



Open Space Chronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Fall 2009

Preservation Funding: A Smart Investment for Troubled Times

November 3rd Ballot Question in Dollars and Cents

We value open spaces because, among other reasons, they enhance our quality of life and are a core aspect of our sense of place. But there are more tangible benefits as well. The value of open space, farmland and historic preservation can be measured in dollars and cents. For instance, the resale value of a home increases by about 16% when it is located near preserved open space. Listing on a historic register raises the market value of a property. Because development increases the demand for municipal services, conserving land keeps the demand for those services and their attendant costs in check. One study showed that for every \$1 collected in residential property taxes, between \$1.10 and \$1.51 was spent for municipal services.

And it isn't all about real estate. In 2007, farms in New Jersey generated \$30 million in income from sales of edible farm products. Preserved lands are good for regional economies in other ways as well. Hikers, birders, fishermen, hunters, canoeists and other recreational users spend money where they spend their time. The numbers of visitors to state parks and forests each year may come as a surprise. According to a report produced by the New Jersey Conservation Foundation in cooperation with the New Jersey Keep It Green Coalition, of which FoHVOS is a member, the famous birding spot, Cape May Point State Park, sees well over half a million



*Virginia creeper at the Lawrence Preserve
Photo by Rachel Mackow*

visitors a year. And our own neighbors, the D&R Canal State Park and Washington Crossing State Park have a combined annual visitorship of nearly 2.4 million. The visitors rent bikes and canoes, buy lunch, eat dinner on the riverfront, fill their gas tanks and maybe visit nearby retail and entertainment establishments. Recreation on state parks and forests pumps an estimated \$1.2 billion annually into state and local economies which helps to stabilize the financial base of our entire state.

On Election Day, November 3rd, voters will be asked if they support a \$400 mil-

lion bond measure to fund the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) for two years. GSPT, the main engine that keeps preservation efforts going, is currently out of money. The last of the funding approved by voters in 1998 was allocated this year and the piggy bank is empty.

Can New Jerseyans afford to take on another bond obligation in these troubled times? Can we afford not to? We can look at this as an investment in two ways: what would we get in return and, what would it cost us if we don't invest? Bonding the \$400 million will cost the average New Jersey household \$10 per year for 20 years, for a total of \$200. The funds provided by the ballot question would preserve about 73,500 acres of land. There is a very precise and technical analysis published by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, the 2007 Natural Capital Report, which concludes that the ecosystem goods and services provided by such preservation would be valued at \$329 million per year, or about \$6.5 billion in the 20-year period of the bonds. The Trust for Public Land calculated this to be a 1,000% rate of return on each household's \$10 per year investment. But the payback would be in perpetuity, not just for 20 years. Where else can you find a deal like that? The Natural Capital Report can be found at <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/natural-cap/>.

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November 3rd Ballot Question in Dollars and Cents

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So, what do we lose if we don't invest? If farms and forests are not preserved they can be lost to development. Even though more than 1.2 million acres of land in New Jersey have been preserved since 1985, including more than 176,000 acres of farmland, more than two million acres remain that could be developed...or preserved. As land becomes developed, we lose the ecosystem services that they provide: flood and sediment control, filtering waste and chemicals from runoff, fresh air, carbon sequestration, groundwater recharge, habitat for plants and animals, local food production, recreational opportunities. Cleanup and remediation are always more costly than prevention. As of today, 81% of Green Acres funding requests remain unfunded. 67% of historic preservation grant requests are languishing. 70% of applications for trails grants are not funded. We have a lot of catching up to do.

It may not be possible to put a dollar value on the physical and psychological health benefits of preserved open space, but it is human nature to feel uplifted by beautiful views, a walk in the woods or a visit to a local farm stand. Historic buildings tie us to the glorious past of our region. Hiking and biking trails provide safe opportunities for outdoor exercise and access to nature.

The next time you drive through the Valley's rural areas, note the number of "for sale" signs along the way. This will give you some idea of the work that still needs to be done. Most acquisitions for preservation come about as the result of partnerships among public and private entities, but funding provided by the Garden State Preservation Trust is an essential element in most of

them. We and our partners in preservation are eager to resume our work in securing our precious land and natural and historic resources. Please be a part of this endeavor by giving us the one tool we now lack...GSPT funding...with your November 3rd vote on Public Question #1.



