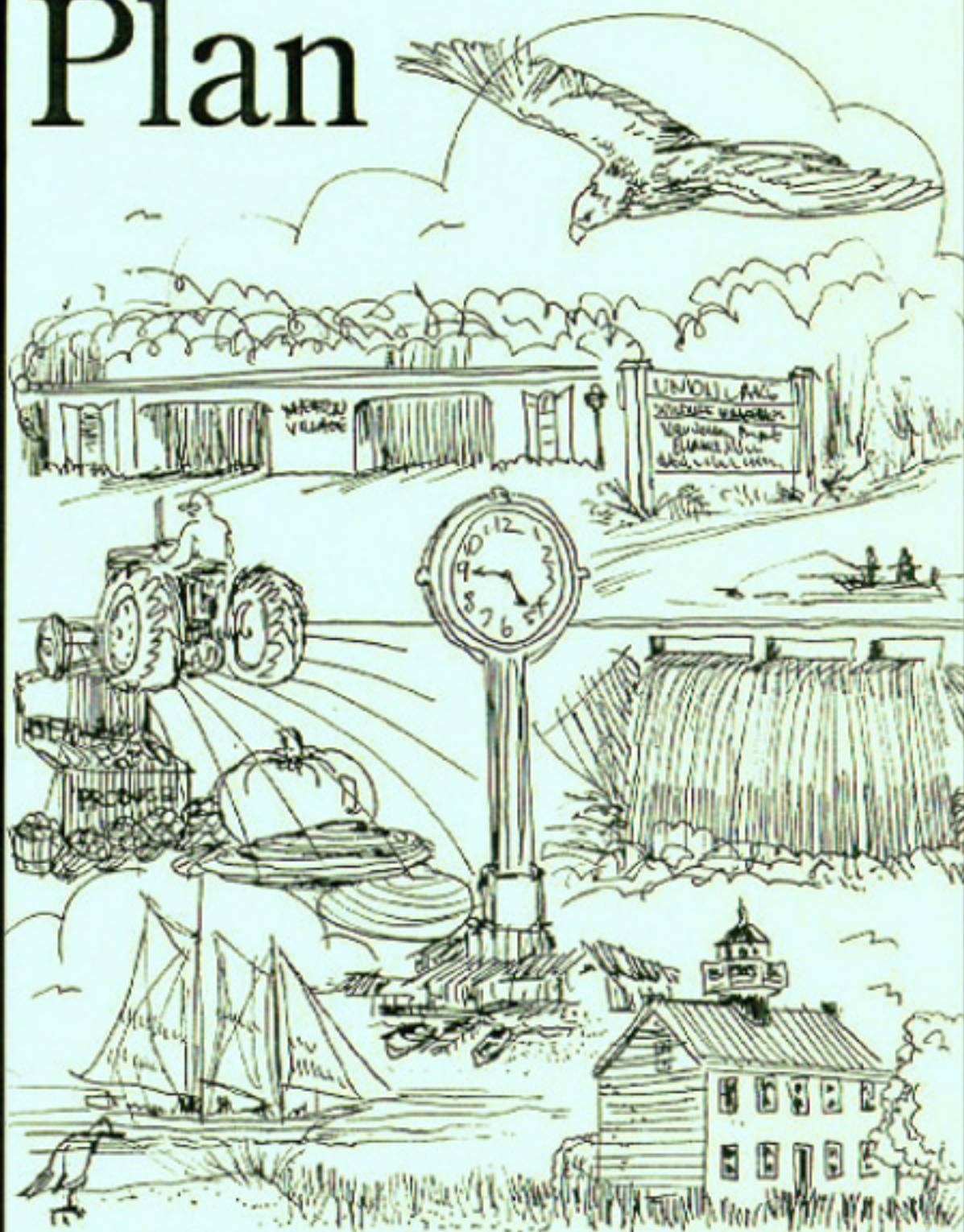




Cumberland County

Ecotourism Plan

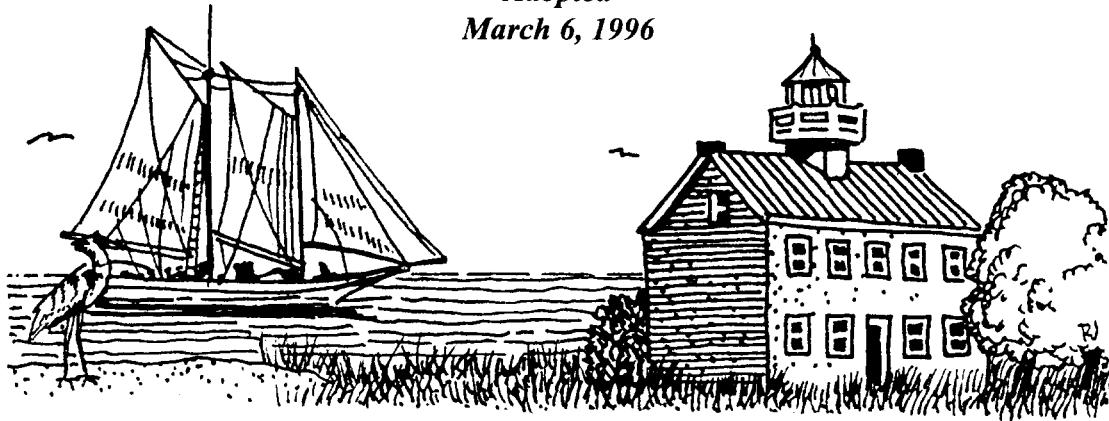


A Vision & Implementation
Strategy For Economic
Development & Conservation

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.**

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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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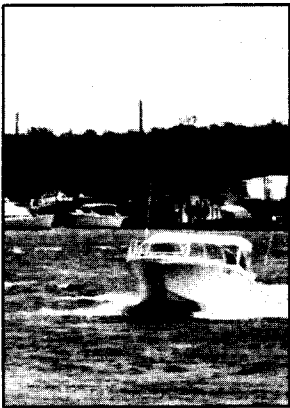
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Section I

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