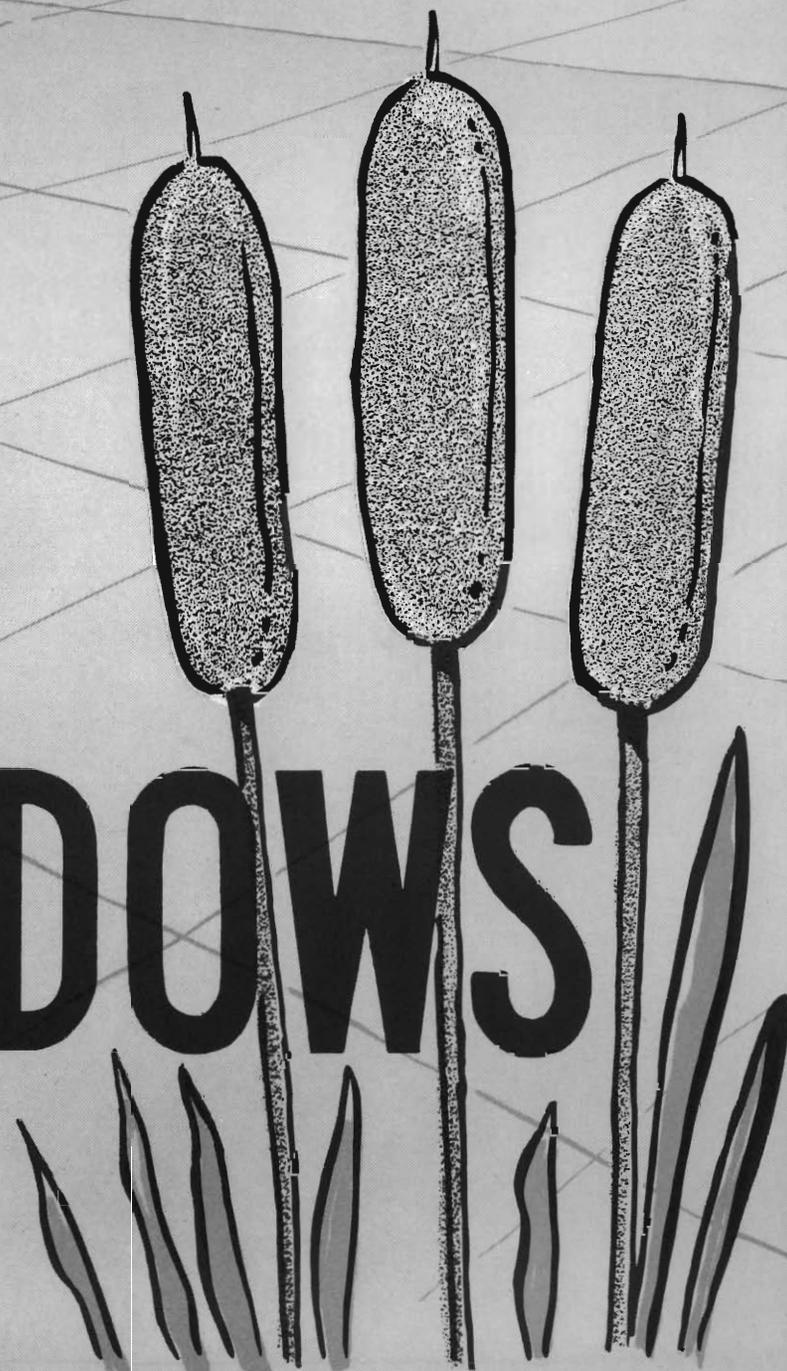


DEVELOP

THE

MEADOWS



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**MEADOWLANDS
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

MUNICIPALITIES

Borough of Carlstadt	Borough of North Arlington
Borough of East Rutherford	Township of North Bergen
Town of Kearny	Borough of Rutherford
Township of Lyndhurst	Town of Secaucus
Borough of Moonachie	Borough of Teterboro

COMMISSIONERS TO THE AGENCY

Alvin E. Gershen, Chairman

John A. Bado, Vice Chairman	John J. Daly, Treasurer
Herbert E. Armstrong	Louis C. Kaufhold
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Anthony Calderone	Arthur D. Liva
Harold J. Camelet	Stephen H. Magnus
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Hubert Franklin	Walter Palmer
Robert E. Helstoski	Edward Rudlinger

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Honorable Salvatore A. Bontempo	Honorable Harold Pareti
Honorable William F. Gallagher	Honorable Peter R. Tonner
Honorable Joseph M. Healey	Honorable John Tucci
Honorable Henry Helstoski	Honorable Charles Weaver
Honorable G. Herbert Mallett	

Charles C. Nathanson
Executive Director

William Blohm, Jr., Legal Advisor

**DEVELOP
THE
MEADOWS**

May, 1960



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
TRENTON 25

March 30, 1961

The Commissioners of the
Meadowlands Regional Development Agency

Gentlemen:

I have the pleasure of transmitting to your Agency a copy of the report "Develop the Meadows," prepared by your Chairman and your Executive Director with the aid of the staff of the Bureau of Planning of this Department.

