

The following Action Plan provide detailed strategies and specific actions, serving as a technical guide for implementing the recommendations of The Plan. These action plans are intended to be living documents, being revised and updated as Together North Jersey works with various partners on implementing recommendations in the plan



Focus Area 13: Improve stewardship of natural lands, agricultural lands, open space, parks and historic resources.

What and why. Both human activities and natural processes are degrading the ecological integrity of forests, fields, and wetlands in the North Jersey region. For example, over-population of white-tail deer has led to numerous environmental problems, including loss of native plants and trees and increased incidence of Lyme disease. Invasive plant and tree species have displaced native flora, reducing biodiversity. In fact, the New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team has over 150 invasive species on its “2014 DO NOT PLANT LIST.” The maintenance of the massive lawns common in many areas of North Jersey leads to excess water consumption. Fertilizer and pesticides used in lawn treatment and farming operations contaminate our region’s soil and water supplies. In addition to natural lands, North Jersey has also lost numerous historic sites to development, redevelopment and neglect of historic resources by both public and private entities.

Effective stewardship of land and historic resources can mitigate these negative effects, and can help to protect and restore important natural processes. Stewardship is a practice that allows both public and private property owners to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of natural lands, agricultural areas, open space, and parks and the character and condition of historic sites. It involves a combination of property management, resource conservation and maintenance through activities such as preservation, easement enforcement, erosion control, wildlife control, invasive species removal, planting of native flora and control of improper uses.

How. Stewardship of land and historic resources can be initiated through raising awareness about the importance of stewardship, educating landowners on programs and techniques they can use, and providing financial incentives for undertaking stewardship activities. Our region should work to expand and improve public efforts to protect and steward parks and open spaces; and governments, non-profit organizations and private citizens should be encouraged to preserve historic sites through governmental action, non-profit stewardship and maintenance of historic structures by private citizens.




Strategy 13.1 Work with land owners to improve stewardship of privately owned natural lands and green space.

What and why. The majority of our region’s remaining natural lands are in private ownership. Much of this private land takes the form of large lot commercial and residential development. It runs the gamut from woodlots, to portions of parcels left undisturbed because of environmental constraints, to large lawns maintained by property owners. We need to create incentives for private property owners to implement best stewardship practices and dedicate portions of their property to conservation. The

NJDEP and non-profits should work together to educate landowners through best practice guides and outreach campaigns and should develop and implement effective stewardship incentive programs.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Create an environmental stewardship manual that describes best practices and case studies, and includes model municipal and county ordinances for sound stewardship activities, including those fostering the protection of ground water, lakes, steep slopes, trees, streams, riparian corridors, and other natural resources. Relevant NGOs should contribute to the publication and help to promote sound practices to constituents.	Lead: NJDEP Support: ANJEC, Sustainable Jersey, NJLM, County Planners Association, and other relevant NGOs	Medium term
2.	Create a best practices manual for ongoing maintenance and/or retrofit of green stewardship activities for commercial and residential property owners. Activities could include conversion to native plant species, sustainable lawn care to prevent soil compaction and reduce non-point source pollution, etc. Relevant NGOs should contribute to the publication and help to promote sound practices to constituents.	Lead: NJDEP Support: USGBC-NJ, NJBA, NAIOP-NJ, ISCS, and other relevant NGOs, Municipal and county governments	Medium term
3.	Create municipal and county comprehensive Environmental Resource Inventories, and adopt stewardship and protection ordinances for critical community resources.	Municipal and county governments	Medium term
4.	Research and develop recommendations (including legislative, as necessary) related to appropriate incentive-driven conservation measures, as well as open and government-regulated markets around the demand for stewardship related activities, like nutrient reduction, habitat protection, wetland creation, afforestation and reforestation, etc.	ANJEC, NJCF, NJ Future, RPA, Sustainable Jersey, with support from NJDEP	Short term
5.	Institute an education and outreach campaign targeted toward government organizations and private land owners around stewardship best management practices.	NJDEP, with support from NJ Highlands Council, NJ Pinelands Commission, USGBC-NJ, NJBA, NAIOP-NJ, ISCS, municipal and county governments, Sustainable Jersey.	Medium term



Strategy 13.2: Expand programs to preserve parks, open space, natural lands, and agricultural lands permanently

