

**OPEN SPACE RECREATION PLAN**

**BOROUGH OF WANAQUE**  
**PASSAIC COUNTY**

*Prepared for:*

*Planning Board  
Borough of Wanaque  
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## **INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), as defined by the Green Acres Program

*articulates a local government's vision of open space and recreation. It should establish a philosophical and practical justification for the protection and preservation of open space and recreation opportunities. An OSRP provides a framework for implementation. Through an OSRP, you identify and examine open space and recreation resources important to you and lay out ways to protect and enjoy them.*

The following Open Space and Recreation Plan has been prepared for the Borough of Wanaque in accordance with the guidelines and requirements of the New Jersey Green Acres Program and includes the following elements:

- Goals and Objectives of the Plan.
- Inventory of Existing Open Space and Recreation Facilities both Public and Private.
- Needs Analysis.
- Resource Assessment.
- Action Plan.
- System Map.

The Borough currently owns 72 acres of developed open space exclusive of any Board of Education property and 7.75 acres of undeveloped open space. Additionally, there are extensive State, County and non-profit owned open space lands in the Borough, totaling over 2,723 acres that are open to the public and provide both active and passive recreational opportunities. While the North Jersey District Water Commission property (1,698 acres) is not open to the general public for recreational uses, it does provide both physical and visual conservation of vast areas of environmentally sensitive lands in the Borough. The 1,025 acres of State Forest, located in Wanaque, is part of a greater forested park system that encompasses several municipalities in two counties. It is open to the general public for passive recreational uses.

In accordance with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the total acreage owned by the Borough meets the recommended acres of developed open space land per 1,000 persons. This amount of developed open space land satisfies the needs of the 2000 population, as published by the U.S. Census. However, it should be noted that while the Borough meets the NRPA standards, continual upgrading and replacement of equipment is necessary to maintain the Borough's active open space recreational facilities.

Therefore, the focus of the Wanaque Borough Open Space Recreation Plan is to identify existing active open space recreational facilities that require upgrading and replacement of equipment, as well as to identify currently undeveloped lands for possible acquisition as preserved open space for environmental protection and for the provision of passive recreational opportunities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To accommodate the year-round recreational needs of the Borough's existing and future residents through public, private and semi-public efforts;
- To preserve and enhance environmentally sensitive areas such as steep slopes, stream corridors and woodlands from development and to ensure compliance with State restrictions pertaining to wetlands, wetland transitional buffer areas and floodplains;
- To create an open space corridor along the Ramapo Mountain connecting Wanaque with Pompton I Sakes and Ringwood;
- To promote and set aside open space areas wherever possible so as to maintain the balance between developed and undeveloped areas;
- To protect and preserve environmentally sensitive lands including habitats for endangered, threatened or rare flora and fauna;
- To create stream corridor protection by requiring sufficiently wide buffers for the preservation of streams, the associated woodlands and natural habitats, and for the protection of the watershed areas and surface water quality; and
- To improve and/or expand the existing parks and recreational facilities of the Borough, where appropriate.

**INVENTORY OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

All existing State, municipal and non-profit open space and recreational facilities are designated and shown on the accompanying "Open Space Inventory and Proposed Open Space" map. Approximately 4.4 square miles or 48% of the Borough is preserved as public and private open space.

**State of New Jersey**

**The Ramapo State Forest** is owned and managed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The area is located along the entire eastern boundary of the Borough and extends into the neighboring municipalities of Oakland and Ringwood. The portion of the park, located in Wanaque, is virtually untouched consists of 1,025 acres of forest, lake and environmentally sensitive lands. Passive recreation, in the form of hiking, is permitted in the forest.

**Borough of Wanaque**

Laurie Field is a small 0.25 acre site which contains an active recreational amenity in the form of one baseball field.

**Rainbow Lake Park** is a 8.4 acre park that contains both active and passive recreational amenities. The land area, of the park, contains a small developed playground and a full basketball court. The vast majority of the park consists of Rainbow Lake which provides passive recreation in the form of non-power boating and fishing.