You have made substantial progress toward achieving your objectives. However, there is still a long road ahead and numerous questions yet remain to be resolved. The major problem preventing a breakthrough in your efforts has been the need to have a method whereby, through joint-municipal cooperation, the municipalities and their citizens would share the tax benefits that will result from reclaiming and developing the Meadowlands. Such a formula appears for the first time in this most important report.

The Meadowlands Regional Development Agency is a local agency. The State Department of Conservation and Economic Development has provided the staff service for the preliminary steps to get the Agency underway. The time for community action has arrived. The decision to fully utilize the Meadows in accord with its utmost potential rests squarely with the municipalities and the local citizenry.

You can rely upon the continued full support of this Department in your efforts to further develop this meaningful new concept. This concept represents one of the few new attempts at joint-municipal action towards solving common municipal problems.

I wish you good luck in your future endeavors.

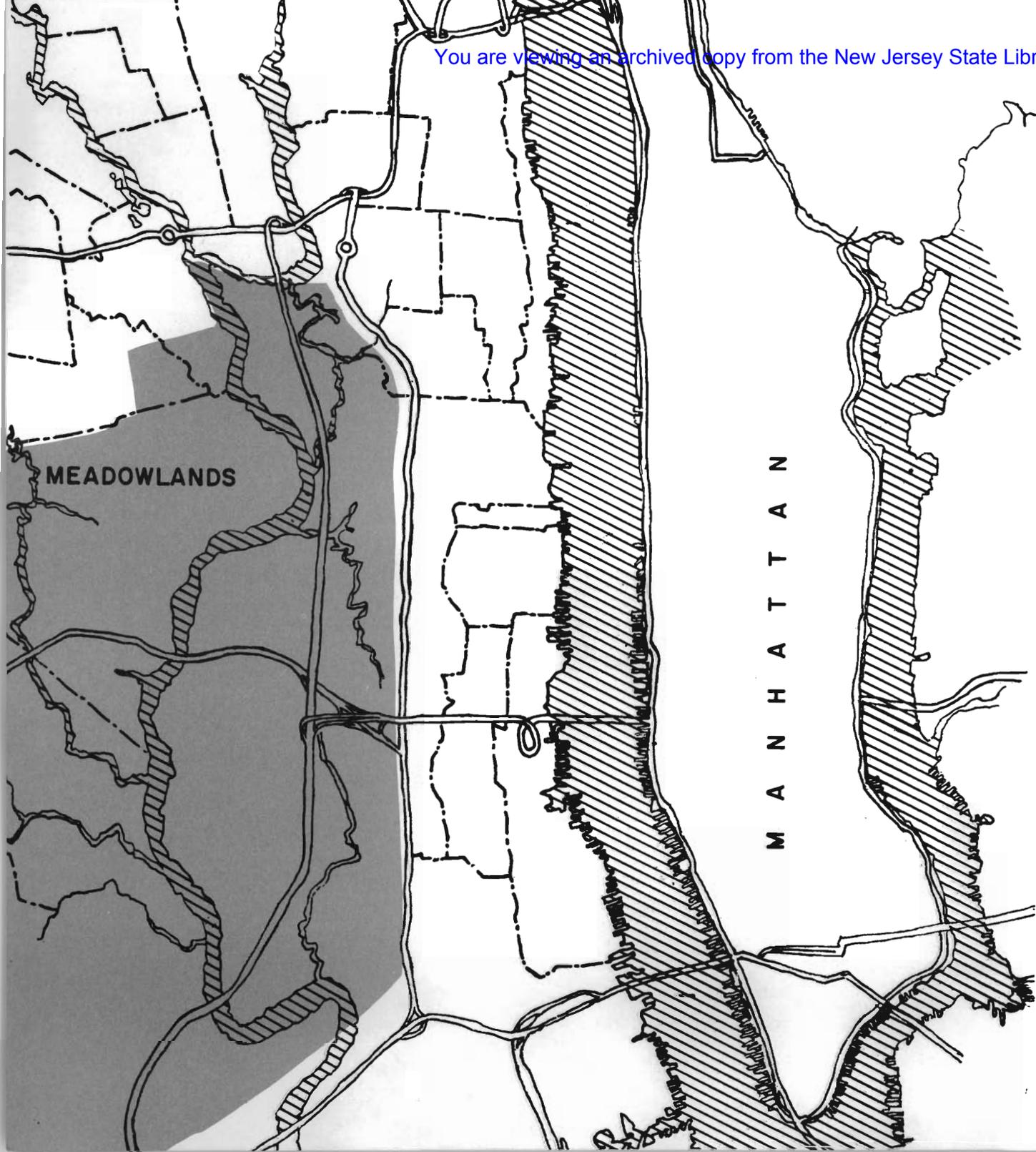
Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Salvatore A. Bontempo".

