



Continuing Preservation along the Lockatong Creek

On May 1 The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance completed another land preservation project along the Lockatong Creek, when we purchased a 34-acre property on Raven Rock-Rosemont Road from Mr. Anthony Zega.

The property is mostly wooded but also includes a small area of Lockatong floodplain and an open field along the road. It is located just west of the historic iron truss bridge crossing the Lockatong Creek, on the north side of the road. HLTA now owns the property and will manage it as a nature preserve, complementing nearby parkland at Bull's Island State Park and the Wescott Preserve County Park.

When HLTA trustees and staff learned in Spring 2002 that a subdivision application had been submitted for the property, the organization moved quickly to set up the acquisition project and obtain needed funding. The total purchase price was \$716,400, with Green Acres providing

HLTA with 50% through its Nonprofit Grants Program, and Delaware Township and Hunterdon County contributing matching funds of 30% and 20% from their respective open space trust funds.

HLTA President, Deborah Woodard, commented that: "This is a magnificent piece of land and it dovetails well with the Wescott Park and the recent addition to Bull's Island. Next we hope to fill in the missing pieces of the puzzle. This acquisition is also a great example of our ability to partner with the Township and the County. Everyone involved deserves our heartfelt thanks."

The purchase of the Zega property is HLTA's third acquisition project along the Lockatong. Earlier this year the organization accepted the donation of a conservation easement protecting 14 acres also in Delaware Township, and in 1999 HLTA helped NJDEP purchase 10 acres in Kingwood Township. The effort to preserve land along the Lockatong follows the



recommendations of a watershed-based management plan developed by HLTA in partnership with the environmental commissions from Raritan, Kingwood, Franklin, and Delaware Townships, the Hunterdon County Planning Board, and other non-profit organizations. ●

Annual HLTA Fall Dinner

Last year's event at The Mill was such a success that we've decided to repeat the venue. The fare will be heavy hors d'oeuvres and the libation a sampling of wonderful wines served as tastings. Live music and a raffle of local art will round out the evening.

Mark your calendars for November 16th and watch the mail for your invitation!

President's Message

This has been a busy and exciting time for HLTA. We've closed on two more properties. The first is an 85-acre parcel in Bethlehem Twp. that has been transferred to the county for inclusion in Jugtown Mountain County Park. The second, comprising 34 acres which will remain an HLTA holding, is in Delaware Township within our Locketong project area. This parcel is yet another link in the chain of properties connecting Bull's Island to the Wescott Preserve County Park. Both of these properties have public access and we invite your exploration.

As of this writing the Land Trust is well into the search for its first Executive Director. Earlier this year Rob Eberhardt, our part time Land Acquisition Specialist, gave notice that he would be leaving to attend New York University School of Law. Rob came to us through a unique assistance program with our friends at the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. Rob's contribution to HLTA's vision of open space in Hunterdon has been pivotal. Through his dedicated efforts we were able to accomplish so much more than would otherwise have been possible. Heartfelt thanks to NJCF and especially to Rob Eberhardt! With our new full time Director, we anticipate yet more land saved and stepped up efforts to raise the funds to accomplish the task.

With Fall fast approaching I look forward to seeing many of you at the annual fundraiser which will again be held at the Mill. Until then, it's still a busy, beautiful summer which I hope we can all enjoy to its fullest.

In friendship,

DEBORAH WOODARD

The Trepani Woods

"Teacher, TEACHER, TEACHER, TEACHER!" No – there's no school nearby; but you might hear this when you are out for a walk in these woods. It is the call of the ovenbird, a neotropical songbird, up for a summer visit. The ovenbird often walks alone through the leaf litter along the forest floor. You might see one wagging its tail and bobbing its head, or hear him (the females rarely sing) from high in the limbs above.

HLTA is pleased to add this significant 85-acre woodland to the adjacent Musconetcong Gorge County Park. It is part of the ridgeline of the Musconetcong Mountain and is in both the Musconetcong River and Mullhockaway Creek watersheds. A regional hiking trail called the Highlands Trail is planned to run through the property on its route through the greenway from the Spruce Run Wildlife Management Area west to the Musconetcong Gorge County Park.

The two parcels that make up this tract run along the relatively flat top of the Musconetcong Mountain ridge. It is interesting to note that this mountain was bare 100 years ago, the trees all cut for charcoal production and low-grade cattle grazing. So, while this mix of large deciduous trees is not "old growth", it has earned its ecological significance through the habitat that it now provides and of course its ability to recharge groundwater and mitigate erosion from runoff. It serves as habitat for pileated woodpeckers and ovenbirds, which require deep woodlands to breed and thrive. In combination with adjacent protected properties and the Tower Hill Park next door, this land creates an area large enough to be self-sustaining for wildlife, a node of necessary critical mass. This transaction ensures the continuation of a large tract of unbroken woodlands forever.