New Jersey's Unmet Preservation Needs

Up to 1 million acres....High quality natural resource land

30,000 acres.....Pinelands preservation

76,000 acres.....Barnegat Bay watershed protection

"Blue Acres".....Flood mitigation along the Delaware

1,327 sites.....Rehabilitation of registered historic sites

450,000 acres.....Farmland in need of preservation*

Urban parks.....Many more are needed

*It is estimated that an additional 450,000 acres of farms should be preserved to ensure a viable agricultural industry in NJ. Agricultural land decreased by 72,000 acres between 2002-2007.

These numbers are from a white paper produced by the New Jersey Conservation Foundation in cooperation with the Keep It Green Coalition.



Conserve Wildlife Foundation Grant Supports Invasive Species Work

A \$3,500 matching grant has been awarded by the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey and the NJDEP - Division of Fish & Wildlife for FoHVOS' contribution to the Central Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team (CJISST.) This is the second year in a row that the CJISST project has received CWF funding. The money will be used to help reach the project's 2009 goal of eradicating 200 populations of emerging invasive plants. The funding will also support maintenance of the CJISST database, creation of additional emerging invasive species fact sheets, finalizing control recommendations and preparation of the 2009 annual report/2010 action plan. We are very grateful for this much needed funding.

The Conserve Wildlife Foundation is a nonprofit organization whose primary goal is to support the science and outreach activities of the Endangered and Nongame Species Program in the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife.



President's Note

New Jersey is recognized as a preservation leader among the fifty states. In fact, our state is ranked second in the nation for state funding for open space preservation. Since 1985, municipalities, counties and non-profit organizations such as our own have preserved more than 1.2 million acres of open space and over 176,000 acres of farmland through the Green Acres Program, the Farmland Preservation Program and the NJ Historic Trust. Since 1981, 532 historic sites have received preservation funding. Approximately 29% of New Jersey's total 4.8 million acres of land area have been preserved either as open space or farmland.

The first Green Acres Bond Act was

approved in 1971, long before the founding of the Friends in 1987. In our 22 years of existence, we have always been able to rely upon Green Acres funding to help carry out our preservation goals. In that time, 1,754 of the 1808 acres we own outright as preserves were purchased with Green Acres matching funds for nonprofits. With the exception of a few donated parcels, our portfolio of preserved lands would be just about empty without Green Acres funding.

And that is exactly the situation right now with the Garden State Preservation Trust, which was authorized as the financing authority in 1998 to fund open space, farmland and historic preservation: empty. Meanwhile,

we and our preservation partners have a significant backlog of projects, some of which have been in the pipeline for some time and others that have been added recently to the list of potential acquisitions in the hope that the Trust will be replenished.

We have that chance. On Election Day November 3rd, voters will have the opportunity to send the message, loud and clear, that we will not relinquish New Jersey's role as a preservation leader. We have approved 12 out of 12 statewide preservation ballot measures since 1961. Talk to your friends and neighbors and tell them we're going for a perfect 13 out of 13.

John Jackson

Clean Communities Cleanup Day Saturday, November 7

Raise money for your group and help keep the Hopewell Valley clean!

When: November 7 – same-day registration 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.

Where: Hopewell Twp. Public Works Dept.

Contact: Rachel@fohvos.org or 609-730-1560

Work two hours and receive a free T-shirt. Up to 100 designated cleanup areas.

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Yes, I prefer to receive your newsletter via email.

- Friend.....\$40
- Advocate.....\$70
- Partner.....\$100
- Student/Senior.....\$25
- Steward.....\$250
- Corporate Sponsor.....\$500
- Other - \$ _____



News & Events

A New Trail in the Harbourton Area

by Chris Berry

On National Trails Day, June 6, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space built our newest trail at the 76-acre Eames Preserve with the help of 13 volunteers. It is about 1.7 miles in length and includes a gentle 50 foot change in elevation. This trail is a long narrow

loop through open woods and a meadow. The first section follows an old road as it passes the former site of a house and outbuildings on the western side of the trail. The woods here are very open with red maple, white ash, some large black cherry trees, sassafras, tulip poplar and hickory. There are scattered stands of dying red cedar

indicating that this was once an open field. There are also standing dead trees (den trees) with signs of woodpecker holes that have been enlarged by the inhabitants such as squirrels.

