

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES AND
STRATEGIES IN RINGWOOD BOROUGH AND THE
HIGHLANDS REGION
DRAFT



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Prepared for:
Borough of Ringwood
Prepared by:
Banisch Associates, Inc.
Flemington, NJ 08822

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to examine the opportunities for eco-tourism in the New Jersey Highlands and how municipalities like Ringwood can develop sustainable tourism strategies. Eco-tourists increasingly gravitate toward close-to-home experiences, a trend sure to increase in lockstep with the price of gasoline and Ringwood's slice of Highlands wilderness is literally around the corner from the epicenter of the New York/New Jersey Metropolitan Region. This landscape reinforces the State motto "Come See For Yourself", and the rich mosaic of lake communities nestled among native forest, expansive reservoirs, and its deep-rooted history make Ringwood the quintessential Highlands.

The rapidly growing eco-tourism industry, calls upon the adventurer in us to explore the outdoors yet increasing interest in the arts, culture and history has spurred interest in a diverse tourism experience. Heritage tourism, agri-tourism, festivals and art events increasingly combine to reinforce the "power of place". The field of tourism is responding to these areas of interest by connecting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. While the term "eco-tourism" implies a native-based travel activity, this report examines the range of historical, cultural, ecological travel activities that, in combination, are referred to herein as "sustainable tourism".

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM?

A key feature of sustainable tourism is the maintenance and *improvement* of the quality of life of tourism regions for both inhabitants and tourists. Recognizing that sustainable tourism customers (or eco-tourists) are in search of a completely unique experience, the strategies used for mass-market appeal are less likely to appeal to this group. Rather, harnessing and promoting what is of cultural, societal, or ecological importance to a community is essential to a successful eco-tourism strategy.

The International Eco-Tourism Society identifies that the following seven key principles for eco-tourism should:

- minimize impact on the natural environment;
- build environmental and cultural awareness and respect;
- provide a positive experience for both visitors and hosts;
- provide direct financial benefits for conservation;
- provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people; and
- raise sensitivity to host's political, environmental and social climate.

Sustainable tourism uses material and immaterial resources of the environment, in ways that allow a balance in and awareness of the economic, social, ecological and spatial spheres. The four distinct categories of nature-based tourism that most eco-tourists fall into include:

- *Active/consumptive* = fishing, hunting, crabbing;
- *Passive/consumptive* = beachcombing;
- *Non-consumptive/active* = hiking, canoeing;

- *Non-consumptive/passive* = guided bird watching, photography tours.

Development of these niche markets for highly-populated areas like northern New Jersey provides for a variety of services for the diverse interests of eco-enthusiasts. However, sustainable tourism recognizes that human impacts of this type of tourism can destroy the very resource it seeks to explore. Outdoor recreation is a consumable product that remains only in the mind of the consumer after it is completed, while what is sometimes left behind can be damaging to the physical environment. Public parks and forests have adopted “carry in-carry out” rules so visitors will “leave no trace”. This outdoor ethic encourages consumers to be respectful of the area providing them the experience.

Paul F.J. Eagles, of the University of Waterloo, Ontario, noted the uniqueness of the outdoor recreation “product” as opposed to a typical consumer product as follows:

- Outdoor recreation experiences are consumed on site, well away from home.
- Travel costs to the site often far exceed the costs at the site.
- It is a package of facilities and programs that attracts people to a site or area.
- Recreation experiences are ephemeral and experiential; they cannot be possessed except as memories.
- The production, delivery, and consumption of the recreation product occur simultaneously.
- The consumer is actively involved in the production of the experience, both their own and those of others.
- Poor recreational experiences cannot be returned for a refund.
- Recreational sites and experiences are difficult to assess before purchase; therefore, word-of-mouth from friends and family is an important choice determinant.
- Recreational products cannot be stockpiled during periods of low demand and sold during times of excessive demand.
- Important aspects of the recreation experience occur before and after the on-site participation.

Ringwood hosts a diverse array of the attributes highly sought after by eco-tourists and heritage tourists. The extensive trails through undisturbed forests offer vistas of all scales, and the historic attributes of the Borough, coupled with the abundant natural resources and beauty, offer a wealth of leisure-time opportunities for residents and tourist alike.

Diversification of economic development in the Borough to broaden the tourism opportunities can have a multitude of positive impacts. Financially, tourism can diversify the local economic base will providing for new and innovative niche markets. Environmentally, this type of tourism brings awareness and understanding of the natural setting and importance of conserving, enhancing and preserving the cultural and natural resources in the region. Eco-tourism also promotes and enhances the sense of “place” and quality of life enjoyed by residents and sought after by visitors.

ECO-TOURISM IN THE UNITED STATES

The tourism setting and experience is important to both general consumers and eco-tourists, but it is important to recognize the distinct benefits sought by eco-tourists, including natural settings, history and culture. These experiences may be enjoyed separately or in combination or the range of tourism activities may attract a household with diverse interests. When preferred eco-tourism destinations were examined in the early 1990's (Wight 1996), nearly half of the offerings of North America-based, nature-oriented tour operators were first world destinations. And a survey of consumers found that most eco-tourists had traveled to North American destinations with far greater frequency than to exotic locales. A survey of North American consumers found that equal proportions favored Canada, the U.S. or all other destinations. However, when eco-tourists were surveyed, they were more likely to select Canadian destinations over the U.S.

The low rate of passport holders among U.S. citizens was thought to decrease the likelihood of an overseas eco-tourism destination for these visitors (8% of U.S. citizens held valid passports according to the 1992 study). In fiscal year 2006, the U.S. Department of State issued over 12.1 million passports. (www.census.gov).

Ringwood holds a wealth of opportunities to be explored when viewed through the lens of the eco-tourist, given that hiking, trekking, walking and wildlife viewing continue to be among the top ranked activities. Since these travelers only require limited and small-scale accommodations, Ringwood may also be well suited to match resources with this potential market. However, protecting Ringwood's unspoiled setting will be an important draw, since the natural setting is the most important feature to eco-tourists and Ringwood's vast wilderness areas are a stark contrast to the metropolitan sprawl that extends to the foothills. Competing for the eco-tourist dollar will require responding to eco-tourist desires for open wilderness settings with expansive opportunities for wildlife, nature and cultural history interpretation, where physically challenging activities are an integral part of the experience. As Ringwood and its neighbors search for the right balance of eco-tourism, community needs and the effects on local stakeholders will need to be carefully factored into the equation.

