



OpenSpaceChronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Autumn 2008

Will your vote *really* make a difference?

On November 4th, residents of Hopewell Township will head to the voting booths to make their presidential choice and also will be asked to vote “yes” or “no” on a question that will impact their daily lives and overall quality of life here in the Hopewell Valley. The decision they must make is whether or not to add an additional penny to the already existing two cents that are levied for every one hundred dollars of property assessment.

It is all a matter of perspective. To some, an additional penny seems inconsequential in relation to the cumulative return on their nominal investment. To others, it represents just one more penny leaving their pockets in tough economic times. In order to help our residents make an informed decision, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space dedicates the following pages to a complete overview of this ballot question.

Preserving quality of life also means protecting water

Hopewell Valley residents have the statewide reputation of being actively informed about issues that affect the protection of important natural resources such as wetlands, streams, farmland and habitat precious and sometimes unique to this area. A little over 25% of Hopewell Township is developed; about 26% is in agriculture; about 48% is natural cover. “Natural cover” includes undeveloped portions of large properties—it does not mean 48% of the land is protected from development. Much of it is not. Hopewell Township has preserved about 2,500 acres since its open space tax was first approved by voters in 1998, either alone or in partnership with other government agencies and organizations such as FoHVOS.

Geographically, Hopewell Township lies in an important watershed area that contains numerous creeks and larger tributaries that eventually feed into the Delaware and Raritan Rivers, which provide drinking water for hundreds of thousands of households in much of the state, including parts of our township. Furthermore, Hopewell Township’s wells draw from groundwater sources, or aquifers, that are relatively low-yield ad, because of the types of underlying rock formations, are very sensitive to drought and demand. Even the smallest amount of development on previously undeveloped land has a ripple effect on neighboring properties in the following ways.

Development creates impervious surfaces, including driveways, parking lots, rooftops and lawns underlaid by compacted soils. Impervious surfaces lead to runoff, which often carries pollutants such as oil, pesticides and herbicides, detergents and antifreeze into our streams. Runoff produces flooding of streams and leads to stream bank erosion and the consequent sediment which muddies the waterways and damages aquatic habitat. Impervious surfaces also prevent rainwater from percolating down to our precious aquifer to replenish our wells, a process known as “aquifer recharge.” Some areas of the township are more significant than others at capturing rainwater and many of these areas are not presently protected from development.

Protection of our water sources is one of the most crucial benefits derived from open space preservation and thoughtful planning. A study of Hopewell Township’s water resources published in 2001 indicated that we needed to reduce our
Continued on Page 2



Sophie Vetri enjoys a clear stream on Baldpate Mountain.
Photo by Jayna Tutino.

Will your vote *really* make a difference?

Continued from Page 1

zoning density in order to protect our groundwater resources. This conclusion was based on the scientifically supported conclusion that, "Hopewell Township is nearing the dependable yield for the area encompassed within the Township perimeter and continued demands could adversely impact stream ecosystems, downstream consumers, or current residents of the Township and Borough." (Evaluation of Groundwater Resource of Hopewell Township, Mercer County, New Jersey, Matthew J. Mulhall, P.G., M2 Associates, Inc.) But zoning alone does not necessarily permanently protect land from development; only preservation can accomplish that goal.

The state's well runs dry

The Green Acres Program was created in 1961 to meet New Jersey's growing recreation and conservation needs. From 1961 through 1995, New Jersey's voters overwhelmingly approved nine bond issues in order to preserve the state's dwindling open spaces and natural lands. In 1998, the voters approved a measure to provide a stable source of funding that was intended to carry the state through ten years of open space, farmland and historic preservation. Despite the fact that we live in the most densely populated state in the nation, New Jersey gained a national reputation for being a leader in open space preservation and environmental protection.

Now, more than four decades later, the well has finally run dry. There will not be a statewide open space funding question on the ballot on November 4th. With all of its remaining funds allocated, soon the state will fall far behind in its position as a leader as it draws ever closer to the first break in annual open

space acquisition funding. Lack of funding means that thousands of acres of land could be forever lost to development. Without state funds to match county, municipal and nonprofit open space funds, local farmland and open space preservation projects will be stopped in their tracks. A halt in the flow of funds also plays havoc with the open space and recreation element of the township's own master plan.

With only fifteen years left until New Jersey is predicted to reach its full build-out, the race is on for individual municipalities to step and protect their own land with their own funds.

