New Jersey Trails Plan Purpose

This update of the New Jersey Trails Plan presents a renewed vision, goals and strategic actions to help guide and coordinate the efforts of all those who plan, build, operate and maintain New Jersey’s trails. The Plan reaffirms the importance of providing trails for all and emphasizes the value of trails in supporting a wide range of benefits. The Trails Plan is ultimately intended to benefit New Jersey citizens and visitors of all ages and abilities, for whom trails can provide access to nature and to community destinations, serving both recreation and transportation needs. The Trails Plan is intended to inspire those who care about trails and see their value to New Jersey.

The Plan is also intended as a guide to those who must make decisions regarding the funding and development of trails, from the state to the local level. To realize New Jersey’s Trail Vision as an on-the-ground reality will require the commitment of all levels of government to adequately fund trails development, operation and maintenance, and the commitment of all trail advocates and providers to cooperate and work collaboratively to expand and improve trails. The New Jersey Trails Plan serves as a common ground for all to achieve these two conditions for success – funding and cooperation.
In addition to legislators and elected officials, there are two state Departments primarily responsible for funding, policy and program decisions affecting trails, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The primary agency involved in the development of trails is NJDEP. The Agency's Division of Parks and Forestry includes the Office of Natural Lands Management (ONLM), which is responsible for the Trails Program. The Trails Program receives guidance from the New Jersey Trails Council, a volunteer committee representing a wide range of trails constituencies. New Jersey's state parks and forests include numerous trails and provide opportunities for additional trails. Lands managed by the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife division offer numerous marked and unmarked trails available during non-hunting times or by special permit for equestrian use on selected wildlife management areas.

Other units within NJDEP also administer programs that significantly impact trails. The Division of Land Use Regulation administers rules pertaining to freshwater wetlands, stream encroachment, flood plains, coastal areas and riparian lands. The administration of these rules and regulations can have a significant effect on trails development. The Green Acres Program administers the Garden State Preservation Trust, the major source of funding for the acquisition of open space, for farmland and historic preservation, and for parks and recreational facilities.

The other Department with major trails involvement is the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The Bicycle and Pedestrian Unit provided funding through the Federal Highway Administration to update the Trails Plan. There are other divisions within these two agencies that also contribute powerfully to New Jersey’s trails, and other agencies with programs that impact trails development. In addition, most counties and many municipalities have also embraced trails, developing and managing trails as part of their parks, recreation and open space programs.

Non-profit and volunteer organizations also make a significant contribution to trails. They vary widely, from land trusts, conservation and recreation organizations staffed by trained professionals to trails advocacy groups and outdoor recreation clubs staffed by volunteers. These grassroots organizations build a broad constituency of trail advocates and users, and also provide important services, from managing preserves to organizing volunteer labor. Much of the information about trails, maps and descriptions comes from their efforts. Many trails are in place and maintained primarily because of the enthusiasm and persistence of local volunteers and “friends” groups. Often in partnership with government, trails organizations guide many trail projects through the land acquisition and development process to trail opening celebrations. This Plan is also for these non-profit organizations, which collectively act as a strong and positive force for New Jersey Trails.

Scope of the Trails Plan Update
This Trails Plan differs from earlier New Jersey Trails Plans, published in 1982 and 1996. Unlike the 1996 Plan, it does not evaluate trails in terms of their eligibility for inclusion in the New Jersey Trails System. It does not include an inventory of existing trails nor does it focus on individual trails. It is similar to the first New Jersey Trails Plan published in 1982 in that it is comprehensive in scope and assesses a broad range of needs, desires, topics and issues from the standpoint of both trail users and trail providers.

The planning approach included an examination of trails planning and trends that influence trails development and use in New Jersey. An active Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) representing trail user
groups and public and private trails organizations provided guidance. The planning process included
interviews with key stakeholders and extensive public outreach, with focus groups, public information
centers, vision workshops, county surveys, state park superintendent surveys, trail user surveys and
on-site (trail head) intercept surveys.

Based on the needs, desires, topics and issues that were raised during the planning process, this Plan
establishes a Vision for trails in New Jersey, proposes Goals for fulfilling the Vision, recommends actions
and activities to achieve the Goals, and assigns roles and responsibilities for implementing those actions.
The Plan proposes many possible actions, including a series of priority short-term (1-2 years), mid-range
(3-5 years) and long-term actions (6-10 years), many of which are intended to be on-going. The actual
priority and order will ultimately depend on available funding and the commitment of the trails com-
community - both government and non-profit - to advance and implement these recommendations.