ECO-TOURISM IN NEW JERSEY

Tourism was the fastest growing New Jersey industry in 2005. According to the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, the tourist industry is a major component for the State's economy. It is estimated that 72,240 visitors came to the NJ in 2005, the most tourist visits since 1993.

In the Skylands region of NJ, "Entertainment" accounted for 16.1% of tourism, "Accommodations" (4.9%), "Transportation" (4.8%), "Food" (3.8%) and "Shopping" (3.8%). The Skylands region and Ringwood Borough in particular, attract visitors who seek refuge from urban life. They come to this four-season attraction to experience the foliage in the fall, hike or bike the countryside and relax at one of the many lakes in the region in the summer.

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ECO-TOURISM

The discovery and understanding of wild, natural environments is at the core of eco-tourism, frequently associated with wilderness, national parks, birds, tropical forests and wildlife. Eco-tourists have a strong affinity for sustainability and environmental protection and prescribe desired behaviors which are shared by these affinity groups. Activities like bird watching and wildflower photography are common eco-tourism pursuits in the northeast.

Eco-tourists are generally interested in observing and understanding nature as well as themselves. Social contact is not important to a worthwhile eco-tourism experience and, in fact, may degrade the experience. Eco-tourists are a diverse group with strongly held attitudes reflected in other cultural expressions, including literature and art. They also loosely share a philosophy that guides travel actions and behavior.

Eco-tourists, generally sensitive to the rules of the road as they have come to be understood, constitute a powerful group that has been gaining in influence on the delivery of tourist services. Eco-tourism is a reflection of an increasing global consciousness about the importance of sustainable human activities to natural resource protection. It is currently in the growth stage of its business cycle, where increasing participation and interest suggests a need for a greater market supply and more private development.

Ringwood and the Highlands “core” offer a variety of active and passive eco-tourism activities. In Ringwood, seen on [Figure 1](#), these assets include County and Borough open space, State parks and State forest lands, opportunities for water-based activities at the reservoirs and semi-public and private open space lands. Effectively promoting and marketing the full array of eco-tourism activities will heighten awareness of the natural resources of the Borough, as well as creating local business opportunities serving these tourists.

The Power of Trails

An extensive trail network currently exists in the Borough ([Figure 2](#)) and provides a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities for users. The trails also allow for a variety of skill levels, making the region accessible and attractive to families and serious hikers alike.

The Highlands Trail is an emerging trail network interconnecting parks and forests that will ultimately span from the Hudson to the Delaware. Guided by the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, the Highlands Trail has earned the Millennium Legacy Trail designation (one of 50 across the country), a singular distinction within New Jersey’s Trail System.

The Highlands Trail will offer a diversity of outdoor experiences, from a simple “walk in the park” to “a challenging lung-gasping experience” for those who “climb Windbeam Mountain in Ringwood to dangle over the Wanaque Reservoir, which supplies 25% of New Jersey’s residents with water.” Also seen along this trail is the Long Pond where Hewitt’s Ironworks were first located in the late 1700’s (www.njskylands.com). With natural beauty of the highest caliber, Ringwood is poised to capture the hiking and climbing eco-tourists. Combined with the Highlands rich history it also affords a variety of nature and heritage tourism experiences.

The wealth of outdoor opportunities throughout the full course of the year makes every season a new eco-tourism opportunity in Ringwood. Expansive scenic vistas echo the season's changing palette, subtle in the springtime and an intense uprising of color in the fall. Significant strides have been made to realize the vision of the National Parks Service and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation for the Highlands Trail. The New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, responsible for developing the footprint of the trail, is seeking maintenance partnerships among volunteer trail clubs, community groups, private landowners and public agencies. These efforts in Ringwood should be rallied. One interesting feature along the trail is the Highlands Natural Pool in Ringwood, which provides an opportunity for hikers to cool off after a long hike on a warm day. Eco-tourism development in Ringwood should rally the volunteer and non-profit interests into a coalition for sensible tourism (COST – Coalition Organized for Sensible Tourism).

Critical Wildlife Habitat

The New Jersey Landscapes Project has identified extensive areas of habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. A treasure chest of rich grassland and forest habitats, tucked away in remote pockets in this most densely populated state in the nation is critical to the successful migration and breeding of a large number of birds and other species. While grasslands are almost nonexistent in Ringwood, the extensive closed canopy forest provides what has been described as an unusual resource for birds that are in decline in many parts of the eastern United States. Many migrating species travel long distances from South or Central America (neotropical) using the Highlands region as a vital link. Each year, 95 species of neotropical migrants pass through and seventy to seventy-five neotropical bird species breed in the Highlands area. Examples include warblers, thrushes, cuckoos, tanagers, orioles, grosbeaks, vireos, and flycatchers (USDA Forest Service).

These unique birding opportunities offer a firm foundation for responsible eco-tourism in Ringwood. However, assuring that other recreational uses of Ringwood's forests don't degrade or diminish these interpretive opportunities will be a continuing challenge.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism, a fast growing niche market in the travel industry, is defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present." Recent studies conducted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation show that those who participate in heritage tourism are often older, more educated and more affluent. This tourist also tends to stay longer to explore what the local area has to offer.

The opportunities and benefits of heritage tourism play an important part in a sustainable tourism strategy. First, culturally and historically significant sites already exist and in most cases require little or no additional development or improvements of infrastructure. Heritage tourism also brings historic and cultural sites into view by visitors which can lead to an increase in awareness and preservation of significant sites. These two factors lead to a tourism base that taps into existing sites with little need for capital improvements. Money and interest raised at the sites also contributes to greater preservation and conservation efforts, a win-win situation for Ringwood and the region.

Ringwood’s rich historical setting attracts many in this category. Historic sites are found throughout the Borough (Figure 3) and provide many interpretive opportunities. These include the State-owned lands where visitors can see the Manor and Forges of Ringwood, as well as smaller historically significant sites outside of the State Park. Developing an extended “loop” of trails among historic destinations could enhance the overall tourist experience and offer a product that can be effectively “packaged”.

Crossroads of the American Revolution

New Jersey played a crucial role in Washington’s bid to hold off the British as our new nation was being born. The Crossroads of the American Revolution was created to raise awareness of New Jersey’s unique Revolutionary War history and to link and improve hundreds of nationally-significant Revolutionary War historic, cultural and natural resources in New Jersey. While the frequency of Revolutionary War engagements and extent of over-wintering is heaviest in the triangle between New York, Trenton and Monmouth, Ringwood played a key role as the site of the Ironworks and home of Robert Erskine, who supplied iron to the Revolutionary Army.

