

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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OpenSpaceChronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Spring 2007

Celebrating Ted

Ted is gone, but the woods behind my house, and all of his many other gifts to us, remain. The best tribute we can pay to Ted is to care for and add to this legacy; so that we and those who come after us can fully enjoy the gifts he has left in our care...

A Life Well-Lived...

Nearly 500 people - many dressed in plaid - gathered on Saturday, March 24th to honor and celebrate the life of a man who left his mark on the Hopewell Valley as few others have - Edmund 'Ted' Stiles. The afternoon was filled with shared memories: an NJN video clip featuring Ted; a sing-a-long to "Roll on Chordata", a song he made to entertain his students on weekend camping trips; and plenty of humorous stories that told of a passionate and committed life.

The day's speakers, including family

members - brother Bill Stiles, wife Michele Byers Stiles, and children Kaelyn and Ben - related how Ted's passion for the land and its creatures, his love for family, friends and students were unmatched. They spoke of how life with Ted was an adventure, and the lessons taught by him would remain with them forever. Any question about a plant or animal would be answered with a whole story about interactions, behavior, and adaptation. Whether during numerous field trips taken around the world or in a Hopewell Valley backyard, he enjoyed opening up his own and other's eyes to the beauty of the natural world. To accompany Ted on a walk was pure pleasure.

Representatives of organizations led and advised by Ted also took the stage to tell of a dedication which enabled him, and all those he volunteered with, to make a commitment that would affect positive, long lasting change through advocacy, legislation change, and the education of others. FoHVOS Vice Presidents, Jessica Wilkinson and John Jackson, spoke of the need for people to step up and fill the void left by such a dynamic individual as well as sharing personal insights such as, "One of Ted's many strengths, obvious to all of us on the Board, was that when something didn't work out he didn't dwell on the negatives, he didn't engage in recriminations. He accepted

his failures and moved on knowing he had a lot of other important work to do."

John Jackson summed up many thoughts when he concluded, "I mentioned earlier that at most places in the Hopewell Valley if you just look around

you can probably at least catch a glimpse of land that Ted played a major role in preserving. One of those places is my kitchen with its bay window which looks out across the back-

yard onto Ted's first project, the Curlis Lake Woods. The serenity I feel as I look at these woods reminds me of the calmness and serenity which Ted invariably displayed even though his life, to accomplish what he did, had to have been hectic and busy beyond belief. If Ted is any guide, the calmness and serenity which he displayed surely must be the reward of a life well-lived - a life of good work, pursued with energy, conviction, and grace."

In early March, Board member, Pat Sziber had a chance to reflect on Ted's early years with FoHVOS, "During a February 1989 trustees meeting - Ted, with that famous way of winning everyone over, began his leadership role by talking FoHVOS out of \$3,000 that they didn't have for a study of the woodlands of Hopewell Valley. The rest was history. In May of that year the board approved Ted's proposal and the product is *The Woodlands of Hopewell* Continued on Page 2



Ted, 2005 - Pennington Day



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Celebrating Ted

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Valley in which a former grad student of Ted's, Doug White, evaluated the woodlands, ranked them as to maturity and assigned conservation priorities to them. This document has guided many decisions, has been cited numerous times



Aerial view of the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain.

and serves as a model for others who struggle to save our precious woodlands. This was just the first of many Ted's innovations that helped position FoHVOS as one of the most active local land trusts in New Jersey."

With the help of Ted's leadership, and since its founding in 1987, FoHVOS has either purchased or facilitated the purchase of 70 tracts totaling over 3,500 acres in the Hopewell Valley, an area which represents 10% of the total area of the Township. Friendly, local, "in your backyard" FoHVOS is number four in the state in the number of conservation easements held - only two statewide organizations, the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and The New Jersey Natural Lands Trust, and one large regional organization, our neighbor, the D&R Greenway, hold more.

"We are all touched by Ted's work," comments Board member Jack Koepfel, "it is everywhere you look. The lasting effects of Ted Stile's passion and dedication to the environment and open space will be felt for generations to come not only in the Hopewell Valley area, but beyond its borders throughout the state."

