



The Hunterdon Land Trust recently partnered with New Jersey Audubon Society to preserve a 70-acre parcel on Pittstown Road in Franklin Township. Eric and Geraldine Turnquist offered a bargain sale at 80% of the appraised value. Here Margaret Waldock from the Hunterdon Land Trust meets with Rudy Wadle, who farms the property, and his two sons: Logan and Rudy. The property will be farmed to promote grassland bird habitat.

## save the dates

This year...take it local!  
An abundance of local activities to support local conservation

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

**Sunday 18-May**  
Trailbuilding Day, Crystal Springs Preserve, Lebanon Township

**Sunday 8-Jun**  
Opening Day of Farmers' Market, Dvoor Farm, Flemington

**Saturday 21-Jun**  
Day on the Land, Plein Air Painting and Photo Contest, Crystal Springs Preserve, Lebanon Township

**Sunday 14-Sep**  
Harvest Festival at Farmers' Market, Dvoor Farm, Flemington

**Sunday 19-Oct**  
The Art of Conservation – "Plein Air and More" art auction and cocktail reception, Prallsville Mill, Stockton

visit [www.hlta.org](http://www.hlta.org) for the latest calendar updates.



# conservation matters

## hunterdon land trust alliance

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Spring 2008

### the gift of conservation: alexandria resident donates conservation easement to land trust, creates legacy of conservation

Laura Riley loved nature and wildlife. She and her husband Bill traveled the country visiting National Wildlife Reserves and wrote a book together documenting their travels; the book was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Their 40 acre property in Alexandria is abundant with wildlife, a mini-reserve right here in Hunterdon County. Sadly, Laura passed away suddenly in 2006. After her death, Bill contacted the land trust about preserving his property; he was concerned for the future of the natural haven that he and Laura had worked to create.

Mr. Riley donated a permanent conservation easement on his property to the land trust, an easement that will protect the habitat and natural resources

The federal government recognizes that the gift of a conservation easement is one that can benefit the public since scenic views; water quality, wildlife habitat and rural character are protected in perpetuity. Donors of conservation easements that meet the Internal Revenue Services' standards are eligible for a charitable income tax deduction equal to the value of the gift, in most cases, the value of the development rights that have been foregone in favor of conservation. The Riley's property includes a tributary of the Capoolong Creek, designed by the state as a Category I waterway due to its high water quality. The abundant forest on the Riley property protects the stream, shading and cooling the water. This stream

eventually reaches the South Branch of the Raritan River, an important waterway for many reasons, including as a public drinking water supply. A pond on the property is alive with waterfowl, including breeding Wood duck. Bill and Laura Riley incorporated management practices on



on the property by preventing certain practices by future owners, such as subdivision and development and forest clear cutting. As holder of the easement, the land trust is entrusted with ensuring that all future owners abide by the terms of the easement. Given these long term obligations, Mr. Riley also pledged a \$5,000 donation to the land trust, to be placed in a permanent stewardship endowment, so the land trust has the resources to fulfill its obligations.

their property to attract this wildlife, including placement of bird boxes and carefully timed mowing of fields.

He and his wife Laura long valued the abundant wildlife and natural beauty of their land. Through his generosity, Mr. Riley has created a legacy of conservation that will benefit the community for generations to come. 🌿

### delaware river area stewardship program

The William Penn Foundation awarded a one year grant of \$45,000 to the Hunterdon Land Trust toward the development and implementation of a model stewardship and management plan for the permanently protected public lands located in the Delaware River corridor of Hunterdon County.

The stewardship program, which will serve as a model elsewhere in the state, will begin with the establishment of a "Friends" group. This group will be made up of representatives from the townships of Alexandria, Delaware, Holland, Kingwood, and the boroughs of Frenchtown, Lambertville, Milford and Stockton, local conservation organizations and land trust staff.