Erskine requested deferment of his workers from military duty and was turned down. He soon lost many of them to the war and iron production ceased by the end of 1777. However, Erskine had surveying skills aside from the iron-making business and at the request of George Washington he was appointed Geographer and Surveyor-General to the Continental Army on July 27, 1777. Throughout the war he provided invaluable service in making maps of the areas involved in hostilities. After a mapping trip in the autumn of 1780, he developed ‘a severe cold’ and died two weeks later.” It is said that George Washington attended his funeral.

RINGWOOD’S ECO-TOURISM STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

Ringwood Borough has taken the initiative in implementing sound planning policies to investigate and promote eco-tourism. In the 2007 Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan, the Borough identified that Ringwood has “a unique opportunity to capitalize on the scenic natural resources, cultural heritage and regional recognition of the Highlands as a tourism destination.” To this end, a variety of strategies and goals were defined. These included:

Product Development Strategy

Build on Ringwood’s Strength as a Tourism Destination

Goals:

- Protect, preserve, and enhance Ringwood’s authentic natural, cultural, historic and architectural heritage assets and distinctive “sense of place” as the foundation for future sustainable tourism development and promotion
- Focus resources on prioritized areas and corridors with the greatest potential for sustainable tourism development

Infrastructure and Mobility Strategy

Make it Easy for the Visitor – Connect People and Places

Goals:

- Enhance visitor mobility and access through transportation improvements
- Increase the quality of the visitor experience
- Explore strategies for opening and reopening scenic hiking trails to the public

Marketing Strategy

Focus on Brand Equity, Continuity and Packaging

Goals:

- Build on the N.J. Highlands strong brand awareness and as a unique and scenic natural area
- Enhance existing and create new collaborative marketing initiatives and partnerships with a range of communities of interest (art, historic preservation, outdoor activities, etc.)
- Focus initially on day trip visitors and develop a long range strategy for overnight tourism opportunities for the greatest economic impact

Outreach and Public Involvement Strategy

Educate and Involve the Community

Goals:

- Increase recognition of tourism’s importance to the economy and to the overall quality of life in Ringwood, Passaic County and the Highlands
- Engage all stakeholders in refining the local vision for sustainable tourism
- Involve the community in the tourism planning process

Organizational/Collaborative Strategy

Keep it Simple and Collaborate for Success

Goals:

- Create a Tourism Development organization to guide preparation of a Strategic Tourism Development Plan

- Establish a creative, collaborative and results-oriented organizational structure to support tourism development
- Create strong partnerships and systems to increase cooperation of the public and private sectors in tourism planning and development
- Develop new and stable sources of funding for product development, infrastructure improvements and marketing

Developing a clear vision for strategic tourism planning should involve all stakeholders and should be an ongoing, collaborative process.

To expand the tourism industry base, Ringwood’s long-term tourism strategy should include the following:

1. “Connect the dots” – Identify and create functional pathways between and among the various points of interest in the Borough and beyond to help guide tourists and local and regional residents.

This strategy involves creating and expanding trails and bike and pedestrian paths to the various places of interest in the Borough. This can be done through trail marking, informational map brochures and other educational material that will allow visitors to take full advantage, not only of the recreational opportunities, but other services available in the Borough.

2. Pedestrian and bicycle safety – Work with all involved parties to achieve a safe and functional travel route for those who walk, bike or use alternative mode of transportation.

This strategy can include designated parking areas with safe accessibility to recreational opportunities. Also, maintaining trails and bike path areas for safety and visibility to users as well those traveling in vehicles on shared roadways.

3. Expand the range of permitted uses – Allow for flexible and creative permitted uses in the districts to take advantage of recreational and historic attributes of Ringwood, such as bed and breakfast inns, homestay accommodations and home occupation businesses that permit retailing of art and handicrafts. Homestay accommodations are very similar to bed and breakfast except in a homestay situation guest have more interaction with their host family.

Allowing for flexibility in uses can create additional economic diversity that can meet the needs of residents as well as visitors. Allowing a local homeowner to dedicate a percentage of their home floor area to the sale of handicrafts made on site can attract visitors and extend their time in the Borough, spending more money locally. Additionally, allowing for bed and breakfasts and “homestays” in appropriate residential districts allows visitors increased opportunities to stay overnight, visit more local attractions and take advantage of more recreational opportunities.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN - FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESSFUL ECO-TOURISM

Given the interest in nature interpretation and enjoyment (hiking, backpacking, bird watching and other field interpretive activities), the regional eco-tourist will largely be a “drop-in” visitor. Unlike tent campers or other longer stay visitors, nature interpreters are likely to bring their own lunch and if they inspire a local business development it is likely to be related to equipment rental and/or sales (fishing, photography).

Early use of the term “eco-tourism” frequently related to a form of exploitation which was clearly not sustainable. As the term has gained increasing recognition, its proponents have attempted to redefine the concept on a sustainable use basis, which more closely reflects the concept of eco-tourism. Nonetheless, it is important to identify the multiple goals associated with eco-tourism and their importance to the various stakeholders.

Successful eco-tourism will protect natural areas, produce revenue and offer education, local participation and capacity building. Assuming that a consensus can be achieved among stakeholders as to what eco-tourism is and what it is intended to achieve, methodologies will be needed to manage the strengths and weaknesses and measure the effectiveness of an eco-tourism program. Tools to monitor the social and biophysical impacts of tourism, such as environmental impact assessment (EIA), carrying capacity estimates, acceptable change, cost benefit analysis (CBA) and visitor impact management (VIM) all require the development of data that is not generally available without specific study. Nonetheless, GIS data has been widely used in local planning efforts and in developing the Highlands Regional Master Plan and can automate some analytical functions.

Understanding all aspects and implications of eco-tourism will be almost impossible, in light of the variety of interrelated variables. Ideally, local residents, protected resources and tourism can coexist in a symbiotic relationship that respects the interests of each. Identifying and reinforcing the intellectual, emotional and administrative linkage between people, natural resource biodiversity and tourism should lead to a new land ethic in Ringwood and other areas in the Highlands where past exploitation of natural resources (forests, iron ore, water) have placed the needs of man ahead of the maintenance of a sustainable natural resource base.

Successful eco-tourism will not only protect biodiversity and the integrity of natural areas, but will educate a broad range of publics regarding these resource values and opportunities to appreciate and interpret them. Instilling “transformative values” (a learning experience that yields greater environmental awareness, appreciation and respect for nature) is the dynamic for successful eco-tourism in the long term. It has been noted that the “development of positive relationships between people, resources and tourism is very unlikely to occur without implementation of effective policies, management strategies and involvement of a wide range of organizations, including NGO’s . . .”

