

TOWNSHIP OF LONG HILL
CONSERVATION ELEMENT
OF THE
MASTER PLAN

Prepared for:
The Long Hill Township
Planning Board
10 December 2013

Kevin O'Brien, P.P., A.I.C.P.
Shamrock Enterprises, Ltd.
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The Original Of This Report Was Signed And Sealed Accordance With N.J.S.A. 45:14a-12

FINAL ADOPTED VERSION 121113

LONG HILL TOWNSHIP

PLANNING BOARD RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Municipal Land Use Law requires planning boards to reexamine their Master Plans and the municipal development regulations at least every ten years; and,

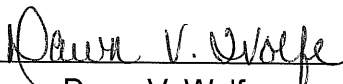
WHEREAS, the last Master Plan was adopted in 1996 and the last Master Plan Reexamination Report was adopted in 2003; and,

WHEREAS, the Long Hill Township Planning Board has prepared a new Conservation Element of the Master Plan with the assistance of Board Engineer Thomas Lemanowicz, P.E., and Township Planner Kevin O'Brien, P.P., which has been the subject of discussion at numerous Planning Board meetings and a noticed public hearing:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Long Hill Township Planning Board hereby adopts the 10 December 2013 Conservation Element of the Master Plan, as referenced above; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning and Zoning Administrator/Secretary be directed to send a copy of the adopted report with this resolution to the Morris County Planning Board and to the clerks of each adjoining municipality.

I, Dawn V. Wolfe, Planning and Zoning Administrator/Secretary to the Planning Board of the Township of Long Hill in the County of Morris, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Planning Board at a regular meeting held on the 10th day of December, 2013.


Dawn V. Wolfe

Planning and Zoning Administrator/Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) permits a municipality to prepare and adopt a Conservation Plan Element as part of its Master Plan. The MLUL describes a conservation plan element as follows:

A conservation plan element providing for preservation, conservation, and utilization of natural resources, including, to the extent appropriate, energy, open space, water supply, forests, soil, marshes, wetlands, rivers and other waters, fisheries, endangered or threatened species, wildlife and other resources, and to systematically analyze the impact of each other component and element of the master plan on the present and future preservation, conservation and utilization of those resources.¹

This Conservation Element reaffirms the longstanding commitment to safeguard Long Hill's natural resources. The Element builds upon previous conservation planning decisions and the strong, continuing public support of environmental preservation by the residents of Long Hill Township.

The abiding public interest in the protection of Long Hill Township's environment can be traced to the rich and diverse natural resources that make up the Township. These include:

- Large expanses of contiguous open space comprising nearly 40 percent of the township's area. The northern area of the township features the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness Area. Most of the southern border has a large buffer of County- and State-owned parklands along the flood prone Passaic River.
- The third range of the Watchung Mountains forms a ridge of steep slopes through the entire central portion of the township, with dramatic vistas to both the north and south. This ridge is the long hill that is the Township's namesake.
- A network of historic roadways criss-crosses the township. Many of these roadways have been maintained and improved in a manner that has preserved their rural ambiance. The relatively narrow, tree-canopied cartways with narrow ditches and no curbs is one of the Township's most defining characteristics.
- The Black Brook that flows through the Great Swamp and the Passaic River that forms the westerly and southern borders of Long Hill Township are both historic waterways. The Passaic River is a major regional water supply and has a long history of recreational use for canoeing and fishing.

¹ MLUL 40:55D-28(8)

- The combination of steep, wooded terrain of the Watchung Mountains, the wetlands of the Great Swamp and Passaic River, and being a part of the Atlantic flyway provide rich habitat for many species of birds, mammals and reptiles.

Challenges

- Land use decisions within the Passaic River basin continue to impact flooding and flood damage in the Passaic River basin with significant portions of the Township lying within the 100-year floodplain.
- Industrial pollution, including asbestos contamination at a number of sites, including South Main Avenue, Bay Street, Metzlar Place and Meyersville should continue to be monitored by Township officials for any effect upon the public health, safety and welfare.
- The Superfund sites are also a major concern and should also be monitored by the Township for any effect upon the public health, safety and welfare.

II. CONSERVATION GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conserving, protecting and enhancing Long Hill Townships natural resources is central to land use and planning decisions.

The specific goals for the Conservation Plan Element of this Master Plan are:

1. To encourage ecotourism and promote river, hiking and biking leisure activities. In addition to providing a direct economic benefit, ecotourism fosters a positive conservation attitude.
2. To preserve and restore the Township's natural resources, including its open space areas and treed corridors.
3. To make environmental Best Management Practices ("BMP"), as defined by the *New Jersey Stormwater Best Management Practices Manual*¹ (NJBMP) and the appropriate sections of the Long Hill Township Land Use Ordinances, an integral part of land development projects.
4. To make stormwater management a central feature of all land development projects, with the minimum goal being no net increase in rate, volume, or pollution levels of stormwater following development.
5. To follow a detailed environmental assessment procedure for all Major Development proposals in the Township in accordance with the Township's Environmental Impact Statement Ordinance, using BMP to minimize both on-site and off-site environmental disturbance.
6. To protect the Township's critical areas to the greatest extent possible as specified in the appropriate sections of the Long Hill Township Land Use Ordinances, and to periodically review local critical area regulations to assess their ongoing appropriateness in protecting the natural resources of the Township.
7. To encourage the ongoing acquisition of open space by Long Hill Township and by County, State, and Federal governmental agencies.
8. To encourage greater tree preservation and planting efforts in the Township through targeted tree preservation and removal, the formation of a tree bank and street tree planting programs and the continuation of development review procedures aimed at tree preservation.
9. To support where appropriate regional efforts aimed at protecting and restoring the ecosystems of the Great Swamp and the Passaic River corridor.

