

Township of Morris
P.O. Box 7603
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www.morristwp.com

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TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING HOURS
8:30 am to 4:30 pm

**HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE &
ELECTRONICS DROP-OFF EVENTS**
9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Saturday, September 10, 2005
Morris County Fire Fighters & Police Training
Academy, 500 West Hanover Rd., Parsippany

Sunday, November 6, 2005
Jefferson Township DPW
1033 Weldon Rd., Lake Hopatcong
Questions, call Morris County Municipal
Utilities Authority (973) 829-8006

FIND OUT MORE ON OUR WEB SITE
www.morristwp.com

**FIRE AND FIRST AID VOLUNTEERS
ARE NEEDED! HELP US HELP YOU!**
If you are interested, please call
(973) 326-7460 - Fire Department
(973) 539-1776 after 6 pm – First Aid Squad

Morris Township's Open Space Program By Richard A. Watson, Morris Township Committeeman

By an overwhelming margin, the people of Morris Township voted in 1992 to create an Open Space Trust Fund with a dedicated portion of your tax dollars. This fund is used exclusively for the costs of acquiring lands. A committee of citizens known as the Open Space Committee studies the properties that are or may become available in the Township and makes recommendations to the Township Committee, which negotiates with landowners and makes the purchases. The entire history of the fund is described in the comprehensive Open Space Plan which the Planning Board has incorporated in the Township's Master Plan.

If you ask several citizens what they think of as being 'open space' and why the Township should acquire it, you're likely to get several different answers. Some people want to preserve hillsides and scenic views, some favor habitats for wildlife, while others envision ball fields or trails for passive recreation. Others would like to see land preserved for no other reason than to prevent it from being developed.

The properties that Morris Township has acquired through the Open Space Trust Fund reflect a variety of these purposes.

- The Deer Haven and Jockey Hollow Top purchases, between Mt. Kemble Avenue and Skyline Drive reflect our determination to minimize erosion by stopping development on the steep hillside, to protect the homes in Mountain Shadows, the Frederick Place area, and the Great Swamp Watershed from inundation of stormwater.
- The purchase of the Jones Woods property was in order to protect a hillside and habitat area, and also to avoid an intense development of over 100 new homes.
- The Lupo, Bocjuk, and Spence properties were purchased in Washington Valley with the objective of linking up, eventually, with other preserved properties and with trails such as Patriots Path.
- Active recreation is the ultimate purpose envisioned for other acquisitions, such as the State-owned property at Ketch and Hanover, the Blue Gate Farm on Park Avenue, and a property adjacent to Tucker Field in Collinsville.

In addition, the desire to preserve open space was a significant factor in our decision to approve the Continuing Care Retirement Community at Delbarton, because that plan will permanently preserve over 100 acres that would have been developed under the alternative scenario.

Wherever possible, Morris Township has sought funding for these purchases from the County's Open Space Trust Fund and the State's Green Acres Program. On one purchase, we were assisted by the Great Swamp Watershed Association. At this point, the fund has about \$3.4 million on hand and about \$1.7 receivable from Green Acres for reimbursement of past purchases.

While we remain interested in certain other properties, and consider it prudent to keep a reserve in the fund for future contingencies, the Township Committee is also aware of the public's desire to limit taxation. Therefore we have set the annual open space tax at one cent per \$100 assessed valuation rather than the full authorization of 3 cents which was previously levied.

The Township Committee and the Open Space Committee are constantly looking for new opportunities to preserve appropriate parcels, even as the inventory of lands not already preserved or developed is declining. Any citizens with ideas in this area are encouraged to communicate them to the Open Space Committee by calling (973) 326-7360.