



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

SOMERSET COUNTY
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January, 2017



COUNTY OF SOMERSET DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

ENGINEERING DIVISION

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County Engineer
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Assistant County Engineer
ADAM H. SLUTSKY

Facilities & Services Director
CARL MEMOLI

Supervisor of Roads & Bridges
VINCENZO RUSSO

Director of Planning
WALTER C. LANE

Recycling Superintendent
JOHN T. KENDZULAK, JR.

Transportation Director
YVONNE C. MANFRA

Vehicle Maintenance Acting Supervisor
JOHN T. KENDZULAK, JR.

Somerset Union Soil Conservation
District Manager
FRANK CALO

February 1, 2017

Peter Palmer, Director
Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders
County Administration Building
20 Grove Street
P. O. Box 3000
Somerville, NJ 08876

RE: 2016 Open Space Advisory Committee Annual Report

Dear Freeholder Palmer:

On behalf of the Somerset County Open Space Advisory Committee, I am pleased to submit our Annual Report for 2016. The Somerset County Open Space Preservation Program had another successful year with respect to implementing the County's duly adopted "Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan". With the addition of over 105 acres, the total park inventory now exceeds 14,400 acres.

2016 was extremely busy in terms of land acquisition and related parks, recreation and open space initiatives. Key target areas saw an increase in activity and many noteworthy property acquisitions were negotiated.

The continued support of the Board of Chosen Freeholders is greatly appreciated. Without the Board's endorsement and follow through, the Open Space Preservation Program would not be as successful as it is today. We look forward to the combined efforts of the Freeholders, Somerset County Park Commission and Open Space Advisory Committee in 2016 to continue the past success of the Open Space Program.

Sincerely,

Christopher Kelly

Christopher Kelly, Chair
Open Space Advisory Committee

Attachment

c: Freeholders
Park Commissioners
OSAC Members

- Mission Statement -

The County of Somerset is committed to excellence and innovation in public service, promoting the well-being of all residents and communities by providing effective, efficient and responsive leadership.

Somerset County Is An Equal Opportunity Employer

2016 ANNUAL REPORT SOMERSET COUNTY OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Membership

The ten members are chosen, two each by the Democratic Party, Republican Party, Planning Board, Park Commission and Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Ten individuals were appointed and served on the Committee in 2016 for a term of one year. Officers were determined by election in accordance with adopted bylaws.

Kacey Dyer, Chair
Helen Haines, Vice Chair
Mark Caliguire, Freeholder
A.D. Amar
James Jones
Randy Jones
Chris Kelly
Michael Kirsh
Suzanne Ochse
Walter Rusak

Staff/Non-Voting

Thomas Boccino, Principal Planner, County Engineering Parks Section
Brian Mundhenk, Principal Engineer, County Engineering Parks Section
Adam Bloom, Principal Engineer, County Engineering Parks Section
Raymond A. Brown, Director, Park Commission
Walter Lane, Director, County Planning Board

County Counsel

William T. Cooper, III, Esq.
Carl Taylor, Esq.

Summary of Meetings

The Open Space Advisory Committee met on nine occasions at the Somerset County Administration Building:

January 20, 2016
February 10, 2016
March 9, 2016
April 13, 2016
May 11, 2016
July 12, 2016
September 14, 2016
October 12, 2016
December 14, 2016

2016 Attendance

Name	1/20	2/10	3/9	4/13	5/11	6/8	7/12	8/10	9/14	10/12	11/9	12/14	Total
A.D. Amar	Abs.	X	X	X	Abs.	C	X	C	X	X	C	Abs.	6
Mark Caliguire	X	X	Abs.	X	Abs.	A	X	A	Abs.	X	A	X	6
Kacey Dyer	Abs.	X	X	Abs.	X	N	X	N	X	Abs.	N	X	6
Helen Haines	X	Abs.	X	X	X	C	X	C	X	X	C	X	8
James Jones	-	-	X	X	Abs.	E	X	E	X	X	E	X	6
Randy Jones	X	X	X	X	Abs.	L	X	L	Abs.	X	L	Abs.	6
Chris Kelly	-	X	Abs.	Abs.	X	L	X	L	X	Abs.	L	Abs.	4
Michael Kirsh	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	E	Abs.	X	E	Abs.	7
Suzanne Ochse	X	Abs.	Abs.	X	X	D	X	D	X	X	D	X	6
Walter Rusak	X	X	X	Abs.	X		X		X	X		X	8

2016 Land Acquisition Summary

Park Area	Acres Preserved	Total Park Area Acreage
Sourland Mountain Preserve	94.54	6,152.19
North Branch Greenway	10.40	221.82
Second Watchung Greenway	0.329	826.24

Open Space Preservation Highlights

1) The County acquired parcels from 7 property owners totaling **105.27** acres. The total Open Space Inventory now exceeds **14,457** acres.