**Back Beach Park** is a 41.3 acre park that contains both active and passive recreational facilities and amenities. Developed several years ago, with Green Acres funds, the site contains lighted tennis courts, a developed playground, a lighted softball field, a lighted softball/hockey field, access to the Wanaque River for fishing, boat launching to the Wanaque River, an extensive network of trails, a concession stand and a picnic area. This is the largest and most comprehensive park in the Borough of Wanaque.

**War Veterans Park** is a 9.0 acre park that contains the area commonly known as "Memorial Field." This park contains active recreational facilities in the form of two baseball fields, one of which is lighted and has a concession stand.

**Addice Park** is a 13.0 acre park that is underutilized containing active recreational facilities in the form of two baseball fields and a developed playground.

**Tremont Park** is a 2.3 acre park that contains a fully developed playground for younger children. Much of the site remains in its natural state, heavily wooded.

**Unnamed Park** is a small 0.25 acre park that contains a recently erected playground. This park is located off Conklingtown Road just east of Cannon Ball Road.

### **Board of Education**

The Board of Education owns 2 elementary schools and one high school for a total area of 52 acres.

Each school contains active recreational facilities as follows:

#### **Haskell School**

Baseball Fields (1)  
Playgrounds (1)  
Basketball Courts (1)

#### **Wanague School**

Fields (1)  
Handball Courts (2)  
Playgrounds (1)  
Basketball Courts (2)  
Soccer/Hockey Fields (2)

- **Lakeland Regional High School**

Fields (1)  
Baseball Fields (1)  
Football Fields (1)  
Tracks (1)  
Basketball Courts (1)

### **Non-Profit Organizations**

**The Elks Camp Moore** is a 30 acre site, located in the southwestern section of the Borough. This “camp” serves more than 150 Elks lodges in New Jersey and is dedicated to providing recreational-oriented experiences to handicapped children. Currently, the camp handles in excess of 600 camperships.

### **Additional Recreational Facilities**

By Developer’s agreement, the owners and developers of Highland Avenue site, commonly known as “Powder Hollow” have dedicated approximately 250 acres of the Ramapo Mountain to conservation. As a result, this portion of the mountain, adjacent to the State Forest, may now be utilized for passive recreation. As part of the recently adopted Amended approval, the developer’s have proposed to provided recreational facilities to the Borough in the firm of two baseball fields, a soccer field, parking for approximately 50 vehicles, and bathroom facilities. As part of a revised Developer’s Agreement, the final configuration of fields and amenities must be approved by the Borough Council.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

In 2000, the U.S. Census indicated the Borough's total population was 10,266. This was an approximate 5.5% population increase from the 1990 population of 9,711. The overall Borough median age was 37.6. The distribution of the children within the Borough were as follows:

- 4 and under 689 (6.7%) children
- 5-17 1,812 (17.7) children

Thus, 24.4% or 2,501 children resided in Wanaque Borough in 1990, with 54.1% or 5,550 adults ranging in age from 17-54 and 21.5% or 2,215 ranging in age from 55 and over.

The "National Recreation and Park Association" (NRPA) recommends that 6.25 to 10.50 acres of developed open space land be provided for every 1,000 persons. Therefore, the Borough should have between 65 and 109 acres of developed open space. Presently, the Borough has approximately 72 acres of dedicated developed open space exclusive of the Board of Education developed open space. Additional open space *is* present in the form of 7.75 acre site located off Stephens Lake Road which is currently undeveloped.

The Borough of Wanaque has numerous volunteer recreation organizations offering organized sports at both the local competition level and the traveling competition levels. Generally, these organizations are funded through sign up fees, fund raising and sponsorships, with only a small percentage of tax dollars being utilized.

