



## **CHERRY HILL ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

---

### **Cherry Hill Trails Program**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.**

Cherry Hill Township residents have insufficient opportunities to access trails within the Township. The current inventory of recognized Township off-road, non-motorized trails totals less than a mile falling far short of the Cherry Hill Master Plan standard. However, the Township does have a wealth of Open Space land. Developing a trail system on Cherry Hill Open Space and other township public lands is the purpose of the Cherry Hill Trails Program (Program). Over 10 miles off-road trails at 13 locations are ready for formal development.

Trails have the following benefits:

- enhancing the connection between people with nature
- expanding community opportunities for:
  - recreation
  - education
  - exploration
  - solitude
  - inspiration
- promoting good physical and mental health by providing opportunities to breathe fresh air and escape from stress
- supporting Cherry Hill's Green Initiative and its sustainability goals

The Program will significantly enlarge the inventory and network of non-motorized off-road trails throughout the township, link neighborhoods, and county and regional trail plans where appropriate. Trails will be developed on Township land, thus expanding environmentally appropriate uses of Open Space lands for Cherry Hill residents.

Trails development adds community resources, but requiring few Cherry Hill tax dollars. No additional Township staff will be hired to develop the trails specified in this Program. Grant funding and community volunteer resources are key elements in the Program's implementation.

The Cherry Hill Environmental Advisory Committee (CHEAC) played a key role in the Program's development and will continue its effort for the Program's implementation. CHEAC has and will continue to work closely and primarily with the Recreation Department, as well as other departments including Public Works and Community Development for trail system development, and with the Mayor's Office for general township support, public outreach, and promotion.

## **I. Need.**

### **A. Trails Availability.**

1. The 2000 Cherry Hill Master Plan indicates that the Township should have one mile of trail for every 1,000 residents. This plan recorded approximately 15 miles of fitness and exercise trails, but did not specify locations. These distances counted tracks at schools and parks. Off-road trails in natural areas were not included, since none formally existed in the year 2000.
2. Cherry Hill's Open Space lands exist in various parts of the Township, but these lands do not have developed trails to allow residents to access the many natural features including streams, lakes, meadows, and forests in an environmentally sensitive manner. This Program addresses the need for more off-road trails, while expanding access to nature for Cherry Hill residents.

### **B. Trail Benefits.**

1. Promotes physical fitness as well as a connection to nature. Connecting with nature is an important element of child development to prevent what has been currently termed "nature deficit disorder", by "Last Child in the Woods" author, Richard Louv. Therefore, it is in the interest of the Cherry Hill Township to develop a trail system then manage those trails to secure the highest benefit for township residents.
2. Encourages the use of less polluting alternative transportation. Some trails connect portions of neighborhoods and provide the nucleus of a trail system that could be expanded to create a linked network of trails throughout the township, county and multi-county areas.
3. Provides access to Cherry Hill's green spaces. These trails open township Open Space lands for nature-related activities such as birding, nature observation, school outdoor laboratories, and sites for community service opportunities.

## **II. Scope.**

- A. Program Overview. This document portrays the proposed development of a Township-wide system off-road, non-motorized trail system focusing on Township owned lands developed with key funding from external sources, and built primarily with volunteer labor.

- B. Trail Uses. The Program's trails will be limited to non-motorized travel, and focus on recreation and exposure to nature and the outdoors. The system of trails will include the following uses:
  - 1. Hiking
  - 2. Biking
  - 3. Canoeing/kayaking
  - 4. Nature exploration, observation, connection
  - 5. Cross-country skiing
  
- C. Trail Locations. The Program features trails on the following potential categories of Cherry Hill Township owned land:
  - 1. Open Space
  - 2. Township Owned
  - 3. School Board Owned
  - 4. Other
  
- D. This Program will be updated as new trails are added to the Cherry Hill Trails Program inventory. This includes expansion of the trail system at currently addressed sites and the development of trails at new locations.

### **III. Implementation.**

- A. Goal and Objectives.
  - 1. Goal. Increase the capability of residents to experience nature via easily accessible means.
  - 2. Objectives.
    - a. Officially designate at least 10 trails by the end of FY 2010.
    - b. Provide a nature trail component on at least 3 trails
  
- B. Background.
  - 1. The Office of the Mayor brought together CHEAC, and the Cherry Hill Department of Recreation to explore the concept of trail development, with an emphasis on using Cherry Hill Open Space lands.
  - 2. This meeting spawned the planning for a trail system in the Colwick section.
  - 3. Nature trail development was coordinated by CHEAC and The Cherry Hill Recreation Department, a collaboration that designated two township nature trail locations; Barclay and Croft Farms.
  - 4. Continued collaboration between the Recreation Department and CHEAC resulted in development planning for this Program.
  - 5. CHEAC developed a Cherry Hill Habitat Restoration Program Plan and presented it to the Mayor's Office for review and approval in July 2009. This Program Plan incorporated a no-mow provision for

a number of Cherry Hill Open Space parcels. Implementing the recommended no-mow actions created opportunities for trail development, particularly in areas currently maintained as lawns by active Township mowing. If fully recommended no-mow actions are disapproved, trail development efforts at selected Open Space parcels will not reach their full potential. If approved, trails through meadows will be created as reflected in this Program.

