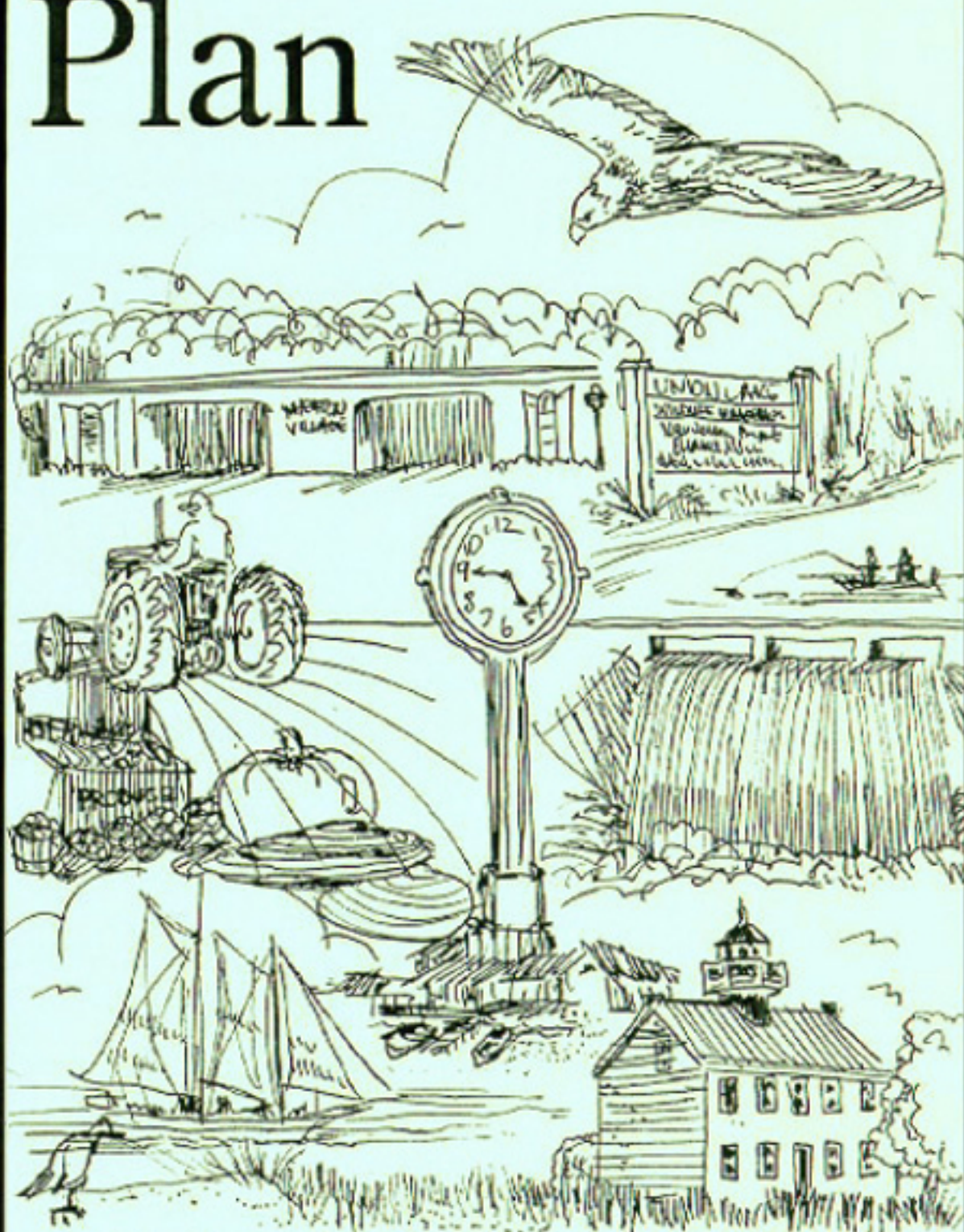




*Cumberland County*

# Ecotourism Plan

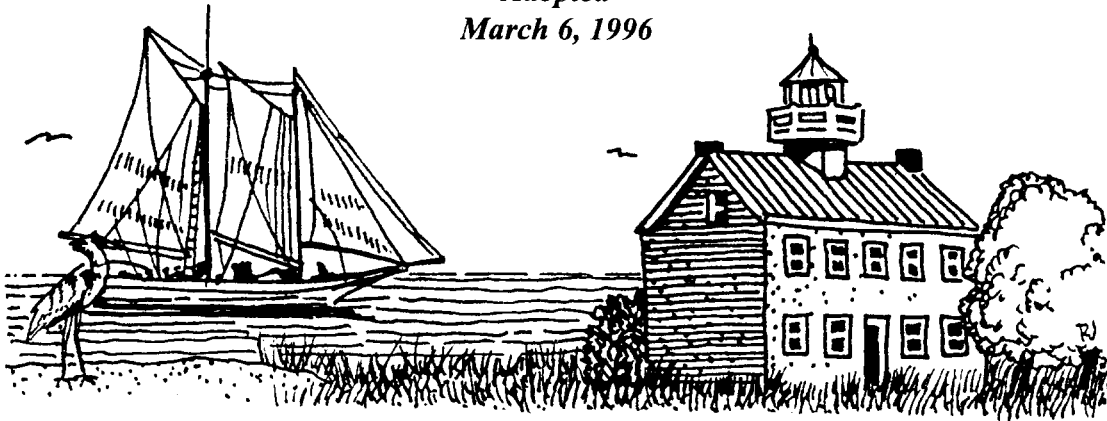


A Vision & Implementation  
Strategy For Economic  
Development & Conservation

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY ECOTOURISM PLAN

**A Vision and Implementation Strategy  
for Economic Development and Conservation**

*Adopted  
March 6, 1996*



This Plan was adopted at the regular meeting of the Cumberland County Planning Board, held on March 6, 1996 at 2:30 p.m. at the Cumberland County Administration Building, 790 East Commerce Street, Bridgeton, New Jersey, 08302. A formal resolution is on file with the Department of Planning & Development.

**Prepared for the Cumberland County Planning Board by the  
Department of Planning & Development, March 1996.**

Artwork: Robert A. Johnson  
Photography: Glenn R. Nickerson

*Cumberland County Department of Planning & Development  
800 E. Commerce Street  
Bridgeton, New Jersey 08302  
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# Ye Olde Treasure Map

*Tucked away in the quiet, rural landscape of Cumberland County, in the southern-most part of New Jersey lie hidden treasures. They are not pirate bounties of silver coins or jewelled medallions. Neither are they the buried riches or golden icons of European kings. These treasures live and breathe. They are part of what makes Cumberland County a special place. They are the natural resources and other treasures of a rich environment. They are some of the County's most valuable commodities.*

*Not many people know about these treasures. They have been hidden for many years by the relative isolation of the region. Slowly but surely, however, they are being discovered. The inclusion of the Maurice River and its tributaries in the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System is helping to introduce new visitors to the area. Bird watchers are coming to the County's picturesque marsh lands. Crabbers and fishermen can be found searching the many streams and waterways of Cumberland County for their catch. Boaters and canoeists are enjoying the nationally renowned recreational opportunities found in the area.*

*Like Rumpelstiltskin, the mythical weaver who turned straw into gold, many Cumberland Countians are looking to turn their rich natural heritage into jobs, profit, and a healthier economy. This plan identifies strategies to make that happen. It describes a concept known as ecological tourism that seeks to build a more prosperous community around the wealth of natural resources in the area.*



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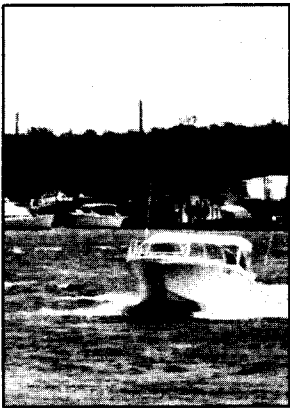
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*Section I*

# INTRODUCTION

*Ecological tourism got its start in places such as Kenya where there was a desire to protect African wildlife and enhance the national economy.*



*Recreational boating has long been an important part of the local economy in Cumberland County*

## WHAT IS ECOLOGICAL TOURISM?

Ecological tourism is a concept that affords visitors an opportunity to enjoy the natural resources and environment of an area without destroying them. Ecological tourism seeks to manage the visitor experience to minimize the adverse impacts on the natural resource base that might otherwise occur. Through a process of shared goal setting and design, conservationists, citizens, and business leaders can structure an ecotourism program to promote the protection of the natural resource base and offset it with economic benefits that meet the needs of the local community.

The concept of ecological tourism is a relatively new one. It had its beginnings in places such as Kenya, where tourist revenue from visits to the Serengeti Plain generated funds to help save many of the animals of Africa from extinction. Tourism boosted the local economy of the region and helped promote conservation objectives of world-wide significance.

It is easy, however, to include many types of tourism under the umbrella of ecotourism. Sometimes, traditional tourist pursuits have direct connections to the natural resource base, (eg. recreational boating.) Other times, they do not. It is important, therefore, to draw a clear distinction between ecological tourism and tourism in general. While the links between the two are essential, a successful plan for ecotourism must have a clearly defined focus. Consequently, this Plan includes those themes and places that have a direct link to the County's natural resource base. Related themes such as cultural and historical tourism need to be the primary focus of another project.

## OUTLINING THE PLAN

This plan establishes the goals and strategies upon which ecotourism can be promoted in Cumberland County. Specific recommendations for implementing the plan are presented. The narrative begins with an overview of the County. The concept of ecotourism is put into perspective by examining some

of the characteristics of the County's natural resource base and its economy. Section II outlines ecotourism initiatives around the nation and region. Concepts that might work for Cumberland County are identified. Section III focuses on establishing the parameters of the plan. Highlights from the 1993 Ecotourism Workshop cosponsored by the County and the South Jersey Land Trust are presented. The important issues in an ecological tourism program for the County are identified. Section IV defines the key themes and places in the County where an ecotourism effort should be focused. While there may be broader dimensions to the ecotourism program over time, these regions offer the most promise for realizing some immediate and short term success. Section V outlines some of the specific steps necessary to implement the plan. Recommendations ranging from the development of new infrastructure to specific marketing suggestions are offered. Finally, this section summarizes the effort and offers some broad policy direction for County and local government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector.

*This plan provides a road map for charting the future of the County's ecotourism program.*

Regardless of one's business, environmental, or community interests, this plan offers ideas for everyone in Cumberland County to share. It provides a road map for developing an ecotourism industry in the County that will provide greater diversity, stability, and new opportunity to the County economy. It sets forth a vision of the future by proposing that the next generations of Cumberland Countians can share both the wealth of a rich environment and a more prosperous community.

Come. Join in the adventure!

## **GETTING TO KNOW CUMBERLAND COUNTY**

### **History**

Like much of southern New Jersey, Cumberland County's heritage is steeped in the history of the Lenni-Lenape people and the European settlers who came later. Many current residents of the County trace their native American roots to the Lenni-Lenape nation; a nation that numbered some 6,000 inhabitants at the time of the earliest colonial explorations of the Delaware Bay region.

*Many of the old, historic villages of Cumberland County were founded on the natural resources of the area.*

It was the rich natural resource base of the County that shaped its first settlements. Villages such as Greenwich, Mauricetown, Newport, Fairton, and Port Norris developed around the fishing, seafaring, and oystering industries. The waterways of the Cohansey and Maurice Rivers provided

commerce and trade with cities and other communities in the region and along the east coast. The many deposits of silica sand promoted the development of glass manufacturing in Millville and Bridgeton. Fertile soils and a mild climate enabled the farming industry to develop in Vineland and the rural, western parts of the County. Recreational opportunities along the Delaware Bay helped to make Fortescue one of southern New Jersey's finest resort communities at the turn of the century.

*The "A. J. Meerwald" is a floating classroom for environmental education.*

Today, natural resources are still important factors in the history, economy, and culture of Cumberland County. While the oyster industry has come upon difficult times, Port Norris, Shellpile, and Bivalve are centers for the seafood packing houses in the region. Along with places such as Fortescue, Newport, and Fairton, they provide docks for the fishing fleets that ply the waters of the Delaware Bay. The "A.J. Meerwald", a nineteenth century oyster schooner, is being restored in Port Norris and will soon be a "living" museum and educational facility for the maritime industry that is still a significant part of this region. The Maurice River and its tributaries, the Manumskin River and Menantico and Muskee Creeks were designated part of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers system in December 1993 and are increasingly popular recreation areas. The old, victorian villages along the Maurice and Cohansey Rivers are homes to marinas that offer a variety of recreational boating opportunities. Pristine wetlands along these rivers and throughout the Bay Shore provide habitat for birds and animals rarely found in New Jersey. Some of the species located here are nationally or globally endangered. A growing bird watching industry is developing in the County based on the shore bird phenomenon and the other rich habitats in the area. Clearly, the natural history and the historic landscape of Cumberland County have much to offer the prospective visitor.

### **Regional Setting of Cumberland County**

Despite the fact that New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the nation, Cumberland County is relatively rural. Its historic isolation from the rest of the state can be traced to two factors: geography and transportation.

*Sandwiched between the cities of Philadelphia and New York, New Jersey is a predominantly suburbanized state.*

New Jersey is a State sandwiched between Philadelphia and New York. The early development of the State was centered around the transportation corridors between these two cities. It was in the surrounding counties such as Camden, Union, Morris, and Bergen that the tremendous suburban growth which occurred in New Jersey after the Second World War took place.



Cumberland County is located south of the New York - Philadelphia corridor. In fact, until 1989, there was no access to the County from this corridor on any of the major four lane highways that traverse the state. The opening of Route 55 in the fall of that year provided Cumberland County with its first major link to the employment and population centers around Camden and Philadelphia. Map 1 illustrates the location of the County relative to the rest of the region.

*Route 55, completed in the fall of 1989, gives Cumberland County an important link to the rest of the region.*

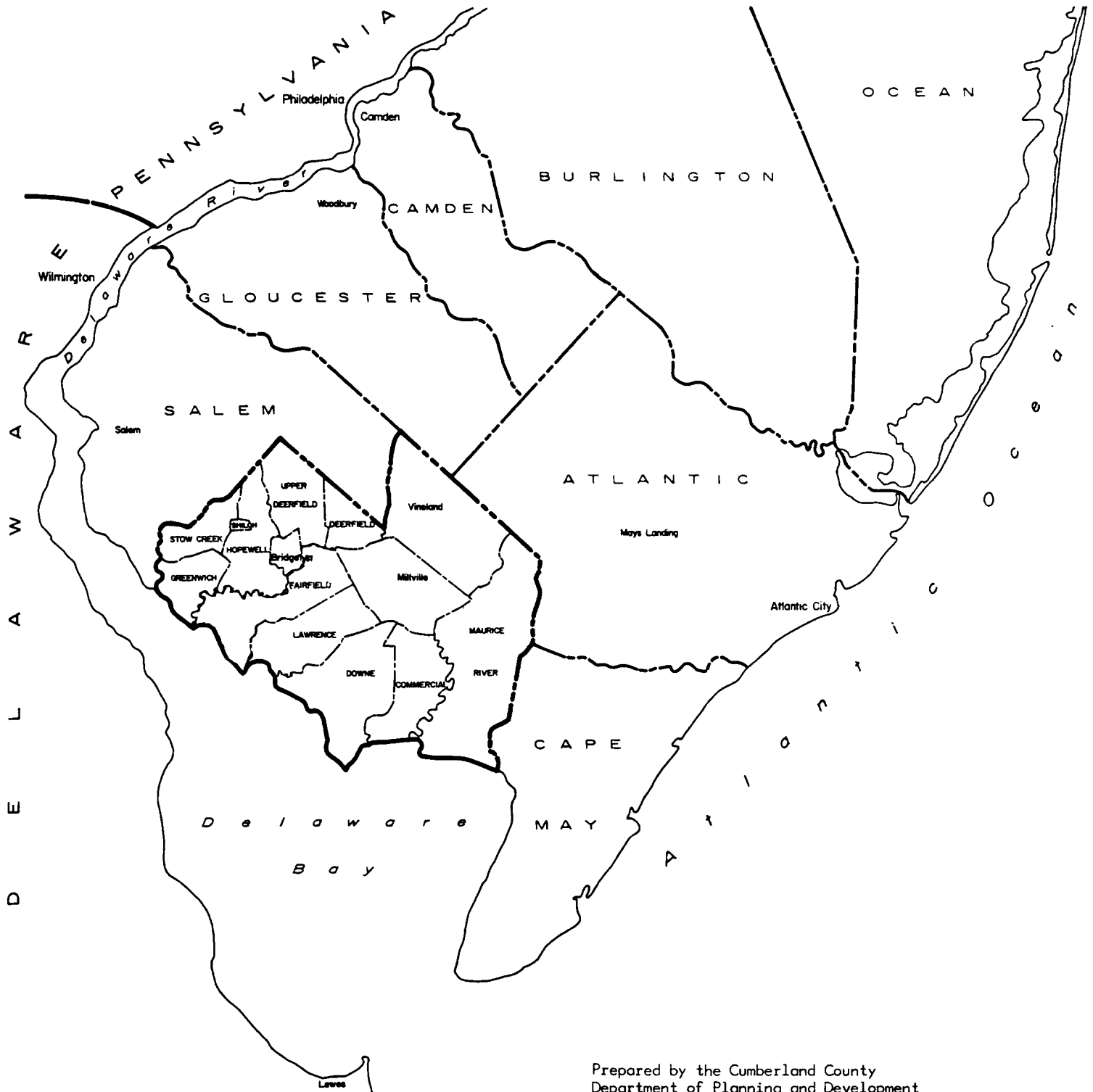
The historic isolation of the County limited development pressure. Consequently, there are many natural areas of the County that have remained unspoiled. There are vast expanses of wetlands along the Delaware Bay and the County's many rivers and streams. The Manumuskin River has such pristine water quality that it provides habitat for the sensitive joint vetch, a globally endangered plant. The area known as Bear Swamp, located along the Delaware Bay contains the largest tract of old-growth forest left in New Jersey. In addition to providing outstanding natural habitat, these many forests, wetlands, and rivers have offered a multitude of recreational opportunities as well. Hunting and fishing are popular pastimes. The village of Fortescue has numerous charter fishing operations. Crabbing and clamming are also enjoyed by local residents and visitors to the area.

One of the most spectacular natural phenomena occurring in the area is the annual migration of shore birds from South America to the cold regions of the Artic. Hundreds of thousands of birds rest in the marsh lands, on the beaches, and along the streams of the Delaware Bay. This migration, usually in mid-May coincides with horseshoe crabs coming to the beaches to lay their eggs. These eggs provide food for the hungry birds after their long journeys and give them the strength to continue their flights.

Another reason for the large numbers of birds and other species of plants and animals in the County is its varied habitat. There are large expanses of woodland in southern Cumberland County, some of which are part of New Jersey Fish, Game, & Wildlife Management Areas. These woodlands, in conjunction with the agricultural fields, marsh lands, salt hay farms, wetlands, and the Maurice and Cohansey Rivers provide a great variety of natural spaces. There are annual fall and winter raptor migrations that utilize many of these habitats. Nesting bald eagles can be found along the streams, creeks, and wetlands of the area. Northern harriers fly across the marshes in abundance. Fully one half of all the rare, threatened, and endangered species in the state find homes in Cumberland County.

*The annual migration of shore birds is one of the County's most fascinating natural phenomena.*

# Map I REGIONAL SETTING OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY



Prepared by the Cumberland County  
Department of Planning and Development

Farming, an historic part of the County's history, is a very large segment of the local economy. Approximately one third of the gross county product is related to agriculture. The City of Vineland is home to the largest fresh produce market on the east coast; the Vineland Produce Auction. Fruits and vegetables, nursery products, and grains of various kinds are staples of the local agricultural economy. Cumberland County is the location for some of the largest agricultural operations in New Jersey.

*In the 1970s, many of the traditional manufacturing jobs such as those in the glass making, textile, and food processing industries left Cumberland County.*

While the relative isolation of the County has helped protect natural areas, habitats, waterways, and other resources from the pressures of development and overuse, the County's economy has suffered. Once part of a prosperous region that boasted many thousands of glass making, textile, and food processing jobs, the County economy began to decline in the 1970's as these manufacturing jobs dried up or went elsewhere. Because the County was not part of the mainstream of development in the State, there was limited diversity in the County economy. Unemployment skyrocketed. Urban areas that were homes to many employees in these industries began to suffer. By the early 1980's, unemployment in Cumberland County was almost 20%. In places such as Bridgeton, the County seat, it was even higher. Rural towns such as Port Norris were also hard hit. The once thriving oyster industry suffered an unusual fate of its own. The onslaught of MSX disease in the late 1950's and later "dermo" in the 1980's significantly depleted this industry.

*Today, casino gambling in Atlantic City has helped to provide new jobs for many Cumberland County residents.*

Today, the local economy is improving although unemployment often remains in double digits. The advent of casino gambling in Atlantic City helped provide thousands of new jobs for residents of the region. The food processing industry has made a comeback. New businesses such as data processing, packaging, and expanding retail and service sectors have helped to enhance the County economy. Nonetheless, Cumberland County remains one of the more economically distressed counties in the State. The education and income levels of its residents remain below the State average.

## **THE EVOLUTION OF ECOTOURISM IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY**

It is due in part to the dichotomy in the County between the need to preserve outstanding natural resources while at the same time promoting jobs and a healthier economy that many of the County's businesses and citizens became interested in ecotourism. The regional trends that had left the County with some of the most spectacular natural areas in the northeast and one of the most

*The genesis of ecological tourism in Cumberland County came in the fierce debate over the future of the Maurice River system.*

depressed economies in the state, caused a clash of local interests that culminated in a fierce debate over the future of the Maurice River and its tributaries. After a six year effort, these waterways were included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. One of the offshoots of this effort was the growing interest in ecological tourism as a way to promote new jobs and industry and at the same time protect some of the beautiful natural areas of the County. This interest was promoted further by the Delaware Estuary Program and its endorsement of ecological tourism as one way to balance environmental preservation with economic growth and development. A new river planning process also emerged on the Cohansey River with objectives to strike similar balances. The County worked closely with many of the non-profit conservation organizations in the State to begin a dialogue that coordinated their efforts with some of the economic needs of the region. In November 1993, the County held its first ecological tourism workshop. The event attracted a wide range of business, citizen, and environmental interest. The results and recommendations of the workshop (which are highlighted in a later section) helped to establish the framework for many of the ecological tourism strategies and actions found in this Plan.

## **TOURISM IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY TODAY**

*Cumberland County has a modest tourism industry, particularly when compared to those in Cape May and Atlantic Counties.*

According to the New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism, the tourist economy is the State's number one economic sector. It accounted for more than \$17 billion dollars to tourist establishments in 1991. In southern New Jersey, Atlantic and Cape May counties account for more than \$2 billion dollars of the State total. In Cumberland County, the figures are more modest.

Cumberland's tourist economy generates more than \$100 million dollars in revenue; (\$101.2 million in 1991.) Most of this is from sales in the restaurant, food, and retail sectors of the economy. The lodging and recreational sectors, which are usually large contributors to the tourist economy, are relatively small segments of the industry in Cumberland County. To provide some perspective to these figures, lodging in Cape May County was a \$236.8 Million dollar business in 1991. In Atlantic County, it contributed \$473.8 Million dollars to the tourist economy. In Cumberland County, lodging generated only \$5.5 Million dollars in tourist revenue; about 5% of all tourist dollars spent in the County. A similar picture is evident for the recreation businesses such as theaters, amusement parks, and the like. Cumberland County revenues are 6% and 3% of what is generated in Cape May and Atlantic Counties respectively.

The implications of the State's tourism analysis are many. First, the southern shore region of the State, which includes Cumberland County, is not as heavily travelled by visitors from the New York metropolitan area, as are the other regions of the state. Specific reasons for this are not spelled out in the report, but perhaps they involve a lack of knowledge of the County's tourism destinations and a lack of familiarity with Cumberland County as a whole. The State report also highlights the importance of day trips to the overall tourist economy.

*Understanding the history of Cumberland County can help establish a vision for its future.*

All of these implications can provide guidance to the County in structuring an ecotourism strategy of its own. Protecting the natural resource base, providing for new jobs and economic opportunities, and linking this, its tourist economy, to those in other regions of the state are all important ingredients in this effort. Understanding the County's past can help define its future.

*Section II*

# **LEARNING FROM OTHER ECOTOURISM STRATEGIES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ecotourism is increasingly discussed as a way to promote a region's natural resource base and expand its tourism economy. More and more references to ecotourism appear in newspaper articles, magazine features, and promotional material. Sometimes the reference to ecotourism is made in other ways. Highlighting "nature based" tourism, or simply by promoting outdoor recreation are other ways that many areas promote their natural assets.

As part of this plan, the County Planning & Development Department conducted an inventory of other ecotourism strategies and programs around the region and nation. This section of the plan presents a general overview of these efforts and highlights some ideas that might be applicable for a Cumberland County Ecotourism Plan.

*Promoting the natural assets of an area can be accomplished in many different ways.*

## **OTHER ECOTOURISM EFFORTS IN THE REGION**

There are a number of ecotourism programs either underway or being developed around the region. In New Jersey, several counties have hosted ecotourism workshops and are beginning to assemble comprehensive ecotourism strategies.

In the spring of 1995, Warren and Sussex Counties held a joint workshop to promote some of the ecotourism opportunities found in northwestern New Jersey. They focused on the recreational opportunities found along the Delaware River National Recreation Area at the Water Gap, and on the many hiking trails in the "Skylands Region" and other natural areas in their counties.

*Several New Jersey counties including Warren, Sussex, Cape May, and Cumberland have been involved in ecotourism workshops.*

This was followed by a Cape May County workshop in June of 1995 that highlighted some of the long-standing ecotourism themes such as birding, fishing, and recreation that have been a part of that County's economy for many years. One of the important findings of the Cape May experience is that birding has become a \$10,000,000 a year industry. Birders competing in the

*The Audubon Society's World Series of Birding is part of a county-wide birding industry that produces more than ten million dollars in revenue for the Cape May County economy.*

Audubon Society's *World Series of Birding* held in the spring of each year, those visiting the Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, or birders who simply visit the county in other months have extended the traditional tourism season considerably. They frequent the service establishments and tourist facilities in the county such as the overnight accommodations, restaurants, gift shops, and gas stations. There is the potential for Cumberland County to realize similar revenues from birding activities. This facet of ecotourism is one that should be explored in detail as part of this Plan.

In addition to the work done in Cape May to advance birding opportunities, the Cape May County Department of Tourism and Economic Development, in conjunction with the County's Chamber of Commerce has produced a brochure on the many natural sites and attractions found in Cape May County. This flyer, prepared in 1994, provides a description and location map for sites ranging from State owned conservation areas to hiking trails and environmental education centers.

In Pennsylvania, Bucks County recently began promoting its natural amenities as tourist destinations. As part of a 51 page multi-color guide to attractions throughout the County, the Bucks County Tourist Commission has devoted considerable space to outdoor recreational opportunities. Special events, hiking trails, caverns, outfitters, campgrounds, wildlife sanctuaries, and parks are all described in detail. In addition, the County has assembled a 30 page newspaper print insert entitled "*Eco Adventures -- Escape to the Nature and History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania's Perfect Getaway!*" The publication includes some general information on ecotourism and presents highlights on parks, camping, biking, hiking, environmental agencies and organizations, accommodations, plant and animal life in the County, wetlands, and various historic and cultural sites.

*Bucks County, Pennsylvania is one of the few areas promoting its natural assets as "eco" attractions.*

The Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau, also located in Pennsylvania, publishes a Nature Guide to the Pocono Region. This multi-color booklet highlights the designation of the Pocono Mountains as one of the "40 Last Great Places" by The Nature Conservancy. The guide presents information on wildlife sanctuaries, parks, environmental education centers, and the many wildflowers, birds, and mammals found in the Pocono region. A "Nature Log" found in the back of the booklet provides a handy "checklist" for the tourist and some "rules to remember" while observing wildlife. There is also a page on animal identification for young children to use.

The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail is another example of an excellent ecotourism effort in the region. Created by an act of Congress in 1988, this Trail is administered by the National Park Service and is devoted to promoting an understanding and enjoyment of the natural and cultural resources of the New Jersey coast. The trail runs from Deepwater, just north of Salem, down the Delaware Bay coast and north on the Atlantic Coast to Sandy Hook. While the trail is devoted to more than just ecological themes and places, its connection with ecotourism is evident.

### **Regional Efforts Outside of the Public Sector**

*Non-profit organizations in the region are doing an excellent job promoting ecotourism opportunities.*

One of the most outstanding ecotourism initiatives in the region is found in southern Cumberland County. The Delaware Bay Schooner Project, located in Port Norris, is restoring the old oyster schooner "A.J. Meerwald." In addition, the Schooner Project has established a maritime museum and is in the process of rehabilitating several old shipping sheds along the Maurice River which will provide dock space for the schooner, classrooms, office space, and perhaps some small shops or other small facilities.

The Nature Conservancy and the Natural Lands Trust, both large non-profit conservation groups, are working to enhance their Cumberland County properties by constructing trails, observaton platforms, and nature walks. The Natural Lands Trust made these improvements to its "Glades" property in Downe Township and TNC is working on its Gandy's Beach, Manumuskin Preserve, and Willow Grove Lake holdings to install these amenities.

Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G) is also making similar improvements to property it is acquiring through its Estuary Enhancement Program. This program is a large conservation project intended to provide additional fish habitat to offset the recent losses in fish and aquatic habitat throughout the Delaware Bay region. PSE&G is constructing ecotourism facilities at its Greenwich Township, Maurice River Township, and Commercial Township properties.

*A number of businesses throughout the region are also focusing on ecotourism activities.*

In Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, the *Twin Capes Nature Tours* provides regularly scheduled tours of Rehoboth Beach, Cape Henlopen, and waterfowl areas. In addition, "on location" nature programs and special package tours are available. The firm specializes in linking nature programs with restaurant or hotel/motel accommodations, convention planners, and other tourist facilities.



In Cape May, New Jersey, the *Great Atlantic Kite Company* offers a program entitled Aqua Trails, which provides kayak tours of Cape May County's bays and salt marshes. Tours focus on the native vegetation and wildlife of the area and on other sites found at "see level" along the picturesque coastlines and inlets of the Cape region.

While not a comprehensive inventory of all the ecotourism publications, promotions, and initiatives in the region, this overview highlights a range of of the programs currently underway. The initiatives outlined here provide examples of the publications, promotions, businesses, and projects that might be successful in Cumberland County. (Other examples of small business initiatives are found in Sections IV and V of this Plan.)

*Many States have produced some excellent guides to outdoor recreation and travel.*

## **ECOTOURISM INITIATIVES AROUND THE NATION**

Most states in the Country are very active in promoting outdoor vacation adventures. While not often referred to as "ecotourism" promotions, the subjects are clearly compatible. Here are a few examples.

New York State produces a series of eight vacation "theme publications" as part of its "*I Love New York*" promotion. Two of these publications, "*I Love Water Vacations*" and "*I Love The Outdoors*", highlight opportunities that appeal to people interested in an ecotourism vacation. Examples of the range of vacation themes include: "Flyfishing in the Catskills," "Rent a Canal Boat," "Canoe in Adirondack Waters," "Fun on the Delaware River," and "Thrill to Whitewater Rafting." These publications are available either by mail or by fax transmission, so they are very marketable, easily accessible, and very concise materials.

*Several agencies of State government in New Jersey have prepared material on a wide range of camping, touring, hiking, and biking adventures.*

The Texas Department of Transportation, Division of Travel and Information publishes a very nice, 272 page travel guide that highlights many of the lakes, recreation areas, national and state forests and parks in the State. But it also devotes attention to some more unusual attractions such as bird life, rocks, minerals, and the many hunting and fishing opportunities that Texas has to offer.

