



News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Freeholders and New Jersey Conservation Foundation Announce Key Addition to Sourland Mountain Preserve

HILLSBOROUGH - Another 343 acres will be added to the Sourland Mountain Preserve in the southern portion of Somerset County, following the Board of Freeholders' Sept. 25 approval of the acquisition.

The county, in partnership with the nonprofit New Jersey Conservation Foundation, will permanently preserve the land as open space. The New Jersey Conservation Foundation secured an option agreement to purchase the property from land developer Bryce Thompson and will transfer the agreement to the county.

The property will remain largely in its natural state. Somerset County and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation will work together to develop a management plan that will outline appropriate uses for the preservation and public enjoyment of the land.

The 343 acres, which are made up of several tracts in Hillsborough Township near the intersection of Wertsville and Montgomery roads, are contiguous to other open space lands acquired by Somerset County in recent years and will encourage the expansion of the Sourlands Preserve to the Hunterdon County border, where many local, county and nonprofit preservation initiatives are currently underway.



"The acquisition of this property will add significant acreage to the county's growing Sourland Mountain Preserve and contributes to the key elements of the county's Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan by protecting a significant environmental resource," said Freeholder Mark Caliguire, liaison to the county's Open Space Advisory Committee.

"We are very excited to be working with New Jersey Conservation Foundation to preserve and maintain the property," said Freeholder Patrick Scaglione, Park Commission liaison. "The preservation of this property will allow for the expansion of public access to the western portion of the Preserve in Somerset County and will also provide opportunities for connections to public lands in Hunterdon County."

"Land preservation has already been a top priority in Hillsborough. Partnering with Somerset County and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation is an opportunity that further realizes that priority, while perpetuating continued economic benefits through reduced development," stated Mayor Carl Suraci of Hillsborough Township.

"We're very pleased to partner with Somerset County to preserve this beautiful Sourlands Mountain property," said Michele S. Byers, executive director of New Jersey Conservation Foundation. "We've worked with Bryce Thompson on several land preservation projects in the past, and we're grateful for his willingness to sell lands for conservation."

The Sourland Mountain region is an expansive green swath of intact forest and farmland spanning parts of three largely developed central New Jersey counties. It extends from the central part of Hillsborough Township southwest to the Delaware River in West Amwell, Hunterdon County, and Hopewell Township, Mercer County.

The Sourlands contain over 20,000 contiguous forested acres, which protect the water supply to the headwaters of several significant streams flowing to the D&R Canal, Millstone, Raritan and Delaware rivers. The Sourlands support many rare plant and animal species, and provide nesting and migratory stopover habitat for over 100 species of migratory birds.

Somerset County began the preservation of the Sourland Mountain in Hillsborough and Montgomery townships in the early 1970s. With the addition of the Thompson property, the Preserve will exceed 5,400 acres, making it the largest park in Somerset County's 13,000-acre park system.

**Patricia L. Walsh, Freeholder Director • Peter S. Palmer, Freeholder Deputy Director
Robert Zaborowski, Freeholder • Patrick Scaglione, Freeholder • Mark Caliguire, Freeholder**

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The Far Hills-based New Jersey Conservation Foundation, which preserves open space and farmland throughout the state, is working to protect additional acreage in the Sourland Mountains.

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