

REIMAGINING

THE NATURE OF NEW JERSEY - 2050 | MICHELE S. BYERS



New Jersey Conservation
FOUNDATION



“

We owe it to ourselves
and to the next
generation to conserve the
environment so that
we can bequeath our
children a sustainable
world that benefits all.

Wangari Maathai

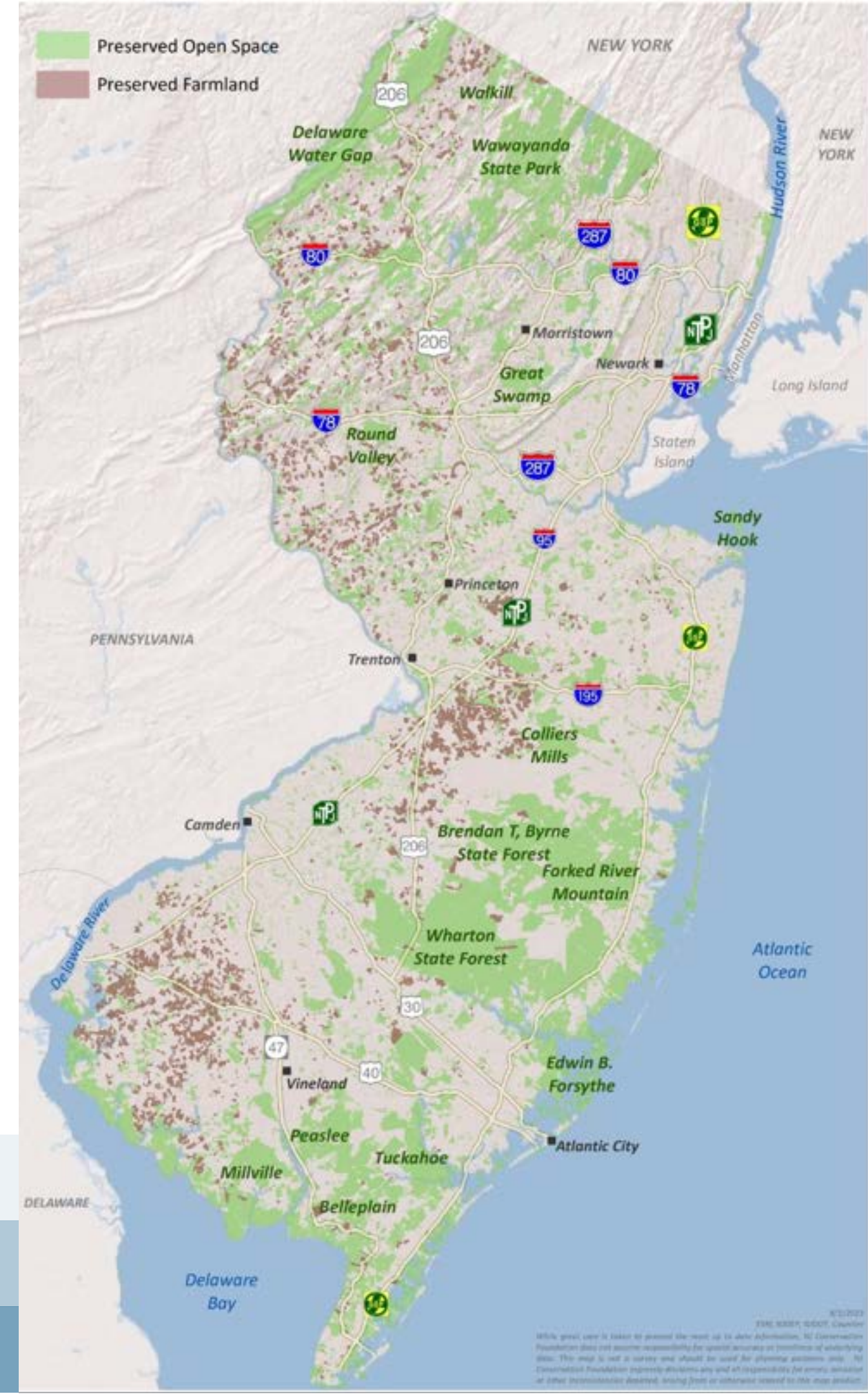
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



According to the Conservation Blueprint New Jersey's land area can be broken down as follows:

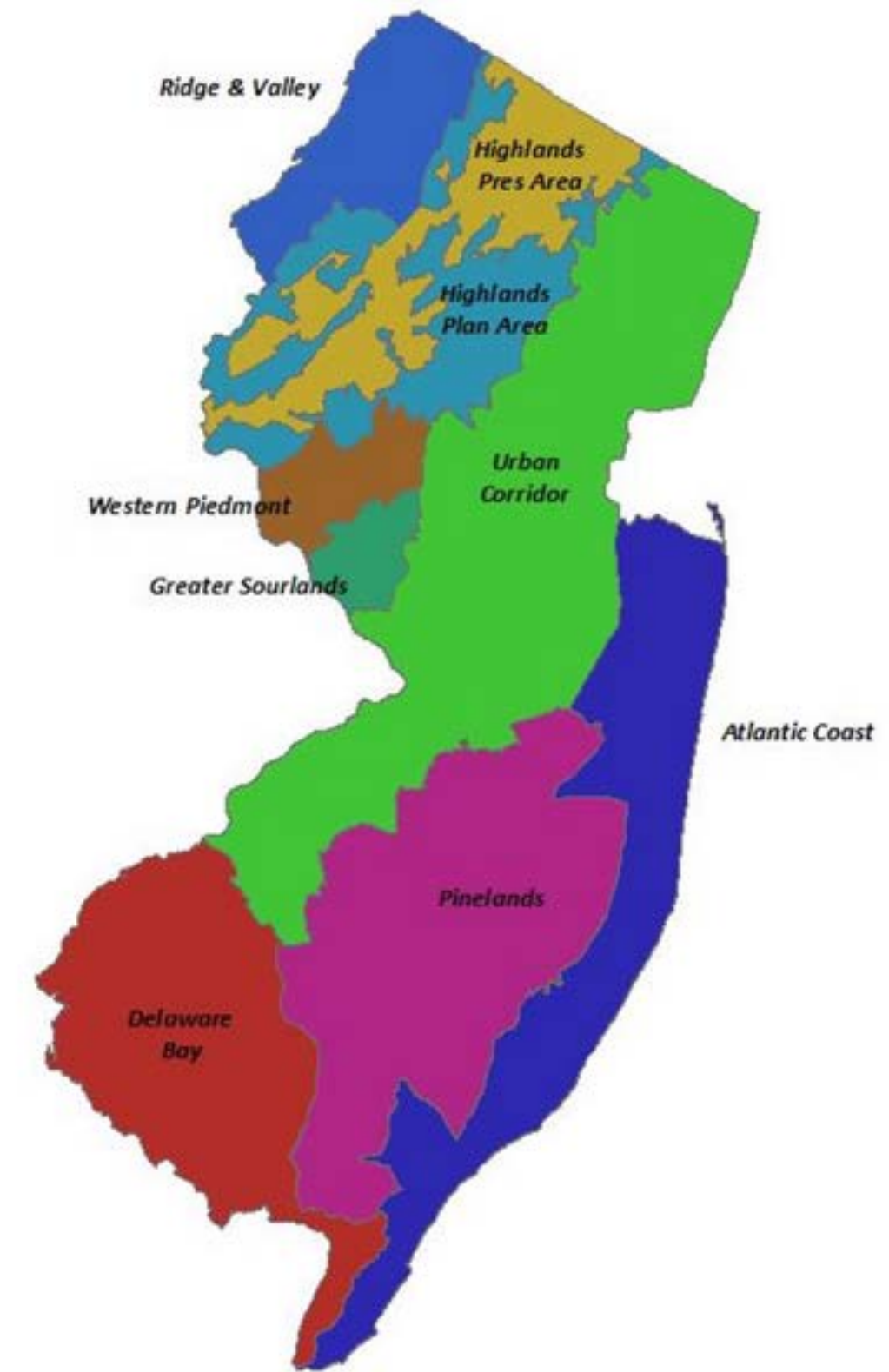
4,782,035	Total land and water area
1,572,877	Preserved 33%
1,793,573	Developed 37%
1,460,585	Remaining Acres* 30%
816,031	Remaining unregulated* 17%
644,554	Remaining regulated* 13%