The New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism produces a 163 page guide to the Garden State that includes references to parks, beaches, nature trails, boat and canoe rentals, and other outdoor recreational opportunities. In addition, there is a highway map included in the guide that outlines six excellent driving

*Ecotourism opportunities of national significance are found as close to Cumberland County as the New Jersey Pinelands.*

tours of the State. Each of the tours implies a connection to ecotourism themes. They include "Fun and Foliage," "Reach for the Stars," "Nature's Wonder," "A Touch of History," "Pinelands Pleasures," and "Garden State Cornucopia." The proximity of Cumberland County to the New Jersey Pinelands makes ecotourism efforts there particularly beneficial. In addition, the Division of Travel & Tourism produces an extensive outdoor guide that focuses specifically on the many hiking, biking, surfing, swimming, boating, fishing, ballooning, camping and other outdoor destinations and activities found in New Jersey. Other State agencies including the Division of Parks & Forestry and the Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife also produce excellent guides to outdoor recreation, including material on parks, forests, wildlife areas, camping opportunities, and special events.

The State of Delaware is also promoting its natural resource base. The State's Department of Tourism recently held an ecotourism conference. As a follow-up to that effort, State officials are conducting an inventory of their ecotourism activities. This publication, being prepared with assistance from the University of Delaware, is due to be released in the spring of 1996.

The Pacific Northwest has become a magnet for ecotourism with whale watching cruises, biking trails, hiking, and camping opportunities in abundance. The nation's first "whale watching park" has been developed at Lime Kiln State Park in the San Juan Island chain in Washington State. Marine parks, boating, fishing, and kayaking opportunities are also abundant. Guided tours are offered for outdoor enthusiasts as well.

The island of Kaua'i, Hawaii in conjunction with the County's Office of Economic Development and the University of Hawaii, is exploring a variety of ecotourism themes and programs. This effort, which focuses on natural and cultural based tourism, is seen as a way to help the tourist economy of the island recover from the affects of Hurricane Iniki in 1992.

### **EXAMPLES OF ECOTOURISM PLANS**

*There were very few examples of ecotourism plans found. Most of the initiatives centered on natural resource marketing and promotion.*

The examples of ecotourism or outdoor recreational programs and publications cited so far, focus primarily on the marketing and promotion of nature based tourism. To find examples of ecotourism planning was more difficult. Very few areas have approached ecotourism in a comprehensive fashion to address not only the marketing of their natural resources, but their conservation, management and development as well. Two examples of a more

comprehensive approach to ecotourism are found in the coastal regions of North Carolina.

*Tyrell County is promoting the creation of a non-profit development corporation to guide ecotourism development.*

### **Ecotourism in Tyrrell County, North Carolina**

Tyrell County is located in northeastern North Carolina on the southern edge of the Albemarle Sound. The only major highway in the County is Interstate 64 which connects the Norfolk metropolitan area with Richmond and Washington, D.C. to the north.

Like Cumberland County, Tyrell County is looking for ways to expand its economic opportunity while protecting some of its abundant natural resources. The Conservation Fund of Arlington, Virginia has acquired 110,000 acres along the Pamlico peninsula; 49,000 of which lie in Tyrell County. Natural features such as the Scuppernon River and Pocosin Lakes are important features highlighted in the Plan and provide an important focus for many of the recommendations made in the Plan.

The Plan is divided into four main sections. The first inventories the existing characteristics of the County and assesses potential environmental impacts that would be adverse to an ecotourism economy. Second, the Plan analyzes general development opportunities covering such issues as marketing, the development of nature trails, canoe areas, bird watching tours, hiking and off road tours, cultural and historic tourism activities, archeological tours, festivals and special events, and ideas for the small business person. The third main segment of the Plan outlines a role for the County Community Development Corporation. This non-profit corporation was established in 1992 and is charged in the Plan with mobilizing citizen involvement in the ecotourism program, developing the labor force, providing financing and loan assistance to businesses wanting to get started or expand their ecotourism activities, and provide a variety of training and technical assistance to the local communities. The last major element of the Plan outlines short and long term actions. Included as short term actions are recommendations to expand infrastructure, develop a land use plan for the city and county, clean up the Scuppernon River, identify the recreational, natural, historic, and cultural resources in the area, sponsor achievable projects, get young people involved, construct a natural resource center for the sound, and continue the economic development planning process. Long term objectives included maintaining environmental quality, expanding loans to small businesses, linking the natural resource center to educational and other school curricula, developing downtown

*Tyrell County, North Carolina shares many characteristics with Cumberland County, New Jersey.*

Columbia as a tourist destination, and tying Tyrell County into the regional and state economy.

The Ecotourism Plan for Tyrell County was produced in 1993. It was prepared by the University of North Carolina's Department of City and Regional Planning.

### **Nature Based Tourism in Eastern North Carolina**

Another interesting initiative in North Carolina centers around work done by an organization known as the "Partnership for the Sounds." A report issued by this group stemming from a forum held in November of 1994 offers a number of recommendations for building an ecotourism program.

The effort, intended to introduce a comprehensive ecotourism strategy for coastal North Carolina focused on four major themes. The first was ecotourism marketing. The report makes an interesting recommendation involving a classic "chicken and egg" dilemma: should the region be marketed first or should there be improvements to the region's facilities before it is marketed. The solution produced by the forum is to simultaneously market the region to generate demand, and improve the facilities and infrastructure to accommodate the growing demand. There were also recommendations to map the region and its assets, develop a theme or identity, target the audience and develop and market tour packages.

The second theme presented was "Eco-tourism as Economic Development." A number of suggestions were made here. The first was that ecotourism development needs to be linked closely with the skills of the labor force. The second was to examine ways that fees, services, and tourist merchandise could be generated to enhance local businesses. Technical assistance to business to help with business planning and development was also noted as a strategy.

Community development and involvement was the third theme of the report. It identified the major citizen groups and organizations that need to be involved in building an ecotourism program. Suggestions were made for field trips, technical assistance, and other forms of public outreach.

Finally, the strategy addresses implementing an environmental stewardship program through resource management and education. Steps should be taken to ensure that the resource base, the infrastructure, and the community

*A successful and sustainable ecotourism program must involve much more than good marketing.*

*A sound ecotourism program for Cumberland County must combine good ideas for marketing and promoting the natural resources with suggestions for protecting, managing, and developing the area.*

*The Cumberland County Plan must contain a mix of ideas and themes.*

acceptance for ecotourism are closely monitored to determine changes that would detract from a good, widely accepted community ecotourism program. Environmental education and awareness were also critical components of this theme. Influencing people's behavioral ethic, preparing good public information pieces, and generating good outdoor exhibits, field trips, and tour experiences are necessary to make this program work.

## **SUMMARY**

This brief overview highlighted some of the natural resource based programs and activities occurring around the region, state, and nation. There are many excellent examples of natural resource promotion and the marketing of outdoor recreational experiences. These materials rarely include information on natural resource management or the simple rules of stewardship that visitors to a natural area need to remember. Only the Bucks County *Eco Adventures* and the Kaua'i, Hawaii material touched in a significant way on some broad "ecotourism" themes.

In order to be successful, and to sustain a meaningful and enjoyable ecotourism experience, communities, states, and regions must do more than simply advertise their natural assets. While marketing and promotion are obviously essential segments of an ecotourism effort, they must be coupled with other programs and information that guide and manage visitors and resources in other important ways.

The two North Carolina strategies for ecotourism focus on the issues of nature based visitation comprehensively. They blend the need for promotion and marketing with resource protection and visitor management strategies.

A comprehensive ecotourism plan for Cumberland County must also encompass a wide range of promotional and management ideas. It needs to include many of the themes, publications, and ideas highlighted in this section of the Plan. In addition, it must incorporate suggestions and ideas generated locally. The Cumberland County Workshop on Ecotourism, which was held in November of 1993 provided considerable guidance in this regard. The findings of the workshop and the evolution of a framework for a Cumberland County Plan are the subjects of the following section.

*Section III*

## **BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK FOR AN ECOTOURISM PROGRAM**

*A public workshop to give citizens, businesses and environmental groups the opportunity to get together and discuss ecotourism was the first step the County took in developing a comprehensive ecotourism strategy.*

*Held in November 1993, the workshop focused on several themes that provide broad guidelines for an ecotourism program.*

### **SUMMARY OF THE 1993 CUMBERLAND COUNTY WORKSHOP ON ECOTOURISM**

One of the first steps that Cumberland County took to develop the concept of ecotourism was to organize a workshop. This event, held in November of 1993, gave citizens, businesses, environmental leaders and other interested parties the chance to get together, discuss some of the issues, and make general recommendations about the future of ecotourism in the County.

There were a number of agencies and organizations involved in the planning and design of the workshop. In July of 1993, the County Planning & Development staff met with a committee of people representing business, non-profit conservation groups, and elected officials to plan the event. The South Jersey Land Trust agreed to cosponsor the workshop in conjunction with Cumberland County government. Atlantic Energy Corporation offered the use of the Brian Parent Conference Center in Millville for the workshop, and a number of other agencies including newspapers, conservation organizations, municipalities, chambers of commerce, and tourism associations agreed to assist in promoting the event.

In order to reach the public and other interested parties, the workshop was widely marketed. There were three basic avenues through which this effort was pursued. The first was a direct mailing. Elected officials, planning and zoning board members, business people, citizen groups, environmental organizations and others were sent invitations to the workshop. The County Public Information Office distributed press releases to the local media. Various conservation and business organizations circulated flyers that publicized the workshop.

There were seven themes that workshop organizers felt were important. They were: Making Ecotourism Work for Local Business; Managing Natural and Human Resources in an Ecotourism Program; Identifying Investments Needed for a Sound Ecotourism Program; Making Ecotourism Part of a Regional

Tourism Program; Identifying Present and Future Ecotourism Attractions; and Assistance from Conservation Agencies: How Can They Help? In addition to these themes which constituted "breakout sessions" for the workshop participants, there was a keynote speaker and introductory and wrap up sessions that were part of the agenda. (A complete copy of the workshop report is available at the Department of Planning & Development.)

### **Findings of the Workshop**

Mr. Edward McMahon of the Conservation Fund in Arlington, Virginia, was the keynote speaker for the workshop. He delivered a powerful message about the importance of retaining a sense of "community." Despite the advances that have been made in environmental protection over the past generation, Mr. McMahon stressed that most places in America were beginning to look like every other place. He challenged local officials and those present at the workshop to work to retain the local character and other assets that make their communities special. Each of the breakout sessions also provided a number of recommendations on how to develop a comprehensive strategy for ecotourism. These recommendations are outlined as follows.

#### *Making Ecotourism Work for Local Business*

Getting the business community excited about ecotourism is important. Clearly the success of any ecotourism plan depends in part on investment by the private sector. There were a number of suggestions in this session. Establishing public-private partnerships, providing technical support for the business community through market studies and surveys, developing a theme/logo for the Delaware Bay, providing tax and other incentives for new development, improving signage, and putting together a plan for business were the major recommendations.

#### *Managing Natural and Human Resources in an Ecotourism Program*

Providing access to natural resources without destroying them is one of the central dilemmas of an ecotourism program. Impacts on these resources come from such things as boats, all terrain vehicles, and human contact. The participants in this session identified six areas that an ecotourism plan must address. They are: controlling access to the most critical sites; improving management, enforcement and coordination of regulation; providing controlled access to less sensitive sites; improving infrastructure; coordinating

*The workshop consisted of seven breakout sessions, each of which focused on a special theme that is important to the development of an ecotourism plan.*

*There was so much interest in the Cumberland County workshop that registration exceeded the capacity of the facility.*

public and private investments; and addressing the problems of vehicular use.

#### *Identifying Investment Needs for a Sound Ecotourism Program*

Any tourism program needs a range of public and private investment if it is to be successful. The job of this workshop session was to identify some of the possible investments that need to be made in Cumberland County. They include promotional material, public facilities such as restrooms, viewing platforms, and boardwalks, signage, infrastructure, campgrounds, special events, contests, interpretive facilities, and marketing programs.

#### *Making Ecotourism Part of a Regional Tourism Program*

Any good ecotourism program must compliment other types of tourism programs in the region. Within an hour's drive of Cumberland County there are numerous, large tourism destinations including, for example, the Atlantic shore, the casinos, Philadelphia, and the Pine Barrens. This breakout group identified a process for melding a county program with regional tourism initiatives. This process included determining the regional market, identifying the connections that ecotourism has with that market, making contacts with regional tour operators, and coordinating calendars, events, scheduling, and the other aspects of program development. The group also recommended developing interpretive centers to help provide a focus to any County effort.

*Many of the present and future ecotourism attractions can be marketed as part of a comprehensive ecotourism program.*

#### *Identifying Present and Future Ecotourism Attractions*

There is no shortage of natural resources or sites in Cumberland County that could be part of an ecotourism program. More than 80 potential sites were identified by this breakout group. They included natural areas such as the "Glades Refuge" in Downe Township, the Maurice and Cohansey Rivers, various Fish & Wildlife Management Areas, the Delaware Bay, fishing areas, special events, festivals and tournaments, and various cultural and historic resources such as Wheaton Village, the "Maritime Traditions of the Delaware Bay" Museum in Port Norris, or Dutch Neck Village.

#### *Marketing an Ecotourism Strategy for Cumberland County*

Marketing the County's ecotourism potential can be a complicated business. It must be well coordinated with the development of new attractions, themes, and facilities. To market environmental sites that are not accessible or that do



not have proper management will discourage future visits to the area. The participants in this breakout group recognized that there must be short term and long term marketing objectives. In the long term, coordination with the region is essential. Education about the natural resources, their management and protection should be part of the marketing effort. A good marketing campaign must also promote the opportunities for business and investment. In other words, the program needs to have a multiplicity of components -- some directed toward the visiting public and others directed toward potential investors.

*Establishing partnerships with the non-profit conservation groups, business organizations, government agencies and others can be important steps to a successful program.*

#### *Assistance From Conservation Agencies*

In Cumberland County, the conservation organizations in conjunction with the State of New Jersey have preserved many of the most critical natural areas. The conservation interests recognize that it is important to establish partnerships with local governments that meet more than just land preservation objectives. By forming these linkages through chambers of commerce, civic organizations, shared marketing objectives, and board memberships, the conservation groups can become more integrated into the local communities. Conversely, membership in non-profit conservation organizations can provide local citizens and businesses with a better understanding of some of the conservation objectives these agencies have.

### **MAKING THE TRANSITION TO A COMPREHENSIVE ECOTOURISM STRATEGY**

*The findings and recommendations of the County Workshop needed to be placed in a broad framework for the development of an ecotourism plan.*

The 1993 Ecotourism Workshop accomplished many things. It introduced the concept of ecotourism to a broad cross-section of the public. It provided an opportunity to focus on many of the issues that need to be developed as part of an ecotourism program. It also helped to generate enthusiasm and support for ecotourism in the community and offered some common themes that both the environmental and business interests could embrace.

Yet this workshop touched only on some of the broader, more general parameters of a comprehensive ecotourism program. There are many details that need to be assembled. Many of the themes and issues discussed at the workshop must also be put into a broad context that provides an overall focus to the ecotourism plan.

*The development of a good ecotourism program in Cumberland County will be a fluid process that evolves over time.*

In January, 1995, the Cumberland County Planning Board discussed several tenets that should guide an ecotourism strategy and within which the recommendations of the workshop should be refined. A workable, achievable ecotourism plan must provide focus. It cannot be so general that it becomes a broad-based plan for traditional types of tourism. Neither can an ecotourism strategy ever define the big picture completely. Ecotourism is a new industry. It will evolve over time. Its development will be a fluid process. The ecotourism plan must be viewed as a starting point in this process. Many organizations and interests in both the public and private sectors can play important roles in fostering ecotourism. The role that government can play in the process is to establish some goals, define a vision, and propose ways to achieve that vision.

### **Establishing Thematic Links**

*There are many themes that can provide an excellent basis for an ecotourism program in Cumberland County.*

The ecotourism plan must also stress the common linkages and themes that exist throughout the County. In Cumberland County, there are a number of themes that can provide an excellent basis for an ecotourism program. For example, the maritime industry has been an important part of the heritage of the bay shore area of the County. Bird watching can be promoted as a theme that cuts across many of the municipal and geographic areas of the County. Fishing and hunting and recreational boating are also common activities along the rivers, streams, and natural areas of the County. Other themes that have important links to the County's natural resource base are glass making and agriculture. From the rich, silica sands in Cumberland County to the finished products produced by Wheaton, Durand, Foster-Forbes, and the many other glass houses in the County, this interesting story is one that can add an unusual dimension to an ecotourism program. The County's outstanding agricultural resources also provide a wealth of ecotourism stories and themes from their relationships to the resource base to the importance of farming as a business and the marketing of farm products.

### **Focusing on Geographic Areas with Special Ecotourism Potential**

*There are also areas of the County that can tell some special and unique stories.*

While common themes are many, there are also characteristics that are unique. For instance, there is only one National Wild & Scenic Maurice River system in the County. The Shellpile-Bivalve-Port Norris area is prominent for its oystering industry. Fortescue has a large charter fishing fleet. The river and wetland impoundments maintained by the State are also interesting and unique. The shorebird migration to the Delaware Bay beaches is one of the

largest in North America! These are attractions that are special. They are not duplicated elsewhere in the County or region. Just as the common ecotourism themes are important in building interest in a region, the uniqueness of certain areas must be promoted to ensure a diversity of opportunities.

### **Continuing a Public Involvement Process**

*A good process for public involvement is an essential part of any planning program.*

Finally, the Planning Board stressed the need to work with local communities and interests. Some areas of the County will welcome ecotourism and more visitation. Other communities will be less receptive. Whether it is in conjunction with local government, business, conservation groups, or citizen organizations, an ecotourism plan must encourage partnerships. Government should not do what the private sector can do better. County government should not compete with the interests of local government. Clearly defining the roles of the different players in an ecotourism plan must be an important part of the planning process. The ecotourism plan must include a listing of the groups, stakeholders, and other affected interests that should be involved in crafting and implementing the program.

### **SUMMARY**

*In order to be successful, a program for ecotourism must be well defined and well focused.*

With the experiences of other regions, states, and localities to provide guidance and with the findings of the County's own workshop and planning board input, the following sections of the Plan focus on developing the specific themes of a County ecotourism program.

It is important to reiterate that the general framework established in this section of the Plan attempts to limit the focus of the program to those themes and geographic areas that have direct connections to the natural resource base. Cultural attractions and historic sites, while certainly integral to an overall program for tourism development are not included in the focus of this Plan. It is important that the Plan identifies a limited number of well defined themes that can be developed and implemented. As the program grows, the linkages to other aspects of the tourist economy can be made without diluting the initial effort.

*Section IV*

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY'S ECOTOURISM THEMES AND PLACES

## OVERVIEW

This section of the Plan examines in detail the themes and places that could be part of a County-wide ecotourism program. Each of the themes and places is described in terms of its resources, its infrastructure and development needs, its land use and resource management objectives, and some marketing and promotional ideas. Maps highlighting many of these characteristics and program concepts are included in each of the thematic and place presentations.

*This section of the Plan outlines those themes and places that could provide the foundation for a County Ecotourism Program.*

The summary portion of this section reviews many of the common needs, priorities, and management issues of the area and makes some general recommendations about County-wide ecotourism priorities. These needs and priorities are the focus of the implementation strategies presented in the final section of this Plan.

There are six general themes and four "places" outlined. They include the following:

### *Themes*

1. Tracing Cumberland County's Maritime Heritage;
2. Boating Adventures in Cumberland County;
3. Premier Fishing, Hunting, Crabbing, and Trapping Opportunities;
4. The Heart of Farming in the Garden State;
5. Birding, Biking, and Hiking: Passive Recreation and Ecotourism;
6. From Silica to Crystal: Tracing the Natural History of Glass.

*There are ten themes and places in Cumberland County that could be developed to promote ecotourism.*

### *Places*

1. Cumberland's Wild & Scenic Rivers;
2. Port Norris and New Jersey's Oyster Heritage;
3. The Maurice River Natural Resources Center.
4. Services and Facilities: The Strengths of Urban Areas

*This section of the Plan focuses on those themes and places that are the potential strengths of a County ecotourism program today.*

Because there is overlap between the themes and places in some instances, certain objectives and recommendations may be slightly repetitive but this may help to define the necessary priorities of the Plan. It is also important to remember that these themes and places do not represent all of what might be possible in the County. Other aspects of an ecotourism program can be developed over time. New attractions can be added, new themes promoted, and additional places included. The focus of this section is on those topics that are the County's ecotourism strengths today.

## **TRACING CUMBERLAND COUNTY'S MARITIME HERITAGE**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

Cumberland County as we know it today was founded by seafarers. The Scandanavians and later the Dutch brought European settlements to this area. Small villages and towns sprang up along Cumberland County's coastline and rivers with direct connections to the maritime trades.

The first ports in southern New Jersey, established in the late 17th century, were located at Salem and Greenwich. In the 18th century, Port Elizabeth, Bridgeton, Millville, and Port Norris also saw maritime trade in the many raw materials and agricultural products produced in the region including wheat, corn, beef, tallow, timber products, and animal pelts.

Most of the area towns also built the sloops and schooners that carried the region's exports to urban areas such as Philadelphia and New York. Bridgeton, Cedarville, Dividing Creek, Dorchester, Leesburg, Fairton, Greenwich, Mauricetown, Newport, Port Elizabeth, and Port Norris all boasted able shipwrights and busy shipyards. Literally thousands of wooden sailing ships were built at these yards during the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. These vessels helped to support the growing oystering business which in the 1880s employed 3,000 persons in the Port Norris area.

*Maritime trades are important aspects of the County's heritage.*

At about the same time, another seafood industry was booming on the western side of Cumberland County. The rich harvest of sturgeon from the Delaware River and Bay made the packing of caviar a very lucrative business. In fact, a little fishing village named Caviar (no longer in existence, but near present-day Bayside) was the site of about 400 residents during the fishing season.

*The Ship John and East Point lighthouses remain important reminders of the region's seafaring history.*

With the tons of oysters, caviar and other seafood being processed and shipped from Bay towns in Cumberland County and with the significant seafaring trade occurring throughout the region, many lighthouses were constructed along the Delaware Bay to ensure safe navigation. Of the numerous lighthouses that were built in Cumberland County in the nineteenth century, only two remain -- the Ship John lighthouse and East Point lighthouse. East Point lighthouse is located on the eastern shore of the Maurice River cove and the Ship John light is situated on a shoal near the mouth of the Cohansey River.\*

### **Resources Today**

Many of the remnants of the historic maritime industry in Cumberland County remain. Other sites continue to be active maritime centers. A very interesting ecotourism theme could be established around the nucleus of the maritime trade and historic seafaring sites in the County. These sites include the following.

1. *The Remnants of Caviar Village.* Currently a stop on the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, the best location from which to view the historic remnants of Caviar village is from the observation platform at Bayside. This platform offers an outstanding view of the Delaware Bay, area wetlands, the natural habitat of the Bay shore, and the remains of the historic village.

2. *The Greenwich Boat Works.* An old ship and boat building operation, this facility stores and repairs boats of all types. It is a private operation which ceased ship building in the early 1960's.

3. *The "John Dubois Maritime Museum" in Greenwich.* This museum houses many artifacts associated with the maritime history of the region. It is operated by the Cumberland County Historical Society and is open for public visitation on Sunday afternoons.

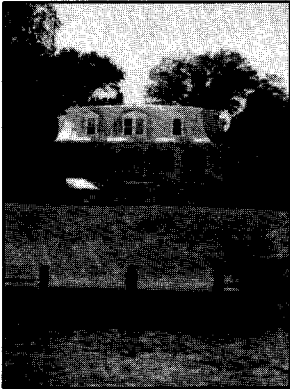
4. *The Fairton Boat Yard.* Old, wooden-hulled boats are often being restored and repaired in the village of Fairton. Currently, there are no tours available and the site is not open to the general public. Some old schooners, now on the National Historic Register, were restored in this village.

*Many new as well as historic sites could be the foundation of a comprehensive maritime theme.*

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\*"HISTORIC THEMES AND RESOURCES WITHIN THE NEW JERSEY COASTAL HERITAGE TRAIL -- Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay: Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties." U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C. 1991.

5. *The Seafaring Villages of Cumberland County.* Many of the old seafaring villages of the County retain an outstanding degree of historic integrity. Greenwich, Fairton, Newport, Mauricetown, Dividing Creek, Port Norris, Dorchester, Port Elizabeth, and Leesburg all have examples of old captain's houses and other homes built by the merchantmen and other individuals connected with the maritime trades. Some of these communities are more affluent than others. Some are more receptive to tourism activities than others.



*Historic Mauricetown, on the Maurice River, is a beautiful, old seafaring village.*

6. *The Schooner "A.J. Meerwald."* Currently being reconstructed, the site where this old, oyster schooner is being rebuilt is open for public visitation. The schooner will eventually have its home port at dock facilities which are also being restored. (More on this location is presented later in this section in conjunction with the Port Norris area.)

7. *Maritime Traditions of the Delaware Bay Museum.* Located in Port Norris, this museum presents an overview of the oystering and seafaring industries that existed in the Port Norris, Shellpile, and Bivalve areas. It is operated by the Delaware Bay Schooner Project, Inc. and is open to the public on weekend (Saturday and Sunday) afternoons.

8. *The Dorchester Shipyard.* Located on River Road in Dorchester, this ship yard is an active construction and repair facility. It is one of the oldest shipyards on the Maurice River. It is also a private business and not open for public visitation.

9. *The Silverton Marine Corporation.* A large, modern manufacturer of yachts, this facility is one of the largest boat builders in southern New Jersey. Silverton yachts are widely known in the boating industry. This is a private corporation and not open for public visitation.

10. *The Del Bay Shipyard.* Currently owned by WHIBCO Corporation, a major silica sand manufacturer, the buildings now used as office facilities for the company, are excellent examples of how some of the historic shipyards may have appeared. WHIBCO officials are discussing possible plans to use the facility as a museum site to display much of this heritage although the site is currently part of the company's sand mining operation and not open to the general public.

11. *The Lighthouses at East Point and Ship John.* These facilities are currently intact but only one is easily accessible. The grounds at East Point

*The County is still home to many shipyards and boat builders.*

Lighthouse are open to the public. Although the lighthouse is being restored it is open at certain times of the year for the visiting public. There are few facilities currently in place at the site that provide interpretive or other types of information. The Ship John Lighthouse is accessible only by boat and is located near the mouth of the Cohansey River.

*12. Cohansey and Maurice River Tours.* Periodically, there are schooner trips on both the Cohansey and Maurice Rivers that help to provide visitors with a sense of the maritime history of the region. These trips are not offered on a regular basis and are generally limited to a few weekends in the spring or fall. In addition, there are dinner cruises now offered from the Ship John Inn at Greenwich and from Fortescue that compliment this type of theme.

## **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT**

Currently, very few of the Cumberland County sites that are potential resources for a maritime-oriented ecotourism theme can accommodate visitors adequately. Some are private operations not open at all to public visitation. Other sites, which are open to the public, do not have the types of services and facilities that make for a well managed experience. Consequently, there are several issues that must be addressed before a maritime theme can be easily molded into a practical, stand-alone County ecotourism theme. These include infrastructure and access issues, protection of the resource base, and issues regarding a sensitive promotional theme.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS**

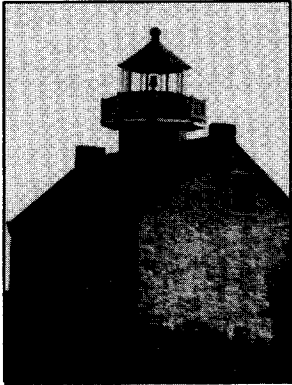
For the sites currently accessible to the public, there are many improvements in infrastructure and public facilities that are necessary. At the Bayside Observation Platform (Caviar) and at East Point Lighthouse, parking, signage, roadway improvements, and interpretive facilities are needed. In addition, site management is necessary to protect the integrity of the facilities if an increase in tourism and promotion is to occur.

The Public Service Electric & Gas Company, (PSE&G), is making both interpretive and facility improvements to the Bayside Platform as part of its Estuary Enhancement Program. These improvements include enhancing the structural integrity of the platform, adding directional signage, improving the parking facilities, providing site management, and adding interpretive material. The observation platform is located on lands that have recently become permanently deed restricted.

*To pull a comprehensive ecotourism theme together will require partnerships between the public and private sectors.*

*Site management will become an increasingly important issue as tourism and visitation increase.*





*Maintaining the historic context of the East Point Lighthouse is just as important as maintaining the structure.*

The Maurice River Historical Society has done an outstanding job over the years maintaining the integrity of East Point Lighthouse. Without the diligence of this organization, it is quite possible that the lighthouse would have been allowed to fall into disrepair or be destroyed. However, if this facility is to realize its potential as a widely publicized and promoted site, the public amenities on the site need to be enhanced. There are parking improvements necessary, interior renovations needed, and possibly full-time management of the site required. While almost entirely surrounded by public lands that are part of the Heislerville Fish & Wildlife Management Area, private lands immediately adjacent to this site should be acquired and protected when they become available on the open market, (not through any type of condemnation process.) This would ensure that the historic context of the lighthouse is maintained.

Signage to the County's existing, publicly accessible maritime sites is also inadequate. Any type of comprehensive, maritime theme must include plans to upgrade the directional signage to these and other facilities. Arrangements for such things as trash removal, litter cleanup, public restrooms, and visitor kiosks are also necessary throughout the region if a maritime theme and other ecotourism themes are to be implemented successfully.

## **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

While there are existing sites that can tell the history of Cumberland County's maritime heritage, many of the businesses, shipyards, and other maritime operations that can present an interesting overview of the industry today are private operations without any public access.

Part of the process of building a comprehensive maritime theme into a County ecotourism program will be to work with business to demonstrate the economic potential for business to invest in ecotourism opportunities. In order for this to be effective, business must be satisfied of four things: 1.) That ecotourism can compliment existing commercial activities and not be a disruption to commercial operations or to the work force; 2.) That it can add significantly to business revenues; 3.) That it has a long-term future in the County and 4.) That it can be incorporated into long term business plans without liability and insurance problems. The County needs to develop marketing studies and fiscal impact analyses to determine whether these issues can be defined to the satisfaction of the business community.

*Business must be able to see a profit in ecotourism in order to get involved.*

Another important ingredient in this process involves hospitality training. Many businesses that have no experience with the tourism industry need to get an understanding of the complexity of the industry and how to gain maximum advantage of tourism opportunities. Even businesses that have catered to tourism for a long time can benefit from refresher courses in imaging and hospitality training.

## **PROMOTING A MARITIME HERITAGE THEME**

There are many exciting resources that are existing or that could be developed to support a maritime theme as part of a County ecotourism program. Only a few of the elements necessary to promote and manage these resources are in place today. That does not mean that some maritime sites cannot be included in any promotional material produced. Rather, it is apparent that if maritime history is to be a major theme of the County ecotourism program, there will have to be significant investments made in infrastructure, facility management, and business development.

*The promotion of this theme will take time and must be phased to accommodate the existing and potential tourist sites.*

This will take time. The County government can be a catalyst in this process by identifying grants, developing marketing concepts, and working with local business and community leaders to develop this theme.

Because the theme is one that will take more development before it can be marketed comprehensively, it is recommended that only selected portions of the theme be included in any short-term material promoting County ecotourism opportunities. This promotion should also include information about the ecological sensitivity of many of the existing sites and the need to be good stewards of the landscape.

## **BOATING ADVENTURES IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

For many years, Cumberland County has provided some of the best recreational boating opportunities in the region. With access to the Delaware Bay from two major river systems and various locations directly on the Bay shore, recreational boating has been an important pastime of County residents and visitors to the area.



*Fortescue is one of the oldest and largest of the villages on the Delaware Bay*

Fortescue is one of the largest recreational boating communities on the Bay. Home to a State marina and other privately operated facilities, the history of Fortescue is one with direct connections to the recreational boating industry. The Maurice and Cohansey Rivers also offer many opportunities for the boating enthusiast. These rivers have provided access to recreational boaters via private marinas for many years. More recently, public access points have been developed. There is a public access ramp on the Maurice River at Millville. There used to be one in Commercial Township. Unofficially, many small boaters use the County right-of-way north of the Mauricetown bridge as an access point as well. On the Cohansey, the City of Bridgeton has the only public launch point on the River.

