

REPORT ON

PROPOSED EXCHANGE OF  
VACANT PRESERVED PROPERTY

BETWEEN

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
AND  
RIDGE AND VALLEY CONSERVANCY

IN THE

TOWNSHIP OF BLAIRSTOWN,  
COUNTY OF WARREN  
Block 2002, Lots 15.01, 17, 18

[*N.J.S.A.* 13:1D-52]

PREPARED BY  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
GREEN ACRES PROGRAM  
March 2012

## STATUTORY REFERENCE

Under *L. 1993, c. 38*, codified at *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-51* through *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-58*, no lands acquired or developed by the State with Green Acres funds, or developed by the State in any other manner and administered by the Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”), may be conveyed unless the DEP first prepares a report on the proposed conveyance in accordance with *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-52a(1)*, transmits the report to the individuals listed at *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-52a(2)*, makes the report available to the public in accordance with *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-52a(3)* and conducts one or more public hearings as required by *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-52a(4)*. Public notice requirements for the hearings are specified at *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-53* and *-54*. A summary and/or transcript of the public hearing(s) is provided to the DEP Commissioner, the State House Commission and the public under *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-55*. The methodology for valuing lands to be conveyed and the terms of such conveyances are governed by *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-56*.

Once these procedural requirements have been met, the conveyance proposed in this report requires the approval of the DEP Commissioner and the State House Commission. *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-55*; *N.J.S.A. 13:8A-48*; *N.J.S.A. 13:8C-1 et seq.*

## RATIONALE FOR CONVEYANCES

### PROPOSED ACTIONS

On November 21, 2001 the DEP’s Green Acres Program acquired on behalf of the State approximately 96 acres of property in the Township of Blirstown, Warren County for addition to the Kittatinny Valley State Park. The property, known locally as either the Garrique parcel or part of the Limestone Ridge area, is vacant undeveloped land. Although the DEP purchased the property due to its size, natural resource values and proximity to the Paulinskill Trail, it is not adjacent to any other State-owned land. The property is currently managed by the Ridge and Valley Conservancy (“RVC”) on the State’s behalf under a management agreement between the DEP and the RVC and is used by the public for hiking and other passive recreational purposes.

The RVC and the Nature Conservancy (“TNC”) have now proposed to exchange other properties they own, totaling approximately 137 acres and known locally as Tranquility Farms, for the Garrique/Limestone Ridge parcel. The RVC is a non-profit land trust dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the Appalachian Ridge and Valley region of New Jersey, and is active in land preservation in Sussex and Warren counties. TNC is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. TNC’s New Jersey Chapter has protected more than 56,000 acres of land throughout the State.

As currently structured, the proposed land exchange involves the transfer of several properties by TNC to RVC, which will then convey them to the DEP along with other properties already

owned by the RVC. The RVC is interested in obtaining full fee ownership of the Garrigue/Limestone Ridge parcel (which it is already managing on behalf of the State), and, as described below, the properties to be acquired by the DEP are a better fit with the State's holdings from a management perspective.

The properties involved in the proposed exchange are as follows:

Proposed Land Exchange Between The State of New Jersey and Ridge and Valley Conservancy Summary of Acreage Gains and Losses						
Municipality	Block	Lot	Current Owner	Proposed Owner	State to Gain Acres	State to Give up Acres
Lands Owned By Non Profits						
Green	110	1	TNC	State	2.488	
Allamuchy	401	1.01	RVC	State	44.761	
Allamuchy	401	5.01	TNC	State	9.396	
Allamuchy	401	6.03	RVC	State	81.141	
					Total	137.786
Lands Owned By State of New Jersey						
Blairstown	2002	17	State	RVC		13.703
Blairstown	2002	18	State	RVC		38.979
Blairstown	2002	15.01	State	RVC		44.066
					Total	96.748
<b>Net Gain Of Acreage By The State of New Jersey = 41.038</b>						

Six of the seven parcels involved in the proposed land exchange (the three parcels in Allamuchy Township and the three parcels in Blairstown Township) were purchased with Green Acres funds by the nonprofits and the DEP. As a condition of providing funds to the nonprofits, the DEP already holds a conservation restriction on the properties proposed to be conveyed by the RVC (and by the TNC to the RVC.) However, as discussed below, based on the net gain in

acreage to the State and other considerations, the DEP believes the exchange is an equitable one for the State of New Jersey.

