

# Mount Holly Township Municipal Public Access Plan



JUNE 2017



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**Plan submitted by: Mount Holly Township**

**Plan reviewed by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection**

**Pending adoption by the Township in the Fall of 2017**

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Approval of this plan does not eliminate the need for any Federal, State, County or municipal permits, certifications, authorizations or other approvals that may be required by the Applicant, nor shall the approval of this plan obligate the Department to issue any permits, certifications, authorizations or other approvals required for any project described in this plan.

# Table of Contents

- Introduction** ..... 1
  - A. Authority for Municipal Public Access Plans** ..... 1
- I. Municipal Public Access Vision** ..... 3
  - A. Overview of Mount Holly Township and the Rancocas Creek** ..... 3
  - B. Municipal Access Vision** ..... 6
  - C. Municipal Public Access Goals** ..... 6
- II. Public Access** ..... 9
  - A. Public Access Locations**..... 9
  - B. Improved Public Access Locations** ..... 18
  - C. Limitations to Public Access** ..... 20
- III. Community Engagement** ..... 21
- IV. Implementation Plan** ..... 23
  - A. Priorities**..... 23
- V. Implementation Schedule**..... 30
- VI. Resolution of Incorporation** ..... 30

**Figures**

- **Figure 1:** The North Branch Rancocas Creek and Its Context..... 2
- **Figure 2:** Mount Holly Township’s Tidal Waterways and Lands..... 5
- **Figure 3:** Mount Holly Township’s Public Access Locations ..... 10
- **Figure 4:** Mount Holly Township’s Improved Public Access Locations ..... 19



## Appendices

<b>Appendix 1: Model Resolution for Incorporating MPAP into Master Plan .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Relationship to Other Local, State, and Regional Plans.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Public Access Location Amenities .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Community Needs Assessment Survey for the MPAP .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Appendix 5: Overview of Community Needs Assessment Survey Results .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix 6: Notes from Public Meeting #2 (March 1, 2016) .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Appendix 7: New Jersey’s Recreational and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Appendix 8: Municipal Public Access Plan Implementation Schedule .....</b>	<b>49</b>



## Introduction

The North Branch of the Rancocas Creek (see Figure 1) is a treasured destination for Mount Holly residents and visitors alike. The access points along the Rancocas, as it runs through Mount Holly, offer the community places to paddle, swim, hike, run, photograph wildlife, and enjoy the view of the water flowing in and out with the tides.

In creating this municipal public access plan, Mount Holly Township builds upon the generations-old affection that its residents hold for the Rancocas Creek and lays out a vision for creek access, goals to fulfill that vision, and steps to bring those goals into practice.<sup>1</sup>

In New Jersey, the public holds the right to gain access to and use tidal shorelines and waters. In 2012, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) adopted new rules about public access: municipalities with tidal waterways can adopt their own municipal public access plans that identify, preserve, and enhance public access to and along those tidal waterways.

In July 2014, representatives from Mount Holly Township met with NJDEP staff to create a municipal public access plan. The township developed the plan with the Township Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), the Township Planning Board, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), Rancocas Creek Association, and many community members.

The plan was presented to the community in October 2015 and March 2016. It was approved for submission to the NJDEP in April 2016. It was incorporated into the Open Space Element of the Township

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<sup>1</sup> This plan was developed in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Rules, in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

Master Plan by resolution (see Appendix 1).<sup>2</sup> All decisions made within Mount Holly Township concerning public access to the Rancocas Creek are consistent with this plan.

### A. Authority for Municipal Public Access Plans

With the authority to develop a municipal public access plan, Mount Holly Township officials, staff, and residents are empowered to customize their vision, goals, and improvements to creekside public access in a way that might not occur through a broader state-mandated public access plan. Mount Holly Township can use the municipal public access plan as a tool to ensure that proposed local development projects include public waterway access.

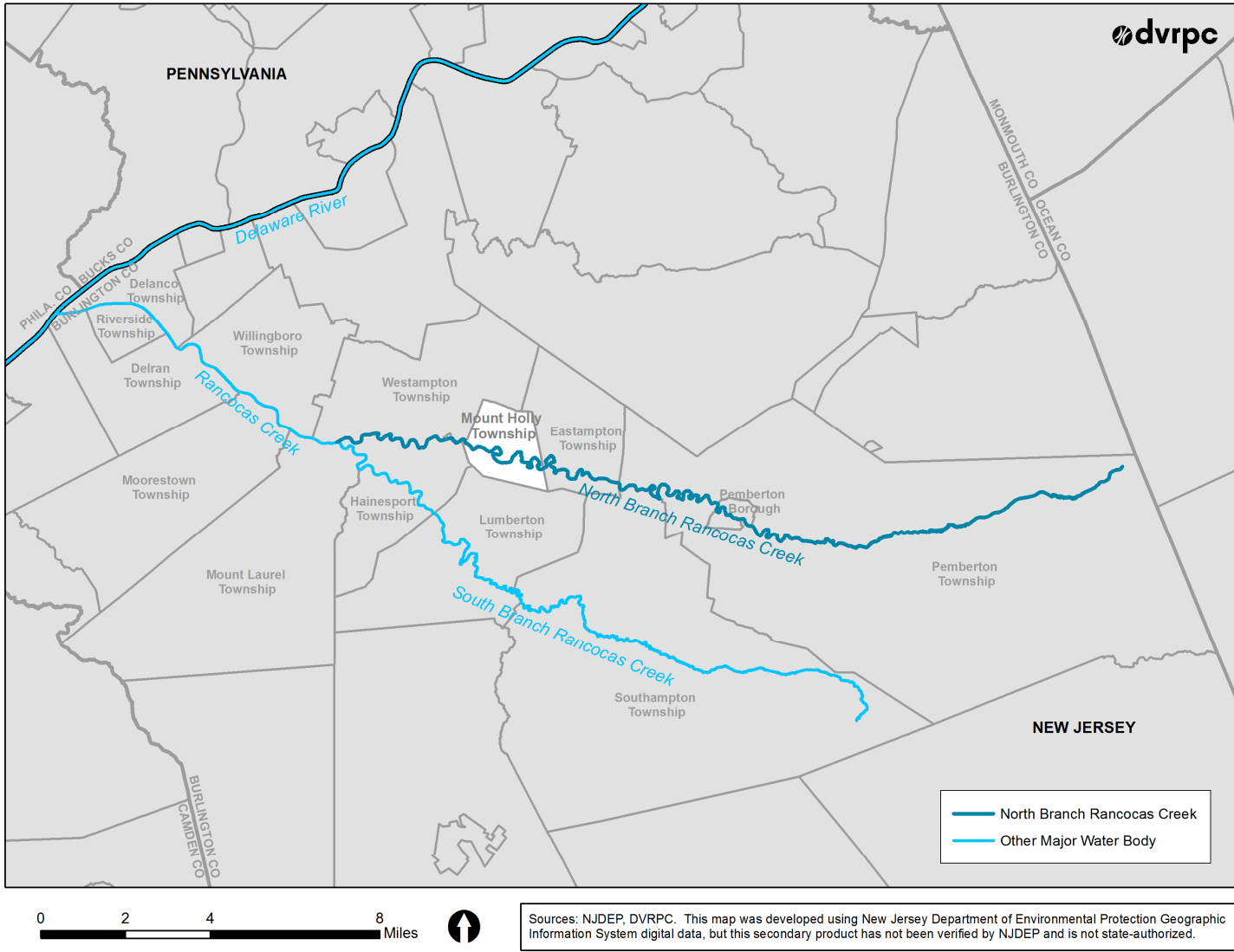
Alongside its rights to create the municipal public access plan, Mount Holly Township also has responsibilities to put it into action. The township must ensure that all public access to and along the tidal Rancocas Creek is developed and maintained according to this plan. It must also confirm with NJDEP that all new public access projects are consistent with this plan. The township also must provide NJDEP with updates on the implementation of this plan every five years.<sup>3</sup>

The State of New Jersey also has responsibilities in accordance with the municipal public access plan. Any permit that NJDEP issues must reflect this plan and ensure that public access requirements match it.

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<sup>2</sup> The incorporation of the Municipal Public Access Plan into Mount Holly's Master Plan complies with Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A 40:55D).

<sup>3</sup> Per the Coastal Zone Management Rules, Mount Holly Township is required to submit a progress report on plan implementation to NJDEP within five years from date of plan adoption.



**Figure 1: The North Branch Rancocas Creek and Its Context**

## I. Municipal Public Access Vision

### A. Overview of Mount Holly Township and the Rancocas Creek

The North Branch of the Rancocas Creek runs through the center of Mount Holly Township, traveling west from the Pinelands region of southern New Jersey toward the Delaware River. As a tributary of the Delaware River, the creek becomes tidal in Mount Holly once it reaches Mount Holly's historic mill dam between Mill Dam Park and Iron Works Park.

The Rancocas Creek was a determining factor in the formation of the settlements that would eventually become Mount Holly Township. Before European immigration to the region, the creek was known as "Ankokus" to the Lenape tribes, who formed villages near the creek and used it for transportation, irrigation, and as a source of food.<sup>4</sup> In 1677, Walter Reeves, one of the first Europeans in present-day Mount Holly, acquired land along the creek and constructed a plantation and trading site.<sup>5</sup> Reeves and others took advantage of bends in the Rancocas to create mill races between them, which provided the energy needed to cut lumber, weave cloth, hull grain, and create other necessities from raw materials.<sup>6</sup> In the following centuries, an industrial community grew and thrived.

In 1793, state legislature approved the relocation of the Burlington County seat to the community, and municipal buildings were constructed along High Street, which passes parallel to and over portions of the creek. These buildings joined existing homes and

<sup>4</sup> Dennis C. Rizzo, *Mount Holly, New Jersey: A Hometown Reinvented* (The History Press: July 27, 2007), 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–32.



*Image 1. Mill Dam, 1927. Image courtesy of the Historical Society of Riverton, New Jersey, [www.rivertonhistory.com](http://www.rivertonhistory.com).*

industrial facilities that continued to flourish through the turn of the twentieth century. By the early twentieth century, industry coexisted with leisure in the community as visitors swam and boated along the Rancocas Creek, maintained bankside vacation homes, and sent postcards of their adventures to loved ones (see Image 1).

Today, the neighborhoods through which the creek winds hold a mixture of residential, commercial, recreational, institutional, and industrial properties, as well as varying degrees of investment in the creek. However, several groups of residents are fully committed to the improvement of the Rancocas: the township's Environmental Advisory Committee, the Rancocas Creek Association, and other dedicated neighbors help maintain and advocate for the creek. These groups view this local waterway as a jewel that could become a regional destination, and some residents have gathered support to apply for the National Park Service's National Water Trail designation on behalf of

the creek. This award would give the Rancocas Creek greater visibility through official designation by the Secretary of the Interior and national promotion by the National Park Service, opportunities for assistance with planning and implementing projects along the Rancocas, and the benefits of being part of a national network of well-loved and celebrated water trails. As the Rancocas Creek receives increased attention as a recreational amenity, it could become a greater source of revenue for Mount Holly Township and other nearby waterfront communities, as it did in centuries past.

### 1. Mount Holly Township's Public Access

Mount Holly Township provides physical public access along the Rancocas Creek at four major sites: Creek Island Park, Monroe Park, Mill Dam Park, and Iron Works Park. These parks together provide visitors with areas to view the creek, fish, and launch boats, as well as parking areas, picnicking areas, and restroom facilities.

The township could consider other public parcels along the Rancocas Creek for new or enhanced public access facilities, including the Oxbow Area in downtown Mount Holly, parcels near the Mount Holly Bypass/NJ Route 541, the county-owned Chestnut Court Tracts, and several other small sets of parcels scattered throughout the township.

*"The Rancocas Creek is a source of community pride in Mt. Holly"*

*- 91% of Community Needs Assessment respondents*

*"I recently retired and look forward to taking up the sport of kayaking. Throughout my childhood summers I went fishing, boating, swimming and tubing on both the North and South Branches of the Rancocas Creek."*

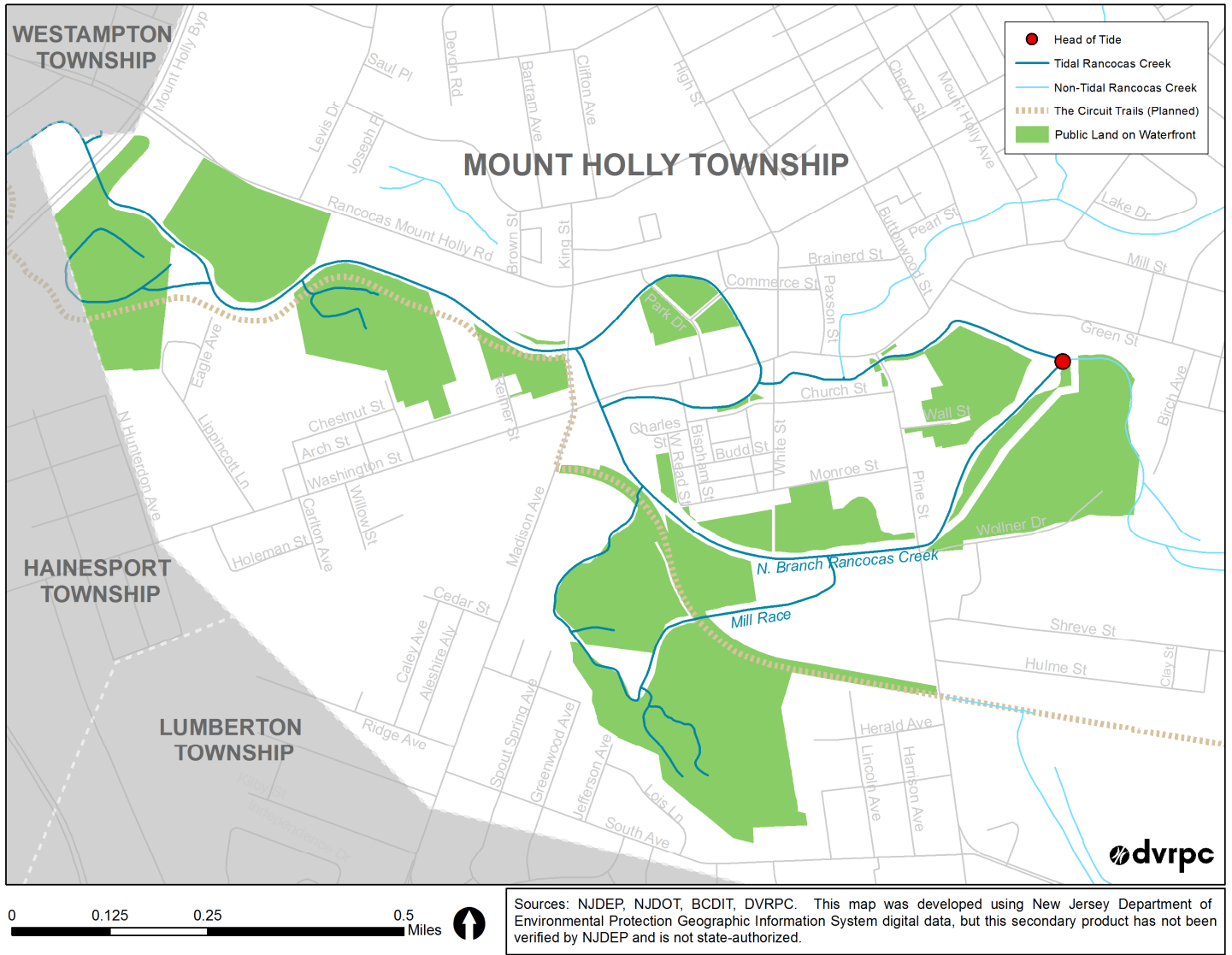
*- Resident, Community Needs Assessment*

Visitors can also view the Rancocas Creek from many bridges within downtown Mount Holly. Bridges at King Street, Park Drive, Commerce Street, Washington Street, White Street, Bispham Street, and Pine Street all afford views of the Rancocas and its tributaries.

