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Conservation Matters

Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

Vol. 4, No. 1

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Save The Date

Live Off Your Land: How Land Preservation and Financial Planning Can Combine to Benefit You, a workshop for landowners – Tuesday, July 11 – 7 to 9 p.m. at the Dvoor Farm in Raritan Township. For information contact the HLTA office at 908-996-4421.

Stonescaping Clinic to Benefit HLTA – Weekend of June 2-4

Have you always wanted to learn how to build a stone wall or stairway but aren't sure how to go about it? See page 5 for details of a special clinic on how to use dry stone to enhance your landscape.

HLTA Takes Title to the Dvoor Farm

On a gray and dreary December 29th as the century came to a close, about fifteen lawyers, principals, and witnesses hovered over the closing documents for a project that has been in the works long before the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance came into existence. The Dvoor Farm, on the Route 12 circle in Raritan, has finally been protected forever through the efforts of many dedicated volunteers, and HLTA now owns it. This was a partnership of individuals, non-profit organizations, foundations, and municipal, county, state and federal governments. The farm, which was purchased by South Branch Watershed Association (SBWA), includes over 46 acres of fields, wetlands, and forest, bisected by the Walnut Brook, also known as Mine Brook. SBWA, which does not normally hold land, immediately turned the landmark property over to HLTA, which will own and manage it.

HLTA's Treasurer, Dave Buchholz,

steered the project for the land trust, and Advisory Trustee Fred Allen, esq. represented HLTA's interests in a very complex transaction. There were six different owners with property interests, two adjustments to

property lines, ten different transfers of property or property interest, and over twenty documents recorded – not your average real estate closing.

But this is not your average property either. As Buchholz said: "This is truly a Hunterdon landmark." William Penn sold it to John Kase, a German immigrant, in 1738. When Kase came to build his log home here he befriended Chief Tuccamirgan of a Lenni Lenape encampment on the Mine Brook, and at his death in 1750 Tuccamirgan was buried in the Kase family cemetery. In 1925 Flemington erected a monument to the Chief, which is still intact at 56 Bonnell Street. The history of this farm includes a cheese industry, copper mining, pottery, and its most recent incarnation as a horse and cattle trading center. The property typifies the agricultural character that's an integral part of the history of Hunterdon County. The farm has a magnificent Dutch stone farmhouse built in 1790 and three barns that illustrate the history of barn building in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Herb Dvoor's family has been farming the land and selling livestock since the late 1800's. Its highly visible location on the Route 12 circle contributes to the rural feeling of the area that county residents so desperately want to preserve.

The Dvoor Farm is a critical link in a greenway of parkland along the brook in Raritan Township. To

continued on page 2



Photo by William Wyman

Dvoor Farm cont.

the north, it abuts Mine Brook Park and continues through Bernadette Morales Nature Preserve and Uplands Park to the headwaters of the brook. The NJ Department of Environmental Protection classifies the Mine Brook as a high quality Trout Maintenance Waterway. The Brook is also habitat for the threatened wood turtle.

At the closing Karen Elbert, President of the South Branch Watershed Association said, “The idea of preservation of the farm began in 1987 with the vision of former SBWA Director, Denise Naidu Snyder, and its founder, Hermia Lechner. The Dvoor Farm acquisition represents a departure from our traditional activities of education and environmental planning, but it’s a dream our members have held onto for years.” SBWA received a Green Acres matching grant for acquisition of the farm in 1991. Efforts to raise the matching funds and come to agreement with the farm’s owners

were unsuccessful until recently when the introduction of development proposals including high-density housing and a large retail center served as a catalyst encouraging the renewed preservation efforts.

Citizens for Parkland, a local preservation group, spearheaded the effort to raise the necessary funds and was instrumental in putting the deal together. Beryl Doyle, co-chairman of CFP, and her fellow members raised over \$255,500 of the purchase price through foundation grants, raffles, gifts, and events such as “A Day in the Park.” Of these funds, \$65,000 came through a bequest of Hermia Lechner. Other funding for the project came from the NJ Green Acres Program, Raritan Township, Flemington Borough, NJ Department of Transportation (through the Federal ISTE program), the Large Foundation, The Tomlinson Family Foundation, The William Penn Foundation, The Bunbury Company, and Merck.

