



Open Space Chronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Fall 2013

Celebrate the Fall Equinox at a Party on the Patio

Autumn arrives at 4:44 p.m. EDT on September 22. Why not celebrate that magical moment atop Mercer County's highest point, Baldpate Mountain!

This year we return to Strawberry Hill Mansion for our fall celebration where you can take in the finest views of the Delaware River while sipping a glass of wine or beer on the elegant bluestone terrace. You may be tempted to take your glass down to the walled garden, where you can walk the paths between the beds of native plants which were a magnet for butterflies and bees this summer.

Back at the mansion, you can sample the tempting selection of hors d'oeuvres, tapas, brie specialties and desserts by Emily's Café & Catering and check out the variety of items in the silent auction display. Mountain View Band will once again entertain with their blend of acoustic bluegrass and country music.

In addition to the fall equinox we will also be celebrating the success of the first year of our Private Lands Stewardship Program. More than fifty households are now creating and nurturing habitat for native plants and wildlife in their own backyards under the guidance of our stewardship staff. Many of the silent auction items that will be offered were selected to inspire and enhance your gardening efforts. Plenty of information on ecological stewardship will be available and a member of our staff will be happy to talk to you about getting started.

The Party on the Patio will be held from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 22. This year plenty of parking is available near the mansion. Access is via the mile-long driveway to the top. Of course, you may also park in the Fiddler's Creek Road parking lot and hike up if you wish. Reservations, which are \$65 per person, are required and you may register online at www.fohvos.org. Under Upcoming Events, click on the link under Party on the Patio!



Photo by Pat Sziber

Preserved! 18th Century Farmstead Near Baldpate Mountain

In April of this year, a partnership consisting of Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FoHVOS), D&R Greenway Land Trust and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) finalized the preservation of the 35.5-acre Longspring Farm located in the Pleasant Valley area of Hopewell Township. The property is a key connector between Baldpate Mountain and a Mercer County preserve which fronts on Pleasant Valley-Harbourton Road. NJDEP has acquired 14 acres of woodland in fee; FoHVOS and D&R Greenway purchased a Conservation, Agricultural and Historic Easement on 21.5 acres of pasture and woodland with the help of preservation grants from the New Jersey Green Acres Program and Mercer County.

This property is an important part of Hopewell Township's historic landscape. A small stream, wooded and steeply

banked, runs diagonally behind the house and barns; pastures mark the boundary between the fee and easement portions. Based on maps and other evidence, it appears the farm was settled in the mid-18th century, as was much of Pleasant Valley. Historical records refer to it as the Hart Farmstead.

We commend Longspring Farm's owner, Cynthia Goldsmith, whose love of history and commitment to preservation of our rural landscape has led to this important acquisition. And we celebrate the collaboration among FoHVOS, D&R Greenway, NJDEP and Mercer County that made it possible.



Historic Longspring Farm.

Photo by Pat Sziber

Open Space Funding Not on the Ballot This Year

The New Jersey Senate voted twice this summer to place an open space funding bill on the November ballot but the Assembly failed to act to its companion bill. This means voters will not have the opportunity to vote on the constitutional amendment which would assign \$200 million a year for the next 30 years for open space, farmland, blue acres and historic preservation as we had hoped. There is no more state preservation money remaining from previous funding measures available to be allocated. As a member organization of the Keep It Green Coalition, we will refocus our efforts on getting the measure on the November 2014 ballot. Since the Senate has already acted, we will focus our efforts on working with the Assembly to urge them to do likewise so that a simple majority approval by both chambers again next year will get the measure on the ballot.



President's Note

I hope you'll take the time to read the full article in this issue about the Longspring Farm, our most recent preservation success. Although in recent years we have devoted considerable effort toward developing wise and innovative stewardship techniques for our own preserves and are now working to get others to adopt these same techniques, preservation of land is what first brought us together as a group and this is still very much part of our mission.

