

Open Space Chronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Summer~Fall 2016

An Enchanted Forest Awaits at Our Fall Celebration on September 18

Who lives in the hollow at the base of that hickory tree along the trail? Was it fairy dust that gave rise to that patch of cream-colored mushrooms? Why can I hear but not see the bird that is calling nearby? The forest holds many secrets and some of them fuel our imagination and urge us to seek even more surprises.

Come to The Enchanted Forest fall celebration at Strawberry Hill Mansion on Baldpate Mountain and we will beguile you with the magic of the forest. See the mansion transformed into a magical woodland, complete with troll houses, fairy lights and overhanging branches. Sample delicious hors d'oeuvres prepared by Will Mooney of Brothers Moon Restaurant with the assistance of professional forager Tama Matsuoka Wong. Enjoy a glass of beer or wine, bluegrass music by Magnolia String Band and, of course, spectacular views overlooking the Delaware River from the patio.

Among the many silent auction selections are some very special items including a month of yoga at Honor Yoga in Pennington, a bike from Sourland Cycles, a wine collection curated by our own board of directors, and a hike on Baldpate Mountain guided by historian David Blackwell of the Hopewell Historical Society. Baldpate's archaeological secrets are part of the forest's enchantment!

The event will also feature presentation of our annual Jack Gleason Environmental Award and an update on our recent accomplishments.

The Enchanted Forest celebration will be held from 3:00 to 6:30 on Sunday, September 18. Parking is available near the mansion - follow the "Private Event" parking signs up the driveway from Fiddler's Creek Road. Reservations are \$75 per person and you may register online at www.fohvos.org. Click on the link under "What's Happening."



FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE



Be Bitter about Litter!

**Clean Communities Cleanup Day
Saturday – October 15**

Help keep the Hopewell Valley litter free And raise cash for your favorite nonprofit. Assignments throughout the Valley. Register on our website www.fohvos.org





News and Events

We're on Top of the Mountain!

On April 14th cars, vans and pickup trucks made their way up the mile-long driveway to Strawberry Hill mansion atop the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain. It was moving day for the FoHVOS office and we started the newest phase of our organization's history as we said goodbye to the historic Blackwell House in Washington Crossing State Park that we called home for ten years. The landmark, the oldest part of which had seen the Continental Army pass by on its way to Trenton, was showing her age and we needed to find a new location for our office. The unoccupied second floor of the mansion came to mind, though it was very much in need of work. Extensive renovation of the first floor, where we have held our fall celebration every year since 2009, was begun in 2007 but the interior upstairs was untouched.

In October 2014 FoHVOS Vice President Tom Ogren reached out to the Mercer County Park Commission about the possibility of turning the second floor into office space for occupancy by FoHVOS staff. The structure is solid and it appeared that cleanup, some carpentry and electrical work,

new lighting fixtures and outlets, refinishing the floors and a coat of paint would do the trick. The work, mostly done by Park Commission staff, began in early fall of 2015 and was completed early this year.

And now we spend our days in a sunny office space whose windows look out over our meadow restoration on one side and the Delaware River beyond the trees on the other. In addition to the three office rooms we also have a small meeting room and ample storage space. The native plant garden, which we planted and steward, is within easy reach and the patio is the perfect spot for lunch. The setting couldn't be more idyllic.

FoHVOS has a license agreement for the office space with the Mercer County Park Commission which is renewable annually. Newly installed furniture, carpeting, etc. are the property of the County. Management of Strawberry Hill mansion is still the responsibility of the Park Commission. Note that the doors to the building are always locked, even when we are in the office, so visits need to be arranged beforehand. But watch for word of a



The stewardship office has desks for four.

chance to tour our offices later this year!

We are very grateful for the productive working relationship we have had with the Mercer County Park Commission and we thank them for the arrangement we now enjoy at Strawberry Hill. We especially want to thank Project Manager Joe Pizza for working out the myriad details required for making this our home.



