



MISSION STATEMENT

*The Somerset County Park Commission
is committed to excellence in promoting
stewardship of land and resources,
providing outstanding recreation opportunities
and leisure services, and fostering
an environment which is service oriented
and responsive to public needs.*



**Somerset County
Park Commission**

Colonial Park • Duke Island Park • East County Park
Green Knoll Golf Course & Tennis Center • Leonard J. Buck Garden
Lord Stirling Park Environmental Education Center and Stable
Little Brook Sanctuary • Natirar Park • Neshanic Valley Golf Course
North Branch Greenway Park • North Branch Park • Mountain View Park
Quail Brook Golf Course • Ralph T. Reeve Cultural Center
Raritan River Greenway • Skillman Park • Sourland Mountain Preserve
South Branch Greenway • Spooky Brook Golf Course
Torpey Athletic Complex • Warrenbrook Golf Course & Pool
Washington Rock Park • Washington Valley Park

Somerset County Park Commission

P.O. Box 5327, North Branch, NJ 08876

www.somersetcountyparks.org

908 722-1200

Park Information

Event Hotline	Ext. 5351
Lord Stirling Park	
Environmental Education Center	Ext. 5002
Lord Stirling Stable	Ext. 5010
North Branch Park/Headquarters	Ext. 5200
Park Rangers (Cell)	908 285-3800
Park Rangers (Office)	Ext. 5121

Field Playability

Colonial Park & Howe Athletic Complex	Ext. 5355
Duke Island Park	Ext. 5354
Mountain View Park	Ext. 5358
North Branch Park	Ext. 5353
Quail Brook Park	Ext. 5356
Torpey Athletic Complex	Ext. 5352

Golf Courses

Golf Office/Information	Ext. 5428
Green Knoll	Ext. 5005
Neshanic Valley Clubhouse	Ext. 5006
Neshanic Valley Learning Center	Ext. 5020
Quail Brook	Ext. 5004
Spooky Brook	Ext. 5003
Warrenbrook	Ext. 5016

Recreation

Colonial Park Putting Course/Paddle Boats	Ext. 5023
Colonial Park & Green Knoll Tennis	Ext. 5021
Permits	Ext. 5225
Therapeutic Recreation	908 526-5650
Warrenbrook Pool	Ext. 5018

Gardens

Buck Garden General Info	Ext. 5011
Buck Garden Photo Permits	Ext. 5621
Colonial Park Gardens General Info	Ext. 5008
Colonial Park Gardens Photo Permits	Ext. 5721

Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may use the Relay Service at 711.

7/20



Welcome to the Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park



**Somerset County
Park Commission**



Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park



Lord Stirling Park is in the western part of the Great Swamp, adjacent to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The 1,000 acre park contains two sections. The Environmental Education Center trails are open for pedestrian hiking. Lord Stirling Stable offers trails open only for horseback riding.

Environmental Education Center Mission Statement

The Environmental Science Department is dedicated to stimulating awareness and understanding of the natural world in order to foster a sense of responsibility for its care and use through environmental, cultural, and recreational learning experience, as well as, serving as trustees to preserve, maintain, and improve both developed and undeveloped natural areas of Somerset County parkland.



The Environmental Education Center Operations



The Somerset County Park Commission Environmental Science department maintains and operates the 18,000 square foot building and approximately 500 acres of natural lands at the Environmental Education Center. The Park Commission's naturalists maintain offices at the Environmental Education Center and conduct many hundreds of programs each year for schools, families, individuals, and organizations interested in environmental education and natural education. These programs are offered at the Environmental Education Center, at other Somerset County parks, and around New Jersey. Winter/Spring, Summer, and Fall Program Guides are

available at all Somerset County parks and on-line at www.somersetcountyparks.org.

Facilities and Services

There are 9.5 miles of hiking trails with more than three miles of boardwalk. Two wildlife observation blinds and two observation towers are located along the trails. The Discovery Garden Trail is home to gardens of herbs, ferns, and a wide variety of native plants including a small arboretum. The Rain Garden in front of the building is an example of using native plants to collect, filter, and recharge ground water. The building contains classrooms and meeting rooms that are used by community and governmental organizations for environmental meetings and programs. The bookshop contains books and gift items relating to the environmental programs and topics offered at the Center. The reference library has a collection of environmental books, history books, and periodicals. An auditorium is used for lectures, public meetings, concerts, and special events. An exhibit area has an ongoing schedule of temporary exhibits and art shows. A permanent collection entitled *The Great Swamp Experience* contains a series of interactive displays telling the story of the Great Swamp from prehistoric times to the present.



The Land

A variety of animal habitats and plant communities are present in a relatively small area and are accessible through the trail system. Marshes, swamps, a river, intermittent streams, springs, floodplains, natural and human engineered ponds, fields, and forest are all present in the park. The buttonbush, swamp rose, cattails, rushes, and sedges of the freshwater marshes contrast with the floodplain along the Passaic River, which is dominated by white swamp and pin oak.



The southern portion of the park (near Lord Stirling Road) is comprised of abandoned farm fields in various stages of succession. These are prime areas to find vivid displays of wildflowers. The central portion of the park is characterized by pin oak, blueberry bushes, and sedge hummocks. Pockets of drier woods contain white oak, beech, black birch, and shagbark hickory.

History

The Great Swamp is a wetland remnant of the Glacial Lake Passaic which covered the area approximately 15,000 years ago. The area was much used by Paleo-Indian groups and later by the Lenape. In colonial times, what is now Lord Stirling Park was part of the estate of William Alexander, the Lord of Stirling, who served as a major general in the Continental Army. The site of his elegant Georgian manor is located in a non-public area of the park that is accessible one day each October as the site of the *1770s Festival*, a celebration of colonial-era New Jersey.



Agricultural activities and logging altered the character of the land during the 19th and early 20th centuries. A proposed international airport was among the

potential threats to the land that led to the public acquisition of the Great Swamp. Environmental education programs in Lord Stirling Park have been ongoing since 1971. The building, which was the first solar-heated and cooled public building in the country, opened in 1977.

Building Hours are 9AM to 5PM, except Holidays. Exhibits and gift shop are open 9AM to 4:30PM. Trails are open dawn to dusk.