Salvatore A. Bontempo
Commissioner

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FOREWORD

The Hackensack Meadowlands have remained in their natural state despite the relentless march of time and progress. These marshlands are a sight which have greeted every visitor to metropolitan New York who arrived by air, rail or highway from the north, east, south or west since travel began.

Today the 15,000 acres of Hackensack Meadowlands represent, in every sense, a new frontier. Nowhere else in the metropolitan region does there exist a tract of land so vast in size and so available for use and conducive to any number and variety of development projects.

The Meadowlands require a considerable amount of preparation in order to accommodate future development. However, if the Meadowlands had required little or no preparation to be useful they would have already been consumed and absorbed into the great mass of urban sprawl which characterizes most of the metropolitan region. The Meadowlands have been largely removed from the real estate market and preserved in almost virgin state to the present time.

The Meadowlands are now ripe for development. Physical conditions which would have prevented the feasible use of the Meadowlands, can now be controlled. Engineering science has made such significant advances that the reclamation and development of the more marginal types of land is entirely possible and problems are no longer insurmountable.

Any practical effort to develop the Meadowlands must be based on broad regional or inter-municipal considerations. This is true because the Meadows freely traverse political boundaries. A way has to be found in order that our local units of government will not have to keep on "going it alone" in the Meadows. The present situation wherein development takes place in a wholly uncoordinated and haphazard fashion without regard to overall planning is no aid to raising the area to its utmost potential.

Reclaiming the Meadows in a piecemeal manner is extremely expensive. Controlling the action of the Hackensack River is clearly fundamental to the success of any reclamation project. Yet control can only be effectuated through close municipal cooperation and effort, because the river is not confined within a single municipality but rather passes through many.

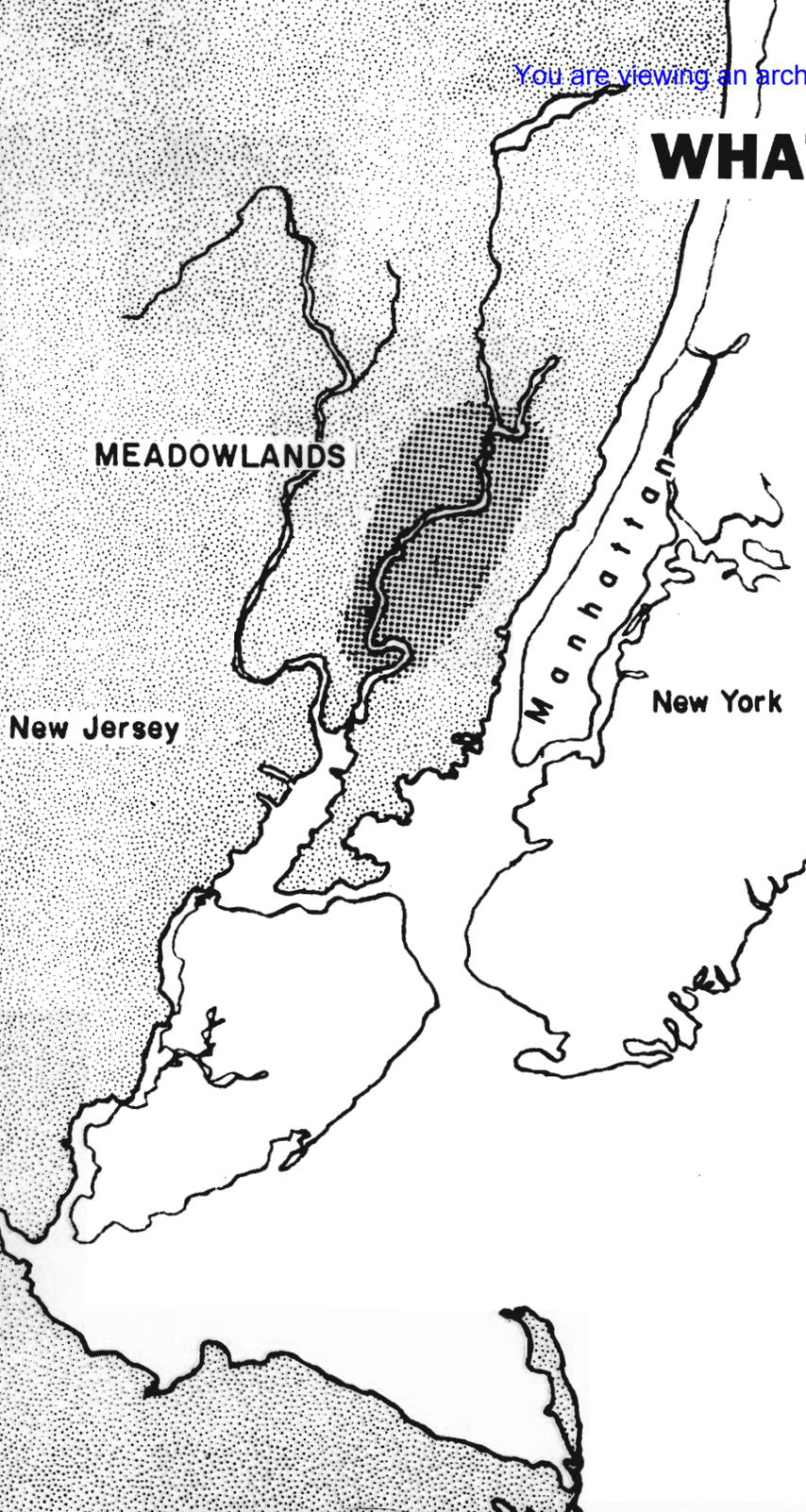
Essentially mechanisms must be provided through which local government units bear some more logical relationship to the physical growth pattern so that the area of political unity can conform more or less to the area of economic and physical unity. To accomplish this, the *Meadowlands Regional Development Agency*, having all the powers necessary to accomplish reclamation and development, came into being in September, 1960.