Submit Your Photos Now – “Treasures of the Forest” Photography Contest

You have probably found that if you walk slowly through the forest with your camera close at hand you will find yourself taking dozens of photos. The camera lens lures us to the most mysterious and unexpectedly beautiful snapshots of nature—some dramatic, some subtle, always telling us a story about the treasures of the forest. A caterpillar on a branch, a colorful mushroom, a tiny ephemeral wildflower...they all have a story to tell and you can help tell that story.

Treasures of the Forest photo entries are being accepted now through October 21 at 5:00 PM. Our contest juror is professional photographer Daniel Kassel, who will determine first, second, third and honorable mention awards. Photos will be on exhibit at Hopewell Creative Arts Studio in November. Each image must be a 300 PPI JPG file, scaled 6" by 4". You may submit up to three entries for \$20; each entry should be labeled 1, 2 or 3 with last name and title. Maintain a record of your entries. Payment and submission may be completed through our website or mail your check to FoHVOS, P.O. Box 395, Pennington, NJ 08534.



The focus of this contest is to bring attention to the vast ecosystems of the forest, including mushrooms, lichens and slime molds. We want to encourage photographers to use their imaginations to showcase the acres of preserved land in the Hopewell Valley area. Take a walk in the woods with your camera and focus on your vision of forest treasures!





President's Note

Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space has been on the move – and we've literally come full circle from the original fight to preserve Baldpate Mountain to our offices now atop Strawberry Hill on Baldpate this summer. Our hard-working staff is enjoying the stunning view of the forests and fields at the Ted Stiles Preserve as they organize our major stewardship efforts throughout the valley. Check out some of the progress that has been made this spring-summer season in the Stewardship Corner in this issue of Open Space Chronicles.

Realizing it was time to pay some respect to the biology of the fungi, which play such important roles in the ecosystem, FoHVOS sponsored a May lecture at the Hopewell Library by Dorothy Smullen, past President of the Northeast Mycological Federation. She informed the packed room about macro-fungi and their importance to healthy forests. Our interest piqued, we joined forces with the New Jersey Mycological Association for a forest "Mushroom Foray" in July at Baldpate Mountain to collect mushrooms. After brief training on field techniques, participants collected a remarkable abun-

dance and diversity of mushrooms within a mere 1-1/2 hours, with over 100 species identified.

We now know fungi are critical not only to forest ecology, but also to human endeavors including medicine, agriculture, and many other disciplines, not least their irreplaceable culinary role -- many edible mushrooms taste great! Don't miss an opportunity to join a foray of a different kind as Will Moony of Brothers Moon restaurant will be designing a menu around various edible mushrooms at "The Enchanted Forest" event on September 18th at Strawberry Hill Mansion at the Ted Stiles Preserve. Spread the word to friends and neighbors as this will be a unique opportunity to enjoy food, drink, music, and catch up with FoHVOS members, all the while supporting our preservation efforts.

We'll round out our celebration of the beauty and ecology of the forest, including the amazing fungi, with our first annual photography contest, Treasures of the Forest. Entries will be accepted through October 21st to be followed by an exhibit and reception at Hopewell Creative Arts Studio in

November. Read the details elsewhere in this newsletter or on our website www.fohvos.org.

Speaking of our local ecology, don't forget that a wide variety of birds in our area depend on insects - and our insects depend on native plants. If you are interested in creating a productive link in that wildlife web, please consider joining our Private Lands Stewardship Program. We recently had the opportunity to tour four of member gardens and learned that meadows are grand, but small gardens are also important. You can take advantage of input from our stewardship staff on what plants would work well for your site and enjoy the benefit of our wholesale discount as you order those plants. Contact Stewardship Director Mike Van Clef at Michael@fohvos.org to get started.

