

SEP 2, 2016 3:46 PM

# ‘In wildness is the preservation of the world’

BY ERICA CHAYES WIDA

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On the 50th anniversary of the United States passing the Wilderness Act, President Barack Obama in 2014 declared September as National Wilderness Month. The Wilderness Act was put into effect to protect all facets of the wild, from water conservation to wildlife protection.

According to The Wilderness Society, the Act helps protect watersheds, wildlife habitats and the recreational activities so many individuals enjoy, such as hiking, fishing, camping, boating and hiking. When passed in 1964, the Wilderness Act immediately put laws into action that preserved approximately 9 million acres of national forests as “wilderness” – a title which places the highest level of protection on federal land deemed as such. In the same year Obama passed the Act, the National Wilderness Preservation System covered almost 110 million acres and wild country throughout 44 states.

In the words of Henry David Thoreau: “In wildness is the preservation of the world.”

If you are a Princeton resident and enjoy the outdoors, you may be familiar with the plethora of preserved land that exists in the area. In addition to wide expanses along Mercer Road where the Battle of Princeton was once fought exists plenty of historic and recreational properties designated for a love of nature. And what better time to appreciate the verdant woods than during National Wilderness Month?

“My favorite wilderness trail is D&R Greenway’s Cedar Ridge Preserve. I love the peaceful trail that wanders through meadows full of wildflowers and butterflies, past vernal ponds and along a restored stone wall into the deep, dark woods,” said Linda Mead, president and CEO of D&R Greenway Land Trust, one of the organizations at the forefront of preservation in Mercer County. “Find the sign that says, ‘Rest’ and sit on the wall, alone in nature.”

On Sept. 12, D&R will launch an exhibit to celebrate the wild at its Olivia Rainbow Art Gallery and Marie L. Matthews Galleries. The show, on view through Oct. 14, is a collaboration with Conserve Wildlife NJ and will feature the wildlife art of James Fiorentino and the first-place county winners of Species on Edge.

“Because of the 20,000 acres preserved by D&R Greenway, endangered wildlife who make their [home](#) in New Jersey will continue to have a supportive habitat,” Fiorentino said in a statement.

“Princeton has many natural areas which hikers can enjoy, including D&R Greenway’s Children’s Discovery Trail on Drake’s Corner Road, our All Saints Trail that connects to Herrontown Woods and the one-mile Greenway Meadows Trail

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behind the Johnson Education Center,” said Emily Blackman, D&R land protection associate and native plant nursery manager.

In addition to the many trails, parks and lakes throughout Princeton, there are more opportunities to celebrate nature – especially if you feel like learning something. On Sept. 10 at 11 a.m., David LaMotte, former chair of English at Princeton Day School, will lead a walk through of St. Michael’s Preserve trailhead on Princeton Avenue. During the walk, LaMotte will discuss “The Practice of the Wild,” by Beat poet Zen Buddhist and naturalist Gary Snyder.

Snyder has been writing poems and essays about the beauty of being grounded in the wilderness for nearly six decades. His works encourage readers to explore the wild, even in the watersheds where we live and walk often. LaMotte will demonstrate ways to live by Snyder’s wilderness philosophies as he takes participants on a journey, just beyond their backyards.

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### About Erica Chayes Wida

Erica Chayes Wida is a writer, mom, and complete zealot when it comes to poetry, paella and globe collections. After graduating with a degree in Anthropology from UCLA, Erica moved to Italy where the seasons and old architecture inspired her journey back to the East Coast. Since then, she and her husband have created a nest egg locally and, over time, developed a rather grand love affair with the town of Princeton. Erica is senior editor at The Princeton Sun and enjoys fulfilling her Princeton affections on a daily basis. | [View all posts by Erica Chayes Wida →](#)

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