

Lasting Landscapes®
Effectively Uniting Open Space
Protection and Historic
Preservation

Spring 2004



environs





Heritage Conservancy, a regional land trust committed to preserving our natural and historic heritage, works with conservation partners and local communities to protect and preserve open spaces and areas of natural significance.

Please visit our web site at www.heritageconservancy.org to learn more about our conservation efforts.

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A Lasting Landscapes® Conservation Case Study

HISTORY AND CRITICAL HABITAT ENTWINED

The Cooks Creek Watershed, one of five Lasting Landscapes® designated by Heritage Conservancy for targeted protection, boasts a rich diversity of natural elements as well as historically significant structures and buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries. In 2001, Heritage Conservancy acquired a 90-acre property in this region known as Rattlesnake Hill, which contains what was once a large iron ore mine. In a fascinating segue from its original incarnation, serving human needs and industries, this cavernous site has now become critical habitat for at least four species of bats, ranking as Pennsylvania's second largest bat hibernaculum.

Its history is long and storied. The Durham Mine contributed to the economic lifeblood of the area throughout the 18th and mid-19th centuries, as the Village of Durham centered around iron-ore extraction from the local mine and the smelting activities of the Durham Furnace, which produced cannon during the Revolutionary War. The mine also fed production at a coal-fired plant near Riegelsville, which supplied cannon for the Civil War, and continued operation until its closing in 1908.

After the mine closed, the Rattlesnake Hill property was acquired in the 1940s by the Rufe family, who later formed the Rattlesnake & Mine Hill Wildlife Preservation Trust. Through this private foundation, the family protected the mine, facilitating its status as one of the region's most valuable natural resources and critical species habitats.



Gradually, without human guidance or intervention, the abandoned mine became the natural home for over 10,000 bats, which hibernate there for approximately six months of the year, from late October to early April. The deep and interconnecting shafts of the mine provide the ideal conditions for a bat hibernaculum, with high humidity, temperate climate and an exchange of air among the subterranean tunnels and entrances.

Bats fulfill a critical function in the balancing act of the ecosystem, consuming thousands of insects that would otherwise overwhelm plants and crops. The hibernation period for bats is critical, as their fat

reserves are very limited, and repeated intrusions by spelunkers and vandals over the years necessitated the construction of barred gates, which allowed the free flight of the bats, but precluded human access to the mine. Heritage Conservancy spearheaded this protective measure, with the collaboration of Bat Conservation International (BCI) in 1996.

The conservancy is partnering with BCI and other organizations, including the Delaware & Lehigh National Corridor Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, to continue research and preservation goals, including the development of a system to track the migratory routes of these bats as they depart the hibernaculum each year. We will also continue to target adjacent properties for permanent protection, to serve as an additional buffer for this critical wildlife habitat.



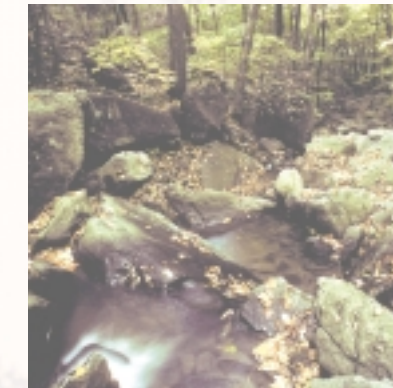
A Lasting Landscapes® Planning Case Study

A WILD AND SCENIC AND VALUABLE RIVER

In designating the Musconetcong River Valley as one of its five Lasting Landscapes®, Heritage Conservancy has worked to identify and contribute to meaningful conservation projects in this region. Through the efforts of our planning staff, we have partnered with the Musconetcong Watershed Association and the National Park Service to develop a study plan for the river's designation by the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. This study plan was a critical step leading to the introduction of federal legislation by Congressman Scott Garrett (NJ-5) in March 2004 for official recognition under this program. Developed in the 1970s by the National Park Service to recognize the premier waterways in the United States, this program is designed to provide river protection through the combined efforts of private landowners and other citizens, river-related organizations and all levels of government.

The Musconetcong River drains a 157-square-mile watershed area in northern New Jersey, and as a major tributary to the Delaware River, is part of the 12,755 square mile Delaware River Watershed. As the only New Jersey river entirely contained in the environmentally sensitive Highlands region, which provides the water source for major urban areas in both New York and New Jersey, its ecological viability is critical to millions of people living well beyond this area.

In addition to its environmental value, the Musconetcong River Valley features a remarkable diversity of scenic farms, secluded natural areas and small villages, offering cultural and historic attractions



for visitors and providing significant recreational opportunities, including boating, fishing, hiking and camping.

The road to Wild and Scenic designation has been long. In 1992, The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) formed and in 1993, partnered with the National Park Service (NPS) to investigate the problems, amenities and opportunities within the watershed. In 1995, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Office of Natural Lands Management recommended to the NPS that the Musconetcong River be included in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory of "candidate" rivers that are considered to have the appropriate characteristics for Wild and Scenic designation. Two years later, 18 of the 19 municipalities along the river voted to request that the NPS study its eligibility and suitability for inclusion in the national system.