2) The single largest acquisition of 2016 was 90.0 acres in the Sourland Mountain Preserve in Hillsborough Township from Charlotte Smith and David Weinberg. The property is completely wooded. The preservation of the property advances the County's goal of preserving the unique ecological environment that is the Sourland mountain region. The Sourland Mountain contains over 20,000 contiguous forested acres, which protect the water supply to the headwaters of several significant streams flowing to the D&R Canal, Millstone, Raritan and Delaware Rivers. The Sourlands support many rare plant and animal species, and provide nesting and migratory stopover habitat for over 100 species of migratory birds. The acquisition of this land increases the acreage of the Sourland Mountain Preserve to over 6,000 acres.



3) The 10.4 acre Cline property in Bridgewater Township is a completely wooded parcel with approximately 1,100 feet of frontage on the North Branch of the Raritan River. The acquisition of this property continues the preservation of land along the County's major waterbodies while allowing additional public access to the river for passive recreational activities such as hiking and fishing. The County is under contract for the purchase of a portion of the adjacent parcel which will ultimately preserve 1,500 linear feet of continuous river frontage and provide direct access from a public road.

4) With the assistance of New Jersey Conservation Foundation, the County acquired the 73.59 acre Higgins property in the Sourland Mountain Preserve in Hillsborough Township in 2015. The remaining 4.5 acres of the property containing the remains of a residence and barn were acquired this year. The existing improvements will be removed allowing the property to revert to its natural state. The property,



which is located near the intersection of Wertsville and Montgomery Roads, is contiguous to other open space lands acquired by Somerset County in recent years and will encourage the expansion of the Preserve to the Hunterdon County border, where many local, county and nonprofit preservation initiatives are currently underway. The County and NJCF have been working together on a Management Plan that outlines planning and management activities most appropriate for the health and public enjoyment of the land. Preliminary planning has begun for nature and equestrian trails on and around the property.

5) Bernards Township donated a 0.329 acre parcel to the County within the Second Watchung Greenway. The parcel is contiguous to existing preserved County open space, helps to continue the preservation efforts along the Second Watchung ridge and provides access to the Greenway from existing residential neighborhoods.

6) The Somerset County Municipal Flood Mitigation Funding Program was established by the Board of Chosen Freeholders in 2012 to assist municipalities with the buyouts of flood-prone residential properties. The program was initially established as the required match to State or Federal buyout programs. In 2016 the Freeholders expanded the original program into two



components. The Match Funding Program provides matching funds to municipalities in partnership with FEMA and Blue Acres up to 25% of the project cost. The Primary Funding Program provides assistance where funding is not being derived from other federal or state sources with Somerset County in the lead funding role.

- 7) The County is currently actively negotiating or under contract for the acquisition of approximately 300 acres in several target acquisition areas.
- 8) The Somerset County Engineering Division Parks Section continues to assume administrative responsibilities for the Open Space Advisory Committee.

Open Space Trust Fund

During 2016, open space acquisition costs totaled \$1,789,044. As of December 31, 2016, a balance of \$5,202,724 was available for acquisitions. This available amount includes the \$2,600,000 Freeholder allocation from the Trust Fund for open space acquisitions. Purchases are still pending for several large acquisitions that were made through the Somerset County Improvement Authority that will ultimately be reimbursed from the Open Space Trust Fund.

The Freeholders allocated \$200,000 from the Trust Fund for the County Flood Mitigation Funding Program.

Montgomery Township authorized the contribution of 30% of the acquisition cost (approximately \$600,000) toward the County's acquisition of the 59 acre "Thompson" property on Pleasant View Road.

To date the NJDEP Green Acres Program and the Garden State Preservation Trust Program has awarded the County \$17.7 million in matching grants and loans through its Planning Incentive Grant Program.