Public Outreach
The extensive outreach carried out for this Plan guided the development of:

- Key issues and current topics to be considered in the Plan
- A Vision for trails in New Jersey
- Goals describing the conditions necessary to achieve the Vision
- Recommendations for actions to achieve the Goals

The outreach activities included:

Surveys to gather input from stakeholders
- County Park Director Surveys
- State Park Service Superintendent Surveys
- Intercept Surveys (conducted at four trail facilities throughout the state)
- Trail User Surveys
- Website Surveys

Focus Groups to explore specific topics and issues
- State Agency Trails Issues Focus Group on June 21, 2006
- Health and Trails Focus Group on August 30, 2006
- Business and Landowner Focus Group on September 8, 2006
- Urban Trails Focus Group on September 12, 2006

Open Houses to confirm issues and opportunities
- September 12, 2006 Atlantic County
- September 19, 2006 Morris County
- September 26, 2006 Mercer County

Visioning Workshops to develop a future vision and vision themes
- October 16, 2006 Morris County
- October 24, 2006 Burlington County
- October 26, 2006 Monmouth County
An essential part of the outreach effort is the Trail User Survey. The purpose of the survey is to gauge current public opinion regarding trails in New Jersey, identifying topics, issues and concerns to inform the process of updating the New Jersey Trails Plan. The survey was conducted informally and the results cannot claim to be statistically representative. Participants were self-selecting. Nonetheless, the survey provided an important opportunity to hear from thousands of New Jersey residents who care about trails. The results provide significant insight into the perspectives and priorities of many of New Jersey’s trail users and supporters.

Surveys were filled out by attendees at three Open House Meetings held in September 2006. The survey was also posted on the project web site and the public at large was invited to fill it out.

Response to the survey was overwhelming. A total of 3,759 respondents completed the survey.

*Some of the results from the Trail User Survey are included here.

**What setting best describes the trail location for your most frequent trail activity?**

- **Remote Areas** (29%)
- **Rural/Agricultural Areas** (38%)
- **Just Outside a City/Town** (7%)
- **In a City/Town** (7%)
- **Off Highway Vehicle** (17%)
- **Walking, Jogging, Running** (18%)
- **Hiking & Backpacking** (22%)
- **Other** (4%)

**Top Trail Activities**

- Hiking & Backpacking (22%)
- Walking, Jogging, Running (18%)
- Off Highway Vehicle (17%)
- Canoeing/Kayaking (9%)
- Mountain Biking (9%)
- Biking (8%)
- Equestrian (7%)
- Winter Trail Uses (6%)
- Other (4%)

**In what season do you always/most often use trails?**

- **Summer** (26%)
- **Fall** (30%)
- **Winter** (14%)
- **Spring** (30%)

**Top 10 Trail/Water Routes respondents use most often in New Jersey**

1. D&R Canal State Park Multi-use Path
2. Wharton State Forest
3. NJ ORV Park – Chatsworth (closed Sept. 2008)
4. Delaware Water Gap NRA
5. Brendan T. Byrne State Forest (formerly Lebanon SF)
6. Ringwood State Park
7. Appalachian Trail
8. Assunpink WMA
9. Waywayanda State Park
10. Paulinskill Valley Trail

63% of respondents felt that their use of trails has influenced the purchase of their homes.
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How often do you experience conflicts with other trail users?
- Rarely (42%)
- Never (33%)
- Sometimes (22%)
- Always/Mostly (3%)

Approximately how much money did you spend on trail equipment in the past year?
- $0 - $100 (9%)
- $101 - $500 (26%)
- $501 - $1000 (19%)
- $1001 - $5000 (23%)
- More Than $5000 (23%)

Overall what is the primary reason you use trails?
- Recreation/Social (55%)
- Exercise/Health (33%)
- Transportation/Utilitarian (12%)

Top Trail Issues
- Quality of Trail Facilities (19%)
- Lack of Information about Trails (13%)
- Overcrowding (12%)
- Inadequate Support Facilities (10%)
- Accessibility of Trails (9%)
- Other (8%)
- Lack of Trails (25%)
- Safety and Security (4%)

How do you typically learn about trails to visit?
- Word of Mouth (42%)
- Internet (20%)
- Clubs/Businesses (16%)
- Signs/Maps (12%)
- Newspapers/Books/Brochures (10%)

