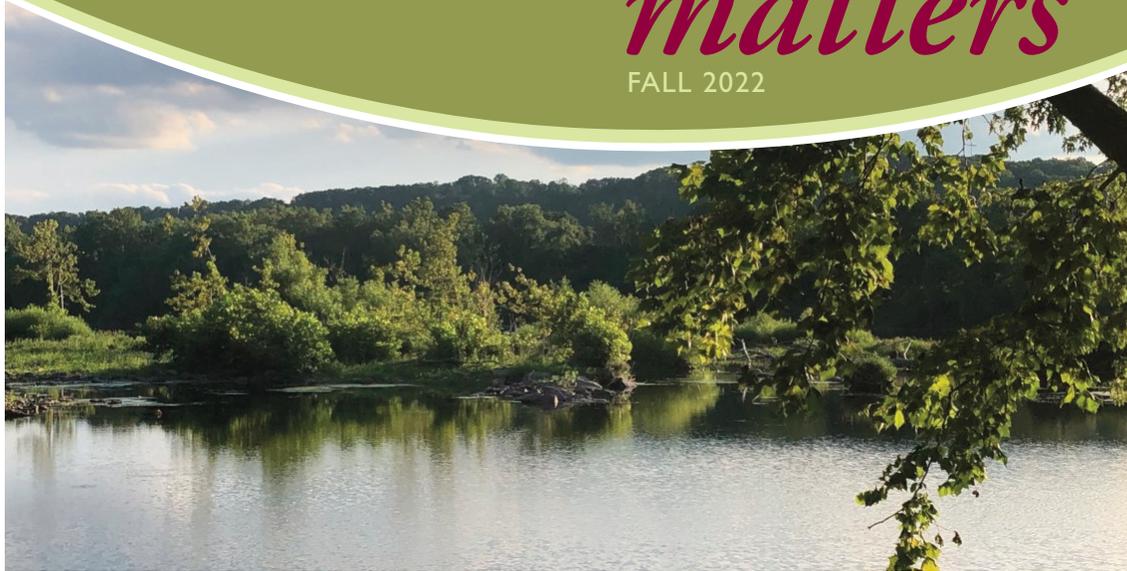


CONSERVATION *matters*

FALL 2022



The Nishisakawick Creek where it flows into the Delaware River.

HLT's Ceaseless Efforts to Protect Our Critical Waterways

The waters flow cool and clear, ceaselessly and effortlessly, over the smooth stones below. Overhead, branches from the trees along the creek banks provide much-needed relief from the sun for the aquatic life darting about in the creek. Downstream, a box turtle, tired of sunbathing upon a log, plunges into the waters, its legs churning toward the opposite bank.

You would be hard-pressed to find a more idyllic scene of a healthy ecosystem. With a name that would challenge a champion spelling bee contestant, the Little Nishisakawick Creek flows south and west for several miles before emptying into the waters of the majestic Delaware River at Frenchtown. The name of this Delaware tributary is thought to originate from the Unami (Leni Lenape) word *neschi-sakquik*, meaning "double outlet or mouth."

Since our founding more than a quarter of a century ago, Hunterdon Land Trust has considered the protection of precious waterways like the Little Nishisakawick strategically important. For years, HLT has adhered to a strategic, regional conservation plan that identified critical areas where preservation will have the greatest impact. These areas of focus include our water quality, wildlife habitat and scenic views, and target a number of regions, including the Delaware River Scenic Corridor and the tributaries of the Delaware River.

The Delaware River Scenic Corridor features spectacular vistas, forested ravines and historic villages with breathtaking views of the Delaware River Valley. This stretch of the Delaware River also falls under

the purview of the National Park Service's Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic Program, which works to protect the scenic values and water quality, and seeks to improve public recreational opportunities of this historic river.

Preservation of land along this corridor helps ensure clean drinking water for millions of people. The maintenance of natural buffers along the river and prevention of additional development help reduce runoff, mitigating the damaging effects of disastrous storms like last year's Hurricane Ida.

