed out that greenways like the Raritan River Greenway could be more than an isolated strip for a pathway; they could be the stimulus for redevelopment efforts. The natural features of County parks can be used as a framework for development. Redevelopment efforts, in turn, can redound to the benefit of the County Park Commission. The extension of an attractive downtown streetscape into the County parks, as planned in Raritan and South Bound Brook, shows how urban restoration can enlarge the County park experience.

Future County parks in the older communities should not be viewed as a substitute for the traditional municipal park. They should be designed to serve a regional audience and act very much like a tourist magnet to attract potential customers to older downtowns. The County’s goal of creating a continuous greenway along the Raritan River can offer the potential to develop tourism opportunities in the form of county-developed docks, strategically placed to encourage canoe recyclers to stop and shop or eat in an adjacent downtown.

In the distant future, the County’s role may be expanded to include the operation of indoor recreation experiences in large old converted industrial buildings or the management of landscaped boulevards that function as linear parks between communities.

This policy of concentrating new parks and recreation facilities in developed sections of the County to encourage renewal is consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment plan.
5. Provide open space, which enhances the quality of life in Somerset County.

a) Objective:

Surveys consistently show that New Jersey and Somerset County residents consider open space to be a prime determinant of the quality of life. The continued presence of open space, particularly at key visible locations, creates a feeling of well-being and increases the overall value of an area.

Other ways open space can sustain the quality of life in Somerset County, besides acquiring County park sites are:

- by preserving agricultural lands
- by creating "breathing spaces" in built-up and developing areas
- by shaping and directing growth into distinctive livable patterns

Criteria:

Acquisition of County parkland which adjoins existing farmland or is concentrated in an area of prime agricultural preservation potential contributes to the support of farmland preservation by reducing the number of potential residences which could otherwise conflict with farmland activities.

From its regional land use perspective, the County Planning Board should actively support the clustering of development to create linked open space systems and the use of creative techniques to retain significant privately-held open space. The County should encourage the preservation of existing centers and the creation of new centers (small towns, villages and hamlets) with distinctive buffers or development boundaries by offering to accept significantly-sized greenbelts into the County park system.

The acquisition of the open space setting of a cultural or historic site can stabilize its surroundings, retaining its property values and assuring that future changes will not substantially clash or distract from the enjoyment of viewing these physical structures much as they appeared in the past.

Greenways offer multiple benefits meriting priority in open space preservation. Greenways can preserve "breathing spaces" and add economic, social and psychological value to settled communities as buffers to existing and proposed development and linkages connecting people with open space experiences.
b) Objective:

Somerset County is, by most measures, one of the best places to live and work. Evidence of this is the many premier growth industries attracted to its borders. Not wishing to take its good fortune for granted, County officials have created a “Smart Growth” strategy that seeks to sustain its alluring quality of life.

The Somerset County Park Commission is seen as one of the main contributors to the County’s pleasant lifestyle. The County Park Commission could play a role in bringing the County’s varied populace together by creating a common image that everyone can identify as uniquely Somerset.

There is a need for everyone to feel a connection with their place of residence, to feel part of the larger community to which one would be willing to make a contribution. Identity with place helps anchor people, leading to a more stable workforce, which in turn, retains the County’s attractiveness as a place to conduct business.

Criteria:

How can the Somerset County Park Commission be the County’s community image-maker? The County Park Commission is one of the few regional organizations that reaches all segments of society. It is the one County agency that can create large-scale events (i.e. festivals, concerts) that can truly galvanize large segments of the population. Taking this role even further, the County Park Commission could create the kind of memorable events that stamp the County as a special place and lead to a source of pride that makes people identify themselves with Somerset County.
RETHINKING THE SOMERSET COUNTY PARKLAND GOAL OF 10,500 ACRES

The Somerset County Park Commission has long held an ultimate goal of acquiring 10,500 acres of County parkland. This goal is consistent with the Balanced Land Use Guidelines used by the State Green Acres Division as a means of estimating the amount of recreation land that should be set aside by various levels of government to provide recreation opportunities for current and future residents. However, this goal is based on an older vision of the County’s role among the four levels of government in providing for public outdoor recreation needs. It is now clear that the future Somerset County Park Commission cannot be adequately satisfied by the current goal of 10,500 total acres of parkland.

More parkland is needed for a County park system consisting of parkland corridors, as compared to freestanding parks.

The parkland goal of 10,500 acres, originally proposed in the 1957 Master Plan, was based on the vision of a County park system essentially consisting of a few large, freestanding regional parks. The 1994 Plan proposed a change in this philosophy, focusing on creating parkland corridors and nodes. The addition of linkages along a corridor requires two to three times more land than freestanding regional parks alone require.

More parkland is needed to meet unexpected recreation demands.