Having determined through the Department of Treasury's Real Property Review (RPR) process that no other State agency is interested in using or acquiring the Garrigue/Limestone Ridge parcel, the DEP now proposes to move forward with the land exchange as proposed by RVC and TNC. The advantages of the land exchange for the DEP are discussed below.

Based on consultation with the State Forestry Service, the DEP will retain access to the Garrigue/Limestone Ridge property for wild fire suppression purposes. In addition, the DEP will retain a conservation easement in order to impose permanent open space preservation restrictions on the Garrigue/Limestone Ridge property after it is conveyed to the RVC.

Upon successful completion of the public hearing process, the proposed conveyance will require the approval of the DEP Commissioner and the State House Commission under *N.J.S.A. 13:8C-31*, *N.J.S.A. 13:8C-32* and *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-52*. The DEP hopes to secure these approvals by the Spring of 2012 and to complete the proposed land exchange by the middle of 2012.

## **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES**

In exchange for the conveyance of the 96-acre Garrigue/Limestone Ridge property, which is not a contiguous part of Kittatinny Valley State Park, the DEP will acquire 137 acres currently owned by nonprofit organizations and located adjacent to Allamuchy State Park. The 96-acre Garrigue/Limestone Ridge property will remain permanently preserved for recreation and conservation purposes and will continue to be managed by RVC (whose office is also located in Blairstown). The acreage being acquired by DEP adjacent to Allamuchy State Park will be more manageable for the State Park system.

From the DEP's perspective, a key component of the proposed land exchange is the acquisition of Block 401, Lot 5.01 in Allamuchy Township and Block 110, Lot 1 in Green Township. These two parcels will help fill in a missing portion of a nine-mile segment of the Hudson Lehigh Rail Trail, which is already owned and managed by DEP. If the proposed conveyance does not occur, the DEP would be required to maintain the non-contiguous trail segment and will not have continuity of the trail.

Once the proposed land exchange is completed, the DEP will not have to commit any financial and staff resources for the maintenance of the remote Garrigue/Limestone Ridge site. As discussed above, all the properties involved in the proposed land exchange will remain restricted for recreation and conservation purposes.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

### **Assessment of Environmental Impact and Impact on Plants, Endangered and Non-Game Species**

The DEP is not aware of any threatened or endangered plant or animal species on the portions of the properties proposed for conveyance by the DEP to the RVC. This area has been in a continuous forested state for between 40 and 250 years, and will continue to be maintained by RVC for recreation and conservation purposes under the conservation easement to be retained by the DEP on the property. The proposed land exchange has undergone an internal review by the affected programs within the Department's Natural and Historic Resource Group, including the Nongame and Endangered Species Program, the Natural Heritage Program, the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Parks and Forestry, with no objections raised.

As part of this internal review, the State Historic Preservation Office ("SHPO") determined that the continued use of the Garrique/Limestone Ridge site for recreation and conservation purposes will not adversely affect any historic or archaeological resources. However, the SHPO requested that RVC be required to consult with the SHPO prior to undertaking any development, land clearing and/or ground disturbance within the properties to be conveyed, in order to assess the affect of the proposed activities on historic and archaeological resources. These requirements will be included in the conservation easement to be retained by the DEP on the property.

### **Assessment of Recreational Impact**

The DEP does not anticipate that the proposed land exchange will have a negative recreational impact. The properties proposed to be conveyed to the RVC by the DEP will remain available for public access and use under the conservation easement to be retained by the DEP.

