

**BOROUGH OF FRANKLIN
RAILS TO TRAILS AND
GREEN ACRES AD HOC
COMMITTEE**

**FINAL REPORT OF FINDINGS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Dated: May 17, 2000

Rails to Trails Ad Hoc Committee Members

William Hodas, Chairman
Phillip Crabb, Vice Chairman
John Friend, Recording Secretary
John Christiano
Bonnie Kopsco
Frank Hennion
Lisa Kisch
Edward Allen

Rails to Trails Ad Hoc Committee Convened on the Following Meeting Dates:

March 9, 2000
March 16, 2000
March 23, 2000
March 25, 2000
March 30, 2000
April 6, 2000
April 13, 2000
April 18, 2000
April 19, 2000
April 20, 2000
April 27, 2000
May 3, 2000
May 4, 2000
May 11, 2000
May 18, 2000

**FRANKLIN BOROUGH
OPEN SPACE/RAILS TO TRAILS
AD HOC COMMITTEE**

MISSION STATEMENT: As appointees of the Mayor, our mission is to, without prejudice or bias, collect and compile data relative to the proposed State acquisition of various properties located in the Borough of Franklin and provide a recommendation relative to the land acquisition proposal.

VALUES: In carrying out our mission, members of this committee will continue to value:

- Organizational excellence;
- The views of the residents of Franklin;
- Each other;
- Problem solving partnerships;
- Courtesy and open communication; and
- Ethics and integrity.

OBJECTIVE: In order to be qualified to offer a recommendation based on personal knowledge of the areas in question, the Committee will complete the following tasks by no later than May 15, 2000.

TASKS: The following tasks will be accomplished to meet the aforementioned objective:

- Compile information relative to the assessed value of the properties and the tax revenue generated from each property.
- Physically visit the proposed sites and become informed as to each property's historic, environmental or recreational relevance to the overall plan.
- Physically visit other areas where similar open space initiatives have been put in place both in and out of Sussex County.
- Conduct a meeting open to the public to give residents an opportunity to express their comments relative to the proposal.
- Obtain further information from State of New Jersey Parks and Forestry Office relative to rails to trails programs, how they function and how they are managed, maintained, policed, etc.
- Request an informal management plan proposal from the Franklin Historical Society relative to the NJ Zinc property site.

OBJECTIVE: The Committee will make a formal recommendation to the Franklin Borough Council at their regular meeting of May 23, 2000.

TASKS: The following tasks will be accomplished to meet the aforementioned objective:

- Taking into account all of the accumulated information, the Committee will evaluate both the Green Acres and Rails to Trails initiatives.
- A written report will be drafted which will include the data collected, the Committee's findings and recommendations.
- Review the recommendations in view of the potential overall vision for Franklin Borough.

SCOPE OF GREEN ACRES AND RAILS TO TRAILS INITIATIVES

The initiatives as outlined by representatives of the State of New Jersey can be divided into two categories. For the purposes of this report, the Committee has designated the proposed plan to convert the abandoned railroad bed that traverses the Borough and connects Ogdensburg Borough with Hamburg Borough, the "Rails to Trails Initiative".

Additionally there are also a number of parcels of land within the Borough that several different State departments have expressed an interest in pursuing for acquisition purposes. The State's acquisition motivation ranges from preservation of historic sites, preservation of environmentally sensitive areas, preservation of endangered species, opportunities for passive recreation areas and overall open space preservation. These parcels are outlined in detail on the large map, which is included with this report as Exhibit A. The Committee refers in this report to these areas as the "Green Acres Initiative".

The following will more fully describe each of the "Green Acres Initiative" sites with respect to size, tax ramification and preservation relevance.

RAILS TO TRAILS INITIATIVE

Project Description:

In addition to the "Green Acres Initiative", the State also proposed that a section of railroad tracks that run from the town of Ogdensburg and continue through Franklin and lead to Hamburg be converted to a biking, hiking and walking trail. It is common knowledge that these rail lines have not been used as a train bed for quite some time. It is clear however, that there is a possibility that these lines do have a significant potential of being used as transmission lines for utilities such as sewer lines, fiber optic paths, etc.

