

# Open Space and Recreation Plan

East Amwell Township  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey  
Adopted October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Open Space and Recreation assets of a community are closely associated with perceived quality of life. East Amwell has long recognized this fact, and has been a statewide leader in farmland preservation and an active partner in the conservation and preservation of natural lands. To date, 36% of the Township's land area have been permanently preserved, a tribute to the Township's continuing partnerships with County, State and non-profit organizations. The Township has also planned for, and developed, active recreation facilities scaled to meet the needs of this rural community.

The Goals outlined in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) address three major areas; active recreation, passive recreation and open space/conservation. Active recreation goals seek to meet the needs of all Township residents, regardless of age and ability. Goals for passive recreation include acquisition of unique lands and minimizing the impacts of man-made activities on sensitive lands. Open space and conservation goals promote the acquisition of environmentally critical lands and historic sites through a variety of methods in order to protect cultural resources and the long-term health of the ecosystem.

East Amwell has a wealth of preserved farmland and open space areas, as seen in the Inventory section of the OSRP. Over one-third of the Township has been preserved through local, County, State and non-profit efforts. Nearly two-thirds of these preserved lands have been enrolled in farmland preservation with other ownership as follows:

- Farmland preservation – 61%
- Non-profit ownership – 22%
- County lands – 8%
- State Lands – 8%
- Municipal lands – 1%
- School lands – 1%

The Needs Analysis evaluates the adequacy of the current open space and recreation system to satisfy present and future needs of East Amwell residents. Active recreation facility development has responded to the increasing needs of local residents. Local recreation organizations suggest the need for more playing fields and increased maintenance. A continuing ambition to preserve and protect farmland and critical environmental resources and provide passive recreational opportunities will inspire future preservation efforts.



The OSRP also suggests a 'tool box' of methods to identify and acquire lands. Identified acquisition targeting criteria seek to:

- Preserve and protect critical environmental features such as wetlands, steep slopes, flood plains, and vernal pools
- Create and expand greenway elements and linkages
- Increase contiguous holdings
- Preserve cultural and historic resources
- Provide active recreation areas scaled to East Amwell's rural population, and
- Protect important open space and recreation lands threatened by development.

This plan also seeks to educate East Amwell's residents on the importance of active and passive recreation lands, their accessibility, and ways to preserve and conserve these resources. The plan is being implemented through a combination of state, county, and local resources including:

- East Amwell's Local Open Space Tax
- Hunterdon County's Open Space Trust Fund
- New Jersey's Green Acres Program funding
- New Jersey's Environmental Infrastructure Trust
- The National Recreational Trails Program, and
- Conservation Easements



East Amwell will continue to collaborate with Hunterdon County, the State and non-profit organizations to conserve and protect environmentally sensitive lands. East Amwell should also develop other successful partnerships like those to date with the D&R Greenway Land Trust, the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

## **INTRODUCTION**

East Amwell Township spans the agricultural Amwell Valley and extends into the heart of the Sourland Mountain region in Central New Jersey. The prominent ridges and forested habitat of the Sourland Mountains provide a unique and breathtaking backdrop to the contrasting rolling farmland valley located to the north, imparting a rural character distinctive to the Township. East Amwell has long championed the conservation of the local and regional resources contained in the Township through extensive farmland preservation and protection of ecologically sensitive lands in the Sourland Mountain area. Through a variety of methods, including local, County, State and non-profit participation efforts, 36% of all the Township land is currently preserved. These preserved lands provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities for East Amwell residents.

Numerous environmental analyses and planning studies conducted by East Amwell have highlighted the necessity of protecting the fertile Amwell Valley and the fragile Sourland Mountain region while providing adequate recreation opportunities for residents. Local policies and regulations have been designed to preserve the headwaters of two watersheds (Stony Brook-Millstone and South Branch Raritan), maintain water supply and quality for existing and future residents, and preserve fragile environments for biodiversity. These policies are also intended to protect the largest canopy of forest in Central New Jersey, protect wildlife migration routes, preserve historic sites such as the Lindbergh Estate, Hart's Cave, etc., provide greenway linkages for future generations of people and wildlife, protect wetlands and provide natural flood storage to minimize stormwater runoff and meet the recreation needs of all the Township's residents.

Throughout the years, the Township has prepared various comprehensive studies on forest habitat, rich agricultural areas, greenways and groundwater resources that have all led to the understanding of the important need to conserve its natural resources. Land conservation, through purchases of land and easements and through limits on development, is key to achieving these goals.

The purpose of the Open Space and Recreation Plan is to provide guidance for current and future acquisition, preservation, management and use of open space and recreation areas in East Amwell Township. Open space is defined by the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL §40:55D-5) as:

“Any parcel or area of land or water essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment or for the use and enjoyment of owners and occupants of land adjoining or neighboring such open spaces; provided that such areas may be improved with only those buildings, structures, streets and offstreet parking and other improvements that are designed to be incidental to the natural openness of the land.”

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Through this planning process, the Township is articulating the importance of open space and recreation opportunities that benefit Township residents and promote a healthy environment.

East Amwell voters approved referenda in 1988, 1995 and 1998 on land preservation issues to bond money and further open space taxes. All have received overwhelming voter approval.

The Township provides a variety of community activities and recreational areas for both active and passive recreation. Active recreation generally refers to structured events requiring prescribed places, sites or fields while passive recreation activities are low impact activities such as walking, picnicking and bird watching. Other recreation and open space opportunities are provided through County, State and Non-profit organizations. Preservation of vital lands needs to continue in the Township in order to provide future protection of the region while providing residents with a variety of recreational opportunities that contribute to their overall quality of life and sense of place.

### **GOALS AND POLICIES**

The following goals are designed to offer guiding principles when considering the acquisition and use of open space and recreation areas in the Township. These goals, like the rest of the Plan, are to be viewed as an organic document that should be flexible to adapt to the future changes and needs of the Township.

The overarching goal for open space and recreation is to promote sustainability for the ecosystem and accommodation of development that is not in conflict with natural resources. Scientific study, the health, safety and welfare of citizens, landowner rights, resource protection, public policy and conservation goals all factor into responsible land management.

#### ***Active Recreation Goals***

- To provide open space and recreational facilities and opportunities that meet the needs of all Township residents, regardless of age and abilities.
- To establish linkages of public spaces through the use of greenways, greenbelts, waterways, paths and bikeways.
- To maintain and enhance the quality of life for the Township's present and future residents by establishing and enhancing active and passive recreational lands and public open space.
- To acquire land and develop a central location for East Amwell active recreation needs which would include playing fields and other active recreation facilities.

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- To provide East Amwell residents with timely information on recreational facilities and activities to promote awareness of recreational opportunities available for all residents.

***Passive Recreation Goals***

- To encourage and provide for passive recreation uses that have no deleterious impact on the environment
- To establish as the highest priority for public acquisition, areas of unique recreational, scenic or environmental value.

***Open Space and Conservation Goals***

- To promote public open space acquisitions, private conservation actions, and management and maintenance techniques which preserve and protect the integrity of historic resources and sensitive environmental resources and ecosystems, including but not limited to groundwater, surface water, steep slopes, ridgelines, trout streams, wetlands, stream corridors, aquifers, forests and other areas of native vegetation, habitats of threatened and endangered species and unique natural systems.
- To promote threatened and endangered species habitat protection through the acquisition of passive recreation resources.
- To support and partner with State and County open space programs, private organizations and any other open space programs for ongoing acquisitions as appropriate to the goals of the community

## **INVENTORY**

The Township contains a number of municipal, County, State and privately-owned open space and recreational areas. These facilities offer a wide range of passive and active recreational opportunities, from nature walks and hiking to active sport fields and playgrounds. As of July 2005, the Township contained 6,522 acres of preserved land, or 36% of the Township's total land area, which includes public, non-profit and private lands and preserved farmland. Recreational areas, preserved lands open to public use, total 2,529 acres, or 14% of the Township's total land area. Of this, 4%, or 95 acres, are owned by the Township or the Board of Education. Figure 1, titled "Open Space and Recreation System Map", depicts the location and ownership of these parcels. The following is a brief description of ownership, size and type of facilities available to the public.

