

Camden County Open Space Preservation Trust Fund Advisory Committee



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Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding the Camden County Open Space Preservation Program. This program, created in 1999 by the Camden County Board of Freeholders in response to overwhelming voter support of an Open Space Referendum placed on the ballot in November 1998, is funded by the Camden County Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.

Please note that all monies provided through the Trust for the acquisition of open space are limited to funding only the acquisition of those acres that will be dedicated to conservation or passive recreation. The acquisition of any acreage to be dedicated for active recreation shall not be funded through the Trust Fund. Exceptions to this policy may be made only in those instances where:

- 1) the proposed acquisition includes privately held recreation areas under threat of residential or commercial development, or
- 2) the proposed acquisition and subsequent development of active recreation would result in the elimination of existing residential or commercial development, or
- 3) the applicant can demonstrate both a compelling need for the development of active recreation facilities, and that the proposed development of active recreation facilities poses no significant threat to the local environment.

Enclosed is an application packet that includes:

1. The **Goal and Objectives** of the Camden County Open Space Preservation Program
2. An **Application for Open Space Preservation Funding** and;
3. An overview of the County's **Application Procedures**.

In addition, the following definitions are provided to help you better understand the historic preservation component of the Program.

“*Open Space Acquisition*” means the securing of a fee simple or lesser interest in land, including but not limited to an easement restricting development, by gift, purchase, installment purchase agreement, or devise, for use as parks, open space, natural areas, ecological and biological study, water reserves, wildlife preserves, fishing, hunting, camping, boating, water sports, or similar uses for either passive public outdoor recreation or conservation of natural resources.

“*Farmland Preservation*” means the long term preservation of land devoted to agricultural or horticultural use that is valued, assessed, and taxed pursuant to the “Farmland Assessment Act of 1964” P.L. 1964, c. 48 (C 54:4-23.1 et seq.)

“*Enhancement of Existing Recreation Facilities*” means improvements to existing publicly owned recreation facilities that are designed to expand their utilization for recreation purposes.

“*Historic Preservation*” means the performance of any work relating to the stabilization, repair, rehabilitation, renovation, restoration, improvement, protection or preservation of a structure, facility, site, area, or object that has been approved for inclusion, or otherwise meets the criteria for inclusion in the New Jersey Register of Historic Places pursuant to P.L. 1970, c. 268 (C13: 1B – 15.128 et seq.)

Acquisition Strategies

The acquisition of open space can be accomplished in a number of ways. These include donation by property owner; purchase of conservation easements or development rights; fee simple purchase; and, purchase by private conservation organization. These strategies are discussed below

Donation by Property Owner

A property owner elects to donate his or her property to a local government or private conservation organization. Public access to the property may or may not be granted.

Purchase of Conservation Easement

A conservation easement identifies certain rights or restrictions on the use and development of a property. Easements may be donated by a property owner or purchased by a local government, charitable organization, or conservation organization/land trust. The holder of the easement agrees to perform periodic inspections of the property to ensure that the provisions of the easement are being met. Public access to the property may or may not be granted under a conservation easement.

Purchase of Development Rights

The purchase of development rights is a form of conservation easement whereby the difference in the highest and best use of undeveloped land before and after the creation of the easement is paid to the owner. In return, the owner agrees to abide by specific rights and restrictions on the use and development of the property. This is the primary method used in the acquisition of farmland. Public access to the property may or may not be granted by the purchase of development rights.

Fee Simple Purchase

Under a fee simple purchase the transfer of full title to a property is made to the purchaser. The purchase price is negotiated based on an appraisal and the establishment of fair market value. Variations on this method of acquisition include: installment purchases whereby a set number of acres are purchased periodically until full title is obtained; and, purchase at less than market value whereby the owner donates a portion of the purchase price. Fee simple purchase is typically the most costly method of acquisition. Public access to the property is typically granted under a fee simple purchase.

Purchase by Private Conservation Organization

Private conservation organizations can play a significant role in the acquisition of open space. By forming informal public-private partnerships with such organizations, significant amounts of open space can be preserved. Public access may or may not be granted by the organization.

Should you have any questions, or require assistance in completing the application, please contact me at (856) 858-5241.

Sincerely,

Jack Sworaski, Director
Division of Open Space and Farmland Preservation