



Bucks County Open Space Program

Progress Report

2010



INTRODUCTION

In May 1997, Bucks County voters approved a \$59 million bond referendum to fund a 10-year Open Space Program, which resulted in the protection of more than 15,000 acres of farmland, parks and natural areas. Realizing the need for continued open space preservation, Bucks County Commissioners endorsed a second Open Space Bond Initiative for \$87 million. Again, voters overwhelmingly approved the referendum in November 2007. Of these funds, \$44 million has been divided among the following components: Municipal Open Space Program, Natural Areas Program and Delaware Riverfront Program.

MUNICIPAL OPEN SPACE PROGRAM

Under the 2007 Bucks County Open Space Bond Initiative, \$26 million was allocated to the Municipal Open Space Program to provide boroughs and townships with financial assistance for open space planning, acquisitions and improvements. In addition to a base allocation of \$200,000, each municipality received an adjusted share according to its percentage of overall county land area and population.

2007 Municipal Allocations

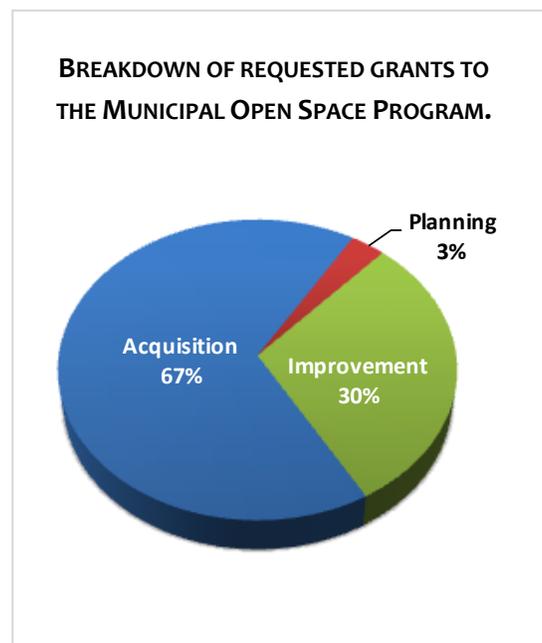
Municipality	Allocation	Municipality	Allocation	Municipality	Allocation
Bedminster	643,468	Langhorne Manor	220,566	Richlandtown	219,679
Bensalem	1,173,688	L. Makefield	824,605	Riegelsville	223,535
Bridgeton	298,748	L. Southampton	517,197	Sellersville	269,274
Bristol	343,782	Middletown	1,016,324	Silverdale	216,970
Bristol Twp.	1,077,380	Milford	659,729	Solebury	641,983
Buckingham	828,783	Morrisville	344,625	Springfield	636,351
Chalfont	271,436	New Britain	243,225	Telford	233,204
Doylestown	326,756	New Britain Twp.	517,715	Tinicum	630,468
Doylestown Twp.	620,408	New Hope	245,058	Trumbauersville	218,440
Dublin	233,803	Newtown	234,306	Tullytown	249,995
Durham	329,607	Newtown Twp.	580,101	U. Makefield	568,983
East Rockhill	430,112	Nockamixon	519,896	U. Southampton	470,982
Falls	945,014	Northampton	1,020,604	Warminster	727,858
Haycock	486,164	Penndel	234,497	Warrington	637,867
Hilltown	686,281	Perkasie	338,194	Warwick	514,000
Hulmeville	215,577	Plumstead	678,864	West Rockhill	456,808
Ivyland	214,100	Quakertown	332,660	Wrightstown	353,378
Langhorne	230,397	Richland	602,815	Yardley	243,742

Municipal Open Space Program funds may be used to preserve lands for natural resource conservation, agriculture and recreation through fee simple acquisition or purchase of conservation easements. A new feature under the 2007 bond also allows municipalities to request funding for improvement projects that enhance public access or natural resources on preserved open space. Municipal Open Space Program grants are capped at 75 percent of the property interest's appraised value, or the estimated improvement costs.