There is also a growing number of launches for small boats. New facilities on some of the tributary waterways such as the Dividing Creek have been developing. Canoe rentals are also available on both the Cohansey and Maurice River. It is the impression of many of the long time residents along the Maurice River that interest in recreational boating has increased with the publicity surrounding the inclusion of a portion of the Maurice and its tributaries in the National Wild & Scenic Rivers system in 1993.

## **INVENTORY OF FACILITIES**

### **Marinas and Power Boat Facilities**

Currently, there are thirty-four (34) marinas and power boat rental facilities in Cumberland County. Six are located on the Cohansey River; fourteen are located on the Maurice River; and fourteen are located on the Delaware Bay, (in Fortescue, Newport, Dividing Creek, and Gandy's Beach.)

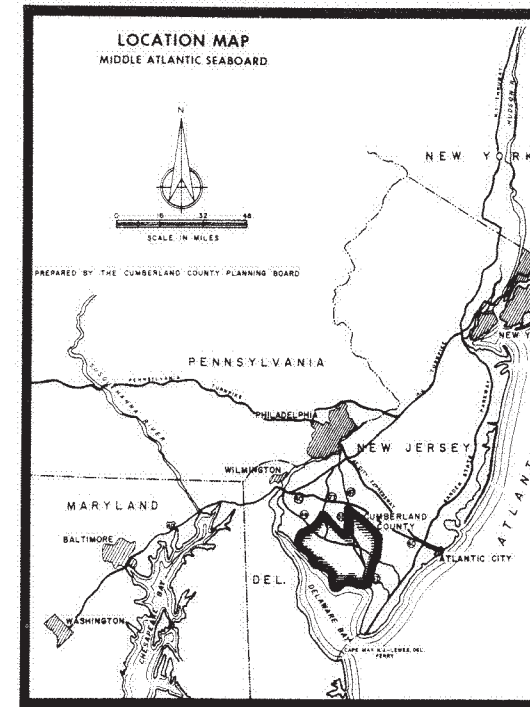
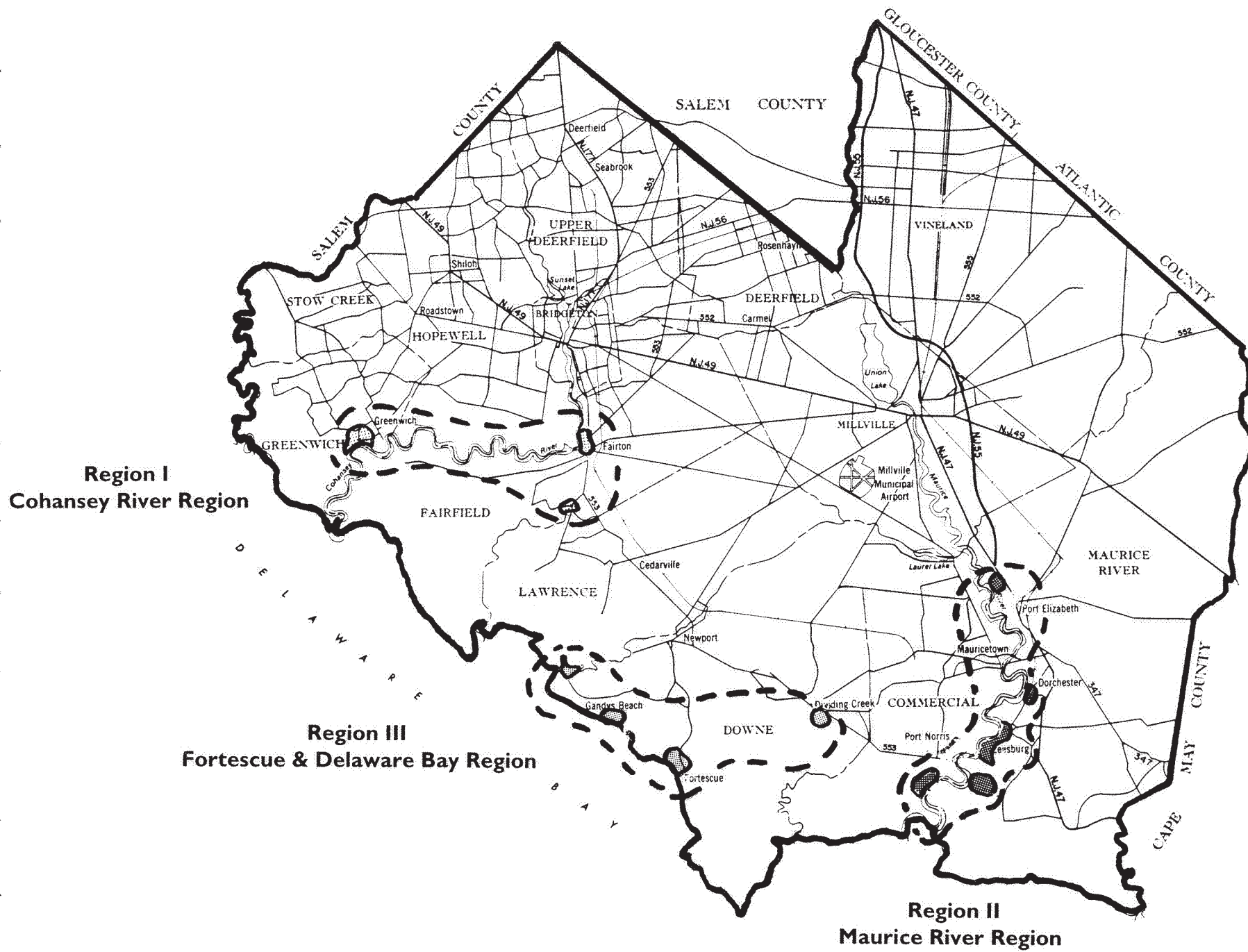
Map 2 identifies the general locations of these facilities. (They are not named or located individually since this inventory is not intended to be a marketing tool.)

### **Public Access Points**

There are three official and one unofficial public access points for launching boats on the Cohansey and Maurice Rivers. Both Bridgeton and Millville have public boat ramps. The Bridgeton facility which provides access to the Cohansey River, is located just south of the Route 49 (Broad Street) bridge. The Millville boat ramp is located on Fowser Road and provides access to the

*There are thirty-seven facilities, both public and private, where people can launch their boats in the County.*

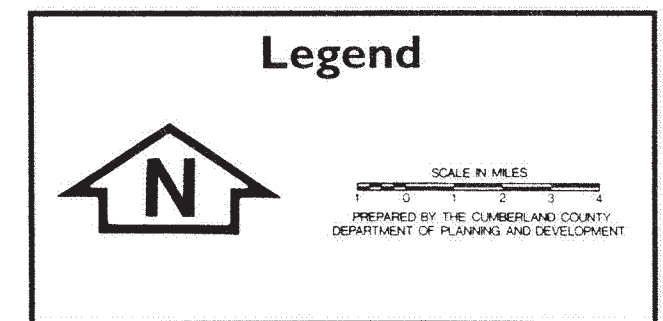
# CUMBERLAND COUNTY New Jersey



## ECOTOURISM PLAN Cumberland County New Jersey

### Map 2 Concentrations of Marina and Boat Rental Facilities

-  Region I - Cohansey River
-  Region II - Maurice River
-  Region III - Fortescue & Delaware Bay



*In addition to the power boat facilities, there are also launch areas and rental facilities for car-top boats.*

Maurice River. The County Right-of-Way at the Mauricetown bridge has also been used, unofficially, as a location to launch small boats.

In addition, public access is available at the State marina in Fortescue. Most of the private marinas in the County also provide public boat launching for a fee.

Furthermore, there are a number of small boat launches at many of the Fish & Wildlife Management Areas in the County. The Dix, Egg Island, Fortescue, Heislerville, and Nantuxent Fish & Wildlife Management Areas all have locations from which car top boats can be launched.

### **Canoe and Small Boat Rental Facilities**

There are canoe rental facilities in Bridgeton and Vineland. One operator serves the upper Maurice River area and the other serves canoe enthusiasts on Sunset Lake. There is also public access for small boats onto Union Lake from the newly constructed facilities at the Union Lake Fish & Wildlife Management Area.

There are a number of other establishments which specialize in small boat rentals. Most of these are located along the Delaware Bay shore. They include a number of businesses concentrated in the small villages of Fortescue, Newport, and Dividing Creek in Downe Township. Crab boats and small motorized boats are available to fish the creeks and guts of the wetland areas along the Bay.

### **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

*Promoting recreational boating and protecting the natural resources from overuse involves striking a difficult balance.*

The primary management issue associated with recreational boating involves overuse of the resource. The central question is this: How can use of the resource be developed without inviting so much use that the experience is destroyed? The answer is not a simple one.

Defining the point at which the natural resource has been taxed to its ability to handle additional recreational traffic without destroying the natural resource is referred to as its "carrying capacity." There are several ways to address carrying capacity. The first would be to allow the market place to determine it. Once the carrying capacity is reached and the experience is sufficiently degraded, recreational boaters would go elsewhere. Of course,

this is the very situation that an ecotourism plan seeks to avoid. Another method for determining carrying capacity would be through a bureaucratically driven program which would seek to regulate use of the resource. This is also undesirable since it adds to an already burdensome regulatory environment for local business. A third means of addressing the issue would be to establish a local advisory council which could give advice to local planning and zoning boards in the issuance of permits for new and expanded facilities. The council could include representatives of the marina and recreational boating interests as well as municipal, county and citizen representatives. Clearly, the overuse of the resource has adverse consequences for both the environment and local business, and should be something which both interests seek to avoid.

*Recreational uses of the waterways must be coordinated with other forms of river use.*

Another issue associated with recreational boating involves its competition with other uses of the river. On both the Cohansey and Maurice Rivers there are limited amounts of commercial and industrial river traffic. Some of this traffic is headed toward boat repair or shipyard facilities. Other traffic is destined to an industrial site. The relationships between business traffic and recreational boaters must be defined and addressed. This could be another role for the advisory council to play.

Securing the necessary permits to dredge and maintain marinas is a difficult process. The State of New Jersey must be included in ecotourism planning so officials of that agency can appreciate the role of ecotourism and its impact on the economy and environment of the area. Ways to streamline the permitting and regulatory processes and secure funding and investment should be important objectives of this Plan. State officials can be valuable partners in an ecotourism program.

### **PROMOTING A THEME FOR RECREATIONAL BOATING**

*Marketing the recreational boating opportunities in Cumberland County is already occurring.*

Recreational boating is a big business in Cumberland County. It is already a business that is being promoted through the efforts of the marinas and rental facilities as well as public organizations. The County Planning & Development Department produces a brochure that describes the marina facilities in the County and their locations. Recreational boating opportunities are also being advanced through flyers on the Maurice River, Fortescue, local Chamber of Commerce publications, and promotional material produced by the State of New Jersey.

Recreational boating is an ecotourism theme that is well advanced. The facilities are generally in place to accommodate tourist demand. The sites are all accessible. As in the case with maritime heritage, signage to many of the facilities could be enhanced. Directional signage to many of the towns and villages as well as signage directing travellers back to Route 55 and the other major roadways in the area could be improved.

*Promotional material must include information on the environmental responsibilities people have when they use the County's waterways.*

The coordination of publications outlining this ecotourism theme could also be improved. There are opportunities for more county-wide promotion of the facilities and recreational boater's destinations. The further development of this theme is one that can move forward very quickly. However, there must be action included in the recommendations of this Plan to protect the resource. Rapid overdevelopment of recreational boating opportunities could limit the future of this business and significantly impact on the environmental quality of the boating experience. Promotional material must educate and inform boaters of the environmental responsibilities they have as users of Cumberland County's magnificent waterways.

## **PREMIER FISHING, HUNTING, CRABBING, AND TRAPPING OPPORTUNITIES**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

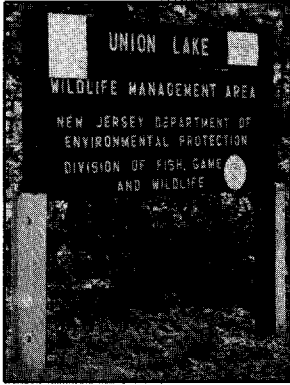
*The publicly owned lands in Cumberland County offer some of the best fishing and hunting in the area.*

There are fifteen (15) major State owned natural areas in Cumberland County. These include both State Forest lands and Fish & Wildlife Management Areas. The acquisition of State properties in Cumberland County goes back to the 1930's when the Edward Bevan Wildlife Management Area along the Delaware Bay shore was purchased. Since then, the State has acquired more than 50,000 acres of land in the County, with a particular focus on the wetlands of the Delaware Bay.

Not all of these properties are easily accessible. Some have only small, dirt roads running through them. Some are not well marked. Signage is deficient. Nonetheless, these areas offer some of the best fishing and hunting in the region.

The New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife has a very good guide to hunting and fishing on their lands. Also included is a listing of the ponds, lakes, and reservoirs in New Jersey, regardless of ownership, that are open to

public angling. The Division also has two additional guides, although somewhat dated, entitled "Saltwater Fishing in New Jersey," and "New Jersey Party and Charter Boat Directory." The following summary provides an outline of some Cumberland County attractions as presented in these guides.



*Union Lake, the largest lake in New Jersey, has excellent public access and parking facilities.*

### **Fishing in State Owned Properties**

There are seven State owned properties in Cumberland County that the N.J. Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife promotes as public fishing areas. These include Cumberland Pond, Cedarville Ponds, Clarks Pond, Heislerville Ponds, Menantico Ponds, Shaws Mill Pond, and Union Lake. Of these sites, Union Lake is the largest, most accessible, and most developed.

The Union Lake Wildlife Management Area in Millville was improved recently. A large parking lot has been added. A new boat ramp was provided. Access and signage were upgraded. These improvements enhance Union Lake as one of the premier fishing and recreation spots in the State.

Clarks Pond is also easily accessible and widely used. The State owns land on one side of the pond and there are privately run picnic grounds and recreational facilities on the other side. Menantico ponds in Millville is less accessible, but still well known locally. It has an excellent boat ramp and parking area. The State record large mouth bass was caught here in 1980. The other sites are all smaller and relatively undeveloped, but easily accessible.

### **Other Public and Private Fishing Areas**

In addition to the State owned lands, there are municipal and privately owned fishing areas in Cumberland County. Bostwick Lake, Cedar Lake, Giampietro Park Pond, Mary Elmer Lake, and Sunset Lake are either municipally owned or provide municipal access. Laurel Lake in Millville and Commercial Township is a private lake with access through membership only. In addition, there is excellent fishing in many of the streams, creeks, and rivers in the County. Much of this fishing is done by boat since there are very few fishing piers or other locations that provide public access from land. The Mauricetown Park, adjacent to the Maurice River, provides a nice location for fishing the river. There are locations along the Cohansey River in the Bridgeton municipal park where public access is available. Fishing in most of the smaller creeks and streams must be done from boats since fishing from bridges and other overpasses is generally discouraged.

*Fishing along the Delaware Bay shore in addition to the rivers and streams in the County is a popular pastime.*



Many of the lakes and ponds in the County are stocked with trout every year. Giampetro Park Lake, Mary Elmer Lake, Shaws Mill Pond, Bostwick Lake, and stretches of the upper Maurice and Cohansey Rivers are popular trout fishing areas.

*Trout fishing in many of stocked ponds, lakes, and rivers in Cumberland County is also a popular sport.*

Fishing is also done from the beaches and bulkheads along the Delaware Bay. New Jersey Avenue in Fortescue is used extensively by fishermen as are some of the other beach front communities. There are very few, if any, public facilities in these locations to manage this type of fishing experience. Consequently, there are problems with parking, camping, and other forms of visitor management that accompany these uses.

In 1985, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service estimated that there were more than 2,000,000 fishing trips made by State residents and out of state visitors to the Delaware Bay region! These numbers point to the tremendous potential for recreational fishing in the area. Fortescue, known as the "Weakfish Capital of the World" generates many of these fishing trips along the Cumberland Bay shore.

### **Crabbing Locations**

Crabbing too is a popular pastime along the beaches and inlets of the Delaware Bay shore. Places such as Beaver Dam, Matts Landing, and Moores Beach are known throughout the State as crabbing hotspots.

Crabbing is not only a recreational activity. It is a livelihood. Many residents of the area supplement their incomes from trapping crabs. Crab processing operations have been important enterprises on the waterfront in Shellpile and Bivalve.

*Crabbing is also a very important activity in the region. There are many crabbing hot spots in Cumberland County.*

### **Hunting Opportunities**

Many of the State owned Wildlife Management Areas in the County provide good hunting opportunities. At the Union Lake Wildlife Management Area, (WMA), deer hunting and various types of small game hunting are permitted. Pheasant, rabbit, woodcock, waterfowl, and quail hunting are especially good at the Heislerville WMA. Duck hunting and other waterfowl hunting is excellent at the Dix WMA, although access is very difficult. The upland portions of the Dix property provide a variety of good small game hunting. The Edward G. Bevan WMA is a 12,000 acre property in Downe,



*Private hunting clubs also offer hunting and fishing for area sportsmen.*

Commercial, and Lawrence Townships and the City of Millville. The State maintains an office here (on Buckshutem Road) as well as facilities for hunting dog training and hunter education. There is excellent rabbit and quail hunting on the property as well as hunting for deer and wild turkeys. The Egg Island WMA offers some of the best waterfowl hunting in the State. Black duck, gadwall, teal, and widgeon are some of the waterfowl found in this area. The 19,815 acre Peaslee WMA is one of the largest such facilities in the State. There is a sizeable deer herd in the area and wild turkeys are abundant. The old April Cranberry Bogs on the property provide excellent wood duck hunting. The State has also cleared and planted a quail management area on the property where quail are stocked in season. This area is particularly popular with quail hunters who enjoy working their dogs.

While opportunities for a wide range of hunting activities abound on the State owned lands, they are not the only hunting preserves in the County. The Bayside Tract, a 3500 acre property in Greenwich Township has recently been deed restricted by the Public Service Electric & Gas Company. The company plans to manage that property in conjunction with the Township to provide a limited number of hunting permits for deer, waterfowl, and small game, under a State-approved plan. Deer hunting is permitted at the Glades preserve in Downe Township, owned by the Natural Lands Trust. In addition, the Maurice River has a long history of rail bird hunting. This sport, conducted from rail boats in the marshes and wetlands of the tidal Maurice River, is one of the finest hunting grounds for this specie anywhere in the mid-Atlantic region and provides a very unique sporting opportunity.

The County also has many privately owned hunting and gunning clubs. Most of these clubs are located in the eastern part of the County in the Menantico and Manumuskin Creek watersheds. In addition to hunting, some of these clubs offer tours for the general public as well as bird watching, nature trails, canoe access, and other forms of passive recreation.

*Trapping is a tradition in Cumberland County dating to the earliest native American settlements.*

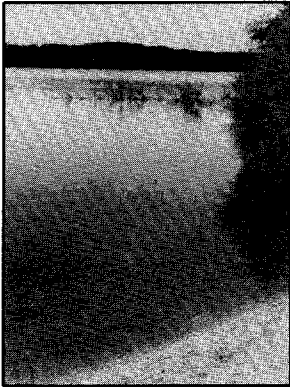
### **Trapping**

Trapping is a tradition in Cumberland County that dates back to the earliest days of the native American settlements in the area. During colonial times, pelts, hides, and furs of various kinds were shipped from the County to various markets in the region. Today, trapping for muskrat, otter, beaver, and other small animals is practiced on a very limited basis along some of the rivers and streams of Cumberland County. The Menantico and Manumuskin Creek

corridors in Maurice River Township and some of the estuarine areas of the lower Cohansey River are particularly popular trapping spots.

Map 3 illustrates the location of the many sites described in this section of the Plan and outlines some of the fishing and hunting opportunities available.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES



*Good management of the public lands in Cumberland County can help to reduce problems with trash and litter.*

Managing lands for hunting and fishing exemplifies the need to view ecotourism issues comprehensively. On the one hand, the excellent fishing, crabbing, and hunting available in Cumberland County can be an outstanding tourism asset. On the other hand, if the natural resources are inadequately managed or there is too much public access provided, the quality of these activities will decline. In addition, many of the state owned properties provide habitat and protection for rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species. It is not only the hunting, fishing, and crabbing opportunities on these sites that must be managed.

One of the objectives of this Plan should be to examine the various hunting, fishing, and crabbing sites and determine where there may be a need for additional infrastructure. In addition, there needs to be an analysis of which properties can accommodate more visitors; which properties should have more restrictive access; and where there are critical lands that really should not be disturbed. The N.J. Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife indicates that any State lands needing restricted access currently has it.

To accomplish this, several criteria were examined. First, the existing characteristics of many of the sites highlighted previously were taken into consideration. Second, the ecological sensitivity of the sites were examined. Thirdly, the sites were reviewed relative to their proximity to urban areas, existing public facilities, and other types of urban infrastructure. Sources such as the Cumberland County Rare, Threatened, & Endangered Species Inventory, the Maurice River Wild & Scenic Rivers Inventory, and information provided by the N.J. Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife were used as source material.

*The public lands along the Delaware Bay shore are generally more sensitive habitats and can support less intensive recreation.*

Based on this analysis, several general observations can be made. Public lands along the Delaware Bay shore are generally more sensitive than those further inland. They are also the lands which currently have the fewest public amenities and offer the most restricted public access. The more inland sites

are accessible by larger roads that can handle greater traffic volumes. They have in some instances fewer sensitive habitats and are in closer proximity to existing urban areas and public infrastructure.

*There are many different types of infrastructure improvements that can be made to enhance the WMAs and other lands.*

The Heislerville WMA may be an exception to this rule. While there are certainly critical habitats and sensitive ecological areas on the site, it is also an area where there are existing impoundments along the Maurice River and where officials from the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife are proposing future interpretive programs including a major Natural Resource Center, (see pp. 70 - 72 ). The area is also reasonably accessible from various municipal and county roadways.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS**

There are two levels of public improvements necessary to enhance fishing and hunting opportunities in Cumberland County. The first level involves those improvements needed to adequately manage existing properties.

Many of the State owned properties are easy targets for illegal dumping. There is inadequate policing, signage, parking, site access, and other improvements to effectively manage and inform visitors. Sites need to be regularly checked for trash and debris.

*The types of infrastructure needed differ from site to site.*

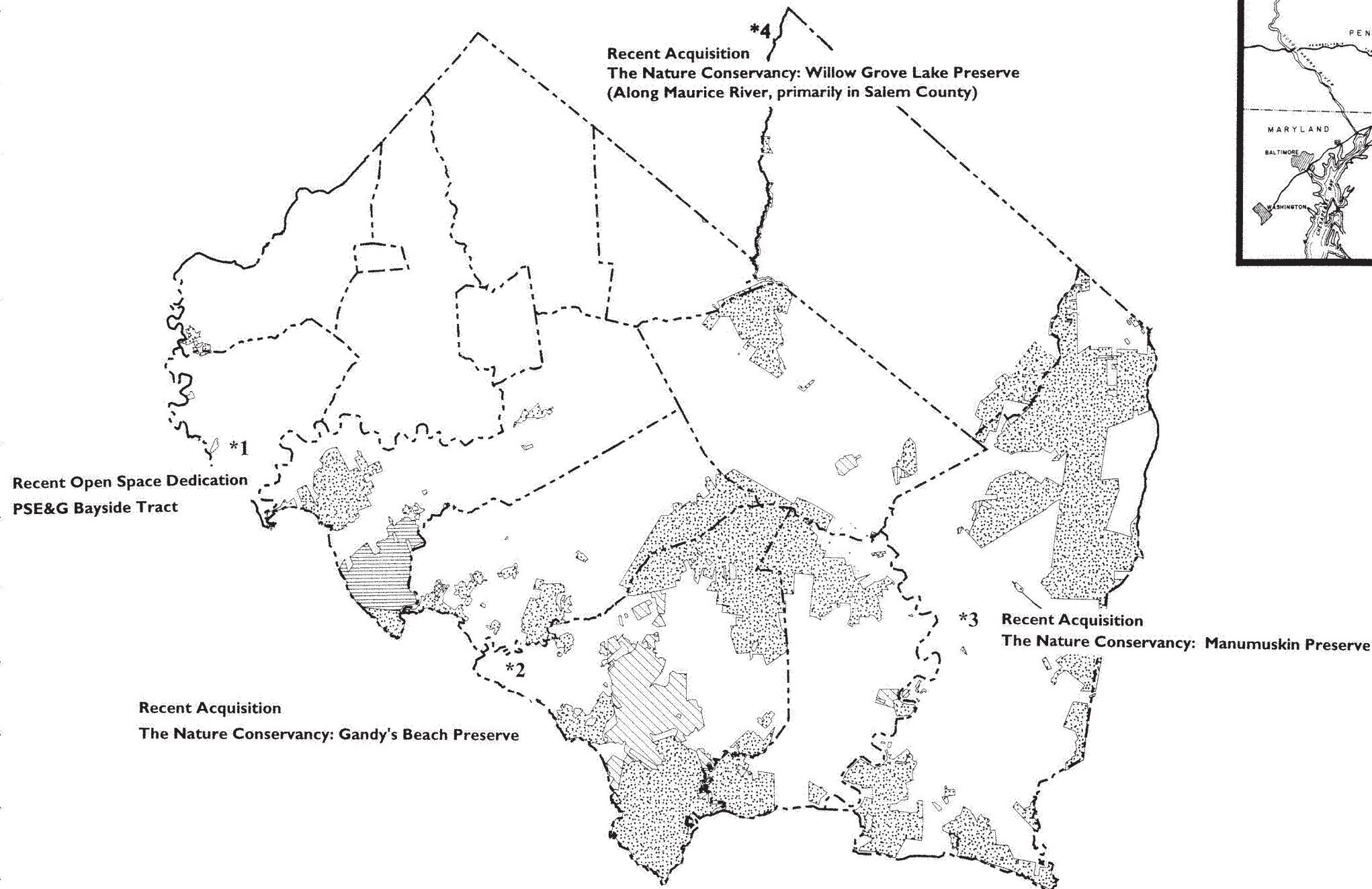
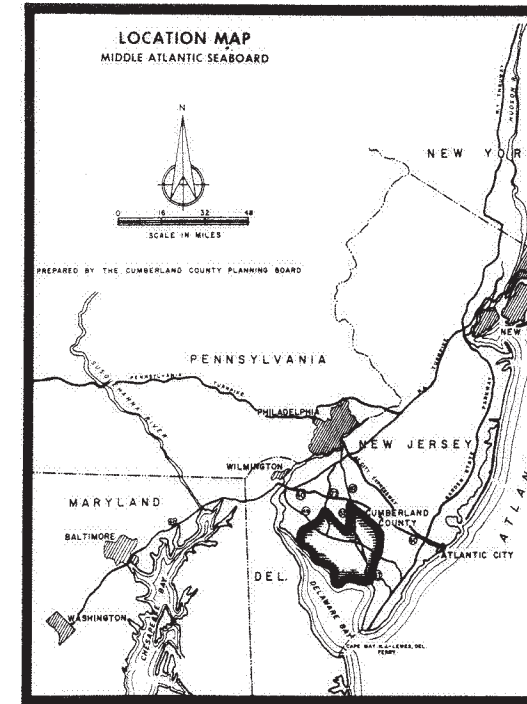
At the sites (public and non-profit) where there is a significant management presence, signs informing visitors of the sensitive ecological nature of the site and asking them to please remove all the trash they generate during their visit would help. Also, educational signs indicating the name of the property, the types of natural features, fishing, hunting, and other activities at the site, and a code of conduct would also provide visitors with information that would improve the chances that the site would be well treated. These types of improvements are needed at the State Wildlife Management Areas, (where appropriate) publicly owned lands, and many of the lands owned by the major non-profit agencies.

A second level of improvements at certain sites include those which provide a greater range of recreational experiences. For those lands along the Delaware Bay shore, with the exception of the Heislerville WMA, improvements should be made that are low impact and that encourage passive recreational experiences.

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY New Jersey

## ECOTOURISM PLAN Cumberland County New Jersey

### Map 3 State and Non-Profit Owned Lands in Cumberland County



- State Lands**  
**Non-Profit Lands**
- NATURAL LANDS TRUST
  - NATURE CONSERVACY
  - NEW JERSEY CONSERVATION FUND
  - PHILADELPHIA CONSERVATIONISTS INC.
  - WILDLIFE PRESERVATIONISTS INC.

**Legend**

SCALE IN MILES  
0 1 2 3 4

PREPARED BY THE CUMBERLAND COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

*Passive recreational uses on the State lands must be managed so they do not conflict with the hunting and fishing on the properties.*

Public Service Electric & Gas Company, through its Estuary Enhancement Program is constructing some nature trails and car top boat launches on the sites it is acquiring along the Bay. These improvements should be a model for similar development of recreation areas elsewhere. The Natural Lands Trust has a very nice boardwalk and observation tower on its "Glades" property in Downe Township which provides another good example of low impact improvements.

Some of the other Wildlife Management Areas can support more intensive recreation. The improvements made at Union Lake WMA can serve as a guide for similar improvements elsewhere. Land in the Edward G. Bevan preserve is being considered for sand mining. This activity would provide an excellent opportunity to design wildlife viewing platforms, nature trails, and other public facilities in conjunction with this development or as a reclamation project. The Peaslee preserve is also a very large property. Facilities developed in the area of Hesstown Road could offer excellent interpretive experiences along the upper Manumuskin Wild & Scenic River.

### **PROMOTING A FISHING, HUNTING, AND CRABBING THEME**

There are many outstanding hunting, fishing, and crabbing areas in Cumberland County. Some are very accessible and well developed. Others are relatively inaccessible and have little in the way of public facilities and infrastructure. Some do not need a lot of improvements.

As this section of the Plan has illustrated, there needs to be a variety of fishing, hunting, and crabbing opportunities. It is desirable that these activities on some of the public lands be less intense and more closely managed than on others. There are other locations where public access must be improved. The Bevan, Peaslee, and Heislerville Wildlife Management Areas are State owned properties in the County where facilities can be enhanced significantly.

This is a theme that can be marketed immediately. The opportunities, while diverse, can be presented that way, with visitors cautioned about the limitations in some areas. Development activities which improve access and that manage visitors more effectively can occur concurrently with the promotion that needs to be done. The South Jersey Sportsmen's Jamboree, an event held in the fall of each year, is an attraction that presently draws thousands of people to the area to enjoy the many sporting opportunities found in the

*Hunting and fishing laws need to be enforced to ensure a well managed harvest of game.*

Cumberland County area. This event is testimony to the tremendous interest in hunting, fishing, trapping, and other similar activities and to the fact that they can be effectively marketed. Wheaton Village and the Delaware Bay Schooner Project also market some of the decoy and sporting displays offered by the Delaware Bay Museum and the Folk Life Center at Wheaton Village. It is also important to keep in mind that hunting, fishing, and the other sporting themes can be marketed year-round. Bay fishing gEnerally has a longer season than ocean fishing. Hunting has various seasons depending on the type of game being hunted.

Since there are so many sporting activities, and since there are many seasons involved, promotional efforts must be well coordinated. There are many publications at the State level that highlight the fishing and hunting opportunities in the County. A partnership among levels of government and various agencies would promote these opportunities more effectively. Marketing in tandem with other themes is also important.



*Agriculture in Cumberland County is more than a \$2 billion dollar industry.*

## **THE HEART OF FARMING IN THE GARDEN STATE**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

Agriculture has been one of the dominant industries in Cumberland County since the native Americans first practiced it. One of the richest agricultural regions of the State, Cumberland County is the heart of the farming industry in New Jersey.

Many of the earliest European settlements in the area brought a variety of vegetable, livestock, and other farming practices with them to the colonies. The Dutch and Swedes were the earliest European farmers in the region. Many of them located along the waterways of Cumberland County, reclaiming many of the marshes and wetlands for the rich fertility found in the soils.