*neither preserved nor developed



Remaining Lands by Region				
<i>Region</i>	<i>Unregulated Available Acres</i>	<i>Regulated Available Acres</i>	<i>Total Available Acres</i>	<i>% of Region</i>
Atlantic Coast	50,731	74,880	125,611	22%
Delaware Bay	174,110	117,665	291,775	41%
Greater Sourlands	23,310	7,487	30,797	37%
Highlands Planning Area	110,350	47,667	158,017	36%
Highlands Preservation Area	70,488	59,578	130,066	31%
Pine Barrens	147,444	162,387	309,831	33%
Ridge & Valley	75,864	31,177	107,041	39%
Urban Corridor	124,123	125,946	250,069	20%
Western Piedmont	39,611	17,767	57,378	41%
TOTAL:	816,031	644,554	1,460,585	

New Jersey must redouble its efforts to expand its land preservation efforts to ultimately preserve 50% of the state's land area to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of our environment, communities, and economy. The Conservation Blueprint analysis identifies lands most critical for **ecological and water resources, agriculture, and community greenspaces**. It is essential to preserve both high-value conservation lands that are at risk of development as well as high-value conservation lands that are environmentally constrained by regulations. Regulatory programs do not provide the same level of protection as is provided by permanent preservation.





The State of New Jersey should establish a Green and Healthy Cities Initiative to create a comprehensive planning and investment program for the state's underserved urban communities. The Initiative must be led by a Green and Healthy Cities Task Force, made up of citizens from directly impacted communities.

FUNDING

- Funds from the **State Corporate Business Tax**
- **Federal funding from the USDA Agricultural Land Easement program, the Forest Legacy Program, the Highlands and Pinelands Programs, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund**
- **Stewardship funding**
- Possible **statewide water fee** to preserve the most sensitive and critical forested watershed lands.
- Green and Healthy Cities Initiative
- **Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act**
- Funding should be pursued through the recently passed **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.**

A TIME FOR ACTION

This report presents a comprehensive vision for why, how, what, and where New Jersey needs to act aggressively and invest to ensure its future.



A 2050 VISION FOR NEW JERSEY: NATURE AND PEOPLE



Every New Jerseyan will have:

- vibrant, attractive, and livable cities, towns, and urban communities with high environmental quality and nature in every neighborhood throughout New Jersey.
- clean drinking water from protected water sources,
- clean air to breathe,
- easy access to locally sourced healthy foods,
- safe and accessible outdoor recreation, including parks, trails, fields, forests and water access,
- high-quality open spaces and parks in every community,
- reduced mental stress, and reduced loneliness,
- access to safe, clean beaches and inland waterbodies for public recreation like swimming, fishing and birdwatching
- beautiful and peaceful natural areas,
- high environmental quality and quality of life,
- shade to protect against and to escape from sun and heat, eliminating the dangerous heat island effect.
- sound and effective land use planning and zoning protections
- natural lands to absorb flood waters,
- diverse and healthy populations of native plants and animals,
- strong community identity and connections,
- personal and intimate nature connections, inspiring wonder and awe

New Jersey must continue to lead the Nation in land preservation, environmental protection, and environmental sustainability and deliver a high quality of life for all of its residents and visitors.



TWO CHOICES: TWO FUTURES



What will be the fate of more than 1.46M acres remaining in NJ that are not yet developed or preserved?

Will a land area the size of one-third of the state be preserved or paved?

Choice 1: Maintain the status quo/ take no new actions.



LAKEWOOD, NJ NEW DEVELOPMENT 2019
(COURTESY: ASBURY PARK PRESS)



CAMDEN STREET SCENE IN WATERFRONT SOUTH
(COURTESY: CATHOLICMOM.COM)



HELMETTA, NEW JERSEY | AUGUST, 2021
(COURTESY MY CENTRAL JERSEY. COM)

Choice 2: Preserve an additional 750K acres and make an epic investment in the environmental health and quality of New Jersey's cities, towns, and urban communities.



STREET TREES CAMDEN CITY (COURTESY NJ TREE FOUNDATION)



STOKES STATE FOREST, SUSSEX COUNTY (NJ SKYLANDS.COM)



SMALL TOWN NJ (SOURCE UNKNOWN)

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

-Jane Goodall



TODAY'S THREATS AND CHALLENGES



Sea level rise and flooding.



HURRICANE SANDY WEBSITE PICTURE

Systemic Environmental Injustice.



Loss of biodiversity.



WHITE- TAILED DEER (COURTESY US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE)



LONG -EARED BAT (COURTESY US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE)


PEOPLE & NATURE



LIBERTY STATE PARK (COURTESY NJ DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION)

