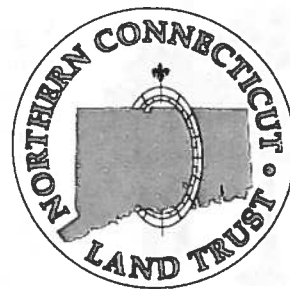


LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust



Number 12

February 2004

Land Trust Acquisition to Protect Valley Falls Area

With the recent purchase of the Knapp property next to Valley Falls Park, the Northern Connecticut Land Trust has moved another step forward in their effort to protect open space in Vernon. The 35 acre parcel represented the last privately owned parcel in the immediate vicinity of the Park, connecting Town of Vernon property with the state-owned Belding Wildlife Preserve along Valley Falls Road, and had been a target for acquisition for over 3 years.

The project began as part of a letter writing drive in January 2000, contacting owners of several large tracts of undeveloped land in Vernon to determine if there was any interest in protecting the properties as open space. Almost 2 years later, Andrew Knapp contacted the Trust on behalf of his mother and property owner, Anne Webster Knapp, to look into the opportunity to keep the land, known to four generations of their family as the "wood lot", undeveloped. "My grandfather, A. Kenneth Webster, my father, my son, and I have walked every foot of this land and know well that it is a beautiful property that should remain unspoiled forever" he stated in the letter. As of January 14 this year, his hope has come true with the sale to the Trust. The property will be named the Andrew Kenneth Webster Preserve, for his grandfather. Plans are to enhance some of the natural trails for public use, but primarily to keep the wooded area in its natural state. The property goes uphill from Valley Falls Road to the Rails-to-Trails path, crossing and continuing on up to the top of the ridgeline, adjacent to other open space the Trust owns along Echo Ridge. "It is very satisfying to have been a part of the effort to ensure that no development will be allowed to spoil the beauty and serenity of the Valley Falls area, one of the great natural resources for the people of Vernon" said Karl Hasel, Vernon resident and Vice President of the Trust, who spearheaded the negotiations for the purchase.

The acquisition was made possible by a matching grant from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Program in September, 2002. Matching dollars were raised with a private grant from the Bafflin Foundation, and a generous gift from anonymous supporters who had helped the Trust previously in acquiring the adjacent Echo Ridge property. This acquisition brings the total acreage owned by the Trust to over 400 acres.

Accolades for Volunteers

The Trust recently received two awards related to its conservation activities. From the North Central Conservation District, the award for Conservation Organization of the Year was presented based on "dedicated and innovative efforts in preserving open space in northern Connecticut." The second award came at the annual meeting of the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association. Its 2003 Trails Committee Award went to the "outstanding organization for your dedication to the natural environment, to working to eradicate invasive plants from NCLT properties, and to creating habitats rich with native plant and animal species", as well as "for your instrumental role in revitalizing the Scantic River Watershed." We are very grateful to all our volunteers and their organizer, Jerry Stage, for the many hours they have contributed to make these awards possible.

A Biological Control Opportunity

Though beautiful, Purple Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*, is a serious invasive plant infesting and reducing the wildlife value of extensive areas of wetlands in the Eastern US. We have a large patch in the southern part of the Scantic Riparian Area. Fortunately it is one of the few species for which the USDA and cooperating state agencies have developed a biological control program. Since the NCLT qualifies for and would like to participate in this program we need several volunteers to maintain caged pots of the plant in order to grow large numbers of the loosestrife eating beetles for release. Please contact Jerry Stage (JerryStage@aol.com or (860)870-4255) if you are interested in helping. For more information click on "Volunteers Wanted! Be a Beetle Farmer" at UCONN Extension Service's web site on Integrated Pest Management (<http://www.hort.uconn.edu/ipm/>).