HLT's consistent focus on this corridor through the years can be seen in places like Kugler Woods, along the Route 29 byway, which was preserved in 2001; Horseshoe Bend Park, by the Delaware River bluffs a decade later; and most recently at the O'Sakame Preserve in the Holland Highlands on land previously owned by Gilbert Power Co. This 70-acre preservation, completed in 2021, again demonstrates how our unrelenting, targeted approach bears fruit. (You can read more about this preservation on page 5.)

Protecting the tributaries that flow into the Delaware River—like the Locketong, the Wickecheoke, and the Nishisakawick and Little Nishisakawick creeks—is a key component of HLT's strategic efforts. These stream corridors and their adjoining flood-protecting wetlands provide critical wildlife habitat, along with numerous opportunities for hiking and other outdoor recreational activities.

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A Conversation with our Interim Executive Director



Jacqueline Middleton

Jacqueline Middleton is a familiar face at Hunterdon Land Trust: Since 2014, she has served as our director of land acquisition, identifying parcels of land for preservation and handling negotiations with landowners. As our new interim executive director, she is working to ensure Hunterdon Land Trust stays focused on its mission. With that in mind, we wanted to share with you a few of her thoughts on our past, present and future.

What do you think is unique about HLT?

Land trusts, in general, play an important role in protecting land to ensure clean drinking water; healthy local food sources, wildlife habitat, clean air and flood protection. Hunterdon Land Trust does all of this and so much more. We steward eight public-access properties, including the historic Dvoor Farm, which is an iconic landmark in our area. The farm is on both the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Also, our Farmers' Market is unique as it supports our local farmers and rural economy while providing a place for the community to gather and get to know their farmers.

HLT has had quite a few successful preservation projects within the past year or so. What factors have led to this accomplishment? And what factors have you seen during your tenure here that you believe have contributed to HLT's success in preserving and caring for land?

HLT has helped preserve more than 500 acres in the last year, and we hope to close 100 more acres in Raritan Township this year. Those acres include both farmland preservation and open space. I want to point out that 100 percent of the land we protect for open space is accessible to the public – places where someone can hike, bike, or horseback ride. Our success occurs because so many people and organizations work together: our dedicated staff, our committed Board of Trustees, our amazing volunteers, our generous donors, our preservation partners, and the willing landowners who believe in what we are doing. Hunterdon County and the surrounding area have so much to offer. I think our community values what we do and wants to see us succeed in protecting our natural resources and our cultural legacy.

What are the biggest challenges or needs facing organizations like Hunterdon Land Trust?

We have a very committed constituency, but to continue being successful we need to grow our base, increase our volunteers, and let more people know about the work we are doing. When I was a little girl at church, I remember hearing a call for people to give a combination of their time, treasure, and talents. In a nutshell, that is what we will need to keep protecting the places we all love.

What's going on at HLT that everyone should be excited about?

We have so many projects that people should be excited about that picking one is too hard! I think everyone should be excited every week to go to our Farmers' Market to hear music and take a yoga class, to see friends, support farmers, and to buy delicious healthy food. When they come to the Farmers' Market, they should look around at our beautiful barns and get excited about how much we have done to uphold our promise to care for these buildings and how much we still plan to do. Finally, I think everyone should take a walk and enjoy our 40-acre property – its wetlands, meadow and old-growth forest – and get excited about our ongoing stream restoration project where we are planting more than 1,000 trees and replacing the crossing that was damaged in Hurricane Ida.

What do you hope to accomplish during your time as interim director?

I hope to continue the incredible legacy of Hunterdon Land Trust as we begin our second quarter-century of protecting the places you love. I want to encourage more people to come to our Farmers' Market every Sunday. I want more people to come to our wonderful programming, including our Oct. 2 program on using phone apps to help explore the natural world around you. (Details on page 8.) I want more people to visit our preserves. I want more people to learn about the great work that we do. And since I'm still serving as land acquisition director, I want to protect more land.

