



Open Space Chronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Fall 2014

The Baldpate Patio Is the Place to BEE on September 21

Our fall event this year celebrates both open space and the pollinators, those busy bees, butterflies and other creatures that are so vital to the production of the food we eat and the floral abundance that we enjoy. And Strawberry Hill Mansion at Baldpate Mountain is a perfect place to celebrate. The Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate is an ecological treasure cherished and enjoyed by many and it reminds us of why we preserve land. The native plant garden, filled with a variety of nectar-bearing plants, is a haven for pollinators. Even the flowers that grace the edges of the patio are host to hundreds of tiny native bees. The event will highlight two FoHVOS projects, the Summer Triangles and creation of a pollinator meadow on the hill across from the Mansion, both of which are featured in articles in this newsletter.

On this next-to-last day of summer, come out and enjoy the bounty of the season. Emily's Café and Catering will once again provide a tempting selection of hors d'oeuvres, cheeses and desserts. Quaff it down with a glass of wine, beer or soda from Shop Rite Liquors while you peruse the assortment of silent auction items ranging from birdhouses, to restaurant gift cards, to two nights at a cabin in

Colorado...and much more! Chat with friends on the beautiful patio with the forest and the Delaware River as your backdrop, or take a short stroll through the pollinator-friendly garden. Bluegrass music this year will be provided by The Barncats....some of the faces and tunes will be familiar from previous events.

As we celebrate open space and nature in this beautiful place we will also celebrate the memory of long-time FoHVOS board member and treasurer Robert (Bob) Johnston, with presentation of the Jack Gleeson Environmental Award to his widow, Grace Johnston. We hope you will be there to share this special moment with us.

The 2014 Celebration for Open Space will be held from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 21. Parking is available just steps away from the mansion. Access is via the mile-long driveway from Fiddler's Creek Road. Just follow the signage. You may also park in the parking lot at the bottom and hike up, if you wish. Reservations are \$70 per person and you may register online at www.fohvos.org. Click on the Celebration link under Upcoming Events.





President's Note

As I think most of you know, the main activities of FoHVOS fall into two broad categories - land preservation and land stewardship. Living as we do in the most densely populated state in the nation, it's not hard to see why we got involved in land preservation. Less obvious, but just as essential, is our stewardship role but this focus has come about because it is now recognized that in a state like New Jersey almost any land left undisturbed loses many of the natural values which make it attractive as open space in the first place. In fact, we've come to see our stewardship role as so vital that in recent years we've made a major effort to extend the good stewardship practices we've developed for our own preserves to other land, both public and private, in the Hopewell Valley.

This dual focus on preservation and stewardship is the reason we are so excited that on Nov. 4 New Jersey voters will be given the chance to approve a constitutional amendment that for the

first time will provide a permanent source of funding for the NJ Green Acres program. And future funding will not only provide funds for new purchases of open space but will include, also for the first time, funds for stewardship.

And those of you who live in Hopewell Township will have another chance on Nov. 4 to advance the cause of open space by voting to increase the Township open space tax from 3 to 4 cents per \$100 of assessed value. These additional funds will help to replenish the Township's open space fund which is now fully committed to existing projects. Buying 30, 50 or 100 acres of land for preservation is expensive and often beyond the reach of a grass roots organization like FoHVOS. As a result, we often pool our available funds with other non-profit or governmental organizations and over the years Hopewell Township has been an absolutely indispensable partner in the acquisition of half a dozen of our proj-

ects, including the 1200-acre Baldpate preserve. Just as important, the Township, either on its own or with other partners such as Mercer County or the State of New Jersey, has participated in many additional acquisitions in the Hopewell Valley.

So we sincerely hope that on Nov. 4 you will support the state constitutional amendment to permanently fund the Green Acres program. We also urge Township residents to vote for the open space tax increase to assure that Hopewell Township will continue in its role as a guardian of open space into the future. And, finally, we hope you will take the time to leverage your own vote by explaining to your friends and neighbors just how important their vote is to the future of open space in New Jersey.

John Jackson, President



Remembering Two Great Friends of FoHVOS

It was with deep sadness that we learned of the sudden death in May of Peggy Snyder, who served on our Board of Trustees for several years during which she generously shared her expertise and her commitment to protecting open space and wetlands. Peggy was a professional engineer who fought to preserve wetlands and water resources throughout New Jersey. She was prominent in efforts to preserve Hopewell Valley's rural landscape as a voice for protective zoning.