What and why. New Jersey has successfully preserved millions of acres of open space and farmland through a combination of state and local initiatives over the past 30 years or more. Preservation efforts must continue. Land owners (both public and private) can preserve land by applying a deed restriction that permanently prohibits substantial future development on a parcel of land. While preservation alone does not ensure proper stewardship, it does help to limit development and can be used to create contiguous swaths of natural areas necessary to support critical habitats, drinking water recharge areas and resources critical to our region's quality of life, especially clean air and water supplies. While a constitutional amendment approved by New Jersey voters in 2014 appropriates new business tax revenues to open space preservation, our region should leverage these funds to employ municipal open space taxes, preservation tax credits and resource fees to fund and encourage the protection of land and natural resources. Land use strategies such as cluster development, non-contiguous clustering, and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) should be employed to protect natural areas while respecting private property rights and accommodating growth.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Levee a municipal and county open space tax, or consider increasing existing tax, to better leverage and supplement NJ state preservation funding.	Municipalities and counties	Short term
2.	Implement land use strategies that use private market forces to permanently preserve land, including cluster, non-contiguous cluster, and TDR. (See Strategy 5.5.)	Municipalities	Short term
3.	Institute a transferable NJ income tax credit for a portion of the value of a qualifying conservation donation. A tax credit is a more robust incentive than the typical charitable donation deduction, and allowing the credit to be transferable expands the desirability and applicability to the open market.	NJ Legislature, with support from Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT)	Medium term
4.	Institute a water consumption fee to be used for water resource protection efforts, including mitigation and stewardship efforts in critical water supply areas, as well as infrastructure improvements in distressed urban areas.	NJ Legislature	Medium term
5.	Authorize municipal government to establish an open space impact fee.	NJ Legislature and Governor	Medium term
6.	Require all applicants for NJ preservation funds to implement conservation plans that establish priority preservation areas based on resource value, contiguousness, and other relevant factors, similar to the requirements of the SADC Planning Incentive Grant (PIG) Program,. The state should establish a planning grant program to assist applicants in creating (and periodically updating) these conservation plans.	Lead: GSPT Support: NJ Legislature, NJDEP Green Acres, NJDA	Medium term
7.	Establish critical resource areas through the NJ State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, through which new major linear development projects, such as roads and utilities, through critical resource areas should be prohibited (needs Legislative enactment).	NJDEP, NJ Legislature and Governor's office	Long term



Strategy 13.3: Improve stewardship of public parks, open space, and natural lands

What and why. A key step towards improving stewardship of parks, open space and natural lands is a reorientation of funding and revenues to strengthen the operations of the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife and Division of Parks and local parks departments. State agencies should retain enforcement fines and concession fees—revenues that are currently diverted to the state’s general fund. The state should also increase funding for the division’s activities. All levels of government in the region (state, county and municipal) should develop stewardship best practices and prioritize stewardship as part of conservation planning.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Increase NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife and Division of Parks and Forestry enforcement fines. Return enforcement fines to the relevant enforcing agency, rather than the state general fund.	NJ Legislature, with support from NJDEP	Short term
2.	Allow Parks and Forestry to retain concession fees in Division budget rather than moving the fees to general fund purposes.	NJ Governor	Short term
3.	Create a toolbox that includes best practices, technical guidance, and case studies for environmental stewardship of publically owned open space and natural lands. The manual should include a comprehensive set of strategies to address the full range of urban, suburban, and rural open space land uses.	NJDEP	Medium term
4.	Set stewardship priorities as part of state, county, and municipal conservation planning.	State, county and municipal government	Medium term
5.	Increase funding for NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife and Division of Parks enforcement activities.	NJ Legislature, NJDEP	Medium term
6.	Establish formal stewardship and enforcement cooperatives between the NJDEP and local land conservancies, counties and municipalities. These cooperatives could include authorization to conduct stewardship activities and enforcement, as well as provide matching funds for mitigation and restoration work on state natural and open space lands.	NJDEP, with support from Land conservancies, counties, and municipalities	Medium term
7.	Institute a water consumption fee to be used for mitigation and stewardship efforts in critical water supply areas as well as infrastructure improvements in urban areas.	NJ Legislature	Medium term
8.	Maintain a NJDEP database of stewardship activities, and monitor stewardship program activities through a matrix of indicators and milestones.	NJDEP	Medium term

TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY Strategy 13.4: Implement best practices for stewardship of private and preserved agricultural lands

What and why. On farmland, stewardship involves the adoption of responsible and sustainable methods for agricultural land use, including water conservation, erosion control, integrated pest management and proper treatment of animal farm wastes. To promote farmland conservation, the state should restore funding for the New Jersey Soil and Water Conservation Grant program and increase staffing to complete farm conservation plans in a timely manner. We should also provide incentives for new and existing farms to participate in natural resources conservation service programs to encourage stream, wetlands and forest protection and stewardship.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Reinstate funding for the NJ Soil and Water Conservation Grant program.	Lead: NJ Legislature Support: NJDA	Short
2.	Increase staffing levels to complete Farm Conservation Plans within a timely manner for all that request them.	Lead: NRCS and NJDA	Medium
3.	Provide incentives for new and existing preserved farms to participate in NRCS conservation programs like the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to encourage stream, wetlands, and forest protection and stewardship. The NJDA should investigate requiring <i>implementation</i> of Farm Conservation Plans as a part of the deed of easements.	Lead: NJDA Support: NRCS	Medium


TOGETHER NORTH JERSEY Strategy 13.5: Expand programs to preserve historic resources.

