



Forked River Mountain Views

Newsletter of the Forked River Mountain Coalition

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A Look Back. . . A Look Ahead. . .

Many people we talk with are under the impression that the Forked River Mountains are already protected.

Truth is the Forked River Mountains are privately owned (as in Keep Out - No Trespassing).

Truth is the Forked River Mountains are located in the outer protection area of the Pinelands where development is allowed.

Truth is of the 20,000 acres surrounding the mountains, 15,000 acres are owned by just 3 people (land development companies). Because these companies own so much land they can meet current zoning and density requirements.

Truth is gravel pits located in the preservation area are "Grandfathered" and can continue to expand to over 1,000 acres in size.

For the past year, the Forked River Mountain Coalition has been working to permanently protect this vast wilderness. Below are just some of our more notable accomplishments for 1995 and some of our goals for 1996.

Accomplishments

Applied for a \$500,000 Green Acres Grant, along with the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (for a total of \$1 million) to purchase environmentally sensitive land in the region. The grant, if awarded, will help establish a corridor between the Forked River Mountains and Wells Mills County Park in Waretown.

With the help of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, fought back a proposal by the Cellular Telecommunications Industry to locate a tower on or near the Forked River Mountain. Pinelands Commission regulations established a five mile buffer around the mountain where no towers can be constructed and visual impacts beyond five miles must be minimized.

Conducted our second Spring Cleanup for Earth Day. Over 22 tons of trash were removed from the forest.

Sponsored our first canoe trip down Cedar Creek and our first tree frog hunt near Webbs Mill. These educational events were fun for young and old alike.

Goals

Secure tax-exempt status, which will in turn help us to . . .

Obtain additional funding to acquire more land. Millions of dollars will be needed to protect the entire forest . . .

Obtain funding to conduct endangered species/wildlife inventories necessary to prepare a future management plan for the area . . .

Conduct a direct mail membership drive to increase support for our grass-roots initiative to permanently protect the Forked River Mountains and the rich wilderness that surrounds them.

But we can only realize our goals with your help. That is why we hope that you will become a member of the Coalition if you are not one already. Please help support the grass-roots initiative to permanently protect the Forked River Mountains and the vast wilderness that surrounds them.

Mountains Under Siege - A Wake-Up Call

Recent approvals have been given by the Pinelands Commission and others for development on over 600 acres of land within the Forked River Mountain Area. This will result in the construction of new single family dwellings in the Rural Development Areas of both Lacey and Ocean Townships off Route 532. The area is located in the Oyster Creek Watershed and is known to harbor, rare, threatened and endangered species. The public will no longer have access to these areas for recreation or to simply enjoy the nature that is located there.

This is only the beginning of what could be the eventual demise of the pristine wilderness known as the Forked River Mountains. If we don't act quickly the Forked River Mountains will be reduced to a few hundred acres of forest fragmented by piecemeal development and gravel pits.

The long term results of this happening would have major impacts: the loss of forest would reduce air quality; open space for recreation would be lost; wildlife habitat would be destroyed, resulting in extinction for some local populations of endangered species; surface and ground water pollution would reduce water quality for residents living east of the Garden State Parkway and along Barnegat Bay.

It is our sincere hope that this article will serve as a wake-up call to all those concerned. Remember, once it's gone, it's gone forever!