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Colts Neck.

Feb 1984

The value of agricultural
+ open space lands in the
Twp. of Colts Neck.

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(includes map)

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THE VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL AND OPEN SPACE LANDS
IN THE TOWNSHIP OF COLTS NECK
COUNTY OF MONMOUTH, NEW JERSEY

Prepared for submission to:

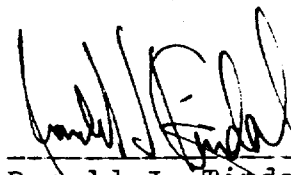
The Hon. Eugene Serpentelli, Judge of the Superior Court
Law Division
February, 1984

TERRAPLAN

P.O. Box 248

Pennington, New Jersey 08534

The original of this document was signed and sealed in
accordance with N.J.S.A. 13:41-1.



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MONMOUTH COUNTY SANITARY SEWERAGE FACILITIES

MONMOUTH COUNTY WATER SUPPLY FACILITIES

MONMOUTH COUNTY COMPOSITE ZONING MAP

1962

~~1969~~ MONMOUTH COUNTY COMPOSITE AIR PHOTO

1976

~~1981~~ MONMOUTH COUNTY COMPOSITE AIR PHOTO

INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by the Township of Colts Neck to establish the significant value of agricultural lands and open space as well as to defend it against future suburban sprawl which has altered or eliminated agricultural activities in surrounding municipalities. This document will be supported by color maps of the Township's existing land use, a soil map composite, Monmouth County maps, air photo maps, color photos, and a VHS video tape of agricultural activities.

We shall identify the unique conditions which have made Colts Neck Township a viable, growing agricultural community. In addition, we will attempt to present the negative impacts which dense residential and commercial development have had upon agriculture in Monmouth County, with the hope that the understanding of this man-made process will prevent its occurrence in the Township.

Our office has been informed that a proposed development on the Orgo Farms tract is the subject of this suit against the Township. We understand that the plaintiff intends to develop approximately 1,100 units on the northern portion of the 189-acre tract located on County Route 537 east of Route 34 and cut by Route 18 on the south. The

proposed density of six units/acre would far exceed the existing densities on surrounding tracts. The existing farm is bounded on the west by commercial lots along Route 34 with a natural wooded buffer separating the two. The site was a plant nursery and is under cultivation. On the west is the Atlantic Elementary School, to the north are single family residential homes, and horse farms, while to the east are several cattle and horse farms. The southern portion of the tract, 24.7 acres, abuts the Earle Naval Depot and the Township Road Department Maintenance Facility at the Route 34 and Route 518 interchange. (See Existing Land Use map).

Our report, with the supporting maps and visual aids, will illustrate that Colts Neck is not appropriate for a "Growth Area" designation due to unique natural features, a thriving equine industry, the lack of utilities, and its regional, and statewide importance.

NATURAL FEATURES AND CONDITIONS WHICH CREATE THE
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY AND OPEN SPACE RESERVE

The Township has remained rural in contrast to the suburban sprawl which has developed in large portions of adjacent municipalities. A primary reason for this occurrence is that the Township is blessed with an abundance

of highly productive soils, including both Collington and Freehold series. The Township is located in the geologic formation consisting of the Hornerstown Sands, the Red Bank and Tinton Sands, and the Vincetown Sands. This band forms the soils which run from Sandy Hook on the northeast across Monmouth County to the southwest into Mercer and Burlington Counties.

Since its creation more than 200 years ago, Colts Neck has been a farming community until the 1960's when residential development began in the northwest portion of the Township. Residential development has occurred slowly and orderly due to the high value of farmland and competent planning by the municipality.

The trends in agricultural activity in Colts Neck have changed with the needs of both the region and the state. The Township has witnessed the demise of dairy farms, beef cattle, and the disappearance of equipment suppliers in the county. The need for fresh fruits and vegetables has continued as the population of the region increased, as witnessed by the numerous farm stands which thrive during the summer and fall throughout the Township.

