



## **Donating a parcel of land to the Raritan Headwaters Association**

### *The Advantages of donating your land*

The donation of a parcel to the Raritan Headwaters Association (RHA) is one of the techniques that you as an area landowner can use to preserve and protect your community.

- The land is protected in from unwise uses, including both public and private actions.
- RHA will allow for public access on this parcel, as long as it aligns with the conservation values on the parcel.
- The stewardship of the land is done by the Association.
- A donation of a parcel of land that meets federal tax code requirements may entitle the donor to federal income tax deductions. Please contact a financial advisor for more information regarding tax benefits.
- When part of a regional or area-wide effort, substantial public benefit can result, leveraging public funds for other land preservation activities in the region.

### *II. RHA's Commitment to Land Preservation*

Since 1959 the organization has been working to “protect the woods, waters and fields” of the 470 square mile Headwaters region of the Raritan River. Currently, RHA holds conservation easements with thirty-three area landowners. The Association retains the ability to acquire lands-in-fee where appropriate and today owns 11 preserves representing 450 acres. These lands are open to the public for “passive recreation”. In addition, RHA has preserved thousands of acres partnering with other non-profit conservation groups, leveraging municipal, county and state open space funds to acquire priority lands that safeguard water supplies, protect greenways and sustain the quality of life for our citizens.

RHA's “Land Committee” oversees all aspects of the land preservation program including:

- Developing and adopting policies and procedures to comply with the Land Trust Alliance's “Standards and Practices”.
- Growing Land Stewardship and Legal Defense Funds to assure that fee owned properties are stewarded and protected into the future.
- Retaining legal counsel with expertise in the field of land preservation and tax law.

- Implementing a system to safeguard project records including baseline documents, photography, monitoring records, reports, surveys and maps.

### ***III. Steps to donating a parcel of land to RHA***

- 1. Initiate Contact:*** Contact RHA to discuss your situation and desires. Call: George Schaberg, Land Projects Manager (908) 234-1852, ext. 328. All discussions are confidential.
- 2. Schedule a "Site Visit":*** Arrange for RHA staff to make a site visit to inventory your land's conservation value.
- 3. Contact Your Experts:*** Contact your *attorney* and/or *financial advisor*. RHA can provide a contract for review.
- 4. RHA's Land Committee Review:*** The committee will confidentially review the potential donation. After review the Committee will make its recommendation to RHA's Board of Trustees.
- 5. Approval by the Board of Trustees:*** RHA's Board will hear the recommendations of the Land Committee. Assuming acceptance, the President and the Secretary of RHA are authorized to sign the contract. The signing of the contract by you and RHA legalizes the document.
- 6. Have your attorney conduct a Title Search and Obtain a Title Insurance Policy:*** In order for RHA to accept a parcel of land, chain of ownership must be established and a title insurance policy must be obtained.
- 7. Hire a Licensed Professional Surveyor:*** RHA can provide a list of qualified surveyors.
- 8. Hire a Licensed Environmental Professional:*** RHA can provide a list of qualified environmental firms to conduct a Phase 1 Assessment. Phase 1 assessments closely review the land, neighboring lands and past activities on the land to put together a clear picture of any areas of concern. It is considered best practice to conduct a phase 1 assessment on any lands intended for conservation.
- 9. Hire an Appraiser:*** RHA can provide a list of qualified appraisers. The Internal Revenue Code requires a qualified appraisal by a qualified appraiser for gifts of property valued at more than \$5,000. RHA will need a copy of the appraisal to accompany the project files and for review if the value is being claimed on an IRS 8283 form. RHA can provide the appraiser with a property analysis of natural features called a "*baseline study*".
- 10. Completing the "Baseline Study":*** A complete "*baseline study*" can be conducted by RHA Staff to accurately reflect the character of the parcel. Photography, a site map, inventories and a report will be added to the file to reflect present conditions. RHA will create a Management Plan based on this information.

**11. Closing:** There will be a real estate closing transaction at a jointly approved time and place.

**12. The Final Steps:**

- a. Stewardship:* RHA encourages a stewardship and legal defense donation, which is calculated on a case by case basis in cooperation with the landowner. These funds are added to our land stewardship and legal defense accounts to cover the costs of monitoring and stewardship.
- b. Transferring Appraisal Information:* RHA will require a copy of your appraisal for the project file.
- c. I.R.S. Form 8283:* If you are claiming an income tax deduction on the donated value of the land, you must provide RHA with an I.R.S. Form 8283 that certifies the gift and establishes the value. RHA will review the form against the appraisal, and if no errors or omissions are found, a signed copy will be returned to you in a timely manner. Please retain the completed 8283 form for your tax purposes.

Raritan Headwaters Association  
P.O. Box 273  
Gladstone, NJ 07934  
Contact: George Schaberg  
(908) 234-1852, ext. 328  
[gschaberg@raritanheadwaters.org](mailto:gschaberg@raritanheadwaters.org)