



conservation matters

hunterdon land trust alliance

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Spring 2005

projects preserve more than 300 acres of scenic wildlife habitat

The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance got off to a strong start in 2005, completing a series of acquisition projects that have preserved more than 300 acres of scenic wildlife habitat in Holland and Bethlehem Townships. These projects represent important successes in our efforts to protect some of the most sensitive, high-priority preservation targets in the county's open space plan.

As importantly, these successes highlight the growing momentum behind our efforts, and those of our preservation partners throughout the county. On each of these projects we collaborated with different groups of partner organizations, in each case building on one another's efforts and expertise to achieve a common goal.

"There is a growing community of organizations and individuals working to save Hunterdon County from the rampant development that has overrun much of the state," said HLTA Executive Director Margaret Waldock. "The increasing cooperation between organizations and the growing support of our respective members are really starting to pay off. This is a very encouraging trend, and we are hopeful that we can keep accelerating the pace of preservation."

highlighting holland's musconetcong region

Among our most recent successes was the preservation of a 90-acre

tract along Shire Road in Holland Township that was conducted in partnership with the Phillipsburg Riverview Organization and Holland Township. The property is situated on the southern shoulder of Musconetcong Mountain in the Highlands geographical region of northern Hunterdon County and encompasses woodlands, a wellhead protection zone, and CI trout production streams. The parcel is in a sensitive watershed area that drains into the Delaware River, making its protection all the more critical.

"We were delighted to have played a role in bringing the Phillipsburg Riverview Organization and Holland Township together to preserve this important property," said Waldock. "This acquisition is a fine example of how nonprofit groups and municipalities can work together toward preservation goals that benefit both parties and the public at large."

Another recent project, in partnership with the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund and Holland Township, involved the acquisition of 56 acres of fields and woodland fronting Hawks Schoolhouse and Myler Roads in Holland Township. The property directly adjoins the county's Musconetcong Preserve, a valuable public resource. The general public will be able to enjoy the property for passive recreational use including

hiking, bird watching, and cross-country skiing.

It is also particularly valuable natural habitat. The property consists of open fields and woodlands that stretch to the top of the Musconetcong Ridge and includes a small stream that merges with the Pine Brook, a tributary of the Musconetcong River. According to the Division of Fish and Wildlife Landscape Project, the property is also home to bog turtles, a state endangered species.

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Emmet and Kurt Steinert walk in the snow on the recently preserved 56 acres in Holland Township. photo: Amy Kosh

season's greetings from our executive director

As I write this, the epic struggle between Old Man Winter, reluctant to withdraw from the scene, and spring, the bearer of daylight, chocolate bunnies, and all things fresh and green rages on. An easterner through and through, I find these transitional times especially invigorating. With the advent of longer, warmer days and the sensory delights of returning wildlife, it is the perfect time to get out and enjoy the rural landscapes and natural beauty of our region.

It's been a long, busy winter for the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance. This past year, we turned our preservation focus to properties in the Highlands region, building on past preservation efforts in Holland and Bethlehem Townships, culminating in the acquisition of over 300 acres of critical watershed lands. The permanent preservation of properties like these will ensure a legacy of clean air, clean water, and recreational opportunities for generations to come.

In this issue, you'll learn more about these successful preservation projects as well as a few new initiatives here at the land trust, including the launching of our new website and the creation of our Evergreen Partners program. You will also be introduced to a group of Hunterdon County young adults with a penchant for birds. We hope that you help support this group in their efforts to identify a record number of birds in this year's exciting World Series of Birding. I can't think of a better way to help celebrate the season.

Warmly,
Margaret Waldock



The Turkey Brook Preserve.

photo: Amy Kosh

Preservation continued from page 1

bethlehem's turkey brook preserve

The HLTA has also been particularly active in Bethlehem Township in recent months, helping preserve two tracts totaling nearly 130 acres, properties which are among the highest priorities in the township's open space plan.

