

**OPEN SPACE RECREATION PLAN**

**TOWNSHIP OF JEFFERSON**  
**MORRIS COUNTY**

*Prepared for:*

*Planning Board  
Township of Jefferson  
1033 Weldon Road  
Municipal Building  
Lake Hopatcong, New Jersey 07849*

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<u><b>Page</b></u>
<b>INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	1
<b>GOALS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	2
<b>INVENTORY OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FACILITIES</b>	
<i>State of New Jersey</i>	3
<i>Morris County</i>	3
<i>Township of Jefferson</i>	4
<i>Board of Education</i>	5
<i>Non-Profit Organizations</i>	7
<i>Additional Recreation Facilities</i>	7
<b>NEEDS ANALYSIS</b>	8
<b>RESOURCE ASSESSMENT</b>	10
<b>ACTION PLAN</b>	13
<b>APPENDIX</b>	Following page 14
<b>SYSTEMS MAP</b>	<i>Jefferson Township, Morris County</i> <i>Open Space Inventory and</i> <i>Proposed Open Space</i> Binder Sleeve

## INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), as defined by the Green Acres Program

*articulates a local government's vision of open space and recreation. It should establish a philosophical and practical justification for the protection and preservation of open space and recreation opportunities. An OSRP provides a framework for implementation. Through an OSRP, you identify and examine open space and recreation resources important to you and lay out ways to protect and enjoy them.*

The following Open Space and Recreation Plan has been prepared for the Township of Jefferson in accordance with the guidelines and requirements of the New Jersey Green Acres Program and includes the following elements:

- Goals and Objectives of the Plan.
- Inventory of Existing Open Space and Recreation Facilities both Public and Private.
- Needs Analysis.
- Resource Assessment.
- Action Plan.
- System Map.

The Township currently owns 160 acres of developed open space exclusive of any Board of Education property and 104 acres of undeveloped open space. Additionally, there are extensive State, County and non-profit owned open space lands in the Township, totaling over 6,288 acres that are open to the public and provide both active and passive recreational opportunities. Finally, Newark Watershed property totaling 4,105 acres, is located in the northern most extreme portion of the Township. Passive recreational use of this area is permitted with permit only.

In accordance with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the total acreage owned by the Township meets the recommended acres of developed open space land per 1,000 persons. This amount of developed open space land satisfies the needs of the 1990 population, as published by the U.S. Census, as well as the estimated year 2000 population. However, it should be noted that while the Township meets the NRPA standards, continual upgrading and replacement of equipment is necessary to maintain the Township's active open space recreational facilities.

Therefore, the focus of the Jefferson Township Open Space Recreation Plan is to identify existing active open space recreational facilities that require upgrading and replacement of equipment, as well as to identify currently undeveloped lands for possible acquisition as preserved open space for environmental protection and for the provision of passive recreational opportunities.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- To preserve and protect scenic views throughout the Township, especially along roadways and from ridges;
- To accommodate the year-round recreational needs of the Township's existing and future residents through public, private and semi-public efforts;
- To preserve and enhance environmentally sensitive areas such as steep slopes, stream corridors and woodlands from development and to ensure compliance with State restrictions pertaining to wetlands, wetland transitional buffer areas and floodplains;
- To promote and set aside open space areas wherever possible so as to maintain the balance between developed and undeveloped areas;
- To protect and preserve environmentally sensitive lands including habitats for endangered, threatened or rare flora and fauna;
- To create stream corridor protection by requiring sufficiently wide buffers for the preservation of streams, the associated woodlands and natural habitats, and for the protection of the watershed areas and surface water quality;
- To improve and/or expand the existing parks and recreational facilities of the Township, where appropriate; and
- To meet the policy objectives, as indicated in the March 31, 1999 "New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan Interim Plan" for the "Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area", which includes the entirety of Jefferson Township. This policy is to "protect and preserve large, contiguous tracts and corridors of recreation, forest or other open space land that protects natural systems and natural resources."

## **INVENTORY OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

All existing State, county, municipal and non-profit open space and recreational facilities are designated and shown on the accompanying "Open Space Inventory and Proposed Open Space" map. Approximately 22 square miles or 50% of the Township is preserved as public and private open space.