The features of each current and potential future public access site will be discussed in greater detail in Part II of this plan.

**Figure 2** shows all of the tidal waterways within Mount Holly Township and all publicly owned lands adjacent to them. Much of this land is held by Mount Holly Township, while some parcels—the Chestnut Court Tracts—are owned by Burlington County.





**Figure 2: Mount Holly Township's Tidal Waterways and Lands**

## B. Municipal Access Vision

Mount Holly Township aspires to maintain public access along the tidal Rancocas Creek that:

1. Is accessible to all visitors;
2. Provides comfort and entertainment;
3. Balances the enjoyment of visitors with the integrity of the existing stream habitat;
4. Ties to Mount Holly Township's past and supports its future; and
5. Is stewarded with care.

## C. Municipal Public Access Goals

### 1. Goals and Recommendations

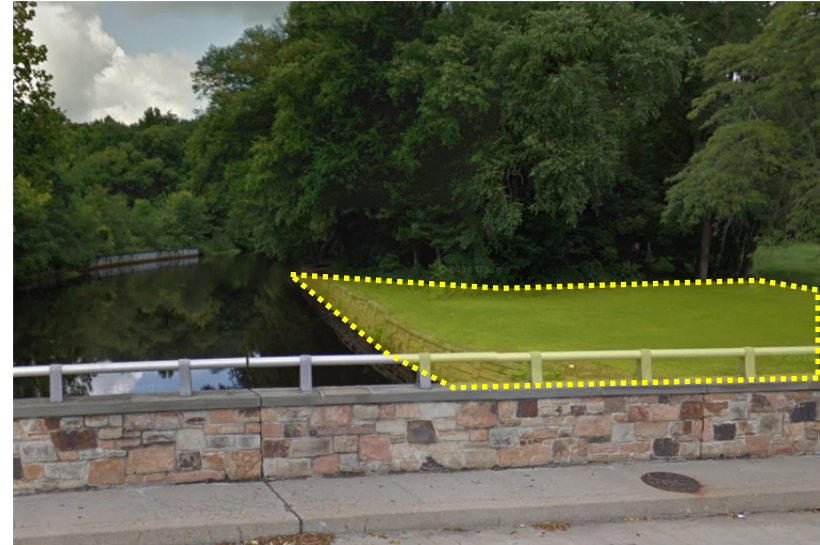
Mount Holly Township establishes the following seven goals for public access:<sup>7</sup>

- i. Add new public access points along the Rancocas Creek

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Prioritize, acquire, and construct a public access point in downtown Mount Holly (see Image 2); and
2. Construct a public access point east of the Mount Holly Bypass/NJ Route 541 (see Image 3).

<sup>7</sup> The goals are compliant with the New Jersey Coastal Zone Management Rules.



*Image 2: Recommended sites for new municipal public access points at the King Street Bridge, facing west (top), and the Oxbow Area along Park Drive, facing south (bottom). Images courtesy of Google Maps, <https://maps.google.com>.*

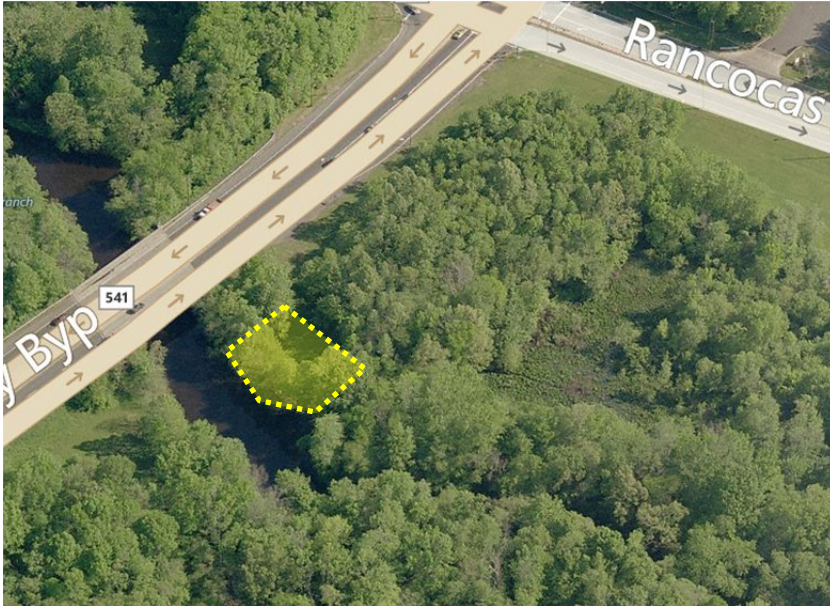


Image 3: Recommended site for new municipal public access point at the Mount Holly Bypass/NJ Route 541, facing north. Image courtesy of Bing Maps, [www.bing.com/maps/](http://www.bing.com/maps/).

ii. Foster connections between the Rancocas Creek and downtown Mount Holly

*Recommendations:*

1. Through public–private partnerships and acquisition where needed, create a “Riverwalk” through downtown Mount Holly; and
2. Incentivize the addition of complementary retail facilities that cater to creek users, such as restaurants, cafes, concessions, outfitters, or fishing or boating supply stores;

iii. Attract more visitors to the Rancocas Creek

*Recommendations:*

1. Develop a branding strategy for the creek and its amenities in Mount Holly Township;
2. Hold community events at waterfront access points;
3. Produce maps of the public access points and North Branch Rancocas boating route, and distribute throughout Mount Holly and online; and
4. Partner with Burlington County and community organizations to educate residents and visitors about the creek’s history and environment.

iv. Increase and improve physical and visual access to the Rancocas Creek, in balance with the habitat needs of other species

*Recommendations:*

1. Construct a trail spur to connect the Circuit Trail system to the Rancocas Creek at Creek Island Park or the Chestnut Court Tracts;
2. Provide portage past the Mill Dam at Iron Works Park;
3. Inventory and map plant and animal species at or near potential access points to determine locations of riparian buffers where construction should be limited or avoided;
4. Secure funding and/or partnerships to maintain and monitor riparian buffer areas;
5. Secure funding and/or partnerships to remove vegetation at access points for the purpose of increasing sightlines to the creek;

- 6. Install ADA-accessible sidewalks to connect existing sidewalks and parking lots to access points and along the waterfront;
  - 7. Add more parking at sites of high parking demand along the waterfront; and
  - 8. Partner with a private entity to provide boat rentals.
- v. Provide amenities for visitor safety and comfort at public access locations

*Recommendations:*

- 1. Encourage concessions or other dining opportunities near access points;
- 2. Secure funding and/or partnerships to install non-motorized boating ramps and/or docks at key put-in and take-out locations;
- 3. Secure funding and/or partnerships to install and maintain ADA-accessible toilets at access points;
- 4. Secure funding and/or partnerships and install and maintain lighting, water fountains, seating, picnic benches, and plantings at access points;
- 5. Organize regular citizen clean-up groups for access points and the creek;
- 6. Include access points in existing maintenance staff schedules and security patrols;
- 7. Organize groups to monitor creek safety conditions for paddlers, fishermen, and swimmers; and
- 8. Through written materials and programs, educate visitors about proper waste disposal at access points and the effects of waste on the environment.

- vi. Provide clear informative signage for access locations

*Recommendations:*

- 1. Create a prioritized list of locations for each of the following sign types: historical, ecological, regulatory, directional, and warning for hazards;
- 2. Develop a set of dimensional and aesthetic design standards for signs;
- 3. Secure funding and/or partnerships to construct signs.
- 4. Develop a sign maintenance plan; and
- 5. Secure funding and/or partnerships to maintain, update, and replace signs.

*Are there any places where signage should be added in Mt. Holly relating to waterfront access? Where?*

*“Everywhere!! People need...and want...an education on the Creek.”*

*- Resident, Community Needs Assessment*

- vii. Maintain safe and adequate access locations for fishing in those areas where fishing is safe and appropriate

*Recommendations:*

- 1. Survey local fishermen to determine preferred fishing locations along the Rancocas Creek;
- 2. Develop priority list and map of fishing locations;



3. Secure funding and/or partnerships to install docks, fishing line disposal units, and signage at priority fishing locations; and
4. Provide educational materials to alert fishermen to the damage caused to riparian areas by informal fishing locations.

viii. Preserve existing public access to the maximum extent practicable

*Recommendations:*

1. Ensure that all public access points are preserved in perpetuity.

## 2. Municipal Master Plan Consistency

The goals provided in this municipal public access plan are consistent with goals of the local, state, and regional plans that have been created for recreation, open space, and economic development. See Appendix 2 for a list of these plans and a brief description of the goals that they hold in common with this municipal public access plan.

*“Mt. Holly’s historic waters embrace a nucleus of a national water trail... Downstream parklands embrace restless, inquisitive wonderful depths of tide-water marshes and parklands.”*

*- Resident*

## II. Public Access

### A. Public Access Locations

**Figure 3**, Mount Holly Township’s Public Access Locations identifies all public access locations within Mount Holly Township and describes their current status as Utilized, Unutilized, or Restricted to the public. Definitions of each are as follows:

- Utilized: This location is used by the public. However, it may not currently contain formal public access points.
- Unutilized: This location contains no improvements and receives little or no use by the public.
- Restricted: This location may endanger public health and safety or damage the environment.<sup>8</sup>

Each public access location also fits under one of the following four categories:

- Locations that are publicly owned in fee simple, and that already include permanently preserved public access ways to and along the tidal Rancocas Creek;
- Locations that are publicly owned in fee simple, and that will include guarantees to protect public access to and along the tidal Rancocas Creek in the future through the creation of an easement or placement on New Jersey’s Recreational and Open Space Inventory (ROSI);
- Locations that are publicly owned in fee simple, have atypical dimensions that could never accommodate development, and thus do not require preservation to facilitate public access; and
- State-owned rights-of-ways on bridges that already serve as public access ways.

This section provides detailed information on each public access location, and a summary table is located in Appendix 3.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to Coastal Zone Management Rules for details.

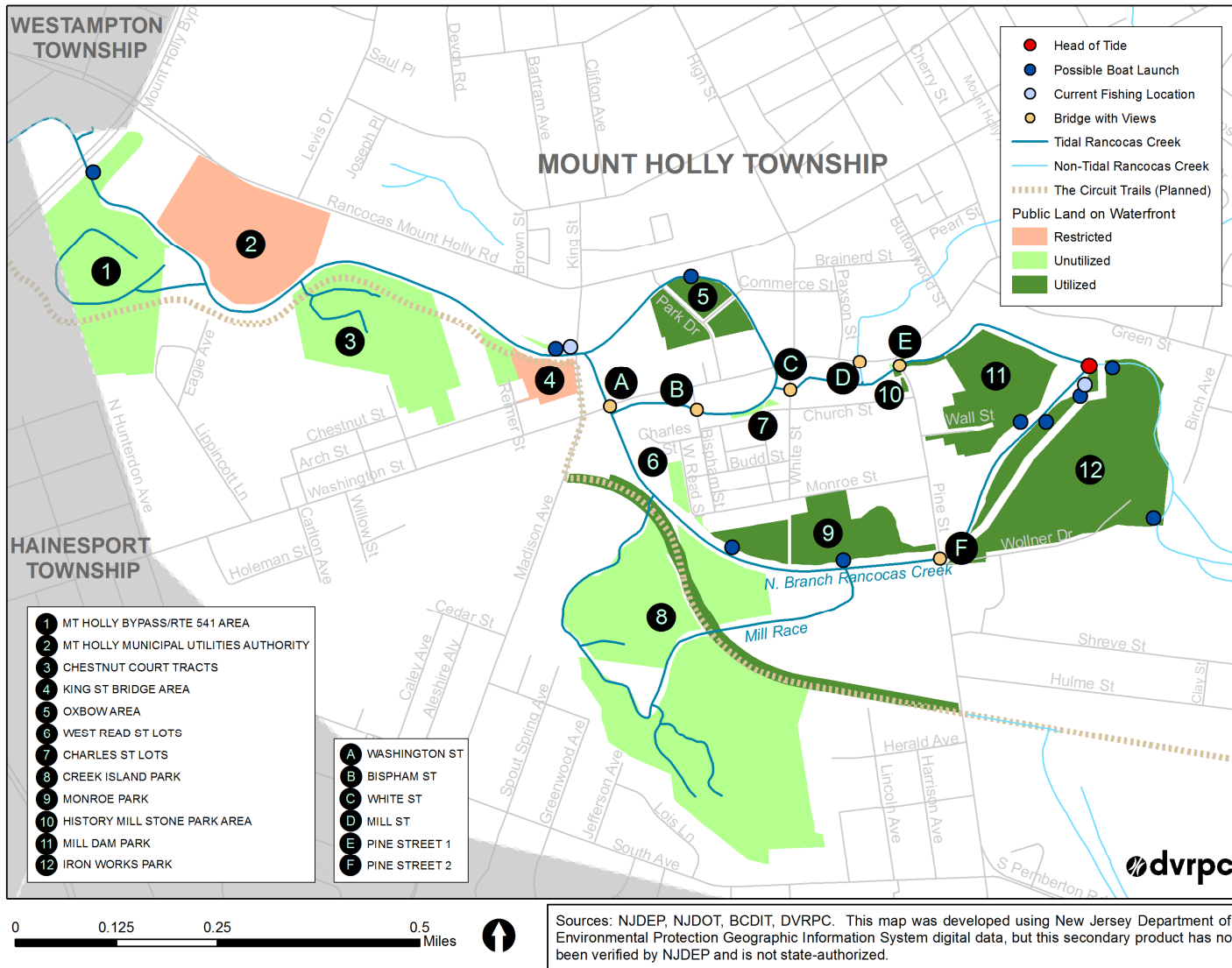


Figure 3: Mount Holly Township's Public Access Locations



## 1. Utilized Locations

Each utilized public access location and its amenities are described below. The number of each public access location corresponds with its assigned number in Figures 3 and 4.