The properties, also located within the Highlands region of the county, contain a mixture of open fields and contiguous woodlands that are important habitat for resident and visiting wildlife including migratory birds. The properties also include significant stretches of the Turkey Brook, a Category I waterway that feeds the Musconetcong River.

These successful acquisitions complement more than 300 acres of

adjoining preserved land, some owned and managed by the New Jersey Audubon Society, a partner in the project. Upon closing, the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance assigned its interest to the Audubon Society for permanent management as a bird sanctuary and wildlife preserve, open to the public for passive recreational use.

sometimes bigger is better

With each of these projects, HLTA has focused on preserving properties that can be combined with other protected properties to establish or expand a large, contiguous area of preserved watershed and sensitive wildlife habitat. In this way we can see greater impact from our efforts, protecting significant swaths of land from developers and hopefully helping

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fantastical fall fete biggest hlta fundraiser to date

For anyone who was there, the HLTA Fantastical Fall Fete, held on November 12, 2004 at the splendid Rago Auction House in Lambertville, was an evening not soon forgotten. From the sumptuous dinner provided by Baker's Treat of Flemington and sushi from Lambertville's Ota-Ya to the top-notch red and white wines from Phillips Fine Wine in Stockton, we not only ate and drank like royalty, HLTA members and their guests raised more funds for land preservation in Hunterdon County than any event in our history.

We enjoyed even more epicurean delights from their own kitchens at the Trustee's Table, baked goods from Panera Bread in Flemington, soup from Cocina del Sol in Frenchtown, crème brulee from the Sergeantsville Inn and coffee from Buck's of Frenchtown and Lambertville.

As Christiane Darby welcomed attendees with works of Schubert and Liszt on the harp, the newest generation of HLTA volunteers – Emily Tareila, Kristen Harris, Carmen

Gonzalez, Alison Wolock and others – ran the check-in desk and took coats. Bar persons Anne Waldo and Scott Deter made sure we didn't parch in the warmth generated by the packed house. Take a look at the photos on this page by HLTA volunteer and professional photographer Amy Kosh and see if you can find yourself among the revelers. The evening was in full swing by the time former HLTA Trustee and Rago partner Suzanne Perrault took the mic and lent her gavel and wit to the live auction.

A dozen extraordinary donations were put up in the live auction, including a jeroboam of Merlot, a marvelous chainsaw sculpture of a bald eagle, works by area artists like Bob Beck and weekends at first-class resorts in Martha's Vineyard and Miami Beach. Another 90 items were on the block in the silent auction, all of which were outright donations from local residents, businesses and artists. Among them were framed limited editions of Frank Silva's wonderful poster design for the Fantastical Fall Fete.

Together, the live and silent auctions, the admissions and donations raised an astonishing \$20,000 for Hunterdon County's only county-wide preservation organization. By this measure, the Fantastical Fall Fete was the most successful to date, and we extend our profound thanks to Suzanne Perrault and David Rago, Michael Wargo, Michael Ingham and the rest of the staff at Rago Auctions, Risa Sackman, and past event chairs Deborah Woodard and John Mathieu for bringing to a cold Autumn night the social event of the season. Finally, to all of you who took home winning lots, you have made a tremendous contribution to the preservation of Hunterdon County's farmland and open space for generations to come. Check www.hlta.org for the announcement of this year's Fete! 🍷



all photos: Amy Kosh

conservation easement deductions under attack: how you can help

Nationwide, many landowners interested in preserving their land from development donate their land or conservation easements on their land to land trusts like the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance. In Hunterdon County, HLTA has worked with several landowners who have made such donations, and while preserving land is the primary motivation for such donations, the tax deductions associated with these gifts enable many more people to consider this as a viable option for preserving their land.