The assumptions about the nature of recreation demand for County parks that underlie the 10,500-acre goal have changed. Instead of using the County parks in a casual or informal way as individuals, County residents, burdened with their busy schedules, now seek to reserve space in County parks for programmed events or require structured recreation activities. The cumulative demand for the use of County park facilities, which is expected to increase, particularly in the peak months, cannot be satisfactorily met with a County park system of 10,500 acres.

More parkland is needed to make up for State and Federal open space shortfalls.

As was pointed out in the 1994 Master Plan, Somerset County is projected to have a long term open space deficiency in regional open space due to the large shortfalls at the State and Federal levels. Except for 200 acres added to the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, there has been little change in the
amount of State or Federal open space in Somerset County in the last five years. There are no prospects on the horizon for any major State or Federal initiatives to correct this open space deficiency in Somerset County. The State Outdoor Recreation Plan recommends “one level of government may compensate for another less active or inactive level of government by providing appropriate recreation lands”. This means that the County Park Commission’s open space goal established over forty years ago needs to be upgraded to make up for the regional open space shortfalls, especially in light of the diminishing opportunities to acquire large tracts of vacant land. As the County experiences a steady amount of development driven forward by its favorable economic climate, it is imperative that the County Park Commission move early to assume the role of compensating for the Federal and State open space shortfalls which amount to 15,859 acres in Somerset County.\(^\text{10}\)

More parkland is needed to complete an existing County park’s purpose or solve existing County park problems.

Create buffers – There is a need for greater buffers to retain a park-like atmosphere free from suburban development intrusions that were not anticipated when a goal of 10,500 acres of parkland was set forty years ago.

More land for active recreation facilities and parking – Some existing parks cannot satisfy the current and projected demand for recreation facilities or parking, for example, Warrenbrook Park, the fairground at North Branch Park, and Washington Valley Park.

Improved access – Some existing parks need additional land to create suitable access, as in the case of Little Brook Sanctuary, or to improve access to better distribute traffic from an actively used site like Washington Valley Park.

More parkland is needed to assure that useable recreation land, free from environmental constraints, is available for peak season use.

The New Jersey Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan cautions that the acreage figures yielded by the Balanced Land Use Guidelines “represent only minimum goals for recreation land acquisition programs. In order for public open space areas to be considered as supply toward meeting the Balanced Land Use goals, the areas must be environmentally suitable for the recreation activities generally provided by the particular level of government.”

Because of State and Federal regulations, such as wetland development constraints, unimagined forty years ago when the parkland goal of 10,500 acres

\(^{10}\) Phase One of Somerset County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, 1990.
was set, all the parkland that is acquired cannot be used for active recreation purposes. A greater amount of land needs to be acquired to assure that developable land, free from environmental constraints, will be available for recreation activity especially in the peak season. Flooding adversely impacts approximately 20% of the current County parkland. Flood plain protection is a highly desirable use of County parks but it means this land cannot be counted on to meet the tight schedules for group recreation activities from May to October. Additional parkland free from the threat of flooding must be acquired to give the Somerset County Park Commission more flexibility in dealing with peak season group recreation requests.

**More parkland is needed to accommodate the multitude of new roles the County Park Commission is expected to satisfy.**

Forty years ago, when the County was much less developed and open space was abundant, County parkland was viewed by many as a useful but non-essential accessory to one's quality of life. Today, as the amount of open space is diminishing rapidly, the public has made it clear that open space in the form of parks or preserved farmland is essential to the continued quality of life in Somerset County. The public and its elected officials have come to recognize that open space preservation is needed in Somerset County, if for nothing else, to provide spatial separation from continuous development.

The many present and future roles that the County park system is expected to fulfill necessitate the acquisition of additional County parkland. These roles include the provision of historical guardianship, flood plain relief, environmental resource management, and overall scenic quality maintenance.
Taking into account all of the new demands on the County Park Commission and recognizing the need to compensate for Federal and State deficiencies in the provision of regional open space, the Somerset County Park Commission has determined that the ultimate County parkland goal should be increased by another 10,000 acres, for a new total of 20,500 acres.

As it has been documented that a higher acreage goal for the County Park Commission is imperative, the establishment of an aggressive acquisition schedule is also essential. During the last five years, more than 14,000 acres have been converted for residential and non-residential/commercial development. In comparison, only 3,647 acres have been acquired for County parkland since 1994. This means that the development rate is nearly four times that of the County Park Commission’s rate of preservation.