Scantic River Watershed Association Progress

Officers have been elected for the Association:

Culver Modisette – Chairman Michael Dynia – President
Judith Snyder – V. President James Gage – Treasurer
Secretary – Natalie George

On Saturday, May 29, members will present a canoe clinic on Somersville Pond as a public service program, starting at 9:30 AM. The clinic is directed towards people interested in learning the basics of canoeing, and will be followed by a trip around the pond and into the Scantic River. From Enfield, take Rt 190 East toward Somers, turning right at the stop light in Somersville onto Maple Street, and continuing past the church and post office to the pond. From Somers, head

west on 190 to the blinking light in Somersville, and turn right onto School Street, with the pond ¼ mile ahead on the left. From Vernon or Ellington, head up Pinney Road taking the right fork in Somersville to the pond. Call Judy Snyder at 749-5411 for more information.

Rowland Budget to Support Land Preservation

In this year's State of the State speech, Governor John Rowland stated that he was "optimistic about the future of our state", and "about our state budget". Included in that budget proposal is the plan to "continue our fight against sprawl by investing further in open space and farmland protection". Although no specifics were mentioned, any continuation of the Open Space Grant Program will be good news for open space conservation efforts. Please urge your legislators to support

this vital budget item and to approach the Bond Commission to release the dollars to allow these programs to be funded.

From Michelle, a Trust supporter:

To the skyline I climb,
views of fields and mountains
in short will be mine.
To those with foresight,
I am forever grateful
for without their donation
this paradise could have been a landfill.

Sprawl is for Real! (based on Hartford Courant article by Mike Swift)

For several decades, Connecticut residents have observed unprecedented development and shrinkage of farm and forested land. Until recently, there had been no reliable, objective way to measure these changes. This now has changed. Scientists at the UCONN Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) have developed, after two years of arduous work, NASA satellite-generated computer maps that clearly measure acre-by-acre change within Connecticut's cities and towns over the past 17 years. Some of CLEAR's findings show that between 1985 and 2002, high-density urban cover expanded by 119 square miles, an area 6-1/2 times the size of Hartford! The state has lost 170 square miles of forest land. Development has surged 35-38% in suburbs north and east of Hartford. Connecticut still does have about 56 percent forest coverage, however, but the satellite maps do show a landscape in progressive change.

CLEAR emphasizes that this new data base should be of assistance in deciding not only how much development is optimal, but in finding the best way to develop it. Development is essential to the economy (perhaps especially in a state so strongly dependent on real estate taxes to support schools and local government), but fragmented development is harmful to animal species that depend on large, connected tracts of forestland.. When forests vanish, quality of life is affected in the human species as well.

CLEAR recommends their new website as a way to access statewide changes. In addition, an interactive map allows a user to zoom in on any individual town: <http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/landscape/index.htm>.

Plans for Next 5 Years in Development

The current 5 Year Plan implemented by the Board of Directors in 1999 is about to expire. Great progress has been made during this time, with many of the goals reached with the help of efforts by all our volunteers and committee chairs. To keep the momentum going, a new Plan is being developed to guide our efforts in the near future. Committees have presented their proposals to the Board, with many new initiatives and plans to keep expanding the public activities of the Trust, to enhance the visibility of the Trust in our communities, and to address the land conservation opportunities that arise. All this requires support from our many volunteers, so if you are interested in becoming involved in Membership, Finance, Fundraising, Public Relations, Stewardship, Land Acquisition, or the Farm or Signage sub-committees, please contact us with your personal interest or ability and we will find a way for you to contribute. Many hands and new ideas are always welcome! And remember, all monthly Board meetings are open to membership. We meet the 4th Thursday of each month, usually in the Ellington Library Community Room at 7:30 PM, so come out and see the Trust in action. It might trigger some input or thoughts to improve our organization and its goals.

Membership Reminder: 2004 membership donations are new due. Please consider your continued support. All funds are applied directly to attaining the goals of the Trust.