The demand for field crops has increased in the last decade as a new activity, the equine industry, has emerged. Colts Neck is ideally located for the raising and training of race horses as well as for pleasure riding. The

close proximity of Monmouth Park, Freehold Raceway, The Meadowlands tracks in New Jersey, as well as Belmont Park, Aqueduct, Yonkers and Roosevelt Raceways in New York, Liberty Bell and Keystone Parks in Pennsylvania have created an increased demand for training and boarding facilities. Within two hours' drive are four tracks for thoroughbreds and five for standard bred. The Meadowlands, which is owned and operated by New Jersey, serves both breeds with year-round racing dates.

The soil in Colts Neck are a blend of sand and clay which creates a loamy consistency that is ideal for grazing horses. The trends in agricultural land use in the Township are shown in the following Table by Queale and Lynch, Inc.

COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP

Trends in Agricultural Land
1973 - 1982

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Line Items</u>	<u>Total Acres Devoted to Agricultural & Horticultural Use</u>	<u>Total Acres Not Devoted to Agri & Horticultural Use¹</u>	<u>Total Farm Acres</u>	<u>% of Total Twsp²</u>	<u>% of County's Farmland³</u>
1972	246	8,373	784	9,157	45	9
1973	239	7,351	887	8,738	43	9
1974	241	8,504	977	9,481	47	10
1975	240	8,143	981	9,124	45	10
1976	250	8,210	995	9,205	46	9
1977	252	8,175	935	9,110	45	9
1978	238	8,500	1,140	9,640	48	10
1979	260	8,092	982	9,074	45	9
1980	271	7,821	665	8,486	42	9
1981	277	8,547	684	9,231	46	10
1982	317	8,195	636	8,831	44	9

1. Land with farmhouse, woodland not devoted to agriculture and horticulture and all other land not devoted to agriculture and horticultural use.

2. 20,224 acres in Township = 6.6% of total county area.

3. Total farm acreage from Approved FA-1 Forms, Div. of Taxation

Source: State of New Jersey Farmland Assessment Act of 1964
Data from FA-1 Forms for the tax years shown

Prepare by Queale & Lynch, Inc.

Race horses require a minimum of one acre each and an optimum of 2 acres for paddock space. On less area the grass cannot regenerate because of the grazing and constant movement of these vigorous animals. Breeding and training facilities with 100 animals will require from 100 to 200 acres of paddock area. The land area required to produce the hay, straw and grain varies due to soil productivity from 5 to 7 acres per horse per year. A farm with 100 horses requires from 500 to 700 acres to support the livestock, creating a demand for productive acreage throughout the county and beyond.

From 1972-1982 the total acres devoted to farming and horticultural uses has fluctuated between 8,373 and 8,195 with the total farm acreage dropping from 9,157 to 8,831. The percentage of total Township farmland use has dropped from 45% to 44% and remains 9% of the County total.

The horse population in Colts Neck Township has increased from 650-800 in 1970 to between 1,300 and 1,500 in 1979. The current figures range from 1,800 to 2,000 horses boarded or trained, and varies daily as animals are shipped to and from race tracks or to other farms for breeding purposes.

The expansion of the equine industry has created a vast network of services and jobs in the region and throughout

the State. These include equipment, veterinarian services, blacksmiths, horse transportation and vehicle maintenance, feed and hay transport, trainers and handlers, to name a few. The established service network is in place and would be difficult to develop elsewhere in the state.

The horse racing industry has grown significantly in New Jersey since the construction of the New Jersey Meadowlands complex in the mid-70's. The resulting demand for horses and facilities has had a marked effect upon Colts Neck as evidenced by the construction of several new training tracks, barns and related facilities. Meadows Run Farm on Heulitt Road was purchased in September of 1982 and is undergoing the construction of \$870,000 of improvements for the training of standard bred horses. Major improvements have been undertaken at Due Process Farms on Route 537 as well as at Colts Neck Training on Prothro Road.

