

Otto's Farm Park

The original 36 acre Otto's Farm, located on the southeasterly corner of Montgomery and Wertsville Roads, was the first property preserved in 1996 with Hillsborough's dedicated Open Space tax, for \$270,000, following the approved referendum in 1995 (the first such dedicated Trust Fund of any municipality in Somerset County). In 1998 the adjacent 49 acre Fitzgerald property was added for \$500,000, both purchases leveraged with Green Acres and Somerset County Partnership Grants. Fitzgerald connected to an long-time held 55 acre township "farm". This 140 ac park was named after Otto Paersche whose cows frequently escaped his field and the police would be called to round them up in the 1970's.

The grass trails have been developed by the Parks staff and include a stepping stone crossing of a seasonal stream running down the hillside. The park is used by the Hillsborough High School cross country team, horse riders from nearby boarding stables, birders and anybody who just wants a quiet walk in nature. Plans are being discussed to connect Otto's trails to the interior of the recently purchased 300+ acre property directly across Montgomery Rd.

A Natural Resource Inventory was done a few years ago and a grant was received from the federal government to remove multi-flora rose, Russian olive and other invasive species. Bluebird houses have been installed.

The dedication of the Park took place in 1998 with Boy Scouts of Troop 1776, members of the Open Space Advisory Committee and general public in attendance.

This area has been almost exclusively a farming area except where the land is too rugged or steep to be cultivated. Otto's Park is adjacent to the 151 ac Agnes Dewitt Girl Scout Camp to the south and other preserved farmland and county-owned Sourland Preserve land in all directions.