

# LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust



Number 4

February 2000

## **Connecticut Working Toward Protecting 21% of Its Land**

Recent studies showed that the state of Connecticut has the lowest open space as a percentage of total land area of all the New England states. This led to establishment of new programs to substantially increase the amount of protected land owned by the state and private organizations, with a target for 21% of the state to be held as open space in the next 25 years. 1999 saw an increase of over 7000 acres added to open space, with the state purchasing over 2900 acres, and contributing \$10 million to aid towns, land trusts, and other organizations to buy another 4200 acres. Open space in Connecticut now totals about 440,000 acres owned by government and non-profit organizations, with a total of 673,000 acres targeted for the future. These programs are helping to preserve wildlife habitat and fragile ecosystems, to create more recreation opportunities, and to sustain the high quality of life in Connecticut's towns. The NCLT is excited to be a part of this effort to make sure that following generations will have these natural areas to enjoy.

## **Interested in Land Protection or Estate Planning?**

Your local libraries have literature on many topics relating to protecting your land and planning for the future. The NCLT has donated several references to the Somers Public Library on issues of interest in these areas. These include "Doing Deals: A Guide to Buying Land for Conservation", "Connecticut Connections: Resources for Greenways", "Guidebook for Directors of Non-profit Corporations", and "Managing Conservation Land". You can visit Somers, or request these references from your local library through the Connecticut inter-library loan system so that you can checkout and return the literature without ever leaving town! Or contact the NCLT to see what other books or videos are available. For instance, did you know that you can protect your property from future development, realize both property and income tax reductions, AND NEVER GIVE UP CONTROL OF OR TITLE TO YOUR LAND? Many options are available to landowners to achieve open space protection and reach financial goals with some research, which the NCLT will be glad to help you in accomplishing.



## **Hiking Trail Maps of Vernon Available**

A pamphlet showing over 30 miles of open trails in Vernon is available if you are interested in exploring the natural areas of town on your own. Stop in for a copy at the Parks and Recreation office in Henry Park off South Street.

## **Good News and Bad News for State Forest Land**

A U.S. Forest Service study, slated for release next month, shows that although Connecticut has been losing prime forest land at a rate of 6000 acres per year, total forest land actually increased over the same period of time. While the prime forest land, defined as land capable of supporting some commercial timber harvest, has been decreasing, there has been a shift to more acres of urban forest, smaller wooded lands surrounded by development. The total has increased to the point where there is currently almost 60% of the state covered by forest. There is some disagreement on the importance of this shift. Although this change is seen all over the Northeast, the effects are somewhat offset by increased productivity of the remaining prime forest, as there are more trees and wood per acre than in the past, which is important to the forest industry in Connecticut. On the other hand, fragmented urban forest acreage may not be as beneficial to wildlife habitat and human recreation as the larger tracts of wooded land.



## **Latest Round of Open Space Grants to Benefit Area Land Protection**

In a ceremony in Hartford this month, the DEP awarded \$6 million to Connecticut towns and non-profit organizations to preserve 1,886 acres of open space. Among those towns receiving grants were Bolton, Ellington, and Vernon, totaling almost \$700,000 of matching funds to acquire close to 350 acres.

Bolton officials accepted about \$390,000 for the purchase of 88 acres of the historic Rose Farm along Bolton Center Road, a key parcel of open space with historic value and proximity to additional open space in the area. The property would most likely continue use as an active dairy farm in the future.

Ellington's check was for \$130,000 for acquisition of 151 acres near the Shenipsit Forest. This represents about 50 percent of the purchase price of the first piece of land that is targeted under a 2 phase plan to protect land between 2 disconnected sections of the 650 acre Shenipsit State Forest.

Vernon collected 2 grants totaling \$171,000. The first will acquire 2 acres of open space along the entrance to Dart Hill Park which had been a target of development, and will protect the recently-completed park from encroachment and allow expansion of the hiking trails within the park. The other grant will fund acquisition of 104 acres, known as the Rambling Ridge parcel, which had been the site of controversial development plans several years ago along the top of Box Mountain off of Lake Street. This property has been a top priority of town open space plans, and will extend the wildlife corridor along Railroad Brook in the adjacent Valley Falls Park and expand existing passive recreation opportunities along the Box Mountain Ridge.

Because these funds represent only approximately half of the purchase price of these properties and are intended as matching funds for the towns, the NCLT urges each of you to actively solicit your town representatives to appropriate the required funds to complete the acquisition of these important lands, and to support the State in its endeavours to protect open space and maintain the character of our New England countryside.

## Hikes for 2000

March 18	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Beginner Birding
April 1	Shenipsit State Forest, Stafford	10:00 AM	See below
April 8	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Beginner Birding
April 15	Skyline Scenic Area, Somers	5:00 PM	Sunset/moonlight walk
April 15-16	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Somers Spring Hike Festival
April 30	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Early spring wildflowers
	Tankerhoosen Gorge, Vernon	9:30 AM	Meet at Church St parking area
May 28	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Late spring wildflowers
June 3	Valley Falls Park, Vernon	9:30 AM	4-5 mile hike to Bolton line
June 4	Valley Falls Park, Vernon	9:30 AM	Several short walks to Boulder & Echo Ridge. See new Land Trust property
June 25	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Early summer wildflowers
	Risley Park Loop, Vernon	1:00 PM	Pond edge walk, up to lookouts
July 23	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Mid-summer wildflowers
	Rails-to-Trails, Vernon	1:00 PM	Rail bed & Box Mountain loop. Meet at Church St. parking lot
August 13	Hockanum River Trails, Vernon	1:00 PM	Meet Kelly Rd side of Denny's, Tri-Town Plaza, to carpool to trails
August 20	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Late summer wildflowers
September 10	Shenipsit Lake, Tolland-Ellington	1:00 PM	Meet at Lafayette Plaza (McDonalds), Rt 30-31
September 17	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Late, late summer wildflowers
October 8	McCann Family Farm, Somers	9:00 AM	Fall foliage hike

\*\* Further info on Vernon hikes by calling Ed at 872-4120.

### Shenipsit State Forest Hike

State forester and NCLT director Ed McGuire will lead a hike in Stafford Saturday, April 1, covering several miles. Points of interest will include the Kellogg Cabin, a recently harvested stand of trees, a stand marked to be harvested in the near future, and many old charcoal mounds and remnants of charcoaling. Topics to be covered include land preservation, silviculture, forest history and ecology, and the charcoaling industry. Meet at the Shenipsit State Forest headquarters on Route 190 in West Stafford at 10:00 AM to carpool to the site. Bring lunch and water. Contact Ed at 684-3430 during weekday work hours for further information.

### NCLT-Sponsored Public Programs

The slide shows on canoeing in northern Alaska were a great success, attracting over 70 people in Somers and 30 in Vernon. Join us for these other interesting programs coming up this year:

March 16, 7:30PM - UConn Professor Robert Thorson will present a slide show and discussion on "The Value of Unkempt Stone Walls". First Lutheran Church, 154 Orchard St, Ellington (Middle Butcher Rd off Rt 83, up hill to 2nd right-Orchard St).

April 30, 2:00PM - "Living with Wild Animals: Coyotes" - Mr. Paul Rego of the Department of Environmental Protection will present a program in conjunction with the Friends of Valley Falls in their newly renovated red barn on Valley Falls Rd, Vernon. Meet in the parking lot of Valley Falls Park and walk up to barn.

September 24, 5:00 PM - Annual potluck supper and annual meeting, with program and officer elections. Social hour begins at 5, dinner at 6. Bring casserole, salad, or desert sufficient for 6 people. Wesleyan Church in Ellington, 1/4 mile east off Rt 83 on Rt 140. A small donation to cover expense of the hall will be appreciated.

***Watch for announcements of these hikes, programs, and other events of interest in your local newspapers. Further information available from Fay Dresner at 872-4120 or Whit Davis at 749-4753.***



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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

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Mail to: Membership Chairman, 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 \_\_\_