Perhaps Ted's crowning achievement could be considered the 9-year negotia-

tion which led to the preservation of Baldpate Mountain. This tract of land, 1,100 acres and the highest point in Mercer County, is located along the Delaware River. Ted loved Baldpate for several reasons, especially because of the extraordinary numbers of neotropical migratory songbirds that are found there. He reveled in the fact that it is the only location in Mercer County where breeding pairs of Kentucky, hooded and worm-eating warbler can be found. The preservation of this site in 1998 was significant for outdoor and nature enthusiasts throughout the region, and has since become a favorite hiking place for those who enjoy the tranquility of its deep woods and the stunning vistas from atop the ridge.

At the March 24th Memorial Event, Mercer County Executive, Brian Hughes, announced that the co-owners of Baldpate Mountain - the County, FoHVOS, Hopewell Township and the State of New Jersey - would rename Baldpate Mountain Preserve the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain in memory of Ted's tireless dedication to preservation and conservation. Remarking on the significance of this honor, Jessica Wilkinson stated, "I can think of no better place in the Valley to honor Ted's memory and contributions. The preservation of Baldpate took years and required a degree of perseverance that defined Ted and his bold conservation vision."

If we are judged by the lasting effects we have on the community in which we live, Ted Stiles will be considered one of Hopewell Valley's greatest contributors. Board member, Jack Koepfel adds, "When I sit, many years from now, with my grandchildren on my lap, I will tell them about why Hopewell Valley still looks the way it does-why there is still open space and why the natural world is still an important part of our everyday life in Hopewell Valley. I will tell them about the man that was responsible for all of this."

My Favorite Hike

Baldpate Mountain Hopewell Township, NJ



Paved roadway from Fiddlers Creek Road, leading up to the top of Baldpate Mountain.



Picturesque farm house at the top of the mountain.

Ted's Impressive Leadership Legacy

In addition to his 34-year career at Rutgers University as a Professor of Biological Science, Ted Stiles lent his time and talents to these organizations:

- 2004-present: Advisory Committee, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
- 2003-present: Member, Mercer County Solid Waste Advisory Committee
- 2003-present: Member, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Advisory Committee on the Environment
- 2001-present: Board of Trustees, Crossroads of the American Revolution
- 2001-present: Associate Editor, Plant Ecology
- 2001-present President, Board of Trustees, Land Use Municipal Resources Center
- 1999-present Chairman, Hopewell Valley Open Space Advisory Board
- 1998-present Board of Trustees, Planned Parenthood of Mercer County Area
- 1995-present Board of Trustees, Friends of the Six Mile Run
- Board of Trustees, The Nature Conservancy, New Jersey Chapter, Co-chair Conservation Committee 1998-2000, Co-Chair International Committee 2000-2003
- Board of Trustees, Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association, Secretary 1992-1994, Chairman 1994-1997
- 1991-present Board of Trustees, Willowood Foundation, President 1992-1997
- 1990-present Chairman, Mercer County Open Space Preservation Board
- Vice President for Education, Organization for Tropical Studies
- Board Member, American Institute of Biological Sciences, Task Force for the '90s
- Board Member, Morris County Park Commission Visiting Committee
- 1989-present President, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space
- 1988-present Commissioner, Hopewell Township Environmental Commission, Chair 1999-present
- 1987-present Director, Hutcheson Memorial Forest Center
- 1987-present Scientific Advisory Committee, Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission.
- 1987-present Vice Chairman, Delaware and Raritan Greenway
- Board Member, Organization for Tropical Studies
- Past President New Jersey Academy of Science

Get Outside!

Celebrate Spring by welcoming our feathered friends to our wonderful open spaces. The Hopewell Valley is a great place to look (and listen!) for birds as they arrive from their wintering grounds in the tropics to set up housekeeping in our area or rest before they continue their journey

northward. Woodland birds including warblers, flycatchers, scarlet tanagers and rose-breasted grosbeaks can be found on Baldpate Mountain. Grassland birds such as eastern meadowlarks and bobolinks are a specialty at the Pole Farm. Both areas have been identified as

This issue's contributor: Pennington resident, Alan Hershey

"For a beautiful long hike on Baldpate, climb the Summit Trail (blue blazes) from Fiddler's Creek Road, enjoy the view from the top, then loop down the red-blazed "northwest loop" trail, returning to the Ridge Trail (white blazes) near the old farm pond. Turn east on the Ridge Trail and enjoy a picnic by the pond, then return along the Ridge Trail, turn down the upper end of the paved driveway, and enjoy the Summit Trail going down!"

Parking: Lower, partially graveled lot off of Fiddlers Creek Road.

