

# The Skylands News



## Plein Air and Preservation: Perfect together

**West Milford** — Skylands CLEAN held its first art show on April 6th. “Plein Air and Preservation: Landscape Paintings of the New Jersey Highlands” was extremely well attended with over 50 guests, and raised approximately \$1000 for CLEAN.

The Plein Air Painters of the New Jersey Highlands, a local artist group dedicated to “Plein Air” (outdoor) painting of Highlands landscape scenes, partnered with CLEAN on the event. All plein air painting is done on site, not from photographs or from the artists memory. The Plein Air painters generously donated 50% of the proceeds of each painting sold at the event to CLEAN.

Trustee Miriam Nelson-Gillett and member Cheryl Kiviat joined with plein air artist Diana Gibson-Brown in developing the art show concept and organizing the event.

“I wanted to do something special, something classy and inspiring,” said Nelson-Gillett of the event. “Landscape painting preserves a vista for posterity, and CLEAN is committed to preserving these areas for future generations. It was a natural synergy.”

Members also learned about CLEAN’s plans for the upcoming year during a short membership meeting. O’Hearn presented a

calendar of the year’s upcoming events, explaining that CLEAN developed the events in an effort to connect with its membership.

“Wine in the Woods” a popular gathering place on Cahill Cross Road provided the backdrop for the show. Guests enjoyed a glass of wine, wonderful hors d’oeuvres, enjoyed music by soft-rock duo Jeff and Karen of Jersey Fresh, and viewed many original artworks depicting familiar local scenes such as the Monksville Reservoir and Skylands Manor.

“What’s great about these paintings is that they depict beautiful places we are all familiar with,” said Robin O’Hearn, CLEAN’s Executive Director. O’Hearn bought a painting of the Botanical Garden at Skylands Manor entitled “First sign of spring” by William Brown. “I love the garden, and now I have a painting to remind me of it all year long.”

“The event exceeded my expectations in attendance, artworks sold, and new memberships,” said Nelson-Gillett. “I’m really grateful for the generous donations from the artists, and the food donations from Down Under Café, Stone Mountain Cheese, Anita Yarossi and Arlene Mac Allen. And I hope all the new “patrons of the arts” enjoy and are enriched by having these paintings in their homes.”

# Housing slump prompts legislators to push for permit extensions



**Region** — In a huge giveaway to developers, the NJ Legislature has introduced bills which could bring dead projects back to life if adopted. Bills A2867/S1919 (the Permit Extension Act) propose to extend “certain permits and approvals affecting the physical development of property” to 2014 and would “supersede all existing statutory and regulatory requirements to the contrary.”

The 8-page bill looks to cure the state’s economic woes and those of the building industry by allowing an open ended timetable for all permits. The industry is suffering from reduced demand, cancelled orders, declining sales and rentals, fewer qualified buyers, and scaled back growth plans. These problems, however, are the result of the sub-prime mortgage crisis and deflation of an

overheated housing market, not due to environmental regulation.

The bill would exempt all projects from having to comply with any new environmental regulations going forward between now and 2014. A similar bill which was adopted in 1994 allowed many projects to avoid complying with wetlands regulations well into the current decade. Examples include the Stone Ridge and West Brook Hills 1 projects in Ringwood, which skirted wetlands rules demanding larger buffers when they were finally built in 2003, long after those rules took effect.

One of the more troubling aspects is that Highlands projects grandfathered under the Act could now be revived. Valley Ridge, for example, was first approved in 1997 and obtained several legal extensions to its approval, but never managed to get needed DEP permits or start construction prior to the end of the 3-year exemption they obtained under the Highlands Act. Their exemption expired in August 2007. Their project still requires a modification to its water permit and property must be condemned to run sewer lines. This bill would give it a new life. Since the bill is supposed to jump-start stalled projects, will letting them languish for another six years really accomplish that goal?

According to Bill Wolfe, the executive director of PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility) environmental regulation is often targeted during economic downturns.