### **Township Lands**

East Amwell offers its residents a variety of Township-owned recreational facilities. These include active sport facilities for soccer, baseball, and other team sports, as well as passive recreational areas that encourage activities such as hiking and nature study. These combined resources enhance the quality of life for residents, who can stay active in a wide range of recreational activity. The following is a summary and inventory of Township-owned lands.

#### **Active Recreation Areas**

East Amwell Municipal Ball Fields are located on Wertsville Road at the intersection of U.S. Route 202 adjacent to the municipal building. The park is just over 9 acres and is used for active recreation, primarily for softball and soccer. The park consists of:

- 3 ball fields (1 with scoreboard)
- 1 multi-purpose field (lighted field)
- 2 batting cages
- 1 playground is also on site
- 3 storage sheds
- 1 snack shack
- 1 trailer used for Amwell Valley Baseball League

The municipal fields are jointly maintained by the Township, Baseball league and Soccer league.

#### **Passive Recreation/Open Space Areas**

Clawson Park, a community park, is located in Ringoes Village, on New Jersey State Route 179 near the intersection with Fox Hunt Road. The park contains 23 acres and is currently under development. The Township is constructing a variety of facilities including tennis courts, a



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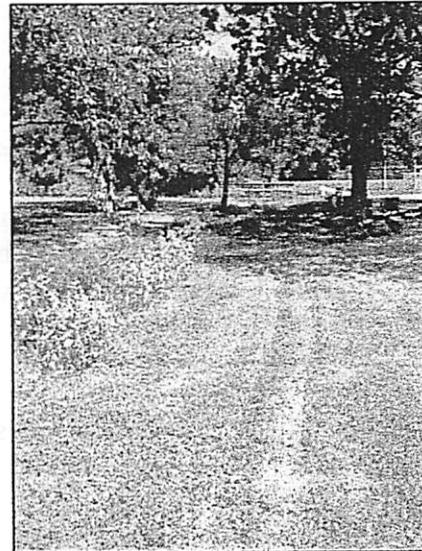
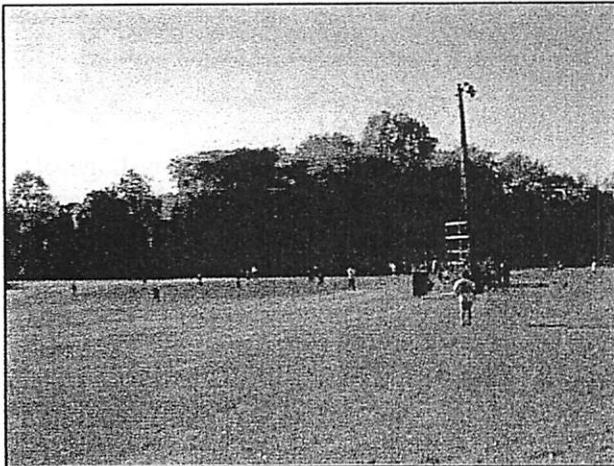
volleyball court, playgrounds, pavilions, an ice rink, a softball field, an all purpose field and a 1.5 mile walking trail. The park will be open to the public in September 2005.

East Amwell Park along Welisewitz Road at Cider Mill Road is a preserved parcel that runs along the Neshanic River. The use of this site is appropriate for low impact passive recreation such as hiking, bird watching and nature study.

**Table 1: Township-Owned Lands by Block and Lot\***

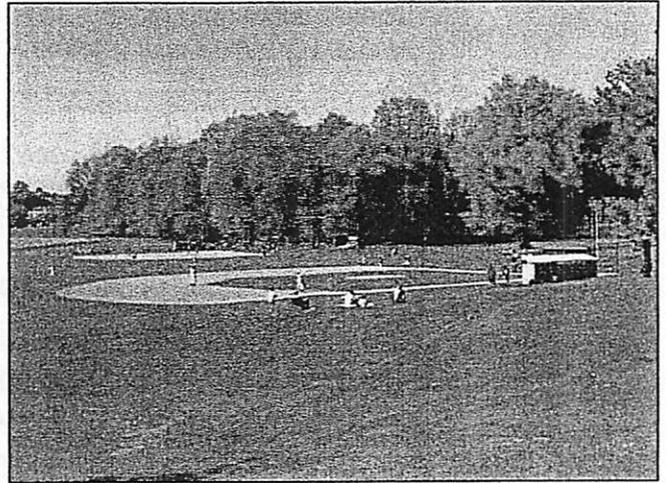
Block	Lot	Description	Acres
16	37	East Amwell Municipal Ball Fields	9
	34.01	East Amwell Municipal Field	1
	34.02	East Amwell Municipal Building	.8
14	15	Clawson Park	23
21	18	East Amwell Undeveloped Park along Welisewitz Road	6.48
27.01	11.01	Vacant	.6
38	42	Vacant	7
38	42.02	Vacant	16
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>63.9</b>

\*As of July 2005



**School Lands**

East Amwell Township School serves Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grades and is located on 31.25 acres at Wertsville Road and U.S. Route 202. In 2004 the school acquired 10 acres of land to construct additional fields and help alleviate pressure on current facilities. The school currently has:



- 3 ball fields
- 2 multipurpose lighted fields
- 1 basketball court
- 2 playgrounds
- 1 cross country course
- 1 indoor gymnasium (can be reserved depending upon availability and scheduling)

The school facilities are maintained by school personnel.

**Table 2: Board of Education Sites by Block and Lot**

Block	Lot	Description	Acres
16.01	35	East Amwell School	31.25
<b>Total</b>			<b>31.25</b>

**Private Active Recreation Lands**

Amwell Valley Fire Company Field is located behind the firehouse in the Village of Ringoes on 3.72 acres. The fire company provides the use of one regulation size Little League field to the Amwell Valley Little Baseball League. In return the Baseball League maintains the field and associated out buildings such as the Snack Shack. The field includes:

- 1 ball field with scoreboard
- 1 snack shop
- 1 batting cage
- 1 storage shed

Kirkpatrick Church also provides limited use of their gymnasium and kitchen facilities. Reservations of these facilities are made through the church given their availability and scheduling.

**Summary of Local Recreation Facilities**

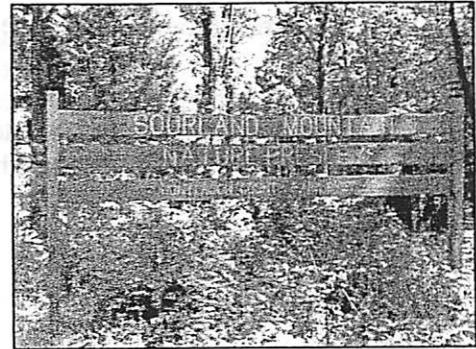
Table 3 provides a summary of the fields available for use by Township and regional residents.

**Table 3: Summary of Township, School and Fire Company Recreation Facilities**

Facility Type	Number of Fields/Facilities
Ball Fields	8
Multi-Purpose Fields	4
Basketball Court	1
Tennis Courts	2
Playgrounds	4

**County Lands**

The Hunterdon County Department of Parks and Recreation focus is “to provide for meaningful use of leisure time, encourage appreciation of our natural resources, and preserve and protect open space and greenways for the enjoyment of future generations.” The County owns a variety of recreational facilities throughout the Township that offer residents further access to a range of recreational activities. The following is an inventory of County owned lands in the Township.



**Table 4: County-Owned Lands by Block and Lot\***

Block	Lot	Description	Acres
38	1, 44, 9	Sourland Mountain Park	274.3
34	26	Sourland Mountain Park	83
31	9	LaPort Farm	49
8.02	25.01 & 26.02 (pending)	South County Park	92
38	11	Preserved Land	6
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>504.3</b>

*\*As of July 2005*

The Sourland Mountain Park consists of 357 acres located on Rileyville Road within the Sourland Mountain range. The Park is comprised of a deciduous forest with a swamp surrounded by two streams. Permitted activities in the park include mountain biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting and nature study.

LaPort Farm is located on Mountain Road and consists of 49 acres of open space. The site is currently undeveloped, but future purposes may include hiking trails and day camps.

