



Hunterdon Land Trust

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MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release:
Nov. 13, 2013

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Hunterdon Land Trust Helps Preserve 113 Acres for Agricultural Use

KINGWOOD – Roughly 113 acres of farmland off Hampton Road have been preserved for future generations thanks to a partnership between the Hunterdon Land Trust, Kingwood Township, Hunterdon County, the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program and the State Agricultural Development Committee.

While the Makatura family will continue to own the farmland, its future use will be restricted to agriculture.

Preserving Maplewood Farm proved the best of both worlds for Sandra Search and her sisters, Diana and Dale Makatura: A father's wish to take care of his daughters has been honored, and the land will continue to be farmed for generations to come.

"This was the best way to make sure that happened," Search said.

Efforts to preserve the farmland began more than two years ago when Kingwood Township contacted the Land Trust about partnering. The property is situated in the Lockatong Creek watershed, which is one of the largest priority areas targeted by the Hunterdon Land Trust.

"I was very pleased that the family wanted to preserve the land," said Katherine Buttolph, land acquisition and stewardship director at the Land Trust. "It is a property with large open fields in an area of other preserved farms."

Protecting the Lockatong helps protect the quality of the area's drinking water. The region is known for its forested and agricultural properties.

"In addition to protecting water quality in a Category 1 stream, this project offered a great opportunity to preserve a large farm with prime soils that will support our agricultural heritage for generations to come," said Patricia Ruby, executive director of the Land Trust.

The Makatura family purchased the land in 1940, and the farm was passed down to two generations of Makaturas. The three sisters have many memories of growing up on the family farm and walking its fields. They also recalled all the hard work involved in keeping a farm running.

“We walked those fields many times because my father (Frank Makatura) had the first round hay bales in the area,” Search said. “The bales weren’t the big ones, they were the little ones. I remember when the piece on the baler broke that lined the bales up straight so he could go with the elevator and collect them. After it broke, we kids would have to go out into the fields and line those bales up. We were his ‘farm hands’.”

The Makaturas also worked as dairy farmers until around 1974. After which the farm was rented to sod farmer for a number of years. “The fields always looked so nice and lush with the sod on them” recalls Search. Now rented to a local farmer that rotates between soybeans and corn, the fields still look very nice and are showing how great and fertile they are.”

“When we see these young kids who say they’re going into farming, we think ‘Oh boy, you have no idea,’ ” Search chuckled.

The Land Trust provided half the funding for the preservation through the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A farmland easement on the property will be monitored by the county.

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