How often do you experience conflicts with other trail users?
- Never (33%)
- Rarely (42%)
- Sometimes (22%)
- Always/Mostly (3%)

If New Jersey is to develop new trails what should be emphasized?
- Trails that serve multiple types of trail users (24%)
- Trails in natural landscapes (28%)
- Trails that connect public destinations (15%)
- Trails for specific types of outdoor recreation (33%)
- Other (10%)
- Inadequate Support Facilities (10%)
- Lack of Information about Trails (13%)
- Accessibility of Trails (9%)
- Other (8%)
- Lack of Trails (25%)
- Safety and Security (4%)
What are Trails?
As described in the first New Jersey Trails Plan, trails preceded humankind’s existence on the earth as traces or paths of least resistance, accommodating movements of land animals. With the arrival of homo-sapiens on the planet and for most of our existence, both land and water trails have been considered and used as transportation facilities. With the emergence of an industrialized, urbanized economy, the evolution of transportation and the development of mechanized travel to meet our commercial and personal transport needs, some trails were transformed and new facilities were developed into roadways, railways and highways to accommodate the new modes. As this happened, many trails that were once the primary links in our transport system became byways; eventually they began to serve primarily a recreation, as opposed to a utilitarian, function.

If you asked someone 50 years ago to define trails, they would likely have suggested that trails were paths located in parks or forests used for recreation primarily by hikers. This definition has broadened markedly. Today, trails are defined much more broadly with respect to uses, settings, users and their place in our culture.

Trails continue to be popular for outdoor recreation, but many are also important for transportation (as they originally were). Some trails are created to commemorate, preserve and provide access to historic places or unique natural landscapes, providing a venue for education and interpretation. Many trails are located in rural or bucolic settings, but an increasing number are found in urban and suburban areas where they are sometimes referred to as “community pathways.” Today, trails can also be located within public rights of way and can include “on-road” elements, such as a bicycle touring route or a trail connector that completes a network of trails. Trails are being used by an expanding variety of user types. In addition to land trails, there are a fast growing number of water trails or “blueways”: streams, rivers, canals and waterfronts for boating.

Trails are enjoyed not only by the vigorous and physically fit, but by persons of all abilities, ages and means who are seeking physical activity and improved fitness as part of a healthy active lifestyle. They are for the old and the young, including people with varying sensory or motor limitations. In short, they are for everyone. Outdoor Recreation in America, a 2003 survey conducted for the Recreation Roundtable by Roper Starch Worldwide, confirms a high national participation in a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities that make use of trails, for example:

Outdoor Recreation in American, 2003 National Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoeing/ Kayaking</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horseback Riding</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Road Vehicle Driving</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Biking</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, trails are not facilities set apart. They are part of our infrastructure, the connecting fabric of our communities. This broader definition of trails calls for a plan that addresses a broader audience and elevates the importance of trails to our society now and into the future.
Benefits of Trails

The benefits of trails seem almost endless. Many benefits were defined and discussed in the previous State Trails Plans, however, only more recently have they been widely recognized. Collectively these benefits present compelling reasons for addressing the needs of trails in New Jersey.

Recreational Benefits

Trails provide a wide variety of opportunities for recreation and leisure time pursuits that virtually anyone can enjoy, including activities that require no equipment or special facilities. Trails use can be a life-long pursuit. Trails provide access to various environments and, thereby, to opportunities for other recreational activities such as bird watching, photography, fishing, hunting, etc.

Transportation Benefits

Trails serve as facilities for purposeful travel such as commuting and shopping. (See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Trails and Transportation.)

Environmental Benefits

Trails can act as buffers or green spaces that preserve and protect the environment, contributing to wildlife habitat, to water and air quality and to flood control, for example. Trails foster awareness and appreciation of the natural environment, contributing to the support of programs for conservation, preservation and open space protection. Trails used for transportation result in fewer vehicles on the road, minimizing the environmental impacts of vehicle use.

Health Benefits

Trails use contributes to healthy, active lifestyles, providing physical, mental and emotional benefits to all, regardless of age or ability. Trails provide opportunities for physical challenges and fitness. (See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Trails and Health.)

