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**HLT Preserves 104-Acre Property in Kingwood**

##### FLEMINGTON – Hunterdon Land Trust's preservation of the 104-acre Maritan Inc. property in Kingwood will create an impressive green corridor in Kingwood Township that will connect to the adjacent Idell Preserve.

Maritan is comprised of a mix of forest and farmland, contains 16 acres of wetlands, and two tributaries of the Lockatong Creek, a Category One (C-1) stream, flow through a portion of it. (C-1 waterways are protected from any measurable change in water quality because of their exceptional ecological significance, exceptional recreational significance, exceptional water supply significance, or exceptional fisheries resources.)

Maritan and Idell will be connected by a trail. Combined, the two parcels will offer visitors a chance to explore 160 acres with vernal pools and numerous amphibious creatures, said Land Acquisitions Director Jacqueline Middleton.

This mostly flat property hosts several small ponds where, recently, a beaver built a home. Barred owls can easily be heard hooting on the property, and the fields are an excellent habitat for grassland birds, rabbits, foxes and other small rodents that provide the base of the food chain. The open wetlands and ponds are inhabited by numerous reptiles and amphibians and provide nesting areas for waterfowl.

"Anytime we can expand one of our preserves for more open space it is always a nice win,” Middleton said.

Kingwood Deputy Mayor Richard Dodds said the township will start its work on the preserve by mowing out the trails, then next spring will establish a connection between Idell and Maritan.

When completed, the trail will offer visitors the chance to enjoy hiking, birding and fishing in the ponds.

Maritan will be managed by Kingwood Township through its Parks and Recreation Commission and will be used for passive recreation. HLT will coordinate the trail expansion with Kingwood. It’s anticipated that four miles of trails will be added.

“This preservation effort began when the owner, Sharon Gonen, contacted HLT around 2014 to discuss preservation options,” Middleton said. “We were able to get available funding from Hunterdon County and through Kingwood’s Green Acres grant.”

Dodds said he’s excited about the preserve’s future, envisioning the township perhaps getting a major grant from the state to improve the property.

“The park is so flat it really lends itself to being a completely accessible trail,” Dodds said. “We could have a large accessible trail that uses a permeable surface that would be perfect for strollers, people using wheelchairs or for someone unable to hike up hills.

“It’s the most accessible park in Kingwood because there are families living close by on Barcroft Road, who could easily walk to it,” Dodds noted.

This preservation falls under the aegis of the National Park Service’s Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic program, which aims to protect the natural, cultural and historic value of the Delaware River.