

# COUNTY OF MERCER

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DATE: Feb. 15, 2022  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## PARK COMMISSION RELEASES RUTGERS PARKS REPORT

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP – The Mercer County Park Commission has released a report from Rutgers University's Center for Urban Sustainability (CUES) on Mercer County's parks and open space network. The report is the culmination of a year-long study by CUES and provides a detailed inventory and analysis of County parks and how they provide a diverse variety of recreation amenities and also protect the County's natural resources. The report includes park-specific recommendations for future enhancements in order to further restore natural habitat and improve visitor experiences.

The survey assessed county-owned regional parks, golf courses, and urban parks by land type, ecology, and infrastructure, providing a detailed inventory of the park system. Throughout 2021, the team assessed and inventoried amenities throughout all county park facilities, inspecting 7,379 acres of land and a long list of amenities, such as 17 playgrounds, 50 sports fields, 4 dog parks, 26 comfort stations and 220 picnic tables. The full inventory and analysis can be viewed here: <http://mercercountyparks.org/stewardship>.

"In addition to County investments in new parks and open space, this report highlights the Park Commission's commitment to providing the highest level of maintenance to public spaces," said County Executive Brian M. Hughes. "The research and analysis will help to maximize these efforts to benefit our parks, natural areas and future park development."

"This report provides a critical inventory of the many park improvements available to Mercer County residents and data on the natural resources we are entrusted to care for through long-term stewardship practices here at the County," said Park Commission Executive Director Aaron T. Watson. "It provides our Park Commission with helpful recommendations on how to enhance our public spaces even further. We want to thank the Rutgers research team of students, landscape architects, ecologists, and researchers for undertaking this comprehensive study."

The CUES report includes recommendations such as increasing efforts to remove diseased ash trees, expanding the monitoring of rare native species threatened by invasive vegetation, and implementing green stormwater management practices to enhance watershed health and overall user experiences in the parks. Expanded partnerships with non-profit organizations are also recommended to provide a greater network of resources and expertise to support management of county open space.

The Mercer County parks system is home to many native plant and wildlife species across rural and urban environments. These properties provide wildlife habitat and offer both passive and active recreational activities for residents and visitors.

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