

Chapter 10

AVERETT SECTION

All the land comprising the Averett section was originally owned by the Chatham Township family of the same name. Samuel W. Averett was the chairman of the Chatham Township Environmental Commission in 1974 when the first Township NRI was created. New Jersey initially passed legislation in 1968 authorizing the establishment of environmental commissions. Chatham Township hardly waited for the ink to dry on the enabling document before creating an environmental commission and beginning work on an NRI. The 1999 NRI and the 2012 NRI are based substantially on the 1974 NRI. The Averett estate was managed as an evergreen tree farm.

In the early 1980s the portion of the property south of River Road was sold to a developer who over the next decade built the Chatham Glen condominiums on what was originally a bench of the Passaic River. The condominiums consist of about 900 units, a number of which are in the affordable housing category. The development borders the Passaic River and at its closest is just over 50 feet from the centerline of the river. The land within the 50 foot area frequently floods and is protected from development by a conservation easement. A JCP&L power line right-of-way crosses from west to east. There is a package sewage treatment plant next to the river in the western area.

The land rises steeply from River Road to Fairmount Avenue. South of Fairmount Avenue is a steep wooded slope. Along Hillside Avenue there is a high hemlock hedge that has been pruned and nurtured for over seventy years and row of old horse chestnut trees. Part of the land still owned by the Averetts continues to be used for the growing of evergreen trees, mostly spruce.

In 2012 using funds from the NJ Green Acres program the portion of the Averett property north of Hillside Avenue was acquired by Chatham Township to be preserved as open space for passive recreation such as walking and nature study. A trail is being developed from River Road to the corner of Fairmount Avenue and Southern Boulevard.

OPEN SPACE

Chatham Township owns the Little Red Schoolhouse, home of the Township historical society, at the corner of Southern Boulevard and Fairmount Avenue. The Township also owns the undeveloped Averett property between Hillside Avenue and Fairmount Avenue. A fifty-foot-wide strip along the riverbank in the condominiums is protected by a conservation easement.