The Somerset County Park Commission has already begun to take steps to acquire greater amounts of open space at an increased pace while significant tracts of undeveloped land are still available, in order to ensure the future character of the County.
THE 21ST CENTURY PLAN FOR THE SOMERSET COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

Although the demands on the Somerset County Park system will significantly increase the need for additional park acreage beyond prior intentions, the 1994 County Park, and Open Space Master Plan conceptually remains a viable guide to the ultimate County park system. The plan for the future County park system is still focused on the same essentials: completing linkages and acquiring major park sites along the greenway corridors of the major rivers of Somerset County; preserving sites in the Watchung and Sourland Mountains; and expanding major General Use Parks near the County’s population centers. The 1994 Master Plan identified fifteen areas which constitute the minimum parkland necessary for the County park system to achieve its long held goal of 10,500 acres. There were approximately 6,000 additional acres identified in the Plan as the maximum acreage for the County park system. These were potential park sites in the same vicinity as the primary parkland sites having equivalent open space and recreation value and being capable of serving as substitutes if primary park sites were unavailable for acquisition. With the ultimate goal of the Somerset County Park system proposed to be 20,500 acres, all of the parkland proposed in 1994 as the maximum acreage now becomes part of the basic parkland for the future County park system.

The Plan update proposes that the Somerset County Park Commission acquire land in order to bring the existing County parkland acreage up to the new mark of 20,500 acres. This new County parkland goal will be achieved by land acquisitions or easement purchases involving five initiatives shown in Chart 5: expansion of existing County parks; greenways along the County’s major rivers and Second Watchung ridgeline; the Sourland Mountain; the Millstone River Valley; and new County parks in northern Somerset County.

The Master Plan update proposes the greatest increases in the amount of open space acreage, beyond what was envisioned in the 1994 Plan, in the expansion of parkland in six greenways, the Sourland Mountain, and the Millstone River Valley. These substantial acreage proposals reflect the view of the Plan update that in both the Sourland Mountain, and the Millstone River Valley an opportunity exists to reduce the regional open space deficit caused by the lack of past State and Federal open space efforts in Somerset County and in Central Jersey.
The Somerset County Park Commission believes that the Sourland Mountain and Millstone River Valley proposals merit special State attention. Specific financial support from the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund would be appropriate as a means of addressing future outdoor recreation needs, not just in Somerset County but in all of Central Jersey, whose population in the next thirty years could top 1.7 million persons.

What follows is a description of each of the individual County park proposals that constitute Somerset County’s ultimate County park system for the 21st century, as shown in Chart 6. The narrative for each proposed park highlights the parkland acreage currently held by the Park Commission, the amount of total parkland proposed for that park and the current acreage shortfall should be made up to create that County park.

The map entitled Somerset County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, located on the inside back cover, presents Somerset County’s overall concept of open space and parkland. The map shows, as a base, existing public parks and open space and private land currently in outdoor recreation use or permanently preserved for open space such as preserved agricultural lands. The existing County parks are shown in dark green and proposed County parks are depicted in bright green.
Table 5 - Total County Park Acquisitions for the 21st Century - 12,091 acres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expansion of Existing County Parks</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Park/Spooky Brook</td>
<td>445 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Valley</td>
<td>178 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East County Reserve</td>
<td>100 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke Island</td>
<td>66 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Knoll</td>
<td>8 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrenbrook Park</td>
<td>17 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard J. Buck Garden</td>
<td>27 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Brook Sanctuary</td>
<td>10 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Stirling</td>
<td>279 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various park additions</td>
<td>412 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greenways/Flood Plains and Ridgelines</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,220 acres</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Branch Greenway</td>
<td>820 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Branch Reserve</td>
<td>68 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Branch Greenway</td>
<td>504 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raritan River Greenway</td>
<td>940 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead River Greenway</td>
<td>600 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Watchung Mountain Greenway</td>
<td>288 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sourland Mountain Preserve</td>
<td><strong>4,579 acres</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millstone River Valley Initiative</td>
<td>2,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North County Parkland</td>
<td>750 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravine Lake</td>
<td>350 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamington River Greenway</td>
<td>400 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,091 acres</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
South Branch Greenway

Current Acreage: 957.13 acres  
Goal: 1,845 acres

A continuous system of parkland along the South Branch River corridor in Branchburg and Hillsborough Township is the highest acquisition priority of the Somerset County Park Commission. Highly scenic and critical for future water supply and flood protection, the South Branch is an important regional greenway that is also actively being preserved by the Hunterdon County Park Commission, the State of New Jersey, and several non-profit conservation groups. The acquisition of the 432-acre South Branch Reserve presents an opportunity to create major recreation facilities like golf courses and a General Use Park to relieve the pressures at other actively used County parks.

Colonial Park

Current Acreage: 654.55 acres  
Goal: 1,100 acres

Colonial Park is the Commission’s most popular General Use Area Park and additional land acquisition by the park and additional land proposals is needed to meet the unsatisfied demand for recreational opportunities and to add buffer areas to improve park aesthetics. Colonial Park should be expanded to create more developed frontage to permit greater public use of this regional recreational resource and trail amenity.

