

# LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust



Number 27

September 2014

## **Annual Meeting Sunday, September 28**

The NCLT Annual Meeting, open to all members, is scheduled for Sunday, September 28, starting at 5:00 at the Somers Congregational Church near the intersection of Rts 83 and 190 in Somers. The event begins with social hour from 5-6, with a potluck dinner at 6:00. Bring a dish to share, and supply your own plates, utensils, and any special beverage you might want (there will be some there too). After dinner there will be a very short business meeting to elect Officers and Directors for the coming year, followed by a presentation from our featured speaker, Eric Hansen, a Ct Certified Forester, on the topic of Forest Management. Mr. Hansen has extensive forest service experience in Ct and around New England, including developing a management plan for Whitaker Woods for NCLT and a recent forest bird habitat assessment for The Audubon Society.



2013 Annual Meeting in Somers

This year's nominating committee has put forth the following slate of Officers and Directors for consideration. Officers serve for one year, while Directors serve 3 year terms. Additional nominations will be recognized at the meeting before voting.

President – Patrice Carson, Somers  
1<sup>st</sup> V. President – Wes Smith, Somers  
2<sup>nd</sup> V. President – Rick Dewey, Stafford  
Treasurer – Jim Gage, Ellington  
Secretary – Doug Metivier, Enfield

Directors:  
Richard Bailey, Somers      Karl Hasel, Vernon  
Jim Gage, Ellington        Don Smith, Somers  
George Grant, Somers      Wes Smith, Somers

## **REMINDER: Donation matching Programs**

Keep in mind that if you work for or are retired from many of the corporations in Connecticut, such as Travelers, Aetna, United Technologies or Northeast Utilities, that they offer matching programs where they will match dollar for dollar any donations or gifts to qualifying non-profit organizations such as our Trust. This includes membership donations, so that the programs effectively double your contributions. Typically there are simple forms that you get online or from your HR offices, and fill out and send in with your gift, and the Trust will take it from there.

## **Board of Directors Begins “Assessing Your Organization” Project**

Earlier this year the Trust applied for and received a \$5000 Challenge Fund Grant from the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) and Ct. Land Conservation Council (CLCC) for funding a guided assessment of the Board and its operations. Using this grant money, we have contracted with Conservation Consulting Group out of Wisconsin to lead us through this activity over the next year. The objective is to compare our current operating procedures and policies against those recommended in “The Standards and Practices Guidebook” published by the LTA and widely accepted as the standard for good land trust operations. An action plan will then be established to bring your Trust into better alignment with these guidelines, with the intent to build long term strength and effectiveness into our operations and better serve our conservation objectives.

In July and August, the project began with each Director completing the questionnaire for a “Guided Organizational Assessment” using the LTA’s online **Assess Your Organization** tool. Once these results are available, the consultant will review and compile them and meet with the Board for an on-site review and further individual interviews, currently planned for September. A facilitated workshop with the consultants will follow to assess the results and establish an action plan for priority needs. The consultants will close out their part of the project with a written report and implementation plan, with a 6 month check on progress to follow.

## **The Culver Pond Property**

Culver Modisette, our long time president who died in December 2012, wanted his property in Somers to be preserved as open space. The NCLT Board of Directors has decided to acquire 125 acres of his property because of its strategic location. It abuts a section of Shenipsit State Forest and an 83 acre property that has been willed to the NCLT. The Culver Pond property includes shoreline on Culver Pond, a section of Rock-a-Dundee Brook containing native brook trout, and a network of trails through upland forest.

The executors of Culver’s estate have agreed to a bargain sale at 25% less than the \$560,000 appraised value to honor Culver’s wishes that the property remain undeveloped and open to the public for passive recreation. We have submitted

grant requests to the CT DEEP and the Cox Family Fund at the Boston Foundation that are expected to provide the majority of the cost. However, we still need to raise additional funds to complete the purchase.

We would like to appeal to Culver’s friends to help complete this funding. Your contributions of any amount will be greatly appreciated. Please send your donations to the NCLT, P.O. Box 324, Somers, CT 06071. And don’t forget the gift matching programs for employees and retirees many corporations sponsor if it applies to your situation, doubling your donation.

## **Black Bear Sighting Near the NCLT Boothroyd Property**

A black bear has been sighted several times in the Ellington area near the hiking trails. Signs have been posted warning hikers to be alert when walking. During your walk, alert any bear in the vicinity to your presence by making noise, especially in areas with limited sight distance such as laurel thickets. If you do see a bear, do not approach but walk slowly back the way you came. Do not run. Please report any sighting to Property Steward Rob Ziegfeld at [n1nug@comcast.net](mailto:n1nug@comcast.net).

