



BERGEN *County* NEW JERSEY

For Immediate Release

September 26, 2016

Bergen County and Rutgers Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability (CUES) Partner to Develop First Comprehensive County Parks Master Plan

(Bergen County)- This morning, Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco announced that the County of Bergen has partnered with the Rutgers Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability (CUES) to develop the first comprehensive master plan for the Bergen County Parks system. The first stage of this work commenced over the summer, as CUES professors and students began creating a baseline inventory and analysis of current properties within the County Parks System. As this project progresses, the County will seek input from stakeholders and county residents through a variety of interactive engagement opportunities. The final Master Plan will be presented to the County Board of Chosen Freeholders, who will vote to determine whether the plan will be formally adopted by the county.

The Bergen County Parks System, established in the late 1940s, currently encompasses almost 10,000 acres within New Jersey's most populous county. With today's development trends and a changing and growing population, it is imperative that county and community leaders understand and evaluate the recreational and open space needs of Bergen's nearly one million residents. This partnership between Bergen County's Department of Parks and Rutgers, New Jersey's flagship university, seeks to create greater understanding of current needs while anticipating future needs and providing structure to guide the growth of the Bergen County Parks system in a manner that best addresses the long term recreation and open space needs of county residents.

The master plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2017, which will also mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Bergen County Parks Commission (the predecessor to the current Bergen County Department of Parks).

"I recognize that I am the merely the caretaker of nearly 10,000 diverse acres of Bergen County Parks belonging to all Bergen County residents," said County Executive Jim Tedesco. "Our parks are valuable community assets offering a wide array of active and passive recreational opportunities while preserving the natural beauty of our county's native ecological systems. It is my job to act as a responsible steward of the County Parks System for current and future residents, by continuing the work of those who came before me and helping create the framework that will guide the future of Bergen County Parks. The establishment of this partnership, and the comprehensive master plan that will develop from its work,

allows us to best manage the parks system in a manner that meets the needs of current residents and creates lasting enjoyment for generations to come.”

“This partnership with Rutgers and the development of the master plan are crucial steps in making sure we continue to responsibly develop and improve our County parks,” said Freeholder Chairman Steve Tanelli, who serves as Chair of the Freeholder Parks Committee. “As a longtime resident of Bergen County I know how important our system of county and municipal parks is for busy working families who need a break from our busy lives. My colleagues and I look forward to examining this in further detail in the future.”

“For the first time in the history of both the Parks Department and Bergen County Parks Commission, this master plan will establish a vision for the future growth and development of green infrastructure and open space networks throughout Bergen County. From the Meadowlands to the mountains, Bergen County has some of the best recreational opportunities in New Jersey for people of all ages to enjoy. This master plan will provide a roadmap to maintain and enhance these opportunities for generations to come,” said Bergen County Parks Director James Koth.

“Rutgers is committed to providing University support to enhance the quality of life for all New Jersey residents,” noted Dr. Laura J. Lawson, Dean of Agriculture and Urban Programs at Rutgers University. “The Bergen County Parks Master Planning partnership will engage faculty and students in a real-world application of their scholarship and provide Bergen County with the creativity and resources available through Rutgers.”

“Rutgers students and researchers are excited to be part of a project which will balance desired park amenities with ecological stewardship of public property,” said Dr. Wolfram Hoefler, Associate Professor and CUES Co-Director. “For this project to be successful, public input will be key.”

Information about this partnership and the ongoing development of the Bergen County Parks Master Plan can be found on here: <http://cues.rutgers.edu/bergen-park-system>. The site will be updated as the project progresses, with information about public engagement opportunities expected within the next few months.