



The Township of Lopatcong  
232 South Third Street  
Phillipsburg NJ 08865

## Community Forestry Management Plan 2003-2008

**Prepared by**

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and*

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**As submitted by**

Lopatcong Shade Tree Commission

**Elected Officials**

**Douglas Steinhardt**

*Mayor*

**Victor Camporine, Council President**

**William Baker**

**James Mengucci**

**H. Matthew Curry**

***Lopatcong Shade Tree Commission Members***

**Carol O. Koop, Chairwoman**

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This plan was prepared in accordance with the NJ Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act, P.L. 1996 Chapter 135.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The township of Lopatcong acknowledges the contribution shade trees and community forests make to our quality of life and the necessity of protecting and managing the vigorous community forest within our borders.

Stewardship of our trees is essential. The Councils support is evident in their creation of the Shade Tree Commission which guides this stewardship whenever possible.

A management plan is an essential guide to successfully achieving a healthy and safe community forest. By developing this management plan for Lopatcong, the tree program can become more pro-active and efficient. A management plan can also lead to decreased tree maintenance and removal costs, shorter response time to citizen requests for work and a decrease in hazardous tree situations.

This plan will present five-year objectives in ten different areas as required by the New Jersey Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To educate the community on the value our community forests serve so that we can build an active shade tree program and maintain a shade tree resource for the economic and aesthetic and environmental benefits it brings to the township.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Over the past 18 months the current commission has defined the following Goals and Objectives for the next five years:

### **Goal 1**

To keep the viability of our trees within our borders strong.

#### **Objective**

- To identify insect or disease problems and initiate corrective action.
- to identify historic or specimen trees for special care and protection.
- To influence and control tree maintenance by utility companies, our road department and anyone the township contracts to do work on our trees.

### **Goal 2**

To create for the citizens a thorough educational resource in the commission and tree awareness program in township.

#### **Objective:**

- To provide an information in an electronic as well as a printed format for homeowners on proper tree care including planting, pruning, mulching, watering, fertilization, insects and diseases, sidewalk conflict with roots, and song bird habitat creation.
- To provide two articles per year to local newspapers.
- To become a point of reference for the Lopatcong Planning Board and Athletic Association and Environmental Commission and Elementary Schools.
- To conduct an Arbor Day Program with the public schools.
- To celebrate Arbor Day in keeping with the requirements of the designation of Tree City USA.
- To participate in Community Day by manning a booth that explains our role here in Lopatcong, distributes information on care and maintenance of trees, recruit volunteers for projects set for the ensuing year that reflect the goals of the management plan.

### **Goal 3**

Reduce hazardous trees and conflicts to maintain public safety.

#### **Objective:**

- To work toward a maintenance program whereby each municipal shade tree is pruned at least every 10 years.
- To identify and repair sidewalk conflicts by working with the homeowner and municipality.
- To change the elevation of the lower limbs of street trees.

### **Goal 4**

To replace any trees removed with species appropriate to our maintaining the variety of specimens we currently have and to maintain a tree canopy of 70% within the township.

#### **Objective:**

- To utilize the County nursery for township planting where possible.
- To establish an Adopt-A-Tree program.

### **Goal 5**

To capitalize on the GIS mapping being done by the Township engineer to help "manage" the township trees.

#### **Objective:**

- To select appropriate computer and computer programs to record and display accumulated tree data in the municipal building.
- To utilize the data to produce a profile of the township trees.
- To utilize the data to produce a tree maintenance, replacement and planting plan for the township.

### **Goal 6**

To continue to support training for the Shade Tree commission members and township employees.

**Objective:**

- To attend NJ Federation Meetings regularly.
- To maintain membership in the NJ Federation of Shade Tree Commissions.
- To maintain core training and continuing education requirements of the Community Forestry Assistance Act.
- To increase the knowledge and capabilities of Township employees on tree care by attending at least one training session sponsored by Rutgers, the NJ Forest Service, or Federation on an annual basis.

**Liability Statement**

Although our park and our street trees are an asset to the community, it is inevitable that they mature and require care, maintenance and eventually replacement. Care and maintenance, in addition to planting " the right tree in the right place" can help insure that community trees not only contribute to the environmental and economic vitality of the area, but also reduce the potential hazards to public safety. Recognizing that the budget of the Shade Tree Commission will be limited, it is the intent to focus available resources to the greatest need and inch ourselves towards a healthy forest along with reducing the risks to public safety.

We feel by following the goals and objective outlined in the management plan we will garner public support for its implementation and demonstrate the long-term benefits to the environments and public safety.

