



**MILLSTONE TOWNSHIP**  
**AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COUNCIL**  
**FALL/WINTER 2020**



### *Letter from the Chair*

The residents of Millstone Township are fortunate to enjoy vast amounts of beautiful Open Space land dispersed among the residential areas. For those residents who have lived here their entire life, they have witnessed many changes, but for many others, the open space has been the attraction that has brought them to this wonderful community. Collectively, we stand together and support the preservation of open space and farmland which fosters our quality of life and quiet living.

As the Open Space Preservation Council, we are charged with the acquisition and maintenance of the Open Space that exists and remains available throughout the town. As residents, we are all responsible for the care and preservation of the spaces that are integral to our community. Fires could have devastating effects to wildlife, residences, and environmental resources. By taking a few precautions, we can avoid the devastation associated with Open Space wildfires.

The United States Forest Services reported that there are around 68,000 wildfires every year in the United States. Approximately 7.4 million acres of forest is burned with nine out of ten wildfires being caused by humans. Less than ten percent of forest fires are caused naturally during a drought by lightning strikes that ignite dry grass and /or trees. The remaining wildfires are due to some form of human contribution such as campfires, fireworks, yard waste burning, cigarettes and/or vehicles.

For most of us while visiting open space areas, the threat of cigarettes and vehicles rise to the top of the list. To prevent cigarettes from starting wildfires, always dispose of them in places where they cannot be a source of ignition. Placing a cigarette in a bottle of water after use is a great way to prevent them from causing fires. Never simply discard a cigarette on the ground or throw it out a car window. Regardless of what type of vehicles you use, it is important to be mindful of the role vehicles can play in starting wildfires. Never park any type of vehicle on dry vegetation; the heat from the exhaust can cause it to ignite. Also, make sure any off-road vehicle you use has a working spark arrester as improper ones can cause dry vegetation ignitions.

Every year wildfires destroy thousands of homes and businesses all over the United States. This is why it is so important to be aware of the potential for wildfires. The preservation and protection of open space remains threatened but can be limited by our residents taking the following steps:

1. Create safety zones around the home; recommendations include a 30 foot and 100-foot safety zone that eliminates and reduces the amount of open vegetation and dried brush.
2. Ensure flues and chimneys have spark arresters.
3. Inappropriately used fireworks cause wildfires: It is important to note that it is illegal to use fireworks in forested areas; Fireworks are illegal in Millstone Township.
4. Fireworks are enjoyable to watch but as the saying goes, leave it to the professionals.
5. Firepit safety rules should be followed as to their placement and use, a fire extinguisher should always be available.

By taking a few precautions, we can avoid the devastation associated with open space wildfires.

***Kelly Scott (Chair of the Open Space Preservation Council)***



## Birds of Millstone



There is not a Millstone resident that wouldn't agree that there is nothing better than a cup of coffee in their yard on a sunny morning. As quiet and serene as our great town is, you cannot ignore the sound of nature echoing and sometimes blaring in the background. Chances are it's the birds chirping that woke you this morning and led you to that cup of coffee.

Millstone is home to plenty of wildlife and the various species of birds contribute a great deal to that population. People are most familiar with our resident turkey vultures. They can be seen circling in a cult like fashion or chowing down on the latest roadkill. Other birds of prey Millstone is home to include: Red Tailed, Red Shouldered, Broad Winged, Coopers, and Sharp Shinned hawks. Prairie, American Kestrel, and Merlin Falcons and both Screech and Great Horned Owls can be seen soaring overhead day or night. The largest of the birds of prey can be found here as well. Bald Eagles, standing nearly three feet tall, can be spotted in the tree lines near our waterways along with another fish eater, the Osprey. A visit to Assunpink Wildlife Management Area almost guarantees a glance at one of the majestic birds mentioned above plus the many Waterfowl and Gulls. Other feathered friends found at Assunpink can also be found right in your yard. Several different types of Woodpeckers, Swallows, Warblers, Sparrows, Finches, and Blackbirds can be found in your landscaping. Along with Blue Jays, Fly Catchers, Vireos, Chickadees, Orioles, and Wrens.