### 5. Oxbow Area

*Location:* Area surrounding Park Drive, roughly between Washington Street and Rancocas Mount Holly Road (see Image 4)



*Image 4: Aerial of the Oxbow Area of the Rancocas Creek. Photo courtesy of Allan Hollowell.*

The Oxbow Area includes parking lots that support the Municipal Building, the Burlington County Administration and Justice Complex, and Mount Holly's downtown. Visitors can view the Rancocas Creek from sidewalks that are adjacent to the northernmost parking lots or from over the Park Drive and Commerce Street bridges. A riparian buffer along the creek in this area preserves habitat but limits some viewing opportunities. Although a public access easement does not currently exist in the Oxbow Area, one will be created on each of the parking lot parcels that are adjacent to the waterway.

*Ownership:* The Oxbow Area contains public parcels with both township and Burlington County ownership, but the parcels discussed in this plan are all owned by the township.

*Amenities:* Sidewalks along the creek, trash cans, 10,000 square feet of open space for picnicking or other outdoor activities, proximity to downtown amenities. Several of the parcels near King Street and Washington Street are slated for redevelopment, and the township is planning a creekside walking path through the area, making it a high priority for enhanced public access.

*Handicap Accessibility:* The amenities are not entirely compliant with handicapped-accessible requirements. As the Oxbow Area is predominately parking space, it is flat and easily accessible. However, the sidewalks to

and along the Park Drive and Commerce Street bridges at the northern boundary of the Oxbow Area are not compliant for width, slope, and treatment at curb cuts.

*Access and Interpretive Signage:* None

*Parking:* With over 250 spaces, there is ample all-day parking that is as few as 17 feet from the Rancocas Creek.

*Restrooms:* None

#### 8. Creek Island Park Rail-Trail

*Location:* The trail is located between, and connects, Madison Avenue and Pine Street.

The trail at Creek Island Park, a constructed segment of the planned Rancocas Creek Trail in the region's Circuit Trail system, is a multi-use trail that was converted from an unused rail line.<sup>9</sup> Cyclists and pedestrians can view the Rancocas Creek near the trail's northwestern terminus, but there is currently no official physical access to the creek. Access to the trail itself, however, is free, and the park is open from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

Public access to the creek will exist in perpetuity along the Creek Island Park Rail Trail. The rail-trail parcel has an irregular dimension that could not accommodate development, so it will serve as a functional public right-of-way in a manner similar to that on the bridges over the Rancocas Creek that are listed in the following section.

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<sup>9</sup> "Burlington County," *The Circuit Trails*, accessed 3/17/2016, <http://connectthecircuit.org/#!/network/branch/burlington-county>.

*Amenities:* The site contains an eight-foot-wide multi-use gravel trail.

*Handicap Accessibility:* The materials used on the trail do not comply with handicapped-accessible requirements. The surface is too loose, and the materials are too round to compact.

*Access and Interpretive Signage:* None

*Parking:* The 17 spaces at the former train station are approximately 170 feet from the creek.

*Restrooms:* None

#### 9. Monroe Park

*Location:* Pine Street and West Monroe Street

Monroe Park is a recreational park. It closely follows the Rancocas Creek (see Image 5) and contains two unofficial launching and resting points for paddlers. Several openings in the riparian buffer provide a clear view of the creek, enabling views of water and wildlife. Access to the park is free, and the park is open from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. Monroe Park is listed on the ROSI.

*Amenities:* Five baseball fields with stands, concession stand, tot lot, trash cans, benches, two unofficial boat launches, lighting along creekside path. The township intends to improve the entrance along Pine Street by adding a walkway from Pine Street, constructing a jogging path along the Rancocas Creek, and improving connectivity to Mill Dam and Iron Works Parks.



*Image 5: The Rancocas Creek near Monroe Park. Photo courtesy of John Anderson.*

*Handicap Accessibility:* Access to and along the creek is not compliant with handicapped-accessible requirements. There is an accessible sidewalk from the Monroe Street entrance to the parking lot, but the path along the creek is not paved.

*Access and Interpretive Signage:* None

*Parking:* The 110 spaces in the park are at minimum 26 feet from the creek.

*Restrooms:* Facilities are available. They are located approximately 220 feet from the closest waterfront access point.

#### 10. History Mill Stone Park Area

*Location:* Pine Street and Washington Street

Several parcels across from Mill Dam Park function as small creekside “pocket parks” and contain trees and benches for viewing the water. Access to these parcels is free, and they are open from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. Mount Holly Township will create easements to preserve access to and along the Rancocas Creek.

*Amenities:* A parcel on the west side of Pine Street contains a flower garden, a small gravel path, a trash can, and lighting. History Mill Stone Park, located on the east side of Pine Street, contains open space, a trash can and recycling bin, and approximately 500 square feet of mowed open space for picnicking or other activities.

*Handicap Accessibility:* The small U-shaped path in History Mill Stone Park is compliant, but the gravel path in the other parcel is not.

*Access and Interpretive Signage:* Mill Stone Park contains a plinth describing the park’s history and a sign with rules and regulations; the other parcel does not contain signage.

*Parking:* None

*Restrooms:* None

#### 11. Mill Dam Park

*Location:* Wall Street

Mill Dam Park is a recreational park. While most of its amenities are farther from the waterfront, including those slated for reconstruction through a Green Acres grant in late 2016, the park has one opening in its riparian buffer area that some visitors use as an unofficial boat launching point. Visitors can walk on a pedestrian bridge, which provides scenic views of Mount Holly’s historic mill dam (see Image 6),



across the Rancocas Creek from Mill Dam Park into Iron Works Park. Mill Dam Park is also abutted to the north by a historic mill race. It is accessible by a shaded walkway to Pine Street, which provides views of this fast-moving spur of the Rancocas Creek. Access to the park is free, and it is open from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. The park is listed on the ROSI.



*Image 6: Historic dam at Mill Dam Park.*

*Amenities:* The park contains two tot lots, two tennis courts, three basketball courts, picnic tables, a creekside path, a baseball field, and a boat launch site. New and updated facilities are currently under construction.

*Handicap Accessibility:* Access to and along the creek is overall not compliant with handicapped-accessible requirements. The paths around the park are unpaved and are steep in some places.

*Access and Interpretive Signage:* None

*Parking:* The 57 spaces in the park are at minimum 260 feet from the creek.

*Restrooms:* None

## 12. Iron Works Park

*Location:* Wollner Drive

Iron Works Park is a recreational park that contains Mount Holly's official launching point on the Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail. It is the last point west along this 14-mile water trail as it moves east from Pemberton Township. Access to the park is free, and it is open from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. The park is listed on the ROSI.

*Amenities:* Three baseball fields, storage sheds, picnic benches (see Image 7), pedestrian paths, a football field, a concessions stand, and an official boat launch, as well as three or four unofficial launch sites: one under the footbridge to Mill Dam Park and several at the north and west ends of the park. Tire tracks in the turf grass near the creek in these areas indicate a need for more official launch sites, as visitors are currently driving across the grass and directly offloading boating or fishing equipment.

The township intends to continue the sidewalk from Wollner Drive to other portions of the park to provide a safe path for pedestrians and joggers; improve signage; improve wayfinding throughout the park, especially near the bridge to Mill Dam Park and the boat launch; install paddling facilities near the boat launch; and install bandstand facilities for festivals and shows.

In order to avoid the hazards of the historic mill dam downstream, paddlers must remove their boats from the water and portage across the park. A small footpath in a riparian area along the east side of the park provides views of a stream-wetland habitat and could be used for portage.

*Handicap Accessibility:* While there are paved areas, the paths to the launch areas are not paved or graded for accessibility.

*Access and Interpretive Signage:* At the Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail boat launch, a wood sign, recently created by an Eagle Scout, designates the launch as a stop on the water trail. The site also has a kiosk with paddling rules and maps of the water trail.

*Parking:* There are eight spaces located 30 feet from the official boat launch, as well as 110 spaces throughout the park that are at minimum 110 feet from the creek.

*Restrooms:* Facilities are available. They are located 260 feet from the closest waterfront access point.

## 2. Unutilized Locations

Each unutilized public access location and its amenities are described below. The number of each public access location corresponds with its assigned number in Figure 3.



Image 7: Creekside picnic tables at Iron Works Park.

### 1. Mount Holly Bypass/Route 541 Area

*Location:* Rancocas Mount Holly Road

A township-owned parcel abutting the Mount Holly Bypass/Route 541 is currently undeveloped woodland. The north bank is unofficially used as an access point by some paddlers, but a safe launch is needed. The township will list this parcel on the ROSI.

### 3. Chestnut Court Tracts

*Location:* Oak and Chestnut Streets

The Chestnut Court Tracts include 15 acres of wooded, unimproved land, of which two-thirds is deciduous wetlands. They were purchased by Burlington County using Green Acres funding. Burlington County has acquired fee ownership and easement rights through these tracts and other properties fronting the Rancocas Creek from the 541 Bypass

to Madison Street with the intention of growing the Rancocas Greenway, which will include trail access.

The site may require further review for the presence of hazardous materials. It is located across the Rancocas Creek from the Mount Holly Public Works Garage, which is identified by NJDEP as a Classification Exception Area (CEA) Groundwater Contamination Area, and its western extent is fewer than 300 feet from a Known Contaminated Site, the Eagle Dyeing and Fishing Company site.<sup>10</sup>

Development on these tracts may also be limited by the fact that they include state-designated endangered species habitat for bald eagles.



*Image 8: The weir near the King Street Bridge. Image courtesy of Stephen Belton.*

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<sup>10</sup> “Known Contaminated Sites in New Jersey Reports,” *New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection*, accessed April 14, 2016, [www.nj.gov/dep/srp/kcsnj/](http://www.nj.gov/dep/srp/kcsnj/).

As these parcels are owned by Burlington County, an agreement with the Township would be required for any public access improvements.

#### 4. King Street Bridge Area

*Location:* King Street and Reimer Street (see Image 8)

The King Street Bridge is one of Mount Holly’s bridges that enables access to views of the Rancocas Creek. Two nearby Township-owned parcels, one along King Street and one along Reimer Street, could provide physical waterway access while maintaining other uses inland. The former parcel is a small strip of land on the north bank of the creek that is informally used as a recreation site for fishing. The latter parcel, on the south bank, is adjacent to a township-owned Known Contaminated Site.<sup>11</sup> Access is not permitted at this time. Mount Holly intends to develop this parcel, so only a small linear access way to the creek, and the creek frontage itself, would be preserved through an easement and used for recreation.

#### 6. West Read Street Lots

*Location:* West Read Street

The township owns several small parcels between West Read Street and the Rancocas Creek. They contain no improvements but could support an access way easement directly to the creek.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



## 7. Charles Street Lots

*Location:* Charles Street between Bispham Street and White Street

Several township-owned parcels along Charles Street and the Rancocas Creek enable views to the creek but contain no improvements. Public access to the creek will exist in perpetuity along the Charles Street parcels. They are too small to accommodate development, but they can serve as a functional public right-of-way in a manner similar to that on the bridges over the Rancocas Creek that are listed in the following section.

## 8. Creek Island Park

*Location:* Madison Avenue

Creek Island Park is owned in fee simple by Mount Holly Township. It currently has no improvements. The rail-trail mentioned previously, which winds through the park, is located on a different set of parcels.

The township intends to improve signage and entrances to the rail trail and is considering installing a disc golf course throughout the park. Creek Island Park is listed on the ROSI.

## 10. History Mill Stone Park Area

*Location:* Pine Street

Several parcels along Pine Street and the creek enable views to the creek but contain no improvements. As mentioned previously, Mount Holly Township will create easements on these parcels to preserve access to and along the Rancocas Creek.

## Bridges

The following bridges pass over the Rancocas Creek, enabling access to views and providing opportunities for fishing. The letter of each bridge corresponds with its assigned letter in Figure 3.

In partnership with Burlington County, which owns the bridges, Mount Holly Township could enhance them with plantings, benches, fishing wire disposal units, or other small amenities to improve the experience of viewing the creek.

As Washington Street, Mill Street, and Pine Street are state roads, Mount Holly Township will need to coordinate not only with Burlington County but with the New Jersey Department of Transportation prior to adding any amenities. As public rights-of-way, these public access points will not be sold and will remain open for public use.

### A. Washington Street Bridge

*Location:* Approximately Washington Street and Madison Avenue, Washington Street and Paxson Street

### B. Bispham Street Bridge

*Location:* Approximately Bispham Street and Charles Street

### C. White Street Bridge

*Location:* Approximately Washington Street and White Street (see Image 9)

### D. Mill Street Bridge

*Location:* Approximately Mill Street and Paxson Street

### E. Pine Street Bridge 1

*Location:* Approximately Pine Street and Mill Street

### F. Pine Street Bridge 2

*Location:* Approximately Pine Street and Wollner Drive



*Image 9: The White Street Bridge near Robin's Nest, a popular restaurant along the Rancocas Creek in the Oxbow Area. Photo courtesy of John Anderson.*

### 3. **Restricted Locations**

Each restricted location is described below. The number of each location corresponds with its assigned number in Figure 3.