2004 NCLT Hike Schedule

Date	Day	Leader (s)	Time	Town	Location / Meeting Place	Title / Description	
Mar	14	Sun	Dresner	1:00 PM	Vernon	Valley Falls parking lot	Valley Falls area (4 - 5 miles)
	20	Sat	Collins	10:00 AM	Somers	Somers Town Hall parking lot	Bald Mountain area (3 - 4 miles)
Apr	11	Sun	Dresner	9:30 AM	Vernon	Valley Falls parking lot	Tankerhoosen / Hockanum River area (4 - 5 miles)
May	1	Sat	Stage, <i>et al</i>	6:30 PM	Somers	Somers Town Hall parking lot	Sunset / Moonlight hike in the Skyline Scenic Area (3 - 4 miles)
	2	Sun	Stage	7:30 AM	Somers	McCann Family Farm parking lot	Birding in the Whit Davis Bird Sanctuary (2 miles)
	2	Sun	Dresner	1:00 PM	Vernon	Dart Hill Road Park (W. of Skinner Rd.)	Hockanum River area trails (2 - 3 miles)
	22	Sat	Smith	9:00 AM	Somers	Somers Town Hall parking lot	Minnechaug Mtn. from Skyline Scenic Area (3 - 4 mile loop)
	23	Sun	Stage, <i>et al</i>	9:00 AM	Somers	McCann Family Farm parking lot	Spring Wildflowers on McCann's (2 miles loop)
Jun	6	Sun	Dresner	9:30 AM	Tolland	Rte. 74 pkng lot off I-84 Exit 69	D.E.P. Wildlife Preserve (4 - 5 mile loop)
	27	Sun	Stage, <i>et al</i>	9:00 AM	Somers	McCann Family Farm parking lot	Early Summer Wildflowers on McCann's (2 mile loop)
July	5	Mon	Dresner	9:30 AM	Vernon	Rte 44 pkng lot (E. of Rte 85, W. of Bolton Rd.)	Bolton Notch to Risley Pond (3 or 5 miles)
	11	Sun	Stage, <i>et al</i>	9:00 AM	Somers	McCann Family Farm parking lot	Ferns and Club mosses on McCann's (3 mile loop)
	17	Sat	Hayward	8:00 AM	Somers	Somers Town Hall	Worthington Pond (1-2 Miles), with 1 steep incline.
	18	Sun	G. Grant, <i>et al</i>	9:00 AM	E.Windsor	Wapping Bog	Bog exploration walk (1 - 2 miles)
Aug	1	Sun	Dresner	9:30 AM	Vernon	Bread & Milk Road	To Boulder Crest area (3 - 5 miles)
	15	Sun	Stage, <i>et al</i>	9:00 AM	Somers	McCann Family Farm parking lot	Late Summer Wildflowers on McCann's (2 mile loop)
Sep	12	Sun	Stage, <i>et al</i>	9:00 AM	Somers	McCann Family Farm parking lot	Fall Wildflowers on McCann's (2 mile loop)
	25	Sat	Patsun	9:00 AM	Somers	Somers Town Hall parking lot	Explore Scantic Riparian Area trails (2 - 3 miles)
Oct	10	Sun	Stage, <i>et al</i>	9:00 AM	Somers	McCann Family Farm parking lot	Fall Foliage (2 - 3 miles)
	17	Sun	Dresner	9:30 AM	Union	Restaurant 200 yds S. off I-84 Exit 69	Bigelow to Rte. 198 (6 miles)
	23	Sat	G. Grant	4:30 PM	Somers	Somers Town Hall parking lot	Sunset / Moonlight hike in the Skyline Scenic Area (3 - 4 miles)
	31	Sun	A. Grant	11:00 AM	E.Windsor	Melrose Road near Albe's	Fall Foliage along the Scantic
Nov	14	Sun	Dresner	9:30 AM	Union	Bigelow Hollow State Park	Bigelow loop
Jan	1	Sat	Snyder	10:00 AM	Somers	Somers Town Hall parking lot	To be determined



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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

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

Mail to: Northern Connecticut Land Trust
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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 ___