Towns wishing to develop their eco-tourism strategies should consider land use regulations that protect the very thing that brings the tourists – the environment. Ordinances such as ridgeline protection or viewshed protection help in creating that feeling of isolation in nature. Being able to take a hike and not see a cell tower or hear a car engine is the very reason some eco-tourists

travel to parts of the state like Ringwood. Ringwood's Master Plan should lay out the strategies for accomplishing these goals.

As the definition of eco-tourism has broadened beyond "tourism to natural areas" to an integrated resource conservation and economic development approach, cooperation among stakeholders has become increasingly important. Effective outreach and early buy-in are important to a truly workable eco-tourism strategy.

As development opportunities continue to be sharply curtailed, local government and the local business community will increasingly look to tourism as a potential source of revenue. As this happens, the financial incentives to capitalize on these opportunities will appear greater if unfettered by "unnecessary regulation". However, the core concept of eco-tourism is the ability to exploit a renewable resource in a responsible manner, so that its essential character is preserved, and where possible enhanced. The carry-in, carry-out rules in New Jersey State Parks are a reflection of a larger ethic in nature interpretation. Sustainability utilizes resources without damaging their ability to be utilized indefinitely into the future.

In order to promote eco-tourism opportunities, regional and local officials can undertake a variety of tasks that can foster tourism efforts:

1. *Conduct Market Studies.* Provide documentation that encourages private sector businesses to invest in tourism concepts.
2. *Develop a Targeted Loan Program.* Provide low interest loans to eco-tourism businesses.
3. *Clean up Key Eco-tourism Sites.* Litter in the more remote rural areas is unattractive to potential investors and tourists. Unmanaged hazardous and/or toxic waste sites can undermine local tourism.
4. *Organize Special Events and Festivals.* Celebrate the place, culture and history to educate visitors and encourage preservation of the area.
5. *Prepare Promotional and Marketing Material.* An eco-tourism guide can connect many of the themes and places highlighted in the Plan.
6. *Develop an Eco-tourism Logo.* This logo could be featured on publications, products and other material that promotes a Ringwood and/or Highlands Core eco-tourism theme or place.
7. *Signage.* Getting people to and from places of interest is important.
8. *Establish an Eco-tourism Advisory Committee.* Oversight and coordination of the program are necessary. There are many ways this can be done. An advisory committee could help advocate for eco-tourism reports.
9. *Improve Access to Places of Interest.* Road access and public facilities are needed where eco-tourism sites exist or are proposed.
10. *Training and Education.* Local residents, businesses, and public officials should be sensitive to the needs and wants of the prospective visitors.
11. *Amend Local Ordinances.* Local plans and land use regulations should be refined to accommodate eco-tourism needs and facilities.
12. *Code Enforcement.* Keep the community clean and attractive.
13. *Educational Material.* Promote a code of ethics that eco-tourists and ecodevelopers should follow. Be sensitive to the natural resource base. Leave no trace.

14. *Produce a Funding Guide.* Such a publication could list funding sources for prospective eco-tourism developments and projects.
15. *Establish a Non-Profit Development Corporation.* In conjunction with local non-profit conservation groups, chambers of commerce, businesses and other organizations, Ringwood should consider creating a non-profit corporation to finance eco-tourism development.
16. *Prepare Maps of Self-Guided Tours.* To help visitors appreciate themes and places highlighted by the Plan.
17. *Promote Development of an Urban Market.* There are numerous farms around the Ringwood area that already sell produce and other goods. By bringing more visitors to the area, the market for farm produce stands across the region would be expanded. This type of facility would also make a direct eco-tourism link between urban and rural interests.
18. *Develop Bike and Pedestrian Trails.* Safe pedestrian and bicycle routes invite healthy exercise. On County, non-profit, or State-owned lands, biking and hiking trails are important eco-tourism amenities.
19. *Connections to the Region.* Ringwood should join with Highlands neighbors to market eco-tourism experiences to major tour operators throughout the region.
20. *Eco-tourism Calendar of Events.* Link and coordinate activities and facilities.
21. *Measures to Protect the Natural Resource Base.* Provide local planning assistance, prepare an owner's guide to resource protection, and promote stream corridor conservation.
22. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* Identify benchmarks to monitor the success of an eco-tourism program.
23. *Coordinated Cultural and Natural Resource Interpretation.* Such a program of sustainable tourism will offer significant rewards for Ringwood if properly implemented.
24. *Municipal Flyers on Eco-tourism.* Develop promotional materials on eco-tourism.
25. *Connect with Local Conservation Groups.* Organizations such as the Audubon Society, the NJ Conservation Foundation, and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of NJ can all provide good technical expertise.
26. *Cultivate Arts and Cultural Affinity Groups.*

Local businesses can also participate in promoting eco-tourist endeavors. Businesses can:

1. *Use Eco-tourism Logo.* Once it is developed, the business community could use the logo to promote its eco-tourism products or services.
2. *Package Tours.* Private operators are needed to make the connections with business, industry and other potential providers of eco-tourism sites and services.
3. *Bed and Breakfast Houses.* B&B accommodations, on a personal scale, are well suited to the eco-tourist.
4. *Establish an Eco-tourism Travel Center.* Explore ways to develop a travel center to specialize in Ringwood's eco-tourism adventures.
5. *Bird Watching Tours.* Find new and better ways to capitalize on eco-tourists like birders who are already coming to the area.
6. *Nature by Night.* Exploring nature at night brings out a new set of sights and sounds. Tours could be arranged to star gaze or just enjoy the "night life".

7. *Market Local Products with Eco-tourism Themes.* Products could bear the eco-tourism logo or a theme for Ringwood’s history, culture.
8. *Develop a Model Ironworks.* Show what life was like when the Ironworks was in full swing. Invite visitors to experience a typical workday or life in Ringwood in the late 1700’s.
9. *Develop Welcome Centers.* Draw tourists to the town and the surrounding areas by establishing “gateway” welcome centers at the main borders crossings.

THE STATE’S ROLE

New Jersey plays a vital role in promoting and supporting tourism at all levels, including eco-tourism. A statewide initiative is underway to entice visitors to recreate in New Jersey, using the motto “Come See For Yourself”. The 2004 NJ Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan envisions a New Jersey where residents can choose to safely and conveniently bicycle and walk as an alternative to automobile use. This Plan is designed to prioritize and target resources for the appropriate bicycle and pedestrian improvements to achieve the greatest results and benefits. Ringwood should work with the State Park system to develop Natural Resource Centers that can offer interpretive information about the area for visitors. Streamlining regulations to permit construction of public facilities and amenities will also be important for creating an eco-tourism program.