PRESERVING LAND IS KEY



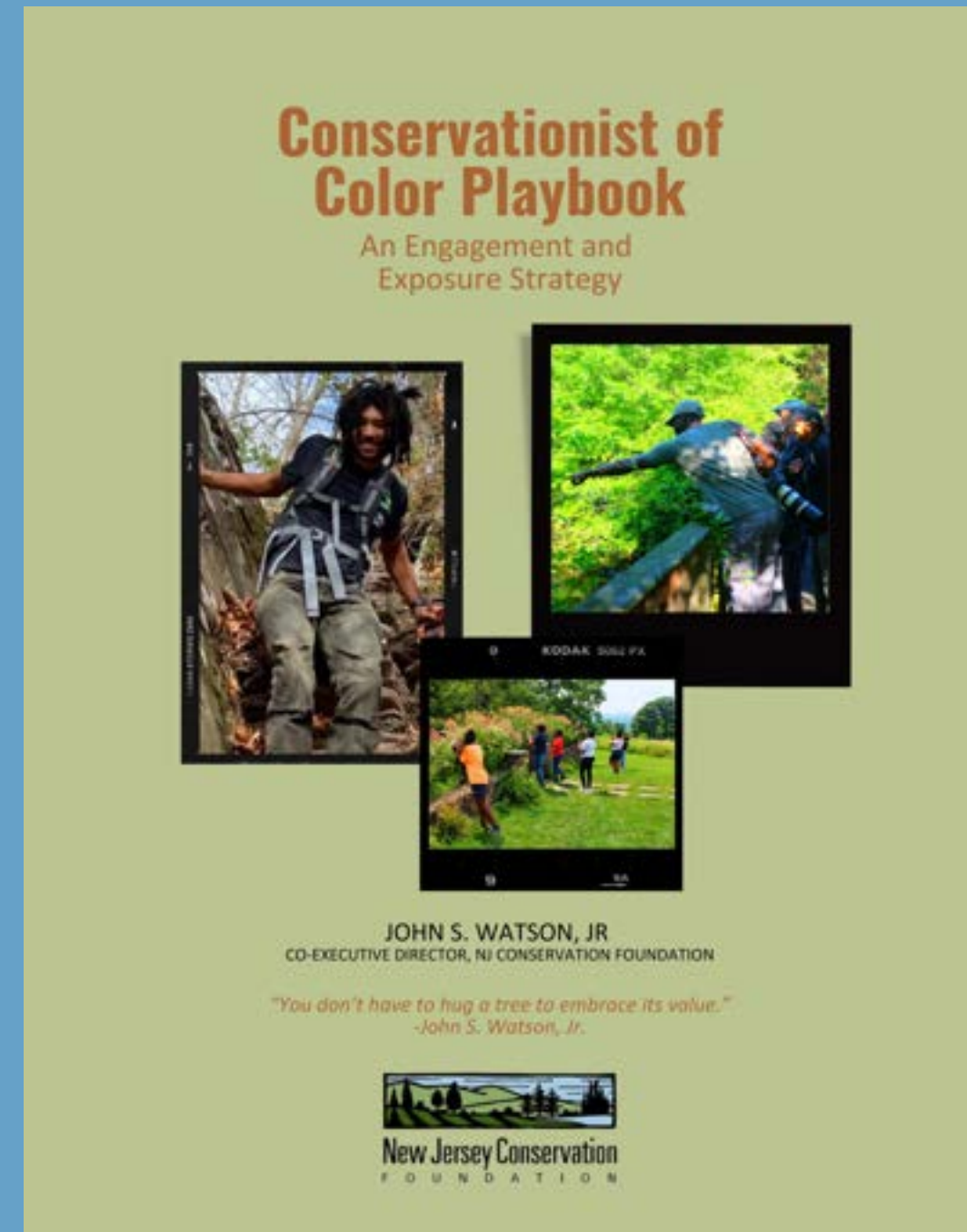


People in New Jersey's underserved communities of color need and deserve a healthy environment and a high quality of life. Urgent and comprehensive action is needed to improve environmental health.

“

To have meaningful impact, we must make today's environmental issues relevant to future generations. Key to this effort is understanding the natural assets of each community or neighborhood, as well as what changes residents would like to see. The easiest way to begin this work is with an assessment of the built environment.

”



-Jay Watson,
Conservationist of
Color Playbook

A rural landscape featuring a green field with a wooden fence in the foreground. A horse is visible in the background, and a semi-transparent blue banner with the word 'RECOMMENDATIONS' is overlaid on the image.

RECOMMENDATIONS

New Jersey must ramp up funding and capacity to increase the scale and pace of land preservation to bring half of New Jersey's land area into permanent preservation.



PRESERVATION PRIORITIES:

- Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement
- Climate Mitigation: Forests, Watershed Lands, and Natural Solutions
- Farmland and Sustainable Agricultural Practices

The Governor should establish a new comprehensive Green and Healthy Cities Initiative aimed at Greening New Jersey's Underserved and Overburdened Communities of Color and rectifying decades of environmental injustice. The Initiative must be led by a Green and Healthy Cities Task Force, made up of community leaders and residents of the directly impacted communities.



CITY OF NEWARK URBAN FARM (COURTESY GREATER NEWARK CONSERVANCY)



NEW JERSEY MEADOWLANDS (COURTESY OF HACKENSACK RIVERKEEPER)



LAND PRESERVATION GOALS / CONSERVATION BLUEPRINT



Conservation Blueprint: A tool to identify the most important lands for preservation.

The Conservation Blueprint is a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool developed by Rowan University, the Nature Conservancy of New Jersey, and the New Jersey Conservation, Foundation in partnership with the greater conservation community. It was created to help identify additional lands needed for preservation due to both location and conservation values.



