



# Open Space Chronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Spring 2014

## Preserving Land in Challenging Times

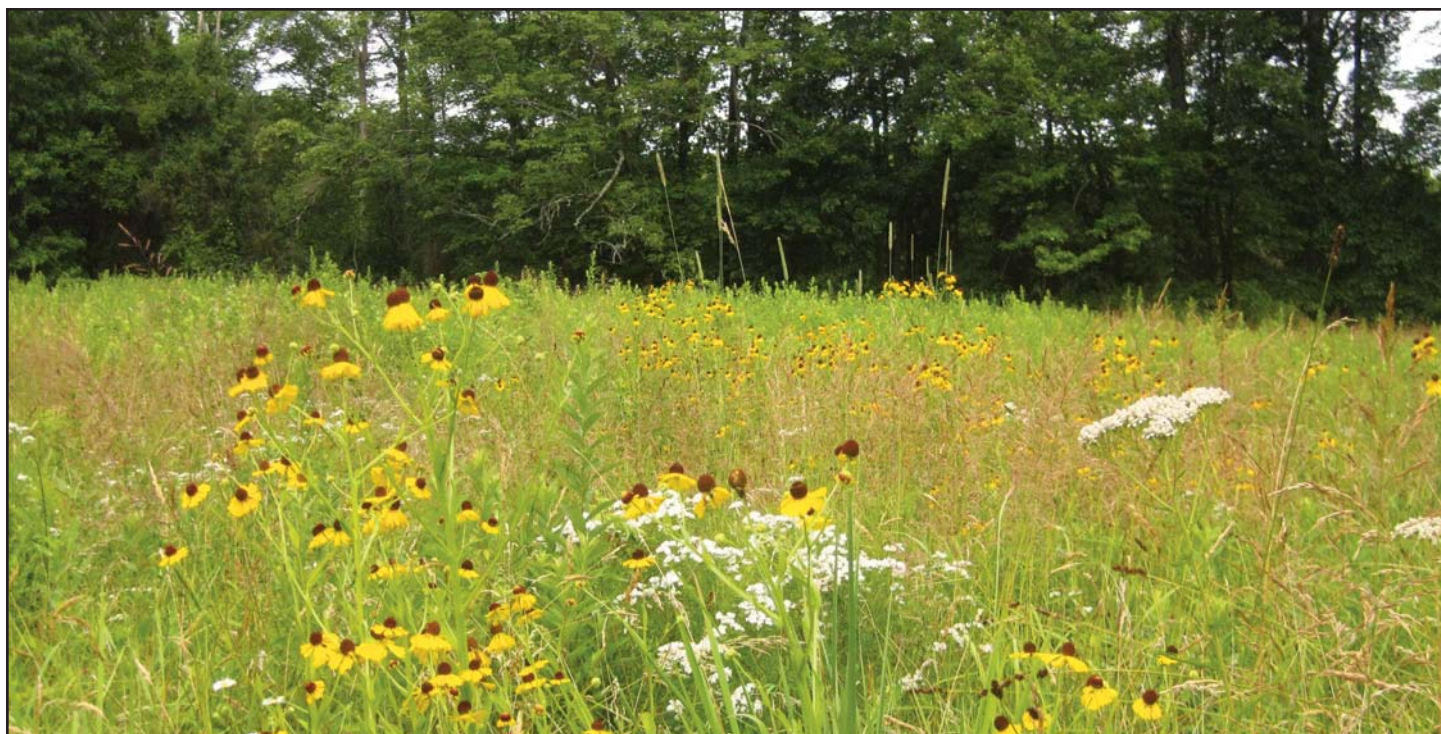
**I**n 2009, New Jersey voters approved a \$400 million bond measure to fund the Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) for two years for open space, farmland and historic preservation. As of last year, every bit of that preservation money had been fully allocated. This is one of the very few times since the Green Acres Program was founded more than 50 years ago that New Jersey is without a source of funding for preservation programs. Even with short-term funding fixes like bond measures, more than 75 percent of Green Acres grant requests have gone unmet.

