

Open Space and Recreation Plan

Township of Clinton
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

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Prepared by:
Clinton Township Planning Board

With the assistance of:
Burgis Associates, Inc.
25 Westwood Avenue, Westwood, NJ 07675
(201) 666-1811

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Executive Summary

The Township of Clinton has a rich diversity of ecological landscapes that offer a wide variety of recreational, scenic and environmental qualities to the Township. Its river basins, reservoirs, strong ridgelines and diverse landscapes feature stunning scenic vistas and a variety of habitats that enhance the quality of life for Clinton Township residents and contribute to the bucolic character of the region.



Preserved Farm and Acquired Development Rights

Despite increasing development pressure, the Township has been able to maintain its rural character which is a direct result of the community's commitment to the preservation of vital ecological areas and a healthy environment for future generations. The preservation and maintenance of open space and recreational areas goes beyond providing residents with an active and healthy lifestyle as it ensures that critical natural habitats and resources are protected against degradation. The primary purpose of an open space and recreation plan is to establish guiding principles for key decision-making processes in facilitating thoughtful and productive purchasing, conservation and management of areas deemed to be of significant environmental and/or recreational value.

Clinton Township contains a wide variety of recreation facilities and open space areas that offer Township residents and the general public a diverse range of opportunities for recreation. In total, the Township encompasses 6,780 acres of recreation and open space areas. These range from active recreational parks, including Foran and Bundt Parks which provide facilities for baseball and soccer fields, to passive preservation and conservation areas such as Brays Hill featuring amenities for nature study and hiking trails. In addition, the preservation of contiguous open space allows for the continuation of agricultural activities critical to the local and State economy as well as providing for future population needs.

The efforts of the Township and its residents in this endeavor have resulted in the identification of all applicable lands and adoption of criteria that will promote a balance of open space and recreation areas among the community's other land uses. Such guiding principles are intended to encourage appropriate determinations of use of Township and publicly owned lands. The ability of the Township to acquire and connect additional lands for open space can be strengthened through collaboration with other State, County and private organizations whose continued involvement will assist the Township with funding and enforcement of consistent environmental health policies that extend past the local level to those of the region and State. The combination of these efforts will ensure the long-term viability of the Township and allow for the continued high quality of life that residents have come to appreciate and enjoy in Clinton Township.

MUNICIPAL LAND USE LAW

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) governs all land use planning activities in the State. As such, the MLUL details the authority of the local Planning Board, the power to zone and the requirement to adopt a master plan land use element, housing element and recycling plan element in order to implement and zoning ordinance. Section 40:55D-28.a. of the MLUL notes the master plan is intended to “guide the use of lands within the municipality in a manner which protects public health and safety and promotes the general welfare,” and section 40:55D-28.b. continues that a master plan shall comprise “a statement of objectives, principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical, economic and social development of the municipality are based.”

This Open Space and Recreation Plan combines the Township’s recreation and conservation plan elements into a single comprehensive plan. The MLUL allows for the adoption of a recreation plan element which must show a “comprehensive system of areas and public sites for recreation.” A conservation plan element must provide “for the preservation, conservation and utilization of natural resources, including, to the extent appropriate, energy, open space, water supply, forests, soil, marshes, wetlands, harbors, rivers and other resources, and which systematically analyzes the impact of each other component and element of the master plan on the present and future preservation, conservation and utilization of those resources.” In addition, this plan sets forth the recommended steps required to preserve and maintain the limited supply of public space.

GREEN ACRES REQUIREMENTS

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection created the Green Acres Program in 1961 to assist counties and municipalities throughout the State in enhancing existing recreation facilities and acquiring land for preservation and recreation purposes. In this mission, the Green Acres Program administers five program areas including: State Park and Open Space Acquisition; Local Governments and Nonprofit Funding; Stewardship and Legal Services; and Planning and Information Management. Its Local Governments and Nonprofit Funding program area includes the Planning Incentive Program which provides grants and loans to counties and municipalities to acquire land for public recreation and conservation purposes which have enacted an open space tax and adopted an open space and recreation plan. Failure to comply with both of these requirements limits the ability of a governmental entity to obtain Green Acres funding. In addition, matching grants are only awarded for preserved lands identified in an open space and recreation plan.

In general, open space and recreation planning is more efficient and cost-effective when supported by a stable source of funding such as an open space tax and the implementation of an open space and recreation plan as a component of a comprehensive master plan. This allows a local government to acquire lands in its open space and recreation plan without making multiple, site-specific applications to Green Acres. The application process for funding is therefore streamlined for participating municipalities. An open space tax provides a local revenue stream to fund open space preservation and recreation projects. Local governments that do not have an open space tax and plan can receive 25% grant funding for land preservation vs. 50% for those that have them.

Open Space Tax

A local government qualifying for Planning Incentive funding “must have established, and be collecting an open space tax, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.7d. Under this law, counties and municipalities may assess a tax, approved by voter referendum, for the following purposes, or any combination of these purposes, as determined by the local government:

1. Acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes;
2. Development of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes;
3. Maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes;
4. Acquisition of farmland for farmland preservation purposes;
5. Preservation of historic properties, including the acquisition of such properties for historic preservation purposes; or,
6. Payment of debt service on indebtedness issues or incurred by a local government for the above purposes (excluding #3).

Open Space and Recreation Plan

The items listed below are required components of an open space and recreation plan in accordance with the Green Acres Program. The organization and level of detail given to each of these items is at the discretion of the implementing local government.

1. Executive Summary: a summary of the plan's origin, purpose, planning processes and findings, major goals it establishes, and actions it proposes.
2. Goals and Policies: the local government's goals and policies should be clearly stated and relate to the applicant's philosophy of open space and recreation.
3. Inventory: documentation of existing public and private open space and recreation resources and opportunities. The inventory is to include the size, location, ownership, and usage.
4. Needs Analysis: an analysis of the adequacy of the current open space and recreation system, as documented in the Inventory, to satisfy present and future needs.
5. Resource Assessment: the assessment of lands with open space and recreation potential and interest, and this lands ability and opportunity to meet the public's needs.
6. Action Plan: a program of actions to guide the orderly and coordinated execution of a plan's goals and policies.
7. General Open Space System Map: a map of the open space and recreation system showing the location and general configuration of all existing public and private open space and recreation resources and sites identified as having open space and recreation potential.
8. Additional Parcel Data Requirements: data required to maintain a statewide map of existing and planned open space.
9. Public Participation: a discussion of the public participation process.
10. Planning Adoption: plan adoption by the local government's Planning Board as an element of the local master plan. A statement of planning board adoption is to be included in the OSRP. The local unit must adopt the OSRP as part of its master plan the next time the OSRP or master plan is updated.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Open Space and Recreation Plan is to provide guidance for current and future acquisition, preservation and management of open space and recreation areas in Clinton Township. This is to be achieved in balance with the goals and objectives of the Township's Land Use Element, Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and Historic Preservation Element.