As part of the transaction, SBWA donated a 2 1/2-acre portion of the Dvoor Farm to Raritan Township to be annexed to Mine Brook Park for future recreational



Herb Dvoor

use. Mr. Dvoor will remain on the farm as caretaker and made a generous donation of \$50,000 to the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance for maintenance of the property. Mr. Dvoor and Mine Brook Associates also donated two easements on adjacent parcels along the Walnut Brook for stream corridor preservation and pathway creation. HLTA has created a committee to deal with stewardship of this important community asset. There is a great deal of interest in some community use of the barns. A coalition of groups is looking at the barns as a possible site of a new cultural center. ●

ROGER HARRIS

Volunteer Profile BY SANDY MADON



Alison Mitchell

Alison Mitchell, newly elected president of HLTA, grew up in Kingwood Township and now lives in Stockton. She received a degree in International Relations from Connecticut College and a master’s degree in Urban and Environmental Policy from Tufts University. Alison is Director of Programs at the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, where she is

involved in land acquisition and public policy work, focusing on farmland preservation. She’s also a board member of Isles, Inc., a community development nonprofit in Trenton, and the Cook College Board of Managers. Previously she interned at the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C.

Did growing up in Hunterdon County have any influence in the career you chose?

Absolutely. I always loved the rural landscapes of this area and grew up playing in the fields

and woods, and swimming in the Lockatong Creek. From a very young age I was upset seeing farms turned into housing developments all over the landscape in a seemingly random way. Of course, as a kid I just didn’t know what to do about it or that there was anything that could be done.

Do you have any favorite places to visit in Hunterdon County?

I am partial to farmland, but my favorite places in the county also include the Delaware River, its tributaries, and towns.

What, in your opinion, are the greatest challenges Hunterdon County faces in the future?

The greatest challenge we face as a county is

HLTA joins with partners to preserve land in Frenchtown

HLTA is pleased to announce preservation of a 12-acre parcel of land in Frenchtown Borough. The property, formerly owned by Jonas Bingeman, joins Frenchtown Park, allowing the borough to extend its environmental study area up the Nishasakawick Creek. According to Dave Buchholz, HLTA trustee and lead negotiator on the project, this is an important acquisition. “Preservation of this property allows for the protection of the entire Nishasakawick Creek within the Borough of Frenchtown and anchors a potential



Photo by Dave Buchholz

greenway along the creek corridor. It’s a beautiful area, home to long-tailed salamanders and containing a scenic hemlock ravine.” The New Jersey Green Acres program provided the majority of the funding for the project. HLTA’s contribution will be partially reimbursed by Frenchtown Borough. Thus a nonprofit organization, state and local government, have joined together to preserve an environmentally important site in Hunterdon County. ●

Fall Harvest Dinner A Sell-Out Success

Trustee John Mathieu once again organized a superb Harvest Dinner, held last October at David’s Yellow Brick Toad. The sold-out dinner featured local lamb and beef as well as delicious dishes prepared by local restaurateurs. Please be sure to thank those who contributed if you can. It helps to make next year’s recruiting job easier! Participating restaurants included Atrio, Church Street Bistro, David’s Yellow Brick Toad, The Fish House and The Sergeantsville Inn. Lamb and beef donors were Harriet Akoulitchev, Martin and Linda Siecke, Brenda Spingarn and Julia Allen. Alba Vineyards, Unionville Vineyards, and River Horse Brewery supplied libation. Hodoulick Brothers supplied cider and apples and The Baker donated dinner rolls. ●

protecting the countryside that still remains. At the same time, we need to find a way to keep the existing population centers – the various villages and small towns – economically sustainable. If we don’t take a proactive approach now, we will not have land available for agriculture, wildlife, and parks in the future.

What can be done about these challenges?

We need as a county, as municipalities, and as individuals to embrace the vision of New Jersey’s State Development and Redevelopment Plan. That vision focuses on vibrant cities, thriving town centers, and open country landscapes as the goal for

future growth in New Jersey. Doing so requires a leap of faith on everyone’s part that in the long run we’ll all be better off in a variety of ways – from an environmental and aesthetic standpoint and a financial standpoint as well. To achieve this vision, we need to both acquire important land and development rights for preservation, and we need to direct growth in a pattern that takes advantage of existing infrastructure and conserves open land. This requires strong leadership on the part of county and municipal government and on the part of concerned citizens to make tough choices over land use controls and to accelerate funding the purchase of land and development rights.

