Doing Good Even Better

Upcoming Improvements to the Green Acres Local & Nonprofit Assistance Program

Stakeholder Meetings

September 29 & 30, 2022
Before we start:

- Today’s presentation is being recorded

- Submit questions/comments through the chat feature
  - Please give your name & affiliation
Green Acres Program

- State Land Acquisition Program
- Planning & Technical Services
- Local & Nonprofit Assistance Program

Legal Services & Stewardship ->
Now Public Land Compliance
Our Team

Elizabeth Dragon
Assistant Commissioner
Community Investment & Economic Revitalization

Martha Sullivan Sapp
Director
Green Acres Program

Cecile Murphy
Project Manager
Green Acres Program

Amy Sumoski
Project Manager
Green Acres Program
Goals of Today’s Meeting

- Share upcoming program improvements and opportunities
- Solicit input from our partners
What Are We Going to Talk About Today?

- Program Reassessment
- Opportunities to Do Better
- Plans to Improve
- Legislative & Policy Developments
- What’s Next?
Guiding Questions

How can we better:

- Achieve our mission?
- Support our partners?
- Respond to emerging priorities?
- Maximize our Return on Investment?
### Public Investment in Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Green Acres</th>
<th>Urban Parks</th>
<th>Jake's Law</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$88.6</td>
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<td>$88.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$71.7</td>
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<td>$71.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
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<td>2021</td>
<td>$80.5</td>
<td>$6.0</td>
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<td>2023 (Anticipated)</td>
<td>$95.0</td>
<td>$10.0</td>
<td>$15.0</td>
<td>$120.0</td>
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Figures in millions of dollars.
Opportunities for Green Acres to Improve

- Better applications for **higher quality** projects that are **more likely to succeed**
- Faster & fairer application process
- More timely project completions and expenditures
Better Applications for Higher Quality Projects

- Longer application period
  - 3 months instead of 2
  - More time to plan/design

- Better guidance, more support
  - Virtual, recorded workshops for applicants
  - Readily available technical support
  - Tips for submitting a successful application

- Meaningful public engagement
  - What does that mean?
SHARE YOUR IDEAS!

FINK PARK'S VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

APRIL 6, 2022
5 PM TO 6:30 PM VIA ZOOM

Help define the future of Perth Amboy’s Fink Park!

For more information and to register click link below:

Take our survey here
Engage ALL members of the public!
Financial Resources
• Anticipated funding award amounts
• Project should not be contingent on supplemental funding in a future round (park dev’t and stewardship projects)
• List of other potential funding sources
• CFO signature

Nonprofit Capacity
• Eligibility Certification Checklist
• Demonstrated compliance with IRS and CRIA
✓ Project Management Resources

• Consider when deciding whether to apply / how many applications to submit

✓ One parcel / park at a time

➢ Planning Incentives – One active parcel
  o Utilize staff resources most productively
  o Prevent review delays

➢ Park Development – One location
  o Eliminate multi-park projects
  o Tighten up time to close out project
  o Ensure fair project ranking
Categories of Ineligible Applicants:

- Applicants with three or more open projects
- Applicants with significant stalled compliance issues
New Focus for Urban Parks Program

• Funding for approximately 20 projects

• Projects eligible if located in or easily accessible from:
  ✓ an Adversely Stressed Overburdened Community
  IN
  ✓ an Urban Aid municipality

• 59 eligible municipalities (plus counties, for projects in eligible locations)
Overburdened Community (OBC)
A census block group in which:
- ≥ 35% of households qualify as low-income households; or
- ≥ 40% of residents identify as minority or as members of a tribal community; or
- ≥ 40% of households have limited English proficiency.

Adversely Stressed OBC
- An OBC that is higher than the 50th percentile for total environmental and public health stressors.
Eligible Communities
Complete applications
- Readily available technical support
- Simplify & clarify application package
- Detailed instructions for each deliverable

Firm application requirements & deadlines
- Must submit complete application or supplemental funding request by the deadline
- Public hearing timing & requirements must be met and minutes submitted by the deadline

Increase number of staff reviewers
Timely project completions and expenditures

After Funding Approval:

- Address potential delays early
- Firm deadlines for deliverables
- No major scope or location changes
Legislative & Policy Developments

- NJDEP Priorities
- New legislative initiatives
- Evolving policy issues
DEP Priorities