Currently, the approximate numbers of Wanaque Borough children participating in organized sports is as follows:

- Baseball 33children
- Little League Baseball 400children
- Softball 250children
- Basketball 200children
- Soccer 440children
- Indoor Soccer 40children
- Wrestling 65children
- Football 80children
- Field Hockey 40children

The NRPA also has standards regarding the particular recreational facilities that should be provided based upon the population to be served by the facilities. The following table provides a comparison between the required standard per person per recreational facility with and the facilities currently existing in the Borough.

<u>Recreational</u> <u>Facility</u>	<u>NRPA</u> <u>Standard per</u> <u>Persons</u>	<u>Current</u> <u>School Property</u> <u>Facility</u>	<u>Current</u> <u>Additional</u> <u>Facilities</u>	<u>Total</u> <u>Facilities</u>
Baseball Field	1/5,000	1	1	2
Softball Field	1/5,000	2	4	6
Little League Field	1/20,000	0	2	2
Football Field	1/20,000	1	1	2
Soccer Field	1/10,000	3	2	5
Basketball Court	1/5,000	3	4	7
Tennis Court	1/2,000	0	2	2
Volleyball Court	1/5,000	0	0	0
Field Hockey	1/20,000	1	0	1
Golf(9 Hole)	1/25,000	0	0	0
Golf Driving Range	1/50,000	0	0	0
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	0	0	0
Running Track	1/20,000	1	0	1
Trail System	1/region	0	1*	1*
Community Center	1/25,000	0	0	0

\* As well as several miles of trails located in State Park System

As a result, the Borough presently has sufficient existing developed open space to satisfy the present and near future active recreational needs of its residents.

The Borough Open Space Advisory Committee held two committee meetings to discuss and create the proposed Open Space Recreation Plan. At its September 19, 2002 meeting, the Planning Board held a public hearing regarding the Open Space Recreation Plan and formally adopted the Plan. This plan is based upon both the Planning Board's examination and analysis of the Borough's open space needs, as well as that of the general public.

## **RESOURCE ASSESSMENT**

This section provides an assessment of those public and private land and water resources that have potential for providing open space or recreation opportunities and include:

- opportunity for creation of linear recreation and open space facilities such as trails, bicycle paths and green ways which link existing recreation and open space sites in an integrated system;
- opportunities for supporting conservation objectives such as water supply protection, wildlife and rare species protection, protection of rivers, streams and forest lands, farmland preservation and historic preservation;
- opportunities for supporting community objectives for development and land use, including open space which buffers or defines developed areas, open space which preserves scenic or distinctive landscape features and open space with development limiting characteristics such as floodplains, storm prone areas and steep slopes;
- opportunities for additional public access to waterways; and
- opportunities for the development of recreation facilities such as ballfields, playgrounds, court sports, swimming pools and golf courses.

Therefore, open space opportunities may be the acquisition of land for recreation and conservation purposes, the development of existing or acquired land for recreational and conservation purposes, the redevelopment of existing recreational facilities through upgrading and expanding existing active recreational facilities and amenities; and utilizing innovative planning design techniques with regards to private development that retain environmentally sensitive lands, including wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, stream corridors, scenic vistas, ridge lines and water bodies.

Some of the more notable natural physical features of Wanaque Borough include the following:

- **Ramapo Mountains** -This mountain area consists of a majority of the land east of Ringwood Avenue from the borough's southern boundary with Pompton Lakes to its northern boundary with Ringwood.
- **Trout Production Streams** -Within Wanaque Borough only a very small portion of the Meadow Brook is classified as a trout production stream.
- **Wanaque Reservoir** . This 1,550 acre portion of the Wanaque Reservoir consists of 2.42 square miles of the Borough's 9.21 square miles and occupies approximately 26% of the entire Borough.

**Major Lakes** . While Wanaque Borough has several ponds and lakes, the following are the major water bodies within the Borough: Wanaque Reservoir. Rainbow Valley Lake, Twin Lakes and Stephens Lake.