What would you like HLTA to accomplish in the next five years?

First, to reach out to all Hunterdon landowners so that they at least know the options for protecting their land rather than developing it and can make a real choice. Offers from developers are not always as good as they may seem, and people should be aware of the alternatives. Secondly, to work closely with other nonprofits and government entities to preserve Hunterdon’s share of the statewide Million Acre goal. We need to be halfway there in five years! That will be a lot of work.

HLTA Elects Officers and Two New Trustees

After over four years of devoting tremendous time and energy to HLTA, founding President **Roger Harris** has stepped down. While he remains active on several HLTA committees, Roger and the board of trustees felt strongly that in order for HLTA to prosper, new leaders should emerge to take responsibility for our growing land trust.

Alison Mitchell is our new President. Alison is a native of Hunterdon County and an experienced land preservation professional (see article on page 2) who is well suited to guide HLTA as it matures.

Ken Jagel, Vice President, is a retired chemical engineer who was involved in the development and commercialization of the auto exhaust catalytic converter. Ken serves on the Readington Township Environmental Commission and is the township's liaison to the CADB (County Agriculture Development Board). He is also treasurer of the South Branch Watershed Association, chairman of the Hunterdon County Library Commission and trustee of Hunterdon Regional Community Health.

Dave Buchholz, former HLTA Vice President for Administration, is Treasurer. Dave's careers have included ownership of Glen Summit Nurseries, banking, computer consulting and real estate, teaching agricultural economics at Rutgers, and directing the Delaware River Greenway Partnership. He has set up HLTA's office systems, from furniture to computers to light bulbs. In his spare time Dave is an avid kayaker and birder.

Sandy Madon has taken over as Recording Secretary. Sandy has been active in helping to organize HLTA events and writing for the newsletter. She lives in Readington Township and is a special education teacher at the Franklin Township School in Warren County.

New trustees are **Denise Royle** of Delaware Township and **Rob McGeary** of Franklin Township. Denise is working on her PhD. in forest ecology. Rob is an attorney specializing in elder law.

President's Message

We are in a time of immense opportunity for land conservation, but unfortunately, also a time when the threat of losing land from development is greater than at any other time in the county's history. We are in a race against development forces the likes of which we have never experienced in Hunterdon. You may not see most of the development occurring on the ground, but the process is well underway. A number of landowners have given us copies of letters with glossy brochures that they have received from a variety of residential developers. Developers in fact appear to be blanketing Hunterdon County, as well as Warren and perhaps other counties, with information on options for selling land for development. Increasingly when we talk to landowners they already have offers from developers in hand.

One piece of encouraging news is that HLTA has been awarded a \$500,000 grant from the state Green Acres Program to acquire important land within three project areas – the Lockatong Creek corridor in Delaware, Kingwood and Franklin Townships, the Delaware River Bluffs in Kingwood and Delaware Townships, and the Alexauken Creek corridor in West Amwell. Efforts are underway to preserve a number of parcels in these and other areas of the county using state and local funds, as well as private contributions.

Now is the time to join the race! We have a lot to gain, and an enormous amount to lose – all in a very short period of time. Please contact us if you would like ideas on how you can become more involved in saving land in Hunterdon.

ALISON MITCHELL



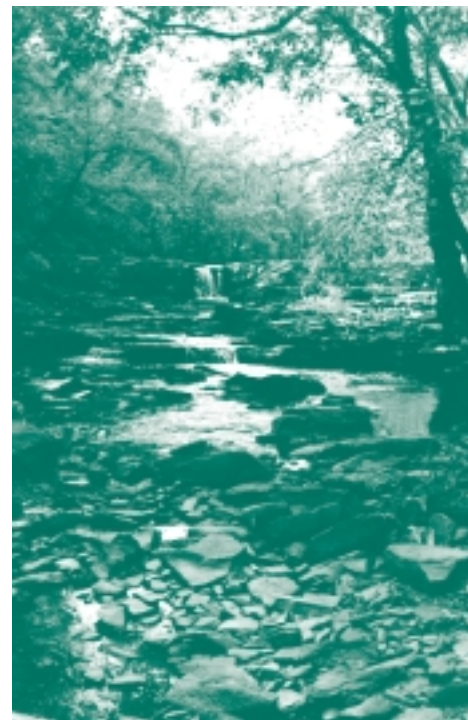
Sandy Madon, Dave Buchholz, Alison Mitchell, Rob McGeary, Ken Jagel, Denise Royle

