

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
GREEN ACRES JAKE’S LAW PLAYGROUND PROGRAM  
FREEHOLD TOWNSHIP**

**1. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT**

- a. **Briefly describe the total development project:** The Freehold Township Parks & Recreation Commission (FTPRC) plans to replace an existing playground named “My Playground” at Michael J. Tighe Park in Freehold Township with a new fully-inclusive and accessible playground.
- b. **State the objectives of the project:** Project objectives include:
  - i. Removing the existing 10-year-old play structures and other playground equipment.
  - ii. Replacing the previous play structures and playground equipment with a new fully-inclusive and accessible playground.
- c. **Fully describe multi-phase projects:** The proposed project does not include multiple phases.

**2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

**Describe existing environmental features:**

- a. **Vegetation:** Michael J. Tighe Park is a 200 acre park located in Freehold Township, NJ. The park is carved out of a tract that was originally farm land and later became a second growth forested area with a combination of indigenous deciduous hardwoods and numerous species of conifers including cedar trees and scrub pines.
- b. **Wildlife, including State and federal threatened and endangered species and critical habitats:** The park is a habitat for white-tailed deer, gray squirrel, chipmunk, racoon, red fox, ground hog, various aquatic turtle and snake species and numerous bird species.
- c. **Geology, topography, and soils:** The soil of Michael J. Tighe park is typically sandy and well-drained. The entire park is bounded to the south by the Manasquan River and wooded to the north.
- d. **Water resources/hydrology:** The park contains the Manasquan River and two tributaries to the Manasquan River—Tributary B and Tributary C—which separates different portions of the park. The Manasquan River separates the Georgia Road portion of the park from the Jackson Mills portion of the park. The proposed work area is located outside of the special flood hazard area and any existing wetlands.
- e. **Historic/archaeological resources:** There are no known historic or archaeological resources at Michael J. Tighe Park.
- f. **Transportation/access to site:** Michael J. Tighe Park is most easily accessed via car from local roads within the township. The park is located a few miles from Route 9, a commonly traversed highway in the state. Driveways and parking lots exist for vehicular access at either side of the park from either Jackson Mill Road or Georgia Road. Complete passage from one side of the park to the other exists through a multitude and combination of paved and stone paths as well as an existing footbridge over the Manasquan River which separates the two sides of the park.

- g. **Adjacent land uses/description of the surrounding neighborhood:** Residential subdivisions exist along Georgia Road. The homes in this area are buffered by a wooded strip of land. A wood and steel vehicular bridge provides access over the unnamed tributary of the Manasquan River that runs perpendicularly through the middle of the park.

### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION

**Impacts are defined as direct or indirect changes to the existing environment, whether beneficial or adverse, that are anticipated to result from the proposed action or related future actions and uses. Any off-site impacts, such as increased traffic on neighborhood roads or increased noise levels in surrounding areas, should be described. Whenever possible, environmental impacts should be quantified (i.e., number of trees to be removed, cubic yards of cut/fill, etc.).**

- a. **Discuss all affected resources and the significance of each impact:** The proposed project will have several positive impacts. By replacing old play structures and the playground surface with new, updated fully inclusive structures, “My Playground” will be accessible to all users. Additionally, the new playground structures will draw increased user attention to the park. Finally, the creation of an enclosed fence around the playground will keep children from wandering away from the playground or into the nearby wooded area and assist parents and guardians in supervising children.
- b. **Discuss short-term and long-term project impacts:** The entire project area is located within an already disturbed area of the park and will have negligible impact on local ecosystems and wildlife. The playground to be installed during this project will replace the existing playground in kind and in the same location. Additionally, the limits of the new fence to be added around the playground are located within the area that is actively mowed and previously disturbed. Ultimately, the long-term impact of creating a safe and inclusive playground accessible to children of all abilities significantly outweighs any short-term negative impacts.
- c. **Discuss anticipated increase in recreation and overall use of site over time:** “My Playground” is a popular installation at Michael J. Tighe Park. The Freehold Township Parks & Recreation Commission expects a significant increase in recreation and overall use of the site over time after the play structures are updated. The proposed activities will improve accessibility and draw more users to the playground.
- d. **Identify adjacent environmental features that may be affected by the proposal:** The proposed project will not impact any undisturbed portion of the project site: the proposed playground will replace an existing playground and the fencing that will be installed by this project will be placed on already disturbed land that is actively mowed. Installing a fence that fully encloses the playground will also better contain children to the playground area and away from the wooded areas to the northwest of the project site.
- e. **List any permits required for project and brief status (i.e., waterfront development):** Construction permits will be required from the Freehold Township

Building Department and will be expediently acquired if the proposed project is awarded funding.

- f. **For development that would impact an undisturbed portion of the project site, the local government must submit a [Natural Heritage Data Request Form](#) to the DEP's Office of Natural Lands Management (form available at the website or by writing to Natural Heritage Program, PO Box 404, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0404). Please attach and discuss the results of the search:**  
This project will not impact undisturbed portions of the project site.
- g. **Discuss if/how the project may be impacted by sea level rise and any related design considerations:** Sea level rise and any related design considerations will not impact the project.

#### 4. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

- a. **Identify alternate sites:** Because the focus of this project is to construct a fully inclusive playground at "My Playground" specifically, there are no alternative sites.
- b. **Discuss alternate levels and types of development:** With no alternative sites, there are no alternative development plans.
- c. **Compare environmental impacts of each alternative:** Not applicable, as there are no alternative sites for this project.

#### 5. MITIGATING MEASURES

- a. **Describe the measures that will be undertaken to mitigate adverse impacts:**  
There are no adverse impacts to mitigate, as all project activities will take place within the area of the pre-existing playground that the proposed playground replaces.

#### 6. AUTHOR(S) AND QUALIFICATIONS

Matthew J. Bryant, PE, CME, CFM, Township Engineer, Township of Freehold