### **State of New Jersey**

The **Berkshire Valley Wildlife Management Area** is owned and managed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife. The area is located in the southwest portion of the Township and extends into neighboring Roxbury Township. The entire Berkshire Valley Wildlife Management Area contains 1,800 acres of woodlands and fields. It protects portions of the Rockaway River and its tributary, Stephen's Brook and associated wetlands. It is managed for upland game, deer, waterfowl and fishing. Pheasant are stocked by the Division of Fish and Game both pre-season and in-season. Wild turkey may be hunted in the spring and deer hunting, both bow and shotgun, is permitted.

**Hopatcong State Park** includes only the water area of that portion of Lake Hopatcong that is located in the Township and totals in excess of 550 acres. The Lake is used for all forms of water sports including boating, fishing and skiing.

**Rockaway River Wildlife Management Area** is approximately 411 acres of undeveloped passive recreation and conservation area owned and managed by the NJDEP, Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife. The area is located in the central portion of the Township adjacent to Mahlon Dickerson Reservation and the 704 acre Jersey City Watershed property.

**Jefferson Sparta Preserve** is a passive recreation conservation area containing approximately 572 acres in the Township of Jefferson. This property serves as the headwaters for the Wallkill, Pequannock and Rockaway River. While owned by the State, the Morris County Park Commission has a 99 year Lease Agreement with the State to manage it.

### **Morris County**

**Mahlon Dickerson Reservation**, centrally located in the Township, contains over 2,892 acres of mountainous terrain and extensive wetlands. The park can be accessed at numerous locations along Weldon Road. It offers a wilderness experience with over eight miles of trails. One of the many excellent features is the Headley Overlook, at 1,300 feet elevation, one of the highest points in Morris County. Existing facilities, in addition to the trails, include adirondack shelters, a tent and trailer camping area, ballfields and fishing at Saffin Pond. Educational activities for both school and families are held in the main Saffin Complex.

**Minisink Park** contains over 297 acres of undeveloped passive recreation conservation area and is located in the southwest portion of the Township along Minisink Road and adjacent to the State

Berkshire Valley Wildlife Management Area.

**Berkshire Valley Recreation Area** is the newest addition to the County park system in Jefferson Township and is located along the Township's northeastern border. With the purchase of an old quarry site, the County is presently rehabilitating this 369 + acre site into an 18 hole County golf course with appropriate amenities. The site also contains mountainous terrain and portions of the Rockaway River.

### **Township of Jefferson**

**Camp Jefferson** is a 96.25 acre park that contains both active and passive recreational facilities. The park, recently purchased by the Township, contains a soccer field, a pool facility, a skateboard park, a soccer/football field, fishing, cabin buildings and hiking trails.

**Creative Park** is located on a 1 acre portion of the municipal complex site of 32 acres. The park is located in the northwestern portion of the Township, behind the municipal building and contains a state of the art children's playground.

**Ridge Road Park** is a 27.3 acre park developed with two baseball fields, two lighted roller hockey rinks, two concession buildings and a gravel parking area. The remainder of the park is in its natural state and undeveloped. The park is located in the northeastern portion of the Township along Ridge Road.

**Kennedy Fields**, formerly known as Lakeside Fields, is a 2.14 acre park developed with a youth baseball field and is located in the north central portion of the Township along Apollo Drive. The park also contains a building for equipment storage and sale of refreshments.

**Chamberlain Fields** is a 10.6 acre park developed with a lighted baseball/softball field, a soccer/football field, two basketball courts, two tennis courts, a volley ball court, a playground area, portable bathroom facilities for men and women and two paved parking area for a total of 56 parking spaces. It is fully developed and located in the northeastern portion of the Township along Chamberlain Road.

**Dogwood Park** is a 5.12 acre neighborhood park located between the southern cul-de-sac of Dogwood Drive and Cozy Lake Road at its intersection with Notch Road. Active recreational opportunities include a playground area. Johnson Pond offers fishing and ice skating opportunities on the pond which is approximately 2 acres in size. There is a small gravel and dirt off-street parking area which supports up to six vehicles.

**Berkshire Valley Park** is an undeveloped site recently purchased by the Township with Green Acres funds. It contains approximately 14 acres and is located in the northern portion of the Township along the eastern side of Berkshire Valley Road.

**Longwood Lake Park** is a small 0.24 acre neighborhood park playground located on Longwood Lake Road. The play area is fenced on all sides with a four foot high chain link fence. In addition to traditional playground apparatus, the park contains two side by side half court basketball courts on a non-delineated asphalt surface and a bocce/shuffleboard court.