THE NON-PROFIT ROLE

A large number of non-profit organizations work with local communities to preserve, protect and enhance the natural resource base. Some also work with residents, businesses, and local officials to implement an eco-tourism program that protects sensitive resources and fits the character of the community.

The NJ Conservation Foundation (NJCF) works with communities to purchase open space, which directly supports eco-tourism. The Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) works to educate environmental commission members and the public about protecting these important cultural/natural areas. Also the local Watershed Association has a wealth of knowledge to help raise awareness about protecting water resources that contribute to recreation in the town and the larger region. In addition, non-profit groups:

1. Act as Regional Marketing Advocates.
2. Organize a Volunteer Pool
3. Develop Sites as Eco-tourism Destinations
4. Host Public Information Meetings
5. Partner in Management
6. Organize Field Trips and Interpretive Experiences
7. Organize Native American Interpretive Opportunities

PARTNERING WITH THE PUBLIC

One of the keys to successful eco-tourism is the development and implementation of a local public-participation element. While many tourism initiatives follow a top down planning

agenda, assuring the health and well-being of local interests is a key long-term concern when inviting increased activity from outsiders and should be carefully managed. Public involvement from the earliest phases of development of an eco-tourism program will not assure its success, but the failure to include such a component will almost assuredly result in its demise.

A review of model public participation approaches indicates that there are several essential components, including:

“The integrity of the natural resource base is fundamental to the aspirations of sustainable eco-tourism development and this dependence needs to be recognized by all of those whose activities have impact on these resources”(Garrod, 2003). Early involvement of all stakeholders in the development of an eco-tourism program will allow development of aligned interests in a climate where the interests of newcomers or visitors are frequently pitted against the interests of local residents and businesses.”

Successfully integrating public participation into this planning process requires group leadership, vested as the shared responsibility of a number of stakeholders, including local community leaders. The essential steps in this process include:

1. Determining the participation mechanism.
2. Undertaking initial dialogue and educational efforts.
3. Creating/reinforcing support mechanisms.
4. Conducting preliminary studies.
5. Collectively determining the scope and nature of eco-tourism development.
6. Developing a community-based action plan and implementation scheme.
7. Implementation of a plan.
8. Monitoring and evaluation.

An effective participatory planning approach promotes project efficiency and effectiveness, as an understanding of the various dimensions of sustainable tourism evolves among the group. Additionally, local empowerment improves the perception and reality of local control over the local resource base and decisions relating to its use and invites opportunities for cost sharing with the full range of beneficiaries (Garrod, 2003).

Eco-tourism researchers also cite a number of disadvantages to a participatory planning approach. These include possible increases in staffing and cost, pressures to extend the scope of the project and the potential loss of centralized control. Additionally, fears that benefits may not reach their intended recipients or unrealistic local aspirations can also lead to disenfranchisement in a process that can easily bring latent conflicts among the participants into focus. Nonetheless, while timing and costs involved are a concern, failure to fully integrate the local resident and business community in a network of aligned interests will prevent the evolution of a comprehensive eco-tourism program for Ringwood and the surrounding region.

INAPPROPRIATE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

While the expansive natural landscape in Ringwood will inspire eco-tourism, its effects can substantially degrade the tourism experience if not carefully managed. In Ringwood, formerly pristine ridgelines are now adorned with large homes, strategically placed for the “view”. If Ringwood is not to kill the goose that is laying this golden egg, stringent design standards should be applied to assure that permitted development does not prevent the nature interpretation experience and opportunities that have long existed by “cheapening” and “dumbing down” the visual natural character.

Managing the visual character and biological health of the natural systems will be an important factor in the future eco-tourism in Ringwood. At the same time, however, those seeking types of active recreation which are disruptive or destructive also hold the potential for undermining successful eco-tourism initiatives. Many are familiar with the distain felt by most boaters toward riders of personal watercraft, although aggressive behavior may actually be occurring in a limited percentage of cases. Similarly, motorized trail riding and other forms of all-terrain activities need to be carefully controlled since they result in erosion and degradation of the environment, including deposition of trash and debris. As Ringwood’s attraction as a wild land destination increases, increased interest by those who seek motorized off road travel will require careful management.

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive strategy for sustainable tourism that takes advantage of locally available resources can promote community awareness and create a diverse economic base for the Borough while maintaining the integrating of the environment. Ringwood is fortunate to have a multitude of natural and cultural resources that populate the landscape with the substance of eco-tourism and heritage tourism. Proper management of these assets can overcome the disconnect between economic development and natural resource protection in this region is a beautiful but fragile ecosystem.

Effective marketing strategies and economic incentives can encourage local businesses to see the parks and cultural resources as a way to add a layer of diversification to the market. Additionally, local municipal efforts and regulations can also increase the ability and extent to which local tourism opportunities can be enhanced. Providing for signage, flexibility for home-based businesses and creating community awareness-raising events are all parts of a comprehensive approach to attracting visitors to the region. These efforts will benefit not only the Borough but the region as well, as increased awareness of Highlands assets and the need to preserve fragile ecosystems improves the long term health of the environment.

APPENDIX A: HISTORIC INVENTORY

1. Iron Industry District – An area of abandoned iron mines and structures housing, associated with the early iron industry at Ringwood: furnaces, forges, mills, stores, etc. Includes the mine area and the Ringwood Manor and Green Camp sections of Ringwood State Park. Ref. A,B,C,D,E,R,S,T
2. Sawmill Site – North of Stonetown Road bridge on the Wanaque River, Stonetown Section, Greenwood Lake State Park. Ref. G,H
3. Grist and Sawmill Site – South of Stonetown Road Bridge on the Wanaque River, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: I
4. Cemetery – Adjacent to Stonetown Road near Wanaque River at Monksville, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: W4
5. Windbeam Forge Site – Adjacent to Westbrook Road, near the reservoir bridge, flooded site, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: H
6. Freedom Furnace Forge Site – Adjacent to Midvale Dam, Furnace Avenue, flooded site, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: H,I,D
7. Schoolhouse – West side of Route 511, approximately 300 feet north of Westbrook Road, currently a store. Block 738, Lot 7. Ref.: K,L
8. Schoolhouse Site – Magee Road, only basement remaining. Ref.: M,K
9. Forge Site, Forge Pond – Sloatsburg Road, flooded site, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: H,D
10. Board Mine – Near intersection of Route 511 and Stonetown Road. Block 311, Lot 1. Ref.: J
11. Rhinesmith Farm Explorations – Mine pits located near Little Big Horn, between Burnt Meadow Road and Magee Road. Block 201, Lot 17. Ref.: J