The Committee has been advised that the railroad has no intention of selling any of these properties to individual adjacent property owners, because the rail beds have no value as a non-contiguous property. Additionally, it would not be advantageous for the rail road to sell "piece-meal" tracts to adjacent property owners because it would be much more difficult for them to manage several small properties rather than one continuous track.

The proposed trail would meander through Franklin Borough. According to Mr. Cherepy, the proposal would include the installation of fiberglass panels along the trail that would be impregnated with information relative to the historical significance of a large number of sites located on or near the trail. It is apparent that the Trail proposal has been designed to work in concert with the Green Acres plan to highlight and preserve Franklin's industrial and cultural history.

It has been further noted that the proposed trail would provide a safe alternative mode of transportation between various sites within the Borough. Additionally, it would provide a recreational and physical fitness opportunity to Franklin residents.

It is important also to note that the rail beds are exempt from taxation and therefore, there are no tax loss ramifications related to this part of the overall acquisition proposal.

Committee Findings:

The Committee has spent a considerable amount of time reviewing and considering the views of property owners whose property is located adjacent to the existing rail bed.

It was determined that while there is an abandoned railroad bed that traverses Mr. Fletcher's property, the proposed trail would not use that track. Therefore, the trail as proposed does not impact Mr. Fletcher's plans for development of the industrial park to be located off of Munsonhurst Road.

On several occasions, Mr. Louis Cherepy, Regional Superintendent of the Northern Division of New Jersey Forestry and Parks, has met with the Committee to provide further information specifically relative to the "Rails to Trails Initiative."

In view of the concerns raised by the adjacent property owners, the Committee took the following actions to become fully informed:

1. Physically visited a number of sites located along that trail, including:
 - a. Corkhill Road
 - b. Junction Street (where it is proposed to travel behind Fowler Street)
 - c. Area behind the Immaculate Conception Church
2. Traveled as a group on May 3, 2000 to visit the D&R Trail in Lambertville. The Committee met and spoke with a variety of municipal officials including the director of police, as well as various homeowners whose homes were adjacent to the trail to get a first hand account of what impact the trail has had on the community and individual property owners.
3. Conducted an open public forum on April 19, 2000 in order to give the public an opportunity to express their comments and ask questions relative to both the Green Acres and Rails to Trails Initiatives. There were approximately 130 people in attendance. A transcript of the meeting is being prepared and will become Exhibit D of this report, once it is available. Nineteen individuals spoke at the meeting, 6 were against the Rails to Trails proposal, 10 were supportive of the Rails to Trails project and 3 did not declare a position, they just asked questions. Several letters were also offered from the Immaculate Conception Church relative to the issues relating to the close proximity of the proposed trail to the existing school and playground and their need for expansion.
4. Invited Jack Carroll of the SCMUA to come to a meeting and discuss issues relative to planning for and protecting rights to run sewer lines in the future through lands that are slated to be acquired by the State.
5. Coordinated a meeting between Lou Cherepy, Committee members and representatives from the Immaculate Conception Church and School to further discuss the initiative and try to develop a plan that would address the Church's concerns.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

Concerns were predominantly expressed by homeowners whose property is adjacent to the existing rail bed and parishioners of the Immaculate Conception Church. A letter was also received from Mr. Charles Fletcher, owner of the proposed Corporate Campus project. Copies of these letters are attached herewith as Exhibit C

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

After extensive study and consideration of the State's proposal to transform the former Hanford Branch of the New York Susquehanna & Western Railroad from an abandoned railbed to a developed hiking and biking trail, the Committee has come to the following conclusions.

The benefits of such a trail running through the Borough would include a clear path from one end of town to another with the Borough's main recreational facility, pond and athletic fields, conveniently located in the middle. The trail would also interface with many historical sites.