**East Shore Park** is a small 0.76 acre neighborhood park playground located on East Shore Road at the Benedict Drive intersection. This playground includes a sand play area and playground apparatus. There is an off-street parking area along the frontage of the park for approximately 11 vehicles.

**Shore Road Park** is a 0.25 acre neighborhood park playground located in the northwestern portion of the Township between Prospect Point Road and Ledgewood Road.

**Lakeside Fields** is a 14.72 acre park located in the south central portion of the Township off Route 15 South. It is a developed community field complex containing a senior league baseball field, a football/soccer field, two little league baseball fields, a soft ball field and a lake that is utilized for ice skating when weather permits. It also contains a 3,200 square foot open air pavilion. Parking for approximately 80 cars is provided in an unlined gravel area adjacent to the fields.

**Prospect Point Park** is a small 1.1 acre neighborhood park located on Florida Avenue. It contains two fenced enclosed tennis courts, one sand volley ball court, two full court asphalt surface basketball courts and a playground area. There are also two asphalt surfaced play/court areas. Off-street parking, in the form of a gravel area, is available for approximately 17 vehicles.

**Liffy Island** is a 60 acre island located in the southwestern portion of the Township in Lake Hopatcong. It is presently wooded and undeveloped.

**Children's Park** is a small 0.22 acre neighborhood park located on the northeast corner of Schwarz Boulevard and Maine Street. It contains an older fenced in playground area. There are no off-street parking facilities.

**Shawnee Trail**, also known as Tract 13 is an undeveloped 30.1 acre site located in the southwestern portion of the Township off Shawnee Trail.

**Board of Education**

The Board of Education owns six elementary schools, one middle school and one high school for a total area of 168 acres. Each school contains active recreational facilities as follows:

- White Rock School                      2 Small softball fields
- 1 Playground facility
- Cozy Lake School                      1 Small little league baseball

field

2 Short full court basketball courts

1 Playground facility

•

Milton School            1 Softball field

1 All purpose field/play area

1 Playground facility

•

Ellen T. Briggs School        1 Baseball/softball field

1 Small softball field

2 Full court basketball courts

2 Playground facilities

•

Consolidated School        1 Playground facility

•

Stanlick School            1 Softball field

1 Softball/utility field

1 Baseball field

1 Playground facility

•

Middle School            2 Tennis courts

1 Little league baseball/softball field

1 Soccer field

•

High School                1 High school baseball field

2 Football practice areas

1 Freshman baseball/soccer field

1 Varsity football field

1 Combination varsity softball/soccer field

1 Varsity soccer field

1 Field hockey field



**Non-Profit Organizations**

**The Passaic River Coalition** owns a 157 acre site in the northwestern portion of the Township known as "Timberland." This is a landlocked, undeveloped wooded area preserved for conservation purposes.

**Audubon Society** owns a 45 acre site in the northwestern portion of the Township, located along Ridge Road. This is a wooded undeveloped area preserved for passive recreation and conservation purposes.

**Additional Recreational Facilities**

Private recreational facilities include the golf course, camps and marinas. Private camps in the Township include the following:

- Sun Air Lakeside Camp
- Camp Nyoda
- Willow Lake Camp

Private marinas in the Township include the following:

- Clark's Landing Marina
- Great Cove Park
- Hockenjos Boat Company
- Prospect Point Boat Yard
- Woodport Marina
- Floraine's

**Bowling Green Golf Course** is a semi-private 18 hole golf course located on approximately 150 acres. In addition to the ancillary golfing facilities of a practice green and putting green, the facility contains a clubhouse with men's locker room and women's changing area. The facility also contains a restaurant, open to the public.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

In 1990, the U.S. Census indicated the Township's total population was 17,825. This was an approximate 8% population increase from the 1980 population of 16,413. The overall Township median age was 33.2. The distribution of the children within the Township were as follows:

- 4 and under 1,490 (8.3%) children
- 5-18 3,308 (18.6) children

Thus, 26.9% or 4,798 children resided in Jefferson Township in 1990, with 57% or 10,284 adults ranging in age from 19-54 and 15.4% or 2,743 ranging in age from 55 and over. Since 1990 approximately 718 new homes were constructed and received Certificates of Occupancy. Using the 1990 household size of 2.81 persons per dwelling, an estimated 2,018 individuals was added to the Township's population for a year 2,000 estimated population of 20,651.