It's all in the numbers

The economic climate is dreary. Any talk of a tax increase can create pause even in the staunchest environmental supporter. But we are talking about pennies a day. For a residential property assessed at the Hopewell Township median of \$570,000, that comes to less than \$5 per month. That's five dollars invested in clean and plentiful drinking water, clear streams, farmland, open spaces and our quality of life. The returns on that investment are immeasurable!

So, what are we really being asked?

In the ballot question's interpretive statement, a clear explanation of the levy and how it will be used is described:

Hopewell Township's open space levy stands at 2 cents (.02) per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation of real property. A "yes" vote would increase the open space levy by one cent per one hundred dollars of assessed value, which would provide the Township with additional funds that would be dedicated to the acquisition and maintenance of land to conserve open space; preservation of farmland and historic sites; or payment of debt service

on bonds issued for these purposes. Among other things, funds used for these purposes would help to protect drinking water sources, water quality in streams and wildlife habitat, and to provide public access to lands through trails and other means. A "no" vote would keep the current 2 cent open space levy.

The story behind the story is this. As of now, Hopewell Township is working closely with FoHVOS as well as other groups on prioritized projects. Several acquisitions are near completion. These projects represent significant achievements for everyone involved and have made great strides in protecting our drinking water sources, water quality in our streams and conserving open space, farmland and wildlife habitat.

But other promising acquisition opportunities are out there and, until funding becomes available, they cannot be pursued. State matching funds will not be available to complete any additional projects. Potential open spaces and farmland that are in danger of disappearing forever will have to be put in a holding pattern until state funds are replenished. How long could the drought last without the extra boost? The effect could be felt indefinitely. Additional funding at the municipal level is need to keep the well flowing.

So, what can you do now to protect Hopewell Township's water resources? Carefully consider all the reasons we need to be proactive in our preservation efforts when you go to vote on November 4th. Your vote will make an immediate impact by helping our elected officials, the Open Space and Agricultural Advisory Committees, the Planning Board, local land trusts including FoHVOS, and other environmental organizations take steps now to protect important natural resources through acquisition.



My Favorite Hike: Ralph Peters Trail in the Wescott and Zega Lockatong Preserves



This issue's contributor:

Kay Widmer, Pennington resident and hike enthusiast

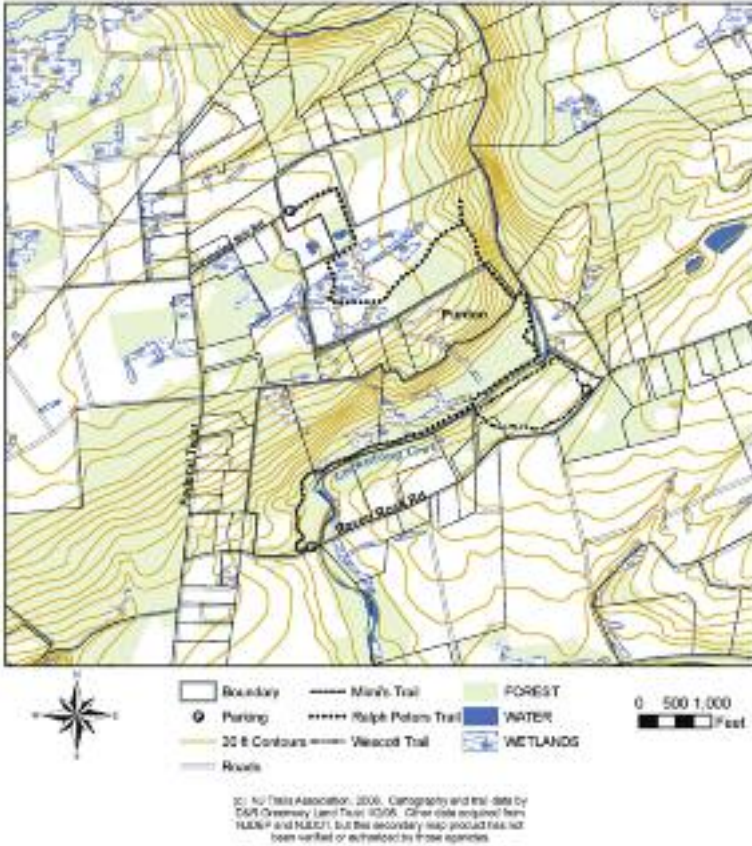
This 1.7 mile trail leads one through some of the most beautiful woods in the area. From the parking lot the trail winds through farm fields and meadows, an open red oak-white oak forest to a stand of beautiful old hemlocks. It descends a steep slope to the Lockatong Creek at the bottom of the gorge. The creek has several miniature waterfalls and rapids as it tumbles over the hard shelving bedrock. The descent to the creek can be slippery after rains. The trail then follows the creek through a flood plain woods to end at the Mimi Upmeyer Bench which is the beginning of the Mimi Upmeyer trail. The Upmeyer trail continues along the creek for .75 miles to the Zega preserve parking lot. There is a picnic table at the end of the Upmeyer trail.