South County Park is a 92-acre parcel of land between Routes 179 and 202 that was acquired in 2002 to serve as the new location for the Hunterdon County 4H

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Fairgrounds. The county has also acquired two undeveloped tracts on the east of Route 179 in West Amwell Township. The first acquisition occurred in 2001 and preserved 173 acres. The second parcel was obtained in 2004 and added an additional 79 acres. Together these parcels create a refuge for wildlife totaling 252 acres. Currently, the park offers no official recreation purposes other than to support county special events and the 4H fair.

In order to control the population of deer on park property, hunting is permitted on the undeveloped section of the park. Hunters must obtain a special permit issued by the Parks Department to hunt in the park.

**State Lands**

The State of New Jersey also owns lands that expand the open space inventory in the Township. The lands owned by the State are largely undeveloped and protect critical natural resources, and the use of these facilities is geared towards passive recreation.

Amwell Lake and Wildlife Area contains 26 acres of passive open space and is located off New Jersey Route 31. This area is currently undeveloped but accessible for nature study, fishing and hunting.

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The following is a summary of State-owned facilities as of July 2005.

**Table 5: State Lands by Block and Lot**

<b>Block</b>	<b>Lot</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Acres</b>
30	26, 27, 28, 29, 32.01	Amwell Lake Wildlife Management Area	21.86
34	25.08	Conservation Easement	44
35	32, 35, 41	Open Space	28
35	55	Open Space	9.7
35.01	22	Conservation Easement	2
37	2	Open Space	32
38*	30, 31	Highfields	194.76
38	38	Open Space	5.9
40	10.01, 18, 18.01, 18.02, 19, 21.02, 56.01	Conservation Easement	78
40.01	2	Open Space	24.7
40.02	25.02, 27	Conservation Easement	15
41	4 & 10	Open Space	43
<i>*Highfields has no public access and is owned and operated by NJ Dept of Corrections</i>			<p align="center"><b>Total</b></p> <p align="center"><b>498.92</b></p>

**Non-Profit Recreational Facilities**

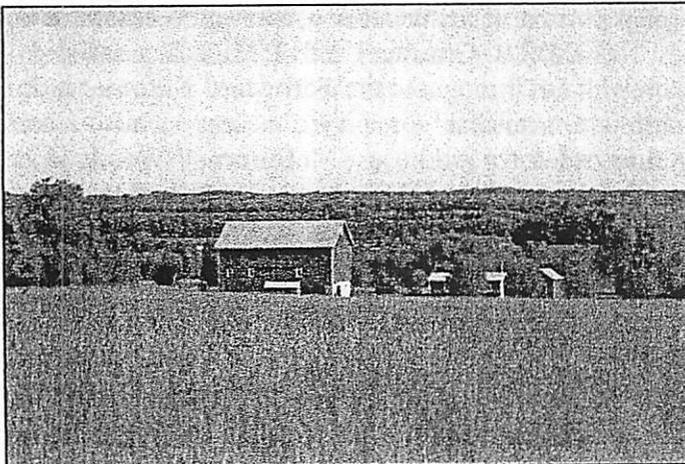
East Amwell is fortunate to have an active non-profit and private landowner community that has placed a large portion of lands under conservation easement and various preservation strategies. The D&R Greenway Land Trust has assisted in securing and/or purchased a variety of lands throughout the Township. Some lands in private and non-profit ownership are available for public access, while some conservation easements are not intended for public use. McBurney Woods is one example of non-profit recreational lands with public access. McBurney Woods, located off Mountain Road, has developed parking areas and walking trails. The following table is a list of lands under conservation easements and protection as of July 2005.

**Table 6: Non-Profit and Non-Public Recreational Facilities**

Block	Lot	Acres	Description	Block	Lot	Acres	Description
38	12	43.4	Private	35	16, 17, 18	98	D&R
38	18	52	Acquired rights	38	12.01 & 13	20	Private
40.01	6	1.6	D&R	38	19 & 20	16	Private
40.02	28	9.6	D&R	40	37	88	Private
40	38.01	57.7	D&R	25	10	298	Golf Club
40	39	4.57	D&R	40.02	20	23	Private
40	41.09 & 41.10	14	D&R	30	10.01, 11.01, 12.01, 12.02	65	Private
40.02	18	1.6	D&R	41	44 & 45	200	Private
40.02	29	9.7	D&R	40	52 & 54	47	Private
40.03	2	107.4	D&R	34	27 & 27.01	80	Private
40.03	16	85.33	D&R	34	26	82	Private
35	14	6.8	D&R	35	61,	5	D&R
35	15	5	D&R	<b>TOTAL 1426.5</b>			
35.01	31	5.8	D&R				

**Preserved Farmland**

The Township has a rich farming history and the preservation of farmland in the Township is abundant. While preserved farmland is not intended for public access, and is part of a separate preservation process through the County Agricultural Development Board (CADB) and the State Agriculture Development Committee



(SADC), the preservation of large contiguous tracts of farmland also provides valuable opportunities to support habitat and conservation of natural resources. Preserved farmland also retains the rural character of the community and enhances the quality of life for residents. The following table is a list of the preserved farms in East Amwell as of July 2005.

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Table 7: Preserved Farmland

Block	Lot	Acres	Block	Lot	Acres
23	11	107.99	8	3	99.57
20	20	132.36	8	4	135.54
26	3	61.02	8	24	99.47
31	5	68.64	18	23	76
35.01	11	55.02	21	19.03	58
34	1.01	1.79	18	19, 20 & 22	170
34	2	26.9	25	9	89
34	2.09	13.4	30	12	5.18
34	4	24.76	30	16.01	43.83
30	5	84.75	11	37	40
30	41.01	.95	18	18	75
30	42	132.71	20	22	51
24	3	58.18	20	23.02	51
23	12	4.09	20	6	5
23	12.01	2.74	20	24	61
35.01	8	114.2	21	19	49.8
2	10.05	45.8	18	1	109
17	9	61.54	17	15	41
17	10	84.2	32	1	87
32	3	74.11	27	47	97
40.01	3	84.2	31	3	
35.01	10	123.17	20	17.07	107.6
35.01	13	162.57	20	18	
17	24	146.03	16.01	31	50
27	39	139.27	16.01	31.05	20
33	1.03	2.88	21	2	176
33	5	65.71	25	12	135
33	7.06	12.02	31	10	105
7	6	.01	31	4	
			40.01	40	
8	2	3.23	40.02	6	62
<b>TOTAL 3,933.23</b>					

**Summary of Open Space and Recreation Areas**

As described above, the following acreage of preserved farmland, open space and recreational lands currently exists in East Amwell as of July 2005:

**Table 8: Summary of Open Space and Recreation Areas**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
Municipal lands	64
School lands	31
Fire Company lands	4
County lands	504
State lands	499
Non-Public	1,427
Preserved Farmland	3,993
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,522</b>

These lands represent 36% of East Amwell's total land area of 17,984 acres, and substantially affect the quality of life in the township.

**SYSTEM MAP**

The Open Space System Map depicted on Figure 1 includes existing open space lands at the municipal, county and state level and private and quasi-private areas. This map helps to identify how much land preservation has already been accomplished and helps identify potential future acquisitions, which may change over the span of this plan to account for changing needs.

**NEEDS ANALYSIS**

The Needs Analysis evaluates the adequacy of the current open space and recreation system, as documented in the Inventory, to satisfy present and future needs. In order to achieve this, two methodologies are used. First, an overview of current active recreation organizations, both private and public, outlines current participation levels, potential participation levels and the utilization of the current facilities for the identified organization. Additionally, the Township's open space and passive recreation needs are assessed in light of the current use of recreation sites and facilities of the Township.

**Active Recreation Facility Analysis**

***Recreation Organizations***

There are two independent active sports leagues in East Amwell Township. The South County Soccer League and the Amwell Valley Little League use a variety of fields in the region, including East Amwell's municipal fields, the Firehouse field and

school fields.

The South County Soccer League has approximately 272 members with roughly 169 from East Amwell Township. The league has five age divisions, with three coed age groups and two groups divided by gender. The season runs from September through November and utilizes the lighted municipal fields. The league continues to grow and the need for additional fields to accommodate increased participation and to allow time for rejuvenating the fields has been identified as critical.