## **Maine Supreme Court Endorses Land Conservation as Charitable Purpose**

The state’s highest court endorsed the many benefits of land conservation to health, the economy and the environment of Maine and, by implication, our entire country. The case follows the equally strong Massachusetts decision in May as well as cases in New Mexico, Florida and New York, establishing a national precedent that conservation benefits everyone and relieves the burdens of government. The case involved a refusal to grant property tax exemption on land trust properties conserved for the benefit of the public as not being a charitable activity.

The Maine court further noted that part of the rationale for granting exemption for charitable institutions is that their charitable activities relieve the government of part of its burden because of the public benefits the charity confers. So the property tax exemption is in exchange for their services in providing something which otherwise the government would have to provide. The court further wrote “In addition to the ecological and environmental benefit of land preservation there are numerous physical, psychological and, for some, even spiritual benefits to having access to undeveloped land.

## **THE TRAIL**

*By Richard Bailey*

The trail exists. Before the work party volunteers begin their work. Before the trail is flagged with plastic tape to mark its location. Before the decision to build the trail is made. Before NCLT acquires the property, promising the donor or seller, the public, and the land, that it will be preserved forever. The trail exists. It lies, waiting to be discovered; covered by a blanket of fallen trees and branches, vegetation and years of accumulated leaf litter. Although it might be hidden or partially hidden from view, it provides us with clues of its existence. The clue might be an abandoned and long forgotten woods road. It might be a game trail slanting up the side of a ridge. It might only be the path a person naturally or instinctively takes when wandering through the woods skirting around a swamp or climbing a hill to a possible viewpoint.

The trail passes by various features that beckon to the person laying it out. A sugar maple, much older than the surrounding trees, which may have provided shade for cattle pastured on the land before it became transformed into a forest. A gap in a rock face, providing a natural ramp for the trail to ascend. A large boulder perched precariously on the top of a ridge. A mountain stream to walk beside.

In the late afternoon a volunteer is beginning to clear the Upper Shady Brook Trail in Whitaker Woods. He is not looking forward to carrying out his chain saw and then lugging it back up the next day so he hides it behind a stone wall on top of a small knoll a short distance off the flagged trail. After hiding the saw he sits down on the stone wall to rest a moment (sitting on old stone walls is something you aren't supposed to do but he is very careful). As he sits he hears Shady Brook below him burbling along, as well as various birds flitting through the trees. It is very peaceful. He suddenly realizes the trail is here and not in the valley below.

The trail is brought to life by NCLT volunteers who remove the years of accumulated debris and vegetation that have hidden it. They are careful not to create piles of branches or cuts made half way out a branch that make their labors obvious. They remove leaf litter to create the look of a well-worn path. The person later walking the trail will simply see a path flowing through the woods and be oblivious to the hard work done to achieve it.

The trail is fulfilled by the sounds of tromping boots or children's happy cries at some new discovery. It

is at peace as a solitary hiker slowly walks along, glad for the quiet and the respite from an otherwise hectic day. The trail is happy that it has been discovered, respected, and given new life.

## **Children Enjoy NCLT Hike**

Leslie Grant and Richard Bailey recently led a short walk at McCann Family Farm for 14 children and 3 teachers from Lego Creative Daycare in Enfield. The hike was organized in response to a request to NCLT from Amy Silva, a teacher at the daycare, for a walk to allow the children to experience and learn about "wilderness". The hike lasted a little over an hour and ended when a thunderstorm threatened. Along the way they talked about things found along the trail from wild grapes and snails to poison ivy and nettles. As Amy said, "Everyone involved had a wonderful time and I hope we get to do this again in the future". All the children received a McCann's brochure to share with their parents.





**LANDMARK: *Newsletter of the***  
**Northern Connecticut Land Trust**  
**PO Box 324**  
**Somers, CT. 06071**

**Board of Directors**

**President**

Patrice Carson, Somers

**1st V. President**

Wes Smith, Somers

**2nd V. President**

(vacant)

**Treasurer**

Jim Gage, Ellington

**Recording Secretary**

Doug Metivier, Enfield

**Directors**

Gail Faherty, Vernon

Walter Moody, Ellington

Albert Grant, Melrose

Arend Jan-Knuttel, East Windsor

George Grant, Somers

Karl Hasel, Manchester

Don Smith, Somers

Paul Lagel, Enfield

Richard Bailey, Somers

Martin Smith, Somers

Ingrid Aarrestad, Stafford

Rick Dewey, Stafford

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.

|                     |            |      |            |        |
|---------------------|------------|------|------------|--------|
| <b>MEMBERSHIPS:</b> | Individual | \$25 | Family     | \$35   |
|                     |            |      | Sustaining | \$50   |
|                     |            |      | Patron     | \$100  |
|                     |            |      | Benefactor | \$1000 |

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E\_MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Mail to: Northern Connecticut Land Trust**  
**PO Box 324**  
**Somers, CT. 06071**

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