Although the historical sites are important to the area, possibly the most important prospect is that the trail would provide a safe place for residents, more importantly children, to safely ride their bikes and exercise. After researching the subject of trails in detail, including consideration of the Committee's field trip to a community that hosts a trail, it was determined that trails are a benefit to the community they serve.

The visit to Lambertville enabled the Committee to discuss pertinent issues with both the local police director and municipal clerk. Interestingly, the Lambertville trail is also located adjacent to similar types of uses, i.e. churches, day care centers and municipal parks. Our discussions with Lambertville's municipal officials and residents whose property was adjacent to the trail revealed that there were no issues relating to the trail that distracted them from their normal daily routines. The overall consensus was that the trail was not only safe, but highly desirable.

While the benefits are clear, the proposal for the conversion of rails to trails in Franklin is not without controversy. Several neighboring properties along the rail have voiced objections to the trail for various reasons. Several property owners are concerned that the rail bed runs too close to their property and would effect their peace and quiet.

An additional area of concern relates to the Immaculate Conception Church and School. The school's issues range from safety of children to the need to expand the structure of the school due to growing enrollment. It is the Committee's understanding that the railroad does not have any intention of selling the rail beds to either individual landowners or groups.

Furthermore, this rail bed is located approximately 20+ feet below the grade of the school property. The bed will soon host a sewer line, which will not be able to be further buried because it would impede future repairs to the line.

It is the position of the Committee that the State of New Jersey should continue to have dialogue with the church/school representatives to try to develop a plan which will best protect the safety of the children as well as provide for the needs of the school's future expansion, in view of the close proximity of the existing rail bed.

FORMAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The trail would provide a source of recreation that would be easily accessible by a majority of residents in Franklin;
2. It would provide safer means of access for Borough children to travel to get to the Borough's established recreation areas at the pond, as an alternative to transiting on public roads;
3. The community at large would benefit from learning from the numerous historically and culturally sensitive sites along the trail;
4. The trail would lend itself to educational purposes in addition to recreational uses;
5. The trail in conjunction with the Green Acres project could have a positive impact on the re-establishment of positive foot traffic on Main Street;
6. With respect to adjacent property owners who have expressed concerns relative to privacy issues, the State should attempt to install buffers using fencing and landscaping where quality of life and privacy issues are of concern;
7. Where the trail is next to contiguous lots, the trail should not encroach onto existing properties, driveways, gardens, yards, etc.;

There is no debating the issue of child safety, and therefore the Committee of the opinion that the concerns of the Immaculate Conception Church cannot be ignored. But the Committee is confident that the many benefits of this initiative far outweigh the potential of the stated concerns.

Conversations with the local Police Director and Municipal Clerk in Lambertville revealed that there were no issues relating to the trail that distracted them from their normal daily routines. The overwhelming consensus was that the trail was not only safe, but highly desirable. Correspondence and conversations with the local church adjacent to the trail indicated nothing but complete acceptance and appreciation of the pathway.

In all instances except for one, each landowner had their own gate for personal access to the trail, and most only had short decorative fencing. Conversations with one of these property owners indicated initial resistance to the trail, only to later discover how much they appreciated it and was glad it existed.

Property values have generally risen on lots adjacent or close to the trail.

The State would assume responsibility for the patrolling and enforcement of law on the trails. Granted, the availability of State enforcement officers would sometimes be stretched thin, but at least the burden of responsibility would be accepted by them, of which there is no acceptance by local authorities now.

The combination of the trail initiative along with the other project proposed by the State in the borough would provide a great synergy to bring people and interest to this town, which would have long lasting and positive influence on the rehabilitation of the Main Street infrastructure, and help to bring a better quality of livelihood back to that key neighborhood.

For these reasons, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this initiative for State preservation and development, and move forward on that behalf, but would also recommend the Borough encourage the State to consider alternatives in the immediate areas of concern, such as fencing or redirection of the trail where appropriate and feasible.

