

Hopewell Valley Community Stewardship Plan

Our Stewardship Vision:

Foster ecological health in the Hopewell Valley through cooperative stewardship efforts among conservation partners and all landowners

Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FoHVOS) completed the comprehensive Hopewell Valley Community Stewardship Plan in Spring 2012. The Plan provides guidance to our stewardship efforts throughout the Valley over the next 10 years.

Our goal is to foster the recovery of our forests, shrublands and meadows by reducing negative human impacts. Please visit www.fohvos.org to view the complete plan.

What's in the Plan?

The plan consists of four sections. The Overview describes the 'landscape context' shaping the Valley – the physical features, historical aerial imagery, natural land cover, geology, soils, and waterways as well as roadways, railways and human land uses.

We then cataloged and assessed the Valley's Conservation Values. This included all significant features such as large forest patches, riparian habitat and grasslands of regional significance along with the presence of rare animals and plants. Next, we assessed Challenges to conservation values – threats such as overabundant white-tailed deer, invasive species and lingering impacts from past agricultural activities.

Given all of this information, the Plan carefully identifies Goals and Strategies that guide our stewardship efforts and relationships with conservation partners and landowners. The Plan identifies five primary stewardship goals:

- ✓ Reduce impacts of white-tailed deer
- ✓ Strategic invasive species control
- ✓ Broad habitat management & restoration
- ✓ Rare species management
- ✓ Foster community support for stewardship

Meeting these goals will improve the ecological health of the Hopewell Valley.



Forested Wetlands in Central Hopewell Township, Nayfield Preserve



Hooded Warbler



Field-based workshop on invasive plants

Why is Hopewell Valley worth protecting?

The Hopewell Valley contains multiple large conservation areas, including forest, grassland and riparian habitats. The Raritan Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership (RPWHP) identified priority areas across Central New Jersey, and selected the following high priority conservation areas in the Valley:

- *Baldpate Mountain Ecosystem & Sourland Mountain Ecosystem* – large forest patches uncommon in NJ
- *Mercer Meadows* (a.k.a. Pole Farm) – a grassland supporting a suite of rare and uncommon birds
- *Stony Brook* and its tributaries – critical riparian habitat



The New Jersey Natural Heritage Program lists three areas (Strawberry Hill, Titusville and Goat Hill) of particular significance to rare plants – these areas are all located within the Baldpate Mountain Ecosystem. *Each one of these habitats is comprised of and surrounded by both preserved and privately owned land.*

The Valley provides habitat for a diversity of animals including 35 species of mammals, 106 birds, 27 reptiles, 23 amphibians, 35 fish, 57 dragonflies/damselflies, 94 butterflies, 10 mussels and 229 woody plant species. Among these species are **82 rare and priority species**. This impressive list includes **5 globally rare species** including American Ginseng and Shortnose Sturgeon.

Putting the Plan into Action!

Carefully planned activities with quantifiable outcomes, along with scientifically assessed monitoring, will be the hallmark of FoHVOS' contribution to fostering ecological health in the Hopewell Valley. FoHVOS will commit 40,000 hours of staff and volunteer effort over the next 10 years to implement the Plan.

FoHVOS' stewardship activities will include participation in Valley-wide and regional efforts including:

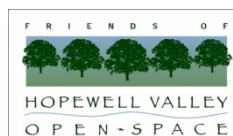


American ginseng - A globally rare species found in the Hopewell Valley

- ✓ **Hopewell Township Deer Management Advisory Committee**, which addresses the effects of deer on people and our natural heritage
- ✓ **New Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team**, a statewide program for which FoHVOS serves as the Central Region Coordinator
- ✓ **Private Lands Stewardship Program**, a program implemented by FoHVOS to significantly broaden stewardship efforts across the entire Valley
- ✓ **Citizen Science** projects that engage Valley residents in national efforts such as Christmas Bird Counts
- ✓ **Public Access** through trails on our preserves and throughout the Valley

Please contact us to help protect the Valley's natural heritage!

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