

■ The 1990s | A CLEAR VISION



A truly outstanding job

AS THE 1990s began, the Park System was poised for a major surge in both land acquisition and visitation. The approval of the 1989 Green Acres Bond Act and the County Open Space Referendum had together created an unprecedented amount of open space and recreation funding, and County leaders and employees were prepared to move quickly to take advantage of it. They would preserve nearly 5,000 acres and create 12 new parks in the 1990s, but the preserved land was only about 10% of the open space that would be lost to development during that decade.

In early 1989, after members of the Park System's Open Space Planning Team had completed mapping the County's land use and natural and cultural resources, they took their findings on the road and met with individual municipalities over the course of several months. Energized by the enthusiastic support of local officials for an aggressive land preservation program, the Planning Team, led by Park System planner Faith Hahn, prepared an ambitious draft plan that was warmly received at a series of six public meetings held throughout the county in January, 1990. In these public presentations, members of the Team emphasized that, as the competition for land grew, it was critical to develop new strategies and partnerships to gain control of key parcels before development swallowed them up.

The Planning Team's "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan" proclaimed that "Open space is an element of the public infrastructure, which, like bridges, schools, and water lines, must be provided and maintained to sustain the rest of the community." While reflecting the generalized goals and policies of the Park System's earlier plans, the "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan" defined open space as a complex and connected environmental system of plant and animal habitats, water resources, and human land uses as farms, fisheries, forests, recreation areas, and historic and cultural sites. It also embraced the understanding that open spaces often require special management for public health and safety, such as floodplains, watersheds, and reservoirs for water quality and preserved areas for air quality, and that open spaces are important to the image of a community because of their strong visual impact and their relationship to the surrounding built environment.

The "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan" called for New Jersey officials to develop a statewide open space strategy and for the County and its municipalities to integrate open space objectives into their

Opposite: Historic Walnford.

planning, operating, and regulatory activities. It also emphasized the County's role in providing technical support to municipalities and in stimulating cooperative efforts. On private land, the Plan encouraged new strategies and incentives to protect natural resources and provide public access where possible. For acquisitions, the Plan targeted areas with special natural features, greenways for trails and water protection, recreation areas for sports and riding, golf courses, additions to existing parks, and the development of new parks in the coastal, Bayshore, and Marlboro/Manalapan/Millstone areas.

While the earlier plans had general acquisition goals, the Plan identified specific additions totaling more than 1,700 acres to 13 of the Park System's 22 parks. These additions included 230 acres for Clayton Park, 130 for Walnford, 410 for Howell Park and the Manasquan Reservoir, 300 for Turkey Swamp Park, 150 for Dorbrook Recreation Area, 200 for Huber Woods Park, and 105 for Shark River Park. The Plan also identified 10 new park and golf course sites, including Perrineville Lake in Millstone as a 500-acre regional park, Charleston Springs in Millstone as a 980-acre golf course, Big Brook in Marlboro as a 660-acre regional

All of these things are possible in Monmouth County

"Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan," 1991

Imagine beaches, nature preserves, ball fields, and marinas permanently protected from development and open to the public.

Imagine streams, ponds, and rivers whose banks are accessible to the public, whose waters are stocked with fish, and which are protected from erosion and flooding by sensitive land practices.

Imagine a trail near your home where you can walk for leisure or exercise, or where your child can ride a bike safely to school.

Imagine a public golf course with a waiting time of only 15 minutes.

Imagine showing your grandchildren the farm where you were raised or the woods where you played as a youngster, instead of telling them what was there before the houses.

This is no fantasy...all of these things are possible in Monmouth County. It is we, not some untamable

beast, who control the future of the County, and the choice of what the future will be is ours.

We can mourn the way conventional subdivisions consume treasured landscapes, or we can encourage creative development by rewriting our zoning ordinances, require and accept conservation and scenic easements, and experiment with innovative preservation techniques such as transfer of development rights.

We can claim that the job of preserving open space and improving our recreational facilities is too big and not even try, or we can enlist the aid of civic groups and the sponsorship of corporations and tackle the job together.

The County has chosen to take an active role in deciding our open space future...but implementation of the plan will require a cooperative effort.



Crosswicks Creek Greenway, Upper Freehold Township.



The Park System's Open Space Planning Team in 1992. Seated: Andrew Coeyman, Faith Hahn, and Tom Collins. Standing: Robin Ostrowski, Joseph Sardonía, Ken Thoman, Andrew North, Gail Hunton, and Francesca Martone.

park, Wolf Hill in Oceanport as a 90-acre regional recreation area, and Fisherman's Cove in Manasquan as a 60-acre special use area.

The Plan called for the State to add 1,070 acres to its Turkey Swamp Wildlife Management Area and 368 acres to Monmouth Battlefield. It specified 35 greenways, bikeways, and trails totaling 238 miles plus nine conservation areas with more than 2,100 acres to be created or protected through State, County, and municipal acquisitions, easements, and regulations.

In recognition of the Planning Team's accomplishments, Jim Truncer wrote in the March-April, 1990 *Green Link*, "Through the efforts of the staff in the Acquisition and Design Department, our County will be better prepared to meet the quality-of-life concerns of our citizens as our County continues to grow and change. My hat's off to the open space planning staff for a truly outstanding job."