In addition to scheduled league play, the Soccer league also sponsors Friday night soccer for ages 12 and up. This program runs from August through November and is attended by approx. 20 -25 individuals weekly.

The Amwell Valley Little Baseball League hosts approximately 245 participants (all East Amwell residents), and is co-ed for ages 5 to 12, offering girls softball for ages 9-17. The season runs from April through August and uses the municipal fields, firehouse fields and school fields for practice and games.

Both of these organizations raise their funds from membership fees, fund raising, sponsorships and tournaments. The objective is to keep the cost related to these programs low for the participants.

#### ***East Amwell Township Recreation Programs***

In addition to privately funded and active recreation programs the Township also provides the following activities through the Recreation Department:

Summer Playground is a morning program at the elementary school offered to children from Kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade for a 4-week period in June and July. The program includes indoor sports in the gym, outdoor play and activities, arts and crafts, and use of the game room. There are currently approximately 80 children enrolled in the program, which is free for East Amwell residents.

The Township holds a one-week soccer camp at the municipal field complex providing training in specific skills, for children ages 5 to 13. The camp further divides the children by age groups. The Township also holds a one-week softball camp at the school that provides training in specific skills for girls from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. A one-week baseball camp for training in specific skills is conducted for boys from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The camp is held at the East Amwell School. All camps include a fee per camper to cover costs of paid professionals.

An active senior citizens club meets twice a month, where they have covered dish luncheons, invite speakers, and celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. They also sponsor bus trips once or twice a month to cultural events and Atlantic City. A weekly exercise class is held on Thursdays.

An adult basketball program is offered to East Amwell Township residents. This program is held on Thursday nights at the school.

**Private Recreational Opportunities**

As a community with numerous large working farms, and other large parcels of preserved open space, there is a multiplicity of opportunities for private recreation. These recreational activities take place on privately-owned land, and require the explicit permission of the landowner. There are many landowners who have given permission for their land to be used for pursuits such as horseback riding, hiking, cross-country skiing, and bird-watching. The area has a large deer and small game population with several private gun clubs active in East Amwell, with permission from landowners. Bicycling and hiking are popular activities that capitalize on the beautiful scenery and rolling natural terrain. Hunterdon County bike groups use East Amwell roads for staging races.

Three membership organizations provide private recreation in East Amwell, including a private golf club and two equestrian organizations, these include:

The Amwell Valley Trail Association (AVTA) organized in 1987 by a group of citizens who desired to preserve the rural atmosphere and to enjoy hiking and horseback riding. AVTA has established, and maintains, a network of approximately 75 miles of clearly marked and mapped trails on private land for hiking, riding, and cross-country skiing. Membership is open to all residents of East Amwell and those who board horses in the Township. There are modest dues which are used to pay for insurance, trail clearing and maintenance, trail and road signs, a newsletter, supplies, and postage. The basic premise of its rules is that the rights of the property owners who allow AVTA members to use their lands must be respected.



The Amwell Valley Hounds Pony Club (AVHPC) is a not-for-profit organization for children between the ages of 5 and 21 which promotes knowledge about horses and riding, sportsmanship, team work, and learning how to set goals and work towards accomplishing them. AVHPC is a chapter of the well-established national pony Club and the East Amwell branch is one of 6 Pony Clubs in the State.

The Ridge at Back Brook Golf Club is a recently constructed award-winning golf course designed by noted golf architect Tom Fazio. Its breathtaking vistas and challenging play earned The Ridge high rankings among the nation's best new courses. While the course is open to members of the club, the Ridge also donates limited use of its facilities for fundraisers.

The Amwell Valley Hounds (AVH) was organized in 1962, to enjoy the sport of foxhunting. Membership is not limited to East Amwell residents. The AVH meets at various sites, at the invitation of landowners on Wednesday and Sundays during the hunting season, which extends from mid-August through late winter. Fox chasing is more descriptive of the sport, as foxes are rarely caught.

The Colonial Sportsmen's Club is a private club offering hunting and swimming

opportunities to its members. The club offers membership only to persons who are sponsored by an existing member and an annual membership fee is required.

**Active Recreation Needs Summary**

East Amwell hosts a variety of active recreation organizations and events. While the Township maintains its rural character, current and future populations place a strain on the resources currently available to residents. The survey of recreation organizations shows that better maintenance and appropriate scheduling and use of facilities is critical to the efficient and safe use of current sites. Needs for additional fields, especially for adult baseball, and facilities such as a Skate Park have been identified by the Township Recreation Committee. These items should be accommodated in a single centrally-located active recreation area which is consistent with the goals for the Township. Future consideration for the placement and type of fields should address the needs of all Township residents. Municipal Recreation and Open Space Needs Summary

**Municipal Passive Recreation and Open Space Needs Summary**

***NJDEP Balanced Land Use Concept***

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection endorses a theory known as the “Balanced Land Use Concept” (BLUC), which recommends that a minimum 3% of a municipality’s developed or developable land should be set aside for recreational use within the community. Land deemed developable is exclusive of slopes greater than 12%, wetlands, federal-, state- and county-owned lands along with other environmentally sensitive land that is not suitable for development.

In order to apply the BLUC to East Amwell Township, a variety of data sources were consulted and analyzed using a Geographic Information System (GIS). Data sources utilized for this analysis included the NJDEP 1995 Land Use/Land Cover data, a United States Geological Survey Digital Elevation Model and the Open Space and Recreation Inventory. GIS analysis was undertaken to provide information for input into the BLUC, the results of which are found in Table 9.

**Table 9 - Balanced Land Use Concept**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Area in Acres</b>
Developable land in Township <sup>1</sup>	13,273
Steep Slopes (greater than 12%) in developable areas <sup>2</sup> (subtract)	981
Preserved land (County, State, Farmland Preservation and other) (subtract)	6,487
Developed land <sup>3</sup> (add)	2,459
<b>Total Developed and Developable</b>	<b>8,264</b>
<b>3% of Total Developed and Developable</b>	<b>248</b>

The BLUC indicates that 8,264 acres of developed and developable land remain, including agricultural, forest and barren land categories. Currently 6,487 acres are protected by the State, County and other programs such as farmland preservation. Finally, 981 acres are removed from the calculation due to steep slope constraints. However, NJDEP is currently in the process of updating the Land Use/Land Cover to reflect the 2002 aerial photography. This update will have a significant impact on the determination of the BLUC, since additional lands that have been developed since 1995 will be adequately reflected. The likely result of this will be a reduction in the amount of developable land in the Township which will reduce the acreage of developed and developable land.

The New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) describes the BLUC as a tool to determine the minimum amount of open space that a municipality should set aside for recreation purposes. However, the BLUC is not intended to be a limitation on a municipality's own independent determination of the amount of space that should actually be set aside for recreation purposes. While preserved farmland and other non-public preserved lands are "not considered as part of the public recreation supply", they are "of considerable outdoor recreation value because they protect important natural and historic resources that are essential in maintaining an environment that is conducive to high quality recreation experiences" according to SCORP.

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<sup>1</sup> NJDEP 1995 Land Use/Land Cover: cumulative sum of agriculture, forest and barren land categories

<sup>2</sup> USGS DEM approximation of slopes greater than 12% not including those located in protected open space.

<sup>3</sup> NJDEP 1995 Land Use/Land Cover: urban category

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Through an aggressive farmland preservation effort, 3,993 acres of land have been permanently preserved (48% of East Amwell’s developed and developable land). When combined with municipal, County and State open space, nearly 61% of the developed and developable land in the Township has been preserved, as seen on Table 10.

**Table 10: Municipal, County and State Open Space and Preserved Farmland as a % of Developed and Developable Land**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>% of Developed and Developable Land (8,264 acres)</b>
Municipal lands	64	1%
Preserved Farmland	3,993	48%
County lands	504	6%
State lands	499	6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,060</b>	<b>61%</b>

As mentioned before, the BLUC provides one target for the amount of preserved publicly-owned open space and recreation areas in a municipality. However, SCORP also states that the preservation of lands through a variety of avenues are of “considerable outdoor recreation value”. East Amwell has endeavored to preserve lands through an active farmland preservation program as well as through partnerships with State, County and non-profit organizations. This has resulted in the permanent preservation of 61% of the Township’s developed and developable lands. Although preserved farmland is privately owned, some landowners allow the use of their lands to be used for passive recreation, such as hiking and horseback riding trails, cross country skiing, and hunting deer and small game.