### 2. Municipal Utilities Authority

*Location:* 300 Rancocas Mount Holly Road

The Mount Holly Municipal Utilities Authority's main facility is located along approximately 1,400 feet of the Rancocas Creek in Mount Holly. In order to protect the facility's equipment and ensure the public's safety, these parcels will not contain public access points.

### 4. Ankokas Dye and Process Corporation

*Location:* 14 King Street

Since April 2012, this parcel has been designated as an active site with confirmed contamination.<sup>12</sup> Before visitors can gain access to the site, it will require remediation.

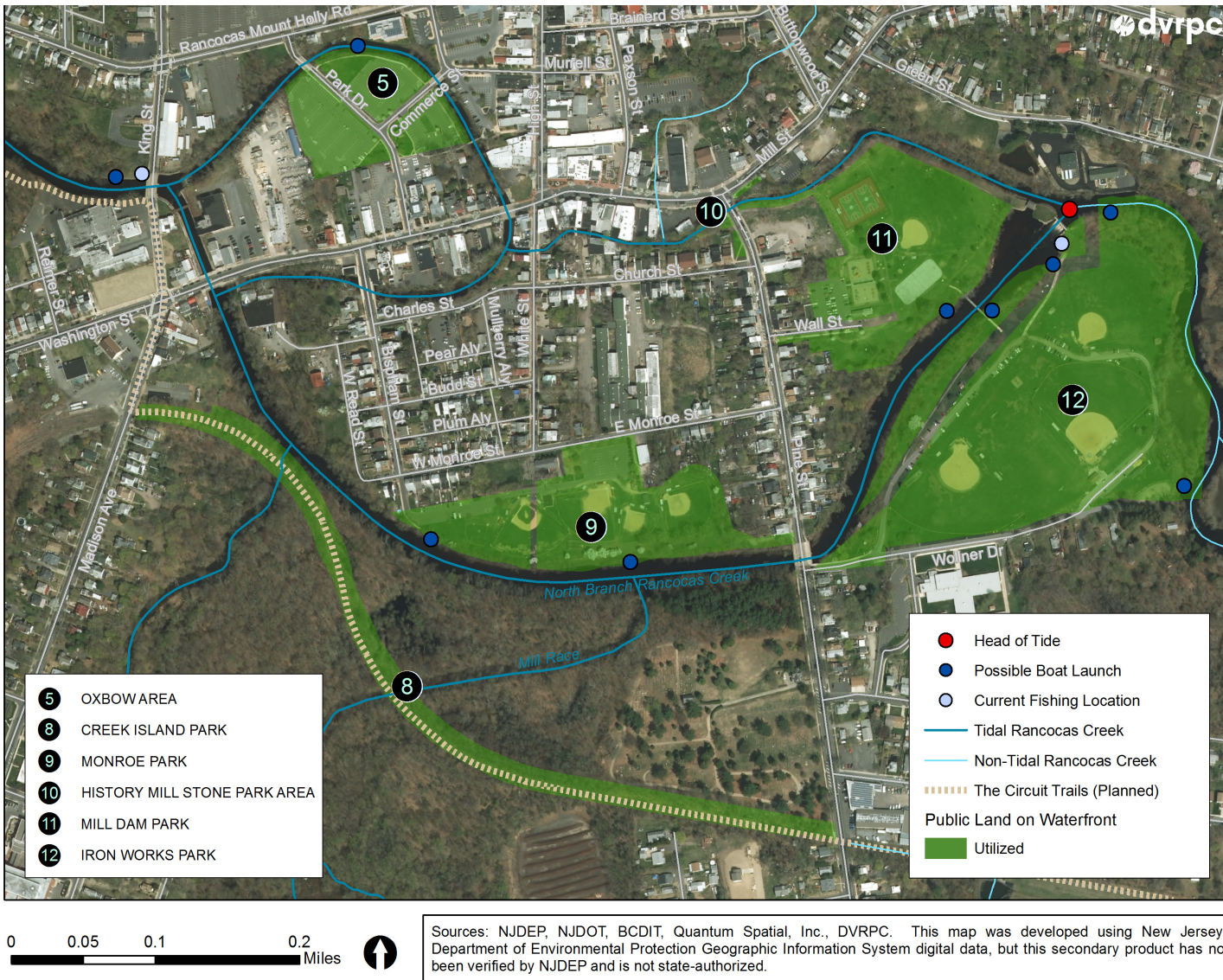
## B. **Improved Public Access Locations**

### **Mount Holly Township's Improved Public Access Locations**

**Figure 4** provides an inventory of the existing "Utilized" public access locations that currently provide access to public trust lands and waters and have constructed improvements. See **Table 1**, located in Appendix 3, for summary information about these locations. Additional fishing sites may be identified upon further survey work.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 4:** Mount Holly Township’s Improved Public Access Locations



## C. Limitations to Public Access

### 1. Temporary Restrictions

*Time:* Mount Holly Township's Municipal Code has established daily time restrictions at Creek Island Park, Iron Works Park, Mill Dam Park, Monroe Park, History Millstone Park, and the recreation area on the west side of Pine and Mill Streets. Each of these parks is open to the public from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.<sup>13</sup> Neither parked cars nor visitors are allowed in these spaces outside of the designated hours. However, people may walk through them on the way to other destinations, stay for special township-sponsored events, or stay in lighted areas. The parks are monitored for after-hours activity by the Mount Holly Police Department, the Department of Recreation, and park attendants.

*Parking:* Parking near public access points is limited to designated parking lots. Furthermore, parking in the 24 parking spaces located in the West Parking Lot at Monroe Park is reserved to vehicles owned by Mount Holly residents with a decal. These decals are issued by the office of the Chief of Police and are renewed annually.<sup>14</sup>

*Events:* People who want to host a waterfront event in Creek Island Park, Iron Works Park, Mill Dam Park, Monroe Park, History Millstone Park, or the recreation area on the west side of Pine and Mill Streets

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<sup>13</sup> Township of Mount Holly, *Revised General Ordinance §187-2*, accessed 2/24/2016, <https://law.resource.org/pub/us/code/city/nj/Mount%20Holly.html#10359958>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, §187-10 and §187-11, accessed 2/24/2016, <https://law.resource.org/pub/us/code/city/nj/Mount%20Holly.html#10359996> and <https://law.resource.org/pub/us/code/city/nj/Mount%20Holly.html#10359999>.

parks must file a permit with the Mount Holly Department of Recreation.<sup>15</sup>

*Public health and safety:* The township will not provide public access in the following locations, pending analysis and resolution of any site contamination, because in the meantime they may endanger the public.

- Ankokas Dye and Process Corporation (14 King Street)
- Chestnut Court Tracts (Oak and Chestnut Streets)

### 2. Permanent Restrictions

*Public health and safety:* The township will not provide public access at the following location:

- Mount Holly Municipal Utilities Authority (300 Rancocas Mount Holly Road)  
*Large equipment, machinery, and wastewater in the process of being treated are safety hazards to visitors.*

### Environment

The township will limit access to designated locations along the Rancocas Creek through signage. Designating these locations through signage, and enforcing that designation, is critical for balancing the preservation of public access and of riverine ecosystem health. This balance is particularly important for the banks of Creek Island Park, where there is substantial natural habitat and where

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, §187-3, accessed 2/24/2016, <https://law.resource.org/pub/us/code/city/nj/Mount%20Holly.html#10359964>.

numerous species live, including state-listed endangered species.<sup>16</sup> Maintaining these areas as a grassy lawn, or opening up these areas to visitors using paths and other amenities, would reduce the abundance and variety of wildlife that draws many visitors to the creek.

### III. Community Engagement

#### Community Needs Assessment

On October 14, 2015, the Mount Holly Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) led a public meeting to hear Mount Holly residents' preferences for public access (see Image 10). EAC and DVRPC also posted information about the meeting to social media. Mount Holly Township posted information about the meeting to its website and sent out a notice about the meeting with its monthly water utility bills. The Burlington County Times also wrote an article about the meeting on October 8.

Thirty township and regional residents attended the Community Needs Assessment meeting. After listening to an introductory presentation by EAC and DVRPC, they individually filled out a 12-question survey that contained questions about waterfront access points that they used, how they used them, their experience at those points, and their thoughts on how access could be improved or expanded along the Rancocas Creek (see Appendix 4).

Attendees divided into groups to discuss their responses and presented their top recommendations at the conclusion of the meeting.

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<sup>16</sup> "Species Based Habitat – Piedmont Plains Region," *New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection*, accessed 2/26/2016, [www.nj.gov/dep/gis/landscape.html](http://www.nj.gov/dep/gis/landscape.html).



*Image 10: Community Needs Assessment meeting. Photo courtesy of Arlene Pfeiffer.*

Coinciding with and following the public meeting, DVRPC published an online survey containing the same questions as the paper survey, modified for online response, on SurveyMonkey.com. Mount Holly Township linked to the survey from their website, and DVRPC promoted it on social media over a one-month period (October 8 to November 10, 2015). Thirty-five people responded.

The project team analyzed the survey results to determine the community's wishes and concerns regarding access to the creek. Public responses shaped the plan's goals, recommendations, and the implementation plan, which outlines projects, actions, and resources to help satisfy unmet public access needs. The project team used coding to narrow down the responses, which varied from respondent to respondent, into short phrases that could be compared and analyzed. See Appendix 5 for the Community Needs Assessment results.

## Feedback from the Community Needs Assessment

The results from the community needs assessment indicate that the township should make the following priorities.

- Iron Works Park and Mill Dam Park were the two waterfront sites that respondents visited most frequently. As these parks host a relatively high number of visitors, the township should prioritize them for new capital projects, while ensuring that all public access points offer the same basic amenities for comfort.
- Paddling, walking/running, and fishing were the most popular activities along the creek. The township should prioritize installing amenities that support these activities.
- To most respondents, the most enjoyable aspect of visiting the Rancocas Creek is being able to view the waterfront. The township should clear and maintain access points to enable waterfront views, but it should balance this maintenance with the

*What additional amenities or activities would you like to see along the waterfront?*

*“Somewhere to stop to take walking tour of urban areas, see historical sights, relax, rest, and dine.”*

*- Resident, Community Needs Assessment*

*What additional amenities or activities would you like to see along the waterfront?*

*“Floating dock, kayak and canoe launching areas, fishing pier.”*

*- Resident, Community Needs Assessment*

maintenance of natural habitat that is home to the wildlife that visitors also enjoy viewing.

- Respondents had concerns about the cleanliness of public access sites, suggesting that the township should prioritize the appearance of existing sites before pursuing new public access locations.
  - Respondents who commented on suggested improvements listed bathrooms above other desired amenities, but also listed concessions, landscaping, trash receptacles, boat rentals, and lighting. Many respondents also wanted access into the water in the form of a dock, ramp, or pier. Others wanted parking access close to the water.
  - When asked about new public access points, respondents were overwhelmingly interested in adding an access point in or near downtown Mount Holly.

*Are there any places in Mt Holly where you would like to see more waterfront access points?*

*“As many in the downtown area as possible.”*

*- Resident, Community Needs Assessment*

*“[I] have lived in area for 45 years and have never seen any literature available [on waterfront access] at County outdoor related events. Publicity please!”*

*- Resident, Community Needs Assessment*



- While respondents had a strong interest in new signage with historical and ecological information, rules and regulations, and direction to access points, there was no consensus on where that signage should be located. Some respondents recommended signage at specific sites, while others recommended posting it throughout Mount Holly.

## Public Meeting on the Draft Municipal Public Access Plan

On March 1, 2016, the EAC and DVRPC hosted a second public meeting to present a draft version of the plan and hear residents' thoughts. About 30 attendees discussed the plan, voiced concerns, offered recommendations, and brainstormed how it could be carried out. See Appendix 6 for the minutes from this meeting.

## IV. Implementation Plan

To implement the goals and recommendations of this plan, Mount Holly Township has created an implementation plan that includes tools and funding sources for cleaning and maintaining existing public access points, adding programs and facilities to existing access points, and adding new access points. It also records public access projects that the Township has listed in other plans.

*What additional amenities or activities would you like to see along the waterfront?*

*"Sponsored / volunteer clean-up weekends in early Spring and Fall."*

*- Resident, Community Needs Assessment*

### A. Priorities

#### 1. Clean and Maintain Existing Public Access Points

Mount Holly Township's top priority for public access is to keep existing municipal public access locations clean.

##### a. Tools

The township has an anti-litter ordinance that applies to public parks and water bodies.<sup>17</sup> It is enforced by the Township Clean Communities Coordinator, and a violation carries a fine of up to \$1,000 or community service. Fines and community service requirements from the ordinance, particularly on properties that have public access to the Rancocas Creek, can be directed toward the continued maintenance of public access points along the creek. The township could also use these fines for increased maintenance, such as more trash receptacles, more anti-littering outreach, or more frequent trash pick-up times during peak use periods.

The township's Open Space and Recreation Plan recommends implementing usage fees as one means of filling gaps in the funding of maintenance, development, or programming. This fee, the plan notes, could be

"assessed by time (yearly, seasonally, monthly, weekly, daily, hourly, or even for a single use); [or] by user (individual, group, team or family)...fees may be differentiated on the basis of affiliation or by special interest group (seniors, disabled, children or students); and/or by organization (nonprofit, for-profit or corporate)."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Revised General Ordinance §158," *Township of Mount Holly*, accessed 2/24/2016,

<https://law.resource.org/pub/us/code/city/nj/Mount%20Holly.html#10359813>.

<sup>18</sup> "Draft Open Space and Recreation Master Plan," *Township of Mount Holly*, August 2014, p. 6.

Boat launch permits or fishing permits are two versions of this fee. However, per NJDEP requirements, parking fees cannot discriminate between residents and non-residents.

Maintenance of public access space could also be funded with public access mitigation funds from waterfront property owners seeking permits for parcel development, redevelopment, or subdivision. The township's Subdivision of Land Ordinance can also require ongoing public access maintenance contracts with each private property developer.



*Image 11: Debris that volunteers have recovered from the Rancocas Creek during a scheduled cleanup day. Photo courtesy of Stephen Belton.*

Non-profit organizations or community members who are already committed to protecting the Rancocas Creek can provide assistance to develop and distribute educational materials describing the benefits of keeping the creek clean and well maintained.

