

## **Hunterdon Open Space Plan Moves Forward As Freeholders Approve Preservation Of 135 Acres**

Moving forward on implementing the Hunterdon County Open Space Strategic Plan, the Hunterdon County Freeholder Board acted at recent meetings to approve the preservation of a 64-acre farm and two open space properties with over 70 combined acres, in conjunction with two major environmental non-profits.

Properties approved for preservation included 64 acres of the Curtis Farm in the Rosemont Valley, 31 acres of open space for a park near downtown Whitehouse Station, and 40 open space acres on Stanton Station Road, near the Echo Hill park, in Readington.

Freeholder John E. Lanza, the Board's liaison for Planning and Land Use, stated, "The preservation of these three land parcels is exactly what was envisioned in the County's Open Space Strategic plan, adopted by the Freeholder Board in 2018."

The non-profit New Jersey Conservation Foundation joined with the County in the preservation of a farmland easement for 64 acres at the Curtis farm in the Rosemont Valley. The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) is providing 50% of the approximate \$814,578 cost of the easement.

Lanza commented, "This is the final farm in Rosemont Valley to be preserved, protecting a rural vista that truly encapsulates Hunterdon County's natural beauty. The fact that half the cost is provided by the SADC is the icing on the cake."

The Freeholders also joined with the non-profit Hunterdon Land Trust in approving the preservation of 31 acres of open space for a park near downtown Whitehouse Station, with the state Green Acres program providing half the \$310,000 preservation cost.

Lanza said, "Here is another instance where the county can achieve open space preservation in collaboration with a long time, valued partner in the Hunterdon Land Trust, and with a funding partner in the state green acres program.

Hunterdon County taxpayers are winners with the green acres program covering 50% of the acquisition costs and the environment is a winner with the protection of land near the Chambers Brook."

The Freeholders also approved the preservation of 40 open space acres on Stanton Station Road, near the Echo Hill park and the County Arboretum, in Readington, with \$300,000 directly from the County Open Space Trust Fund.

Lanza pointed out, “The property provides open space connectivity, including access from Echo Hill park. It protects the Prescott Brook and adds to the already preserved 150 acres along the South Branch, protecting that waterway.”

The Hunterdon County Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee recommended all three preservation projects to the Freeholder Board. All County share of costs come from the dedicated County Open Space Trust Fund.

Lanza added, “I think it is important to note that achieving the preservation of properties takes skill on the part of the county’s team, and it also is a credit to the various land owners in our county that many will work towards the goal of preservation.”