Points of Interest: Main House, Old farm pond and lodge, Upper fields provide picnic tables and a view of Philadelphia and large portion of Delaware River on a clear day.

FYI: Parking and site improvements announced at a groundbreaking ceremony in April. To be completed by the end of 2007.

Important Bird Areas under a nationwide program administered in our state by New Jersey Audubon Society. Directions to these wonderful natural areas can be found at www.njtrails.org

Better Tax Break for Conservation Agreements

If you own land with important natural or historic resources, donating a voluntary conservation agreement can be one of the smartest ways to conserve the land you love and protect Hopewell Valley's natural heritage, while maintaining your private property rights and possibly realizing significant federal tax benefits.

In 2006, Congress passed a law to enhance the tax benefits of protecting your land by donating a voluntary conservation agreement. Unfortunately, the current tax breaks are scheduled to expire at the end of 2007. U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) recently introduced a bill (S.469) to make these tax incentives permanent. President Bush's FY2008 budget proposal also includes a provision that would make these expanded tax incentives permanent.

Conservation easements are legally enforceable agreements that preserve privately owned open space to protect its natural, agricultural, and scenic resources. A non-profit land trust such as FoHVOS can buy a conservation easement on a parcel of open space or farmland for a fraction of the cost of the land, and still prevent future development. Easements have become a staple of land and natural resource

conservation efforts nationwide.

The new & improved legislation:

A conservation agreement donor can deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (as opposed to 30% under the previous law)

Qualifying farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income

Donors to carry over deductions for their contribution for as many as 16 years (as opposed to six years before 2006).

Send a message!

Join FoHVOS as we encourage our federal legislators to go the rest of the way and pass the necessary legislation to make the improved conservation tax incentives permanent.

Contact your Representatives and Senators to let them know you would appreciate their support.

Hopewell Township is in the Twelfth Congressional District and is part of New Jersey's 15th Legislative District. New Jersey's Twelfth Congressional District is represented by Rush D. Holt Jr. (D).

New Jersey is represented in the Senate by Frank Lautenberg (D, Cliffs Park) and Bob Menendez (D, Hoboken). The 15th legislative district of the

New Jersey Legislature is represented in the State Senate by Shirley Turner (D, Ewing) and in the Assembly by Reed Gusciora (D, Trenton) and Bonnie Watson Coleman (D, Trenton). The Governor of New Jersey is Jon Corzine (D, Hoboken). Phone numbers for your Senators' and Representatives' offices can be found at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

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 - \$ _____

President's Note

2007 - FoHVOS's 20th anniversary year - marks a time of change and transition for Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, as well as an occasion for celebration. Ted Stiles, our President of 18 years, left an imprint on the Hopewell Valley that can be seen in every field, forest, and stream from the Sourlands to Curlis Lake Woods, Baldpate Mountain to the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association's Reserve, and in patches big and small between. Although we begin this, our 20th year, with a profound sense of loss, we have Ted's legacy to thank for our financial stability, our dedicated and savvy board, and a vision for conservation of open spaces, agricultural lands, and passive recreational opportunities for all of the Valley's citizens.

Since its inception in 1987, FoHVOS has grown to be one of

New Jersey's most successful land trusts. We have helped preserve 70 properties totaling more than 3,500 acres and we fully intend to keep up with the impressive pace of land protection for which FoHVOS has come to be known.

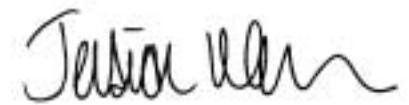
Local land trusts play a leadership role in the community - a role we take seriously. It is estimated that New Jersey will gain as many as 1 million new residents by 2020. The state is projected to be the first in the nation to reach full build-out in 20 to 40 years. We need to act now to educate the public about the role of open space preservation in maintaining clean drinking water, public health, and overall higher quality of life. Land protection needs to be balanced with a serious commitment to affordable housing to ensure that its benefits reach all of our citizens.

We also want to hear directly from

you so we can learn what open space means to you personally. So please visit our table on Pennington Day. You will find us in front of Queenstown Gallery. We will be there and asking your opinion.

We hope that you take the opportunity to attend our 20th anniversary celebration this fall, participate in Clean Communities days, wear your FoHVOS t-shirts with pride, support this organization financially and by volunteering, and make an effort to get to know some of the players that will carry on the FoHVOS mission over our next 20 years.