What and why. New Jersey has spent millions of dollars to preserve historic sites throughout the state. These efforts must continue. The New Jersey Historic Trust capital preservation program should be adequately funded on a yearly basis. Counties should be encouraged to establish historic preservation grant programs through their Open Space, Farmland, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust funds. The preservation grant programs in place in Somerset and Morris counties can serve as models for the region. Municipalities should be encouraged to adopt historic preservation ordinances consistent with the Municipal Land Use Law and to also establish preservation grant programs as part of their open space programs. A historic preservation certificate program should be re-established to provide historic preservation expertise to members of preservation commissions, citizen members of planning and zoning boards, not-for-profit boards and other private citizens.

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>

1.	Expand funding levels for the various funding programs of the New Jersey Historic Trust. This includes increasing the funding level and implementing the Corporate Business Tax Historic Preservation Fund which was approved by the voters in 2014.	Lead: NJ legislature, Governor's office, NJ Historical Commission Support: Preservation New Jersey, Counties and Municipalities	Short
2.	Create new financial incentives to promote job growth through the rehabilitation of privately owned commercial and residential historic properties, including a state-level tax credit	Lead: NJ Legislature, NJ Historical Commission Support: Preservation New Jersey, Counties and Municipalities	Short
3.	Establish county historic preservation trust fund grant programs consistent with Title 40:12-15 et. seq. of the revised New Jersey State Statutes in each county in North Jersey.	Lead: Counties Support: Local historic preservation and history organizations	Medium
4.	Establish a new historic preservation certificate program in the state to train government officials, planners, real estate professionals, historic preservation commissioner's volunteers and the general public in historic preservation techniques and strategies.	Lead: New Jersey Historic Trust Support: Ad Hoc Certificate Program Committee, Preservation NJ, local historic preservation and history organizations	Medium
5.	Complete or update historic resources inventories for each county in the region.	Lead: Counties Support: Local historic preservation commissions and organizations	Medium
6.	Expand the number of communities in North Jersey which have historic preservation regulations and historic commissions consistent with the Municipal Land Use Law NJSA 40:55D-1 et. Seq.	Lead: Local Municipalities Support: Preservation NJ, local historic preservation commissions and organizations	Medium

7.	Expand the number of communities taking advantage of the Certified Local Government Program.	Lead: NJ DEP State Historic Preservation Office, municipalities Support: Preservation NJ	Medium
8.	Encourage municipalities to adopt property maintenance codes to protect dilapidated, vacant and abandoned historic buildings.	Lead: NJ DEP State Historic Preservation Office, municipalities Support: Preservation NJ	Medium
9.	Government agencies and non-profit organizations should cooperate with various federal historic programs in North Jersey including the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail, the Millstone Valley National Scenic By-way and the Delaware River Scenic By-Way in order to promote historic sites and encourage heritage tourism.	State County and Municipal governments non-profit historic preservation and heritage organizations. Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, W3RNJ and the National Scenic Byways	Short



Strategy 13.6: Improve stewardship of publicly-owned historic sites.

What and why. North Jersey’s historic places have powerful stories to tell, but they cannot speak for themselves. Historic sites need to be properly interpreted to teach citizens about their communities’ past in ways that everyone can understand. In addition, proper interpretation, staffing and amenities are important in making historic sites tourist destinations that promote economic activity. Funding from the New Jersey Historical Commission and other state sources should be expanded to provide assistance to not-for-profit and publicly owned historic sites to bring their stories to life and provide amenities to make these sites tourist-ready and enjoyable destinations.

	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Revise State regulation permitting more flexibility for the adaptive re-use of historic structures on lands that are owned by the State or are encumbered by the Green Acres program.	Lead: NJ legislature Support: NJDEP State Historic Preservation Office, NJ Historic Trust	Medium

2.	Inventory and complete historic structures reports/preservation plans and establish priorities for stabilization and restoration of historic properties on state, county and municipal lands.	Lead: State, county and municipal, governments Support: Local historic preservation organizations	Long
3.	Establish programs to provide training to develop skills for volunteers and paid employees to properly interpret historic sites that are open to the public.	Lead: State, county and municipal, governments and Local historic preservation organizations Support: NJ Historic Commission, Preservation NJ	Long
4.	Expand funding levels for the New Jersey Historical Commission's grant programs which offer both general operating support and project grants for local historic organizations.	Lead: NJ Legislature, NJ Historical Commission Support: County and local historic preservation and heritage organizations	Short
5.	Promote coordination between historic sites throughout the region including marketing strategies and major event coordination.	Lead: State, county and local historic preservation and heritage organizations Support: Regional destination marketing organizations (DMOs). County and local historic preservation and heritage organizations	Short

6.	A tourism wayfinding program should be initiated in the state as well as historic marker programs at the state or local level. These programs should be coordinated with the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area, the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail, as well as the National and state scenic by-way programs.	Lead: NJ Legislature, NJ Historical Commission, NJ Historic Trust. Support: County and municipalities, local historic preservation and heritage organizations, Regional DMOs.	Long
7.	Encourage Destination Marketing Organizations in the region to focus on heritage tourism.	Lead: DMOs Support: County and local historic preservation and heritage organizations, Preservation NJ	Short