Washington Park

Current Acreage: 870 acres

The detailed Master Plan for this park identified the need for approximately 1,100 acres to accommodate active recreation needs and provide much of the surrounding parkland located along the East and West branches of the Middlesex River. This park is environmentally sensitive and is limited in its potential for facility development.

The acquisition of the site of historic remnants from the Revolutionary War offers the County Park Commission an opportunity to present Somerset County’s role as part of the Crossroads of the American Revolution.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East County Reserve</td>
<td>75.54 acres</td>
<td>175 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The County Park Commission acquired parkland on Reinman Road as a substitution for the less accessible Helen Street site, which was proposed to serve as a General Use Area for eastern Somerset County. Vacant land exists to expand the East County Reserve by another 75 to 100 acres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Branch Greenway</td>
<td>145.58 acres</td>
<td>650 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The North Branch Greenway to the north of Route 22 remains a high priority for acquisition as this area is currently not being served by a County park. Flood plain preservation along this corridor is vital to regional stormwater management. One high priority site (Lady Eccles) that was proposed for parkland will be permanently preserved as farmland instead. Future farmland preservation efforts along this greenway should incorporate an easement permitting a public trail along the North Branch and sites for canoe launching and public parking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second Watchung</td>
<td>411.61 acres</td>
<td>700 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 119.43-acre AT&T tract that was jointly purchased by the County Park Commission and Bernards Township has added significantly to the Second Watchung Mountain Greenway in the provision of land for parking, group recreation and accommodations for trail users. Additional acquisitions will assure a continuous trail system with nodes for parking and supplementary facilities.
Sourland Mountain Preserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,620.78 acres</td>
<td>7,200 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Sourland Mountain is an elliptically shaped, forested ridge of traprock running 10.3 miles from the village of Neshanic to the Delaware River. The highest point between New York and Philadelphia, the Sourland Mountain stands as a deep woods refuge and a rugged, comparatively unspoiled landscape with the potential to be a regional open space preserve on the scale of a State park. The biological diversity, historic legacy, and scenic quality of this area have prompted all of the municipalities and the park systems of the three counties which share a portion of the Sourland Mountains (Hunterdon, Mercer and Somerset), non-profit organizations like the Delaware and Raritan Greenway, and concerned private landholders to prioritize the preservation of the Sourland Mountain for conservation and low intensity recreation activities like hiking.

The ultimate goal of the Somerset County Park Commission is to acquire, through fee simple title and easements, a preserve in the Sourland Mountain of approximately 7,120 acres. Combined with the intended preservation efforts of the other public and non-profit groups, it is possible that a preserve of 10,000 to 15,000 acres could be created in the Sourland Mountain.

The Sourland Mountain preservation effort presents an appropriate opportunity to make up the lack of State and Federal parkland in burgeoning Central Jersey. This can be accomplished by encouraging the State to make the acquisition of the Sourland Mountain, a region of statewide importance, a high priority for special funding from the Garden State Preservation Trust.

Open space holdings in the proposed Sourland Mountain Preserve are interspersed with scattered low-density residential development. Future planning of the Sourland Mountain should be modeled on the Adirondack Mountains preservation program which involves a mixture of development regulation, transfer of development, purchase of conservation and trail easements, and fee simple land acquisition. Sites for conveniently located parking and accommodations and park headquarters with group recreation facilities are needed to complete this regional park.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tract</th>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schaefer Tract</td>
<td>95.55 acres</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formerly identified as "South County Reserve", the Schaefer tract is located in Rocky Hill Borough and Montgomery Township. This property was acquired to serve as a General Use park for the underserved southern part of the County. It is the intention of the County Park Commission to accommodate the remaining future parkland needs of southern Somerset County with the Millstone River Valley initiative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tract</th>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raritan River Greenway</td>
<td>460.02 acres</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Raritan River Greenway provides the County Park Commission with the opportunity to serve the open space and recreation needs of populated areas of Bound Brook, Bridgewater, Manville, Somerville and Raritan. With its highly scenic quality and potential for water-based recreation and historic preservation (the Van Veghten House), the Raritan River Greenway can play a creative role in the redevelopment of flood-impacted and economically obsolete areas at the heart of the County.

The Raritan River Greenway could be significantly increased in area and recreation potential with the future acquisition of the former American Cyanamid site in Bridgewater. Currently a brownfield area being cleaned up at a substantial expense by American Home Products, American Cyanamid’s successor company, this site of more than 400 acres, in combination with the adjacent Somerset Patriots stadium and passenger rail service, could be an ideal location for a variety of active recreation pursuits. The possibility of all or part of this area becoming County parkland will evolve as decisions are made at all levels of government about site cleanup standards and the future community planning goals of Bridgewater Township.