Best,



FoHVOS pledges unprecedented \$250,000 towards local land acquisition projects!

Within the final weeks of the St. Michael's deadline, FoHVOS announced a contribution of \$100,000 toward D&R Greenway's acquisition of the St. Michael's site near Hopewell borough. "This was a very large commitment for

us, explains Fohvos Board VP John Jackson, "but our trustees wanted FoHVOS to have a role in this important acquisition, which we see as comparable in significance to our other two signature projects, Curlis Lake Woods and Baldpate Mountain.

We salute D&R Greenway for talking the lead in this ambitious project."

D&R Greenway's Executive Director Linda Mead adds, "The preservation of the St. Michael's land is the first time that D&R Greenway and FoHVOS have been

financial partners in a project. Coming together and leveraging our resources to preserve open space in Hopewell creates a win-win situation for all-especially for the local residents. We are very grateful for the support of FoHVOS-and look forward to working together on upcoming preservation projects."

In addition to the St. Michael's property, FoHVOS trustees also approved allocating \$150,000 from our Green Acres grants to the D&R Greenway's Wright acquisition project. This is a 30-acre farm property located along Elm Ridge Road fairly close to Carter which extends all the way down to the Stony Brook.



From l to r: John Jackson, FoHVOS vice president, Jim Waltman, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Assoc Executive Director, Linda Mead, D&R Greenway land Trust executive director, Stephanie Harris, St. Michael's Preservation Committee.

News & Events

FoHVOS Hosts Panel Discussion on Farming in the Valley

On March 13th, over 50 members, supporters, and interested residents attended a panel discussion hosted by Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FoHVOS). The discussion, "Sustainable Farming in the Hopewell Valley: Past, Present & Future," was the highlight of FoHVOS's annual meeting, which was held at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Pennington. Panel members included three local farmers, Lucia Huebner, owner of Beechtree Farm, George Kerr who has been farming the current Bristol Myers-Squibb site on Pennington-Rocky Hill Road since



From l to r: Lucia Huebner, George Kerr and Jim Kinsel.

1978, and Jim Kinsel, who began farming the Watershed Organic Farm, now known as Honey Brook farm.

Earth Day Weekend Clean Up!

Over 16 groups including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, School Clubs, and several individuals came out to support FOHVOS & Hopewell Township's 32nd semi-annual Clean Up Day. Enough garbage to fill a 30 yard dumpster + 10 cubic yards of recycling material was collected along the roadways by our wonderful volunteers! Thanks to long time FOHVOS supporter, Michael Rothwell, owner of The Pennington Market for supplying our deserving crew with donuts, soda, coffee, and hot chocolate.



Dedicated youth on Clean Up Day, Spring 2007.

The Hopewell Chapter, The Pennington Business & Professional Association Honors FoHVOS & Ted Stiles

A Community Service Appreciation Reception, hosted by The Hopewell Chapter and The Pennington Business and Professional Association, will be held on Thursday, June 7, 2007 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Hopewell Valley Golf Club located at 114 Pennington-Hopewell Road, in Hopewell.

We are deeply honored that the Hopewell Chapter of the Chamber of

Commerce has chosen us for this award," states Jessica Wilkinson, the Friends' new President. "I know Ted would have been especially pleased and it is a wonderful way for us, in this our 20th year, to embark on the next 20 years of land conservation through open space preservation, informed land use, and sound stewardship in the Hopewell Valley."

Guided Hike!

Join us for a two-hour guided hike in a beautiful setting that is right in your own back yard at Curlis Lake Woods, Pennington! This is an activity that the whole family will enjoy. Our guides combine the wonders of the natural world with an in-depth knowledge of the history of the area. Members are welcome at a reduced rate.

Time: 12:00 -2:00 pm

Date: Sunday, June 3rd, 2007

Location: Meet at Curlis Lake trailhead, South Main Street, Pennington (see www.njtrail.org for directions and map)

Cost: Members - \$7.00

Nonmembers - \$10.00

Children under 16 = \$5.00

(under 5 yrs = n/c)

Special Family Rate = \$20

Don't forget your water bottles!

Coming Soon!

Friends of Hopewell Valley 20th Anniversary Celebration, Fall 2007

To volunteer your time and talents, please contact Jayna at: development@fohvoss.org

"Ted Stiles Memorial Hike"

Held at the Ted Stiles Reserve at Baldpate Mountain – an annual hike that highlights the scenic beauty of Mercer County's highest point. Fall 2007 – Date to be announced.

