



Hunterdon Land Trust

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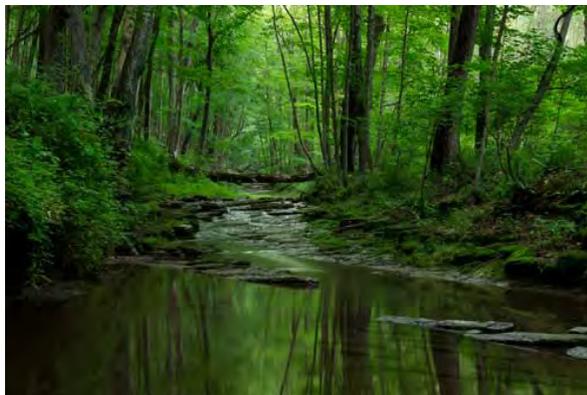
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313-acre Horseshoe Bend Park Dedicated in Kingwood Township

KINGWOOD TWP. - A 313-acre park for hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers, bird watchers and other outdoor lovers was dedicated today, Wednesday, July 6, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony off Horseshoe Bend Road.

Representatives of Kingwood Township, the state Green Acres program, Hunterdon Land Trust, New Jersey Conservation Foundation and U.S. Department of Agriculture gathered at the new Horseshoe Bend Park to celebrate an open space and farmland preservation that was a decade in the making.

“This property is a local jewel, and we’re so thankful that we and our partners were able to work together to successfully preserve it,” said **Mayor Phillip Lubitz**. “If it had not been preserved, it could have become a 72-home development.”



The property is one of the most beautiful in western Hunterdon County, with rolling hills, lush forested ravines, and sweeping vistas of the Delaware River Valley. Its high meadows are home to meadowlarks, bobolinks and redwing blackbirds, and bald eagles and hawks are believed to nest there. The Copper Creek and other small streams run through the property on their way to the Delaware River.

The first phase of the preservation took place in the summer of 2010, when 73 acres on the east side of Horseshoe Bend Road were preserved: 25 acres as open space and 48 acres as permanently protected farmland. That section could have been developed for 14 homes.

The second phase of the preservation, 240 acres on the east side of Horseshoe Bend Road, was completed in June.

That section, a former equestrian facility, includes more than seven miles of existing trails that will be shared by hikers, horseback riders, bicyclists, birders and others who come to enjoy nature and passive recreation. An 11,000-square-foot indoor equestrian center already stands on the property, along with barns and other structures.

"Preserving the State's natural spaces is critical to the quality of life for our residents. This land will provide countless benefits of open space preservation, including the protection of water quality, wildlife, and providing a place for people to recreate and enjoy the outdoors," said DEP Commissioner **Bob Martin**. "I commend the Green Acres Program, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary, and the many other organizations involved in this effort for their vision and cooperative efforts to protect this beautiful property."

New Jersey Conservation Foundation and Hunterdon Land Trust first became interested in preserving the property 10 years ago, but were unable to reach an agreement with the landowner at the time.

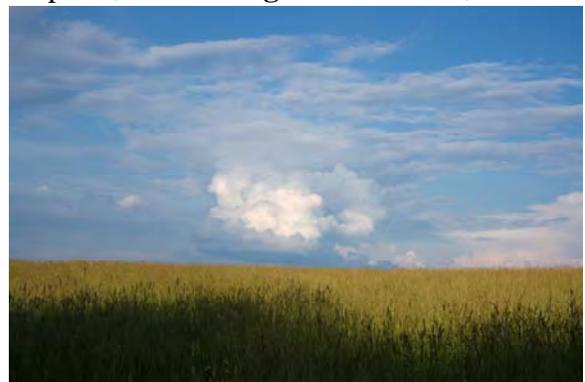
In 2006, the property was subdivided into 58 lots by Deer Run Equestrian Village LLC. But the subsequent recession and real estate downturn prompted the owner to opt for selling the land for preservation instead. A public-private partnership was forged to put together a funding package for the preservation.

The 313 acres were acquired for a total of \$7.5 million. The first phase cost \$1.7 million, with funding provided by New Jersey Conservation Foundation's grants from the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and State Agriculture Development Committee; and a Hunterdon Land Trust grant from the state Green Acres program.

The second phase cost \$5.8 million, with \$4.06 million coming from the state Green Acres program, \$1.1 million from Kingwood Township open space funds, \$440,000 from a Hunterdon County open space grant to New Jersey Conservation Foundation, and \$150,000 from a state Natural Resource Restoration grant.

"I've seen some beautiful, amazing properties in Hunterdon County and this one is a true gem. Losing this place to development was simply not an option," said **Margaret Waldock**, executive director of the Hunterdon Land Trust. "Future generations will praise this community for having the vision and commitment to protect this special place."

Kingwood Township Committeeman **Jim Burke** noted that the Horseshoe Bend property is adjacent to 200 acres of preserved open space to the south, and more than 300 acres of preserved farmland and open space to the north. "With the



addition of Horseshoe Bend, there are now over 800 acres of contiguous preserved land, with the potential to preserve more in the future,” said Burke.

“It took a multi-partner, long-term effort to save this spectacular property,” said **Michele S. Byers**, executive director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation. “Properties of this size are hard to come by in Hunterdon County, where the average farm is about 75 acres. People care about preserving places like this because once they’re gone, they’re gone and we can’t get them back.”

The farmland on the east side of Horseshoe Bend Road is now permanently protected with a farmland easement funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and the State Agriculture Development Committee.

“The State Agriculture Development Committee was pleased to partner in this project to strengthen the significant investment in farmland preservation in Hunterdon County -- an investment that has made Hunterdon County the statewide leader in the number of preserved farms under the state Farmland Preservation Program, with 345 farms permanently protected to date,” said Agriculture Secretary **Douglas H. Fisher**.

Donald J. Pettit, state conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, lauded the agency’s part in the overall project, saying “protection of prime and statewide important soils is vitally important to maintain local food supplies. As one small piece of protected farmland and open space in Kingwood Township, this property will help continue the agricultural tradition of the area and sustain NJ farm families for generations to come. NRCS is proud to assist our conservation partners in the protection of this important farm.”

The park is now open for the public to enjoy. Kingwood Township will manage the property, and is in the process of putting together a committee that will develop a management plan with input from the community.