We also want to become pro-active in the management and care of our trees. Through the inventory and hazard assessment we will position our Shade Tree Commission to take corrective action prior to structural failure. We acknowledge that not all-hazardous conditions will be predicted. Good maintenance and care will reduce probability.

Following the Management Plan will demonstrate that the Lopatcong Shade Tree Commission is devoting reasonable levels of resources in a planned manner to reduce the number of tree related accidents and thereby reduce its exposure to liabilities and increase public safety.

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Lopatcong Township is located in northwestern New Jersey in southern Warren County. The Highlands. It is a community that is north east of an urban area (Phillipsburg) and south of the agricultural township of Harmony. To the east is Greenwich Township a rural community fast becoming a dense suburb.

Lopatcong's suburbs have now exceeded her agricultural roots. They now compromise 91% of her 7 square miles. She has six distinct neighborhoods that reflect different times of growth for her tree canopy. This gives her six distinct areas of tree lined streets in need of various maintenance activities. The roadsides are tree lined for the most part and this fact creates an aesthetic appeal as well as environmental benefits such as cooling, buffers to winter winds, dust filtration and oxygen production. Her slopes to the north meet up with the Highlands Trail and to the East, which is Scotts Mountain, residents are currently seeking conservation. Matching grants are currently being sought by the Phillipsburg Riverview Organization from contiguous townships and Lopatcong has been the first to agree to this match.

This community forest needs attention. The township has never progressed beyond the establishment of the Commission in caring for or even evaluating the trees. The Commission has made two suggestions for the Municipal Master Plan when it is reviewed again. Under the Goals and Objectives page 12 and 13 include the following:

*Encourage that all new land developments in the Township include adequate use of planting plans that will help improve air quality and provide additional trees to the town.*

Under Natural Resources page 15

*3. Identify and provide resources to assure the Township tree population is protected and properly maintained . Plan for future of the township trees to help improve air quality and beauty in our town through the Forestry Management Plan and the Shade Tree Commission*

This five-year plan is designed to focus on the municipality's trees along those streets and within the open spaces and municipal park.

A quick glance at Lopatcong's tree resource reveals various states of need. Pins Oaks, Sugar Maples, Sycamores and Ash as well as evergreen are in evidence. In our newest developments the plantings have been flowering pear and white pines which the Commission has addressed with the Planning Board. It is unknown the extent to which the trees are damaged or healthy as we have not pushed the Commission in that direction until now. Grants, which we intend to apply for, will give us the opportunity to do these desperately needed inventories and assessments. Much of the canopy is in need of proper pruning. Education of the residents and the Townships as to their role will go far in maintaining the health and vigor of this resource and avoid the topping of trees which has occurred in sporadically in every corner of the township.

The township is nearly developed. Data from the Master Plan prepared by the Planning Board provides a good summary of the land use in the Township. We have requested of the Planner an accurate breakdown in percentages realizing that parcels do not give accurate land use. These numbers along with the map and the photos should help you get the visual picture.

- Vacant land            531 parcels
- Residential land      1921 parcels
- Regular farms         32 parcels
- Qualified Farms       71 parcels
- Commercial land     115 parcels
- Industrial land        12 parcels
- Apartment land        2 parcels
- Public school land    3 parcels
- Public property       39 parcels
- Charitable land        7 parcels
- **Grand total            2759 parcels**