Do you wonder why the sign at "Alliger Park" now reads "Woolsey Park"? National Trails Day allowed us to join forces with the Hopewell Valley Historical Society to hike the preserve and learn all about the history of the Woolsey family that had owned and farmed the property for seven generations all the way back to the early 1700s.

Finally, be sure to read in this summer issue updates on two additional important developments: our work in partnership with many other groups to oppose the PennEast pipeline which continues to threaten the region and Hopewell Valley; and progress with the Mount Rose Stewardship Plan and what you can expect going forward as this wonderful new preserved tract becomes a meaningful part of the preservation efforts by FoHVOS.

Carol Kleis, President



PennEast Pipeline Meets Increased Opposition

Affected landowners, area residents and municipal and county governing bodies all along the 118-mile route of the proposed PennEast pipeline have registered strong opposition to the project by denying access for surveys, formally passing resolutions, and voicing their position publicly and in the media. This unified voice became even stronger when on July 22 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) which, in the opinion of opponents, is premature at best. Among the criticisms raised is the lack of on-the-ground environmental data which renders the document incomplete. Permits from NJDEP have not been granted. There hasn't even been a credible study as to the public need for the pipeline. Cumulative and secondary impacts have not been addressed.

Within minutes of FERC's posting the DEIS on the docket,

the news spread like wildfire via email and Facebook among groups that have been fighting the proposed pipeline for nearly two years. The process allows 45 days for review and comment on the nearly 1,200-page document, a constrained period spanning the prime vacation season. The timing sparked outrage. The lack of substantive data supporting the application raises a serious question as to FERC's lack of adherence to the standards expected of them.

FoHVOS is a registered intervenor in the PennEast application process and, as such, has been reviewing the DEIS, tagging its flaws and posting comments to the project docket at FERC. The proposed route crosses a number of pieces of preserved open space. Most notably for us, it cuts diagonally across nearly two miles of Baldpate Mountain, utilizing part of the JCP&L easement that is not cleared for right-of-way and provides critical habitat for rare species of birds and other wildlife. In early May, PennEast wrote to FoHVOS requesting access to two other properties for "temporary workspace and permanent easement rights" and suggested we initiate a Green Acres Program diversion process. We firmly rejected their request and suggestion.

As we stated in our response to PennEast, "We are very committed to compliance with our stated mission of protecting the land that we preserve. We honor the trust that the taxpayers of New Jersey have placed in the conservation community over the years with their repeated approval of land preservation funding and would hope that we will continue to earn their trust."



Preserve NJ Act Restores Preservation Funding

After many months of debate and compromise, both houses of the New Jersey Legislature agreed on the language of a bill authorizing the implementation of the constitutional amendment approved by the voters in November 2014. On June 30, the Governor signed the bill, which authorizes funding for open space, farmland and historic preservation. During the time that has elapsed since voters approved the amendment, prospective preservation projects have languished and some opportunities have been lost. We can thank the open space advocates in the Legislature and the dedication of the NJ Keep It Green Coalition, who invested an enormous amount of time and energy in this journey, for the ultimate success of the legislation.

The funding is based on a percentage of projected Corporate Business Tax (CBT) revenues, which can vary from year to year. Proposed allocations for FY2017 under the Preserve New Jersey Act total \$71,377,692 of which \$3,037,835 would be available to nonprofit organizations such as FoHVOS. Just \$2,703,673 would be for acquisitions; the remainder would be for stewardship. This is a fraction of Green Acres funding available in the past.

Funding is expected to increase substantially in FY2020. Meanwhile, competition is going to be robust among nonprofits over the next few years. We plan to remain in the business of preserving open space and will work together with our County, municipal and nonprofit partners to remain competitive and make the best use of the funds available.





