

LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust

Number 36

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“Whenever there is a massive spill of solar energy, it is just called a nice day.”

Bumper sticker

Trust Working to Improve Land Conservation Efforts

Every non-profit organization staffed completely by volunteers struggles with effectively presenting themselves to their communities to help support the activities and efforts to achieve their goals. In an effort to address these challenges, the Northern Ct Land Trust is participating in a new regional initiative for the next 3 years. A Northeast Land Trust Advancement Initiative sponsored by the Ct. Land Conservation Council (CLCC) and The Last Green Valley (LTGV) was kicked off with a planning meeting on January 24th this year. Along with our Trust, the group consists of representatives of the Joshua Trust, Wyndham Land Trust, Wolf’s Den Land Trust and Eastern Ct Forest Landowners Association, and the New Roxbury Land Trust. The meeting was a chance to meet each other and share thoughts on what we do well, what we don’t do very well, and what activities and capabilities we as a group would like to concentrate on to improve on meeting our land preservation objectives in the future and better reach and represent you, our faithful donors and members. Community communications jumped out as the number one issue facing all the groups – how do we do a better job reaching all our constituents.

The initiative is a grant-funded, 3-year project, with 3 main overall goals and specific deliverables for each year: (1) improve community engagement and communications to raise the visibility of the trusts in our areas, (2) develop conservation planning to help the trusts conserve critical lands, and (3) establish framework for a larger watershed-wide conservation strategy to allow land trusts to cooperatively seek funding for shared priorities. Activities will include both individual as well as group coaching for the Trust Boards of Directors, primarily by Judy Anderson of Community Consultants. Some funding will be available for the Trusts completing this training to implement new initiatives developed during this period. Over the course of the next 3 years, we will be bringing you updates on our efforts and improvement activities. If you have any thoughts or suggestions on the subject, please forward them to us on our website email at www.northernctlandtrust.org or send them along to karl.hasel@cox.net, who is representing the Trust in this initiative.

“Whoever loves and understands a garden will find contentment within.” Old Chinese Proverb

Trust –owned Farms Leveraging Grant Money for Improved Yields

For many years, the NCLT has leased the fields on our Swann Farm in Ellington to the Oakridge Dairy for growing field corn. This property has extensive areas of prime agricultural soil that are a valuable resource for growing corn and other crops.

Oakridge Dairy and the NCLT have partnered to expand the size of the corn fields. During the past several years, wooded areas have been cleared, stumps have been removed, and rocky berms have been leveled. The NCLT applied for and received a grant of \$20,000 from the CT Department of Agriculture to contract for some of this work. The grant required that the \$20,000 be matched and the match was provided by the Oakridge Dairy with in-kind labor and equipment. As a result, the 2019 crop of feed corn will be planted in fields that are significantly enlarged.

A similar project is currently underway on the NCLT-owned abutting Myers Farm, using a \$20,000 grant awarded to Ken Hunt, who leases several hay fields on this farm. These projects are the result of the efforts of George Grant, Chairman of NCLT's Farm Committee, and your support of the Trust all-volunteer organization.

New Property Preserved in Ellington Near Crystal Lake

The NCLT has purchased a 36 acre parcel of upland forest off Sandy Beach Road near the Stafford town line in eastern Ellington. The property will be named the Bellante Preserve and will be connected by trails to the abutting 58 acre Ernie Boothroyd Nature Preserve, owned by the NCLT. The Bellante Preserve includes stands of mountain laurel and is home to a large variety of birds and animals. There have been bear sightings in the area for the past several years.

Funding for this project was provided by grants from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Bafflin Foundation, and by contributions from the Town of Ellington and members of the NCLT. The property was offered at a bargain price by the Bellante family in order to ensure that it would remain in its natural state.

The Bellante Preserve will be opened to the public for passive recreation and wildlife viewing by next year. The NCLT plans to install a small parking area off Sandy Beach Road and will add to the trails that currently exist on the property.