FoHVOS was one of many applicants who did not receive funding in the final disbursement from the fund. We have been making do with the small amount remaining from our last allocation by collaborating with our preservation partners, pooling and stretching our dollars to save land in the Hopewell Valley. Most recently, the cooperative efforts have resulted in preservation of two important parcels, the 86-acre Olcott Preserve on Route 518 and the 35-acre Longspring Farm on Pleasant Valley Road. And we currently have a role in three other preservation projects involving

multiple partners. While we have little remaining in Green Acres funds, we have been able to leverage what we have. But our well is nearly dry.

One very valuable resource is the Mercer County Open Space Assistance Program, which has been available to municipalities and nonprofits for matching funds since 1994. Previously limited to up to a match of 15% of Certified Fair Market Value, as a response to diminished state funding Mercer County early this year announced enhanced funding for projects initiated in 2014. Grants for up to a 50% match are offered for preservation projects involving multiple partners. There is also the possibility of a 10% bonus for special qualifying projects. This step comes at a very challenging time and we are very grateful to Mercer County for keeping the preservation door open. Over the past 20 years, the County has granted over \$23 million to assist with the acquisition of 114 properties throughout the County totaling over 4,800 acres. Twenty different preservation organizations have benefited from this program.

*Continued on page 2.*



Eames Preserve Photo by Rachel Mackow



# Preserving Land in Challenging Times

*Continued from page 1.*

As one of 185 member organizations of the Keep It Green Coalition (KIG), we have been keeping tabs on efforts to secure a long-term stable source of preservation funding. In the last legislative session the New Jersey Senate, with bipartisan support by a 29-8 super-majority vote, passed a bill to place a referendum on the November 2014 ballot asking voters to dedicate a small percentage of sales tax revenues for open space, farmland and historic preservation. The Assembly failed to take action on a companion bill and the measure died. Now the Senate has introduced a new bill, SCR84, which was voted 4-1 out of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee with bipartisan leadership on March 17. The proposed referendum would ask voters to approve dedicating 6 percent of Corporate Business Tax revenues that would generate approximately \$150 million annually for preservation and stewardship programs annually for the next 30 years. The Coalition supports the concept of the measure but raised concerns about the fact that 4 percent of the Corporate Business Tax revenues are already dedicated for other environmental programs and would be diverted for preservation and stewardship programs under the proposal. The Coalition has also taken the position that funds from Natural Resource Damages settlements should continue to be reinvested in the same areas where the environmental damages occurred rather than be used for statewide preservation needs. KIG has pledged to work with legislative leaders to identify additional funds to address these needs, including park capital improvements, watershed management and underground storage tank removal. As of this writing, the Assembly had not yet acted on a companion measure (ACR130).

The reasons for providing long-term preservation funding are clear. In fact, a recently released draft 2013-2017 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan prepared by the NJDEP Green Acres Program indicates that at least 650,000 acres still need to be preserved to protect water quality, provide parks and other recreational opportunities and support the economy. They are worth repeating here.

- More than 400,000 acres of farmland need to be preserved to reach the 600,000 acres recommended to sustain agriculture as a viable New Jersey industry.
- The long-term dedication of funds for land preservation and recreation is a major factor in sustaining New Jersey's nearly \$40 million tourism industry.
- Land preservation can provide protection from future storms like Hurricane Sandy. The Blue Acres program can acquire flood prone homes and create open space for storm mitigation. Nearly 184,000 acres of federal, state and local public open space was inundated from Sandy's storm surge.
- According to DEP 2007 land use data, there are a total of 4,968,980 acres of land in New Jersey. Of those, 1,529,097 acres are preserved open space and farmland, comprising 30 percent of the state. Another 1,593,853 acres or 32 percent consisted of developed lands according to DEP 2012 land use analysis. This leaves 1,846,030 acres available for future land preservation—or development. Note, between the years 2000 and 2012 an average of about 26,000 residential building permits were issued each year...a total of 333,551.



