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Contact: Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795
Lawrence Ragonese (609) 292-2994

DEP JOINS WITH D&R GREENWAY TO PRESERVE CRITICAL HABITAT ON CIDER MILL PRESERVE

TRENTON - An 89-acre natural grassland tract in Hunterdon County, with views of Amwell Valley and bordering the forested ridges of Sourland Mountain, will be permanently protected through a \$2.1 million preservation deal, DEP Commissioner Bob Martin announced today.

The DEP has worked with D&R Greenway Land Trust and other partners to save the Cider Mill Preserve tract in East Amwell, marking another major State preservation project that has been completed in this 50th anniversary of the State's Green Acres Program.

"This is a continuation of the State's longstanding effort to protect the natural spaces that make New Jersey such a special place to live and work," said Commissioner Martin. "It's a great example of the importance of our Green Acres Program."

"This deal protects an ecologically sensitive tract, a unique site that offers refuge to threatened grassland bird species," added Amy Cradic, DEP Assistant Commissioner for Natural and Historic Resources. "In addition, it offers great wildlife watching, birding and walking opportunities in a remarkable setting."

The preservation effort was funded through a combination of Green Acres grants; the New Jersey's Natural Resource Damages fund, which uses money paid to the DEP by polluters to preserve or restore lands that protect groundwater; the nonprofit Conservation Resources Inc., through a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; Hunterdon County; and East Amwell Township.

The DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife will be part owners and co-managers of the preserved property, along with D&R Greenway.

The site, which is surrounded by hundreds of acres of preserved open space and farmland, offers a unique grassland habitat for threatened grassland birds, including good cover and nesting sites for birds. The site could benefit species such as the American kestrel, bobolink, Eastern meadowlark, short-eared owls, Northern harriers, Savannah sparrow, vesper sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, and bobwhite quail.