A Musconetcong Advisory Committee, comprised of municipal representatives, was formed to work with the National Park Service, the Musconetcong Watershed Association and Heritage Conservancy in completing the Wild and Scenic study.

The principal protection afforded by Wild and Scenic designation is that potentially harmful federally funded water resource projects, such as dam construction, are blocked. Designation does not affect the local control of zoning and development, nor does it open private lands to public access. However, the public education that occurs may help to encourage local conservation efforts.



Mission in Action

EVENTS

Jeffrey Marshall, Heritage Conservancy's Vice President for Resource Protection, will be featured on a televised forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters, to air throughout April and May on Philadelphia-area cable stations. The program will focus on the environmental and economic benefits of open space, and will also feature Bucks County Planning Commission Executive Director Lynn Bush and Bensalem Township Mayor Joseph DiGirolamo.

On February 4th, conservancy staff joined with Forks of Neshaminy landowners and Bucks County and municipal representatives for a celebration event to recognize the individuals and partner organizations instrumental in placing conservation easements on properties in this region of Bucks County. Of the 5,600 acres in the Forks, the conservancy has worked to permanently preserve over 535 acres, encompassing thirteen individual properties. An additional 379 acres have been preserved by Bucks County and its municipalities, for a total of approximately 915 acres with permanent conservation easements.

David Kimmerly, Historic Preservation Specialist for Heritage Conservancy, will speak on "Strategies for Preserving Historic Resources" on Wednesday, May 12th, at Aldie Mansion, the conservancy's headquarters. The program is open to the public, free of charge, and light refreshments will be served. Please call 214.345.7020 ext. 109 to register.

Frogs and bogs! On Saturday, May 8th, the conservancy will host the Quakertown Swamp Frog Hunt, with a presentation at the Paletown Rod & Gun Club in Quakertown, PA, followed by an outdoor

excursion to the edge of the swamp after sunset when the frogs begin their chorus. Free to the public, rain or shine! For more information, please call 215.345.7020 ext. 103.

The following Saturday, May 15th, join Heritage Conservancy's biologist, Kelly Germann, in welcoming the beauty of the season for a summer tree identification and trail walk on the conservancy's Fuller Preserve in Springfield Township, PA. Magnifying glasses will be provided, and identification guides will be available to borrow or bring your own. Free to the public but reservations are requested. For more information, please call 215.345.7020 ext. 103.

BECOME A MEMBER

Consider joining Heritage Conservancy, which offers membership opportunities for both individuals and businesses. Help us to preserve our bucolic open spaces and rich history, and receive:

- Satisfaction of helping preserve our natural & historic resources
- Free Seminars and quarterly newsletter, *Environs*
- Annual Member Appreciation Party at Aldie Mansion
- Invitations to member-only events

In addition, business members receive:

- Association with leading land conservation and historic preservation organization
- Listing on our *Business Membership Directory* page, with a direct link provided to your business website
- Networking opportunities with other business members
- Business member appreciation party at Aldie Mansion

To learn more about membership with Heritage Conservancy, please contact Sandra Yerger, our Membership Coordinator at 215.345.7020 ext. 103 or at syerger@heritageconservancy.org

Heritage Conservancy President Cliff David with Mrs. Margaret Perry, a director emeritus of the conservancy and a recent conservation easement holder.



Message From the President

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

For more than four decades, Heritage Conservancy has been committed to protecting the natural and historic resources – places, buildings, flora and fauna - that make this region such an extraordinary place in which to live, work and call home. Working with individuals, communities, government agencies and other conservation organizations, we strive to coordinate our collective efforts to achieve our mission of “preserving our natural and historic heritage.”

Environs, the quarterly newsletter of Heritage Conservancy, has traditionally brought news highlights of our programs and activities to members, donors and partner organizations. In this, the inaugural issue of our newly redesigned format, we hope to provide a deeper look into the exciting work going on in the multiple landscapes of our region - in your own backyard and over the horizon.

This issue focuses on the work of one of our most important open space programs, an initiative we call Lasting Landscapes®, which unites open space protection and historic preservation at the “landscape level.” The Lasting Landscapes approach is to first identify and map significant areas containing a critical mass of both natural and/or historic resources, and then develop and implement protection techniques to sustain the resources’ integrity.

This targeted approach to land protection combines science and aesthetics, and brings together multiple partners from the private and public sectors to achieve what cannot be done alone by a single organization. Lasting Landscapes responds to many of the challenges raised in the recent Brookings Institution report, *Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania*, which is also discussed in this issue of *Environs*.



The issues of unchecked suburban sprawl, declining inner-city and urban neighborhoods, and the need to coordinate our efforts on a regional level are addressed in the integrated planning and land and historic preservation programs of Lasting Landscapes. This initiative also highlights the important interrelationships of these and other environmental concerns, such as water quality protection and the degradation of biodiversity throughout this region.

There will never be enough money – in county, state, or federal programs – to protect all of the land we might wish to preserve for future generations. That is why strategic planning and coordination on all levels is key to continued successes in conservation. We look to our growing circle of members and partner organizations to sustain their support as we advance our ongoing initiatives and face new challenges in the conservation community.

Clifford C. David Jr.

President, Heritage Conservancy