Palmer Shaft and Mill Site

Project Description:

Located on Main Street, the total acreage in question represents approximately 43 acres and is in the Blighted Area Rehabilitation District Zone. The property was host to the world famous New Jersey Zinc Company Palmer Shaft and Mill. The zinc mine was the world's largest and richest. It operated from the late 1880's to 1954 when the ore body was exhausted.

The site has a number of potential impediments to development, which include steep slopes, wetlands and potential environmental clean up issues. Because of the prior mining use, there are concerns relative to the stability of geology (sink holes, etc.)

Conversely, the property does offer a strong link to Franklin's historical past. The Change House located on the site needs considerable restoration, but its outer walls are still intact. Additionally, the current owner has graciously given the Franklin Historical Society the opportunity to restore and use the time building as their museum. This building is also located on the site.

There are various foundations and structures on the site, which lend themselves to historical interpretation and understanding of Franklin's historic relevance in the area of industry and mining.

The total tax assessment for the property in question is \$275,700. Yearly tax revenue for this tract is \$9,538.00.

An additional tract is being considered for acquisition adjacent to the Zinc Mine site. The tract consists of approximately 3 1/2 acres. It is located in the Blighted Area Rehabilitation District and the Residential District. The assessed value of this property is \$44,400. Total yearly tax revenue from the property is \$1,438.

This site is proposed for Historical Preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. A documentative picture is attached in the appendix. The committee observed the structure formerly known as the Change House is still intact. The underground adit to the mineshaft still exists, as do other pieces of the original plant. The former Time/Employment building is occupied by the Franklin Historical Society and utilized as a Franklin Heritage Museum. The lower part of this tract contains original foundation infrastructure of the Mill Site, including the original smokestacks of the Power House.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

Public comment was received that this property is key to the redevelopment of Main Street.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee recognizes the clear historical value of this site. In geological and mining circles, this site is world famous. The committee sees vast potential for preserving and capitalizing on the historical assets inherent in this site as the catalyst for the rehabilitation of the Main Street and downtown area of the Borough.

The committee feels that this tract is the key piece of all the tracts proposed by the State for preservation.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

Open Cut Tract Located on Buckwheat and Evans

Project Description:

This property consists of approximately 39 acres. The property is located in the Residential District Zone. It is the location of the initial workings of the New Jersey Zinc Company. It offers several mine shafts including the Trotter Shaft, and was mined almost exclusively by hand by Hungarian immigrants beginning in the mid-1880's. This site also hosts world endangered botanical species.

The potential impediments to development at this site, include steep slopes, endangered plant species and unstable geology (sink holes, etc.)

The total tax assessment value for this property is \$116,300

Yearly tax revenue from this property is \$3,768.12

This site is proposed for Historical and Botanical Preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. A documentative picture is attached in the appendix. The committee was extremely impressed with the natural beauty and magnificence of the quarry where the former mining operations were performed. The site contains many early mine shafts and workings dating back to the 1870's. There is significant rare mineral species on the site and many artifacts of the former mining efforts. The area is adjacent to the Franklin Mineral Museum and the Buckwheat Dump.

There are also areas of world-endangered botanical species.

The committee feels that there are clear historical and other assets on this tract that should merit its preservation. It is a world famous location that, along with the other historical tracts, would lend itself to the revitalization of the Borough.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee recognizes the clear historical value of this site. In geological and mining circles, this site is world famous. The committee sees vast potential for preserving and capitalizing on the historical assets of this tract.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

Lime Kiln Located on Corkhill Road

Project Description:

Early (circa 1850's) limekiln located on Corkhill road near and opposite Kovach's Grove. Formerly used to smelt lime quarried from the Franklin Marble in the hillside behind it, which is now owned by Aerosystems, Inc. One of the largest intact limekilns left in the state, dating back even earlier than those found in Hamburg.

This site includes approximately 2 ½ acres. The property is located in the Industrial District Zone of the borough.