Our investigation of the horse industry in Colts Neck indicates that between 350 and 375 persons are employed on these farms alone. The number of horses stabled varies daily as animals are shipped to and from race tracks. Employees of the trainers are also on the move from track to track as each opens or closes. All the trainers we have contacted agree that the number stabled changes daily; with the barns full for a few weeks, then becoming half-empty when a new race season begins.

The value of agricultural land in Colts Neck is significantly higher than other areas of Monmouth County. Table 15 of the Agricultural Statistics for Monmouth County and New Jersey, 1982, illustrates that for 1979-1980, of 57 land sales totalling 2,367 acres, the average price/acre was \$4,167. The value for land continuing in agricultural use was \$2,693/acre; for investment, \$3,762/acre; and for development purposes, \$7,859/acre.

Land sales in Colts Neck for horse farming use far surpasses all of the above as documented below.

Date of Sale	Block Lot	Acreage	Total Price	Price/Acre
Jan. 1981	51-2	144.5	\$1,150,000	7,958
May 1981	46-17	79	550,000	6,962
Sept. 1981	51-1	145	942,500	6,500
Jan. 1982	51-3	78.5	1,800,000	22,929
Sept. 1983	50-24	22.11	262,500	11,872
Oct. 1983	43-5	20.65	270,000	13,075
Dec. 1983	22-12	39.5	800,000	20,253

Source: Colts Neck Township Tax Collector

It is clear to us upon examination of these figures that agricultural lands along Route 537 are more valuable than lands for development in all of Monmouth County, and these values should increase in the future. In our opinion, the

intrusion of large residential development nearby may have a negative impact upon that trend.

Agricultural activity both in Monmouth County and New Jersey has experienced the decline of poultry and egg production, dairy, orchard and vegetable cultivation. Many factors have influenced this trend, including the construction of major roads (Garden State Parkway, New Jersey Turnpike), and the resulting development near these major arteries.

The resulting loss of the critical mass, the infrastructure of farmers, suppliers and large land areas, has accelerated this destructive process. We shall present to the Court visual examples of the domino effect of farm after farm growing houses instead of crops.

The equine industry has put a stop to this process in rural communities such as Colt's Neck, due in part to the economic and tax benefits of the industry as well as the increasing scarcity of suitable land near the racing facilities.

Colts Neck Township also serves an important role in the environmental quality of Monmouth County which will be addressed by other professionals for the Court. The farmland, pastures, and woodlands also serve as a visual oasis in the center of urban development and suburban

sprawl. Monmouth County loses 1,000 acres each year to development, which eliminates 10 average size farms of 98 acres from production.

STATE PLANNING POLICIES WHICH SUPPORT COLTS NECK'S ROLE IN
AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE

The planning policies of every State agency propose agricultural activities or low density development in Colt's Neck.

The New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Master Plan (1982), the New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (1977) and the State (Air Quality) Implementation Plan (1982) all recognize the valuable regional ecological functions performed by Colt's Neck and its surrounding area as open space in agricultural use. The New Jersey Department of Transportation Long Range Plan (1982), the State Capital Planning Commission program (1983), and regional sanitary sewer treatment plans are careful not to locate new growth-generating projects in the Township.

The Blueprint Commission on The Future of New Jersey Agriculture (1973) proposed a land policy targeted at preserving the state's prime agricultural soils. Under this criterion, Colts Neck would be a prime candidate for

farmland preservation since sixty-three percent (63%) of its farmland area lies in the prime agricultural soil categories of Class I, II and III soils, as indicated on the attached map.

Since the preparation of the State Development Guide Plan, State efforts to preserve agriculture have increased significantly. The State Legislature adopted laws in 1982 to protect and preserve farmland: the Right-to-Farm Act and the creation of the Farmland Preservation Act.

Governor Kean in his 1984 State of the State message identified farmland preservation as an important state policy. The fourth Green Acres bond issue approved by voters in November 1983 proposed as one of its goals acquisition of open space easements to permanently preserve farmland.