12. Schoolhouse – Corner of Magee Road and Stonetown Road. Block 227, Lot 1.
Ref.: K,N
13. Baptist Church Site – Corner of Burnt Meadow Road and Magee Road. Block
223, Lot 1 and/or 2. Ref.: O,P
14. Methodist Church Site – West side of Stonetown Road, south of Windbeam Lane.
Block 201, Lot 20. Ref.: O,I
15. School Site – Boardville – Adjacent to Route 511 near Sloatsburg Road, flooded
site, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: Q,H,I
16. Dutch Reformed Church Site – Boardville – Adjacent to Route 511 near
Sloatsburg Road, flooded site, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: Q,H,I
17. Schoolhouse Site – Margaret King Avenue near Peters Mine Road, current site of
Borough garage. Block 600, Lot 2. Ref.: K,R
18. Colfax Forge Site – Westbrook Road near Stonetown Road, flooded site,
N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: V
19. Schoolhouse Site – West side of Stonetown Road, south of Windbeam Lane.
Block 201, Lot 22. Ref.: K
20. Indian Campground – South of Skyline Lake. Ref.: U
21. Sloat Farm Explorations – Mine pits, near Skyline Drive between James Drive and
Fieldstone Drive. Block 801, Lot 5. Ref.: J
22. Pellington Mine Lot – Located adjacent to Westbrook Road, near West Brook.
Block 200, Lot 8. Ref.: J
23. Roman Catholic Church Site – Margaret King Avenue, near current Borough
Garage. Block 508, Lot 3. Ref.: K

24. Church of the Good Shepherd – Margaret King Avenue. Block 601, Lot 3. Ref.: K
25. Chapel – Shepherd Lake Section, Ringwood State Park. Ref.: W3
26. Indian Campground – Magee Road at Burnt Meadow Brook. Block 201, Lot 22
and Block 100, Lot 16. Ref.: M
27. House Site (Board, Capt. Joseph) – Adjacent to Route 511, flooded site,
N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: W2
28. House – 319 Margaret King Avenue. Block 311, Lot 11. Ref.: H,I
29. House (Carleton) – 84 Carletondale Road. Block 912, Lot 13.
30. House (Miller/Green) – Catholic Convent – Mount Saint Francis. Block 1100, Lot
1A. Ref.: T
31. House (Brown) – Ringwood Avenue. Block 739, Lot 54. Ref.: I
32. Site of Revolutionary War Beacon – Adjacent to Sloatsburg Road, Ringwood State
Park.
33. House (Ricker-Pellington) – 566 Stonetown Road. Block 301, Lot 28. Ref.: I
34. House (Duffy) – 416 Stonetown Road. Block 222, Lot 5. Ref.: H,I
35. House (Colfax) – 278 Stonetown Road. Block 203, Lot 3. Ref.: I
36. House (Sloat) – 140 Conklintown Road at Canterbury Place. Block 748, Lot 75.
Ref.: I
37. House (Whritenour) – 145 Stonetown Road. Block 100, Lot 15. Ref.: H,I
38. House (Carrigan) – 614 Westbrook Road. Block 200, Lot 6. Ref.: I
39. House (Stephens) – Westbrook Road. Block 101, Lot 10. Ref.: I
40. House (Rhinesmith) – 11 Magee Road at Westbrook Road. Block 200, Lot 1.
Ref.: I,H

41. Schoolhouse – Green Camp, Ringwood State Park. Ref.: K,R
42. Cemetery – Ringwood Manor, Ringwood State Park.
43. Borough Hall – 60 Margaret King Avenue, Block 601, Lot 4. Ref.: K,R
44. Red House – Reportedly the oldest building in Ringwood, circa 1740. Ringwood Manor, Ringwood State Park. Ref.: S,T
45. Ringwood Iron Furnace/Forge Site – a) Furnace, b) Forge, c) Forge, d) Forge. Ringwood Manor, Ringwood State Park. Within 50 yards of the furnace was a forge; a second forge was located 500 yards upstream, and a third half a mile downstream. Ref.: A,D
46. Ringwood Manor House – National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmark, Ringwood State Park. Various buildings, all 19th century or earlier, exist in this section of the park. Ref.: D,S,T
47. Iron Mine Area – Located in the iron industry district. A group of over two dozen pits and shafts, some of which are among the oldest in the state. Ref.: A,D,X
48. Edward R. Hewitt House Site – Adjacent to Route 511, flooded site, N.J.D.W.S.C. Ref.: T
49. Iron Truss Bridges – a) On Magee Road over West Brook. b) On Magee Road over Burnt Meadow Brook.
50. House Site (J.D. Prince) – Shepherd Lake area, Ringwood State Park. Ref.: R
51. Skylands Manor (1924) – Skylands Section, Ringwood State Park. In Skylands Farm, a number of buildings were constructed 1890-1924. Ref.: K
52. Vreeland Hotel – Route 511. Block 310, Lot 3. Ref.: R
53. Railroad-Railroad Station Sites – a) Abandoned Greenwood Lake Railroad,

b) Monks Station Site, c) Boardville Station Site, d) Ringwood Junction Station

Site, e) Erskine Station Site, f) Ringwood Depot/Store/Post Office Site. Ref.: I,R

