

Conservation Plan

The Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28) provides guidelines for the content of a conservation plan element as part of a municipal master plan as follows:

“A conservation element providing for the preservation, conservation, and utilization of natural resources, including, to the extent appropriate, energy, open space, water supply, forests, soil, marshes, wetlands, harbors, rivers and other waters, fisheries, endangered or threatened species wildlife and other resources, and which systematically analyzes the impact of each other component and element of the master plan on the present and future preservation, conservation, and utilization of those resources.”



This conservation element, together with Weymouth Township’s Environmental Resources Inventory (the “ERI”), and background data included in the Land Use Element, addresses the above guidelines. The ERI is an inventory of the Township’s natural assets and environmental resources and was completed in 2009. The conservation element provides policy guidance and recommendations to address the resources and problems discussed in the ERI. It also establishes a sustainable basis for long-term natural resource protection and conservation relative to other objectives of the Township’s Master Plan.

Preserving the Township’s natural resources allows for continuation of natural processes and for people to enjoy them for generations to come. Natural and cultural resources present in Weymouth Township are assets that are beneficial to sustaining the natural environment, enhancing quality of life, and enhancing economic aspects. The approaches outlined here strive to protect, maximize and expand these assets.

The recommendations presented in this conservation plan are largely in the form of strategies the Township should pursue to ensure resource conservation. The resource categories include greenways, soil, groundwater, surface water, wetlands, air quality, vegetation, energy. Issues related to Open Space, Solid Waste and protection of Historic Resources are addressed in other elements of the municipal Master Plan.

The Conservation Plan’s overriding goals, objectives, and recommendations intend to retain and improve the quality and character of the lives of the citizens of Weymouth Township. The Conservation Plan is built upon the premise that Weymouth’s existing natural and historic resources shape the way in which leisure time is spent, affect the long-term strength of the economy and property values, determine whether there is clean air and water, support the network of living things of which we are a part, and affect the character of the community.

This Conservation Plan identifies an implementation strategy and additional planning steps necessary to continue this effort and makes recommendations to improve the balance between manmade and natural resources. The approach taken is to describe the natural resource conditions and, through a variety of community-based programs, suggest mechanisms to support the natural resources of the community.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The overall goal of the Conservation Element is to preserve and maintain the ecological, historic, visual, agricultural and scenic resources of the Township, preserve the environment and maintain and enhance the overall quality of life for Township residents.

Objectives

1. Identify and protect ecological, historic, visual, agricultural and scenic resources through the use of creative land development techniques (such as clustering, homestead exchange program and mandatory simultaneous clustering and transfer of development credits for residential projects, flexible implementation of setbacks and buffers) and other methods as may be found effective and practical.
2. Continue to use the local open space tax to preserve environmentally sensitive areas, agricultural lands, parkland, historic resources and other conservation areas. In addition, pursue other State and County funding mechanisms and methods of acquisition and/or preservation as available and practical (i.e., conservation easements, private donations.)
3. Proactively protect, maintain and expand the community forest, including street trees, park landscape and natural areas, wherever they occur. Promote and enhance the ecological management of forested lands in the Township including goals of achieving Forest Health and adequate fire management.
4. To the extent possible, encourage existing agricultural areas to remain. Where possible employ right-to-farm rules, land and/or development rights acquisition, and other methods where practical to preserve agriculture.
5. Maintain design and siting standards to protect the Township's historic and rural character, particularly in the Township's original villages of Dorothy and Belcoville and along those roadways where natural vegetation, farmland or open space remain. These historic features and rural/farmland areas should be preserved wherever possible. They establish the pastoral open character of much of the Township and represent the community's heritage.
6. Encourage conservation of individual archaeological and historical landmarks and clusters of locally significant historic sites predominantly found in the villages of Dorothy and Belcoville.

7. Preserve and improve the quality of both surface water bodies and groundwater resources. Preserve the ecological integrity of the Great Egg Harbor River, South River and the Tuckahoe River in particular

Open Space

Open space preservation is a crucial part of any conservation plan. Not only is it effective for natural resource protection, but it is important for people as well, since the availability of open space is closely linked with an enhanced quality of life. It is crucial to carefully manage existing areas, and expand the Township's stock of open space where realistic opportunities present themselves - now and in the future. The Open Space and Recreation Plan Element of this Master Plan provides a comprehensive analysis of these issues.