The approximate tax assessment value is \$10,000

The yearly tax revenue generated from this parcel is approximately \$324.00

This site is proposed for Historical Preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. A documentative picture is attached in the appendix. The committee was impressed by the structural integrity of this kiln, and of the very nature of it's existence, since many were not aware of it's presence, even when located just a few yards off of Corkhill Road.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

None received.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee recognizes the clear historical value of this site. As stated above, it is astonishing how few people are aware of it's existence. It is a solid facet of the many varied historical artifacts the Borough has to offer. It should be preserved.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

Ball's Mountain Iron Mines

Project Description:

This interesting site hosts the remains of a string of about 8-10 former iron mine holes and drifts. Most of these mine holes go to a depth of 100 feet or more. These holes were also hand dug and developed in the mid to late 1880's.

This property is located on the same block and lot as the limekiln. It is located in the Industrial District Zone.

The tax information has been included with the Limekiln information.

This site is proposed for Historical Preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. It is secluded in a heavily wooded area off of Maple Road. There are several of the mine shafts in a line extending for several hundred feet. It is a potentially dangerous site as it exists due to the deep holes that are partially hidden. It is an unlikely area for development.

It is an exceptional area of historical reference, as Franklin was one of the world's largest Iron producers before the zinc ore body was exploited. This is another significant area of Franklin that many residents are probably not aware of.

The committee feels that there are clear historical and other assets on this tract that should merit its preservation.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee recognizes the clear historical value of this site. It is the defining representation of the considerable Iron Mining workings in this town. This tract has very low probability for development.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

Pre-Columbian Indian Shelters Located on Wildcat Road

Project Description:

This site includes approximately 11 ½ acres. 3 ½ acres are currently owned by the Borough and are tax exempt.

The site is historically significant in that it hosts intact pre-Columbian Indian shelters, dating back hundreds of years.

The assessed value of the acreage to be acquired is \$74,100

The yearly tax revenue from this property is \$2,400.00

This site is proposed for Historical Preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. It is secluded in a heavily wooded area off of Wildcat Road. The Shelters are on a ridge approximately 300 feet into the tract from the road. One shelter is perhaps as large as 35-50 feet long. Artifacts have recently been found at these sites. The shelters were very impressive and heretofore unknown even to most local residents.

The committee feels that there are clear historical and other assets on this tract that should merit its preservation.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee recognizes the clear historical value of this site. It is one of the best examples of pre-Columbian Indian shelters in existence. This tract has very low probability for development.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

**Area Slated for Potential Passive
State Forest Area
Located on Wildcat Road**

Project Description:

This area includes approximately 137 acres and is located in the Residential District Zone requiring 1 acre lot sizes.

The total assessed value of the property is \$30,100, as the property is under farm land assessment.

The total tax revenue per year for the parcel is approximately \$975.00

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. It is on the upper end of Wildcat Road from roughly just past the Laner residence to the Sparta border.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee has no objection to this tract being preserved.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

Ogdensburg Fen

Project Description:

This property can best roughly be described as the swamp area between the Kennedy Avenue Bridge north adjoining the former Upstream Farms property, below Corkhill Road. This property appears to include significant wetlands and wetland buffer area. It has also been noted for hosting endangered botanical and animal species.

The estimated acreage involved in the proposed acquisition of this site is 35 acres. 9 acres are owned by the Borough and are therefore exempt from taxation. This property is located in the Residential District.

The approximate assessed value for this area is \$76,700.

The approximate tax revenue derived from this tract is \$2,485.

This tract is slated for botanical and endangered wildlife preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site individually. It was full of diverse and endangered animal wildlife. It is clearly wetlands with no possibility of development.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee has no objection to this tract being preserved. It is an unlikely tract for future development. It is desirable to preserve the diversity of wildlife and open area that this tract provides.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

**Wildcat Bog & Ravine
Located between Cork Hill
& Wildcat Roads**

Project Description:

This property includes approximately 108 acres. The property is located in the Residential District.

This site is in the area of the Limecrest Quarry, a former glacial lake, which is now a large Bog Wetland area.

The assessed value of this tract is \$411,900.

The total yearly tax revenue from this parcel is approximately \$13,345.