East Amwell’s age distribution offers additional information on the recreational needs of the Township. Table 11 shows the age distribution, as provided by the U.S. Census, for 1990 and 2000.

**Table 11: Age Distribution for 1990 and 2000 (% of persons)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>0-4</b>	7	6
<b>5-19</b>	21	21
<b>20-34</b>	19	13
<b>35-49</b>	31	28
<b>50-64</b>	13	22
<b>65-84</b>	9	9
<b>85+</b>	1	1

The age distribution in the Township reveals that more than half of the population is older than age 35, and this age group has increased over the past decade, while the age group 5 – 19 has remained a constant percentage of the Township’s population. This distribution among the age groups further identifies the need for diverse recreational opportunities. These opportunities should consist of appropriate active

### *2005 East Amwell Township Open Space and Recreation Plan*

facilities for school aged and the adult population, as well as providing for the senior population, which could consist of more passive recreational areas with easy access along with facilities for group activities such as lunches and group meetings.

The Township's efforts combined with East Amwell's low population density, suggest that East Amwell's combination of farmland preservation and public open space are well matched with the Township's rural character. This plan will help to identify lands of critical environmental and recreational importance, to ensure the protection of these natural resources and the promotion of appropriate farming activities.

#### **Open Space Planning Coordination**

The following criteria of passive recreation and other open spaces needs are intended to support open space, conservation and environmental needs in the areas of critical wildlife habitat, greenways linkages, watershed protection projects, historic and cultural resource preservation, and documented threatened and endangered species.

#### ***Open Space***

Hunterdon County has purchased an increasing amount of open space in the southern portion of Hunterdon County. Within East Amwell, these lands are concentrated around the Sourland Mountain Preserve and provide connections to existing parks and trails along the Stony Brook Greenway, Bedens Brook, the D & R Canal State Park, and extend into West Amwell Township to the Delaware River. This area is an integral component of the 'Crossroads of the Revolution' vision, and provides important regional connections. East Amwell is a vital link of this connection containing the ridge area of the Sourland Mountains.

#### ***Conservation/environmental***

The extensive, contiguous woodland area across the Sourland Mountain Ridge provides intact wildlife habitat along important migration routes. This forested diabase ridge extends in a linear orientation across several miles eastward from the Stony Brook forming a natural greenway across the Sourlands from the Delaware River to the Millstone. Preserving this largest intact remaining woodland in central New Jersey is critical to protecting critical habitat.

#### ***Greenways linkages***

The Township prepared a Greenways and Open Space plan in 1999, which highlighted the need, and the potential location, of greenways. Some of the highlighted extensions included completing a greenway linkage from the Stony Brook Greenway along the wooded Sourland Ridge to the Millstone River that will connect thousands of acres of protected lands. These include public access preserves at D & R Greenway's northern Stony Brook Preserve, the Hunterdon County Sourlands Preserve, the Lindbergh Estate (Highfields), and the Somerset County Sourlands Preserve.

***Watershed Protection***

The Sourland Mountain forest also provides critical aquifer recharge to maintain fragile ecosystem components, like vernal ponds, and protects potable water supplies. The intact woodland of the eastern Sourland Mountain and the stream buffers of the Stony Brook, Rock Brook and Beden Brook serve to protect steep slopes, wetlands, and aquifer recharge areas, and maintain drinking water supply and quality. Preserving this woodland is also important to minimize storm water impacts and non-point source pollution thereby protecting surface water quality and biological integrity of these streams for aquatic life, wildlife and human recreation. The argillite and diabase rock underlying this project area is naturally prone to high runoff and flash flooding.

Greenways resulting from land acquisition along the Sourland Ridge and stream corridors will provide a physical and visual buffer between development and sensitive lands. Preserving lands through acquisition and conservation easements will also provide opportunities for public access hiking trails along streams. Acquiring lands on the Ridge and in affected watersheds will help to preserve the integrity of the large block of intact forest and stream buffers in this area and protect the water quality, ecology and wildlife habitats of headwater streams.

***Historic and Cultural Resource Preservation***

Historic resources with documented significance also include the Lindbergh Estate, Hart's Cave, Dawliss Mills, the New Market Historic District, the Wertsville Historic District, Three Brother's Rock Formation, and a number of Crossroads of the Revolution sites. Linkages provided to these resources with documented national and local significance including the D & R Canal and other National Historic Districts and the Crossroads of the Revolution will preserve historical context by protecting intact landscapes including stream corridors, forests, mills, bridges, and individual structures that tell the story of the region and its land use history.

Preserving forest and grasslands in the Township is important for the long term health of the ecosystem and species dependant on these unique habitats. With the burgeoning population in central New Jersey, East Amwell Township is in a race to ensure that its natural resources are protected in part through stewardship of its grasslands and mature forest. The Sourland ridge and slopes constitute an irreplaceable natural treasure, and the significant farmland and grassland habitats that support a variety of migrating bird populations also contribute to the special rural character of the Township. Historic villages and hamlets punctuate East Amwell's farmland and forested landscape.

## **RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**

The Resource Assessment section is meant to provide an assessment of public and private lands that have potential for providing open space or recreation opportunities. This includes:

- Creation of linear or contiguous recreation and open space facilities which link existing recreation and open space sites in an integrated system,
- Supporting conservation objectives such as water supply protection, wildlife habitat protection, protection of rivers, streams and forest lands, farmland preservation and historic preservation,
- 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 critical natural features such as floodplains and steep slopes.

This section will reflect the nature of East Amwell's current land base and identify critical environmental features that offer a potential for further preservation efforts.

### **Resource Management and Conservation**

East Amwell is host to a variety of environs and habitats that have recreational value, but also are important to maintaining the future ecological and biological base of the region and the State. The forests, wetlands, edge habitats, stream corridors and other environmentally sensitive features are interconnected components that create an overall healthy environment. The rural character of the area makes living in East Amwell Township attractive and desirable. The Township's population continues to grow slowly as development continues to impact East Amwell. Despite this growth, the Township is endowed with a wealth of valuable natural resources and important habitats that will benefit substantially from conservation efforts. The benefits of acquiring open space go far beyond creating additional recreational facilities. Safeguarding open space ensures the viability of fragile ecosystems that support and maintain the high environmental quality, and quality of life, that residents associate with living in East Amwell.

### **Sourlands**

The Sourland Mountain, prominently described throughout this plan, is the most predominant land formation in the Township. The Sourlands play a vital role in protecting the regions groundwater supply, habitat areas and other sensitive natural resources. As seen on Figure 2, "Topography and Steep Slopes", the high elevations of the Sourlands dominate the southern portion of the Township. The long term health of the Township's natural resources hinges on the protection of these steeply sloping areas and their unique habitat and groundwater supply.

### ***Steep Slopes***

Steep slopes are environmentally sensitive features that merit special protection. Forested steep slopes provide protection from many devastating environmental consequences. Loss of cover on slopes can:

- Increase soil erosion and sedimentation
- Decrease surface water quality
- Decrease soil fertility
- Increase overland flow and decrease ground water recharge
- Alter natural drainage patterns

East Amwell's contrasting topography, blending scenic farmland with the rugged Sourlands, provides for a variety of viewsheds. While much of the Township's steep slope areas are located within the Sourlands, steep slope areas along stream corridors are also vital resources. The steepest slopes occur in the southern section of the Township as well as in areas along the various stream corridors. (Figure 2: Topography and Steep Slopes).

### ***Groundwater Resources***

East Amwell has highlighted the protection of groundwater resources as a major priority, and toward this end funded a groundwater assessment in consultation with Demicco and Associates, Inc. in an August 2002 report entitled "Groundwater Resource Evaluation-Sourland Mountain and Stony Brook Districts of East Amwell Township"(The Demicco Report). The report outlines the importance of groundwater protection in the Sourland and Stony Brook areas and the importance of protection of these resources to the Township and the region to meet local water needs and long-term natural resource protection. Protecting and preserving open space areas will help to maintain and protect groundwater systems by protecting areas of groundwater recharge.