The favorite of all my backyard visitors is the Hummingbird. We look forward to their arrival each April and attract them with colorful flowers and feeders that are filled with the recommended one-part pure cane sugar to four-parts water. For residents interested in feeding the many types of birds listed, understand it comes with responsibility of maintaining and cleaning all feeders and houses regularly to avoid illness and

death to the birds. Also keep in mind, feeders will attract other wildlife including raccoons, squirrels, groundhogs, chipmunks, feral cats, and even foxes. Many of us are equal opportunity feeders but you may want to reconsider it if you want to avoid other visitors. Many encounters with our wildlife are regularly posted on our Millstone Open Space And Farm Land Preservation Page on Facebook.

**\*\* Photos Courtesy of Michelle Datello**





## The Mighty Honey Bee!



Honey bees are a garden delight. Their friendly buzzing and activity through one's flower bed or vegetable garden bring a sense of true whimsy. However, though they may appear delicate, bees are a might force in the world of agriculture and are truly a powerful asset. According to the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) article titled, Helping Agriculture's Helpful Honey Bees, "Honey bees are big money makers for U.S. agriculture. These social and hardworking insects produce six hive products – honey, pollen, royal jelly, beeswax, propolis, and venom – all collected and used by people for various nutritional and medicinal purposes." Per USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) statistics, in 2016 honey bees produced approximately 163 million pounds of honey correlating to an estimated value of \$339 million dollars.

While honey may be the best known and economically important hive product, it is their tireless work as a crop pollinator that is the most beneficial role. "This agricultural benefit of honey bees is estimated to be between 10 and 20 times the total value of honey and beeswax. In fact, bee pollination accounts for about \$15 billion in added crop value. Honey bees are like flying dollar bills buzzing over U.S. crops.", per the FDA. With honey bees facing constant pressure from bacterial hive diseases, parasites and commercial pesticides, preserving their very existence is a critical factor to the sustainability of global agriculture.

Within the hive itself, the honey bees interact in a very industrious and harmonious way. The hive contains the colony which consists of worker bees (undeveloped females), drones (males) and the single queen bee. In a single day, worker bees make about a dozen trips out of the hive spanning 2-5 miles in distance from the hive with the ability to visit several thousand flowers in one day. Today, the commercial agricultural production of more than 90 crops relies on this very act of bee pollination. Per the FDA, "Of the approximately 3,600 bee species that live in the U.S., the European honey bee (scientific name *Apis mellifera*) is the most common pollinator, making it the most important bee to domestic agriculture. About one-third of the food eaten by Americans comes from crops pollinated by honey bees, including apples, melons, cranberries, pumpkins, squash, broccoli, and almonds, to name just a few. Without the industrious honey bee, American dinner plates would look quite bare."

Honey bees are indispensable to agriculture, yet their future and the future of the dependent agricultural economies are in a state of peril. Beekeepers, or apiarists, have a crucial task to monitor and protect their hives at all levels, from backyard hives to commercial operations. So, the next time you catch a glimpse of the mighty honey bee, take a moment to remember the importance these amazing creatures!

If you are interested in purchasing local Millstone Township honey, a Jersey Fresh product, visit Anna & Angelo Trapani's farm, A. Trapani Farm, marketing Trapper's Honey! Website: [www.trappershoney.com](http://www.trappershoney.com)

## Fire Precautions

To Millstone Residents,

During these crisp fall days, fire safety should be on the mind. Millstone is an environmentally sensitive area with many open spaces and farmlands. **Fires could have devastating effects to wildlife, residences, and environmental resources.** Open spaces full of dead leaves and branches create opportunities for wildfires to start. It is important as residents of Millstone Township that we extinguish all campfires and fireplaces as to minimize the spread of flames. According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the best way for someone to prevent fires are to:

Protect the Roof  
Prevent Chimney and Flue Fires  
Landscape Plantings  
Home Identification

Remove Dead Limbs & Leaves  
Protect from Flammables  
Green Lawns  
Access Road and Escape Route

Please help protect Millstone's open spaces and wildlife by keeping these precautions in mind as we enjoy the beautiful fall weather.