What else should people know about HLT?

Hunterdon Land Trust's mission is "to preserve the integrity of the rural landscapes in the Hunterdon County region by protecting and enhancing natural resources, and the cultural landscape of the historic Dvoor Farm, for public enjoyment and education." Everyone should know that HLT is committed to its mission, and we strive every day to make our spot on this earth better for all of us and for future generations.

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HLT's Ceaseless Efforts to Protect Our Critical Waterways

And, again, water protection is critically important here. HLT has concentrated efforts on these tributaries dating back to 1996 with one of our earliest preservations, Zega-Lockatong Preserve, and continued the work since then and most recently with the preservation of the Kollmer and DeSapio farms, both of which the Little Nishisakawick Creek runs through or near. (You can learn more about the preservation of the Kollmer and DeSapio farms on page 4.)

All of these efforts to safeguard our critical waterways succeed because of our incredible partners and your amazing support. Your dedication to protecting the places we all love is vital.

We ask you to support our ceaseless efforts by donating to Hunterdon Land Trust today. We have included a remittance envelope in this newsletter for your convenience, or you can make a safe and secure donation online by visiting our website at www.hunterdonlandtrust.org. As always, we thank you for your support.

Become a Preserve Steward and Protect The Places You Love!



Volunteers work with Stewardship Program Manager Emily Dunn at the Zega-Lockatong Preserve.



A volunteer removes tree cages at the Zega-Lockatong Preserve in Delaware Township.

Turn your passion for the great outdoors into action by becoming a Preserve Steward!

Hunterdon Land Trust is introducing a new program in which volunteers work together to enhance our public preserves. These Preserve Stewards will maintain walking trails and parking areas, care for plant and wildlife communities, remove invasive species, and monitor the land for any issues that might arise.

"There's so much we'd like to do with our public-access preserves, but because of our staff capacity, we're limited on how much time we can dedicate to each individual preserve," said Emily Dunn, HLT's stewardship program manager. "So, our vision is that these Preserve Stewards would be empowered to go out on the land and get some of our long-term projects done."

Volunteers would work both individually and as part of a team, and be dedicated to a specific property.

"We hope for these volunteers to feel invested in a preserve," Dunn said. "You really get to know a place when you're out there often enough, and you'll see things that others might not pick up on right away."

While the program would greatly aid HLT's efforts to protect the places we all love, it offers rewards to volunteers as well. You'll get hands-on experience learning about our local environment, and meet new friends who share your love for the outdoors. It's also a great way to get physically active while doing something that benefits others.

"It's a hard thing to put into words," Dunn said, "but you gain a certain level of peace working outside. When you clear an area of invasive species or plant new natives, it can be incredibly satisfying. And it's very gratifying to see people out there enjoying a place that you are taking care of."

"...you gain a certain level of peace working outside. When you clear an area of invasive species or plant new natives, it can be incredibly satisfying. And it's very gratifying to see people out there enjoying a place that you are taking care of."

HLT also hopes teams will tackle larger-scale projects like building new trails, repairing a kiosk that needs a little TLC, or installing nest boxes for wildlife. In addition, some properties have bluebird boxes that HLT would like to monitor on a regular basis.

"Another thing we're hoping volunteers could do, if they have an interest in it, is to start documenting what plants and wildlife they're seeing at their preserve," Dunn said. "This way we can

really put together a bio-inventory of what species we have on a property and at what time of the year. Doing so would give us a much better sense of what we have out there on the land."

HLT plans to kick off this program at the Zega-Lockatong Preserve in Delaware Township and the Dvoor Farm in Raritan Township. Both properties are exceptionally popular. "Zega, in particular, has seen a huge uptick in use over the last couple of years as people started spending more time outdoors as a result of the pandemic," Dunn said.

Projects will vary depending upon the needs of each preserve.

No experience is needed – just an interest in working outside. Ideally, teams will include at least five volunteers per preserve.