The State has encouraged programs specifically to promote the horse industry. New Jersey's Standard Breeders Association Sire Stakes Program offers purses to owners and trainers in order to bring breeding and training facilities to the State.

COUNTY PLANNING POLICIES SUPPORT COLTS NECK'S ROLE
IN AGRICULTURAL AND OPEN SPACE

The Monmouth County Planning Board adopted its Growth Management Guide in October 1982, five years after the State Development Guide Plan was prepared. Using more up-to-date, site-specific information, the Growth Management Guide identifies more definitively than the State Development Guide Plan the Growth, Limited Growth and Agricultural areas of Monmouth County. Refinements to these planning area boundaries were made by the County Planning Board, affecting not only Colt's Neck, but other areas of Monmouth County.

Equally important, the Growth Management Guide reflects the concern of County officials for the need to preserve agriculture in Monmouth County for open space, environmental and economic reasons. All of Colt's Neck as well as the portion of each municipality immediately bordering Colt's Neck is planned for agriculture and conservation areas.

The intersection of Routes 537 and 34 is proposed in the County Guide for a small village consisting of no more than 200 single family homes and neighborhood shopping. These nodes of growth in the Limited Growth area are intended only for small-scale residential development and services for the surrounding rural agricultural area.

The Growth Management Guide directs many of its policies toward preserving agriculture and low density open development in Colts Neck as a means of achieving the County's regional, environmental, land use and economic goals. Page 54 of the County Guide recommends that "extensive areas in portions of Colts Neck... are prospective candidates for agricultural districts."

Monmouth County Freeholders have recently created a County Agricultural Development Board. This Board is in the process of evaluating agricultural soils in the County with the goal of identifying the best areas for farmland preservation activities. Under criteria established by this Board, Colts Neck should rank as a top priority for preservation efforts based on its importance to agriculture and its location between two growth areas.

LOCAL POLICIES WHICH SUPPORT AGRICULTURE AND OPEN SPACE

Colts Neck Township's Master Plan and land use controls have consistently adhered to a policy of encouraging agricultural uses, low density residential development and open space preservation. Colt's Neck is relatively free from non-residential land uses and has not sought to attract employment activities from industrial or commercial development.

The single family residential development which has occurred in Colts Neck over the last quarter century has generally taken place on the less productive soils of the Township. This fact is apparent when we examine the Soils and Existing Land Use Map Composite attached.

CONFLICTS BETWEEN HIGH DENSITY URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND
EQUINE ACTIVITIES

The introduction of high density housing in Colts Neck, particularly on County Route 537, will have a detrimental effect on the horse industry. The immediate, direct and secondary effects of a high density residential project will be felt on the nearby farms. The long-range effect will be a subtle, chilling effect on the climate for investment for the horse industry along County Route 537, where the greatest concentration of this use is currently found.

The introduction of a high density residential project in an equine setting will create adverse impact to the raising and breeding of specialty horses. There will be an increasing potential for wind-borne litter, vandalism, unwanted light and noise, as well as non-point air and water pollution, not to mention increased vehicular traffic. The concentration of a large number of persons and their activities will create conditions for accidental and deliberate human interference with adjacent horse farms.

Thoroughbred horses are high-strung animals whose diet and environment must be sensitively managed. The introduction of possible risks to these horses from human interference is disturbing when considering these unique animals range in value upwards to \$500,000 each.

The concentration of persons in the proposed project in the midst of a horse farming area will expose these persons to farming activities including machinery noise and animal odors. The placement of a large block of residents (voters) in a farm environment will trigger an increased number of complaints, which despite the protections offered by the "Right-to-Farm Act," will nonetheless have an inhibiting effect on farm operations because of vocal outcries to municipal officials.

The most threatening effect which will result from a high density residential project will be the pressures it will set in motion for further variances or re-zoning applications and additional development.