Prior to applying for a grant, a municipality must update its open space plan. To date, 47 plans have been approved by the Bucks County Open Space Board. Several of the remaining municipalities, which include Wrightstown, Hulmeville, Langhorne Manor, Quakertown, Riegelsville, Telford and Trumbauersville, have already begun the planning process.

Twenty-two applications totaling more than \$2.5 million in requested funding have been submitted to the Municipal Open Space Program under the 2007 bond (See Table 1).

- 12 municipalities received planning grants to assist in the update of their local open space plans.
- 6 acquisition grants totaling almost \$1.8 million were awarded for the preservation of 279 acres including 14 acres of parks, 214 acres of farmland and 51 acres of natural areas.
- 4 improvement grants have helped fund the following projects: riverbank restoration, native tree plantings, pedestrian trails and multi-use sports fields.



Since 1997, 103 projects have been completed through the Municipal Open Space Program, resulting in the protection of 2,883 acres.

Table 1:

Municipal Open Space Program Budget

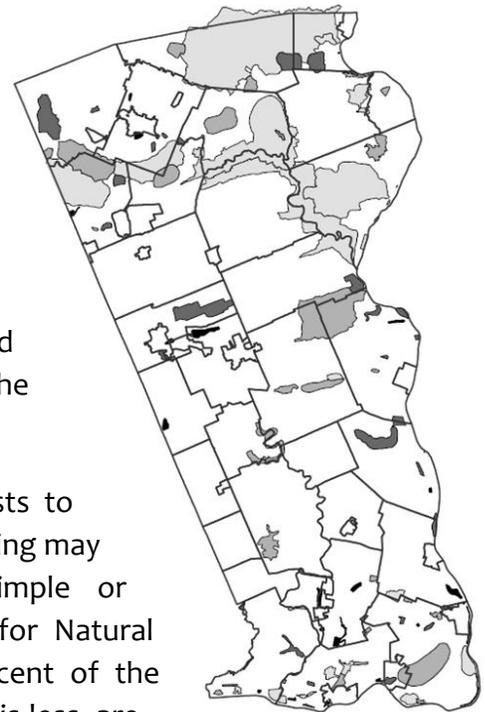
as of December 31, 2010

2007 Bond Allocation		\$26,000,000
- Acquisition Projects		1,781,383
L. Southampton - Bustleton Pike, fee, 13.7 acres		517,197
East Rockhill - Rufe, easement, 45 acres		268,943
Bedminster - Miller, easement, 51 acres		317,434
Bedminster - Harrison, easement, 95.9 acres		317,434
Tinicum - Shivo, easement, 72.9 acres		102,000
Warrington - Dempsey, fee, 7.0 acres		258,375
- Improvement Projects		794,265
Chalfont - Pedestrian Trail, 4.9 acres		97,687
U. Southampton - Veterans Field, 9.2 acres		470,982
Morrisville - Riverfront Preserve, 8.7 acres		15,596
Richlandtown - Benner Hall Park, 11.8 acres		210,000
- Open Space Plan Updates		81,784
Bedminster		8,600
Bristol Township		5,330
East Rockhill		5,771
New Britain Township		5,462
Richland		10,000
Richlandtown		7,356
Dublin		10,000
Ivyland		4,506
Northampton		10,000
Newtown Township		4,506
Perkasie		5,923
New Hope		4,330
TOTAL FUNDING APPROVED		\$2,657,431
= Current Balance		\$23,342,569

NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM

The mission of the Natural Areas Program is to preserve and protect important examples of plant and animal habitats, significant geological features, and vital ecological systems throughout Bucks County. In 1999, Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania completed the *Natural Areas Inventory of Bucks County*, which prioritized a list of 115 sites for preservation and establishes eligibility for funding consideration through the Natural Areas Program.

