



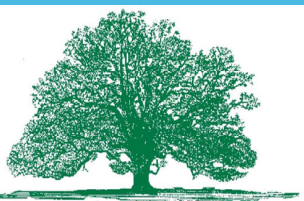
# Doing Good Even Better



## Upcoming Improvements to the Green Acres Local & Nonprofit Assistance Program

**Stakeholder Meetings**

**September 29 & 30, 2022**



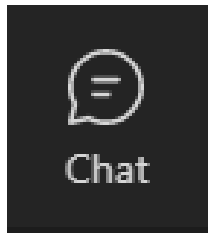
# Welcome & Housekeeping

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## *Before we start:*

- Today's presentation is being recorded
- Submit questions/comments through the chat feature
  - *Please give your name & affiliation*



## Green Acres Program

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- ❖ State Land Acquisition Program
- ❖ Planning & Technical Services
- ❖ Local & Nonprofit Assistance Program

*Legal Services & Stewardship ->  
Now Public Land Compliance*

# Our Team



Elizabeth Dragon  
Assistant Commissioner  
Community Investment &  
Economic Revitalization



Martha Sullivan Sapp  
Director  
Green Acres Program



Cecile Murphy  
Project Manager  
Green Acres Program



Amy Sumoski  
Project Manager  
Green Acres Program



## Goals of Today's Meeting

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Share upcoming program improvements and opportunities



Solicit input from our partners

## What Are We Going to Talk About Today?

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- Program Reassessment
- Opportunities to Do Better
- Plans to Improve
- Legislative & Policy Developments
- What's Next?

# Guiding Questions

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How can we better:

- ✓ Achieve our mission?
- ✓ Support our partners?
- ✓ Respond to emerging priorities?
- ✓ Maximize our Return on Investment?



# Public Investment in Parks



	Green Acres	Urban Parks	Jake's Law	Total
2014	\$88.6	n/a	n/a	\$88.6
2017	\$71.7	n/a	n/a	\$71.7
2019	\$77.8	n/a	n/a	\$77.8
2021	\$80.5	\$6.0	n/a	\$86.5
2023 (Anticipated)	\$95.0	\$10.0	\$15.0	\$120.0

*Figures in millions of dollars.*

## Opportunities for Green Acres to Improve

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**Better** applications  
for **higher quality** projects  
that are **more likely to succeed**



Faster & fairer application process



More timely project  
completions and expenditures

## Better Applications for Higher Quality Projects

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- ✓ Longer application period
  - 3 months instead of 2
  - More time to plan/design
- ✓ Better guidance, more support
  - Virtual, recorded workshops for applicants
  - Readily available technical support
  - Tips for submitting a successful application
- ✓ Meaningful public engagement
  - What does that mean?

