

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
GREEN ACRES PROGRAM

MARCH 2005
PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS
Funding Round 2006A

State Open Space Acquisition and Park Development Projects

**Recommendations for Funding
to the
Garden State Preservation Trust**



Richard J. Codey
Governor

Bradley M. Campbell
Commissioner

The Green Acres Mission

*To achieve, in partnership with others, a system of interconnected open spaces,
whose protection will preserve and enhance New Jersey's natural environment and its historic,
scenic, and recreational resources for public use and enjoyment.*

General Overview

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Green Acres Program was created in 1961 to meet New Jersey's growing recreation and conservation needs. Together with public and private partners, Green Acres has protected more than 558,632 acres of open space and provided hundreds of outdoor recreational facilities in communities around the State. The total acres of protected open space and farmland across the State has exceeded 1.25 million acres.

The protection of New Jersey's environmentally sensitive open space, vital water resources, and significant natural and historic resources is critical to the quality of life enjoyed by all New Jerseyans. Preserved open space protects our water supply, protects sensitive habitats for endangered and threatened species, promotes smart growth, and provides a place for public recreation and connection with community and nature.

Quality open space and attractive recreational facilities in cities, suburbs, and other developed communities throughout New Jersey help to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors and help to create an environment where people want to live and work.

Since the 1999 creation of the Garden State Preservation Trust, Green Acres has used all of the enabling legislation's 50% allocation for State acquisition and development solely for acquisition purposes. This has put a huge strain on the resources of the Division of Parks and Forestry and the Division of Fish and Wildlife, with land acquisitions adding to their development and stewardship burden.

In this funding round, \$10 million of the \$75 million available for State purposes in FY06 is allocated to the Divisions of Parks and Forestry and Fish and Wildlife to help address the heavy backlog of capital improvements facing them, in furtherance of the mandate of P.L. 1999, Chapter 152: ". . . that it is necessary and desirable to provide funding for the development of parks and other open space for recreation and conservation purposes."

Thanks to widespread public support of land preservation for recreation and conservation purposes, and to the state's commitment to smart growth and the environment, New Jersey's

legacy of parks, open space, and conservation areas will continue with funding provided under the Garden State Preservation Trust Act.

Funding is provided for land acquisition in rural, urban and suburban communities throughout New Jersey. Funding for park and wildlife area development is provided to create new parks and to upgrade existing recreational and conservation facilities in our communities.

STATE ACQUISITION PROJECTS

Barnegat Bay Watershed Greenway

\$5,500,000

The Barnegat Bay is the most widely used recreational resource in New Jersey, yet its ecosystem is fragile and dependent on the preservation of coastal islands, wetlands, and critical uplands. Preservation of open lands and moderation of harmful uses of the Bay and along the rivers and streams which feed it, will allow the continued enjoyment of this critical natural and recreation resource by millions of residents and visitors each year.

Cape May Peninsula

\$1,000,000

Cape May is host to increasing numbers of tourists every year. This increase is due to the presence of Cape May Point State Park, Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area, and the natural wonders that can be witnessed at these sites. Located on the Atlantic Flyway, both of these state facilities have drawn worldwide attention for the spectacle of the spring and fall migration of birds. Particularly notable are the spring migration of warblers and the fall migration of raptors. Tourists flocking to Cape May to witness these spectacles have also become a rite of the spring and fall migrations. Green Acres will continue its program of expanding Cape May Point State Park, Higbee Beach Wildlife Management Area, and other important wildlife areas to protect wildlife and provide public access.

Crossroads of the American Revolution

\$4,000,000

More Revolutionary War battles took place in New Jersey than in any other state. Remarkably, many vestiges of the Revolutionary War era still remain – mines, mills, soldier’s footpaths, revolutionary leaders’ homes, encampment sites, battlegrounds, and barracks. Many of these sites are already preserved in public ownership; many more can still be preserved. What is even more remarkable, though, is that much of the landscape over which Washington’s army crossed on route from battle to battle is still open land. The basis of this project is to preserve land ~ through a variety of methods and with a variety of partners ~ which will help interpret New Jersey’s role in the American Revolution.

Delaware and Raritan Canal Greenway

\$1,000,000

The Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park is a designated national recreation trail. It serves as a link between rolling countryside of the Piedmont and Inner Coastal Plain Provinces and urban

areas. The park, as it exists now, is a relatively narrow strip along its 70 miles length. Green Acres and its preservation partners would like to widen the park and provide greater protection to its neighboring resources. One of the major project initiatives is to connect the Delaware and Raritan Canal Greenway into a system of existing and planned greenways in the region.

Delaware Bay Watershed Greenway

\$5,500,000

The Delaware Bayshore is an area of global ecological significance: millions of shorebirds and thousands of raptors rely upon the area's food sources and habitat for their survival during migration. The fragile web of marine and terrestrial species can only be sustained through preservation of contiguous blocks of habitat. In addition, this region's economic base is greatly enhanced by the growing ecotourism industry that is directly linked to the preservation of the Bayshore's natural resources. The primary focus of this project is the protection of the major river corridors that drain into the Delaware Bay.

Delaware River Watershed Greenway

\$6,000,000

Many consider the Delaware River Valley one of the most scenic areas of the Mid-Atlantic states. A trip down the 115 miles that the river meanders along New Jersey's western border would reveal dramatic palisades at the Delaware Water Gap, the steep rise of the Kittatinny Mountains, forested islands, rolling valleys, towns, historic villages, and farms. The Delaware River also serves as a section of a major flyway for migratory birds. The amount of access varies throughout the length of the river, but remarkably, the vast majority of the New Jersey land along its length is only sparsely developed and retains its scenic quality. Efforts are underway to secure greater public access, broaden the width of public holdings within its corridor, and protect the scenic and historic resources of the Delaware River and its tributaries.

