

Rancocas Journal

NEWSLETTER OF THE RANCOCAS CONSERVANCY
VOLUME 11 NUMBER 2 FALL 2006



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Our 15th Annual Meeting in June, celebrating our first watershed festival and honoring 13 Burlington County municipalities and Burlington County for their commitment to preserving land in the Rancocas Creek Watershed, was a great success. Our guest speaker, Joe Laufer, Burlington County Historian, provided insight in to the amazing connection between our Creek and the development of our County. Thank you all for dedicating your time and talent.

For some, passing from summer to fall evokes nostalgia of summer vacations and anticipation of our beautiful fall colors in our Rancocas Watershed.

Before the anticipated holidays and winter sets in, there is an important message I urge you to consider. On the November 7th ballot, Question #1 refers to asking you, the voter, to consider extending the existing funding mechanism for farmland, open space, and historic preservation. **The reason it is on the ballot this year is to better leverage the incoming funds by extending them for a longer period of time.**

The Burlington County Freeholders are committed to continuing their focus on providing farms and parks to all Burlington County residents. Funding preservation of land along the Rancocas Creek continues to be a goal. Without proper financial decisions, some opportunities could be missed.

November 7th is important to all of us to vote "YES" on Question #1.

President, Board of Trustees

One New Preserve, One Thousand Reasons to Celebrate

by Chris Jage

This has been a year of milestones for the Rancocas Conservancy. In June, we celebrated our 15th anniversary. In that same month, we hosted the first ever Rancocas Watershed Festival. In September, the Conservancy surpassed the 1,000 acre mark in our efforts to preserve land throughout the watershed.

In a unique partnership with Shamong Township, the Conservancy acquired an 82 acre preserve in the Piper's Corner section of the township. This project began when Shamong Township was working on preserving their first property under their newly generated open space trust fund. The township wanted to see the land preserved but didn't want to own or manage it. They also wanted to take advantage of the State's Payment In Lieu of Taxes Program that provides subsidies to towns for every acre

preserved by non-profits like the Conservancy. As a result, the town reached out to the Conservancy to see if we would accept the property as a donation. After some research and several property inspections, we gladly accepted their offer.

This new preserve consists of a mix of hardwood lowland forest with patches of pitch pine uplands. Coursing through the middle of the property is the Haines Creek tributary to the Southwest Branch of the Rancocas Creek. In fact, Haines Creek emerges from the ground and becomes a creek right on the property! The preserve will be open to the public during daylight hours for hiking and nature study. This fall we will sign the property and mark trails for access so all can enjoy our newest preserve and our 1,000 acre milestone.

Cowan Preserve

On Saturday, November 4th, a ceremony will be held at Medford Leas to dedicate the **Cowan Preserve** in memory of Marguerite (Peg) Cowan. Peg made a generous bequest to the Conservancy which was put toward the acquisition and preservation of a 27 acre parcel of land in Medford. The program will begin at 10:00 a.m., and will last for about half an hour, after which folks will be invited to car pool with us for a short tour of the property.



Winner Farm Project

by Erin Mickelwaite, Burlington County Farmland Preservation Program

In 2004 Burlington County acquired the 60 acre Winner farm located at the intersection of Hartford and Centerton Roads, near Rt. 295 and the Mount Laurel campus of Burlington County College. Owned by the Winner family since the 1940's, it was originally a dairy farm; currently soybeans and hay are grown and sheep are raised there.

To be called the **Pleasant Acres Community Farm**, the County plans a variety of uses. There will be a farmers' market where local farmers can directly market their produce and value-added products to the public as well as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm where local consumers can pay a fee to a farmer who will, in turn, provide them with a weekly share of the harvest from his or her farming operation. Another proposed component of the agricultural center is an area of designated garden plots. The County envisions one or several organizations establishing a community garden center where County residents, club members, students and other citizens can grow their own vegetables and flowers.

Also being constructed will be a picnic area, new fences and pedestrian paths. The parking lot, instead of the typical blacktop, will be a pervious grass and concrete pavement which will permit water to drain into the ground, thereby significantly reducing stormwater runoff.

The work is expected to be finished in late Fall 2006, and activities are anticipated to begin in late Spring 2007.



ATVs — *What to do about them* by Rick Walnut

There are believed to be about 250,000 ATVs (all-terrain vehicles) in New Jersey, and the number keeps growing. Unfortunately, many of those who purchase them appear to give little thought to where they will use them. They seem to think any open land, whether privately or publicly owned, is their playpen.