Through this public planning process, the Township has articulated the importance of open space and recreation opportunities that benefit the Township's residents and public while protecting invaluable natural resources. Similarly, the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commission (ANJEC) recognizes the many reasons to preserve open space, including:

- To ensure the health and diversity of plant and animal communities;
- To prevent increased flooding cause by additional land cover;
- To maintain New Jersey's thriving outdoor tourism industry, providing places to fish, swim, boat, hunt and hike;
- To protect the quality and quantity of our surface and ground water;
- To preserve agriculture as an industry;
- To provide opportunities to exercise and play sports;
- To avoid some of the costs associated with development;
- To preserve our connection with the natural world; and,
- To provide tranquil islands amid the rush and bustle of life.

The following goals and policies are designed to offer guiding principles when considering the acquisition and use of open space and recreation areas in the Township. These goals, like the rest of the Plan, are to be viewed as organic with flexibility to evolve in meeting the current and future needs of the Township. They are intended to be applied in conjunction with the goals and objectives of the Township's various master plan elements.

1. *To promote public open space acquisitions, private conservation actions, and management and maintenance techniques which preserve and protect the integrity of sensitive environmental resources and ecosystems, including but not limited to groundwater, surface water, steep slopes, ridgelines, trout streams, wetlands, stream corridors, aquifers, forests and other areas of native vegetation, habitats of threatened and endangered species and unique natural systems.*

2. *To maintain and enhance the quality of life for residents by establishing and enhancing active and passive recreational lands and public open space, which provide opportunities to meet the needs of the Township's present and future residents including all segments of the population.*
3. *To protect the supply and quality of groundwater and surface water resources through the acquisition and protection of open space in order to meet current and future demands of the Township as well as maintain such valuable resources for the region.*
4. *To provide open space and recreational facilities that meet the actual needs of the Township rather than the minimum state guidelines, including sufficient access to such amenities and upgrading of equipment that does not meet current State and recreation industry standards.*
5. *To provide appropriate and balanced public open space and recreational facilities through public action and the development review process.*
6. *To establish linkages of public spaces through the use of greenways, greenbelts, waterways, trails, paths and bikeways.*
7. *To support and partner with State and County open space programs, private organizations and any other open space programs for ongoing acquisitions as appropriate to the goals of the community.*
8. *To promote agriculture as a vital component of the local economy and preserve such lands for the production of current and future food and material supplies.*
9. *To promote ecotourism in establishing and maintaining such activities in appropriate places to support the local economy in consideration of the needs and impacts to other surrounding land uses.*
10. *To promote ecotourism and agritourism as means of maintaining and preserving open space while supporting the local economy through new revenue sources and job creation.*
11. *To protect scenic vistas, viewsheds and natural features from obstruction, degradation and development in preserving the Township's rural character.*
12. *To serve as the facilitator and source of funding in the coordination of land purchases among all levels of government (Federal, State, County, Municipal) as well as private and non-profit organizations.*
13. *To seek funding for the enhancement of existing open space and recreation areas and the creation of new ones.*

Inventory

The Township contains several Municipal, County, State and privately owned open space and recreational areas. These facilities offer a wide range of passive and active recreational opportunities from nature walks and hiking to active sport fields and playgrounds. Altogether, recreational areas total 6,777.39 acres, or 31.3% of the Township's total land area. 17.9%, or 1,214.22 acres, of the Township's recreation areas are owned or leased by the Township or the Board of Education. The attached Open Space and Recreation System Map depicts the location of these various facilities. The following is a brief description of ownership, size and type of facilities available to the public.

Township Lands

Clinton Township offers a variety of Township-owned or leased recreational facilities for residents. These include active sport facilities for soccer, baseball, lacrosse and other team sports as well as passive recreational areas that encourage activities such as hiking, nature study, and canoeing. These combined resources provide an enhanced quality of life for residents by offering a variety of recreational activities to cater to alternative preferences and abilities. The following is a summary and inventory of Township-owned lands.



Foran Park



Old Stone Spring House at Bray's Hill

Table 1: Township-Owned or Leased Lands by Block and Lot

Block	Lot	Description	Acres	Block	Lot	Description	Acres
7	18.03	Windy Acres	11.63	68	2	Route 31 and Echo Lane	19.49
7	31.01	Windy Acres	254.59	68	9.04	Hacketts Preserve	3.12
7	31.02	Windy Acres	25.3	81	7	Kent Court	4.93
13	28	Haytown Road	0.35	81	8	Hamden Road	2.1
19	28	Prostak Farm	75.296	81	40	Wales Court	28.13
25	10	Prostak Farm	84	82	3	Cramer's Creek Park	83.73
30	19	Bray's Hill Preserve	93.727	82	4	Cramer's Creek Park	98.91
30	23	Bray's Hill Preserve	1.58	82	4.03	Cramer's Creek Park	34.38
30	35	Field of Dreams Playground*	3	82.02	9	Amherst Open Space	1.32
30	39	Field of Dreams Playground*	0.62	82.04	16	Lexington Road	10.81
33	2	Springside Farm	57.74	82.06	6	Bennington	14.15
33	4	Springside Farm	4.87	82.06	40	Andreann Drive	16.66
33	9	Springside Farm	25.15	82.07	25	Oak Knoll	3.78
33	10	Foran Park*	21.8	82.07	43	Drainage	0.57
34	2	Beaver Brook Ravine	45.91	82.08	8	Oak Knoll	1.23
54	1	Beaver Avenue	0.25	82.11	12	Oak Knoll	6.65
56	4	Humphrey Road	0.05	82.12	11	Drainage	1.24
58	1	Humphrey Road	0.19	82.13	61.34	Brighton Park	23.87
61	15	Annandale High Bridge Road	0.29	82.19	29	Southgate Drive Pedestrian Access	0.12
60	56.01	Vought House	2.18	83	4	South Branch Drainage	1.05
60.02	23	Austin Hill Road	5.1	87	47	Whispering Hills	1.58
63	2	Hacketts Preserve	79.91	88	3.02	White Cloud	29.45
63	3.14	Hacketts Preserve	0.30	88	3.03	Bundt Park	33.12
						TOTAL	1,214.22

* These park areas are leased to the Township on a continuing basis to be renewed by the Township at the end of each lease term.

