

Open Space Update & Trails Overview

Readington Township

Open Space Advisory Board

November 16, 2020



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Open Space Updates & Highlights (1)

- First, a step back. Readington Township has a long history of being a pioneer with both Open Space and Farmland preservation. The township residents overwhelmingly approved the first municipal Open Space referendum in 1978. The first farm was preserved in 1987 and there are now approximately 70 farms preserved and a total of approximately 9,186 acres preserved, either as Open Space or Farmland.
- In 2018, Readington updated its Open Space Master Plan and committed to the preservation goal of 12,000 acres of preserved open space and farmland by 2050. This will require an additional 3,000 acres of land, either open space and farmland. This goal would preserve 40% of Readington lands with its success dependent upon the availability of Township, County, State and Non-Profit open space taxes and funding as well as by opportunities provided by existing landowners willing to preserve their lands.



as of June 2020

Open Space Updates & Highlights (2)



as of June 2020

- Starting in 2018, we have completed preservation efforts toward that goal as follows:
- 2018 Round Mountain – 14 acres of high quality mature forest near Stanton Village
- 2018 Round Mountain – 8 acres upland forest on summit of Round Mountain
- 2018 Cushetunk Mountain – 3.8-acre steep slope woodlot adjoining preserved land
- 2018 Cushehunk Nature Preserve – 8 acre addition by South Branch of the Rockaway Creek
- 2019 Cushetunk Mountain – 30 acre additions to Holland Brook Headwaters Natural Area
- 2019 Round Mountain – 14.6 acre addition to Round Mountain section of County Park system
- 2019 Chambers Brook – 35.66 acre natural area in the Chambers Brook headwaters area
- 2020 Chambers Brook – 22.61 acre private open space in the Chambers Brook watershed
- 2020 South Branch of the Rockaway – 1.5 acre open space in Whitehouse Station
- 2020 South Branch of the Raritan – 60 acre preserved farm in Three Bridges Village farmbelt
- 2020 South Branch of the Raritan – 45 acre open space alongside State Wildlife Mgmt. Area

- All acquisitions were preserved by Readington Township thru donation, license agreements (\$1 fee for parcels) and expected reimbursement from State and County Open Space programs. All extend protection of existing natural lands and provide future trail opportunities.

Saums Farm Open Space Acquisition (109 Acres)

Readington Township Open Space Advisory Board announces the Saums Farm on Rockafellow's Mill Road in the Three Bridges area has been preserved.

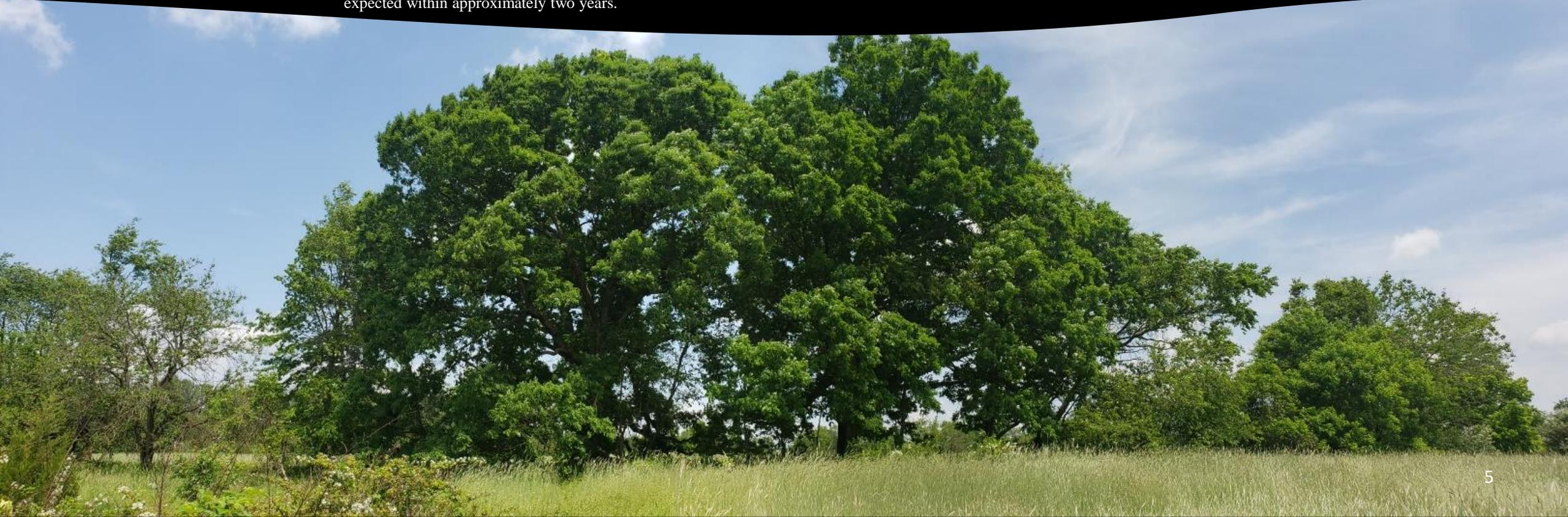
Open Space – South Branch of the Raritan – approx. 49 acres of streams, meadows, and forest for Readington Township open space adjoining the State South Branch Wildlife Management Area.