## *Was That A Coyote I Just Saw?*

Yes! There are coyotes in New Jersey and in Millstone too! Many residents noticed an animal passing by that resembled a dog? Or a fox? But in some cases it could have been a coyote!

In New Jersey, adult coyotes range in weight from 20-50 lbs. and exceptionally large ones may be up to 55 lbs. Coyotes are social animals and commonly yip, bark, and howl to communicate; with the urban dwellers being much quieter. They are most active at night and in the early morning. Coyotes adjust well to their surroundings and use sheltered areas, burrows, hollow trees, rock crevices, and thick underbrush as well as under shed and decks as dens and resting areas. They are tolerant of human activities and readily adapt to a changing environment.



Coyotes are primarily carnivorous, but also opportunistic surviving on whatever food is available. Their diet tends to reflect the most abundant prey species in the area and commonly includes birds, small rodents, rabbits, carrion (decaying tissue), deer, waterfowl, livestock, poultry, young and weakened deer, and free ranging pets. Seasonally they eat fruits and berries. In areas such as ours, they eat garbage and pet food left outside. Attacks on small dogs and cats are common; attacks on people are rare but increasing. It is important to make sure your pets are vaccinated for rabies as a precaution. Recently, there have been several attacks on horses which indicates an increasing hungry population.

Coyotes bear litters during April and May, with females delivering three and nine pups. The pups will stay with the family until the next litter is born. Conflicts between coyotes and humans are most likely to develop as adults forage for food for the pups in the spring and the summer.

### **Coyote Precautions**

The following guidelines can help reduce the likelihood of conflicts with coyotes:

- Never feed a coyote. Deliberately feeding coyotes puts pets and other residents in the neighborhood at risk.
- Feeding pet cats and/or feral (wild) cats outdoors can attract coyotes. The coyotes feed on the pet food and also prey upon the cats.
- Put garbage in tightly closed containers that cannot be tipped over.
- Remove sources of water, especially in dry climates.
- Bring pets in at night.
- Put away bird feeders at night to avoid attracting rodents and other coyote prey.
- Provide secure enclosures for rabbits, poultry, and other farm animals.
- Pick up fallen fruit and cover compost piles.
- Although extremely rare, coyotes have been known to attack humans. Parents should monitor their children, even in familiar surroundings, such as backyards.
- Install motion-sensitive lighting around the house.
- Clear brush and dense weeds from around dwellings - this reduces protective cover for coyotes and makes the area less attractive to rodents and rabbits. Coyotes, as well as other predators, are attracted to areas where rodents are concentrated like woodpiles.
- If coyotes are present, make sure they know they're not welcome. Make loud noises, blast a canned air siren, or spray them with a garden hose.



## The Warehouse Threat

Recently Millstone Township and our surrounding neighbors have been fielding calls and have received applications for warehouse development. This trend became noticeable several years ago when online buying took off. Now with the prolonged pandemic everyone is encouraged to limit their public exposure resulting in increased online shopping for everyday essentials. This has set off a stampede of the industry looking for warehousing sites with close proximity to major thoroughfares. Our town which is centrally located with direct access to Routes 33, 537, 195 and the NJ Turnpike, is unfortunately a perfect area to house distribution centers.

Millstone however is the headwaters for five watersheds and located in the environmentally sensitive 4B planning area, serviced solely by well and septic systems. Our open land acts as a collection area for recharge into the aquifers, purifies our drinking water and saves endangered wildlife and plant habitat. We have some of the richest soils in the state. The western Monmouth Panhandle is the epicenter of the county's agricultural industry.



Our Master Plan reflects our responsible approach to preservation of our valuable, natural resources; our land, our water, and our forests. Our zoning map has carefully laid out a plan for development that balances careful residential development with areas for commercial development on the major exterior roadways. While our master plan encourages preservation of both farmland and open space, the Township diligently moves forward in a way to ensure the protection of our natural resources and quality of life for future generations. We have 7,800 acres of open space (barren land, forest, water, and wetlands) of which 6,338 acres, accounting for 53%, are preserved. We have 4,968 acres of agricultural land, an active farmland preservation program that has to date preserved 1,462 acres.

