



Highlands Lookout

www.njhighlandscoalition.org

Newsletter of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition

Autumn 2008

Message from the Executive Director

Welcome to the premiere edition of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition newsletter. It is being rolled out simultaneously with a newly re-designed web site and new outreach and educational materials.

Individual members are an important part of the Coalition, but until now there has not been a regular method of communicating to them what has been going on in the Highlands and the work we have been doing. Although we hope to inform both our organizational and individual members, we recognize the need to regularly communicate with the over 400 (and growing) individuals who are generous supporters of our mission, to protect the water and other natural and cultural resources of the NJ Highlands.

The format of the newsletter will include an update of the major issues affecting the Highlands and our efforts

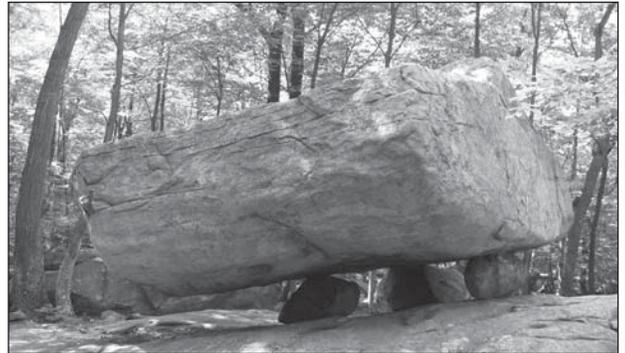
in meeting their challenges, through the work of our small yet highly productive staff and in conjunction with member organizations.

Each newsletter will include features on recreational and tourism opportunities in the Highlands plus a feature on its history. In addition, we will spotlight one of our organizational members. Our first issue's spotlight will be on our very good friends, the South Branch Watershed Association.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our agile, very effective and hard working staff; Elliott Ruga, Mark Zakutankysy and Becky Weinstein. By the way,

congratulations are in order for Becky, who is on maternity leave. She and her husband, Matt, are proud parents to Aaron Mitchell, born July 1. We wish the entire Weinstein family well!

Best regards,



Tripod Rock, Pyramid Mountain, Montville.

Photo courtesy Morris Co. Park Commission

Coalition News

Elliott Ruga, newsletter editor

The Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) was adopted by the Highlands Council on July 17. Despite strident appeals from most of New Jersey's environmental groups (including many organizational members) to adopt strict resource protective amendments offered by two Council members, the Council adopted a much weaker plan that failed to meet the critical mandates of the 2004 Highlands Act. Our major areas of concern included allowing continued development in areas that lacked sufficient water supplies, allowing new clustered developments served by wells and septic to exceed

the state standard of health and safety for nitrates in well water and allowing encroachment into previously undisturbed 300-foot buffers along C-1

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waters in redevelopment areas. However, due to our continuing presence and comments at Council meetings as the RMP was developing, we gained ground as the Council made significant changes

to many of their original proposals. These include the Council dropping a controversial method for determination of impervious cover, restrictions on development in prime ground recharge areas and excluding agricultural soils from

continued on page 2

inside this issue

Message from the Executive Director	1
Coalition News.	1
Highlands Recreation: Schooley's Mountain Park	2
Highlands History: Craftsman Farms	3
Member Focus: South Branch Watershed Association	3

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Coalition News *cont'd*

impervious cover. However, outside of the RMP, the Coalition is involved with many issues affecting the resources and quality of life in the region. We have provided extensive written comments to NJDEP on Holland Township's Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP), the proposed Biomass Plant at Mt. Hope in Rockaway Township and our concerns about the lack of effective stewardship of Waterloo Village. We are a presence at the State Planning Commission during the drafting of the latest State Development and Redevelopment Plan; keeping a close watch on the adoption of 3rd Round COAH Rules and we are advisors to the Pilot Project of The Crossroads of the American Revolution.



Photo courtesy Wilma Frey

Next steps

We will continue our presence at Highlands Council meetings and provide comments on WQMPs, Project Review and Conformance issues.

The success of the RMP will depend on the number of municipalities that conform to it. We will be spearheading a major effort advocating for municipal conformance by working with our organizational members, and reaching out to civic and grassroots community groups and municipal officials. Towards this end, we have developed educational materials, handouts, displays and presentations. Our newly re-designed web site is far deeper with helpful and updated information. 

Highlands Recreation: Schooley's Mountain Park

by Mark Zakutansky

The Highlands Region of New Jersey is blessed with majestic overlooks, expansive forests, incredible rock outcrops and rushing streams. One of the best locations to enjoy all of these resources is at Schooley's Mountain Park in Long Valley, Morris County.

Open year round, Schooley's Mountain Park provides gentle walking trails around the eight acre lake, boating, ice skating, and fishing. Facilities include playing fields, a large picnic pavilion, a playground, a majestic lodge with porch chairs to enjoy the view, an outdoor chapel constructed in 1944 and old mill ruins. The fall and spring months are the best time to explore the hiking trails around Schooley's Mountain Park, which meander through meadows, up ridgelines, down the creek valley and connect to Morris County's Patriot Path.

My favorite hike begins at the Lodge and follows Electric Brook down from the lake past a few impressive cascades to a picturesque two-tiered forty-foot waterfall. This is a beginner/intermediate hike appropriate for the whole family.

From Route 24/CR 513 in Long Valley, proceed up Schooley's Mountain Road. Turn right onto Camp Washington Road. Follow signs for Schooley's Mountain Park. Turn right into the first parking lot at the lodge. Walk around the lodge to the right to reach the trailhead for the Loree chapel and the Boulder Gorge Trail, blazed

in green. Follow the trail less than a quarter of a mile to the chapel. From here the trail makes its way to Electric Brook. Once you reach the brook, the old mill ruins are on the other side of the creek. Continue down the trail, across a wooden foot bridge to the top of the two-tiered waterfall. In the low-water summer months, the pool at the bottom of the second waterfall is waist deep and the water is cool and refreshing. Do not consider going swimming or wading across the creek if there has been rain recently in the area, as the creek will be a torrent of rushing water. The trail continues along the creek after passing the waterfalls. If the creek is low enough, cross the creek using stepping stones. Do not attempt to cross the brook if the water

is deeper than your ankle (you can double-back to the lodge at any point along the trail). Once you cross the creek, continue up the hill following the trail, bearing left at the old stone quarry, at the fork with Patriot's Path's White Trail. Follow the blue-blazed Falling Waters Trail on the other side of the brook until you reach the lake's spillway. Take the footbridge across the spillway to return to the lodge. 



Photo by Mark Zakutansky

Highlands History: Craftsman Farms

by Camilla Somers, Intern

Craftsman Farms in Parsippany-Troy Hills is just one among the many historic treasures located throughout the New Jersey Highlands. Established in 1908 by Gustav Stickley, a figurehead of the Arts and Crafts movement, this National Historic Landmark is a throwback to a phenomenon that called for environmental protections and a simpler lifestyle, all during a period of industrialization and overwrought Victorian aesthetic.

Though best known for his furniture designs, Stickley generally promoted a way of life that centered on the home and family, on self-sustainability and the way of the working man. Thus the main residence, with a kitchen able

to accommodate up to 100 workmen, is constructed out of stone and chestnut logs taken from the property itself, which also once included a farm, three cottages and a crafts workshop. The farm and buildings were clustered on 150 of the property's 650 acres; the rest were purposely left in their natural state. Luckily, when what remained of the original land was threatened by development in 1989, the local government stepped in and gained ownership by way of eminent domain. With the creation of the non-profit Craftsman Farms Foundation, this Arts and Crafts gem was preserved as the Stickley Museum.

Today visitors to the museum can enjoy furniture and architectural design that, like that of Stickley's contemporaries Frank Lloyd Wright and William Morris, is both beautiful and unique in its simplicity, in its obvious craftsmanship and individuality. Craftsman Farms is open year-round from 11-4 on weekends, and during the spring and summer on Wednesdays thru Fridays from 12-3. Please visit www.stickleymuseum.org for more information and directions. 

Member Focus: South Branch Watershed Association

by Mark Zakutansky

The South Branch Watershed Association (SBWA) has been working actively to educate the public and spread awareness on the values of the South Branch of the Raritan River for almost 50 years.

The South Branch River valley is a historic, cultural and environmental treasure. It was first occupied by the Lenni Lenape Indians, who relied on the fertile lands around the river for agriculture, growing an abundance of maize, beans, pumpkins and other fruits.

Today, the river provides one of the finest cold water fisheries in the state, a favorite among New Jersey anglers. The Ken Lockwood Gorge Wildlife Management Area is a prime example of the shared recreational uses the river sees today. The river has become as vital to the lives of people today, as it was during the times of the Lenni Lenape.

The South Branch Watershed Association works closely with local governments to ensure that the resources the river provides are protected through sound land use decisions. Additionally, the SBWA provides public education by working with schools, community groups and local businesses. Programs offered by SBWA include stream monitoring programs, stream clean-ups, workshops, well testing and in-the-field educational programs. The SBWA also is a knowledgeable source within the watershed and beyond for those seeking information on environmental issues.

"The single best predictor of water quality in a watershed is land use," says Executive Director Bill Kibler, "if you want to protect water quality, you must address destructive land uses. The New Jersey Highlands Coalition is a critical partnership for us because we multiply our strengths in influencing land use policies in the Highlands and, as a result, helps protect our clean water." 



Photo by Flickr

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Your water Your future

The New Jersey Highlands Coalition is a nonprofit organization made up of groups and individuals committed to a common goal of helping protect, enhance and restore the New Jersey Highlands.

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