

LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust



Number 8

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Land Trusts Climb to New High

According to a press release by the Land Trust Alliance in September, the number of local and regional nonprofit land trusts reached a record level in 2001. The National Land Trust Census, the nation's only tabulation of the achievements of the voluntary land conservation movement, tallied 1,263 organizations, up 42% since 1990. And since 1891, when the first nonprofit land trust was founded in the United States, open space has been permanently protected in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico by grassroots land trusts. Total protected land was up to 6.4 million acres, an area twice the size of Connecticut, as of the end of 2000, almost a 2-1/2 fold increase since 1990.

Connecticut ranked third in the nation in the number of land trusts by state with 112 trusts. Massachusetts, home of the first land trust, was first with 143, followed closely by California with 132. The Census also showed that Connecticut land trusts own over 45,000 acres and hold over 19,100 acres under easements.

Land Trust Alliance President Jean Hocker notes that "Local and regional land trusts are nonprofit organizations that people have formed, grown and supported in order to protect and give long-term stewardship to open space. They represent people's ambitions, hopes and dreams for their communities and generations to come. The success of land trusts show us just how much people treasure these places and how hard they will work to ensure their conservation."



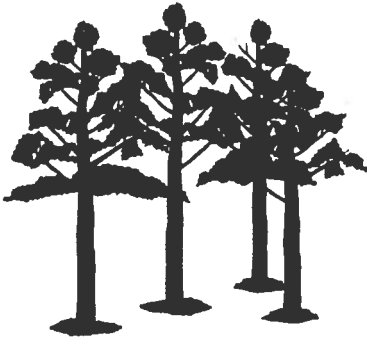
Somers Outdoor Festival Saturday, May 4



The Somers Open Space / Trails Subcommittee, in conjunction with the NCLT, is sponsoring an outdoor event for the whole family, young and old. The purpose of this free event is to promote the awareness and use of Somers' extensive and expanding non-motorized, multi-use recreational trail system. Activities include hiking, biking, canoeing, and horseback trail riding. All events with the exception of the horseback riding will meet at the Somers Town Common on Battle Street. Carpooling will be available to the event sites. Horseback riders will meet at Worthington Pond Farm on Mountain Road. Food will be available for purchase on the Common from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM, with proceeds benefiting the Northern Connecticut Land Trust.

This year there will be a free concert, beginning at 2:00 PM at the gazebo behind the Historical Society Museum, co-sponsored by the Somers Open Space/Trails Subcommittee, the Somers Cultural Commission, and the Somers Sportsmen's Association. Performing will be Fourth Street String Band, a trio playing a variety of music styles - country, folk, ragtime, blues, old time, and Irish ballads.

The Somers Historical Society Museum will also be open from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon, with an exhibit on the history of farming in Somers. For additional information, call Judith Snyder at (860) 749-5411. Bring the whole family and enjoy the great outdoors here in Somers and the surrounding area!



NCLT Acquires East Windsor Property

Ever since its inception in the late 1980's, the Northern Connecticut Land Trust, then the Four Town Land Trust, has had its eye on preserving a particular parcel of land in East Windsor. On January 10th this year, our wishes came true as the 13.6 acre property on Wapping Road in the Windsorville section of town was donated to the Trust. Known as the Wapping Bog, the property was part of a tobacco farm owned by J.R.F. Realty, a subsidiary of Gallagher, and operated by Connleaf. Thanks to the hard work of Jim

Parker of North Carolina, the representative of Gallagher in the U.S., and George Grant of Ellington, the donation has been finalized.

The parcel is unique in that it features a 4 acre black spruce bog. Relics of the last time Connecticut was glaciated, bogs are very rare. Of the fewer than 50 bogs in the state, 27 contain black spruce, and the bogs are the only places these trees grow in Connecticut. Three of these bogs are in Windsorville, two of which contain black spruce. The June 1987 newsletter of the Connecticut Botanical Society stated that "There are only a few dozen areas of sphagnum-dominated, acidic peatland left in the state, and these remaining areas are endangered....They represent an unusual challenge to those interested in preserving rare species and habitats in Connecticut." Bogs are apt to contain several species of interesting plants and uncommon insects, and a recent walk there identified numerous types of birds.

The formation of this type of bog requires very specific circumstances. Depressions left by the withdrawal of the glaciers filled with mineral-poor rainwater or melted ice, and became colonized by the sphagnum mosses. These mosses thrived in the low mineral areas, so they multiplied to form a continuous floating mat. Without significant surface runoff or groundwater to increase the availability of minerals, the sphagnum proceeded to make its habitat even less hospitable to other species by releasing acid. These bogs are extremely acidic places, with a pH below 5 and frequently below 4. As the mosses multiplied, the mat thickened, with the trapped water underneath eventually losing nearly all of its oxygen. The combination of lack of minerals, oxygen, and light, and the extreme acidity made for an environment where virtually nothing else could live. Even the decay organisms were greatly inhibited, resulting in the buildup of sphagnum peat under the living plants. This is especially true in cold climates.