Economic Benefits

Trails offer direct economic benefit to users where they provide low-cost, close-to-home means of transportation and opportunities for recreation. According to the Outdoor Industry Foundation, 2006, active outdoor recreation generates 730 billion dollars to the national economy. Trails are proven to increase property values and can be a part of urban revitalization or redevelopment. They contribute to the local economy and can be tourism destinations. Trails can even be part of ecotourism strategies, engaging visitors in first hand experience of natural and historic landscapes.
Social/Cultural Benefits
Trails can provide either an individual experience (serenity, solitude) or a social or group experience. They provide connections among people and communities, including opportunities to encounter and interact with other users of differing socio-cultural backgrounds. Trails development can provide opportunities for diverse groups to work toward a common goal. A trail can provide access to cultural, historic and scenic resources and can also serve as an aesthetic feature/attraction in and of itself. Since trails can be used by people of all ages, trails are family-friendly.

Educational Benefits
Trails provide opportunities to explore natural settings and to learn about nature and the environment within communities. Trails also provide venues to observe and learn about historic and cultural landscape features, promoting an understanding of the history and geography of the places through which they pass.

Types of Trails and Trail Users
Practically all types of trails and trail uses are covered in this Plan. The following narratives describe major trail types and uses, though in reality, the lines between them blur and new forms of trail activities, conveyances and designs are constantly emerging.

**Major Trail Types**
- Hiking/Foot Trails
- Bicycling Trails/Bike Paths
- Mountain Biking/Mountain Biking Trails
- Equestrians/Equestrian Trails
- Canoeing/Kayaking/Water Trails
- Winter Trail Users/Snow Trails (non-motorized)
- Off-Highway Vehicle Users/Off-Highway Vehicle Trails

**Hiking/Foot Trails**
The term “hiking” is used both as a generic term to denote many forms of foot travel on trails, and as a term describing a specific type of trail use. These various forms include such uses as trail walking, nature walking, jogging or running, hiking and backpacking, which differ from one another in a variety of ways, from their purpose to the types of trails and environments they typically require.

In New Jersey, foot trail use can be undertaken throughout the year with no equipment, at no cost, alone or with others, and by practically anybody. Trails of varying width, surface, terrain and distance serve the needs of these different forms of foot trail use. The descriptions of the various forms of foot trail activity that follow, those most frequently practiced in New Jersey, are derived from the New Jersey Trails Plan of 1982.
Trail walking (for pleasure, fitness or socializing) can take place on trails of varying length, width, and surface and on many different types of terrain in urban, suburban and rural environments. The benefits of trail walking come from engaging in the activity itself, though the character or qualities of the trail facility can certainly add to the enjoyment of the experience.

Nature walking is distinct in terms of purpose, i.e., the observation or study of some facet of nature either on the trail or at a destination accessed by the trail. Nature walking can also take place on various types of trails within a variety of settings; however, some trails are specifically designed for this activity. These trails may include interpretive information (usually on signs) about local flora or fauna or other local features.

Jogging or running is undertaken primarily for reasons of health and fitness, but can also serve a social function. These are strenuous activities, and trails used for this purpose are typically longer, with smooth surfaces free from obstacles, though not necessarily paved. These trails are, desirably, located on gentle as opposed to rugged terrain. Shared use loop trails in parks or linear trails along rail rights of way are ideal for this purpose. Another challenging variation, referred to as trail running, takes place on more rugged trails.

Hiking may be described as a prolonged walking activity usually on less improved or unimproved foot trails which may be located on varied or rugged terrain, often in more remote areas. As such, hiking can present physical or technical challenges. Hiking is usually engaged in for longer periods of time than trail walking, from several hours to a full day, and hikers typically carry food, water and other gear to last the duration of the hike. Hikers are motivated by many reasons: the physical challenges, exercise and fitness, or to experience a sense of remoteness or solitude in a natural or scenic environment. Trails or trail systems used for hiking are, desirably, of sufficient length to accommodate trips of longer duration. Since hikers typically travel at 1 to 3 miles per hour, hiking trails should be a minimum of three miles long and up to 15 or more miles if they are to accommodate day-long hiking trips. Trails or trail systems in parks that provide this distance and have loops or circuits are ideal. Hiking requires relatively simple trailhead facilities and parking or access to transit, since trails most frequently used for hiking may be at some distance from the hiker's residence.

Backpacking can be simply described as hiking for more than a day. As such, backpackers must carry food, water, shelter and other gear with them. Even with modern lightweight equipment, carrying a loaded backpack is a strenuous activity. In addition to the challenge of carrying a heavy pack, often over unimproved trails, backpacking involves camping overnight in remote areas. Given these circumstances, backpacking appeals to those who enjoy challenge and adventure. Backpacking trails should have places for camping en route, with sources of water, and some form of sanitary facilities. There are a limited number of trails in New Jersey that accommodate backpacking.