On January 27, 2005, a report released by the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation shocked the land trust community by proposing major decreases in the federal tax deductions for the donation of conservation easements and property. The proposals, if adopted, threaten the work of land trusts like the

Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance by removing the tax incentives associated with the charitable gifts of land or interests in land.

the new tax proposals


The Joint Committee has proposed that deductions for conservation easements be limited to only 33% of the appraised value of the easement, as opposed to the current rules that allow for deductions based on 100% of the value of easements. In addition, the Committee also proposes changing the deductions associated with donations of land by limiting such donations to the owner's "basis"—that is the original cost of the land plus any capital improvements made over the years, not the current fair market value of the property.

If enacted, these proposals would negatively impact our land

conservation work and limit our ability to promote charitable gifts of property or conservation easements to those preservation-minded landowners that are able to benefit from the tax deductions associated with such gifts.

how you can help


If you'd like to help our organization and other land trusts nationwide, letters to our Senators and Representatives asking them to help fight these proposals are essential. Our local opinion does count. More information on the Joint Committee's report can be found at www.LTA.org, as well as sample letters to Congress. Contact information for your Senators and Congressional Representatives can be found at www.congress.org.

Let us know if you write a letter! 

join the evergreen partners – hlta's new monthly giving program

Looking for a simple way to preserve farms and natural areas in Hunterdon County? Then consider Evergreen Partners, HLTA's new automated giving program that lets you make monthly donations directly from your credit card or checking account to support HLTA's preservation efforts.

You can choose the amount of your monthly gift from the usual giving levels – see our membership form on page 7 – or set your own monthly donation by selecting your preference on the secure donation pages of www.hlta.org. If you prefer to make your contribution by direct debit from your checking account, you can download the Evergreen Partners Enrollment Form or give us a call and we'll send you one the old-fashioned way. If you choose this option, simply send us a check for your first month's contribution along with your enrollment form and we'll take care of the rest, using the account and routing information from your check to set up the monthly contributions thereafter.

Making small gifts on a regular basis helps HLTA cut down on the staff time, materials and postage needed for our renewal mailings. Become an Evergreen Partner today and help build a legacy of conservation in Hunterdon County! 

new faces

gattuso, reid join board

At their February 3, 2005 meeting, the Board approved the appointment of John Gattuso and Robert Reid as Trustees. As volunteers, both Robert and John have been on the front lines of HLTA preservation projects, bringing critical properties to the attention of the HLTA and acting as liaisons to the landowners and municipalities involved in the transactions.



New HLTA Trustees Robert Reid and John Gattuso. photo: Amy Kosh

Gattuso, a Holland Township resident, is a writer and publisher of Stone Creek Publications, a travel and outdoor guide series. He has been instrumental in preservation of a 97-acre property in Holland, located in our Highlands project area. We are delighted that John has agreed to bring his abundant talents to the HLTA in an official capacity.

Reid, an artist who lives in Alexandria (some will recall his marvelous glass bowl from the Fantastical Fall Fete last November), has been an active advocate for the preservation of properties within the Sweet Hollow Preserve in Alexandria. A long-time volunteer, Robert plans to focus his attention on the stewardship of HLTA preserved properties.

Please join the Board and the Staff of the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance in welcoming John and Robert to the organization! 🌲

jamey king, bookkeeper

HTLA is delighted to announce that Jamey King, of Holland Township, has joined the staff as our bookkeeper. He brings many years of professional accountancy to the position. When he's not at the HLTA office, Jamey is championship disc golfer and apprentice chimney craftsman. Welcome, Jamey! 🌲

classified

POSITIONS AVAILABLE: board members for Hunterdon County's only county-wide farmland and open space preservation organization. Must enjoy clean water and rural vistas and be able to donate time and energy to the cause. Please send letter of inquiry to: Margaret Waldock, Executive Director, Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance, 3037 Route 29, Frenchtown, NJ 08825.