## **ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT**

At the time of acquisition in 2001, the appraisals commissioned by the Green Acres Program as part of the purchase set a value for the 96-acre Garrique/Limestone Ridge parcel of \$275,000.00. The current adjusted assessed value of this site is \$386,900.00.<sup>1</sup>

The 137-acre parcel to be acquired by DEP as part of the proposed land exchange was purchased by the RVC and TNC in 2001 for approximately \$303,325.00, broken down as follows:

125.40 acres acquired by Ridge and Valley Conservancy	\$250,000.00
11.85 acres acquired by The Nature Conservancy	\$ 53,325.00

The current adjusted assessed value of this site is \$722,070.00.

The NJDEP has not commissioned a current appraisal of the properties involved in the proposed land exchange. However, given the adjusted assessed values listed above and the proposed net gain of approximately 46 acres in State ownership if the proposed exchange is completed, even if the value of Green Acres-funded properties is discounted substantially due to their preserved status, the Green Acres Program review appraiser has determined that the proposed exchange is an equitable one for the State of New Jersey.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

In accordance with *N.J.S.A.* 13:1D-52a(4), public hearings will be scheduled on the proposed conveyances as follows:

The **first public hearing** will be held on **May 24, 2012** at **6:30 PM** at:

Blairstown Township Municipal Building  
106 New Jersey Route 94  
Blairstown, New Jersey 07825  
(908) 362-6663

The **second public hearing** will be held on **June 7, 2012** at **3:30 PM** at:

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
501 East State Street  
4<sup>th</sup> floor large conference room  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

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<sup>1</sup> The adjusted assessed value is determined by applying an equalization ratio (also known as the Director's ratio) promulgated by the Department of Treasury to the assessed value in order to allow comparison of values between municipalities and to provide a more accurate representation of the market value of the property.

## **EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1      Public Hearing Notice (3 pages)
- Exhibit 2      General Location Map of NJDEP Property to be Conveyed
- Exhibit 3      Aerial Map of NJDEP Properties Proposed for Conveyance
- Exhibit 4      Aerial Map of Properties to be Acquired by NJDEP

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For further information, please contact:

### Department of Environmental Protection

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Trenton, NJ 08625-0420  
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## **DISTRIBUTION LIST**

Commissioner Bob Martin, DEP  
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Assistant Commissioner Amy Cradic  
Assistant Director John Trontis, Division of Parks and Forestry, DEP  
Richard Boornazian, Administrator, Green Acres Program, DEP  
Dave Chanda, Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife, New Jersey DEP  
Administrator Daniel Saunders, State Historic Preservation Office, DEP  
Judeth Yeany, Chief, Bureau of Legal Services and Stewardship, Green Acres Program, DEP

Frank Anderson, Mayor, Township of Blirstown  
Phyllis E. Pizzaia - RMC, Clerk, Township of Blirstown

Patricia J. Kolb, Clerk, County of Warren

Hon. Paul A. Sarlo, Chair, Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee  
Hon. Jim Whelan, Chair Senate State Government Committee  
Hon. Bob Smith, Chair, Senate Environment Committee  
Hon. Nelson T. Albano, Chair, Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Hon. Grace Spencer, Chair, Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee  
Hon. John Burzichelli, Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Hon. Linda Stender, Chair Assembly State Government Committee

Robert J. Shaughnessy, Secretary, State House Commission

## PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

### Department of Environmental Protection

#### Green Acres Program

#### Notice of Public Hearings on Proposed Exchange of Property with Ridge and Valley Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy (Green Township, Sussex County and Allamuchy and Blirstown Townships, Warren County)

**Take Notice** that in accordance with *N.J.S.A. 13:1D-51 through -58*, the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”), Green Acres Program, will hold two **public hearings** to seek comments on the proposed exchange of property with Ridge and Valley Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy in Green Township, Sussex County and Allamuchy and Blirstown Townships, Warren County.

