

**Francis Rapa, Delaware Bay Regional Manager
New Jersey Conservation Foundation
Remarks
NJDEP Public Hearing, Proposed Conveyance of Former Durand Glass Property
May 7, 2014
Millville, NJ**

[Introduction and thanks]

This proposed conveyance promises to set a harmful precedent that will negatively affect residents, entire communities and the environment across New Jersey.

It threatens the integrity of the entire public open Space preservation program in New Jersey.... past, present and future.

It exposes all public preserved land to potential development threats from political expediency and short-sighted planning.

It threatens to weaken one of the nation's most successful open space programs..... including over 50 years of Green Acres open space acquisitions, 13 voter-approved bond issues, AND a million acres of State Parks, Forests, Natural Lands and State Wildlife Management Areas, like this property.

It threatens to undermine public trust in New Jersey's open space program, one of the most popular programs among the State's citizens, and one of its greatest success stories.

It further threatens to undermine public support for future open space ballot questions.

It threatens to discredit the work of expert DEP staff who objectively and scientifically evaluate land for important qualities and worthiness of preservation.

It threatens to undermine the sportsmen and sportswomen, naturalists and other outdoor enthusiasts who depend on State lands for recreation and leisure.

And, particularly, it shortchanges the City of Millville, its residents and taxpayers.

Millville, no doubt, is in need of jobs and sustainable economic growth.

But diverting protected lands to factory development is not the answer.

If you listen to some local officials, you will hear that there's too much preserved land, and not enough space for growth.

But in fact, over 3,000 acres – nearly 5 square miles - of Millville are devoted to industrial and commercial enterprises.

At what point do City leaders decide that they want to protect wildlife habitat, water quality and environmentally sensitive areas, and grow industry and commerce in more appropriate locations?

Yet, rather than aggressively pursue infill development, redevelopment, brownfield development and adaptive reuse, some will direct taxpayer resources to facilitate development in Millville's best and most vulnerable natural places... AND NOW, on publicly owned parkland.

Millville residents deserve better.

Just because Millville has a City form of government, doesn't mean that the entire municipality should be intensively developed, or that its rich natural heritage is expendable.

Along with its people, Millville's natural assets are, in large part, what make this city worth investing in, working in, and living in.

Don't squander your most valuable assets in exchange for short-term gain.

Sale of this public trust land to the City of Millville, or any entity, for the purpose of development is an all-around bad idea.

The New Jersey Conservation Foundation not only opposes this proposed conveyance, but we respectfully urge the City and the Department to withdraw this proposal before it goes any further.

There's far too much at risk to stay on this path.

Thank You