

# LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust

Number 7

August 2001



## **NCLT Captures State Award**

Over the last eighteen months the Northern Connecticut Land Trust has made substantial improvements to its most significant holding, the McCann Family Farm in Somers, Connecticut. For this work and the educational and recreational programs held at the Farm throughout the year, the Trust received the Outstanding Stewardship Award at the March State Convocation of Land Trusts held in Berlin, Ct.

Under the direction of Dr. Jerry Stage and his Stewardship Committee and staffed by teams of volunteers, an extensive series of programs and tasks were undertaken and completed on the Farm. For this, the Land Trust Service Bureau decided to award its annual Stewardship Award "for developing a comprehensive stewardship program which includes a volunteer program, marking trails and boundaries, hikes, grassland bird sanctuary, cataloging of flora and fauna, and developing management plans for preserves." Accepting the award, which included a plaque and the book "The Quotable Nature Lover", were Dr. Stage and Director George Grant, shown below with Mike Fotos (left), Director of Land Protection for the Connecticut chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

The beautiful, hilly 84 acre farm was given to the Trust as a result of the vision and generosity of Mary McCann, who loved her land and wanted it to remain in a natural state. Following nearly 10 years of intermittent discussions with her, the property was transferred in October of 1997 after her passing. Her niece, Kathy Dufraime, and Kathy's husband Walter, sharing Ms. McCann's vision, generously granted an easement on their land for a parking lot and an access trail to the Farm.

Stretching from near the center of Somers to the northwestern slopes of Soapstone Mountain, the property crosses several types of topography from flood plain to glacial outwash to rocky upland. As a result, a wide variety of habitats are present, including two streams (one perennial, one intermittent), a small pond, two vernal pools, wetlands, hayfields, fallow fields, and mixed forest growth. Nearly 300 species of trees, flowers, ferns, and other vascular plants have been identified thus far. Eight-eight species of birds have been sighted, which represents 11% of all bird species known to occur in North America north of Mexico! Seven of these birds are on the list of "Connecticut's Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species", as are three plants, one reptile, and one amphibian also seen on the property.

The Farm is now open on weekends and holidays to the general public free of charge for hiking and other passive recreation. A parking lot, self-guiding trails, and bridges have been built for the convenience of visitors. The Farm is located on Route 190 just east of the intersection with Route 83 in the center of Somers.



Mike Fotos, left, Director of Land Protection for the Connecticut chapter of the Nature Conservancy, presents the Stewardship Award to Northern Connecticut Land Trust members Jerry Stage and George Grant at the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Convocation of Land Trusts held at the Northeast Utilities facility in Berlin, Ct.

*Don't forget, you can follow activities and news at our Website, [www.nclt.icomm.ca](http://www.nclt.icomm.ca)*

## **Annual Meeting and Potluck Supper September 23**

Join us Sunday, September 23, for the potluck supper followed by the annual meeting and speakers. This year's event will be held at the First Lutheran Church in Ellington, on Orchard Street off Middle Butcher Road, beginning at 5:30, with dinner starting at 6:00. Bring a salad, dessert, or main dish and your own plates and utensils. Social hour and dinner will be followed by a short business meeting to elect Directors and Officers for 2002. The program will be "Chile - Through the Eyes of Americans". Our featured speaker will be Michelle Hayward, who visited Chile in January, followed by slides by Fay & Ed Dresner. For information, phone Judy Snyder at 749-5411.

Officer nominations for the coming year are:

President - Culver Modisette  
1st V. President - Karl Hasel  
2nd V. President - Jerry Stage  
Treasurer - Jim Gage  
Recording Secretary - John Maulucci  
Corresponding Secretary - Fay Dresner

Director nominations are:

Ernest Boothroyd  
Albert Grant  
Michelle Hayward  
John Maulucci  
Lois Osier  
Judy Snyder

Nominee for at-large member of Executive Committee is George Grant.



## **Volunteers Needed**

As our organization grows, we don't want to forget our roots in the Four Town Land Trust and Vernon Land Trust. We need someone willing to put our records, photos, and newspaper clippings in order. We will provide necessary supplies. Phone Fay Dresner at 872-4120 if you are interested.

We also direly need a volunteer who is into the computer age to monitor the email account that is part of our Website. If you are interested in Internet websites, have the computer connections necessary, and could check this email account regularly for activity and forward mail to appropriate members, it would be greatly appreciated. Contact Karl Hasel (haselkl@pweh.com) for details, and we can get you access to the account at the [www.nclt.icomm.ca](http://www.nclt.icomm.ca) location.

If you have some interest in redesigning the newsletter and helping produce it twice a year, we could use some help by an "expert" with Microsoft Word or the publication software of your choice. Contact our volunteer coordinator, Virginia Patsun, at 763-4047 or [gpatsun@aol.com](mailto:gpatsun@aol.com).



## **Committee Activities**

We welcome Judy Snyder, who has taken over the chair of the Program Committee. If you have any suggestions for programs that would be of interest to you and the general public and are related to the goals and objectives of the Trust, give Judy a call at 749-5411.

With our growing farm properties and responsibilities to our urban communities, a new Farm Committee has been formed as a sub-committee under Stewardship. George Grant will chair this group and will gladly accept any volunteers interested in forming and monitoring policies related to the farming community and agricultural practices.