This tract is slated for historical, botanical and wildlife preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site individually. It contains a former lake created during the glacial period, and contains endangered botanical species and wildlife.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee has no objection to this tract being preserved. It is an unlikely tract for future development.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

Marsh/Wetland Tract Located between Wildcat and Davis Roads

Project Description:

This property includes approximately 55 acres. This tract consists of a wetland marsh area containing a diversity of plant and animal life, many of which are rare and endangered. It is located in the Residential District and is severely constrained with wetlands and is also adjacent to the Wallkill River.

The assessed value of this area is approximately \$36,000.

The total yearly tax revenue from this area is approximately \$1,166.

This tract is slated for botanical and wildlife preservation.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. It was full of diverse animal wildlife. It is clearly wetlands with no possibility of development.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee has no objection to this tract being preserved. It is an unlikely tract for future development. It is desirable to preserve the diversity of wildlife and open area that this tract provides.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

Former Church Street Bakery

Project Description:

This property is located adjacent to the Wallkill River. It has been noted that additional parking is needed to provide safe parking for fisherman who presently park along Church Street. The State plans to create a parking facility on this property to correct this safety hazard.

The current assessed value of the property is \$132,000.

The total taxes paid per year for this property is \$4,488.

This site is proposed for demolition.

Committee Findings:

The committee visited this site. It is adjacent to the Walkill River and the primary fishing areas of Church Street.

Public Comments or Correspondence:

There was no public comment or correspondence relating to this site.

Declaration of Council Recommendation:

The committee feels that this would be a logical site for local fisherman parking, relieving the hazards of parking along Church Street for recreational purposes.

Therefore, the committee **recommends** to the Borough Council that they endorse this site for State preservation, and move forward on that behalf.

The Ogdensburg Fen

Fens unlike bogs, although structurally similar, receive moisture from groundwater, precipitation, and surrounding area seeps and have water discharging from one or more points. The slow moving water through the fen minimizes acid build-up and maintains slightly acid to basic pH conditions. Some sphagnum mosses can be found growing within the fen's peat area. However, fens favor sedges and woody plants because of the moderate to high mineral content within the matrix of the peat complex.

Among the plants most commonly found growing on a fen are: red maple and northern white cedar trees, high bush blueberry, bog birch, large cranberries, sweet gale, swamp azalea, Solomon's seal, blue flag, and skunk cabbage.

Mammals that may call the fen home or use it as hunting grounds are muskrats, beaver, otter, deer, and bobcats. Insects, other invertebrates, amphibians, and reptiles along with rare and endangered species of plant and animal life are also in abundance at the fen.

Like the Wildcat Bog, the Ogdensburg Fen is an example of rare and unusually ecological conditions for this area. The fen offers the community an opportunity of both seeing first hand and exploring an ecosystem rare to the area. As a trivia side note, the stadium in the city of Boston, Massachusetts is called Fenway Park. The stadium's name is derived from the fact that it was built on a wetland fen before the era of federal wetland protection regulations.

The Bicsak and Van Horn Marsh

This marsh is probably the most valuable of the wetlands within the Borough of Franklin. Marshlands, as found here, are nature's most efficient treatment complex for purifying water. Unlike a bog or fen, water in a marsh circulates throughout the entire matrix of the system leaving behind a highly nutrient and mineral rich organic fertile area.

The vegetation on the marsh is mostly grasses and floating leaves aquatic plants. Take a ride on Maple Street and observe the abundance of cattails, watercress, and pickerel weed in the brook crossing under the road. Also note the abundance of loosestrife with its purple coloring in late summer. As a side note, loosestrife is an invasive plant taking over the cattails in the marsh. The Native American's considered a marsh one of their most valuable resources, providing food and material from which to make baskets, pottery, clothing, and shelter.

The marsh is a haven for wildlife. Redwing black birds, kingfishers, great blue herons, ducks (both mallard and wood ducks), and geese all have been seen nesting in the marsh. There is an abundance of reptiles, amphibians, insects, invertebrates, and large and small mammals living in and visiting the marsh daily. This marsh probably has the highest level of bio-diversity in the borough and in this immediate area. Once it has been preserved, the marsh will become the jewel of Franklin's open space.