**SHARE YOUR  
IDEAS!**

**FINK PARK'S  
VIRTUAL  
OPEN HOUSE**

**APRIL 6, 2022  
5 PM TO 6:30 PM  
VIA ZOOM**



**Help define the future of Perth Amboy's Fink Park!**

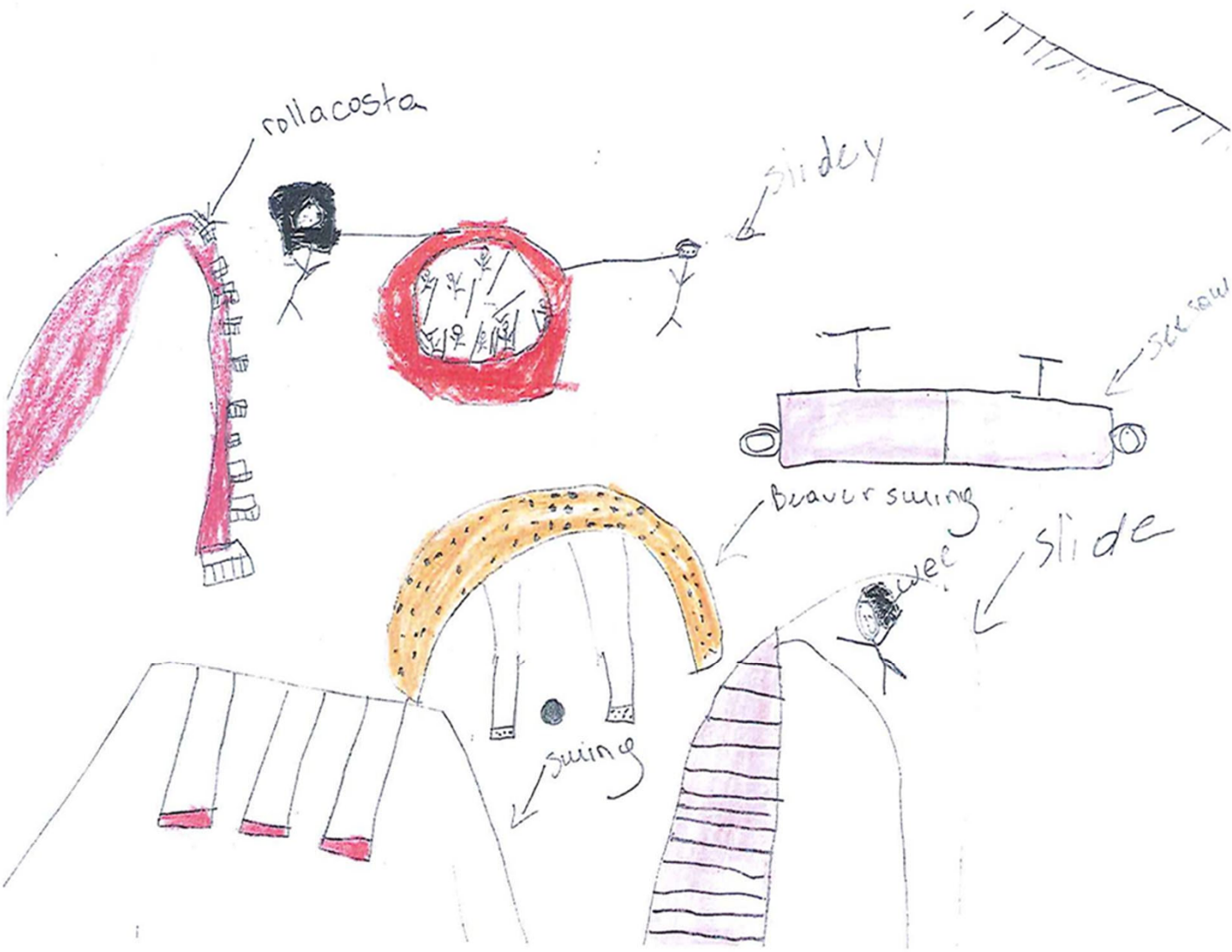
For more information and  
to register click link below:

[https://bit.ly/FinkPark\\_OpenHouse](https://bit.ly/FinkPark_OpenHouse)



Take our survey here

Engage ALL members of the public!



# Applicant Success

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## ✓ Financial Resources

- Anticipated funding award amounts
- Project should not be contingent on supplemental funding in a future round (park dev't and stewardship projects)
- List of other potential funding sources
- CFO signature

## ✓ Nonprofit Capacity

- Eligibility Certification Checklist
- Demonstrated compliance with IRS and CRIA

# Applicant Success

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- ✓ **Project Management Resources**
  - Consider when deciding whether to apply / how many applications to submit
  
- ✓ **One parcel / park at a time**
  - **Planning Incentives – One active parcel**
    - Utilize staff resources most productively
    - Prevent review delays
  
  - **Park Development – One location**
    - Eliminate multi-park projects
    - Tighten up time to close out project
    - Ensure fair project ranking

## Applicant Eligibility

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### Categories of Ineligible Applicants:

- ✓ Applicants with three or more open projects
- ✓ Applicants with significant stalled compliance issues

# Urban Parks Program Eligibility

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## New Focus for Urban Parks Program

- Funding for approximately 20 projects
- Projects eligible if *located in or easily accessible from*:
  - ✓ an **Adversely Stressed Overburdened Community**
  - IN
  - ✓ an **Urban Aid municipality**
- 59 eligible municipalities (plus counties, for projects in eligible locations)

## Definitions

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### **Overburdened Community (OBC)**