### ***Wetlands***

The New Jersey DEP places a high priority on the protection of wetlands which are regulated by the State. Wetlands perform many valuable functions that help to maintain balance throughout surrounding ecosystems.

- Wetlands protect drinking water by filtering out chemicals, pollutants, and sediments.
- Wetlands soak up runoff from heavy rains and snow melts, providing natural flood control.
- Wetlands release stored floodwaters during droughts.
- Wetlands provide critical habitats for a major portion of the State's fish and wildlife, including endangered, commercial and recreational species.

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Township wetland areas are identified on Figure 3: Hydrology and Critical Habitat using the NJ Landscapes critical habitat distinction of emergent and forested wetlands. The largest areas of wetlands are found within the Sourland Mountain Region in the southern portion of the Township, although isolated pockets are found throughout the Township.

***Streams and Stream Corridors***

Stream corridors are important features that provide aquatic habitat, semi-aquatic habitat, drinking and bathing water and allow for movement of various species throughout an ecosystem. Stream corridors are vital to the health of streams by protecting the watercourses through erosion control, pollution filtration and providing protected habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic habitat. Stream corridors in the Township traverse a variety of habitats including, forests, grasslands and residential areas (Figure 3: Hydrology and Critical Habitat).

There are a number of streams in the Township, including the Back Brook and Neshanic River tributaries and the Stony Brook. All but two streams are classified as Non-Trout streams. The Alexauken Creek has recently been upgraded to Category One Status and the portion of the Stony Brook in the Amwell Lake Wildlife Management Area is also classified as C1.

***New Jersey DEP Landscape Project***

NJDEP's Endangered and Non-Game Species Program (ENSP) has evaluated the extent and suitability of remaining habitat types in the State for Federal and State threatened and endangered species and species of special concern. Land cover and habitat suitability were analyzed and ranked in 5 habitat categories (see Table 12), including beach/dunes, emergent wetlands, forested wetlands, forested areas and grasslands. Specific habitat foraging and nesting areas for the Wood Turtle and Bald Eagle were also identified.

The result of the data is depicted in Figure 3: Hydrology and Critical Habitat and Figure 4: Forest and Grassland Critical Habitat. The Landscapes Program data provides users with scientifically sound, peer-reviewed information on the location of critical habitat based on the conservation status of the species that are present. Habitats are ranked on a scale of 1 to 5, based on the following criteria:

**Table 12: NJ Landscape Program Ranking System**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Indication</b>
1	Suitable habitat, no special concern, threatened or endangered species sighted
2	Habitat patch with species of special concern present
3	Habitat patch with State threatened species present
4	Habitat patch with State endangered species present
5	Habitat patch with Federal threatened or endangered species present

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East Amwell Township is rich in habitat that is suitable to support populations of threatened and endangered species. Four of the five Landscape Project categories are represented in the Township including forested wetland, emergent wetlands, forest and grassland habitats. Most of these habitat types have documented presence of State threatened and endangered species.

Much of the forest and grassland areas in the Township, which is reasonably contiguous, is home to state threatened and endangered species. There are two primary areas of important habitat with the presence of State listed threatened and endangered species in East Amwell Township. The first is in the southern Sourland Mountain region of the Township. In this area, Rank 3 forest and wetland habitat is home to Wood Turtles, Barred Owl and herptile species. The second area is the northern portion of the Township where Rank 3 and 4 grassland exists. The grassland areas of the Township provide valuable breeding and migration habitats for endangered bird species such as the Boblink, Northern Harrier, Upper Sandpiper, and Vesper, Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows.

### ***Forested Areas***

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) publication titled, "Protection and Care of Urban Forest" provides a detailed list of the resources that are protected and benefits offered by forested areas which:

- Modify local climatic conditions near and within their boundaries
- Create a feeling of privacy
- Serve as recreational facilities
- Provide habitats for plants and animals
- Reduce surface runoff because of the high moisture holding capacity of the forest soils and tree canopy
- Enhance the visual characteristics of scenic corridors
- Reduce noise pollution
- Produce oxygen

The Township retains large tracts of contiguous areas, as seen in Figure 4, Forest and Grassland Critical Habitat. The Township is home to a large contiguous forest canopy cover primarily along the Sourland Mountain region. These contiguous areas of forested land provide an interconnected series of woodland habitat that allows for unrestricted movement for many wildlife species.

There still remain many larger unprotected tracts of the Township that should be considered for preservation. The larger patches of forested areas occur almost exclusively within the Sourland region.

### ***Grassland Areas***

Grassland areas play a vital role in the health of bird populations. Grassland habitat offer valuable nesting sites for migratory birds. Grasslands are typically agricultural

fields, either maintained as pasture or mowed regularly for hay. Grassland bird species readily take advantage of the open fields, particularly when warm season native grasses flourished. The grasslands that flank the Sourland ridge in East Amwell provide critical habitat to a number of bird species, as identified earlier. Much of the Township north of the Sourlands is critical grassland habitat as seen in Figure 4.

## **ACTION PLAN**

In order to address the goals of this Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Township must carry out a number of actions. The Township has been an active partner with county, State and non-profit organizations in the preservation of open space for passive and active recreation and conservation of environmental resources. The Township will continue efforts to acquire land to address future environmental protection and open space and recreation needs.

There are a number of cost sharing options the Township can utilize to help manage the costs of acquiring and developing recreational lands. The following is a summary of acquisition criteria, potential acquisitions/conservation easements, and implementation approaches and resources that can be used as guidance to current and future decision makers.

### **Acquisition Criteria**

Future additions to the open space and recreation inventory of the Township will need to be evaluated in order to determine continuity with the Open Space and Recreation Plan. The following criteria will help guide decision-making for future purchases.

#### ***Protect Critical Environmental Features***

As noted throughout this plan, preserving critical environmental features is a mainstay of the Open Space Plan. Protecting a variety of interconnected critical natural systems, such as stream corridors, forested areas, wetlands and steep slopes, is a priority consideration in expanding the open space inventory. When evaluating potential purchases, properties containing multiple critical environmental features should be highly valued, especially when they adjoin other environmentally sensitive areas. When environmentally sensitive properties are acquired, passive recreation should be the end use, provided this is conducive to the preservation of the valued feature(s).

#### ***Identify Development Pressure***

Since available parcels may be attractive for potential development, development pressure can also expedite purchase of available lands for preservation. If this is the case, and the parcel meets one or more of the criteria or goals of the Plan, acquisition priority should be given where it can provide a valuable addition for either passive or active recreation.

***Expand Greenways/Linkages***

Parcels that connect existing or proposed open space or expand existing or proposed greenways/linkages are valuable additions to East Amwell's open space system. A linear or contiguous system of open space, which provides access for the greater population and preserves uninterrupted habitat, is a stated goal and important to protect. This criterion can be used to evaluate potential acquisition sites for both passive and active recreation facilities.

***Increase Contiguous Holdings***

The contiguity of parcels to existing or proposed preserved areas should be an influencing factor. Areas that can contribute to contiguous open space will help to achieve goals regarding expanding open space, preserving habitats and environmental features and maintaining the rural character of the Township. Both active and passive recreational opportunities can be examined using this evaluative criterion. Lands adjacent to the Municipal Ball Fields along Route 202 have been suggested as a potential expansion area that could provide for additional fields and parking.

***Develop New Linkages***

As parcels become available and are purchased over time, new or expanded linear opportunities may become evident. In this event, parcels that may add connectivity to a new system should be given priority for purchase. Passive and active open space assessments can use this as an evaluative criteria.

***Preserve Cultural/Historical Sites***

Preserving historically or culturally significant sites is also a consideration when targeting acquisitions. These lands and buildings can help to preserve the character and historically rich identity of the Township, and preservation of these lands should generally be geared towards an end use of passive recreation.

***Evaluate for Active Recreation***

Purchase of lands for active recreational sites should consider the size of the parcel, topography, soil conditions, location and access to the site. If the parcel is generally well suited for active recreation, the next step is to determine the development potential of the site for the proposed activities. If the site is appropriately located and large enough to accommodate the proposed facility and meet the requirements set forth in the Action Plan it should be considered for purchase.