"This is the kind of program where, for instance, if you're not as familiar with invasive species, we'll teach you how to recognize and manage them," said Dunn, who will train the teams in the techniques and strategies used by HLT to care for our properties.

"The goal is to eventually build these volunteer teams for all of our public-access preserves and expand our capacity to accomplish even more," Dunn said.

To become a Preserve Steward, please email emily@hunterdonlandtrust.org or call 908-237-4582.

Celebrating Your Hunterdon County Preservation Victories!

All our preservation victories happen because of your passion for protecting our natural resources, our plant and wildlife communities, and our fields, woodlands and family farms. You'll note that the four preservation projects we spotlight on these pages are located on or near vital waterways, as we continue focusing our efforts on ensuring clean drinking water for all.

To date, we have preserved 11,419 acres, including more than 500 within the past year. We've got a few projects nearing completion, and are eagerly anticipating adding 100 preserved acres in Raritan Township soon. We thank you for donating, volunteering and caring for this beautiful place we call home!

Hunterdon Land Trust Preserves Two Kingwood Farms

An existing greenbelt of preserved land in Kingwood Township just grew even larger, thanks to the efforts of Hunterdon Land Trust and its partners.

HLT led the way in preserving the 26-acre Kollmer and the 48-acre DeSapio farms, both of which are situated within an existing corridor of preserved farmland.

"These aren't large farms, but they do fill in important puzzle pieces within this area," notes Jacqueline Middleton, HLT's Interim Executive Director.

"One of the priorities of farm preservation is contiguous agricultural areas, a criterion that both Kollmer and DeSapio met," said Bob Hornby, Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board Administrator. "We have found agriculture is most viable when farms operate side by side with minimal residential contact."

The Ridge Road portion of Kingwood is a mix of residential development on converted farmland. The DeSapio farm adjoins previous farmland preservation projects on two sides to create a 150-acre block, and the Kollmer property creates about a 225-acre block that joins across Ridge Road to another roughly 325 acres, Hornby said.

Both properties were compelling targets because the Little Nishisakawick Creek runs either near or through them. This Category One Stream – a designation given to protect waterways with exceptional ecological, recreational or water-supply significance – springs from the wetlands of Kingwood and winds southwest for about four miles before emptying into the Delaware River in Frenchtown.

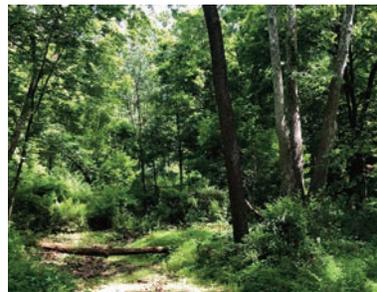
Partners in this preservation were the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the New Jersey State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC), Hunterdon County and Kingwood Township. HLT provided funding through a contract with the NRCS that provides federal funding for farmland preservation through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.

"These are two farms that were preserved largely because of this federal grant," Middleton noted. "Without it, it would have been much harder to do. Of course, we couldn't do any of this without our wonderful partners."

SADC, Hunterdon County, and Kingwood Township provided funding as well. Middleton added that using federal money in these preservations allows us to stretch our state, county, and local preservation dollars further and ultimately preserve more land in Hunterdon County.



View of the Little Nishisakawick Creek at the Kollmer Farm in Kingwood Township.



Woodlands at the Kollmer Farm in Kingwood Township.

Wesley and Melinda Kollmer's farm is adjacent to the 52-acre Dalrymple Farm, which was preserved by Hunterdon Land Trust in 2019. The property is a natural habitat for numerous birds, including the Bald Eagle, Bobolink, American Kestrel and Savannah Sparrow.

For the Kollmers, the wrong place turned out to be the right place. In 2018, the couple was looking for a farm to purchase, but their GPS led them to the wrong address. They immediately fell in love with the land they had stumbled upon serendipitously and decided it couldn't hurt to ask the owners if they were willing to sell. Much to their delight, the answer was yes.