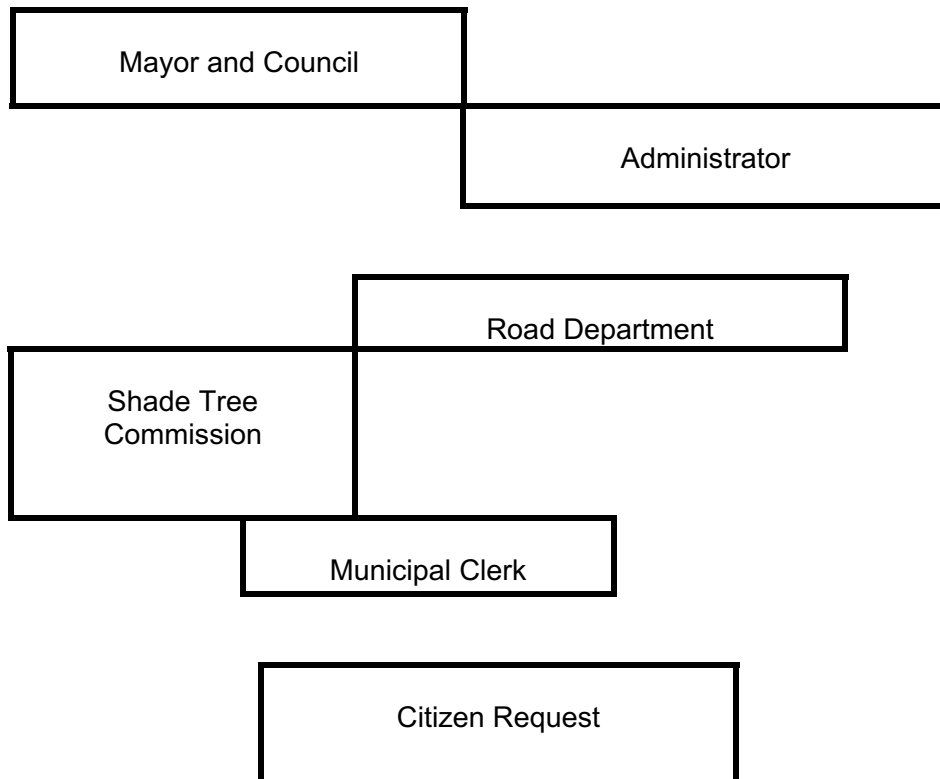
## COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Township of Lopatcong established a Shade Tree Commission to oversee the management of the trees that exist or will exist on township land

Citizen inquiries will come into the township Municipal Clerk and then they will be forwarded to the Commission Chair. On-site evaluation is then done by one or several of the members to determine the course of action needed. The Road Dept. will be contacted if needed, or when necessary, private tree experts contracted. If the public needs to be informed of the actions being taken it is done by letter (Appendix 3).

Any future plantings being reviewed by any Committee, i.e. Planning Board, Zoning officer, will now pass through the Commission. The Commission will also keep the those respective Boards informed of Forestry issues and updated to changes implemented.

In recognizing that our presence at meetings precipitates great windfalls, the following meetings will be attended by a Shade Tree Member: Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Environmental Commission.



## TRAINING PLAN

Core Training is required by the new Shade Tree and Community Forestry Assistance Act (Appendix 2). The core training familiarizes members with the background of community forestry and shade tree commissions the legal aspects of managing trees, and the recognition of hazardous tree situations. It also enables a municipality to be eligible for NJ Forest Service grant money and increased liability protection under the act. Two individuals have been Core Trained. CJ Koop the Chair and David Porcelli the Tree Inspector. Maser Consulting's landscape architect also has those credits to her name. It is the intent to keep at least the minimum number of persons core trained and up to date by accumulating the necessary continuing education for certification. It is also the intent to bring the training to the members of the Township Road dept.

Attendance at the annual meeting of the NJ Federation Shade Tree Commissions will be encouraged. Specialized training offered by Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener's program, NJ Forest Service. NJ chapter of ISA and the NJ Arborists Association in the following areas will be encouraged:

- Tree Assessment and identification
- Hazard tree Identification
- Pruning and Maintenance
- Tree/Sidewalk conflicts.

With the acceptance of this plan the Commission intends to seek the funding to act on any of the above educational courses. The commission will also seek the funding to actually perform the tasks outlined in the Goals and Objective Section of this report. The first priority is a computerized a tree inventory that will be done with the first grant applied for.

## **PUBLIC EDUCATION/AWARENESS/OUTREACH**

### **Tree City USA**

With the submission of this Forestry Management Plan, Lopatcong will complete the first half of the fourth element required for Tree City USA. This a national award given to small towns townships, counties, and cities in recognition of outstanding stewardship in dealing with the communities tree resource. The rewards will include:

- Signs for Community entrances
- A Tree City USA flag
- A walnut mounted plaque

The remaining half of the fourth element is establishing a Budget that at its minimum will devote \$2 per capita.

### **Memorial Tree Program**

Establishing this program allows persons or organizations to donate a tree as a living memorial, in the memory of a loved one or to honor a person or event. The program as envisioned will work in two ways. The donor can either purchase the tree directly and donate it to the borough, or they can donate \$ 250+ for the purchase of a tree directly into the township tree fund. Funding is needed to prepare a brochure explaining the program and to set up the procedure for participation.

### **Homeowner Information**

The Commission will provide homeowners with up-to-date information and knowledge about tree care. This will be complimented through access on the website. The information will include:

- Policy on newly planted tree and responsibilities
- Proper pruning of newly planted and young trees
- Mulching
- Watering

- Species recommendations for yard plantings
- Species to create habitat for song birds
- Identification and treatment for the most common insects and diseases
- Planting methods
- Sidewalk/tree root conflicts

Many of these topics are already in print but they are not free. They will be made available at our Arbor Day Ceremony and at the booth during Community Day.