It can be argued that horses can be raised under less than optimal conditions. Owners of horse farms can increase security efforts and construct additional rows of fencing or increase setbacks on adjacent lands. Some farmers will continue to tolerate such nuisances and adverse spillovers from

urban development. However, the serious horse farmer, the specialty breeder and large-scale trainer of horses, will be reluctant to invest in Colts Neck. The large capital investment in equipment and facilities demanded by this unique form of agriculture will not be made in the face of an uncertain real estate climate created by high density development. The real and imagined perception of change in land use conditions could result in a lessening of commitment to the equine industry in Colts Neck.

The process of agricultural disinvestment brought about by development speculators is an all-too-familiar cycle in New Jersey. They have created a cycle which the State Development Guide Plan seeks to correct. The Plan seeks to identify and stop the misuse and abuse of productive agricultural and valuable open space lands. The Guide Plan, in addressing where farmland should be retained, stated:

"Where should farmlands be retained?

The areas designated on the concept map are considered most appropriate for a coordinated public effort to preserve agriculture in New Jersey. These large tracts reflect the needs of modern agricultural practices for concentrated areas of farmland, free of incompatible development, yet accessible to market and service centers.

Currently much of the farm activity within the State is

located in the areas designated for agricultural use. Development is relatively sparse, and the areas lack extensive water and sewer systems and other public facilities. These areas also contain the most favorable soils -- Classes I, II, and III -- for productive agriculture.

The Plan generally supports the Blueprint Commission on Agriculture's recommendation to maintain 1,000,000 farmland acres in the State. Methods to retain farmland include selective purchase or transfer of development rights, appropriate tax and regulatory programs, and an investment policy which is sensitive to the need for minimizing development pressures in these areas."

STATE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE PLAN GROWTH AREA
IS INAPPROPRIATELY LOCATED IN COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP

Based on its land use and environmental characteristics, the 262 acres in the southwestern corner of Colts Neck is inappropriately classified "Growth Area" by the State Development Guide Plan. The existing land use character is low density, (.16 units/acre) single family, detached homes on large lots, horse farms and other agricultural activities. There are no public water and sanitary sewers available.

We have inspected the area and have found that Abbatiello's Willow Brook Farm of over 100 acres with 50-60 standard bred race horses, is thriving. We saw a new residence with stable under construction on the corner of Five Points and Stone Hill Road, and several under construction. This portion of the Township is in use for successful horse farms and residential homes and is not suited for low or moderate income housing due to environmental factors and its rural location.

The natural demarcation line provided by environmental conditions would be more appropriate, in our opinion, for determining where the State Guide Plan boundary for a Growth Area might be correctly located.

SUMMARY

As a result of our investigations into the value of agriculture in the land planning of Colts Neck Township, we wish to suggest the following to the Court:

1. All planning reports and studies researched designate Colts Neck Township for Limited Growth or Agricultural Preservation.
2. Natural features do not support the designation of a Growth Area in the Township.
3. Prime agricultural soils which have not been developed should be designated as an Agricultural Area instead of Limited Growth Area.
4. Developed portions of the community and lands south of Route 18 should remain Limited Growth Area.
5. The development of dense residential, commercial or industrial facilities are not compatible with the horse training industry.
6. The high environmental, social and economic value of the unique agricultural lands in Colts Neck should be protected.
7. High density land use should be discouraged in Colts Neck by zoning and by the Courts because of their direct and secondary impacts upon agricultural activities.

8. Development should be directed to municipalities located in the Growth Areas which have available water and sewer service, public transportation and major highways.

Terraplan is pleased to have this opportunity to work for the preservation of the valuable agricultural lands in Colts Neck Township and are prepared to support our findings and recommendations for the Court.

