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DEPARTMENT OF LAND PRESERVATION



2008 ANNUAL REPORT
8/1/2007 - 7/31/2008

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The Land Preservation Department (LPD) has completed its sixth year. Since its beginning on June 12, 2002, it has continued to adhere to its charter to:

- **Administer the Farmland Preservation Program under the Warren County Agriculture Development board (CADB)**
- **Administer the Open Space Program under the Board of Recreation Commissioners (BORC)**
- **Administer the Municipal and Charitable Conservancy Trust Fund under the Municipal and Charitable Conservancy Trust Fund Committee (MCCTFC)**
- **Administer other programs of preservation as directed by the Board of Chosen Freeholders (BCF)**
- **Oversee various properties owned by Warren County.**

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STAFFING

Staffing of the department continues at three positions:

- **Director, Bob Resker**
- **Confidential Assistant, Teresa Kaminski**
- **Administrative Clerk, Sue Beall**

We completed a realignment of responsibilities for each staff member to provide more effective cross-training in our functions.

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FUNCTIONS OF LAND PRESERVATION

- **Combining the functions of land preservation in a single administrative body continues to prove advantageous.**
- **There is much interplay among preservation techniques and a good deal of overlap.**
- **A single coordinated effort permits choosing the most efficient method of preservation, and in some cases combining funding sources to achieve the desired end.**
- **It has the additional advantage of exposing staff to both state funding agencies (SADC & Green Acres), conservation groups and organizations that have much to offer in reaching the county's long-term goals.**

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BUILDING ON OUR EXPERIENCES WE CONTINUE TO:

- **Maintain and refine a comprehensive inventory of preserved land, both public (state, county and municipal) and private conservancies.**
- **Update our county-wide map of block and lot parcels to track these properties and assist in planning further acquisitions.**
- **Revisit our procedures for all three functions to address our changing workload and personnel.**
- **Expand our network of partners in land preservation, strengthening our ties to Green Acres, Parks & Forestry, Fish & Wildlife, SADC, The Trust for Public Land, Heritage Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, The Ridge & Valley Conservancy and the Morris Land Conservancy, the NY/NJ Trail Conference and the Musconetcong Watershed Association.**

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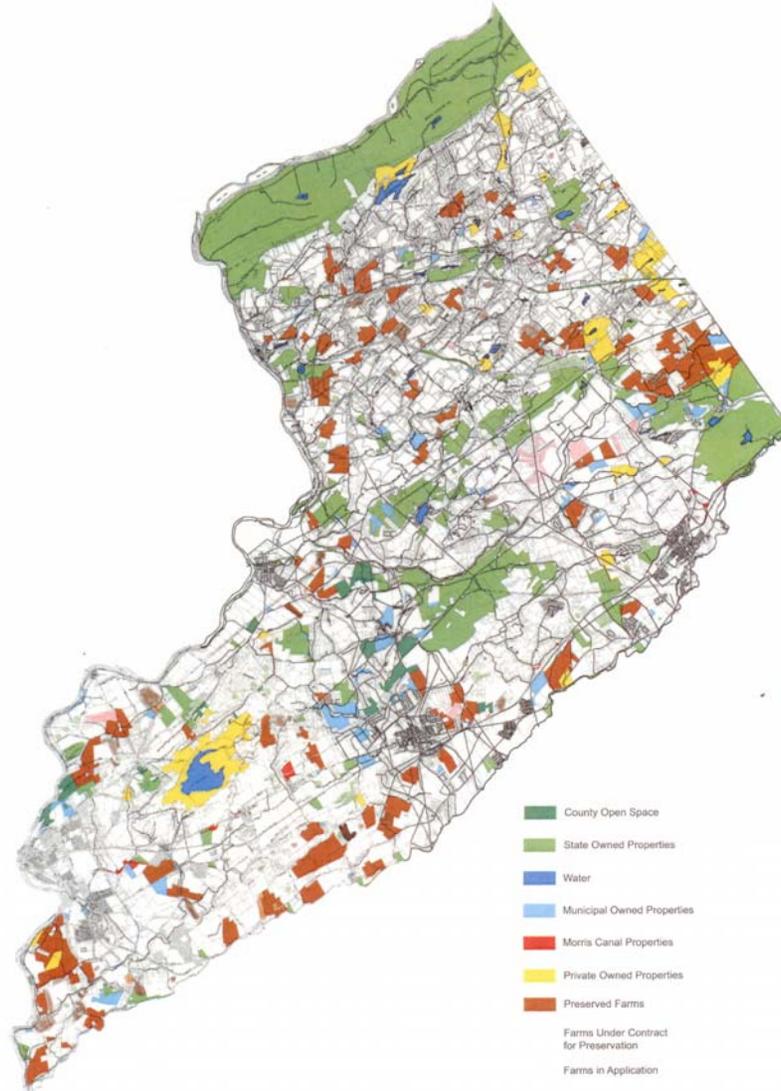
BUILDING ON OUR EXPERIENCES . . .