Farmland – South Branch of the Raritan – approx. 60 acres dedicated as a working farm to remain on the Township tax rolls.

Benefits:

- Preservation of Readington's rural character and a local viewshed
- Preservation of the agricultural area around Three Bridges Village
- Provides buffer for State South Branch Wildlife Management Area
- Protection of stream corridors for water quality and wildlife
- Reduction of storm water runoff for the South Branch of the Raritan
- Public access for trails and open space (planned for 2021)

Readington Township has purchased this parcel with the assistance of the Hunterdon Land Trust and is working with both County and State partners to complete this preservation effort. The preservation plan envisions the farm to be auctioned to a private owner as preserved farmland and reimbursement of purchase funds by County and State partners is expected within approximately two years.





Round Mountain Loughlin Parcel Stanton Village

- Readington Township has preserved a 13.8-acre forested property on the northern slope of Round Mountain by the village of Stanton. The Open Space Advisory Board identified this as a key parcel which is bordered on three sides by existing preserved land and protects a mature high-quality forest. It contains stands of mature red and white oak, beech, tulip trees and has an old logging road which will be used as a trail to connect an existing trail network that is maintained by both Hunterdon County and Readington Township.
- According to the NJ Conservation Blueprint, the land is listed as of highest importance for priority lands for ecological integrity and high importance for water quality protection. The forest also is largely intact with native understory and limited deer browse.
- This preservation continues Readington's efforts to preserve forest land on Round Mountain, add to the greenbelt surrounding the village of Stanton and provide further trail connections between Readington Township and Hunterdon County Park System. This parcel will be part of a larger complex of preserved land and an extensive trail system.
- The funding was provided by County and State programs. The allocation was 50% State Green Acres Planning Incentive Grant Fund, 20% County Funds (Cooperative County OS Fund), and the balance of 30%, the County's Municipal Grants Program.

Lorenzen Parcel Cushetunk Mountain

Readington Township's Open Space Advisory Board announces the addition of two forested parcels on the eastern ridge of Cushetunk Mountain. The two parcels protect a beautiful forest, preserve habitat for endangered species and provide water quality protection. The Holland Brook Headwaters trailhead and the forested Lorenzen parcel are shown.

This new parcel will allow trails in a mature forest while the 22 acre parcel is next to preserved State lands, buffering the State Round Valley ridge loop trail, with mountainous terrain and protecting a core forest area of exceptional value.





**Chambers Brook
Greenway
Gallo Acquisition
(35 Acres)**

- Readington Township has accepted the donation of a 35.66-acre wooded and wetland parcel located on the Chambers Brook Corridor. It includes sensitive wetlands, a pond and streams that provide suitable habitat for reptiles and amphibians, large areas of importance for groundwater recharge, and coniferous forest that provides suitable habitat for wintering owls, including the threatened Long-eared Owl.

- The Readington Township Open Space Advisory Board and Environmental Commission plan to protect and monitor this parcel, especially the wetland areas and it is expected that this parcel will be maintained in its natural state for wildlife protection.





Round Mountain / Deer Path Park Delaney Acquisition (14.6 acres)

- Hunterdon County Round Mountain section has been expanded by approximately 14.6 acres with an addition on the northwest part of the mountain by Foothill Road.
- This parcel on the Round Mountain section of Deer Path Park allows future trail connections between County Parks Headquarters and Round Mountain trail system.
- This acquisition continues the County and Readington goal to preserve environmentally valuable and forested lands on Round Mountain.

A photograph of a forest path. The path is covered in brown leaves and some green grass. There are many trees with green leaves. A large tree trunk is visible on the right side of the path. The path leads into the distance.

Cushetunk Mountain Duke Farms Foundation Donation

- A 3.8-acre forested property on the eastern ridge of Cushetunk Mountain. Readington Township Open Space Advisory Board accepted this parcel on behalf of Readington Township as a donation of land from Duke Farms Foundation in Somerset County.
- This land previously served as a quarry for stone at Duke Farms in Hillsborough, and it adjoins an existing preserved woodlot that will continue to protect the eastern ridge of Cushetunk Mountain. Both Cushetunk Mountain and Round Mountain are preservation priorities for Readington as they are home to Readington's largest unbroken forests. The Office of Natural Lands Management (ONLM), which is a division of the NJDEP's Division of Parks and Forestry, identifies the majority of the Cushetunk Mountain lands as a *Natural Heritage Priority Site*.

Cushetunk Nature Preserve & Round Mountain PSE&G parcels

- Readington Township completed a preservation effort in February 2018 which includes two (2) parcels of land owned by PSE&G. Both are approximately eight (8) acres in size and complement existing preserved lands and allow additional trail opportunities given the contract with PSE&G.
- The first is on Round Mountain which will remain as forest and second is next to Cushetunk Nature Preserve which will serve to protect land along the South Branch of the Rockaway, a C1 category trout stream, and add a future trail connection for walking access to the preserve. This preservation effort, which took over a year of discussions by the Open Space Advisory Board and PSE&G, now become part of Readington's Open Space lands inventory, at no acquisition costs given the license arrangements made with the corporate owner. Below is a view of Cushetunk Nature Preserve from the southwest toward the restored "Reno barn" reconstructed onsite in 2010.