Salt hay farming was another of the principal agricultural industries to spring up along the marshes of the Delaware Bay. Salt hay was a good bedding material for livestock. It has also been used as cattle feed and a material to line and pad coffins! The waterways also provided good habitat for many of the animals the hides of which made valuable pelts for harvesting and trading. In addition, wood products and raw lumber were important agricultural commodities of the early farmers.

*Vegetable and horticultural products are the dominant agricultural products grown in Cumberland County.*

As the farm industry evolved in Cumberland County, poultry farming became one of the principal sectors of the agricultural economy. The Vineland area in particular was well known for its many chicken and egg operations. Abundant through the 1960s, these poultry farms have virtually disappeared. They have been replaced by nursery, greenhouse, and intensive vegetable production areas.

Today, agriculture in Cumberland County represents a \$2 billion dollar industry. Direct sales alone totaled more than \$72,000,000 in 1992, making Cumberland County first in New Jersey in the value of agricultural products sold. Roughly 68,000 acres were in agricultural production, encompassing 609 farms. Various vegetable and horticultural products are the dominant commodities in the County with fruit and grain production also significant contributors. Most of the farmland in the County is located in the western municipalities although Vineland still has many small, intensive, vegetable farms and nursery operations. The Vineland Produce Auction is one of the largest agriculture auctions on the east coast. Products are shipped to markets around the region from this facility. Map 4 illustrates those areas of the County that the County Agriculture Development Board has targeted for its farmland preservation program.



*Farm marketing can be an effective urban redevelopment tool.*

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

In order to make agriculture a theme of a County ecotourism program, several issues need to be addressed. The first is to provide a focus to the effort. There are several possibilities.

One focus could be the marketing of farm products. The County has many produce stands, farm markets, and marketing facilities. A tour of the many "pick-your-own" and other produce facilities in the County would provide visitors with a good sampling of the agricultural commodities in the County. The Vineland Produce Auction could also present visitors with an interesting exhibition on how produce is marketed and distributed.

Farm marketing might also provide one of the cornerstones of urban redevelopment in Cumberland County. In a region such as Cumberland County where agricultural commodities and farm operations are such important contributors to the local economy, it is unusual that farm marketing is not a visible activity in the County's urban centers. Lancaster, Pennsylvania has a very active farm market in the heart of its downtown. This facility is jammed



*The diverse ethnic and cultural traditions of Cumberland County could be woven into a farm marketing theme.*

with tourists and local shoppers during the peak of the growing season. The facility also offers stands to bakers, food vendors, crafters and other business people who compliment the agricultural marketing theme. In Cumberland County, with its rich ethnic diversity, such a facility could offer produce, foods, crafts, and other goods that reflect the cultural diversity of the area. For example, there could be different sections of the market devoted to Eastern European, Mexican, Asian, African, Spanish, and other ethnic foods, crafts, and produce specialties. Architectural themes throughout the facility could also reflect the different cultural traditions.

*Salt hay farming and diked farming are examples of the diversity of Cumberland County agriculture.*

Such a facility could be a tremendous tourist attraction as well as an important addition to the farm marketing outlets in the County. The location of the facility in the downtown shopping districts of Bridgeton, Millville, or Vineland could be a major catalyst in bringing new vitality to the urban area as well as new visitors to the rural parts of the County.

Another aspect of agriculture which could be developed into a viable ecotourism theme involves some of the unique history of farming in the County. There is a fascinating story to be told associated with salt hay farming and its relationship to the Delaware Bay. There is also an interesting history of diked farming along the major waterways of the County. There is still one active diked farm along the Maurice River that could provide a unique look at the complexity, ingenuity, and hard work that goes into farming a piece of land surrounded by water!

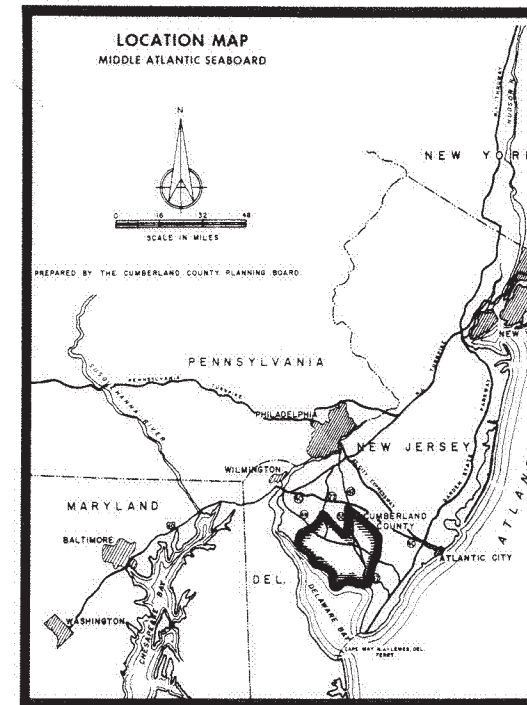
Farm vacations are becoming popular in many areas of the Country and should be explored in Cumberland County to provide another facet of an ecotourism program devoted to agriculture. Such a program would provide visitors with an opportunity to learn about agriculture first hand and to participate in the decisions, lifestyles, and other aspects of modern day agriculture.

*Farm vacations also offer interesting and unusual ecotourism opportunities.*

Clearly, there are many ways to develop an agricultural theme that is part of an ecotourism program. Much of the infrastructure and investment needed to make this happen is not in place. Only the marketing of agricultural produce stands is something that could happen right away. Other aspects of the program would need to be nurtured. The urban farm market would need to be developed. A facility would have to be found and a community willing to make this one of the center pieces of an urban redevelopment project would have to be identified. Regarding the historic aspects of agriculture, both the salt hay farms and diked farms in operation today are private businesses not

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY

## New Jersey

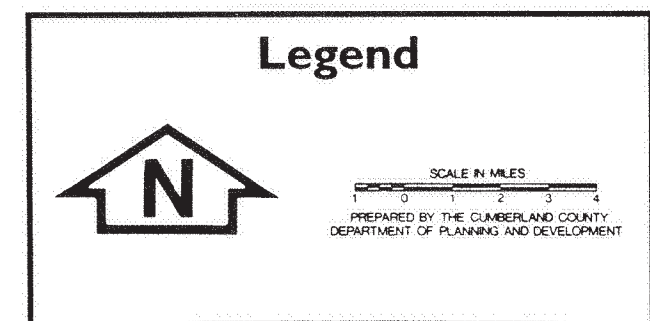


# ECOTOURISM PLAN

## Cumberland County

### New Jersey

**Map 4**  
*Targeted Lands*  
**Cumberland County**  
**Farmland Preservation**  
**Program**



*Ensuring a viable farm industry means promoting the business and conserving the land.*

open to public visitation. To use such sites as tourist destinations would involve putting together strategies for the long term maintenance and preservation of these areas, something that will take considerable time, money, and effort. The same is true for marketing farm vacations in the County. This is an idea that has not received much attention to date. Only the agricultural community itself can organize and promote these types of experiences. A discussion of this concept with the farm families of the County will be necessary to get such a theme into operation.

## **RESOURCE PROTECTION**

Marketing Cumberland County's farming heritage as an ecotourism theme will only be possible so long as there is a farm community to promote. The rapid disappearance of New Jersey's farmland is a much discussed and studied problem. Protecting the land base -- the natural resource -- from development and other non-farm uses is central to keeping agriculture as a major industry in the Garden State. How this should be done is a complex issue. Many people feel that additional regulation at the local, County, and even State levels is necessary to protect the remaining farmland base. Other people feel that investing in farming as a business will keep the farmers on their lands and keep agribusiness growing.

In Cumberland County, the Department of Planning & Development in conjunction with the County Agriculture Development Board and Board of Agriculture have invested in a three tiered approach to this issue. The first involves implementation of the State/County farmland easement purchase program. To date, more than 2,000 acres of the County's prime farmland have been permanently deed restricted. Funds for soil and water conservation are also available through this program and are in place on 43 farms in the County.

*Cumberland County has protected more than 2,000 acres of farmland through the State's easement purchase program.*

With more than 60,000 acres of farmland, Cumberland County will only be able to permanently protect a small fraction of the total agricultural land base. Other steps are needed to ensure the preservation of farmland. Toward this end, the County Agriculture Development Board has been promoting the concept of Agriculture Enterprise Zones. These areas would contain tax benefits and other financial incentives to keep farmers in production and the agricultural industry viable. Other ways to encourage the marketing of Cumberland County farm commodities such as those outlined in this Plan can also enhance the long term viability of farming.

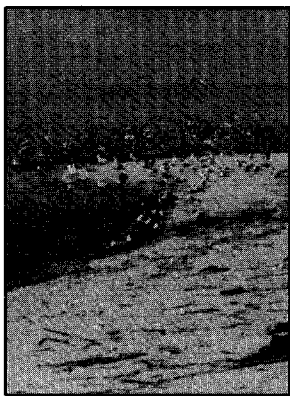
*Good land use practices such as clustering development can help protect farmlands and other open spaces.*

Finally, the Cumberland County Department of Planning & Development is committed to work with its municipalities and farm residents to find ways to protect the farmland base through good local planning practices. New and innovative ideas, variations on traditional planning and zoning techniques, cluster development incentives, and other methodologies must be utilized to help protect this important natural resource. The Department is working currently or will have contracts in the near future with several Cumberland County municipalities in the farming region. In addition, the Agriculture Development Board and Board of Agriculture have been proactive in supporting cluster development and other techniques to conserve the farmland base.

### **PROMOTING AN AGRICULTURAL THEME**

Agricultural tourism has tremendous potential as an ecotourism theme in Cumberland County. Much work has to be done in order to effectively develop and market this theme. The County should work through its Agriculture Development Board and the Tourism Advisory Council to market this theme.

The resources are in place currently to promote the various produce stands and direct marketing facilities in the County. Other themes that can be developed need time to be thoroughly reviewed and discussed. Material that is prepared must also include educational material on farming; its benefits and its importance to the quality of life of an area. People must need to appreciate the fact that farming is a business, not just a pretty landscape. Consequently, marketing and promotional material must inform the consumer about the hazards to farm operations from litter, trespassing, damage to crops and infrastructure that increased visitation to an area can bring.



*The spring shorebird migration on the shores of the Delaware Bay is a magnificent sight.*

### **BIRDING, BIKING, AND HIKING: PASSIVE RECREATION AND ECOTOURISM**

#### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

As a County with some of the premier natural areas in the State it is not surprising that Cumberland has many outstanding locations for birding. The diversity of plants and habitats in the County is ideal for promoting a spectacular array of bird life.

There is an array of salt marsh birds, summer song birds, wintering raptors, neotropical migrants, and waterfowl of all kinds. The Cumberland County area has been documented by many naturalists for its outstanding shorebird populations, bald eagle habitats, and migratory birds of all kinds. The shorebird migrations along the Delaware Bay are particularly special. The migrations of these birds are thought to be second in size only to the migration on the Copper River Delta in Alaska.

There are five principal species of shorebirds present during this spring migration including the red knot, ruddy turnstone, sanderling, semi-palmated sandpiper, and the dunlin. These birds are drawn to the area by the large quantities of horseshoe crab eggs deposited along the Bay shore which act as needed "fuel" so the birds can continue their flights north.

*The American bald eagle is a common site in the winter skies above the Maurice River.*

There is also a significant migration of songbirds through the County. These migrations also include a wide variety of bird life including thrushes, warblers, tanagers, orioles, and flycatchers. These birds use the coastline as a point of reference during their flights. Many of these neotropical migrants also use the County as a breeding area. This population in addition to the rich diversity of birds native to the County's woodland areas, gives Cumberland an abundance of breeding birds found nowhere else in New Jersey. Willets, rail birds, nesting passerines including sparrows, indigo buntings, grosbeaks and yellow-breasted chat are just a few of the many breeding birds found here. The Bear Swamp area in Downe Township is particularly well known for its diversity of breeding birds.

Raptors of various types also grace the County during the fall and winter months. Most notable is the increasing population of bald eagles. Almost extinct in New Jersey just a few short years ago, the bald eagle population has been making a comeback. In the mid-1980s, the lower Maurice River in Cumberland County was home to the only nesting pair of bald eagles left in the State. Recently, however, other nesting pairs have been found in the western part of the County along the Stow Creek and in other parts of New Jersey. The Maurice River area remains one of the most significant migratory regions of the East for a variety of species including the wintering hawks, vultures, harriers, and eagles.

As noted in previous sections of this Plan, there have been large amounts of land set aside in public ownership that provide outstanding habitat for the bird life in the County. The Wildlife Management Areas, the lands owned by non-

*Developed opportunities for hiking, biking, and other forms of passive recreation are limited in Cumberland County.*

profit conservations organizations, and lands owned by the County and municipalities offer some excellent areas for viewing many species of birds. Some of these lands have appropriate facilities for public access. Others do not. As in the case with fishing, hunting, boating, and maritime visitation, signage, access, public facilities, hiking trails, and other infrastructure issues will need to be addressed on those sites that can accommodate increases in useage.

### **Hiking and Biking**

Opportunities for other forms of passive recreation in conjunction with birding, most notably hiking, are limited in Cumberland County. There are no "rails to trails" hiking areas; there are no large, public parks that have hiking trails; there are few, well developed hiking opportunities in the Wildlife Management Areas; and there are few trails on the non-profit lands.

The trails that do exist are more in the order of nature trails or boardwalks. They are not very long and are not promoted as hiking areas. Some of the dirt roads in the Wildlife Management Areas could be used for hiking and biking since they are not heavily travelled, but again, they are not marked or developed for that purpose. Other of these roadways are closed to vehicular traffic. Wildlife Management properties that are accessible for biking and hiking are listed in the State Guide to Wildlife Management Areas.

### **Non-Profit Organizations and Passive Recreation**

A couple of the non-profit organizations with major land holdings in Cumberland County have been leaders in providing passive recreational experiences. The Nature Conservancy, an international conservation group, recently acquired a significant presence in the County when it bought land in Maurice River Township, Downe Township, and other locations in the Maurice River region. The Maurice River property, known as the Manumuskin Preserve, is a 3,800 acre tract locted at the confluence of the Manumuskin Creek and the Maurice River. In Downe Township, the Gandy's Beach Preserve contains 275 acres of wetland habitat along the Delaware Bay. The Willow Grove Preserve located on the upper Maurice River in Vineland and Pittsgrove Township, Salem County, contains 1100 acres. A smaller land-holding along the Menantico Creek is over a hundred acres in size. The Nature Conservancy has been a leader in promoting ecotourism opportunities in conjunction with the purchase of its land holdings.

*The non-profit organizations are providing or planning for many of the biking and hiking opportunities in the County today.*

*The range of passive recreational opportunities for ecotourism is enhanced by the non-profit organizations.*

The Natural Lands Trust, a Media, Pennsylvania conservation organization, also owns several tracts of land in the County, including the Glades Nature Preserve -- a 5,000 acre piece of ground containing some of the most impressive wetland vistas in the region. The Peek Preserve in Millville is a much smaller tract that the NLT hopes to use for workshops and environmental education. Both the Natural Lands Trust and The Nature Conservancy have plans to provide a range of passive recreational opportunities on their lands.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

The infrastructure and facility requirements for bird watching and hiking are different than for some of the other more active forms of recreation. The development needs are much less intense. For example, nature trails, hiking trails, observation platforms, and the rather limited parking facilities required by birders, bikers, and hikers are less intrusive than the boat ramps, access roads, and the larger parking facilities required by vehicles pulling trailers.

The bottom line is that there are very few of these facilities in Cumberland County. The Natural Lands Trust maintains a boardwalk and observation platform at its Glades Refuge in Downe Township. PSE&G maintains a platform at its Bayside Tract in Greenwich Township.

There has been some discussion about erecting temporary observation platforms during the spring shorebird migration at certain Cumberland County beaches such as Fortescue, Thompson's Beach, or East Point. These platforms would most likely be managed by the N.J. Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife.

In addition, The Nature Conservancy has plans to provide self-guided hiking trails, observation platforms, or other appropriately scaled public access improvements at its Manumuskin, Gandy's Beach, Willow Grove, and Menantico Preserves. The Natural Lands Trust is planning nature walks, a boating pier, an observation platform and other improvements to its Peek Preserve and is upgrading the parking and observation opportunities at its Glades property in Downe Township.

*The non-profit organizations are planning a variety of public access improvements.*

There are no plans by State, County, or local governments to construct hiking or biking trails in the County. The best hiking and biking opportunities in the County today are found at many of the municipal parks. The area around the

Bridgeton City Park and Cohanzick Zoo offer some excellent hiking and biking trails as well as some good birding.

*Better signage and other investments are needed to manage the influx of bird watchers to the County.*

Resource protection is a critically important issue where bird watching is concerned. The shorebirds in particular, depend on undisturbed expanses of beach on which to feed and rest. Large tracts of unfragmented forest lands are also important to the populations of songbirds, nesting birds, and other migrants. Map 5 illustrates those areas of the Delaware Bay shore where public acquisition has provided permanent protection of the beaches and shorelines.

### **PROMOTING BIRDING, BIKING, HIKING, AND OTHER PASSIVE RECREATIONAL THEMES**

The natural resource base in Cumberland County provides habitat for a diversity of bird and other animal life not found anywhere else in New Jersey. Bird watching is beginning to be promoted in the County through publications prepared by the Department of Planning & Development. *A Birding Guide to Cumberland County, N.J.* illustrates the best birdwatching sites in the County and also provides tips on where to find an array of visitor services. Prepared with assistance from the Delaware Estuary Program, (U.S.E.P.A.), this guide is a thorough examination of birdlife in the County and an excellent resource for the serious birding enthusiast. A less detailed pamphlet is also available for the more casual bird watcher.

*The State is developing a new wildlife viewing guide to help promote ecotourism opportunities.*

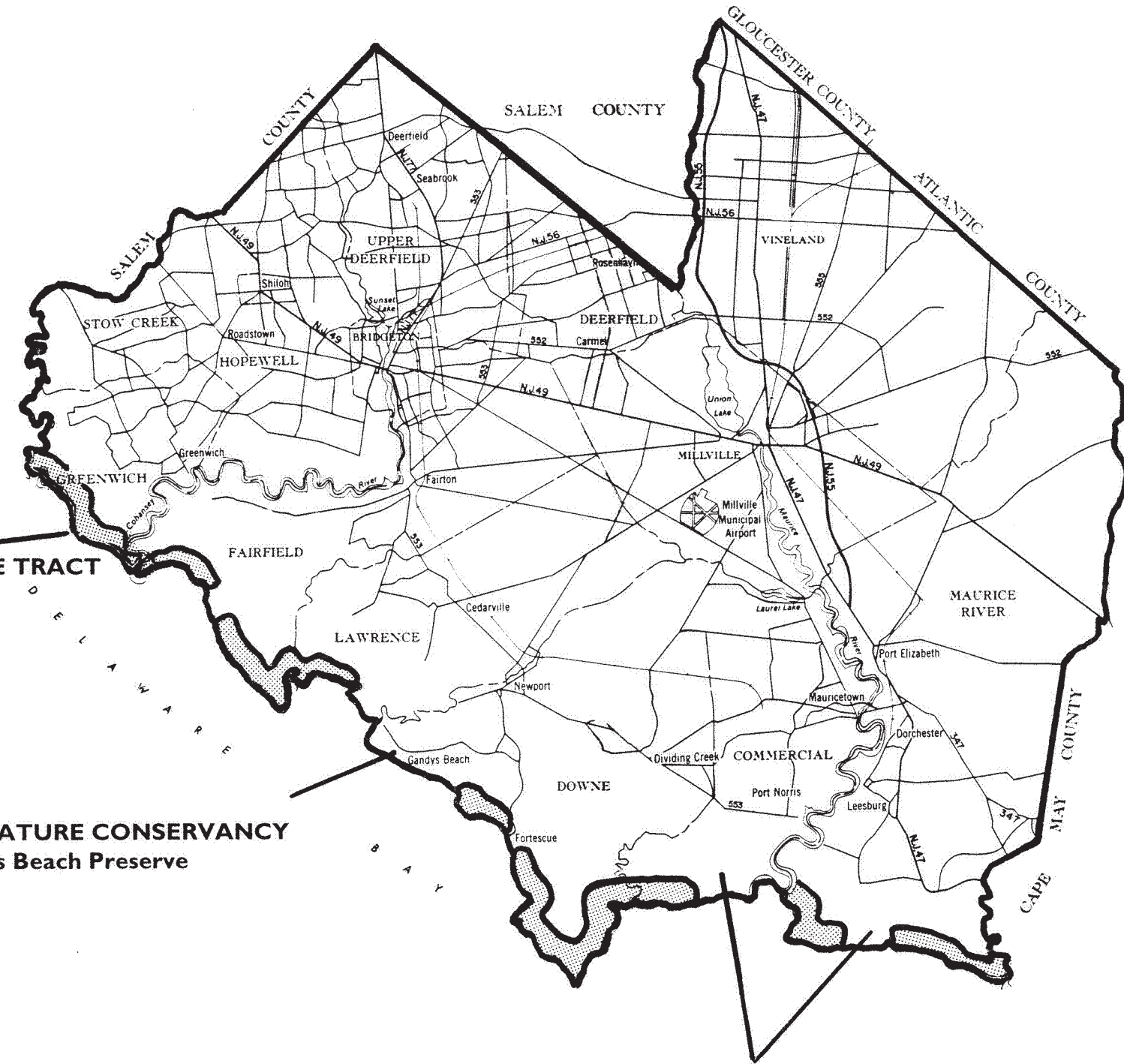
A New Jersey Wildlife Viewing Guide is being developed by the Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife. It plans to highlight some overnight tours of wildlife viewing areas. In addition, the "Teaming With Wildlife" initiative should provide dollars in the near future for signs, trail development, observation platforms, and other facilities for which there is little funding currently available.

As bird watching in the County begins to increase, it will be important that improvements are made in many of the areas where birders are directed. The signage and other infrastructure improvements needed should be coordinated with those required for other forms of recreation and ecotourism. Restaurants, shops, and bed & breakfast inns can help promote the rural economy.

Regarding biking, hiking, and other forms of passive recreation, there is a shortage of facilities in the County. While protected open spaces are plentiful



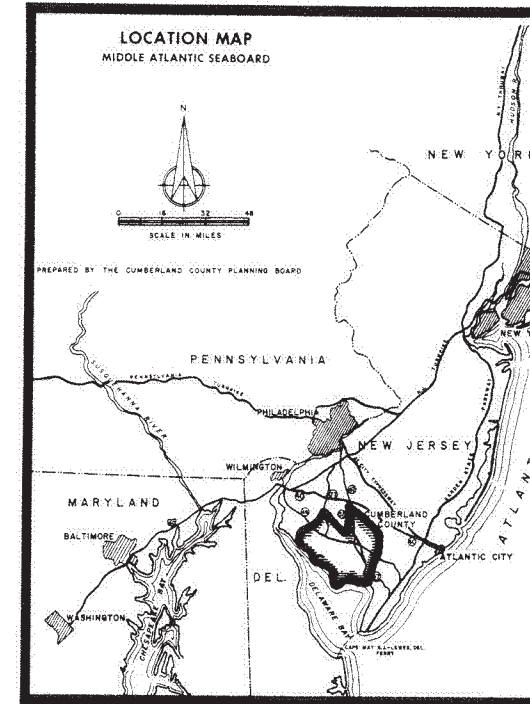
# CUMBERLAND COUNTY New Jersey



PSE&G BAYSIDE TRACT

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY  
Gandy's Beach Preserve

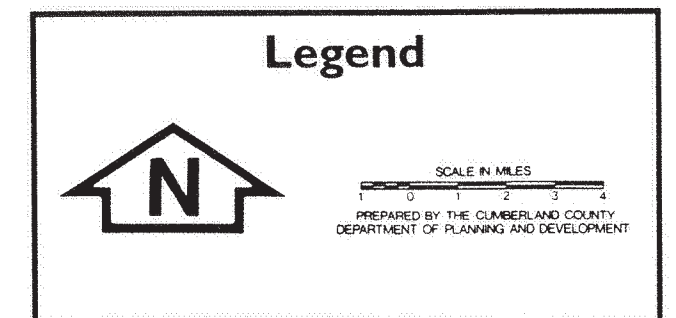
PSE&G ACQUISITION AREAS



# ECOTOURISM PLAN Cumberland County New Jersey

## Map 5 Permanently Protected Shoreline of the Delaware Bay

Note: See Map 3 for a more elaborate delineation of protected lands in the vicinity of the Bay Shore



and provide the land for such activities, park development is lacking except in the larger urban communities where there are many excellent parks. This is a recreation and ecotourism need that should be addressed. Park development at the regional and county level can also compliment the development of bird and wildlife observation areas.

Guided birding tours would also be useful. There are regular bird walks at Parvins State Park. Perhaps an arrangement to provide this type of expertise could be provided on a regular basis in Cumberland County through a partnership with State and non-profit experts.

## **FROM SILICA TO CRYSTAL**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

The history of glass making in Cumberland County can be traced to the rich deposits of silica sand found in the area. Almost all of the County is underlain by either the "Bridgeton," "Cape May," or "Cohansey" geologic formations. These sandy deposits provide a range of products from the fine, silica sands used in glass making to the more coarse industrial and foundry sands. The Cohansey formation in particular contains the best and largest quantities of silica sands.

The history of glass making in New Jersey dates back to the early eighteenth century with the establishment of the Wistarburgh Glass Works in Salem County. In Cumberland County, the Eagle Glass Works was built in 1799 in Port Elizabeth by James and Thomas Lee. Shortly after establishing this operation, James Lee constructed the Union glassworks in Millville. This 1806 establishment constructed on Buck Street gave the name "Glasstown" to this early settlement. Other glass factories also sprang up in Millville and elsewhere in Cumberland County including the Union Glassworks, another early facility established in 1806.

In 1888, Dr. Theodore Wheaton established a 36 employee glass plant in Millville, specializing in glass tubing and bottle manufacture. By 1909 this operation had grown to 2,000 employees and was incorporated as Wheaton & Co.

*The first glass plant was established in Cumberland County in 1799.*



*Today, more than thirty modern glass plants are in operation in Cumberland County.*

*Linking sand mining, the glass manufacturers, and the historic and cultural facilities of Wheaton Village could provide the visitor with an excellent and comprehensive understanding of the heritage of the glass industry.*

Today, there are better than thirty glass manufacturers in the County producing products ranging from glass containers and tubing to scientific glassware and crystal. Glass companies represent some of the County's largest employers. Wheaton Glass, Kimble Glass, Durand Glass, Comar, Inc., and Foster Forbes are five of the County's six largest non-governmental employers. These large glass products manufacturers employ more than 3500 people.

The County also has a number of large sand mining companies in operation. Unimin Corporation, WHIBCO, Morie Company, U.S. Silica Sand, and Ricci Brothers are among the top mining companies. Figures from the U.S. Census of Mineral Industries, (1987), indicated that there were 11 sand and gravel mining operations in the County, employing 300 people with a total payroll of \$6.5 million dollars and receipts (sales) of \$33.3 million dollars.

There are many uses for sand in today's economy. Most people think of beaches, sand boxes, and glass but sand also has a wide variety of uses in cleansers, construction material, porcelain, tooth paste, fertilizer, asphalt, and industrial manufacturing.

Map 6 illustrates the areas of the County where there are large concentrations of sand mining operations. As can be seen from this map, most of these areas are located in townships along the Bay shore including Commercial, Downe, Lawrence, Fairfield, and Maurice River. There are scattered operations elsewhere, and almost every municipality in the County has within its borders abandoned sand pits and sand washes.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS**

The story of glass, "from silica to crystal," is a very interesting one. Wheaton Village, in Millville is a reconstructed glass town that does an outstanding job telling the story of glass making. Glass products and crafts are also exhibited in the village and are offered for sale. The Museum of American Glass is an internationally reknown facility, drawing tourists from around the nation and the world.

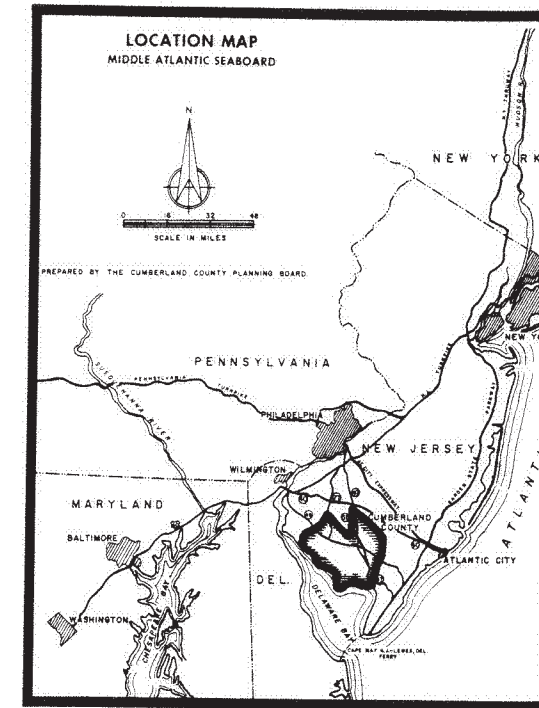
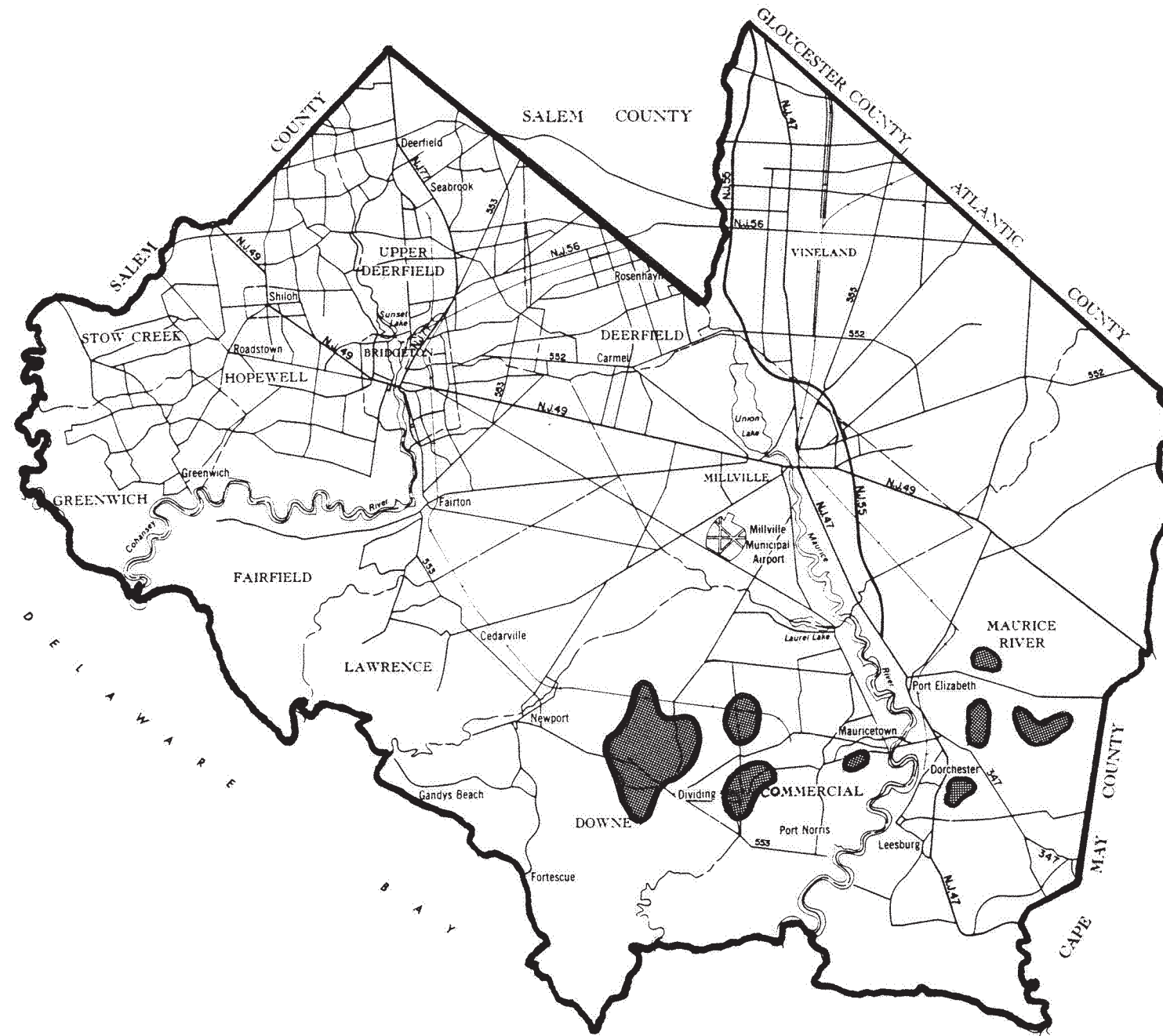
This story could be augmented, however, with the involvement of the sand companies and some of the glass plants. Tours showing the mining process coupled with a short geology lesson could enhance a visitor's trip to Wheaton Village and provide the sand companies with another source of revenue. Collectively, the sand companies could also put together a museum or



*Wheaton Village offers the visitor to Cumberland County a unique look at an old, nineteenth century glass town.*

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY

## New Jersey

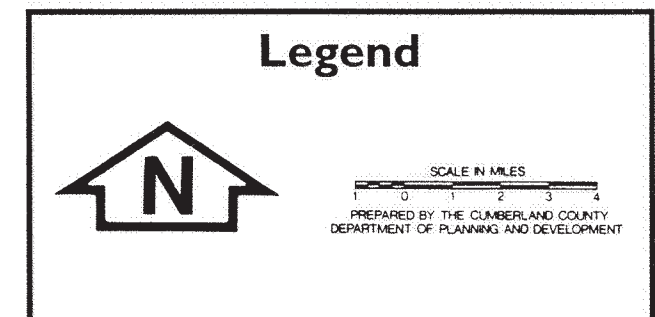


# ECOTOURISM PLAN

## Cumberland County

### New Jersey

**Map 6**  
**Concentrations of**  
**Sand Mining Activity**



heritage facility that would talk about the history and importance of silica sands and other products to the economy. The glass factories could also offer tours showing the range of glass products manufactured at a given facility and explain how a modern, glass manufacturing process operates.