HELP WANTED: volunteers sought for rapidly-growing area land trust. Duties include easement monitoring, letter-writing, light office duties. Must own boots and generosity of spirit. Inquiries to: Adam Blackburn, Administrator, Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance. Phone: (908) 996-4421 or e-mail: adam@hlta.org. Address as above. 🌲

calendar

Get to know the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance at any of these upcoming events:

June 11th: Chronicles of Hunterdon: Works by Jerry Cable. Art show and sale at an historic private farmstead in Raritan Township to benefit HLTA. By invitation only. HLTA members will receive two complimentary tickets; admission for the general public is \$25.00 per person. Mr. Cable is a noted artist whose oil paintings of



Morning in Delaware Township

pastoral subjects are regularly featured on the cover of *Hunterdon County Town and Country Living* magazine. Both original canvasses and limited-edition giclees and prints will be offered for sale. To learn more, visit www.Jerrycablefineart.com.

August: Hunterdon 4-H and Agricultural Fair, Ringoes. The very best of Hunterdon County's traditional bounty, with something for everyone in your family. www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/depts/rutgers/20044hagfair/main.htm

Autumn: The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance Fall Fete. A festive fundraising gala for Hunterdon County's only county-wide land trust, featuring live and silent auctions, entertainment and splendid eating and drinking. Please check the HLTA web site regularly for updates! 🌲

world series of birding to benefit hlta

The tapestry that makes up the rural splendor of Hunterdon County is never more vivid than in the springtime, when the fields and woods come alive with birdsong. The re-emergence of the avian community will be celebrated for the first time by the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance by sponsoring a youth birding team in the 2005 NJ Audubon Society World Series of Birding. Our team, "The Pished Off Birders" – who take their name from "pishing," the practice of mimicking a tufted titmouse in distress – consists of Hunterdon Central HS seniors Joey Dolan, Kyle Fischer and Sam Gallick. Last year they spotted 177 different species of birds all over New Jersey, and on May 14 they'll attempt to beat their record and wing their way to victory.

Please consider making a contribution as part of HLTA's sponsorship of The Pished Off Birders. HLTA is delighted to be a sponsor in the 2005 World Series of Birding and encourages all our members to do their part in preserving wildlife habitat by making a donation using the contribution form in this issue of *Conservation Matters*. Good luck birders! 🏠

*A light broke in upon my soul
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased – and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard.*

Byron

*I hope you love birds too.
It's economical. It saves going to heaven.*
Emily Dickinson

volunteers make the world go 'round

As we expand our preservation efforts throughout the county, we are grateful to have a core group of dedicated volunteers that assist in a variety of ways, ranging from administrative assistance to outreach to our members and supporters. We'd like to take this opportunity to recognize a few of them.

The latest photographs you'll find on the new HLTA web site and many of those in this issue of *Conservation Matters* were taken by Frenchtown resident Amy Kosh. A professional photographer, Amy also donated her services during last November's Fantastical Fall Fete (see page 3 for more examples of her handiwork).

We would also like to thank Pat Griffith, Nancy Roselli, Maureen Shelly and Myrna Smith of Frenchtown for their hours of folding, stamping and stuffing envelopes for HLTA's mid-year and year-end appeals and invitations to the Fantastical Fall Fete.

Margot Hilson of Holland donates her expertise as a former librarian at the county library by poring through the local newspapers and clipping all articles that mention HLTA and relevant land preservation issues. A regular around the HLTA offices, Margot was also one of the most generous and productive volunteers during the Fantastical Fall Fete.

Gerry Thomas of Tewksbury helped usher in the modern era at HLTA by setting up our credit card processing facilities, as well as his very generous donation of a credit card terminal and printer.

Finally, if you are among the fans of our redesigned *Conservation Matters*, you can thank Christina Sacalis. A publishing and design professional, Christina was born and raised in the area and lives in Frenchtown.

For anyone interested in volunteer opportunities at HLTA, give us a call anytime at (908) 996-4421, drop us an email at adam@hlta.org or visit our web page and complete our volunteer form. 🏠

Preservation continued from page 2

avoid the patchwork of small, preserved parcels typical in many parts of the state. These larger preserved areas also offer more sustainable and nurturing wildlife habitat for migratory birds and local animal populations.

