



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### To all the caring folks in the Rancocas Watershed:

After complimenting the marvelous volunteer activities in our latest high-lighted watershed township, Hainesport, and complimenting other townships for being more "proactive", I feel compelled to make a plea.

So much development is happening in many of our watershed towns that your Board of Trustees is feeling the pressures of not being able to provide the necessary protection for our water supply and water quality that so many take for granted as being "limitless" and "treatable".

Why we became a land trust was to preserve land in the watershed, one of the many important steps in maintaining clean drinking water. But land preservation alone does not do the job. We must depend on our townships to enact ordinances that provide more protection than even the NJDEP can provide with its rules and regulations. If an applicant meets all the requirements for obtaining state permits, the only other protective measure is a local ordinance. Once an applicant is before a planning or zoning board, very little improvement for water protection can be accomplished if there is no ordinance in place.

I am putting forth a challenge to every member and reader of this newsletter in our 30 municipalities. The challenge is: Ask your town clerk or environmental commission for a copy of:

1. Any ordinance that pertains to stormwater control.
2. Any ordinance that allows a developer to "cluster" the number of units, without necessarily increasing the density, to provide for more open space.

Please fax or mail copies to the Rancocas Conservancy address. I will commit to you to read every submission and get back to you with an opinion of what more could be accomplished by influencing the towns to be more protective with its ordinances. (You could

*continued on page 2*

## Conservation Easement Deductions Under Attack *by Chris Jage*

### Join the Fight to Stop the Proposals

*(Editor's note: The Rancocas Conservancy is an organizational member of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), a national non-profit that endeavors to ensure that the work of groups like ours can continue by representing us in Washington D.C. and by providing all land trusts with access to the best tools and expertise available to preserve our nations natural and cultural heritage.)*

On January 27, 2005, a report released by the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation shocked the land trust community by proposing major decreases in the federal tax deductions for conservation easements and bargain sales of land for conservation purposes. The proposal, if adopted, would end the work of land trusts as we know it.

The Rancocas Conservancy is supporting the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) in a vigorous response along with a coalition of national conservation leaders and allies. But to succeed, we need the help of every friend, staff member and board member.

### The New Tax Proposals

The Joint Committee has proposed that deductions for conservation easements be limited to 33% of appraised value. No deduction will be allowed for the donation of an easement on land used for a personal residence. The

Committee also proposes changing the deductions associated with donations or bargain sales of land by limiting such donations to the owner's "basis"—that is, the cost of the land plus any capital improvements made over the years.

### The Impact on Land Trusts

These transactional details may seem arcane, but they are often the incentives that landowners have looked toward (and conservation advocates have worked hard to enact) when deciding to sell land for conservation as opposed to development. Simply put, these rules will limit the Conservancy's ability to protect the waters and habitats of the Rancocas Creek Watershed.

### Please Help Today

You must act today, because our organization depends on the tax incentives the Joint Committee on taxation has attacked. Letters to our US Senators and Representatives asking them to help in fighting these proposals are essential. Our local opinion does count. Draft letters and more information—including how to email or write our elected officials are on the LTA web site at [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org). Information can also be obtained by calling 609-859-8860. Your letters can make the difference in ensuring that local, private land and water conservation efforts like ours will thrive in America.



## Beechwoods Preserve Cleanup

It was a beautiful fall day in September when a group of Rancocas Conservancy volunteers and board members set their sights on posting and removing trash from the 47 acre Beechwoods Preserve in Pemberton. The crew posted approximately 75 signs, picked up bags of trash and also removed an illegal ATV bridge from the property. In an ironic twist, we

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**Presidents Column** *continued from page 1*

also let me know if none exist, which would be even more telling.) I have attended enough meetings in the watershed that, without money to buy the land or an easement, this is what needs to be done to protect our drinking water.

Certainly, if you have questions before your visit to your town hall, I would be

happy to answer them. 856-234-2787

Thank you for taking the time to meet my challenge.