Facilities

Foran Park is located near High Bridge and the Reformatory off of Reformatory Road. The park is currently used by the North Hunterdon Football Club, North Hunterdon Youth Baseball, Hunterdon Mohawks Lacrosse, Round Valley Middle School, Clinton Township Men's Softball, and occasionally, traveling athletic camps such as UK Elite Soccer and the United Soccer Academy. The park has 1 softball field, 1 baseball field, 3 soccer fields and a playground.

Bundt Park is located on Red School House Road near the intersection of State Route 31. Bundt Park is used by North Hunterdon Football Club, North Hunterdon Youth Baseball, Hunterdon Mohawks Lacrosse, Clinton Township Men's Softball, Sky Lands Softball, 30 and over Men's Baseball and North Hunterdon High School Lacrosse. Bundt Park contains 2 softball fields, 1 baseball field, 3 full size lacrosse/soccer fields, 4 basketball courts, a walking trail, a snack bar and restrooms. Most recently, the Township installed a public dog park at the site and anticipates converting some of the existing basketball courts into tennis courts.

Field of Dreams Playground is a community designed and built playground developed with guidance from Robert S. Leathers and Associates Architects. The playground is located on a leased portion of the Immaculate Conception Church on Old Allerton Road in Annandale.

Windy Acres is located in the easterly area of the Township totaling approximately 291 acres. The Township intends to improve access to the site including the installation of a new bridge as well as facilities for picnicking and camping.

Cramer's Creek Park comprises the Marookian and Kaufelt tracts immediately south of North Hunterdon High School with access to the land provided on Regional Road. The Township has installed fitness, cross country and walking trails, a gravel parking area and is available to the public for such activities as well as cross country skiing, hunting, bird watching and is utilized for team sports training. In 2019, the Township intends to develop a wilderness running course through the property. In addition, as a component of the Township's February 2018 affordable housing Settlement Agreement, the Township will develop an inclusionary playground for handicap individuals on a portion of the Kaufelt tract in a manner and location to be determined.

School Lands

Table 2: Board of Education Sites by Block and Lot

Block	Lot	Description	Acres
3	19	Round Valley School	19.4
28.01	12.04	Patrick McGaheran	24.92
60	51	Spruce Run School	17.5
60	56	Middle School	24.17
71.04	1	Middle School	15.7
79	1	North Hunterdon Regional High School	49.26
		TOTAL	150.95

Facilities

The Clinton Township Middle School is located on Grayrock Road, and will conduct grades 6, 7 and 8 beginning in September 2018. The school offers a variety of co-curriculum activities for students and also public access to recreational facilities including the five week Clinton Township Summer Recreation Program, the Men’s over 30 Basketball, Clinton Township Youth Basketball, and Adult Co-Ed Volleyball. The facilities at the school include:

- Indoor all purpose Room/Gym
- 1 Outdoor Basketball Court

The Round Valley School is located on Cokesbury Road, and will conduct grades 3, 4 and 5 as of September 2018. The school offers a variety of co-curriculum activities for students and also public access to recreational facilities. The Men’s over 30 Basketball, Clinton Township Youth Basketball, and Adult Co-Ed Volleyball. The facilities located at the school include:

- 1 Playground which includes, 1 set of monkey bars, 2 chin-up bars, 2 vertical ladders, 1 sand box, 1 complex tot lot
- 1 baseball field with backstop
- 1 soccer field with goals
- 1 basketball court
- 6 benches
- 1 bike rack
- All purpose-room

The Patrick McGaheran School offers education for grades K-2 as of September 2018 and is located on Allerton Road. This school also provides limited co-curriculum activities for students, such as basketball and floor hockey, and allows public access to their facilities. The facilities located at Patrick McGaheran are:

- 1 complex tot lot with 1 set of monkey bars, 10 swings, 1 set of parallel bars
- 1 soccer field
- 1 baseball field
- 1 balance beam
- 1 basketball court
- 1 all purpose room

The Spruce Run Elementary School teaches will conduct preschool to pre-kindergarten as of September 2018 and is located on Belvidere Avenue. The school hosts community groups including North Hunterdon Youth Baseball, Clinton Township Basketball League, and offers family oriented co-curricular activities as well as offering public access to the school's facilities.

- A playground that includes 18 swings, 2 conventional slides, 1 oval climbing set, 1 parallel bars, 2 vertical ladders, 2 sliding poles, 2 monkey bars, 1 merry-go-round, 1 climbing caterpillar
- 8 benches
- 1 open play field
- 2 soccer fields with goals
- 2 baseball fields with backstop
- 1 complex tot lot
- 4 basketball hoops (no nets)
- all purpose room

North Hunterdon Regional High School teaching grades 9-12 is located on Route 31 in Annandale and includes the following facilities on 49.3 acres:

- 4 tennis courts
- 1 track with 6 lanes
- 1 football field with goal posts
- 3 softball/baseball fields (2 with backstops)
- 2 lacrosse fields with goals
- 1 shot put ring
- 1 open play field
- 2 regulation sized baseball fields with backstops
- 4 basketball hoops
- 1 bike rack

The Township and School lands combined contain a variety of active recreational facilities. The following table summarized the total number of facilities in the Township.

Table 3: School Facilities

Facility Type	Number of Fields/Facilities
Soccer /Lacrosse Fields	10
Basketball Courts (indoor and outdoor)	15
Baseball Fields	11
Softball Fields	6
All Purpose Room/Gym	5

County Lands

The Hunterdon County Department of Parks and Recreation focus is, “to provide for meaningful use of leisure time, encourage appreciation of our natural resources, and preserve and protect open space and greenways for the enjoyment of future generations.” The County owns a variety of recreational facilities throughout the Township that offer residents further access to a range of recreational activities. The following is an inventory of County owned lands in the Township.



Echo Hill

Table 4: County Owned Sites by Block and Lot

Block	Lot	Description	Acres
8	5	Cushetunk Mountain Park	2.33
16	3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19	Cushetunk Mountain Park	193.73
19	20, 20.01, 21.09	Arboretum	51.79
20	2.01, 4	Arboretum	83.47
34.06	16	Lot Easement	28
70	8	South Branch Preserve	26.3
81	3, 5.01 & 6.01	South Branch Nature Preserve	13.96
82.13	57.01	South Branch Nature Preserve	50.86
86	2, 2.01	South Branch Nature Preserve	32.58
91.01	13	Echo Hill Section	75.93
93	1, 1.02, 2	Echo Hill Section	28.56
94	1, 2	Echo Hill Section	18.8
95	1	Echo Hill Section	15.43
400	1, 2	Columbia Trail	8.19
		TOTAL	629.93

Facilities

Cushetunk Mountain Nature Preserve is part of a ring of mountains in Clinton Township located adjacent to Round Valley Reservoir and spans the border of Clinton and Readington Townships. The park contains a hiking trail, and allows for mountain biking, nature study and hunting.