Weymouth Township already has an Open Space and Recreation Plan with which it can advance the goals and objectives of this topic. Building on this valuable foundation, the Environmental Resource Inventory provides important details on the resource areas that are most vulnerable and of optimal value as open space. Potential specific Open Space Policies are outlined below.

Open Space Policies

- Use open space preservation as a primary means for conserving natural resources.
- Use a variety of methods to secure permanent open space, including easements, purchase, and partnering with regional and state organizations.
- Incorporate Township's Open Space and Recreation plan as part of the Master Plan.

Methods for Acquiring and Funding Public Open Space

- Fee Simple Acquisition – This involves a direct purchase of a parcel by the town or open space trust organization, with the intention of creating permanent open space. Vacant land is the most common target of this type of acquisition technique but in certain cases, developed property may also be acquired.
- Bargain Sale – Property owners sometimes are willing to sell their land to the township for less than market value for open space or other public purposes. Reasons one might sell below market value include reduced maintenance costs and tax benefits.

- Property Exchange – Towns sometimes have a surplus of public land, meaning they could use it for exchange in acquisition of environmentally sensitive properties.
- Open Space Tax – In recent years, many New Jersey counties and municipalities have, with voter approval, established dedicated open space taxes. The revenues from an open space tax can support a pay-as-you-go strategy for open space preservation.
- Green Acres – This State Program carries out the state’s purchases of conservation and recreation lands, and provides open space matching grants to municipal governments, county governments, and tax-exempt non-profit organizations.
- Issuing Bonds – Governments will sometimes borrow money for open space by issuing bonds. The issuance of long-term general obligation bonds to finance open space acquisitions has a compelling rationale: undeveloped land, or easements on such land, may not be available in the future at a reasonable price. Using bond proceeds today for acquisition assures that future generations will enjoy the fruits of preservation.
- Capitalizing on Economic Conditions -- The current national economic downturn has resulted in depressed market values of real property, meaning that this may represent a unique opportunity for purchasing open space.
- Create an Endowment – Individual donors, through bequests and donations help create endowments. Endowments can be coordinated by non-profits/foundations and used for the acquisition and maintenance of open space.

Increasing Open Space without Purchasing Property

- Conservation Easements – Conservation easements are permanent deed restrictions that prevent land from being developed. These restrictions typically are effective in perpetuity, or at least beyond the tenure of the current owner. These easements can allow for public access, which is useful when trying to construct hiking trails or bikeways. This is a very important tool for several different resources, including the establishment of greenways.
- Master Plan Adjustments – Changes to the Master Plan and resulting conservation zoning designations should be made as open space protection priorities are refined.
- Cluster Zoning – This involves the town allowing greater than normally allowed density of buildings on a single piece of land in exchange for the owner leaving the rest of the parcel for conservation.
- Transfers of Development Rights (TDR) – Similar to cluster zoning, TDR involves exchanging the rights (in the Pinelands, known as Pinelands Development Credits) to build at a higher density in appropriate areas while conserving environmentally important parcels in exchange. The Township’s Homestead Exchange Program is a slightly different approach to this concept as well.
- Landscaping – Landscaping decisions made on both private and public property are potentially useful for creating or extending open space. An important step is to encourage the planting of native trees, shrubs, and groundcover in yard areas instead of non-native and exotic plants. This can allow the plant and animal habitat established in existing open space to be broadened. Natural areas are also usually cheaper and easier to maintain than formal lawns and ornamental plantings.

Greenways

A focus on greenways is an essential component of a conservation element. It is a natural extension of any discussion of open space resources because greenways typically function to link or join open space areas. Greenways can protect surface water, forests, and rare species habitat as well.