The Park System's efforts to proceed quickly with one key project in the "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan"—the Manasquan River Greenway—ran into some public opposition. With the long-awaited Manasquan Reservoir nearing completion, the staff wanted to preserve land along the upstream corridor to protect this key potable water supply as much as possible. At the initial meetings with Howell and Freehold Townships in 1989, the local officials had lauded the creation of the Greenway as complementing their own master plans. However, when Park System acquisition staff began to contact property owners in the project area, rumors circulated that the County would actively use eminent domain to create the Greenway. In a November, 1989, article with the headline "Greenway proposal has some seeing red," the *Asbury Park Press* noted that one property owner claimed "he's got nothing against protecting the Manasquan River, which runs behind his property in Howell Township. But he and many of his neighbors object to the county forcing them to sell some of their land to extend public access along the river's banks, which they say will make their homes and farm animals more vulnerable to abuse."

When Park System staff held a public meeting at Howell High School in March, 1990, about the proposed Greenway, about 150 people attended and many expressed concerns about the County's potential condemnation of their land. The staff described the Greenway as a long-term project and stressed the County's preference for dealing with land owners who were interested in having their properties appraised for possible sale. By the end of 1990, the Park System had purchased three parcels totaling 17 acres along the river to start the

Manasquan River Greenway. Over the next 19 years, the Park System staff expanded the Greenway to 338 acres. Of the total 39 properties acquired, only four acquisitions have involved eminent domain.

To advance another project proposed in the “Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan,” in June of 1990 the Park System used County Open Space Trust funds to acquire the 204-acre former Bobbink Nursery in Millstone Township, identified in the Plan as Charleston Springs, a potential golf course site to serve the western portion of the County. Two years later, the Park System acquired the adjacent 383-acre Bulk Nursery property and the sellers donated an additional 34 acres, bringing the Charleston Springs golf course site to 621 acres.

The County Planning Board and the Recreation Commissioners adopted the “Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan” in the summer of 1991. The N.J. Chapter of the American Planning Association gave the Park System its annual Outstanding Environmental Achievement Award for the Plan in 1992.

Virtually irreplaceable in this developed region

As an example of the governmental cooperation encouraged by the “Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan,” the Park System assumed management of the Bayshore rail corridor between Aberdeen and Atlantic Highlands in 1990 and created the Henry Hudson Trail, the County’s first rail-trail. The Central Railroad of New Jersey had built this Seashore Branch line in the late 19th century to haul freight from northern Monmouth industries and farms and to transport commuters and tourists traveling to towns along the Bayshore and the ocean. Conrail took over the service but eventually discontinued it, and in the 1980s it tried to sell portions of the nine-mile right-of-way. After a lawsuit blocked the sales, the County used a State grant to purchase the right-of-way for a possible light rail line in the future.

With the agreement of Bayshore towns, the Park System converted the right-of-way into a recreational trail that travels through communities, across streams and salt marsh, and over local streets where people can access the trail. After cleaning up what had been a litter-strewn and overgrown abandoned corridor, removing over 70 encroachments, and improving over 30 street crossings, Park System staff opened portions of the Henry Hudson Trail starting in 1992. They used funding from a Federal ISTEA transportation enhancement grant to renovate or replace 11 bridges and to install signage along the entire trail.



Above: The Park System acquired Bulk Nursery in Millstone Township in 1992 to create Charleston Springs Golf Course.

County officials and Park System employees celebrated the opening of nine miles of the Henry Hudson Trail on National Trails Day in June, 1995. The trail links the communities of Atlantic Highlands, Middletown, Keansburg, Union Beach, Hazlet, Keyport, and Aberdeen. Hikers, bikers, and joggers could travel from Atlantic Highlands to just east of the Garden State Parkway, with bridge crossings providing open views of stream corridors, tidal wetlands, and Sandy Hook Bay. The trail soon became particularly popular with Bayshore residents and, as *Green*

Below: The abandoned Central Railroad of New Jersey rail corridor across Chingarora Creek in 1989, prior to improvements to create the Henry Hudson Trail.



Heritage noted in its June-July, 1995 issue, this resource is “virtually irreplaceable in this developed region.” The Park System’s success in developing and managing this first trail has helped generate political and public support for additional trail projects.

Unparalleled in Monmouth County

In another example of inter-governmental collaboration, the Park System assumed management of the public use of the State’s new Manasquan Reservoir in Howell Township, the first step in realizing the long-held vision to develop the recreational potential of the reservoir. After the dam was completed, people patiently awaited the months-long filling of the four billion-gallon reservoir, eager to see what the site would look like and to use it for fishing, boating, and hiking. As the reservoir filled up in early 1990, the *Asbury Park Press* noted, “Completion of the project will be a momentous achievement for the hundreds of people who have worked on it during the years.”

As the Park System prepared to open the Manasquan Reservoir in September, 1990, Tom Fobes, the park manager, told an *Asbury Park Press* reporter, “It’s a new and different facility, and it has tons of wildlife. We’re excited to be here. I think it’s going to be one of the best facili-

Below left: Sailing Camp on the Manasquan Reservoir.

Above right: Manasquan Reservoir Visitor Center.



ties we have.” The Park System opened the Reservoir in the fall of 1990 with 282 acres of recreation land around the 770-acre lake, including a partially-completed perimeter trail, several parking areas, and two boat launch ramps on the southern shore. As construction crews worked on a new maintenance building, Park System staff developed plans for a Visitor Center and boating facility on the south shore and an Environmental Center on the west shore.