To accomplish this there would have to be investments in buildings, tour facilities, parking areas at mining sites, modifications to some of the glass plants to accommodate visitor traffic, signage additions, areas that are actually open to public inspection.

At the sand plants, visitors could view not only the mines in use but also the transition in mining activity from a new operation to a reclaimed site. At the glass plants, the visitor could also see the transition in the operation from the introduction of the raw materials -- the silica sands -- to the finished products. By combining these experiences, a very interesting and comprehensive ecotourism package could be developed that takes a visitor through all the different phases of glass making from the extraction of raw material to the finished product and provides a link to Wheaton Village -- the premier tourist destination in the County today.

### **PROMOTING A GLASS MAKING AND SILICA THEME**

Through the excellent effort that Wheaton Village is doing now to market the heritage of glass making in the County, a significant part of the "Silica to Crystal" theme is already in place. This facility attracts more than 60,000 visitors a year and has an estimated \$8 million impact on the County economy. A more extensive theme that included sand mining and manufacturing facilities would have an even greater impact.

In order to develop this theme further, there would need to be formal linkages established between Wheaton Village, interested sand companies, and glass manufacturers. The result would be an unusual tour that would provide the visitor with a very unique overview of the many aspects of this important industry as well as its natural resource base.

By including a bit of history, culture, nature, geography, geology, and technology this tour would also provide the prospective visitor with a good introduction to Cumberland County. Additional linkages could be made between Wheaton Village and the glass companies to overnight accommodations and eateries in the urban areas, while the sand companies could expand

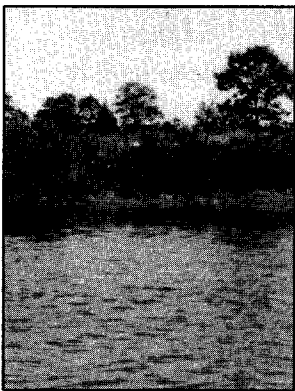
*By combining a number of visitor experiences, the history of glass making from the raw material to the finished product could be told.*

*A heritage facility that would tell the story of silica sand and mining's connection with glass making would be an excellent addition to the County's ecotourism attractions.*

their connections to ecotourism in the rural areas. A heritage facility that tells the story of silica sand would be an excellent asset to the ecotourism attractions of the County.

In addition, reclaimed mining areas could be transformed into recreational sites or natural habitats. Fee fishing or other types of water based recreation could occur on some of the mining ponds with the appropriate land management controls.

There are many opportunities through this theme to develop interest in one of the oldest industries in New Jersey. No other County in the State has the elements in place to develop such a theme as comprehensively as Cumberland. There would be many opportunities here for partnerships between public, private, and non-profit organizations.



*The Maurice River and its tributaries are home to some of the finest natural habitats in the region.*

## **CUMBERLAND COUNTY'S WILD & SCENIC RIVERS**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

Aside from the Delaware River itself, the Maurice River is the largest tributary of the Delaware Bay. The River, which begins in Gloucester County, is approximately 58 miles long and drains an area of about 380 square miles. The tidal portion of the waterway extends from its mouth at the Delaware Bay north to the Union Lake Dam in Millville.

The history of the River's nomination and acceptance in the national Wild & Scenic River system is a long and complicated one. In the winter of 1986, the State of New Jersey's Hazardous Waste Siting Commission chose a location at the confluence of the Maurice and two of its major tributaries, the Menantico and Manumuskin Creeks, as a potential site for a hazardous waste landfill. This action prompted the local communities in Cumberland County to call for some type of long-term protection for the waterways. A bill was introduced into the Congress of the United States in the winter of 1987 to study the possible inclusion of the Maurice River and its tributaries, the Manumuskin, Menantico, and Muskee Creeks in the National Wild & Scenic Rivers system.

From that point, it took more than six years of difficult and sometimes contentious debate to reach a community consensus about the future of the

*The Maurice River was designated part of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers system in 1993.*

area. Both Congressman William J. Hughes (now retired) and the National Park Service, which was conducting the study, indicated that before the river system would be designated, a local consensus among the municipalities was necessary. A local management plan for the waterways needed to be prepared. That plan and a consensus on designation were finally agreed upon in the summer of 1993 when the municipalities of Vineland, Millville, and Maurice River, Commercial and Buena Vista Townships decided to include portions of the system in the federal designation. On December 1, 1993, President Bill Clinton signed legislation making a large portion of the Maurice River system part of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers program, (see Map 7).

The Maurice River system supports some of the most important wildlife habitats in the region. It is believed that more than 50% of New Jersey's threatened and endangered plant and animal species can be found in the Maurice River watershed. Shorebirds, bald eagles, rail birds, hawks, and songbirds of various types are found here. In addition, the diversity of reptiles and amphibians is higher in the Maurice River watershed than in any other watershed in New Jersey. Fish life is also varied. The Maurice River is one of only three rivers in the State where striped bass still spawn and over-winter. The Manumuskin Creek, the largest tributary of the Maurice, has been classified as "pristine" by the State. This outstanding water quality is the principal reason for the diversity of aquatic plant life in the region. The Manumuskin Creek is particularly important for its large populations of sensitive joint vetch, a globally endangered plant.

It also has a rich and varied history. Remnants of the once prosperous oyster industry are located along the River. Old villages such as Mauricetown, Dorchester, Leesburg, Port Elizabeth, and Port Norris were locations for ship building, glass manufacturing, sand mining, and other commerce. East Point Lighthouse, located at the mouth of the Maurice River stands as testimony to a once vibrant seafaring culture.

*Many of the historic industries of the region remain important economic activities.*

Many of these historic industries remain important segments of the region's economy. Millville has many large glass plants that manufacture a wide variety of products from scientific glassware to crystal and tableware. Agriculture, while never a dominant activity in the region, is important because of the unique types of farming found in the watershed. Salt hay farms and other diked farming operations were common sights. One diked farming operation remains on a piece of ground located just south of Millville. Hunting and fishing remain popular pursuits. The Maurice River is reknown

*While rich in natural resources, history, and culture, there are very few areas along the waterway with the necessary facilities to accommodate visitors and provide public access to these resources.*

for its rail bird hunting. A large fishing fleet still operates out of the Shellpile/Bivalve area and trapping for muskrat meat and pelts and other small mammals remains fairly common.

In New Jersey, the most densely populated State in the nation, the Maurice River is perhaps most impressive for its spectacular natural vistas. It is hard to believe that this area is just over an hour's drive from Philadelphia and under three hours from New York and Washington, D.C. It is a region that looks the way New Jersey did fifty years ago and affords a rare opportunity to revisit the State's natural and cultural heritage; one that is found almost nowhere else in the State.

## **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

There are very few public facilities of any kind along the Maurice River or its principal tributaries. While marinas are plentiful and provide ample access to the river for the boating public, there are few areas where people not owning a motorized boat can enjoy the river view and the other natural resources of the watershed. There are also very few places where visitors to the area can make connections between land and water transportation. For example, one can visit East Point Lighthouse by car and find a place to park. But it is impossible to visit the facility by boat and find a place to tie up. A visit to the antique shops in historic Mauricetown by boat would be greatly enhanced by being able to dock and walk to the seafood or antique festivals held there every year. Conversely, visits to some of the wetlands and wildlife habitats are accessible by boat, but there are few places where boardwalks, observation platforms or other facilities exist for visitors coming to the area by car. These types of connections need to be made.

### **Facility Needs**

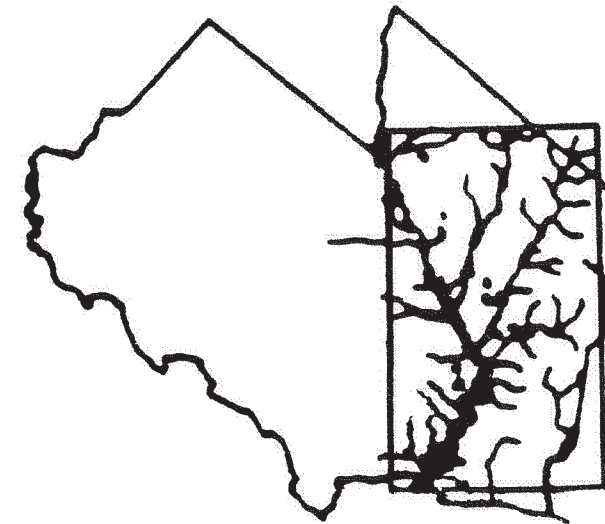
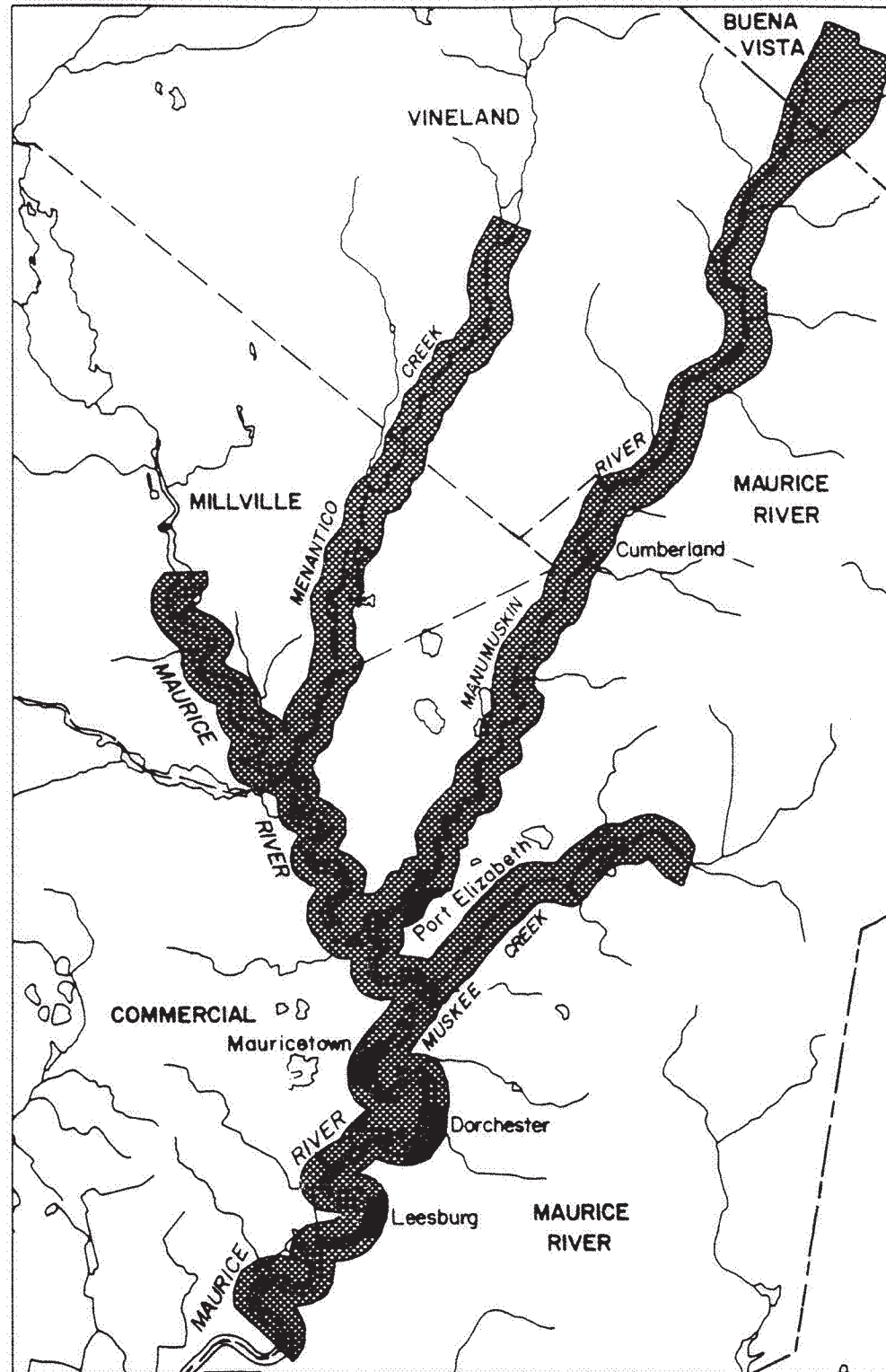
In the spring of 1995, the National Park Service requested information from the municipalities in the designated reaches of the river system to identify services and facilities that they would like to promote as part of an interim brochure on the Maurice River environs. The responses received outlined the non-profit and publicly-owned lands, both municipal and state, that exist. They also included bird watching sites, a campground, historic sites, produce stands, restaurants, marinas, and overnight accommodations. It is apparent from this list that while there are many potential places to see and visit, most of these locations would be enhanced through the development of public

*A Welcome Center to the Maurice River region is a necessary public facility.*



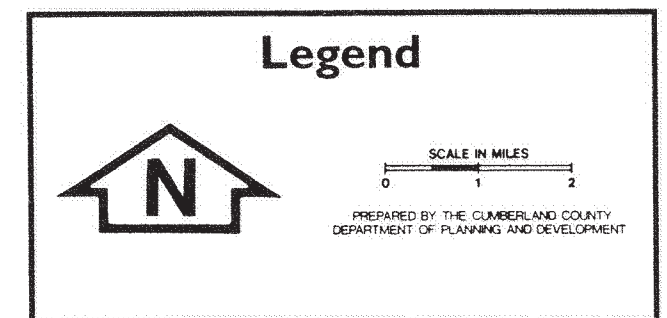
# ECOTOURISM PLAN Cumberland County New Jersey

## Map 7 Designated National Wild & Scenic River *Maurice River & its Tributaries*



LEGEND: LOCATION OF THE DESIGNATED WATERWAYS IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY

**Note:** This portion of the Maurice River and its principal tributaries, the Manumuskin River, and the Menantico and Muskee Creeks were included in the National Wild & Scenic River System in December 1993.



facilities. There are other public amenities that simply do not exist in the region. There is no visitor or welcome center to the area. There is no facility for the interpretation of the natural and cultural resources of the River. There are very few places to camp. There are no interpretive loops or drives. There are small, undeveloped parcels of land along the river that would make ideal parks; but there are no natural, waterfront parks in place today. It should be an objective of this Plan to identify the locations for these types of amenities and improvements in ways that do not compete with the private sector and that compliment the natural resources of the area. A listing of the major facility needs along the waterway and a brief description of each one are presented as follows.

#### *Park Development*

Unless one owns property along the Maurice River or its tributaries, or unless one has access to a private marina or pleasure craft, there are very few areas along the waterways where the average visitor or resident can enjoy the scenic beauty of the River system. The Mauricetown Waterfront Park is a very nice, picturesque, neighborhood facility that serves the needs of the villagers and Township residents. The Millville Waterfront Park also offers a view of the River from a more urban surrounding and offers a place to fish or relax for many city residents. While both are very nice facilities, they are not designed for or intended to accommodate many visitors. Neither do they offer a range of recreational or park experiences. A large regional park, complete with picnic facilities, birding and wildlife observation areas, an interpretive facility, and small docks for car-top boats is something that would enhance visitation to the area and something that is needed by the people who live in the area now.

*There are no large park facilities along the river where the average person can take the family to enjoy the natural beauty and scenic vistas the river has*

#### *Welcome Center(s)*

There is no facility that is readily accessible to the major highways in the region that serves as a welcome center to the Maurice River watershed. Few locations provide tourist information that is handy to the travelling public. The County should work with the National Park Service as part of this Ecotourism planning effort to construct and manage a visitor center somewhere in the Route 55 corridor. The purpose of the center would be to introduce the visitor to the Maurice River area; provide guide books and maps showing the places to visit, eat, and stay overnight. The center should also

offer an educational experience outlining the history of the river, its eligibility for Scenic River designation, and its outstanding resources.

### *Interpretive Loops*

One of the activities that could be promoted by a Maurice River visitor's center is a driving tour of the river region. An interpretive loop of this type could direct the visiting public to places of interest in the region and could be a tool for managing visitor access to the area. In addition to the natural, cultural, and historic sites of the area, the interpretive loop could also direct motorists to places in the urban areas where various types of visitor services are available. The loop would have to be thoughtfully developed to avoid some of the more environmentally sensitive areas along the river. The loop would also have to provide parking areas, turnoffs, pullovers for scenic vistas, and other types of public amenities -- restrooms, signage, etc. -- usually found on these types of interpretive drives. These loops would also compliment the efforts of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail. Connections to the Trail could be made through signage and marketing efforts.



*The Maurice River region has many magnificent scenic sights and vistas which can provide an interesting tour of the area.*

### *Other Infrastructure Needs*

In order to accommodate a greater demand for public facilities and tourist services, some places along the Maurice River will need to develop public wastewater systems. The most notable of these is the Port Norris area. With the redevelopment of the waterfront in Shellpile and Bivalve as a tourism and educational resource and with the rebirth of many food processing industries in the area, a public wastewater system will be necessary to promote the vision of this area, (see following section on Port Norris and the oyster industry.)

Other types of investments in visitor kiosks, interpretive signage, and public access are also needed. Locations where connections from the water to the land as described on page 59, are necessary to enhance the visitor experience. Observation areas, trails, boardwalks, and parking areas are all necessary to accommodate the increase in development that ecotourism will bring to the region.

## **RESOURCE PROTECTION**

The designation of the Maurice River and its principal tributaries in the National Wild & Scenic River system was made in conjunction with the

implementation of a river management plan. This plan, developed locally and implemented through local zoning and land use regulations, is the foundation for managing the resources of the river corridor. The plan established a five acre lot size for residences in areas outside the major villages and developed centers along the waterways. It provided for buffers and setbacks from the water's edge for approximately 1400 feet or a quarter mile on both sides of the waterways. Several municipalities, most notably Millville and Maurice River Township, extended their conservation zones well beyond this quarter mile boundary. The plan provides for the conservation of the most important lands in proximity to the waterways.

There are other factors that are also important to resource protection efforts. Incentives should be provided to promote the historic character of many of towns and villages in the area. While few are located directly in the Wild & Scenic corridor, the historic integrity of places such as Mauricetown, Leesburg, and Dorchester contribute to the special character of the area. Citizen education on how to maintain and enhance the historic value of their properties; how to develop a business that provides an attractive asset to a town; how to market their community's culture and historic charm are all important to maintaining the charm and integrity of the area. The private donations of conservation easements along the waterways can help protect important natural and historic vistas. The National Park Service is developing such a volunteer program in conjunction with the Natural Lands Trust. Enforcing zoning and building codes can also help to ensure that the area offers a clean, safe, and attractive environment for residents and visitors. Managing the carrying capacity of the waterways is also important to ensuring a safe and enjoyable Maurice River experience; (See discussion on Boating Theme, p. 29 ).

*The development of the many potential ecotourism sites along the Maurice River must be well coordinated to ensure the maximum benefit for the entire region.*

## **PROMOTING THE MAURICE RIVER WILD & SCENIC RIVERS AREA**

Interest in the Maurice River region has increased significantly since the discussion about river designation began in 1987. Publicity surrounding this effort in regional newspapers has heightened public awareness of this region as a recreational destination.

At present, however, the public facilities and visitor services are not adequate to advance a full scale promotional campaign. There are very few public access points along the river. Many of the historic and cultural sites cannot

handle visitor traffic. There are no visitor centers, public restrooms, interpretive facilities, or large public parks that address many of the visitor needs. Passive recreational opportunities provided by boardwalks, nature trails and observation platforms also need to be developed in some of the larger natural areas in the watershed. The Nature Conservancy is seeking to provide these amenities at its newly acquired Manumuskin Preserve in Maurice River Township. The Natural Lands Trust is also developing these amenities at the Peek property in Millville. The State, through the Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife is considering a major investment in the Heislerville WMA to provide a similar range of facilities, (see Maurice River Natural Resource Center.)

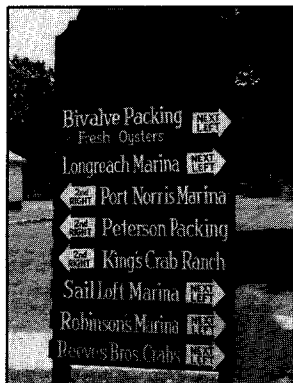
*The development of the many potential ecotourism sites along the Maurice River must be well coordinated to ensure the maximum benefit for the entire region.*

While the awareness of this area will increase over time through National Park Service publications and the efforts of local businesses, recreational facilities, and so forth, the organized promotion of the area will need to occur slowly and should be timed to take advantage of facility development. Maintaining the historic, cultural, and natural resources of the region will be of critical importance in developing and promoting a viable, long-term ecotourism industry. Targeting certain types of well planned and designed development such as the small shops, bed & breakfast inns, and other service oriented establishments can enhance ecotourism and the rural economy.

The coordination of activities in the area is also critically important. There is much that the Maurice River region has to offer. The potential is significant. But it will require the cooperation of many levels of government, citizen groups, and the private sector to be implemented properly. The development of new sites, programs, facilities, and visitor services in the region must be coordinated so that there are not overlapping efforts. Each facility or service must be designed to enhance the range of opportunities, not duplicate what is being done elsewhere in the area. There are few places in the County, where there is greater potential for significant benefits from a well developed and coordinated ecotourism program. This fact also implies that the need is greatest in this area for cooperation and coordination if the potential of the area is to be realized. This is true not only for facility development but for the future protection of the area as well. The lower part of the river, from Mauricetown south, is still eligible for designation. Local officials have indicated that if the economic needs of the area can be met, they will consider designation of this segment.

## PORT NORRIS AND NEW JERSEY'S OYSTER INDUSTRY

### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND



*Port Norris was once the "Oyster Capital of the World!"*

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Port Norris was the "Oyster Capital of the World." While this home grown description may have been a slight exaggeration, there is little doubt that Port Norris was the location of one of the premier oyster industries in the nation. Only the Chesapeake Bay and the Long Island Sound could rival Port Norris and the Delaware Bay oyster industry.

From the early eighteenth century, settlers recognized the rich harvest in oysters that could be found in the Delaware Bay. The colonial legislature enacted laws to prevent the pillaging of the Delaware Bay oyster beds as early as 1719.

By the middle part of the nineteenth century, the oyster industry in Port Norris was booming. Figures from the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries indicate an 1880 harvest of 17,735,000 pounds. Trains from Port Norris carried box car loads of oysters to market every week. By the middle of the 1880s, 90 cars a week departed Port Norris.

Approximately 300 oyster boats operated on the Delaware Bay in 1880. More than 1500 persons were engaged in the planting and marketing of oysters and were required by law to be residents of New Jersey. By the 1920s, 75,000 acres of natural seed beds were under cultivation. Employment in the industry had reached 4,500 persons. The oyster harvest in 1929 was recorded at 19,916,000 pounds. This harvest represented the largest one of the century. It is a figure that has not been equalled since.

The mechanization of the industry in the 1930s disrupted the shipbuilding and labor intensive culture that had developed around the old oyster schooners. Employment in the industry began to decline. Harvests also dropped off to an average of 5,000,000 to 8,000,000 pounds from the mid-1930's through the mid-1950's. It was the latter decade that also saw the appearance of MSX disease, a virus that virtually destroyed oyster fishing in the Delaware Bay.

Today, the oyster harvest is sporadic. In addition to MSX, a parasite called dermo has also infected the Delaware Bay oysters. Several years have passed

*The appearance of a previously unknown virus in the 1950's virtually wiped out the Delaware Bay oyster industry.*

*The restoration of the old oyster schooner A.J. Meerwald has contributed to the potential of Port Norris as an ecotourism destination.*

without a major harvest although there are some promising signs. The Harold Haskins Research Lab affiliated with Rutgers University and located in Bivalve has been trying to develop a strain of oyster resistant to the MSX virus. New techniques for planting and harvesting are yielding some signs of a comeback.

Despite the decline in the oyster harvest, the Port Norris region contains much of the cultural and historic remnants of this once prosperous industry. Shucking houses and processing sheds can still be found along the Maurice River. Many active seafood businesses remain in the area, processing clams, fish, crabs, and other products. The Commercial Township Seafood Festival is an annual event held every fall in Mauricetown. Bay Day, a recently organized activity sponsored by the Delaware Bay Schooner project has become an overnight success and is drawing new attention and positive notoriety to this area every spring.

### **The Delaware Bay Schooner Project**

The Delaware Bay Schooner Project was founded in 1988 with an intent to restore an old, wooden, oyster schooner, the *A.J. Meerwald*, (a.k.a. *Clyde A. Philips*.) The project set up shop along the Maurice River, in Shellpile, Commercial Township. Ferry cruises on the Delaware Bay, art auctions, and other events were organized to begin raising the funds for the schooner's restoration.

The spirit and enthusiasm generated by the project soon captured the imagination of the region. Many large foundations, conservation organizations, and public agencies began contributing to the restoration effort. As the project developed, so did its mission. Interpretive trips, classroom lectures, and other special events (such as Bay Day) contributed to the Schooner Project's role as an educational resource throughout the region.

*Infrastructure investments in the Port Norris area are necessary in order to realize the full potential of a tourist economy.*

The Schooner Project has also brought new activity to the waterfront in Shellpile and Bivalve. Plans by the Schooner Project to restore some of the old docks, packing sheds, and buildings to house a Delaware Bay Resource Center are underway. The intention of this effort is to restore the waterfront in Shellpile and Bivalve to reflect the types of maritime, oystering, and fishing activities present in the area around the turn of the century. Commercial shops, craft demonstrations, cultural and historic displays have the potential to make this area an attractive ecotourism destination. The launching of the

restored *A.J. Meerwald* in the Fall of 1995 added significantly to the types of events that can be held in the area. Map 8 depicts the Port Norris area and illustrates the many historic and cultural resources that exist in the community today.

## **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

The potential to rebuild Shellpile/Bivalve and Port Norris around an ecotourism theme is significant. The remnants of the rich history and culture surrounding the oyster and seafaring industry are everywhere. The staff of the Delaware Bay Schooner Project has been instrumental in providing the vision and leadership to advance this agenda and will continue to be a major catalyst for ecotourism in the region. The long range vision of the Schooner Project staff is to assemble some of the old buildings currently in the Shellpile area around the shipping sheds there now to recreate the type of oystering village that existed at one time.

*There are some large, capital projects needed such as a wastewater plant and a channel dredge to support the future of the Port Norris area as a tourist destination.*

The future of this area should be one that marries the many public, private, and non-profit objectives for the future of this community. Bringing back many of the seafood processing industries and maintaining the waterfront in Shellpile and Bivalve for the fishing fleet are important economic development objectives of the Township. The Schooner Project envisions using the Schooner as a floating classroom to educate school children and visitors to the Delaware Bay about the importance of the region, its history and culture. These themes could be easily linked by providing visitors with a "hands-on" look at an active seafood processing operation, a chance to learn about oystering and fishing in the old days, and an opportunity to view the Delaware Bay and the lower Maurice River from the vantage point provided by the Schooner *A.J. Meerwald*. The restaurant and marinas currently in operation in Shellpile provide one of the few good connections from land to water based activities along the River. Visitors to the area could access these educational, cultural, and recreational experiences from either land or water providing the community with a wide array of marketing themes.

There needs to be considerable investment made in infrastructure development. Signs, parking areas, organized tours, guides and brochures are all needed prior to realizing the full potential of the area. Boardwalks, observation towers, and trails of various types can help trace the history and heritage of the area. In addition to the oystering history of the community, there are places where excellent interpretive opportunities exist to explain salt hay



farming and its unique contribution to the region. These opportunities need to be developed so these important resources are not lost.

In a larger sense, some type of wastewater treatment system is also needed in the Port Norris area if it is to accommodate the redevelopment and public facilities that are necessary. The Township is currently working on several options in this regard. In addition, a dredge project is needed to open the channel at the mouth of the River. While this is an unusual investment in ecotourism, without the project the fishing industry, the ship building businesses, and possibly the marina traffic are jeopardized because many of the larger boats cannot easily navigate the waterway. The Army Corps of Engineers has a dredge project scheduled for the area which should commence sometime within the next year.

### **MARKETING THE PORT NORRIS AREA**

To a limited extent, the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail and the Delaware Bay Schooner Project have already begun to market this area through Bay Day, the events associated with the Schooner Project, National Park Service publications, and the boat restoration itself. Until much of the infrastructure and other public facilities needed in the area become reality, the area will have to be promoted slowly in conjunction with the special events and activities occurring there. As public interest in the area increases, there will be more opportunities for private investment in a growing ecotourism trade.

