



Hunterdon Land Trust

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Forty-Three Acre Farm Preserved in West Amwell Is Site of Future Park

WEST AMWELL -- An eight-year effort to preserve a 43-acre farm with the goal of establishing a park has recently come to fruition, thanks to the efforts of the D&R Greenway Land Trust, West Amwell Township and the Hunterdon Land Trust .

The preservation effort, spearheaded by West Amwell Township and the D&R Greenway Land Trust, will protect land farmed by the Wooden family for more than a century. The Hunterdon Land Trust assisted by acquiring nonprofit grant money from Hunterdon County to apply toward the purchase price of the land. The Land Trust's efforts were supported by generous funding from the National Park Service's Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic Program.

Preserving the property offers numerous benefits, including creating an ideal location for a future park, protecting water quality in the area and helping maintain the county's rural character.

Walter Wooden owned the property and began working with D&R Greenway to protect it. He died in April 2012 before the sale could be completed. His wife and family helped complete the deal, honoring Walter's commitment.

Kate Buttolph, land acquisition and stewardship director at the Hunterdon Land Trust, has been involved with efforts to preserve this property since 2005, when she worked for the D&R Greenway Land Trust, and is pleased to see this project concluded.

"This has been eight years in the making and well worth it," Buttolph said. "It's a beautiful piece of property with some incredible views that fits in quite nicely with the existing trails."

The land, which runs along the west side of Woodens Lane and south of Route 518, includes a tributary to Moore's Creek and is a water recharge area that drains into the Delaware River, which provides drinking water for 15 million people. Preventing future development of the land helps protect the quality of the water – for recreation and consumption – for generations to come.

The land is also ideally suited for a park where residents will be able to enjoy picnicking, cross-country skiing, birding or hiking.

Roughly 12 acres of the property is a coniferous forest dominated by fully mature red cedars and deciduous hardwoods. The cedars provide an ideal roosting habitat for three owls: Eastern Screech, Saw-Whet and Long-Eared. (The latter is on the state's list of threatened species.)

Mature trees that break the force of the winds are excellent perch sites for various foraging raptors that hunt the fields and feed on small rodents. With proper stewardship, these lands can support grassland birds including bobolink, grasshopper sparrow and savannah sparrow, which are all listed as threatened in New Jersey.

The property offers hikers stunning views of Baldpate Mountain to the south, provides a missing link to existing greenway corridors and creates an opportunity to extend that trail, which currently runs along Dry Run Creek from Howell Farm to Rock Hopper Trail on Lambertville Water Company lands. The parcel will provide an alternate trail loop, accessed from the nearby D&R Greenway Land Trust parking lot and trailhead for the Dry Run Creek Trail.

This area contains many historic farms and ties into Mercer County's Baldpate Mountain Preserve, Howell Farm and Pleasant Valley Historic District. It is also a linchpin in the Crossroads of the American Revolution Heritage Area.

D&R Greenway will manage the preserve with assistance from West Amwell Township.

For more information about preserving property in Hunterdon County, call the Hunterdon Land Trust office at 908-237-4582.