The *Agency* is studying some specific questions in the fields of engineering, land use planning, administration, law and finance. Basic, however, to everything else is the need to arrive at the method and formula for dealing with the manner in which costs of this project will be charged and revenues which accrue as new developments take place will be distributed.

When agreement is reached on this fundamental prerequisite, advanced planning will start and definite engineering and fiscal details will be worked out.

The purpose of this publication is to explain this concept and the justification behind it. In a democracy municipalities act only in response to the wishes and desires of its citizenry. It is hoped that this booklet will inform the public and their elected officials so that the resulting enthusiasm, or lack of it, will provide those who are charged with the responsibility for making decisions, with a clear mandate for future action.

WHAT ARE THE MEADOWLANDS?



The Meadowlands comprise a large area of marshlands and flood plains along the Hackensack River in northeastern New Jersey. Physical conditions cause seasonal flooding which make the Meadowlands largely unsuited for proper development.

The Hackensack Meadows, as they are known, are approximately twenty-two square miles in size, which is about the land area of the City of Newark. These twenty-two square miles have similar physical characteristics and problems although they are located in parts of thirteen separate municipalities.

For years men have dreamed of using the Hackensack Meadowlands. Reclaiming them on a large scale has been either impossible or too costly. Now, the techniques of land reclamation make it possible to reclaim the entire area and turn it into land suitable for development. Today, reclamation is also economically sound because of the high demand for large areas of vacant land in northeastern New Jersey, within the heart of Metropolitan New York. These factors make the Meadowlands potentially the most valuable vacant land in the world.

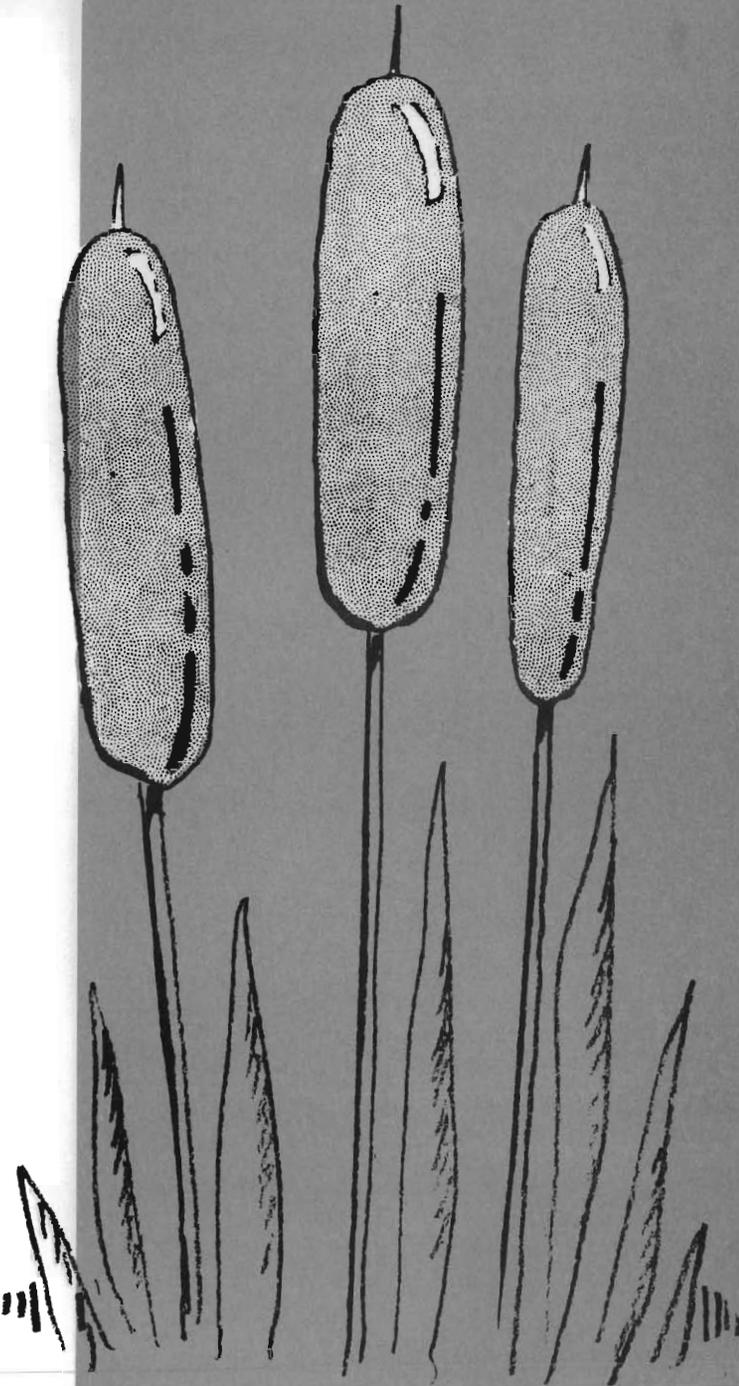
WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL PROBLEMS?

