

Chapter 10

PASSAIC RIVER SECTION

The Passaic River section lies between River Road and the Passaic River, extending from the Long Hill Township border to the Chatham Glen condominiums. It lies entirely within the Passaic River watershed with no part in the Great Swamp watershed. Away from River Road the land slopes rapidly toward the river and is almost entirely wetlands or lies in wetland transition areas. All drainage from Long Hill, the ridge above River Road, crosses under River Road in culverts and creates numerous short open brooks discharging into the river.

The eastern end of the section between Passaic Street and the Chatham Glen condominiums is owned by Chatham Township except for one privately-owned parcel directly adjoining the condominiums. The 16 acre public portion consists of floodplain along the river below steep slopes along River Road. Chatham Township purchased the property in 2001. In 2003 the Chatham Township Environmental Commission began an annual cleanup event on the property which over eight years removed a 40-year accumulation of trash and the yearly collection of debris washed down the river.

In 2005 the Chatham Township Environmental Commission sponsored a plant inventory of the area. Biologist Blaine Rothauser walked the tract, identified 49 plant species, and made recommendations for habitat maintenance. Read the complete report (click on [plantinventory032005.doc](#)).

The area is flat, mostly wetlands, except for a narrow strip along River Road where there are very steep slopes because of the grading done when the road was constructed. Possibly because of historical filling of wetlands near the intersection of River Road and Passaic Street there is a dry area in that corner on which a house once stood; remnants of a small apple orchard can be seen. The site is entirely deciduous woods except for one small very wet cleared section below a culvert on River Road. The trees are mainly red maple and pin oak between 20 and 40 years old, there is no understory because of very heavy deer browsing, and multiflora rose is widespread. Other abundant plants are poison ivy, tussock sedge and skunk cabbage. Two possible vernal pools were noted.

Between Passaic Street and Central Avenue there is a mix of private and conserved parcels fronting on River Road. Chatham Township, the Passaic River Coalition, and the Chatham Township Volunteer Fire Department own several properties. All the residences and the fire house have been constructed near River Road because away from the road the land consists of floodplain and wetlands, mostly cleared and mown except near Passaic Street. A power line right-of-way parallel to the river crosses part of the area. The package sewage treatment plant for the Cardinal Hill Apartments and co-located cell equipment on a power tower lie in the right-of-way near Passaic Street. Near Central Avenue a north-south power line coming down the ridge traverses wetlands and crosses the river.

Between Central Avenue and the Long Hill Township boundary the land along the river is part of the Morris County Passaic River Park, mostly floodplain but gradually rising toward Central Avenue. The County has developed a quiet recreation area here with a ball field and picnic facilities. Great blue herons have been seen along with Canadian geese and mallard ducks. Parcels along River Road in this area have been developed with private residences whose cleared and mown backyards slope down into wetlands.

OPEN SPACE

The Passaic River Coalition owns 3 parcels, maintained as nature preserves. Chatham Township owns 3 unencumbered parcels which are likely to remain undeveloped because of wetland constraints. A large parcel has a conservation easement granted to Chatham Township on land extending from the road to a property owned by the PRC. Two parcels are owned by the Chatham Township Volunteer Fire Department, one of which is vacant land.