Eames Preserve Photo by Rachel Mackow

The report is prepared every five years by the Green Acres Program to maintain the state's eligibility to receive funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund administered by the National Park Service.

As an active member of the Keep It Green Coalition, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is committed to working with our partners and our legislators to ensure that New Jersey voters will have the opportunity to approve a long-term stable source of preservation funding this November. Follow us on Facebook for updates on progress of this important legislation.





## President's Note

Since our founding in 1987, the primary goal of FoHVOS has been the preservation of open space in the Hopewell Valley and today we find our efforts seriously curtailed by the exhaustion of funds in the state Green Acres program. Many people mistakenly think our land purchases are made with money FoHVOS has accumulated over the years, but a single land deal in which we are typically involved requires sums many times larger than what we, as a grass roots organization, take in each year from memberships, fundraisers, and all other sources. Instead, NJ Green Acres funding has been absolutely essential to almost all of the more than 50 acquisitions we have participated in over the years, either as owner or facilitator.

As this issue's lead article describes,

the exhaustion of funds for the state Green Acres program has placed our traditional preservation role in jeopardy. To its credit, Mercer County has stepped in to fill much of the gap for 2014 but a long-term funding solution for the state program is an absolute necessity if we are to continue to preserve new properties. We ask you, our members, to help us by staying involved on this issue and stressing to our elected representatives in the Senate and the Assembly the urgency of resolving the Green Acres funding impasse.

Our other essential role is to take care of the lands we hold and, over the years, as we have acquired more land, we find ourselves increasingly involved in active stewardship projects. This may sound like a contradiction but the natural values of preserved land can

erode over time due to incursions of non-native invasive plants and a deer population which is many times over what the land can support. And in the past few years we have sought to extend some of the successful stewardship techniques we've developed for our own preserves to other publicly and privately owned land in the Hopewell Valley.

I hope you'll take the time to read Mike Van Clef's Stewardship Corner column to learn more about some of our efforts to maintain a healthy ecological balance not only on our own preserves but on other public and private lands in the Hopewell Valley.

John Jackson, President



## Volunteer Spotlight

Maintaining and repairing trails to keep them safe and user friendly. Removing invasive plants to keep them from crowding out native ones. Restoring habitat by planting trees and shrubs. Weeding the native plant garden on Baldpate Mountain. Monitoring a preserve for hazards and to make note of plants and wildlife there. Helping at the office with mailings. Working on an event. Our staff members rely upon volunteers for hands-on help to get the work done. We deeply appreciate every gift we receive, and volunteer hours are the gift of time.

Trail work is regularly scheduled on Thursdays, spring and fall, weather permitting. Volunteers help with invasive species removal on Tuesdays. Other outdoor tasks, such as habitat restoration and maintenance of the native plant garden on Baldpate Mountain, are scheduled at various times. Many hands make light work, so we welcome school and corporate groups to help with these jobs. Each of



our preserves that have walking trails has a volunteer Site Steward who visits the assigned preserve once each season and walks the entire trail to determine if it needs maintenance or improvement. Light maintenance, such as clipping branches encroaching on the trail or picking up trash, may be performed at this time. We encourage the Site Stewards to become familiar with the plant and wildlife species present on their preserve and to keep a list. Additional Site Stewards are currently needed for our Thompson, Jacobs Creek and Skyview preserves.

If you find indoor work more appealing, we occasionally need help preparing mailings or preparing for events. We also can use volunteer help on Clean Communities Cleanup Days and tabling events. If you would like to give the gift of time helping us care for the land in Hopewell Valley, please give us a call at (609)730-1560 or e-mail Beth@fohv.org.







## On the Trail

# History and Habitat on the Fiddler's Creek Trail

An hour-long ramble on the Fiddler's Creek Trail will take you across more than 250 years of history, through fledgling forest, among towering hardwood trees and along the scoured shale of an ancient creek. How's that for time travel! Located on preserved land formerly called Hollystone Preserve, the trail's opening was celebrated with an inaugural hike on October 26, 2013. Planning and building of the trail was a project of New Jersey Trails Association under the leadership of Alan Hershey, former Chair of the Board of D&R Greenway Land Trust. The 108-acre preserve, which falls under Mercer County's management plan for the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain, was preserved in 2010 by a partnership of Mercer County, Hopewell Township, FoHVOS and D&R Greenway.

