



New Jersey Conservation
F O U N D A T I O N

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Press Releases

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32 Rural Acres Preserved in Hamilton Township

Green Acres NonProfit Grant Fuels Crosswicks Cemetery Land Deal

HAMILTON TWP. -New Jersey Conservation Foundation and partners - Save Hamilton Open Space, North Crosswicks Friends of Open Space, the state Green Acres Program, Mercer County and Hamilton Township - have joined together to permanently preserve two properties totaling 32 acres in Hamilton Township.

Nineteen acres at the edge of the North Crosswicks village historic district, once proposed for a cemetery and mausoleums, was preserved as open space. The property fronts on both South Broad Street and Crosswicks-Hamilton Square Road, and is nearly surrounded by preserved farmland and open space. It will be used for passive public recreation such as hiking, bird watching and nature observation. Agriculture to attract grassland bird and pollinator habitat will continue on a section of the property that has been farmed for hundreds of years.

As part of a package deal with the Diocese of Trenton, the purchase also includes a 13-acre property with frontage along Doctors Creek. This property, which has wetlands and steep slopes, is a bald eagle foraging area and will be kept in its natural state to protect wildlife.

In January 2016, the Hamilton Township Zoning Board of Adjustment rejected a variance request by the Diocese of Trenton for a cemetery with 5,500 burial plots and three mausoleums. Following the zoning board's decision, New Jersey Conservation Foundation approached the Diocese about selling the land.

"We were immediately interested in acquiring the Diocese of Trenton land, because it's an important link in both the open space and farmland preservation efforts in the area, and is bordered on three sides by preserved farmland and open space," said Greg Romano, assistant director and head of land acquisition for NJ Conservation. "We thank the Diocese for its willingness to sell the land for conservation."

The two properties were purchased on Dec. 28. The property proposed for the cemetery is now owned by Save Hamilton Open Space, although plans are for it to be ultimately owned and managed by the North Crosswicks Friends of Open Space. The land along Doctors Creek is now owned and managed by the township.

Funding for the project came from a Green Acres grant to Save Hamilton Open Space, Mercer County, a North Crosswicks Friends of Open Space grant and private donations.

"Green Acres is proud to be a partner with Save Hamilton Open Space, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and others in the preservation of this significant property within the Crosswicks Creek watershed," said Martha Sapp, Director of the Green Acres Program. "The preservation of this property will allow for public trails and passive recreation, while protecting important wildlife habitat."

"With this recent preservation, more than 21 percent of Hamilton Township will be permanently preserved as open space or farmland, demonstrating our true commitment to our local environment and our high quality of life," said Hamilton Township Mayor Kelly Yaede. "In addition, our community is working to complete the preservation of an additional 63.9 acres of land within the next month through the acquisition of a Merrick Road located farm estate."

"The County's Municipal and Non-Profit Assistance Program has enabled Mercer County to leverage its funds with numerous partners resulting in the preservation of over 1,100 acres in this rural part of Hamilton Township. Mercer County is pleased to provide grants through this program to permit the preservation of locally important lands such as these," said Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes. "The preservation of these parcels in North Crosswicks and along the Doctor's Creek enhance and protect the County's prior investment in farmland and open space preservation and the Crosswicks Creek Greenway."

"Save Hamilton Open Space has been engaged in protecting the southeast area of Hamilton Township for almost 15 years," said Michele Donato, attorney for Save Hamilton Open Space and the North Crosswicks Friends of Open Space. "The Township responded by adopting a comprehensive Master Plan and land use ordinances to create the rural resource conservation zone. Open space in the historic village of North Crosswicks has been largely preserved as a result of these land use reforms and long-term public and private efforts."

"When 18.5 acres in the heart of North Crosswicks were proposed for a cemetery and mausoleums, North Crosswicks Friends of Open Space spearheaded a successful organized effort to oppose the use variance," added Donato. "Save Hamilton Open Space and the Friends coordinated their efforts, resulting in the acquisition of the property from the Diocese."

New Jersey Conservation Foundation and its partners, including Mercer County and Hamilton Township, have preserved several properties in the township's rural southeast corner in the past several years, including the 149-acre Princeton Research property, the 62-acre Barry Black property, the 58-acre Vaishnav property and the 21-acre Linda Black farm.

This area is part of one of the largest concentrations of preserved farmland and open space in the New Jersey, incorporating parts of Mercer, Burlington, Monmouth and Ocean counties. The area is known for its high quality soils for agricultural production.