C. Implementation Actions. CHEAC and the Recreation Department will take the lead in carrying out Program implementation actions with primary support from the other Cherry Hill government organizations discussed above, along with any federal, state, non-governmental organizations, and community members who agree to assist.

1. Inventory.
  - a. Site reconnaissance was conducted at selected Open Space parcels to determine trail development potential.
  - b. Other Cherry Hill lands categories described earlier and Open Space parcels not originally visited will be assessed to determine trail development suitability.
2. Prioritized Trail Development List.
  - a. The trails inventory and site reconnaissance provided an opportunity to produce a list of trails sites and distances.
  - b. The sites selected for trail development as a result of this inventory are shown in Appendix A for FY 2010 trail development and Appendix B for FY 2011 trail development.
  - c. The recommendations were based on site suitability, resources needed, construction required, and Township location.
3. Site Specific Plans. These will be developed for each trail location. Trail design and development plans will be guided by the following principles and/or criteria:
  - a. Application of conservation principles
  - b. Requirement for low maintenance
  - c. Involvement of volunteers in the trail system's construction. This will include the development of opportunities for youth, such as Eagle Scout and Gold Award projects
  - d. Ongoing trail maintenance through recruitment of volunteers
  - e. Prevention of trail vandalism through township resident support
  - f. Trail development/maintenance through use of external funding wherever feasible
  - g. Trail Plan contents. Each trail's plan will include at least the following:
    - Layout
    - Resources needed
    - Construction requirements
    - Signage needs
    - Interpretive materials needed

4. Community Involvement.
  - a. Council leadership and Council members will be briefed on the Program.
  - b. Neighborhood organizations, where appropriate, will be solicited for input and support.
  - c. Program edits will be made based on feedback received.
5. Promotion and outreach.
  - a. Promoting the existence of trails is a key Program element.
  - b. Providing the public with the availability of township trails is important to accomplish the goal of the program; increase the capability of residents to easily connect with nature.
  - c. Recognition. The Program will seek national recognition for its trails through the American Recreational Trails (ART) Program. Applications are due annually on 1 September. If approved, a sign can be purchased from the ART program showing its attainment of national recognition. It will be added to a national database and added to the Cherry Hill Township website.
  - d. The network of trails developed as part of this program can form the basis of hiking, naturalist led walks, and school study programs throughout the township.
6. Trail Maintenance.
  - a. Ongoing maintenance is crucial for trail sustainability.
  - b. A Cherry Hill Trail Crew will be developed to create a volunteer force to maintain Cherry Hill trails specified in this plan.
  - c. The township's website and local media will be used to publicize the need for Trail Crew members.
7. Trail Improvements.
  - a. A list of trail improvements, such as raised walkways, erosion control and expansion will be developed and maintained. This list will provide community members opportunities for conservation community service. Trail crews may perform these projects.
  - b. Grant Applications. CHEAC and the Cherry Hill Recreation Department will apply for appropriate grants and related funding to gain resources for trail development and/or improvements.

#### **IV. Program Responsibilities**

##### **A. Mayor's Office**

1. Provide vision for an off-road trails program
2. Provide funding if available
3. Assist with Trail Program outreach and promotion via media and web
4. Provide guidance on community review and support of the Program.
5. Assist with developing community trail input forums

- B. Department of Recreation
  - 1. Collaborate with CHEAC in the implementation of this Program
  - 2. Apply for trail development grant funding
  - 3. Manage contracts
  - 4. Perform purchasing actions
  - 5. Provide signage consistent with Township trail sign standards
  - 6. Coordinate Program with other Cherry Hill departments and external regulatory agencies
  - 7. Maintain the master list of trail improvements and maintenance needs
  - 8. Maintain the Township's master trails list
  