The Hunterdon County Arboretum is located on State Route 31 at the southern end of Clinton Township. The Arboretum is now home to the Hunterdon County Parks Department Offices and offers a variety of facilities available to the public. The Arboretum includes a greenhouse, gardens, meeting room, wedding gazebo, picnic sites, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, nature study, restroom and parking.

The South Branch Nature Preserve spans Clinton, Franklin, Raritan and Readington Townships. The preserve consists of a series of smaller trails and parks. These include:

Columbia Trail starts in High Bridge and ends at Valley Brook Road in northern Tewksbury Township on the Morris County border. The trail is relatively flat and allows for hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing. The trail also has benches located along the entire length, picnic areas, and parking facilities.

Echo Hill is located on Lilac Drive in the southern portion of the Township and provides a variety of recreational opportunities. The park provides meeting rooms, restrooms, playground area, reservable facilities, camping sites, and trails that allow for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing.

Melick's Bridge is located on Hamden- River Road in Clinton and Franklin Townships. This park provides hunting, fishing, hiking and canoeing.

Sunnyside Picnic Area is located on Kiceniuk Road and contains a picnic area, hiking/biking trails, cross-country skiing, fishing, canoeing, and parking.

Valinsky's Section is located on River Road in Clinton and Franklin Townships and allows for hunting, canoeing and fishing and has parking facilities.

State Lands

State-owned lands, by far, are the largest providers of open space in the Township, due largely to the presence of Round Valley and Spruce Run Reservoirs. The facilities located at these two park areas provide many recreational opportunities and are used largely by Statewide residents. Round Valley Reservoir and adjoining property make up the largest contiguous area of open space, consisting of over 4,100 acres. Overall, the facilities found at State-owned areas allow for educational, recreational and preservation efforts. The following is a summary of State-owned facilities.

Table 5: State Lands by Block and Lot

Block	Lot	Description	Acres
7	4.03	Round Valley Reservoir	0.9
14	5.01	Round Valley Reservoir	4.78
15	1, 3, 3.01 & 4.01	Round Valley Reservoir	198.85
16	1	Round Valley Reservoir	3,703
25	3, 8	Round Valley Reservoir	45.8
26	4	Round Valley Reservoir	1.25
28	34	Round Valley Reservoir	49.6
30	1	Round Valley Reservoir	29.4
36	20	Ken Lockwood Management Area	3.5
36	24	Ken Lockwood Management Area	1.0
39	1	Voorhees State Park	8.45
39	7	Voorhees State Park	0.4
68	2	Spruce Run Reservoir	19.49
68	15	Spruce Run Reservoir	340
88	2	Round Valley Reservoir	1.92
		TOTAL	4,408.34

Facilities

Round Valley Reservoir and Park encompasses over 4,100 acres; the reservoir itself is 2,350 acres and is 180 feet deep, making it the deepest lake in New Jersey. The reservoir is a man-made lake created in the 1960's to supply water for New Jersey communities. The park offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities including one of the few State parks that offer tent camping sites. Other park activities and facilities include:

- Picnic tables, picnic shelters, playground, food concession
- Swimming (reservoir), bathhouse
- Boating/canoeing: electric motors, gas motors (10 hp limit), trailer launch, cartop launch, no rentals available
- Fishing
- Hunting (waterfowl only)
- Scuba diving
- Winter sports: cross-country skiing, ice fishing, sledding
- Hiking
- Horseback riding
- Mountain biking

Spruce Run Recreation Area is popular with picnickers, swimmers, fishermen, boaters and campers. The reservoir was one of the first water supply facilities to be constructed and operated by the State and covers 1,290 acres with 15 miles of shoreline for recreation. Spruce Run is the third largest reservoir in New Jersey after Round Valley and Wanaque Reservoirs. Spruce Run also offers:

- Playgrounds, in-line skating, basketball, volleyball
- Swimming (reservoir), bathhouse
- Boating/canoeing: sailing (maximum 25 ft length, 30 ft height from waterline), wind-boarding, electric motors, gas motors (10 hp limit), trailer launch, car-top launch, seasonal dry boat storage, seasonal boat rentals and canoe rentals
- Picnic tables, grills, picnic shelters, group picnic facilities, food concession.
- Fishing
- Hunting (waterfowl only)
- Winter sports: ice fishing, cross-country skiing, ice boating
- Hiking
- Biking
- Jogging

Non-Public Recreational Facilities

Table 6: Non-Public Recreational Facilities

Block	Lot	Description	Acres
3	13	N.J. Baptist Convention	75.11
4	21	N.J. American Baptist Churches	33.84
29	3	Valley Crest Preserve	75
30	15.01	Valley Crest Preserve	20.61
41	4	Camp Dill Foundation	5.88
79.01	4	Beaver Brook Country Club	52.63
79.01	10.02	Beaver Brook Country Club	0.542
79.02	9	Beaver Brook Country Club	77.13
79.02	10.01	Beaver Brook Country Club	4.76
79.07	2	Beaver Brook Country Club	1.1
83	1, 5	Y.M.C.A.	2.14
84	3	Y.M.C.A.	17.96
85	1	Y.M.C.A.	10.25
		TOTAL	376.95

Summary of Open Space and Recreation Areas

The preceding analysis indicates that the following acreage of open space and recreational lands exists in Clinton Township:

Table 7: Summary of Open Space and Recreation Areas

Category	Acres
Municipal lands	1,214.22
School lands	150.95
County lands	629.93
State lands	4,408.34
Non-Public	376.95
TOTAL	6,780.39

Needs Analysis

A needs analysis is a planning tool which may be utilized to determine the adequacy of a municipality’s existing open space and recreation system relative to the community’s present and projected public recreational demand. This analysis is based on Clinton Township’s open space and recreation system inventory detailed herein which provides an overview of the distribution of various types of open space throughout the Township. The analysis includes two of several methodologies that can be employed in evaluating open space and recreation needs.

NJDEP Balanced Land Use Concept

The first methodology in addressing the community’s need for open space is the Balanced Land Use Concept, endorsed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The Balanced Land Use Concept provides that a minimum 3% of a municipality’s developed or developable land should be set aside for recreational use within the community. Land deemed developable is exclusive of slopes greater than 12%, wetlands, federal, state and county owned lands along with other environmentally sensitive land that is not suitable for development.

In order to apply the “Balanced Land Use Concept” (BLUC) to Clinton Township, a variety of data sources were consulted and analyzed using a Geographic Information System (GIS). Data sources utilized for this analysis included the NJDEP 2012 Land Use/Land Cover information, a United States Geological Survey Digital Elevation Model and the Open Space and Recreation Inventory. GIS analysis was undertaken to provide information for input into the BLUC, the results of which are found in Table 8.