As Faith Hahn noted in the October 1990 issue of *Open Spaces, Livable Places*, the Park System’s planning newsletter, the agreement between the N.J. Water Supply Authority and the Park System is “a prime example of how the coordination of programs and projects among public agencies can advance important open space objectives at little cost to the taxpayer. Thus, the public acquisition and development of one site yields a new source of potable water, spares aquifers throughout the County from depletion from overuse, and provides an opportunity for freshwater recreation unparalleled in Monmouth County.”

In its first full year of operation in 1991, the Manasquan Reservoir attracted over 128,000 visitors and recorded more than 2,000 boat launchings. Three years later, the Freeholders and Recreation Commissioners opened an 8,000 square foot Visitor Center, fishing pier, and boating facility at the Reservoir. The N.J. Recreation and Park Association gave the Park System its Kinsey Award in recognition of the Visitor Center’s design excellence.

A month after opening the reservoir in 1990, the Freeholders added another prime water recreation property to the Park System with the acquisition of the 10-acre Gateway Marina in Port Monmouth on the Bayshore. Purchased with Green Acres funding, the property included a fuel dock, floating docks with slips for 140 boats, storage racks for 80 boats, a boat shop, marina equipment, and some beachfront. The Park System had targeted it for acquisition back in 1984 when its Monmouth County Marina Study predicted a steep decline in rental boat



slips as the County's marinas succumbed to waterfront housing developments. The Recreation Commissioners named it the Monmouth Cove Marina.

We have only one environment, we'd better protect it

In 1990, more than 500 volunteers contributed over 14,500 hours of work to park maintenance and programs. The remarkable range of volunteers' activities included giving tours, planting gardens, interpreting 1890s rural living history at Longstreet Farm, assisting with therapeutic recreation and equestrian programs for individuals with special needs, clearing and establishing trails, and producing summer theater. Many people and businesses donated artifacts, art objects, plant materials, and educational and recreational supplies and equipment, and individuals and organizations also contributed funds to specific programs or improvement projects.

To enable people to help the Park System in other ways, Jim Truncer and several staff members worked with county residents Frank McDonough, Joanne Mullen, Daniel Ward Seitz, and other supporters in 1991 to establish the Friends of the Parks as a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing Park System activities, facilities, and services. To introduce people to the new Friends' organization, McDonough, an attorney in Red Bank, sponsored a 'Friends-Maker' walk around the undeveloped Wertz Park in Ocean Township, and Joanne Mullen sponsored a tour of Walnford, which she and her husband Ed had donated to the Park System in 1979. Daniel Ward Seitz, a descendant of the Hartshorne family, sponsored a 'Friends-Maker' walk through Hartshorne Woods Park, where Frank McDonough told the group, "I come from Ocean Township, which is 95% built up, and I know how very important it is to preserve these woods intact."

The 22 founding members expanded the Friends of the Parks to 129 members in their first year and raised \$15,000 through membership fees, donations, and events such as the raffle of a Victorian Dinner at Longstreet Farm in Holmdel Park to support an exhibit in the farmhouse. They established specific funds for projects and equipment in Turkey Swamp, Hartshorne Woods, Huber Woods, and Seven Presidents Parks, and a Recreation Scholarships Fund that sponsored 483 participants from low-income urban areas to attend recreational programs in County Parks. The Friends also sponsored a Rails-to-Trails Celebration along the Henry Hudson Trail, where McDonough told the participants, "We have only one environment and we'd better protect it."



Friends of the Parks Board 1993: (seated from left) John Linney, Frank McDonough, Jim Truncer, Joanne Mullen; (standing from left) Edward P. Pitts, Carol Tomson, Daniel Ward Seitz, Joan Rechnitz, Dominick Cerrato.

In 1993, the Friends held the first Friends of the Parks Golf Tournament at Hominy Hill Golf Course. Over the years this tournament has become a popular tradition and the group's signature fundraising event. In the nearly two decades since its founding, the Friends organization has raised over \$2.5 million for many different projects that have immeasurably enhanced both the parks and the experiences of people who use them.

To recognize the increasing value of the volunteers, the Friends of the Parks started giving "Volunteers in Parks" awards in 1994 to people who contributed more than 500 hours of "their time, talent, and energy." That year, Friends Chairman Daniel Ward Seitz awarded special recognition to five volunteers who had each contributed more than 1,000 hours to facilities or programs such as historic interpretation at Longstreet Farm, the gardens at Deep Cut, and therapeutic riding at Huber Woods Park.

By the end of the 1990s decade, over 1,300 people were annually donating nearly 40,000 hours of their time, effort, and expertise volunteering in Monmouth County Parks and recreation programs. The volunteer activities had expanded to teaching about nature, planting dune grass and over 1,200 tree seedlings, helping SPUR (Special People United to Ride) with therapeutic riding programs, extensive gardening at Deep Cut Gardens and Thompson Park, and helping with many other projects and events. From the beginning of the volunteer program in 1976 through the end of the 1990s, over 10,000 generous



Master Gardener volunteers helped plant the restored parterre at Deep Cut Gardens.

individuals had donated an incredible 250,000 hours. Friends of the Parks presented volunteer service awards to eight individuals in 1999 who had each contributed more than 1,000 hours.

Friends of the Parks Mission – First Annual Report 1992

To increase the Park System's value through donations of services, property, financial assistance, scholarships, and coordination of volunteer activities.

To increase existing resources through funding beautification, restoration, and limited capital improvement projects.

