

## Acquisition Protects Water Supply and Forested Habitats

## Conserving New Jersey's Highlands/Upper Delaware River Watershed

## The Challenge

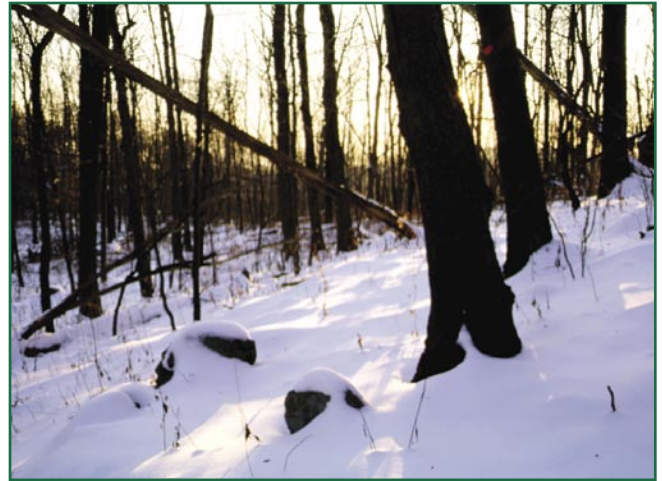
The Highlands area of New Jersey and New York is virtually “the backyard of the Nation’s largest metropolitan area.” The location provides outdoor recreation opportunities for the 20 million people who live in northern New Jersey and New York City. The entire Highlands Region—an area encompassing more than 2 million acres of glacial bogs, hardwood-conifer swamps, rock outcrop communities, and chestnut oak forests—stretches from western Connecticut across the Lower Hudson River Valley and northern New Jersey into Pennsylvania. The region, characterized by a series of ridges and valleys that are part of the Appalachian Mountains, is covered by a mosaic of forests and farmlands.

New Jersey’s Upper Delaware River watershed covers a 746-square-mile area located within the Highlands in northern New Jersey. The tributaries in the upper watershed are among the Delaware River’s most pristine, making this section of the river one of its most crucial segments and a top-priority focus area. In this part of New Jersey, the overwhelming majority of residents obtain their drinking water from individual or community groundwater wells of varying depths. As the population of the Upper Delaware River watershed and the greater Highlands Region continues to grow, regional water demands will become critical, as will the need for increased conservation. With so much at stake, it is vitally important to seize opportunities to conserve remaining nearby forest lands when practical. This will help protect the urban population’s drinking water, maintain habitats, and preserve natural spaces.

## The Solution

The USDA Forest Service’s *New York-New Jersey Highlands Regional Study: 2002 Update* provided a detailed analysis of the area’s watersheds. It covered wildlife habitats and recreational sites, and outlined strategies for land planning aimed at protecting the area from overuse. Following the study, the Trust for Public Land spearheaded and coordinated an effort to preserve an important location

*The Buckhorn Creek acquisition was built on a multi-agency team effort.*



Buckhorn Creek’s forests are covered in a snowy blanket.

within the region—the Buckhorn Creek site, a 433-acre parcel located just east of the Delaware River. It is the largest contiguous forest area in southern Warren County, New Jersey.

## Resulting Benefits

The Forest Service Forest Legacy Program targeted funding for this acquisition to ensure the long-term protection of the area’s undeveloped forests, as well as the flora and fauna they contain. The location provides critical habitat for more than 200 forest interior-dependent bird species in New Jersey’s Highlands. The acquisition also protects Buckhorn Creek, a fast-moving trout stream and a major tributary of the Delaware River. Formerly a drinking water source for the town of Belvedere, the Buckhorn Creek tract contains a reservoir protected by a forested watershed. The preservation of this land will protect wildlife habitat, ensure public recreation opportunities, and protect the drinking water supply for millions of residents.

## Sharing Success

The Buckhorn Creek acquisition was and continues to be a multi-agency effort on Federal, State, and local levels. The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife will manage the property as a new wildlife management area that will be open to the public for hunting, fishing, and hiking. Funding for this project was provided through grants from the Forest Legacy Program (\$1,663,750), Warren County (\$500,000), Phillipsburg Riverview Organization (\$500,000), New Jersey Green Acres State Land Acquisition Program (\$346,200) and White Township (\$250,000).



USDA Forest Service  
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