Table 8 - Balanced Land Use Concept

Item	Area in Acres
Developable land in Township ¹	11,111
Steep Slopes (greater than 12%) in developable areas ² (subtract)	3,624
Land within County, State and Municipal Parks (subtract)	6,252.49
Developed land ³ (add)	6,874
Total Developed and Developable	8,111.51
3% of Total Developed and Developable	243.3

The BLUC indicates that 11,111 acres of developed and developable land remain, being agricultural, forest and barren land categories. Currently 6,252.49 acres are protected by

¹ NJDEP 2012 Land Use/Land Cover: cumulative sum of agricultural, forest and barren land categories.

² USGS DEM approximation of slopes greater than 12% not including those located in protected open space.

³ NJDEP 2012 Land Use/Land Cover: urban category.

the State, County and Township. Finally, 3,624 acres are removed from the calculation due to steep slope constraints. The BLUC calculation indicates that Clinton Township should have a minimum of 243.3 acres of land set aside for recreation purposes, to include both active and passive recreation lands. Currently, the Township owns or leases approximately 1,214 acres applied toward this figure. Therefore, the Township meets the minimum guidelines set by the State. However, these guidelines only depict a minimum set aside and are not indicative of the Township's goals and objectives. The Open Space and Recreation Sub-committee and Township Planning Board reject these minimum standards. Given the Township's commitment to preserving natural resources and open space, and the vast amount of environmentally sensitive areas, assessing the true needs of the Township will increase the BLUC's minimum requirements. A more accurate and useful evaluation of the needs of the community is expressed in the Action Plan which begins on page 28 of this document.

National Recreation and Park Association Criteria

The second methodology utilizes the standards contained in the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) "Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines." These criteria are based on the existing and projected population for the Township. The guidelines indicate there should be a minimum of 10 acres of open space for every 1,000 residents. Included in this calculation, the guidelines recommend that 6 acres per 1,000 residents be provided at the local level and the remainder by County, State or other regional authority.

Based on the Township's estimated population of 13,119 residents as calculated by the 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the imposition of the NRPA guidelines suggests a need for 131 acres of open space to accommodate the Township's existing population, including 78.6 acres at the local level. As such, this standard indicates the Township has an adequate amount of open space relative to its overall land area and population.

However, population and land area ratios are two basic means of assessing whether a community has an appropriate amount of open space and recreational facilities available to the public. These methodologies do not consider significant issues such as types of recreational activities, accessibility, population density, physical character and the actual usage of each existing facility.

The community survey supports this analysis in generating a comprehensive overview of open space and serving as a more practical reliance on local experience, knowledge of the local population, and recognition of the unique character of the Township. The developed character of Clinton Township supports this survey approach as an appropriate way to determine the Borough's open space needs in addition to the two aforementioned methodologies.

Passive Recreation Needs Analysis

The Balanced Land Use Concept (BLUC) is a tool used to determine the minimum amount of open space that a municipality should set aside for recreation purposes. The BLUC is not intended to be a limitation on a municipality's own independent determination of the amount of space that should actually be set aside for recreation purposes. With the number of acres contained in County and State Parks within the Township, it is difficult to express a deficit of passive recreation lands. The Township may want to consider retaining a portion of one or more future purchases as a set aside for future active recreation amenities such as playing fields if league participation continues to rise over the next few years. These sites would need to be evaluated for their appropriateness to active recreation facilities and development.



Echo Hill

Resource Assessment

Resource Management and Conservation

The Township's population has stabilized with a decline in the number of school aged children reducing development pressure for additional housing. The rural character of the area makes living in Clinton Township attractive and desirable. The Township retains many valuable natural resources and important habitats that will benefit substantially from conservation efforts. The benefits of acquiring open space go far beyond creating additional recreational facilities. Safeguarding open space ensures the viability of fragile ecosystems that support the high environmental quality, and quality of life, that residents associate with living in Clinton Township. The forests, wetlands, edge habitats, stream corridors and other environmentally sensitive features are interconnected components that create an overall healthy environment. Clinton Township is host to a variety of environments and habitats that make protection of these areas not just a recreational incentive but also an important step to maintain the future ecological and biological base of the region and the State. The Township prepared an extensive Natural Resource Inventory in 2002, which can be referred to for any additional information on the natural resource base of the Township.

Forested Areas

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) publication titled, “Protection and Care of Urban Forest” provides a detailed list of the resources that are protected and benefits offered by forested areas which:

- Modify local climatic conditions near and within their boundaries
- Create a feeling of privacy
- Serve as recreational facilities
- Provide habitats for plants and animals
- Reduce surface runoff because of the high moisture holding capacity of the forest soils and tree canopy
- Enhance the visual characteristics of scenic corridors
- Reduce noise pollution
- Produce oxygen

The Township retains large tracts of contiguous areas. While there are no virgin forests the Township does contain many mature second and third growth deciduous woods. These contiguous areas of forested land provide an interconnected series of woodland habitat that allows for unrestricted movement for many wildlife species.

There still remain many larger unprotected tracts of the Township that should be considered for preservation. Larger patches of forested areas occur along Route 31 on the west side and in the southeastern portion of the Township near Round Valley. Another large section of forested area remains in the northern section of the Township north of the Reformatory to the Lebanon border.

Wetlands

The New Jersey DEP places a high priority on the protection of wetlands. Wetlands perform many valuable functions that help to maintain balance throughout surrounding ecosystems.

- Wetlands protect drinking water by filtering out chemicals, pollutants, and sediments.
- Wetlands soak up runoff from heavy rains and snow melts, providing natural flood control.
- Wetlands release stored floodwaters during droughts.
- Wetlands provide critical habitats for a major portion of the State’s fish and wildlife, including endangered, commercial and recreational species.

The Township’s largest areas of wetlands are found along most of the stream corridors with smaller isolated wetlands dispersed throughout the municipality.

Streams and Stream Corridors

Stream corridors are important features that provide aquatic habitat, semi-aquatic habitat, drinking and bathing water and allow for movement of various species throughout an ecosystem. Stream corridors are vital to the health of streams by protecting the watercourses through erosion control, pollution filtration and providing protected habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic habitat. Stream corridors in the Township run through a variety of habitats including, forests, grasslands and residential areas.

There are a number of streams in the Township. All but two streams are classified as FW-2, Trout Maintenance streams or higher. Trout Maintenance streams are able to support trout throughout the year. Portions of the Beaver Brook and its tributaries and the South Branch of Rockaway Creek are designated FW-2 (C1) Trout Production. These streams are able to support trout maintenance and are used by trout for spawning. Trout Production streams are considered the highest classification of stream and require rigorous environmental protection in order to ensure the health of these aquatic habitats.

