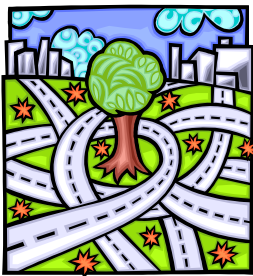




“That land as a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten”

*Aldo Leopold
A Sand County Almanac*



**Open Space
Benefits**

- Δ refuge for native plants and animals
- Protects ecologically sensitive areas
- Preserves natural flood control
- Provides visual and sound barriers
- Provides recreational opportunities
- Adds beauty to the landscape
- Maintains rural atmosphere
- Improves property values

Introduction

It is one of the great ironies of our time. As more of us move into the country to escape the hustle and bustle of houses, highways, bright lights and loud noises, the harder it becomes to find places where we can be alone in the natural world...open space where soil is not eroded, water is not polluted and wildlife abounds....open space where the quality of life is enriched. These places are precious and when we own them we should feel more than just satisfaction in our good fortune, we should also feel a responsibility to protect them for the common good.

Environmental protection for open space is slowly being accomplished through state legislation and local initiatives. A state mandated comprehensive planning process called “Smart Growth” now requires municipalities to prepare plans to guide their future development. Many local governments, agencies, developers and homeowners associations are already preserving open space through ordinances, policies, planned unit developments or conservation subdivisions. The growth and success of local land trusts over the last 10 years is another positive indication that people increasingly value their remaining open spaces.

As more open space is set aside, the question arises “what do we do with it?” To some, old fields or pastures, degraded woodlots or weedy wetlands may seem like wasted space. But, on the contrary, they can be made into attractive, enjoyable and ecologically significant pieces of land.

This manual is designed to provide options for the establishment, maintenance and long term protection of environmentally friendly open space. Its audience is developers, homeowners associations, schools, sanitary districts, landscapers, park departments, and individual land owners. Specifically, it presents sections on creating new or improving old wetlands, woodlands and prairies; how to make bird sanctuaries; what to do with storm water ponds; how to provide protection for shorelands; and how to make farmland and lawns into compatible uses of open space. Other sections deal with troublesome invasive plants and long term legal protection of open space land. Useful handouts and lists of contacts and publications are provided in each section.

We hope by having read the options available and noting their advantages and disadvantages, you will be in a better position to make a decision on what is best for your open space situation.