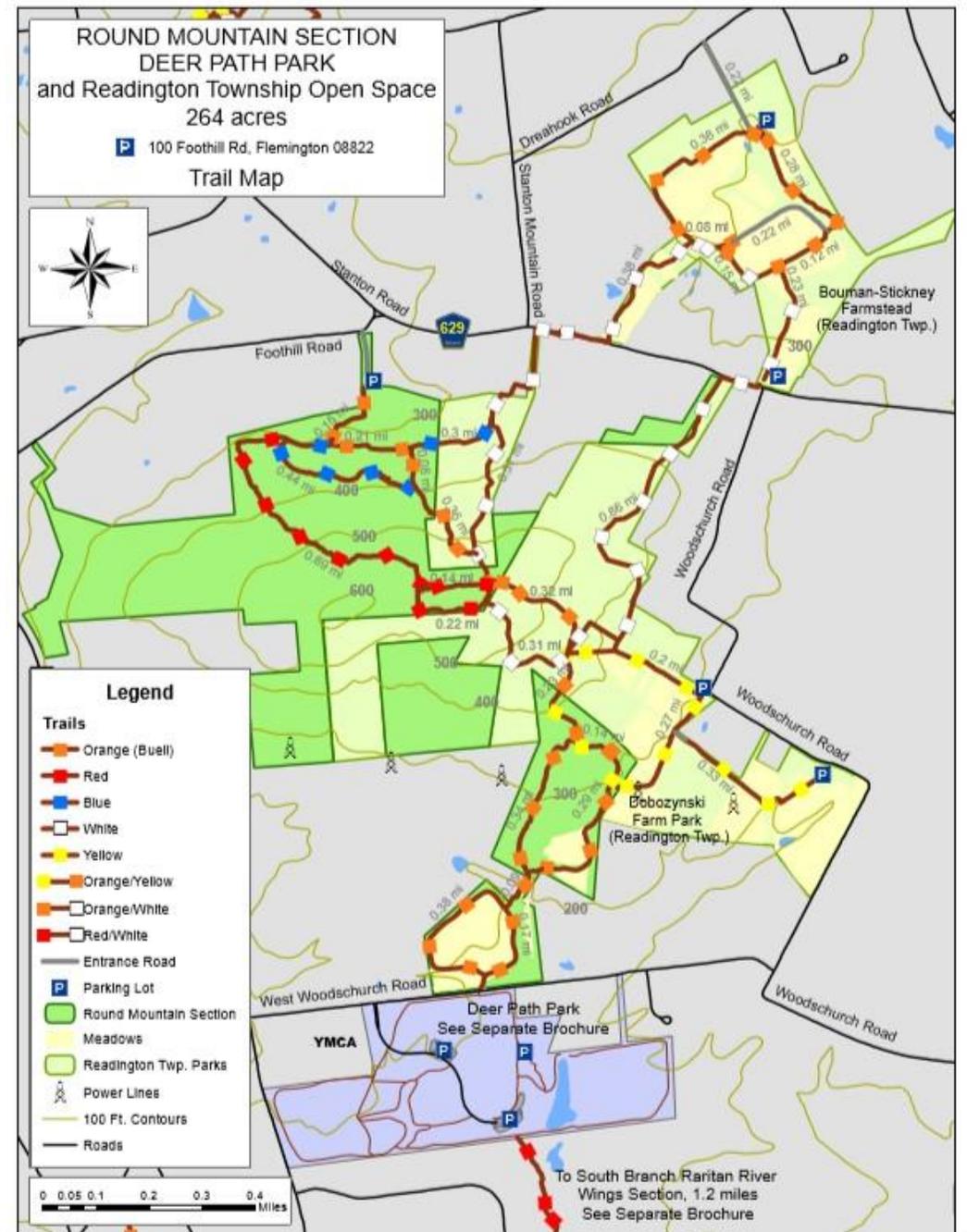
Trails Overview

- Approx. 35 miles of trails
- Mountain / forest / meadow sites
- Trailheads and access throughout Township
- Trail system created by OSAB
- Maintained by:
 - Open Space Advisory Board
 - Readington Trail Association
 - Dept. of Public Works
 - Local Volunteers
- Additional support by local volunteers



• Round Mountain Trail System

- Bouman Stickney Farmstead
- Dobozyński Farm Park
- County Round Mountain section
- County Deer Path Park



Stewardship Updates

- Forestation / Tree Planting
- Meadow Management Grant
- Pollinator Gardens
- Deer Exclosures
- Invasive Plant Removal
- Street Tree Inventory
- Township Deer Survey





Readington Water Watch

- A committee of Open Space Advisory Board and Environmental Commission members and volunteers.
- Focus on protection of streams / watersheds.
- Promote initiatives and projects to support water quality improvements.

Lamington River