



Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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Preservation Effort Adds 24 Acres to Readington's Deer Path Park

READINGTON – Visitors to the Round Mountain section of Deer Path Park will have more acreage to hike, bird and enjoy other outdoor activities on after the recent preservation purchase of two additional woodlots.

The two lots, previously owned by Robert Yard and the other by his nephew Geoffrey Palmer, will add roughly 24 acres to the park located off West Woodschurch Road near Route 31.

Both properties are mostly surrounded by park land, and are predominantly wooded. The 12.90-acre Palmer property's shape resembles a bowling alley and cuts across the northern section of the park. Yard's 11.45-acre tract is south and west of the Palmer lot.

The Hunterdon Land Trust became involved with the preservation effort after being contacted by Readington Mayor Julia Allen about the availability of the two tracts. Hunterdon County also stepped in to help.

Allen said old logging trails crossed the park land onto the privately owned lots, causing hikers to either trespass or get off the trail.

"It's natural for hikers to want to walk where the trail is but they couldn't," Allen said. "They'd have to walk onto these rocky fields – it didn't make sense. Now, the trail system can be completed in a way that's much friendlier to hikers."

“Now you can come to the park and cross over Round Mountain without going on private property,” added Kate Buttolph, former Land Acquisition Director of the Hunterdon Land Trust, who helped shepherd the preservation.

Preservation of these properties will also assist efforts to protect a critical wildlife habitat by keeping this wooded area on Round Mountain intact. “The two lots were developable and had existing rights-of-way, so someone who was really determined could have put a house up there if they had wanted to,” Buttolph said.

The forest canopy contains various deciduous trees, including oak, maple, ash and beech, while evergreens can be found in isolated groves at the edges of fields. Round Mountain serves as a resting spot for migratory birds and is home to some year-round residents, among them Scarlet Tanagers, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Pileated Woodpeckers and Common Yellowthroats.

Hunterdon County, who will take title to the two properties, acquired the land that became Deer Path Park in 1977. Two years later, the Round Mountain section was established when the county purchased 55 acres from Frank and Krystel Keogh. Now the Round Mountain section comprises 229 acres and includes several trail loops, including the popular Peter Buell Trail. This purchase will enable the county’s trail system to grow.

“The goal of the county is to complete its park system” said Sue Dzimara, director of the Hunterdon County Planning Department. “This is an important step in that process.”

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Photo information: (From left) Sue Dzimara, director of the Hunterdon County Planning Department, Kate Buttolph, former Hunterdon Land Trust land acquisitions director, and Julia Allen, Readington township mayor, meet to discuss the Yard and Palmer acquisition which adds 24 acres to Deer Path Park.