To improve and expand programs.

To enhance the delivery of park services to groups with special needs.

To assist local groups which provide direct assistance to particular parks and activities.

To solicit and hold money and property from grants, gifts, bequests, and contributions.

They'll see what we did

In early 1991, Andy Coeyman became Supervisor of the Land Preservation Office, where he benefited greatly from having already worked for the Park System for twelve years as a naturalist and for five years in the land acquisition office. A self-described 'Army brat' born at Ft. Monmouth in Oceanport, Andy graduated from Monmouth College (now Monmouth University), where he studied biology. In the nearly two decades that he has supervised land preservation, the Park System has

ANDREW COEYMAN

For the kids of the future

At some point in college, I wanted to work outdoors with wildlife. I first encountered the MCPS in 1972 during an ecology class field trip to Thompson Park. Gerry Savitz showed us the animal collection, then housed in the Rec Barn, and I was very impressed with Gerry. I landed a job as naturalist in 1974, and what really made it great was working with the naturalists and interpreters, Howard Wikoff, Nick Fiorillo, Bob Henschel, Doug Krampert and Gerry, with Tom Kellers at the top, and later Pat Contreras and Patty O'Rourke. They all had different interests, and I was like a sponge, and soaked up a lot of what they knew. It was a great job because I got paid to learn about the parks and the nature of the County and then got to pass it on to park visitors and students.

I was brought over to the planning team in November, 1986, and took over land acquisition in February, 1991. The Open Space Plan and Open Space Tax came in about the same time and told us what project areas to work on and gave us the money to buy the properties as they became available. We have acquired thousands of acres since then.

It has been a great career, and I am indeed fortunate to work here. Working with great people has also made my job wonderful. I guess my zeal for land preservation comes from hunting, fishing, and camping as a kid in Wall, and seeing beloved spots turn into houses. If we can preserve such places, then they will always be there for the kids of the future. I just hope that we can continue buying land and establishing parks and that the MCPS lasts for a thousand years or more.

preserved thousands of acres. As he told his colleague Fran Martone in 1992, "People won't remember you and me in a hundred years, but they'll see what we did."

On Memorial Day Weekend of 1992, County and Park System officials celebrated the opening of the Environmental Center and new trails in Huber Woods Park. More than 50 Park System staff members from multiple departments collaborated on the projects, demonstrating their creativity and skills in a variety of disciplines. Designers, planners, naturalists, carpenters, and other Park employees renovated the former Huber house for the Environmental Center and created exhibits interpreting the history and ecology of the Park.

Ken Thoman, Park System Ecologist, developed the trails plan for the Park and collaborated with Assistant Superintendent Lee Homyock, Principal Park Ranger Ed Orr, and other rangers and volunteers to improve the existing trails and create new ones for a variety of hiking and riding experiences. They created a Nature Loop trail as a linear "outdoor classroom" to inform visitors about the nearby habitats, and an accessible Discovery Path with native plants to attract birds for bird-watching. Ken and other staff members also converted areas of turf and former pasture into a wildlife meadow and fields of native grasses.

The National Association of Park and Recreation Officials recognized the Park System's achievement at Huber Woods with its 1993 Award of Excellence for design and development, noting that the Environmental Center and outdoor improvements had transformed the once private estate into a premier regional park.

With the quick success of the trails at Huber Woods Park, Ken developed a "Park Trails Program" for upgrading and maintaining trails in other County parks. The Program included developing standards for different types of trails: from short and flat groomed trails for casual hikers, to long and steep trails with rough surfaces for hikers and bicyclists who prefer moderate or challenging levels of difficulty.

With the strong public support for open space in Monmouth County and all around the State, New Jersey voters in November of 1992 overwhelmingly approved the eighth Green Acres Bond Act for \$200 million for open space acquisition, farmland preservation, and historic preservation. The Park System received two significant historic preservation matching grants through the N.J. Historic Trust funded by this Green Acres Bond Act and the prior one. The Trust awarded a \$1 million grant from the 1989 Bond Act for restoration of the grist mill, colonial house, and main barns at Walnford, and a \$110,000 grant from the 1992 Bond

Below left: Huber Woods Environmental Center, 1996.

Below right: Trails volunteers at Huber Woods, 2009. From the start of the Park Trails Program in 1993, volunteers have been instrumental in its implementation. Citizens committed to enhancing the ecology of the parks worked on the Huber trails in the 1990s and continue to volunteer today.





The Nomoco Activity Area at Turkey Swamp Park, formerly Camp Nomoco, offers group camping facilities amidst extensive woodlands.

Act for the restoration of the 1792 Dutch Barn that is the centerpiece of the historic farm complex at Longstreet Farm. The Trust later awarded the Park System supplemental grants for both sites totaling \$676,358. By leveraging County funds, these grants enabled the Park System to undertake the historically-appropriate restoration that these significant buildings deserved.

To a buyer who cares more about nature

In May of 1993, the Park System acquired Camp Nomoco from the Monmouth Council of Girl Scouts to add it to Turkey Swamp Park, and recreation staff members started nature and swimming programs there just a few months later. The Council had operated the 303-acre camp since 1947 and, over the years thousands of girls had enjoyed day and overnight visits at its 56-acre campground, but camping had become less popular for girls and registration had declined.