***Other Recommendations***

Educating residents on ways to preserve and conserve natural resources can be a valuable tool for expanding open space resources in the Township. Providing educational materials and informative seminars at a Township or neighborhood level

### *2005 East Amwell Township Open Space and Recreation Plan*

may encourage residents to place conservation easements on their property or help to encourage others in the community to do so.

A realtor education program is another effort that the Township should consider. Educating realtors on the various regulations designed to protect natural resources and critical environmental features could help to assure that this information can then be passed on to potential homebuyers. This type of program would eliminate potential problems an unknowing new homebuyer might encounter after purchase.

There is a need to set forth policy for the continuing maintenance of open space areas as well as setting up a program through non-profit organizations to monitor conservation easements. These steps will help to ensure proper long-term care of the Township's open space and recreation areas.

#### **Implementation Approaches and Resources**

A coordinated open space and recreation effort should integrate environmental protection strategies as core elements of the preservation effort. The Township will utilize this approach, as outlined in this plan. The programs and approaches outlined below represent a menu of implementation strategies that the Township should monitor in order to determine their merit and application in East Amwell's continued efforts.

#### ***Open Space Tax***

East Amwell Township adopted an Open Space Tax in 1999, which generates four cents per hundred dollars of assessed value. These revenues can be used to fund the acquisition of land for open space preservation and recreational purposes. The Open Space Tax generated \$159,500 in 2004, and East Amwell also received \$15,458 from Hunterdon County for open space, totaling \$174,958 in 2004.

#### ***New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program***

In 1999 the State Legislature passed the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund, securing funding for a state-wide open space plan for New Jersey. In order to provide support to local governments who have adopted an open space tax and prepared an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), the Green Acres Program developed the Planning Incentive Grant (PIG). This program provides 50% matching grants to local governments for the acquisition of land for recreation and conservation purposes. To be eligible for funding, local governments must have a Green Acres approved OSRP, and either an open space tax, or an approved alternative funding source which is stable and sufficient, such as an annual tax levy. The Township has an active program that is funded by Green Acres and has received Green Acres funding for site specific areas, such as Clawson Park, as well as the 2003 Planning Incentive Acquisition (PIA) for the Sourland Mountain Region.

***Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund***

In 1999, the voters of Hunterdon County approved the creation of an open space tax in the amount of 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value. In 2004, the tax generated \$5,676,085 totaling \$23,718,415 over the past 5 years to be used by the County for various activities related to open space preservation.

There is a provision in the Open Space Trust Fund program that provides municipalities with the opportunity to recapture 10% of what its taxpayers contribute. The money can be utilized on a yearly basis (for eligible projects) or can be rolled over and banked for a period up to five years. East Amwell's 10% recapture over the past 5 years has totaled \$764,300. East Amwell utilizes these fund in a variety of efforts, primarily for reimbursement for completed projects. If not utilized with the 5 years of collection, the money is then reallocated for County purposes.

***The Environmental Infrastructure Trust Financing Program***

This program provides low interest loans to municipalities, counties and authorities for clean water-related activities, including land acquisition when watershed management and water quality benefits are provided. With funding from both NJDEP and the NJ Environmental Infrastructure Trust, the program utilizes a Federal Priority System developed each year by NJDEP. Loans are made for 20-year terms at a blended interest rate. Local governments receive 0% interest rate for half of the allowable costs and market rate for the remainder.

***National Recreational Trails Program***

NJDEP provides financial assistance for developing and maintaining trails and trail facilities for non-motorized, motorized and multi-use purposes. The maximum grant award is \$25,000, and projects are funded on an 80% federal share and 20% matching share basis.

***Conservation Easements***

Recreational land, both passive and active, can be made more accessible with access provided through conservation easements. Conservation easements typically encompass some critical environmental resource, such as a stream, floodplain or steep slope area, and restrict development. Limited access can be permitted through conservation easements to make certain lands more accessible to the public. Access through conservation easements should promote the creation of linked open space corridors, to create a network of open space that can be accessed by means other than automobile, and should not impact the resource protected by the conservation easement.

***Partnering with Other Agencies***

There are a number of agencies in Hunterdon County that are active in land preservation initiatives. Two of the most prominent are the County itself and the State of New Jersey. Both agencies have large parks and other land holdings in the Township and will likely continue to purchase land for both passive and active recreation facilities. The Township can work in concert with these two agencies in order to promote the preservation of key environmental resources identified in this plan and the Master Plan.

The New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) is also active in land preservation and watershed protection efforts, aided by an open space tax paid for by its customers, which was approved in 2001. This provides a unique opportunity to partner with NJWSA to share resources and encourage the preservation of key tracts that meet the needs of both agencies.

The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance (HLTA) is a non-profit organization in Hunterdon County whose mission is to conserve natural resources. HLTA has been an active member in the preservation efforts of the County to preserve and conserve natural resources. Their specific goals are:

1. To preserve, protect, and enhance the county's scenic beauty, and its environmental and historic resources.
2. To provide for the permanent preservation of farmland and to support and foster agricultural viability.
3. To promote the conservation and appropriate management of woodlands and open space.

Non-profit and watershed groups such as New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Nature Conservancy and D&R Greenway Land Trust have also become active participants in land preservation particularly in the Sourland Mountain region which, because of its recognition as part of the Crossroads of the American Revolution, is a major focus of local preservation efforts. These groups can often provide leveraging funds to municipalities or other agencies and are critical to the overall process. There are few preservation deals made which don't involve at least one non-profit or watershed group whose project support was critical.

**Summary of Action Plan**

The Action Plan provides a toolbox for the Township to assist in the identification, selection, and implementation of acquiring open space and recreational areas. Identifying potential acquisition parcels that are environmentally, socially or culturally significant aids the selection of parcels that will add synergy to the open space inventory. These include critical environmental resources, linkages, contiguous holdings and the like. Once the Township has identified potential parcels, these lands can be acquired or protected through a variety of means. Partnering with the State, County and non-profit/private organizations and reaching out to private landowners

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will help to bolster open space preservation. Consequently, the Action Plan can be viewed as a guidebook to create a long lasting agenda of open space and recreation opportunities in the Township.

# Figure 1 Open Space System Map

East Amwell Township  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

October 2005



0 0.5 1 Miles

## Legend

- Municipal
- County
- Board of Education
- State Owned
- Non-Profit Conservation Easement
- Private Conservation Easement
- Preserved Farmland
- State Owned Correctional Facility

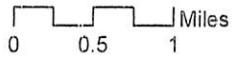


Data Sources:  
Hunterdon County Planning Board Division of GIS  
Township of East Amwell