The "National Recreation and Park Association" (NRPA) recommends that 6.25 to 10.50 acres of developed open space land be provided for every 1,000 persons. Therefore, the Township should have between 129 and 217 acres of developed open space. Presently, the Township has approximately 160 acres of dedicated developed open space exclusive of the Board of Education developed open space. Additional open space is present in the form of Morris County Park developed open space (Mahlon Dickerson Reservation and Berkshire Valley Recreation Area) and a semi-private 18 hole golf course (Bowling Green Golf Course).

The Township of Jefferson has numerous volunteer recreation organizations offering organized sports at both the local competition level and the traveling competition levels. Generally, these organizations are funded through sign up fees, fund raising and sponsorships, with only a small percentage of tax dollars being utilized.

Currently, the approximate numbers of Jefferson Township children participating in organized sports is as follows:

- Jefferson Babe Ruth Travel Baseball  
100 children
- Jefferson Sports League - Babe Ruth Baseball  
299 children
- Jefferson Sports League - Basketball  
261 children

- Jefferson Sports League - Babe Ruth Softball  
182 children
- Jefferson Tennis  
40 children
- Milton Recreation Association - Basketball  
350 children
- Milton Recreation Association - Little League Baseball  
510 children
- Milton Recreation Association - Babe Ruth Softball 205 children

The NRPA also has standards regarding the particular recreational facilities that should be provided based upon the population to be served by the facilities. The following table provides a comparison between the required standard per person per recreational facility with and the facilities currently existing in the Township.

<u>Recreational Facility</u>	<u>NRPA Standard per Persons</u>	<u>Current School Property Facilities</u>		<u>Current Additional Facilities</u>	<u>Total</u>
Baseball Field	1/5,000	3	4	7	
Softball Field	1/5,000	*	*	*	
Little League Field	1/20,000		9	4	13
Football Field	1/20,000		1	2	3
Soccer Field	1/10,000		2	2	4
Basketball Court	1/5,000	6	10	16	
Tennis Court	1/2,000	2	4	6	
Volleyball Court	1/5,000	0	2	2	
Field Hockey	1/20,000		1	0	1
Golf (9 Hole)	1/25,000		0	0	0
Golf Driving Range	1/50,000		0	0	0
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	0	1	1	
Running Track	1/20,000		1	0	1
Trail System	1/region		0	**	**
Community Center	1/25,000		0	0	0

\* Included with baseball fields

\*\* Several miles of trails located in County and State Park System

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As a result, the Township presently has sufficient existing developed open space to satisfy the present and near future active recreational needs of its residents.

The Planning Board, in its preparation of the OSRP, consulted with the Township Open Space Advisory Committee. In addition, two public discussions, on the Draft Open Space Recreation Plan Element, were held on March 13, 2001 and April 10, 2001. This was followed by a formal Public Hearing on May 8, 2001 at which time the Planning Board formally adopted the Plan. This plan is based upon both the Planning Board's examination and analysis of the Township's open space needs, as well as that of the general public.

**RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**

This section provides an assessment of those public and private land and water resources that have potential for providing open space or recreation opportunities and include:

- opportunity for creation of linear recreation and open space facilities such as trails, bicycle paths and green ways which link existing recreation and open space sites in an integrated system;
- opportunities for supporting conservation objectives such as water supply protection, wildlife and rare species protection, protection of rivers, streams and forest lands, farmland preservation and historic preservation;
- opportunities for supporting community objectives for development and land use, including open space which buffers or defines developed areas, open space which preserves scenic or distinctive landscape features and open space with development limiting characteristics such as floodplains, storm prone areas and steep slopes;
- opportunities for additional public access to waterways; and
- opportunities for the development of recreation facilities such as ballfields, playgrounds, court sports, swimming pools and golf courses.

Additionally, stated goals of the 1991 Master Plan include the following:

*To recognize areas of environmental sensitivity including wetland areas, stream corridors, rock outcrops, aquifer recharge areas, steep slopes, lakes, ponds, rivers, significant vegetated areas and endangered wildlife and vegetation, and to preserve these critical resources through implementing appropriate planning and zoning policies...To continue to improve the quality, quantity and location of recreational lands and open space including both active and passive recreational facilities, as well as environmentally sensitive lands.*

Therefore, open space opportunities may be the acquisition of land for recreation and conservation purposes, the development and redevelopment of land existing or acquired for recreational and conservation purposes, and utilizing innovative planning design techniques to private development that retain environmentally sensitive lands, including wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, stream corridors, scenic vistas, ridge lines and water bodies.

