

8: PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS / SOILS OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE

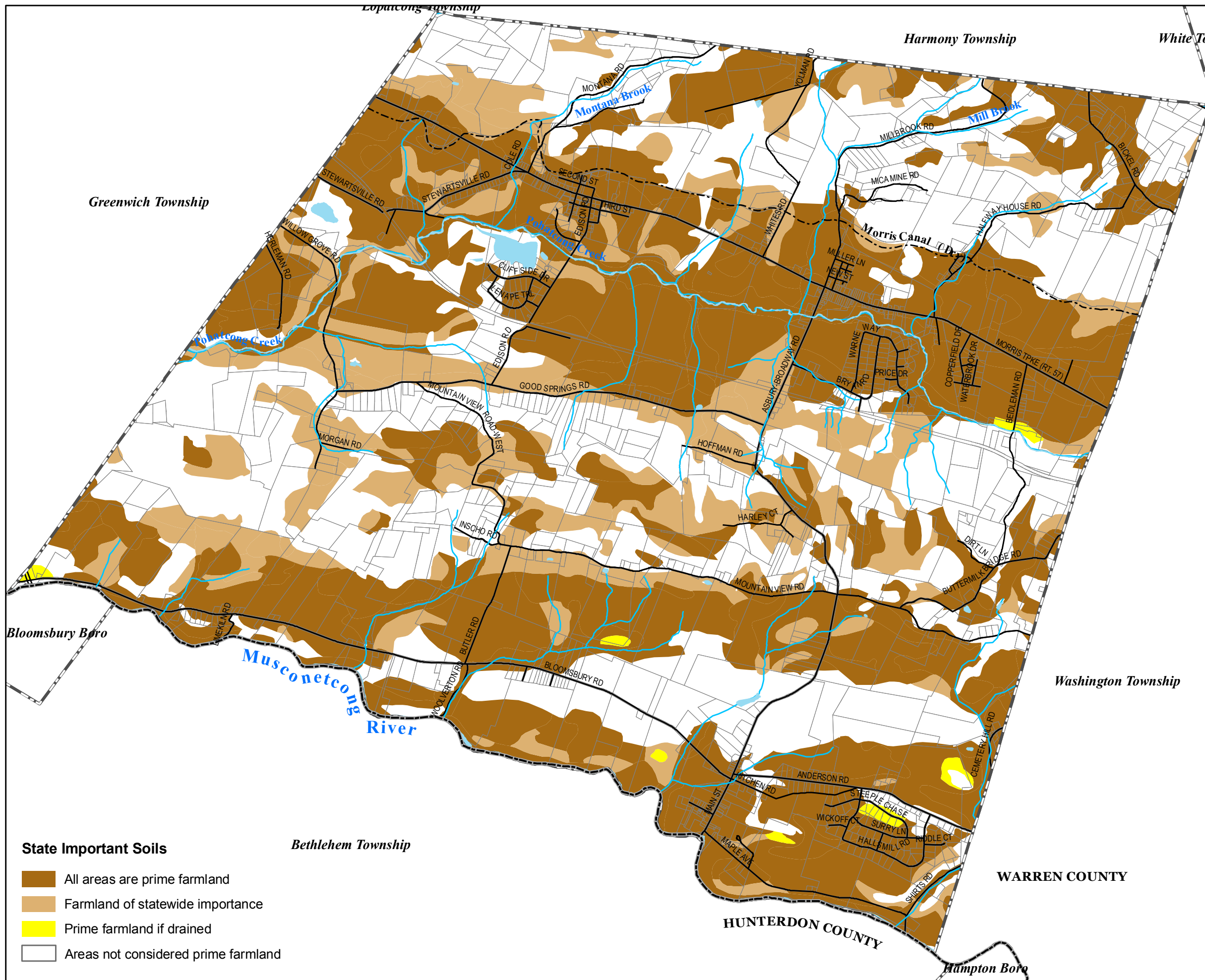
Open space preservation actions often target agricultural lands. The Highlands Protection Act also highlights the value of agricultural lands and promotes farmland preservation and the practice of agriculture. The initial step in conservation measures is the identification of land deemed valuable for protection. Agricultural productivity is directly influenced by soil characteristics; thus, agricultural lands are characterized by the soil. The Figure of Prime Farmland and Statewide Important Soils is a tool for identifying real and potentially valuable agricultural sites based on soils ([Figure 8](#)).