Distance: This trail takes approximately 40-60 minutes to walk, use red diamond plastic patches on posts and trees.

Word of Caution: In order to control the population of deer on park property, hunting is permitted on the preserve. Hunting season is mid-November through mid-February. No hunting allowed on Sundays, even during the season.

Directions and Parking: Travel Route 29 North to the junction with Route 519 just above Stockton. Proceed on Route 519 until it takes a sharp bend to go into Rosemont. At this bend, Raven Rock-Rosemont Road bears to the left. Make the left and proceed 0.7 mile to the preserve which is located on the right. The parking lot will hold 6-8 cars.

Zega - Wescott Lockatong Nature Preserve
Delaware Township, NJ



Get Outside!



Fall is a great time for shutterbugs. The colorful foliage, berries on the shrubs, dried grasses, milkweeds shedding their downy seeds, a woodpecker mining deeply-ridged bark for a meal—all are tantalizing subjects for creative composition. Water, whether still or running, has its own special allure. A frog pokes his nose up in a pond, breaking the sky's reflection into perfect rings of blue. Click! Slow down exposure time and create an impressionist study of a brook splashing

over a rock. Geese silhouetted against the liquid gold of sunset on the Delaware? Zoom in, zoom out! One of those shots will be perfect. Bravely balance yourself on a rock and focus straight down onto the red and yellow leaves basking on the surface of a pool so clear the submerged rocks themselves compete for attention. Water, in all its beautiful forms, is a commanding subject in every corner of the Hopewell Valley. Seek out the subtle, the not-so-obvious when you

are out enjoying our open spaces. And, whatever you do, don't go out without your camera.



Photo by Pat Sziber



News & Events



FoHVOS partners on land acquisition with ecological significance

The Kulak property, located on Featherbed Lane in Hopewell Township, is the latest acquisition completed by FoHVOS. The property, totaling 56.38 acres, represents a second successful partnership with D&R Greenway Land Trust.

This addition will connect and link to existing preserved open space in Mercer County, including the Stephens, Tassone and Stoveken properties and the 1,000+-acre D&R Greenway Northern Stony Brook Preserve, providing enhanced passive recreation opportunities and allowing improved public access along the Stony Brook. Open space within the Stony Brook watershed helps to protect water quality and numerous forest-dependent species,

including those that are rare and declining.

Preserving this corridor has local importance to Hopewell Valley residents. It possesses a tributary of the Stony Brook, meadows, and forested areas in various stages of succession. The meadow and forest communities on the property buffer and preserve both ground and surface water quality in the Stony Brook watershed by slowing storm water runoff, allowing increased recharge of the water table, and helping to sustain the stream base flow during droughts. The forests and wetlands also act as filters to remove sediment and pollution that may impact the watershed.



Nov 1 is Clean Up Day – get involved!

Looking for an easy, volunteer family activity? Want to raise money for your group? Want to make an immediate impact to your community? Then, register today for Hopewell Valley's Clean Up Day! There are over 100 designated clean up areas available. Work for just two hours and collect a free T-shirt.

Sponsored by: FoHVOS, Hopewell Township and Hopewell Borough.

When: Saturday, November 1st starting at 8:00 am – last drop off is at 1:00 pm.
Who can participate? Any youth (must be accompanied by at least 1 adult), religious or civic organization or individuals may participate.

Where: Meet us at the Hopewell Township Public Works building, 203 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road.

Register Now at www.fohvos.org or call us (609) 730-1560.



Eat Locally Tour photos by Pat Sziber



President's Note

Water—clean, safe, abundant water—can be considered the earth's most precious natural resource. Here in the Hopewell Valley, our land is crisscrossed by many streams and tributaries which ultimately flow into either of two great rivers—the Delaware and the Raritan. The headwaters of these waterways emerge in wetlands, some only a few hundred square feet in area, scattered throughout Hopewell Township.

