

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Prepared to address the
GREEN ACRES PROGRAM
JAKE'S LAW PLAYGROUND FUNDING APPLICATION

For The

Grekoski Park Improvements
Block 371, Lot 1.01
Block 375, Lot 1
Block 376, Lots 1.01 & 2

For
The Borough of South River
48 Washington Street
South River, NJ 08882

Prepared by:



CONSULTING AND MUNICIPAL ENGINEERS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS**PAGE**

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

1

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION

2

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

4

MITIGATING MEASURES

4

AUTHOR(S) AND QUALIFICATIONS

5



DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

- a. The Borough of South River is proposing to replace the site's existing exercise equipment area with an inclusive playground, install a gazebo on the existing tot lot to create a quiet area and construct an ADA walkway to connect the amenities to the existing concession building. These proposed improvements at Grekoski Park will contain features that will be beneficial to all residents and visitors.
- b. The purpose of this project is to ensure the construction of the inclusive playground, gazebo and walkway to the concession building to benefit the community.
- c. This project is not anticipated to be a multi-phase project.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

- a. **Vegetation**

The site area is partially forested and partial open. The adjacent forested areas contain assorted established hardwoods in addition to a variety of understory and other tree species. An oak tree exists in the center of the site's exercise equipment and few trees surround the tot lot.

- b. **Wildlife**

Given there is existing recreational area at Grekoski Park, there would be a minimal impact on any wildlife presence in the area. Based on the NJDEP's GeoWeb Landscape Layer, there is nearby foraging habitat for Osprey, Bald Eagle, Yellow-crowned Night heron and Red-headed Woodpecker. There also an identified nesting colony for Yellow-crowned Night-heron west of the park. The project will have no effect on these species because the species are not critically dependent on this area for survival. This work will not destroy, jeopardize, or adversely affect a present or documented habitat for threatened and endangered species and will not jeopardize the continued existence of any local populations.

- c. **Geology, Topography, and Soils**

The project site's surficial geology consists of lower stream terrace deposits with a lithology of sand, pebble gravel, minor silt and cobble gravel. Colors consist of reddish brown, yellowish brown, and reddish yellow. These layers can be as much as 30 feet thick. Surficial geology also consists of weathered coastal plain formations with a lithology of exposed sand and clay of Coastal Plain bedrock formations, including thin, patchy alluvium and colluvium, and pebbles left from erosion of surficial deposits.



Topography on site reaches a high point along Whitehead Avenue to the west and generally slopes towards Bissette's Pond and the South River.

The USDA Websoil Survey online resource shows the proposed work area to be within an area overlain by Hammonton loamy sand (HbmB).

Hammonton loamy sand – 0 to 5 percent slope, moderately well drained. A typical profile consists of 0 to 18 inches of loamy sand, 18 to 36 inches of sandy loam, and 36 to 80 inches of stratified sand to clay.

d. Water Resources/Hydrology

The site contains Bissette's Pond which is located near the proposed playground. Additionally, freshwater wetlands were identified on site. Based on the proposed concept, NJDEP permits will be required to permit the activities within regulated areas. Additionally, the South River exists east of the site and will not be impact as a result of this project.

e. Historic/Archaeological Resources

This site is not a historical or archaeological site according to NJ-GeoWeb.

f. Transportation/Access

The park includes two parking lots that provide access to the baseball fields, playgrounds, basketball court, and pond on site. The proposed construction of the inclusive playground, gazebo and walkway will not impact site access other than during construction.

g. Adjacent Land Uses

The site is bordered by wooded areas to the north and south and South River on the East. The immediate project area is mapped as recreational land. The rest of the park area is mapped as Deciduous Forest (10-50% crown closure), Deciduous Brush/Shrubland, and Deciduous Wooded Wetlands.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION

- a. There is potential for some hardwoods and evergreens to be remove as a result of the gazebo although, the removal of trees will be avoided as much as possible. There is an existing oak tree in the middle of the exercise equipment which will be removed to install a playground surface.

The proposed playground will be located within the riparian zone of Bissette's Pond and within a disturbed freshwater wetland transition area. These two resources are regulated



by the NJDEP and construction within these areas will require compliance with the State regulations.

- b. The short-term impact will be a loss of use of Grekoski Park while the construction is underway. Once construction is complete, use of the park should be increased. Long-term impacts will ideally increase park use.
- c. Given the proposed improvements, it is anticipated that the parks overall use will increase.
- d. As previously stated, the adjacent environmental features that will be impacted by the proposed improvements will include the riparian zone and freshwater wetland transition area.
- e. No permits have been applied for or obtained as of the date of this assessment although, the following appear necessary;
 - I. NJDEP FWWL Transition Area Waiver
Fee estimate per NJDEP Fee Schedule:
 $\$1,000 + \$100/\text{acre of disturbed area (rounded to 1 acre)}$
 $\$1,000 + \$100 (1 \text{ acres}) = \$1,100$
 - II. NJDEP FWWL LOI
Freshwater wetlands and freshwater wetland transition areas were only located on Block 371, Lot 1.01 and Block 376, Lot 1.01 & Lot 2, therefore these 3 lots were used to calculate the LOI fee.
Fee estimate per NJDEP Fee Schedule:
 $\$1,000 + \$100/\text{acre of the site}$
 $\$1,000 + \$100 (21 \text{ acres}) = \$3,100$
 - III. NJDEP FHA Individual Permit
Fee estimate per NJDEP Fee Schedule:
\$3,000 Base Fee
- f. A Natural Heritage Database search was requested on January 10th, 2024. The results can be forwarded when received.
- g. Sea level rise should not have an impact on this project as there is a significant change in elevation between the South River and the proposed improvements.



ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

- a. Dailey's Pond Recreation Area was considered as an alternate location however, Grekoski Park was ultimately chosen based on the age of the existing equipment. Alternative configurations were also explored.
- b. Alternative 1, the preferred alternative, proposes to construct an inclusive playground, a gazebo and an ADA walkway to connect the areas together and provide access to the concession building. This will meet the goal of the proposed project and provide additional amenities to the community.

Alternative 2 would include just the inclusive playground and ADA walkway.

Alternative 3 would be the "no-build" alternative which will not meet the goal of the project.

- c. The three alternatives do not differ significantly in environmental impacts. Alternative 1 would impact disturbed freshwater wetland transition areas and the riparian zone. Disturbed transition areas are considered transition areas that are currently not acting as transition areas, as they are already previously disturbed. The existing exercise equipment is within a woodchip bed and the gazebo is proposed on an existing tot lot.

Alternative 2 would result in similar impacts to alternative one. Since the gazebo is proposed where the existing tot lot is, there will not be any significant change in impact should it be constructed.

Alternative 1 and 2 would also include non-vegetated riparian zone disturbance, which is not regulated as a disturbance under the Flood Hazard Area Control Act rules.

Alternative 3 would result in zero environmental impacts however, this alternative would not meet the goal of the project.

MITIGATING MEASURES

Measures will be taken to mitigate any adverse impacts that might affect the site. Tree protection will be explored during the design phase to limit impacts to trees. Freshwater wetland and riparian zone disturbance will be limited to the greatest extent possible and only be impacted within currently disturbed areas.



AUTHOR(S) AND QUALIFICATIONS

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