Prime and Unique Farmlands (7 CFR Part 657) (http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr657_04.html), an amendment to the federal Farmland Protection Policy Act, directs the State Conservationist under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to prepare a statewide list of soil mapping units that fit defined criteria as Prime Farmland and Important Soils. The identification system in New Jersey relies on previously published Land Capability Classification (LCC) data. Capability grouping shows, in a general way, the suitability of soils for most kinds of field crops. The principal concerns in managing the soils for the production of crops are maintaining fertility, controlling erosion, and providing drainage. The groups are developed according to the limitations of the soils when used for field crops, the risk of damage when they are used, and the way they respond to treatment.

Prime Farmlands include all those soils in Land Capability Class I and selected soils from Land Capability Class II. Prime Farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops that is available for agricultural uses. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Prime Farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods and infrequently flood or are protected from flooding.

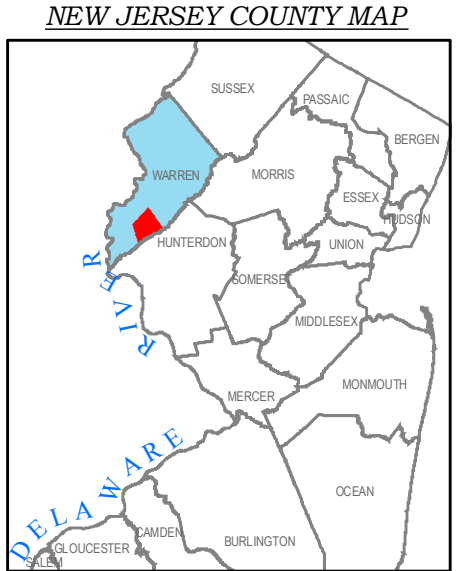
Soils of Statewide Importance include those soils in land capability Class II and III that do not meet the criteria as Prime Farmland soils. These soils are nearly Prime Farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields as high as Prime Farmland if conditions are favorable.

Prime Farmland soils account for 46.14% of Township area. These soils are predominantly located in the plain adjacent to the Musconetcong River and Pohatcong Creek. Statewide important soils are more evenly distributed in these areas throughout the Township, but are also more fragmented. Statewide important soils account for 16.85% of Township area. While most of the prime farmland soils in the Township are actively cultivated or maintained as agricultural land, some of the remaining identified prime farmland and statewide important soils in other areas are not identified as agricultural lands, but as urban use.

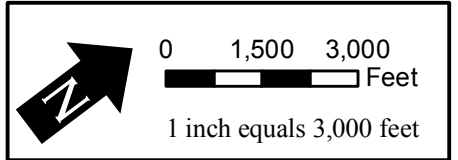


State Important Soils

- All areas are prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Prime farmland if drained
- Areas not considered prime farmland



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- SOURCES:**
1. Parcel, roads and the Franklin Township Boundary data obtained from Warren County Planning Dept. "This map was developed using the Warren County New Jersey, Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by Warren County and is not county-authorized."
 2. Surface water data obtained from the NJDEP, Division of GIS.
 3. Soils data obtained from the USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) website.

FIGURE 8
STATE IMPORTANT SOILS

NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY
 FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP
 WARREN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

- Legend**
- County Boundary
 - Municipal Boundaries
 - Ponds/Lakes
 - Streams**
 - Streams
 - Morris Canal (Dry)
 - Roads
 - Parcels