¹ BMP refers to Major Development as defined by N.J.A.C. 7:8-1.1 et seq., which governs any land disturbance of one acre or more or one quarter acre or more of development.

10. To prepare and adopt additional ordinances that further protect and enhance the environment of the Township.
11. Support Long Hill Township *Resolution 12-190 Flood Damage* and the Passaic River Basin Flood Advisory Commission 15 Point Plan by:
 - a. Expanding and expediting floodway buyouts with State Blue Acres and FEMA funds;
 - b. Encouraging home elevation projects in flood prone areas if acquisition is not an option;
 - c. Buying undeveloped land for use as a flood storage area; and
 - d. Initiating de-snagging and shoal dredging efforts to facilitate improved Passaic River flow.

III. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT GOALS

The proper management of stormwater may be the most important aspect of this Master Plan Element. The requirement for modern BMP in all land use development and redevelopment, will help the Township to derive the following benefits:

1. Reduced flood damage through Land Use Management. Most of Long Hill Township's commercial district, several municipal buildings, a number of residential homes, and the Township's wastewater treatment plant are situated within the floodplain of the Passaic River, and the Township has suffered significant losses as a result of several serious floods both recently and over the past 100 years. The 1999 flood from Hurricane Floyd, the Northeaster of 1996 and Irene in 2011 threatened all of the above mentioned areas. The reduction of stormwater reaching the Passaic River is, therefore, of paramount importance.
2. Available drinking water during drought cycles. Long Hill Township and numerous other communities in the region rely upon the Passaic River as a source of drinking water. Increased infiltration of stormwater will help to increase groundwater reserves while helping to restore more normal flow patterns in the Passaic River.
3. Reduction of water treatment costs. Pollutants that enter the Passaic River and stormwater entry into the wastewater system increase processing costs.. These costs can be reduced through the use of land use BMP and improvements to the sewer line infrastructure.
4. Protection of natural resources. The presence of pollutants, the erosion of stream banks, and artificial raising and lowering of water levels has an adverse effect on ecosystems and landscapes. The use of BMP will help to preserve the Township's valuable natural resources.
5. Protection of recreational income. When the mismanagement of stormwater causes the destruction of natural habitats and ecosystems, local income derived from ecotourism is reduced. Adherence to environmental standards will help to preserve the Township's attractive natural features.
6. Enhanced property values. Modern BMP have significant fiscal benefits. Construction costs for stormwater infrastructure is typically less than existing practices when using BMP and the reduced environmental destruction leaves the developed property more aesthetically pleasing, thereby commanding higher selling prices. Typically, neighboring homes see an increase in property values when proper stormwater management techniques are practiced.

IV. EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

The State of New Jersey has recognized that ongoing education in environmental policies and procedures benefits the public good. This plan element supports this view. Every portion of our Township lies within the watersheds of either the Great Swamp or the Passaic River, both of which are environmentally sensitive and have local and regional requirements for special protection. The preservation and restoration of these valuable natural resources will require ongoing and comprehensive programs of outreach and education:

1. Conduct annual BMP and land use educational programs for township volunteers, employees and officials.
2. The Township should continue and expand its efforts to raise awareness of our natural resources.
3. The Township should continue and expand its efforts to increase public access to our natural resources.
4. The Township should continue and expand its efforts to promote recycling, energy reduction, and wastewater management.
5. The Township should promote the use of indigenous plants that provide natural habitat, chemical free lawn maintenance, reduction of impervious cover, rain gardens, and other BMPs.

V. CONCLUSION

The 1987 and 1996 Master Plans of the Township each significantly raised awareness of environmental issues within the Township and endorsed ordinances that would protect the natural environment. This Element (2012) also recommends the preparation and adoption of additional ordinances to further protect and enhance the environment of the Township.

The Planning Board extends its gratitude to their colleagues on the Environmental Commission, and in particular, former Chairman Leonard Hamilton, Ph. D., for all of their contributions to this document.

This Conservation Element is the product of many, many members of the Long Hill Community. We thank each and every one of them, without whom this document would not exist.

VI. TOWNSHIP BOARDS AND STAFF

The Planning Board thanks the many concerned citizens who assisted the Planning Board with their time, dedication and knowledge of our community. We also give our thanks to the selfless volunteers who make up the following bodies:

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Brendan Rae, Ph.D.
Guy Roshto

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