Flooding occurs throughout the Meadowlands because:

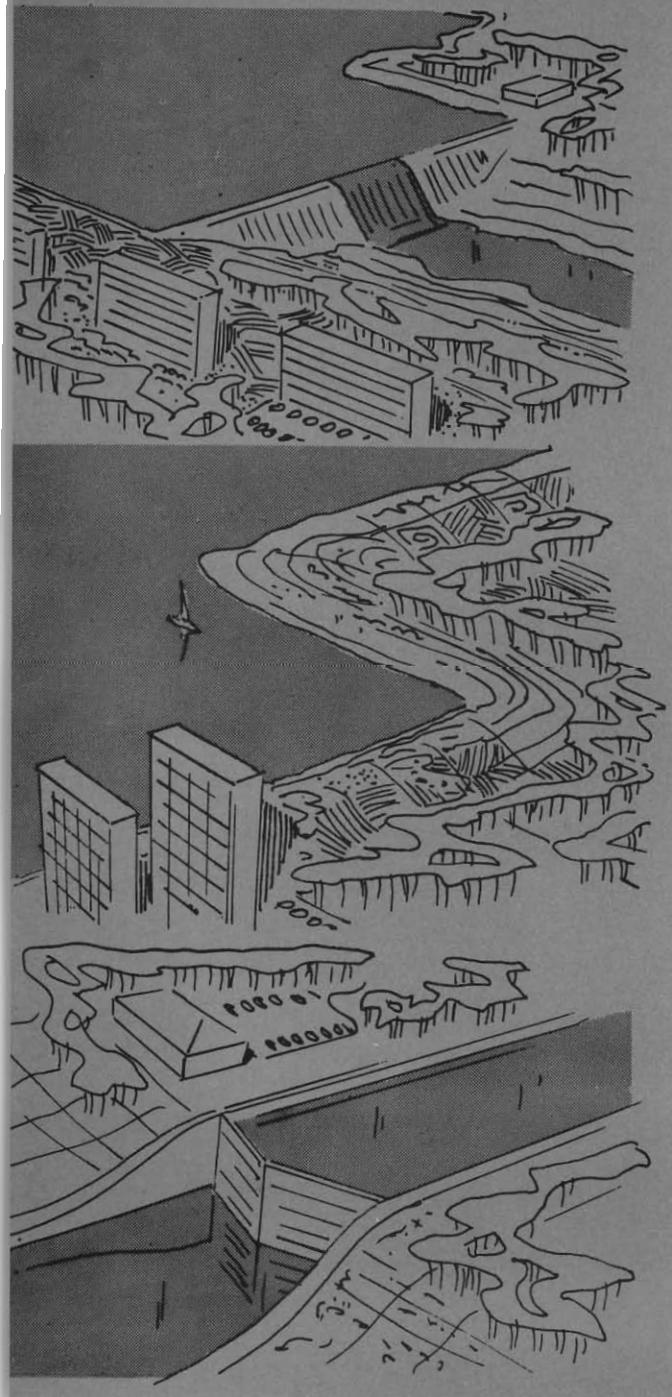
- **The land does not have sufficient elevation to provide adequate natural drainage;**
- **Poor subsoil conditions prevent the absorption of excess surface water;**
- **Tidal action at Newark Bay forces the Hackensack River to back up along its lower course.**

These factors combine to result in the thorough saturation of adjacent land areas and frequent periods of flooding. The effect is the formation of a vast tract of tidal marshlands or Meadowlands.

Since the Meadowlands respect no political boundaries, any plan for reclamation and development must treat the entire region as a single unit without regard to municipal limits.