"We had been looking at houses to buy and just couldn't find The One," Melinda Kollmer said. "We randomly found this property and it just clicked; we could see the potential for our home and family to grow here. The creek runs through the back of our property, and I knew it would be a magical place to raise our kids! This property allows us to dream. We could have cows, pigs, chickens, a huge garden; we can make this farm into anything we want for our family."

The 48-acre Martin and Cathleen DeSapio farm, located down the street from the Kollmers' farm, also serves as a natural habitat to Bald Eagles, Red-shouldered Hawks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Brown Thrashers, Blue Herons and other birds. The Little Nishisakawick Creek runs through the property too.

"These farms represent the core of HLT's mission," Middleton said. "We don't just focus on big farms; we want to promote farmland preservation throughout Hunterdon County and we're keeping a close eye on smaller farms that are strategically important. In this instance, we're helping expand one of Kingwood's preserved farmland corridors.

"And HLT is not done working. We're hoping to preserve another farm in that area in 2023," Middleton added.

A Round Up of Recent Preservation Victories



The O'Sakame Preserve

O'Sakame Preserve

Hunterdon Land Trust and its partners jumped at the opportunity to preserve this Holland Township gem. Why? Well, these charming 70 acres are just a stone's throw from the Delaware River:

"It's a rare opportunity when 70 acres that close to the Delaware River become available," Middleton said.

HLT teamed up with Holland Township and Hunterdon County to purchase this land from Gilbert Power Co.

Holland Township now owns the property and plans to install kiosks, park benches and a fitness trail. An interpretive sign will highlight the land's history. There will be passive recreation on site and trails through the wooded area, where walkers can spot a variety of birds – including perhaps a Bald Eagle – soaring and flitting overhead.

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. Holland Township Mayor Dan Bush stressed that general funding from the township was not used for this purchase.

The preserve name O'Sakame comes from the Lenape word for "across the river."



The CRC Mine Road Preserve

CRC Mine Road Preserve

Located in Bethlehem Township, the CRC Mine Road property features 97 acres of wetlands and woods. It's a serene spot, where the quiet is only interrupted by the burbling of small streams, and the call of a bird high overhead. This land was vital to preserve because a Musconetcong River tributary flows through it. It's also adjacent to other preserved lands.

Several organizations, led by HLT, made this preservation possible by working together: New Jersey Green Acres, Hunterdon County, Bethlehem Township, The Nature Conservancy, The New Jersey Conservation Foundation and the Musconetcong Watershed Association. This project 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. "This acquisition is part of a larger preservation effort in the Musconetcong River watershed aimed at improving water quality."

HLT acquired the property, then conveyed it to the county; it is part of Hunterdon County's park system.

New Jersey Green Acres funded 50 percent of the purchase price for the property, while HLT and Bethlehem Township obtained grants from Hunterdon County for the remainder. The Nature Conservancy covered some additional costs.

The Kollmer and DeSapio farms and the O'Sakame preservations all support the goals of the National Park Service's Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic Program, whose aim it is to protect the natural, historic and recreational resources that earned this stretch of the river the Wild and Scenic designation.

Thanks to Our Partners in Preservation

We extend our deepest gratitude to our Partners in Preservation: Basil Bandwagon Natural Market, Northfield Bank, Thomas McMillan – Callaway Henderson Sotheby's International Realty, Davey Resource Group, Fox Pest Control, and the Woolverton Inn. Please support the businesses that support HLT!

CRITTER CORNER

Headbanging Woodpeckers Are Vital for a Healthy Forest Ecosystem

While spending time at one of HLT's preserves, such as Idell or Zega-Lockatong, you likely have heard the rhythmic drumming of a woodpecker, or even caught a glimpse of one navigating a tree trunk. These familiar birds play a crucial role in the health of a forest ecosystem, and are considered keystone species – meaning that their presence makes a significant impact on other species in the forest.

Woodpeckers use their strong bills to create holes in dead and dying trees to use as nest cavities. Once these cavities are abandoned by the woodpeckers, they are utilized by a wide variety of other wildlife, including owls, wrens, ducks, squirrels, and bats, who aren't able to build these cavities themselves and therefore depend upon the woodpeckers for the creation of their homes.