On the Trail

Curlis Lake Woods Gets Another Eagle Scout Project

Curlis Lake Woods, bordering the eastern edge of Pennington Borough, has benefited from a fifth Eagle Scout trail improvement project completed earlier this year. Ethan Jeffs of Boy Scout Troop 44 built a 12 foot long bridge over a swale on the Lake Shore Trail, a popular trail that hugs the eastern side of Curlis Lake. Ethan's project was a much needed improvement to allow hikers to circumvent a large and muddy wetland area on the Lake Shore Trail.

Ethan joined two other scouts from Troop 44, Jeremy Thong and Kennan Myer, in completing two other trail bridge projects at Curlis Lake Woods to qualify for the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank in scouting. Donald Allen of Troop 41 and Garret Monfre of Troop 28 were responsible for the other two Eagle Scout projects, a boardwalk and a bridge.



Ethan Jeffs on the bridge that qualifies him for Eagle Scout status.

Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space (FoHVOS), founded in 1987 to preserve open space, led the fight to preserve the 116 acre Curlis Lake Woods when the Pennington Bypass was proposed to go through the site that same year. FoHVOS currently helps maintain trails at the County owned preserve which is managed by the Mercer County Park Commission. Since 2009 Eagle Scout projects at Curlis Lake Woods have been supervised by FoHVOS board member Tom Ogren.



Exploring History and Nature along Woolsey Brook

FoHVOS celebrated National Trails Day on June 4 together with the Hopewell Valley Historical Society and about thirty hikers along the Osage Ridge Trail on what was known then as Hopewell Township's Alliger Park. The trail, completed just last year, was named after a long row of closely planted Osage orange trees along a high ridge. The trees served to fence in livestock many years ago.

David Blackwell, representing the Historical Society, shared the history of the site which was first settled by George Woolsey around 1700, one of the earliest settlers in the Hopewell Valley. His son, Jeremiah Woolsey, whose 1865 National Register listed house still stands next to the park, and his descendents occupied and farmed the site well into the 20th century. David Blackwell also spoke about the abandoned 19th century route of the Mercer and Somerset railroad which ran through the park and crossed the Woolsey Brook. FoHVOS stewardship director Mike Van Clef filled hikers in about the ecology, wildlife and varied habitats of the park.



Mike Van Clef filled hikers in on the varied ecology of Woolsey Park.

In July of this year, the Hopewell Township Committee, at the urging of David Blackwell, voted to officially name the park by ordinance as Woolsey Park in recognition of its early settlement and over 200 years of ownership by the Woolseys. The park is also the site of Veterans and 9/11 memorials. Entrance to the park, which is located on Washington Crossing-Pennington Road, is prominently marked with the new name.

A complete description of the Woolsey Park trails and the history of the site are included in the second edition of our *Guide to Walking Trails in the Hopewell Valley*, which is available in local libraries and at the Hopewell Township Municipal Building.





Volunteer Spotlight

Bloomberg Volunteers Lend a Helping Hand

The wildflower garden next to the mansion atop Baldpate Mountain is picture-perfect, thanks to the helping hands of volunteer employees from Bloomberg. Last year, once a month from May to October, they came to help remove invasive weeds so the native plants could flourish in all their glory. They are doing the same this year. The intrepid workers also helped cut back an aggressive population of autumn olive at our Heritage Preserve last year. In July of this year, they spent a hot, sunny afternoon cutting down invasive growth at the Fiddler's Creek Preserve and building brush piles that will benefit wildlife. The garden and the Fiddler's Creek project will keep them busy the rest of the season!



These helpers, who volunteer through Bloomberg's community outreach program, have logged an impressive number of hours helping us maintain the garden and the ecological health of our preserves. Sixty-eight volunteers worked a total of 170 hours in 2015. They are well on their way to matching that number this year.

Many thanks to the volunteers and to the Bloomberg company for their commitment and their generous community spirit.

Bloomberg teams have invested nearly 200 volunteer hours helping us control invasive weeds.