On June 1st long-time FoHVOS trustee Robert "Bob" Johnston passed away. Bob was an attorney and a pas-

sionate open space and environmental champion who served as a volunteer with many organizations. He was a co-founder and trustee of D&R Greenway Land Trust and a former chairman and also served on the board of Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association. Bob was our treasurer for many years and he also oversaw the legal details of our land acquisitions, tasks that he carried out with patience and fortitude.

To their families, we offer our most sincere condolences.



Generous Gifts Help Support Our Work

FoHVOS has been the recipient of several unrestricted gifts in the past few months that will go a long way in supporting our stewardship program. We received nearly \$1,800 in memory of Peggy Snyder, a former trustee and supporter who died in May. We also received a \$5,000 grant from the Pheasant Hill Foundation, \$2,000 from an anonymous donor, and \$500 from the Robert Wood Johnson, Jr. Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation. We are very grateful for these generous gifts, which help us carry out our mission of preserving and caring for the land.

In response to an inquiry from a supporter, we have set up a brokerage account and can now accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, please have your broker call us at 609-730-1560 or e-mail execdir@fohv.org.



Vote YES for Open Space Funding

On November 4, New Jersey voters will have a chance to vote YES on the dedication of state funds to protect clean water and ensure our children and grandchildren will continue to have access to parks, open spaces, family farms and historic treasures. And Hopewell Township voters will decide on a referendum that asks to increase the Township's open space tax by 1 cent to help realize these same goals. At this time, all funds from the statewide bond measure approved by voters in 2009 are fully allocated. There is no new money left for preservation programs in New Jersey, but tremendous needs remain.

The state measure, which will be Question #2 on the ballot, will ensure dedicated long-term funding for the now-depleted Green Acres, Blue Acres, farmland and historic preservation programs, and continue investments to improve water quality, remove underground storage tanks and clean up polluted sites.

The NJ Keep It Green Coalition, of which FoHVOS is a member, has worked tirelessly to assure a long-term dedicated source of funding for preservation. State funding is now in the hands of the voters.

It is important to note that this proposal does not increase the burden on taxpayers. On November 4th, voters will decide whether to amend the state constitution to reallocate 4% of existing Corporate Business Tax (CBT) revenues already dedicated to some environmental programs. The ballot measure changes the way some of those programs are funded and raises the amount from 4% to 6% beginning in July 2019. Under the measure, Green Acres, Blue Acres and farmland and historic preservation programs will receive approximately \$71 million annually for the first four years and then \$117 million annually thereafter.

An estimated \$29 million annually for the first four years will provide continued funding for critical environmental programs currently supported by the CBT revenue including watershed management, underground storage tanks, brownfields and public cleanups of polluted sites. This amount will increase when the dedication increases to 6% in 2019. The measure will continue to provide funds for park improvement. Funding for stewardship of preserved land will also be included.

Hopewell Township will be asking its

voters to weigh in on a ballot question that would increase its open space tax to 4 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. The funds would continue to be used for the acquisition and maintenance of land for preservation of open space, farmland and historic sites, and payment of debt service on bonds issued for these purposes. The open space tax was lowered from 4 cents to 2 cents by the voters following property revaluation in 2006, and raised to 3 cents in 2008. But all preservation funds collected to date are committed to paying bond debt on previous open space acquisitions. Unless funds are replenished, Hopewell Township would not be able to participate in any new acquisitions down the road.

Preservation of open space and farmland enhances our quality of life here in the Hopewell Valley and beyond. It protects water quality and quantity, provides access to recreation and nature appreciation, encourages local agriculture, conserves habitat and maintains our scenic landscapes. And it leaves a legacy for future generations. We urge you to vote YES on both ballot questions.



From Old Field to Pollinator Meadow

A very generous gift from an anonymous donor has enabled FoHVOS to embark on an ambitious project to transform an overgrown field filled with invasive plants atop Baldpate Mountain into a 7-acre meadow of native wildflowers and grasses. The metamorphosis began in fall of last year with clearing of the field to prepare it for seeding. The presence of stubborn woody vegetation has required several tries at eradication, but the field should be ready for sowing next spring. While we won't be seeing a lush meadow for a while, it is easy to visualize the hill rich in yellows and pinks once it does become established. It is also easy to imagine butterflies, native bees and other pollinators who will visit it and the winter birds who will feed on the



seeds that will be left to ripen.

The cost of the Baldpate Summit Meadow Restoration Project will be about \$21,000, most of which will be covered by the anonymous gift. The remainder will be paid for by a grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The funding covers site preparation, purchase of grass and wildflower seeds, seed application and staff time. We are sowing a high-quality mix of seeds to ensure flowering May to November to coincide with the pollinators' active season.


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From Old Field to Pollinator Meadow, continued

Continued from the last page.

