



STAFF REPORT

DRCC #: 26-5609A

DATE: September 21, 2026

PROJECT NAME: Lawrence Hopewell Trail -- Pretty Brook Segment

Latest Submission Received: August 28, 2026

Applicant:

Township of Lawrence
James Parvesse, P.E., C.M.E.
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Lawrence Township, NJ 08648
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Engineer:

Jeffrey S. Richter, P.E., P.P.
ACT Engineers
1 Washington Boulevard, Suite 3
Robbinsville, NJ 08691
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Project Location:

Road	Municipality	County	Block(s)	Lot(s)
Pretty Brook Road	Lawrence Township	Mercer	N/A	N/A

Jurisdictional Determination:

Zone B	Major	Governmental
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Subject to Review for:

Drainage	Visual	Traffic	Stream Corridors
X			X

Documents Received: Site Plans (28 sheets) dated November 5, 2024; prepared by Township of Lawrence.

**THIS STAFF REPORT IS ISSUED AS A GUIDE TO APPLICANTS IN
COMPLYING WITH DRCC REGULATIONS. IT IS NOT AN APPROVAL. NO
CONSTRUCTION SHALL BEGIN UNTIL A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL
HAS BEEN ISSUED.**

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Existing Conditions: The project area is located along Pretty Brook Road between Cleveland Road and Province Line Road in Lawrence Township, Mercer County, and approximately 3.8 miles northwest of the Delaware and Raritan Canal at Port Mercer and within the Commission Review Zone B. In the existing condition, most of the project area consists of open space wooded and meadow wetland areas, along with single-family residential developments located on comparatively large lots located along Pretty Brook Road.



The project area is a segment of the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail (LHT), a 22-mile multiuse trail that runs through Lawrence and Hopewell townships in Mercer County that offers safe and scenic off-road access for families, joggers, hikers, bicyclists, and commuters to enjoy the abundant natural environment of this region. The LHT is part of the Circuit Trails, an 800-mile network of bicycle and pedestrian trails connecting people to jobs, communities, and parks in the Greater Philadelphia Region. The Circuit Trails network begins south of Philadelphia, extends northeast to the LHT, and connects to the East Coast Greenway to the east and to the Appalachian Trail to the west.

The LHT is mostly complete, although several undeveloped segments remain, including the Pretty Brook Segment that is the subject of the application. The proposed route of the segment of the LHT that is the subject of the application would be an off-road side path along Cleveland and Pretty Brook roads to Province Line Road. The current trail route turns south onto Province Line Road, crosses the historic truss bridge over the Stony Brook and continues to where it turns west onto the Education Testing Service campus across from Audubon Lane.

In 2021 the Commission issued a certificate of approval to continue the development of the LHT by constructing an approximately 10 foot-wide 1,882 linear-foot extension,

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including a pedestrian footbridge that would span a tributary to Pretty Brook (DRCC #20-5609). That project proposed an increase in impervious surface coverage of 18,816 square feet (0.43 acre), including 18,214 square feet of pervious bituminous pavement and 600 square feet of bridge decking. DRCC #20-5609 also proposed the disturbance of approximately 36,038 square feet (0.83 acre) of land. The certificate of approval for project DRCC #2-5609 expired on February 17, 2026.

Proposed Project: The applicant proposes a project to develop the LHS Pretty Brook Segment in a manner similar to that which was approved by the Commission pursuant to DRCC #20-5609. The project proposes 1,791 linear feet of 10 foot-wide multiuse trail constructed of pervious pavement, and a prefabricated steel footbridge that would span the Pretty Brook and rest upon two concrete abutments.

Based upon the submitted application, the project would result in an increase of 18,816 square feet (0.43 acre) of impervious surface coverage, consisting of 18,214 square feet of pervious pavement and 600 square feet of bridge decking. The project would also result in the disturbance of approximately 36,038 square feet (0.83 acre) of land.

Stream Corridor: The entirety of the proposed project site is located within the Stony Brook watershed. A tributary to Stony Brook and its floodplain bisect the proposed project area. The project proposes both permanent and temporary intrusions within the Commission stream corridor area related to the construction of an approximately 10 foot-wide extension to the existing LHT, including a pedestrian footbridge spanning the tributary to the Stony Brook. The proposed trail would be constructed of pervious pavement. The proposal includes 5,806 square feet and 3,512 square feet of permanent and temporary impacts, respectively, within the defined stream corridor. Therefore, the project is subject to stream corridor impact review pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:45-9.1(a).