#### b. Funding Resources and Partnerships

Currently, Mount Holly Township hires staff to inspect the facilities at municipal public access points. Their inspections are supplemented by those of volunteers, who regularly meet to remove debris from the Rancocas Creek (see Image 11). The township can partner with these volunteers, as needed, to help them organize and grow their membership, find additional funding, and prioritize cleanup sites along the creek.

Costs for maintenance include staff salaries and equipment. Municipal staff picks up trash and fixes broken equipment in Mount Holly's public properties. Landscaping and garbage removal are line items in the township's budget.<sup>19</sup>

The township also receives funding from the New Jersey Clean Communities Program, a statewide litter abatement program that allots the majority of its funding to municipalities.<sup>20</sup> Mount Holly Township can allocate some of this funding toward the maintenance of municipal public access points.

<sup>19</sup> "2015 Municipal Budget: Current Funds – Appropriations," *Township of Mount Holly*, accessed 2/24/2016, [www.twp.mountholly.nj.us/content/386/384/396/451.aspx](http://www.twp.mountholly.nj.us/content/386/384/396/451.aspx).

<sup>20</sup> "New Jersey Clean Communities," *New Jersey Clean Communities* accessed 2/24/2016, [www.njclean.org/CC-overview.html](http://www.njclean.org/CC-overview.html).

Mount Holly Township can also use New Jersey’s Clean Shores Program, which is managed by NJDEP. This program removes floatables, including wood, garbage, medical waste, and recyclables, from tidal shorelines using state inmate labor.<sup>21</sup> As a tidal waterway, the portion of the Rancocas Creek discussed in this plan is eligible for this program.

## 2. Preserve Existing Public Access Locations

Mount Holly Township already enjoys an abundance of publicly owned land along the Rancocas Creek. As of June 2014, parcels that make up Creek Island Park, Iron Works Park, the Chestnut Court Tracts, Monroe Park, and Mill Dam Park were registered on the ROSI (see Appendix 7).<sup>22</sup> Parcels on this list are preserved in perpetuity, and development on them is restricted. Other public access locations in Mount Holly are currently not preserved in perpetuity. Mount Holly will preserve additional public access to and along the Rancocas Creek through easements or registration on the ROSI, in accordance with the description of each public access point in Section IIA of this plan.

## 3. Enhance Existing Public Access Locations

The proposed projects for existing public access points are referenced from the Goals and Recommendations section in this plan (Section IC1).

### Fishing access

- Survey to determine preferred fishing locations;

<sup>21</sup> “Clean Shores,” *New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection*, accessed 2/24/2016, [www.nj.gov/dep/bmw/cleanhores/csindex.html](http://www.nj.gov/dep/bmw/cleanhores/csindex.html).

<sup>22</sup> “Green Acres Open Space Database,” *New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection*, accessed 2/26/2016, [www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/dep/greenacres/facproc.pl](http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/dep/greenacres/facproc.pl).

- Priority list and map of fishing locations;
- Docks, fishing line disposal units, and signage at priority fishing locations; and
- Educational materials on the damage caused to riparian areas by informal fishing locations.

### Amenities for visitor safety and comfort

- ADA-accessible toilets at access points;
- Non-motorized boating ramps and/or docks at key put-in/take-out locations (see Image 12);
- Lighting, water fountains, seating, picnic benches, and plantings at access points; and
- Concessions or other dining opportunities near access points.



*Image 12: Creek bank and possible future boat landing location at Mill Dam Park.*

Physical and visual access to the water, in balance with the habitat needs of other species

- New trail spur to connect the Rancocas Creek Greenway, and the regional Circuit Trail system as a whole, to the Rancocas Creek at Creek Island Park or the Chestnut Court Tracts;
- Inventory and map of plant and animal species at or near potential access points to determine locations of riparian buffers;
- ADA-accessible sidewalks to connect existing sidewalks and parking lots to access points and along the waterfront;
- Portage at Iron Works Park;
- Parking at sites of high parking demand along the waterfront; and
- Boat rentals.

Connections between the Rancocas Creek and downtown Mount Holly

- Retail facilities in downtown Mount Holly that cater to creek users, , such as restaurants, cafes, concessions, outfitters, or fishing or boating supply stores; and
- A “Riverwalk” through downtown Mount Holly. The Mispillion Riverwalk, along the Mispillion River in the City of Milford, Delaware, is a local and similarly scaled example of how this “Riverwalk” could look. Image 13 shows one section of the Mispillion Riverwalk next to the Old Cannery, one of many industrial sites along the waterfront. Image 14 offers design precedents for how two larger cities, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Leuven, Belgium, have created public spaces that enable visitors to travel down to a waterway from a high riverbank, an issue that is also present in Mount Holly. Pittsburgh’s Water

Steps demonstrate an interactive and sculptural means of traveling from a higher elevation to the waterfront. The steps down to the Dyle River in Leuven, Belgium, which are known as “Dijleterrassen,” are an example of a creekside public space and means of designing around a high shoreline that could be employed in the Oxbow Area.



*Image 13: Mispillion Riverwalk, City of Milford, Delaware. Photo courtesy of the Delaware Institute for Local Public Leaders at the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration, [www.ipa.udel.edu/localgovt/training/dilgl/22nd\\_content/MispillionRiverwalk\\_web.pdf](http://www.ipa.udel.edu/localgovt/training/dilgl/22nd_content/MispillionRiverwalk_web.pdf).*





Image 14:

Left: *The Water Steps, Pittsburgh, PA.. Photo courtesy of Judy Wells' "Travel on the Level" blog, <http://tinyurl.com/hc8c4pd>.*

Below: *Dijleterrassen, Leuven, Belgium. Photo © by Erik Olaerts, "Opening Dijleterrassen Leuven 30 April 2011," <http://tinyurl.com/zuplpem>.*



© erik O., 2011

### Attracting visitors to the Rancocas Creek

- Community events at public access points;
- Maps of the public access points and North Branch Rancocas boating route;
- Educational materials on the creek's history and environment; and
- Branding strategy for the creek and its amenities.

### *Other Planned Improvements*

#### Iron Works Park, Mill Dam Park, and Monroe Park

The township plans to link Iron Works Park, Mill Dam Park, and Monroe Park using a multi-modal exercise trail. In Monroe Park, the township has prioritized improving the entrance along Pine Street and adding a walkway. The township's goals in Iron Works Park are to connect the existing sidewalk from Wollner Drive to other portions of the park, and to install facilities near the Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail launch that cater to paddlers.

#### a. Tools

Amenities at public access points, including trail spurs, docks, ramps, fishing line disposal units, lighting, water fountains, seating, picnic benches, plantings, ADA sidewalks, parking, and portage, are capital projects that would be identified in the Capital Improvements Plan.

The Township's budget would incorporate staffing costs for planning and marketing projects, including developing the priority list and map of fishing locations, inventory and map of species in the riparian buffer, maps of public access points, and branding the Rancocas Creek as a destination. Staff time would

also be required for reaching out to private partners to assist with providing concessions and other retail catering to creek users, operating boat rentals, and creating a “Riverwalk” experience along the Creek.

The costs for printing and copying educational materials could also be incorporated into a line item in the Township’s budget. Community events are already a line item.

The Township can update its zoning ordinance or add a zoning overlay along the creek through Mount Holly’s downtown to establish physical requirements for a “Riverwalk.” The Township can then provide incentives for landowners within that zone or overlay to facilitate implementation of the “Riverwalk.”

For those parcels currently under public ownership that will eventually be sold to a developer, Mount Holly can require in its Subdivision of Land Ordinance that public land along the Rancocas Creek retain public access to and along the waterfront.

#### b. Funding Resources and Partnerships

For past park projects, Mount Holly has used Burlington County’s Municipal Park Development Program, which offers grants to create or improve municipal parks. Burlington County is also a partner in implementing trails through Mount Holly and along the Rancocas Creek as part of its regional Rancocas Creek Greenway plan. As mentioned previously, Burlington County has acquired access through properties fronting the Rancocas Creek from the 541 Bypass to Madison Street. The county’s long-term goal is to develop a path for pedestrians and cyclists stretching from Long Bridge Park, Hainesport,

through Mount Holly using these properties and the Creek Island Park rail-trail, to Historic Smithville Park, Eastampton, and beyond.

Access fees for use of waterfront amenities, a tool mentioned previously for maintenance at public access points, can also be used for public access amenities.

Federal funding through the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program can all be used for capital projects that help connect public access points using trails rather than roads. With its regional context in the Circuit Trail system, a spur from the proposed Rancocas Creek Trail to the waterfront is one project that could be particularly well placed to use these funds.

The township could also seek private partners to implement physical projects. Local or regional outdoor recreation outfitters could provide funding for a boat launch or dock in exchange for being able to advertise their store or rent boats to visitors. Mount Holly Township could also find private sponsors, including local companies or clubs, to install fishing line disposal units, picnic benches, plantings, kiosks, and other amenities. The township could partner with a local restaurant or café owner to provide concessions at a public access point.

Burlington County staff, nonprofit organizations, or community members can lend their expertise for producing educational materials about the creek, developing maps, and inventorying the creek’s natural resources.

#### 4. Create New Public Access Points

Respondents who completed the community needs assessment expressed great interest in adding a new public access point near Mount Holly's Oxbow Area. Two possible sites that could accommodate an access point are (1) the area northwest of the King Street Bridge over the Rancocas Creek and (2) the area between Park Drive and Commerce Street along the Rancocas Creek. Another high priority for Mount Holly Township is expanding the existing boating network westward by adding a public access point near the Mount Holly Bypass/NJ Route 541 area that would be used as a landing for boats.

##### a. Tools

The township should ensure that any new public access points are on parcels that have land preserved in perpetuity for public access to and along the Rancocas Creek. Mount Holly should consider adding parcels near the Mount Holly/NJ Route 541 Bypass and in the Oxbow Area to the ROSI.



*Image 15: Entrance signage at Mill Dam Park.*

##### b. Funding Resources

None of the new public access points require acquisition of land or easements, as they are located on publicly owned property. However, they would require amenities to enable safe, comfortable, and desirable public access. Mount Holly Township can use the same funding sources for these public access improvements as for those listed in the previous section.

#### 5. Develop Signage

##### Existing Signage

Signage at Mount Holly's public access points is applied inconsistently. The entrances to Monroe Park, Mill Dam Park, and Iron Works Park are graced with decorative wrought-iron signage (see Image 15). The remainder of the public access points should have identification signage. The Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail boat launch in Iron Works Park contains a kiosk with rules, regulations, and maps of the Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail, as well as a wooden sign indicating the site as stop on the Canoe Trail. These types of informational signage should be located at each public access site.

##### Proposed Signage

One of the Township's top priorities is developing new signage for its parks and public access points. In addition to signs indicating the location of public access points, Mount Holly Township will provide interpretive signs explaining the history and ecology of the Rancocas Creek, signs indicating where visitors currently are located in relation to the Rancocas Creek as a whole, rules and regulatory signs for safe use of the waterfront, and signs providing warnings about potential hazards in the creek (see Image 16 for design precedents). The weir



in the Oxbow Area is a high-priority area for safety signage, as it provides an obstacle at low tide.

NJDEP has several requirements for municipal signage at public access points, including clearly marking public access areas, public parking areas, and pathways to reach public access points. NJDEP

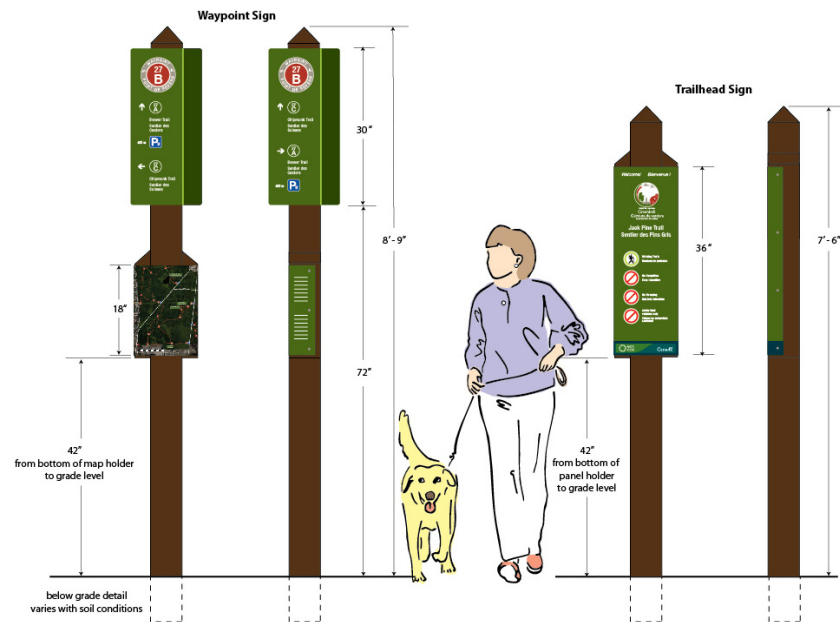


Image 16: Signage along the Rancocas Creek can be functional yet elegant, as demonstrated by Pixo Design Canada's design for the National Capital Greenbelt outside Ottawa, Canada. Image courtesy of Pixo Design Canada, <https://pixodesigncanada.wordpress.com/portfolio/orientation/greenbelt-trails-wayfinding/>.

also requires that municipalities submit signs for approval at the design stage, and then maintain the signs in perpetuity once they are installed using a signage maintenance plan.<sup>23</sup>

### Municipal Ordinances

Mount Holly Township does not yet have an ordinance requiring signage at public access locations, but such an ordinance will help the Township and private partners construct consistent and clear signage along the Rancocas Creek. The Township can incorporate design standards and other signage regulations into Chapter 187 (Parks and Recreation Areas) of its Revised General Ordinance.

## V. Implementation Schedule

The municipal public access plan recommendations vary in complexity, and as such are attainable in the short term (between 1 and 5 years), in the mid-term (between 5 and 10 years), or in the long term (10 or more years), or should be maintained on an ongoing basis. Please see Appendix 8 for the implementation schedule.

## VI. Resolution of Incorporation

Mount Holly Township has approved a resolution for the incorporation of the MPAP. See Appendix 1 for the draft resolution.