The Council trustees were determined to sell the camp, as a *Wall Herald* reporter noted, to “a buyer who cares more about nature and a pristine environment than about developing the land.” Park System staff saw the Nomoco acquisition as a logical addition to Turkey Swamp Park because it helped protect the Metedeconk River watershed while converting a private camping facility into a public one.

In addition to Camp Nomoco, the Park System has preserved four

other private camps through easements: the Quail Hill Boy Scout Reservation in Manalapan, Camp Sacajawea in Howell, YMCA Camp Arrowhead in Marlboro, and YMCA Camp Topanemus in Millstone.

In 1994, the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) awarded its first-ever national accreditation to the Monmouth County Park System. CAPRA developed the national accreditation program to recognize agencies that meet the highest level of professional standards in 10 categories: agency authority, planning, organization and administration, human resources, finance, program and services management, facility and land use management, security and public safety, risk management, and evaluation and research. In the 1994 Park System Annual Report, Freeholder Ted Narozanick said about CAPRA’s accreditation, “This pat on the back, like that which our Park System employees already receive from visitors to the parks, is more evidence that employees are helping to maintain a top-rate organization.” The Park System has received CAPRA’s reaccreditation every five years since 1994.

Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies

First National Accreditation, Monmouth County Park System, 1994

The Acquisition and Planning Department exceeded national standards...and the personnel were well trained, experienced, well versed and capable of working with the taxpayers, homeowners, and general public.

The Monmouth County Park System is exceptionally well organized and administered. Despite budget crunches, this agency has been able to provide adequate support services in its divisions and departments. It has clearly established lines and levels of responsibility. A strong sense of positive and happy morale is very much evidenced.

The visitor team was very favorably impressed with the high quality of achievements and the amount of work being performed by the Board, staff, and all employees with whom we came in contact. We found nothing but excellent cooperation, a friendly spirit of interest, helpfulness, and hospitality.

Marvelous enthusiasm

The Park System hosted the U.S. Golf Association's 19th U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links Championship at Hominy Hill Golf Course in June, 1995. The Women's Championship is a showcase for the finest amateur women public links golfers, and U.S.G.A. officials wanted a particularly memorable event that year because the Association was celebrating its 100th anniversary. The Park System opened the seven-day Centennial Championship, as the U.S.G.A. dubbed the event, free of charge to the public, and hundreds of spectators came to observe golfers from 33 states.

In thanking the Park System for its efforts, as *Green Link* reported in September-October, 1995, the U.S.G.A. event chairwoman wrote, "The Centennial Championship was the finest one of all the 19 we've had. From the golf course itself, to the staff at Hominy Hill, to the heads of all the committees, everything was absolutely superb. It was all so perfect – the clubhouse, the merchandise, the caddies, the staff. I wish we could bottle this championship for the future because the combination was ideal." As one of the tournament players wrote to the Park System, "Thank you all for the use of your great course and for your marvelous enthusiasm in supporting the tournament. None of the players will ever forget it."

While Park System officials welcomed the acknowledgements from tournament players, they were particularly gratified that golfers of all skill levels were enthusiastically patronizing their four golf courses. In their 1995 Annual Report, Park System staff noted, "Because of the popularity of Monmouth County's golf courses, there can be as many as 35,000 attempts to access the Park System reservation service's 16 phone lines during the first half hour of tee time availability. With 180,000 rounds of golf played yearly on County courses, demand for tee times is extremely high." Today, the Park System utilizes a computerized reservation system that enables golfers to reserve tee times easily.

With this considerable demand, the Recreation Commissioners decided to proceed with the development of the Charleston Springs Golf Course in Millstone Township. Under the leadership of Supervising Landscape Architect Joe Sardonia and Golf Courses General Manager Dave Pease, a team of Park System staff developed environmental objectives for the course's design, construction, and management, including wetlands and habitat areas for native plants and animals and minimizing the use of water, fertilizers, and pesticides.

The Park System engaged nationally-known golf course architects Cornish, Silva and Mungeam of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, to design two 18-hole regulation golf courses for Charleston Springs, with a golf center, putting green, practice range, plus 70 acres of passive recreation. The architects designed a "links-style" North Course, with few trees and an expanse of native grasses and water features with aquatic habitats, and complemented it with "parkland-style" South Course, with tree-lined fairways and water features built to collect and filter runoff water for supplemental irrigation.

The North Course at Charleston Springs opened for limited play six months ahead of schedule in the fall of 1998, and Golf Ranger Bob Giolotto reported, "Ninety-eight percent of the golfers are loving the course. They give it rave reviews and can't wait to play here again." The course's environmental design has generated many positive comments.

In the summer of 1995, the County moved forward with the preservation of one of the last large parcels along Monmouth County's

Buffer of native wetlands plants on Charleston Springs Golf Course. The design of the course helps protect natural resources while providing an aesthetically pleasing course for people to golf, goals supported by a National Golf Foundation survey which revealed that, "getting outdoors and reconnecting with nature were among the top reasons why people play golf."





Above: Fisherman's Cove, 1992.

Right: Youth Tournament at Bel-Aire Golf Course, 2008. The Park System is "growing the game" by expanding access and instruction at county golf courses for all ages and abilities.



Atlantic shoreline, with the acquisition of 35 acres at the mouth of the Manasquan River known as Fisherman's Cove. While much of the site consists of tidelands, the acquisition preserved 15 acres that had been zoned for high-density housing, thus concluding years of local opposition to potential development. With the support of local preservation advocates, the Park System designated the site as the Fisherman's Cove Conservation Area. Park System staff renovated a former bait and tackle shop on the site and started offering environmental education programs there focused on the Manasquan tidelands.

