

## 2023 Evesham Township – NJDEP Stewardship Grant Application

Green Acres Project Number: 0313-99-021 (*Planning Incentive, Acquisition*)

**Project Name:** 477 North Elmwood Road, Marlton NJ 08053 (aka Beagle Club Property); 176+/- Acres Block 11.52, Lot 2, Evesham Township, Burlington County (Includes Block 703, Lot 6, Mt. Laurel Twp)

Concept Plan Development Overview: <https://evesham-nj.org/beagle-club>

### **Environmental Impact Assessment Outline**

As part of the Green Acres funding proposal, each applicant must collect, evaluate, and present pertinent environmental information necessary to ascertain the suitability of the site for the activities proposed. Please review and consider the applicable Landscape Project maps and reports, developed by the DEP's Fish and Wildlife Program, during the preparation of the environmental assessment. Information can be found at the Landscape Project website or by emailing the Program.

## **1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

**a. Briefly describe the project:** With the assistance of the NJDEP Green Acres in 2022 the Township acquired the 176-acre property with a goal to develop the tract into a passive recreation area for citizens of all abilities and ages for generations to come. *Reference attached, Community Meeting, Conceptual Design for New Passive Park at 477 N Elmwood Rd., dated May 31, 2022. Pages 46-78 of 70-pages*

**b. State objectives of the project:** Create a state-of-the art passive park that incorporates green infrastructure that provides health, wellness, and educational opportunities for benefits for citizens of all abilities and ages for generations to come. This initial part of the project is to begin habitat creation with some needed access improvements.

**c. Fully describe multi-phase projects:** The Concept Design for the 176+/- acre tract will require investments in access, stormwater management, park amenities, including but not limited to restrooms, trails, outdoor classrooms, constructed meadows, habitat, landscaping, and pavilions. The plan also includes the adaptive reuse of a locally designated historic structure that will be used for the Township Open Space Department. As funding opportunities arise, the Township will apply to secure the necessary financial resources to implement the concept plan. Due to the size of the new passive park, and the slew of proposed amenities, it is anticipated that it may take several years and multiple phases before the park is complete. Once completed, the park will provide regional benefits to Evesham Township and the surrounding communities.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Describe existing environmental features:**

- a. **vegetation:** According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Division of Fish and Wildlife, Evesham Township is located in the "Pinelands Landscape" region of New Jersey. The site is comprised of a varying landscapes, including a variety of mature trees, mowed and natural grasslands, and wetland areas. The northwestern portion of the site is almost entirely wooded, whereas the eastern portion (along North Elmwood Road) is open and mowed.
- b. **wildlife:** including State and federal threatened and endangered species and critical habitats: According to the NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife, the site is located within the Pinelands landscape region and is mapped as a "species-based habitat" for two (2) federally listed species:

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the Great Blue Heron and the Northern Myotis. Also present on the site are multiple mapped “Rank 2 – Special Concern” areas and several areas mapped as containing “habitat specific requirements”.

- c. **Geology, topography, and soils:** According to NJDEP’s Division of Fish and Wildlife, Evesham Township is located in the western section of the “Pinelands Landscape” landscape region of New Jersey between the “Piedmont Plains” to the west and the “Atlantic Coastal” region to the east.

According to NJDEP’s NJ-GeoWeb, the surficial geology consists of Upper Gravel, Lower Phase, and the bedrock geology consists of both the Hornerstown Formation (Tht) and the Navesink Formation (Kns). The Hornerstown Formation is comprised of mainly fine-to-medium grained glauconite sand, and the Navesink formation is comprised of clayey glauconite sand.

The site is relatively flat, located at approximately seventy (70) feet above mean sea level, and is located in an area of Evesham Township that generally slopes gently to the west toward the North Branch Pennsauken Creek.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Conservation Services, 477 North Elmwood Road soils are comprised of the following soil unit types: Colemantown loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded (CoeAs), Kresson fine sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes (KreA), Kresson loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes (KrhA), and Marlton fine sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes (MapB). The MapB soil unit covers the majority of the site and the capacity of its most limiting layer to transmit water is moderately high (0.06 to 0.20 in/hr).

Typical Marlton fine sandy loam (MapB) profile:

- Ap - 0 to 10 inches: fine sandy loam
- Bt – 10 to 30 inches: clay loam
- BC – 30 to 40 inches: clay loam
- C – 40 to 60 inches: sandy clay loam

- d. **Water resources/hydrology:** According to NJDEP’s NJ-GeoWeb, Evesham Township is located over the Composite confining unit (ccu) aquifer system, an “E-D” ranked aquifer (median yield of 25 to 100 gpm) composed of silt and clay with localized sand lenses. Confining units include the Shark River, Manasquan, Hornerstown, and Tinton Formations.
- e. **Historic/archeological resources:** According to NJDEP’s NJ-GeoWeb, the site is mapped as containing the Thomas & Susannah Ballinger House historic property.
- f. **Transportation/access to site:** 477 North Elmwood Road is accessible via:
- Access driveway along North Elmwood Road
  - NJ Transit Bus Route 406 which stops at intersection of Old Marlton Pike East and Roosevelt Avenue about 1.5 miles south of the site.
- g. **Adjacent land uses/descriptions of the surrounding neighborhood:** According to NJDEP’s NJ-GeoWeb, 477 North Elmwood Road is mostly classified as forest with a small section of agriculture land use on the east side of the property along Elmwood Road. The portion of the site in with the historic house sits is marked as urban and sections of wetlands are mapped on the western portion of the property. The site is in a mainly residential area of Evesham Township

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with single and multi-family residential properties to the north, east, and south and wooded wetland areas to the west.