Steep Slopes

Steep slopes are environmentally sensitive features that merit special protection. Forested steep slopes provide protection from many devastating environmental consequences. Loss of cover on slopes can:

- Increase soil erosion and sedimentation
- Decrease surface water quality
- Decrease soil fertility
- Increase overland flow and decrease ground water recharge
- Alter natural drainage patterns

Clinton Township offers a contrasting topography which provides for a variety of viewsheds. While much of the Township has slopes less than 15%, there are areas of slopes that exceed 25%. The steepest slopes occur in the northern section of the Township near the border with High Bridge but the majority of steep slopes occur surrounding Round Valley Reservoir.

New Jersey DEP Landscape Project

In order to address habitat loss, NJDEP's Endangered and Non-Game Species Program (ENSP) needed to grasp the extent and suitability of remaining resources in the State. To accomplish this, they partnered with the Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis (CRSSA) at Cook College, Rutgers University. Utilizing Landsat Thematic Mapper satellite imagery, CRSSA mapped land cover for the entire State of New Jersey, broken down into 20 different habitat/land cover types. After generalized cover types were classified, detailed methodologies were developed to address the habitat suitability issues for each focus category, including beach/dunes, emergent wetlands, forested wetlands, forested areas and grasslands.

After reclassifying data based on standards developed for each category, the habitat data was intersected or combined with the Natural Heritage Program’s Biological Conservation Database (BCD). This database is a Geographic Information System (GIS) coverage that provides information on the sighting of threatened and endangered species, based on the field-work of ENSP scientists and sightings reported by members of the public. It is the most comprehensive data available in digital form on the location of threatened and endangered species.

Habitats are ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, based on the following criteria:

Table 9: NJ Landscape Program Ranking System

Rank	Indication
1	Suitable habitat, no special concern, threatened or endangered species sighted
2	Habitat patch with species of special concern present
3	Habitat patch with State threatened species present
4	Habitat patch with State endangered species present
5	Habitat patch with Federal threatened or endangered species present

Clinton Township is rich in habitat that is suitable to support populations of threatened and endangered species. Four of the five Landscape Project categories are represented in the Township including forested wetland, emergent wetlands, forest and grassland habitats. Most of these habitat types have documented presence of State threatened and endangered species as well as federally listed threatened and endangered species.

There are two primary areas of important habitat with the presence of federally listed threatened and endangered species in Clinton Township. The first is in the northeastern portion of the Township, near Haytown Road. A patch of Rank 5, presence of federally threatened or endangered species, grassland is located in this area. A tributary to Beaver Brook (FW-2 (C1)) also originates at this grassland. The second area with federally listed species is Forest and Emergent lands surrounding the larger portion of Round Valley Reservoir. The Round Valley Reservoir is a water supplier for many communities in New Jersey.

In addition to habitat with federally listed threatened and endangered species, there is an abundance of habitat in Clinton Township with state threatened and endangered species documented. Much of the forest and grassland areas in the Township, which is reasonably contiguous, is home to state threatened and endangered species. These lands coincide with a number of properties already preserved, ensuring their protection and availability as a resource into the future.

The Landscape Program data was intended to aid municipalities, County and State governments, conservation agencies and citizens in determining the extent of critical habitat within their respective jurisdictions and communities. After identifying critical habitat, a variety of means can be employed to protect it, including the following:

- Prioritizing open space acquisitions based on the presence of habitat for threatened and endangered species
- Adopting regulations aimed at protecting critical habitat
- Adopting management policies for open space that are consistent with protection of critical habitat
- Permitting flexibility in development techniques that can accommodate the protection of critical habitat
- Promoting land stewardship practices that are consistent with the protection of critical habitat

Clinton Township has chosen to utilize the New Jersey Landscape Project data to further define priorities for preservation, in keeping with the goals and policies of this plan.

Highlands

The northern portion of Clinton Township contains a portion of the State’s Highland region. This area is a region known for its diverse ecosystem and for the critical future supply of water for the State. The Highlands region was designated as the first Special Resource Area in New Jersey by the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). The presence of this region in the Township adds to the necessity to ensure clean and healthy stream corridors and water quality for the overall health of regional water supplies. In addition, in June 2015, the Highlands Council approved the Township’s petition for plan conformance of the Highlands Regional Master Plan (“RMP”) in both the preservation and planning areas of the Township. The Township’s conformance with the Highlands RMP has decreased development pressure in the community in an effort to preserve natural resources and mitigate sprawl.

Groundwater Resources

Clinton Township has acknowledged that the protection of groundwater resources is a major priority. The Township contracted M² Associates to prepare an evaluation of the Townships groundwater resources⁴. The results of which identified that while two major reservoirs are located in and near the Township, residents receive their water from groundwater sources. In addition, geologic conditions existing in the Township place added constraints on groundwater availability. The Township understands the needs of protecting groundwater systems for the longevity of local water needs and long-term natural resource protection. Protecting and preserving open space areas will help to maintain and protect groundwater systems by creating areas of groundwater recharge.

⁴ Mulhall, Matthew J. 2003. Evaluation of Groundwater Resources of Clinton Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey. M² Associates Inc. Available for review at the Clinton Township Planning Board office, Monday through Friday 8:30am-4:30pm.

Action Plan

In order to carry out the objectives of this Open Space and Recreation Plan, a number of actions must be carried out by the Township and its officials. As stated previously, the Township meets many of the minimum requirements set by the Balanced Land Use Concept and the recreation survey results. However, this minimum requirement will likely become a deficiency with increasing growth demands on the Township. Consequently, a plan must be initiated that will address the need for future environmental protection and open space needs as well as active and passive recreation facilities. There are a number of cost sharing options the Township can utilize to help manage the costs of acquiring and developing recreational lands. Below is a summary of acquisition criteria, potential acquisitions/conservation easements, and implementation approaches and resources that can be used as guidance to current and future decision makers. The information and action plan presented herein is based on input from the public work session of the Planning Board on November 19, 2018 and at the Township Council's December 12, 2018 public meeting.

Acquisition Criteria

Future additions to the open space and recreation inventory of the Township will need to be evaluated in order to determine continuity with the Open Space and Recreation Plan. The following criteria will help guide decision-making for future purchases.

Critical environmental features

Preserving critical environmental features is a mainstay of the Open Space Plan. Protecting a variety of interconnected systems, such as stream corridors, forested areas, wetlands, steep slopes, etc. is a key factor in the overall open space system. When evaluating potential purchases, properties containing multiple critical environmental features should be highly valued, especially when they adjoin other environmentally sensitive areas. When environmentally sensitive properties are acquired, passive recreation should be the end use, provided this is conducive to the preservation of the valued feature(s).