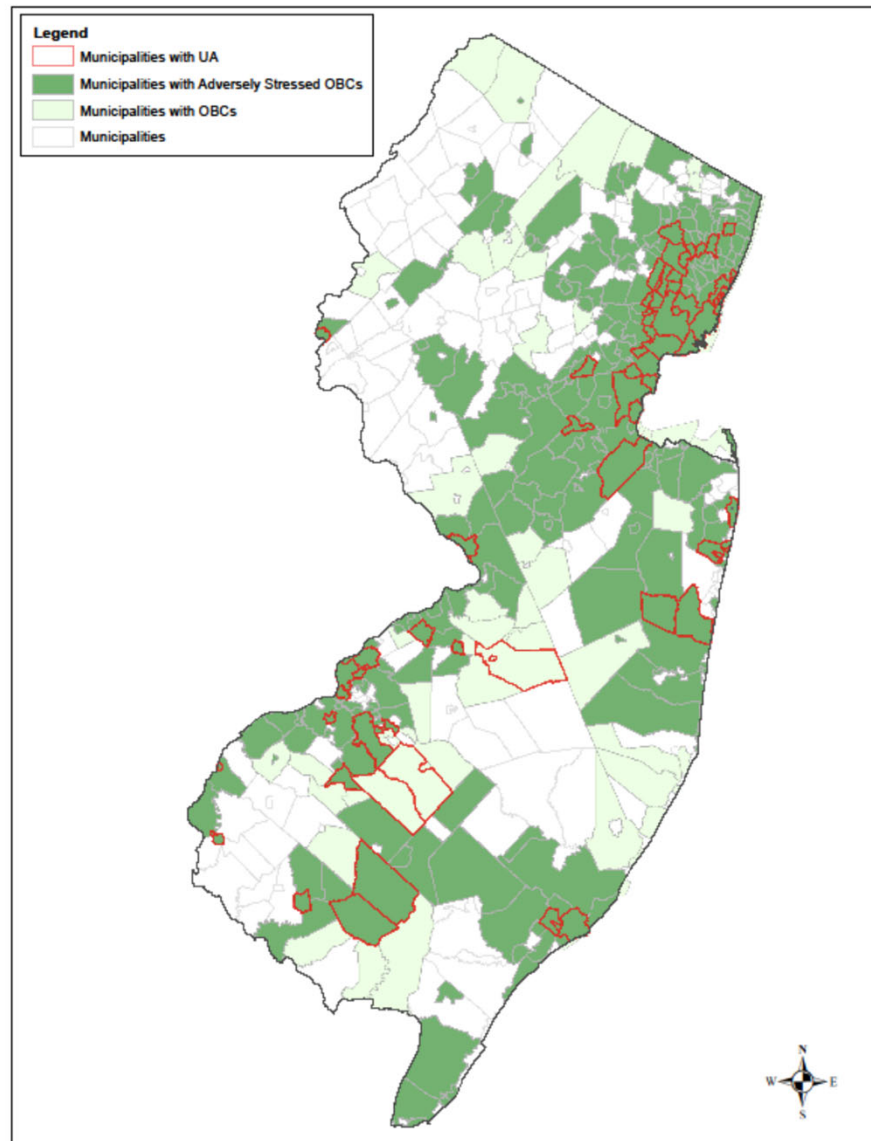
A census block group in which:

- $\geq 35\%$  of households qualify as low-income households; **or**
- $\geq 40\%$  of residents identify as minority or as members of a tribal community; **or**
- $\geq 40\%$  of households have limited English proficiency.

### **Adversely Stressed OBC**

- An OBC that is higher than the 50th percentile for total environmental and public health stressors.

# Eligible Communities



## Fast & fair application process

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- ✓ Complete applications
  - Readily available technical support
  - Simplify & clarify application package
  - Detailed instructions for each deliverable
- ✓ Firm application requirements & deadlines
  - Must submit complete application or supplemental funding request **by the deadline**
  - Public hearing timing & requirements must be met and minutes submitted **by the deadline**
- ✓ Increase number of staff reviewers

## Timely project completions and expenditures

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### After Funding Approval:

- ✓ Address potential delays early
- ✓ Firm deadlines for deliverables
- ✓ No major scope or location changes

# Legislative & Policy Developments

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NJDEP Priorities



New legislative initiatives



Evolving policy issues

# DEP Priorities



1. Reduce and Respond to Climate Change
2. Protect New Jersey's Waters
3. Revitalize Our Communities and Protect Public Health
4. Manage and Promote Thriving Natural & Historic Resources
5. Strengthen DEP



# NJDEP Priorities: Priority #1

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## Climate Resilience



- ✓ Resource information in application for climate-friendly parks
- ✓ Ranking points to projects that promote climate resilience and that meet the goals of an applicant's Climate Resilience Plan; subtract points for tree clearing
- ✓ New tree removal policy

# Tree Removal Policy

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- More detail in Environmental Impact Assessment
  - ✓ Information about trees >6" DBH to be removed
  - ✓ Alternatives discussion
  - ✓ Shade Tree Commission or Environmental Commission role
- Applicants should adhere to municipal tree ordinances
- Projects that propose significant tree removal will not be approved for funding