Collectively, as suggested by the trail user surveys conducted for this Plan, the various forms of foot trail use are the most popular trail activities in New Jersey. Foot trails are available in most state parks, forests and recreation areas in New Jersey, and at many county and municipal parks as well.

**Bicycling Trails/Bike Paths**

Bicycling (as a trails activity) consists of the use of the bicycle for recreational or utilitarian purposes.
on a variety of facilities. Typically these facilities are multi-use or shared-use paths of varying widths, with an asphalt surface or with a compacted non-impervious surface such as quarry screenings or crushed stone. The types of trails used for bicycling are typically suitable for walking (or in some cases equestrian use) and, where they have a hard surface, are suitable for skateboarding, in-line skating and other wheeled conveyances. This being the case, trails bicyclists are typically sharing facilities with other trail user groups. Where trail traffic volumes are moderate to low, bicycle use is generally compatible with foot trail uses.

Bicycle trails may be loop trails located in parks as part of a multi-use trail system, or linear trails located within abandoned rail rights of way, or utility and roadway rights of way. In this Plan, as in the 1982 Trails Plan, bicycle trails may also consist of designated (signed or mapped) recreational bicycle touring routes that are completely or partially on roadways, e.g. Delaware River Heritage Trail and the High Point to Cape May Bicycle Touring Route.

Bicycle trail riders include a wide range of participants, from families with children out for a recreational ride for usually short distances and enthusiasts who may ride long distances, even multi-day trips if trails of sufficient length are available, to those using a trail for commuting or other utilitarian trips.

There are nationally accepted design guidelines for multi-use paths (The AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 1999) and the New Jersey DOT has developed its own design guidelines for bicycle facilities. Currently, these guidelines are incompatible with NJDEP regulatory requirements, which allow (under a general permit) a maximum path width of only 6'-0 in wetlands or wetlands transition areas. This width is not sufficient for shared use according to existing “state of the practice” guidelines.

Mountain Biking/Mountain Biking Trails
Mountain biking is a trail activity recognized in the 1996 Trails Plan as a distinct trail activity. Mountain biking involves riding a mountain bike or fat-tired bike on a variety of trail surfaces or rights
Mountain biking differs from other bicycle trail riding in terms of the intensity of the activity and the types of facilities on which it is practiced. Although mountain biking can be carried out in a variety of settings: back yards, dirt or gravel roads, park trails and other multi-use trails, mountain bikers typically prefer to ride on trails referred to as singletrack – narrow trails that wind through forests, fields, hills and mountains. Mountain biking is challenging and tests a rider's skills and stamina. Mountain bikers describe a sense of enjoyment and excitement that results from riding singletrack.

Because riders often ride far from developed areas, there is an ethic of self-reliance in the sport. Riders must be able to repair their broken bikes to avoid being stranded where help may not be available. Club rides and other forms of group rides are common, however, individual solitude is often sought for the rider's experience.

**Equestrians/Equestrian Trails**

Equestrians or horseback riders ride on a wide range of facilities, therefore, equestrian trails encompass a variety of designated trails, paths and greenways, woods roads, abandoned rail rights of way, utility corridors and undeveloped lands, both public and private, that are open to recreational horseback riding. This includes sand roads and fire breaks in the Pine Barrens which are heavily used by equestrians. Trails for equestrian use are available in many state and county parks and federal recreation areas.

In addition, the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife has 16 designated wildlife management areas (WMA) that are open to equestrian use with a Bridle Trail Permit.

**NJ WMA For Equestrian Use**

- Flatbrook-Roy
- Whittingham
- Black River
- Capoolong Creek
- Alexauken Creek
- Assunpink
- Colliers Mills
- Greenwood
- Medford
- Glassboro
- Millville
- Union Lake
- Peaslee
- Higbee Beach
- Tuckahoe
- Winslow

Equestrian organizations, perhaps more so than other trail user groups, have created systems of equestrian trails on private land through agreements with the landowners. Horseback riding can take place on multi-use trails, where permitted.

Since horses are prey animals, their natural instinct is to run when frightened. Therefore horses may be startled when they encounter unfamiliar users, such as bicyclists, hikers, ATVs and dog-walkers. Horseback riding can cause physical impacts to the trail surface and horse droppings affect the use of trails by others.

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Horseback riding typically requires more extensive trail head facilities than other trail uses, and may include trailer parking, water troughs and mounting stations.