As a professional who has spent most of her career working on wetlands policy, I know that protecting these headwaters is one of the most important steps we can take to protect

the quality of our surface and ground water resources. I also know that not all of the rain that falls across the Hopewell Valley ends up recharging groundwater, filtering through our forested wetlands and, ultimately, reaching our wells. A drive down any of our country roads immediately after a heavy rainfall reveals torrents of muddy water coursing down the side of the road and into the nearest stream, flooding it with silt, oil, herbicides and other contaminants.

This scenario would never happen in a natural environment, where our forests and natural wetlands capture, filter, and slow down rainwater. The

effect of development on water dynamics is a proven fact. We also know that permanent preservation of open space is our most powerful tool for protection of our water resources on a large scale. I urge each and every Hopewell Township voter to carefully consider these issues when they vote on the township's open space question on November 4th. The protection of open space is one investment you can count on providing long-term dividends.

Our Most Sincere Appreciation to Those Who Made the Eat Locally Event Possible

2008 Eat Locally Tour Farm Stops

David Earling and Maria Nicolo of Gravity Hill Farms, Titusville
Lucia and Charles Huebner of Beechtree Farms, Hopewell
Mike Rassweiler of North Slope Farm, Lambertville

Providers of Samples, Eat Local Bags and Music

Amwell Valley Organic Grains, Ringoes
Mountain View Band
River Horse Brewing Company, Lambertville
Sweet Sourland Farm, Hopewell

Local Food Guidebook Sponsors

David Earling & Maria Nicolo
Mid State Equipment, Titusville
John Hutchinson Architect, Pennington
Janssen Pharmaceutica, Titusville
NT Callaway, Pennington
Pennington Quality Market, Pennington
Long Motor Group, Princeton, Edison and Bridgewater
Daniel Saporito, DMD, Hopewell
Sam Hamill
Stephanie Harris
Jon McConaughy

Our Eat Locally Food and Beverage Suppliers

Hopewell Valley Vineyard, Pennington
The Brothers Moon Restaurant, Hopewell

Eat Locally Tour Ticket Locations

Around the Table, Pennington
Boro Bean, Hopewell
Rosedale Mills, Pennington

Event Sponsors

Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, Pennington
Evann Gleeson

Auction Donors

Inn at Glencairn, Princeton
Lucy's Ravioli, Princeton
Nomad Pizza, Hopewell
Catherine Ahmad, Landscape and Design
Ruth Jourjine, Artist

And our volunteers

Shelterwood 4-H, Hopewell
Denise Lager



Volunteer Spotlight

Inspiring a new career

Matt Lager, 19, was at a crossroads last spring. As a junior attending Pennsylvania State University, he was on course to graduate with a biology degree and, afterwards, continue on to dental school. However, several of his previous environmental science classes had begun to pique his interest. Around the same time, he learned through his mom that FoHVOS was looking for a summer volunteer. Matt decided that a hands-on volunteer experience would help him determine whether these classes were a passing interest or a potential new career.

During the summer, Matt assisted Stewardship Director, Mike Van Clef, using GIS software, taking measurements and counts in the forest, and helping to provide valuable data for FoHVOS invasive species research. "While working with Mike in the field," Matt explains, "I learned many things about local plants that I never really knew. I've spent a lot of

time in the woods growing up, but until now, did not ever really learn about what was around me. I gained a much deeper appreciation for the things I



Matt Lager, summer 2008 volunteer.

had never before noticed. I learned first hand how threatened our natural habitats have become from the influx of different invasive species."

Matt got to experience what he

could only read about in school. "I saw just how fragile ecosystems actually are". Upon returning to school for the fall semester, Matt can say with confidence, "I'm now looking into going to law school in order to study environmental law."

Although nonprofits typically offer non-paid volunteer and internship positions, a price tag cannot be placed on the potential gains. The experience can provide a deeper understanding of a topic or, in Matt's case, open up a student's eyes to a completely new field of study. A student does not have to wait for college to explore and try out new things. High school summers are also a great time to develop an interest or learn about the many types of careers that exist. As a local land trust, FoHVOS is committed to doing its part in developing and mentoring tomorrow's conservationists. For more information about our volunteer and internship opportunities, please visit www.fohv.org.



Yes, I want to preserve open space throughout the Valley!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Yes, I prefer to receive your bi-annual newsletter via email.

