

4.20 Parklands and Open Space

Parklands are generally defined as any arrangement of publicly owned active recreational facilities, such as playgrounds and athletic fields, and publicly owned passive recreational facilities such as walking paths, wildlife viewing locations, and picnic areas. Parklands are established and maintained to serve human recreational needs and provide habitat as well as personal, social, economic, and environmental benefits (NJMC, 2004).

The study area falls within the HMD and as such is subject to the jurisdiction of the NJMC. In 2004, the Commission released its Green Map, which identifies all parks and recreation areas, wetlands, open space preservation area, landfill restoration areas, and water bodies.

This section will identify existing publicly owned parklands and open space preservation areas within the study area and within close proximity to the study area.

4.20.1 Existing Conditions

4.20.1.1 Parklands

Riggin Memorial Field, which is a part of the Borough of East Rutherford municipal park system, is located on the western edge of NJ Route 17, just south of Union Avenue. The Field consists of football, soccer and baseball fields, a running track, bleachers, locker rooms and public restrooms. Henry P. Becton Regional High School also utilizes Riggin Memorial Field for sporting events.

The Little League Field, which is also part of the Borough of East Rutherford municipal park system, is situated on the northwest corner of the intersection of NJ Route 17 and Berry Avenue approximately one-half mile north of the study area. The Field is comprised of a baseball field, two batting cages, and a playground.

4.20.1.2 Open Space Preservation Areas

Walden Marsh, which is positioned in the northwest section of the study area, begins west of West Perimeter Road and extends to Berry's Creek. Two small portions of the Marsh do continue west of Berry's Creek. The NJMC designated the Marsh as a combination of preservation areas and wetlands. A preservation area is considered to be a public or private tract, likely including wetlands, which is protected by law.

Oritani Marsh, which is located in the southwest portion of the study area, begins just west of the right-of-way for the Pascack Valley Line and extends north and west across Berry's Creek to NJ Route 3. The Marsh is approximately 224.8 acres and is designated a preservation area by the NJMC. Current design plans for Marsh include wetland preservation and enhancement activities.

4.20.2 Impact

4.20.1 No-Action

Under the No-Action Alternative, no changes to existing parkland and open space preservation resources would occur. Therefore, no adverse impacts to these resources areas are anticipated.

4.20.2 Preferred Alternative

Parklands

Under the Preferred Alternative, no adverse impacts would result to Riggin Memorial Field or the Little League Field. The proposed project would cause no displacement or physical encroachment to the parks. In addition, implementation of the proposed project would result in no access or safety issues, nor would it cause displacement of any parkland.

Open Space Preservation Areas

Under the Preferred Alternative, no adverse impacts would result to Oritani Marsh. While visible from the proposed right-of-way, the Marsh is located ample distance from the proposed right-of-way to prevent any possible adverse impact. The proposed project would cause no displacement or physical encroachment. In addition, there would be no access or safety issues regarding open space reservation areas.

Under the Preferred Alternative, impacts to portions of Walden Marsh would be expected, specifically in the northwest corner of the Marsh east of Berry's Creek, and in the areas located between the Packsack Valley Line and Berry's Creek. The proposed alignment travels through the above-mentioned areas and displacement of these preservation areas is anticipated. However, since Walden Marsh is not accessible to the public for active or passive recreation, the proposed project would not present any significant access or safety issues.

Short-term impacts could affect Walden Marsh during the construction phase of the proposed project. Construction equipment and trucks could potentially traverse areas beyond the construction site boundaries as a result of staging activities.

4.20.3 Mitigation

Adverse impacts to portions of Walden Marsh would be compensated through a wetland mitigation plan, which is currently being developed. It is anticipated that quantity of preservation area for mitigation would be greater than the quantity of the preservation area impacted by the proposed Project, discussed in the Section 4.2.4 on wetland mitigation.

Through coordination among NJ TRANSIT, NJSEA, NJMC and the Project contractors, the above-mentioned short-term impacts would be reduced. Contractors would be required to make considerable efforts to avoid staging equipment and traversing preservation areas beyond construction site boundaries.