The Raritan River Greenway would be further enhanced by the use of Duke Estate lands fronting on the Raritan River. At a minimum, the County Park Commission trusts that the Duke Estate will continue to be held as preserved open space. Ideally, the County Park Commission would like to explore with the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation ways of affording public access along the riverfront that respect the privacy and integrity of the Duke Estate.
Millstone River Valley

Previously identified in the 1994 Master Plan as “South Franklin,” the Millstone River Valley initiative goes beyond the acquisition of a single County park site. The County Park Commission envisions that it would acquire outright or preserve through conservation easements upwards of 2,000 acres in the Millstone River Valley. In addition, the Park Commission would participate in the preparation of a plan for an aesthetically designed landscape that would accomplish its objectives through a combination of development regulations and financial incentives.

Some of the targeted acreage would likely come to the County Park Commission as a result of Federal and State financial settlements for that permanently setting aside flood-prone lands in open space. Strong financial support the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund is envisioned for the Millstone Valley initiative because, as in the case of the Sourland Mountain Preserve Millstone River Valley presents an opportunity to substantially redress the shortfall in State and Federal open space in Central Jersey.

Duke Island

Opportunities to expand this popular General Use Park should be taken. Flood-impacted properties should be acquired and set aside as permanent open space.

Passaic River Greenway

The Dead River County Park was one of the initial projects in the County Park Plan. Located in Warren and Bernards Townships and the Dead Rivers, this park site is comprised almost entirely of wetlands and is not in jeopardy of development due to current State regulations. Nonetheless, the Passaic River area does present a future opportunity for environmentally based recreation like nature watching. The scattering of developable uplands in and among the wetlands could present the County with a novel opportunity to create a wetlands mitigation bank that could generate funds for even greater open space acquisition elsewhere in the County. The County Park Commission should explore creative ways to stimulate donation of these wetland parcels in exchange for tax credits.
Ravine Lake

Ravine Lake, one of Somerset’s most scenic assets and an early County park proposal, presents a limited opportunity to create a County-scale park due to the lack of useable parkland frontage on the lake itself. Land surrounding the lake is generally not available or prohibitive in cost. The County Park Commission recognizes that there is a significant lack of County parkland in the Somerset Hills area. It is for that reason that this plan update proposes a floating acquisition goal of 350 acres for a General Use County park site for the unserved area north of Interstate 78 and Route 202. It is further recognized that the Commission’s long standing goal of preserving the upper reaches of the North Branch River corridor might also be realized through private conservation efforts spearheaded by non-profits or the property owners themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 acres</td>
<td>350 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lamington River Greenway

Since the adoption of the 1994 Master Plan, Governor Whitman placed a conservation easement on her property, the 72.118-acre site (Block 37, Lot 1) on Lamington Road which was identified as a long-range County park site. The other site on the Lamington River corridor proposed in the 1994 Plan has become part of the Brady Family estate plan which includes extensive land conservation. The County Park Commission remains committed to finding a County park site along the Lamington River to provide for a variety of recreation activities compatible with the conservation goal of preserving this entire river corridor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 acres</td>
<td>400 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lord Stirling

Future opportunities to expand Lord Stirling Park should be pursued to ensure the integrity of the Passaic River watershed of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and to increase the opportunities for public recreation experiences in this area of Somerset County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>921 acres</td>
<td>1,200 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Various Park Expansions

The County Park Commission anticipates acquiring additional land to solve problems of access, parking, buffers and facility expansion at various park locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88.11 acres</td>
<td>500 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 - The Optimum Somerset County Park System - 20,500 acres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Existing Acreage</th>
<th>Proposed Acreage (rounded)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Park/Spooky Brook</td>
<td>654.55</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke Island</td>
<td>334.50</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East County Reserve</td>
<td>74.54</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Stirling</td>
<td>921.00</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Knoll</td>
<td>152.00</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quail Brook</td>
<td>200.10</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Branch Greenway</td>
<td>145.58</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raritan River Greenway</td>
<td>460.02</td>
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<td>35</td>
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OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION

The Garden State Preservation Trust has been established to serve as the successor to the 1995 Green Acres bond act and similar previous bond acts. The NJ Legislature, upon the recommendations of the Governor’s Council on New Jersey Outdoors, has declared a goal of the preservation of one million more acres of open space and farmland in the State. For this purpose, three funds to which annual deposits will be made by the Trust have been created: the Garden State Green Acres Preservation Trust Fund, the Garden State Farmland Preservation Trust Fund, and the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund. Annual deposits over the next ten years will total $1 billion, with an average yearly deposit of $98 million.