A greenway is a primarily natural place designed to preserve and protect desirable natural features for use and enjoyment by wildlife and people. The most recognizable form of a greenway is a linear park, often located along a stream. This type of greenway increases the benefit of protected natural resources because they are connected in an unbroken corridor, which often link larger protected areas. Such areas provide a contiguous area for natural processes to occur with less encroachment by human activities. Additionally, these parks are also useful tools for increasing recreational opportunities and non-automotive mobility; they are logical locations for foot and bicycle trails. Greenways can also adjoin streets and may include water bodies with vegetated shorelines or beaches.



Greenway Policies

The highest potential for greenway development in Weymouth Township is along the Tuckahoe River and the South River - along which some parkland already exists. Although the Great Egg Harbor River exhibits high environmental characteristics, the existing land use pattern along the portion of the river that lies within Weymouth Township is not as conducive to Greenway development.

The Protected Open Space Map in the Master Plan Land Use Element shows where the current natural areas are located and provides a context for the following strategies:

- Determine ways to connect existing natural areas.
- Seek to include lands not suitable for development with buildings or parking.
- Add trails between natural areas, preferably for walking or hiking and biking. This allows people to enjoy the entire greenway and provides a more scenic and peaceful alternative for travel.
- Obtain easements for strategic properties within greenway corridors.
- Explore acquiring the parcels of vacant land located in delineated greenway corridors.
- Utilize the Pinelands Scenic By-Ways Program to highlight the importance of protected and linked natural areas in the Township and the Pinelands.

Soils

Soil diversity is essential to healthy ecosystems. The primary goal for protecting the value soil provides is to prevent its loss due to erosion. Rates of erosion are based on gravity and therefore slope. Most soil conservation strategies involve reducing development and increasing vegetation on erosion-prone steep slopes or poor soils. Weymouth Township is entirely composed of the geologic features generally associated with the Outer Coastal Plain of New Jersey.



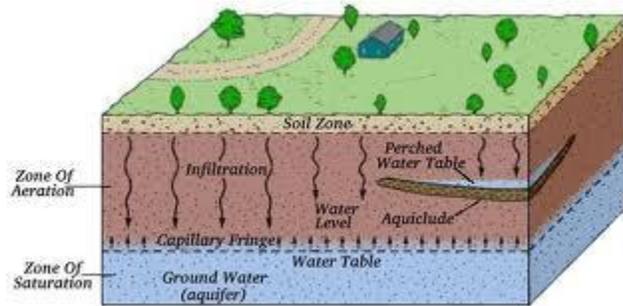
Certain soil types are associated with periodic flooding and erosion. Alluvial soils are subject to periodic flooding and have a low depth to seasonal high water table. Weymouth Township has areas with alluvial soils. Although floods do erode some soil, the Township can consider soil erosion a marginal hazard. There are still steps the Township can take to improve soil quality.

Soil Protection Policies

- Encourage individual property owners to properly to compost appropriate yard and food wastes which reduces municipal solid waste disposal costs and provides a local source for low-cost soil nutrients.
- Avoid removal of existing vegetation in erosion-prone areas, especially near and along stream banks. While State regulations governing wetlands usually protect these areas, certain non-wetland areas near streams may benefit from local regulations aimed at preventing soil erosion, especially in small areas of disturbance that may fall below the minimum thresholds for County Soil Conservation District jurisdiction.
- Minimize disturbance of vegetation in natural drainage and flood-prone areas to help sustain the water-cleansing properties of well-established natural soil media.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices for Manure Management as a nutrient enhancement for local soils. Proper small farm Manure Management and Utilization plans can allow the Township's horse and animal farms to properly compost and utilize manure for beneficial agricultural uses. *Manure Management For Small and Hobby Farms*, by Athena Lee Bradley of the Northeast Recycling Council is a good resource for this effort.
- Investigate the potential for a centralized composting facility and possible associated activities like a community garden.

Groundwater

Water that collects underground is an invaluable source of drinking water for the Township of Weymouth. The Township's land area lies above the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer which contains the drinking water supply for Weymouth Township and much of the New Jersey Pinelands. It is crucial for the Township to continue to protect this aquifer so it can naturally provide Weymouth Township with clean drinking water for years to come.



The process of groundwater recharge is important to protect in order to ensure there is an adequate future water supply. Contaminants can reach the groundwater supply through the soil.