Overall Tax Information

Because several of the proposed acquisitions are depicted as not including all property located in several block and lots, the tax information offered is approximated.

TOTAL BOROUGH-WIDE ASSESSED VALUE	\$227,057,535
APPROXIMATE ASSESSED VALUE OF SLATED ACQUISITION PROPERTIES	\$ 1,093,900
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BOROUGH ASSESSED VALUE	½ of 1% (.5%)
FRANKLIN BOROUGH'S TOTAL BOROUGH-WIDE TAX LEVY	\$ 7,534,985
APPROXIMATE REVENUE RECEIVED FROM SLATED ACQUISITION PROPERTIES	\$ 39,718
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL BOROUGH TAX LEVY	½ of 1% (.5%)

In addition while studying the taxable impact that the proposed acquisition may have on the Borough, it is important to consider the State's commitment to provide municipalities with in lieu of tax payments for a period of 13 years following a formal acquisition.

Based on the State's policy, the in lieu of payment for the first year will equal the total tax based on the assessed value. The amount will decrease on a yearly basis at a rate of 7.7% per year until it reaches a rate of \$2 per acre. This will occur after 13 years. At which time, the State would pay the Borough \$2 per acre in lieu of taxes in perpetuity.

Below is a breakdown as to the approximate in lieu of payments that could be expected if all of the "Green Acres Initiative" sites were actually acquired by the State:

Total in lieu of payment first year	\$39,718
Total in lieu of payment second year	\$36,660
Total in lieu of payment third year	\$33,602
Total in lieu of payment fourth year	\$30,544
Total in lieu of payment fifth year	\$27,486
Total in lieu of payment sixth year	\$24,428
Total in lieu of payment seventh year	\$21,370
Total in lieu of payment eighth year	\$18,312
Total in lieu of payment ninth year	\$15,254
Total in lieu of payment tenth year	\$12,196
Total in lieu of payment eleventh year	\$9,138
Total in lieu of payment twelfth year	\$6,080
Total in lieu of payment thirteenth year	\$3,022

Thereafter, the in lieu of minimum would be calculated at \$2 per acre multiplied by the total number of effected acres, which is according to our calculation approximately 450 acres. The minimum in lieu of payment therefore would be \$900.00.

FURTHER COMMENTS REGARDING THE FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful review and consideration of all of the information gathered, the Committee makes the following findings of fact and recommendations relative to the two initiatives which, for purposes of clarity, have been broken down into two distinct categories.

In addition to studying the physical and historical features of these properties, the Committee personally visited each of the sites during a field trip meeting held on March 25, 2000. Photos were taken during this trip, were mounted on presentation boards for review by the public and are offered with this report as Exhibit B.

The Committee also considered information received from the Franklin Borough Historical Society relative to potential future plans for the NJ Zinc Mine site.

The Committee also took into consideration existing land use approvals for additional development within the Borough. Existing site plan and subdivision approvals include the proposed development of an additional 350 condominiums in the Route 517 area and a 60 units senior housing project on Main Street.

Other potential development projects are proposed or contemplated on Davis Road, Scott Road and off of Jenkins Road. These potential projects could potentially generate another 50 or more single-family homes if approved.

Green Acres Initiative:

The proposed Green Acres project is intended to preserve areas within the state that contain land which will be held in trust to assure that future generations have open spaces available. In the case of the Borough of Franklin, these areas still exist and the State is interested and willing to consider acquiring these properties. The special circumstances relative to the Franklin sites are that the lands under consideration have, in most cases, either special historical relevance to the area or host plants and/or animals that are rare not just within the metropolitan area, but worldwide.