The program allows municipalities and qualified land trusts to apply on behalf of themselves, or private landowners. Funding may only be used for acquisition projects, either fee simple or conservation easements. Improvements are not eligible for Natural Areas Program funding. Individual grants up to 50 percent of the property interest's appraised value or \$500,000, whichever is less, are awarded through a competitive process.



1999 Natural Areas Inventory
Priority Sites

The Natural Areas Program received \$11 million from the 2007 Open Space Bond. Since 2007, 41 applications have been submitted to the program. To date, County Commissioners have approved 23 grants totaling approximately \$5.6 million, which have led to the preservation of 1,003 acres (See Table 2).

Since 1997, the Natural Areas Program has distributed 87 grants toward the preservation of 3,719 acres.

Natural Areas Inventory Update

Throughout 2009 and 2010, Drs. Ann Rhoads and Timothy Block of the Morris Arboretum worked on updating the *1999 Natural Areas Inventory*. The revised inventory uses a systems approach to group individual inventory sites into larger conservation landscapes, emphasizing the relationship among sites and important surrounding conditions, such as forest cover, geology and hydrologic features. The landscape approach also maximizes potential for long-term sustainability of individual sites by protecting context and connectivity. A draft of the update has been submitted to the Bucks County Planning Commission and is currently under review.

Table 2:

Natural Areas Program Budget as of December 31, 2010

2007 Bond Allocation		\$11,000,000
- Completed Projects (23)	\$ 5,338,836	
Kerl Easement, <i>Nockamixon</i>	306,109	
Jahnke Property, <i>East Rockhill</i>	350,000	
Berger Easement, <i>West Rockhill</i>	213,243	
Herz Easement, <i>Springfield</i>	151,573	
Beardsley Easement, <i>Milford</i>	137,500	
Plater Easement, <i>Nockamixon</i>	364,762	
Ingham Spring Property, <i>Solebury</i>	600,000	
White Knight Easement, <i>Tinicum</i>	13,000	
Rockbridge Property, <i>Newtown</i>	157,500	
Fleck Easement, <i>Nockamixon</i>	161,192	
Povenski Easement, <i>Springfield</i>	187,500	
Gottlieb Easement, <i>Nockamixon</i>	330,838	
Frank Easement, <i>Durham</i>	339,629	
Hardy Easement, <i>Springfield</i>	259,185	
Snipes Easement, <i>Falls</i>	500,000	
Nace Easement, <i>Richland</i>	59,250	
Rouse Easement, <i>Tinicum</i>	165,000	
Faro Easement, <i>East Rockhill</i>	140,576	
Rattlesnake Trust Easement, <i>Durham</i>	215,598	
Slotter Easement, <i>Plumstead</i>	222,716	
Mesko Easement, <i>Springfield</i>	102,500	
Landgreen Easement, <i>Richland</i>	186,165	
Bunn Property, <i>Milford</i>	175,000	
= Current Balance		\$ 5,661,165
- Pending Projects & Applications (14)	\$ 2,532,522	
= Remaining Balance		\$ 3,128,643

DELAWARE RIVERFRONT PROGRAM

The Delaware Riverfront Program is a new funding option added to the Open Space Program under the 2007 bond initiative. The \$7-million program is aimed at facilitating land preservation along the Delaware River corridor. Consistent with the overriding guidelines of the Municipal Open Space Program, Delaware Riverfront grants are available to municipalities for the acquisition of land and conservation easements for recreation, natural resource, and farmland conservation priorities. Funding for improvement projects is also considered on a case-by-case basis.

Only the 17 riverfront communities that border the Delaware River are eligible to participate in this competitive grant program. Applicants may receive up to 50 percent of the property interest's appraised value or \$500,000, whichever is less for acquisition projects and up to \$250,000 for improvements. Applications to the Delaware Riverfront Program are accepted annually and must be received by August 1st.

Guidelines for the Delaware Riverfront Program were distributed to eligible municipalities in 2009. The first round of applications was accepted in August 2010. Two applications totaling \$1 million were received and are pending approval by County Commissioners.

