

# Open Space Chronicles

Newsletter of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space

Winter-Spring 2016

## Creating a Stewardship Plan for the Mount Rose Preserve

**N**ow that the 230-acre property on Carter Road that had been slated for 800,000 square feet of office space has been added to adjacent preserved lands to become the nearly 400-acre Mount Rose Preserve it is time to craft a plan that will restore its ecological health and open up opportunities for passive recreation. Culmination of the five-year effort to preserve the land, led by New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Hopewell Township Citizens Group, was celebrated on Earth Day last spring.

Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, under the leadership of Stewardship Director Michael Van Clef, Ph.D, has been charged with creation of a stewardship plan for the Preserve. The work began early last summer, starting with field collection and evaluation of biodiversity information. Among the information collected was assessment of plant community types, presence of invasive species and rare native species, and impacts of deer overabundance. Volunteers from Washington Crossing Audubon Society assisted with collection of bird population data. Maps of the plant community types will be part of the plan, along with natural resources such as bedrock geology, soils, wetlands, open water and rare species occurrences.

Representatives of the eleven project partner organizations have met to discuss the steps involved in creation and review of the plan, including stewardship strategies and the cost of their implementation. Meetings included discussion of a deer management plan that will not conflict with recreational use of the Preserve, including the portion of the Lawrence-Hopewell Trail that crosses part of it, by utilizing buffer zones around the trail, buildings and the parking area. The stewardship plan is expected to be rolled out in June of this year.

A public survey posted on the FoHVOS website until February 29 was also part of the process and stakeholder interviews will be scheduled early in 2016. The goal is to understand and incorporate multiple points of view into the plan.

Habitat restoration is expected to be a big part of the stewardship of the Preserve. Open areas have suffered from neglect and, in some places, are clogged with invasive species such as Autumn Olive and Multiflora Rose. Replacement with diverse native meadow habitat seems like the best option in some cases. One of the first projects



*Native Indian grass at the Mount Rose Preserve.*

is likely to be planting the spot where the derelict dormitory building once stood. There are beautiful mature woodlands on the property that will require some preventive maintenance to minimize spread of invasive species and enhancement of populations of native woodland wildflowers through deer herd reduction.

There is much work to be done: removal of invasive plants, preparation for plantings, seeding, trail building, installing signage—it all costs money. To that end, a Stewardship Fund specific for the Mount Rose Preserve is being set up and managed by New Jersey Conservation Foundation. We hope you will consider being a part of the community effort to help the Preserve realize its potential as an ecological gem.





## News and Events

### FoHVOS Welcomes New President and Trustees

As of October 1, **Carol Kleis** stepped up as President of Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, replacing John Jackson who served in the position for seven years. We are very happy that John will continue to serve as a trustee, generously sharing his dedication and expertise. Carol has been a board member for fifteen years and served as a Vice President since 2008. She has enthusiastically taken on the job and both the board and the staff look forward to working together with her guiding FoHVOS in its role as a leader in land conservation and stewardship.

Ryan Kennedy, Daniel Pace and Bruce Weise began their three-year terms on the board in April 2015. **Ryan Kennedy** is an attorney with the Stevens and Lee law firm and is

President of the Board of the Hopewell Valley YMCA. He also serves on the Hopewell Borough Planning Board and the Borough's Economic Development Commission. Ryan continues a family tradition. His father, Patrick Kennedy, served on FoHVOS' inaugural board of trustees. **Dan Pace** is returning to the FoHVOS board after taking a break for several years. He is a licensed professional planner and is Principle Planner and Agricultural Development Board Administrator for Mercer County. He also serves on the Pennington Open Space Committee and the Board of Trustees of the Hopewell Valley Historical Society. **Bruce Weise** is a retired Credit Risk Officer having worked in commercial banking. He is a former member of the Hopewell Township Planning Board.

**Marjorie Kaplan** was appointed to the board in November. She has degrees in Natural Resource Management and Environmental Sciences and currently is Associate Director of the Rutgers Climate Institute where she facilitates and participates in research project development, education and outreach. Through Rutgers, she co-facilitates and conducts research on behalf of the New Jersey Climate Adaptation Alliance network.

The FoHVOS community welcomes these committed volunteers who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our organization. We feel privileged to have them on our board.



### Julia Snyder Joins FoHVOS Staff

Julia Snyder joined the FoHVOS staff in mid-February as part-time Administrative Assistant and Assistant Land Steward and is quickly rounding out her skills in both positions. A recent graduate of Rutgers University with a degree in Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources she came to us with an excellent background and strong recommendations for both tasks. She is working under the supervision of Land Steward Beth Craighead, Executive Director Pat Sziber and Development Director Lisa Jordan who are finding her tremendously helpful. Welcome on board, Julia!