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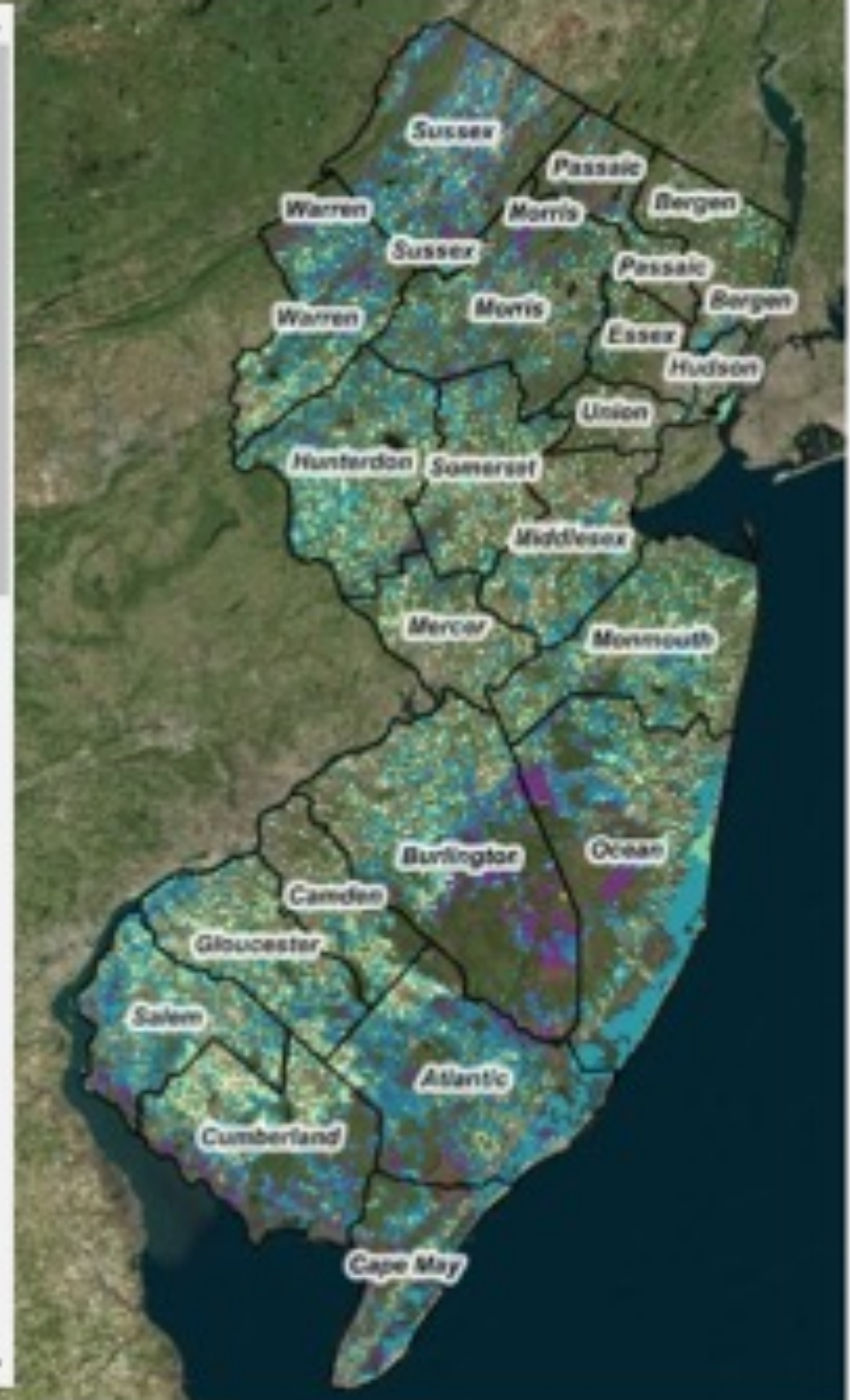
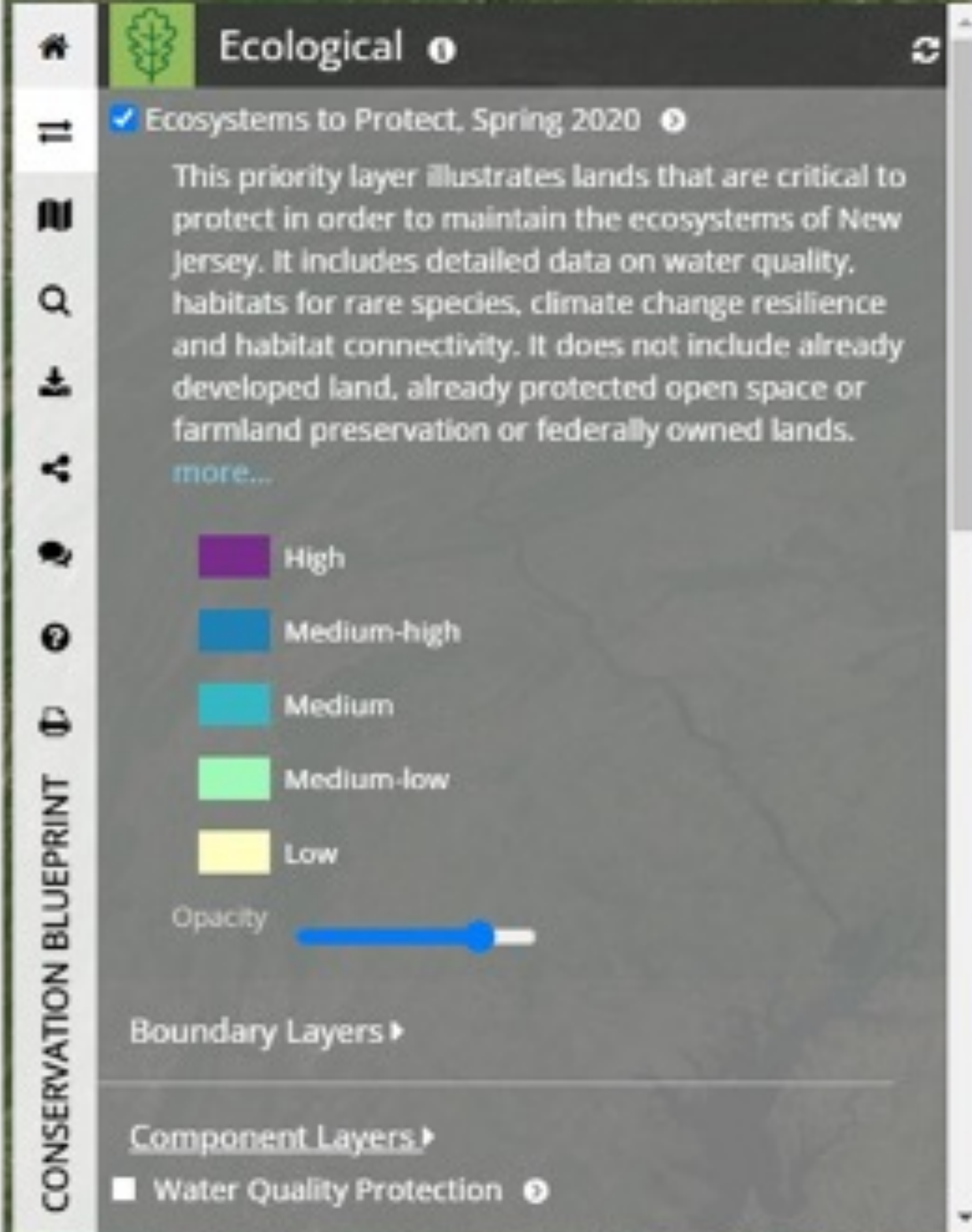
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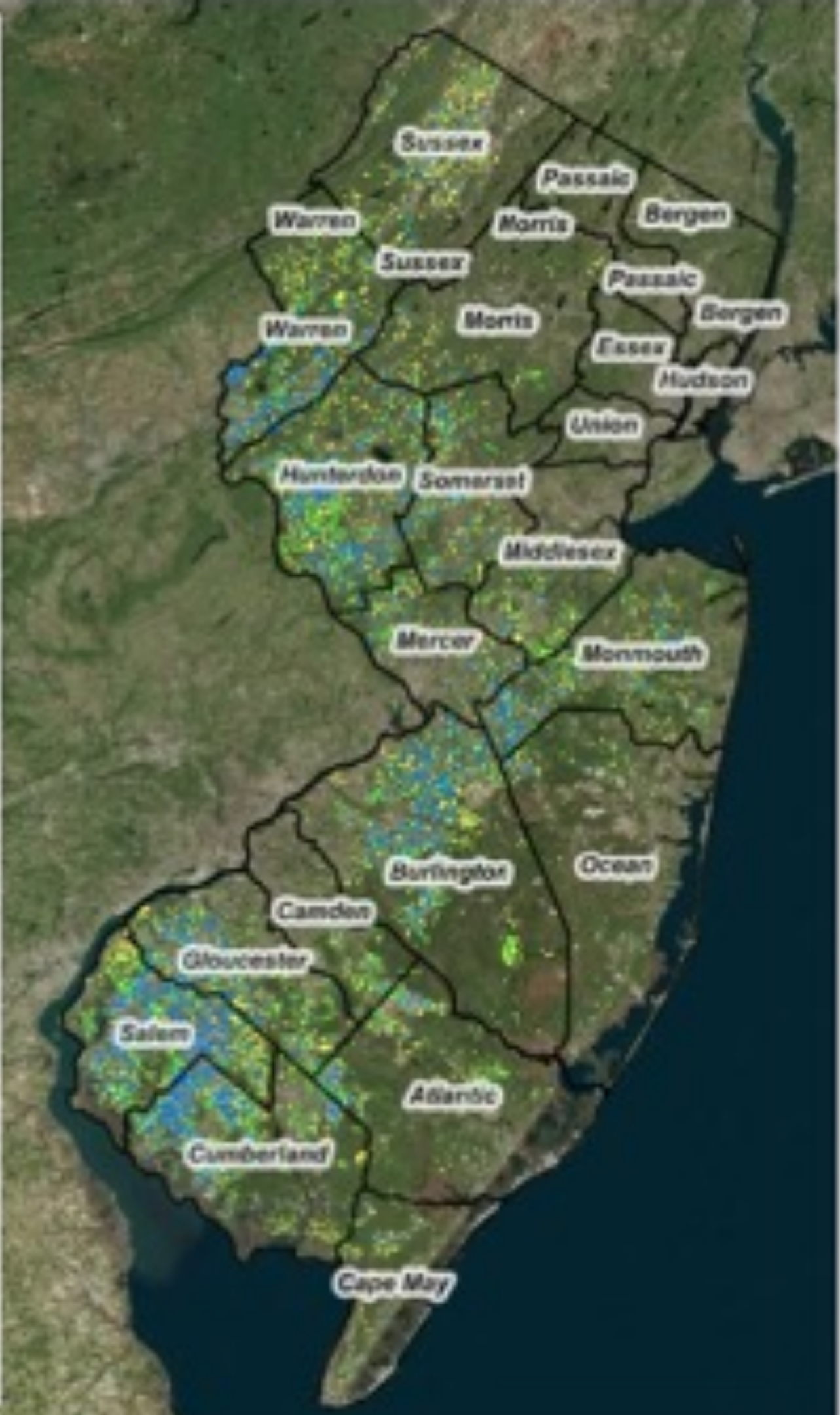
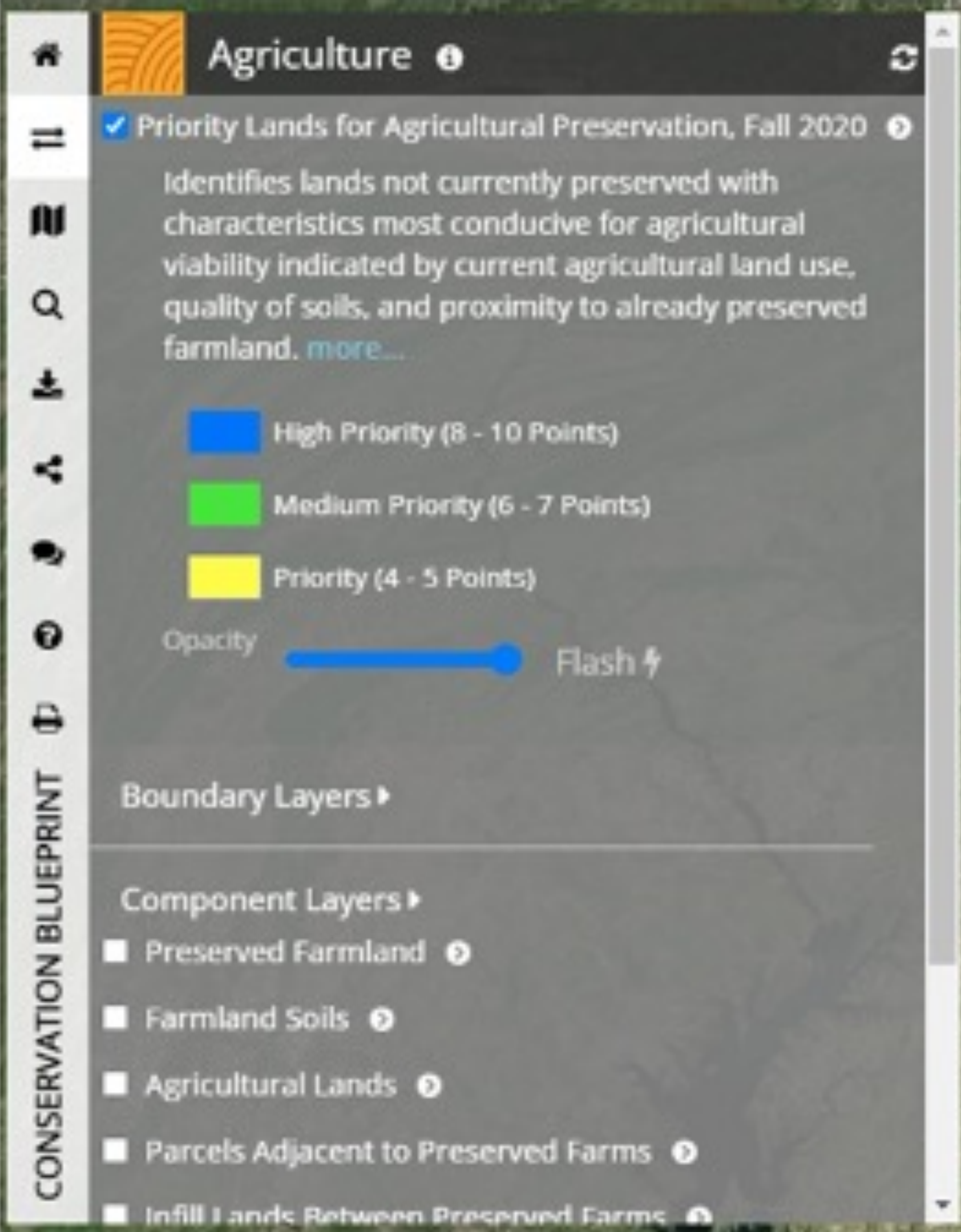
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Total Available Lands by Land Use (2015) Type						
<i>Region</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Barren Land</i>	<i>Forest</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Wetland</i>	Total
Atlantic Coast	8,908	5,504	45,510	4,116	61,573	125,611
Delaware Bay	103,652	6,321	80,786	7,078	93,938	291,775
Greater Sourslands	11,390	514	14,657	285	3,951	30,797
Highlands Planning Area	41,297	3,794	80,676	6,380	25,870	158,017
Highlands Preservation Area	16,695	1,691	88,040	7,905	15,735	130,066
Pine Barrens	38,292	6,554	166,307	6,846	91,832	309,831
Ridge & Valley	22,794	685	62,977	4,203	16,382	107,041
Urban Corridor	48,354	13,608	76,865	9,933	101,309	250,069
Western Piedmont	23,238	353	24,518	609	8,660	57,378
TOTAL:	314,620	39,024	640,336	47,355	419,250	1,460,585