54. Winsel Mine – Two adjacent openings off Route 511, Stonetown area.

Greenwood Lake State Forest. Ref.: J

55. Hickory Mine Prospects – Two openings north of Margaret King Avenue. Block

400, Lot 1. Ref.: B

REFERENCES

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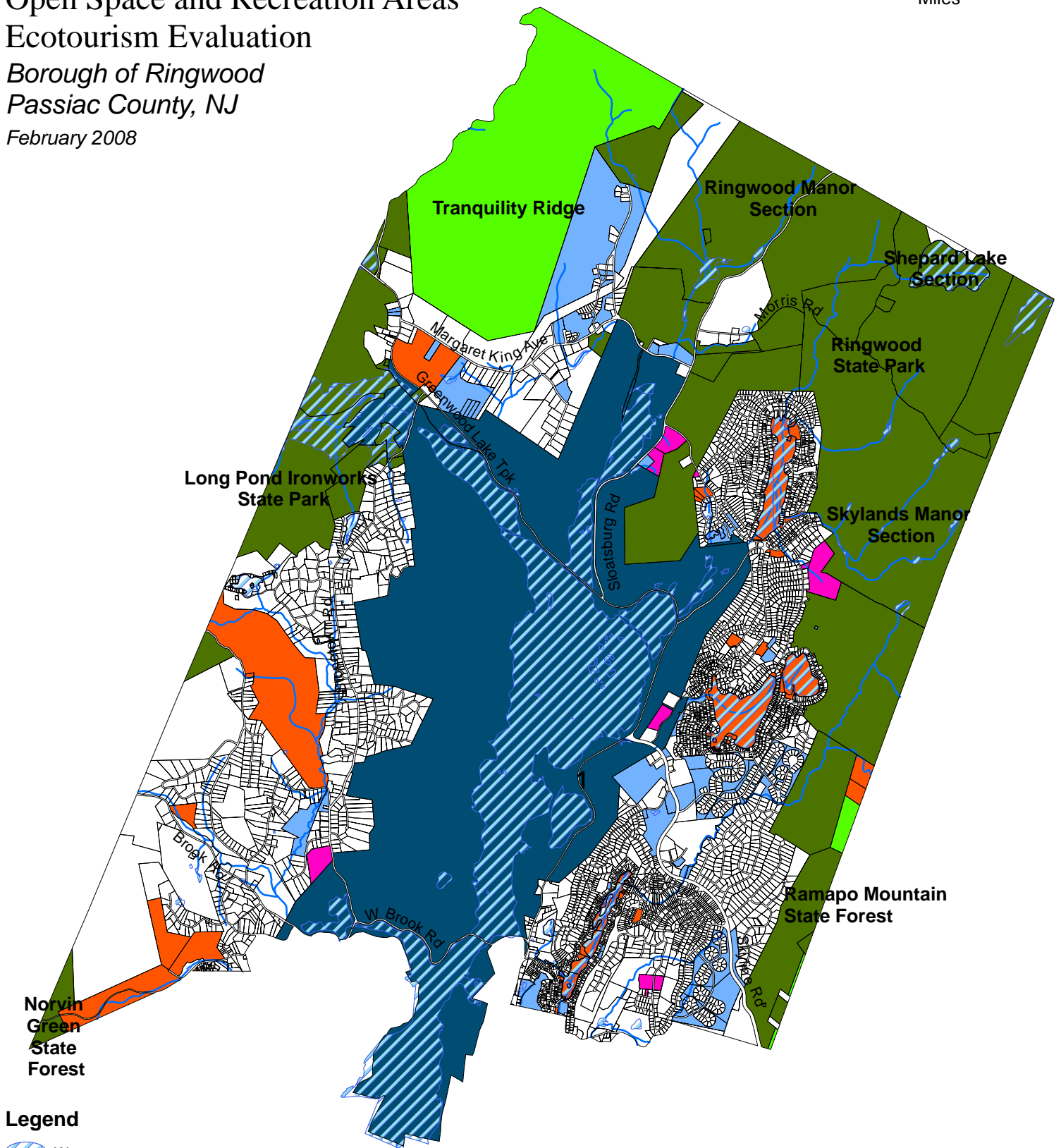
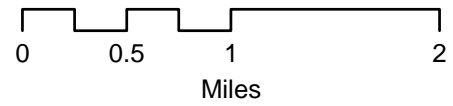
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Figure 1 Open Space and Recreation Areas Ecotourism Evaluation

*Borough of Ringwood
Passaic County, NJ*

February 2008



Legend

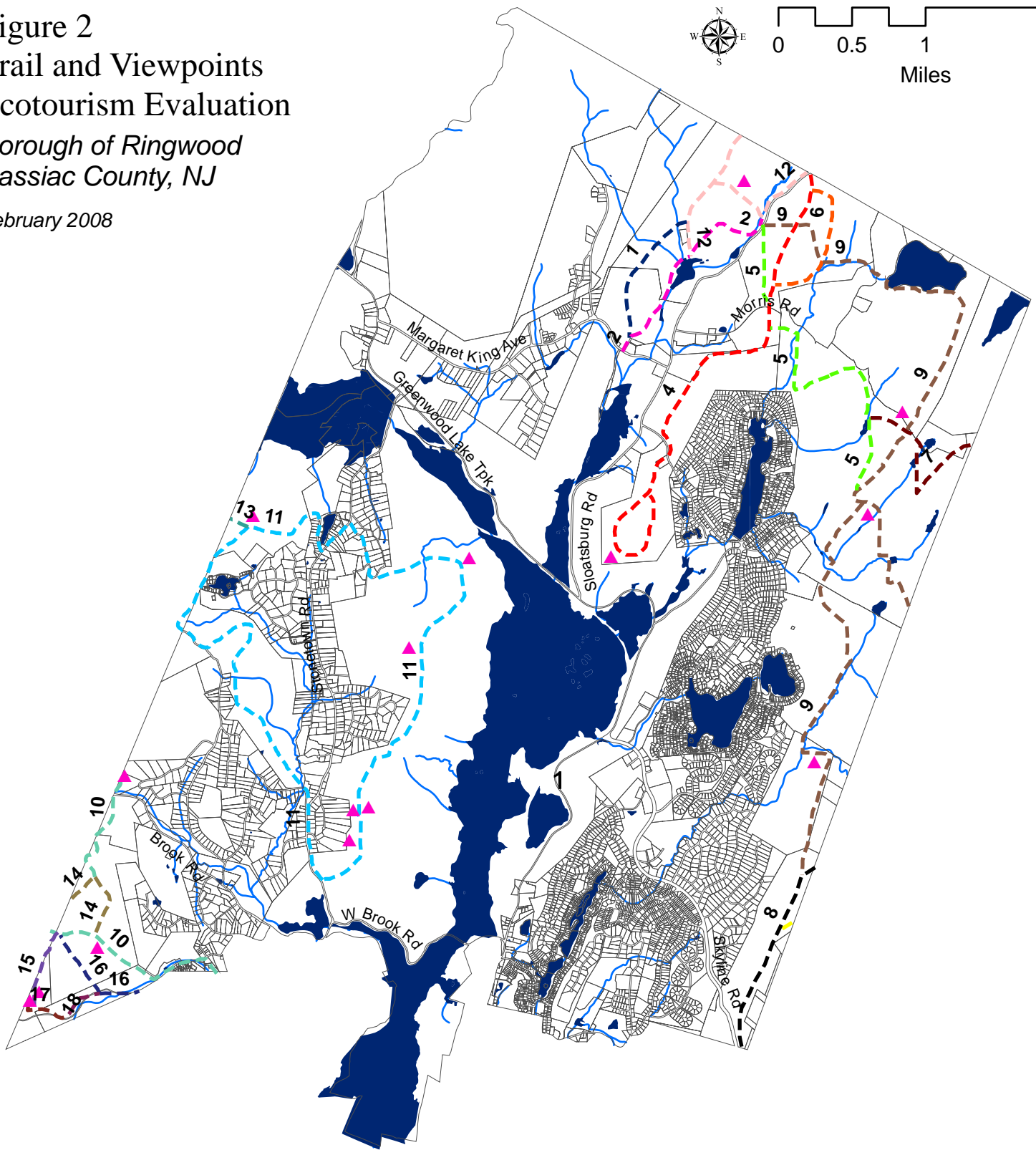
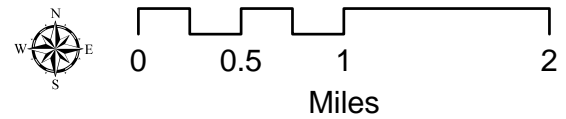
- Water
- Streams
- State of New Jersey
- Passaic County
- Borough of Ringwood
- NJDWSC Lands
- Private and Semi Private Open Space
- Board of Education