The Department of Environmental Protection and the State Agriculture Development Committee will submit lists of recommended Green Acres and farmland preservation projects twice a year to the Trust. Recommendations are based upon a priority system, ranking criteria and funding policies. Projects involving the joint effort of more than one level of government or non-profit organization will be encouraged. The expenditure and allocation of grants will reflect geographic diversity.

Many factors will determine the distribution of funds. The legislation declares that the criteria and policies “may be based upon, but need not be limited to, such factors as: protection of the environment, natural resources, water resources, watersheds, wetlands, flood plains, beaches and coastal resources, forests and grassland, scenic views, biodiversity, habitat for wildlife, rare, threatened, or endangered species, and plants; degree of likelihood of development; promotion of greenways; provision for recreational access and use; protection of geologic, historic, archeological, and cultural resources; relative cost; parcel size; and degree of public support.”

When weighing these and other factors determining its share of the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund grant money, Somerset County clearly has some advantages and disadvantages. Land in Somerset County is expensive and the Fund’s money will not stretch as far in accomplishing its ambitious acreage goal. Availability is another problem, with much County land under competition from developers. As well, Somerset County has environmental lands that are less critical in statewide importance than those contained within some other counties such as the Pinelands.
On the other hand, the County has demonstrated its commitment to aggressive open space acquisition and preservation over the long term. It has a well-organized system in place with substantial dedicated funding and bonding capacity. There is an active farmland preservation program with ambitious goals already underway. As well, the County has a history with Green Acres; thus the machinery for an efficient future partnership is in place. Somerset County's park planning emphasis on protecting greenway corridors and other environmentally sensitive lands provides for an organized open space acquisition program that accomplishes a number of the objectives of the Garden State Preservation Trust Act.

On the local level, bolder steps are being taken toward the goal of more aggressive open space acquisition. Currently, twelve of Somerset County's 21 municipalities have approved an open space tax similar to the County's. The revenue generated from this tax will allow the municipalities to pursue local acquisition projects or enter into partnerships with the County, State, or non-profit land-preservation organizations. In addition, increased levels of Green Acres funding are available to counties and municipalities that have initiated an open space trust fund. Given this added advantage, the County is offering assistance to municipalities in developing local plans and promoting the adoption of local referendums.

Somerset County and its municipalities should investigate opportunities to acquire unneeded State real property for open space preservation or recreation. This could be a potential future source of cost-free open space acquisitions.

There should be an organized effort to notify private citizens of the opportunities and benefits, such as tax advantages, of dedicating portions of their property for conservation purposes. In addition, life estates allow landholders to occupy their residence and portions of their property for the duration of their lifetime while collecting money from the sale of their estates. Ownership options are outlined in Phase One of the Somerset County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan.

With money generated through the Open Space Trust Fund, the County has approved two $30 million bonding authorizations to be completed in 1998 and 2001. Assuming a twenty-year principal debt schedule, the County will have approximately $120,000,000 to purchase open space and farmland properties and development rights over the next twenty years.\(^\text{11}\)

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\(^{11}\) Assumptions include a steady 2\% ratable growth, $0.03 per $100 of assessed value for the Somerset County Open Space, Farmland, and Historic Preservation Trust Fund, and consistent
A third $30 million bond authorization to be approved in 2005 is possible, allowing for a more aggressive open space acquisition program. The third authorization would add significantly to the short-term (six-year) and mid-term (ten-year) purchasing ability for open space and farmland preservation. Funding for greenways and historic preservation would also increase in the short-term.

With money available from the Somerset County Open Space Trust Fund and other State and Federal funds, it is likely that the acquisition goal laid out in this plan can be achieved.

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allocations to the four eligible program areas: 30.5% to Open Space, 20.5% to Farmland, 10.3% to Greenways, and 8.2% to Historic Preservation.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COUNTY PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Undeveloped Natural Area

1) General Definition: An area in its natural state with some identified aesthetic and special environmental qualities.

2) Prescribed Use: For use by individuals and permitted groups.

3) Administrative Responsibility: Division of Leisure Services.

4) Maintenance: Limited: Natural, undeveloped trails and natural surface parking areas. No regular maintenance necessary.

5) Control: Limited numbers of signs, permit system for groups, patrols by designated personnel.

6) Example: Sourland Mountain Preserve.

Developed Natural Area

1) General Definition: An area with natural features available for public use in a controlled manner. Limited development to accommodate visitors.

2) Prescribed Use: For use by individuals and permitted groups.

3) Administrative Responsibility: Division of Leisure Services.

4) Maintenance: Periodic inspections with on-site maintenance tasks completed as needed. Routine maintenance plan in effect.

5) Control: Appropriate signs, permit system for groups, patrols by designated personnel.

6) Example: Lord Stirling Park.
General Use Area

1) General Definition: An area that is developed and made available to the general public for a wide range of passive and active recreational opportunities.