“An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.” Henry David Thoreau

2019 Outdoor Activity Schedule

Check News and Events at www.northernctlandtrust.org for latest schedule

Sun. April 14 – Culver Pond – 10:00 AM - Explore the latest Land Trust acquisition. Culver Pond is a 118 acre parcel of land in Stafford, near the Somers town line. We'll hike the rolling hills of the property, about four miles, approximately a two to three hour hike. Bring binoculars for spring birding opportunities. Meet at the Culver Pond Land Trust parking lot on Gilbert Road; it's a gravel road. Friendly leashed dogs welcome. Call hike leader, Wes at (860) 402-2388

Sat., May 4 – Canoe and Kayak Paddle of Upper Bolton Lake in Vernon -Take a leisurely tour of this pristine lake setting, perfect for bird-watching, photo opportunities, or just a quiet morning enjoying the outdoors. Meet at the boat launch area off Hatch Hill Road at 9:00 AM. Must bring your own boat, paddles, and life vests. Call Karl at 860-649-4949 for more information

Sun. May 12 - Mother's Day hike on McCann Family Farm - 10:00 AM. Comfortable trail walk thru field and forest. Good bird-watching habitat. Mothers bring the kids – kids bring your mother! Meet at the rear of the Somers Town Hall, 600 Main St., Rt. 190 near the intersection of Rt. 83. For questions, contact Albert Grant, 860-623-5487

Sat. June 1 - Trails Weekend - 10:00 AM - We will follow blazed trails through the Land Trust's premier 200+ acre, Whitaker Woods property, featuring woodland and a cow pasture. This approximately 5 mile, one way hike will be scenic, with bridge crossings and beautifully constructed and well preserved stone walls. There will be the opportunity to loop back to the trail head for a shorter hike. From the Land Trust property we will continue on Somers Trail Committee and Shenipsit State Forest trails to the Soapstone Mountain Lookout. There will be transportation back to the trail head. We will discuss the natural and land use history as well as local wildlife along the way. Meet behind the Somers Town Hall, 600 Main St., Rt. 190, near the intersection of Rt. 83 in the center of Somers. We will car pool to the trailhead. For questions, contact Albert Grant, 860-623-5487, albert_grant@sbcglobal.net.

Sun. Sept. 1 - Bald Mtn. Preserve, Somers - 10:00 AM – We will hike through two Land Trust properties as well as Town of Somers and State of CT properties. These comprise the Bald Mountain Preserve, which includes the entire summit of the tallest of the surrounding mountains. Foliage should be starting to turn. The trails are steep and rocky in some places but not difficult with good shoes. The distance will be about 2 1/2 miles. Meet at the rear of the Somers Town Hall, 600 Main St., Rt. 190, near the intersection of Rt. 83. For questions, contact Albert Grant, 860-623-5487

Sat., Sept. 28 - The 7th Annual Talcottville Gorge/Falls and Vernon Rail Trail circular hike. Moderate effort, rambling walk of 2 miles along the scenic and historic site brook and view the falls off Dobson Rd. This very popular event takes attendees on a history/geology/archeological tour of this fascinating area – a jewel in the Vernon/Talcottville area. 9:00 AM at the Talcottville Congregational Church on Elm St. For questions, contact Gail Faherty at gfherty@sbcglobal.net.

Sun., October 19 – Fall foliage along Railroad Brook gorge in Vernon. Leisurely walk thru the Trust's Andrew Webster Knapp property to the Rails-to-trails, then up to the ridge overlooking Valley Falls Park and Railroad Brook for some beautiful scenery. Fairly energetic walk with up and down steep slopes, 1 to 1 ½ hours. Meet at the Valley Falls parking lot off Valley Falls Road at 9:00 AM. Call Karl at 860-649-4949 for further information.

Sat. Nov. 9 - Sunset / Moonlight at Skyline – 3:45 PM - moonrise at 3:38, sunset at 4:36. We will hike around Trust's 65 acre Skyline Scenic Area on Stafford Rd near Somers/Stafford line. We will enjoy the sunset and beautiful view across valley towards Springfield from atop the mountain, have a snack if you would like to bring one, then return by the light of the moon. Meet at the rear of the Somers Town Hall, 600 Main St., Rt. 190 near the intersection of Rt. 83 and carpool to the site. For questions, contact Albert Grant, 860-623-5487

Sun. Dec. 15 – Schlaf Farm, Somers. Hike 2.5 miles at a casual pace exploring a 38 acre property conserved by the Northern CT Land Trust located in the picturesque center of Somers, CT. The hike follows easy navigable woodland trails with few gentle inclines and skirts a cornfield. . If there is snow, hikers may plan to bring cross-country skis, snowshoes, or a sled to pull along the little ones. Leashed dogs are welcome. Meet at 10 am at the parking lot located behind the Somers Town Hall (600 Main Street) in Somers. The hike will begin from there. Leader: Albert Grant 860-623-5487 at albert_grant@sbcglobal.net

“Keep your sense of proportion by regularly, preferably daily, visiting the natural world.” Catlin Mathews



LANDMARK: *Newsletter of the*

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

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.

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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 ___