

Observer-Tribune

Trust's grant will help educate property owners in Harding Township

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HARDING TWP. – The Harding Land Trust wants landowners to be trained to care for their land and they want the “how to” guide to be in writing.

Thanks to a grant from the **N.J. Highlands Coalition**, they're in luck.

Twelve grassroots organizations working on projects within the New Jersey Highlands or working to protect Highlands resources have been selected to receive grants up to \$5,000 through the **New Jersey Highlands Coalition's 2011 Small Grants Program**.

Two of the grant recipients are in Morris County, and one is the Harding Land Trust.

The funds will be used to develop and produce a Landowner Stewardship Guide to educate landowners about the management and conservation of natural habitats.

Tina Bologna, executive director of the non-profit Harding Land Trust, said the organization is working with both the Highlands Coalition and Conservation Resources, Inc., of Chester to develop the guidelines.

They will be distributed, she said, to landowners whose properties contain conservation easements or sensitive environmental areas. The goal, she said, will be to foster the preservation and protection of wildlife habitats and water resources.

She said the **Trust will be receiving about \$1,500 from the coalition**.

“This guide will be geared toward education property owners with sensitive environmental features as to how to best care for them,” she said.

“This is the fifth year for our Small Grants Program and by far the largest number of applications and grants,” said Julia Somers, a Harding resident, and executive director of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition.

Somers said the smaller grants are intended “to prime the pump, with local citizens doing most of the work after our financial assistance helps get projects off the ground.”

Grants are given to projects that focus on implementation of the Highlands Regional Master

Plan; establish a precedent advancing strong environmental protection in the Highlands; assist an organization to fight against an environmentally damaging development in the Highlands; support capacity building of Highlands Region grassroots organizations; or educate the public about Highlands water and resources.

Grassroots groups across Hunterdon, Mercer, Morris, Sussex and Warren counties were selected to receive grants that will help protect the Highlands resources that are the source of drinking water for 850,000 people in the Highlands and more than four million outside the region who depend on Highlands water.

The other grant went to Citizens for Better Planning in Morris Township to hire an attorney specializing in environmental and municipal law to work on potential rezoning of the Honeywell site, where large, multi-use development is proposed.

“These groups will find that in addition to the financial support from the Coalition, they will get as much value from the expertise and experience of the other environmental groups they meet through joining the N.J. Highlands Coalition,” said Michael Keady, chairman of the coalition’s Small Grants Committee.

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