

# OPEN SPACE

## XI

### Summary

According to Borough records, 37% of West Cape May consists of farmland. This area includes wetlands that are currently in agricultural production. Of that 37%, 20% is preserved farmland and 17% is non-preserved farmland. Approximately 11% of the Borough consists of vacant land or Borough owned land. Figure XI-1 graphically illustrates open space in West Cape May.

West Cape May has one park, Willbraham Park, located within the southeast portion of the Borough. It consists of 0.78 of an acre of land area.

Preservation of the currently unprotected farmland combined with the preserved farmland and the area of wetlands located within the Borough, would result in the preservation of a significant amount of West Cape May as open space.

## West Cape May Open Space



**Figure XI-1. Open Space within the Borough of West Cape May.**

Preservation of these areas would ensure critical habitat for migrating wildlife would remain available. It should be noted, areas are not completely protected from development just because they are wetlands; however, due to regulatory constraints, large-scale development is unlikely. To completely protect any area from development, land can be placed into programs such as (but not limited to) the State's Farmland Preservation Program or the Green Acres Program.

### **Partners**

Protecting a significant amount of the land area of West Cape May is a feasible goal, but will require the involvement of a variety of conservation entities: the federal government, the State, the County, the Borough of West Cape May, private nonprofit groups, and perhaps others as well. Long-term management of the land may require the involvement of additional partners. Land conservation is a fairly complex undertaking that often takes years.

### **A Greenway Network**

Ultimately, a network of paths could connect all of the community's key environmental resources and make them accessible by bike or foot. Pedestrians and bicyclists could use the system to visit birding hotspots, beaches, parks, wildlife refuges, and the town's historic district. The trails would be safe, walkable (flat, well-maintained), and scenic. The idea would be to make West Cape May an even more pedestrian friendly place for residents and visitors.

In addition to a potential network of pathways, as previously stated, the Borough has expressed an interest in developing an ocean to bay greenway that would connect the Delaware Bay to the Atlantic Ocean via the Borough's central wetlands corridor. It has been reported that the NJDEP is also interested in the concept of an ocean to bay greenway within West Cape May. Agricultural land could be protected from future development by entering into the State's Farmland Preservation Program. Land can also be preserved and/or developed for recreation through the State's Green Acres Program.