THE MEADOWLANDS CAN BE RECLAIMED



The engineering methods employed to reclaim the Meadowlands must consider the need for upstream river control and the exclusion of tidal action along the lower portion of the Hackensack River. This may involve the construction of dams, tidal gates and navigation locks at the mouth of the River, embankments and dikes along the course of the River, and provisions for the storage of the excess water. The reclamation plan would probably use a combination of these methods to be applied throughout the Meadowlands according to existing natural conditions and what the proposals for development may require.

Science has provided a number of workable engineering solutions. Examples of development on reclaimed land are widespread in the United States and elsewhere throughout the world. While each solution has a specialized benefit there is no doubt that the Hackensack Meadows can be reclaimed for any proposed development.

The significant factor is that there are a variety of methods available to do the job. Reclamation and development of the Hackensack Meadows are entirely feasible from an engineering point of view. There are no insurmountable technical obstacles.

THE MEADOWLANDS CAN BE DEVELOPED

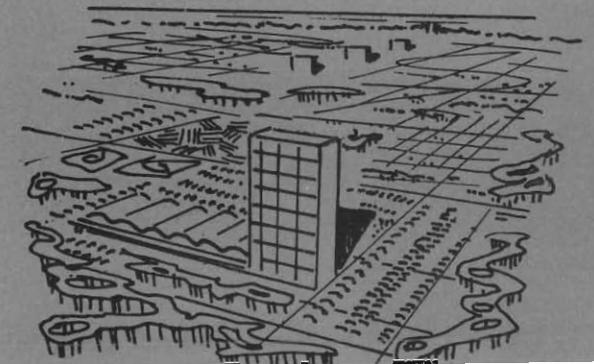
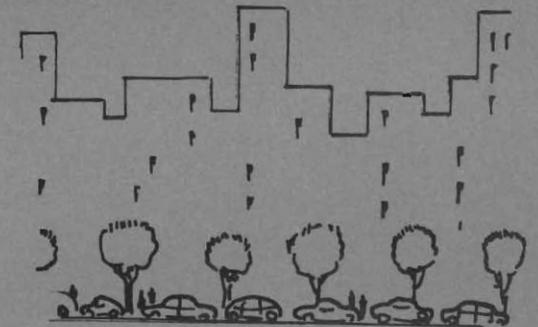
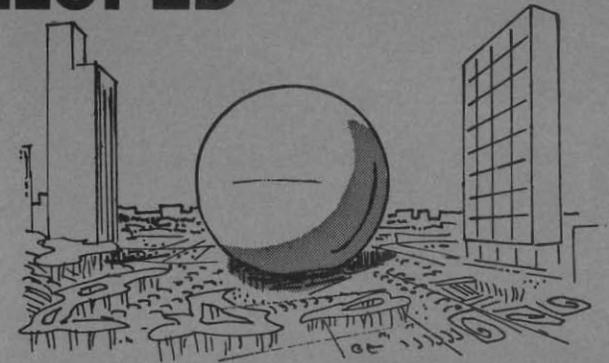
The economic value of the Hackensack Meadows is determined by three principal factors.

1. The advantageous location of the Meadowlands in the heart of the New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Area.
2. The Meadowlands are connected to regional, national and international markets by a superb network of transportation facilities.
3. The Meadowlands represent the last remaining large area of open vacant land in the Metropolitan New York region.

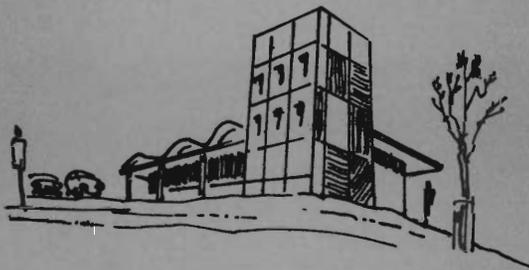
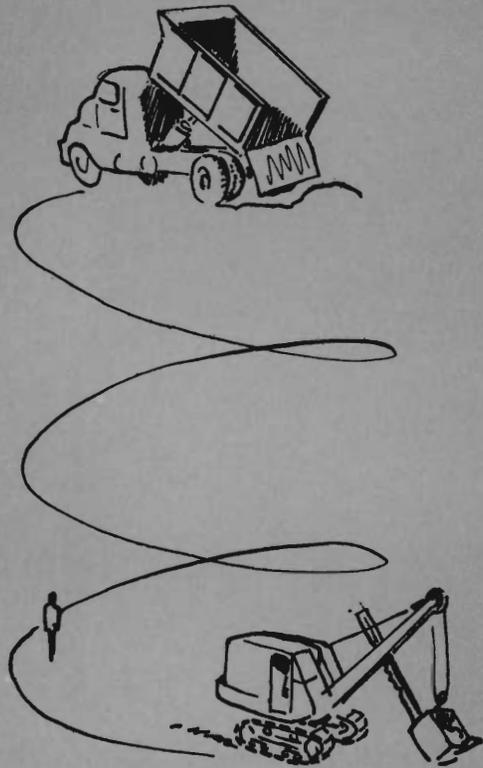
Since various types of land development require different degrees of land reclamation the engineering plan for the Meadowlands must be keyed to the proposed plans for land use. Only those facilities need be constructed to bring about the desired type of development. In this way it is possible to arrive at the least expensive and most suitable reclamation pattern. But these advantages can only come about through a regional plan for both reclamation and development.