### **Arbor Day**

The Commission will conduct an annual Arbor Day celebration in cooperation with the public schools by conducting a tree planting ceremony. This year we began a nursery for the new school that contains 12 Douglas firs.

### **Big Trees**

The commission will seek a partnership with the public school to search for and produce a listing of our largest trees. Results of the search will be announced at the annual Community Day.

## STATEMENT OF TREE BUDGET

The 2003 budget was approved as seen below. The expenditures for the years prior to 2003 is also listed below. Having never been tracked, the figures are general numbers. A municipal allocation in the amount of \$10,000 to be considered matching funds for grant applications for the year 2003 for the Commission is not unreasonable based on the townships current expenditures that barely address has been requested to address the needs of the trees and the initiatives we want to implement the in the first year of this five year plan. That concept has been presented to the CFO who has municipal funds set aside for just such requests.

### Past Community Expenditures

	Hours	Cost
<b>2000 Labor</b>		
Pruning/Chipping Trees	<b>130 hrs=</b>	<b>\$3903.28</b>
Leaf removal	<b>160 hrs=</b>	<b>\$4256.69</b>
<b>2001 Labor</b>		
Pruning Trees/Chipping	<b>200 hrs=</b>	<b>\$6195.29</b>
Leaf removal	<b>160 hrs=</b>	<b>\$4256.69</b>
<b>Equipment</b>		
Depreciation	<b>TBD</b>	
Trees purchased	"	
Trees donated	No records kept	
Trees planted	No records kept	
<b>2000-2001 Volunteer hours by Commission</b>		
Planting nursery, Community Day Booth, Commission Mtgs. Master Plan research, Core Training,	<b>75 hrs=</b>	<b>\$1154.25</b>
<b>two year TOTAL</b>		<b>\$19,766.20</b>

Volunteer groups To Accomplish Program Objectives

Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Student Maintenance Team at Elementary School

**2003 Shade Tree Commission Budget**

<b>Arbor Day/Community Day Activities</b>	<b>\$200.00</b>
<b>Promotional/educational Needs</b>	<b>\$1500.00</b>
<b><u>Mailings (3)</u></b>	<b><u>\$800.00</u></b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2500.00</b>

**Expenditures**

**Labor**

Pruning Trees/Chipping	200 hrs=	\$6195.29
Leaf removal	160 hrs=	\$4256.69

**Equipment**

Depreciation

**Borrow from neighboring towns**

Reserve for Grants	3750.00	2234.50
Trees purchased/planted	9	1515.50

**2000-2001 Volunteer hours by Commission**

Planting nursery, Community Day Booth,  
Commission Mtgs. Zoning & Planning Board Mtgs.  
Core Training

75 hrs=	\$1154.25
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<b><u>GRAND TOTAL</u></b>	<b><u>\$17856.23</u></b>
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## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

The Commission will establish initiatives that will improve our effectiveness. The following elements of plan implementation will be used to help identify Lopatcong needs for grant assistance.

### **Tree Assessment and Inventory (Goal 1) First year**

Lopatcong needs to complete a tree inventory and get that data on computer. An assessment can then be made. This effort in the five-year plan period will be get our mapping in conjunction with the GIS mapping being produced by the township engineering firm. A forestry consulting team will also be used so that we continually move towards a solid foundation. A good, accurate inventory is the foundation of a systematic community forestry program. Data and reports generated from the inventory help to communicate with elected officials and others whose support is necessary. A grant application can be applied for December 2003 to begin this task. (CSIP 5)

The Commission will prepare an action plan during the winter of 2003-2004 outlining the persons responsible and the work involved in this task. How the data will be collected - volunteers, Commission members or consultants will be addressed. A disaster plan could then be created to address a massive replacement of trees with accurate figures. (CSIP 11)

### **Hazard Tree Identification and Management (Goal 1) Second year**

The data collected through the inventory will allow the Commission to schedule the work that needs doing. Hazard Tree Identification and Management will be the top of the list. One obvious aspect is the neglect, which is apparent in many of our neighborhoods. (CSIP 6)

This grant proposal conceptually will be submitted by the fall of 2004.

