

## INTRODUCTION

A Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) (sometimes referred to as an Environmental Resource Inventory) is a collection of text and visual materials characterizing the environmental resources of a municipality (ANJEC 2004). It includes detailed descriptions of the location, character and quality of those resources, which generally include wetlands, streams, aquifers, floodplains, prime agricultural soils, forests and open space (Johnson 1996). In addition, anthropogenic features and cultural and aesthetic resources—such as roads, population centers, zoning boundaries and historic sites—also influence a municipality’s character and the quality and condition of its natural resources. For that reason, these elements also play an important role in the development of an NRI.

This NRI provides a characterization of the environmental resources of Franklin Township, Warren County, New Jersey. It is intended to be a neutral, unbiased document that reflects currently available data regarding the Township’s natural resources, rather than an interpretation of that data or set of land use planning recommendations. However, in order to be a truly useful tool, an NRI must be more than an encyclopedia of facts or an atlas of natural resource features. It should serve as a complement to the municipal Master Plan and a guide for the Township’s land development-related ordinances and land preservation initiatives, and other activities related to the preservation and enhancement of a community’s resources. It may also be useful in upholding municipal zoning ordinances in court (ANJEC 2004).

With this in mind, the content, design and accessibility of information contained within this NRI is intended to allow for the easy—but thorough—identification and assessment of sensitive ecological, aesthetic and cultural features within Franklin Township. A comprehensive understanding of the Township’s environmental resources will facilitate a more informed decision making process regarding planning activities, environmental impact analyses, open space acquisition and preservation efforts, and other activities which may have an impact on those resources.

The Franklin Township NRI is made up of individual sections, each of which focuses on a specific inventory of environmental and cultural resources. Each section includes a figure displaying the location(s) and extent of the resource discussed in the accompanying text. The figures and information are based upon the most current available geographic information systems (GIS) databases, many of which have been obtained from State and County agencies. In addition, a series of corresponding appendices complements each section and figure.

In an effort to provide Franklin Township with a useful and “user-friendly” NRI, the electronic version of this document also includes hyperlinks that allow instant access to associated information both within the NRI and its appendices and on the Internet (including County and State websites). Together, the figures, text, appendices and weblinks provide a rich, comprehensive and site-specific description of the Township’s resources in the context of the County and State physical and regulatory landscapes.

With this NRI it is possible for the Environmental and Open Space Commission, Land Use Board, Township Committee, residents and prospective land developers to access and understand

the key features, resources and attributes of the Township on a site-specific scale. The information contained within this NRI is intended to educate, guide and benefit all those interested in the long-term protection, management and preservation of the resources of Franklin Township.

This NRI should be considered both a tool and a reference for Franklin Township to draw upon in any land development approval and/or planning process. Its use should therefore be promoted by the Environmental and Open Space Commission, Land Use Board and Township Committee, and it should be made available to residents and anyone seeking to develop lands within the Township. In addition, this is not meant to be a static document; periodic revision of this NRI will be necessary to ensure that the information contained herein is accurate, current and reflective of ongoing changes in land use and development within the Township.