- C. CHEAC
  - 1. Provide trail development and maintenance leadership
  - 2. Perform reconnaissance, then propose trail locations and layout
  - 3. Recommend trail uses
  - 4. Determine nature trail locations and layout
  - 5. Prepare nature trail guides for nature trails
  - 6. Recruit and organize volunteer labor to construct nature and other trails as available.
  - 7. Coordinate with youth or other groups agreeing to perform trail construction and/or maintenance projects.
  - 8. Develop trail maintenance and improvement needs
  - 9. Prepare nature trail promotional materials and announcements
  - 10. Develop nature trail information, including location, directions, maps, pictures, activities, and safety considerations for posting on the CHEAC and/or other appropriate Cherry Hill websites
  - 11. Assist with grant application development for trail development construction and/or improvement.
  - 12. Provide letters of support for trail related grant or other funding opportunities.
  - 13. Seek letters of support from appropriate organizations to bolster trail development grant applications.
  - 14. Coordinate with the Department of Public Works to identify locations where trails needed to be mowed.
  - 15. Coordinate with county and state Open Space agencies and Green Acres Program, as needed, with the Recreation Department, for permits and approvals.
  - 16. Update the program as needed.
  
- D. Department of Public Works
  - 1. Review and approve trail improvement structures, such as bridges.
  - 2. Provide hand tools for Program volunteers, as appropriate and available.
  - 3. Mow selected Cherry Hill lands in accordance with the locations approved in the Cherry Hill Habitat Improvement Plan or its

replacement, which will create trails in meadow or scrub/shrub vegetative types.

E. Community Development

1. Provide maps and/or aerial photos for support of trail layout efforts
2. Provide GPS trail mapping support and electronic additions to Cherry Hill Township maps.

**V. Submitted by:**

Lewis E. Gorman III

Chair

Cherry Hill Environmental Advisory Committee

856-482-0984-h

## **Cherry Hill Trails Program**

**APPENDIX A. Locations for Phase I Trail Development. These trails are ready for development or official designation in FY 2010. Most only require signage and outreach.**

- 1. Barclay Farmstead Nature Trail**
- 2. Barclay Farmstead Trails**
- 3. Croft Farm Nature Trail**
- 4. Croft Farm Hiking Trails (Farmstead Side of Brace Road)**
- 5. Downs Farm Trails**
- 6. Erlton Park North Trails (paved section only)**
- 7. Kresson Road Trails**

**APPENDIX B. Program Locations for Phase II Trail Development. These trails are ready for development or official designation in FY 2010, but require solicitation of community input and support.**

- 1. Borton Mill Trails**
- 2. Bunker Hill Trails**
- 3. Charleston Trail**
- 4. Cherry Valley Trail**
- 5. Colwick Trails (also requires NJDEP approvals)**
- 6. Colwick Nature Trail (also requires NJDEP approvals)**
- 7. Colwick Canoe Trail, Pennsauken River, South Branch (also requires NJDEP approvals)**
- 8. Downing Trail**
- 9. Erlton Park North Trails (meadow sections only)**
- 10. Old Orchard Trails**
- 11. Surrey Place Trails**

**APPENDIX C. Status of Cherry Hill Trails Program Trails.**

**AS OF: 4 January 2010**

Name	Location	Distance		Trail Uses			
		Feet	Miles	Ped.	Cycling	Boating	Handicap
Barclay Farmstead Nature Trail	Barclay Farmstead	2373	0.45	1			
Barclay Farmstead Trails	Barclay Farmstead	1353	0.26	1	1		1
Borton Mill Trails	Brace & Borton Mill Rds.	7920	1.50	1	1		
Bunker Hill Trail System	Bunker Hill Basin & Bobwhite Ave	6650	1.26	1	1		
Charleston	Charleston Ave	2460	0.47	1	1		
Colwick Canoe Trail	Pennsauken River, South Branch	100	0.02			1	
Colwick Trail System (includes Nature Trail)	Pennsauken River, South Branch	9300	1.76	1			
Covered Bridge Trail	Covered Bridge Rd	1482	0.28	1	1		
Croft Farm Nature Trail	Croft Farm-Farmstead Section	1717	0.33	1			
Croft Farm Trails	Croft Farm-Farmstead Section	6201	1.17	1	1		
Downing Trail	Downing Section-East	2410	0.46	1	1		
Downs Farm Trails	Burnt Mill Road	5326	1.01	1	1		
Erlton North Trails	Near Clara Barton School	2835	0.54	1	1		
Kresson Road Trails	Kresson & Springdale Rds.	10979	2.08	1	1		
Old Orchard Trails	Between Old Orchard Park and Beck School	3588	0.68	1	1		
Surrey Place Trails	Surrey Place Basin area	1863	0.35	1	1		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>66,557</b>	<b>12.61</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>