Also, by combining resources with other organizations, HLTA and our partners – including other non-profit groups and state, county and municipal governments – are able to stretch our limited budgets, and pursue preservation projects that none of our organizations alone could take on successfully. In many cases, including those described above, HLTA serves as the glue that holds the projects together. The HLTA regularly serves as a facilitator, providing significant staff resources and technical expertise to bring projects to fruition. In this way, our impact is even greater than our size. 🏠



HLTA volunteer
extraordinaire
Margot Hilson

you helped preserve this view



Can you imagine springtime in Hunterdon County without songbirds in the morning? What would it mean if we were unable to save the last wild habitat for the bog turtle, the great blue heron and the short-eared owl? What of the future of our drinking water – our wells and reservoirs – as encroaching development threatens the health of our watersheds? Members of the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance can point to preservation projects such as the Musconetcong Mountain Preserve in Holland (pictured) as proof of their commitment to saving these habitats, keeping our water potable and to halting the erosion of New Jersey’s natural infrastructure.

Your membership contributions helped preserve the 56 acres of farmland you see in this picture, part of HLTA’s Highlands project area. There are many more such projects in the pipeline for 2005, but we need the continued support of members like you and to bring in new members to the HLTA family to preserve farmland and open space like this. Please consider passing this newsletter on to a friend who may become a member and help support land preservation efforts in Hunterdon County.

Membership benefits include:

- ★ The HLTA’s biannual newsletter, *Conservation Matters*
- ★ Invitations to member events
- ★ An HLTA window sticker
- ★ The satisfaction of helping preserve Hunterdon County’s rural character and precious natural resources.

Help spread the word about the good work of the HLTA!

become a member!

You can...

1. Send us a check or complete the credit card information below for a one-time donation, or
2. Become an Evergreen Partner. Enter your credit card information or send us a check for your first month’s gift.

___ I’d like to make a one-time donation, at the level I’ve indicated below:

- \$5,000+ benefactor
- \$1,000 conservationist
- \$500 steward
- \$250 protector
- \$100 supporter
- \$50 contributor
- \$25 friend
- other

Make checks payable to:
Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance
3037 Route 29, Frenchtown, NJ 08825

Please charge my

Mastercard (___) or Visa (___)

Card # ___ - ___ - ___ - ___

Expiration: ___ / ___

name _____

address _____

phone _____

email _____

___ I’d like to become an Evergreen Partner. I will make monthly contributions at the level I’ve indicated below:

- \$40
- \$30
- \$20
- \$10
- \$35
- \$25
- \$15
- Other \$ _____

Signature _____

Please notify us in writing of your wish to discontinue these transactions.

- I am interested in volunteering at HLTA.

The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance is an IRS-recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Charitable contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. Your personal information will be kept completely confidential and will not be shared with any third party except those necessary to complete the transactions authorized on this form.

hunterdon land trust alliance

 to preserve and protect the rural
 character of hunterdon county

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hlta
 launches
 new
 website



Several months in the making, our new website is on-line and waiting for your visit. In addition to the resources previously featured on the site there are a host of new features. The site now includes all of the projects preserved through the first quarter of 2005 and an up-to-the-minute Calendar of upcoming events, with photo galleries to be added very soon; an HLTA Staff page; and in a great leap forward for interactivity, you can now donate via the HLTA web site using your credit card (see the sidebar on Evergreen Partners, our new monthly-giving program). We are grateful to Steve Wolock at River Graphics for helping us get the new site up and running.

The Board and Staff of HLTA would also like to recognize the tremendous contributions of Karen Wenk and Alan Runfeldt who designed, maintained and hosted the original HLTA website. Thank you, Karen and Alan, for introducing HLTA to the virtual community! 🌲

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 3037 route 29
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 to contact the HLTA
 web: www.hlta.org
 email: info@hlta.org
 phone: 908-996-4421
 fax: 908-996-2552