As groundwater is withdrawn for use by the community, it is replenished through the natural process of precipitation slowly seeping through the soil into the aquifer. Human activities have impeded natural recharge of groundwater, but the Township can take a number of pro-active steps to improve the function of this important process.

The quality of the water entering the groundwater supply is another important issue for the Township. Because of permeable soils and a high water table, the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer is particularly vulnerable to contamination.

Groundwater Policies

- Vegetation acts as a filter in the aquifer recharging process. An action plan for increasing vegetation associated with any future large-scale developments throughout the Township can help improve water quality, in addition to assisting in replenishment.
- Minimizing the use of hazardous household chemicals will help prevent contamination of the aquifer. Fortunately, eco-friendly and equally effective household products are increasingly more available as substitutes for toxic substances. The Township should promote their use and by setting an example through its own use of sustainable products in the maintenance of its municipal buildings and school.
- Any sites that contain storage tanks, road salt piles, landfills, and other water quality threats should be secured if possible to prevent leakage into the aquifer.
- Educate residents and business owners about the importance of their actions on the entire system. This can include enhancing their understanding of how their day-to-day activities impact water quality and promoting improved aquifer stewardship through informed individual and group actions and through school programs. The Township Environmental Commission may also be able to play a role in this effort.
- Encourage eco-friendly lawn maintenance with special attention to limiting the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

- Investigate the need for strengthening the limits on impervious cover such as concrete, asphalt and other site improvements to improve groundwater recharge capacity.

Surface Water and Wetlands



Weymouth Township contains a diverse complex of freshwater and coastal wetlands. Approximately twenty three percent of the Township is comprised of wetlands that are chiefly associated with the two major river systems that pass through the Township. Over 35 miles of river, stream and unnamed tributaries include the Tuckahoe River, Stephens Creek, Cedar Brook, South River and the Great Egg Harbor River.

Wetlands serve many important functions. They provide flood storage and stream flow attenuation during wet periods and sustain stream flow by releasing stored water during dry periods. They filter out pollutants in stormwater runoff, thus protecting water quality, and they provide habitat for important species of plants and animals. New Jersey's major wetlands are found on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's National Wetlands Inventory aerial maps, county soil surveys, and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's more detailed wetlands maps. A more accurate wetlands delineation can be obtained from specific site visits, when wetlands can be identified by vegetative, soil, and hydrologic features.

The Weymouth Township Environmental Resource Inventory contains detailed maps of wetland areas in the Township that are based upon the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection data source. The New Jersey Pinelands Commission and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulate the disturbance and protection of wetlands.

When development encroaches on the banks of a stream, it takes away the stream's natural protection of vegetation. This protection slows the flow of runoff into the stream and filters out pollutants that could impair wildlife habitat at the point of entry and downstream. Development can also harm the structure of the stream channel itself, which manifests in erosion. Restoring and maintaining such buffers along Weymouth Township streams is an important step toward improving surface water quality.

Stream Protection Policies

- The Township should develop a program to encourage the planting and maintenance of natural vegetative cover to provide a natural filter for buffering streams. This strategy

could be especially important for existing developed areas located along the Great Egg Harbor River.

- The Township could enlist community participation in the planting of stream buffers and stabilizing of banks, perhaps by establishing a Township Service Day for this purpose.
- Conservation easements, which are typically long-term deed restrictions that prevent land from being developed, should be obtained for land abutting streams to help create and protect buffers.
- The Township should minimize use of harmful fertilizers and pesticides on public landscaping. Choosing native grasses and vegetation for landscaping reduces the need for fertilizers and pesticides. Using native vegetation on Township property will also set a good example.
- Residents should be educated in environmentally friendly lawn maintenance practices, including attractive, low-maintenance alternatives to grassed lawn.
- Existing stormwater outfalls and detention facilities should be retrofitted during the course of normal maintenance using environmentally sound technology that will reduce point source pollution.
- Signs should be placed on storm drains to discourage the depositing of litter that travels directly into streams, clogs them and impairs aquatic resources.
- Canada Geese tend to congregate along some stream corridors and contribute large amounts of fecal coliform bacteria to the water. Managing these populations will help stabilize water quality.
- Promote the development of Manure Management Plans to protect surface water and wetlands from improperly managed stormwater runoff.
- Promote the recommended stocking rates provided by the Rutgers Agricultural Extension. Overstocking of horses or other livestock is the primary cause of water quality contamination on small livestock farms. This leads to overgrazing of land and poor filtration of runoff.
- Consider adoption of a municipal ordinance that limits the number of livestock per area of farmland in the township to protect the quality of water supply.