The selection of this particular site for restoration was based on several factors. Once we had decided that we wanted to create a meadow to replace an old field, we wanted to be sure it would be seen and appreciated by many people. The site is a former hayfield across from Strawberry Hill Mansion—an area where many hikers linger to enjoy the views over the Delaware River and the historic surroundings. The ecological potential of the site fits into our Community Stewardship Plan (www.fohvos.org/community-stewardship-plan.html). Because the field is easily accessi-

ble and close to parking it can be a magnet for photographers and amateur naturalists, as well as for outdoor education classes. Mercer County Summer Nature Camp is held in the cabin directly across from the field. What a great opportunity for kids to net and study the insects that will be drawn to the meadow.

We thank our donor, not only for the financial support, but also for allowing us the flexibility to use the gift on a project of our choosing. We believe this meadow will be an enduring tribute to the generosity of someone who cares deeply about the precious natural heritage of Hopewell Valley. 



Volunteer Spotlight

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We love to get that sort of feedback from people who give hours of their time helping us maintain and improve the land we preserve. This was a comment from one of our volunteers from Bloomberg who pitched in to weed the native plant garden at Baldpate Mountain on May 12. It was a hot afternoon but they didn't complain.

Volunteer groups have been a great help this season! Thanks to a group of 8th graders from The Center for Faith Justice in Lawrenceville, NJ more

weeding was done at the Baldpate garden on July 14. They also filled in some blank spaces by planting monkey flower, columbine and broad-leaved mountain mint on that hot, muggy morning. Their efforts helped meet the community service requirement for their Confirmation preparation. And, on July 30 another student group from the Center for Faith Justice did more weeding and put down mulch to help keep the weeds at bay. The organization is a Catholic nonprofit that engages young people in service activities.

Many hands make light work, and 130 pairs of hands accomplished in two hours what it would have taken weeks for us to do on our own! On July 8, students attending the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) National Youth Pre-Convention at Princeton University removed invasive shrubs, built boardwalks and cleaned up trash at our Heritage Preserve. Our Stewardship staff members, along with board members Chris Berry and Tom Ogren and volunteers Jim Gambino and Jim Golis supervised the group. Staff members and chaperons from LULAC assisted. In her letter to our Land Steward Rachel

Mackow, LULAC Program Coordinator Karina Castellanos stated, “In particular, I thank you for working alongside LULAC to provide our students with the opportunity to take on a fun, dynamic community service project which allowed them to get outdoors and truly make a difference. The students, chaperons and staff members all very much enjoyed the community service project thanks to you and your team at Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space.” 



Bloomberg volunteers at the Baldpate garden



Chris Berry with LULAC volunteers. Photo courtesy of LULAC.



News and Events

FoHVOS Receives Clean Communities Award

FoHVOS is the proud recipient of a 2014 Stewardship of Public Land Award, bestowed by the New Jersey Clean Communities Council at their Reception and Awards Dinner at the Lambertville Station Inn on May 22nd. Our organization was recognized for more than twenty years of administering Clean Communities cleanup days in the Hopewell Valley, during which we have organized trash cleanup not only of the roadsides but also of open spaces. Since 1991, hundreds of volunteers including Scouts, athletic teams, student clubs and members of various nonprofit organizations have walked nearly every road in the Valley during the twice-yearly cleanup days, helping to keep our community welcoming and beautiful. Their volunteer hours are reimbursed to an organization of their choice. Funding for the program is provided by a grant from the Clean Communities Council to Hopewell Township.

We were honored with a plaque presented by Patrick Ryan, President of the Clean Communities Council and Chairman of Hopewell Valley Community Bank. FoHVOS President John Jackson, Executive Director Patricia Sziber, and Land Steward Beth Craighead were on hand to accept the award. Beth handles details of the program for FoHVOS.



*Pat Sziber, John Jackson, Patrick Ryan and Beth Craighead (l to r)
Photo courtesy of NJ Clean Communities Council*

Upcoming Events

**Celebration for Open Space –
Sunday, September 21**

**Curlis Lake Woods Hike –
Sunday, October 5**

**Ted Stiles Memorial Hike at Baldpate –
Saturday, October 18**

**Clean Communities Fall Cleanup –
Saturday, November 8**

We hope you will join us. Check our website for details on the above events. To be added to our ConstantContact list, send an e-mail to execdir@fohvos.org. Or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.





Stewardship Corner

From Lawn to Forest – A Private Lands Stewardship Story

by Chris Berry

Eighteen years ago our yard was 3 acres of lawn and a few trees, mostly Norway spruce, red maple and sycamore. I wanted to return it to a more natural state and started with a half-acre in a very wet part of the yard where some squirrels had already planted some pin and swamp white oaks. After about 10 years the trees were 20 feet tall and I started helping nature build a healthy understory by planting shrubs and wildflowers grown from seed collected or bought from Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve. For the last 7 years our efforts have been more intense, planting various wildflowers from seed or plants, installing a deer exclusion fence and

expanding the natural area to an acre and a half.

