



Hunterdon Land Trust

Protecting the places you love

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Teamwork Leads to Bethlehem Township Preservation

FLEMINGTON – When you’re targeting properties that are vital to preserve, you’d be hard pressed to find one better than this.

The 97-acre CRC Mine Road LLC property in Bethlehem Township is a huge preservation win because the Musconetcong River tributary flows through its wetlands and woods, and it’s located near other preserved lands.

And this accomplishment occurred only because several organizations, led by Hunterdon Land Trust (HLT), pooled their talents and energies: New Jersey Green Acres, Hunterdon County, Bethlehem Township, The Nature Conservancy, The New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) all played roles in sealing this deal.

“I always say how important our preservation partners are, but never has that been more true than for this project,” said Jacqueline Middleton, Hunterdon Land Trust’s land acquisition



director. “They were awesome. And this is why I love working in land acquisition because everyone pitches in when they’re needed, and the end result is this great preservation.”

New Jersey Green Acres funded 50% of the purchase price for the property, while Hunterdon Land Trust and Bethlehem Township obtained grants from Hunterdon County for the remainder. Besides being extremely supportive throughout the process, the township helped fund some of the environmental investigation costs, Middleton said.

New Jersey Conservation Foundation and MWA coordinated a clean-up day at the property as did Bethlehem Township’s Open Space Committee. And the Nature Conservancy helped cover cost for due diligence items – like the survey -- needed for any preservation project.

This project also falls under a William Penn Foundation grant and is part of the Delaware River Watershed Initiative (DRWI).

“Our preservation partners have targeted this property for protection for a number of years,” Middleton said. “Acquisition of this property is part of a larger preservation effort in the Musconetcong River watershed aimed at improving water quality.”

Though preserving the property was a long time coming, it was well worth the wait.

“That property was identified for preservation in Bethlehem Township’s 1999 Open Space & Greenway Plan,” said John Jimenez, who serves as Bethlehem Township’s Open Space Committee chairperson. “It took more than 20 years, but we finally got it preserved with funding from several partners and the assistance and dedication of HLT’s Jackie Middleton.”

Hunterdon Land Trust acquired the property, then conveyed it to the county; it will become part of Hunterdon County’s park system.

William Millette, Hunterdon County's Open Space Administrator/Principal Planner, said the CRC Mine Road parcel will be folded into the existing Tower Hill Reserve, and added to the overall land holdings of that reserve and the Jughtown Mountain Nature Preserve, which the county connected several years ago.

“We have no immediate plans for a trail on the property, although that does remain a future goal for us,” Millette said. “We want to make sure that trail planning takes into account the sensitive wetlands on the property and safe access for the public to cross Mine Road.”



The new acquisition is also directly south of the 98-acre Eisenberger property, which HLT preserved in 2018.

The CRC Mine Preserve is a serene spot, where the quiet is only interrupted by the burbling of small streams and vernal pools, and the caw of a bird high overhead. All those beautiful sounds serve as a testament to the property's high conservation value.

"Protecting forested headwaters, wetlands, and steep slopes, all of which are found on this property, has a positive impact on the water quality and quantity in the Musconetcong River, which has been Congressionally designated a Wild and Scenic river and is one of the best trout fishing streams in New Jersey. Let's keep it that way," said Patricia Ruby, HLT's executive director.