Flood Prevention

Winter and Spring Flooding has been a problem in much of the Township in recent years. These floods cause property damage, surface water contamination and disruption to neighborhoods. While flooding is a natural event, human settlement and improvement of land often worsens the destructive capabilities of floods. The Township can play an important role in minimizing the negative effects of flooding.

- Reduced flooding can be achieved through more vegetation and less area of impervious surfaces like buildings, parking lots, and roads. This can be accomplished by adding more

street trees, encouraging rain gardens, green roofs, and providing incentives for property owners to minimize impervious surfaces.

- Require that all new impervious surfaces be permitted only with a zero net increase in stormwater runoff. The regulation could allow compensating reductions off of the development site, provided they are permanent and within the same contributing drainage area to the receiving waters.
- Stormwater management decisions play an important role in flood prevention or reduction. Higher speed and intensity of stormwater drainage to streams will result in more flooding than a slower drainage system. The Township has already adopted a Stormwater Management Plan. Recommendations outlined in the plan should be considered for adoption.

Wetland Protection Policies

The protection of freshwater and coastal wetlands is largely governed by laws and regulations under the jurisdiction of the State and the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. However, there are a few strategies that Weymouth Township can utilize to augment these protections.

- Protection of Transition Areas – These are needed adjacent to wetlands in order to reduce the risk of degradation. State restrictions on development in transition areas vary by type of wetland, with exceptional value wetlands requiring 150 feet of buffer and most other wetlands requiring 50 feet of buffer. In the Pinelands, a 300 foot buffer is required. Township reviewers of development plans should stay abreast of wetland protection requirements to further ensure conformance with buffering requirements.
- Reasonable protection measures beyond State requirements should be explored with willing applicants during plan review. Additional protections may be required by the Zoning Board of Adjustment as conditions of approval of a use variance involving a wetland resource.
- Conservation easements – Similar to surface water protection, protection of wetlands and transition areas can be achieved through conservation easements.

Air

While air quality has improved in Southern New Jersey over the last 40 years, there is still work to be done. Air pollution has many sources, including transportation, manufacturing, power generation, and commercial activities. Each of these source areas should be addressed in order to comprehensively reduce air pollution.



The Federal Environmental Protection Agency has many regulations for monitoring and regulating air quality, especially the Clean Air Act (CAA). While air quality has improved recently in New Jersey overall, the region still fails to meet some clean air standards. Local sources of air pollution include transportation, lawn mowers and other small engines. Regional air quality can be improved through reductions in local pollution sources.

Mobile emissions from transportation are the largest source of pollution in southern New Jersey. Automobile and truck exhaust contains climate-altering greenhouse gases, smog-forming nitrates, and acid rain-creating sulfur oxides. Township residents take most of their trips by automobile. It is important that significant attention is dedicated to reducing transportation pollution. Some potential policies are listed below.

Air Pollution Policies

- Provide Township support for biking, including bike lane designation and rack installation in important public places and on private property that accommodates large numbers of visitors.
- Work with NJ Transit to provide more opportunities for mass transit to the Township and to encourage greater ridership.
- Examine the potential for an ordinance restricting the idling of vehicles, including trucks and buses.
- De-emphasize infrastructure projects that only support expanded automobile capacity without enhancing other modes of travel.
- Establish a schedule for converting municipal vehicles to fuel-efficient and/or emission-free vehicles, where possible.
- Encourage residents to purchase fuel-efficient and/or emission-free vehicles.
- Ensure that Township land use plans take these measures into account and do not conflict with them through the use of compact development with easy access to existing or planned mass transit opportunities.
- Pursue opportunities to utilize the existing rail infrastructure in Dorothy through the development of a train station and support of passenger rail scheduling.

