



# Ridge and Valley Conservancy Inc.

Summer 2008 Newsletter

## EMILE'S PARADISE – HEMLOCK RIDGE TO BE PRESERVED

Emile McConnell had such a love for the hemlock ravine on his land through which Yards Creek cascades that he approached Ridge and Valley Conservancy (RVC) in 2003, in failing health, to express his wish that his property in Blirstown be protected in the future. Thanks to Emile's vision and the generosity of his wife Eleanor and sons Roger, Robert, Richard, and Philip, 146-acres of Limestone Forest in Blirstown will be preserved for future generations. RVC is in the process of purchasing the property, to be known as the Hemlock Ridge Preserve, from the McConnell family for \$1.3 million, significantly less than the market value of the land. The property consists of a mature, diverse deciduous Appalachian hardwood forest with dense stands of Canadian Hemlock atop limestone. Rock limestone prominences on the property give a dramatic view of the Paulins Kill Valley. The property is one of the largest contiguous undeveloped tracts of forest remaining in Blirstown.

Sinkholes and other mysterious features of the Great Limestone Valley can be found at the site, along with



*Emile and Eleanor McConnell*

small limestone quarries from a by-gone era that supplied a lime kiln on the property. The remains of what appears to be an early iron forge, is found on the land. Ridge and Valley Conservancy will own the property, which has a network of hiking trails formerly used for forestry. The careful stewardship of the forest by the McConnell family is evident to anyone who hikes these trails, which will be called the Emile McConnell Trail in honor of the man who envisioned everyone enjoying what he found precious in nature.

Funds to purchase the property will come from a number of organizations. Costs will be met using public funds from the Garden State Preservation Trust (\$737,000), the Warren County Open Space Trust (\$425,000), and the Blirstown Township Open Space Trust (\$150,000). In addition, the Dodge

Foundation provided a grant of \$5,000 for the project, the Chester-based Conservation Resources Inc., provided a grant in the amount of \$5,000, and the New Jersey DEP Natural Resource Restoration Program provided \$12,000 in Natural Resource Damage funds through settlements with responsible parties, and by using donations from you, our members!

This property is part of Ridge & Valley Conservancy's Limestone Forest Project Area. It is underlain by Kittatinny Limestone, an important aquifer in the Paulins Kill valley. One of the Conservancy's primary goals is to protect high-quality headwater streams in the Valley and Ridge region by precluding development through conservation easements and fee-simple pur-

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . . WHAT'S NEXT!

### RIDGE AND VALLEY CONSERVANCY

#### 2008 OFFICERS

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*This is the question I often ask myself when contemplating which property Ridge and Valley Conservancy might try to protect*

*next. But the question pertains to relevant events like the flooding of our basement and drowning of our furnace at the Ridge and Valley Center in Blairstown, the general drop-off in charitable giving with the rising cost of living, and the uncertainty over finding a long-term source of funding for open space in New Jersey.*

*The future is uncertain. That's part of what makes life worth living – the mystery of what will unfold before us. But what we've always been certain of at RVC is the need to have places where people can go to get away from it all, to experience the sights, smells, sounds, and feelings of nature, whether by oneself or with friends and family. We're thinking ahead. We're always on the lookout for sensitive lands that are in danger of becoming just another housing site, or lands that*

*have the special qualities that wildlife need to survive and humans need to experience.*

*Our members have been generous in their support and enthusiasm in years past and we thank you for your spirited contributions. We know that many of you join us in the feeling that someone needs to take an active, affirmative role in shaping the future of our planet, or we will lose natural treasures that may never return. This requires foresight, dedication, and a constant attention to what's coming next - whether it's the next surge in the economy and the land speculation that inevitably follows, or the news that funds to protect nature are in diminishing supply. These times require foresight and creativity to make sure that what is precious to our existence, clean air and water and a place to renew our spirit, will be there for us and others when we need it in years to come.*

*Thank you for your support. We'll continue to work hard to save the best of what remains.*

*-Bob Canace*

## HEMLOCK RIDGE PRESERVED . . . continued

chases. The property is a likely habitat for the red shouldered hawk as evidenced by a nest that was found on the property.

Ridge and Valley Conservancy would like to thank the New Jersey Green Acres Program, Warren County Municipal and Charitable Trust Fund Committee, Blairstown Open Space and Township Committee, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, Conservation Resources, NJDEP, and private donors who have made this project possible. We especially thank the

McConnell Family for their generosity and patience. The preserve helps protect more valuable open space and gives the public another place to enjoy nature.



*This newsletter is a publication of  
Ridge and Valley Conservancy, Inc.*

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## RVC GOES “NATIVE” AT DARK MOON PRESERVE

Ridge and Valley Conservancy has planted its first six acres of native North American warm season grasses at its Dark Moon Preserve in Green Township, Sussex County. The Dark Moon Preserve consists of 96 acres, divided between limestone forest and open fields. RVC received a Conservation Resources Enhancement Program (CREP) grant from the U.S. Department of Agricultural through the Warren County Farm Services Administration (FSA) in Hackettstown to offset the cost of planting native grasses as a buffer to Trout Brook, which runs through the center of the site.

The CREP program was designed to stabilize erodible soils and protect riparian corridors like to one at the Dark Moon Preserve. Through the hard work of Debbie Crisman of FSA, RVC will receive funds to help pay for the seeding of the preserve and annual payments in exchange for agreeing to let the grasses establish and thrive. Native grasses are those that were found in North America

when Europeans arrived. The Europeans brought with them cool season grasses, such as the orchard grass, timothy, brome, etc., to which we’re now accustomed. Native grasses thrive in mid - to late summer, when soil temperatures are high. They’re commonly known as prairie grasses, with colorful names such as Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem and Indiangrass. Recently switchgrass has gotten notoriety as a potential source of biofuel. Indeed, native grasses can be converted to a biofuel or pelletized or turned to briquettes and burned for energy. They sequester incredible amounts of carbon and will be a long-term solution to our need for energy independence and carbon reduction.

Once planted, native grasses require no reseeding and can flourish for decades. Their root systems can be tens of feet long. They promote beneficial insects and host important native grassland birds, such as the meadowlark and grasshopper



sparrow. Because they are not harvested until late summer, ground-nesting birds can raise young without being threatened by haying operations that take place in early summer.

RVC plans on converting the entire Dark Moon Preserve to native warm season grasses. As the planting process is intensive, this may take 5 years. But the long-term benefits to wildlife and the aesthetic qualities of the grasses will make this effort well worth doing.

If you want to learn more about how you can plant native grasses on your farm and which government programs are available to help offset the cost contact RVC and we’ll work with you or refer you to individuals who can assist you in the process.

## BLADDERWORTS *RVC’s Mr. Nature returns*

Bladderworts are the strangest and probably the most highly developed plants in the world. Bladderworts



are annual plants that lack roots but have flowers on erect stems above the water. The entire floating plant is only about 8 inches tall. F l o w e r s

emerge above the surface and are yellowish with three-lobes and a spur underneath. Bladderworts are usually found in quiet, shallow, waters and can form dense mats. The bladder part of their name comes from the tiny bladder-like structures on their branched underwater leaves. The wort part of the name comes from old English, when wort meant plant. These bladders are actually small vacuum traps which catch tiny aquatic animals. The tiny traps are oval, with a small door at one end. Tiny trigger-

hairs surround the door and secrete a sweet lure. When an animal comes near the hairs, the door snaps open in a fraction of a second, sucking the animal inside the bladder. Once trapped inside, the plant absorbs the animal’s nutrients using digestive juices. There are 14 species of bladderworts found in New Jersey and several of these species are located in the limestone fens of the Ridge & Valley. Bladderworts, (*Utricularia*) make up the largest genus of carnivorous plants and are the most widespread.

## THE LIMESTONE FOREST CAMPAIGN

This year marked the beginning of Ridge and Valley Conservancy's campaign to raise funds to preserve the most ecologically sensitive lands remaining in northern New Jersey, an area known as the Limestone Forest. The forest is crucial to local and migratory species, and water quality in northwestern New Jersey.

The campaign focuses on raising funds needed to:

- ☞ *Start land deals*
- ☞ *Close land deals*
- ☞ *Help care for the land*
- ☞ *Meet staff cost*

In order to keep up the momentum, we planned and assisted in several programs, to date, specifically designed to further the mission.

New programs initiated this year included ***Direct Donor Appeals, Municipal Membership Drive, Nature's Harvest 'Dimes to Dollars' Fundraiser, Rhythm & Vocals Arbor Day Concert, and Foundation Appeals.***

### Direct Appeals

Several of our members have made generous contributions to initiate the campaign. Those making contributions of \$5,000 or more will be recognized by an acknowledgement of their donation on a bronze plaque to be displayed at RVC headquarters. Interested donors should contact RVC Administrator Judy Renna at (908) 362-7989 or e-mail [rvc@goes.com](mailto:rvc@goes.com)

### Municipal Membership Drive

Beginning last November, several municipalities located in the Ridge and Valley region supported the campaign and other RVC efforts by becoming members of the conservancy. Frelinghuysen, Green and Hardwick townships have joined RVC as 2008 Municipality Members.



### Nature's Harvest Dimes to Dollars Fundraiser

A simple wish to encourage patrons to adopt better environmental habits by forgoing plastic bags, blossomed into a successful on-going fundraiser. Initiated by Nature's Harvest, a popular health food shop on Main Street, in Blairstown, this fundraiser has to date raised nearly \$1,300, by offering a dime back to those who choose not to require plastic bags for their purchases and suggesting said dime be placed in a glass jar in front of a display describing RVC's mission and the Limestone Forest Campaign. A pleasant surprise has been that patrons have voluntarily added spare change and dollars to their dime donation, showing strong public support.

*Nature's Harvest, 28 Main St., Blairstown NJ 07825  
(908) 362-6799*

### The Rhythm & Vocals Arbor Day Concert

RVC successfully hosted a top-notch musical event on April 25<sup>th</sup>. This all-acoustic concert involved three exciting musical acts: from Classical Spanish Guitar and traditional Celtic music with step dancing to Classic American Folk music, plus a Lobby Band featuring Old-Time string music, this musical lineup featured top names in each genre, as well as a special poetry reading about trees, seedling giveaways, an Arbor Day tree dedication and free shrubbery raffle. The event was aided by numerous volunteers, program advertisers, in-kind donations of services and products.

### Foundation Donor

RVC received a generous grant in the amount of \$20,000 from the Beneficia Foundation, a private foundation established in 1953 by Theodore Pitcairn. Beneficia's mission is to enhance the quality of life through conservation of the environment and promotion of the arts.

*<http://www.beneficiafoundation.org/>*

*For more information on Ridge and Valley Conservancy's Limestone Forest Campaign, please visit our web site:*

*[www.rvclandtrust.org](http://www.rvclandtrust.org)*

Dear Land Protection Supporter,

2007 marked Ridge and Valley Conservancy's (RVC) 15th year in land preservation. We will reach 3,000 acres of permanently protected land in 2008. Now, as always, we need your support to help us continue to save the best of what's left in the Garden State.

The land and water we protect will stay preserved forever and is open to you for your enjoyment. Think of the future world you'd like to share with others. Kindly act now to save our land, water, and wildlife while there's still time.

Thank you for your continued support. Your generous donation is appreciated and will go to work making a difference in the future of our region and our world.

RVC Board of Trustees and Staff



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS  
AND  
SAVE THIS DATE**

Sunday  
**October 19, 2008**

For RVC's  
**Annual Fall Dinner and Hike**

More details to follow by invitation

Also  
Check RVC's  
Web site for Updates  
[www.rvclandtrust.org](http://www.rvclandtrust.org)



**BECOME A MEMBER OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW**

<input type="checkbox"/> <u>NEW MEMBER</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>RENEWAL</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$30
<input type="checkbox"/> Group	\$50
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<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$100 - \$499
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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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**PAYMENT METHOD**

**Check Enclosed** (please make check payable to Ridge and Valley Conservancy)

**Credit Card / Card Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Credit Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Card Verification Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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