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The Missing Piece Preserved – 121 Acres in Hopewell Township Permanently Protected

Hopewell Township NJ – July 8, 2010: Preserving land can be compared to assembling the pieces of a puzzle. This is especially true of landscape-scale preservation projects that encompass broad ecosystems.

In any region, individual properties are preserved separately, over the course of many years. In order to complete the picture and form contiguous greenways the “missing pieces” need to be identified, preserved and fit together.



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On May 25, 2010 a significant piece of the puzzle was fit into place as 132 acres of open fields, woods and stream corridor in Hopewell Township were permanently protected from future development. This property links two significant preserves – Washington Crossing State Park and Baldpate Mountain – along the D&R Canal. **The preservation of this property resulted in an eight square mile greenway of protected land spanning Mercer and Hunterdon counties.**

Partnership Makes Preservation Possible

The State Green Acres Program, Mercer County, Hopewell Township, D&R Greenway and Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space provided \$2.76 million in funding package to acquire this property. Under the preservation

agreement 107.8 acres were acquired in fee. The landowners retained 22.9 acres. They placed a conservation easement on 13.4 acres surrounding a 10.5 acre residential envelope, containing a ca.1819 homestead once owned by the Titus family, the founders of Titusville.

D&R Greenway facilitated the project for the funding partners: negotiating with the landowners, structuring the preservation agreement and supervising the technical aspects of the project, obtaining appraisals and surveys.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin commented, "The acquisition of the Hollystone property is a great addition to the Sourland Mountain preservation area and we are pleased to join the many partners who contributed to this effort. Protecting this environmentally sensitive property will enhance recreational opportunities as well as protect wildlife habitat and water resources."

"It also provides a great connection between natural areas, allowing easy access between the Baldpate Mountain trail network and Washington Crossing State Park, which will open up both areas to more people. It's a great project."

Brian Hughes, Mercer County Executive, shares the enthusiasm for the preservation of this land: “Mercer County is pleased to partner once again with D&R Greenway, Hopewell Township, the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space and the New Jersey Green Acres Program in the preservation of 132 acres of land along the Fiddlers Creek stream corridor abutting Baldpate Mountain. This land provides important connections by protecting migratory bird flyway and breeding grounds for grassland birds, and by buffering habitat for exceptionally important wildlife. The addition of this parcel to public ownership will allow residents to make new connections as well, to enjoy the passive recreational opportunities available on the D&R Canal, the Delaware River and at Washington Crossing State Park.”

Significant Natural Resources

The preservation of this property is a conservation bonanza. Its woodlands are part of a 9,500-acre contiguous forest supporting rare and endangered species of plants and wildlife. The long-range plan is to manage the property’s former crop fields with native grasses and wildflowers that will provide habitat for birds and pollinators.

The property directly borders Fiddlers Creek, a tributary of the Delaware River. Its proximity to the Delaware River itself helps protect this important water resource, preventing and absorbing run-off and providing a buffer for flood waters.

According to Patricia P. Sziber, Executive Director, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, “We knew this property – a natural and historic gem – had to be preserved and that its preservation could only happen through a partnership. Thankfully, that partnership did come together. We thank the staff at D&R Greenway for facilitating its preservation.”

Trail Connections

The newly-preserved land is situated across from the Fiddlers Creek Road entrance to Baldpate Mountain, where Mercer County has established a parking area and information kiosk. New Jersey Trails Association (NJTA) spearheaded the construction of a substantial hiking trail leading from the parking area to the top of Mercer County’s Baldpate Mountain. Trail volunteers spent countless hours moving boulders to create steps up the mountainside with interesting twists and turns. On a clear day, the Philadelphia skyline can be viewed from the top. NJTA will be working on creating trails on the new land that connect to those that currently exist on the county land.

“As a result of this preservation, people will soon be able to walk from Washington Crossing State Park to Baldpate Mountain,” Linda Mead, D&R Greenway’s Executive Director, commented. “As trails continue to be built though this land and other preserves in the area, this entire region will be accessible. That’s our goal – to preserve lands, and provide the public with access to be able to enjoy them.”

Funding Breakdown

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|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Green Acres State Acquisition Program | \$ 639,523 |
| Green Acres Local Assistance to: | |
| Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space | \$ 347,800 |
| D&R Greenway | \$ 75,000 |
| Hopewell Township | \$ 250,000 |
| (Green Acres Total \$1,312,323) | |
| Mercer County Grants to: | |
| Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space | \$ 150,000 |
| D&R Greenway | \$ 150,000 |
| Mercer County Direct | \$ 700,000 |
| (Mercer County Total \$1,000,000) | |
| Hopewell Township | \$447,799 |