- The use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers to maintain lawns causes air pollution. The use of push or reel mowers instead is a realistic option for many small residential lawns. Reducing lawn size also will help reduce this source of emissions.
- Encourage the use of Car-pooling and investigate the potential for a municipally sponsored program.

Vegetation Cover/Forests



Weymouth Township includes large tracts of forest – occurring in a variety of vegetative community types. The Township is also a part of a much larger extent of forest found within the southern Pine Barrens. These vast forests serve as important habitat and provide ecosystem services such as protection and recharge of the drinking water supply and have positive impacts on the local and regional climate. From a regional perspective, the forests of the southern Pine Barrens act as a critical linkage and wildlife corridor between the vast marshes of the Delaware Bay and the more northerly core Pine Barrens forests.

The Weymouth Township Natural Resource Inventory emphasizes the importance of the Township’s forests to maintaining a variety of social and ecological conditions. The Environmental Commission has started work on a Community Forestry Management Plan to provide a guide for the long-term management of this resource and it will aid in the education of stewardship of forests. However, while some of the forest is located within open space lands or within public management, the majority of the Township’s forest resources are undeveloped and held by private interests. A sound land use planning approach is necessary to insure that future development of the Township minimizes the negative impact on this resource.

Vegetation and Forest Policies

- The tree removal ordinance should be strengthened and better enforced to curb preventable destruction or removal of trees; it should have specific provisions for protection for large mature trees and for long-term management for healthy forests.
- The Township can prepare an Urban Forestry Management Plan. The Shade tree Commission can assist with this effort.
- Species diversity in public plantings and streetscaping is suggested to minimize the overall impact of potential tree blights that may impact whole populations of affected species.

- The Township should pursue available planning and implementation grants in connection with initiatives to reduce the global warming impacts of ‘greenhouse gases’ in the atmosphere.
- Future clustering or large-scale development should avoid the large forested portions of the township that have been identified as having the highest levels of Ecological Integrity by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and as mapped in the Land Use Element of this Master Plan.

Wildlife Habitat

Weymouth Township is home to a wide diversity of wildlife and associated natural habitat. The Land Use Element of this Master Plan and the Township Environmental Resource Inventory has summarized many of these resources. While there are a number of state and federal regulations that help to protect wildlife, Weymouth Township can take actions to slow habitat loss and reclaim important wildlife habitat.



Wildlife Protection Policies

- Provide for appropriate maintenance of natural areas so as to best support diverse wildlife populations. This may include working with state and nonprofit organizations to improve upon existing management activities.
- The Township can arrange community wildlife viewing or inventorying programs to help spread awareness and increase involvement.
- Sustained action to control invasive species can be helpful in fostering suitable habitats for increased wildlife diversity. The Environmental Commission may be able to undertake a program to educate citizens about the harmful use of invasive plants for landscaping.
- Investigate the potential for an ordinance regulating the use of All Terrain Vehicles in the township to minimize the direct negative impacts on wildlife habitat.

Energy Resources



Conserving energy is an important and practical way of conserving natural resources. This is crucial if Weymouth is going to take local action to help reduce the threat of climate change. There are a number of approaches the Township can pursue to make a meaningful difference.

Sources of municipal energy usage include schools and municipal buildings. Possibilities for better energy efficiency, including encouraging use of alternative forms of energy, conducting a detailed municipal energy audit, and working with state and

regional programs, should be considered.

Energy Conservation Policies

- Make Weymouth Township a sustainable community through the existing efforts of the municipal “Green Team”.
- Integrate sustainable and energy-efficient operations into everyday municipal, business and residential life.
- Reduce use of fossil fuels and energy derived from the current power grid.
- Explore new technologies and methods for greater energy efficiency.
- The Township should conduct a municipal energy audit for all public buildings and facilities. The use of energy for lighting, heating, transportation, and powering of equipment should be scrutinized by this audit for possible reductions.
- Changes in the Township’s development regulations should be adopted to provide guidance and incentives for creating more energy-efficient buildings and more environmentally friendly development sites. Standards developed by the US Green Building Council (USGBC) through its LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification program can serve as a model on which to base local standards and criteria.
- Reductions in private usage of energy should be strongly encouraged by the Township. This can be done with grant-funded energy-saving incentives (local, regional, State, & Federal) and community outreach and education programs.

