

# New Jersey State Land Acquisition Strategy

COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITIES TO FOCUS ON LAND PRESERVATION PRIORITIES

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## Executive Summary

New Jersey has a longstanding commitment to preserving land to protect our precious natural resources and to provide recreational spaces for our residents. Created in 1961, the Green Acres Program within the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has helped preserve more than 725,000 acres of open space to establish and expand our wonderful system of State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, and Nature Preserves. Working together with New Jersey's communities, we can do even more!

Given the continuing pressures of land development and the impacts of climate change, the DEP desires to accelerate the pace of land preservation and focus on the most important lands. To do so, the Green Acres State Land Acquisition Program has crafted three key strategic initiatives and methodologies for implementing them, as follows:

### Key Strategic Initiatives

**Connecting Habitat Across New Jersey (CHANJ):** This strategy enhances habitat connectivity for wildlife by identifying and acquiring key properties in high-need areas. Through targeted landowner outreach and collaboration with nonprofits and municipal officials, the DEP aims to create a more connected landscape, supporting biodiversity and ecological health.

### Key Species



Bobcat



Bog Turtle



North American  
River Otter



Monarch Butterfly



Black Swallowtail



Spotted Salamander

**Expansion and Creation of Urban State Parks:** This strategy involves actively seeking land in urban areas that is suitable for future parks. By collaborating with local governments, the DEP ensures alignment with municipal planning efforts, thereby enhancing close-to-home recreational opportunities and maximizing the efficient expenditure of public funds.

## Expansion and Creation of Urban State Parks



Jersey City on the Hudson River



Riverfront walkway at Liberty State Park in Jersey City



Transforming the Delaware River waterfront in City of Camden



Rails-to-trails project in City of Elizabeth



**Natural Carbon Sequestration:** Focusing on climate resilience, this initiative targets land acquisition and reforestation in areas with significant carbon storage potential. By collaborating with internal and external partners, the DEP will enhance carbon sequestration, promoting long-term environmental sustainability while benefiting from the multiple environmental, community, and economic services that forests provide.



Healthy forests absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, thereby reducing this climate warming greenhouse gas in the atmosphere. Forests also generate oxygen, cleanse the air, protect water quality, stabilize and enrich soils, control storm water runoff, decrease flooding, mitigate extreme heat, provide wildlife habitat, and are wonderful places for people to enjoy nature.

### **Implementation Methodologies**

**Collaborative Open Space Management:** Recognizing the need for innovative partnerships, this initiative seeks to involve local governments in managing state-acquired properties. This initiative complements the DEP's commitment to expanding urban parks and protecting key habitat. Sharing operational responsibilities helps the DEP expand open spaces sustainably while maximizing resource efficiency and fostering local involvement.

**Getting the Word Out — *Marketing Land Acquisition*:** This strategy focuses on increasing awareness among property owners, the real estate community, and local governments about the benefits of selling or donating land to the state. By implementing a proactive marketing campaign, the DEP will emphasize fair market value offers and responsible stewardship, aiming to attract more land offers and increase public open space and recreation lands in New Jersey.

The DEP looks forward to working with our community partners to accelerate land preservation for a better New Jersey!