The trailhead is located across from the gated driveway at Baldpate. The trail actually consists of three connected trails of different lengths that offer varied hiking experiences. Start on the Overlook Trail, which wanders through a shrubby successional habitat. After a brief traverse of a 40-acre forest restoration site, the trail connects with

the Ravine Trail, which enters the riparian forest that borders Fiddlers Creek. The restoration area, which is now protected by deer-exclusion fencing, will eventually fill in with trees to connect the extensive forest on Baldpate Mountain with the riparian forest along the creek, thus providing valuable habitat for woodland birds. You will gradually descend from the ridge high above the creek to the floodplain. At this point, a 20-foot tall stone arch...the one remaining visible remnant of a 19th century mill complex...can be seen downstream. It is thought that the flat area where a short path leads

to the creek was the site of a mill pond that served the mill. The Ravine Trail has some fascinating features including splendid views of the creek and a short catwalk bridge that facilitates walking over a tricky spot. You can complete your walk by staying on the trail as it heads upstream or take the shorter but more difficult Stoneface Trail which ascends steeply over stone and timber stairs past rock outcrops. The varied terrain and diverse habitats of Fiddler's Creek Preserve provide an unusually rich hiking experience.

The land where the Preserve is located was settled as a farmstead by Joseph Titus in the mid-18th century. The Titus family established a saw mill at the creek and later added a gristmill. A stone manor house built by Joseph's son, Uriel Titus, in 1812 stands on the adjacent 23-acre Hollystone Farm which is preserved by a conservation easement held by FoHVOS. The farm, which does not have public access, includes a large stone barn, a pond and several other buildings. Fiddler's Creek Preserve and Hollystone together are a significant piece of the cultural and natural history of the Titusville area.



Overlook trail

Photo by Pat Sziber



## Grants Help Support Our Work

A \$3,300 grant from **Washington Crossing Audubon Society** will help launch a collaborative project that synergistically combines art and land stewardship with the help of teachers and students from Hopewell Valley Central High School. The objective of the project is to raise awareness of the serious decline of native bee populations and will demonstrate their habitat needs. Read more about the "Summer Triangles" project in the Stewardship Corner of this issue of *Open Space Chronicles*.

We were very pleased to receive a \$3,000 grant from the **Church & Dwight Employee Giving Fund** to fund durable outdoor signs explaining two of our major restoration projects, the forest restoration at Fiddler's Creek Preserve (formerly known as "Hollystone") and the grassland restoration at Mercer Meadows. The signs will describe the restoration

process, explain the conservation rationale and highlight species of native plants and animals—especially birds—that will benefit from the restorations.

We welcomed generous support from several donor advised funds over the past few months. A \$300 gift from the Rush Holt and Margaret Lancefield Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation, a \$200 Fidelity Charitable grant from the Anna C. Chave Fund, a \$500 William Taylor Charitable Gift from the Schwab Charitable Fund and \$250 from the Bershad/Wynn Fund of the Ayco Charitable Foundation will go a long way in supporting our general operations.

We are very grateful for the generosity of all who support our preservation and stewardship work.





# News and Events

## People

**Lisa Jordan** has settled into her job as FoHVOS Development Director since joining us at the beginning of this year. Her experience includes event management, communications, marketing, graphic design and donor cultivation. She recently worked with Enable, Inc., New Jersey Women and Aids Network and the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association. Lisa has been working on coordinating and marketing our events, organizing our membership database and developing outreach strategies. Lisa, her husband, Dan, their two teenage children and two beloved yellow labs live near Hopewell Borough. She is an avid cyclist who has cycled extensively throughout central New Jersey and frequently participates in fundraising rides. She can be reached by e-mail at [lisa@fohvos.org](mailto:lisa@fohvos.org).