President, Board of Trustees

**P.S. Please note our new address and phone number.**

## Alternatives to Harsh Chemicals

When using cleaning products, it is important to think beyond yourself and be sure that you are not using chemicals that are damaging the water quality in the watershed. Here are some common alternatives to harsh chemical cleaners that are very accessible and less expensive:

<b>To clean:</b>	<b>Alternative:</b>
Drains	Baking soda and vinegar
Floors & toilets	Borax, dish detergent, hot water
Greasy hands	Baby oil, then soap
Furniture	Lemon juice and mineral oil; toothpaste removes water stains
Ovens	Salt and vinegar, baking soda and water
Windows	Ammonia and vinegar
Pet stains	Dish detergent and vinegar
Brass	Flour, salt and vinegar
<b>To:</b>	<b>Use:</b>
Make abrasive cleanser	A mix of salt, baking soda and water
Deodorize	Buy house plants, use potpourri, candles, cedar shavings
Make fabric softener	Add baking soda to final rinse
Repel fleas	Add brewer's yeast to pet food
Keep pests off house plants	Use insecticidal soap

## Meet Our New Watershed Ambassador

Hello! My name is Sonal Patel and I am the new Rancocas Watershed Ambassador for 2005–2006. I was born here in Tabernacle. My wonderful teachers in Tabernacle Middle School and Shawnee High School, as well as being surrounded by the beautiful Pine Barrens, inspired me to pursue a career in the environmental field. I graduated from Virginia Tech this past May with a B.S. in Environmental Science, concentrating in aquatics, and minors in Chemistry and Political Science. There, I discovered an interest in collecting and analyzing aquatic macroinvertebrates to assess a stream's health.

The Watershed Ambassador Program is a joint program between AmeriCorps and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Watershed Management. There are 20 Watershed Ambassadors throughout New Jersey, each serving to protect their respective

watershed. I am looking forward to working with the Rancocas Conservancy, which has hosted the Rancocas Watershed Ambassador for the past four years.

As a Watershed Ambassador, my job is to help teach the community about watershed issues and conduct assessments of our streams, which combines my three passions of the environment, teaching, and stream assessment. I plan on reaching out to people of all ages by making presentations to schools, organizations, and at festivals, and leading groups of volunteers to do stream assessments, site clean-ups, storm drain markings, and other tasks to help protect the watershed. If you would like me to make a presentation to your school or organization, or would like to volunteer to help protect the watershed, feel free to contact me at Sonal\_WMA19@yahoo.com. I look forward to working with you!

## RANCOCAS CONSERVANCY

P.O. Box 2188  
Vincetown, NJ 08088  
(609) 858-8860  
rancocas@bigfoot.com

### MISSION

The purpose of the Rancocas Conservancy is to preserve, protect, and enhance the ecological and cultural integrity of the Rancocas Creek Watershed.

### GOALS

1) To act as the land trust for the Rancocas Creek Watershed accepting donations of land and conservation easements, acquiring land deemed suitable for permanent protection, and for transferring land to other entities for appropriate conservation management

2) To propose, advocate, and carry out cooperative conservation strategies among the citizenry, public and private sectors in the Rancocas Creek Watershed and adjacent areas

3) To educate the citizenry, public and private sectors about the ecological and cultural heritage of the Rancocas Creek Watershed

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## Land and Water Hand in Hand? *by Melanie Reding*

Have you ever wondered what land preservation has to do with water quality? Recently I was asked that question for a grant and the answer I discovered was "Everything"!

I have to admit that I was a little surprised by that answer. I'm new to the arena of land preservation and hadn't completely made the connection until I had to answer that question. What I found is that land and water are intrinsically linked. Virtually every piece of land considered for preservation involves water, whether in the form of rivers, streams, ponds or as springs, bogs, marshes and other wetlands. You can't change the land without changing the water that flows over it, around it and through it.

### *Let me paint a picture...*

It's been a while since you have been to the home where you grew up. In your mind you can picture the field filled with wild flowers on the edge of the little forest grove in which you loved to play hide and seek. You can hear the trickling of the stream you fished in and can almost see the ripples on the edge of the water where the frogs would dive to escape your footsteps. As you get closer to the place you love you notice how it has **drastically** changed. You don't remember that Wal-Mart, or all of those new homes with their immaculate lawns. As you look ahead, the field you remember is gone. It's a bank

now and your forest has become a parking lot. Your stream is still there but there is garbage everywhere. Instead of frogs you find a mylar balloon, a broken brick and a piece of plastic sheeting. The stream-banks are eroded and the water is muddy with an oily film on it.