"Unfortunately, the DEP is being used as a political whipping boy when it has absolutely nothing to do with the state's current financial straits." said Wolfe in a recent interview.

Members should contact our state senate and assembly members to voice our concerns about this dangerous bill which will likely roll back decades of environmental protections. Members can also access an action alert put out by the Sierra Club which will allow them to email a letter to their representatives in the legislature. Go to [www.sierraactivist.org](http://www.sierraactivist.org).

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## Win this Emotion "Charger" Kayak!

Courtesy of  
**Ramsey Outdoor  
Stores!**

**\$5 per ticket**

**All proceeds go to  
Skylands CLEAN**

Winning ticket will be drawn on  
July 18, 2008 at 5:00 pm.

The kayak will be awarded to  
one lucky winner at our  
Great Outdoors Celebration

August 2, 2008 at Monksville Reservoir  
Purchase tickets on the CLEAN web site,  
[www.skyclean.org](http://www.skyclean.org)

No substitutions can be made, nor can cash payment be made  
in lieu of prizes.

## Federal Hill housing approved

The Bloomingdale Planning Board approved the court-ordered DR Horton development of 360 townhomes on Federal Hill at the May 25th meeting. The board had previously denied an earlier application when the builder refused to extend the time for the hearings to allow for public comment. Horton went to court in 2005 under a "builder's remedy" lawsuit to force the borough to accept the project as part of their affordable housing obligation.

The most controversial aspect of this latest application was DR Horton's contention that they did not have to provide any groundwater recharge (contrary to DEP stormwater rules). Lack of stormwater recharge could increase flooding potentially compromising the safety of residents living below. CLEAN and Pequannock River Coalition both urged the Planning Board to hire their own hydro-geologist to verify Horton's findings, but the board declined.

According to Horton's plans, the stormwater from the site will now be directed toward Wanaque via Union Avenue, including Upper Twin Lake and areas downstream in Pompton Lakes. Passaic County must weigh in on the drainage design, which is under their jurisdiction.

CLEAN will work with PRC to press the DEP and the County to protect residents from any negative impacts that this project may cause, and require them to follow state mandated stormwater rules. Safety is too important to leave to chance.

## Highlands Plan final draft to be adopted in July

The New Jersey Highlands Council is scheduled to adopt the final version of the Regional Master Plan (RMP) on July 17th. At the June 5th Council meeting, the Council reversed course on a controversial policy that would have redefined grass as impervious cover, expanding the redevelopment footprint of most lots. After a major outcry from groups like CLEAN and others, that policy has been withdrawn.

The council is also revisiting Transfer of Development Rights receiving zones. CLEAN led Council members and staff on a tour of many of these sites this past winter, showing that they were inappropriately sited on environmentally sensitive areas like the public well for Ringwood, a YMCA camp in West Milford, shorefront on Greenwood and Skyline Lakes, and along Category One waterways.

The RMP in its current form is still deeply flawed, encouraging development in the Preservation Area it was charged to protect. There are several Highlands Council members who have been pushing for substantive changes, including Deborah Pasquarelli, Tim Dillingham, and Tracy Carluccio, and our representative, Freeholder Tahesha Way. We are hoping that they will be joined by Bergen County Freeholder Elizabeth Calabrese and others and vote to substantially strengthen the plan.

# Fishing derby is a 'reel' good time!

**West Milford** – Approximately twenty five youngsters, spanning in age from 22 months to 13 years old participated in our first fishing derby! Organized by our Watershed Ambassador Tracy Margaret, with assistance from CLEAN Trustee Tony Cassera and NYNJ Trail Conference volunteers Bob Jonas and Estelle Anderson, the event was fun-filled for the kids, parents, and volunteers alike. The kids fished the pond at Westbrook Park, the former KOA campground in West Milford on West Brook Road. While the pond is small, there was no shortage of fish, who apparently hadn't seen a hook in a long time.