Over the next year, the committee will work to create a five year management plan for preserved, public land within the river corridor. The goal is to improve public access to public land, including signage, trails, and parking areas. Over the past few years, the state and its conservation partners, like the land trust, have done a very good job of preserving land within the river corridor for the benefit of the public. But limited resources and staff mean that much of this land is unmarked or inaccessible. Often it can suffer from vandals or destruction from prohibited activities, such as off road vehicle use. The goal of this project is to utilize private resources, like volunteer efforts, to assist the park system in its management of these public resources.

If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact Catherine Suttle at 908-237-4582. 🌿

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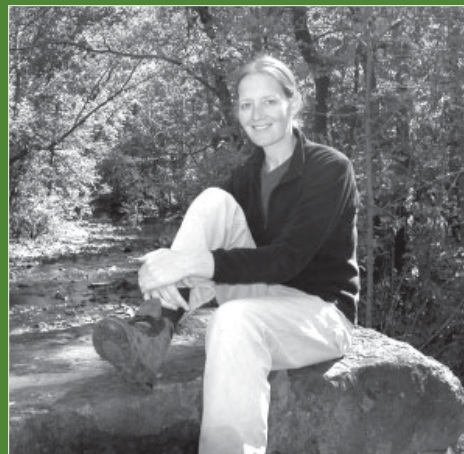
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## greetings from our executive director

This year we're "taking it local," as we emphasize the importance of protecting the natural resources that enrich our lives, strengthen our county's economy, and make our communities such pleasant places in which to live and work. Whether it's protecting the forests that clean the air we breathe, or the farms that provide a local source of fresh food, conservation is a sound investment. This year, we've got lots of activities for you and your families to get involved in, from trail building in a county park to buying directly from local farmers at our market at the Dvoor Farm in Flemington. Despite gloomy economic forecasts and increased demands on our personal time and resources, we hope you remember to enjoy and appreciate what's in your backyard and support the protection of the natural resources that make our communities strong and sustainable.



Warmly,  
Margaret Waldock

## the value of public financing for land preservation

New Jersey has long been a leader in the nation when it comes to publicly financed land preservation. With complete build out expected in the next 20 – 40 years, voters across the state understand what's at stake. Since 1998 when the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund was approved by voters, New Jerseyans have financed the preservation of over 432,000 acres of parks, natural areas and farmland and have approved local preservation financing measures in 21 counties and 226 municipalities.

But time and money are running short. New Jersey continues to lose open space and farmland to development at a rate of 50 acres a day, state funding will run out at the end of 2009, and Hunterdon County's Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund will expire that same year. Now is the time to remind our elected officials how these funds benefit our communities, and why we should renew them so land preservation can continue before it's too late.

### STABILIZE LOCAL PROPERTY TAXES

Preserved farms and open space

require less in the way of services. They provide long-term savings and substantial environmental and economic benefits to the community.

### PROTECT LOCAL CHARACTER & AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIES

Government funding has been vital in helping to preserve historic and cultural resources and maintaining viable local agricultural economies.

### GROW OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

Parks, natural areas and historic sites are a vital component of any community. Creating a high quality of life attracts taxpaying businesses and residents. Contrary to popular belief, they also support the growth of our county and local economies by stabilizing property values; increasing retail and tourism activity; and attracting new industries and skilled workers.

### CREATE HEALTHY LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Parkland provides opportunities for hiking, jogging and other physical activity. Land preservation reduces air and water pollution impacts on public health. Farms provide fresh, local produce to consumers. 🌱

## help!

Funding for land preservation is running out and we need your help to continue to protect what's important to you.

Here's what you can do:

- Contact the Governor and urge him to renew the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund ([www.nj.gov/governor/govmail.html](http://www.nj.gov/governor/govmail.html) or 609-292-6000)
- Contact your county Freeholders and encourage them to renew the Hunterdon County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund before it expires in 2009 ([freeholders@co.hunterdon.nj.us](mailto:freeholders@co.hunterdon.nj.us) or 908-788-1104)
- Contact your legislators and remind them of the importance of state and local funding for preservation ([www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/contact.asp](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/contact.asp) or 609-292-4840)
- Support the Hunterdon Land Trust ([www.hlta.org](http://www.hlta.org) or 908-237-4582)

## stock donations

Gifts of stocks, bonds and mutual funds to the Hunterdon Land Trust can be a tax-smart contribution. If you own stock that has appreciated in value and would like to sell it, you will pay capital gains taxes on the increased value. However, if you donate the stock to a charitable organization, it is exempt from taxation.