<sup>23</sup> Requirements for signage maintenance plans are laid out in the Coastal Zone Management Rules .



## Appendix 1: Model Resolution for Incorporating MPAP into Master Plan

Upon adoption, the final resolution will replace this model.

Resolution # \_\_\_\_\_

Title: A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN

WHEREAS, the Mount Holly Township Municipal Public Access Plan (MPAP) was submitted to the Township Council and reviewed at the regular meeting of {date}, and

WHEREAS, the governing body has approved the plan as submitted, and

WHEREAS, the governing body recognizes the need to make the MPAP an authorized component of municipal decision-making by incorporating it into the municipal master plan,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the {municipal governing body} of Mount Holly Township, the “Mont Holly Township Municipal Public Access Plan,” a copy of which is attached, is hereby approved.

FURTHER RESOLVED, the MPAP shall be incorporated into the municipal master plan within {element}.

FURTHER RESOLVED a copy of the plan shall be sent to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for review and approval in accordance with N.J.A.C.7.7.

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a resolution adopted by the {governing body} at a meeting held on {date}.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Municipal Clerk

## Appendix 2: Relationship to Other Local, State, and Regional Plans

The Municipal Public Access Plan was developed in the context of the following plans, which maintain complementary goals for recreation, open space, and economic development.

### **Mount Holly Township**

#### Open Space and Recreation Plan (2014)

The township's Open Space and Recreation Plan establishes goals for Mount Holly Township's recreational and natural lands. The township seeks to provide facilities that meet the varied needs of Mount Holly Residents, preserve and enhance the township's social and ecological environment, balance open space with other land uses, develop a cultural identity for Mount Holly, find funding sources for recreation development and maintenance, and establish a comprehensive open space network.

#### Mount Holly Township Master Plan (2000)

Mount Holly Township's Master Plan contains land use goals that are relevant to providing recreational space and public access along the Rancocas Creek. These goals include improving quality of life for residents, revitalizing Mount Holly's downtown, improving the quality of Mount Holly's recreation amenities, and improving pedestrian ways and trails in the Township.

The Master Plan also has economic goals that are relevant with establishing recreational amenities and programs along the Rancocas Creek, including promoting historic tourism and expanding events in the downtown, through which the Rancocas Creek runs.

#### Mount Holly Township 2010 Zone Development Plan 2006-2010 for Mount Holly's Urban Enterprise Zone (2005)

Mount Holly's Urban Enterprise Zone includes sections of the Rancocas Creek. One of the plan's economic development strategies, "Invest in People," includes the goal of investing in making Mount Holly a desirable place to live, and enhancements to public access along the Rancocas Creek can contribute to that goal.

### **Burlington County**

#### Cross-Acceptance Report for Mount Holly (2004-2005)

The summary of long-range infrastructure needs and capital projects needed to achieve Mount Holly Township's vision includes recreation facilities improvements as a goal.

#### Parks and Open Space Master Plan (2002)

The Rancocas Creek Greenway, which will ultimately connect the Delaware River to Brendan Byrne State Forest through Mount Holly Township and other creekfront communities, is one of the identified project areas in the plan. The County prioritizes waterways along with greenways.

The Parks and Open Space Master Plan contains goals to expand public access to passive recreational facilities in the County park system, protect significant natural resources, preserve and advance the County's culture and heritage, and coordinate park development

and open space preservation with compatible growth, preservation, and recreation.

## **Region**

### Rancocas Creek Greenway Implementation Plan for the Main Stem (1996)

While the Rancocas Creek as it runs through Mount Holly is just outside the scope of the Rancocas Creek Greenway Implementation Plan, which focuses on the Main Stem Rancocas Creek, aligning the goals of this municipal public access plan with the goals of the Rancocas Creek Greenway Implementation Plan ensures continued holistic planning of the Rancocas Creek corridor as a whole.

This plan lays out goals to conserve environmentally sensitive open space areas and unique resources along the creek, provide additional public access and recreational facilities, such as trails, in appropriate areas, preserve scenic views along the creek, and instruct recreational users to respect the waterway.

## **State of New Jersey**

### NJ Trails Plan Update: A Vision and Action Plan for New Jersey's Future (2009)

In its Vision 1, "Trails for All," the NJ Trails Plan Update recommends establishing a statewide network of water trails and their associated facilities, which include boat transport facilities, designated put-in/take-out areas, and signage.

### New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2001)

In New Jersey's State Development and Redevelopment Plan, which focuses on 2020, the State offers visions for improved recreation and waterway access in two of its goals. In Goal 1, "Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns Strategy," the plan aspires to improved water quality and safe and convenient access to waterfronts that make seasonal activities like fishing, boating and swimming even more popular among urban residents. In Goal 7, "Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value," its vision is for new open space and recreation facilities that help achieve urban revitalization and beneficial economic growth.

### Appendix 3: Public Access Location Amenities

**Table A-1: Mount Holly Township Public Access Location Amenities**

Id	SITE	SIGNS	PARKING	N_PARKING	STREET	CROSS_ST	BADGE	SWIMMING	FISHING	PLAYGRND	PARK	PIER	BOATLNCH	RESTRM	HC	ACCESS_TYP	USE
1	Mount Holly Bypass/Route 541 Area	No	No	0	Rancocas Rd	Route 541	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Physical	Unimproved
2	Mount Holly Municipal Utilities Authority	No	No	0	Rancocas Rd	Levis Rd	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	Restricted
3	Chestnut Court Tracts	No	No	0	Arch St	Oak St	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	No	Physical	Unimproved
4	King Street Bridge Area	No	No	0	King St	Washington St	No	No	Yes (Informal)	No	No	No	No	No	No	Physical	Unimproved/R estricted
5	Oxbow Area	No	Yes	250	Washington St/Rancocas Rd	Park Dr/Commerce Pl	No	No	Unknown	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Visual	Improved
6	Washington Street	No	Yes	4	Washington St	N/A	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	No	Physical	Unimproved
7	West Read Street	No	No	0	W Read St	Charles	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	No	Physical	Unimproved
8	Charles Street Lots	No	No	0	Charles St	Bispham St/White St	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	No	Visual	Unimproved
9	Creek Island Park	No	Yes	17	Madison Ave/Pine St	N/A	No	No	Unknown	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Physical	Improved
10	Monroe Park	No	Yes	110	W Monroe St	Pine St/White St	No	No	Yes (Informal)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Physical	Improved
11	History Mill Stone Park Area	No	No	0	Pine St	Mill St	No	No	Unknown	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Visual	Improved
12	Mill Dam Park	No	Yes	57	Wall St	Pine St	No	No	Yes (Informal)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Physical	Improved
13	Iron Works Park	Yes	Yes	110	Wollner Dr	Pine St	No	No	Yes (Informal)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Physical	Improved
A	Washington Street Bridge	No	No	0	Washington St	N/A	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Visual	Improved
B	Bispham Street Bridge	No	No	0	Bispham St	N/A	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Visual	Improved
C	White Street Bridge	No	No	0	White St	N/A	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Visual	Improved
D	Mill Street Bridge	No	No	0	Mill St	N/A	No	No	Unknown	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Visual	Improved



## Table Definitions

- SIGNS: Does the location provide signage identifying the location as a point of public access?
- PARKING: Is there parking for the location/facility?
- N\_PARKING: List the number of parking spaces.
- STREET: On what street is the public access located?
- CROSS\_ST: What is the cross street where this location is located?
- BADGE: Are there times when a beach badge is required to use this location?
- SWIMMING: Is swimming permitted at this location?
- FISHING: Is fishing permitted at this location?
- PLAYGRD, PARK, PIER, BOATLNCH, RESTRM: Does this location include these amenities?
- HC: Is this location handicap accessible? (Not necessarily ADA Compliant) YES or NO (The level of accessibility is be discussed in Section II.B and C)
- ACCESS\_TYP: Describe the type of access: Physical or Visual
- USE: Improved, Unimproved, or Restricted (see discussion on page 9)

## Table Sources

- Site visit to Mount Holly Township on August 12, 2015
- Email exchange with Randi Rothmel, EAC Chair, on November 1, 2016
- Review of aerial imagery on Google Maps ([google.com/maps](http://google.com/maps))

## Appendix 4: Community Needs Assessment Survey for the MPAP

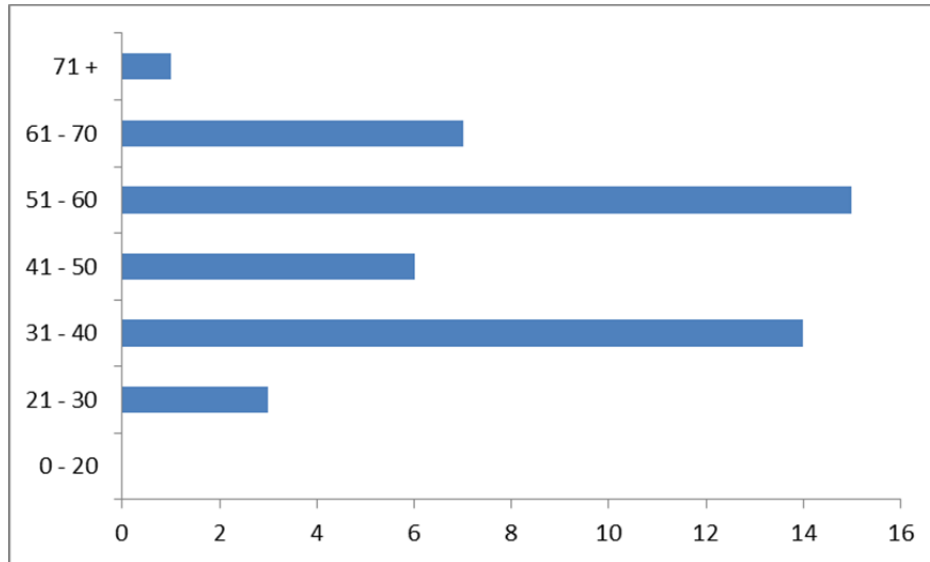
1. What is your age?
2. Do you agree with the following statement: “The Rancocas Creek is a source of community pride in Mount Holly Township.”
3. Which waterfront access points do you use in Mount Holly along the Rancocas Creek?
  - Iron Works Park
  - Mill Dam Park
  - Monroe Park
  - Creek Island Park
  - Other - Please Explain: \_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you use these access points?
5. What do you enjoy about visiting these access points?
6. What do you dislike about visiting these access points?
7. How could amenities at the existing waterfront access points be improved?
8. What additional amenities or activities would you like to see along the waterfront in Mount Holly?
9. Are there any places in Mount Holly where you would like to see more waterfront access points? Where are they?
10. Are there any places where signage should be added in Mount Holly relating to waterfront access? Where?
11. What would be the purpose of that signage (e.g. directions, historical or ecological importance, rules and regulations)?
12. Do you have any further comments about waterfront access in Mount Holly?

## Appendix 5: Overview of Community Needs Assessment Survey Results

The Community Needs Assessment Survey had 48 respondents in total.

1. What is your age?

*Responses:*



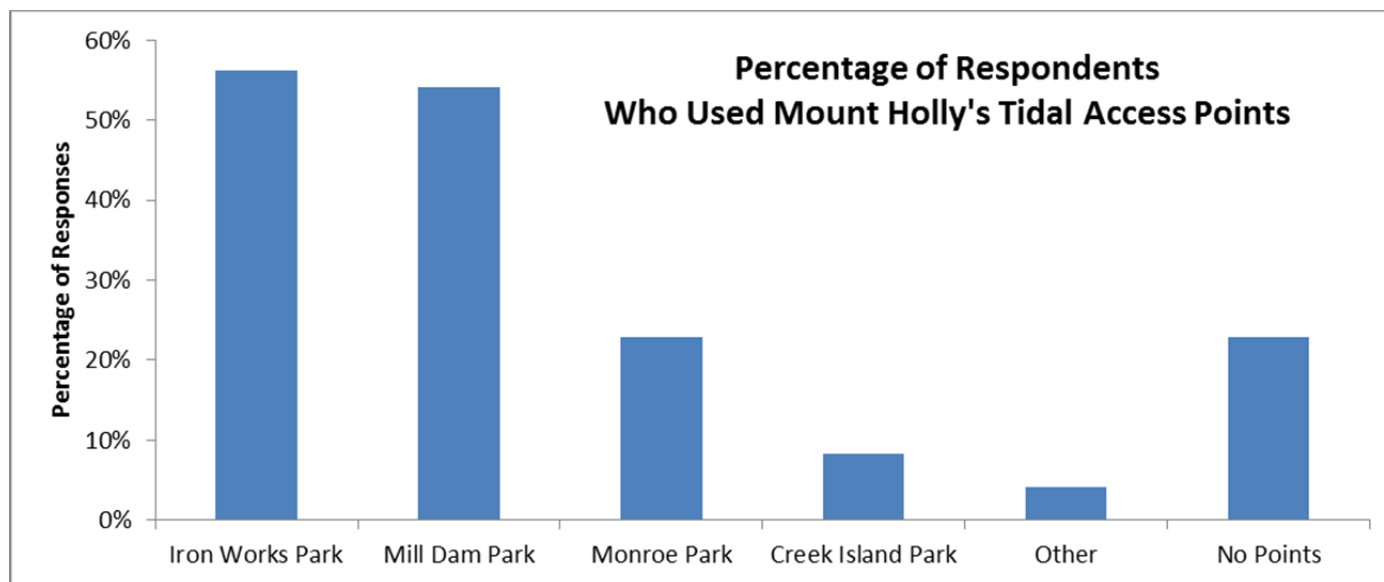
- Median Age: 48.8
- Range: 23-75

2. Do you agree with the following statement: “The Rancocas Creek is a source of community pride in Mount Holly Township.”

