



# Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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## **Hunterdon Land Trust Spearheads Preservation Effort Near Delaware River**

HOLLAND TOWNSHIP – It’s not very often that preservation opportunities pop up so close to the Delaware River.

But it happened recently when Gilbert Power Co. decided to sell 70 acres in Holland Township just off the Riegelsville-Milford Road near Dogwood Drive. Hunterdon Land Trust (HLT) teamed up with Holland Township and Hunterdon County to make this scenic treasure available for everyone to enjoy for years to come.

“It’s a rare opportunity when 70 acres that close to the Delaware River become available,” said Jacqueline Middleton, HLT’s land acquisition director. “But it did, and we are grateful to have willing partners who were happy to assist us in preserving this important property.”

HLT and Holland Township had both been coveting the property for a long time, agreed Middleton and Holland Township Mayor Dan Bush.



“I’ve been on the township committee for five terms, and I’ve had my eye on it since I got here,” Bush said. “We wanted to protect that land, and the Delaware River, and its resources. We told [Gilbert Power] if the land ever became available that we would like the opportunity to purchase it for open space.”

When that happened, the partners pounced. A heavy push ensued to climb the mountain of paperwork required in any preservation effort. Middleton hustled to get the appraisals and surveys done, help secure the funding, and close on the property. This was all accomplished in about one year, which is relatively quick in the world of land preservation.

HLT applied for a grant from the Hunterdon County Open Space Trust Fund Program, and the Holland Township Committee, which fully supported the project, also utilized grant money from the county to raise the \$517,866.80 needed for the purchase. Bush stressed that general funding from the township was not used for the property.

And what a property! Park in the new gravel lot by the preserve sign and look to your right where a meadow gracefully slopes down toward the river. In warmer weather, colors dot this scene like an impressionist’s palette. Walk along a tall row of neatly spaced trees, standing like sentries marking the passage of time, and turn toward the river near the wood line. Several paths invite exploration. This land is a natural habitat for bald eagles; even in winter, a variety of birds twitter about the trees, flitting amongst the bare branches. The paths tilt toward the river, leading one to a set of railroad tracks (private property).

To walk here is to feel steeped in history. And with good reason.

“This effort preserves a large piece of Holland Township history,” Bush said. “There are records of the Lenapes using this land, and there were encampments in that area, so it was important to preserve it.”

While the preserve has a rich past, it also has an exciting future.

Holland Township plans to install kiosks, park benches and a fitness trail that will loop around the property. An interpretive sign will be installed near the parking area that highlights the land’s history. There will be passive recreation on site and trails through the wooded area, Bush said.

The township has already kicked off its work. Besides installing the aforementioned parking lot, Bush and Larry LaFevre, a Holland Township historian and HLT trustee, worked with the girls of



Junior Girl Scout Troop 80309 to find a name for the preserve that honored the Lenapes, who once inhabited the area.

The name chosen was O'sakame, the Lenape word for "across the river." The Girl Scouts planted daffodil and hyacinth bulbs in front of the new sign that bears the park's name.

"The sign at the preservation says it very clearly: This land is dedicated to the residents of Holland Township. We want to thank our partners. We love working with Hunterdon Land Trust and have a great relationship with them," Bush said.

"This project was an extraordinary opportunity to provide the public access to property overlooking this Wild and Scenic stretch of the Delaware River while also protecting lands with historic value and significant wildlife habitat" added Patricia Ruby, HLT's executive director.

This preservation falls within the National Park Service's Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic area, which aims to protect the natural, cultural and historic value of the Delaware River.

