



Buck Mountain Forest Legacy Tract, New Jersey

January 1997

Buck Mountain, one of the larger tracts in the New Jersey Highlands, is located toward the center of 1,000 square miles of forest stretching from the Ramapo Mountains to the Delaware River. Home to black bears, native trout, and more than 100 bird species, the Highlands encompass 11 reservoirs, including 2 below Buck Mountain that supply drinking water to over 4 million people.

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Diane Nelson, Upper Rockaway
Watershed Association

The State of New Jersey acquired 879 full fee acres and accepted a conservation easement on 98 acres in the Borough of Kinnelon, Morris County. The State paid Buck Mountain’s landowner Miklos Felkay \$3,972,674, and a local organization, the Upper Rockaway Watershed Association, received a Green Acres grant of \$429,793, which it paid to Felkay then deeded over its portion to the State. The USDA Forest Service supplied the State with a Forest Legacy grant of \$200,000 to complete the purchase on January 9, 1997. This purchase, hailed by local residents, State officials, and conservationists, completes a greenway 30 miles from Manhattan.

“This illustrates our country’s conviction to protect forest land and conserve all the good things that come with it,” said Deirdre Raimo, of the USDA Forest Service.

Buck Mountain contains all the major ecosystem types found in northern New Jersey, as well as documented habitat for five of New Jersey’s threatened and endangered species (barred owl, red-shouldered hawk, northern goshawk, wood turtle, and bobcat).

The owner once dreamed of cutting a championship golf course into the land and surrounding it with homes. Diane Nelson, an association member, said, “Thanks to the persuasive power of Green Acres Assistant Director Dennis Davidson, Mr. Felkay became aware of the value of the natural resource and agreed to a sale—a bargain sale at that.”

John Denlinger of Green Acres regarded the purchase as important. “The mountain peak called Eagle’s Nest on the tract is the last documented nesting site of the bald eagle in the Highlands, making the site suitable for its reintroduction.”

New Jersey will manage the fee parcel in conjunction with their management plan for nearby State lands.

The Forest Legacy Program protects important forests from conversion to nonforest uses. These forests provide essential wildlife habitat, protect water quality, offer outstanding recreation opportunities, afford outstanding scenic views, are home to historic sites, and/or provide the opportunity to continue traditional forest uses. A Federal-State partnership allows landowners to keep their land private while ensuring it remains forest forever through the use of conservation easements.



An equestrian enjoys the morning on Buck Mountain. Photo by Diane Nelson

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