2) Prescribed Use: For use by individuals and groups. Regulated uses are permitted as scheduled in areas designated by the Park Commission.

3) Administrative Responsibility: Respective division.


5) Control: Daily patrols by designated personnel. Comprehensive sign system. Permit system for groups, regulated uses and special events.

6) Example: Colonial Park.

Special Use Area

1) General Definition: An area developed for one or several unique uses which requires special care and is made available for public use in a controlled manner. This category should be expanded to include major developed special purpose recreation facilities like the stadium and indoor recreation facilities.

2) Prescribed Use: Use by the general public for specialized activities in a controlled manner.

3) Administrative Responsibility: Respective Division.

4) Maintenance: Regular program designed to meet the unique needs of the area.

5) Control: Daily patrols by designated personnel. Appropriate sign system. Permit/reservation/registration systems.

6) Example: Buck Garden.
Leased Reserve Area
1) General Definition: An area of unassigned park use, leased for interim use pending development.
2) Prescribed Use: Maintained as an open space and held for future use. Not for use by the public at this phase of development.
3) Administrative Responsibility: Division of Grounds Management.
4) Maintenance: Determined by short and long term objectives for the property.
5) Control: Restricted public access. Occasional patrol by designated personnel.
6) Example: East County Reserve.
APPENDIX B

COUNTY PARK DESCRIPTIONS

Leonard J. Buck Garden
1) Total Acreage: 33.22
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: Gardens and visitors center in renovated carriage house, nursery, greenhouse, and woodland garden.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Boardwalk along the lake, computerized plant records database program, greenhouse and nursery.
5) Park classification: Special Use Area.

Chipman Tract
1) Total Acreage: 109.00
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: Undeveloped, informal multi-use trail system.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: A Master Plan to assess the potential for future developed facilities.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

Colonial Park/Spooky Brook Golf Course
1) Total Acreage: 631.18
2) Acreage added since 1994: 87.82
3) Type of developed facilities: Spooky Brook Golf Course, two large group picnic areas with support facilities, unreserved picnic tables and grills for casual use, 1.4 mile fitness par course, three fishing ponds, softball field, seasonal ice skating and cross-country skiing, the Morgan Pellowski playground, miniature golf course, paddleboats, eight all-weather tennis courts, horticultural displays (arboretum, Rudolf W. van der Goot Rose Garden, Fragrance and Sensory Garden, perennial garden), the Lois Howe Nature Trail system, Powder Mill
Pond Wildlife Refuge, canoe launch, parking lots, and a maintenance area.

4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: 18 hole putting course with control building, paddleboats, upgraded playground meeting ADA and CPSC requirements, park map, four parking lots expanded and improved, automated irrigation system and pump station for the Spooky Brook Golf Course.

5) Park classification: General Use Area.

Duke Island Park

1) Total Acreage: 334.50
2) Acreage added since 1994: 2.57
3) Type of developed facilities: Five group picnic areas with support facilities, unreserved picnic tables, playground, band shell, two softball fields, seasonal ice-skating and cross-country skiing, river access for fishing, trail system, visitors center, a maintenance area, and parking lots.

4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Playground upgraded to meet ADA and CPSC requirements, sand volleyball court, visitors center renovated and expanded after destruction by fire.

5) Park classification: General Use.

East County Reserve

1) Total Acreage: 74.54
2) Acreage added since 1994: 74.54
3) Type of developed facilities: None.

4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: None.

5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

Green Knoll Golf Course

1) Total Acreage: 152.00
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: Regulation 18 hole course, lighted 9 hole course, par three Pitch and Putt course, golf shop, snack bar, automated irrigation system and pump station.

4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Irrigation system and pump station.

5) Park classification: General Use Area.
Little Brook Sanctuary
1) Total Acreage: 114.70
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: None.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: None.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

Lord Stirling Park
1) Total Acreage: 921.00
2) Acreage added since 1994: 20.60
3) Type of developed facilities:
   Environmental Education Center – classrooms, meeting rooms, library, bookshop, auditorium, exhibit area, pedestrian trails, two wildlife observation blinds, two observation towers, gardens, seasonal cross-country skiing, ponds for fishing and non-motorized boating.
   Stable – equestrian stable, horseback riding trails, and pasture.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994:
   Environmental Education Center – compost garden, pole barn for canoe storage, Paleo-Indian archeological site.
   Stable – addition to indoor ring with multi-purpose viewing room with ADA restrooms, storage barn with horse stalls, run-in shed for ponies, pony party pavilion, expanded pasture with jumping ring, enlarged parking lot, maintenance barn.
5) Park classification: Developed Natural Area.