Alternative Energy

Alternative sources of energy are not carbon based and therefore do not release greenhouse gas (carbon dioxide) into the atmosphere when consumed. They can be designed to partially or fully satisfy the Township’s energy needs. Increasing utilization of these commercially available energy resources, including solar, wind, geothermal, and hydroelectric, is an important component in a municipal initiative to improve energy efficiency.

- The Township should participate in the CleanPower Choice Program, which allows energy ratepayers to choose renewable sources of energy. It should encourage homeowners and businesses to join as well.
- Solar power is a renewable energy type that can be readily harnessed throughout Weymouth. The Township should review and revise its development regulations to facilitate the installation of solar collection equipment on both public and private buildings and inside and rear yard areas (with appropriate screening). This should also include a solar access ordinance to optimize access to this energy resource for passive and active solar energy generation. Size limits are recommended so as not to impact neighborhood character with generation facilities that are too large to be considered accessory uses.
- The Township should develop a plan for replacing its vehicle fleet with alternative fuel vehicles, especially electric vehicles, which will substantially reduce carbon emissions and enable the use of renewable energy to power vehicles and other motorized equipment.
- The Township should investigate the potential for conversion of the closed municipal landfill for use as a large-scale solar facility. Work with the Pinelands Commission to rezone the site appropriately and seek out bidders for installation and operation of such a facility.

Light Pollution



The inappropriate use of lighting and light fixture design can lead to a condition of what astronomers term “light Pollution”.

Light Pollution is an increasing problem threatening astronomical facilities, ecologically sensitive habitats, wildlife, energy use and human heritage. Through the use of excessive and inappropriate artificial nighttime lighting, astronomers have identified four components of light pollution:

- Urban Sky Glow – a general brightening of the night sky;
- Light Trespass – light falling where it is not intended, wanted or needed;
- Glare – excessive brightness which causes visual discomfort decreasing visibility;
- Clutter – bright, confusing, and excessive grouping of light sources found in over-lit areas.

Light Pollution Policies

- Permit reasonable uses of outdoor lighting for night-time safety, utility, security, productivity, enjoyment and commerce.
- Minimize adverse offsite impacts including light trespass, and obtrusive light.
- Curtail light pollution and improve the nighttime environment for astronomy.
- Help protect the natural environment from the adverse effects of night lighting from gas or electric sources.
- Conserve energy and resources to the greatest extent possible.
- Review and consider recommendation for adoption of the Model Lighting Ordinance developed by the Illuminating Engineering Society and the International Dark Sky Association of June 2010.

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Summary

This Conservation Element provides a foundation for the preservation, conservation, and utilization of Weymouth Township's natural resources. It builds on the Township's Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI), and Land Use Element which provide detailed inventories of these resources, and the basis for each strategy in this Plan. Effective resource conservation in Weymouth Township should continue with these policies as a framework:

Good Governance

As a community in the most densely population state, natural land is a limited and increasingly important resource that helps to provide a good quality of life for residents. Pro-active preservation in the public interest therefore should be one of the many spokes of good governance at all levels. Weymouth Township is charged with the important task of monitoring, protecting and enhancing its many natural resource assets, from soil to water to air. This can be accomplished through detailed site plan review, revisions to the zoning ordinance and regulations, environmental programs, and the many other strategies outlined in this Plan.

Education and Involvement

The Township must also promote natural and cultural resource protection within and around Weymouth by involving its citizenry. Environmental education for all ages of the population, within and outside Township schools, is a wise and effective approach. Working together as a community with a shared conservation agenda, the Township can accomplish its preservation objectives.

Action

A prioritized Action Plan should be developed from the strategies provided in this Conservation Plan. The Planning Board should revise and update the action plan as progress is made, and as the environmental and preservation needs of the Township evolve.