Giving Thoughts

BMS Gift Supports our Stewardship Work

We are very grateful to Bristol Myers Squibb Corporation for their gift of \$20,000 to be applied to our stewardship work. Caring for the land we preserve is a major part of the FoHVOS mission. We will soon begin work on ecological restoration projects on the nearly 400-acre Mount Rose Preserve and we invest considerable effort in maintaining nearly 50 acres of forest restorations on Baldpate Mountain and the Fiddler's Creek Preserve, as well as the 7-acre meadow atop Baldpate. The BMS gift will help assure our continued work in maintaining and improving the ecological health of the Hopewell Valley.

Many thanks to Bristol Myers Squibb for their support of our stewardship program!



Be a Partner in Our Stewardship Program

Our Stewardship Program is a major part of what we do. From trail maintenance to habitat restoration; from rare species monitoring to engaging residents in native plant gardening; from invasive species control ecological assessment, to monitoring our preserves and conservation easements. All of these projects take staff time, require supplies and equipment, and maintenance of our truck and tractor. These are the tools that get the work done. There is so much more we would like to do. Can you help fund our efforts?

Here is a sampling of a few projects on our wish list:

- Hopewell Valley American Kestrel Conservation Project.
Estimated cost - \$10,000

- Mercer Meadows Grassland Bird Study.
Estimated cost - \$15,000
- Mount Rose Preserve Forest Restoration.
Estimated cost - \$25,000
- Baldpate Mountain Rare Plant Conservation Project.
Estimated cost - \$50,000

Project costs include staff time, contractor fees and materials costs.

Any gift designated for our Stewardship Program will fund projects such as these. If you think you might like to adopt a project, please contact our Development Director Lisa Jordan at lisa@fohvos.org.