Development pressure

Development pressure can also expedite purchase of available lands. Available parcels may be attractive for potential development. If this is the case, and the parcel meets one or more of the criteria or goals of the Plan, acquisition priority should be given where it can provide a valuable addition for either passive or active recreation. Where development does occur, site plan applications for residential development should include recreation and open space amenities consistent with the Township's land use policies and regulations.

Greenways/linkages

Parcels that connect existing or proposed open space or expand existing or proposed greenways/linkages are valuable additions to the overall open space system in the Township. A linear or contiguous system of open space that provides access for the greater population and preserves uninterrupted habitat, is a stated goal and important to protect. This criterion can be used to evaluate potential acquisition sites for both passive and active recreation facilities.

Increase contiguous holdings

The contiguity of parcels to existing or proposed preserved areas should be an influencing factor. Areas that can contribute to contiguous open space will help to achieve goals regarding expanding open space, preserving habitats and environmental features and maintaining the rural character of the Township. Both active and passive recreational facilities can be examined using this evaluative criteria.

Develop new linkages

As parcels become available and purchased over time, new or expanded linear opportunities may become evident. In this event, parcels that may add connectivity to a new system should be given priority for purchase. Passive and active open space assessments can use this as an evaluative criteria.

Cultural/historical lands

Preserving historically or culturally significant sites is also a consideration when purchasing properties. These significant lands can help to preserve the character and historically rich identity of the Township. Preservation of these lands should generally be geared towards an end use of passive recreation.

Evaluation for active recreation

Purchase of lands for active recreational sites should consider the size of the parcel, topography, soil conditions, location and access to the site. If the parcel is well suited for active recreation, the next step is to determine the development potential of the site for the proposed activities. If the site is large enough to accommodate the proposed facility and meets the requirements set forth in the Action Plan it should be considered for purchase.

Potential Acquisitions/Conservation Easements

The Open Space Advisory Committee has identified parcels that are important to meeting the Township-wide goal of protecting environmentally sensitive resources and the needs of Township residents. While these parcels have been deemed important for potential acquisition, it should be noted that as parcels become available or goals change, so the plan and future acquisitions should also be flexible to meet needs at that time. Table 10 lists the candidate sites that the Open Space Advisory Committee identified for preservation.

Table 10: Potential Acquisitions and Conservation Easements

Block	Lot	Acres	Block	Lot	Acreage
3	16	54.5	16	59	54.76
3	18	118	16	64	36.00
10	1,9.01	170.14	16	73	49.94
11	7	57	29	4	40.00
11	10	56.97	63	8	21.86
11	19	9	68	2	19.49
12	24	39.12	70	6	10.95
13	1	51	71	3.01	21.00
13	3	44.23	82	54	93.49
13	4	31	88	3	45.51
14	5	21.27	89	10	52.81

Other Recommendations

Educating residents on ways to preserve and conserve natural resources can be a valuable tool for expanding open space resources in the Township. Providing educational materials and informative seminars at a Township or neighborhood level may encourage residents to place conservation easements on their property or help to encourage others in the community to do so. It is recommended that the Township dedicate resources to enhancing the availability of open space and recreation information online which may include a current map of sites, list of facilities, fees and contact information for rentals or permits.

Management of Township-owned facilities and areas should be assessed for optimum benefit to users and habitat maintenance. Additionally, there is also a need to set forth policy for the continuing maintenance of open space areas. For example, an open field purchased for preservation should be maintained by the Township to allow for continued grassland habitat and not be allowed to go fallow. Finally, monitoring of privately held conservation easements should be instituted in order to assess if the easements are

properly managed. These steps will help to ensure proper long-term care of the Township's open space and recreation areas.

Implementation Approaches and Resources

A coordinated open space and recreation effort should integrate environmental protection strategies as core elements of the preservation effort. The Township will utilize this approach, as outlined in this plan. The programs and approaches outlined below represent a menu of implementation strategies which the Township will research in order to determine their merit and application in Clinton's continued efforts.

Open Space Tax

Clinton Township had adopted an Open Space Tax in 1997 which generated five cents per hundred dollars of assessed value on a five-year term. In 2002, when this term expired the Township open space tax was set at two cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value. These revenues can be used to fund the acquisition of land for open space preservation and recreational purposes. The Open Space Tax generated approximately \$430,000 in 2016 when the rate was two cents per one hundred dollars of assessed value.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program

In 1999 the State Legislature passed the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund, securing funding for a state-wide open space plan for New Jersey. In order to provide support to local governments who have adopted an open space tax and prepared an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), the Green Acres Program developed the Planning Incentive Grant (PIG). This program provides 50% matching grants to local governments for the acquisition of land for recreation and conservation purposes. To be eligible for funding, local governments must have a Green Acres approved OSRP, and either an open space tax, or an approved alternative funding source which is stable and sufficient, such as an annual tax levy.

The Township has an active program that is funded by a Green Acres PIG grant dating back to 1997, when Clinton Township was one of the first communities to take part in the program. The Open Space Advisory Committee continues to solicit landowners land owners in an effort to identify properties that could potentially be preserved.

Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund

In 1999, the voters of Hunterdon County approved the creation of an open space tax in the amount of 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

There is a provision in the Open Space Trust Fund program which provides municipalities with the opportunity to recapture 10% of what its taxpayers contribute. For 2015, Clinton Township taxpayers contributed \$676,008, making the Township eligible to recapture \$67,600. The money can be utilized on a yearly basis (for eligible

projects) or can be rolled over and banked for a period up to five years. If not utilized within the 5 years, the money is then reallocated for County purposes.

The Environmental Infrastructure Trust Financing Program

This program provides low interest loans to municipalities, counties and authorities for clean water-related activities, including land acquisition when watershed management and water quality benefits are provided. With funding from both NJDEP and the NJ Environmental Infrastructure Trust, the program utilizes a Federal Priority System developed each year by NJDEP. Loans are made for 20-year terms at a blended interest rate. Local governments receive 0% interest rate for half of the allowable costs and market rate interest rates for the remainder.

National Recreational Trails Program

NJDEP provides financial assistance for developing and maintaining trails and trail facilities for non-motorized, motorized and multi-use purposes. The maximum grant award is \$25,000. Projects are funded on an 80% federal share and 20% matching share basis.

Conservation Easements

Recreational land, both passive and active, can be made more accessible with access provided through conservation easements. Conservation easements typically encompass some desirable environmental resource, such as a stream, floodplain or steep slope area, and provide a measure of protection against development to that resource. Limited access permitted through conservation easements is a means to make certain lands more accessible to the public. Access through conservation easements should promote the creation of linked open space corridors, to create a network of open space that can be accessed by means other than automobile, and should not impact the resource protected by the conservation easement.

