

NJDEP Green Acres – Environmental Impact Assessment 2026

Monsignor Owens Park Improvements

This Environmental Assessment has been prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed improvements at Monsignor Owens Park. The project site is an existing, publicly owned recreational facility that has been previously developed and is currently used for active and passive recreation. The proposed improvements are intended to enhance safety, accessibility, and overall functionality of the park while maintaining compliance with all applicable New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and Green Acres Program requirements.

Project Description

The proposed project includes targeted upgrades to existing park infrastructure, specifically pathway improvements and restroom renovations to enhance safety, accessibility, and overall functionality for park users. All work will occur entirely within the existing developed footprint of Monsignor Owens Park and will not require the acquisition of additional land or any expansion beyond the current park boundaries.

Existing Site Conditions

Monsignor Owens Park is a fully developed municipal park containing athletic fields, pedestrian pathways, and supporting recreational amenities. The site has been previously disturbed and maintained for recreational use for many decades. No undisturbed natural areas will be impacted as part of this project.

Description of the Environment

Soils and Geology

All construction activities will be limited to previously disturbed areas. No grading or excavation beyond minor surface preparation is anticipated.

Water Resources and Floodplains

The project will not impact surface waters, wetlands, or regulated flood hazard areas. Existing drainage patterns will be maintained.

Vegetation and Wildlife

No tree removal or habitat disruption is anticipated. The project will not adversely affect wildlife or plant species.

Air Quality

Temporary, minor impacts related to construction equipment may occur but will be minimized through standard best management practices.

Noise

Construction-related noise will be short-term and limited to standard daytime working hours.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The project will not impact any known historic or cultural resources.

Public Health and Safety

The project will improve public safety by addressing deteriorated infrastructure and enhancing accessibility.

Environmental Impact Analysis of Proposed Action**Affected Resources and Significance of Impacts**

The project area is limited to previously developed and actively used portions of the park, including existing walkways and restroom facilities. As such, no significant natural resources will be adversely impacted. There will be no impacts to wetlands, floodplains, surface waters, threatened or endangered species habitat, or forested areas. Existing trees, landscaped areas, and vegetated buffers will be preserved, and no tree removal is anticipated as part of the proposed scope. Overall, environmental impacts are expected to be minimal and localized.

Short-Term and Long-Term Project Impacts

Short-term impacts during construction may include temporary noise, dust, and limited disruptions to pedestrian circulation within the park. These impacts will be short in duration and managed through standard construction best practices, including controlled work hours, dust suppression, and appropriate signage and barriers to maintain public safety.

Long-term impacts are anticipated to be positive. The improved pathways and renovated restroom facilities will enhance ADA accessibility, improve circulation, and increase the overall usability and safety of the park. No long-term adverse environmental impacts are expected once construction is complete.

Anticipated Increase in Recreation and Site Use

The project is expected to result in a modest increase in park usage over time by improving accessibility for seniors, individuals with disabilities, families with strollers, and other users. Upgraded restroom facilities and safer, more navigable pathways will encourage longer visits and greater participation in recreational and community activities, thereby enhancing the park's role as a neighborhood asset without creating environmental stress.

Adjacent Environmental Features

The project will not affect adjacent environmental features beyond the developed park area. Surrounding neighborhoods, existing infrastructure, and landscaped park areas will remain unchanged. There will be no impacts to nearby residential areas beyond temporary construction-related activity.

Required Permits and Administrative Approvals

The project will require standard local approvals, including municipal procurement and construction permits. No state or federal environmental permits (such as waterfront development, flood hazard, or wetlands permits) are anticipated, as the work is confined to existing developed areas and does not impact regulated environmental features.

Natural Heritage Data Review

Because the project does not involve disturbance of undisturbed land or natural habitats, submission of a Natural Heritage Data Request Form is not required. The proposed improvements are confined to previously developed infrastructure areas within the park.

Sea Level Rise and Climate Considerations

Monsignor Owens Park is not located within a coastal or tidally influenced area. As such, the project is not anticipated to be directly impacted by sea level rise. However, design considerations will incorporate durable materials, improved drainage, and resilient construction practices to ensure long-term performance under changing weather conditions and increased precipitation events.

Alternatives of the Proposed Project

Alternate Sites

No alternate sites were considered, as the proposed improvements address existing deficiencies at Monsignor Owens Park and are site-specific in nature.

Alternate Levels or Types of Development

Alternatives such as full park reconstruction or new facility construction were evaluated but deemed unnecessary. The selected approach focuses on targeted upgrades to existing infrastructure, which minimizes environmental disturbance while addressing identified needs.

Comparison of Environmental Impacts

Compared to more extensive redevelopment, the proposed action represents the least environmentally impactful alternative. By limiting work to existing developed areas, the project avoids disturbance to natural resources and reduces construction-related impacts.

Conclusion

Based on this assessment, the proposed improvements at Monsignor Owens Park are not expected to result in any significant adverse environmental impacts. To minimize potential adverse impacts, all construction activities will be limited to previously developed areas of Monsignor Owens Park. Standard construction best management practices will be employed, including dust control, proper waste disposal, and temporary erosion and sediment controls as needed. Work will be scheduled to reduce disruption to park users and surrounding areas, and all disturbed surfaces will be stabilized and restored upon project completion. No tree removal or disturbance to natural resources is proposed. These measures ensure that any short-term construction impacts are minimized while supporting long-term improvements to park accessibility and functionality.

Certification

I certify that the information contained in this Environmental Assessment is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Name / Title: Frank DeMaio, Superintendent of Recreation

Agency / Municipality: Township of Nutley