**Coming to a Road Near You!  
Clean Communities Cleanup Day  
Saturday – April 16**

**Help keep the Hopewell Valley litter free.  
Assignments throughout the Valley  
Register on our website [www.fohvos.org](http://www.fohvos.org)**





## President's Note

Nature may be quiet in winter but Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space does not rest, for the deep of winter is 'Seeding Season' for FoHVOS. Thanks to our volunteers, tree seedlings have been planted and wildflower seeds have been spread. We and many beneficial insects are expecting a spectacular botanical show next summer. Please see more details in the Stewardship Corner of this issue.

As those recent plantings show, FoHVOS volunteers truly drive our stewardship projects. Many goals this year were attained through >1000 hours from individual volunteers. If you would like to add some of your own energy to these essential activities in the field or office, please "click" on the *volunteer opportunity* button on our website, [fohv.org](http://fohv.org).

In 2014 we joined other conservation organizations from around NJ in the "Keep It Green" campaign, helping place a ballot referendum to fund open space, farmland and historic sites, and water and pollution control. Though both the New Jersey Senate and

Assembly approved enabling legislation the bills did not make it past the Governor's desk. We'll be monitoring and communicating to you progress in the state legislature which hopefully will enable these funds to become available in 2016.

In April we pooled our resources with several other major organizations in the successful conclusion of a major effort to preserve 230 splendid acres off Carter Road as part of the 397-acre Mount Rose Preserve. FoHVOS is now leading the effort to create the stewardship plan for the Preserve, as described on the front page of this newsletter. With Green Acres acquisition money now tapped out, our stewardship activities are more important than ever. These include habitat restoration, invasive species control, deer management, and rare species assessment and protection. The commitment to protect the ecological health of the Hopewell Valley runs strong in the veins of FoHVOS supporters.

A deep sense of gratitude is felt for John Jackson who contributed seven

years as President of FoHVOS. His leadership enabled our dedicated staff and volunteers to significantly expand native habitat restoration on both private and public lands. John's encouragement allowed some of our programs to grow beyond Valley borders where they took root in other preserves across the state. His devotion to environmental causes in the Hopewell Valley has inspired us and served as a beacon to our Board and supporters. I am happy to add that John will continue to serve on the FoHVOS board of trustees as we go forward into the future at FoHVOS.

In order to continue building on our legacy of preservation, we rely on the support of our members and friends. Many aspects of our work cannot proceed without financial help. Please consider a generous (tax-deductible) donation. The thriving native landscape in our beautiful Hopewell Valley will be your constant reminder that this truly matters.

Carol Kleis, President



## Gleeson Award Recognizes Preservation Champions

Katherine Dresdner and Michele Byers were presented with the Jack Gleeson Environmental Award at the FoHVOS fall celebration on September 20th in recognition of their unwavering commitment to the preservation of the Carter Road property now known as the Mount Rose Preserve. Ms. Dresdner, an attorney and spokesperson for the Hopewell Valley Citizens Group, and Ms. Byers, executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, worked together to save the property from development and put together the complex partnership that acquired the land. Engraved plaques were presented to them by out-going FoHVOS president John Jackson at the celebration.

Three outstanding volunteers were also honored with framed certificates at the celebration. Jim Gambino has logged more than 260 hours, Jim Golis over 170 and Pat Witkowski more than 100 volunteer hours assisting with many aspects of our Stewardship program.



Katherine Dresdner, left, and Michele Byers, right were presented with the Jack Gleeson Award by FoHVOS president John Jackson.



## Giving Thoughts

Membership support is vital to our preservation and stewardship efforts and we thank everyone who has contributed to our annual campaign. If you have not yet given you may do so on our website.

But there are other ways to support our work and we would like to highlight “giving outside the box” from time to time. Cathy Fortenbaugh is a Site Steward, monitoring our Nayfield, Jacobs Creek, and Fiddler’s Creek Preserve trails for several years. Cathy registers her volunteer hours with her employer, the biotechnology company Amgen, which

has a unique program of providing volunteer service grants through their Amgen Foundation Volunteers Program. This time around, FoHVOS received a \$412 grant as a result of Cathy’s dedicated service.

Many companies also match their employees’ and retirees’ donations to nonprofit organizations. This can result in a significant boost in the value of your gift. Why not check with your employer and see if they have such a policy?