Friend - \$35

Advocate - \$60.00

Partner - \$100

Student/Senior - \$25

Steward - \$250

Conservationist Society - \$500

Other - \$ _____



Stewardship Corner *Ask Dr. Mike*

FoHVOS Leads Cooperative Effort to “Strike” at Invasive Species

FoHVOS and the Upper Raritan Watershed Association (URWA) have partnered to create the Central Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team. The Strike Team represents New Jersey’s first comprehensive effort toward invasive plant management through public-private partnerships. Our project partners include a broad coalition including a growing list of over 20 groups representing state, county and municipal government, private conservation groups, community groups and private citizens. FoHVOS and URWA have received nearly \$40,000 to fund the first year of the project from The Bunbury Company, Merck and Co., Conservation Resources, Inc., Conserve Wildlife Foundation, NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife, and the 1772 Foundation.

The goal of the Strike Team is to halt the spread of invasive species by finding and eliminating small, newly forming populations. This represents a very efficient approach that utilizes a cooperative network of organizational staff, partner staff and a dedicated crew of volunteers. In the Hopewell Valley, we have already searched along trails on lands totaling over 3,000 acres and are quickly learning which species to target. Small groups of invasive species such as linden viburnum, Siebold’s viburnum, jetbead and Japanese aralia have been found at various locations – we have already started to eliminate these new invaders and will continue this work through 2009.

By removing these small populations of new invaders, we will prevent serious damage they would have caused in the future – all for a small

fraction of the cost that would have been required if waited to react until they became major infestations. We are also targeting new populations of widespread invasive species. Through



Native wildflower meadow at Skyview Partners Preserve.

Photo taken by Rachel Mackow.

Sabatia, one of the many native wildflowers growing at the Skyview Partners Preserve.

Photo courtesy of FoHVOS Strike Team volunteer Nina Burghardt.



One of the ten purple loosestrife plants found at Skyview Partners Preserve. If left unattended, loosestrife would dominate the entire meadow and crowd out a variety of native wildflowers.

Photo taken by Rachel Mackow.




our searching efforts, we detected and removed 10 plants of the notorious purple loosestrife at our Skyview Partners Preserve. Our quick action protected a beautiful native wildflower meadow that would have been overrun by this troubling invader.

On September 30th, FoHVOS and URWA hosted our “Kick-Off” event. The goal of the meeting was to strengthen existing partnerships and

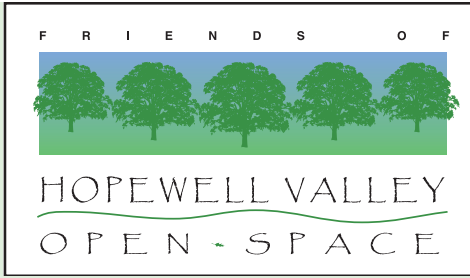
form new partnerships. Melissa Almendinger (URWA), Rachel Mackow (FoHVOS Land Steward Intern) and I presented the scientific basis of the program, the nuts-and-bolts of on-the-ground implementation, and our first set of mapping data to over 50 attendees representing 24 conservation-minded organizations. We are confident that the success of this event and enthusiasm of our partners will greatly increase the success of the Strike Team.

We encourage you to visit our website, www.fohvos.org, to learn more about the Strike Team. You will find basic background information and more detailed technical information about the science behind our efforts. You will also find fact sheets prepared by Rachel to help you identify the Strike Team’s 40 target invasive species. Please let us know if you have you seen any of these species

in our natural areas and consider becoming a Strike Team volunteer! 

If you have any questions or are interested in volunteering, contact:

Michael Van Clef
Stewardship Director
Michael@fohvos.org
 or Rachel Mackow
Land Steward Intern
Rachel@fohvos.org
 or call either of us at:
609-730-1560



The purpose of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is to promote conservation in the Hopewell Valley region through open space preservation, wise stewardship, education and outreach.

Board and Staff List

Officers

President – Jessica Wilkinson
Vice-President – John Jackson
Vice-President – Carol Kleis
Treasurer – Robert C. Johnston
Secretary – Carol Kleis

Board of Trustees

David Glogoff	Tom Ogren
Jack Koeppel	Dan Rubenstein
Liz McLaughlin	Peggy Snyder
Frank Newport	

Staff

Pat Sziber – Executive Director
Michael Van Clef – Stewardship Director
Jayna Tutino – Development Director
Rachel Mackow – Stewardship Intern

For more information on how you can become involved, please contact us at development@fohv.org

Pennington NJ 08534
PO Box 395



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pennington, NJ
Permit No. 62