- **Maintain our ties to other county CADB Administrators to stay ahead of rule and regulation changes. An informal organization of administrators has been functioning for over five years to share concerns and information.**
- **Stay involved with the New Jersey Parks and Recreation Association (NJPRA) and attend their quarterly meetings.**

We will continue to review procedures to improve efficiency and monitor lands as they are preserved and added to inventory.

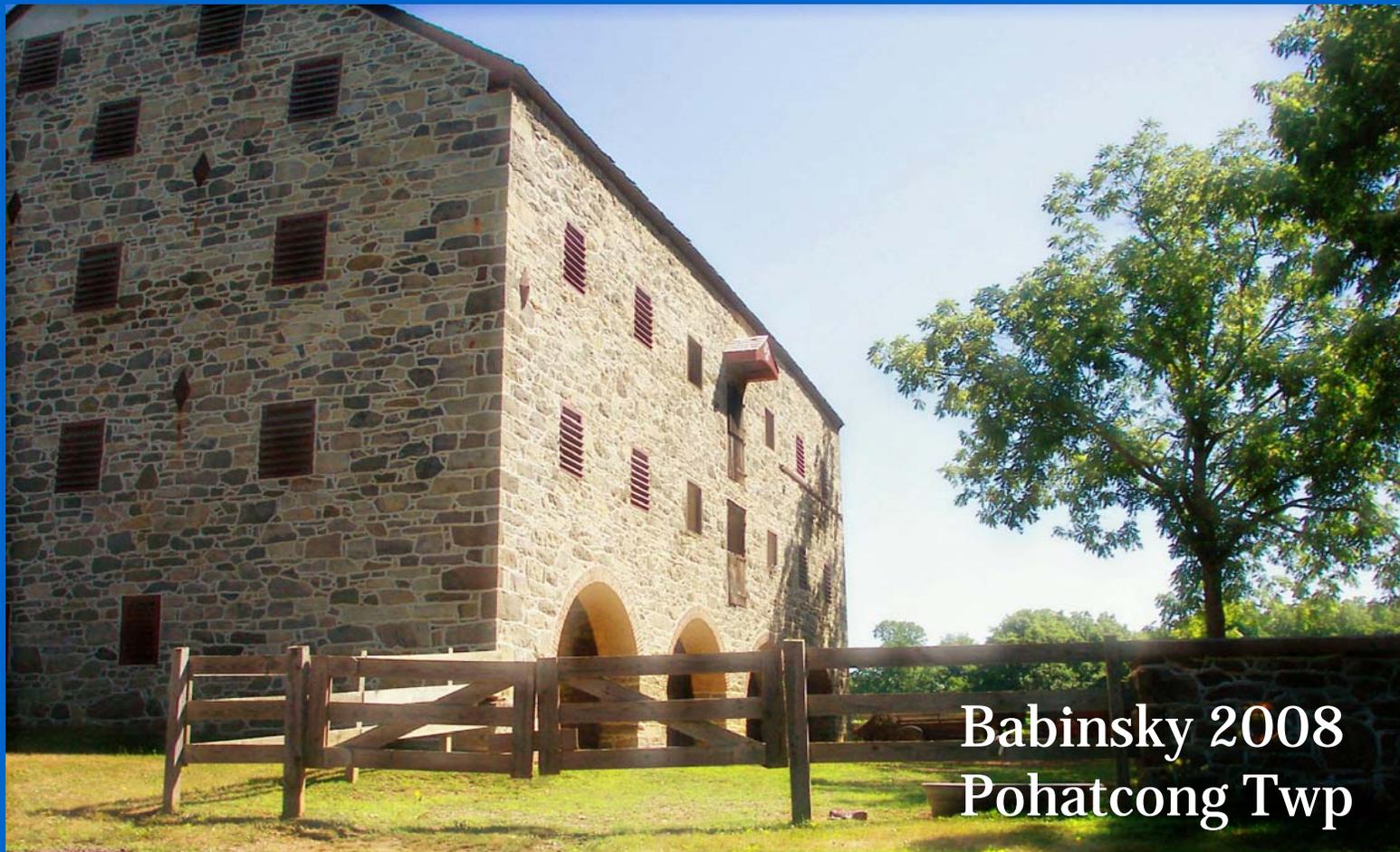
The following sections of this report will detail our activity in each of the areas of our responsibility.

