



Highlands Lookout

www.njhighlandscoalition.org

Newsletter of the New Jersey Highlands Coalition

Summer 2012

Message from the Executive Director

Water in New Jersey is owned by the people of New Jersey. That includes the ephemeral pond in your neighbor's backyard, the stream that runs along the road, the water in the soils a few feet under your feet, etc. It is held in public trust by the State to manage and protect for us. The Legislature reminds us of this arrangement—which is rooted in Roman Law—whenever it enacts laws that pertain to our shared water resource. For example, the opening of the 1981 Water Supply Management Act (58:1A-2) states:

“The Legislature finds and declares that the water resources of the State are public assets of the State held in trust for its citizens and are essential to the health, safety, economic welfare, recreational and aesthetic enjoyment, and general welfare, of the people of New Jersey; that ownership of these assets is in the State as trustee of the people...”

Water is both a natural resource and a commodity with mercantile value. If the State is not executing its public trust

responsibility faithfully, diligently, and with all due care, we must remind it of the obligation. If the State through its actions or inaction allows conditions or activities that threaten to degrade the quality or diminish the quantity of our water, it must be challenged.

At the present time there are too many examples of State level policy and actions that pose threats to our water resources, in both the Executive and Legislative branches; NJDEP's Waiver Rule, the Permit Extension Act of 2012, the Governor's hostility towards the Highlands Act and his undermining of the New Jersey Highlands Council, to name just a few. Together, these amount to pervasive and alarming governmental malfeasance that is squandering our public trust resource. It is time to insist that it

ends.

On that note, please remember our special “UPHOLD THE HIGHLANDS” appeal and help us achieve our goal of raising \$75,000 in new funds. It is only with your generous support that we can meet today's challenges to the Highlands' resources.

Warmest regards,



Coalition News *Elliott Ruga, senior editor*

On May 17th, the Highlands Council approved the conformance petitions for the Preservation Areas of the Townships of Vernon and Harmony, bringing the total number of municipalities to complete basic conformance to 42. On April 19th Morris County Freeholder Gene Feyl was hired as Executive Director of the Highlands Council. On May 17th Margaret Nordstrom was hired

as Deputy Executive Director. Feyl's hiring was merely a component of the grander plan that was set into motion with Eileen Swan's firing in March. Now that the Governor's Machiavellian schemes for the Highlands Council have been implemented, will the Council move forward with its mandated job of protecting the Highlands natural resources? Stay-tuned.

Now that Machiavellian schemes for the Highlands Council have been implemented, will the Council move forward with its mandated job of protecting the Highlands natural resources?

On May 16th, Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company

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Coalition News *cont'd*

(TGP) requested the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) approve the construction of the Northeast Upgrade Project (NEUP) no later than May 30th, 2012. TGP was pushing the FERC to approve in time for a scheduled hearing on the NEUP at the State House Commission meeting on Thursday, June 7th in Trenton. The Commission must approve all conveyances of public lands.

The Columbia Environmental Law Clinic wrote to FERC on behalf of several organizations including the Coalition, requesting denial of the NEUP, citing multiple problems with the construction of the recently completed 300 Line project. However, on May 29th, FERC responded to TGP's request with a conditional approval. The project now has the necessary federal approvals to start construction.

On Thursday, June 7th the State House Commission approved this project to traverse some of the most critical public lands in the Highlands, including Long Pond Ironworks and Ringwood State Parks.

Your calls to the list of targeted Senators in response to our Permit Extension Bill Action Alert was a significant factor in the decision to "hold" the bill (withhold the bill from the scheduled Senate vote). We have been working with our partner organizations in Trenton to expose the very real consequences in the Highlands Planning Area if the Legislature adopts the development-lobby-driven Permit Extension Act. When our outreach is matched with expressions of concern voiced by the voting public, elected officials react.

But it may not be over yet. Please watch for our Action Alerts. As always, your help is a vital component of any successful campaign to protect the Highlands natural resources. [PHC](#)

Highlands Recreation: Warren Hills Wines

Betsy Manning

When you think American wine, stop thinking about the Napa Valley, think The Highlands! In fact, the New Jersey Highlands hosts a premier American Viticultural Area (AVA): the Warren Hills Appellation.

Tucked between rivers—the Paulinskill in the Northwest, the Delaware on the west and the Musconetcong in the south east—the Warren Hills Appellation AVA provides a wide variety of micro-climates, perfect for growing wine grapes. Its valleys and ridges, running northeast to southwest, offer broad sunny exposures. Its limestone, shale, and sandstone based soils provide the classic vineyard nutrients. And, with plenty of direct sunlight, regular breezes flowing up the valleys and cold air draining downwards to lessen the chance of frost damage, the vines thrive. Within this area are located The Four Sisters Winery at Matazzaro Farms and the Brook Hollow Winery near Belvidere; and Alba Vineyards and Villa Milagro Vineyards, both near Finesville.

Planting different grape varieties at different elevations and on different soils allows these growers to exploit different micro-environments. They need to make the vines work hard for the moisture and nutrients needed to produce the layers of complex flavors found in their award winning wines. In the coolest sites, you can find cold hardy Labrusca grapes. The French American hybrids like Frontenac or Cayuga White like it warmer. And, in the warmest spots, the European Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Grigio, Pinot Noir, Riesling and others. All these varieties and more flourish in the hills of western New Jersey.

Wine making is not new to the state. As early as 1767 London's Royal Society of the Arts recognized two vintners for producing quality wine from grapes grown in New Jersey's colonial vineyards. Wine making was part of the state's agricultural heritage until Prohibition eliminated all but two specialty wineries producing communion wines. In the 1980's, the wine industry, as we know it today, began to re-establish itself and has grown steadily ever since.

Today, New Jersey is one of the top ten wine producers in the United States. Its wines have won national and international recognition. And, to lock in New Jersey's reputation as a producer of fine wine, the wines produced must pass a rigorous review process to earn the QWA (Quality Wine Alliance) designation. A review board made up of certified wine judges, wine editors, wine distributors, liquor store owners, and experienced wine reviewers, must give their stamp of approval.

For a wonderful time, plan a winery tour. Many have special events ranging from elegant dinners to Harvest Day festivals. Many are prepared to host your own special events from weddings to corporate get-togethers or group outings. Some provide Bed & Breakfast accommodations. Just remember: call ahead, designate a driver and have a good time! [PHC](#)



Alba's vineyards, near Finesville in Pohatcong, Twp.

Highlands History: Thomas A. Edison in the Highlands *Erica Van Auken*

What do you know about Thomas Alva Edison (February 11, 1847 – October 18, 1931), the Wizard of Menlo Park? Sure, you know he invented the light bulb, right? Well, at least he refined a version of the incandescent light bulb that stayed lit longer and could be mass-produced. Maybe you know he has 1,093 patents to his credit; in fact, he was such a prolific inventor that his record number of patents was not surpassed until 2003! But did you know that he was also quite active in the New Jersey Highlands as well as Essex and Middlesex counties?

It is not widely known that Thomas Edison set up a mining company in Sussex County, specifically, Sparta Township. Edison was hugely successful in the City of Menlo Park, where he built the first industrial research laboratory, but he was not so successful



Edison's Highlands mining operation in Sparta

at extracting iron ore from the mines in Sussex County. Around 1890, Thomas Edison founded the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Concentrating Works, even though iron extraction in this region had begun to slow.

By the end of the nineteenth century, iron ore production was slowing down in the northeast. This resource had been extracted for some time, leaving only low-quality iron. The remaining iron contained a lot of debris and required much more work to extract from the surrounding bedrock, so it was not as economical to mine. As a result, mining operations moved to other parts of the country with purer stores of ore. Thomas Edison, however, thought he possessed the technology to easily extract this low-grade ore and went to work setting up his business.

Using the money earned from his work on the telegraph and from selling patents on the light bulb, Edison invested in a new way to extract the dregs left from the iron mining boom. Edison reasoned that since iron was magnetic he could pulverize the low-grade

ore and debris and extract only the iron deposits using an electromagnet. He received several patents for this application of the electromagnet, but because of numerous technical difficulties this process did not prove to be financially sustainable.

Roughly 500 men were employed at the height of Edison's attempt at iron mining; and over the course of the decade, Edison invested nearly \$2 million into his electromagnetic extraction technology. Eventually, Edison recognized that his iron ore business was failing and admitted defeat. On September 30, 1900, the New Jersey and Pennsylvania Concentrating Works closed for business. But being a successful business man, Edison was able to recoup much of his wealth by selling the by-product of his mining efforts – sand – to cement companies.

Most people are surprised to hear that Thomas Edison was active in the Highlands – most are aware of all the work he did in Essex and Middlesex counties. While his ventures in the Highlands were not his most successful, most lucrative, or most famous, he left his mark on the region nonetheless. 

Member Spotlight: C4BPMT *Elliott Ruga*

It may be an unwieldy title with a less-than-wieldy acronym, but the Citizens for Better Planning in Morris Township have proven to be quick on their feet.

C4BPMT was formed in response to Honeywell International's proposal to rezone its 147-acre campus to a mixed-use zone. This proposal could result in increased building density, traffic volumes and adverse environmental impacts. Several municipalities are served by the roads which bring traffic to and from the Honeywell complex, The intersection of Columbia Turnpike (CR 510) and Park Ave (CR 623) is already failed. The new traffic generated

by the residential, commercial and industrial installations will worsen already unbearable rush hour traffic. The amendment to the Morris Township Master Plan, drafted by Honeywell, was adopted by the Planning Board on May 8 and will be considered by the Township's governing body at a subsequent meeting of the Township Committee.

C4BPMT has been front-and-center in rallying community opposition to the Honeywell proposed zoning change. Their successful outreach has enabled hiring of a professional planner and a land use attorney. They have also been the recipients of two NJ Highlands

Coalition Small Grants. It is our hope that after intervening at the Township Committee's consideration of the zoning change they will continue on as committed community advocates for better planning throughout the town.

C4BPMT president Michele Demerest says of membership with the NJ Highlands Coalition, "C4BPMT is deeply indebted to the good people at the Highland's Coalition. As a fledgling organization grappling with the intricacies of the Township Planning Process, we have benefitted from the Coalition's expertise. From our inception the New Jersey Highlands Coalition has provided support." 

Your water
Your future

www.njhighlandscoalition.org

Remember the
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Campaign!

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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.

You can help.

Please return your membership contribution to:

New Jersey Highlands Coalition
508 Main Street
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www.njhighlandscoalition.org

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(Your email will allow us to inform you of upcoming events.)

Yes! I am interested in volunteering for the Coalition.