However, if you've been following the fate of the proposed open space funding bill in the Legislature, you'll know that this critical mission of land preservation is in jeopardy until either a new NJ Green Acres bond issue or (preferably!) a stable source of Green Acres funding is approved. As the accompanying article describes, the Senate passed the stable-source funding leg-

islation (a constitutional amendment to provide \$200 million per year for 30 years) but the Assembly failed to act in time to get the question on the ballot this year.

It is still crucial that the Assembly pass a bill this year since passage will allow the amendment to be placed on the ballot by a simple majority vote (rather than a super-majority) in both houses next year. We will continue to work with the Keep It Green Coalition to get action by the Assembly but we also need an upswell of grass roots support. So please contact your assembly representatives (Reed Gusciora and Bonnie Watson Coleman represent the three Hopewell Valley municipalities in the Assembly) and encourage your friends in other districts to do the same.

Finally, I hope you'll mark September 22 on your calendar and join us for our

annual fall celebration to be held this year at Strawberry Hill Mansion at the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain. This year's theme is "Party on the Patio" and in addition to live music, a silent auction, and glorious views of the Delaware River and Bucks County we'll also be serving up a selection of fine appetizers from Emily's Café & Catering in Pennington accompanied by an assortment of beer, wine and soft drinks. We especially hope that those of you who have not had a chance to see the mansion since its restoration will come and see why the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate is such a special place for us at FOHVOS.



John Jackson, President



Upcoming Events

Party on the Patio at Baldpate – Sunday, September 22

Eames Preserve Guided Hike – Sunday, October 20

Ted Stiles Memorial/Hollystone Preserve Hike – Saturday, October 26

Clean Communities Fall Cleanup – Saturday, November 9

To learn more about these and future events sign up for ConstantContact notices by sending an e-mail to execdir@fohvos.org, or visit our website or Facebook page.



The screenshot shows the website for Hopewell Valley Open Space. The navigation menu includes: Home, About FOHVOS, Learn about Land Trusts, Preserves, Trails, Stewardship, Private Lands Stewardship Program, Volunteer Opportunities, Support Us, and Contact Us. The main content area features a 'WELCOME' message and a 'BECOME A MEMBER' button. A 'What's New' sidebar lists upcoming events: Native Wildflower Planting at Baldpate Mountain (Volunteers Needed, Sunday, 9/8, 9 a.m. to noon), Party on the Patio! (Strawberry Hill Mansion, Sunday, Sept 22, 4:00 - 6:30 p.m.), and Clean Communities Day (Saturday, November 9, 8:00 a.m. - noon). There are also links for 'FOHVOS Events Calendar' and 'Ongoing Volunteer Opportunities'.





News & Events

Joann Held Presented Gleeson Award

The 2013 Jack Gleeson Environmental Award was presented at the FoHVOS annual meeting on April 28 to Joann Held, founder and co-chair of the Hopewell Valley Green Team and a founder and current board member of the Pennington Farmers Market. She is also a member of the Pennington Environmental Commission and is President of the Hopewell Valley League of Women's Voters. Joann was recognized for her commitment to helping the people of the Hopewell Valley make lifestyle choices that protect the environment.

Three new members were elected to 3-year terms on the FoHVOS Board of Directors at the meeting: Kim Bruno, a resident of Hopewell Township and Director of Development at the Bridge Academy; Andy Jackson, a Pennington resident and a Professor at the School of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Pennsylvania; and Marian Labos, a Hopewell Borough resident and an Engineer with Pubic Service Electric and Gas. Artist Ruth Jourjine of Titusville was appointed to the Board in July.

The meeting was followed by a program on tree climbing by noted author Richard Preston whose best-seller *The Wild Trees* was available for purchase and signing by the author. Mr. Preston

also demonstrated the gear used in climbing some of the world's tallest trees.



*President John Jackson presents the Gleeson Award to Joann Held.
Photo by Pat Sziber*



*Author Richard Preston demonstrates tree-climbing gear.
Photo by Pat Sziber*



On the Trail

Be mindful of trail closures on hunting days.