As the trail descends down a gentle slope the forest changes dramatically. Suddenly there is a large stand of hornbeam, hickory and ash with little undergrowth on the ground. This is a sign that the deer population is far too big and that the deer have eaten most of the native shrubs and saplings. The trail leaves the old road and continues through a wet meadow and then swings to the west. The path follows a delightful meander of Woodsville Brook, skirts a slough filled with skunk cabbage and begins to climb back toward the south through a large stand of climax forest of American beech. The trail then continues back past the homestead to the parking area.

The Eames preserve is located at 43 Harbourton-Woodsville Road. At this time there is limited parking on the old driveway near the road. Please pull to one side so as not to block the driveway when parking.



*In early spring, our native skunk cabbage dominates a wet depression on the Eames Preserve.
Photo by Rachel Mackow*



Site Steward Program Seeks Volunteers

Under the guidance of the FoHVOS Stewardship Committee, we are launching a Site Steward Program whereby volunteers will monitor the condition of our preserves on a regular basis. Site Stewards will essentially “adopt” a preserve and visit it at least once each season to keep tabs on trail conditions, report problems, perform light trail maintenance, list unique sightings and generally be our eyes and ears in caring for our preserves.

A Site Steward Handbook has been produced to provide guidance for volunteers. On-site training will also be available. Over time, the stewards will become very familiar with their preserves and will come to recognize even the most subtle changes. We are confident that the volunteers will find the commitment very rewarding. We’ve already matched two people with a preserve in their neighborhood.

This work will be very valuable to FoHVOS’ ongoing stewardship efforts. If you would like to discuss becoming a FoHVOS Site Steward, please contact us at rachel@fohvos.org for more information.



Ted Stiles Memorial Plaque Installed at Baldpate

Finally, the plaque commemorating the naming of the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain on September 16, 2007 has found its permanent home. The stone, one of the countless diabase boulders found on Ted's beloved mountain, now stands directly across from the entrance to the Visitor Center. Cast in bronze by Gough Engraving & Advertising Specialties in Ewing Township, the plaque installation was prepared this past May by Russell Shane, a carpenter with the Mercer County Park Commission. The plaque reflects Ted's passion for preservation of habitat for wildlife, especially birds. Please stop to see the memorial the next time you visit the Preserve.



Russell Shane pauses while installing the Ted Stiles Memorial plaque.
Photo by Pat Sziber



People

Michael Van Clef, Ph.D., Director of Stewardship

Mike Van Clef has been leading the FoHVOS Stewardship Program since joining us as a contract staff member in December 2005. Mike heads up his own consulting company, Ecological Solutions, LLC, based in Warren County where he lives with his wife and young son. He has over 20 years experience involving land stewardship, planning and research and has worked extensively in the evaluation and management of rare and invasive species, white-tailed deer management, development and implementation of forest health monitoring protocols and natural resource policy. Mike has a B.S. in Biology and a Ph.D. in Ecology, both from Rutgers University, where he studied with Prof. Edmund W. Stiles, former FoHVOS president.

Dr. Stiles recommended Mike for the position because he had every confidence that he would structure and lead an outstanding stewardship program for FoHVOS. In these past four years, he has built a strong, progressive and innovative program of which we are very proud. An important component of his work has been his cultivation of relationships with county and municipal program leaders and with the owners of our easement properties, as well as with the hunting community. We are fortunate to have him on board and look forward to his guidance as we expand our stewardship efforts.



Mike Van Clef leading a field session at a CJISST Invasive Species Workshop at Duke Farms last May.
Photo by Pat Sziber



Volunteer Spotlight

by Rachel Mackow

The Master Gardeners of Mercer County are Central Jersey Invasive Strike Team partners. We would like to recognize two Master Gardeners who volunteer for our weekly eradication efforts: Nancy Putnam and Denise Hansson.

They agree that they have gained an “appreciation for native plants and increased ability to recognize them” and value the “improvement of our local community by learning to identify and assist in the removal of invasive plants.” Nancy and Denise also “enjoy local nature preserves and ecological activities with like-minded community residents.”