1. Reduce and Respond to Climate Change
2. Protect New Jersey’s Waters
3. Revitalize Our Communities and Protect Public Health
4. Manage and Promote Thriving Natural & Historic Resources
5. Strengthen DEP
Climate Resilience

- Resource information in application for climate-friendly parks
- Ranking points to projects that promote climate resilience and that meet the goals of an applicant's Climate Resilience Plan; subtract points for tree clearing
- New tree removal policy
Tree Removal Policy

More detail in Environmental Impact Assessment

- Information about trees >6” DBH to be removed
- Alternatives discussion
- Shade Tree Commission or Environmental Commission role

Applicants should adhere to municipal tree ordinances

Projects that propose significant tree removal will not be approved for funding
Maximizing Ecological Benefits

- Acquisition ranking - points for meeting conservation and environmental protection goals – stream corridors, greenways
- Development ranking - points for including conservation practices, native plantings, clean & renewable energy
- Refocus Stewardship Program

NJDEP Priorities: Priorities #2 & 4
Stewardship Program

- Eligible improvements
  - Natural resource restoration & enhancement
  - Historic landscape restoration
- Conditionally eligible improvements
  - Ancillary improvements for public access
  - Will be subject to a cap
- Detailed list in application package

NJDEP Priorities: Priorities #2 & 4
Environmental Justice

- Increased outreach to Environmental Justice communities and organizations
- Additional ranking points to projects within Adversely Stressed OBCs
- Incentives to create and improve parks where they are most needed
New Incentives for Environmental Justice

✔ Higher grant %s for GA projects located in or easily accessible from an Adversely Stressed OBC

➢ **100% Grants** for projects located in A/S OBCs in Urban Aid Municipalities

➢ **50% Grants** for projects located in A/S OBCs in Highly or Densely Populated Municipalities

✔ Lists of UA and HDP Municipalities in Application Package
New Legislative Initiatives

Jake's Law

- Ranking points for all projects that exceed ADA requirements
- Pilot Program: 75% grants to counties for Completely Inclusive Playgrounds
- CIP applications do not count toward limit on # of awards
Evolving Policy Issues

Outreach & Planning

- Stakeholder meetings, EJ outreach, Workshops
- Clearer and new guidelines for required community engagement
- Encourage comprehensive recreation facilities planning
- *Outside, Together!*
Outside, Together!

- Update of NJ's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- Emphasis on public and stakeholder involvement
- Findings will inform funding policies and acquisition / development priorities
- Stakeholder engagement began this fall
- Get involved!
  https://dep.nj.gov/outside-together/
Public Access

- Ranking points for municipalities that have a DEP-approved Public Access Plan, and extra points if it has been incorporated into their Master Plan

- Meaningful public access to properties immediately upon closing – fee simple & conservation easements

Evolving Policy Issues
Evolving Policy Issues

Synthetic Turf Fields

✅ DEP Division of Science & Research review of runoff, heat impacts

✅ Due diligence in project planning & public outreach
  - Drainage systems
  - Infill material
  - Heat impacts
  - Long-term cost effectiveness
  - Exposure risks

✅ Discussion of alternatives – synthetic v. natural
Funding Request Options

- **Green Acres**
  - Acquisition (Standard or PI) OR
  - Park Development OR
  - Urban Parks Rollover

- **Stewardship**

- **Jake's Law** (Counties)

- **Urban Parks** (UA Adv. Stressed OBC)

*One request for each option – New application OR supplemental funding*
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Meetings</td>
<td>September 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; &amp; 30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Round Announcements (UPG &amp; GA)</td>
<td>October 31&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Application Workshops</td>
<td>November 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; &amp; 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; <em>(tentative)</em></td>
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<td>Application Deadline</td>
<td>February 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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Welcome to Green Acres!

**Green Acres Mission**

To achieve, in partnership with others, a system of interconnected open spaces, whose protection will preserve and enhance New Jersey's natural environment and its historic, scenic, and recreational resources for public use and enjoyment. The Green Acres Program was created in 1961 to meet New Jersey's growing recreation and conservation needs. Together with public and private partners, Green Acres has protected over half a million acres of open space and provided hundreds of outdoor recreational facilities in communities around the State.
Closing Remarks

- Submit additional comments by next Friday, October 7th to:
  GreenAcres@dep.nj.gov

- Thank you for your input!

www.NJGreenAcres.org