WARREN COUNTY PRESERVED LAND



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FARMLAND PRESERVATION



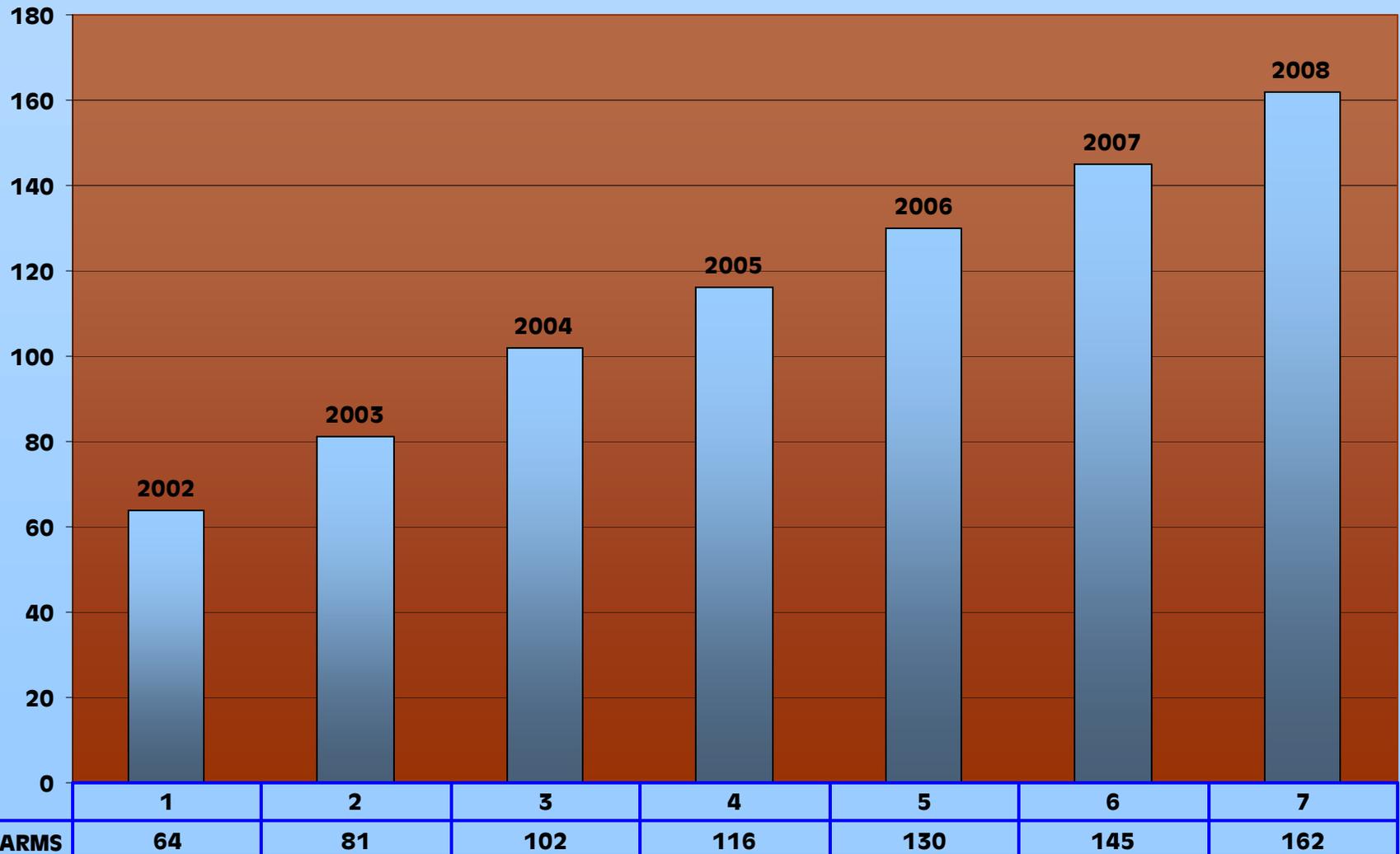
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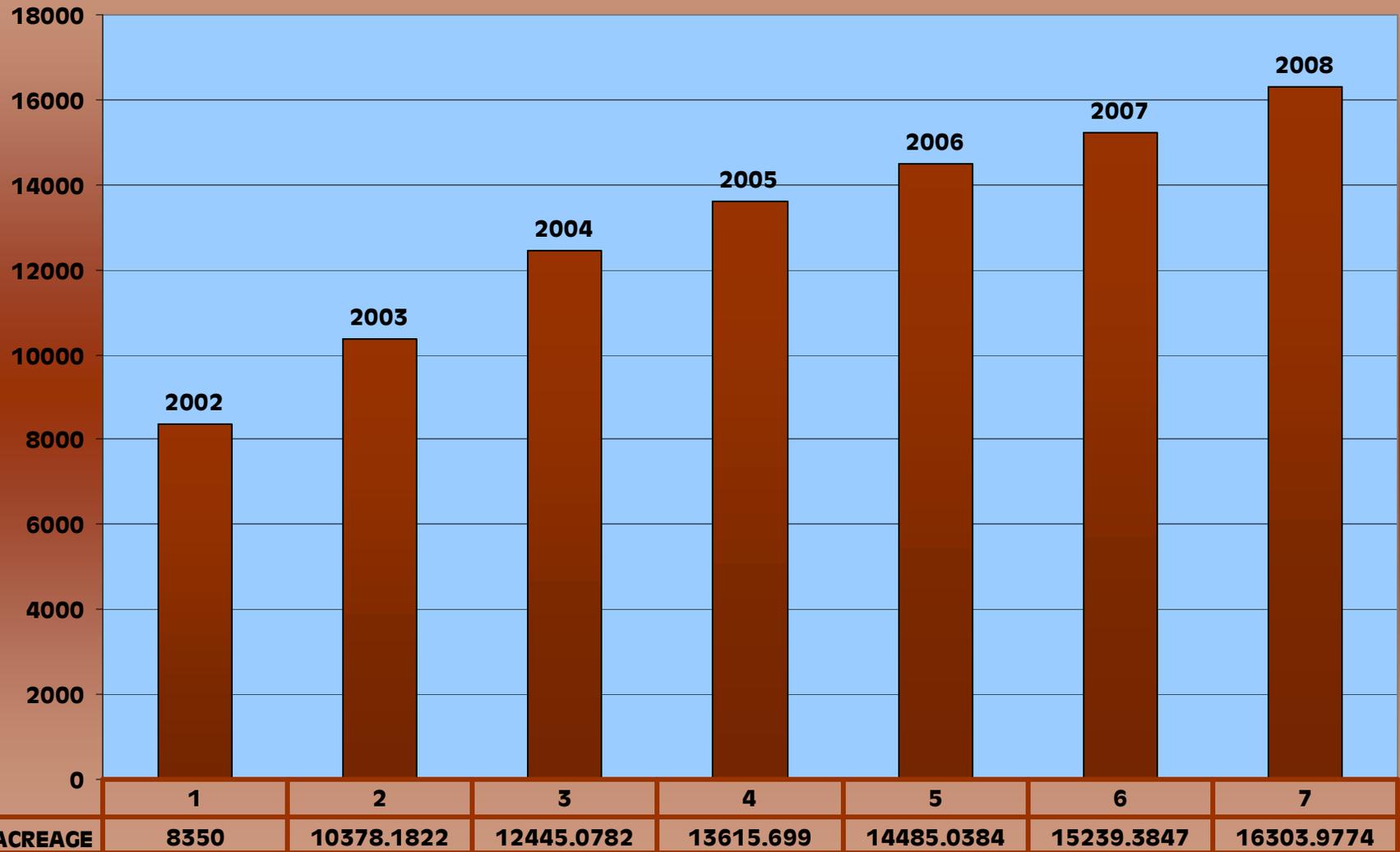
FARMLAND PRESERVATION

- At the beginning of LPD relationship with the CADB in 2002, 64 farms of 8,350 acres were enrolled in the farmland preservation program.
- The attached charts of farms and acreage show a steady increase of both to this year's totals of 162 farms and over 16,300 acres preserved.