# Figure 2 Topography & Steep Slopes

East Amwell Township  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

October 2005



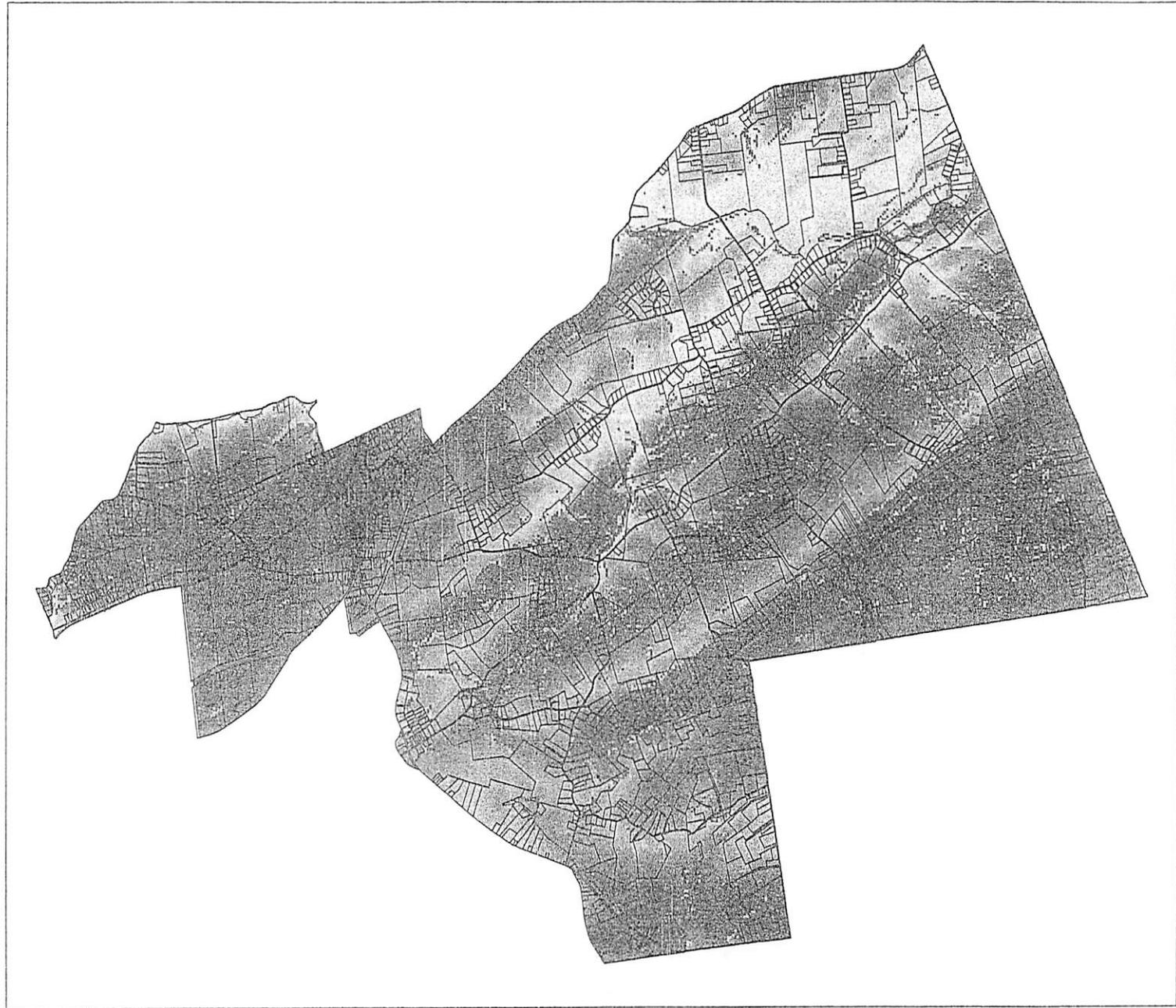
## Legend

-  High : 1064 feet
-  Low : 27 feet
-  Slopes less than 12%
-  Slopes 12% to 15%
-  Slopes 15% to 25%
-  Slopes greater than 25%

Data Sources:  
NJDEP  
Hunterdon County Planning Board Division of GIS  
Township of East Amwell

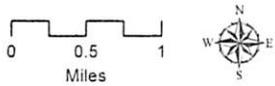
This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been NJDEP verified and is not state-authorized.

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**Figure 3**  
**Hydrology and**  
**Critical Habitat**  
*East Amwell Township*  
*Hunterdon County, New Jersey*

October 2005



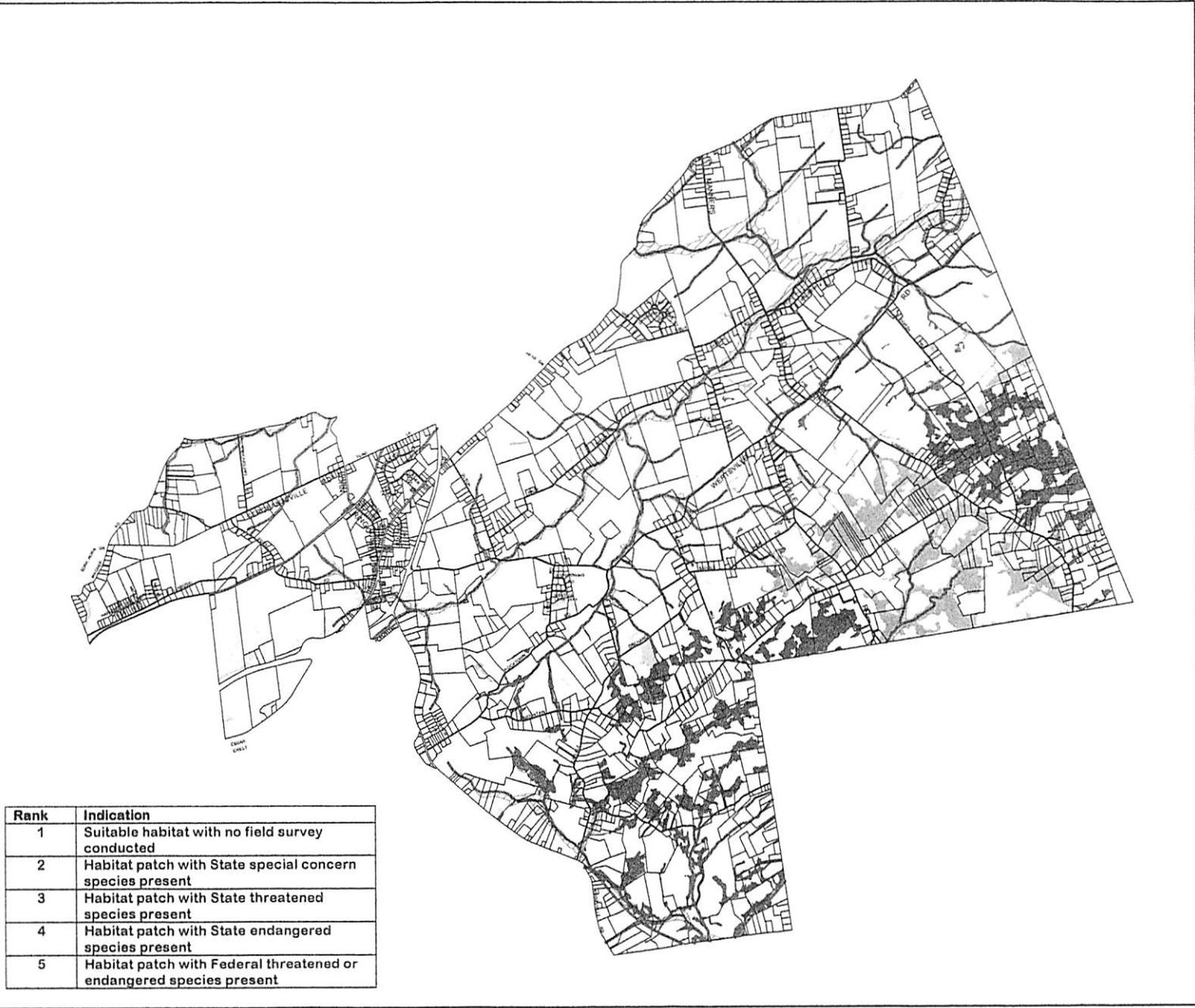
**Legend**

- FW2-Non-Trout Stream
- FW2-Non-Trout C1 Stream
- FW2-Trout Maintenance Stream
- Forested Wetlands (Rank 1)
- Forested Wetlands (Rank 2)
- Forested Wetlands (Rank 3)
- Emergent (Rank 1)
- Emergent (Rank 2)
- 100 Yr. Floodplains

Data Sources:  
 NJDEP  
 Hunterdon County Planning Board Division of GIS  
 Township of East Amwell

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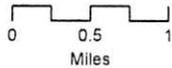


Rank	Indication
1	Suitable habitat with no field survey conducted
2	Habitat patch with State special concern species present
3	Habitat patch with State threatened species present
4	Habitat patch with State endangered species present
5	Habitat patch with Federal threatened or endangered species present

# Figure 4 Forest and Grassland Critical Habitat

East Amwell Township  
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

October 2005



## Legend

- Streams
- Forests (Rank 2)
- Forests (Rank 3)
- Grasslands (Rank 1)
- Grasslands (Rank 2)
- Grasslands (Rank 3)
- Grasslands (Rank 4)
- ◻ Wood Turtle Habitat

Data Sources:  
NJDEP  
Hunterdon County Planning Board Division of GIS  
Township of East Amwell

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Rank	Indication
1	Suitable habitat with no field survey conducted
2	Habitat patch with State special concern species present
3	Habitat patch with State threatened species present
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