



Forked River Mountain Views

Newsletter of the Forked River Mountain Coalition

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3,000 Acres Saved!

In one of the largest land acquisitions ever by a New Jersey nonprofit group, the New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) has completed a transaction to save almost 3,000 acres, the first permanently protected parcel in the remote Forked River Mountains area. The Forked River Mountains encompass some 20,000 acres of pristine Pinelands wilderness.

Designated primarily as forest lands in the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan, a sprawling suburban housing development had been proposed for the site. The property adjoins the inner core preservation area.

NJCF, a private, nonprofit land trust, purchased the property in the northeastern section of the Forked River Mountains area from Probst Enterprises at the end of December.

Probst sold the property, valued at \$2 million, for \$1 million. The donation of the remaining \$1 million value was applied toward a state Green Acres matching grant. (The Green Acres nonprofit grant program awards up to \$500,000 maximum for each landowner.)

The balance of the purchase price was fueled by a direct New Jersey state purchase of a 725 acre portion of the tract for \$500,000, with NJCF retaining natural resource management ability via a long term management agreement with the New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife.

The land is dominated by lowland cedar swamps, open bogs and meadows, pitch pine lowlands and upland pine-oak woodlands. Hot wildfires in both 1992 and 1995 created classic patterns of Pine Barrens early successional vegetation and endangered species habitat on much of the site.

Until recently, the vast, unpopulated Forked River Mountains wilderness, containing dozens of endangered and threatened species had been overlooked by most government acquisition programs.

When New Jersey's Green Acres grant program was opened to nonprofit land trust applicants on a 50-50 matching grant basis, NJCF joined with the Nature Conservancy and the Forked River Mountain Coalition to coordinate permanent land protection efforts in the Forked River Mountains.

NJCF is focusing efforts in the southern and eastern sections of the Forked River Mountains while the Nature Conservancy is focusing efforts in the northern and western sections of the area. The Coalition will focus on smaller parcels throughout the area in an effort to connect the larger parcels together thereby creating one large area of permanently protected open space.

The Probst tract was NJCF's first purchase in the

Forked River Mountains, because it constitutes a significant part of a projected link between existing public holdings including Greenwood Forest Wildlife Management Area, Double Trouble State Park and Wells Mills County Park.

The Probst tract lies south of Lacey Road and immediately west of the Garden State Parkway between milepost 75 and 72. The parcel contains the headwaters to the North Branch and Middle Branch of the Forked River.

NJCF will conduct long-term management for biological species diversity on the property in conjunction with neighboring tracts it plans to acquire in the future.

The parcel was formally dedicated on June 18, 1996 at Wells Mills County Park.

21 Tons!



Over 100 volunteers, including about 20 members of the Ocean County Clean Communities Task Force, spent around three hours on the morning of Saturday, April 20, 1996 collecting trash from the woods and swamps around the Forked River Mountains. When it was over, nearly 21 tons of debris had been removed from the forest.

Cosponsoring the third annual Forked River Mountain cleanup along with the Coalition were the Pinelands Preservation Alliance and the Ocean County Parks Department.

After the cleanup, we all climbed to the top of the mountain for some refreshments and to take in the sights. The Jersey Devil was so pleased with the results of this years cleanup he greeted volunteers as they made their way up the mountain. Later, those volunteers who still had enough energy left to walk, went on a hike on the sand trails around the mountain. To date, a total of 66 tons of trash have been removed from the woods around the Forked River Mountains.

We would like to thank the following businesses and organizations for their donations of help and equipment that helped to make this years cleanup effort a huge success.

Brick Wall Corp.

Ciba

Cosmos Green Acres Auto Recycling Center

GPU Nuclear

Jersey Central Power & Light

Joseph Burnetti Construction Co.

Ocean County Department of Solid Waste

Ocean County Landfill Corp.

Township of Lacey

Parker Associates

Underwater Discovery