FARMS BY YEAR



ACREAGE BY YEAR



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FARMLAND PRESERVATION

- We are awaiting State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) release to close on nine (9) additional County Easement Purchase (CEP) projects and ten (10) Municipal Pig applications for a total of approximately 1,700 acres. Three CEP projects are at our attorney with some issues to be resolved prior to submitting to SADC.
- Additionally there are nine (9) Non-Profit projects in which we are partnered with a conservancy that have varying approvals from the SADC that total nearly 800 acres.

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FARMLAND PRESERVATION

- As reported last year, the Garden State Preservation trust (GSPT) has come to the end of its funding cycle with the 2008 Round.
- Temporary funding has been approved and we have a commitment for \$2,000,000 for the fiscal year 2008/2009.
- Once that fund has been expended we are eligible for consideration in a competitive round where we could receive up to an additional \$3,000,000. The new rules that have been promulgated for both county and municipal programs required each develop and submit to the SADC a “Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan” (FPP).

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FARMLAND PRESERVATION

- This plan was a year in development with our consultant, Morris Land Conservancy, and an additional six months of negotiation with the SADC over minor changes.
- It is a living document. It must be revisited annually and gain approval from the SADC. We are in the process of addressing revisions and expect to have them ready for submission to the SADC for the December 15, 2008 deadline.

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FARMLAND PRESERVATION

- The FPP required revision of our Agriculture Development Area (ADA), establishing Project Areas, and identifying target farms. To be more compatible for the FPP we have revised our Preserved Farm Inventory to show farms by Project Area and that chart is also included.
- Seven municipalities have also developed such a plan. We consider the Municipal PIG Program an essential part of the overall county plan to preserve 20,000 acres by 2010. The municipalities will each be allocated \$750,000 for their programs and that will make an additional \$5,250,000 in state funding available to help with this goal.
- Funding for Non-Profit programs has been substantially reduced, but we would propose continued cooperation in that arena.

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FARMLAND PRESERVATION

- It should be noted that the County has invested nearly \$22,000,000, the State nearly \$47,000,000 and municipalities nearly \$5,000,000 in this program.
- The Land Preservation Department's responsibility is to insure the accuracy of applications, rank farms by specific established criteria, and inspect selected farms prior to submittal to SADC.
- Annual monitoring of all preserved farms is also required by state statute in order to insure their preserved status. We contracted with the Soil Conservation District to perform this function for 2006/2008. We anticipate soliciting bids for the 2008/2009 year shortly.

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FARMLAND PRESERVATION

HIGHLANDS ACT

- Due to the fact that the Highlands Act has had a serious effect on property values, we have been compiling an analysis of appraisal values. Again this year we are including a chart of appraisals from the last three application rounds (2006, 2007 and 2008) comparing values of farms in the preservation area of the Highlands versus farms outside of that area.
- We have not been able to proceed with appraisals under the new rules but when we receive them we will include them in this analysis.
- *The conclusions are startling, but predictable and of grave concern since the “dual appraisal” method required under the GSPT may not continue beyond this funding cycle.*

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OPEN SPACE



White Lake

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OPEN SPACE

- Our focus on Morris Canal properties has been endorsed in the county open space plan.
- We will continue to partner with the State Green Acres program to pursue appropriate parcels. Our efforts during the year in that regard included a number of significant sites.
- One site in Phillipsburg has offered to sell and a second in Lopatcong is under contract.
- The Lopatcong site is very significant because it contains an inclined plane with a largely intact turbine.
- Further discussion is necessary with the Phillipsburg site before proceeding.

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OPEN SPACE

- We continue to pursue several sites in Mansfield that would link together with other county owned sites to essentially connect Port Colden with Port Murray. One very large site is in the appraisal process with Green Acres. Another is actually owned by the State but we are in discussion to have it transferred to the county. The transfer seems to be looked on favorably by the Department of Environmental Protection who has jurisdiction on the matter.
- A significant parcel that we have been attempting to acquire for several years (would connect with presently owned county property to tie Millbrook Road to Halfway House Road in Franklin Township) has been offered for sale and it is in the appraisal process with Green Acres.

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OPEN SPACE

- The site that we acquired in Hackettstown on Grand Ave. is intended to provide parking for access to the long section of the Morris Canal that runs from the Independence border to Florence W. Kuipers Memorial Park in Hackettstown. Working with Green Acres we expect to be able to improve it for that purpose and, most importantly, improve the sight line for automobile exit and entrance.
- We are also pursuing, under the direction of the Board of Freeholders, one very significant project that by its nature must be kept confidential until at least contracts are signed.