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HLTA Trustees bid farewell to Rob Eberhardt

This was an unusual acquisition. HLTA coordinated the project and steered it from the beginning to (almost) the end. Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance took the lead role in negotiating the sale – a “bargain sale”, where a seller voluntarily sells property for less than fair market value, thus qualifying for a tax deduction. HLTA completed all the necessary reports and surveys, and with pro bono legal assistance from Lee B. Roth Law Offices, completed a subdivision that divided an existing house from the rest of the property. The sellers have retained the subdivided house as a rental unit.

The original plan had been to close in February 2003 and to immediately transfer ownership of the property to Hunterdon County but delays in a State bond sale jeopardized HLTA's funding for the project. With the deadline past and the state funding matter still unresolved, Hunterdon County identified a source of previously allocated Green Acres money that they could access immediately. In the eleventh hour, the structure of the purchase was changed. HLTA stepped back. Hunterdon County stepped up, and completed the transaction.

HLTA President Deborah Woodard commented, “The owners showed a great deal of patience as we scrambled to find funding. Ultimately, Hunterdon County came through with Green Acres money that could be accessed immediately. We restructured the project and moved to closing. ●

“Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the people of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it.” – Chief Seattle

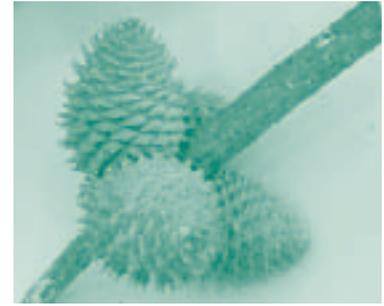
The New Jersey Table Mountain Pine

In May the State Green Acres Program, with the help of the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance, purchased 29 acres of woodlands and fields on Route 523 to establish a new state-owned nature preserve in Delaware Township just north of Sergeantsville. The property was purchased to protect Table Mountain Pine, a rare tree species that grows in that specific area of Delaware Township. Jersey Animal Coalition, an animal rescue group based in Essex County, sold the property to Green Acres.

There is a story behind each of HLTA's projects, but this property's path to becoming a nature preserve is particularly colorful and illustrates one way in which HLTA achieves its mission of land conservation by working closely with State agencies.

The property initially was donated to the Jersey Animal Coalition to help the organization raise funds to build a new animal shelter serving the towns of Maplewood and South Orange. Rather than sell the property to a developer, the trustees of the non-profit organization hoped to find a way to keep the property open while generating revenue for their construction project. After the Delaware Township Board of Adjustment rejected their plan for a commercial pet cemetery, they resolved to try to sell the property for conservation purposes.

At first glance the property did not appear a strong candidate for conservation: it was far from any existing open space and not included in any greenway plan. The Jersey Animal Coalition's financial needs and inability to take advantage of tax



deductions also made the project potentially expensive. However, through our local contacts and familiarity with land conservation options, we knew that there was a “hook” that might make the State interested in the property. That hook was the Table Mountain Pine.

Table Mountain Pine (*Pinus pungens*) is a tree species that typically grows on dry, rocky ridges of the southern Appalachian Mountains from Georgia to central Pennsylvania. It also occurs in scattered locations east of the Appalachians, including on the coastal plain of Delaware (the state) and in Bucks County, PA. The species was first reported to occur in the vicinity of Sergeantsville in 1886 growing on several acres of abandoned agricultural land. The species is not known to occur anywhere else in New Jersey, making the Sergeantsville trees a State priority for protection and management.

After we confirmed in the field that the rare trees grew on the property, we informed our friends and colleagues at NJDEP (both at Green Acres and the Office of Natural Lands Management), who ultimately decided that the property merited State protection. We then guided representatives of the Jersey Animal Coalition through the process of selling the property to State. The result: a piece of the Hunterdon's natural history has been protected from development, and the Jersey Animal Coalition can break ground on their long-awaited animal shelter. ●

Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

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Your Land – a Stewardship Clinic

Do you have woodlands, wetlands, streams or fields on your property? To many Hunterdon County residents responsible management of natural areas for wildlife habitat and sustainable environmental health is a mystery.

Join us for a clinic to recognize problems in our natural areas and learn techniques to rectify those problems at the Land Trust's property known as the Dvoor Farm.

Leslie Sauer, noted landscape architect and author of "The Once and Future Forest" will guide us around the property, located on the Route 12 Circle in Flemington, showing problems and describing restoration techniques on this multi-faceted property.

We also welcome those interested in how the Land Trust plans to manage the Dvoor Farm in an environmentally sensitive manner. The clinic will take place on September 27 from 10:00-noon. Dress for an outdoor hike.



Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

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Presentation Available

If you know of a civic or community group that would like to schedule a presentation about land preservation and HLTA's role, please call the office at 908-996-4421.

Web Site

There's a "protected lands" feature on the HLTA website. Check it out at www.hlta.org.

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