We are indeed fortunate

New Jersey voters approved the ninth Green Acres Bond Act in November, 1995, providing \$250 million for open space preservation, recreation facilities, farmland preservation, and historic preservation. Since the first Green Acres Bond Act in 1991, \$1.4 billion in Green Acres, farmland, and historic preservation matching grants had helped to preserve over 779,000 acres, to develop numerous recreation facilities, and to restore many important historic sites all around New Jersey.

A year later, in November, 1996, Monmouth residents voted by a 3 to 1 margin to increase the County's open space tax from the \$4 million in annual funding approved in 1987 to \$10 million, with \$8 million for preserving land and \$2 million for park improvements. Jim Truncer wrote to the staff in the November-December, 1996 *Green Link*, "We are indeed fortunate to have such dedicated citizens who are interested in their Park System and the preservation of open space in our County. Only with a quality organization of dedicated people doing an outstanding job, day in and day out, are we able to receive the support we need from our voters. I believe the County Open Space Referendum was as much a referendum on the Park System as on increased County open space funding. Thanks to all of you for your hard work, interest, and dedication in making your Park System worthy of voters' support."

In the next two years, the additional Green Acres and Open Space Tax funding enabled the Park System to acquire its fifth golf course and create three parks proposed in the 1991 "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan." The Freeholders accepted an offer in 1997 from the owners of the 78-acre Bel-Aire Golf Course in Wall Township

to sell it to the County. The 30-year-old “executive style” course was popular with beginners and senior citizens who preferred its shorter greens and fairways to those of regulation-size courses. The acquisition preserved open space along a major highway in a rapidly developing area and provided a public golf course for a segment of the market that the Park System was not serving in southeastern Monmouth County.

The Park System passed the 10,000-acre milestone in August, 1997, when the Freeholders acquired 378 acres of Marlboro State Hospital land from the State. With its open space, wetlands, and nearly a mile of frontage along Big Brook—a tributary of the Swimming River—the site had considerable conservation value, and Marlboro Township officials had long urged the Park System to preserve it. The Recreation Commissioners named the new site Big Brook Park. A month later, the Freeholders bought the 91-acre Wolf Hill Farm in Oceanport from the N.J. Sports and Exposition Authority. The Recreation Commissioners named it the Wolf Hill Recreation Area because of its suitability for active recreation in a populated portion of the County. The County added a third new park site in June of 1998 with the purchase of 109 acres along De-Bois Creek and Route 33 in Freehold Township, named the DeBois Creek Recreation Area.

In response to a 1996 survey of recreational interests in the County, the Park System significantly expanded facilities at two large parks in 1997 to serve a variety of recreational needs. Since opening the Dorbrook Recreation Area with 381 acres in 1985, the Park System had expanded it to over 520 acres. In 1997, Park System staff opened a new Activity Center with additional indoor space for therapeutic recreation summer camps, sports and fitness programs, and cultural activities. The Park System also upgraded Dorbrook’s outdoor facilities, including its swimming pools, courts, playing fields, and playgrounds, and it added an in-line skating rink.

In 1997 the Park System also opened a new 11,000 square foot Creative Arts Center in a converted dairy barn at Thompson Park for pottery and ceramics and other crafts classes. Visitor Services staff presented more than 4,000 programs and recreational activities throughout the Park System in 1997. With financial assistance from the Friends of the Parks, Recreation Assistance Program staff provided activities for thousands of economically disadvantaged County residents.



Above: Dorbrook Recreation Area, 2003.



Right: Pottery class, Creative Arts Center. The Creative Arts Center currently offers approximately 400 classes a year in a wide variety of arts and crafts.

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

In October of 1997, County officials opened Historic Walnford in Upper Freehold Township and marked the 225th anniversary of Richard Waln's purchase of the farm and gristmill there. Hundreds of people turned out to enjoy Walnford's historic setting and the restored grist mill, colonial house, and farm buildings. After Ed and Joanne Mullen had donated Walnford to the County in 1979, Park System staff extensively researched the property and developed restoration and interpretive plans for this National Register site, with the assistance of a consulting millwright, archaeologists, historic architects, historic interiors specialists, and exhibit designers.

Noting the project's team effort, Park System Historic Preservation Specialist Gail Hunton, who led the site restoration, told a reporter, "It's really a thrill to be involved with a process like this. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Rather than focusing on one particular period of time, our tours of Walnford will explain how it has evolved over its 250-year history."

Expanding on earlier initiatives to allow natural processes to prevail on the park landscapes, Park System Ecologist Ken Thoman worked with park managers to establish a systemwide Field Maintenance Program in 1998 to improve their stewardship of the thousands of acres of fields in the parks. The staff members inventoried and classified various types of fields according to dominant plants, habitat, and use and developed field maintenance plans for each type that prescribed strat-



Above: The Timberbrook Triathlon at the Manasquan Reservoir, first held in 1995.

Right: Walnford Day, 2000. Every October since the opening of Historic Walnford in 1997, the Park System hosts Walnford Day with special activities and demonstrations.



Field Management - 2001

As the Park System has acquired land over the decades, stewardship of the varied resources within the parks has become increasingly important. The thousands of acres of fields within the parks provide a major vegetative cover and habitat for birds, animals, and insects. They buffer adjacent streams, contribute to the visual character and variety of the parks, and support a range of uses.

