

PRESS RELEASE

D&R Greenway, New Jersey Water Supply Authority and partners preserve 88 acres on Plum Brook in Delaware Township, Hunterdon County

On August 3rd, D&R Greenway Land Trust completed their latest open space acquisition, the 88-acre Central Jersey Beagle Club property located in Delaware Township, Hunterdon County. A most unique property located on the Plum Brook, the land was preserved in partnership with the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, Hunterdon County, Delaware Township and NJDEP's Green Acres program. This marks the first time that the New Jersey Water Supply Authority has joined with D&R Greenway to acquire land. "We are delighted that the Authority joined with us and our other partners to accomplish the preservation of this site," commented Linda Mead, President & Chief Executive of D&R Greenway. "Land preservation and water quality protection are inextricably linked."

Preservation of this property, valued at \$585,576.00 expands D&R Greenway's Plum Brook Preserve to almost 260 acres. Nearly a half-mile corridor is now protected along the Plum Brook, which the state ranks in its highest-quality stream category.

D&R Greenway will manage the site. Mature deciduous woodlands and wetlands cover about half the property, supplying habitat for rare plants and wildlife and protecting the water quality of the Plum Brook. D&R Greenway, together with the Authority and Delaware Township, acquired this portion of the Central Jersey Beagle Club's land as a permanent nature preserve. The remaining half of the land was permanently protected through acquisition of a conservation easement.

The conservation easement land has been continuously maintained by the club for field trials over the past 50 years. Wide trails wind around hedgerows of native shrubs, grasses and wildflowers, supplying habitat for shrubland birds and diverse pollinating insects. By mowing the hedgerows every few years, the club has created rich "scrub-shrub" habitat with rare native plants, including a local genetic strain of big bluestem grass, as well as notably extensive stands of gray and silky dogwood. The club will continue to use this land for training, which is consistent with conservation goals, and will retain 5 acres for its buildings.

"It was our ultimate desire to see the property preserved, rather than developed. We've been approached many times in the past by developers," noted George Wallace, the club's Treasurer and a long-time member. "This preservation transaction allows the Club to survive and continue our field trials and activities."

The combination of riparian woodlands and managed scrubland made preservation attractive to multiple partners. D&R Greenway facilitated the formation of a public-private partnership. Because the Plum Brook flows into the D&R Canal, the Authority saw preservation as an opportunity to protect the quality of a drinking water source. Hunterdon County and Green Acres contributed open space funds to the transaction.

“The Authority is pleased to help preserve this parcel using funds provided by its water customers and financing through the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program. Protection of this property will contribute to the health of the D&R Canal, a drinking water source for more than 1 million central New Jersey residents”, stated Henry Patterson, the Authority’s Executive Director.

The Plum Brook Preserve is the northernmost of D&R Greenway’s flagship preserves. Linda Mead notes, “Our flagship preserves are those places where we especially seek to enhance conservation and public access. This newly acquired land has extremely rich habitat, and is in an area that abounds with preservation potential. It complements nearby agricultural and natural lands preserved by our partners. Our long-range goal is to create a Plum Brook Greenway as a mosaic of connected preserved public and private lands in the Lockatong and Wickecheoke Creek watersheds.” Publicly accessible trails in the Plum Brook Preserve are under construction by D&R Greenway.

Local community officials are thrilled to announce this new acquisition to their constituents. For Delaware Township, the acquisition “could not have been a better one,” according to Jim Borders, Open Space Coordinator. “It’s a most unique property. We’re protecting a traditional sporting activity, which contributes to the Township’s rural way of life, as well as important natural habitat. Through the prescient and generous donation by John Weingart and Deborah Spitalnick of development rights on a separate Township property, additional Green Acres funds could be tapped for the acquisition, so no Township funds were used. The taxable portion of the property will continue to generate ratables for the Township. It’s a win-win for everyone involved.”

BACKGROUND

D&R GREENWAY LAND TRUST: D&R Greenway Land Trust’s mission is to preserve and protect natural lands, farm lands, and open spaces throughout central and southern New Jersey. We celebrate the preservation of 23 square miles of open space – an area about the size of Manhattan Island. Through the contiguous preservation and stewardship of land, we nurture a healthier and more diverse environment. By creating and maintaining trails on our preserves, we provide the public with access to the natural world. Our home, the ***Johnson Education Center***, is a focal point for conservation activity in New Jersey and a place where, through programs, lectures and exhibits, we hope to inspire a greater public commitment to safeguarding our most precious natural resource – our land. Linda Mead, who has served as D&R Greenway’s Executive Director since 1997, is recognized as a leader in creating the partnerships and orchestrating the complex transactions that lead to preservation success.

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