Fall is a wonderful time to get out on the trail and enjoy the signs of the changing season: the bright colors of the frost-tinged hardwoods, the hardy beauty of wood asters and gentians, fungi of the most surprising shapes and hues. In order to protect and restore our native flora, we will be continuing with our Deer Management Program. So please be aware that our trails are closed to all but the registered hunters on 45 hunting days between September 14 and February 15. Dates vary among the preserves, but hunting will not occur on any Sunday for preserves with trails. Hunting dates are posted at the preserve entrances and on our website.

Please enjoy your autumn and winter nature walks, and thank you for supporting our efforts to protect our natural history.

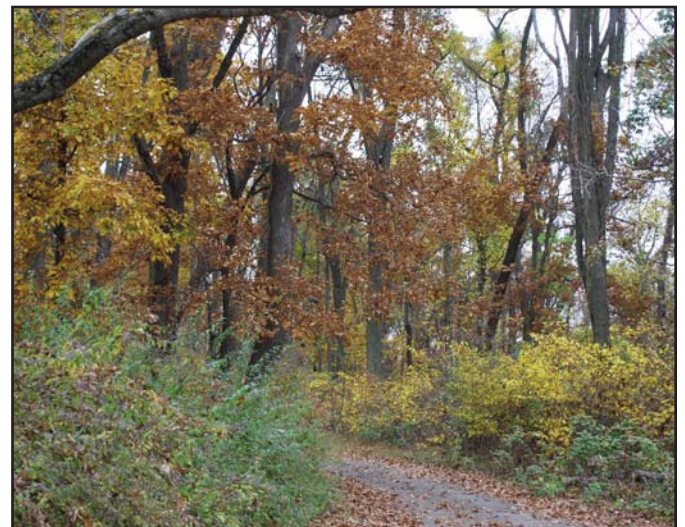


Photo by Pat Sziber



Volunteer Spotlight

When Hurricane Sandy tore through Hopewell Township last year, most residents were affected, including Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space. Six of our seven trails were at least partially blocked by fallen trees. All were cleared and we are very grateful for the volunteers who helped us restore safe access to our trails.

The blockage on our Jacobs Creek Trail on Pennington-Titusville Road was particularly challenging. Four large trees had fallen across the trail and our own equipment could not handle the task of clearing them. We needed to bring in a professional tree service to do the work and we were pleasantly surprised when Hartel Timber Services of Pennington offered to do it free of charge as a stewardship service.

Brian Hartel and Augusto Paredes brought their chain saws to the site and went to work. It wasn't an easy job since they had to walk about ½ mile along the trail before they got to the first tree. Then they had to walk back out carrying those heavy chain saws. They did a wonderful job opening the trail for us and our hikers. The staff and trustees of FoHVOS send a big thank you to Hartel Timber Services for their hard work.



*Many thanks to Brian Hartel (left) and Augusto Paredes for donating their time and hard work.
Photo by Beth Craighead*



*Brian Hartel makes the first cut on a large oak.
Photo by Beth Craighead*



Grants Support Operations and Projects

We were very pleased to receive a \$10,000 **Franklin Parker Grant** from **Conservation Resources, Inc.** to help fund the Mercer Meadows Grassland Restoration Project which FoHVOS is conducting in partnership with the Mercer County Parks Commission. This is the largest restoration project we have ever undertaken and, when complete, the Pole Farm section of Mercer Meadows will provide superior quality habitat for the grassland birds such as Meadowlark, Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow and American Kestrel that have been documented there.

We are very grateful for a \$5,000 grant from the **Pheasant Hill Foundation**, which will go toward support of our general operations, as well as a \$500 grant from the **Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation**.

We deeply appreciate the generosity of those whose support helps us to implement our preservation and stewardship programs.





Stewardship Corner

Stewards of Their Land

FoHVOS launched the Private Lands Stewardship Program (PLSP) in 2012 and, in a year's time, more than fifty Hopewell Valley landowners have enrolled in the program. The objective of the program is to engage residents and businesses in protecting and restoring Hopewell Valley's natural heritage by controlling invasive species, installing native plant gardens, replacing lawns with meadow areas, supporting wildlife conservation and implementing deer management. Our professional stewardship staff provides support and guidance for the projects.