North Branch Greenway
1) Total Acreage: 30.58
2) Acreage added since 1994: 30.58
3) Type of developed facilities: None.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: None.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.
North Branch Park

1) Total Acreage: 184.76
2) Acreage added since 1994: 14.7
3) Type of developed facilities: Two group picnic areas with support facilities, unreserved picnic tables, river access for fishing, two softball fields, soccer field, model airplane flying field, model rocket launch area, two horse show rings, pavilion and fairground for special events, County Park administrative offices, parking lots, playground, in-line skating rink, and basketball court.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Covered pedestrian bridge, playground donated by Saturn Corp., new park entrance treatments, new identification signs and information kiosks, Park Headquarters exterior renovation, in-line skating rink, basketball court, park map, and enlargement of horse-trailer parking lot.
5) Park classification: General Use Area.

Quail Brook Golf Course

1) Total Acreage: 200.10
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: 18 hole course, driving range, golf shop, snack bar, and clubhouse.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Concrete tee area at driving range and correction of drainage problems.
5) Park classification: General Use Area.

Ralph T. Reeve Cultural Center

1) Total Acreage: 35.00
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: Printmaking Council of New Jersey building housing offices, two exhibition galleries, studios, and classroom space.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Parking lot upgraded.
5) Park classification: Special Use Area.
Raritan River Greenway
1) Total Acreage: 62.90
2) Acreage added since 1994: 62.90
3) Type of developed facilities: Trail along the river.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Phase I of Raritan River Greenway Plan was completed, providing a bike path extending from the confluence of the river to Nevius Street Bridge in Raritan.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

Schafer Tract
1) Total Acreage: 95.55
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: None.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: None.
5) Park classification: General Use Area.

Second Watchung Greenway
1) Total Acreage: 297.81
2) Acreage added since 1994: 172.52
3) Type of developed facilities: None.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: None.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

Sourland Mountain Preserve
1) Total Acreage: 2,569.70
2) Acreage added since 1994: 950.54
3) Type of developed facilities: Base map, trails, parking area, and 60-foot bridge.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Master Plan completed, base map, new trails, parking lot, and 60-foot bridge.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

South Branch Greenway
1) Total Acreage: 79.58
2) Acreage added since 1994: 55.15
3) Type of developed facilities: None.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: None.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

South Branch Reserve
1) Total Acreage: 387.30
2) Acreage added since 1994: 387.30
3) Type of developed facilities: Pre-existing buildings, Ranger headquarters.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: None.
5) Park classification: Developed Natural Area.

Washington Valley Park
1) Total Acreage: 686.51
2) Acreage added since 1994: 27.43
3) Type of developed facilities: Master Plan, parking lots, overlook.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Master Plan completed, two new parking lots, overlook with railing.
5) Park classification: Undeveloped Natural Area.

Warrenbrook Park (Pool and Golf Course)
1) Total Acreage: 122.70
2) Acreage added since 1994: 0
3) Type of developed facilities: 18 hole course, golf shop, snack bar, Senior Center building, swimming pool, locker rooms.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: New concrete pool deck, diving board, accessible handrail for main pool, locker rooms renovated, pool office expansion, exterior of Senior Center renovated, cart paths added to golf course.
5) Park classification: General Use Area.

Woodfern Farm
1) Total Acreage: 445.85
2) Acreage added since 1994: 445.85
3) Type of developed facilities: Softball fields managed by Hillsborough.
4) New or upgraded facilities since 1994: Softball fields.
5) Park classification: Developed Natural Area.
APPENDIX C
HISTORIC RESOURCES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

Bernards Township
Lord Stirling Manor, Block 23 Lot 68, Lord Stirling Park NRHP
Lord Stirling Riding Stables, Block 23 Lot 68, Lord Stirling Park

Branchburg Township
Van Camp Farm (H. C. Petree) (18-05-71), Block 77 Lot 23, South Branch Reserve
Van Camp Farm (Dr. C. Welk) (18-05-72), Block 77 Lot 28, South Branch Reserve
Station Master House, Reeve Tract
Block 90 Lot 7 (18-05-154), South Branch Greenway

Bridgewater Township
Middlebrook Encampment, Washington Valley Park, NRHP

Franklin Township
Howe Farm (18-08-105), Block 511 Lot 5, Colonial Park
Udo M. Fleischmann Carriage House, Block 512 Lot 9, Colonial Park

Hillsborough Township
Saums Cemetery (18-10-53), Block 174, 149-A, Sourland Mountain Preserve
Vroom Cemetery (18-10-95), Block 48 Lot 10, Duke Island Park

Warren Township
Duderstadt Barn, East County Reserve
Linden Lane Farm (18-20-68), Block 86.01, Lot 3, East County Reserve

(18-00-00) Somerset County Cultural Resource Survey Survey Number
NRHP - National Register of Historic Places
Prepared by the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission 3-2000