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Media Release

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Watershed Association Adds 30 Acres of protected land to its now 860-Acre Reserve

The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association recently completed the purchase of just over 30 acres of land from the Hopewell Valley Regional School District. The Watershed Association purchased the parcel using Green Acres funds available through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in partnership with Mercer County. The Watershed will assume management and maintenance responsibility for the land. Purchased in 1968 by the school district as a possible future school site, the land proved unsuitable for development and not well located as population grew and shifted in the school district.

"We are thrilled to be able to protect another 30 acres in the region," said Watershed Executive Director Jim Waltman.

The land fronts on Pennington-Rocky Hill Road on one side and borders existing Reserve lands on the other side. It is composed predominantly of cedar forest with a swath of wetlands running north/south through the center and along the southwest corner. There are no structures or other improvements on the property. The purchase of the property by The Watershed ensures the preservation of additional natural lands in Hopewell Township and provides further opportunities for the expansion of the hands-on environmental education programs offered through The Buttinger Nature Center of The Watershed Association.

Originally farmed, the site, undisturbed for almost 40 years, has seen the growth of an early successional forest, primarily of cedar, probably older than others in the area. Drifts of moss and lichens cover the forest floor and the site has potential as a prime wintering habitat for owls. The wet areas also provide opportunities for studying a variety of amphibian populations. There are no plans to construct trails, but rather to leave the area as undisturbed habitat, using the existing deer paths as access for educational programs. Installation of a Watershed sign is planned fronting on Pennington-Rocky Hill Road.

"Watershed teacher-naturalists now have a new resource for providing learning experiences," Waltman said.

The Watershed Association conducts education programs from pre-K through adult at the Reserve and Nature Center, including summer environmental day camp for children in grades 1 through 9 and teacher workshops that empower educators by increasing their understanding and appreciation of the local natural environment.

The Watershed Association works to protect clean water and the natural environment in the 265-square-mile area of central New Jersey drained by the Stony Brook and the Millstone River. It conducts four core programs in pursuit of its mission: preserving natural lands by maintaining a now 860-acre nature Reserve with a pond, and 14 miles of trails, as well as an independent organic farm; researching and monitoring water quality in local streams; delivering year-round environmental education programs for children and adults; and engaging towns, businesses, and landowners in the quest to conserve the environment. Visitors are welcome from dawn to dusk year round. For more information, call 609-737-3735 or visit online at www.thewatershed.org.

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