WCAS Holden Grant Report 2022-2023
Sourland Conservancy

The Sourland Conservancy (SC) was awarded $4,998 from the 2022-2023 Holden grant funding round to support our Forest Restoration project at Sommer Park Preserve in Hopewell, NJ. For this project we partnered with the founder and head of Featherbed Lane Bird Banding and Research Station (FLBBRS), Hannah Suthers.

In the spring of 2022 a mix of woody and herbaceous species at quart/plug/and tubeling stages were purchased with previous funding. Species were strategically planted based on soil moisture, composition, other resident species, and needs of native birds in the area. Planting occurred in April 2022 with the use of staff members and volunteers within the recently built enclosures. For 2023 we decide to build on this work by adding more fencing, while supplementing sites with more herbaceous and woody species plantings where needed. During the end of Summer and the Fall, Sourland employees, interns, and volunteers worked on installing over 1,980 feet of 10 ft fencing, adding 135 more woody plants, and 442 herbaceous plants, all purchased through the Holden Grant. The fencing we received was much more than expected due to a discount the fencing company provided to support the cause allowing us to receive more than ⅔ extra fencing than expected. The construction of the fencing was done with minimal ground disturbance as we used existing trees for the majority of the posts when able. We targeted both areas that could be supplemented with plantings and areas that we wanted to support natural regeneration but no planting was necessary. Once the fencing was installed some sites were left to naturally regenerate on their own while others were supplemented with a variety of species, both woody and herbaceous.

Much of the work we conducted this year was after the heat of the summer to prevent plants from drying out from any possible drought, which was the biggest problem we had run into in previous years.

In sites of previous plantings we have continued to have success with both plantings and natural regeneration. A few of the most abundant species include *Gentiana andrewsii*, *Lobelia siphilitica*, *Lobelia cardinalis*, and *Eurybia divaricata*. All of these species are vital to the local insect and bird population.

We were even delighted to have found a type of coral mushroom growing in one of the enclosures and even a large millipede, both of which are great indicators of an environment rich with nutrients and a healthy decomposition cycle.

We at SC are pleased with the success of this project and are grateful for the support of the Holden Grant Program of the Washington Crossing Audubon Society, Hannah Suthers with the FLBBRS, and all of the volunteers that made the project possible and come into fruition.