It is important that Millstone and its' residents speak in one voice as we did in October, to discourage rezoning of our valuable open lands from being used for warehouse distribution. Instead, we should encourage the redevelopment of the buildings and sites that succumbed to the economic losses, exasperated by the pandemic, such as the large brick and mortar stores, office complexes and paved parking areas. Some predict we will never go back to the way things were...there will be a new normal that encompasses more work from home and less in-person shopping. Millstoners continue to forge ahead to preserve as much of our land base as we can.

**Pat Butch - Chair of the Agricultural Advisory Council**

## Preserving Peplowski Farm



The Peplowski Farm, owned by Raymond and Jean Peplowski, was preserved on June 7, 2020 through the Millstone Township Planning Incentive Grant program. The farm, 9.6 acres, Block 35, Lot 11 is located at 503 Stagecoach Road and was in operation for 55 years. The farm contains two non-severable exception areas; one for a future residential home and one for an area on the farm that is excepted from the restrictions that will give flexibility to the farm operation to remain viable in the future. Neither exception area can ever be subdivided, transferred or conveyed separately from the farm.

We had the opportunity to interview Mr. Peplowski:

**Q:** When did you begin farming in Millstone?

**A:** "In 1965 my father, Leo "Peppy" Peplowski and I bought the farm from Ward Bennett. My farming was interrupted when I served a tour in the navy for 7 years."

**Q:** What kind of farming did you and your Dad do?

**A:** "We grew vegetables—all kinds. For 15 years we also grew in the greenhouse.

We started our seedlings there. We had a farm stand on a wagon by the road. We even had a couple of steers."

**Q:** When did you stop farming?

**A:** "In 2018 I retired from farming and decided to sell. Since then I have rented my land to another farmer."

**Q:** Why did you go into farmland preservation?

**A:** "I like the idea of leaving the land in the hands of another farmer...less concrete in town!"

**Q:** Are you planning to sell?

**A:** "Yes, the farm is under contract to a young local family who plans to build a home and farm."

Ray shared with us that he and Jean hope to see us at the Clambake this year!

Preserved farms are a wonderful opportunity for a new generation of farmers to be able to afford land in Millstone. The age of the average farmer is now over 70. The size of the average farm is declining in NJ. In order to keep farms viable, new trends in farming are emerging that bring new local products: new varieties of vegetables, berries and nuts, value added products, cottage industry items, or local organic meat products. We will have to wait to see what comes to Millstone next!

To date Millstone Township has preserved 1462 acres, of 4968 acres of farmland, or 29% of Millstone Township agricultural land. Way to go, Millstone!



**TOWNSHIP OF MILLSTONE**  
Agricultural Advisory Council  
Open Space Preservation Council  
470 Stage Coach Road  
Millstone Township, NJ 08510

PRSR STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM RETAIL

**LOCAL POSTAL CUSTOMER**

**Millstone Township Committee**

*Fiore Masci, Mayor*  
*Nancy A. Grbelja, Deputy Mayor*  
*Gary Dorfman*  
*Al Ferro*  
*Michael Kuczinski*

**Open Space Preservation Council**

*Kelly Scott, Chairperson*  
*Pat Butch, Vice Chairperson*  
*Mark Blackwell*  
*Amy Butewicz*  
*Michelle Datello*  
*Nancy A. Grbelja (Deputy Mayor)*  
*Gene Madeam*  
*Diane Morelli*  
*Rose Oxley*  
*Sandra Riggan*  
*Jeff Smith*

**Agricultural Advisory Council**

*Pat Butch, Chairperson*  
*George Asprocolas, Vice Chairperson*  
*Amy Butewicz*  
*Shirley Pinhas*  
*Kate Posten*  
*Randy Peck*  
  
*Nancy A. Grbelja,*  
*Township Committee Liaison*

**Happy Holidays**  
**&**  
**A Healthy New Year**