We also welcome three new members to our Board of Directors. **Ruth Jourjine**, a studio artist who lives in the Titusville area, has loaned us her creative talents for most of our events over the years. We are excited about her work on the Summer Triangles project, which is covered in this issue's Stewardship Corner. Hopewell Borough resident Paul Kuehnert is Team Director and Senior Program Officer for the Public Health Team at Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. An outdoor enthusiast, he has been an active member of several environmental organizations and has served on a number of nonprofit boards. Former Development Director Judy Karp left FoHVOS last summer to take a position as a law clerk with a federal judge. As a Board member she brings to us her years of volunteer experience in the education community. Judy lives in the Elm Ridge Park area of Hopewell Township.



Photo by Pat Sziber

## Another Successful Cleanup Day

Cool temperatures and a very stiff breeze did not deter well over a hundred volunteers from walking Hopewell Valley's highways and byways picking up all sorts of carelessly discarded trash on April 5th. For 22 years, FoHVOS has taken the lead on the Clean Communities Cleanup Day on behalf of Hopewell Township. The only time the weather has gotten in the way was in fall of 2012 when Superstorm Sandy forced cancellation. Hats off to the many volunteers who have helped keep our roadsides clean all these years.

## ....and another kind of Cleanup

Over 50 members of the Hopewell Valley Central High School Lacrosse Team came out on the same blustery day to help clear invasive shrubs such as autumn olive and multiflora rose from a field on our Skyview Preserve. This particular field, which presently contains some nice native wildflowers, has the potential to become a topnotch meadow with excellent pollinator habitat once the woody growth is managed. It was hard work and, thanks to these energetic young men, we've made significant progress on the rehabilitation of the field.



Photo by Tom Ogren

## Upcoming Events

### Pollinators and Pizza –

**Saturday, April 26**

Pizza baked in the outdoor brick oven at Gravity Hill Farm at 12:30 pm followed by "The Importance of Pollinators," a presentation by Rachael Winfree, Ph.d., an Associate Professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources at Rutgers University. Fee \$10.00. Limited seating, preregistration required. Contact [Lisa@fohvos.org](mailto:Lisa@fohvos.org) or phone 609-730-1560.

### Birds at Baldpate Mountain –

**Sunday, May 4**

A guided walk on Baldpate at the height of bird migration. Hike leader Sharyn Magee has been conducting bird censuses on Baldpate for a number of years and knows where to find those special songbirds. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Fiddler's Creek Road parking area.

### National Trails Day –

**Saturday, June 7**

**Watch our website for details.**

To learn more about these and future events sign up for ConstantContact notices by sending an e-mail to [execdir@fohvos.org](mailto:execdir@fohvos.org). Or visit our website or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.







## Stewardship Corner

### Summer Triangles: Project Combines Art and Ecology

A unique pilot project that combines art and land stewardship in a way that educates and increases awareness of the ecological requirements of native bees is underway thanks to a \$3,300 grant from Washington Crossing Audubon Society's Holden Fund. "Summer Triangles" is the name of the innovative ecological art project conceived by FoHVOS trustee Ruth Jourjine, a local artist who is creating components of the installations in her studio near Titusville with the help of students from Hopewell Valley Central High School. The goal of the project is to raise awareness of the plight of pollinators, especially native bees, and to inspire residents to create pollinator habitat on their own properties.

Ruth became interested in the problem of the decline in populations of honey bees, native bees and other pollinators and decided that she wanted to do something to address the issue at a local level. To learn more about the topic, she took a Pollinator Short Course with the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Ruth came up with the idea of designing small habitat patches that would incorporate native flowering plants, material for nests and artistic design elements that will define the patches. Three triangles will be installed this year at locations that are easily accessed by the public: Mercer Meadows and our Nayfield and Kulak Preserves. They will be located near trails in sunny locations where the flowering plants will thrive.

