



Washington Township Open Space Advisory Committee



2014 Annual Report

The Washington Township Open Space Advisory Committee (WTOSAC) completed its 14th year in 2014. The Committee, comprised of nine core members, worked diligently to evaluate potential open space purchases, to enhance the Township's existing open space, to plan for future use of available funds, and to involve the community with its activities. Since 2001, the township has permanently preserved 10 properties totaling more than 337 acres. During 2014, the township received \$675,000 under the state's Green Acres Planning Incentive program as a partial reimbursement for the latest open space purchase (Smith-Garrison tract).

The following are highlights of the 2014 accomplishments:

- The WTOSAC continued its reforestation efforts by overseeing the planting of 67 trees on the storm water basin adjacent to the Twin Ponds development.
- The WTOSAC coordinated with the South Jersey Land & Water Trust and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to fence in an area of township open space containing the endangered plant Swamp Pink. The \$12,500 cost of the approximately 2,000 feet of deer fencing was covered by a grant. The fence will be maintained by the South Jersey Land & Water Trust.
- The WTOSAC coordinated with Sarah Summerville, Director of the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, and township officials, in addressing a beaver situation in the area of the Cedar Pond in Washington Lake Park. The beavers were quite active in felling a great number of trees, damming the spillway at the pond, resulting in the flooding of acres of park land and inundating trails. Based on Ms. Summerville's recommendation, park rangers were able to lower the water level in the pond, which alleviated the problem.
- WTOSAC members toured several open space properties in the township to better understand the status of the properties and to facilitate the planning process.
- WTOSAC members examined maps/plans of several properties whose owners were considering selling their properties to the township as open space. Site visits were also conducted.
- WTOSAC members worked closely with two Boy Scouts who were working on their Eagle Scout projects. One scout completed a rehabilitation of the Watchable Wildlife Trail by trimming trees and brush, spreading mulch and placing bird houses along the trail. The second scout cleared an area of the park and created a picnic area with a table and benches. Plants were planted, mulch was spread, and a sign was placed designating the area as "Eagle Scout Way."
- WTOSAC members worked with Girl Scout Troop #61574 in planning and installing a butterfly garden in Washington Lake Park. The garden was dedicated on Earth Day.

- WTOSAC members participated in Earth Day and Super Saturday events, manned tables, presented maps of the township's open space, and shared the advantages of open space with citizens.
- WTOSAC members conducted inspections of the trails in Washington Lake Park, and made recommendations for trail upgrades, maintenance, and signage. These tasks were coordinated with the park rangers.
- The WTOSAC, in a joint effort with the Environmental Commission, completed a trail guide and map of the trails in Washington Lake Park. The guide, the cost of which was covered by a \$780 ANJEC grant, was the result of numerous hours of work by committee/commission members, park rangers, Community Service Workers, and Public Works employees.
- The WTOSAC received a complaint about the dangerous conditions on the East Holly Trail adjacent to the football fields. Committee members inspected the area along with park rangers and township officials. The immediate safety concerns were addressed by township workers.
- WTOSAC members, Boy Scouts and members of the township's Roots & Shoots Club, weeded and mulched the area of "Eagle Scout Way" and attempted to remove graffiti on a bench.
- WTOSAC member Bill Dennis, with the financial assistance of Mayor Barbara Wallace, singlehandedly installed a stone wall, painted the "Welcome to Washington Township" sign, and landscaped the area on Egg Harbor Road, across from the Old Stone House Village. Public Works assisted in the moving of the sign from its former location to the new site.
- WTOSAC members investigated the feasibility of establishing a community garden in the township.
- On March 13, 2014, WTOSAC members manned a table at the Township's Community Service Week/Celebration of Service event.
- On June 5, 2014, WTOSAC members conducted a presentation before the Washington Township Rotary Club on Washington Township open space on behalf of the WTOSAC and Environmental Commission.
- On November 12, 2014, WTOSAC members attended a seminar sponsored by ANJEC titled "Stewarding Open Space & Successful Grant Writing" for Open Space Projects."

The Committee's goals for 2015 and beyond:

- Continue to recommend to Mayor and Council additional open space acquisitions.
- Recommend additional reforestation projects using money from the Tree Trust Fund.
- Identify those areas of the township in need of beautification and initiate projects to address the issues.
- Re-visit all current lease/rental agreements for all involved township owned open space properties.
- Create an updated open space master plan, a natural resource inventory, and a comprehensive open space/recreation plan.

- Formulate the criteria regarding the judicious use of Open Space Trust Fund monies.
- Address a number of issues in Washington Lake Park, including the following:
 - cleaning up the area around the park's maintenance building
 - enhancing the entrances to the park
 - hiring a forester to review the condition of trees in the park and to
 - make recommendations on how to address the many felled trees
 - establish a program that would properly care for the existing trees
 - address any reforestation that may be required
 - develop the Chapel Heights entrance and the immediate area of Washington Lake into an environmental area with the removal of all debris and the enhancement of existing trails
 - construct a bridge across the spillway at the Cedar Pond
 - preserve and properly manage the Atlantic Cedar stand in the park
 - create trail guides for each of the park's trails
 - initiate a "Pride in My Park" campaign that would advertise the many attractions of the park and to encourage citizens to monitor the park's condition and to report issues to the park rangers
 - establish proper irrigation of existing and future gardens
 - maximize the use of the greenhouse to propagate bedding plantings for the park

This report was prepared by the Washington Township Open Space Advisory Committee and respectfully submitted by:

Robert Stannard, Vice Chairman

for:

Leon Lakritz, Chairman

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