This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been NJDEP verified and is not State-authorized.

Figure 2 Trail and Viewpoints Ecotourism Evaluation

Borough of Ringwood
Passaic County, NJ

February 2008



Legend

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| ▲ Viewpoints | 5: Crossover | 13: Horse Pond Mountain |
| ~ Streams | 6: Cupshaw Brook | 14: Wyanokie Circular |
| ● Water | 7: Halifax | 15: Wyanokie Crest |
| Trail Name | 8: Hoeflerlin | 16: Mine |
| 1: Blue | 9: Ringwood - Ramapo | 17: Macopin |
| 2: Bus Stop 22 | 10: Hewitt - Butler | 18: Otter Hole |
| 3: Cannonball | 11: Stonetown Circular | |
| 4: Copper Union | 12: White | |

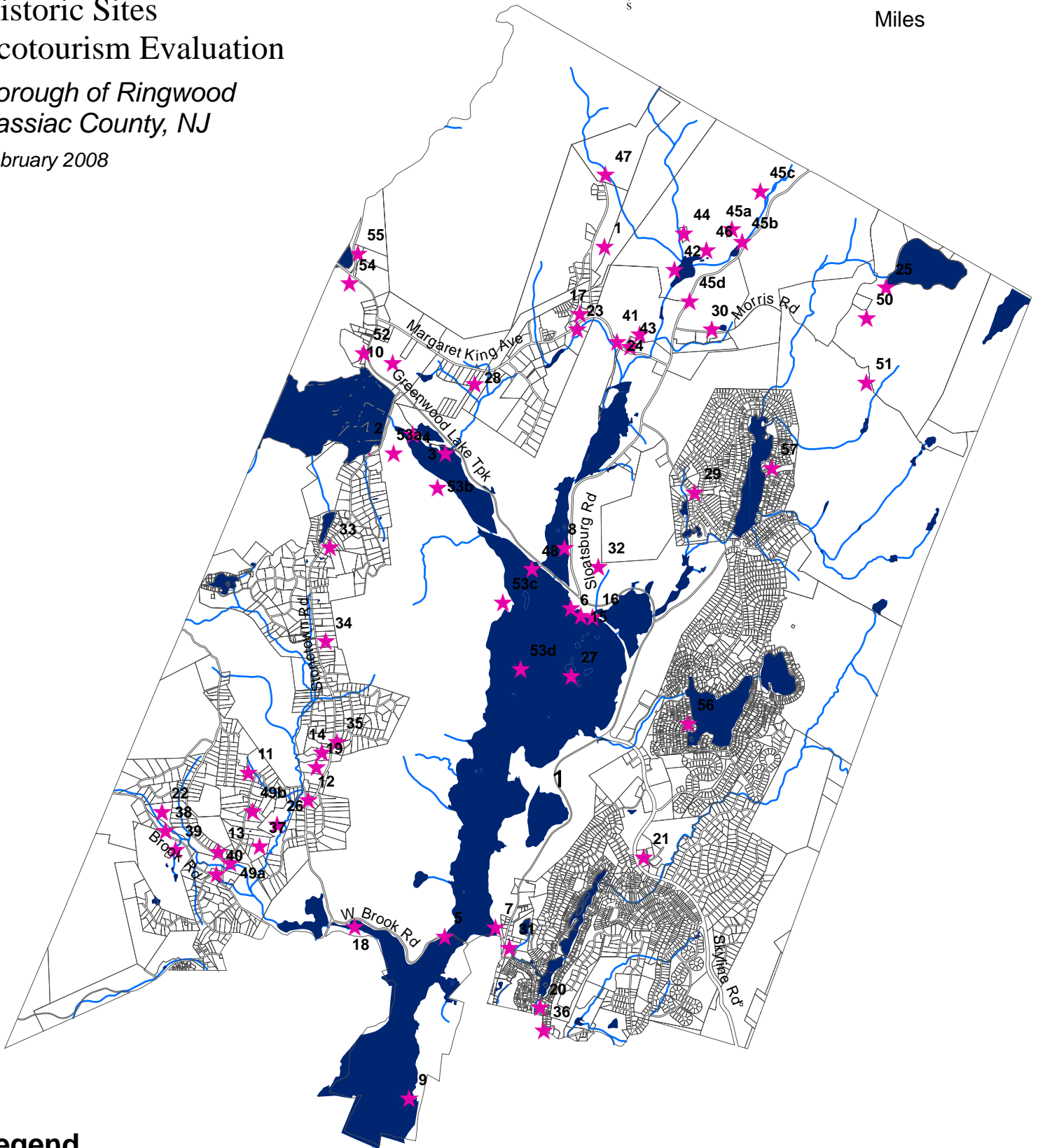
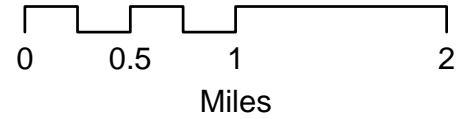
Trails identified are representations of approximate locations. For full trail location description please contact the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, the Weis Ecology Center or the Borough of Ringwood for more information.

This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been NJDEP verified and is not State-authorized.

Figure 3 Historic Sites Ecotourism Evaluation

*Borough of Ringwood
Passiac County, NJ*

February 2008



Legend

- ★ Historic Sites*
- ~ Streams
- Water

*Please refer to the Ringwood Ecotourism Evaluation Report for further description on the historic sites identified.

This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been NJDEP verified and is not State-authorized.