## Consider Giving to Our Stewardship Fund

Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space is a leader in stewardship of the land in New Jersey. In addition to fostering ecologically healthy natural habitat on our own preserves, we engage private landowners in our Private Lands Stewardship Program with outreach and education. We monitor and manage deer populations on our own preserves and offer consultation to others who share our concern about deer overpopulation. We are vigilant and active in the control of invasive plants. We conduct forest and meadow restoration projects, sometimes on a grand scale. And we monitor our conservation easements annually for compliance with the deeds.

In order to assure the continued viability of our stewardship program we have established a Stewardship Fund—money that is invested and restricted to the program. We would like to thank an anonymous donor who helped launch this fund with a very generous \$25,000 donation, the first donation from a private individual to the fund. This same donor also fully funded our meadow restoration on the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain.

Please consider helping us build the Stewardship Fund. Any donation, large or small, will help us continue this important work. Do indicate that your donation is for the Stewardship Fund on your check, or in a note.



## Generous Gifts Support Our Work

The 7-acre meadow restoration at the Ted Stiles Preserve at Baldpate Mountain has been completed and we look forward to a thriving field a native grasses and wildflowers playing host to pollinators and birds. The \$25,000 project cost was provided by a very generous sponsor—this meadow restoration could not have happened without his generosity. Interpretive signage funded by a Church & Dwight Employee Giving Fund grant will be installed. Please visit the meadow near the top of the driveway from Fiddler’s Creek Road sometime this summer when the meadow is in bloom.

Maricel and Michael Hermann donated to FoHVOS a John Deere tractor and brush hog that had been used on the farm they recently bought. We have been using the equipment to maintain meadows at our Thompson, Nayfield, Skyview and Heritage preserves. We thank the Hermanns for making it possible for us to keep our meadows healthy and free of invasive shrubs.

A field at our Heritage Preserve was cleared of a massive infestation of Autumn Olive shrubs using funding from the Franklin Parker Conservation Excellence grant administered by NJ Conservation Foundation. After clearing, wildflower seeds were sown in their place on a cold January morning – we give special thanks for the \$400 gift from Chris Berry and Simcha Rudolph, who are committed to fostering stewardship across the Valley.

A \$300 gift from the Rush Holt & Margaret Lancefield Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation will help support our many programs. We thank them for their continued commitment to our work.





# On the Trail

## New Hopewell Valley Trail Guide Available

Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space has introduced a second edition of our popular Guide to Walking Trails in the Hopewell Valley. The new trail guide includes descriptions and maps for trails at 22 sites in the Hopewell Valley. Three new sites where trails have just recently been developed are included to the second edition. The new sites are the Fiddler's Creek Preserve (across from Baldpate Mountain), Mercer Meadows (Pole Farm) and Hopewell Township's Alliger Park which hosts the Woolsey Brook trails.

The Trail Guide was officially introduced at the annual FoHVOS fall event at the Ted Stiles Preserve atop Baldpate Mt.. FoHVOS, and in particular long time FoHVOS president Ted Stiles, helped to preserve Baldpate Mt. in 1998.

Five years ago Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space produced Hopewell Valley's first trail guide. It was a hit with Hopewell Valley residents as they picked up the entire press run of some 3,000 copies within just two years. Copies were mainly distributed at local libraries and community events.

Re-printing the trail guide was important since the first edition proved to be so popular and since some wonderful newly created trails deserved to be covered in a second edition.

The Hopewell Valley is fortunate to have so much preserved open space and so many trails. By producing the trail guide FoHVOS wanted Hopewell Valley residents to learn more about what's been preserved and to better appreciate that preserved land by taking a hike.

As with the first edition, the cost of printing the second edition of the Trail Guide was supported by the late James Vinson and his wife Rhonda and by Church and Dwight Employee Giving Fund. The design and graphics of the first and second editions were done by Hopewell Township resident Mahlon Lovett. Simcha Rudolph also of Hopewell Township created the trail maps. Most content was provided by the NJ Trails Association which is affiliated with D & R Greenway Land Trust. Board member Tom Ogren provided photographs and oversaw the production of the trail guide.

Copies of the trail guide are available at all local libraries and at the Stony Brook – Millstone Watershed Environmental Center, Washington Crossing State Park Nature Center and the Hopewell Township Municipal Building.