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MUNICIPAL & CHARITABLE CONSERVANCY TRUST FUND COMMITTEE



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MUNICIPAL & CHARITABLE CONSERVANCY TRUST FUND COMMITTEE

- The operating rules for the MCCTF Committee changed back to a “fixed date” process for 2008.
- Through 2007 it had recommended 62 projects for over \$10,760,000 in grants. Of those 62, five projects have been withdrawn by the applicants and 9 others remain open. Grants were made to the 48 completed projects of over \$8,000,000. (See included chart of “Funded Projects”.)
- For the 2008 round, 13 applications were filed totaling approximately \$3,500,000 They have been reviewed by the Committee, site visits are in process and recommendations for funding will be made to the BCF in December.

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MUNICIPAL & CHARITABLE CONSERVANCY TRUST FUND COMMITTEE

- **LPD responsibility is to insure completeness of applications and arrange site inspections for the committee prior to grant selection. Staff also follows up on the funding process to complete the project.**
- **Each program's disbursements are monitored for conformance with the approved project budget.**
- **Programs that remain open after 2 years from grant approval are also required to justify delays and possibly apply for extension from the Board of Chosen Freeholders.**

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PROPERTY MONITORING

- Most county owned property is passive open space. Those sites that require maintenance are mowed and plowed by private contractors under the direction of the LPD. We have taken a somewhat more aggressive tact in maintaining those properties that are more used by the public.
- Bread Lock Park and the Detrick Cabinet Shop have been maintained by the Highlands Project (HP) under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). HP has done a remarkable job of repair and renovation to the Cabinet Shop with volunteer labor. The badly deteriorated siding is in the process of replacement by a contractor.
- At the Jim Lee property we have been able to renovate the “Museum Room” and have transferred artifacts there for display. An agreement for a curator/custodian has been developed. With the imminent completion of necessary improvements he will reside in the house in exchange for his services.

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PROPERTY MONITORING

- The Consumers Water Site is managed by Friends of NJRR & Transportation under a long term lease.
- The comprehensive management plan for White Lake with The Nature Conservancy as agent has proven to be very successful. The first year showed the effectiveness of this approach and 2007/2008 saw many improvements accomplished with an emphasis on public awareness and enjoyment of the property. Continuation of the agreement was approved by the BCF.

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PROPERTY MONITORING

- **This year we took over a property in Lopatcong (Stine Property) that had been a “Life Right” agreement. Rather than demolish the buildings we were able to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the New Jersey Youth Corp to use the site as a headquarters and training facility. They will operate much the same as the Highlands Project.**
- **Due to some break in activity at one site we are pursuing a security system for all facilities.**

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FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Department Expenses (891)

- The budget for 2008 is \$420,500 and there was a surplus of \$215,164 from 2007. We reduced our request for 2009 by \$62,000 to \$358,000. This budget covers salaries, rent, office supplies and equipment, legal advertising and special projects.

Maintenance (892)

- The budget for 2008 was \$285,000 and there was a surplus of \$239,994 from 2007. We reduced our request for 2009 by \$35,000 to \$350,000. This budget covers mowing, snow plowing, and utilities for preserved sites (electricity, gas, sanitary). Costs for the Bread Lock Park renovation and utility improvement at the Jim Lee property and repairs to the Stine Property are covered in this account.

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FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Historic Preservation (893)

- The budget for 2008 was \$1,011,500 and there was a surplus of \$1,489,365 from 2007. The request for 2009 is \$1,012,500.
- Normally we reallocate funds to this account from the 894 line when we know how much is required for historic projects. Funds for all projects approved for 2007 round are encumbered.

Open Space (894)

- The budget for 2008 was \$1,901,675 and there was a surplus of \$4,461,707. The request for 2009 is \$1,937,871. This budget covers land acquisition, MCCTF non-historic grants, title, appraisals, surveys, PSAs, and legal and recording fees.

The bond ordinance of 2003 provided \$5,500,000 for land acquisition and a balance of approximately \$2,500,000 remains in that account.

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FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Farmland Preservation (895)

- The budget for 2008 was \$4,132,060 and there was a surplus of \$8,789,859. The request for 2009 is \$4,117,060. This budget covers acquisition of development easements, participation in Municipal PIG projects, title, appraisals, surveys, legal and recording costs.