Partnering with Other Agencies

There are a number of agencies in Hunterdon County that are active in land preservation initiatives. The two most prominent are the County itself and the State of New Jersey. Both agencies have large parks and other land holdings in the Township and will likely continue to purchase land for both passive and active recreation facilities. The Township can work in concert with these two agencies in order to promote the preservation of key environmental resources identified in this plan and the Master Plan.

The New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) is another agency active in land preservation efforts through an adopted open space tax paid for by its customers which was approved in 2001. Its programs specifically focus on the preservation of land adjacent to streams which feed water supply reservoirs. This provides a unique

opportunity to partner with NJWSA to share resources and encourage the preservation of key tracts that meet the needs of both agencies.

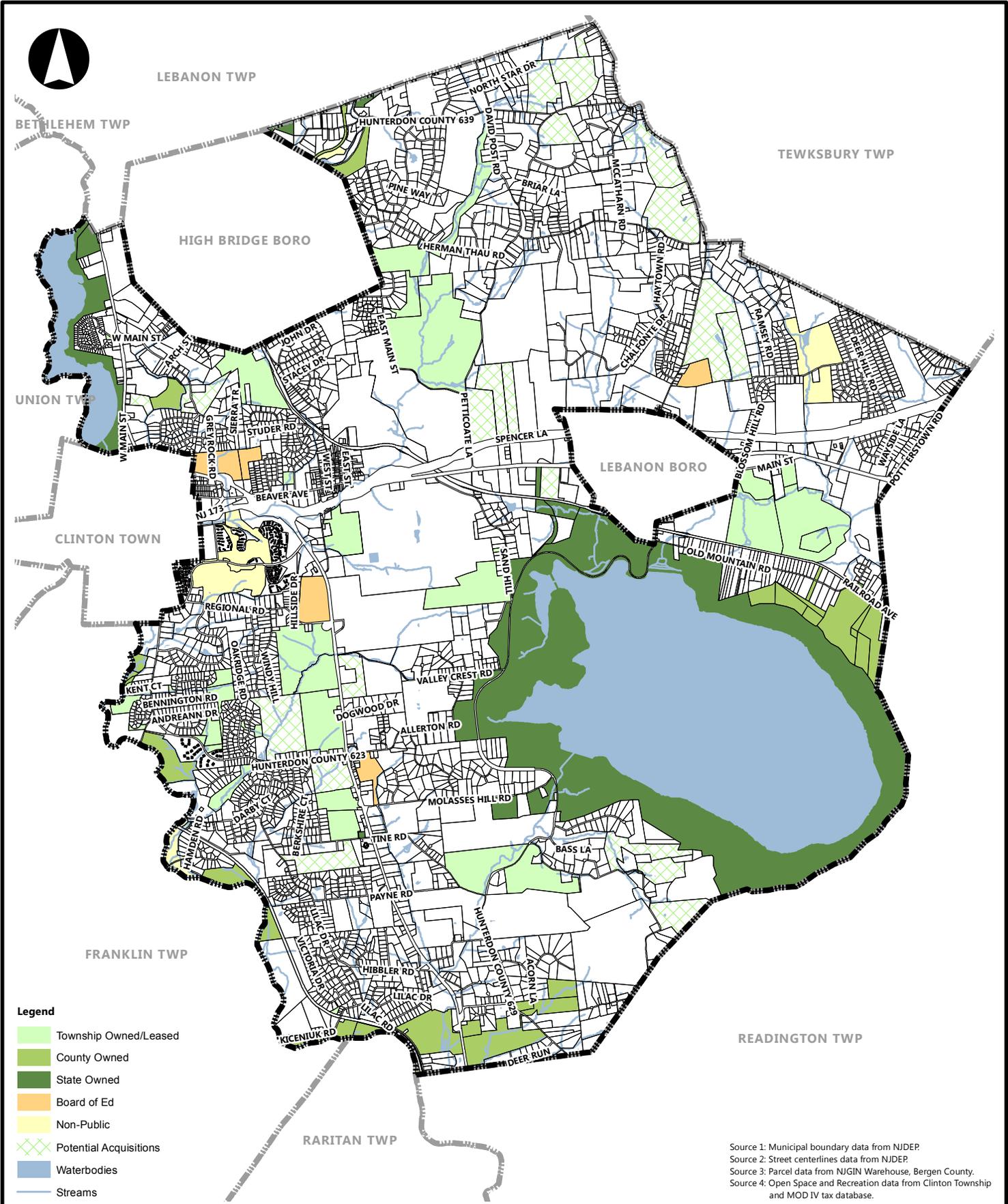
Non-profit and watershed groups have also become active participants in land preservation. These groups can often provide leveraging funds to municipalities or other agencies and are critical to the overall process. There are few preservation deals made which don't involve at least one non-profit or watershed group whose project support was critical.

Summary of Action Plan

The Action Plan provides a toolbox for the Township to assist in the identification, selection, and implementation of acquiring open space and recreational areas. Identifying potential acquisition parcels can be attained by using the acquisition criteria which has been identified as features that are environmentally, socially or culturally significant to the Township. These include critical environmental resources, linkages, contiguous holdings and the like. Once the Township has identified potential parcels, these lands can be acquired or protected through a variety of means. Partnering with the State, County and private organizations and reaching out to private landowners help to bolster open space preservation. Consequently, the Action Plan can be viewed as a guidebook to create a long-lasting agenda of open space and recreation opportunities in the Township.

System Map

The Township's *Open Space and Recreation System Map* is attached. This map includes existing open space lands at the municipal, county and state level and private and quasi-private areas. The map also depicts the Township's priorities for preservation. This map is a fluid representation of acquisition priorities and may change over the span of this plan to account for changing needs.



- Legend**
- Township Owned/Leased
 - County Owned
 - State Owned
 - Board of Ed
 - Non-Public
 - Potential Acquisitions
 - Waterbodies
 - Streams

Source 1: Municipal boundary data from NJDEP
 Source 2: Street centerlines data from NJDEP
 Source 3: Parcel data from NJGIN Warehouse, Bergen County.
 Source 4: Open Space and Recreation data from Clinton Township and MOD IV tax database.

Dwg. Title <h2 style="margin: 0;">Open Space and Recreation System Map</h2>		Project No. _____	Date 11.20.18	Drawn By TB
BURGIS ASSOCIATES, INC. <small>COMMUNITY PLANNING LAND DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE</small> 25 Westwood Avenue p: 201.666.1811 Westwood, New Jersey 07675 f: 201.666.2599		Project Title <h2 style="margin: 0;">Open Space and Recreation Plan</h2>		Dwg. No. OSRP
<small>TOWNSHIP OF CLINTON HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY</small>		<small>2018 COPYRIGHT BA - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED</small>		