Some of the more notable natural physical features of Jefferson Township include the following:

- **Stream Corridors** - The major stream corridors include branches of the Pequannock River, Musconetcong River and the Rockaway River.
- **Trout Production Streams** - Within Jefferson Township only the most southern portion of the Rockaway River is classified as a trout production stream.
- **Trout Maintenance Streams** - Within Jefferson Township, there are three Trout Maintenance streams as follows:
  - Weldon Brook, from its headwaters just north of Weldon Road in Sparta, downstream to its confluence with Lake Shawnee.
  - Russia Brook, from Lake Hartung south to Lake Swannanoa.
  - Pequannock River from Oak Ridge Reservoir south and east for its entire length within the Township.

**Non- Trout Streams** - Within Jefferson Township there are seven Non-Trout streams as follows:

- Russia Brook north of Lake Hartung.
- Cozy Brook including Cozy Lake, Harbargain Pond and Pine Camp Pond.
- Woodstock Brook.
- Berkshire Valley Brook.
- Longwood Lake and the Rockaway River for the majority of its length within the Township.
- Richards Brook.
- Beaver Brook.
- **Trout Stocked Streams** - Within the Township four streams, ponds and lakes are trout stocked by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife. These waters are as follows: Jefferson Township Park Pond, Lake Hopatcong,

Rockaway River, and Russia Brook.

- **Major Lakes** - While Jefferson Township has numerous ponds and lakes, the following are the major water bodies within the Township: Lake Hopatcong, Oak Ridge Reservoir, Lake Hartung, Mount Paul Lake, White Rock Lake, Moospac Pond, Mitt Pond, Nyoda Pond, Cozy Lake, Pine Camp Pond, Oak Ridge Pond, Longwood Lake, Lake Swannanoa, Dodge Pond, Lake Winona, and Lake Shawanee.
- **Steep Topography** - Over 31% of the Township has slopes in excess of 15%. Some of the highest elevations in Morris County are located in Jefferson Township.

### **ACTION PLAN**

The Action Plan of the Township is two-fold: to acquire open space and to enact zoning and subdivision regulations that protect open space resources. This Plan recommends the Township seek funding from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Morris County Open Space Trust Fund along with utilizing the Township Open Space Trust Fund to acquire open space recreation and conservation lands that maximize the potential of existing State, county and local open space lands.

Existing vacant lands within the Township for open space acquisition and preservation opportunities include, but are not be limited to, the following:

- The acquisition of approximately 4,105 acres of the Newark Watershed property, located in Jefferson Township for conservation, preservation and recreation goals. Formal acquisition can be in the form of fee simple or the purchase of the development rights.
- The acquisition of approximately 1,000 acres of the Mt. Paulus Fathers property, located off Ridge Road for conservation, preservation and recreation goals.
- The addition of appropriate lands adjacent to or abutting existing State, County or municipal parklands that further expands or enhances conservation, preservation and recreation goals.
- The acquisition of appropriate lands to provide for conservation, preservation and recreation goals associated with the major lakes and ponds of Jefferson Township. This includes the preservation of wetlands, woodlands and watershed properties associated with these water bodies.
- The acquisition of appropriate lands adjacent to or abutting existing State, County or municipal parklands or independent of any governmental parkland that further expands or enhances stream corridor conservation, preservation and recreation goals. This includes the wetlands, woodlands and watershed properties associated with the Rockaway River and the Pequannock River and their tributaries.

The Jefferson Township Open Space Inventory and Proposed Open Space Map along with Appendix provides a complete picture of the Township's open space acquisition plan.

The Township recently rezoned approximately 50% of the municipality to a Conservation Zone that requires a minimum lot size of 5 acres. These lands are the most environmentally sensitive and contain vast stands of forests, wetlands, floodplains, streams, steep slopes, and rock outcrops. Additionally, this zone encourages cluster development that would retain environmentally sensitive lands in their natural state through the use of cluster development option thus preserving environmentally sensitive lands through private land ownership.



Finally, this Plan recommends the Township identify sensitive stream corridors and adopt appropriate ordinances to require conservation easements along the identified stream corridors in the Township.

JeffersonOSRP

**APPENDIX**

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