Once the peat is thick enough, other plants, including even bushes and trees, may grow on it. The members of the heath family, including cranberries, blueberries, and laurels, and larches and black spruce, are common in bogs. At this stage the mat is still floating on the water and therefore can move readily, which is why they are called "quaking bogs". The surface of the mat is still very nearly at the original water level. Given enough time, the peat may fill the bog from top to bottom, and the vegetation will no longer be floating on the water, but will be supported from below by the peat. Now the growth can continue above the level of the water, forming a mound and creating a raised bog.

Many of the plants found in a bog are unable to survive under less favorable conditions and unable to compete under more favorable conditions, making it a very sensitive ecology vulnerable to changes. They often contain leather leaf, pitcher plants, sundew, and bog laurel, as well as the more common wetland plants such as tamarack, gray birch, and highbush blueberry. Uncommon insects are also quite likely to be found in these bogs. Since the Wapping Bog has active agriculture and a golf course as nearby neighbors, the potential for minerals and lime in surface water runoff is significant, and the means to protect the bog remains to be evaluated by the Trust. Other plans include sponsoring public hikes this summer to highlight the beauty and unique features of our newest property. See the hike schedules for information on these plans.

New Membership Drive Underway

The Trust is in the process of undertaking mass mailings to increase the membership in the towns of our primary operation. The goal of our 5 Year Plan is to increase membership to 500 by the year 2003, almost tripling our current list of supporters.

Be on the Lookout for New Trust Decals

New or renewed memberships will be getting the new 3" square "WE SUPPORT" decals with the Trust logo now on order. The decals will be suitable for displaying on windows of automobiles, stores, or homes to show your support of the conservation objectives of the Trust. And thanks for your support!

Things are Looking Up on Bald Mountain!

Hot off the presses - the Trust has just received another land donation as of February 12th. The Bridge property, on Upper Scully Road in Somers, was generously donated by brother and sister Ted and Elizabeth Bridge-Koenigsberg of Maine, both of whom have spent many summer days at the cabin on their family's land. They have kept the cabin and 10 acres surrounding it, while donating the remaining 64 acres for open space preservation. It is heavily wooded land that lies on the western flank of Bald Mountain, reaching about to the ridgeline between the Pinnacle and the high point of the mountain. It is visible from a large part of the Connecticut Valley and is crossed by the Shenipsit Trail, a part of the Blue Trail System. At 1121 feet elevation, Bald Mountain is the highest peak along the Connecticut River Valley from the Sound to Mount Toby in Sunderland, Massachusetts, almost 37 miles further north.

The donation of the Bridge property emphasizes the progress being made toward the preservation of Bald Mountain. Until less than two years ago, the mountain was entirely in private hands. Since then, the town of Somers has acquired the Hurd and Tease properties, comprising most of the south face and peak, for open space. The state has added the Pease and Casagrande properties, totaling almost 400 acres on the eastern and northern parts of the mountain, up to the Shenipsit State Forest. The Bridge parcel abuts the Casagrande land. The Trust has also been in contact with three other landowners in the area who are contemplating conserving their properties that abut one or another of the already-protected Bald Mountain pieces.

NCLT-Sponsored Hikes / Walks for 2002

Skyline Scenic Area, Somers

April 20th **Sunset/moonlight hike:** Join leaders Jerry Stage, George Grant, and Ginny Patsun climbing the ridge to catch the sunset and beautiful views of the Connecticut River Valley, then hike in the moonlight 3-4 miles on the Minnechaug Mountain in Mass. Meet at the Somers Town Hall parking lot at 6:45 PM or at 5:00 for pizza with the leaders at the Italina Village in Somers. This hike is cosponsored by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).

November 16th **Same as above,** but meet at 3:30 PM at the Town Hall. Pizza will follow for those interested. This hike is cosponsored by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC).

Ellington, East Windsor Walks

May 5th **Swann property review:** Join leader George Grant to explore this fine piece of agricultural land, the first for NCLT in Ellington. Meet at 2:00 PM at the property on Reeves Road. This walk is intended to give NCLT members a chance to see and explore this acquisition.

July 21st **Black Spruce Bog:** Join leader George Grant to explore this biologically interesting new NCLT property in E. Windsor. This leisurely walk will begin at 9:00 AM; meet at the parking area on Wapping Road where it crosses the railroad tracks

McCann Family Farm, Somers

May 26th **Spring Wildflowers:** Enjoy the wonders of nature with leader Jerry Stage and possibly co-leaders George Grant and Ginny Patsun while hiking 2-3 miles in this beautiful place. Meet at 9:00 AM at the farm parking lot of Hwy 190 just east of the Rt 83 intersection. This hike is cosponsored by the AMC.

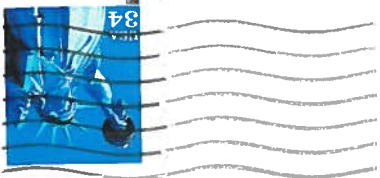
June 23rd **Early Summer Wildflowers:** Same as above.

August 18th **Late Summer Wildflowers:** Same as above.

September 15th **Fall Wildflowers:** Same as above.

October 13th **Fall Foliage Hike:** Same as above.

For more information about any of these activities, call the appropriate leaders at the following :
George Grant - 860-749-3282 Ginny Patsun- 860-763-4740 Jerry Stage- 860-870-4255



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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
Business - \$100.00
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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