Open Play Areas have turf grasses for lawns and athletic use.

Grassy Fields are generally composed of cool season grasses that are allowed to grow with minimal mowing to resemble old-fashioned hay fields, or native warm season grasses that more resemble native prairie.

Agricultural Fields are planted with traditional crops such as corn or soybeans.

Old Fields are composed of herbaceous plants and grasses often dominated by goldenrods, or a mix of warm season grasses and wildflowers.

Shrublands are early succession trees and shrubs.

Barrens have sparse or intermittent vegetation, such as beaches, disturbed areas, and farm fields.

Management standards for enhancing native plant and animal communities, minimizing maintenance, and providing appropriate recreational access to a variety of sites are:

Athletic—athletic fields and golf courses with seeding and irrigation to maintain high-quality turf under demanding conditions; grass height maintained at 2 1/2 - 3 inches; aeration, weed control, fertilizer.

Formal/turf areas—developed and high-visitation areas, often with formal or open play; grass height maintained at 3 - 4 1/2 inches; aeration, weed control, seeding, and fertilizer applied as needed to maintain quality turf during April through October; often not irrigated.

Grassy Field—areas with low traffic and open play; cool season grasses mowed in late April or early May, and again in September; access is maintained with routine mowing of perimeters and interior paths.

Agricultural—areas leased for agricultural production with a grass buffer for public access with routine mowing of the perimeter.

Wildlife Management/Natural Areas—maintained to achieve specific vegetation and wildlife management objectives; often dependent on the establishment and maintenance of native vegetation; cut annually from January to the end of March.

egies to improve habitat and contribute to a diverse and productive landscape. They also initiated an Invasive Species Management Plan to decrease the impacts of invasive species that can severely compromise the natural landscape.

Park System Ecologist Ken Thoman also developed a Natural Resources Management Program in 1998 to be implemented throughout the parks. The program included four steps for each park: a natural resources inventory, a management plan of clearly defined goals for managing the resources, a prescription of specific actions by staff and volunteers for achieving the plan and documenting the results, and monitoring tasks for collecting feedback from staff, volunteers and visitors. Ken and other staff members continue to implement the program throughout the County parks. Staff members annually review the ongoing natural resource management in each park area in the program, including fields, forests, and aquatic areas of ponds and lakes. (See page 62)

To sustain New Jersey as a green and prosperous state

With development growing rapidly in the booming 1990s economy, Governor Christine Todd Whitman's Council on New Jersey Outdoors issued a report in February of 1998 recommending preserving one million of the State's two million acres of undeveloped land in the next 10 years and dedicating \$200 million annually to do so.

The Council noted that, "The investment the public and private sectors make to protect open spaces is returned many times in tourism, trade, employment, and enjoyment. Since 1961, the public has voted nine times overwhelmingly to support Green Acres expenditures. This level of support means that voters clearly want to ensure that the most critical lands and waters of the State will be preserved for public and environmental benefit and not be left to the vagaries of changing real estate markets and unplanned development. . .To sustain New Jersey as a green and prosperous state, all levels of government as well as the nonprofit and private sectors will have to accelerate preservation efforts and double or even triple the current pace of acquisition."

Governor Whitman proposed a referendum for the November, 1998, ballot dedicating \$98 million a year in sales tax revenue from 1999 to 2009 to a Garden State Preservation Trust for open space, farmland, and historic preservation and for recreational development, and dedicating \$98 million a year in sales tax revenue for up to 30 years thereafter for debt service on the 1999-2009 expenditures. Voters approved the State's tenth open space referendum by a margin of almost 2 to 1.