The DEP property proposed for exchange is a 96-acre parcel of property acquired by the Green Acres Program for the Division of Parks and Forestry in 2001 as an addition to the Kittatinny Valley State Park. The property, known locally as the Garrique parcel, is designated for tax purposes as Block 2002, Lots 15.01, 17, 18 in the Township of Blirstown, Warren County. The street address for the property to be exchanged is the corner of Route 94 and Route 521, Blirstown, New Jersey 07825.

The 96-acre parcel to be conveyed is wooded upland forest and will be conveyed subject to a conservation restriction. The DEP is considering conveying this parcel to The Ridge and Valley Conservancy (“RVC”) in exchange for properties currently owned by RVC and the Nature Conservancy (“TNC”). The properties to be acquired by the DEP total 137 acres and are known locally as Tranquility Farms Preserve. The properties to be conveyed by RVC and TNC are: Block 110, Lot 1 in Green Township, Sussex County (2.488 acres) and Block 401, Lots 1.01, 5.01 and 6.03 in Allamuchy Township, Warren County (totaling 134.704 acres.) The street addresses for these properties are Kennedy Road in Green Township (for Block 110, Lot 1), Maple Lane in Allamuchy Township (for Block 401, Lot 1.01), 80 Johnsonburg Road in Allamuchy Township (for Block 401, Lot 5.01) and Johnsonburg Road in Allamuchy Township (for Block 401, Lot 6.03.)

At the conclusion of the proposed exchange, all properties will remain as restricted open space and will be available for public use. A copy of a report analyzing the exchange, including maps and a more detailed description of the exchange, is available online at [www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/notices.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/notices.htm).

State House Commission approval is required for this proposal. If approved, the Department anticipates that the exchange will occur in late 2012.

The **first public hearing** on the proposed sale of this property will be held on:

May 24, 2012 at 6:30 PM at the

Blairstown Township Municipal Building  
106 New Jersey Route 94  
Blairstown, New Jersey 07825  
(908) 362-6663

The hearing record for the first public hearing will close on June 7, 2012. Interested persons may obtain information from Richard Osborn in the Green Acres Program or John G. Trontis in the Division of Parks and Forestry at the addresses below and may submit written comments to Mr. Osborn until the close of business on June 7, 2012.

The **second public hearing** will be held on:

June 7, 2012 at 3:30 PM at the

Department of Environmental Protection  
501 E. State Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

The hearing record for the second public hearing will close on June 21, 2012. Interested persons may obtain information from Richard Osborn in the Green Acres Program or John G. Trontis in the Division of Parks and Forestry at the address below and may submit written comments to Mr. Osborn until the close of business on June 21, 2012.

Persons wishing to make oral presentations at either of the public hearings are asked to bring a written copy of their comments to the hearing for use by the Department. For further information on the proposal, please contact:

