

Hedgerows

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HIGHLANDS REGION

Schooley's Mountain Project Area

Washington Township, Morris County

by Tim Morris

Overview

Washington Township Land Trust's Schooley's Mountain Project Area seeks to protect natural resources such as contiguous forested habitat and water quality, provide trail linkages and other recreational opportunities, and protect the scenic viewshed of historic Long Valley and its large block of protected farmland, the most extensive in Morris County.

Protection of Highlands Treasures

Protection of land in this project area is critical to maintaining the integrity of some of the Highlands most valued natural features, including two that the Highlands Coalition identifies as Critical Highlands Treasures: Musconetcong Mountain and the South Branch of the Raritan River Watershed. In fact, this project area stretches from the shore of the South Branch's most valuable Trout Production waters to the top of Schooley's Mountain, the Morris County extension of the Musconetcong Mountain.

Trail Connections

The project area includes invaluable linkages for recreation in this section of Morris County. Its preservation will help to connect the Columbia Trail and Patriots Path on the west side of County Road 513. This linkage creates the opportunity for a 4-mile loop hike from the center of Long Valley, along the South Branch, and then up the mountain. The loop would take hikers through some of the most scenic areas of Schooley's Mountain County Park and offer expansive views of the valley's preserved farmland.



photo courtesy of Kim Kaiser

Environmental Protection

Various forest interior species, like migrant songbirds, are declining due to the disappearance of large tracts of contiguous forest that provide their breeding habitat. The project area contains contiguous hardwood forest. Its preservation will protect vital forest habitat, and also protect the waters of the South Branch.

Historic Landscape

Farms in Long Valley were originally laid out like a slice of watermelon, from ridge to ridge so that each farmer had farmland, water, woodlot, and quarry. Preservation of the southern slope of Schooley's Mountain will complement the preserved farmland below by protecting the woodlot and quarry portion of these historic farms. The remains of logging trails and quarries can still be found on some properties. The ridgeline and slope must be saved in order to protect the viewshed and historic landscape of Long Valley.

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Mission Statement

The Washington Township Land Trust was organized to protect and preserve the ecological, cultural, and historical integrity of the areas that contribute to and enhance the rural character of Washington Township and its environs. The Trust also promotes public interest in conserving land for open space uses in harmony with the natural environment and acquires interests in land by purchase or donation. It also manages land and property easements for the benefit of the public and educates the public to be stewards of the land.

2003 OFFICERS

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12 East Mill Rd, Long Valley, NJ
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WTLT coming events for 2003

- May 17 Long Valley Association Garage Sale (look for our table)
- August 2 3rd Annual Talent Show to be held at the same location as last year, the Middle Valley Community Center
- October Long Valley Fall Festival (look for our table)
- December 12 . . . 2003 Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner

Welcome New Members

- John B. Daniels
- James Cammarata
- Stephen P. Braunstein
- Nancy Braithwaite
- Thomas J. Ogden
- Edwin P. Murray
- Peter Nitzsche
- Fitzpatrick/Romanick Family

Voters Approve Conservation Measures Nationwide

Voters in 93 communities in 22 states approved on Nov. 5 ballot measures that committed \$2.9 billion to acquire and restore land for parks and open space. The successful measures were among 109 conservation measures considered on state and local ballots across the United States. On Nov. 5 alone, voters approved 85 percent of the referenda on which they voted. (source: www.ita.org)

Company Matching Funds Helps The Land Trust

Some companies like recent Land Trust donators Chubb Insurance and National Starch & Chemical, offer their employees a matching fund program. Both of these companies matched money donated by their employees. If you are thinking of donating to the Land Trust, check with your company to see if a similar program exists.

America Is Losing Its Best Farm Land

American Farmland Trust (AFT) has found that the nation is losing two acres of prime farmland every two minutes. According to AFT's "Farming on the Edge: Sprawling Development Threatens America's Best Farmland," more than 6 million acres of farmland were paved over between 1992 and 1997. (source: www.ita.org)

Become a member of the Land Trust

1 Please select a class of annual membership:

- Student \$5 Individual \$25 Family \$35 Business \$100
- I wish to donate \$_____ for land preservation

2 NAME _____
 STREET _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 PHONE _____
 EMAIL _____

- Please use this donation for Mill restoration work \$_____

Volunteers and Professional Services Needed. Contact any WTLT officer for details.

3 Mail to:

Washington Township Land Trust
PO Box 4
Long Valley, NJ 07853-0004

Land Preservation and Watershed Protection

Consider land donation to preserve New Jersey's open space for future generations. Contact Tim Morris (908) 874-8674 to discuss land preservation options.



2002 Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner

by Caryl Brackenridge

The twelfth Annual Meeting of the WTLT was held on December 13, 2002, at the Middle Valley Community Center. After a delicious potluck dinner, we held a short business meeting and re-elected Stan Andrews, Keith Hayes, Greg Jones, Paul Krylowski and Chris Steffan to the Board of Trustees. The officers elected for 2003 were President Keith Hayes, Vice-President Karen Richards, Secretary Caryl Brackenridge and Treasurer Chris Steffan.

The 2003 Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner will be Friday, December 12. Why not mark it on your calendar now, and join us in December for a fun evening.



Presidents Report

by Keith Hayes, WTLT President

Real Estate:

Ridgeline Property: We are continuing work on the purchase of development rights to approximately 87 acres of property on Schooley's Mountain. Kim Kaiser and Tim Morris have been working on making this a reality.