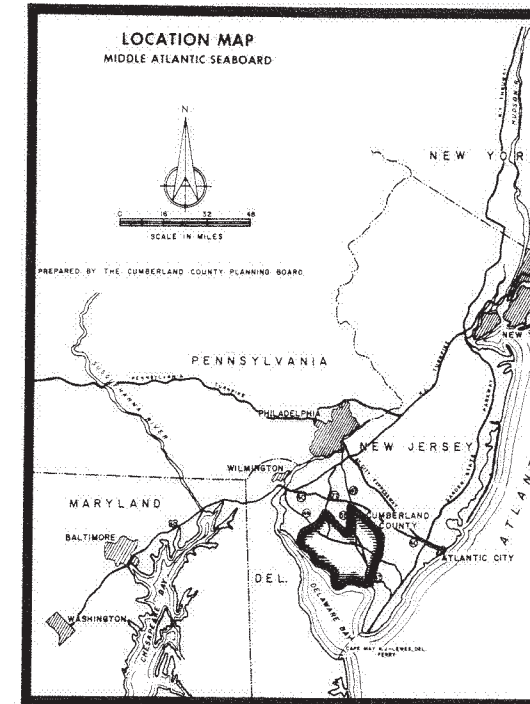
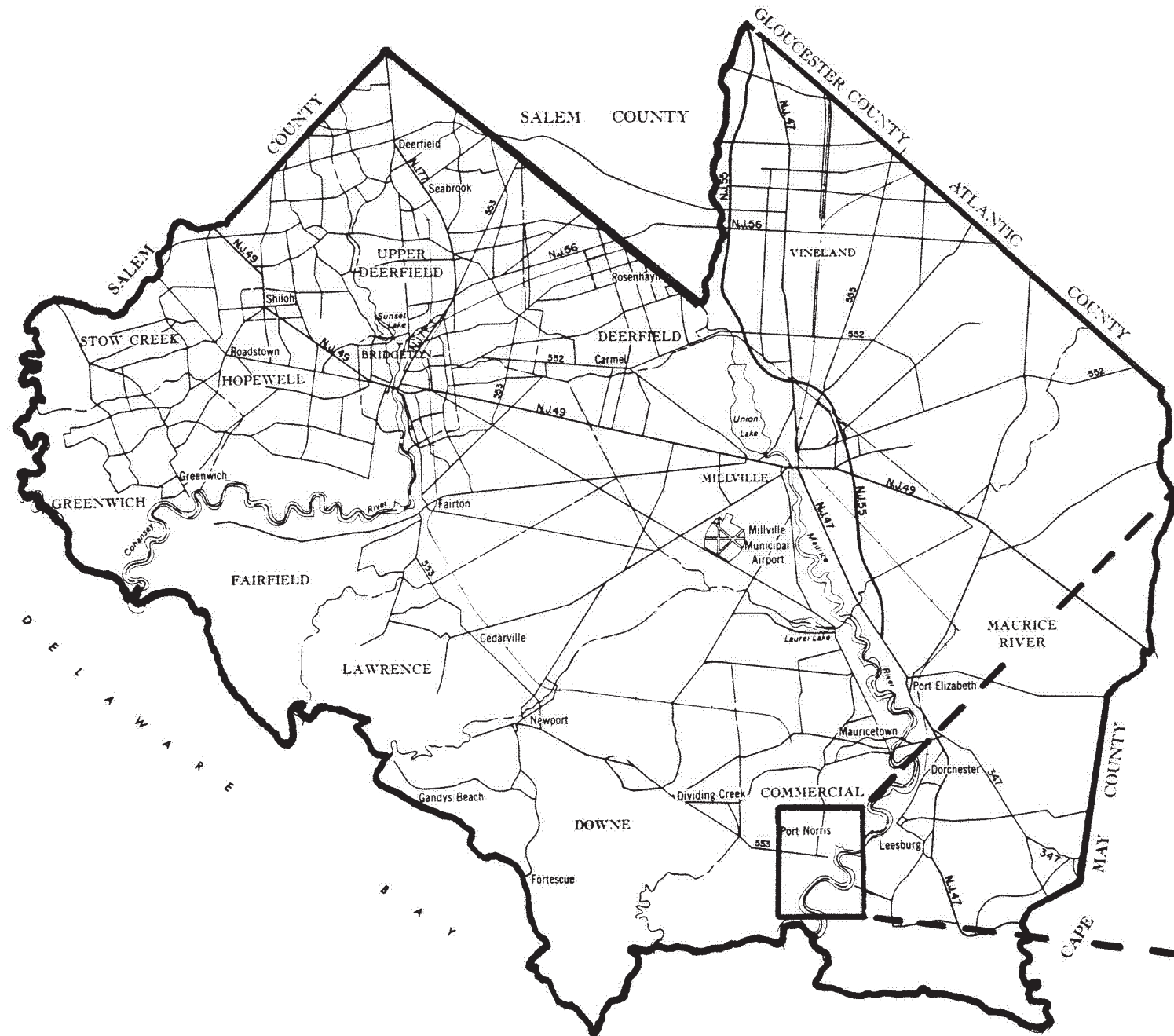
Shops specializing in the Delaware Bay oyster trade might be encouraged to develop. Bed & Breakfast establishments and other types of tourist services will be needed once the area begins to redevelop. Many of the old homes in Port Norris need to be repaired and restored.

*The Rutgers Research Lab is an outstanding facility that could help interpret this area.*

The Rutgers University "Harold Haskins" Research Lab is another excellent facility in the region that can be a catalyst for marketing the heritage of the Shellpile/Bivalve area. This outstanding laboratory already attracts considerable scientific attention for its well known work to eradicate the various diseases affecting the oyster industry. The participation of the lab in the interpretation of this area would be a tremendous asset.

It will take time for this area to redevelop. There will need to be a significant amount of investment made in new infrastructure for this to happen. The

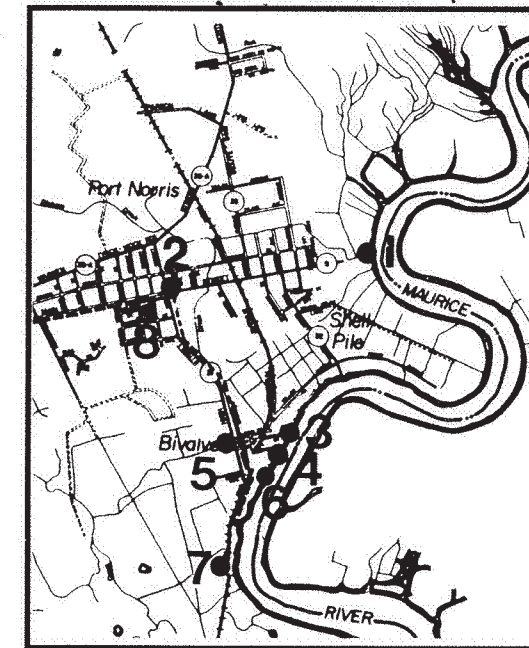
# CUMBERLAND COUNTY New Jersey



## ECOTOURISM PLAN Cumberland County New Jersey

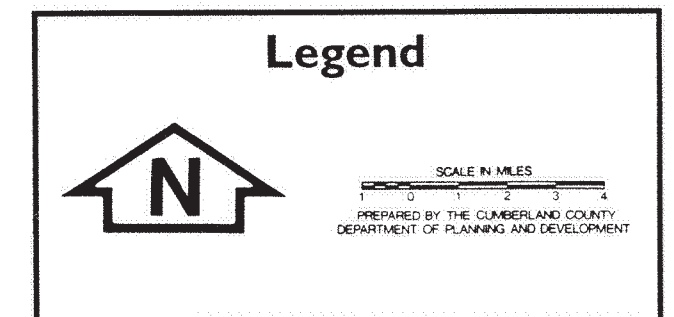
### Map 8 Cultural and Historic Resources in Port Norris, New Jersey

1. Battle of Dallas Ferry, 1781
2. Dallas Ferry Hamlet
3. Haskins Oyster Lab
4. U.S. Customs House, (prior to 1907)
5. Old Bivalve
6. Historic Oyster Sheds  
& Schooner *A.J. Meerwald*
7. Shell Road
8. Delaware Bay Museum

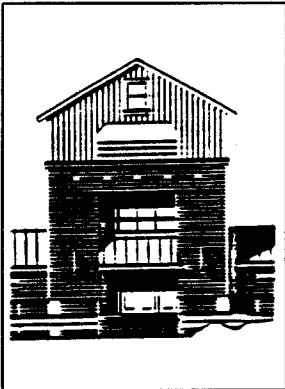


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Source: Commercial Township Land Use Inventory, 1975 and Historic Inventory of Commercial Township by National Park Service, 1995, and Cumberland County Department of Planning & Development.



Schooner Project and the redevelopment of the waterfront in Shellpile and Bivalve can be catalysts to make this happen.



*The proposed Natural Resources Center would be a state-of-the-art facility.*

## **THE MAURICE RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES CENTER**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

As an outgrowth of both the Maurice River Scenic River study and a growing interest in ecotourism, Maurice River Township officials and representatives from the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife began exploring publicly the idea of a Natural Resource Center in the fall of 1994. A report prepared by the Cumberland County Department of Planning & Development, with assistance from the Division and other public and private interests, was released in September of that year. The report outlines the type of facility that could be developed in the area and estimates some of its costs and benefits.

The purpose of the proposed Natural Resource Center would be to provide the residents of the region and visitors to the area with information about the many fishing, hunting, and other outdoor recreational experiences available. The Center would also provide information on and interpretation of the many shorebird, wildlife, and other natural resources of the region. Activities such as rail bird hunting, duck hunting, fishing, and trapping could be enhanced by having the technical resources and management provided by the Center.

The proposed Center is envisioned as a State-of-the-Art facility. The design, drainage, and construction of the building and grounds would be done in keeping with the sensitivity of the area's fragile environment. The structure itself would contain an auditorium, office space for the Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife, a touch tank, a wet lab, archival space, and display areas for community groups and other organizations.

*The habitats and interpretive opportunities posed by the interesting impoundments along the Maurice River can provide a good focus for the Center.*

The outdoor facilities should include a dock for river boat tours and visitors coming by boat. Boardwalks and observation areas offering views of the river and wetlands are important assets. The facility needs to play a dual role as a Natural Resource Center for visitors to the area and as a community facility for Township and County residents.

Township and State officials have been investigating possible sites for the location of this facility. It needs to be close to major roadways; most notably the Route 55/47 corridor. The potential site needs to be free of development constraints and provide good access to the Maurice River. Finally, the site must provide convenient access to the impoundments along the River at the Heislerville Fish & Wildlife Management Area.

In addition to the Center itself, Township officials are promoting the development of shops, restaurants, bed & breakfast establishments and other commercial enterprises that might be part of a greater "Maurice RiverTowne" that would add to the visitor experience in the area.

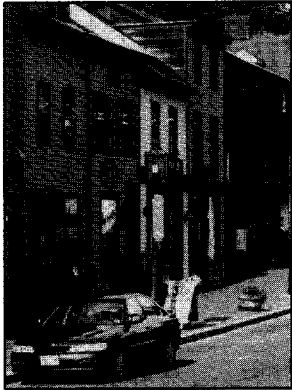
### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

There are many issues that must be addressed in the development of this Center. The first focuses on site selection. It is important that the guidelines established for site development in the Concept Plan for the Center are followed. A Natural Resources Center must take advantage of the tremendous potential for land and water connections offered by the Maurice River. The impoundments along the River at Heislerville also provide excellent wildlife interpretive opportunities. The second issue involves the relationship of the Center to other existing and proposed attractions in the region. The strengths of the Center would be as a land-based, wildlife and natural resource interpretive facility. Training and sporting education would be a special focus of the Center's activities. These activities should be designed not to compete or conflict with other interpretive efforts. Clearly one of the central themes of this Plan must be to identify ways to maximize the number of ecotourism experiences the County can offer the visitor while minimizing the duplication of effort. A third issue involves the use of existing buildings and structures to promote the development of a complimentary "Maurice RiverTowne" versus the development of an entirely new entity. It is important if the Township wants to protect the historical and cultural integrity of the region that the commercial facilities be developed in keeping with the scale and location of existing historical buildings and structures.

### **PROMOTING THE NATURAL RESOURCE CENTER**

Funding sources for the development of the Center have not been determined as of the publication of this document. The concept must continue to be marketed by Township and State officials to both public and private sector

*The center can be promoted as a tourist attraction and an educational facility.*



*The County's urban centers can also benefit from a vibrant ecotourism program.*

*The retail and service sectors of the County economy currently have sales totalling almost \$1.4 billion dollars.*

funding sources. The development of the Center would fit well into a comprehensive ecotourism strategy for the region and would compliment many of the ecotourism sites and themes that could be developed.

## **BRIDGETON, MILLVILLE, AND VINELAND: ECOTOURISM DESTINATIONS TOO!**

### **HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

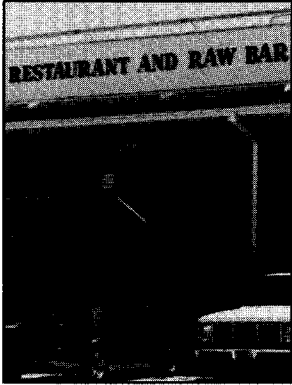
To date, this Plan has focused on many of the rural areas of the County where the various natural resources and ecotourism attractions are located. But the urban areas also have a tremendous contribution to make in this effort. It is in these areas where the concentrations of services and facilities that are important to the tourist trade exist. Hotels, motels, restaurants, service stations, gift shops, and other stores are located throughout the downtowns and shopping centers of these cities.

According to the 1992 Economic Census, the Bridgeton, Millville, Vineland area (which includes all of Cumberland County) had 782 retail establishments with sales totalling almost \$1 Billion. Many of these businesses are the types that cater to the tourist trade. There were 189 eating and drinking establishments; by far the largest single sector of the retail economy. There were 19 general merchandise stores, 124 supermarkets and specialty food stores, (delis, meat markets, seafood stores, etc.), and 49 gasoline service stations.

In the service sector of the economy there were 774 establishments which had better than \$300 Million in sales. There were 10 hotels, motels, and other lodging establishments. Personal service establishments including laundries, shoe repair services, barber shops, and beauty salons comprised 116 establishments.

Each of the three cities has a Chamber of Commerce to assist in marketing these services and other businesses. The Bridgeton/Cumberland Tourist Association provides information on sites around the County. City governments, through their economic development offices provide information and technical assistance to businesses looking to expand or locate in the area. The County College has a very active business assistance center which can help with developing business plans. The County's Department of Planning & Development can provide financing packages to small businesses looking to expand or locate in the area.

Clearly, the foundation for expanding the tourist economy exists in Cumberland County. Government agencies are positioned to provide marketing and technical assistance in this effort. There is a large number of businesses that are poised to benefit from an expanding tourist economy with the proper marketing and linkages established.



*Making connections between the natural sites in the County and retail and service businesses is an important objective of this Plan.*

In addition, the urban areas of Cumberland County also have natural resource attractions in their borders that are legitimate ecotourism destinations. The upper Maurice River, Union Lake, the city parks, canoe operations, fishing spots, and so forth provide a range of nature-based activities.

### **RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES**

The biggest challenge for businesses and for the urban areas in developing an ecotourism industry in the County will be in making a marketable connection to this industry. The cities are already the locations of some large tourism draws. For example, Wheaton Village in Millville is the largest single, tourist attraction in the County. The Cohanzick Zoo and the festivals held in historic downtown Bridgeton are large attractions. Vineland too has been successful with many of its Mainstreet events designed to bring visitors back to Landis Avenue. Suggestions made in this Plan for a large, urban farm market can also bring ecotourism visitors to one or more of the County's urban centers. Visitor and welcome facilities can also be located in and around some of these communities. Tying these events together and making connections to the ecotourism industry is one of the largest marketing challenges of this Plan.

There are many ways this can happen. For example, local businesses could take the initiative with ads and slogans that make the connections. "While birdwatching in Cumberland County, be sure to visit the VeryGood Candy Company featuring the finest chocolates in the South Jersey region." Government can make the connection. "Downe Township -- A Nature Lovers Paradise," is a logo currently in use. Chambers of Commerce could promote certain sectors of the tourist economy by making connections to specific ecotourism events such as Bay Day. "Make this a Bay Day Weekend. Stay overnight at one of these fine accommodations in our City." The possibilities are almost endless.

*Coordinating ecotourism marketing efforts with the development of new sites will mean setting priorities.*

As is the case with the other ecotourism themes and locations outlined in this Plan, the marketing for ecotourism must be increased gradually as new facilities, sites, and ecotourism events are developed. Cities, townships, and

*Collectively, the ecotourism themes and places of Cumberland County present a vision of the almost limitless possibilities that developing a comprehensive ecotourism program might provide.*

businesses cannot promote their ecotourism themes if there is no good connection being made on the other end. People need to have places to see that are developed in conjunction with interpretive centers and facilities. A theme that suggests staying overnight or eating in a certain city while visiting Cumberland's Ecotourism sites will not work until there is a sufficient number of sites or themes to attract more visitors. Suggestions on how this marketing strategy might be phased in are made in the next section of this document on Plan Implementation.

## **SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS**

This section of the Cumberland County Ecotourism Plan has identified six possible ecotourism themes and four places to focus ecotourism development. Some of these themes and sites are easily marketed and are promoted now as ecotourism destinations. Others will require some work and investment in infrastructure and other public facilities before any substantial amount of marketing and promotion can occur. Visitor management and resource protection issues also need to be addressed. Again, in some instances, this can occur concurrently with marketing and promotion. In other situations, additional resource protection measures must be put in place first.

Taken collectively, Cumberland County's Ecotourism Themes and Places represent a vision of how the economy can be expanded while protecting some of the fragile natural resources that are so important to the quality of life in the area. Imagine at some point a visitor being able to come to the County for a self-guided tour of the coastal marshes and wetlands; stopping in at Port Norris for a educational trip on the oyster schooner "A.J. Meerwald;" moving on to Maurice River Township for a tour of the Natural Resource Center; and completing the weekend with a tour of the glass making heritage of the County. Throughout the weekend, the visitor would be spending money at some of the shops and stores located in Shellpile or Fortescue. An overnight stay in one of the hotels and motels in the three cities or at a new Bed & Breakfast facility would be part of the agenda.

*Implementing this Plan will require tremendous cooperation of many different interests.*

Imagine also that this type of weekend was just one of many themes and visitor experiences that could be used to entice tourists to the County. Private tour companies could package these themes as part of larger conventions in the region. Casinos might offer "family outings" and excursions for their non-gambling guests. Government and business might work together to promote

these themes and market the ecotourism potential of the County. All of this is possible, but it will take considerable time, work, and cooperation.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The final section of this Plan focuses on how the potential ecotourism themes and places in the County can be developed. It makes recommendations about how the concepts presented can be implemented. Recommendations are made for County and local government. Ideas for the private sector are offered along with different strategies and suggestions for the State and the major non-profit agencies.

*The next section of this Plan outlines ideas for implementing the themes and places of a County ecotourism program.*

Clearly, priorities need to be set. Certain immediate needs and investments must be met before an ecotourism theme for Cumberland County can be addressed entirely. The infrastructure, facility, resource protection and marketing priorities are addressed in the following section.

Cumberland County is blazing a new frontier with this Ecotourism Plan. There are very few localities around the nation that have examined their ecotourism assets and defined and prioritized concepts and strategies for enhancing those assets comprehensively in a well defined Plan. The nuts and bolts needed to make this happen and to implement this Plan will involve many different people, places, organizations.





*Section V*

# IMPLEMENTING THE CUMBERLAND COUNTY ECOTOURISM PLAN

*Implementing this Plan will occur over time. The evolution of an ecotourism program will involve many different interests.*

*Because there are many ways in which this Plan could be implemented, it makes sense to establish some general guidelines to evaluate implementation strategies.*

## INTRODUCTION

There are many agencies, organizations, levels of government, businesses, and citizen groups that will be involved in implementing this Ecotourism Plan. Implementation will occur over time. Implementation strategies will evolve as new circumstances arise, as the levels of tourism increase, and as people and businesses see new opportunities develop.

Consequently, this Plan cannot predict what the universe of implementation strategies will be. Neither can the Plan determine the precise manner in which ecotourism will develop in the County. That too, will evolve over time.

This section of the Plan presents recommendations and strategies for Plan implementation. Some can happen right away. Others will take time to evolve. Consequently, it is essential to set priorities. If an ecotourism program is to develop in Cumberland County it is important that the various parties to this program have some sense of the actions that should be taken immediately to advance this agenda.

## Establishing Guidelines

Since it is not possible to forecast all possible facets of an ecotourism program that might develop, it is necessary to establish some key guidelines by which an ecotourism strategy might be evaluated. These guidelines will help government agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, and others assess the ecotourism strategies they are proposing to implement.

1. Invest in Community Involvement and Support. Regardless which aspect of the ecotourism plan is being implemented it is important to have community support. For a small initiative, this support may not be critical. But for larger initiatives that have the potential to impact communities and neighborhoods, community involvement and support is essential. This means talking publicly about the concepts and ideas being proposed, outlining some specific

implementation strategies, assessing any negative impacts, and making an effort to address those impacts.

*It is important that ecotourism proposals are compatible with the scale and character of the community.*

2. Ensure resource protection. In order for an ecotourism program to have any long-term viability, the natural resource base must survive. This means that strategies to provide public facilities, access, and or use of the resource must also include recommendations for their protection where none already exist.

3. Ensure that adequate public services exist. This guideline is the flip side of #2. Marketing an area for an increase in visitors that does not have the facilities and services to accommodate the increase is a recipe for disaster. The experience will not be an enjoyable one and the visitor is not likely to return. In addition, without the proper facilities and services to manage the visitor experience, the chances of resource destruction are also increased.

4. Promote a scale and design for facilities and services that are compatible with the area in which it is being developed. A four lane, paved road to Turkey Point is something that would look very out of place. A viewing platform in the middle of a pristine wetland would intrude significantly on the natural, unspoiled sense of place that is being promoted. Buildings, trails, roads, parking areas, and other facilities must be sized and designed to blend in with the surroundings, not stand out as eyesores. There is certainly much room for individual preference and interpretation here. But that is why #1 is important. A community discussion can help determine what is right for an area and what is not.

5. Promote ideas with integrity. This is not a reference to moral judgements. Rather, it is important to plan for ecotourism programs, services, and facilities that are authentic. A wax museum, while often a significant tourist attraction, has no place in an ecotourism agenda. Similar uses which do not advance the authenticity of the theme or location that is being promoted will not add to the development of a good ecotourism program. Concepts such as these should be avoided.

*A County ecotourism program must make connections to other programs around the region.*

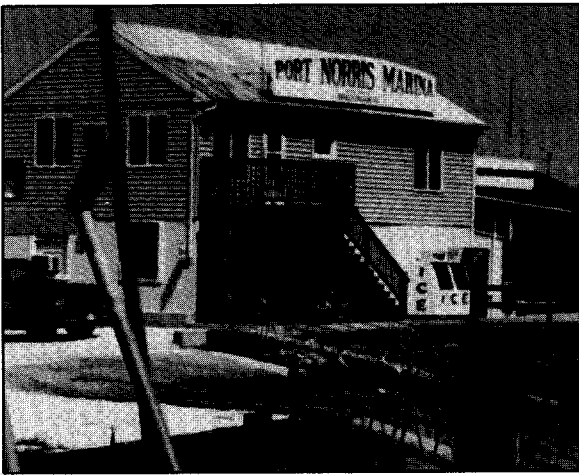
6. Make good ecotourism links and connections. An ecotourism program in the County will thrive if there are good connections to other tourism programs in and around the region. A good ecotourism strategy for local business will be enhanced by connections to other ecotourism themes and businesses. The more of these links that are established and developed, the better the chances of promoting an interesting and successful ecotourism program throughout

the County.

*The following pages outline specific strategies for building an ecotourism industry in the County.*

These guidelines provide a framework for the suggestions and recommendations for Plan implementation. The recommendations of this section focus on strategies for County and local government, State government and the non-profit agencies, and the private sector. It is important to note that not all of these recommendations are ones that can be implemented immediately. After they are presented, the remainder of the section will focus on prioritizing them and providing some short and long term suggestions.

## **38 THINGS COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN DO TO ADVANCE AN ECOTOURISM AGENDA**



**1. Conduct Market Studies.** One of the ways to get the private sector excited about ecotourism is to demonstrate that money can be made; that businesses can be developed around ecotourism themes. County government can help this along by financing marketing studies showing the short and long range potential for an ecotourism economy in the region.

**2. Promote Innovative Wastewater Treatment Concepts.** Some of the small towns and villages will need community wastewater facilities in order to redevelop or to attract the types of business and commercial ventures necessary to establish ecotourism sites and

themes. Conventional wastewater systems may not be practical or affordable in these areas. Systems using natural resource treatments, systems that can be easily expanded, and systems using aquaculture can be promoted both locally and with the New Jersey DEP to facilitate the permitting and funding of these systems. These systems need to be constructed to promote redevelopment at a scale that is compatible with the existing village and its surrounding environment.

**3. Develop a Targeted Loan Program for Ecotourism.** The County and several municipalities either manage or administer loan programs for small business. By targeting ecotourism, low interest loans can be used as incentives for investment in this activity.

*County and local governments need to provide a business friendly environment for ecotourism development.*

**4. Target Clean-up Programs at Key Ecotourism Sites.** Through the County and Municipal Clean Communities Program, clean-up activities could be targeted to some of the key ecotourism sites in the County. The Sportsmen's Association is already working with the Improvement Authority to conduct a spring clean-up of many of the principal natural areas. This type of activity needs to continue and expand. Partnerships with the major non-profit organizations can help to advance this agenda.

**5. Organize Special Events and Festivals.** There are several events being conducted in the County today that have ecotourism themes. Some were planned that way; others simply fit the bill. Examples are the annual Bay Day organized by the Delaware Bay Schooner Project, the Bridgeton and Commercial Township Seafood Festivals, the annual Strawberry festival or Peaches 'N Cream Festival at Dutch Neck Village, the annual Weakfish Tournament and other Fishing Contests, the Vineland Jersey Fresh Festival, the Vineland Azalea Festival, the Vineland Dandelion Festival, and the annual South Jersey Sportsmen's Jamboree. Other events could be organized to focus on such themes as eagle watches, greenhead days, lighthouses, farm markets, hunting, trapping, canoeing, events for children, inter-city sporting events such as a triathlon, or whale watching. The list of possibilities is almost endless. These events need to be coordinated and marketed by a county-wide organization such as the County's Tourism Advisory Council.

*There are many festivals and special events held in the County today that have a good ecotourism theme.*

Special events are important for a number of reasons. First, they attract people from all over the region who come to the area for one or more days, spend their money, and leave. The financial impact of these events is significant, but their environmental impacts can be well managed. Events are also important because they can be tied to specific ecotourism themes that a community may wish to promote or highlight. Inter-municipal events that touch on some of the themes of this Plan -- maritime, agriculture, etc. -- can be vital to showcasing some of the thematic attractions in the County.

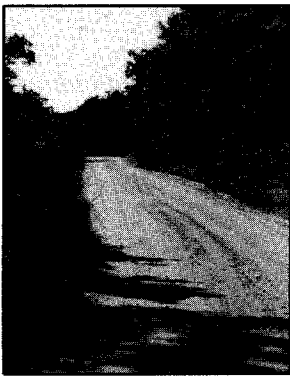
*Marketing and promoting ecotourism will be a primary part of a County ecotourism program.*

**6. Prepare Promotional and Marketing Material.** Currently, the County has promotional material prepared on birding sites and marinas. There is a need for a polished, multi-color guide to ecotourism events and activities in the County. The guide should promote only those sites and activities that have the infrastructure and public facilities in place today to accommodate an increase in visitors. Over time, the guide should be expanded as new sites and experiences are developed. In addition to the traditional types of marketing such as brochures and videos, electronic marketing through the Internet,

phone modem, and other electronic media should be explored.

**7. Coordinate Development of a County Ecotourism Logo.** The County should sponsor a contest with prizes to both amateurs and professionals to develop an ecotourism logo that can be used by the public and private sectors to promote ecological tourism in Cumberland County.

**8. Implement a Program for Ecotourism Signage.** In conjunction with the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the non-profit agencies and municipal government, the County can coordinate a signage program that gets people to and from some of the ecotourism destinations and raises their awareness of conservation issues. Map 9 on the following page highlights some of these locations.



*Access to many potential ecotourism sites is very inadequate,*

**9. Establish an Ecotourism Advisory Committee.** Perhaps as part of the existing County Tourism Advisory Council, a committee could be established to help guide the implementation of County ecotourism program. This committee would be charged with developing new themes and ideas, advising government on the implementation of the ideas, and providing a vehicle for county-wide coordination of ecotourism themes and activities. It is important that County government play a major role in managing this effort. Membership on the Committee should include representatives from a range of business, government, and non-profit organizations.

**10. Improve Access to Key Ecotourism Sites.** This initiative requires cooperation among all levels of government and the major non-profit organizations. Road access needs to be improved to many of the current ecotourism sites. County, State, and local governments also own land that can provide boat access or can be used to make good land - water connections.

**11. Training and Education.** Training and education must be a vital part of implementing an ecotourism program. There are many types of training needed from traditional types of education on environmental issues to less traditional training on crafts, tourism development, and business expansion. Some examples follow.

*Hospitality Training.* If any region is to prosper as a tourist destination, everyone from the local resident to the corporate executive, waitress, store owner, and government official must be sensitive to the needs and wants of the visitor. Hospitality training can provide this awareness and can be

geared to any number of interests and organizations. Perhaps through the County College, this type of training program could be developed.

*There are many programs that could be offered in the schools that could compliment a County ecotourism program.*

***Elementary and High School Programs.*** Field trips and classroom experiences can be very useful tools in developing a County ecotourism program. They provide the children of the area with an understanding of the natural wealth that exists in their back yards. They promote an appreciation of the area which can translate into greater neighborhood and community pride. They also help diversify the educational curriculum. Partnerships between the school districts and the non-profit agencies can be particularly useful in advancing this agenda.

***Crafts and Trades.*** There are many crafts and trades that are inherent in an ecotourism program. Food service, specialty businesses, hotel management, bed & breakfast training, marketing, aquaculture, and retailing are just a few of the trades that would help to compliment and promote a County program.

***12. Park Development.*** Currently, there are no County managed parks in Cumberland County. A park facility with an ecotourism theme would be a great place to start such a program. Either somewhere along the Maurice River, one of the other County waterways, lakes, or natural areas, this type of facility could be developed. A partnership with the non-profit agencies, local government, or state government could enhance this possibility. The County could also develop its own property located near the County Fairgrounds and adjacent to the Union Lake Fish & Wildlife Management Area.

*Maintaining a clean and tidy community helps visitors feel welcome and enhances a trip to the area.*

***13. Tailor Plans and Ordinances to Accommodate Ecotourism.*** Municipalities and other government agencies need to make sure that ecotourism activities are encouraged uses in local plans and land use regulations. These uses should be well defined and controlled to advance the type of ecotourism agenda desired by the local community. Such facilities as Bed & Breakfast establishments, craft shops, fishing, boating, and recreational facilities, boardwalks, observation platforms, canoe liveries, and other types of ecotourism based establishments need to be included in plans and ordinances.