Stewardship Corner

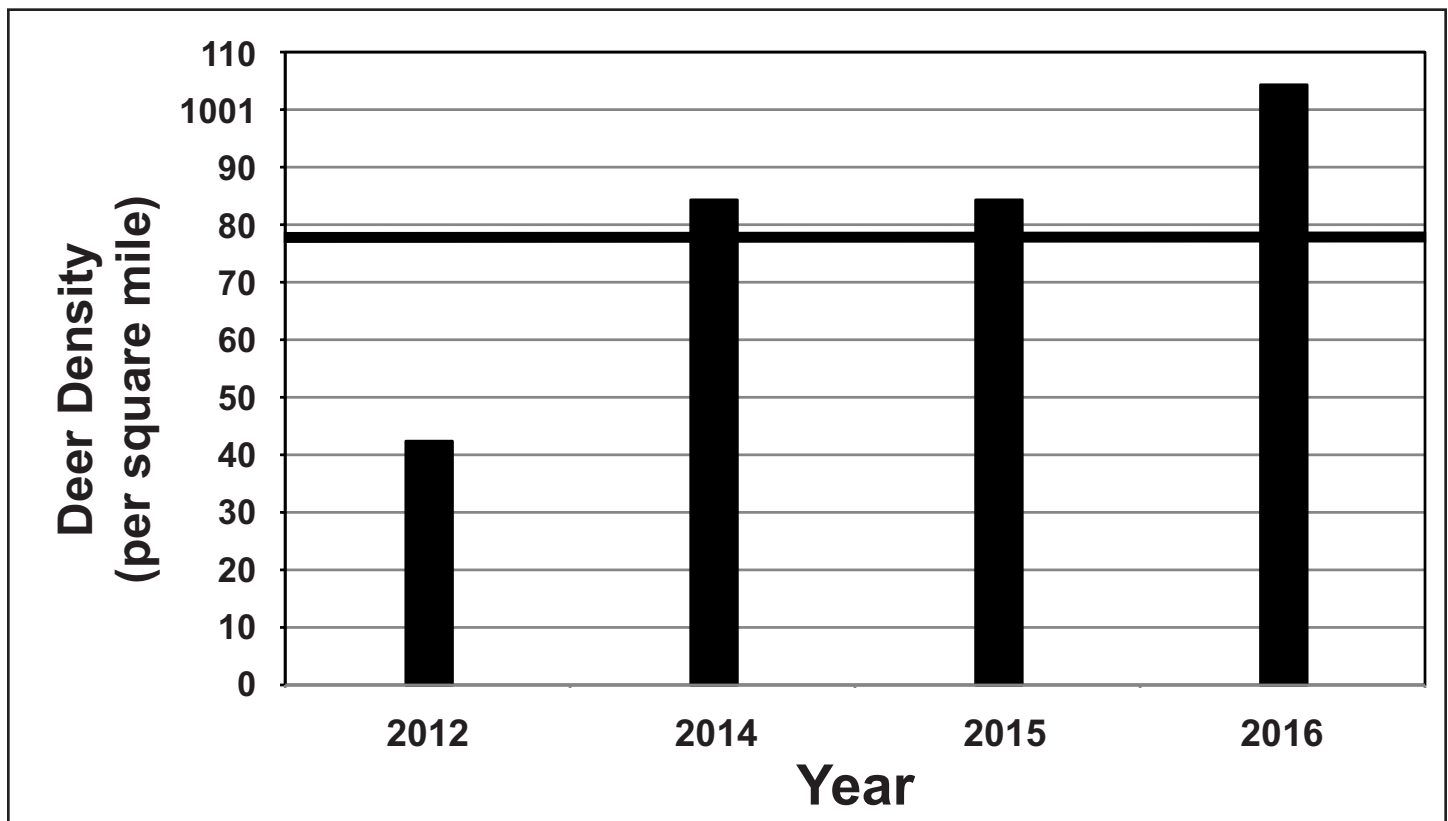
Hopewell Valley Deer Population Update

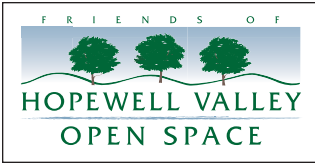
FoHVOS, along with the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife, have been counting deer in the Valley over the last five years. We've been using the 'distance sampling technique', which involves slowly trolling around over 60 miles of roadways and using spotlights to count the number of deer and their distance from the roadside. Using a formula established by wildlife biologists, this data is transformed into the number of deer per square mile.

It is estimated that a population of 10 deer per square mile is associated with healthy forests and low levels of both Lyme disease and deer-vehicle collisions.

What have we found in the Valley? No surprise – lots of deer! The average number (horizontal bar below) is about 78 per square mile. You'll notice that the lowest number occurred in 2012, following an outbreak of 'blue tongue disease' among the deer herd. You'll also notice that in only two years, the population had doubled and held steady through 2015 at over 80 deer per square mile. Just when we thought it couldn't get worse, the population ballooned to over 100 per square mile in 2016! Why? It is likely due to the warm winter weather and abundance of acorns. Not only did this improve their survival rates, it also kept them away from hunters' bait piles and harvest numbers were lower than normal.

Suffice to say, we have lots of work ahead of us! FoHVOS and our conservation partners will continue to lead effective deer management programs on our lands, but we need many private landowners to join our efforts. Please contact Mike Van Clef at Michael@fohvos.org if you'd like to learn more about the possibility of allowing deer hunting on your land.





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Pennington, NJ 08534

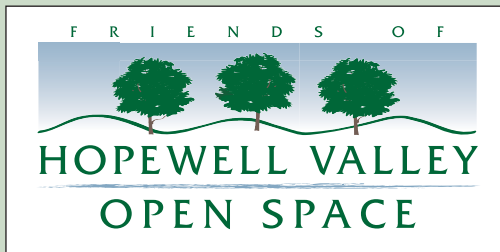
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The purpose of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is to promote conservation in the Hopewell Valley region through open space preservation, wise stewardship, education and outreach.

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Julia Snyder – Administrative & Stewardship Ass't.

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

info@fohvos.org