Each Summer Triangle will be about 80 square feet in area and will be surrounded by a hand-made fence constructed of dried Phragmites stems (a notorious invasive species being put to good use!). Design elements will be posts of native red cedar topped by ceramic flower shapes of a color that serves to illuminate the fact that bees are attracted to certain colors when searching for food sources. Native bee

nest sites will be constructed using dried Phragmites stems. The nest sites will attract female solitary bees who tunnel into the hollow reed and lay eggs, provisioning each nest with a mixture of pollen and nectar. Note: Solitary native bees do not sting. Nearly all of the 4,000 species of bees in North America are native. They are important in the production of an estimated \$3 billion worth of crops in the United States and, for instance, pollinate more than 35% of the crops in California. They also pollinate plants that produce fruits eaten by birds and other wildlife, which points to a critical role in preserving biodiversity.

Signs will be posted at the sites that describe the construction elements and explain why increasing wild bee habitat is important to our society. Websites and links for more information will also be posted. Photographs will be taken throughout the project cycle to document progress. It is anticipated that the triangles will provide a unique opportunity for nature education. Once this pilot project is evaluated and, as time and resources permit, additional Summer Triangles may be installed at other locations.

The project borrows the astronomical term for the pattern of stars known as the Summer Triangle, an imaginary tri-

angle in the sky over the northern hemisphere. Three prominent stars define the vertices of the triangle, Altair, Deneb and Vega, the brightest stars in the constellations Aquila, Cygnus and Lyra respectively. The Summer Triangle is overhead at our latitude in the summer.

It appears likely that the causes of the decline in native bee and honeybee populations are complex. It has long been understood that disease and habitat loss are involved. There is now a growing body of evidence that a class of insecticide known as neonicotinoids is a factor. It is important that we do what we can to provide pesticide-free foraging habitat for the bees. Even backyard native plant gardens are safe havens. The Summer Triangle project is an innovative and attractive way to engage in the educational aspect of our Private Lands Stewardship Program. Using art with sculptural elements will appeal to a broader public that, in turn, will help society to understand the importance of native bees and the benefits to our agricultural crops, wildlife and our own gardens.

A wealth of information about native bees and other pollinators can be found at [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org).