## NJDEP Priorities: Priorities #2 & 4

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### Maximizing Ecological Benefits



- ✓ Acquisition ranking - points for meeting conservation and environmental protection goals – stream corridors, greenways
- ✓ Development ranking - points for including conservation practices, native plantings, clean & renewable energy
- ✓ Refocus Stewardship Program

# NJDEP Priorities: Priorities #2 & 4



## Stewardship Program



- 🌱 **Eligible improvements**
  - Natural resource restoration & enhancement
  - Historic landscape restoration
  
- 🌱 **Conditionally eligible improvements**
  - Ancillary improvements for public access
  - Will be subject to a cap
  
- 🌱 **Detailed list in application package**

## NJDEP Priorities: Priority #3

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### Environmental Justice



- ✓ Increased outreach to Environmental Justice communities and organizations
- ✓ Additional ranking points to projects within Adversely Stressed OBCs
- ✓ Incentives to create and improve parks where they are most needed

## New Incentives for Environmental Justice

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- ✓ Higher grant %s for GA projects located in or easily accessible from an Adversely Stressed OBC
  - **100% Grants** for projects located in A/S OBCs in Urban Aid Municipalities
  - **50% Grants** for projects located in A/S OBCs in Highly or Densely Populated Municipalities
  
- ✓ Lists of UA and HDP Municipalities in Application Package

# New Legislative Initiatives

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## Jake's Law



- ✓ Ranking points for all projects that exceed ADA requirements
- ✓ Pilot Program: **75% grants to counties** for Completely Inclusive Playgrounds
- ✓ CIP applications do not count toward limit on # of awards

# Evolving Policy Issues

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## Outreach & Planning



- ✓ Stakeholder meetings, EJ outreach, Workshops
- ✓ Clearer and new guidelines for required community engagement
- ✓ Encourage comprehensive recreation facilities planning
- ✓ *Outside, Together!*

# Outside, Together!

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- ✓ Update of NJ's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- ✓ Emphasis on public and stakeholder involvement
- ✓ Findings will inform funding policies and acquisition / development priorities
- ✓ Stakeholder engagement began this fall
- ✓ Get involved!  
<https://dep.nj.gov/outside-together/>



# Evolving Policy Issues



## Public Access



- ✓ Ranking points for municipalities that have a DEP-approved Public Access Plan, and extra points if it has been incorporated into their Master Plan
- ✓ Meaningful public access to properties immediately upon closing – fee simple & conservation easements

# Evolving Policy Issues



## Synthetic Turf Fields

- ✓ DEP Division of Science & Research review of runoff, heat impacts
- ✓ Due diligence in project planning & public outreach
  - Drainage systems
  - Infill material
  - Heat impacts
  - Long-term cost effectiveness
  - Exposure risks
- ✓ Discussion of alternatives – synthetic v. natural



# Funding Request Options



- ✓ **Green Acres**
  - Acquisition (Standard or PI) OR
  - Park Development OR
  - Urban Parks Rollover
  
- ✓ **Stewardship**
  
- ✓ **Jake's Law** (Counties)
  
- ✓ **Urban Parks** (UA Adv. Stressed OBC)

*\* One request for each option –  
New application OR supplemental funding\**

# What's Next?



Stakeholder Meetings	September 29 <sup>th</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup>
Funding Round Announcements (UPG & GA)	October 31st
Application Workshops	November 9 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> <i>(tentative)</i>
Application Deadline	February 3rd

# Contact Us!

www.NJGreenAcres.org

Governor Phil Murphy • Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver

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 STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
**GREEN ACRES PROGRAM** - Preserving & Enhancing New Jersey's Great Outdoors since 1961



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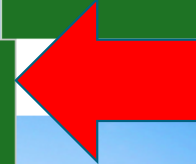
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**Welcome to Green Acres!**

### Green Acres Mission

*To achieve, in partnership with others, a system of interconnected open spaces, whose protection will preserve and enhance New Jersey's natural environment and its historic, scenic, and recreational resources for public use and enjoyment.* The Green Acres Program was created in 1961 to meet New Jersey's growing recreation and conservation needs. Together with [public and private partners](#), Green Acres has protected over half a million acres of open space and provided hundreds of outdoor recreational facilities in communities around the State.

- Staff Directory
- Directions to Our Office



## Closing Remarks

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- Submit additional comments by next Friday, October 7th to:

[GreenAcres@dep.nj.gov](mailto:GreenAcres@dep.nj.gov)

- Thank you for your input!

[www.NJGreenAcres.org](http://www.NJGreenAcres.org)