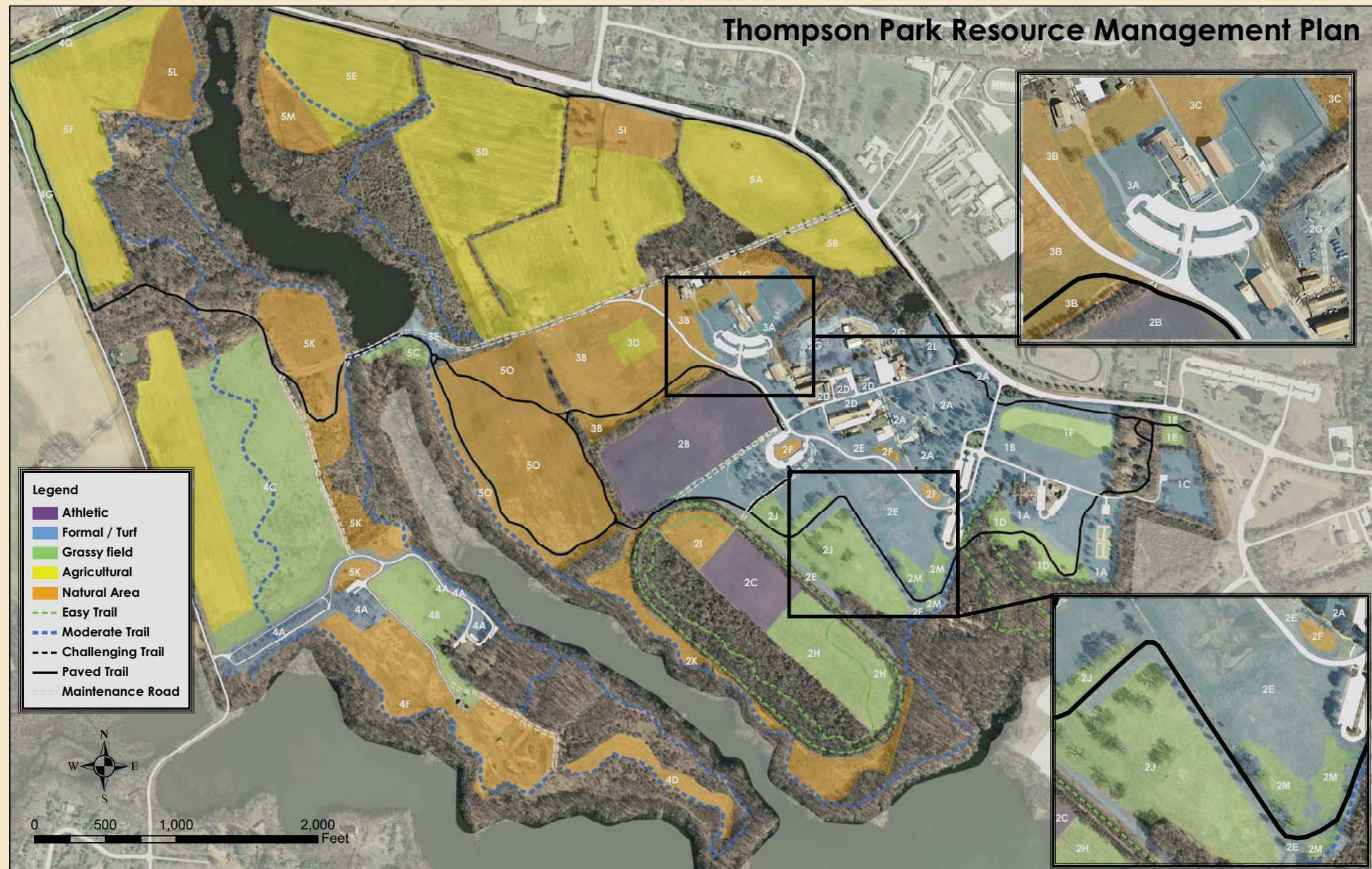
Natural Resources Management Program - 1998

The preservation, enhancement, and stabilization of natural resources are critical to achieving the Park System's mission of providing park facilities and recreational experiences of the highest quality.

Because a diverse environment is the most stable and best able to withstand negative influences, the core objective of the Natural Resources Management Program is to maintain biological diversity: protecting the full spectrum of biological resources including the plant, animal, organic, and inorganic elements that make up the properties managed by the Park System.

Maintaining and enhancing biological diversity has numerous potential benefits: preserving examples of the natural environment of the County as land is developed; expanding the type and quality of recreational opportunities; eliminating unnecessary maintenance activities and avoiding long-term maintenance problems; generating revenue in the community by promoting outdoor recreation-related expenditures; reducing expenses for maintenance personnel, equipment, and supplies; attracting outside funding from agencies, groups, and individuals interested in natural resources.

The initial priorities of the program are to enhance tree resources and trail facilities, to manage invasive species, and to enhance resource diversity.



Thompson Park Resource Management Plan, 2003.

In 1999, a 416-acre tract of prime agricultural land in Holmdel that had been farmed for nearly three centuries exemplified the intense development pressure cited in the Council on New Jersey Outdoors' report. Chase Manhattan Bank owned the Holmdel site and had approval to build a one million-square-foot office campus with the potential for an additional one million square feet, but it contracted to sell the land to a developer that wanted to build 425 homes there. In a backlash against large development projects, Holmdel Township officials rezoned the land to residential use with four-acre lot minimum size, and Chase sued to block the rezoning.

When a survey showed that the majority of residents disapproved of extending sewers to the property, Holmdel officials told Chase they wouldn't approve the extension, and Chase canceled its contract with the developer. Only a coalition on an unprecedented scale in Monmouth County could raise the daunting amount of money needed to pay Chase for the high value of the land. Holmdel Township open space advocates ultimately joined forces with the Park System, the Monmouth Conservation Foundation, the Green Acres Program, and the County and State Farmland Preservation Programs to preserve the tract permanently.

The Park System added 227 acres of the Chase property to Holmdel Park, including portions of the Ramanessin-Hop Brook stream corridor, which the 1991 "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan" had identified as a priority greenway to protect the Swimming River Reservoir water supply. The County and State preserved the two historic farms in perpetuity as farmland and sold it to two nurseries. With the addition of the former Chase lands, Holmdel Park today constitutes a greenbelt of open space extending some two and a half miles from Crawford's Corner to Middletown Road, where it joins Holmdel Township's Ramanessin Greenway.

Following up on a goal in the 1991 "Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan," the Freeholders established a regional park in Millstone Township in 1999 with the purchase of 93 acres that included Perrineville Lake, a well-known scenic landmark that was created as a mill pond in the 18th century. Perrineville Lake Park preserves rural open space and parts of Rocky Brook, a tributary of the Millstone River, which is a major source of municipal water in central New Jersey. With the assistance of Millstone Township and the Delaware and Raritan Greenway Land Trust, the Park System's continuing program of acquisitions has made Perrineville Lake Park the County's fifth largest park.

Below left: The Chase Tract in Holmdel, historically known as the Schenck Farm, in 1987.

Below right: Perrineville Lake, 1992.

