

## CHAPTER XII

### PROPOSED COUNTY OPEN SPACE PLAN

The proposed update of the 1994 Warren County Open Space Plan is a combination of mapping the existing county open space and the stream corridors, ridgelines, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, the Morris Canal, and other interagency open space sites throughout the county.

To summarize the proposed open space plan, it is evident, that Warren County, on the whole, is not meeting the demand in preserving open space. As we review the two methods for determining the acreage needed for open space, as outlined previously, let's first analyze the acres per population method.

Regionally, in 1960, the population of the Southern region was more than the other two regions; however, in 1995, in comparison to both the Northern and Central regions, the Southern region grew by only 8.1 percent, compared to the growth rates of 151 percent and 88 percent for the Northern and Central regions, respectively.

From Table III, based on the projected county's population, by the year 2010, and using the acres per population method, a total of 1,291 acres should be in county ownership. Since the first County Open Space Plan in 1968, the County, to date, has only acquired 671.93 acres. The one major drawback in using this method is that, once the population has increased, so has the value of land increased, but more importantly, land becomes more scarce.

There are other contributing factors that influences growth. Factors, such as the current and planned road systems, adjacent regional growth, prime agricultural soils, and the availability of either or both of water and sewer, have a direct influence on growth and should be taken into account when planning for open space when using the acres per population method.

With these factors taken into consideration, the Warren County Planning Board has selected to use the second method, as outlined previously, which is the Balanced Land Use method. As we review the summary of acreage, found on page 17, only the federal government has met their goal in Warren County. Both the municipalities and the state have taken an aggressive role in meeting their goals; however, Warren County has a significant deficit, estimated to be 9, 312 acres needed, as compared to the current 671.93 acres under county ownership.

When planning for open space in a rural county like ours, it is sometimes difficult to envision the need of open space planning, since there is the perception that there is so much open space already existing in Warren County. This is another reason why the Balanced Land Use method has an advantage over the population per acres method, in that it allows for a predetermined acreage when Warren County becomes fully developed in the future. Furthermore, this method recognizes land as an exhaustible resource, and therefore, Warren County needs to take steps now to insure that there is adequate open space preserved for future generations.

In using the Balance Land Use method, the revised plan becomes generic in the approach to open space planning, as compared to the 1994 plan, which was site specific. This approach for open space planning will result in:

- Greater flexibility to acquire land that becomes available in designated areas as described in the plan.
- Allow for more interagency coordination in achieving the goals of this plan and also the local and state plans as well.
- Due to the sites being identified by regions, which includes stream corridors, ridgelines, the Morris Canal, abandoned rail road rights-of-way, existing and proposed trails, and other interagency open space sites, smaller acreage parcels can now be acquired because they will fit into the overall regions.
- Identify open space sites now and be able to purchase them while land values are lower, rather than wait, when the areas become developed and the land values become

escalated.

The proposed open space is shown on Map 12 (Existing and Proposed Open Space).

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