Dead trees, often called snags, are such an important part of the ecosystem that they impact HLT's management strategies at our preserves. While dead trees in high-risk locations, such as near trails or parking areas, are not wanted, we allow dead trees to remain standing whenever possible to provide this crucial habitat. Beyond the animals that utilize cavities, many wood-eating insects require snags as a food source, and in turn become food for insect-eating birds, mammals, and reptiles. Once these snags fall naturally, they become shelter for amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, and other wildlife.

We're interested in learning what woodpeckers – and other wildlife – you see on our preserves. Report your bird sightings on Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird database (www.ebird.org), and other wildlife sightings on iNaturalist (www.inaturalist.org). If you'd like to join our efforts to manage and enhance HLT's preserves for wildlife, contact our Stewardship Program Manager, Emily Dunn (emily@hunterdonlandtrust.org) about volunteer opportunities.

Seven woodpecker species can be found in Hunterdon County:



Downy Woodpecker:
small woodpecker with black and white back, white below.



Northern Flicker:
brown woodpecker with black speckles on feathers. Unlike other woodpeckers, often found foraging for insects on the ground.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:
black-and-white coloration with red crown. Drills horizontal lines of shallow holes in trees to obtain their primary food source, sap. Found late fall-early spring.



Red-bellied Woodpecker:
black-and-white bars on back, red crown and nape.



Hairy Woodpecker:
similar in appearance to Downy, but larger overall, and longer bill.



Pileated Woodpecker:
large black woodpecker with striking white stripes on neck and bright red crest.



Red-headed Woodpecker:
white body, black-and-white wings, and bright red head. Less common in Hunterdon County; listed as Threatened in NJ.

Make a Gift to Protect the Places You Love!

Your compassion and generosity make a tremendous difference!

Your help provides clean drinking water; protects farms, fields and forests; safeguards native plant and wildlife communities; and ensures that our county's rich cultural legacy will be cherished and handed down for the next generation to enjoy. Simply drive along our county back roads and you can see the impact you've had.

Thanks to you, Hunterdon Land Trust has preserved more than 11,400 acres right here at home. As your local nonprofit dedicated to protecting and stewarding land in the Hunterdon County area, our targeted preservation work mitigates flooding and protects natural resources.

To succeed in protecting the places you love amidst these challenging times, please give generously.

You can make a one-time gift to HLT or, better yet, become an Evergreen Partner by joining our monthly giving program. You can make this happen simply by enclosing a check in the envelope included in this newsletter; or making a secure online donation at www.hunterdonlandtrust.org/get-involved.

Other ways you can protect the places you love include:

- **Matching Gifts:** Make the most of your gift to Hunterdon Land Trust. Many companies will match the charitable gifts of their employees, so be sure to check with your employer to see if it has a matching gift program. Most corporate procedures are simple: Just request a Matching Gift Form from your company and submit it to Hunterdon Land Trust, along with your gift.
- **Planned Giving:** Create a lasting legacy by including HLT in your estate plans. You can make a gift through your will or outside your will, and even make a gift that gives you income for life. Planned giving mechanisms include bequests, gifts of appreciated securities, IRAs, life insurance, real estate, charitable remainder trusts and charitable lead trusts.

If you have already designated a planned gift to HLT, or if you would like to learn more, please contact our Director of Administrative and Social Affairs, Laura Orbine, at HLTadmin@hunterdonlandtrust.org, or call 908-237-4582.



Efforts to restore our Dvoor Farm headquarters continue unabated.

Dvoor Farm Restoration Efforts Continue

Our plans call for a sensitive rehabilitation of the barns, so they can be utilized for children's camps, corporate retreats, educational programming and life celebrations; infrastructure improvements to provide public restrooms and improve traffic flow and parking; and natural resource restorations to benefit pollinator meadows and wetlands, streams and stormwater management.