Don't forget your membership donation!

Your generous support is greatly appreciated!

Stewardship Corner Ask Dr. Mike

Not so 'deer' to Hopewell Valley

As new housing developments and strip malls redefine and encroach upon Central Jersey's remaining woodlands, deer populations continue to thrive in their suburban landscape. The Hopewell Valley's mixture of development, open fields, and forest edges have provided ideal habitat for the white-tailed deer populations.

Population Issues

The deer population grew dramatically from the early 1970s through the 1990s (see Figure 1). The current New Jersey deer population is relatively sta-

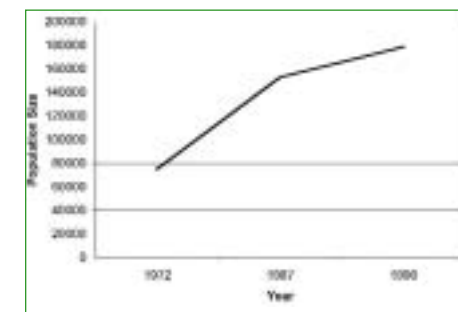


Figure 1

ble at around 180,000; even though approximately 70,000 deer are harvested annually and traffic accidents are responsible for an additional 15,000 animal deaths each year. Approximately 85,000 are killed every year and we still have overpopulated areas and destruction of our forests from over browsing – a term that signifies the loss of nearly all native plants within reach of a hungry deer.

Ecological Impacts

The health of our forests has been negatively affected by deer browsing. A healthy forest consists of a canopy layer, a small tree layer, a shrub layer, and an herb layer. Scientists have studied the impact of deer population for the last decade and have found that deer severely reduce the amount of

plants growing less than 5 feet above the ground (shrubs, herbs, tree seedlings). The loss of the next generation of trees threatens the long-term existence of forests. These barren forest layers directly affect the reproductive success of birds by eliminating the food and cover that they need to rear their young.

In addition, deer feed on plant species such as spicebush and maple leaf viburnum - allowing invasive species (weeds) to take hold of our forests. These invasive plant species spread quickly and provide little benefit to other wildlife living in the forest. These animals, including scarlet tanagers and Kentucky warblers, are driven out of the area to look for more suitable habitat, threatening their survival. (see Figure 2).

What can be done

In order to maintain and restore healthy forests, groups designated as the stewards (protectors) of preserves and open space, such as FoHVOS, must consider their options. The experience of stewards across the region has shown that options including

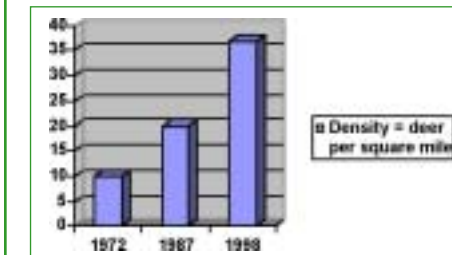


Figure 2

repellants, fencing, and reproductive controls are largely ineffective and/or impractical. Hunting, with the primary purpose of reducing the deer population, is the only feasible solution to regaining the health of our forest. Successful hunting programs focus on the harvest of female deer that drive

population growth, rather than the bucks. Although it may seem contrary to kill a living animal in order to save our forests, the long term effects of allowing a single species to override many other species would be irreversible.

Dr. Michael Van Clef, FoHVOS Stewardship Director, is designing a Deer Management Plan with the goal of improving the health of forests across our 21 preserves which currently show signs of severe deer browsing. This program will utilize hunters to reduce the population as well as scientific monitoring that will determine our effectiveness at relieving the stress to our forests. Please contact Mike if you have any questions or are interested in assisting in this most important project at Michael@fohvoss.org.

The White-tailed Deer at a glance...

- Deer become sexually mature at 2yrs and mate between Oct – Dec
- Deer have a 10-year lifespan
- Home range of a deer is typically 1 square mile
- Bucks (males) are solitary (outside of mating season)
- Does (females) form a herd and give birth in May or June and can have 1-4 fawns, but the average is two.
- Deer's diet changes with the seasons; they feed on grasses in the spring, flowering herbs in early summer, woody plants in late summer, acorns and fruit in fall, and evergreen shrubs and other woody twigs and buds in the winter. Deer will also consume agricultural crops such as corn and soybeans.