

**MERCER COUNTY OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOARD      RES. NO. 2026-02**

**Subject:** Recommendation to Fund the D&R Greenway "Hillside Farm" Trail Grant Construction Application for \$500,000

WHEREAS, the County has created the Mercer County Trail Grant Program (the "Program") to provide funding for projects which support trail development, enhance recreation, mobility, and connectivity, and are consistent with the goals of the Mercer County Open Space and Recreation Plan and local open space plans; and,

WHEREAS, one of the duties of the Open Space Preservation Board (the "Board") is to provide recommendations to the County Executive regarding the Program); and,

WHEREAS, part of the Program's policy includes providing a percentage of funds to assist municipalities and nonprofit preservation partners to aid in trail projects of local importance; and,

WHEREAS, D&R Greenway Land Trust has requested assistance from the County in the amount of \$500,000 to aid in the construction of the Betty Wold Johnson Hillside Farm Preserve All-Abilities Trail and Regional Trail Connectivity project across 780 acres in Hopewell Township, "the Project"; and,

WHEREAS, the Project will create a firm, stable, wheelchair-accessible trail loop with observation pavilion, overlook deck, trailhead parking areas, kiosks, interpretive signage, and new trail segments through meadow and woodland habitats, providing safe and inclusive public access to a large tract of permanently preserved farmland, grassland, and forest; and,

WHEREAS, the Project and trail system will connect with more than three and a half miles of internal trails and link to adjacent preserved lands, forming a contiguous landscape approaching 2,000 acres, thereby strengthening regional trail connectivity and expanding outdoor recreation opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities; and,

WHEREAS, the total project cost is \$1,132,900, with D&R Greenway Land Trust providing matching funds of \$632,900 from individual donor gifts (\$50,000), sale of peripheral houses with deed restrictions (\$400,000), Kentfield Foundation grant (\$25,000), and Cornell Land Trust grant (\$25,000), along with other organizational resources; and,

WHEREAS, the project is construction-ready with final design plans, specifications, construction schedule, and permits to be submitted April 1, 2026, and demonstrates exemplary alignment with county priorities for accessibility, regional connectivity, environmental stewardship, and public access to preserved lands; and,

BE IT RESOLVED, the Board recommends approval whereby Mercer County will fund the grant for \$500,000 to D&R Greenway Land Trust for the Betty Wold Johnson Hillside Farm Preserve All-Abilities Trail and Regional Trail Connectivity project, subject to execution of a Project Agreement and compliance with all requirements of the Mercer County Trail Assistance Program.

**DATE ADOPTED:** April 7, 2026

**SECRETARY:**   
Cynthia Taylor