The kids dropped their lines in the water around 9 am, and lost no time reeling in their fish. Among the biggest catches of the day were a 15-inch yellow perch and a 13-inch large-mouth bass, (caught by sisters Cherokee and Shyann), and two painted turtles who had the misfortune to bite down on a hook. Almost every child there caught a fish, from a 3 1/2" sunny caught by three-year old Lucas, to the 17 1/2" chain pickerel caught by 13-year old Andrew.

Worms, gear, and two "grand prize" fishing poles were donated by Frank's Tackle in Wanaque. These were won by Cherokee and Andrew for catching the two largest fish. In addition, Wal-Mart generously donated fishing gear as prizes for all the kids. We thank our donors and volunteers for making the day such a spectacular success.

Pictures of the event are below:



Derby volunteers below from left, Bob Jonas, Estelle Anderson, Bill O'Hearn, Tony Cassera, and Tracy Margaret with Robin O'Hearn



## EPA letting Ford leave Ringwood Superfund site

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Ringwood Superfund site clean-up. Photo/EPA web site

The Environmental Protection Agency is allowing Ford's clean-up contractor to leave the Ringwood Superfund site after four years of work. This is the fifth cleanup since the area was first cleaned in the late 1980s. During this latest effort (the site was declared "clean" and removed from the EPA's national priority list of toxic sites in 1994), more than 35,000 tons of sludge have been removed from the area. It was re-listed last year, the first time in the nation's history the agency has done so. This is also the first site in which the residents have continued to live on the toxic dump while the clean-up took place. Residents and their representatives are rightly concerned that the EPA's decision to let Ford leave is putting Ford's bottom line over their health and safety.

At the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) meeting in May, Edison Wetlands Association Executive Director Bob Spiegel presented a 20 pound sludge boulder he found during a ten-minute search of sludge hill, raising concerns that the cleanup is inadequate. He suggested that the EPA search the site "shoulder to shoulder" to ensure that the sludge has been completely removed before letting Ford leave the cleanup behind. Spiegel let a tour of the site for EPA staff and others on June 7th.

During the CAG meeting, EPA Section II Administrator Alan Steinberg took offense at suggestions that the EPA was bowing to pressure from Ford. Residents complained about piles of contaminated soil which remain on site while the EPA determines whether the Borough or Ford should be charged with removal (neither the Borough nor Ford are willing to take responsibility). The DEP directed the Borough last week to clean up the soil, part of the former municipal landfill, but the Borough has challenged that decision. In any event, residents should not be forced to continue to live among toxic waste while the parties squabble. EPA should clean it up — then determine who pays.

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## Membership Renewals

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You will receive a letter from us very soon asking that you renew your membership for another year. As you know, funding from major foundations has become limited in recent years. In the past, this funding paid for staff and overhead, allowing member dues to be used for experts like attorneys, hydro-geologists, planners, and engineers. These experts were our key to successfully fighting on your behalf to stop projects that drained your water supply and ruined our local landscapes.

We rely on your support more than ever before. Please be as generous as you can to keep CLEAN working for you! You can even renew or upgrade your membership on line, through our new online donation system. It even allows you to make a monthly donation, if you'd like to spread your giving through the year. Check it out at [www.skyclean.org](http://www.skyclean.org).

# West Brook stream planting a huge success!



Stream planting volunteers from left: Flo Iannanuane, Amanda DaSilva, Bill O'Hearn, Ross Kushner, Jon Berry, Tracy Margaret, Doug Trainor, Lucia Rodriguez, Robin O'Hearn, and Dag Madera. Photos by D. DaSilva



**West Milford** — Despite cold, gloomy weather, 10 hearty volunteers helped us replant an eroded stream bank on the West Brook in West Milford on May 3rd. The West Brook is one of the most important streams in the Highlands, as it feeds the Wanaque Reservoir with clean drinking water, and provides habitat for three types of breeding trout, brown, brook, and rainbow.