## **SNET Community Connections Program Supports NCLT**

With the help of 10 members who have signed up with the SNET program to contribute 5% of long distance bills each month, the Trust is getting a quarterly boost to its treasury. If you already have the SNET All-Distance program, or wish to sign up and have some of your bill contributed to our Trust, call 1-800-635-7638 and give them the name of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust and our code, 3178. There is no cost to you or the Trust, nor does it raise or lower your monthly bill. We would appreciate your support.

## **56 Acres Added to NCLT Protected Lands**

On June 11, NCLT closed on the 56 acre Swann farm off Reeves Road in Ellington, completing the largest financial project yet undertaken by the organization. The closing culminated a two year effort to raise \$300,000 to fund the purchase and finally protect a potentially prime piece of development property in an area of open spaces in northwestern Ellington.

Central to the project were the applications for and awards of two major financial grants. The first was a \$182,500 matching grant in August 2000, from the Connecticut Departmental of Environmental Protection under Gov. Rowland's Open Space Land Acquisition Program. In May, a grant was received from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for \$120,000 to round out the remainder of the purchase price. Said Micheal Bangser, executive director of the Foundation, "The Hartford Foundation is pleased to help towns in Greater Hartford preserve open spaces to be enjoyed for generations to come." Ellington's First Selectman, Michael P. Stupinski, also expressed his gratitude to the Foundation for "its generous grant" to help the NCLT "to include an important Ellington parcel, both farmland and forest, under its able stewardship."

Plans for the property include continuing the leasing arrangement with a local farmer to raise corn on most of the property, which will provide income to the NCLT for other projects.

## **New Bolton Land Trust**

Welcome to our new neighboring land trust that has been formed in Bolton. The Trust received its state letter of incorporation in April, and is hoping to complete the process to achieve its non-profit status with the IRS by year's end. President Gwen Marrion, who can be reached at 643-9302, said that 40 members have signed up as a result of an initial membership drive, a great start. The Trust will be run by a 9 member Board of Directors, elected 3 per year for a term of 3 years each. Congratulations, and we look forward to any future projects which we can work together to better preserve and protect open spaces in all our neighboring towns!

## **Upcoming Programs**

October 16 , 7:30 PM - Steve Gebhardt, Fishery Biologist with the DEP, will speak on the "Return of the Salmon". Program followed by refreshments at Piedmont Hall, next to Town Hall in the center of Somers.

January 1 - New Years Day hike or snowshoeing in Somers. Meet at Somers Town Green at 10 AM or 2 PM, where outing will be determined by weather conditions. Call Judy Snyder, 749-5411.

## **Business Tax Credit for Open Space Preservation**

An exciting means of protecting land has recently come to our attention. It was created by a 1999 change in Connecticut's tax laws. Public Act 99-173, Section 47, allows most businesses to take a tax credit for a donation of land to be permanently preserved as protected open space. Tax credits are much more beneficial to a donor than tax deductions - they are subtracted directly from the tax owed rather than from income before calculating taxes.

The donated land can be already owned by the business, or it can be purchased for the express purpose of land donation. "Donations" include bargain sales, in which below-market sales to charitable organizations are counted as partial donations. It need not be the land itself that is given; the bargain sale of a conservation easement restricting development of land also qualifies.

Donations to qualified organizations, which include the state, political subdivisions of the state, or nonprofit land conservation groups, can also be deducted from income when calculating federal business taxes, which range as high as 39%. Combined with the state credit, which is for 50% of the value of the donation, a company could realize nearly 70% of the value of the donation in tax savings! In the case of a business interested in selling already owned land, the company may net even more from a donation than from a sale of the property. Even in the case of a purchase made expressly for the purpose of donation, the philanthropy involved is very efficient, as the following example illustrates:

A 100 acre parcel of land is for sale. A corporation buys it for \$600,000, then immediately donates it to a local land trust. The company gets a \$300,000 credit against state business taxes. It also gets a \$300,000 deduction from income in calculating federal business taxes, which at a marginal rate of 39% is worth \$117,000. The net cost to preserve 100 acres is \$183,000 - or only \$1830 per acre.

If you know someone who might be able to take advantage of the tax credit, tell them about it (or give them a copy of this article). And don't think they pay too little in taxes to be able to contribute; there is still some relatively low-priced land available, the credit can be carried forward for up to 10 years, and there is nothing to stop several businesses from joining together to buy and donate a piece of land. For further information, contact George Grant, 87 Pioneer Heights, Somers, St. 06071, call him at (860) 749-3283, or drop him a note at [landgrant@msn.com](mailto:landgrant@msn.com).



Northern Connecticut Land Trust  
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**Board of Directors**

**President**

Culver Modisette, Stafford

**1st V. President**

Karl Hasel, Vernon

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John Maulucci, Vernon

Don Smith, Somers

Michelle Hayward, Somers

If you have a friend interested in joining the Trust and supporting the work of protecting our natural resources, please pass this newsletter on to them. Contributions are tax deductible.

**MEMBERSHIPS:**

Student - \$2.00      Individual - \$20.00      Family - \$30.00

Business - \$100.00      Life - \$250.00      Patron - \$500.00

Benefactor - \$1000.00

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E\_MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive the newsletter by e-mail? \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Northern Connecticut Land Trust

PO Box 324

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If you would like to volunteer to work projects such as fund-raising, trail maintenance, newsletter, or others, please check YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_