Development that is unrelated to total reclamation and further land use potential, could completely undermine the competitive commercial position of the Meadows in the real estate market.

The facts clearly show that overall Meadowlands reclamation and development is sound from a financial and commercial standpoint. But proper land use planning of the entire area as a unit is essential.



WHY NOT INDIVIDUAL MUNICIPAL ACTION



Were all the Meadowlands located within a single municipality their reclamation and development would pose no special problem. The municipality could then plan the necessary reclamation facilities and development projects to assure the most desirable balance of industry, commerce, housing and parks.

The Meadowlands however are not confined within the boundary of one municipality, and problems have a common impact throughout the area. For example, the construction of a water storage basin or the alignment of a road that does not conform to a plan for the entire region could depress the value of the Meadowlands as a whole. Moreover, engineering estimates reveal that the cost of improving the Meadowlands on a local or piecemeal scale far exceeds the cost of doing the job on a regional basis.

Economic competition among the municipalities for the most advantageous tax position is a threat to the coordinated and orderly development of the Meadowlands. The continuation of this haphazard policy of land utilization only leads to an enormous waste of natural resources.

Individual municipal action can seriously depreciate the value of the Meadowlands and prevent maximum future development. What is needed is a cooperative approach toward the solution of common problems and the full realization by all municipalities that future responsibility must be shared.

MEADOWLANDS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Recognizing the need for an effective vehicle to carry out agreed upon plans, the municipalities in the Meadowlands joined together in September, 1960, and formed the Meadowlands Regional Development Agency. This action was made possible under the provisions of the Redevelopment Agencies Act of 1949. Under this Act, municipalities have the power to implement regional planning proposals by working collectively. The Meadowlands Regional Development Agency is an action agency fully geared and staffed to successfully perform the functions of reclamation and development. There are no legal roadblocks, which cannot be overcome, that will prevent the Agency from exercising its responsibilities.

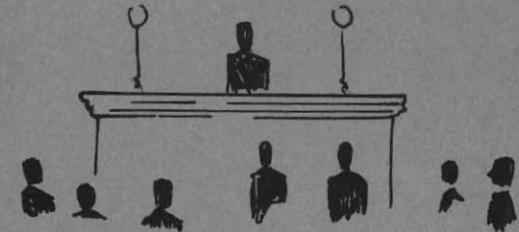
Now the basic objective is to get general acceptance to these points:

1. That the best and most orderly development can come about only by joint reclamation work and developing the land according to an agreed upon regional plan.

2. That municipalities working together can achieve benefits far in excess than would be possible were they to "go it alone."

3. That the Meadowlands Regional Development Agency represents the best vehicle for assuring local control and for getting the job done.

Only a governmental agency can provide for those public works necessary for the successful reclamation on a regional basis.



A NEW CONCEPT

The economic competition now existing among the several municipalities should be converted into a solution for the successful reclamation and development of the Meadowlands. This could be accomplished if all the municipalities in the Meadowlands would agree to a plan by which all would share in the economic benefits resulting from reclamation and development. Such an agreement must be based on the following concepts:

1. Jurisdiction to reclaim and develop the Meadowlands should rest in one inter-municipal agency;
2. The collection of taxes and providing municipal services would rest with each municipality;
3. One inter-municipal agency would construct and maintain reclamation facilities, i.e., dams, dikes and water storage areas;
4. The development plan would be based on its regional implications as it affects all municipalities and would require municipal approval;
5. New development will be scheduled to assure a sufficient surplus of revenues from property taxes.

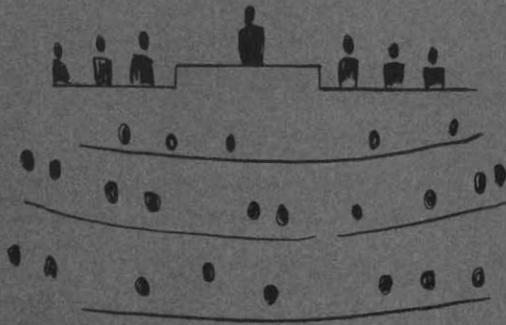
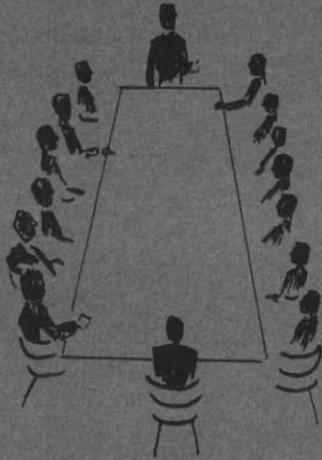
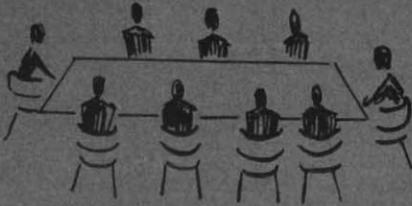
A PROPOSED FORMULA