Responses: 91% Yes, 9% No

3. Which waterfront access points do you use in Mount Holly along the Rancocas Creek?

Responses:



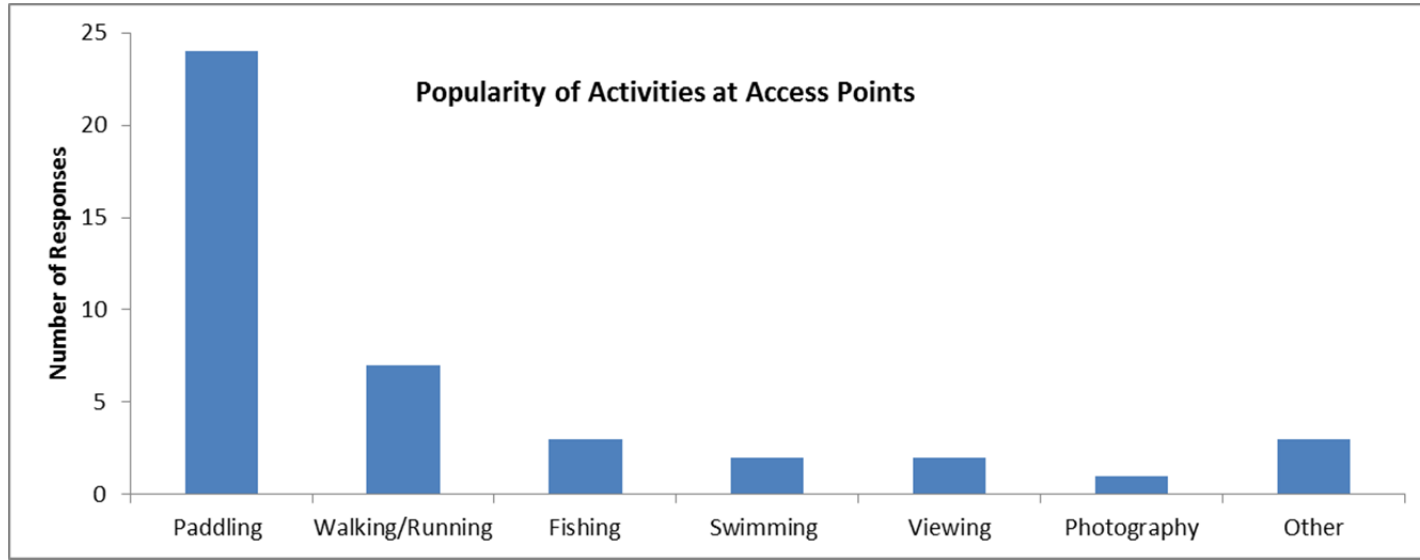
Comments:

- “Other” includes “Oxbow” and “Private access.”
- 23% of respondents (11 of 48 respondents) did not list any access points.
- While it is not a tidal body of water, Woolman Lake was an area of concern for 6 of 48 respondents (13%).



4. How do you use these access points?

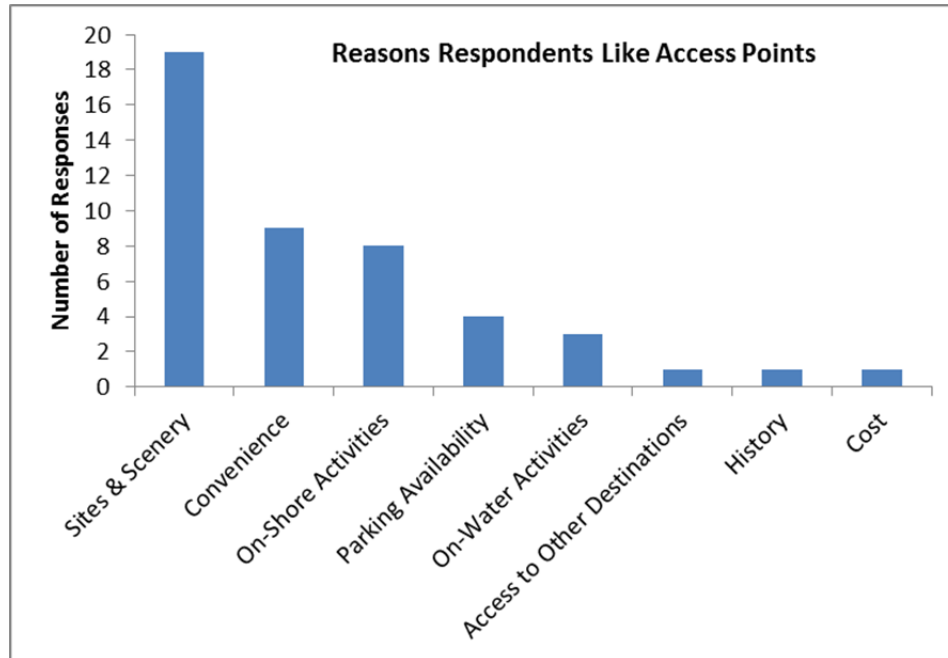
Responses:



Comments: "Other" includes "Leisure," Driving, "Beach Access."

5. What do you enjoy about visiting these access points?

Responses:

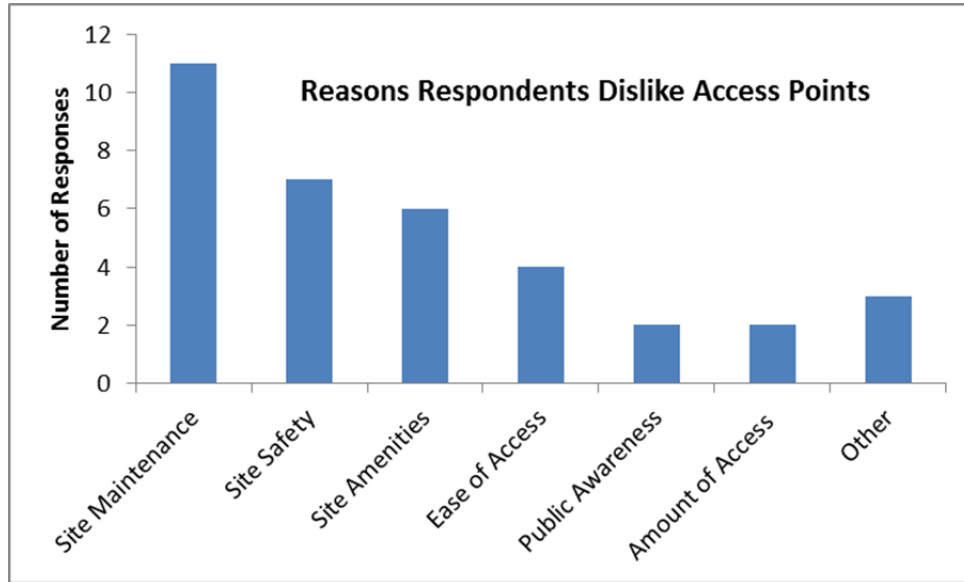


Comments:

- Being able to see the waterfront is of greatest importance to respondents. However, wildlife viewing is also important, requiring a balance between maintaining sites to enable views but avoiding over-landscaping to encourage natural habitat.
- Respondents also like activities that take place on the waterfront and the convenience of the access points.

6. What do you dislike about visiting these access points?

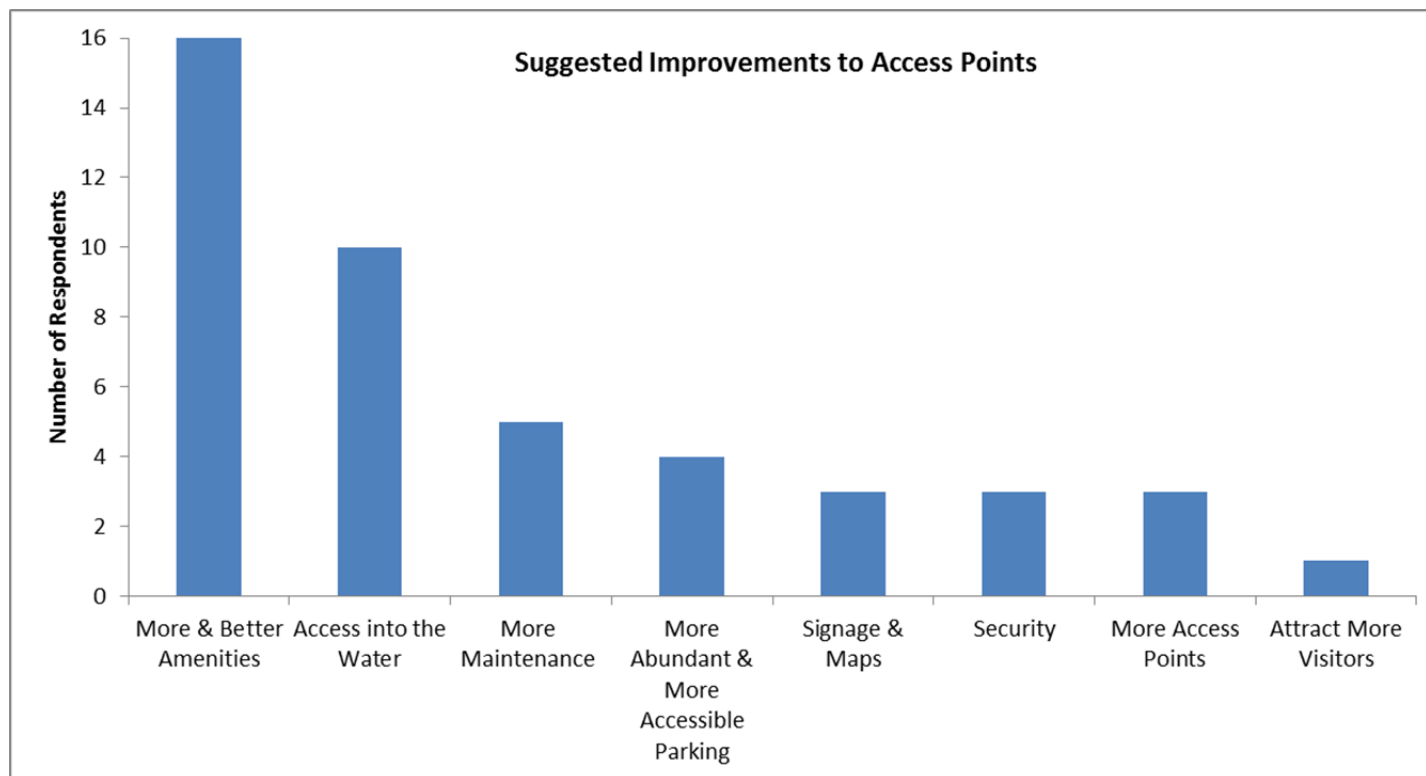
Responses:



Comments: Respondents had concerns about site cleanliness and safety (both in physical conditions and in perception of crime) over lack of amenities.

7. How could amenities at the existing waterfront access points be improved?

Responses:



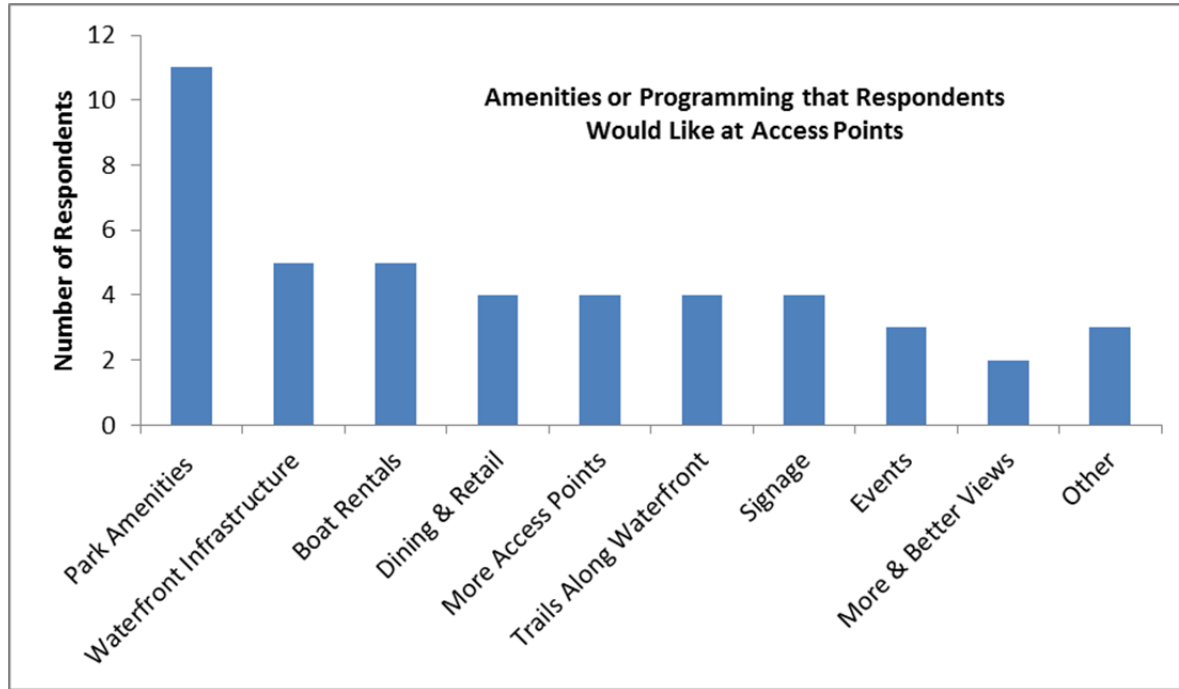
Comments:

- Many respondents want more amenities, particularly bathrooms.
- Many wanted a dock, ramp, or pier.
- Maintenance and parking close to the water were also desirable.



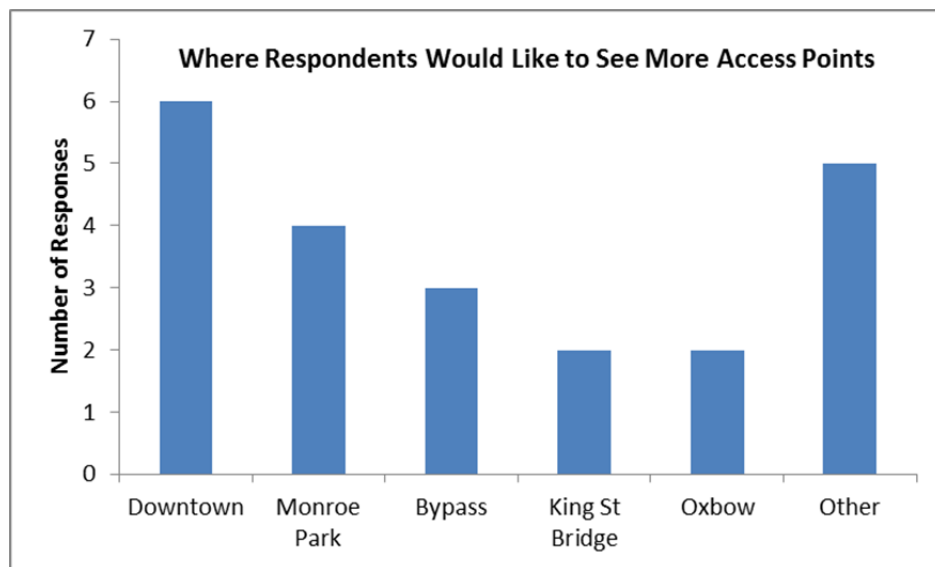
8. What additional amenities or activities would you like to see along the waterfront in Mount Holly?