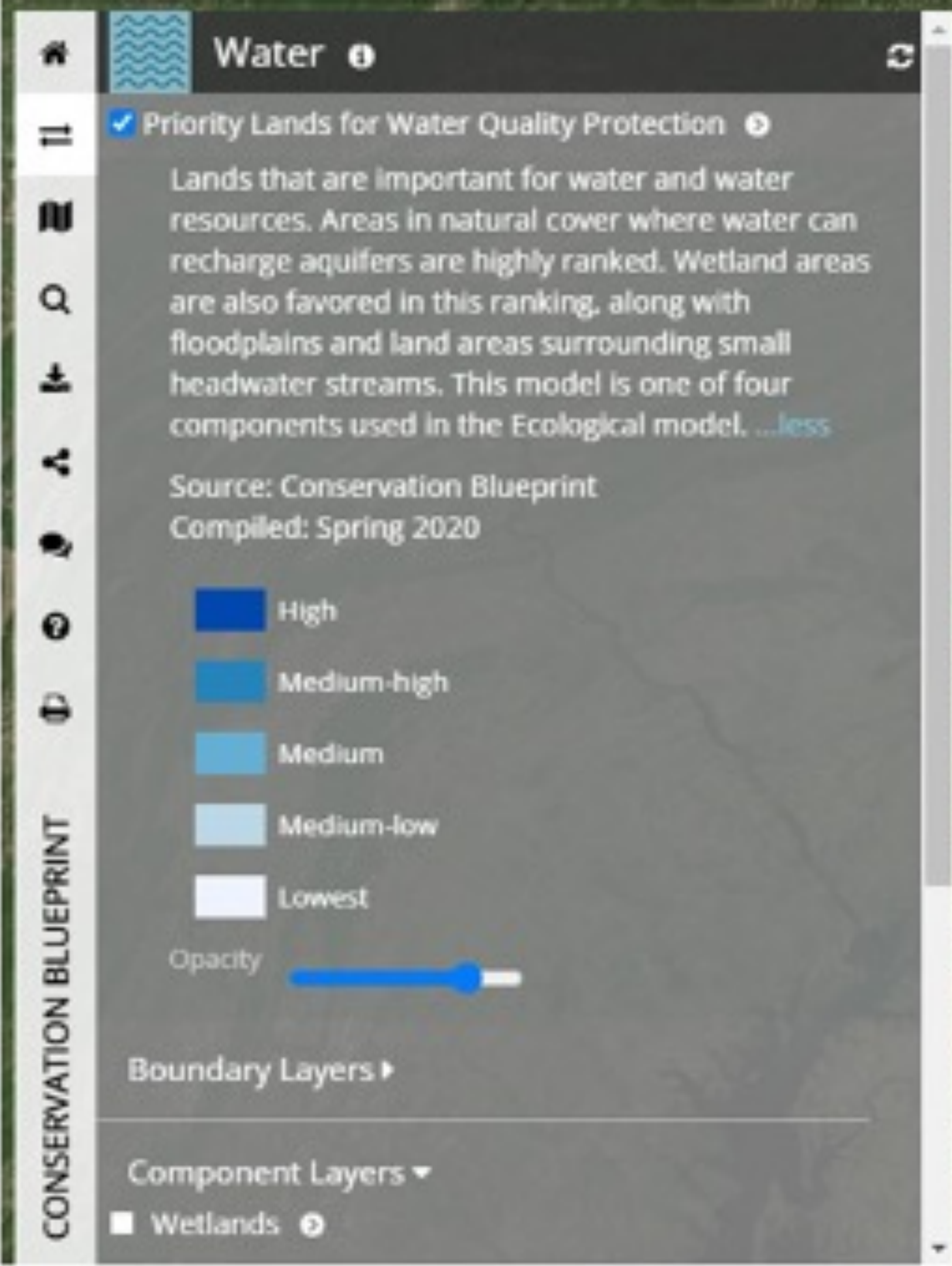
ECOSYSTEMS TO PROTECT



PRIORITY LANDS
FOR
AGRICULTURAL
PRESERVATION



PRIORITY LANDS
FOR WATER
QUALITY
PROTECTION



PRIORITY LANDS FOR COMMUNITY GREENSPACE



ECOLOGICAL AND WATER RESOURCES

The vast majority of NJ's remaining forests and forested wetlands should be permanently preserved to protect water quality, reduce flooding, sequester carbon, provide high quality outdoor recreation and protect New Jersey's natural heritage and biodiversity. Targets for preservation should continue to include forested lands important for water and carbon storage, large landscape scale conservation lands, critical linkages between preserved lands, flood prone lands, wetlands and wetlands buffers, stream and river corridors and New Jersey's most biodiverse habitats. Recent scientific research is demonstrating that proforestation, allowing intact forests to mature, is an effective way to increase carbon sequestration.



“If we are looking for models of self-sustaining communities, we need look no further than an old-growth forest. Or the old-growth cultures they raised in symbiosis with them.”

— [Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)



AGRICULTURE

- The **State Farmland Preservation Program** has identified 200-250K acres for additional preservation.
- According to the State Agriculture Development Committee an additional minimum **200K- 250K acres of preserved farmland** is needed to maintain a sufficient base of farmland to ensure a viable agricultural industry and the continued availability of healthy local foods.



SOMERSET COUNTY FARMLAND (COURTESY MICHELE BYERS)

COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE

NJ DEP Green Acres Program, along with the Trust for Public Land is updating the NJ State Outdoor Recreation Plan and soliciting community input on a new “**Outside Together**” plan which will provide valuable information on community needs for parks and recreation. *(NJ DEP Green Acres Program/ Trust for Public Land NJ)*



BRANCH BROOK PARK, CITY OF NEWARK (COURTESY BRANCH BROOK PARK ALLIANCE)

BENEFITS OF PRESERVED LANDS



Life-supporting and health benefits of preserved lands

- Protect and cleanse drinking water supplies
- Improve air quality
- Protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- Reduce flooding and stormwater runoff
- Protect soils
- Sequester carbon
- Provide locally-grown foods
- Outdoor recreation and scenic beauty
- Reduce the “heat island” effect in urban areas
- Support human health and quality of life
- A growing body of evidence demonstrates the critical role nature and open space play in human health and well-being. (See Appendix B)
- Provide buffers from impacts of adjacent development
- Buffer and increased resilience from climate change impacts
- Inspire awe and wonder, curiosity, and a sense of connection to something greater than ourselves

Economic Benefits

- Property tax stabilization, ecotourism dollars, and jobs in ecosystem services
- Every dollar invested in state land preservation returns \$10 in economic value through nature's services, such as flood control and filtering air and water of pollutants.
- In 2021, outdoor recreation accounted for 1.5% of New Jersey's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), equaling \$20.3 billion (OUTSIDE TOGETHER 2023)
- Average home value increases 16% within 1,500 feet of natural areas.
- Parks contribute up to 20% of the value of homes in urban areas.
- New Jersey's public recreation lands support 7,000 jobs.
- Wildlife-related tourism is estimated to generate about \$3 billion of gross economic activity annually, representing about \$1 billion of wage and salary income annually, or about 37,000 jobs.
- Each year, over 2.6 million people participate in hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching in New Jersey, contributing \$1.7 billion to the economy.
- Water treatment and chemical costs decrease by 20% for every 10% increase in forest cover.

Economic Benefits (Continued)

- In one urban park, tree cover was found to remove daily 48 pounds of particulates, nine pounds of nitrogen dioxide, six pounds of sulfur dioxide, and a half pound of carbon monoxide. (\$136 per day value based on pollution control technology.)
- Open spaces in New Jersey support approximately 900 wildlife species.
- Access to parks leads to a 25% increase in people exercising three or more times per week.
- People living in a greener environment report fewer health complaints.

POPULATION TRENDS AND LAND PRESERVATION



New Jersey is unlikely to lose its distinction as the nation's most densely populated state, at over 1,200 per square mile.

- The state added more than 500,000 people, according to the 2020 census, bringing the population to more than 9,288,000, an increase of 5.7%.
- Though New Jersey tends to see more residents leave the state than move in from other states that are offset by immigration from a host of other countries.
- Trends in development in New Jersey are leaning towards redevelopment and land consumption has slowed. (NJ Future)

WHAT IS NEW JERSEY'S NATURE?