Currently, the project's design team has almost completed the design development phase of the bank barn. The team has completed a site plan; a landscape plan with plantings, lighting and signage; a new entrance to the site; and a design for an on-site wastewater management system.

One of the aims of this project is to heighten the community's awareness of the farmstead's rich history, and allow everyone to experience these unique structures and how the historic character of a building can be preserved for a new purpose. Another prospective bonus is that the project will bring economic benefits to the surrounding community through an increase in tourism, helping to fulfill the goals of Hunterdon County's Economic Development Strategy.

We encourage you to learn more about this project by contacting our Director of Cultural Resources, Catherine Suttle, at catherine@hunterdonlandtrust.org.



HLT Farmers' Market Nurtures Healthy Communities

Our award-winning Farmers' Market provides an essential link in our shared vision of supporting healthy communities here in the Hunterdon County area.

Hunterdon Land Trust – thanks to your support – works to preserve and nurture land, promotes clean air and drinking water, healthy plant and wildlife communities, and supports local family farms. Our local farmers, practicing sustainability, nurture both the health of the land and the people they feed.

For example, consider three of our year-round farmers:

- Cabbage Throw Farm at Comeback Farm, in the fertile Musconetcong River valley, maintains a small environmental footprint by adopting a “human-scaled approach” to farming, growing some 30 to 40 different seasonal and organic vegetables on a roughly one-acre garden plot.
- Pittstown’s Two Barn Farm utilizes regenerative practices that focus on the health of the soil, the environment and the community as a whole.
- AquaSprout Farms operates a hydroponics system in which growing plants and fish exist together in a recirculating ecosystem. Together they thrive, forming a system of sustainable, environmentally friendly farming that allows AquaSprout to produce greens and vegetables year-round, using organic practices.

These, and all our farmers, deliver wholesome food to our Sunday market. The Dvoor Farm serves as a venue where farmers and shoppers connect, nurturing a healthy community.

Shoppers, in turn, benefit from the fresh-picked and nutritious local food they find at our market. They become familiar with the person who has planted the tomato seeds, harvested the honey or baked the bread. Consider this: You know the person who fixes your car; cuts your hair and prepares your taxes. Shouldn't you know the person who grows the food that nurtures you and your family?

To complete the circle, as shoppers, your purchases benefit our local farmers. And by supporting Hunterdon Land Trust, you nurture an environment where a healthy community can thrive.

It may be the quintessential example of how we can achieve anything by working together.

Our Farmers' Market is open every Sunday through November 20 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Dvoor Farm, 111 Mine St. in Flemington.

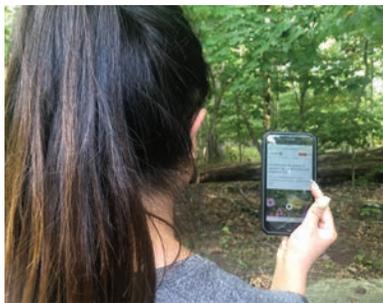


Summer's finest at the Two Barn Farm stand.



Shoppers queue up at the Cabbage Throw Farm at Comeback Farm stand.

Technology and Nature Merge in HLT Program



Join us Oct. 2 and learn about some cool nature apps for your phone.

Join Hunterdon Land Trust for a guided hike, and learn how different phone apps can help you identify and document the natural world around you!

Our Stewardship Program Manager, Emily Dunn, will introduce participants to eBird, iNaturalist, and Merlin Bird ID – popular apps for identifying and recording observations of birds, plants, insects, and other wildlife. No prior experience, or identification skills, required! We will also discuss the value of these apps for Hunterdon Land Trust's stewardship efforts.

This program will be held **Sunday, Oct. 2 at 10:30 a.m.** and will begin in the Dvoor Farm wagon house. It's free, but space is limited – RSVP to emily@hunterdonlandtrust.org or call 908-237-4582. Participants are encouraged to download the apps to their personal phones and create free accounts ahead of time, in order to participate actively during the hike – instructions will be provided upon registering.