

GEHR Watershed Minute #33

Open Space Preservation: (209 words)

One very important tool to protect watersheds is for the public to purchase undeveloped lands and permanently preserve them. Some of the many public benefits of preserved open space are to:

- > Protect drinking water,
- > Lessen pollution by absorbing contaminants from air and water,
- > Reduce flooding,
- > Provide places to fish, swim, boat, hunt, hike, and watch wildlife,
- > Protect forests, rivers, and natural areas,
- > Prevent overdevelopment,

To help fund the protection of thousands of acres of open space in our watershed, voters have approved local open space taxes in Atlantic County, Gloucester County, Camden County, Berlin Borough, Berlin Township, Egg Harbor Township, Franklin Township, Gloucester Township, Monroe Township, and Weymouth Township.

State government and the Federal government have also made significant investments in open space preservation in our watershed through the voter approved Green Acres Garden State Preservation Trust, the Pinelands Conservation Fund, and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. These larger state and federal funds are often used to match local open space funds, adding to their value.

With the ever increasing pressure to build more developments in the watershed, it is very important to understand and promote the great public benefits of more open space preservation to elected officials and the public.