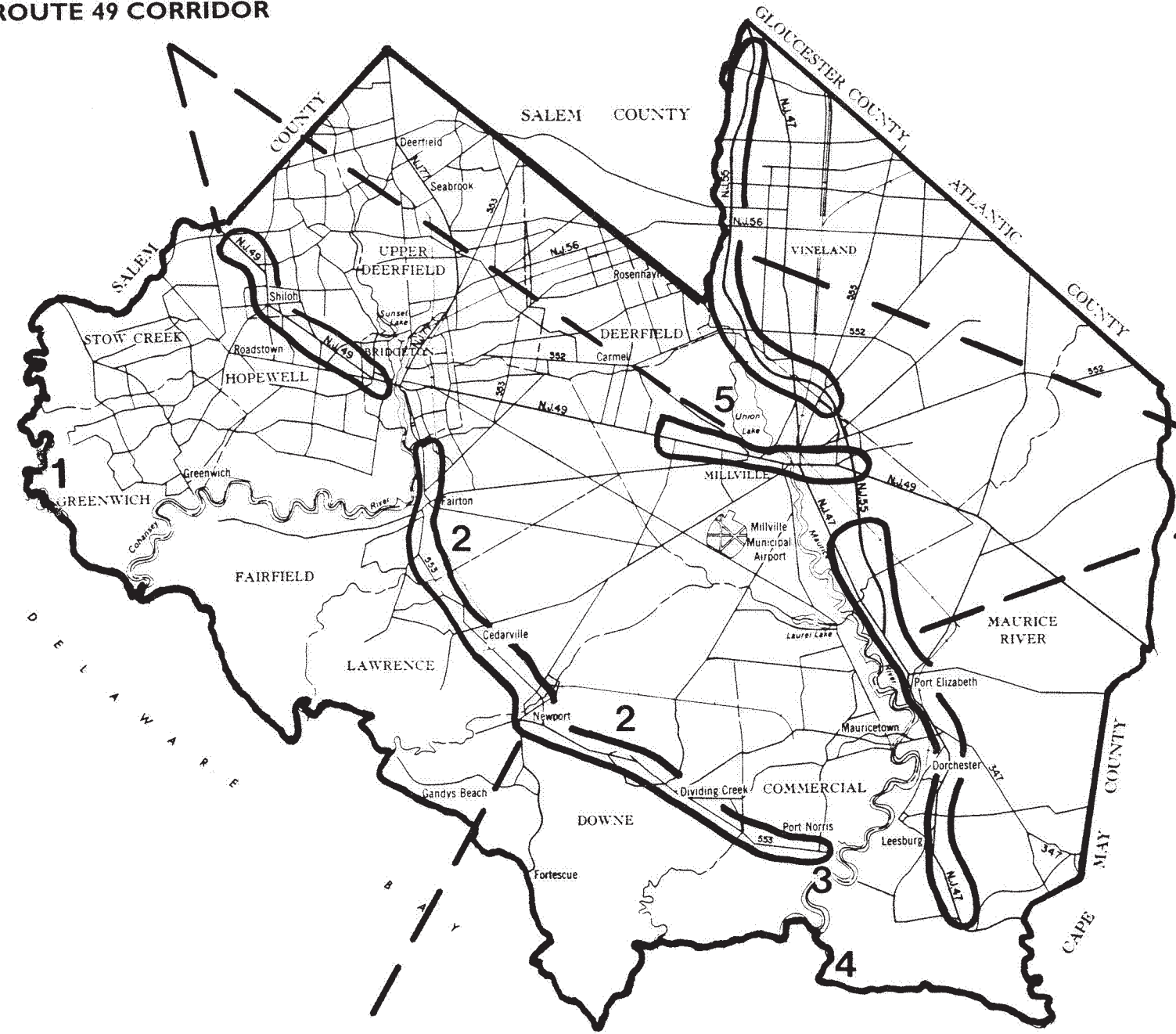
***14. Code Enforcement to Promote Clean and Attractive Communities.*** Inviting visitors to a community is like inviting guests home. Straighten up the house! If a community allows junk cars, litter, unofficial trash piles, abandoned homes, unkept yards, and other eyesores to define the character of

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY New Jersey

# ECOTOURISM PLAN Cumberland County New Jersey

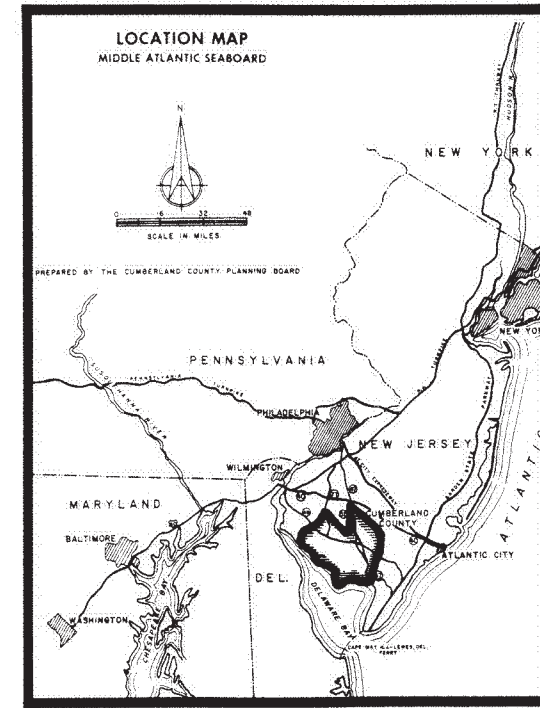
## Map 9 Critical Corridors for Signage Improvements

ROUTE 49 CORRIDOR



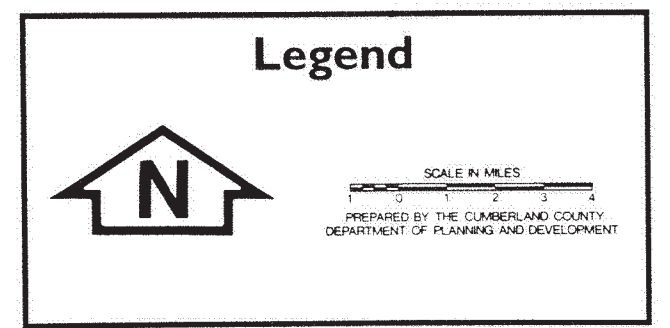
ROUTE 553 CORRIDOR

ROUTE 55/47  
CORRIDOR



**SPECIFIC SHORT-TERM ENHANCEMENTS**

1. Caviar Platform/Bayside Tract
2. Delaware Bay Shore Points  
Fairton  
Cedarville  
Newport  
Fortescue  
Dividing Creek  
Port Norris  
Delaware Bay Schooner Project
3. Delaware Bay Schooner Project
4. East Point Lighthouse
5. Union Lake Wildlife Management Area



the community, there are very few people who will want to visit the area; or having come will want to return. The flip side of this issue is that in making sure the community is clean and presentable local officials do not want to destroy the local "character" that unusual, eccentrically decorated, or old, historic structures lend to an area. Being sensitive to what is interesting versus what might be an eyesore is an important distinction that must be made.

*The Ten Commandments of Ecotourism provide a good code of conduct for enjoying nature.*

**15. Educational Material.** The American Society of Travel Agents has prepared flyers in conjunction with Club Med that outline "The Ten Commandments of Ecotourism." The idea is to promote a sense of citizen responsibility when travelling through or visiting a fragile environment. Too often, with such activities as All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use and other recreational vehicles, this sense of responsibility is lacking. Educational material could be designed around these commandments which (condensed) touch on the following themes.

Respect the frailty of the earth.  
Leave only footprints. No graffiti or litter.  
Educate yourself about a region's culture, customs, and geography.  
Respect the privacy and dignity of others.  
Do not buy products made from endangered plants or animals.  
Always follow designated trails and instructions.  
Learn about and support conservation programs and organizations.  
Walk or utilize environmentally sound transportation.  
Patronize hotels and other establishments that support conservation.  
Ask your ASTA Travel agent to identify organizations that subscribe to ASTA environmental guidelines.

**16. Produce a Guide to Ecotourism Funding Sources.** There are many private and public agencies, corporations, and other organizations that can fund ecotourism development. The County should produce a guide to assist local businesses and governments in advancing their ecotourism objectives.

*Developing ways to assist small business must be an important aspect of an ecotourism program.*

**17. Sponsor Business Assistance Workshops.** To start or expand any type of business requires a sound business plan. The County College offers technical assistance to accomplish this. In conjunction with the Department of Planning & Development, the College might cosponsor workshops to provide business planning assistance for ecotourism enterprises. Workshops might also be developed simply to inform government officials and citizens of the many assets of the area and how they can be protected and promoted.



**18. Establish a Non-Profit Development Corporation.** In conjunction with The Nature Conservancy, other non-profit conservation groups, chambers of commerce, and business interests, the County should consider establishing a non-profit corporation to finance and direct environmentally friendly ecotourism development. This organization would provide a forum for balancing environmental and business objectives and could eliminate many of the controversies that might otherwise plague ecotourism development projects. Such an organization would have available to it funding sources for which governments and businesses alone are ineligible.

*A non-profit corporation can tap into funding sources that government and the private sector cannot.*

**19. Establish an Ecotourism Data Bank and Network.** Making linkages and connections will be essential to establishing a well managed and promoted ecotourism program. For example, a motel owner might want to put together a package that offers a fishing and dining experience. To do this, fishing locations, commercial fishermen, guides, and restaurants need to be identified that provide the appropriate complimentary services. The County can begin to compile this database that can be used to make these types of networking connections.

**20. Prepare Maps Offering Self-Guided Ecotourism Tours.** There are many different routes through the County that can be identified to give the visitor a sense of one of the ecotourism themes or places being promoted. These self guided tours could be accompanied by a cassette narrating the sights found along the way. The sale of these items could help pay the cost of other promotional and marketing material.

*Maps are often excellent tools for promoting an ecotourism theme or destination.*

**21. Promote Development of an Urban Market.** As described on page 44, this facility could touch on a number of themes and cultures and provide a very powerful catalyst for urban redevelopment. By bringing new visitors to the area, such a facility would enhance the market for produce stands across the County. Linkages between this facility and the more rural stands could be established through joint advertising or operation.

**22. Develop Bike and Pedestrian Trails.** As part of any county park development proposal, bike and hiking trails should be developed. There are very few places in the County today, where bikers and hikers can enjoy an organized planned experience. Roadways are often dangerous and present liability problems. Abandoned railroad rights-of-way make ideal bike and hiking trails where they can be sufficiently screened and isolated from residential areas. The County could also work with State and non-profit

*Making good links and connections to other ecotourism activities in the region will be essential for both government and business.*



*Protecting the natural resource base of the area is a necessary part of any sound ecotourism effort.*

agencies to advance trail development at some of their sites. Bike and hiking trails are often the types of amenities that enhance property values in a community. They also cut down on crime rather than cause an increase as is generally assumed, because there are more eyes and ears watching properties. An educational and public information campaign needs to accompany any proposal for the development of these facilities along private property.

**23. *Connections to the Region.*** The County should begin to market ecotourism experiences to major tour operators and convention centers in the region. Philadelphia has a new convention center and Atlantic City has one under construction. Promoting this effort must be organized to ensure a well packaged and meaningful ecotourism experience. Links to the Cape May, Bucks County, and Pocono ecotourism experiences may also prove useful. In order for this to be successful, a predictable service must be provided. Tour operators need to know they can depend on sites being opened and staffed.

**24. *Ecotourism Events Calendar.*** Ecotourism activities should be included in the traditional event promotional material prepared by the County and other agencies. However, if it is to catch on as an individual program, it needs to be marketed and promoted as such. An events calendar can help to do this.

**25. *Resource Protection Measures.*** All the parties in a County ecotourism program need to take steps to protect the natural resource base being promoted. Here are some good ideas for County and local government to consider.

*Establish a Cumberland County Conservation Foundation.* None of the land trusts and conservation foundations operating the County today are local organizations. The South Jersey Land Trust probably comes closest to having a Board comprised of individuals who understand and appreciate County issues. A County Conservation Foundation could provide a vehicle through which easements and deeded property could be protected. By using a County entity for this purpose, local residents might feel more comfortable with the idea of easement donation. This organization could also compliment the County's farmland preservation program by working toward the protection of wetlands and other non-prime farmlands which are often part of the total farm acreage. The Foundation would operate on a willing seller basis and would not be empowered to condemn land.

*Continue Farmland Easement Purchase Program.* The success of the State/County Farmland Easement Purchase Program continues to grow. This

program should continue to be funded. Farmland and farm industry preservation measures, including Agriculture Enterprise Zones should continue to be advanced. County and local governments should reduce regulations where possible to help make agri-business more viable. For example, certain types of farm structures could be exempted from site plan review. Fees could be reduced or eliminated for farm applications.

*Continue Local Planning Assistance Effort.* In the past three years, the Department of Planning & Development has provided planning assistance to seven of the County's fourteen municipalities. Not all of the assistance was natural resource related, but this program provides an affordable way for local communities to keep their plans and ordinances current. Opportunities for addressing ecotourism issues can be provided through these forums if that is what the municipality should desire.

*Prepare a Home Owner's Guide to Resource Protection.* Much of the responsibility for land conservation and resource protection lies with the land owner. Most of the land in the County and elsewhere is privately owned. Good stewardship of private land remains one of the most effective conservation practices.

*Stream Conservation.* Through a combination of private lands management, easement purchase, donations, and local planning and zoning practices, the County and local governments should work to protect the integrity of key stream corridors that have significant ecotourism benefits.

*Providing a vehicle for conflict resolution can be an important step in advancing an ecotourism agenda.*

**26. Provide an Avenue for Conflict Resolution.** The coordination of this issue is very complex. There are many different points of view and interests involved. There needs to be a way that conflict, which can be so counterproductive to an effective ecotourism program, can be resolved quickly.

**27. Monitoring and Evaluation.** Some key benchmarks need to be established to monitor the success of an ecotourism program. The level of visitation to a particular facility or event; the number of vehicles using a given roadway; or the development of new sites and businesses can all provide some sense of how successfully an ecotourism program is being implemented. The County needs to identify several key barometers for economic activity and ecological impacts and monitor them closely.

**28. Restrooms and Visitor Facilities.** Until welcome centers are developed, public facilities such as municipal and county buildings could be used to

*There are necessary connections that must be made with other ecotourism networks and providers in the region.*

provide restrooms for visitors to the area. There needs to be some agreement on how these services can be provided and such services need to be noted on a map.

**29. *Regional Connections to Natural Resource Experts.*** To enhance the interpretive experiences available to the visitor, perhaps connections could be made with the New Jersey Aquarium, the Philadelphia Zoological Society, or other Natural History/Heritage organizations such as the Wetlands Institute, the Cape May Bird Observatory, the Fish & Game's future Maurice River Natural Resource Center, or TNC's future Bioserve Center in Eldora.

**30. *Connections to the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail.*** This Trail, promoted and managed by the National Park Service, provides an excellent tour of sites in coastal New Jersey from Fort Mott just outside of Salem, through the Delaware Bay shore to Cape May and points north. There needs to be county-wide coordination to place eligible Cumberland County sites on the Trail. This program is a great way to help identify and market nationally, the significant ecotourism sites in the County.

**31. *Labor Force Training.*** The Tyrell County, N.C. Plan for ecotourism identified labor force training and fitting the ecotourism industry to the skills and abilities of the labor force as key issues. Those county agencies involved in training and education can assist in this effort, (eg. training guides, etc.)

**32. *Identify Stakeholders and Public Involvement Process.*** One of the most important objectives of this Plan is to reach out and involve citizens, business, and environmental organizations in its development and implementation. The County can provide assistance and leadership in this effort, (page 106.)

*Walking tours, canoe trails, and other specialized recreation can help promote visitation to the area.*

**33. *Walking Tours of the noteworthy glass windows and doors in the area.*** Bridgeton, Millville, and Vineland as well as many of the small towns and villages all have examples of beautiful glass windows and doors that were made either locally or that can be tied to a glass theme.

**34. *Develop Guides for Canoe Trails.*** There are many streams, lakes, and rivers where great canoe trails could be developed and promoted. Attention to tides, sensitivity to important habitats, and a need for public access points would all have to be considered in developing these areas.

**35. *Municipal Flyers on Ecotourism.*** Municipalities should be encouraged to prepare their own flyers on ecotourism. Some Cumberland County

communities have already done this. Maurice River Township has a publication on the Maurice River and its environs; a group of Downe Township businesses prepared a brochure on the community; and Commercial Township is working on an ecotourism flyer.

*A Guide Association could help promote the best sites in the County for hunting, fishing, and crabbing.*

**36. Organize a Cumberland County Guide Association.** In conjunction with the non-profit organizations and state government, develop a Cumberland County Guide Association that offers certified training in hunting, fishing, and crabbing in Cumberland County.

**37. Publish a Directory of Sporting Clay Ranges.** While there are no sporting clay ranges in the County, there are several on the periphery. These facilities can still draw people to the County for related sporting events and activities.

**38. Mosquito Control.** The County should coordinate the development of ecotourism sites with a targeted mosquito control plan.

## **30 GREAT IDEAS FOR LOCAL BUSINESS**

*Government cannot and should not be the major player in ecotourism development. The private sector has a critical role to play.*

Government can only be a catalyst for getting an ecotourism program started. By providing a business environment within which an ecotourism program can be developed government must look to the private sector for much of the needed investment and program development. To help get this process going and to begin the brainstorming here are 30 great ideas that the business community may wish to consider that would promote the ecotourism themes and places outlined in this Plan.

**1. Promote Aquaculture Development.** Aquaculture can be an important asset to an ecotourism. The fish raised on these farms can be used to stock lakes, rivers, and streams in the area. Aquaculture facilities themselves could be used as tourist attractions and to promote a strong farm economy.

**2. Develop a Campground.** There are few campgrounds in Cumberland County. Admittedly, outdoor recreation, particularly along the Bay Shore can be a "buggy" experience depending on the season. But a campground need not be the typical type of facility developed elsewhere. By providing screened enclosures, covered pavillions, boardwalks, observation platforms, wildlife

sighting facilities, good outdoor signage and public information, a campground in or around some of the prominent natural areas in the County could provide an outstanding outdoor experience. Such a facility should be developed in an area that can handle a package wastewater system, that has plenty of high ground, is isolated from other land uses, and that is done at a scale in keeping with the area. Low impact camping experiences should be emphasized. Large, RV facilities complete with miniature golf, game rooms, etc. are not the type of campgrounds that are compatible with ecotourism development.



*Partnerships between restaurants, hotels, motels, and the natural resource attractions can enhance many visitor experiences.*

**3. Crab & Cook Days.** There has always been a great deal of interest locally in mixing an ecotourism experience such as catching a crab with a second experience -- eating one! Many people do not have the slightest idea how to go crabbing. By providing this activity with the cooking and serving of crabs, a new dimension has been added to both experiences. Hotels and restaurants could combine any number of themes with a dining or overnight stay. "Bird and Bed" weekends could promote self-guided tours to birding sites in Cumberland County with an overnight stay at a local hotel/motel. These are examples where links need to be made between the facility or individual who can help with the crabbing and the facility that can do the cooking or provide the overnight accommodation.

**4. Canoe Cruises.** Canoeing with a gourmet touch. Why not provide a gourmet meal as part of a guided canoe trip on some of the scenic lakes, streams, and rivers in the County? Rafters do it!

**5. Use of County Ecotourism Logo.** Once it is developed, this logo should be used by any local business marketing an ecotourism product or service.

**6. Package Tours.** Many local industries such as the sand plants, glass houses, boat builders and so forth do not have the time or the staff to open their facility to the public. If a private operator was responsible for managing a tour perhaps more connections could be made with private industry.

**7. Silica Heritage Facility.** As noted in the section on Themes and Places, the sand mining industry can provide a very interesting connection to the glass making history of the County. A facility that traces the connection of silica sand to glass making and the importance of silica to many industrial uses in general would make for an interesting addition to the ecotourism sites in Cumberland County.

*Package tours of the various ecotourism sites in the County will be a very necessary part of the program.*

**8. Bed & Breakfast Establishments.** Several property owners have attempted to develop Bed & Breakfast facilities in the past with little or no success. The principal reason for a low level of past demand is probably related to the fact that the sites and activities that would be complementary to the marketing of B&Bs have not been promoted. There is not yet the level of tourism in the County, particularly in the more rural areas, to sustain facilities of this type.

**9. Kayak the Delaware Bay Wetlands.** There are an almost limitless number of interesting guts, streams, and other little waterways that can be explored by kayak along the Delaware Bay coast. Adventures of this type could be combined with overnight stays or various eating experiences. Kyaking trips might also be organized with proper guidance about where there might be suitable lands for low impact, overnight camping.

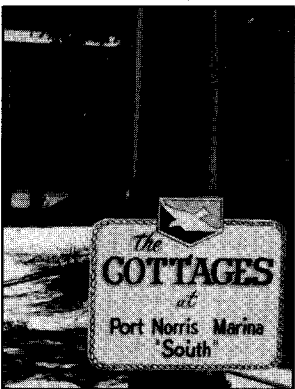
**10. Establish an Ecotourism Travel Center.** An existing travel agency could begin to expand its operation by specializing in packaging, organizing, and promoting ecotourism adventures in Cumberland County. Birding, boating, fishing, and any number of other themes could be promoted as these themes are developed or enhanced.

**11. Develop Fee Fishing Opportunities.** Stocked ponds and lakes offer fishing opportunities different from those in a boat on the rivers or in the Bay. Sand mining sites have ponds that could be stocked for this purpose. The reuse of abandoned sand washes for recreational uses such as this would be excellent additions to the list of ecotourism activities in the County. Municipalities have to amend their land use regulations to encourage or permit this type of activity as reclamation projects. Small fishing cottages could also be developed along the ponds or waterways.

**12. Market local products with Ecotourism Themes.** An excellent example of such a creative endeavor is already in place! The Hook, Line, & Sinker, a fishing shop located in Fortescue is marketing a line of clothing called "Baywear." This clothing line provides beautiful examples of attire with attractive ecotourism logos and designs.

**13. Farm Vacations.** Popular in the mid-west and other regions of the Country, these vacations provide an opportunity for guests to live and work alongside a farm family. For one week, or any set period of time, tourists will get up with the farmer, eat meals with the family, and help with the daily

*Corporate themes and ecotourism travel centers can greatly enhance the assets of the business community.*



*Fishing cottages can enhance the appeal of the area as a fishing destination.*

chores. This type of activity can supplement the farm income and provide a first hand appreciation for the rigors of the farm industry.

**14. *Bird Watching Tours.*** Cumberland County may have a greater variety of birds and bird habitats than Cape May County which has long been touted as a bird watcher's paradise. The Cape May birding industry brings in more than \$10 Million a year to the local economy. Cumberland County businesses must begin to find ways to promote and capture the dollars from birders who are already here but may not be spending their money.

**15. *"Nature by Night."*** At night the rivers and the Bay take on an entirely different set of sights and sounds. The night sky which is darker and clearer than anywhere else in the State offers an excellent opportunity to star gaze or work on some serious astronomy. Nature's sounds also change with tree frogs and other amphibians bringing forth a chorus of chirping and strange melodies.

*Bay Burgers, Maurice River Crabcakes and Greenhead Pies!*

**16. *"Bay Burgers."*** Why not a food line that can be served locally or marketed? Restaurants and delis can promote their location and surroundings by dressing up their menus with unique names for local or everyday dishes. How about some "Maurice River Crabcakes," or some "Greenhead Pie!"

**17. *Develop Balloon Tours of the Bay and Marshlands.*** With various flying fields so close to the Bay and so convenient to travelers, a business could be started that provides aerial (ballooning or gliding) tours of the Delaware Bay, and the rivers and marshes of southern Cumberland County. Even the Cape May County and Atlantic Coastal areas are not out of reach.

**18. *"Lighthouse Holidays."*** Why not dress up the local lighthouses for the holiday seasons? Special holiday events could be held, particularly at the East Point lighthouse, that would provide a unique holiday experience for the visitor or local resident.

*Various tours of the Bay shore area can provide interesting and informative experiences for the visitor.*

**19. *"Rail - Bird Excursions."*** This would take some investment, some negotiation with the local railroad, and some serious insurance coverage, but it may be possible to market bird watching excursions by rail. The rail lines through Cumberland County traverse some very rural and remote areas and touch some of the finest bird habitats in the region. If bird watching is not feasible, then maybe foliage tours, or some other nature-based theme might work.





*Work on a real fishing boat!*

**20. *Work on a Real Commercial Fishing Boat.*** If people are willing to vacation on farms and help with farm chores, why not promote the life of commercial fishermen? Combined with a weekend's lodging and meals taken from the day's catch, this could provide an interesting and unusual holiday for the adventuresome traveler.

**21. *Expand land connections for the boating public.*** For people visiting the area by boat, there are very few places where they can dock, step onto land, and tour some of the sites in the small towns and villages. One of the local cab companies might expand its business by marketing a special rate to boaters looking to visit Wheaton Village, downtown Bridgeton, historic Mauricetown or Greenwich during a brief stop in the region. Other simple conveniences should be provided at local marinas and other docking facilities to enhance the water - land connection such as public phones, supplies, temporary slips, a bulletin board showing the services available in the community, travel options, literature, and so forth. These water - land connections are critical to diversifying the different types of access that can promote a Cumberland County ecotourism program.

**22. *Aquatic Tours.*** Whale watching, educational lectures on aquatic vegetation, or even bird watching by boat can provide alternative sources of revenue for many of the charter fishing businesses in the County. These types of tours would also extend the tourist season from the early spring into fall and even the winter months (for eagle watching, eg.)

**23. *Try your hand at clam shucking.*** Maybe some of the old shucking houses would be willing to open their doors to provide this type of experience. Combined with a meal of steamed clams at a local restaurant, a history of the shucking business, and a trip on an old oyster schooner, this type of activity would add an interesting twist to a visit of the area.

*Classes on boat building or some of the other crafts of the area are good ideas.*

**24. *Boat building classes.*** A visit to one of the local shipyards or boat builders can provide a great understanding of the history, technology, and craftsmanship that is part of the modern boat building industry. Add to that activity a chance to build a small boat of your own and there is the making for a very diverse ecotourism experience.

**25. *The World's Largest Sandbox.*** A sand park for kids to build castles, have contests, enjoy organized games, or just play would be a novel idea in an area where is a lot of sand!

**26. Small motorized boat launches in Sunset Lake and other County lakes.** This is an opportunity to tour the area in small, pleasure craft that are not as demanding as canoes, but not disruptive of the natural environment. Some of the very small, electric motors could provide good power to a craft without polluting the rivers and streams.

*Tours of the many lighthouses of the Delaware Bay would be an interesting activity.*

**27. Develop a Model Farm.** In conjunction with the 4H, farm advocacy groups, state government, and the non-profit organizations, a model farm could be developed that highlights some of the agricultural assets of Cumberland County.

**28. Lighthouse Tours by Boat.** In addition to the two lighthouses at East Point and Ship John, there are three more lighthouses off the Cumberland county coast. A tour of these facilities by boat could provide a supplementary income for charter fishermen and others.

**29. Enhance the Holly Theme.** While not directly connected to any of the themes discussed in this Plan, Millville is the Holly City. The Brian Parent Center, owned by the Atlantic Electric Company, offers an excellent history of holly farming in the region.

**30. Crab Pins and Other Products.** Pins and jewelry honoring the horseshoe crab or other symbols of the region's ecology might help to attract a new line of customers to a local store. The same type of theme might be developed for candy. After all, the "Salt Water Taffy" was one of the first ecotourism products! Partnerships with non-profit agencies could help to promote this.

*These are just some of the many ecotourism concepts that could be developed by local business.*

Obviously, many of these concepts and suggestions are not ones that can be implemented immediately. Some will require significant market study. Others will need to wait until the level of investment in ecotourism and the visitation increase. Some, however, can be done immediately. Many can be packaged together and marketed as part of an ecotourism weekend or day trip. The possibility for new businesses are many. It will take a combined effort of the public and private sectors to promote these possibilities and make them work.

County government can take the lead in including many of these ideas in a marketing study of the area. Assessing the potential for these types of businesses can provide the private sector with some guidance on how to get started and where the best locations for these activities might be.

## **WAYS FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES CAN HELP ECOTOURISM**

There are certain investments in ecotourism that only the State and Federal governments can make. These investments involve changes in existing programs, perspectives, and funding. These large agencies are critical to making an ecotourism program work in Cumberland County. They are essential in developing, promoting, and investing in a County-wide effort.

*There is a significant interest in ecotourism among a number of State and Federal agencies.*

There is a great deal of interest among these organizations in ecotourism. The New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism is aggressively pursuing the development of ecotourism promotional material. The New Jersey Division of Parks & Forestry and the Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife are also very actively involved in promoting an ecotourism program. There are changes in regulatory programs that need the assistance of the New Jersey DEP and other State and Federal agencies. The National Park Service is investing in brochures highlighting the Coastal Heritage Trail and the Maurice River Wild & Scenic program. There are other, more active and visible roles the Park Service can also play.

From the County's perspective, there are a number of investments that can be made to help get the Cumberland program off the ground. Here are a few ideas.

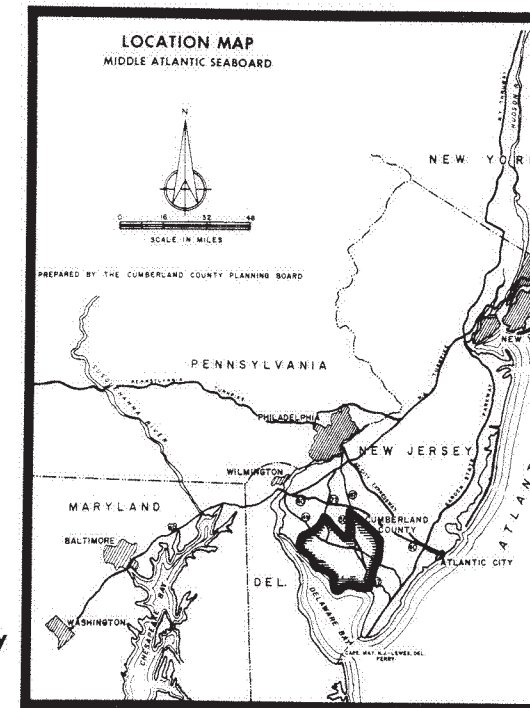
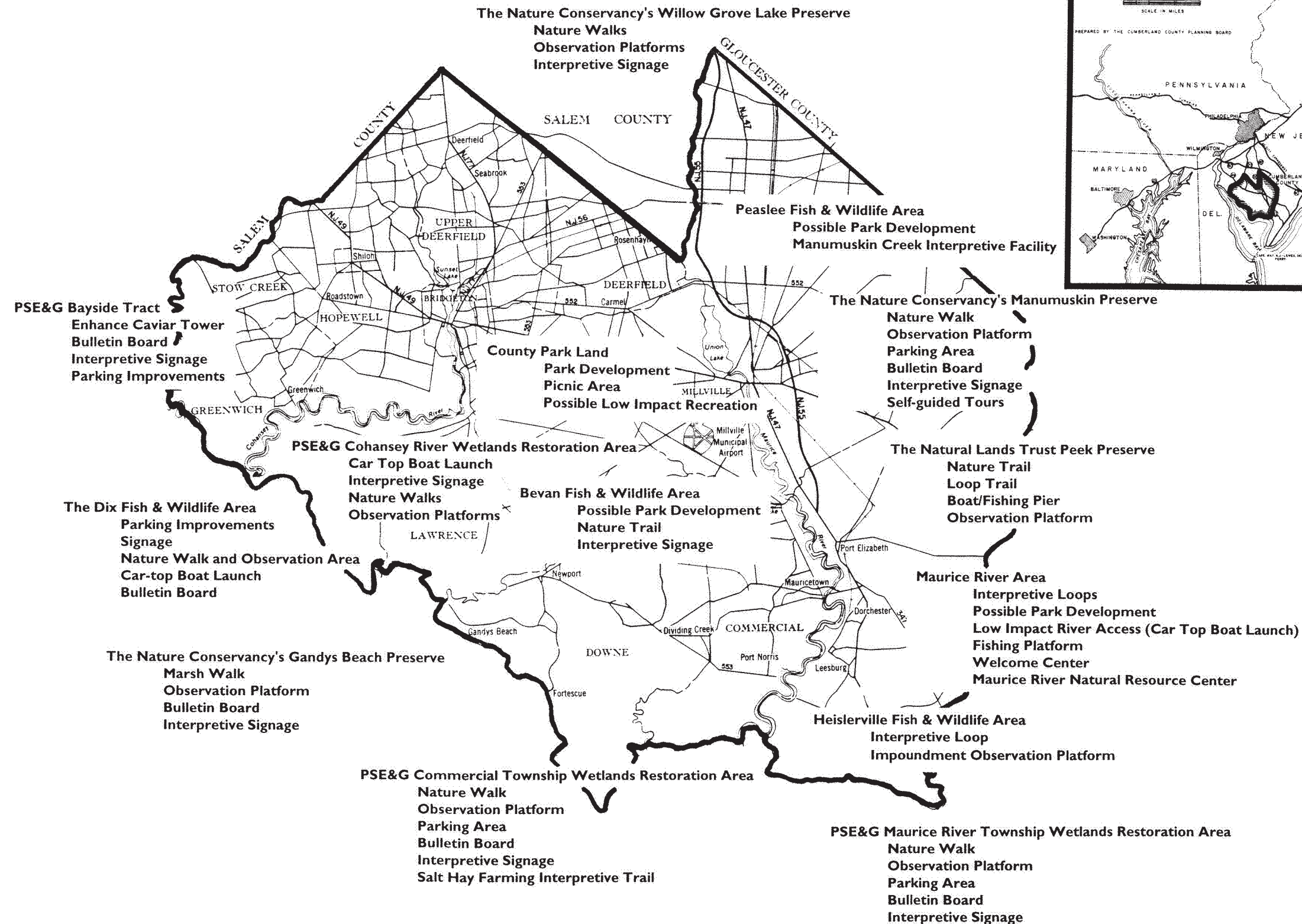
***1. Develop the State Owned Lands to Promote Ecotourism Objectives.*** The presentation of the Fishing, Hunting, Crabbing, and Trapping theme on page 34 of this Plan described the many WMAs that exist in Cumberland County and the types of amenities they currently provide. Certainly, some of these areas contain very sensitive habitats and should not be developed in any way. Others could support limited, passive ecotourism activities while some could be opened to much more active types of recreation. Map 10 outlines a County wish list of development projects to enhance ecotourism opportunities at these locations as well as the non-profit owned lands. As can be seen from the map, there are only a few areas where major investments, similar to those made recently at the Union Lake WMA, are recommended.