Harbor Estuary

\$1,000,000

The New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program is a unique regional partnership of federal, state, interstate, and local agencies, citizens, and scientists working to protect and restore the natural resources of the estuary. Land along the Arthur Kill, Hudson River, Raritan Bay, and in the Hackensack Meadowlands is being considered for preservation. While Green Acres funds have previously been used in this region of the state, this specific dedication of funds will demonstrate New Jersey's long-term commitment to this cooperative effort.

Highlands Greenway

\$18,000,000

Sweeping across the north central portion of New Jersey, nearly one million acres of forests in the Highlands surround and protect the source waters for one-third of New Jersey’s citizens. Serving as a spectacular green belt around some of the nation’s most densely populated cities and suburbs, the majority of the Highlands’ mountains, ridges, forests, and fields are privately held and are thus vulnerable to development. Preservation of the greenbelt is critical to ensuring the integrity of New Jersey’s water supplies and maintaining the state’s biodiversity.

Historic Resources

\$3,000,000

New Jersey is dedicated to protecting sites that have played a role in the history of the state and nation. The following are examples of the types of historic sites the state has preserved and continues to expand: Allaire State Park, Monmouth Battlefield, New Bridge Landing, Princeton Battlefield, Proprietary House, Twin Lights, Washington Crossing State Park and Waterloo Village.

Natural Areas

\$2,000,000

New Jersey’s natural areas often protect threatened or endangered plant and animal species. Green Acres is committed to protecting these environmentally sensitive regions of New Jersey. Green Acres plans to expand dozens of Natural Areas throughout the state, ranging geographically from Woodbine Bogs in Cape May County, to Strawberry Hill in Mercer County, to Ramapo Lake Natural Area in Bergen and Passaic counties.

Nonprofit Camps

\$2,000,000

Purchase of nonprofit camps, in both fee and easement, began as a way to preserve existing facilities that might otherwise be lost to development. The purchase of conservation easements will allow continued operation of the camp, while preserving the natural resource values of the land. In most cases, the camps are adjacent to, or complement, existing state holdings.

Pinelands

\$8,000,000

The only nationally designated reserve of its kind in the country; the Pinelands harbor species found nowhere else in the world. Its sandy soils filter billions of gallons of annual rainfall into New Jersey’s largest drinking water aquifer. Comprising one million acres, the majority of which

are privately held, the Pinelands continue to offer important opportunities for land and resource preservation. Permanent protection of open spaces in the Pinelands will ensure excellent water quality, ecosystem integrity, sustainable agricultural production, and the continuance of such resource-based recreation as canoeing, hunting, and camping.

Raritan River Watershed Greenway

\$6,000,000

Portions of Hunterdon, Morris and Somerset counties are located within the watershed basin of the Raritan River, a suburban area of the state that is faced with increasing residential development pressure. Green Acres will pursue land preservation efforts in the Raritan River watershed to protect areas of natural diversity and historic resource value, including the Sourland Mountains, the largest contiguous wooded area in central New Jersey. Other parcels of open space also will be preserved, creating a greenway network connecting existing and future public open space and recreation areas throughout central New Jersey.

Ridge and Valley Greenway

\$9,000,000

Bounded by the Highlands to the east and the uppermost reaches of the Delaware River to the west, the Ridge and Valley region is made up of ridges including the Kittatinny and Jenny Jump, and valleys including the Paulinskill and Wallkill. These are popular areas for camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, and cross-country skiing. The ridge-tops offer amazing vistas of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The region is also traversed by the world famous Appalachian Trail.

The purchase of additional lands in the Ridge and Valley Region will create linkages between publicly owned lands such as the Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area, Stokes State Forest, High Point State Park, Jenny Jump State Forest, and Bear Swamp Wildlife Management Area. These efforts would serve to promote public access while also helping to protect surface water quality in the watersheds of the Upper Delaware River, the Paulinskill, the Wallkill and the Pequest River, and aquifer recharge areas for public drinking water supplies. This project area will further protect the habitat of a variety of wildlife species, including many endangered plant and animals such as the dwarf wedge mussel, bog turtle, bobcats, and rattlesnake.

Trails**\$2,000,000**

The mission statement of the Green Acres Program includes the goal of establishing “an interconnected system of open spaces.” One of the reasons is that these connections ~ often called trails, greenways, or blueways ~ allow people and wildlife to move between, and better enjoy, public and private protected land. Preserving the scenic viewshed along new and established trails and greenways is also a high priority. Existing recreation trails can suffer problems of overuse and user conflicts. Many trails must host hikers as well as motorized vehicles; these uses often are viewed as incompatible. New Jersey realizes that it is in the public's best interest to purchase land to expand and protect single purpose and multi-purpose recreation trails.

Urban Parks**\$1,000,000**

Providing recreation and environmental education opportunities in urban areas is a national priority. Across the country, the departure of jobs and population from urban centers has compromised the quality of life in our largest cities. Urban public open space and recreation areas have suffered from a lack of funding, maintenance, available land and staffing. Creating and enhancing public open space in our urban areas not only improves the quality of life for urban dwellers and workers, it is often a catalyst for urban redevelopment and renewal, and serves a critical role in controlling urban and suburban sprawl. Recognizing the need for, and importance of urban public open space and recreation facilities, New Jersey provides parks, recreation areas and facilities, and protects historic resources such as Liberty State Park, the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, and the Walt Whitman House. Liberty State Park, situated in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, is New Jersey's most popular state park, entertaining millions of visitors each year. Green Acres will continue to acquire land and develop recreation facilities in New Jersey's cities to expand and enhance recreational opportunities for the residents and visitors to these important places.