

CHAPTER III

GOVERNMENTAL, NON-PROFIT, AND PRIVATE ROLES

The preservation of open space in New Jersey is the responsibility of all levels of government, as well as the private sector. The roles and responsibilities of each level of government vary as well. Although many agency roles differ, overlapping responsibilities and the exchange of data often occur.

The Federal Role

The federal government's role is to assess management problems in order to meet the recreational needs of the nation's citizens in addition to managing thousands of acres of open space. Federal agencies supply programs and funding that meet the broad scale needs for open space and outdoor recreation.

The Department of the Interior acts as the principal conservation agency of the federal government. Agencies within this Department include the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The US Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Conservation Service lends assistance to all levels of government, conservation districts, and watershed associations. The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides grants, conducts soil surveys, forecasts water supplies, and publishes data useful in resource conservation and development programs, public recreation, fish and wildlife protection.

Other federal agencies, which provide programs in open space preservation, include the Environmental Protection Agency, the Commerce Department, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Transportation. The federal government presence in Warren County is exhibited through the National Park Service management of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The site covers 10,749 acres in the former Pahaquarry Township, now part of Hardwick Township, and portions of Blairstown and Knowlton Townships. The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area also extends into Sussex County and across the river in Pennsylvania.

The State Role

The State of New Jersey has the role of planning for the competing pressures and interests on the state's natural resources. This responsibility includes the setting of goals and priorities, as well as the formulation of policy concerning open space and outdoor recreation as set forth in the New Jersey Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan.

The Department of Environmental Protection was established to unite state government operations with a mandate for conservation, restoration, and enhancement of the physical

environment. Agencies within this Department include the Division of Parks and Forestry, the Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife, the Office of Green Acres, and the State Historic Preservation Office.

The County Role

The County has the role to acquire open space lands for public use and to maintain, manage, and develop them in a manner that is consistent with this Open Space Plan. The purpose of County owned open spaces is broader than municipal levels, can extend across municipal boundaries, but are generally less in total acreage than statewide acquisitions. The county system integrates outdoor recreation with environmental protection, farmland preservation, historic preservation, natural resource and historic resource education.

In Warren County, county owned open spaces should be managed to provide for activities such as hiking, fishing, picnicking, bicycling, nature study, touring and traditional uses, such as hunting, where appropriate. The protection of any cultural and historic areas should be incorporated into any planned open space site that may include them. If warranted in the long term, the county system could evolve into one that has a county staffed department that would acquire land, develop parklands, and administer activities and programs for the full use and enjoyment of our residents.

The Municipal Role

Traditionally, municipal parks and recreational areas include ball fields, playgrounds, picnic areas, swimming pools and bike trails. Often, municipal programs are tailored to suit the needs of preschoolers, teens, adults and senior citizens. These areas are typically smaller in size and focus more on the active recreation that county, state, and federal agencies do not provide. Many times, the local schools will provide the recreational athletic facilities for the community.

The Non-Profit Role

Non-profit organizations usually have a specific mission as set forth in its charter and bylaws. They may be established to preserve and protect certain land characteristics regardless of the political jurisdiction, or to acquire land areas located within specified jurisdictions. Non profits have a funding base consisting of membership fees, charitable contributions, donations, and government grants and can qualify for certain grants that governmental agencies are ineligible to receive. Non-profits can fill a void that governmental agencies are unable to fill because of time, lack of funding or policy.

In addition to land preservation, non-profits have played a role in maintaining properties acquired by the county for little or no cost. The county benefits because the non-profit occupies and cares for the land and buildings, and the non-profit benefits because office and work space is provided, and in some cases provides a hands on class room experience for the individuals that the non-profit desires to help.

Active non-profits in Warren County include the Highlands Project, the Friends of the NJ Transportation Museum, the Morris Land Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy, the Ridge and Valley Conservancy, the Canal Society of NJ, the Phillipsburg Riverview Organization, the NY-NJ

Trail Conference, the Trust for Public Lands, Wildlife Preservation, Inc., and the Heritage Conservancy.

Private Role

The private sector role in open space preservation can take four forms. The first is that the private sector provides for the use of land usually for a fee. Private campgrounds and lands owned by special groups such as the YMCA, Boy and Girl Scouts, and religious institutions are examples.

The second form is through the land development process where the developer of a project will dedicate land to a governmental entity in accordance with an adopted Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The third form is where a developer provides for common open space for use only by the residents of the development and their guests. The common areas contribute to the overall goal of open space preservation although it may serve a limited population.

The fourth form is through the responsible management of land by private land owners. While the land may not be legally accessible by the general public, having the land remain in undeveloped state preserves scenic vistas, forest areas, farmland and protects water recharge, water quality, as well as the habitats of flora and fauna. Incentives for land owners to permanently preserve land areas through the use of conservation easements, development easements, etc are available. Use of the easements does not require the land to be accessible for public use.

(THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK)