

GREENWAYS

Newsletter of
Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc.
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In Perpetuity

The Stony Brook Greenway

Since 1987, Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc. has been helping conservation-minded landowners protect their lands along the Stony Brook. Some of these lands have limited development potential, yet they include many important environmental elements which contribute to stream stabilization and flood control and help protect wildlife, plant life, and water quality. Each protected acre joins a growing ribbon of publicly and privately preserved lands along the length of the stream—the Stony Brook Greenway.

The Stony Brook, which reaches from Hunterdon County's Sourland Mountains to the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park in Princeton Township, is one of central New Jersey's most important and most beautiful waterways. From its headwaters in the rural Amwells, the Stony Brook passes through farmland in Hopewell and Lawrence Townships, along the northern border of Pennington Borough, and through residential and farm areas in Princeton Township before it empties into Carnegie Lake. The Stony Brook has played a significant role in our area's history; its protection will make it an equally important part of our future.

Before their displacement by Europeans, the Lenape Indians inhabited the Hopewell Valley and the Sourland Mountains; for them the Stony Brook was a source of drinking water and fish, a sweat lodge location, and a guiding route on semi-annual travels between Hopewell Valley and the Atlantic coast. The Stony Brook may have had a wilder character then: "the banks . . . show that before cutting off the virgin forests it was a wide and turbulent stream."¹ Dense forests of hickory, oak, beech, and maple trees supported black bear, panther, and wolf as well as the more familiar deer, raccoon, opossum, and turkey.

Central New Jersey forests were once so thick that early settlers could only travel by foot or single-file on horseback as they migrated to the inviting watershed framed by Stony Brook and Assunpink Creek. In the 1600s these "gently undulating, well-watered, and drained"² lands were perfect for farming. The Stony Brook and Shipetaukin Creek were large enough to power grist mills, and the "periodic flooding of the Stony Brook frequently replenished the loam which had accumulated for centuries to a depth of eight feet."² The population quickly grew and land was cleared for agriculture and travel.



Virginia Creeper
(*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

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Inside

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Griggstown/Canal State Park

We're working to preserve more lands near historic Griggstown, thanks to a new round of funding by Green Acres. These 55 acres of rural property lie adjacent to Wilson Fields and parallel the D&R Canal State Park. Some of the lands are wooded, with the fields on the east side of the canal mainly in agriculture. The property is a critical link in a proposed open space corridor which will buffer and parallel the canal between Griggstown and Six-Mile Run.

Hamilton/Trenton Marsh

Over the next year, we will be promoting the marsh with help from a \$30,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation, and grants from PSE&G, the Delaware Estuary Program, and Mobil R&D. Look for news of more events, slide shows, talks, and a brochure about the marsh's incredible resources. In addition, we have recommended three properties to Green Acres for purchase; preservation of these wetland and bluff properties will protect fragile animal and plant habitat.

Crosswicks Creek

In September, D&R Greenway convened a meeting of representatives from four counties along the Crosswicks Creek. Participants discussed progress in creating a greenway along the entire length of the creek, which begins in Ocean County and flows into the Delaware River at Bordertown. Monmouth County related its successful techniques of landowner contact and creative planning: 75% of their greenway is complete. Our role was to facilitate a discussion about ways to coordinate efforts and cross borders in order to preserve the entire corridor.

Assunpink Greenway

The City of Trenton is a few steps closer to creating an urban greenway along Assunpink Creek. With a grant from the Fund for New Jersey, D&R Greenway staff put together an inventory of properties along the Assunpink, rating them for acquisition priority. Top rated tracts were submitted by Trenton to Green Acres for acquisition funding consideration. ■

From the Director

MAUDE BACKES SNYDER
Executive Director

The coming year will be a wonderful one for central New Jersey land conservation! D&R Greenway was approved for \$2.5 million in matching grants by the Green Acres nonprofit grants program.

One of only three groups to win approval of five projects by Green Acres (the others were the New Jersey Conservation Foundation and The Nature Conservancy), Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc. has truly established itself as central New Jersey's open space advocate.

1992's successful Green Acres bond measure allocated \$20 million to nonprofit organizations to use for land acquisition. With this funding qualified land conservancies can purchase land, or easements on important lands, for permanent protection. Since all of the money we

receive goes to direct acquisition costs (i.e. no overhead), the program efficiently uses public funds—especially since we will use the State's \$2.5 million to acquire properties with a combined value of \$5 million.

The other good news is that we have done our homework by talking with many of the landowners in our project areas well ahead of the grant approvals. Land conservation is often very time consuming, and requires attention to a myriad of important details.

Our initial work will help narrow the gap between the legislature's appropriation of funding and closing the deal. In the next 12 to 18 months we hope to nearly double the number of acres we have protected along the Stony Brook from 500 acres to close to 900 acres! More detailed descrip-

tions of each project area are on page three, and can be located on the enclosed map.

The Stony Brook Greenway was our first project, and from the accompanying article you will learn about the stream's importance. This model project has given us many opportunities to practice land preservation in a rapidly growing and developing region.

In the early days of the project we helped each municipality to design and adopt greenway elements in Master Plans or stream corridor protection ordinances. During the past three years we have worked directly or in association with other groups or public agencies to protect private and public lands.

Many of the properties we seek to preserve will be protected through conservation easements, which are described below. These deed restrictions benefit the landowner, the conservation organization, and the lands themselves.

Conservation Options

The Conservation Easement

If you wish to continue to own your land and to protect it, one advantageous and flexible option is a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a restriction created to preserve land, yet it is tailored to suit your needs, protect land as you wish and allow activities you want on your land.

A conservation easement is a conveyance of a partial interest of real estate which allows the owner to retain control of the property and its use. You can continue to use, sell, lease, or convey the land, subject to the terms of the easement. The responsibilities and rewards of ownership continue and unless you specify otherwise, you retain full control over public access. In other words, there is no public access unless and until you choose to permit it.

A key advantage to the conservation easement is its adaptability. All activities which change the open or

natural condition of the property can be prohibited, while agriculture or forestry activities and the construction of roads and buildings necessary to carry them out can be allowed. A conservation easement enables you to protect your land forever from undesirable uses and abuses by future owners.

The conservation easement decreases the fair market value of the land by limiting the potential development and use of the property. When the easement is donated, the donation may qualify as a charitable gift and the financial benefits may be significant.

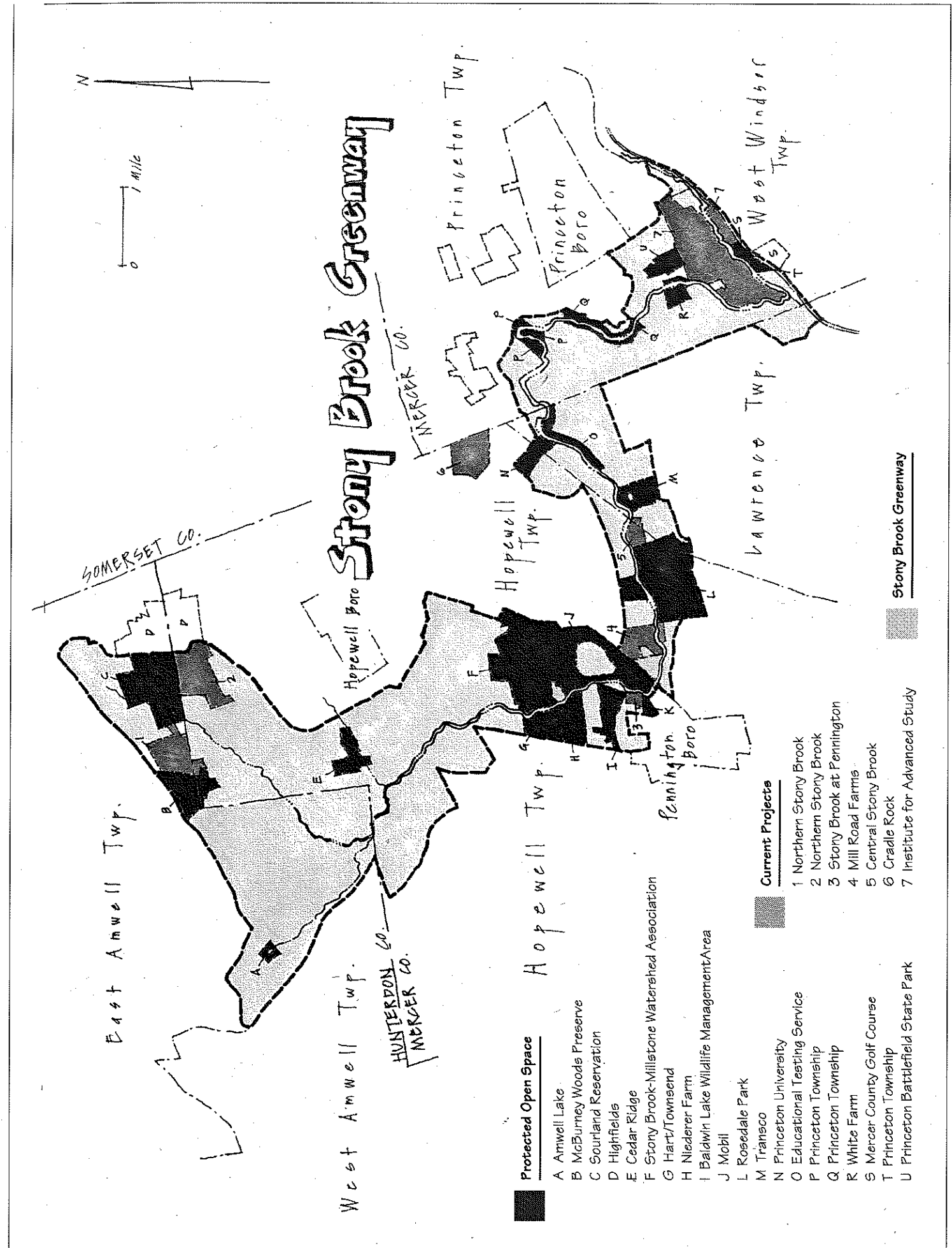
To qualify as a tax-deductible charitable gift, a conservation easement must be granted in perpetuity to a public agency or a conservation or historic preservation organization. A conservation easement must also serve the public good, preserving significant wildlife habitat, open space, scenic vistas, farmland, or watershed. The

terms of the easement must be tailored to the physical and ecological characteristics of the land, the objectives of the landowner and the conservancy organization, and the requirements of the State and local governments.

The timing of a conservation easement can be immediate, by bequest, or by a remainder interest with reserved life estate. Each vehicle has different tax advantages affecting income tax, estate tax, or both. By lowering the fair market value of your land, a conservation easement may also result in a reduction of property assessment and property taxes.

This article does not address all the details of valuation and deductibility. Should you be interested in exploring the benefits of granting a conservation easement, it is advisable to seek the counsel of several specialized professionals including a tax attorney or accountant, the proposed recipient of the gift, an appraiser, and surveyor. We are always happy to help you get started; call us at (609) 452-1441.

BY KATHERINE BUTTOLPH



Stony Brook Greenway

The following Stony Brook Greenway projects have each been approved for \$500,000 matching grants by the NJ Green Acres nonprofit program.

Northern Stony Brook: The characteristic ecology of the Sourland Mountains is evident throughout these 200 acres which lie at the top of the Stony Brook system, and which will link McBurney Woods Preserve to the Hunterdon County Preserve and Highfields, protect mature forests, plant and animal habitat, and headwater streams of the Stony Brook.

Stony Brook at Pennington: A stand of beech trees and a diverse population of spring wildflowers thrive on this mostly forested property, which includes stream frontage, floodplain, and wetlands. Preservation will link the 48.7 acres with the Baldwin Lake Wildlife Management Area. A planned footpath will eventually connect Pennington Borough to the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.

Central Stony Brook: Bordering the Stony Brook, the stream corridor of this 36-acre farm is forested floodplain and wetlands. A trail along the Stony Brook will connect with Rosedale Park and nearly complete a link to the Transco preserve.

Cradle Rock: Just outside the actual borders of the Stony Brook Greenway, Cradle Rock is located on the southern slopes of Mt. Rose. This 128-acre tract, well-known for its boulder fields, includes beautiful rocky outcrops with scenic vistas, and vast diabase boulder fields popular among climbers. The property's wetland areas support a variety of plants including the NJ endangered wild comfrey, and its intermediate aged woodlands are a breeding habitat for a number of bird species showing a decline in the eastern deciduous forest. ■



Sassafras
(*Sassafras albidum*)

In Perpetuity

Continued from page 1

As the area grew more accessible, the topography and the economy changed. Early roadways based on Lenape footpaths evolved into an extensive network connecting cities and towns along the Philadelphia-New York axis. The Delaware and Raritan Canal was completed by 1834, and in 1899 a trolley line bisected Lawrenceville farms in order to connect Princeton with Trenton. The Stony Brook has also been altered over time: mills, dams, bridges, and roads were built in, over, and alongside the stream, filling the needs of everyday life.

Situated almost entirely in the Piedmont Plateau, the stream derives much of its character from the four rock types that characterize that formation locally—Brunswick shale, Lockatong argillite, Stockton sandstone, and igneous diabase. Extensive deforestation in the Stony Brook watershed worsened the Piedmont formation's already poor water storage capacity, and during drought conditions portions of the Stony Brook have no measurable flows. The weathering of the parent bedrock has produced soil with similarly poor water holding and transmitting properties. The periodic flooding which created fertile farmlands, now closes roads; the combination of bedrock and soils contributes to the Stony Brook's ability to quickly rise or fall in water level.

Centuries of agriculture and decades of development have taken a toll on the Stony Brook. Despite the addition of five soil erosion and sediment control dams, the stream quickly turns opaque following a rain storm. Relatively high levels

of phosphorus and fecal coliform bacteria and the decomposition of organic matter using up dissolved oxygen, combined with a poor assimilative capacity, have contributed to a stressed biological community.

Additional excessive and poorly located development along the stream would increase flood damage, degrade water quality, deplete wildlife habitats and aquatic ecosystems, and spoil the beauty and natural character of the region. Even with sophisticated technology it is difficult and expensive to replicate natural systems once they are destroyed.

The Stony Brook corridor retains enough of its original character that conservation groups, municipalities, and residents are actively pursuing its preservation and protection. With the help of forward-thinking landowners, D&R Greenway is piecing together the Stony Brook Greenway, creating a ribbon of publicly and privately owned lands that are protected in perpetuity. Many acres already have been protected (see front and back of map). Yet a great deal of work remains to be done. The long-range success of our efforts depends on the involvement and support of community members—people who share a deep appreciation for this vital natural resource, and who are dedicated to protecting an ecological treasure that is so intertwined with our history. ■

1. Hopewell Valley Heritage, by Alice Blackwell Lewis 2. Old Lawrenceville, by Donald H. Tyler



New England Aster
(*Aster novae-angliae*)

Creating the Stony Brook Greenway

In 1987 Delaware & Raritan Greenway chose the Stony Brook as a pilot greenway project—the first in the region. It is a beautiful stream, with distinct changes in appearance over its 21-mile course. From its headwaters the stream works its way down and around the boulder-strewn forests of the Sourland Mountains in East Amwell, then gathers volume as it travels through the shallow farm valleys of Hopewell Township. In northern Lawrence Township it is contained by steep, dramatic banks, and farther downstream in Princeton Township the Stony Brook empties into Carnegie Lake.

D&R Greenway began this pilot greenway project by mapping environmental elements and property ownership along the stream corridor. Then, with a map and a plan, we approached several municipalities along the Stony Brook to encourage their participation in this effort. First Lawrence and East Amwell townships formed both greenway committees and greenway plans; both communities are implementing these plans and acquiring properties within the greenway. In addition, Lawrence Township adopted a strong new stream corridor ordinance, and more recently, Hopewell Township adopted a greenway element into its master plan.

After this initial work with municipalities, D&R Greenway began to focus on specific acquisition projects. We now have many projects along the Stony Brook, most involving gifts or below market purchase of land or conservation easements. Lands we have helped to preserve along the Stony Brook include:

McBurney Woods Preserve

This 177-acre Sourland Mountain preserve contains headwaters of the Stony Brook, a rare plant, forests and fields. The 50% purchase/50% donation was

acquired by D&R Greenway and funded by a matching grant from the Green Acres nonprofit program.

Hopewell Twp., Mercer Co. and East Amwell Twp., Hunterdon Co.

Cedar Ridge

This 85-acre property includes farmlands and forest. The owners donated a conservation easement with public access. A short loop trail begins at Van Dyke Road; trail guides describing the ecology and geology are available for hikers at the entrance.

Hopewell Twp., Mercer Co.

Niederer Farm

D&R Greenway played an integral role in initiating this 170-acre farmland preservation project. The State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) and Mercer County purchased the development rights to the land. Mercer County also purchased a trail easement.

Hopewell Twp., Mercer Co.

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation

Transco donated an 85-acre conservation and agricultural easement, with future trail use. The land is a combination of farmlands, forest and floodplain. D&R Greenway now owns the easement under which an extensive wildlife enhancement and management plan has been implemented. A joint effort with the Lawrence Township Conservation Foundation and the NJ Conservation Foundation.

Lawrence Twp., Mercer Co.

Educational Testing Service Trail

D&R Greenway's input into ETS's development plan settlement led to the donation of a conservation easement and trail access to Lawrence Township. The ETS trail follows the forested stream corridor.

Lawrence Twp., Mercer Co.

Some important pending projects

Institute for Advanced Study

This 530-acre property encompasses historic landscapes and farmlands, forests, and rare plant species. D&R Greenway initiated a combined effort which includes state and township participation to purchase the development rights. A major campaign, combining the efforts of a number of environmental and historical groups, is underway to permanently protect these critical lands.

Princeton Twp., Mercer Co.

Northern Stony Brook

The owners of these 200 acres in the Sourland Mountains at the top of the Stony Brook system intend to partially donate their lands to D&R Greenway through a below-market sale. This acquisition will link McBurney Woods Preserve to the Hunterdon County Preserve and Highfields, protect mature forests, plant and animal habitat, and headwater streams of the Stony Brook.

East Amwell Twp., Hunterdon Co. and Hopewell Twp., Mercer Co.

Back Brook Preserve

The owner will donate this 11-acre property in the Back Brook headwaters area of the Sourland Mountain property to D&R Greenway. Over time we hope to connect this with East Amwell's open space network.

East Amwell, Hunterdon Co.

Stony Brook at Pennington

Preservation through a below market sale to D&R Greenway will link this 48.7 acre tract with the Baldwin Lake Wildlife Management Area. A planned footpath will eventually connect Pennington Borough to the Niederer Farm and the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.

Hopewell Twp., Mercer Co.

Central Stony Brook

Bordering the Stony Brook, the stream corridor of this 36-acre farm is forested floodplain and wetlands. D&R Greenway intends to purchase this farm and create a trail connecting with Rosedale Park and nearly completing a link to the Transco preserve.

Lawrence Twp., Mercer Co.

Cradle Rock

D&R Greenway plans to purchase this 128-acre property at a below market sale. It includes beautiful rocky outcrops with scenic vistas, and vast diabase boulder fields popular among climbers. Wetland areas support the NJ endangered wild comfrey, and its woodlands are an important bird habitat.

Princeton and Hopewell Twp., Mercer Co.

Mill Road Farms

D&R Greenway initiated preservation of this important 130-acre farmland with a beautiful vista of the Hopewell Valley, bringing together the key groups and facilitating negotiations. The purchase will be a State Agriculture Development Committee and Mercer County purchase, so that the key agricultural lands will continue to be farmed, and the stream corridor and buffer will be annexed to Rosedale Park.

Hopewell Twp., Mercer Co.

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Delaware & Raritan Greenway, Inc., is a regional, 501(c)(3) nonprofit land conservancy dedicated to the preservation of a continuous open-space network enveloping central New Jersey's waterways and unified by the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park.

D&R Greenway began in 1987 as an alliance of regional nonprofit groups, and was incorporated in 1989.

Our thanks to . . .

We wish to thank retiring board members Duffy Hutter, Harry Sayen, and Dick Sword for their dedication and for the expertise they so generously shared during their years as D&R Greenway trustees.

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