



Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

56 Main Street • Suite 2E • Flemington, New Jersey 08822-1474

Phone: (908) 237-4582 • Fax: (908) 237-2225

E-mail: info@hlta.org

www.hlta.org

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Contact: Alison Levine
(908) 237-4582
alison@hlta.org

40 Acres of Parkland Preserved in Bethlehem Township, Highlands Trail Extended

40 acres of forest and wetlands have been preserved by the Hunterdon Land Trust, the New Jersey Audubon Society, Bethlehem Township and the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA). Nestled between land already preserved by the NJWSA and Tower Hill and Jugtown Reserves, both managed by Hunterdon County, the newly preserved property fulfills many important environmental goals. “One of our goals at the Hunterdon Land Trust is to preserve continuous expanses of land” said Margaret Waldock, the organization’s Executive Director. “This property was surrounded on three sides by protected land, which increases the positive impact its preservation will have on our county’s water quality, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat and rural character and made it an ideal property for preservation.”

“The preservation of this property marks an exciting milestone for the Hunterdon Land Trust” adds Kate Buttolph, the organization’s Director of Land Acquisition and Stewardship. “We have now helped preserve over 5,000 acres of land in Hunterdon County. I’m glad we reached this milestone with a project that so clearly illustrates the

benefits of land conservation. From the moment we first heard about this property, its preservation became a high priority for the land trust.”

The property is home to a wealth of wildlife and wildflowers. A variety of birds, including Bluebirds, Wood Thrush and Veery live in the forest, and the seasonal pools and streams provide breeding habitat for Wood Frogs, salamanders and the Eastern Box Turtle, a New Jersey Species of Concern. Butterflies, including Monarchs and Swallowtails abound, drawn by wildflowers such as White Clover, Butter & Eggs, and Snakeroot.

The Mulhockaway Creek, part of the Upper Raritan Watershed, crosses the newly preserved land and runs into the Spruce Run Reservoir area. “The preservation of this property is important to maintaining the water quality of the Spruce Run Reservoir. The NJ Water Supply Authority’s contribution to the protection of this important resource is made possible by its water customers who fund source water protection,” said Henry Patterson, Executive Director, NJWSA. “With this acquisition, the Authority and its government and non-profit partners have preserved a total of nearly 2800 acres of critical watershed area within the Raritan Basin in the last seven years.”

New Jersey Audubon Society felt this was an important project given the property’s proximity to existing preserved land, the potential for recreation including the connection of existing trails to Hunterdon County parks, bird watching and nature study as well as its potential to provide habitat for birds and forested wildlife.

The property was purchased for \$285,000. The New Jersey Audubon Society contributed toward the purchase price, using a \$57,000 non-profit grant from the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund. Bethlehem Township contributed \$85,500 toward the purchase price, using a grant of \$71,250 from the State of New Jersey Green Acres program and

the balance from their County Open Space trust funds. NJWSA contributed \$142,500.00, or 50%, of the purchase price.

The Hunterdon Land Trust brought together the coalition of partners that worked together to fund the preservation of the 40-acre property. Once the funding was in place, there was one final stumbling block to negotiate. “The preservation could not move ahead without a designated land manager” said Margaret Waldock. “We at the land trust felt strongly about this project, and when our partners were unable to commit to managing the property within the timeframe needed, we stepped in to act in that capacity so the project could be completed. We’ll continue to talk with the County to see if the management of this land can be integrated into work the Department of Parks and Recreation is already doing on the adjacent Jugtown and Tower Hill Reserves.”

In the meantime, the Hunterdon Land Trust worked with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference to create a link to the Highlands Trail, a “rugged footpath” uniting the Highlands region of New York and New Jersey.

The newly preserved land is on the south side of Mine Road near Mountain View Road. The property can be accessed through the Jugtown or Tower Hill Reserve along the Highland Trail, which is marked with teal, diamond-shaped blazes.

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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