**Steep Topography** . Steep sloped areas are generally located along the western portion of the Borough coincident with the Ramapo Mountain; in the northwestern portion of the Borough in the Townsend Road section and in the extreme southwestern portion of the Borough south of Union Avenue. The Borough has adopted a Steep Slope Ordinance that adjusts permitted density based upon slope conditions, thus encouraging and requiring development occur in areas of less environmental sensitivity. This Ordinance also results in increased private open space/conservation areas.

## **ACTION PLAN**

The Action Plan of the Borough is two-fold: to acquire open space and to maintain/redevelop existing developed recreational parks and amenities. This Plan recommends the Borough utilize revenue from its municipal open space tax as well as seek funding from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Passaic County Open Space Trust Fund to acquire open space recreation and conservation lands that maximize the potential of existing State and local open space lands.

Existing vacant lands within the Borough for open space acquisition and preservation opportunities include, but are not be limited to, the following:

### **Acquisition**

The Borough of Wanaque has determined that the following four (4) tracts have environmental/conservation significance to the Borough and warrant preservation through municipal/public ownership.

1. **“Gallo Tract”**

This site contains approximately 119 acres and *is* located in the Townsend section of the Borough. The site is environmentally sensitive with steep slopes and wet lands. It is recommended for open space/conservation purposes.

This site has regional importance with adjacency to the North Jersey Water District Commission lands, the northern reaches of Northern Green State Forest, as well as the forested portions of West Milford, Bloomingdale and Ringwood.

2. **“Wanaque Manor”**

This site contains 26 acres and is located off the Boulevard in the southeastern portion of the Borough. The site is environmentally sensitive containing significant areas of steep slopes.

This site is located adjacent to New Jersey department of Transportation lands and Back Beach Park. Such an acquisition would further the Borough goal of creating a continuous linear corridor of conservation and parklands from Pompton Lakes to Ringwood serving as the western section of this north south corridor. It is recommended for open space/conservation purposes.

3. **“Dupont Property”**

This site contains approximately 266 acres and is located in the southeastern section of the Borough. This land has difficult terrain, contains areas of steep slopes, contains wetlands, is vacant and forested, and has little or no access to municipal roads.

From the bridge of 1-287, the site forms an integral part of a breathtaking southern and northern view of both State, county and unprotected forested lands. The valley and slopes

below protect the waters and environs of the Wanaque River. It is recommended for conservation purposes and will advance Wanaque's goal of providing a continuous open space corridor from Pompton Lakes to Ringwood.

4. **“Hillert Tract”**

This site contains approximately 20 acres and is located off Doty Road. It is environmentally sensitive, heavily wooded containing wetlands and steep slopes and has limited access to Doty Road. The site is located in the far western reaches of the Borough surrounded mainly by wooded forested lands similar in nature to it. It is the last remaining large tract of undeveloped land in this area and its preservation as open space/conservation land will serve as continued habitat for both plants and animals alike. It is recommended for open space/conservation purposes.

Existing Active Recreational Park Redevelopment/Upgrading

“Addice Park” . This park is greatly underutilized and generally in poor condition. A new formal playground has recently been constructed. However, the existing baseball field is in general disrepair, as is the parking lot. Both the baseball field and parking lot need refurbishing. In addition, the site contains several acres of unutilized land. This site is presently utilized by Lakeland Regional High School during school hours to 6:00 pm. In addition this site is utilized heavily by teen and adult recreation leagues. An overall recreation plan should be prepared which can incorporate additional active recreational amenities.

“Laurie Field” . This field is in general disrepair and requires refurbishing of the field, diamond and batting cage. Generally, utilized as an instructional and little league field, the site needs upgrading with new fencing, dugouts and bleachers.

- “Rainbow Valley Lake” . As part of this lake amenity, the existing dam must be reconstructed/replaced.
- “War Veteran’s Park” . Generally in good repair, because of its heavy utilization, upgrades and replacement of some fencing, dugouts, etc., as well as new lighting are needed to maintain the quality of this recreation complex.