

# EDITORIAL & COMMENTARY



SCOTT LONGFIELD

IT'S YOUR TURN

## Commentary

### The Greening of New Jersey

By Michele S. Byers

Much of the Garden State is green and leafy, thanks in large part to land preservation. Check out a new interactive map to see the green in your community. You can find out if your town has been building new parks, protecting natural areas, preserving farms or saving historic sites.

For most New Jersey towns, the answer is a big yes!

New Jersey got serious about preserving land in the early 1960s with the passage of the first Green Acres bond, and for more than 50 years this state we're in has been a national model.

Preservation efforts accelerated following a 1998 vote creating the Garden State Preservation Trust.

Nearly 390,000 acres of open space and farmland were preserved through the trust between 2000 and 2013. The excellent new interactive map showing where land was preserved can be found at [www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/08/07/garden-state-preservation-trust](http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/08/07/garden-state-preservation-trust).

The color-coded map illustrates New Jersey's green places, with darker shades indicating towns with the most preserved acres. Hover your computer's cursor over a town to see its total size (in acres) and the amount of acreage that was preserved from 2000-2013.

Much, but not all, land preservation activity is in rural areas. After all, these places have large undeveloped fields, forests, meadows and farms – all needed to protect our state's clean drinking water and grow local, healthy foods.

The map shows numerous preservation hot spots. The darkest green is reserved for towns with more than 2,500 acres preserved with Garden State Preservation Trust funding – and there are quite a few towns in this color!

For example, two North Jersey towns along the New York border – West Milford in Passaic County and Vernon Township in Sussex County – stand out as preservation leaders. Vernon Township preserved 10,738 of its 44,769 acres, while West Milford preserved 11,388 of its 51,848 acres. Surrounding dark green towns include Jefferson, Rockaway and Kinnelon townships in Morris County; and Hardyston and Wantage townships in Sussex County.

At the opposite end of the state, check out the dark green cluster in the Delaware Bayshore region, representing the fertile farmland of the area known as New Jersey's "breadbasket."

Towns like Upper Pittsgrove, Mannington, Pilesgrove, Quinton, Alloway, Pittsgrove and Lower Alloways Creek townships in Salem County; and Hopewell and Fairfield townships in Cumberland County all show up in dark green.

Try clicking on a town. A box will pop up showing a breakdown of open space, farmland and historic preservation. Here you'll find deep data on farmland preservation, with records going back to 1985. In some towns, the total amount of preserved land may be

even higher than shown on the map.

Urban municipalities like Newark, Jersey City, Secaucus, Lyndhurst, East Rutherford, Clifton and Elmwood Park preserved land through the Garden State Preservation Trust. And, though not reflected on the map, from 2000-2012 the state provided more than \$76 million for park projects in Essex County, more than \$55 million in Hudson County and more than \$30 million in Camden County.

As Election Day in November approaches, the interactive map is a handy tool to remind us about the huge impact of preservation. With 2-million acres in New Jersey not yet preserved or developed, the open space race is still on and we cannot stop preserving now!

A Nov. 4 ballot question will ask voters to approve a constitutional amendment to establish a permanent funding source for preservation through an existing tax. Initially, the measure would earmark about \$70 million a year for preservation, and beginning in 2019 the amount would rise to at least \$117 per year.

If you want the nation's most densely populated state to remain the Garden State, vote "yes" in November!

To learn more about preservation funding, visit the Garden State Preservation Trust website at <http://www.state.nj.us/gspst> or read the NJ Keep It Green coalition's report at [www.njkeepitgreen.org/documents/KIG\\_GAlegacybook\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.njkeepitgreen.org/documents/KIG_GAlegacybook_FINAL.pdf).

And to learn more about preserving New Jersey's land and natural resources, visit the New Jersey Conservation Foundation website at [www.njconservation.org](http://www.njconservation.org) or contact me at [info@njconservation.org](mailto:info@njconservation.org).

*Michele S. Byers is the executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.*

### Group Lauds NJ's Decision to Purchase Backup Generators

By Sal Risalvato

I continue to be pleased by the State of New Jersey's efforts to create and implement a generator-grant program that will benefit both the small business owners and citizens of New Jersey.

I have promoted the program among my membership (of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience Store, and Automotive Association) since it was first announced in October 2013, and I am confident that the state's decision to purchase 52 emergency portable generators for use at gasoline service stations, in conjunction with the Retail Fuel Station Energy Resiliency Program, will be much appreciated by station owners across the state.

New Jersey's Retail Fuel Station Energy Resiliency Program currently offers two kinds of grants to qualifying gasoline stations (based on station location and underground fuel storage capacity): Up to \$65,000 for the installation of a permanent backup generator or up to \$15,000 to install quick-connect technology, which will allow the station owner to hook up a portable emergency generator, exactly like the ones that the state has just purchased.

Absent the state pool of generators being made available to grant recipients, a station owner's only option is to make arrangements with a private generator company to have a generator arrive on-site during an emergency, when the demand for generators is at chaotic levels.

Now, there is another option. If a station owner chooses to install quick-connect technology with a hookup compatible with the generators being purchased by the state, then the station owner can arrange for the delivery of a backup generator when an emergency occurs, thereby circumventing the chaotic rental market, and guaranteeing that a generator will be on-site.

For the past 10 months, the state has been diligently working to create a program that would eliminate the long gas lines that we experienced during Super Storm Sandy. This includes backup generators at gas stations, as well as efforts to make New Jersey's fuel supply and distribution systems more resilient, ensuring a more reliable source of fuel when needed.

This purchase of 52 portable emergency generators is just the most recent example of the state's commitment to finding the best solution to ensure that New Jersey motorists can fill up with gas in an emergency.

I look forward to continuing to work with the state on this project, to further ensure that New Jersey motorists and small businesses are better prepared in case of another storm like Sandy.

*Sal Risalvato is the executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience Store, and Automotive Association (NJGCA).*

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COURTESY DORN'S CLASSIC IMAGES

### Two River Moment

This is a 1920 photo of the Water Witch train station in Highlands. According to a timeline prepared by the Historical Society of Highlands, the station was constructed in 1895 at Water Witch Avenue and Shore Drive.