Stonescaping Clinic to Benefit HLTA

Have you always wanted to learn how to build a stone wall or stairway but aren't sure how to go about it? If so, you'll want to sign up for *The Art and Craft of Stonescaping – Setting and Stacking Stone*, a special clinic offered by David Reed of North Carolina. David, who has been working with stone for 20 years, is an experienced teacher. He is coming to the home of Deborah and Nelson Woodard in Delaware Township on the weekend of June 2-4 (rain date is the weekend of June 9-11.) The weekend events include a lecture and slide show on Friday night, and two days of on site work with local stone. You can attend the lecture and one day, the lecture and both days, only the lecture or only the clinic. David will structure the weekend so that he'll cover all aspects of setting and stacking stone each day, but if you can come for both days you will be able to learn more. The clinic is limited to 15 people each day, so make your reservation early. Call Deborah Woodard at 609-397-3495 if you have any questions. ●

Dry stacked and dry laid stonework requires no mortar. You won't need fancy equipment, that much strength or a vast estate. If you can handle a shovel, wield a hammer, and lift small stones, this clinic is for you.

There's plenty of stone in Hunterdon County, as shown in this picture of the Locketong Creek by Joel Coyne.



Stonescaping Clinic

Friday, June 2 – 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. – Slide Show and Lecture. Coffee and dessert will be served – \$25

Saturday, June 3 – 9:00 to 4:00 p.m. – Stonescaping Clinic – Bring a bag lunch. Drinks and morning snack provided. Dress for outdoor work. - \$100

Sunday, June 4 – 9:00 to 4:00 p.m. – Stonescaping Clinic – Bring a bag lunch. Drinks and morning snack provided. Dress for outdoor work. – \$100

David Reed's book, *The Art and Craft of Stonescaping – Setting and Stacking Stone*, will be available at a special reduced price of \$20 to those who sign up for the clinic.

If you attend the slide show and one day, \$75 is a tax-deductible donation to HLTA. If you attend the lecture and both days, \$125 is tax deductible.

Directions and any further instructions will be sent when we receive your registration.

HLTA Benefit Stonescaping Clinic Reservation Form

Your reservation must be accompanied by a check made out to Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance. Space is limited to 15 people; reservations will be accepted in the order received.

Note: rain date is the following weekend – June 9-11

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____

Fax _____

Email _____

Enclosed is my check for _____ for the following:

- Friday June 2 – evening lecture and slide show – \$25
- Saturday June 3 – clinic – \$100
- Sunday June 4 – clinic – \$100
- Saturday and Sunday clinic – \$200

Mail to:

PO Box 143, Sergeantsville, NJ 08557
by May 25

Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

To Preserve and Protect the Rural Landscape of Hunterdon County

P.O. Box 143
Sergeantsville, NJ 08557

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Web Site

Visit our newly redesigned website at www.hlta.org. This is the work of talented member and volunteer, Karen Wenk. Be sure not to type hlta.com; you'll visit the Houston Ladies Tennis Assn. Likewise don't type htla.org; you'll wind up at the Houston Trial Lawyers Assn. And if your finger slips from the L and you type hkta.com, you'll be visiting the Hong Kong Tourist Assn. Visit us next time you're on the net.

Citizen Advocacy

From time to time the national Land Trust Alliance asks us to communicate with our elected officials on issues important to the land preservation community. If you are willing to write letters or make calls and would like to be on an e-mail alert list, you can sign on at LTA's web site (www.lta.org).



HLTA has an office in this building in Kingwood Township, just south of Frenchtown on the Delaware River. A former Superfund site, the property has been cleaned up and cleared by the US Environmental Protection Agency for recreation and park uses, although the groundwater may not be totally clean for another 5-10 years. During the cleanup archeologists found 3,000 artifacts, including tools, weapons and bowls. Some are 8,000 years old! HLTA is grateful to Kingwood Township for providing office space at a very reasonable cost.

To Reach HLTA

Web: www.hlta.org

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Mailing Address: P.O. Box 143,
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Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance

P.O. Box 143
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