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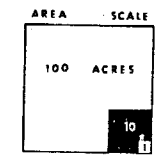
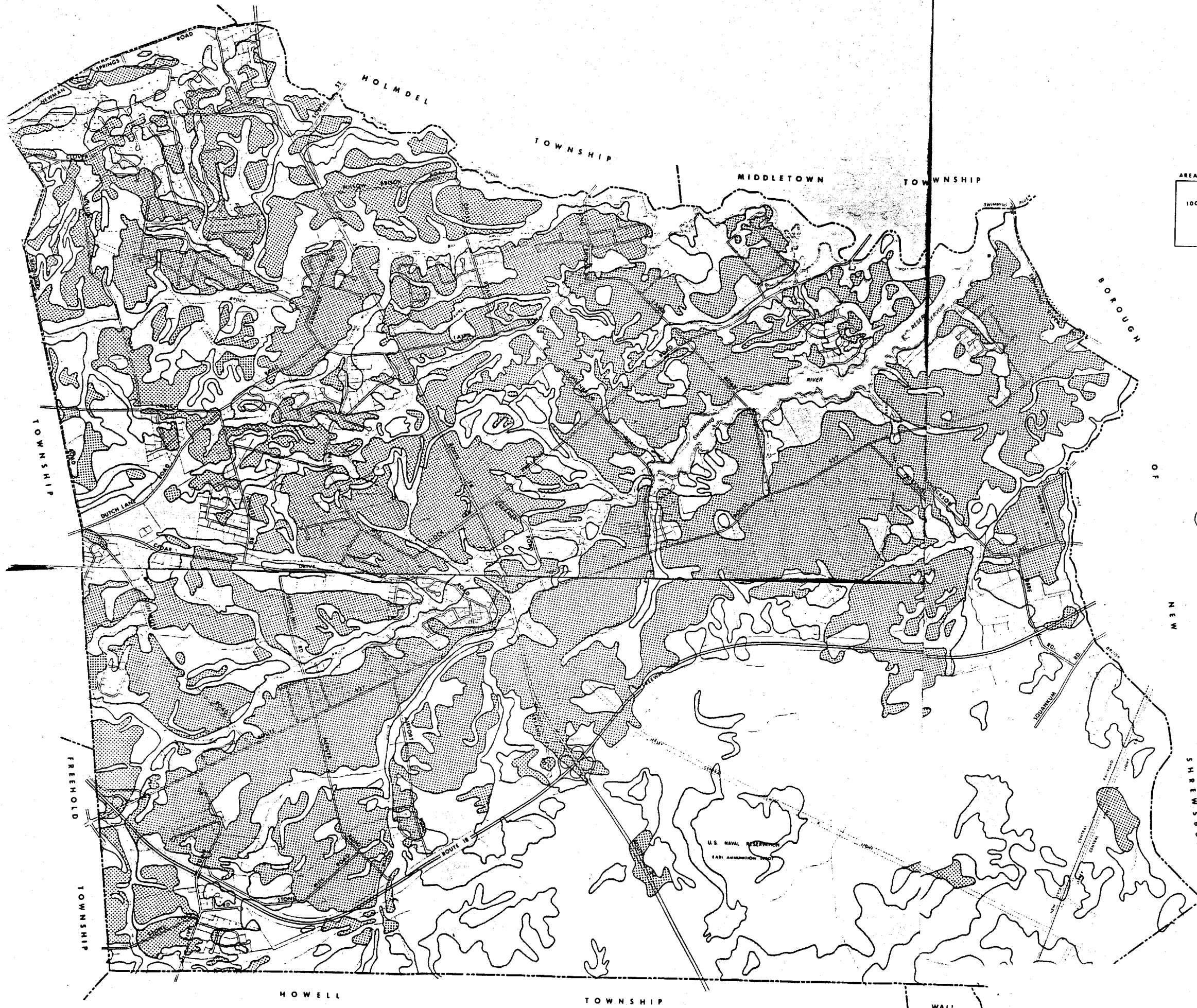
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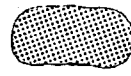
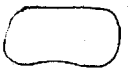

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PLATE 5
AGRICULTURAL SOILS
COLTS NECK TOWNSHIP
MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY



PREPARED BY: QUEALE & LYNCH - PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS
 SOURCE: TOWNSHIP TAX MAPS, 1974

-  CLASS I & II
-  CLASS III
-  CLASS IV & BELOW

SOURCE: SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE