

November 12, 2003

Hon. Jan Wotowicz, Mayor and the Morris Township Committee
Morris Township Open Space Committee and Environmental Commission
Morris Township Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment
Township of Morris
50 Woodland Avenue
Convent Station, NJ 07960

Re: Open Space Review -- Jones Woods

Dear Mayor Wotowicz, Committee and Board members:

At this time of Open Space Review, the Friends of Jones Woods urge that the twenty unprotected acres of Jones Woods be safeguarded by placing the land into the Township's Open Space Inventory along with the Township's eighteen acres dedicated previously.

As described in the current Master Plan, Morris Township owns 38 acres of Jones Woods for which the zoning was changed from RH-5 to open space. However, twenty of those 38 acres are not in the Open Space Inventory. At the time of purchase, the Township Committee *hoped* the land could remain as open space, but it was kept out of the OS inventory in case of future COAH housing obligations. Morris Township now has a substantial COAH credit.

The land has already been purchased by Morris Township; it merely needs a new designation. Now is a perfect time to make this change.

The resounding success of numerous open space referenda clearly shows the public's desire to minimize sprawl and to protect our environmental assets so that Township residents can be assured of clean air and water and the lovely surroundings that brought us to Morris Township in the first place.

Jones Woods contains well-documented natural resources. There are state designated "exceptional resource value" streams and wetlands that attract rare and endangered birds, animals and plants. Jones Woods has some of the cleanest water in the Township. Historically, the area has been a valuable source of drinking water. The Gillespie tower ram pump system, the Morristown Water Company and the Clyde Potts water system are examples of projects that tapped the water of Jones Woods. Although its reservoir is no longer in service, a careful geological study that we would be pleased to provide has shown that Jones Woods has significant recharge soils and rock substructure for

allowing water to re-enter the aquifers. Laws written centuries ago kept contaminants from livestock and manufacturing out of Jones Woods. We need to continue and expand those efforts to include protection from runoff and non-point pollution.

The same steep slopes, scoop shape, recharge soils and other natural features that make Jones Woods a water collector can also make it a pollution collector. With Villa Walsh, at the south end of the woods, located at the highest point in the area, Jones Woods is a trough that in turn flows into Fosterfields. The denser the development on its rim, the more pollution will flow down into Jones Woods' soils and streams, and out into Fosterfields and aquifers below. Protection of the Township's remaining twenty acres will go a long way toward preserving clean water and other resources.

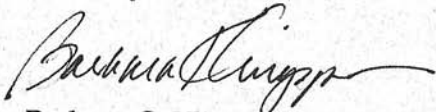
The twenty acres in question are really the heart of Jones Woods, the largest and most unspoiled section, essential to the integrity of natural habitats. This is not simply my opinion. Professional naturalists have documented this fact. Without the twenty acres, Jones Woods is not protected. Put another way, to surrender those twenty acres would be to waste the Township's investment in Jones Woods as open space and seriously risk contamination of aquifers, rare animals and birds, a lovely forest and the contiguous Fosterfields parkland.

As a site for organized environmental education, Jones Woods has increased in value as open space. It has always been frequented by individual nature lovers, hikers and cross-country runners, bikers and skiers. Now it is also used as a natural laboratory by scout groups, student groups from Hillcrest and other schools, including Drew University.

Friends of Jones Woods assisted Hillcrest School to obtain a Dodge Foundation grant and to develop an environmental curriculum. In cooperation with Drew University, the Friends have constructed a 20x20 meter fenced deer enclosure for the study of forest undergrowth. The Jones Woods deer enclosure is part of a ten-year study involving two other enclosures in the Drew campus arboretum.

For all of these reasons, for the sake of future generations, and to honor those in the past who preserved natural resources for our benefit, we urge that all thirty-eight Township-owned acres of Jones Woods (*Block 4101, Lots 3 and 7*) be retained together as dedicated open space and included in the Morris Township Open Space Inventory.

Sincerely,



Barbara C. Klingsporn
President