Canoeing/Kayaking/Water Trails
Canoeing and kayaking involve the use of non-motorized, paddle-powered vessels on navigable waterways. A water trail (blue trail, blueway) can be described as a stretch of river, a canal, a shoreline, or other waterway navigable by canoe or kayak that provides an educational, scenic, or physically challenging recreational experience.

Most canoeing and kayaking occurs in freshwater settings; however, in New Jersey, canoeing or, more often kayaking, is practiced in bays or along the shore. There has been unprecedented growth in the use of kayaks and canoes for bay, lake and river fishing. As is the case with trail walking or hiking, canoeing and kayaking are often performed as an outdoor family recreation activity. They are also used as means of viewing or photographing scenery. Canoeing and kayaking have the potential to be part of Eco-tourism and Heritage Tourism strategies.

Access to water trails is available at many state, county and municipal parks, forests and recreation areas in New Jersey.

Winter Trail Users/Snow Trails (non-motorized)
Non-motorized winter trail uses in New Jersey include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledding (one or more sled dogs pulling a manned sled over ice and through snow) and snow biking (cycling, usually with a mountain bike, on snow and/or ice). Other less frequently practiced types of non-motorized winter sports include skibobbing (using a bicycle-type frame attached to skis instead of wheels) and skijoring (cross-country skiers pulled by dogs). Winter trail uses are generally physically demanding, requiring endurance and skill. Cross Country Skiing is considered among the best cardiovascular fitness activities and provides muscle toning for every major muscle group.

Snow trails are linear facilities that accommodate winter sports users. Winter sport users often utilize hiking, biking or multi-use trails when they are snow covered. Loop trails with internal connectors and cutoffs are preferred by cross-country skiers. These allow different trail lengths and permit easy return access for tired skiers. Multiple short loops with a single access point are often preferable to one long loop.

Non-motorized winter sports trails are available at most state parks, forests and recreation areas in New Jersey and in many county and municipal parks.
Off-Highway Vehicle Users/Off-Highway Vehicle Trails

Off-Highway Vehicle trail use involves the use of motorized vehicles on “off-road” trails or routes, providing the user with a visceral sense of exhilaration, challenge and adventure. OHV use has been rapidly growing in popularity. For example, over 15 million Americans ride ATVs and 70% ride as a family recreation activity. This activity usually involves a significant investment of equipment, fuel and maintenance.

“Off-Highway Vehicle” (OHV) is the currently preferred generic term for off-road vehicles or motorized trail vehicles, which includes a wide range of vehicle types. OHV refers to vehicles licensed and registered for on-road use, such as four-wheel drive vehicles (pick up trucks and sport utility vehicles) and dual sport motorcycles (street legal), as well as to those that lack criteria needed for operation on public roads, such as All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), off-highway motorcycles (dirt bikes) and snowmobiles.¹

OHVs can be used on private lands with landowner permission. Where OHV users may legally ride on the state’s public lands, however, is regulated by the Motor Vehicle Laws of New Jersey, Title 39 (for use on public roads) and the State Park Service Code (for use within State Parks and Forests)². The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Off-Road Vehicle Use Policy Directive also regulates and restricts the use of OHVs on all NJDEP-administered lands.

There is considerable unmet demand for OHV utilization and access opportunities. This has likely contributed to illegal use on public land and trails (not intended or designed for that purpose) and trespassing on private property. There is a history of debate over the use of OHVs on public lands. OHV enthusiasts and NJDEP have been in search of land (public and private) for operating OHVs. NJDEP continues to look for legal opportunities to establish designated venues.

¹ Both ATVs and snowmobiles must be registered with New Jersey’s Motor Vehicle Commission for use on public lands and for crossing public highways. There is currently no registration for dirt bikes.

² According to the State Park Service Code (N.J.A.C. 7:2-17 et seq.), which was readopted April 13, 2007, a person may operate licensed and registered motor vehicles (such as four-wheel drive vehicles and dual sport motorcycles) on established public roads on lands under the jurisdiction of the State Park Service. This includes dirt, gravel or sand roads in state parks and forests that are designated as public roads unless the road is posted as closed by signs or barriers. The State Park Service Code does not allow ATV or dirt bike use on NJDEP lands except with a special use permit for organized “special events” on a pre-established course under prescribed conditions. Snowmobiles are allowed on designated roads and trails in designated state parks and forests.
Delaware & Raritan Canal Bridge over Route 1, Lawrence Township, NJ