*Summer Triangle model  
Photo by Ruth Jourjine*



*Pollinator on Bee Balm  
Photo by Pat Sziber*



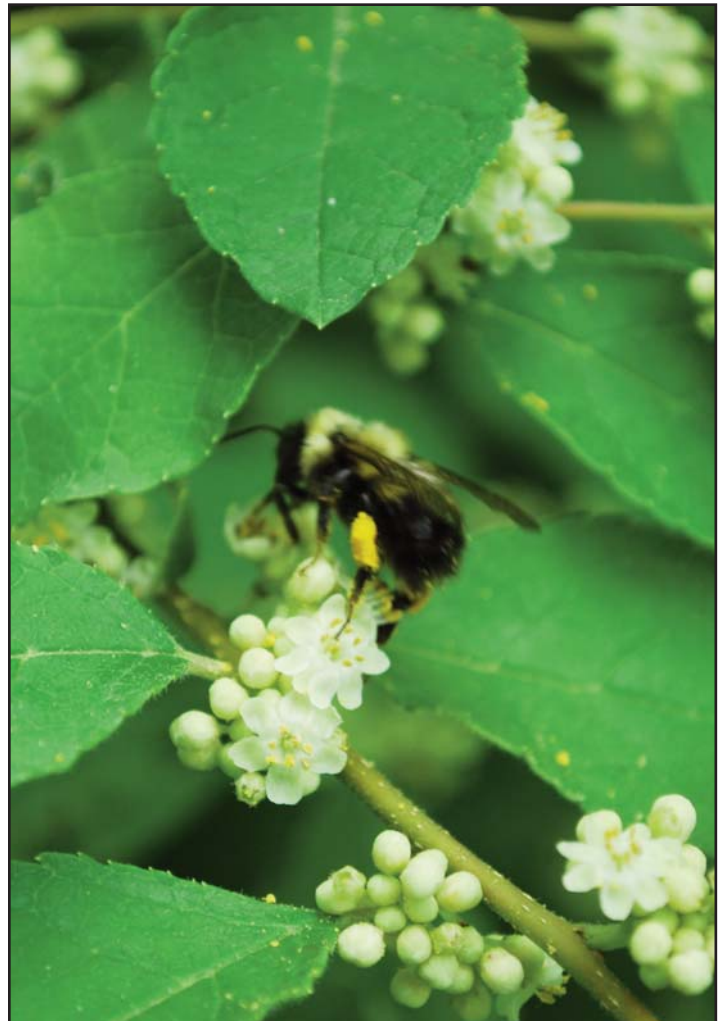
## Stewardship Corner

### One Backyard at a Time

The FoHVOS Private Lands Stewardship Program (PLSP) has grown to more than 70 participating households and 2,000 acres since it was launched in 2012. Properties in the program range from 0.1 to 360 acres, wildflower meadows to native plant border gardens, deer management to bird nest boxes. Participating properties are scattered throughout the Hopewell Valley, filling in gaps between our own preserves where we apply the same stewardship practices. (See the map at [www.fohvos.org/PLSP.html](http://www.fohvos.org/PLSP.html).) We welcome every new enrollment in the program as a partner in restoring Hopewell Valley's natural heritage—one backyard at a time!

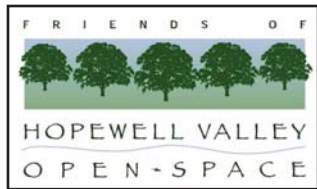
We are very pleased with the enthusiasm shown for the goals of PLSP. At our presentation "The Best Native Plants for the Hopewell Valley" on March 20, Stewardship Director Mike Van Clef shared native plant gardening tips with about 20 residents, some of whom expressed an interest in signing up for PLSP. Mike and our Land Stewards Beth Craighead and Rachel Mackow look forward to visiting their properties and making recommendations for habitat improvement, which may include invasive species control, converting some lawn area to meadow, selecting plants that provide for birds and pollinators and choosing the right native plants for existing garden conditions.

Feedback from participants has been very supportive and many keep coming back for more advice – we are always glad to help! We want to thank everyone who has helped make PLSP an on-going success. If you would like to discuss your own stewardship options, please contact Mike Van Clef at 609-730-1560 or [Michael@fohvos.org](mailto:Michael@fohvos.org).



*Black-eyed Susan and Winterberry Holly are pollinator-friendly plants for the native plant garden.  
Photos by Pat Sziber*





PO Box 395  
Pennington, NJ 08534

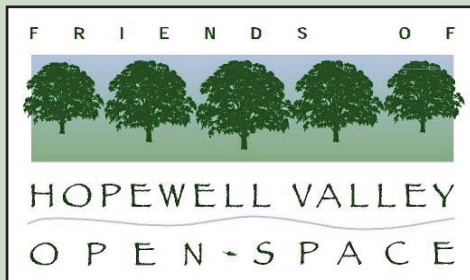
[www.fohvos.org](http://www.fohvos.org)

*Follow us on Facebook!*

*Join us on Twitter!*



Printed on recycled paper.



*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 – John Jackson  
Vice President – Carol Kleis  
Vice President – Tom Ogren  
Treasurer - Robert C. Johnson  
Acting Treasurer – Andrew Jackson  
Secretary – Chris Berry

### Board of Trustees

Beth Caylor	Paul Kuehnert
David Glogoff	Liz McLaughlin
Robert C. Johnston	Frank Newport
Ruth Jourjine	Dan Rubenstein
Judith Karp	

### Staff

Patricia Sziber – Executive Director  
Lisa Jordon – Development Director  
Michael Van Clef – Stewardship Director  
Rachel Mackow – Land Steward  
Beth Craighead – Land Steward

*For more information on how you can become involved, please contact us at  
[info@fohvos.org](mailto:info@fohvos.org)*