### **Tree Planting (Goal 2) first through fifth year**

Our first official tree planting as a Commission happened this spring for our Arbor Day Celebration. In Attendance were Council President Victor Camporine, Councilman H. Matthew Curry, County Shade Tree Member Elwood Bray, School Board President Frank Kish, School Administrator Albert Purdy and Shade Tree Commission Chairwoman CJ Koop. A nursery was created for the landscaping of the new elementary school grounds. Student Council members participated. Grants to support this nursery may be submitted to the NJ Forest Service. We have two nurseries in town that will keep us abreast of the inventory they have available for new plantings and replacement trees. It is not known at this time the demand for replacement trees. We have chosen to pursue further plantings from these local business and the county nursery when and if the need arises. It would be nice to be able to offer businesses/residents discounts for the purchase of replacement trees with the commission budget in future years.

The second year we planted three 3' diameter trees at the municipal pool. The third year we planted nine trees at the lower elementary school. The fourth year we anticipate planting two in Delaware Park softball field. The fifth year we will transplant from the nursery to the new Middle school and replant the nursery with seedlings.

### **Tree Maintenance and Care (Goal 3 through 5) third fourth and fifth years**

The goal of the Commission is prune each municipal at least once every 10 years. This maintenance will extend the life of the trees as well as reduce conflicts with limbs and roots. All trees will be elevated to at least 16 feet providing clearance from overhanging limbs. Which neighborhood is in most critical need will be determined in the Tree Assessment and Inventory. The approach will be neighborhood in most need to least in need.

Pruning each tree once every 10 years is beyond the current workload of the Road Department. After the tree inventory data is completed it will be possible to produce a schedule or annual maintenance to help implement the 10-year pruning/maintenance plan. It will also allow for time to purchase equipment that is now borrowed from other townships for maintenance. (CSIP 8 and 9)

### **Support and Encourage Commission Members Education (Goal 6) annually**

Attendance at the annual meeting of the NJ Federation Shade Tree Commissions will be encouraged. Specialized training offered by Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener's program, NJ Forest Service, NJ chapter of ISA and the NJ Arborists Association in the following areas will be encouraged. All education will be incorporated into the local events. Those events will be attended by members, they include Arbor Day and Community Day. Mailings will encourage township residents to get involved as well educate.

Courses offered throughout the year shall be attended to maintain CEUs for all member and interested volunteers will be encouraged also. (CSIP 2)

## **COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

Upon approval of this Plan the Lopatcong Shade Tree Commission will be able to apply for Community Stewardship Incentive Program Grants to help offset the cost of implementing this plan. The following is a list of possible CSIP grants for Lopatcong. Additional or revise grants may become apparent as work on the computerized tree inventory/assessment progresses.

### **CSIP 2: Training (page 11)**

Funds are available to increase or enhance the number of individuals trained as defined in the training section. Currently, few funds exist for computer training or support.

### **CSIP 3: Public Education and Awareness (page 12)**

Funds are needed to support the new initiatives listed in the public education, awareness and outreach section of the plan. A high priority is to purchase brochures and pamphlets on tree care from sources such as the international Society of Arboriculture, Rutgers University, NJ Forest Service, or the Arbor Day Foundation.

### **CSIP 4: Arbor Day Activities (page 13)**

Funding would enable the Shade Tree Commission to sponsor A significant Arbor Day Ceremony every year in partnership with the School and County. Seedlings and handouts to support student involvement could be purchased to make Arbor Day a special event.

### **CSIP 5: Assessment and Inventory (page 11)**

Inventory data has to be collected and then loaded into existing software programs that sort it and eventually publish a report.

### **CSIP 6: Hazard Tree Identification Plan (page 11)**

Our number one priority for funding. The hope is that this plan can be included in the assessment report. If additional data is needed to support inclusion of the hazard trees in the assessment it may be come necessary to seek funds for the collection of additional data for entry into the data base.

### **CSIP 8: Tree Maintenance (page 11)**

Upon completion of the assessment and a 10 year pruning plan, funds will be needed to implement the pruning plan. The goal of pruning every 10 years cannot be met with current budget constraints (nothing). No proper maintenance has been performed to date in the township on any of the municipal trees. The pavilion is a prime example. Those trees are in need of some thinning and pruning and there alone the costs could exceed \$10,000.

**CSIP 9: Tree Recycling (page 16)**

Funds could be utilized to supplement Township funds to purchase specialized equipment to produce chips or recycle leaves.

**CSIP 10:** The ordinance exists.

**CSIP 11:** Disaster Plan established from the inventory. Cost of replacements accurately estimated and budgeted for.

**CSIP 12: Insect and Disease Management (page 11)**

The assessment report will tell us if we are need of these funds.

**CSIP 13: Other**

A special project to address building a working relationship with local nurseries. This would include stocking trees that would be successful in the township and accelerate the public as well as Planning Board and Zoning Board awareness of these trees so that the entire community can benefit by reinvesting the community.