



Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

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36 Acres Preserved in Bethlehem Township

With the help of the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance, the New Jersey Audubon Society, Bethlehem Township and the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) acquired 36 acres in Bethlehem Township. The property is in the Highlands Preservation Area, and is within the NJWSA's "Spruce Run Initiative" targeted area, directly affecting the water quality and quantity of the Spruce Run Reservoir watershed. The Property is also on Bethlehem Township's Open Space Plan. Approximately half of the property is forested, with the remaining areas currently farmed for hay and oats. There are two small springs on the property which are surrounded by wetlands.

"The preservation of this property is important to maintaining the water quality of the Spruce Run Reservoir. The Authority's contribution to the protection of this important resource is made possible by its water customers who fund source water protection," said Henry Paterson, Executive Director, NJWSA. "With this acquisition, the Authority and its government and non-profit partners have preserved nearly 2600 acres of critical watershed area within the Raritan Basin in the last seven years."

The acquisition totaled \$435,812. The New Jersey Audubon Society contributed toward the purchase price, using a \$87,162.40 grant from the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund. Bethlehem Township contributed \$130,743.60 toward the purchase price,

using a grant of \$108,953 from the State of New Jersey Green Acres program and the balance from their County Open Space trust funds. NJWSA contributed \$217,906, or 50%, of the purchase price. The acquisition was facilitated in part by the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance, which provided transactional assistance and expertise.

“We were delighted to have played a role in bringing the New Jersey Audubon Society, Bethlehem Township and New Jersey Water Supply Authority together to preserve this important property,” said Margaret Waldock, Executive Director of the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance. “This acquisition is a fine example of how nonprofit groups, government agencies and municipalities can work together toward preservation goals that benefit all parties and the public at large.”

New Jersey Audubon Society felt this was an important project given the property’s proximity to existing preserved land, the potential for passive recreation and trail connectivity to Hunterdon County parks, and its potential to provide habitat to grassland birds and forested wildlife. The small fields provide excellent habitat for bluebirds and other small area grassland birds. The forest is connected to a larger forest tract and is suitable for NJ Special Concern species such as the Eastern box turtle, the Jefferson salamander, Woodthrush and Veery as well as a number of other forest birds.

The property is on the north side of Mine Road between Iron Bridge Road and CR635 (Charleston Road). Access to the land is from Mine Road and Iron Bridge Road. The property is directly adjacent to existing lands for public recreation and conservation and will provide additional recreational opportunities for individuals as well as groups interested in nature study, bird watching or hiking.

The Hunterdon Land Trust is Hunterdon County, New Jersey’s only countywide land trust. Incorporated as a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization in 1996, the land trust is committed to preserving and protecting the rural landscapes and natural resources of Hunterdon County. To learn more about the Hunterdon Land Trust, please visit their website at www.hlta.org.

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