For this project, the Commission stream corridor would be defined by the area encompassing the Stony Brook and its tributaries, the 100-year floodplain associated with the Stony Brook and its tributaries, and all of the land within a 100-foot buffer adjacent to the 100-year flood line associated with the Stony Brook and its tributaries. The 100-year floodplain line used to establish the limits of the stream corridor by the applicant was determined by the effective FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). However, the FEMA FIRM only provides a delineation along the main stem of the Stony Brook, and not the tributary in question. Therefore, the floodplain of both the Stony Brook and the tributary to Stony Brook were considered as part of the mapping.

The tributary to Stony Brook is neither a State nor FEMA studied stream. Therefore, a normal depth analysis was performed to determine the 100-year floodplain elevation of the tributary to Stony Brook. The results of the normal depth analysis indicate that the 100-year floodplain elevation for the tributary to Stony Brook is below the main stem Stony Brook 100-year floodplain backwater elevation. Therefore, the FEMA FIRM 100-year floodplain delineation along the mainstem of the Stony Brook would control. The applicant has therefore submitted an acceptable delineation of both the floodplain and the defined Commission stream corridor.

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Commission staff has determined that the proposed permanent and temporary disturbances within the stream corridor could be considered to be a conditional use. N.J.A.C. 7:45-9.4(a)1 provides that recreational paths may be permitted, as a conditional use, if the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Commission that the proposed use complies with the provisions of the Master Plan. The Master Plan notes at Pages 31-32 that the most important quality possessed by a linear park is the role it can perform as a connector. The Master Plan further notes that State agencies, counties, municipalities, and private individuals or groups should be encouraged to develop, enhance, and protect resources which can become a part of the network associated with the canal park. Thus, Commission staff determines that the proposed multiuse trail and pedestrian footbridge spanning the tributary to Pretty Brook could be considered to be a conditional use within the stream corridor as a recreational path that complies with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan.

Stormwater Runoff: As noted above, the project proposes an increase in the amount of impervious surface coverage area, attributable to the proposed 10 foot-wide trail constructed of pervious pavement with a gravel stone base. The proposed pervious pavement will be underlain by a 5.0 feet-deep layer of clean, washed broken stone aggregate. To comply with stormwater management quantity requirements for the trail, the applicant submitted calculations which demonstrate that the pervious pavement section would mimic the hydrologic characteristics of the existing woods and meadow land use areas. Specifically, the applicant demonstrated that the proposed stone storage base would be capable of storing the increase in the volume of runoff from the 100-year event.

Therefore, Commission staff determines that the proposed stone base beneath the proposed trail would provide sufficient storage capacity to comply with the specific runoff quantity standards at N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.6(a)1.

Water Quality: Based upon the submitted application, no new or renewed vehicular access drive pavement and/or gravel vehicular travel surfaces are being proposed onsite. In addition, the surface of the proposed trail would be constructed using pervious pavement, which is recognized as providing an 80% total suspended solids (TSS) removal rate if designed in accordance with the guidelines of the NJ Stormwater Best Management Practice (BMP) Manual. Therefore, Commission staff determines that the project is in compliance with the stormwater quality requirements at N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.7.

Groundwater Recharge: The Commission regulations require that stormwater management measures maintain 100% of the average annual preconstruction groundwater recharge volume for the site; or that any increase of stormwater runoff volume from pre-construction to post-construction for the 2-year storm is infiltrated. As noted hereinabove, the proposed trail would be constructed of pervious pavement with a gravel stone base. To address stormwater management recharge requirements for the proposed trail, calculations were provided which demonstrate that the proposed 5.0 foot-thick storage bed beneath the porous pavement would store and recharge any increase of stormwater runoff volume from pre-construction to post-construction for the 2-year storm. Therefore, Commission staff has determined that the project is in compliance with the groundwater recharge requirements at N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.5.

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Non-Structural Methods: The Commission requires that sufficient non-structural stormwater management strategies be incorporated into the project site design “to the maximum extent practical.” The applicant has proposed the following non-structural measures in the proposed project design:

- The project is generally being constructed at-grade, thereby minimizing land disturbance; The project does not propose to remove any living trees;
- The project results in no impacts to freshwater wetlands;
- The project proposes only minimal additional grading; and
- The use of porous pavement closely mimics the existing hydrologic conditions.

Therefore, based on the foregoing, Commission staff determines that project has proposed non-structural measures that are adequate, and the project is designed in accordance with N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.4.

Stormwater Management Maintenance Plan: A stormwater management operation and maintenance plan document has been prepared and submitted for the LHT Pretty Brook Segment project. The plan includes maintenance details for the proposed pervious pavement system. The plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:45-8.8.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval.

Sincerely,



John Hutchison
Executive Director

c. Mercer County Planning Board
Lawrence Township Planning Board

Please refer to the Commission project number (DRCC #) when making a submission, a resubmission, or transmitting project correspondence or documents.