One type of agreement among the municipalities and the Meadowlands Regional Development Agency may be as follows:

1. Each municipality would pay the Agency the excess of all taxes collected after development as compared to those currently being collected in its Meadowlands area.
2. The Agency would reimburse each municipality the cost of services that the municipality provides the newly developed areas in the Meadowlands. For example, the municipality would be reimbursed for the cost of educating school children living in homes developed under the Meadowlands Agency jurisdiction.
3. The surplus revenue would then be distributed among each municipality in proportion to the land it now has in the Meadowlands as against the total land now in the Meadowlands.

The municipalities and their citizens must agree in principle to share the tax benefits that will result from reclaiming and developing the Meadowlands through joint-municipal action.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NOW



These steps should be next towards reclaiming and developing the Meadowlands.

1. The initiation of a program to inform the public of the need for inter-municipal action and to solicit citizen support for the concept of a cost-benefits sharing plan.
2. An endorsement by the local governing bodies of the concept for inter-municipal action and the formula for the distribution of cost and benefits.
3. A pledge by each municipality to back an agreement in principle by adopting new ordinances, regulations, or other forms of land use and development controls necessary to assist the Meadowlands Regional Development Agency in carrying out its objectives.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What will be the relationship between private land owners and the MEADOWLANDS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY?

The relationship between private land owners and the MRDA will be the same as the relationship between any other local development agency and land owners. After the participating governing bodies have approved the development plan, the Agency may proceed with development by acquiring such lands as are necessary to carry out its functions. This may be done by purchase or condemnation proceedings. But the MRDA can only acquire land when it is necessary to carry out a specific project such as land needed for water storage basins. No attempt will be made to change the existing pattern of land ownership.

2. How will the financing of the reclamation facilities be arranged?

The MEADOWLANDS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY has the authority to issue bonds and borrow money from any source to finance its operations. However, it may be feasible to finance specific projects through municipal moneys, State bonds, or a combination of these and other types of financing. The particular method of financing will be determined within the framework of market conditions and the volume of investment involved in each phase of the program and the specific project being financed.

3. How will the State or State agencies be involved in reclaiming and developing the Meadowlands?

The MEADOWLANDS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY is a locally constituted inter-municipal agency, charged by the member municipalities with the task of solving a problem of common interest. State governmental agencies have pledged full support to the MRDA in carrying out its objectives. But the State will not interfere with the operations of the MRDA in any way.

4. Is it really possible to develop the Meadowlands for the benefit of all municipalities participating in the MRDA?

The value of any tract of land is determined by its best potential use. The objectives of the MRDA will be to plan the Hackensack Meadows as a unit for its best use and hence its highest value. Since the increase in taxes from the newly developed areas will be treated as a whole and divided according to the formula based on land from each municipality, the overall revenue surplus will occur as a benefit to all municipalities participating in the MRDA.

5. What are the chances that the MRDA can obtain a surplus in tax revenues from the newly developed areas that will be sufficient to make this venture successful?

Given the physical characteristics of the Hackensack Meadows, economic conditions will determine to what extent the area will be reclaimed for development. Since jurisdiction to reclaim and develop the entire Hackensack Meadows will rest in the MRDA, reclamation and development can be regulated to produce a surplus in tax revenues over and above the cost of providing services to the newly developed areas.

6. Would the participating municipalities give up too much authority to the MRDA?

No. The M.R.D.A. is not greatly different from any other special purpose agency created by a municipality. Only the M.R.D.A. is an inter-municipal agency and the decision made by it will reflect the common desires and objectives. Members of the M.R.D.A. are representatives of the municipalities participating in the program. Action will be taken only after concerted and cooperative approval is obtained and proper assurance is registered that any contemplated project will not be detrimental to the best interests of the separate municipalities. The Agency, however, is realistic in believing that the greatest good can come about only through a regional and overall effort embracing the entire area. Certainly the rights of the municipalities will be protected while each will derive appreciably more than by "going it alone."



This booklet was prepared under the direction of the Chairman and the Executive Director of The Meadowlands Regional Development Agency with the assistance of Ferdinand L. Vari, Assistant Planner of the State Bureau of Planning. Design and art by Walter Ziering, Principal Planner.

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We wish to acknowledge the continued cooperation of the Department of Conservation and Economic Development, Salvatore A. Bontempo, Commissioner, and the State Bureau of Planning, B. Budd Chavooshian, Chief of the Bureau.

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