Claremont Escrow Agreement: I signed the agreement to hold in the deeds in escrow for the Claremont deal. Now that the 75 acres is slated to be preserved, let's work on the remaining acres.

Mill:

Window Adoption: So far 23 windows have been adopted.

Girl Scout Project: Sheri Ann Secaras built a display area for mill artifacts on the third floor of the West Wing of the Mill. This was her Gold Award Project.

Heritage Conservation Network: In July we hosted a workshop sponsored by the Heritage Conservation Network based in Colorado. Keith Hayes taught historical mortar techniques and Walter Hollein taught woodworking. Chris Steffan and Caryl Brackenridge staffed the mill for the entire week and assisted in teaching the attendees.

Restoration:

North Wall: Structural work has been completed and sheathing is in progress.

Roof: Structural supports and sheathing are complete. Flashing is in place and preliminary roofing is in progress.

West Wing: Siding restoration is complete and the majority of the windows are restored.

Activities:

Talent Show: In August (on the hottest night ever) we hosted the 2nd annual Talent Show. It was a very entertaining evening with a wide variety of talent.

Long Valley Fall Festival: The WTLT discovered that Cookie Mixes/Soup Mixes are a hot selling fundraising item

Conservation Easements: As of this date, we have sold 553 easement markers.

This project has been expertly managed by Madeline Schmitt.

Park:

Tree Planting: In April we planted 25 Black Gum and 25 Swamp White Oak trees in the park. Both are native species. Jon Wagar and Tim Morris arranged for the acquisition of the trees.

Trail Maintenance Work Days: There were two work days this year. Thanks to some impressive equipment and volunteer labor, they were extremely productive.

ADA:

Americans with Disabilities Act: In November we passed a resolution announcing that the WTLT is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

top: Shirley Gillette and Stan Andrews

bottom: Bill Leavens, Margaret Nordstrom, Jon Wagar, Jen Wagar, Keith Hayes & Kim Kaiser

photos courtesy of Caryl Brackenridge

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Threat of Development

The ridgeline of Schooley's Mountain is now being threatened by development. A ride through Morris County confirms the desirability of new ridgeline homes. It is unfortunate that one of Schooley's Mountain's nicest assets, its views of the valley's protected farmland, makes it a particularly desirable target for irresponsible development.

This project is enabled by the assistance of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, which receives funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to build the capacity of land trusts to protect land within the Highlands Region of New Jersey.

FINAL HIGHLANDS REPORT IS ISSUED

Excerpt From the Observer Tribune,
February 27, 2003 edition

by Phil Garber, Managing Editor

Groups fighting to save the 1.5 million acre Highlands region from development said the time for study is over and now that the state has stepped up its efforts, it's time for the federal government to do the same.

The final report on the need to save the Highlands was issued last Thursday by the U.S. Forest Service.

The report highlights the values of the Highlands region, which stretches through northern New Jersey through western Morris County, northern Somerset County and western Hunterdon County into New York, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

"Highlands is the wall against sprawl," said Jeff Tittel, director of the New Jersey chapter of the Sierra Club. "We have to move fast. If we have to do another study, by the time it's done, there won't be any more Highlands."

As it noted in the preliminary report issued last year, the Highlands must be preserved in order to protect water sources which serve more than 15 million people or one-third of New Jersey's needs. The area is also seen as a vital ecosystem, supporting habitat for threatened and endangered species and important for public recreation.

The report again says that 5,000 acres in the Highlands are being lost each year to development and 100,000 acres are in immediate danger of development, threatening to cut the water supply to dangerously low levels.

Using current and projected population growth, the report says, the Highlands population could increase to 1.7 million to 2 million people in the next several decades, from 2000 census figures.

The final report also notes that less than half of the region's 540,000 important conservation lands are protected and 64 percent of the region's critical watershed lands are unprotected.

No News

"There's not a whole lot new about the final report," said Thomas Gilbert, executive director of the Highlands Commission, a consortium of more than 100 groups

working to save the Highlands. "The primary value is that it serves as a reminder of what is at stake in the Highlands and in the region." Tittel also said the report raises public awareness. "But it's implementation that counts," Tittel said.

Gilbert, Tittel and other environmental groups were disappointed that the report did not recommend how to fund programs to buy and protect the Highlands. "We expected stronger and more detailed recommendations on how to protect the land," Gilbert said.

Tittel said the report could be valuable if it helps to get the federal funding. "Otherwise, it just takes up more shelf space," Tittel said.

Martina Hoppe of the U.S. Forest Service said the report intentionally focused on the scientific aspects and left the political and policy decision to the secretaries of the U.S. departments of interior and agriculture. A recommendation on funding is expected within one to two months, Hoppe said. "The study's intention is to provide the science behind the policy," Hoppe said. "It wasn't meant to address the policy aspect."

Hoppe said the latest report is the final study for the Highlands region and that the next step will be to implement strategies to conserve the land.

Gilbert said he didn't object to the Forest Service's plan "if we see recommendations soon."

Millions Needed

Gilbert said Highlands advocates estimate about \$750 million is needed to protect the most important 180,000 acres in New Jersey and New York.

In his "State of the State" message, Gov. James McGreevey promised to work with the Legislature to dedicate an additional \$50 Million over the next three years to preserve 45,000 acres in the Highlands. He also recommended a limited time, capital gains tax waiver for those landowners who sell their Highlands property for dedicated open space.

Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-11, recently won approval to include \$3 million for Highlands preservation in the new, federal appropriations bill. Frelinghuysen also has sponsored pending legislation that would provide \$25 million annually for 10 years, split between the four states in the Highlands....



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