The deer fence made an amazing change as wildflowers sprung from the natural seed bank to join those that we had planted. New York ironweed, boneset, swamp milkweed, elderberry, silky dogwood and many other species appeared in sunny areas. The best was the arrival of two species of orchids, fringed and ladies' tresses. Wildflowers that we had planted (swamp rose mallow, blue flag, etc.) started spreading without the adverse impact of browsing.

This week I saw three fantastic sights in the yard that delighted me. First was a box turtle who, although curious

about me, had no fear. Later in the week I saw a Jack-in-the-pulpit growing in our little forest. Finally, today I saw a wild turkey fly over the deer fence into the back yard and start searching for acorns. All three of these are denizens of the forest. All three have decided that our lawn has made the transition to woodland!



*Eastern box turtle
Photo by Pat Sziber*

Summer Triangles Project Update

After a very busy spring and early summer of preparation and construction, Summer Triangles have been installed at three nature preserves: Nayfield Preserve, Kulak Preserve, and Mercer Meadows. The exact locations can be seen on our interactive maps at www.fohvos.org, along with more detailed information. These environmental art installations do not simply represent nature; they are nature. The triangles were delineated in meadows, native wildflowers were planted within the boundaries, which are bordered by fences made of dried reeds. Phragmites stems are bound together to provide nest sites for native solitary bees. Post made from fallen cedar trees support them and the hand-molded ceramic forms that provide an artistic element were made by Hopewell Valley Central High School students.

The wildflowers that were planted this summer are taking hold and we expect each triangle will be a lush pollinator garden by next summer. Already

native bees are checking out the sites. It is hoped that the unique project, which links together pollinator habitat with ecological art, will draw public attention to the plight of the bees and to their vital role in pollination. The Summer Triangles are inspired by an arrangement of three stellar constellations that is readily visible overhead in our night sky in summer.

Creation of the Summer Triangles is a collaboration between FoHVOS and local artist Ruth Jourjine, who recruited students from Hopewell Valley Central High School to help with the project and who has nurtured it every step of the way. Funding was provided by a grant from Washington Crossing Audubon Society's Holden Fund.

We hope you will visit one or all of the Summer Triangles. We have gotten inquiries from residents about installing Summer Triangles on their own properties. If this is something you would like to do, please contact us.



*Summer Triangle
Photo by Ruth Jourjine*





Stewardship Corner

FoHVOS Recognized for Forest Stewardship

Earlier this year, FoHVOS was welcomed into the New Jersey Forest Stewardship Program by the state's Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee. Our organization was recognized for our commitment to forest land stewardship, for which we receive a Stewardship certificate and Forest Stewardship signs for posting on enrolled properties.

To qualify for the recognition, FoHVOS submitted a Forest Stewardship Plan to the State Forestry Service last year for 387 forest acres on a number of our preserves. The plan covers a 10-year period. Funding was provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), which routinely provides funding to non-profits and private landowners. Implementation of the plan (including invasive species removals) can be supported by additional grants provided by NRCS through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

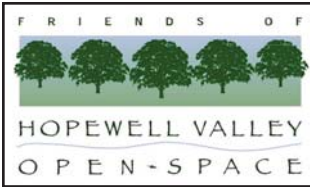
If you own forest land in the Hopewell Valley and would like to know if you could qualify to participate in the NJ Forest Stewardship Program, please contact our Stewardship Director, Mike Van Clef, at Michael@fohvos.org.



Celebration of Open Space & Pollinators
The Place to Bee, on the Patio at the Strawberry Hill Mansion
atop Baldpate Mountain

Sunday, September 21, 2014, 3:30-6:30 p.m.
Reservations available at fohvos.org or 609-730-1560





PO Box 395
Pennington, NJ 08534

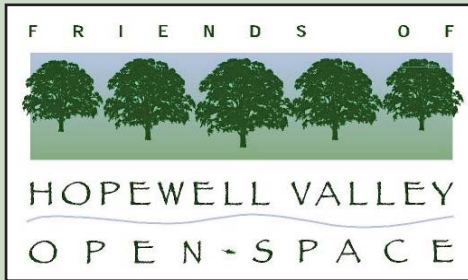
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The purpose of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is to promote conservation in the Hopewell Valley region through open space preservation, wise stewardship, education and outreach.

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Beth Craighead – Land Steward

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