It has further been clear that it would be the State's desire that they work in concert with the Franklin Historical Society with respect to the potential future management of the up-land portion of the NJ Zinc Mine property. It is the opinion of the Committee that if a sound management plan were implemented with respect to the historical sites, particularly the sites in the Main Street area, i.e., NJ Zinc Mine Site and the Open Cut property, this project could serve as a cornerstone to a revitalization plan for Main Street.

Perhaps this quotation from one Committee person best sums up Franklin's potential and the Borough's responsibility to be proactive in the area of historic preservation:

"With each passing year, those whose lives were intertwined with the mining in Franklin leave this world and us and with them goes the history of why they and their families came here. We need to insure that their history is told to every person passing our way. They deserve more than a faded photograph in a museum. We have a great story of immigration that parallels any to be found at Ellis Island."

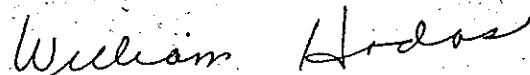
Furthermore, the Committee considered the fact that in most cases these properties are considered either non-buildable or challenged with constraining development issues such as unresolved environmental clean-up problems, wetlands, steep slopes and unstable geology due to mine shafts, sink holes, etc. They further considered the fact that the potential loss of tax revenue would be minimum at less than 1% of the current tax base. Additionally, the anticipated in lieu of taxes would offset that loss over a period of 13 years.

The Committee is also of the opinion:

1. That the Board of Public Works and SCMUA have the opportunity to review the formal acquisition prior to the transfer of property to insure that easements are in place to provide for the possibility of future sewer lines that may need to be run through the slated acquisition site. The endorsement should also be conditional upon the State agreeing that specific easements determined to be necessary by the BPW and/or SCMUA will be granted and recorded prior to or simultaneously with the filing of the deeds of transfer of the property from the present owner to the State of New Jersey.
2. That the Borough have an active role in the development of the Management Plan for the properties slated for acquisition.

The members wishes to express their appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee. We are pleased to announce that the Committee came to the conclusions noted herein by unanimous vote.

We trust you will find this information useful in making your decision in relation to these initiatives and project. The Committee continues to stand ready to assist the Council in any way found to be necessary now or in the future particularly with respect to the development of a general management plan.



William Hodas
Chairman, Rails to Trails Ad Hoc Committee

Dated: 5/19/2000

Addendum to

Green Acres Report

Wildcat Bog, Ogdensburg Fen, and Bicsak and Van Horn Marsh

May 22, 2000

The Wildcat Bog

Bogs are unique since they are looked upon as archeological vaults containing evidence of the flora and fauna from thousand of years in the past. The Wildcat bog is such a structure and very unique to this area. Most bogs are commonly found in the cold north where they are associated with kettle holes and boreal conditions or on the outer coastal plains of the Atlantic as in the Pine Barrens of South Jersey and Cape Code, Massachusetts.

Bogs, as found at the wildcat, are active growing peat surfaces of sphagnum, saturated with water and having no point of discharge. Precipitation is the bog's main source of moisture. Bogs have low pH acid conditions, are low in nutrient, and have low species diversity.

Among the plants commonly found growing on or adjacent to bogs are: Atlantic white cedar, tamarack, black spruce, heaths (bog laurels, leatherleaf, small cranberry, crowberry, pepperbush, and blueberry), sedges, lichens, and the carnivorous pitcher plants and sundew. Larger mammals such as deer, fox, racoons, and bear will visit and cross over the bogs, but seldom live there because of the harsh conditions. Some birds, small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and insects find the bog a protective habitat from predators. Many of these such as the bog turtle, four-toed salamander, and rare frogs have been listed as endangered.

The metabolic action of decomposition is greatly retarded or non-existing in bogs. This is due to the low pH conditions and depletion of oxygen below the bog's surface. Many species of plants, animals and other residues trapped or deposited in the bog over the years are preserved as if at the time of death conditions because of these non-decaying environmental factors. The bog is a stratification of history, sometimes dating back thousands of years. Core samples taken from bogs have given insight into past climate conditions, major global evens in history, and inhabitants of the past. Bogs are clearly a treasure vault of natural history worth preserving.