## Volunteer Spotlight

### Getting a Handle on Herps

Amateur herpetologist and Hopewell Valley Central High School chemistry teacher Mark Manning has been sharing his expertise as a volunteer with FoHVOS since the spring of 2015. While we have accumulated a considerable amount of data on plants and birds on our preserves, our knowledge of the herp population has been sparse. But we now know something about the frogs, salamanders and snakes that live on some of our preserves, and the list is growing.

Mark has found several species of frogs, salamanders and snakes...and a few large spiders. He is also maintaining a bird census. Every species tally is meaningful data for the management of our preserves. Mark is a great volunteer and we hope he will continue to share his knowledge with us.



*Garter snake*

## Thompson Preserve Bridge Replaced by Scout



Lucas Morreale, a Scout from Titusville Troop 1776, completed his Eagle Project at our Thompson Preserve, replacing the bridge over a tributary of the Stony Brook that washed away during Hurricane Irene in 2011. Construction of the 24-foot bridge, which is eight feet longer than the original bridge, was completed in June of last year. Lucas worked on plans with his father Glenn Morreale, project coach Vince Lauricella and FoHVOS board member Chris Berry.

We congratulate Lucas on his achieving Eagle Scout status and thank him for creating a safe and easy way for hikers to cross the stream and enjoy the entire 1.5-mile trail.

*From left, Glenn Morreale, Harrison Zhang, Lucas Morreale, Tommy Vite, Jacob Cseremsak, Chris Berry, Michael Mitrano and Michael Cseremsak.*





# Stewardship Corner

## Baldpate Meadow Restoration Update

The restored 7-acre field on the southwest facing slope atop Baldpate Mountain has undergone a series of steps to establish a native grass and wildflower meadow. Following removal of non-native plants, the field was seeded in May of last year. Following germination, the growth was mowed three times to control the invasive plants and encourage the young grass and wildflower seedlings that will eventually be a haven for pollinators, butterflies and birds. This ambitious project was made possible by a \$25,000 gift from a very generous anonymous donor.



*The restored Baldpate meadow will be in bloom this summer.*

## Nurturing Pollinators One Backyard at a Time



*Bee on Winterberry*

*"It all started with the bee balm, my morning smile is what I am talking about. The one thousand plants you all helped us to put in have now developed into a bee-filled paradise. I am looking forward to doing another one thousand this fall.....This project has already reaped more rewards in the way of smiles than I would ever have expected."*

A note like this makes it all worthwhile. Beekeeper Debbie Burd sent us these delightful words last summer when her luxurious meadow was in bloom. Debbie and her husband Jim wanted to provide an ample source of pollen and nectar for their honeybee colony. But honeybees aren't the only creatures that benefit from the native wildflower meadow. Butterflies, native bees and birds, including hummingbirds, have a lush refuge where they find ample nourishment.



*Bee on Aster*

Not every homeowner has room for a meadow, but even a corner of a flower garden can be a magnet for these creatures, especially if it features native plants. Not only are some of these flowers particularly rich in nutrients for bees but some are also critical to the development of certain butterflies such as monarchs. Hummingbirds draw nectar from cardinal flower and other similar blossoms. And, if you let the flowers go to seed in the fall, they can be a natural food source for overwintering birds such as goldfinches.

We can help you create your wildflower haven! We will soon be placing an order for spring planting, and another for the fall. The spring order deadline is March 28. Go to [http://www.fohvos.org/PLSP\\_Native-Plant-Gardens.html](http://www.fohvos.org/PLSP_Native-Plant-Gardens.html) for more information and to place an order.



## Help Create Woodcock Habitat

FoHVOS will be joining in a unique partnership with the Sourland Conservancy and the Mercer County Park Commission in a "Woodcock Habitat Restoration Project" and volunteers are needed to help with the work. Woodcock, known colloquially as "timberdoodle" and famous for its aerial courtship displays, is native to our area and our organizations are taking on this ambitious project to provide perfect habitat for this interesting bird that lives mainly in young forests and shrubby old fields. The restoration, which will take place over the course of the year behind Gazebo Park in Hopewell Borough, will involve removal of invasive species in spring and summer, building brush piles in early fall and planting native shrubs and other plants in November. A side project will involve removing invasive wisteria vines from trees near the Hopewell Train Station.

If you would like to roll up your sleeves and help with either of these projects, please contact either Laurie Cleveland at [lcleveland@sourland.org](mailto:lcleveland@sourland.org) or Mike Van Clef at [Michael@fohv.org](mailto:Michael@fohv.org).





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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.*

## Board and Staff List

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Vice President – Tom Ogren  
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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](mailto:info@fohvos.org)*