

Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve: “New Jersey’s Central Park”

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Princeton, New Jersey: D&R Greenway Land Trust announces the renaming of its first preserve to The Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve, formerly McBurney Woods. The result of 20 years of intricate acquisitions, The Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve was accomplished through the vital partnership of D&R Greenway and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Green Acres program.

D&R Greenway has produced a new brochure describing the Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve, including maps of the hiking trail system. The brochure is available from the D&R Greenway website, www.drgreenway.org.

The Preserve now encompasses 700 acres of contiguous forest in Hunterdon, Mercer and Somerset Counties. Together with connected land protected by D&R Greenway with public and other nonprofit entities, over 5000 acres of forest are now preserved. This land is crucial to currently migrating songbirds, some of whom will remain to nest there. What has not altered in 20,000 years is the rich, deep Sourlands forest that provides unparalleled habitat, largely vanished from valleys below.

“The Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve is New Jersey’s Central Park,” observes Linda Mead, D&R Greenway’s President and CEO. “This landscape could have looked like everywhere else. Sprawling development would have destroyed a precious natural resource. Instead, we’ve permanently preserved a huge, old-growth forest that supports critical wildlife habitat, protects water quality and provides more than 8 miles of trails for the public to enjoy a unique natural area.”

Rich Boornazian, Green Acres Administrator for NJDEP, comments, “The Sourland Mountain ecosystem is home to a wide diversity of plant and wildlife species. We are happy to partner with D&R Greenway which has long recognized the Sourlands as an area worthy of preservation.”

D&R Greenway Land Trust, Johnson Education Center, One Preservation Place, off Rosedale Road, Princeton 08540. Directions link: <http://www.drgreenway.org>. 609 924-4646 or info@drgreenway.org.

BACKGROUND:

New Jersey’s Sourland Mountains are a unique habitat of global significance. Extending 20 miles northeastward from Lambertville, the Sourlands cover 90 square miles and include 20,000 forested acres. Made of hard volcanic rock, the mountains were much more difficult to settle than the surrounding valleys. Their lush forests remained largely intact while the valleys were cleared. The forests became critical habitat for wildlife whose former range largely vanished, including neotropical migratory songbirds.

There are more than 8 miles of public trails throughout the Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve. The natural footpaths, open year-round, traverse the Preserve in loops through a boulder-strewn upland forest. Parking is available in 4 locations.

In 1992 D&R Greenway acquired the McBurney Woods on Mountain Road in East Amwell, in the first project funded by the Green Acres nonprofit matching-grant program. This property is the core of the Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve. Over the next 20 years D&R Greenway continued to acquire property in the Sourlands, expanding the protected area. Green Acres created a Sourlands initiative to focus on the region, providing financial assistance to many cooperative projects in which D&R Greenway was instrumental in facilitating preservation, linking properties together.

Within the larger Sourlands region, D&R Greenway's vision is to create a 20-mile-long Sourlands Greenway consisting of a mosaic of public and private conserved lands linked by trails and bordered by preserved farms and grasslands in the valleys.

D&R Greenway's Sourlands Ecosystem Preserve is a milestone in a multi-party partnership to preserve an unbroken forest corridor, from the Delaware River to the Somerville area. Additional partners include East and West Amwell, Hopewell and Montgomery townships and Hunterdon, Mercer and Somerset counties.

D&R GREENWAY LAND TRUST: Founded in 1989, D&R Greenway Land Trust is one of New Jersey's leading land preservation organizations. The non-profit has saved and is providing stewardship for over 22 square miles in beleaguered New Jersey.

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