DELAWARE RIVERFRONT MUNICIPALITIES:

Bensalem Township	Nockamixon Township
Bridgeton Township	Plumstead Township
Bristol Borough	Riegelsville Borough
Bristol Township	Solebury Township
Durham Township	Tinicum Township
Falls Township	Tullytown Borough
Lower Makefield Township	Upper Makefield Township
Morrisville Borough	Yardley Borough
New Hope Borough	

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

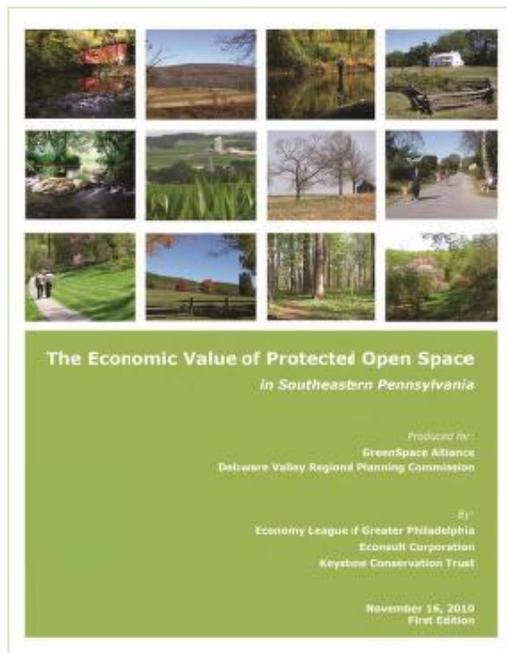
- **COUNTY OPEN SPACE, GREENWAY, AND RECREATION PLAN**

Bucks County Planning Commission is preparing a countywide Open Space Plan that involves surveys of all county, state, and local plans, with goal of setting priorities for county parks, trails and preservation. The Open Space Plan will supplement the county's Comprehensive Plan, which will address issues impacting quality of life indicators, such as agricultural preservation, natural resource protection, housing, transportation, economic development, recreation, and community services. Both documents are scheduled for completion in 2011.

- **THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF PROTECTED OPEN SPACE IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

Commissioned by GreenSpace Alliance and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, this study quantifies the economic value of protected open space for the five-county region. The report, which was released November 16, 2010, examines the economic benefits associated with preserved open space in four key areas: property values, environment, recreation and health, and jobs and revenue.

Bucks County's Peace Valley Park was examined as one of seven case studies conducted across the region. In addition to providing numerous recreational and educational activities, the park was also recognized for Lake Galena's function as a flood mitigation system and drinking water supply reservoir. The report found that home sales within a quarter-mile of the park can attribute an estimated \$35,155 of additional value.



Across the Delaware Valley region, the study found that protected open space:

- Adds \$16 billion to the value of SE Pennsylvania's housing stock - an average property value increase of \$10,000;
- Saves local governments and taxpayers more than \$132 million in annual costs associated with drinking water filtration and flood control;
- Generates more than \$270 million in state and local tax revenue; and
- Supports nearly 7,000 jobs.

BUCKS COUNTY OPEN SPACE BOARD

The Bucks County Open Space Board is comprised of nine members appointed by the County Commissioners. The Board meets monthly to review open space grant applications and make recommendations to the County Commissioners regarding the allocation of funds for the acquisition of lands and conservation easements in association with the Natural Areas, Municipal Open Space and Delaware Riverfront programs. The Board also offers advice and recommendations concerning policy, planning, conservation, use and management of open space, natural areas, parkland, and farmland purchased through the Bucks County Open Space Program.

2010 Bucks County Open Space Board Members:

Det Ansinn, Doylestown Borough

Tony Belfield, Bensalem Township

George Dranginis, Middletown Township

Dr. Joshua Feldstein, Doylestown Township

Marilyn Jacobson, Chalfont Borough

Robert Moffett, Springfield Township

Honorable W. Hart Rufe, III, East Rockhill Township

Robert Wharton, Langhorne Borough

- One Vacancy -