For additional information regarding the above items, please see the following attachments:

- Evesham Beagle Club Design Alternatives, dated October 13, 2021. Pages 1-15 of 77-pages
- Community Meeting, Conceptual Design for New Passive Park at 477 N Elmwood Rd., dated May 31, 2022. Pages 1-78
- Ecological Evaluation Report dated 11/15/2021 for the tract, as prepared by Matthew Popin, PWS, Project Scientist (E&LP). Appendix D, includes a Natural Heritage Database Report. Reference: NHP File No. 21-3907488-22966
- Evesham Township, local Cultural Resource Survey 0313-082 for 1985 and 1986 for the existing club house structure previously known as the Thomas & Susannah Ballinger House.
- 10/4/2022 LOI Submission for the tract by Engineering & Land Planning Associates, Inc.(E&LP), NJDEP Contact Rebecca Grike, Environmental Specialist 3, Division of Land Resource Protection (0313-12-0009.2 FWW220001)

### **3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Impacts are defined as direct or indirect changes to the existing environment, whether beneficial or adverse, that are anticipated as a result of the proposed action or related future actions and uses. Any off-site impacts, such as increased traffic on neighborhood roads or increased noise levels in surrounding areas, should be described. Whenever possible, environmental impacts should be quantified (i.e., number of trees to be removed, cubic yards of cut/fill, etc.).

**a. Discuss all affected resources and the significance of each impact:** The bulk of the proposed conceptual design for the new passive park at 477 North Elmwood Road involves minimal disturbance to previously undisturbed areas and uses green infrastructure wherever possible. Minimal porous pavement is proposed as necessary to develop a parking area and to provide vehicle circulation. Minimal disturbance to established vegetation is proposed aside from the development of trails throughout the forest areas on the western portion of the site.

**b. Discuss short-term and long-term project impacts:** As stated above, the proposed activities will take place over many years and multiple phases. Short term impacts include the temporary disturbance of established vegetation with the regrading and clearing of areas for development.

Long term impacts include generating an increase in usage of the entire property for recreational and educational purposes. The property was previously underutilized by the Beagle Club, but the addition of a new passive park will attract a multitude of residents.

**c. Discuss anticipated increase in recreation and overall use of site over time:** Currently, the former Beagle Club property at 477 North Elmwood Road is unused. The addition of the proposed passive park and all of its proposed amenities make it more accessible and accommodating to a larger number of residents. Once the new passive park is completed, the recreational use at 477 North Elmwood Road is expected to increase drastically.

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**d. Identify adjacent environmental features that may be affected by the proposal:** The North Branch Pennsauken Creek borders the site to the west, but proposed developments are not expected to disturb the Creek. Wetland and woodland vegetation present on the site but again are not expected to be significantly disturbed by proposed development.

**e. List any permits required for project and brief status (i.e., waterfront development):**

- The Township has submitted an LOI submission to the NJDEP that is under review.
- Burlington County Soil Conservation District Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Permit

**f. For development that would impact an undisturbed portion of the project site, the local government must submit a Natural Heritage Data Request Form to the DEP's Office of Natural Lands Management (form available at the website or by writing to Natural Heritage Program, PO Box 404, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0404). Please attach and discuss the results of the search:**

As a part of a previous LOI submission with the NJDEP, Evesham Township requested a Natural Heritage Report. Please see the attachments for additional information (listed below).

- Reference page 45/75: Ecological Evaluation Report dated 11/15/2021 for the tract, as prepared by Matthew Popin, PWS, Project Scientist (E&LP). Appendix D, includes a Natural Heritage Database Report. Reference: NHP File No. 21-3907488-22966
- Development plans will be coordinated with the appropriate agencies having jurisdiction.

**g. Discuss if/how the project may be impacted by sea level rise and any related design considerations.**

The project site is not expected to be impacted by sea level rise. The site is located at approximately seventy (70) feet above mean sea level and is allocated in a predominantly residential area of Evesham Township. 477 North Elmwood Road is located upgradient from the portion of the North Branch Pennsauken Creek located on the property.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION**

**a. Identify alternate sites:**

There are several parks/open spaces in Evesham Township where development could take place. However, most of the parks/recreational areas in the Township are dedicated to athletics. The open space at 477 North Elmwood Road will represent the largest passive park in the township and will serve as a source of passive recreation for residents in the surrounding areas.

The space available at 477 North Elmwood Road is unique relative to the alternate sites for the following reasons. This property was identified as a property to be acquired as part of the NJDEP Green Acres approved 2012 Open Space & Recreation Plan. The property has successfully been acquired by the Township with the assistance of the NJDEP Green Acres program as a property that can contribute to the open space and recreation needs of the community. As one of the largest remaining tracts in the area, this property is a priority site that has the potential to meet the passive recreational needs of the residents due to its proximity to neighborhoods and frontage to a local roadway.

**b. Discuss alternate levels and types of development:**

Alternate 1: No park development

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Alternate 2: Active park development.

### **c. Compare environmental impacts of each alternative:**

No park development does not support the goals and objectives of the Open Space and Recreation Plan of the Township, or the input received during the numerous community meetings that were held during the development of the concept plan. The passive park design will incorporate low impact development technique, adaptively re-use an existing structure and incorporate green infrastructure into the design while creating habitat to support native flora and fauna.

Active park development would likely generate more internal and offsite impacts due to the type of infrastructure needed to support such a use.

### **5. MITIGATING MEASURES**

**Describe the measures that will be undertaken to mitigate adverse impacts.**

No adverse impacts are anticipated as a result of the passive park proposed. In the event, an adverse impact arise the Township will respond accordingly to address any neighbor concerns or environmental issues.