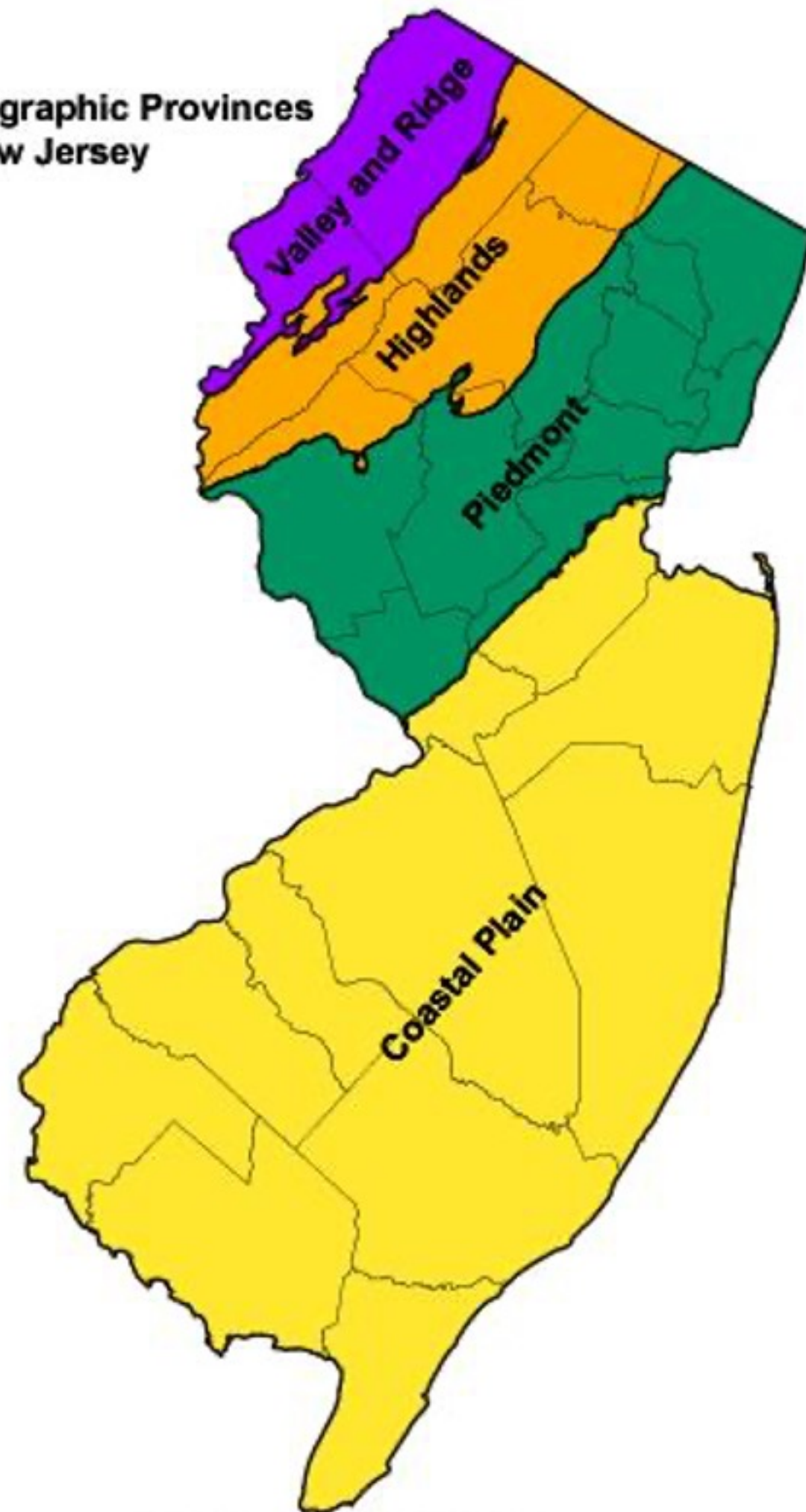


“Nature is the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.”

— OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY

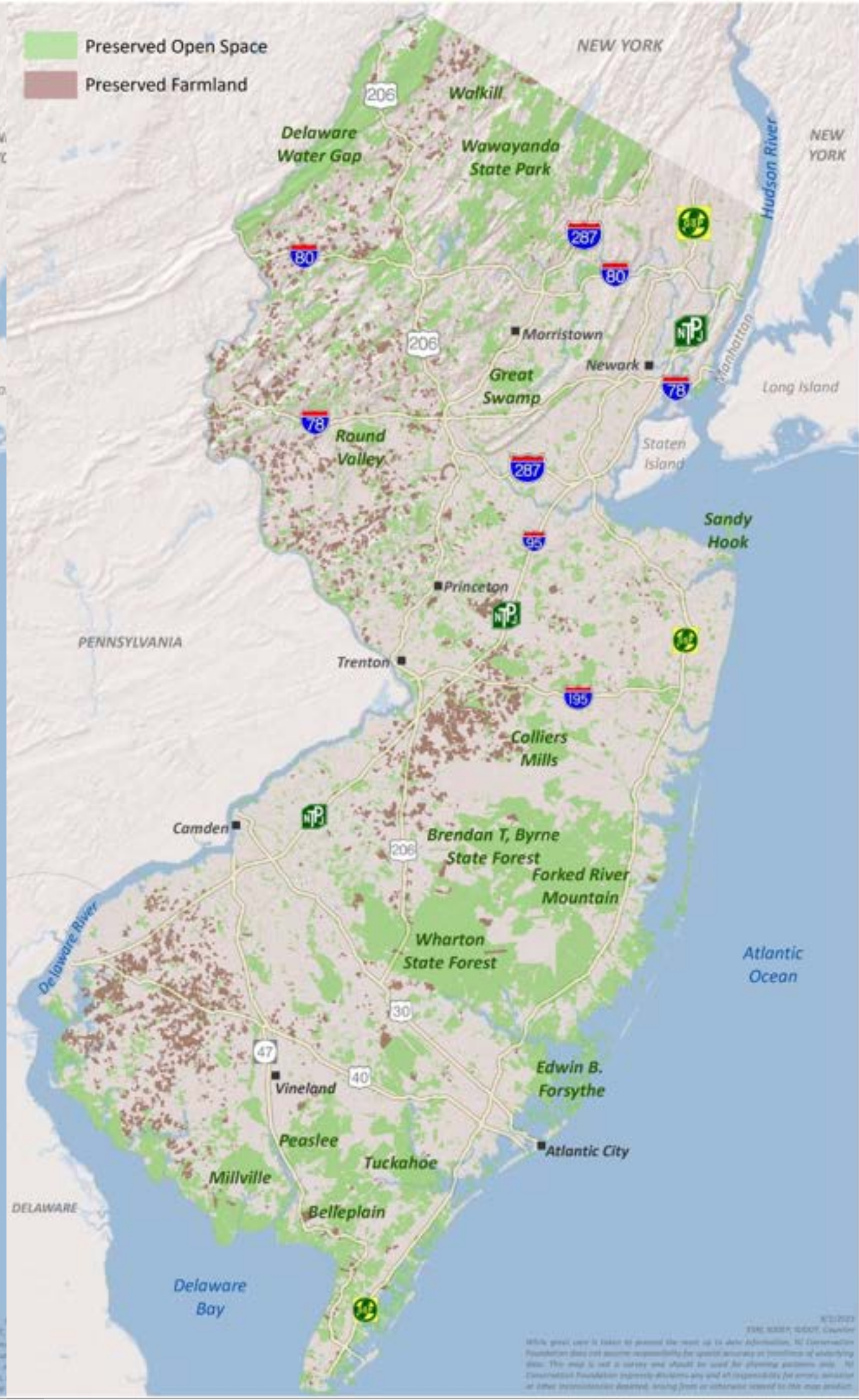
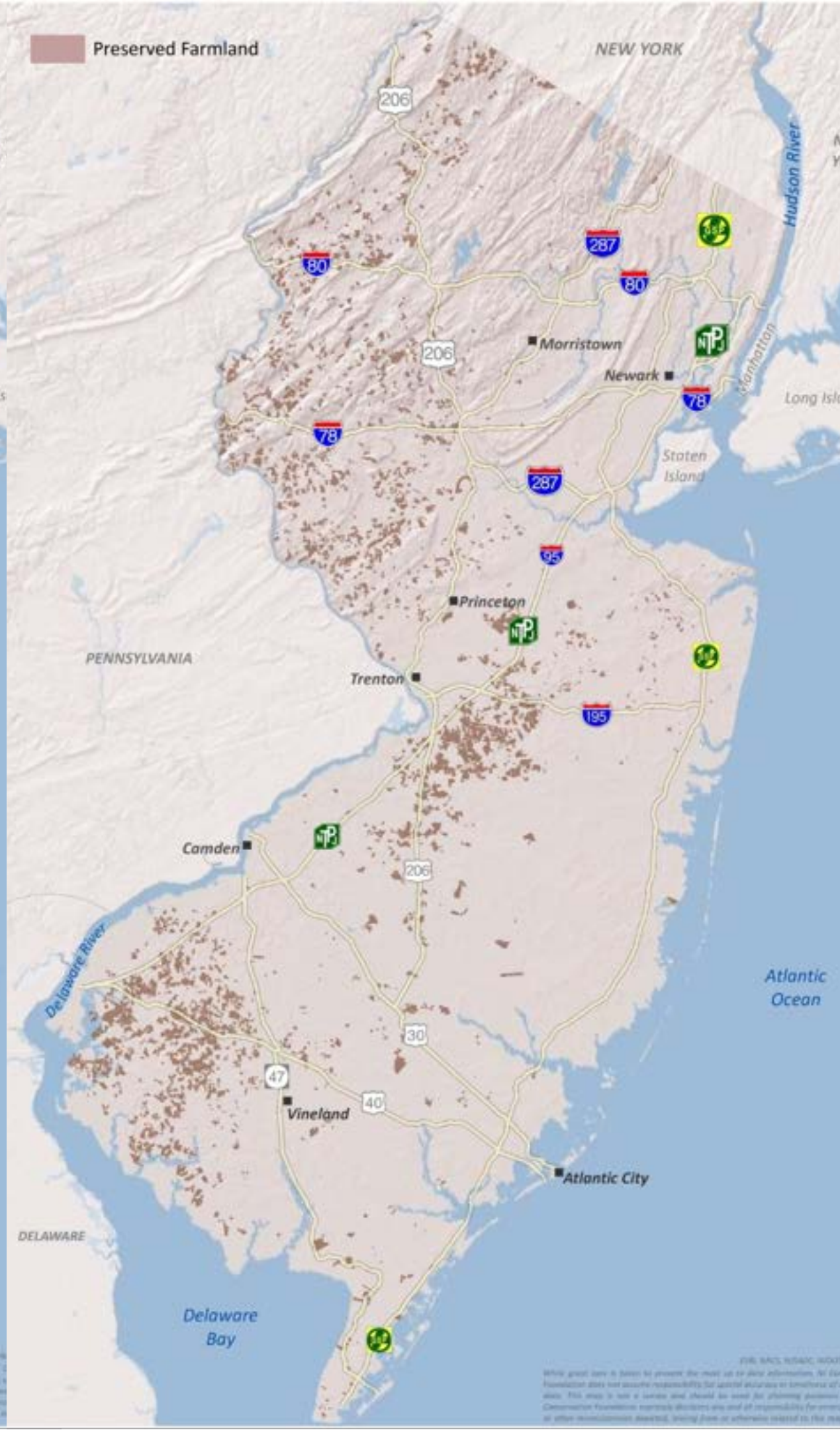
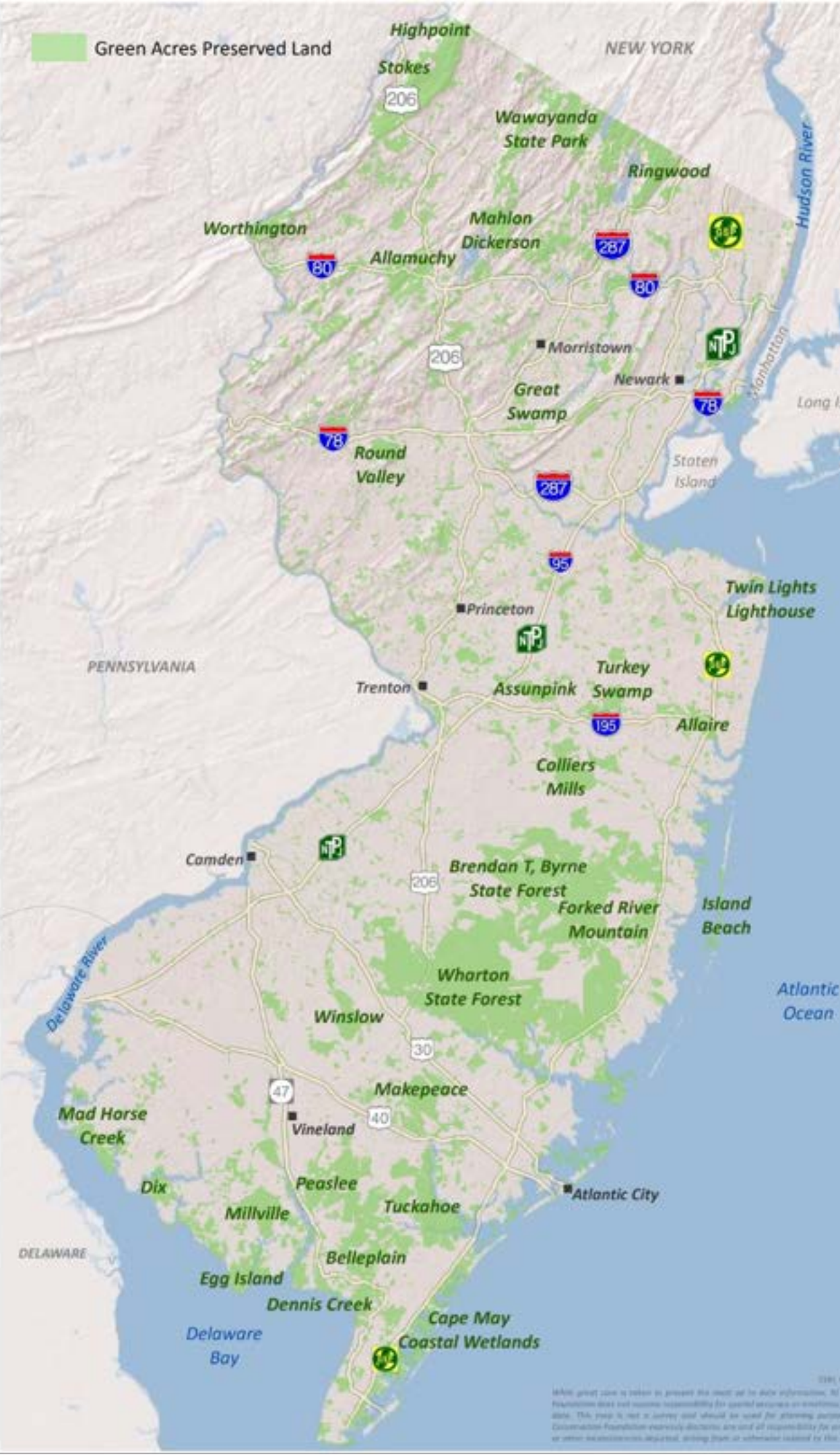


**Physiographic Provinces
Of New Jersey**



County boundaries for reference only.

New Jersey's unique geography and landscapes have much diversity for such a small state.



CONCLUSION



ADVISORS



- JIM AMON, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, D&R CANAL COMMISSION
- Joe Basralian, board member NJ League Conservation Voters
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- Irene Cooper Bausch, former Executive Director, Victoria Foundation
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- Peter Szabo
- Patricia Shanley
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- Ben Spinelli, Executive Director, NJ State Highlands Council
- Chris Sturm, NJ Future
- Meredith Taylor, Rutgers
- Dan Van Abs, Rutgers
- Mike Van Clef, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, NJ Invasive Species Strike Team
- Jim Waltman, Executive Director, Watershed Institute
- Aaron Watson, Mercer County
- Jay Watson, Co Executive Director, New Jersey Conservation Foundation
- Tom Wells, former Administrator NJ Green Acres Program, Nature Conservancy
- Cari Wild, NJ Natural Lands Trust
- Lisa Wolff, Executive Director, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space
- Tom Wright, Executive Director, Regional Plan Association
- Judeth Yeane, counsel, NJ DEP Green Acres Program

STAY CONNECTED

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T H A N K Y O U