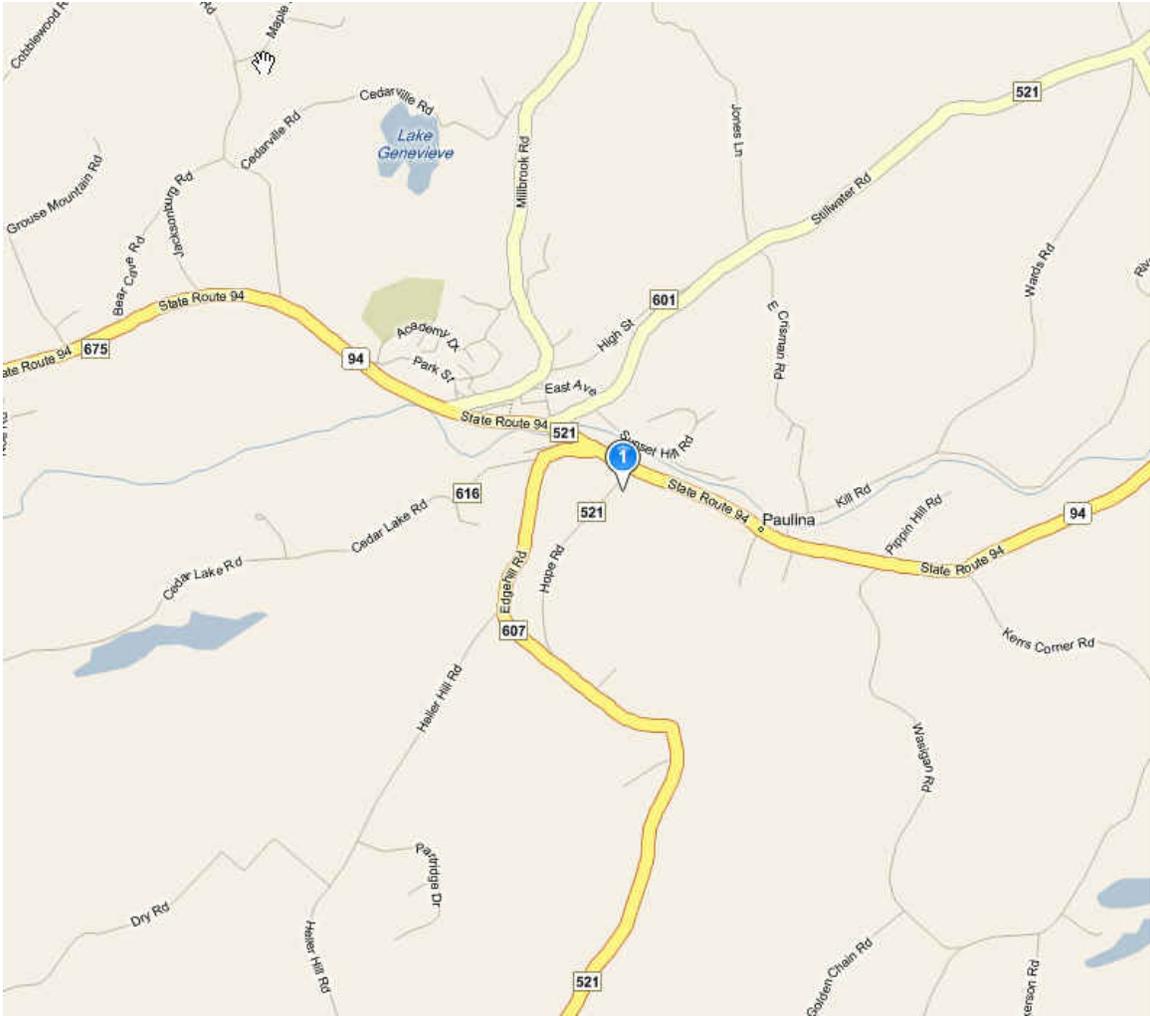
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DATE: 12/21/2011

  
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Bob Martin, Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection

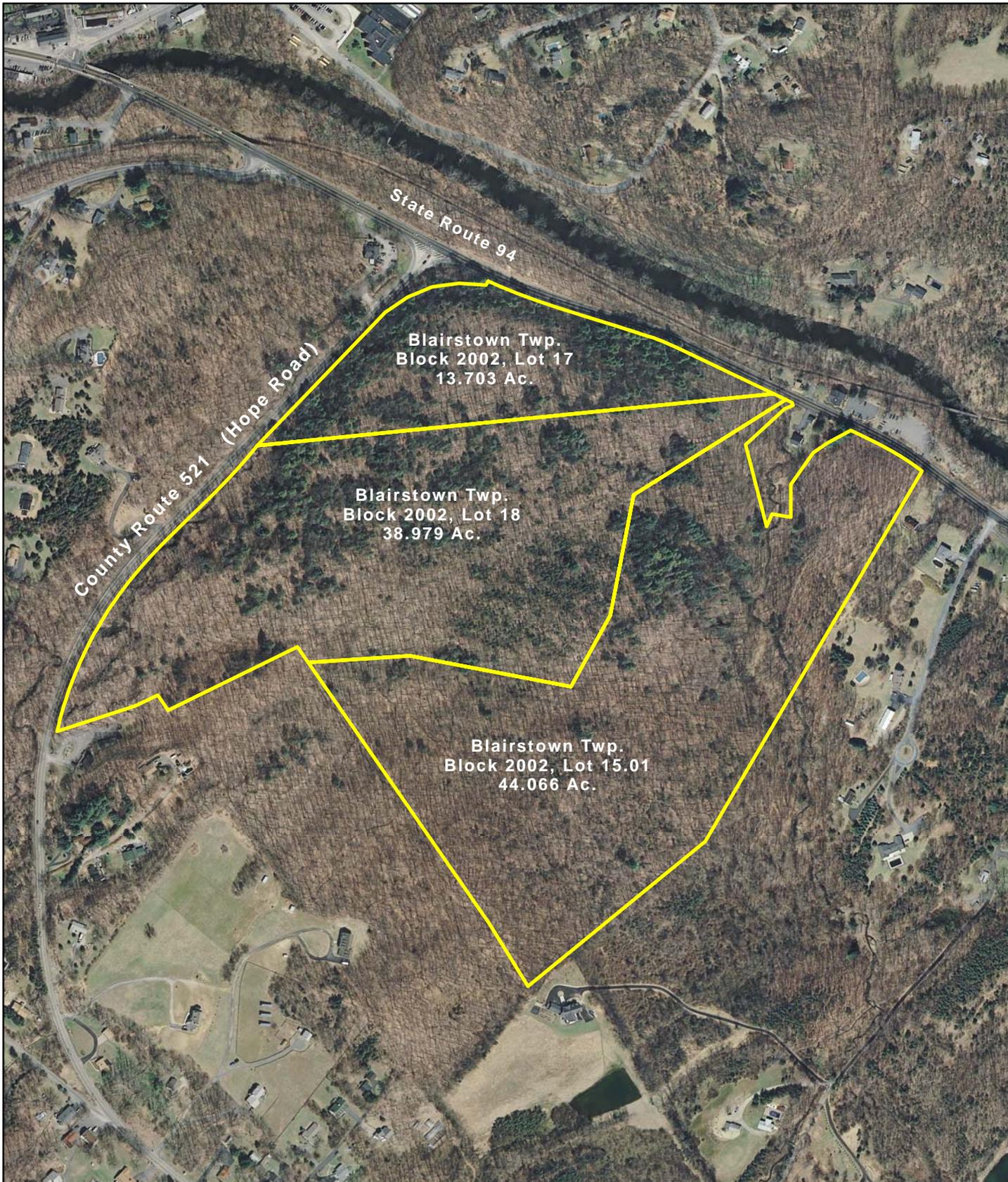
EXHIBIT 2



GENERAL LOCATION MAP FOR PROPOSED NJDEP LAND SWAP

Blairstown Township, Warren County  
Block 2002 Lots 15.01, 17, 18  
Corner of Route 521 and Route 94  
Blairstown, New Jersey 07825

# State of New Jersey Land Exchange with Ridge and Valley Conservancy Lands to be Exchanged by the State to Nonprofit for Lands in Allamuchy Township



Blairstown Township  
Warren County



Land Parcels State of New Jersey to Receive  
from Ridge and Valley Conservancy and  
The Nature Conservancy  
137.786 acres

Green Township  
Block 110/Lot 1  
2.488 acres

Allamuchy Township  
Block 401/Lot 5.01  
9.396 acres

Allamuchy Township  
Block 401/Lot 1.01  
44.761 acres

Allamuchy Township  
Block 401/Lot 6.03  
81.141 acres

Warren County

Sussex County

Allamuchy State Park

County Route 517

County Route 612