The stream bank was damaged when Passaic County replaced an existing bridge at the intersection of Snake Den Road in West Milford, and performed an inadequate restoration of the area. It took a second hit when Hurricane Floyd blew through in 1999. Our work in replanting 200 willow trees and 100 red osir dogwood cuttings will go a long way toward restor-

ing the stream bank and preventing more erosion in the future.

The replanting project was easy, since it involved cuttings which are simply pushed by hand into the ground. Within 3-4 weeks, the cuttings sprout and begin to grow, quickly growing several feet over the course of the season. The cover they provide will not only protect the bank from erosion, but provide shade over the water. Trout are very temperature sensitive, and cannot tolerate temperatures in excess of 78 degrees, so the planting will keep the water cool.

We thank the Watershed Institute and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for their funding of this project. We also thank Ross Kushner, Watershed Ambassador Tracy Margaret, and our wonderful volunteers who made the project a success!

# Get involved – CLEAN has events for every interest all year long!

Exciting things are happening this year at Skylands CLEAN. As you'll see there are a variety of activities for every age, every interest. Join us!

**June/July 2008 – Membership meeting at Ringwood Public Library with presentation on “green” building design by a speaker with the Green Building Council.**  
Check the web site for date and time.

**June 2008 – Ringwood Farmer’s Market. Saturdays from 9 am to 1 pm.** Stop by the CLEAN booth which will be there several weekends in June.

**August 2, 2008, CLEAN Celebrates the Great Outdoors/**



**Kayak Float at Monksville Reservoir, 2 pm–6 pm (rain date August 3rd)** . Bring your kayak for this great event (Life vest required). Prizes and barbeque too! Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. **(CHANGE IN DATE!!!)**

**September 20, 2008, Neighborhood clean up in Wanaque 10 am–12 pm.** Join us for a fun and satisfying morning of beautifying our local neighborhoods. Tools and snacks provided. All ages and skill levels welcome, although children should come with an adult.

**October 18, 2008, Hike and Sketch at Ringwood Manor (rain date Oct. 19) 1 pm–3 pm.** Kids can learn to sketch with local landscape artists. A hike will be led on the park’s trails by Charlie Sontag.

**November 15, 2008, Annual CLEAN awards dinner 7–11 pm.** Location and award recipients to be announced. Silent Auction will be held as well!

## Dads and Grads

Internet shopping for your favorite Dad or grad this summer? What if a portion of that internet purchase could go to Skylands CLEAN at no cost to you? Well now it can.

Goodsearch.org offers a shopping web site where you can access all your favorite internet stores, like Amazon, Best Buy, Sports Authority, and others. All you do is log onto their site, [www.goodsearch.org](http://www.goodsearch.org), type in Skylands CLEAN as your charity, and hit verify. Then, start shopping on their Goodshop site. Each purchase you make from generates a donation to CLEAN from the internet vendor.

Surf the web using Goodsearch.org’s search engine, which also generates donations to us.



## Help Skylands CLEAN work for you!

CLEAN needs your financial support to continue its work in preserving the Highlands. We’ve worked to stop sprawl in Ringwood, West Milford, Wanaque, and Bloomingdale since 1987. Please join us. You can also conveniently join and donate online at [www.skyclean.org](http://www.skyclean.org).

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I want to support CLEAN! Here is my membership contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ I’m already a member, but here is my additional contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

There are several membership levels available:

\_\_\_ \$35 (Basic) \_\_\_ \$50 (Steward) \_\_\_ \$100 (Protector) \_\_\_ \$250 (Advocate) \_\_\_ Other Amount

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail address\*: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Membership donations of \$35 or more allow you to receive email action alerts. Skylands CLEAN is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-partisan, tax-exempt organization. Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. We do not share our mailing list with any other organization. Return this form with your check, payable to Skylands CLEAN, Inc., P.O. Box 85, Ringwood, NJ 07456



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*Preserving and Protecting  
the New Jersey Highlands*

## Plein Air paintings capture the Highlands' beauty