The mis-use of ATVs obviously has severe environmental impacts. It creates air, water and noise pollution, disturbs animal and plant communities, and damages stream banks and wetlands. In the absence of enforceable regulations, controlling ATVs is difficult.

Since ATVs are a fact of life, they will have to be directed to sites where they can be used safely both for riders

and the environment. Currently there is an 80 acre park in Chatsworth, however that is scheduled to close in September, 2008. If ATVs are to be kept off lands they are damaging, more sites designated for their use will be needed.

Another necessary component for controlling ATVs is for the state to pass legislation requiring them to be registered and have license plates, which would make it easier to identify violators. Part of the licensing fees could then be applied to acquiring and maintaining the designated parks.

Urge your legislators to pass such legislation, which will be for the benefit not only of our natural resources, but for the ATV riders as well.

RANCOCAS CONSERVANCY

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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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Rancocas Creek Watershed Festival *by Sonal Patel*

On a drizzly Saturday afternoon on June 3rd, over 150 residents of the Rancocas Watershed came out to BCC in Pemberton to help us celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Rancocas Conservancy and the 1st ever Rancocas Watershed Festival.

Local environmental organizations created interactive booths where they shared their knowledge of our watershed. These organizations include the Rancocas Nature Center, NJ Conservation Foundation, Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge, NJ Watershed Ambassadors, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Pinelands Commission, Burlington County Parks and Recreation, and many more.

In addition to connecting with the organizations, participants attended workshops and learned “How to Make an Environmental Difference in their Town” from Mike Hunninghake of PPA and “How to Make a Watershed-Friendly Home” from Barbara Jones and Rich Bizub of PPA.

Educators had a special portion of the festival dedicated to helping them bring the environment into their classroom, which included lesson plans and educational programs from local environmental organizations. Mary Belko of the Rancocas Nature Center, a part of the NJ Audubon Society, also presented a workshop for teachers and watershed-related activities.

To help celebrate Watershed Awareness Month in May, the Burlington County College Creations Art Gallery held a special display of photographs from the watershed.

Photographers include Ryan Murphy of Medford, Jen Bulova of Burlington County, Joe Martelli of Pemberton, and Ann-Marie Woods of Warren Grove. Their photographs were also displayed and sold at the festival.

This event would not have been possible if not for the help and dedication of

our partners: the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, the Volunteer Center of Burlington County, and the Burlington County College—Pemberton Campus. We would also like to thank our volunteers from Shawnee High School and the Rancocas Valley Regional High School Junior ROTC Program. Thank you to our contributors including Clif Bars, REI of Marlton, EMS of Marlton, Farmers and Mechanics of Vincentown, and photographer Michael Hogan, of Dorothy.

Thank you to all of you who help us protect our watershed every day!



Speaker, Joe Laufer, Burlington County Historian and Barbara Rich, Rancocas Conservancy President

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 |
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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 |

Canoe Medford

Local paddlers will soon have a new canoe trail to explore along the Rancocas Creek. Earlier this year, Medford resident and avid paddler, Bernie Mayer, brought together a small committee to work on establishing a family friendly canoe trail from Freedom Park to Kirby's Mill in

Medford Township. Members of the Conservancy's board were invited to serve on this committee along with representatives of the Medford Recreation Department, the Outdoor Club of South Jersey, Camp Dark Waters, and staff from the Marlton REI. To kick off this project, REI awarded the

Conservancy a \$4,500 grant to assist in improving the canoe launches, developing trail maps and installing informational kiosks. The committee will spend the next year working closely with Medford Township to carefully clear obstructions along the creek and formally open the trail to the public.

A Welcome to Our New Watershed Ambassador *by Melanie Reding*

We'd like to welcome our new Americorp's Watershed Ambassador for Area 19, Kathleen Hollis Caffee. Katie is coming to us from the Marine Science Consortium in Wallups Island, VA where she taught kids about marine mammals and sharks. She is a graduate of Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, PA with a Bachelor of Science degree.

Katie lives in Toms River and is looking forward to blending field work and environmental education as she works as a watershed ambassador. Some of her many tasks

will be monitoring streams within the Rancocas Creek Watershed and teaching others how to do the same. She'll visit local schools, community groups and help the Rancocas Conservancy with stewardship programs.

We look forward to working with Katie throughout the next year and are glad to have her aboard. If you are interested in learning more about the NJ Department of Environmental Protection Americorp's Watershed Ambassador Program, you can contact Katie at (609) 859-8860, ext 17.

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