Here are some of the things that your neighbors are doing as participants in the program:

Barbara and Tim Berry are controlling invasive species on their 6.6-acre property in the Sourlands and are

adding native plants into an area currently infested with Japanese Stiltgrass.

Tim and Rachel Fedor have joined our Kestrel Conservation Program by installing a kestrel nest box on their 62-acre horse farm and allowing us to monitor it throughout the breeding season. American kestrel is listed as a threatened species in New Jersey.

Judith Graber and Paul Kuehnert are removing invasive species and installing native plants on their 0.8-acre property in Hopewell Borough to create habitat for birds and pollinators. They will also create patches of wildflower meadow.

Linda and Kurt Vollherbst have eliminated nearly 2/3 of potential lawn area by allowing fallow farmland to become

wildflower meadow and have planted many native shrubs. Their meadows, along with nesting boxes, regularly attract bluebirds, tree swallows and wrens to their 2.2-acre property. They are also selectively controlling invasive species such as Autumn Olive and Common Mugwort.

Deborah and David Gainer have planted native species such as Sweet Pepperbush and have begun adding many more to their 1.3-acre landscape in Titusville. They plan to convert a portion of their lawn to meadow.

To learn more about the PLSP, and read summaries of the work of many other participants, click on the yellow "Private Lands Stewardship Program" button on our website.



*Eastern Joe-Pye Weed is a late summer favorite of pollinators.
Photo by Pat Sziber*



Stewardship Corner

Providing for Pollinators

Where would we be without bees! Did you know that one-third of food produced in North America depends on pollination by honey bees, a service valued at over \$20 billion in agricultural production annually in the United States? Have you ever noticed how the blossoms in your garden are covered with bees of all sizes: bumble bees, honey bees and a dozen species of tiny native bees, all of them completely focused on gathering pollen and seemingly unaware of your presence. Note how they move from flower to flower, thus carrying out their mission.

In your own healthy garden, the effects of the devastating condition known as colony collapse disorder may not be evident. But during the 2012-2013 winter, U.S. beekeepers on average lost 45.1 percent of the colonies they operate. The cause of this condition has been difficult to pinpoint but there is a growing body of evidence that a class of insecticide known as neonicotinoids is a major culprit. Not only honeybees but also bumblebees and native bees are harmed. Bees that collect the contaminated pollen show signs of neurological damage that affects their foraging and feeding behavior, leads to disorientation, weakens their immunity, delays larval development and increases susceptibility to viruses.

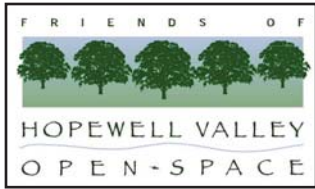
It is important that we provide healthy foraging habitat for bees and other pollinators. FoHVOS has engaged in meadow restoration projects, where native wildflowers flourish without the use of pesticides. At one of our preserves, pollinator strips are a magnet for bees which then provide their services to an adjacent organic farm. Through our Private Lands Stewardship Program we encourage conversion of chemical-dependent lawns to wildflower meadows.

We need to learn more about the cause of colony collapse disorder and legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress in July aims to do just that. H.R. 2692, The Saving America's Pollinators Act of 2013, would require the EPA to suspend certain neonicotinoids for two years to allow time for field studies to evaluate the effects of the pesticides and monitor bee colonies to see if they rebound during the suspension.

The bill can be viewed at <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr2692/text>.



Beekeeper Jeff Burd examines a honeybee colony. Photo by Ruth Jourjine



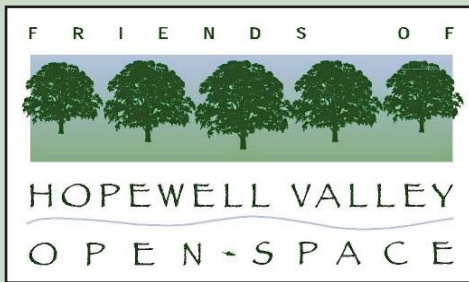
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The purpose of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is to promote conservation in the Hopewell Valley region through open space preservation, wise stewardship, education and outreach.

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

info@fohvos.org