Responses:



9. Are there any places in Mount Holly where you would like to see more waterfront access points? Where are they?

Responses:

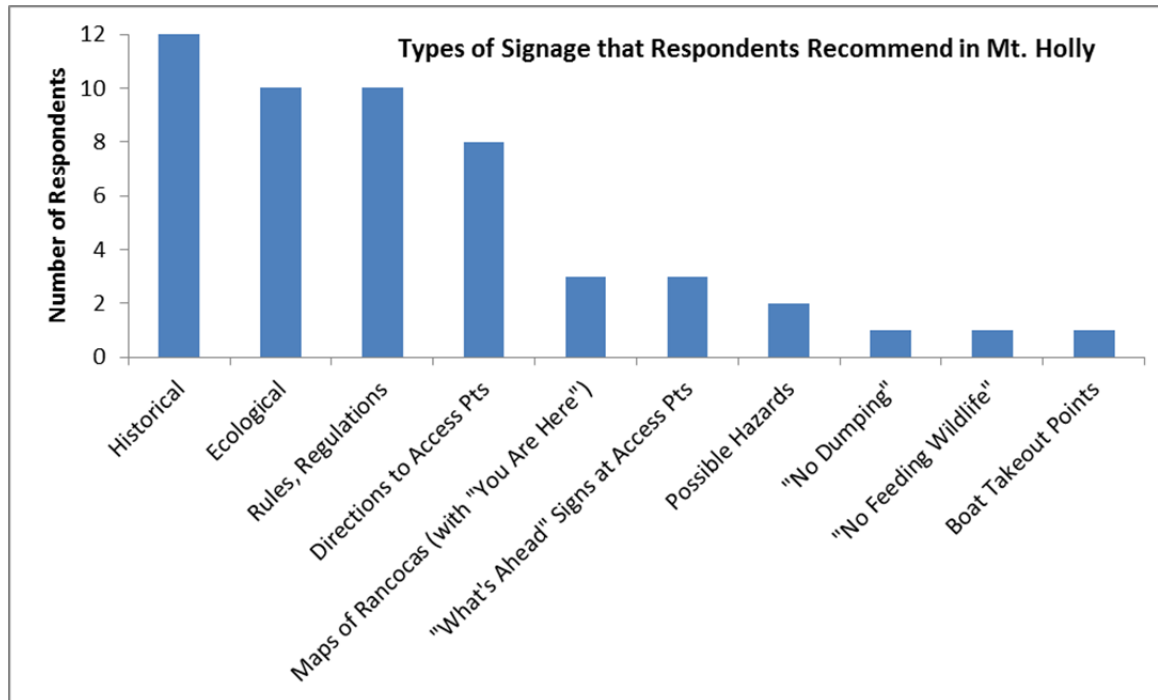


Comments: "Other" includes "Courthouse Area," "Municipal Drive," "Charles St," "Before and After Dam @Mill Dam," and "West of Pine Street Bridge."

10. Are there any places where signage should be added in Mount Holly relating to waterfront access? Where?

- Access/Portage Pts: 5
- Throughout Town: 4
- Mill Dam Park: 2
- Each Bridge: 2
- Pine Street: 2
- Mill Street: 1
- Bypass: 1
- No Signage: 1
- Entrance to Town: 1
- Fire Station: 1
- Mill Dam Race: 1
- Trail Heads of Rail-Trail: 1
- Along Waterways: 1
- Within Parks: 1
- Iron Works Park: 1

11. What would be the purpose of that signage (e.g., directions, historical or ecological importance, rules and regulations)?



## Appendix 6: Notes from Public Meeting #2 (March 1, 2016)

*The following minutes serve as a record of public reactions to the draft version of the Mount Holly Township Municipal Public Access Plan. Public questions and comments are represented by black bullet points, and responses by the Mount Holly Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), or other public attendees are represented by hollow bullet points.*

- Suggestion to install ramps rather than piers or docks, as they are lower-maintenance. Additionally, kayaks work better with ramps.
- Floodplain concerns – are some amenities planned to be installed in the floodplain?
  - DVRPC response: They can be designed so that they are elevated out of the floodplain, or could be flooded with few/no damages.
- Concerns about maintenance costs with new creekside amenities.
- Rancocas Creek Association does regular cleanups elsewhere on the creek.
  - The president of the Rancocas Creek Association requested minutes and the PowerPoint presentation.
  - Feels that the plan is off to a “good start.”
- One attendee wants to see art and historical info installed at viewing areas near signage (Smithville already does this).
- Questions about the timeline for implementing different activities.
  - DVRPC response: A preliminary timeline will be incorporated into the Municipal Public Access Plan.
- Can artists be involved in signage?
- Liked the whimsical signage option.
- Randi Rothmel, Chair of the Mount Holly EAC, commented that she applied for a trail grant of \$24k to create signage.
- Safety issues – referred to police department.
- When would plan be approved? When could it be acted on?
  - EAC response: The plan needs to be approved by NJDEP and could be acted on after that.
- Site near bypass is out of the immediate patrol area of the police – concern about car theft.
  - EAC response: Make this site a formal boat take-out area but do not have space for cars in order to discourage car theft.
- “Mount Holly Island”/Oxbow Area – why not recommend access there?
  - DVRPC response: The elevation of the bank is likely too high – would need a long path down. Also, the creek may not be wide enough at that point to hold a large ramp down and accommodate boats.
- Where do FEMA flood zones go?
- The weir at the Oxbow is a safety issue at low tide – how should it be dealt with?
  - Other attendee’s response: One could increase the height of the weir to create additional depth, but that would require coordination with the Army Corps.



- Other attendee’s response: Signage about safety (“proceed at your own risk”) and the height of the tide that would allow the weir to be navigable (“if you can see this sign [at a certain water level], then it is low tide and you should not proceed”) – it is the rider’s personal responsibility.
- What engineering or construction techniques do you recommend for portage?
  - DVRPC response: These questions will have to be resolved closer to implementation. We are at the planning stage at this point.
- Another possible launch point near King St. on the left side of the bridge (“Antique” side)
  - EAC response: It is privately owned – wall drops off and it lowers out. It is “ideal” for portage but would need to get easement.
- Smithville Park could be an example for trails – it forms a loop.
- Use canvas sand bags rather than ramps for kayaks could be even more cost-effective.
- “Where is the County in this?”
  - EAC response: They are not interested in taking responsibility for maintenance but would offer support.
- Want to ensure that emergency vehicles can get to access points.

## Appendix 7: New Jersey's Recreational and Open Space Inventory (ROSI)

Block	Lot	Facility Name	Interest	Type
102	50	ISLAND CREEK PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal
115	1.01	IRONWORKS PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal
125	2	WOOLMAN'S LAKE	Fee Simple	Municipal
125	2.01	WOOLMAN'S LAKE	Fee Simple	Municipal
134	10	CHESTNUT COURT	Fee Simple	County
134	8.01	CHESTNUT COURT	Fee Simple	County
134	9.01	CHESTNUT COURT	Fee Simple	County
15	26	THE MOUNT	Fee Simple	Municipal
67	17	CARLTON AVENUE TOT LOT	Fee Simple	Municipal
72	4	ISLAND CREEK PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal
73	2	ISLAND CREEK - COMP	Fee Simple	Municipal
83	15	MONROE STREET PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal
83	43	MONROE STREET PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal
83	48	MONROE STREET PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal
86	1	MILL DAM PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal
86	24	MILL DAM PARK	Fee Simple	Municipal

Source: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program.

## Appendix 8: Municipal Public Access Plan Implementation Schedule

Goal	Recommendation	Implementing Entities	Timeline for Completion
<b>i. Add new public access points along the Rancocas Creek.</b>	1. Prioritize, acquire, and construct a public access point in downtown Mount Holly.	Township	Mid-term (5–10 years)
	2. Construct a public access point due east of the Mount Holly Bypass (NJ Route 541).	Township	Mid-term (5–10 years)
<b>ii. Foster connections between the Rancocas Creek and downtown Mount Holly.</b>	1. Through public-private partnerships and acquisition where needed, create a “Riverwalk” through downtown Mount Holly.	Township (with private partners)	Long-term (10+ years)
	2. Incentivize the addition of retail facilities that cater to creek users.	Township	Ongoing
<b>iii. Attract more visitors to the Rancocas Creek.</b>	1. Develop a branding strategy for the creek and its amenities in Mount Holly Township.	Township	Short-term (1–5 years)
	2. Hold community events at public access points.	Township	Ongoing
	3. Produce maps of the public access points and North Branch Rancocas boating route, and distribute throughout Mount Holly and online.	Township or private partner	Short-term (1–5 years)
	4. Partner with community organizations to educate residents and visitors about the creek’s history and environment.	Township or private partner	Ongoing
<b>iv. Increase and improve physical and visual access to the water, in balance with the habitat needs of other species.</b>	1. Construct a trail spur to connect the Circuit Trail system to the Rancocas Creek at Creek Island Park or the Chestnut Court Tracts.	Township or County (with private partner)	Mid-term (5–10 years)
	2. Provide portage past the Mill Dam at Iron Works Park.	Township	Short-term (1–5 years)

Goal	Recommendation	Implementing Entities	Timeline for Completion
<b>iv. Increase and improve physical and visual access to the water, in balance with the habitat needs of other species.</b>	3. Inventory and map plant and animal species at or near potential access points to determine locations of riparian buffers where construction should be limited or avoided.	Township or private partner	Short-term (1–5 years)
	4. Secure funding and/or partnerships to maintain and monitor riparian buffer areas.	Township (with private partner)	Ongoing
	5. Secure funding and/or partnerships to maintain vegetation at access points for the purpose of increasing sightlines to the creek.	Township (with private partner)	Ongoing
	6. Install ADA-accessible sidewalks to connect existing sidewalks and parking lots to access points and along the waterfront.	Township	Short-term (1–5 years)
	7. Add more parking at sites of high parking demand along the waterfront.	Township	Mid-term (5–10 years)
	8. Partner with a private entity to provide boat rentals.	Township (with private partner)	Short-term (1–5 years)
<b>v. Provide amenities for visitor safety and comfort at public access locations.</b>	1. Encourage concessions or other dining opportunities near access points.	Township	Ongoing
	2. Secure funding and/or partnerships to install non-motorized boating ramps and/or docks at key put-in and take-out locations.	Township (with private partner)	Mid-term (5–10 years)
	3. Secure funding and/or partnerships to install and maintain ADA-accessible toilets at access points.	Township (with private partner)	Short-term (1–5 years)
	4. Secure funding and/or partnerships to install and maintain lighting, water fountains, seating, picnic benches, and plantings at access points.	Township (with private partner)	Mid-term (5–10 years)

Goal	Recommendation	Implementing Entities	Timeline for Completion
<b>v. Provide amenities for visitor safety and comfort at public access locations.</b>	5. Organize regular citizen clean-up groups for access points and the creek.	Township (with volunteers)	Ongoing
	6. Include access points in existing maintenance staff schedules and security patrols.	Township	Ongoing
	7. Organize groups to monitor creek safety conditions for paddlers, fishermen, and swimmers.	Township (with volunteers)	Ongoing
	8. Through written materials and programs, educate visitors about proper waste disposal at access points and the effects of waste on the environment.	Township or private partner	Ongoing
<b>vi. Provide clear informative signage for access locations.</b>	1. Create a prioritized list of locations for each of the following sign types: historical, ecological, regulatory, directional, and warning for hazards.	Township	Short-term (1–5 years)
	2. Develop a set of dimensional and aesthetic design standards for signs.	Township	Short-term (1–5 years)
	3. Secure funding and/or partnerships to construct signs.	Township (with private partner)	Short-term (1–5 years)
	4. Develop a sign maintenance plan.	Township	Short-term (1–5 years)
	5. Secure funding and/or partnerships to maintain, update, and replace signs.	Township (with private partner)	Ongoing
<b>vii. Maintain safe and adequate access locations for fishing in those areas where fishing is safe and appropriate.</b>	1. Survey local fishermen to determine preferred fishing locations along the Rancocas Creek.	Township or private partner	Short-term (1–5 years)



Goal	Recommendation	Implementing Entities	Timeline for Completion
<b>vii. Maintain safe and adequate access locations for fishing in those areas where fishing is safe and appropriate.</b>	2. Develop priority list and map of fishing locations.	Township or private partner	Short-term (1-5 years)
	3. Secure funding and/or partnerships to install docks, fishing line disposal units, and signage at priority fishing locations.	Township (with private partner)	Short-term for disposal and signage (1–5 years); mid-term for docks (5–10 years)
	4. Provide educational materials to alert fishermen to the damage caused to riparian areas by informal fishing locations.	Township or private partner	Ongoing
<b>viii. Preserve existing public access to the maximum extent practicable.</b>	1. Ensure that all public access points are preserved in perpetuity.	Township, County	Ongoing

# Mount Holly Township Municipal Public Access Plan

**Publication Number:** 16032

**Date Published:** June 2017

**Geographic Area Covered:**

Mount Holly Township, Burlington County, New Jersey

**Key Words:**

access, boat launch, Burlington County, Circuit Trails, docks, environment, fishing, habitat, Mount Holly Township, municipal planning, municipal public access plan, natural resources, New Jersey, parks, Rancocas Creek, recreation planning, riverwalk, signage, trails, waterfront, waterway

**Abstract:**

This Municipal Public Access Plan includes an inventory of existing public waterway access points located in Mount Holly Township along the tidal North Branch Rancocas Creek; a vision, goals, and recommendations for improving existing public access and adding new access points; and strategies for implementation.

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*Cover image of Mount Holly's historic mill dam courtesy of John Anderson.*



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