Both Nancy and Denise are also volunteers at the Master Gardener maintained site, Mercer Educational Gardens, in Pennington.

Denise Hansson has long been involved in environmental issues, having attended energy conferences in college. More recently, she has, along with family members, done FoHVOS cleanups, tree planting and stream bank restorations with various scout troops. She also did some volunteering for the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association and is a member of a number of environmental groups. She maintains an organic natural garden and lawn, which emphasizes native plants and natural controls

whenever possible.

For the past ten years Nancy Putnam has been a volunteer naturalist and propagation assistant at Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve in New Hope, PA. Since 2006, she has co-chaired the Mercer Educational Gardens, and in 2007-08, she spearheaded a successful effort to obtain a grant from the Washington Crossing Audubon Society in order to renovate the adjacent wetland meadow with native grasses and wildflowers.

We are pleased to honor these two energetic volunteers.



*Denise Hansson and Nancy Putnam at the Mercer Educational Gardens
Photo by Rachel Mackow*

Stewardship Corner

by Rachel Mackow

Partnering to Protect the Hopewell Valley

National Public Lands Day brought together four Central Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team partners—Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, Master Gardeners of Mercer County, Mercer County Park Commission, and Mercer County Planning Department—and over a dozen volunteers.

Staff and volunteer crews worked for over two hours cutting Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*) vines at the Ted Stiles Preserve on Baldpate Mountain. Escaped from landscape plantings around Baldpate's historic buildings, the wisteria vines had climbed 80 feet into the forest canopy. The invasive vines threatened to girdle and topple mature trees. After freeing a tulip tree, two volunteers smiled and agreed, "the tree must be breathing easier."

While working, crews kept a careful eye out for the heart-shaped leaves of the eastern redbud tree (*Cercis canadensis*). A small native tree, redbud is more common in the south and is at the northern extent of its range on Baldpate Mountain. The presence of eastern redbud at Baldpate is yet another reason to protect the preserve's natural heritage from emerging invasive species.



Japanese wisteria "escaped" from ornamental planting at Baldpate girdles a tree.
Photo by Rachel Mackow

Working Across Central New Jersey

CJISST began as a partnership between two organizations—FoHVOS and Upper Raritan Watershed Association—and has grown to over 40 partners in nine counties in just one year. Each agency and organization contributes its unique mission to CJISST's efforts in outreach, education, mapping and eradication of emerging invasive species.

The 2009 field season was a success largely due to partnerships. Multiple partner efforts have targeted some of the most threatening emerging invasive species, including Japanese aralia, Oriental photinia, linden viburnum and Siebold's viburnum. FoHVOS staff has coordinated partner work days with Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park, Delaware River Greenway Partnership, D&R Greenway Land Trust, Mercer County Park Commission, NJ Audubon Society, Washington Crossing Audubon Society, and Washington Crossing State Park. In addition, private landowners have supported CJISST's efforts by allowing access to their land.

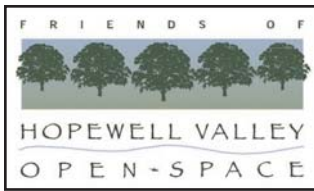
The Central Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team welcomes organizations and private landowners to become partners. Our project area includes the counties of Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Somerset, and Union. To learn more, please visit: www.cjisst.org.



Staff from Mercer County Park Commission, Mercer County Planning Department and FoHVOS with Master Gardeners of Mercer County and volunteers on National Public Lands Day, October 4, 2009.
Photo by Rachel Mackow

Our weekly Strike Team crew and volunteers from Sun National Bank in Pennington and Hopewell Valley High School students contributed to the wisteria eradication efforts. Here, the cut wisteria vines are beginning to fade.
Photo by Rachel Mackow

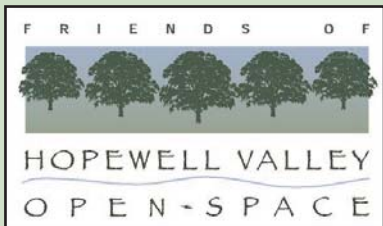




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The purpose of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is to promote conservation in the Hopewell Valley region through open space preservation, wise stewardship, education and outreach.

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For more information on how you can become involved, please contact us at

info@fohv.org