*Amenities at the many Wildlife Management Areas in Cumberland County should help promote ecotourism.*

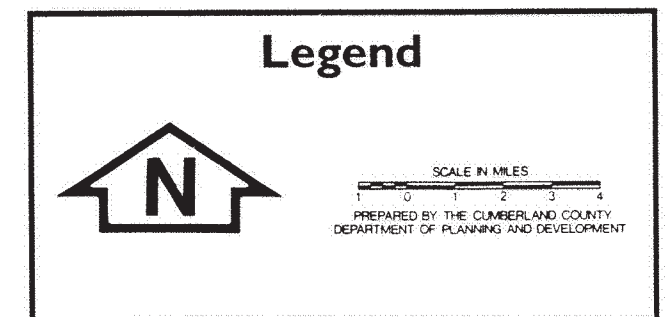
These types of investments are necessary, particularly in the more rural municipalities in the County, to offset some of the issues associated with the removal of large amounts of land from the tax rolls. Investments in

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY New Jersey

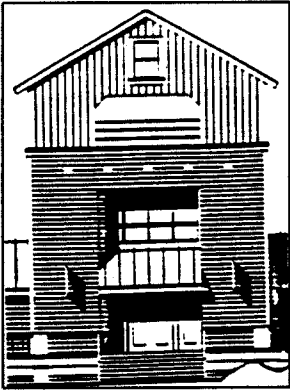
# ECOTOURISM PLAN Cumberland County New Jersey



**Map 10**  
**Potential Projects**  
*Ecotourism Enhancements on*  
*Dedicated Open Space*



ecotourism infrastructure, park development, and promotional material helps to provide economic opportunity in these areas.



*Development of a Natural Resource Center is a major goal of this Plan.*

**2. Development of a State-of-the-Art Natural Resource Center in Maurice River Township.** See discussion, page 70. This facility, proposed for management by the N.J. Division of Fish, Game, & Wildlife, would be a major catalyst for spin-off businesses and special events.

**3. Protection of Delaware Bay Shore And Other Critical Areas.** There are plans underway for the permanent acquisition of land along the Delaware Bay shore. These lands, located outside of the small villages and hamlets along the shore, are critical as habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. The County and municipal governments should support this acquisition effort so long as it is accompanied by investments in ecotourism infrastructure and facilities. Map 11 illustrates the gaps in habitat protection along the Bay shore and notes other areas in the County where conservation efforts may be needed to enhance resource protection.

**4. (State) Park Development.** Despite the fact that the State owns a considerable amount of land in the County, there is no State Park. As more land is acquired for preservation purposes, the development of a major park facility is increasingly desirable. As a specific case in point, the State has been interested for some time in acquiring lands known collectively as Bear Swamp West. The Natural Lands Trust has identified 90 acres at the core of this property that has some of the largest stands of old growth forest remaining in New Jersey. There are many acres outside of the core, however, that are less sensitive and more suitable for park development or for some other form of recreation. Should the State proceed to acquire any or all of this tract, its plans should also include a proposal that provides the area with a park facility that promotes ecotourism, while protecting the most critical natural resource from excessive intrusion. This objective is also being discussed as part of Downe Township's recently drafted Master Plan.

**5. Packaging Statewide Ecotourism Literature.** There are many, very good promotional pieces put together by the State that touch on aspects of ecotourism, (see p. 12) This material needs to be combined and repackaged with a clear and well-defined ecotourism theme. It should contain not only information promoting New Jersey's ecotourism potential, but also contain educational pieces on protecting and conserving the culture and resources of an area -- The Ten Commandments. At least three State agencies, (the

*Regulation must be streamlined and red tape eliminated.*

Divisions of Travel & Tourism, Fish, Game, & Wildlife, and Parks & Forestry), currently fund material promoting some aspect of their ecotourism domain. These funds could be used to coordinate a joint effort to publish one set of materials with interrelated ecotourism themes. By making both visual and thematic connections between these materials, they would be more effectively used and marketed.

*With some very limited, short-term investments, several ecotourism themes can be significantly enhanced.*

Through its six tourism regions, the N.J. Division of Travel & Tourism should make funding and technical assistance available so these regions can tailor special brochures and publications to their own individual ecotourism needs. Workshops and special events sponsored by the Division or other State agencies can help promote ecotourism themes throughout the State.

**6. Beach Restoration.** This important objective is central to this Plan from both a recreational and habitat preservation perspective. The beaches along the Delaware Bay shore have been severely eroded. Beaches provide habitat for humans and wildlife. Fortescue, in particular, is in need of a beach restoration project. The Atlantic Coast communities should not be the sole beneficiaries of beach restoration funds.

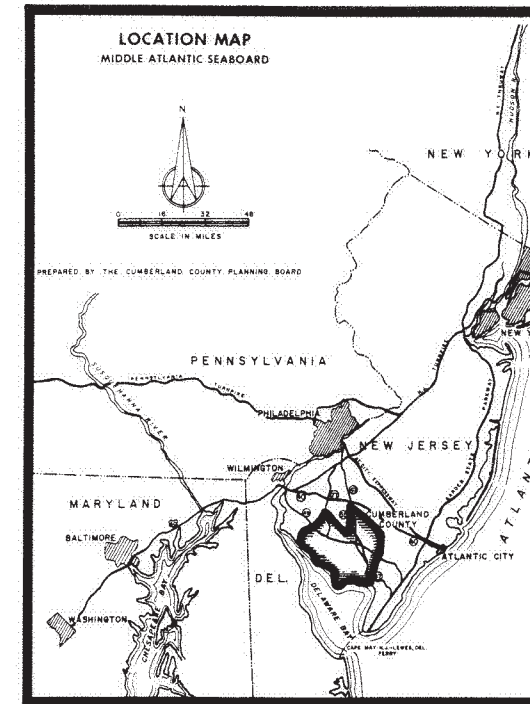
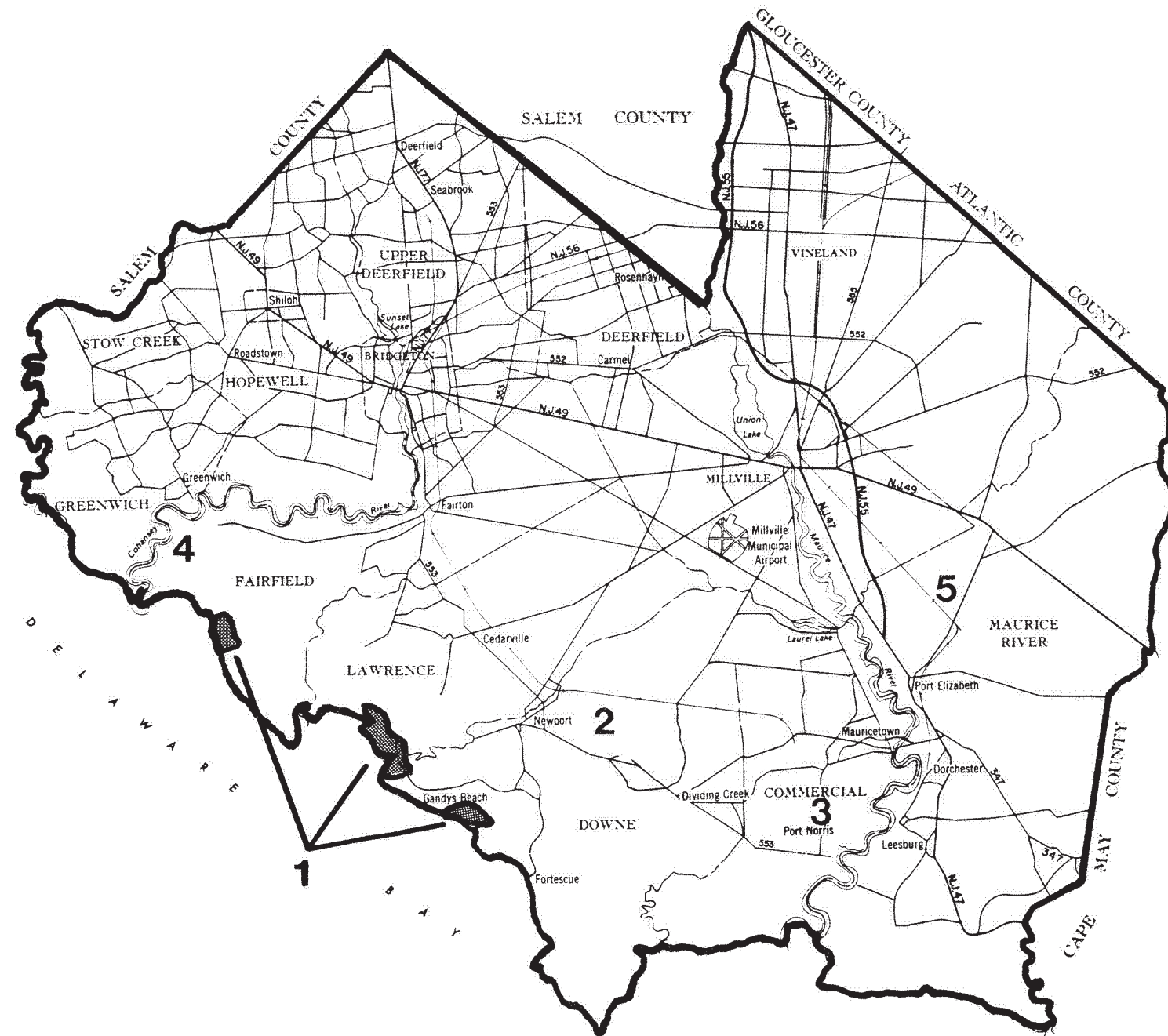
**7. Maurice River Dredge and Riverbank Erosion Projects.** The mouth of the Maurice River needs to be dredged. This is important to preserve many of the historic industries in the region including fishing, boat building, oystering, and, to some extent, recreational boating. Funding was recently delayed for this project. Similarly, the east bank of the Maurice is eroding severely at the river's mouth. Without a significant bank stabilization effort, the river channel is likely to be altered, thereby affecting the fishing and oystering fleet anchored on the west bank in Shellpile. State action, coupled with Federal funding, is needed immediately to help protect this important area. The original dredging proposal also included a habitat restoration program for the area known as "Basket Flats." This project provides a variety of ecotourism benefits, and should be an objective of government, business, and environmental interests.

*The Coastal Heritage Trail is an existing ecotourism link to the surrounding region.*

**8. Develop Coastal Heritage Trail.** Facility development of visitor centers, welcome centers, kiosks, and appropriate signage can help develop the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail and provide links to a Cumberland County ecotourism industry. The National Park Service provides excellent guidance and expertise in this type of interpretation and can help determine how Cumberland sites can be added to the Trail.

# CUMBERLAND COUNTY

## New Jersey



# ECOTOURISM PLAN

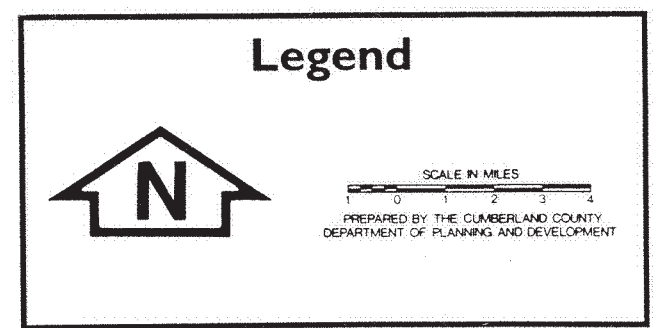
## Cumberland County

### New Jersey

## Map II

### Gaps in Habitat Protection

1. Shoreline Protection Target Areas
2. Bear Swamp West - 90 Acre Core Area
3. Sockwell Road Amphibian Habitat
4. Lower Cohansey River Wetlands
5. Manumuskin & Menantico Creek Corridors



**9. Streamline Regulation.** Redevelopment of many of the villages and urban centers is hampered by State and Federal regulation. Beach restoration, the development of wastewater treatment systems, boardwalks and observation platforms, and other types of public amenities can sometimes be slowed or derailed by burdensome red tape. Ways to streamline this process need to be explored and implemented.

**10. Develop Welcome Centers.** The National Park Service can play a major role in the interpretation of the natural resources of the region. Welcome Centers to the Wild & Scenic River region and other areas of the County would help to draw ecotourists to the area. Good interpretation of an areas ecotourism assets is a critical element in the success of any ecotourism program.

**11. Implement Watchable Wildlife and Teaming with Wildlife Programs.** These State programs are intended to identify key wildlife viewing areas and invest in the public access and infrastructure necessary to accommodate visitors. Aspects of the programs are being implemented now.

**12. Protect the Horseshoe Crab.** These crabs are being overharvested, primarily by individuals outside of the region. The decline in these crabs and their eggs may have a significant impact on the bird migrations to the Delaware Bay, since these birds feed on the crab eggs before resuming their flights.

## **THE NON-PROFIT AGENCIES AND THEIR ROLES IN ECOTOURISM**

Traditionally, the non-profit conservation organizations have been concerned only with environmental preservation. They have acquired land for permanent protection and have been involved in various aspects of State and National conservation policy.

Recently, however, non-profit groups have taken a much broader examination of conservation. They are adopting programs and policies that are sensitive to some of the economic and social issues in communities where they have conservation interests. The Nature Conservancy, for example, is one of the region's foremost ecotourism advocates. Other non-profit groups, such as the Delaware Bay Schooner Project, have ecotourism as a keystone of their corporate missions.

*Good interpretation of an area's ecotourism assets is a key element in the long term success of the program.*

*The traditional outlook of the non-profit conservation groups is changing.*



There are many ways, in addition to the ones already outlined in this Plan, that these non-profit organizations can help advance an ecotourism agenda in Cumberland County. Here are several.

*There are many ways that non-profit organizations can help advance the ecotourism program.*

**1. Act as Regional Marketing Advocates.** Many of the non-profit conservation groups have regional connections that can be very useful in marketing the County's ecotourism program. For example, The Nature Conservancy and the Audubon Society are international organizations. The Natural Lands Trust and the Delaware Bay Schooner Project have many connections throughout the Delaware Valley. Making the general public aware of the opportunities in the County will be critical to the success of the ecotourism program.

Coordinating the ecotourism agenda with other tourism initiatives is also important. Publications, special events, and ecotourism related activities should be coordinated with the County, the municipalities, and other tourism organizations in the region.

**2. Organize a Volunteer Pool.** There are many organizations that provide volunteer support for historical societies, ecological programs, and so forth. Many of the larger non-profit groups have membership lists totalling hundreds of people. A volunteer pool would be useful in getting many of the management strategies, special events, and other ecotourism activities off the ground.

**3. Develop Sites as Ecotourism Destinations.** Many of the sites that the non-profit organizations own in Cumberland County today are being developed for public access and ecotourism. These initiatives should continue, in concert with County and local interests, where new properties are acquired.

*Forming a non-profit, tourism development corporation could be a significant asset in promoting a County ecotourism program.*

**4. Work with County and Business Community on Non-Profit Tourism Development Organization.** The County may wish as a result of this Plan to pursue development of a non-profit corporation to fund ecotourism. Non-profit organizations can play a critical role in forming and managing such an entity.

**5. Host Periodic Public Information Meetings.** The actions of non-profit organizations can have impacts on the community that are just as significant as those of public agencies. It would be helpful, periodically, for these organizations to host community public meetings to lay out their long term acquisition, development, and policy agendas.

**6. *Partners in Management.*** Non-profits can be partners with the State, County, and municipalities in managing lands set aside for conservation. These lands can be part of the State WMAs, County/municipal parklands, or other public properties.

**7. *Comprehensive Ecotourism Advocates.*** Not only can the non-profits play a major role in the traditional types of ecotourism projects such as land acquisition, site development, and public education, but they can also be advocates for related issues that are part of the comprehensive ecotourism agenda. For example, finding ways to augment the payment-in-lieu-of-taxes program so that local governments have funds to pave roads, develop tourist brochures, and clean up their communities is an important issue. Being advocates for permit streamlining or partners with municipalities or the private sector in the permitting process would be worthwhile where well-defined ecotourism objectives are at stake.

*These are just some of the ways that non-profit organizations can help with the ecotourism agenda.*

**8. *Field Trips and Interpretive Experiences.*** There are many non-profit organizations interested in ecotourism. These organizations can bring a great deal to the Cumberland County program. For example, making land holdings in Cumberland County available to zoological societies or the Camden aquarium could provide those organizations with opportunities to conduct field trips in the area. Such events would generate regional interest in Cumberland County and provide for unique outdoor events.

**9. *Native American Interpretive Opportunities.*** Organizations formed to promote native American history and culture could tell the ecological experience of the native American population in the County. The uses for nature's products in medicine, wood crafts, hunting, and other aspects of these early civilizations would provide a unique look at the area's natural resource base.

**10. *Connections to Pinelands.*** The New Jersey Pinelands are an internationally renowned resource. Links to the Pinelands and Pinelands interpretive opportunities can be made by the non-profit organizations alone, or in partnership with government.

## **SETTING PRIORITIES**

To provide structure to the many ideas that have been outlined in this Plan, and to those that will be generated independently, there must be a general

framework established for setting priorities. It makes sense that the first tenet of this framework should be to maintain and enhance the ecotourism attractions that exist now. There are several themes and places that can be marketed in the short term with relatively little effort. A second objective should be to secure the natural resource base and to enhance existing resource protection and management efforts. A third tenet of the implementation framework should be to develop a marketing and promotion strategy that addresses both short term and long term needs. Throughout this effort there needs to be a significant public involvement process, which is a fourth objective of the implementation framework.

## **SHORT RANGE PRIORITIES**

### **Facility Development**

*With some very limited, short-term investments, several ecotourism themes can be significantly enhanced.*

Many of the enhancements to State, County, and non-profit lands can be an immediate benefit to the people who live in the region. Ecotourism development is not only directed at tourists. The emphasis here needs to be on making improvements to the Fish & Wildlife Management Areas and the other nature preserves in Cumberland County. These improvements include signage, parking, car top boat launches, and in some areas, boardwalks and wildlife observation platforms. The County can assist in this effort by submitting grant applications to assist the State and non-profit organizations with the funding for these projects. There are seven (7) properties where limited facility improvement could be accomplished in the short-term. These improvements would significantly enhance the visitor experience and would begin to provide some substance to both the birding, wildlife observation, and fishing themes. These sites include the following mix of public, non-profit, and privately owned lands.

#### **The Dix F&WMA**

- Parking Improvements
- Signage
- Car-top Boat Launch
- Boardwalk/Nature Walk and Observation Platform
- Bulletin Board

#### **PSE&G Bayside Tract**

- Enhance Caviar Tower
- Bulletin Board
- Parking Improvements

**PSE&G Commercial Township Wetlands Restoration Area (Turkey Point WMA)**

Boardwalk/Nature Walk  
Observation Platform  
Parking Area  
Bulletin Board

**PSE&G Maurice River Township Wetlands Restoration Area**

Boardwalk/Nature Walk  
Observation Platform  
Parking Area  
Bulletin Board/Interpretive Material

*These improvements can help provide marketable ecotourism sites for local citizens as well as tourists.*

**The Nature Conservancy's Gandy's Beach Tract**

Marsh Walk  
Observation Platform  
Parking Area  
Bulletin Board/Interpretive Material

**The Nature Conservancy's Manumuskin Preserve**

Nature Walk  
Observation Platform  
Parking Area  
Bulletin Board/Interpretive Facilities  
Self Guided Tours

**The Natural Lands Trust Peek Preserve**

Boardwalk/Nature Walk  
Loop Trail  
Boat/Fishing Pier  
Observation Platform

Some of these facilities are already in the planning stages. The PSE&G properties are being developed for ecotourism as part of the company's Estuary Enhancement Program. The Nature Conservancy is actively pursuing the construction of visitor facilities on its sites. The Natural Lands Trust is enhancing public access at the Peek property along the Maurice River. With the completion of these projects, a series of well located facilities of this nature would span the Delaware Bay coastline. They would compliment the facilities already developed at Union Lake in Millville, and at the Glades Preserve in Downe Township.

*Many of these improvements are already underway by the property owners.*

All of these sites currently have good access; most of them from the County road network. Some of the other prospective areas for similar facility

development need significant road improvements and must be included in long range planning efforts.

There are other sites and facilities that are currently in operation such as the Schooner Project, the East Point Lighthouse, the various marinas, boat rental facilities, river cruises, agricultural markets and produce stands, festivals and special events that can be included immediately in short-term promotional literature. Additional facility development at these sites generally involve long range projects.

*Rehabilitation of some of the old buildings in the Shellpile area is a long-range objective of the Delaware Bay Schooner Project.*

### **Coordination and Management**

Another important short range objective involves the management and coordination of ecotourism development. The best option in the short run may be to provide guidance through the Tourism Advisory Council of county government. It is an entity already in place that provides a broad overview of the County as a whole. The Advisory Council may have to be restructured to accomplish this. A more diverse mix of business, municipal, non-profit, and chamber of commerce representation may be needed. Without disrupting the makeup of the entire Advisory Council, ecotourism issues could be addressed in a special subcommittee of the Council.

In addition, the management of public and non-profit owned lands can also benefit from additional coordination. There should be a strong role played by the municipal governments in helping to direct this effort. County, State, and non-profit organizations could share or pool resources to make the management of these lands more effective.

*Some vehicle for coordinating ecotourism development must be an immediate objective of the Plan.*

### **Marketing and Promotion**

Because there are significant improvements needed to many of the prospective ecotourism destinations, even in the short term, the county-wide promotion and marketing of ecotourism must be phased. Phase I can focus on the following themes and places, since these are the ones that are developed sufficiently to accommodate an increase in visitors.

1. Bird Watching;
2. Recreational Boating;
  - Canoe Rental Facilities
  - Small Boat and Crab Boat Rentals
  - Marinas
  - Public Access Points

*Marketing selected ecotourism themes and places can occur in the short term.*

3. Delaware Bay Schooner Project;
4. Selected Maritime History:
  - Museum
  - Historic Villages
  - River Trips
    - Scheduled Schooner Trips
    - Dinner Cruises
5. Selected Fishing, Crabbing, & Hunting Experiences
  - Union Lake Facility
  - Hunting & Crabbing Opportunities on State owned land
  - Charter Fishing Fleet in Fortescue
6. Farm Stands and Produce Markets
7. Wheaton Village and the Story of Glass;
8. Special Events
  - Festivals with Ecotourism Theme
  - Bay Day
  - East Point Lighthouse Open House
  - Food Festivals
  - Heritage Days
9. The County's Wild & Scenic Rivers.
10. Developing a County Ecotourism Logo.

A brochure that marketed ecotourism in general and directed visitors to certain, well defined sites and locations would provide a good, initial marketing tool. Over the long term, additional sites and activities could be marketed as they are developed. The private sector can also market special products, services, and activities as it is appropriate.

### **Resource Protection**

Currently, there are good land use plans in place that focus on resource protection in many of the critical natural areas of the County. A river management plan exists for the Maurice River and one is in the works for the Cohansey. The State and the non-profit agencies own considerable tracts of the most environmentally sensitive lands in the County. The Agriculture Development Board is working hard on a comprehensive farmland preservation program. There are several efforts currently underway to enhance resource protection in the County.

*There are several efforts currently underway in the County to enhance resource protection.*

An important private, non-governmental, non-regulatory option that exists to protect sensitive lands is the dedication of conservation easements for tax purposes. It should be a short range objective of the County to establish a Conservation Trust that can accept gifts of land or easements. Because it will

take staff to manage any property that is dedicated to the County Trust, a partnership of State, Municipal, County, and non-profit agencies should be formed to pool resources for staff. A conservation easement program along with literature describing the benefits of private, land conservation for Cumberland County citizens must be developed. Limited, additional acquisition of land in the most critical areas may be needed to enhance resource protection. Where possible, this should be accomplished with an ecotourism theme.

### **Public Involvement Strategy**

The 1993 Workshop on ecotourism helped to provide the framework for this Plan. It was very well attended and represented a good cross section of County citizen, businesses, and environmental groups. It involved many different public interests and produced good recommendations many of which have been incorporated into this Plan.

After the draft of this Ecotourism Plan was released in September of 1995, staff of the County Planning & Development Department began making presentations to a wide range of interest groups and organizations including municipal governments, chambers of commerce, business groups, environmental organizations, tourism agencies, elected officials, civic groups, and non-profit organizations. More than a dozen presentations were given around the County to solicit input on the Plan and to inform local citizens about ecotourism.

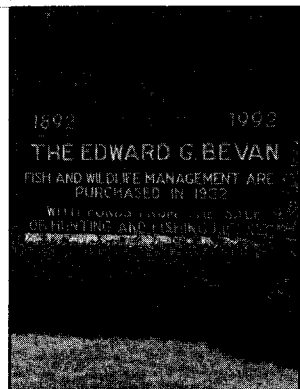
In addition, a public workshop was held on November 14, 1995. Approximately 30 people attended that meeting and numerous comments were offered. Copies of the draft plan and the executive summary were sent to local planning boards, elected officials, and other interest groups to solicit comments. Many of the changes to this Plan reflect the comments received from these contacts.

This type of public involvement needs to continue. This Plan will evolve over time. Implementation of the Plan will be a fluid process involving new ideas and opportunities as they arise. Consequently, the public needs to be involved constantly in this effort.

*A public workshop, a significant mailing, and numerous public presentations helped get the word out on the draft plan.*

## LONG RANGE PRIORITIES

Almost any of the recommendations of this Plan that will take some time to implement can be viewed as a long range strategy. Grouped together, there are several that stand out as priorities.



*The Bevan Wildlife Management Area may be able to sustain a more developed recreational program.*

**1. Develop the Maurice River Natural Resource Center.** This facility proposed for Maurice River Township is key to fostering an ecotourism program in the community and throughout the southern Cumberland County region.

**2. Create an Ecotourism Business Development Program.** Courses in hospitality training, business planning, small business development, financing, and marketing can all assist the business community in starting and expanding the types of small businesses ( bed & breakfast inns, antique and curio shops, specialized services, etc.) that would compliment an ecotourism program in the County. The County College can provide the resources for many of these program ideas.

**3. Park Development.** There are several recommendations in this Plan for park development. The County has some opportunities to develop land it already owns to provide a wider range of recreation for its citizens. The State, both in conjunction with its Wildlife Management Areas, new land acquisition, and existing park and forest lands, can enhance significantly the recreation facilities and services available.

**4. Create a Comprehensive Ecotourism Marketing Package.** This marketing effort should be linked to regional tourism and convention centers, other ecotourism sites, package tour operators, the large scientific and natural resource organizations, and the new and growing businesses dealing in ecotourism activities. The effort should involve a phasing in of the Cumberland County sites and activities as they are enhanced and developed.

**5. Continue to Enhance Existing Services and Facilities.** There are many public amenities, beyond those described for short range implementation, (see Themes and Places Section ), that are necessary to enhance an ecotourism program. Large investments in public wastewater treatment is needed in some of the small villages such as Port Norris and Fortescue, if they are to embrace an ecotourism program. Public restrooms, visitor centers, information kiosks, additional boardwalks, nature trails, observation platforms, interpretive



facilities are needed at existing sites. There are two State owned properties at the Edward Bevan and Peaslee WMAs where additional public facilities could be developed without impacting significantly on the natural habitats being protected. The County should work closely with the N.J. Divisions of Fish, Game, & Wildlife and Parks & Forestry to advance some public improvements in these areas. Management of the facilities to reduce littering, vandalism, and to promote eco-friendly visitation is also necessary. Similar partnerships, such as that described on pages 78-102 are necessary to promote a good management strategy.

**6. Resource Protection Efforts.** There is a need to close the gaps in resource protection, particularly along undeveloped stream corridors and coastline. Some of this can be done through private easement donation programs. Other efforts will require public acquisition or land management. The County should work with the State and non-profit to identify these areas and to protect them. The County should support the acquisition of lands in these areas where payment-in-lieu-of-taxes can be made or where ecotourism trade-offs can be negotiated. Support for changes in the State's payment-in-lieu-of-taxes program is necessary to afford municipalities with a higher than average percent of its land area in public ownership a larger payment. Pennsylvania just enacted a sweeping change in its payment program through House Bill 861, signed into law by Governor Ridge July 10, 1995. A similar bill has been introduced in the New Jersey State House but has not come to a floor vote.

*The long range priorities of this Plan can help to foster a comprehensive ecotourism program.*

## **SUMMARY**

Ecotourism is here. It is happening today in Cumberland County. Small businesses, non-profit organizations, and various levels of government are all exploring ecotourism themes and activities. These activities need focus. They need to share in a county-wide effort where the initiatives can all contribute to common themes and objectives; where the activities begin to complement each other and help to build a more prosperous Cumberland County. That is the purpose of this Plan. It provides a starting point for unifying the many themes and activities into one comprehensive ecotourism program.

To make this happen and to be successful it will be essential that the lines of communication between government agencies, the business community, environmental interests, non-profit organizations, and tourism organizations remain open and active. *It cannot be emphasized enough that in an era of*

*declining Federal and State dollars it is essential that activities and programs are coordinated so there is as little duplication of effort as possible.* Partnerships need to be developed where possible. Funding sources need to be identified. Actions and proposals need to be discussed in advance so that there are opportunities to share in these ideas and initiatives. The concept of ecotourism has been well received in Cumberland County. Government agencies in particular should be careful not take any actions that would polarize this emerging consensus.

*It cannot be emphasized enough that in an era of declining State and Federal dollars, activities and programs must be coordinated.*

The promise of ecotourism depends upon the willingness of businesses, environmental interests, non-profit groups, citizens, and governments to come together to share in the natural wealth of this county; its beauty, its use, and its protection. By sharing in this wealth; by becoming partners in its protection and development, Cumberland County can become a better place to live and work.

Many individuals and organizations have helped to provide leadership in framing the future of ecotourism in the County. The Delaware Bay Schooner Project and The Nature Conservancy have both invested proactively in this effort. Many businessmen and women are already marketing ecotourism products and services. Many municipal and county officials have helped to shape the development of this Plan. The National Park Service's Coastal Heritage Trail is providing national exposure for this region as is the Wild & Scenic Rivers designation for the Maurice River and its tributaries. The New Jersey Divisions of Fish, Game, & Wildlife, Parks & Recreation, and Travel & Tourism should be commended for their active interest in fostering an ecotourism program in the State and region. The South Jersey Land Trust cosponsored the 1993 Ecotourism Workshop. Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and its Tributaries has been actively involved in this effort, as has the newly formed Stockton Alliance. Citizen groups in the County have helped to provide guidance in this effort. The Delaware Estuary Program has endorsed many ecotourism concepts as part of its regional plan. These are the agencies, citizens, businesses, and organizations that have helped advance this effort to date. Without their help and guidance, this Plan would not be possible.

*This Plan is possible because many people and organizations helped to make it happen.*

Ecotourism is not the answer to all of Cumberland County's economic problems. It is one answer. It is a key ingredient in meeting some of the shared objectives of the business and environmental communities. Ecotourism in Cumberland County must always be viewed in its historical context. It was

born out of a need to find a common agenda; one that would provide both economic development opportunity and the preservation of the County's natural heritage. That is the mission of this Plan.

*Ecotourism is one way to mold a common agenda among often competing interests and pave the way for a brighter future for all the County's citizens.*