Your stock donation will support the Hunterdon Land Trust's critical work preserving the rural landscapes and natural resources of Hunterdon County. For more information, please contact Tracey Costanzo at (908) 237-4582 or [tracey@hlta.org](mailto:tracey@hlta.org).

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## taking care of our assets

Land and preservation is more than just protecting land from sprawling development. Responsible land management is critical to ensuring that the ecological health of the properties that we help preserve is maintained and enhanced. Clean air and water, biologically diverse ecosystems, and recreational opportunities are an example of some of the benefits that our communities can realize when land is properly cared for.

Our stewardship responsibilities are growing. As we preserve more land from development, we find ourselves responsible for more acres than ever before. Sound planning is the key to responsible stewardship. For every property we own, we create a management plan that addresses the nature and condition of the property and methods for correcting the forces of degradation caused by past management and natural pressures.

## LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

What may appear to be an idyllic Hunterdon County landscape of leafy trees, or a meadow of grass waving in the breeze, could actually be an ecosystem suffering from extreme degradation. A healthy ecosystem should consist of native plants that support a rich diversity of wildlife. Most plant and animal species are codependent and when one of the elements is missing, a chain of extinction is inevitable.

For example, a healthy forest should have three levels of vegetation composed of a diversity of herbs on the forest floor, a mid layer of thriving shrubs and tree seedlings, and a third layer of mature trees creating a dappled canopy. Look closely at the forests in Hunterdon County and you will notice that many are missing that critical shrub layer and young tree seedlings are non-existent. What is the fate of our forests when the older, mature trees die off and there are none to take their place?

Most of our forests are suffering severely from over-browsing from white-tailed deer, seriously threatening the survival and future of native plants and other animal species. Native plant species are also threatened by non-native invasive plant species brought here intentionally or unintentionally by human activity. Multi-flora rose, Japanese stilt grass, and Japanese

knot weed are a few examples of non-native invasive plant species that can overrun an ecosystem, to the detriment of diversity of native species.

## GETTING STARTED

Before we develop a management plan for a particular property, we first need to assess what kind of plants and animals exist on the property; what's there that should be, what's there that shouldn't be, and what's missing. Using a regional botanical survey called the Plant Survey Index (PSI) developed by Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, we can assess the ecological health of the property. The PSI grades each plant species according to its uniqueness. Our Lockatong Preserve and the Bodine Woods have both had surveys performed by field biologists and further in-depth plant studies are underway for the Lockatong Preserve to help us determine the best course of action to remove invasive plants and protect special, native plant habitats. All of this work has been coordinated by a land trust volunteer and an intern from the State-sponsored Environmental Stewardship program. This initial research is essential to set us on the correct path of action.

## STEWARDSHIP AND PUBLIC ACCESS

We do provide public access on properties when and where appropriate,

making the identification of native species habitat a very important exercise. When we plan a trail we want to ensure a pleasurable experience that does not threaten the native flora and fauna. Trails are designed to avoid erosion and trampling of plant species; certain areas may be fenced off to prevent further degradation and allow for regeneration; motorized vehicles are prohibited from all of our properties for the same reason.

Mimi's Trail and the Peters Trail at our Lockatong Preserve are popular hiking destinations, giving the visitor the opportunity to walk through land protected by the land trust and the Hunterdon County Parks department. Each trail was carefully planned so as to maximize the public's enjoyment while minimizing threats to the ecological health of the land.

## A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

To be successful, responsible land management requires a long term commitment. As we protect more land from development, we have opportunity and responsibility to reverse degradation and promote the ecological health of our region. We hope that we can lead by example, inspiring others like you to employ land management strategies that honor the abundance of natural beauty and biodiversity of our county. 🌲



## we thank our 2007 members and supporters

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