By now, we all know the negative effects of uncontrolled development on our communities. Increased congestion, loss of habitat, and declining air quality are just a few of the issues. They are some of the reasons voters consistently vote for open space taxes. We decided to increase our quality of life! We want open space for our children and grandchildren. We know the importance of preserved habitat to plants and animals. Yet most of us are just starting to discover **that we need preserved land to protect our drinking water**. Luna Leopold (former Chief Hydrologist of the USGS and son of the conservationist Aldo Leopold) has said, "Water is the most critical resource issue of our lifetime and our children's lifetime. The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land!"

The threat posed to our drinking water is increasing as more land is developed in the watersheds supplying our drinking water. All water that falls within a watershed eventually flows as runoff into an above-ground water supply or under-ground aquifer. It carries with it the oil

and toxic metals from roads, pesticides from lawns, manure from farms and a variety of other contaminants to drinking water. When land is protected, natural cover reduces the amount of pollutants that enter our water supply. For these reasons development within the Rancocas Creek Watershed creates a dual threat to our water quality. As natural lands are degraded, their buffering capacity is reduced. And as development spreads in our watershed, land and water pollution increase.

In addition to the increased pollution, the loss of source lands – the watersheds that supply surface water and the aquifer recharge areas that provide groundwater sources – impacts not only the quality of our drinking water but also the amount available for our use. Development increases demand for drinking water while simultaneously decreasing the ability of the land to recharge our water supplies.

Decisions about how we use our land over the next decades will decide the future quality and quantity of our water in the Rancocas Creek Watershed. The increasing threats to our drinking water require an integrated and comprehensive approach of which land preservation has become a vital integral part. When we protect our land we protect our drinking water – they go hand in hand!

### **YES! I want to support the Rancocas Conservancy in their effort to preserve and protect the Rancocas Creek.**

Individual \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00      Sponsor \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00      Benefactor \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 500.00

Family \_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00      Patron \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00      Steward \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone# \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL THIS FORM TO:  
RANCOCAS  
CONSERVANCY  
P.O. BOX 2188  
VINCENTOWN, NJ 08088**

Please make your check payable to the Rancocas Conservancy  
Membership contributions are tax deductible

### **I would like to volunteer my time to help the Rancocas Conservancy grow!**

In 1990, a group of concerned citizens formed the Rancocas Conservancy, a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation to acquire, hold and preserve open space within the Rancocas Creek Watershed. We invite you to participate in the activities of the Conservancy. Please consider volunteering in a way you find personally rewarding. Volunteers are needed in the following areas:

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter       | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity/Media Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Stewardship | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising    | <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Liaison |

## Drinking Water Protection

Under the EPA's drinking water protection program, the NJDEP assessed every public water supply in the state—from large systems like NJ American to the well serving a local diner.

These assessments have three components: 1) a delineation of the area over which water flows to wells or intakes; 2) a list of significant potential sources of pollution within the delineated areas; and 3) an estimate of just how susceptible the water system is to the delineated threats, given its geological setting and its monitoring history.

The main idea behind the program was to put this information into the hands of local citizens and town officials, who could then take actions to reduce or minimize the threats to their water system.

The assessments are on the internet at: [www.nj.gov/swap/creport.htm](http://www.nj.gov/swap/creport.htm)

## Informational sessions presented by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance Protecting Water Quality and Supply

*Learn what you can do to protect this valuable natural resource*

- Status of water quality and supply in Southern New Jersey
- Overview of impacts to water quality and supply
- Water saving technology
- Suggestions for landscaping practices
- Presentation of model ordinances
- More on what you can do in your town

*The Pinelands Preservation Alliance will be scheduling sessions throughout the Pinelands. If you are interested in having a presentation for your local environmental commission, homeowners association or town, please contact Jaclyn Rhoads or Rich Bizub at 609-859-8860, ext. 18 or 16.*

## Beechwoods Preserve *continued from page 1*

plan on using the wooden bridge supports salvaged from the bridge for a preserve sign on our most recent acquisition in Medford. The Beechwoods Preserve has been a favorite ATV playground and dumpsite. There are still some larger pieces of trash, such as old vehicle parts and outdated appliances that will be removed in the

near future. Now that the property has been posted with the Rancocas Conservancy signs stating no motorized vehicles, we will be able to start controlling the severe damage to our property and, if necessary, prosecute ATVer's with trespassing which is one step in the ongoing battle against illegal ATV use.

## Rancocas Journal

RANCOCAS CONSERVANCY  
4 Sawmill Road Medford, NJ 08055



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