

# LANDMARK

The newsletter of the Northern Connecticut Land Trust

Number 42

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*"Into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul --- John Muir*

## **Forest Management Practices Under Scrutiny in Northeast**

There have long been debates, advocacy, and research addressing the positive impacts of widespread and increased forest-clearing versus negative environmental effects and the loss of mature forests and old-growth habitats around New England and the Upper Great Lakes region. Significant federal and state funded programs to clear established forests and expand early-successional forests abound. These programs have historically been aimed at improving habitat for the benefit of specific species, including desirable game species such as woodcock, ruffed grouse, and white-tailed deer. These programs have been funded using public money and coordinated closely with forestry interests, wildlife agencies, conservation organizations, land trusts, and private landowners. However, there is growing evidence that this approach to forest management will result in reduced connectivity, increase in edge habitats, the spread of invasive species, and loss of future old-growth forests. (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/ffgc.2022.1073677/full>)

In the Northeast, forests older than 150 years cover only about .3% of the land area, most being found in the Adirondack and Catskill parks. Old-growth forests cover only .06% of Connecticut, despite almost 60% of the state being forested. Core forests in Ct., those areas bounded by at least 300 feet of forest/non-forest boundaries, have decrease 15% over the last 30 years. These forest lands provide protection for species which cannot tolerate significant disturbance, as well as water purification and runoff protection. Edge forests, those providing this 300 foot protective boundary around core forests, and fragmented forests, those divided by roads or clearings, are not considered fully-functioning forest types, and have shown the largest increase over the past years.

Taken in whole, all this research suggests that with growth in climate concerns, biodiversity, and human health, public land forests and wildlife programs need to be re-balanced in prioritizing and funding of cutting and development of early-successional habitat against strong and permanent protection of old-growth and mature forests.

## **Open Space Grant Successes**

Did you know that the State of Connecticut has sponsored a Open Space and Watershed Matching Grant program for the last 22 years? Roughly every 6 months the program is opened up to applications from towns, land trusts, non-profits, and water companies who are looking for financial aid in acquiring new properties, with grants totaling approximately \$5M each round. The grants are about 50% of a purchase price established by licensed appraisers, with the other 50% raised by the applying organization.

The Northern Ct. Land Trust has been fortunate to have their applications selected 12 times in this program. Almost \$1.85M has been awarded since 2001, allowing the Trust to acquire 12 properties worth approximately \$3.6M. These acquisitions represent 1141 acres of the 1845 acres owned by the Trust, or almost 62% of our properties. Please support your legislators in continuing to fund these important programs.

## **Cost of Community Services**

There are many benefits to a community resulting from protecting open space. They include clean air, clean water, wildlife protection, recreational opportunities, views, increased property values and the control of property tax rates. Most of these benefits are obvious; however, tax rates are not.

It is a common misconception that if more houses are constructed, more tax income will be received and town operating costs will be spread over a larger tax base thereby driving down tax rates. It turns out that this is incorrect and in fact, tax rates will tend to increase as more of a town is developed.

This increase results because the additional tax income received from each new house is not enough to cover the cost to the town of providing the required services to that house. Town provided

services include schools, police protection, fire protection, snow plowing and road maintenance. This has been demonstrated by hundreds of studies of town costs and income throughout New England and the rest of the country known as “Cost of Community Services” studies. These studies show that on the average, it costs a town \$1.16 in services for every \$1.00 of tax revenue received from the average residence. For land that is left undeveloped, on average it costs a town \$0.35 in services for every \$1.00 in taxes collected. Therefore as a town becomes more highly developed and loses open space, mill rates increase.

So remember, your support of your local land trust and your town’s farmland protection program preserves the character of your community and helps to hold down the level of your real estate taxes.

## **Somers Scouts Support Trust**

On March 12 this year, Cub Scouts from Somers Cub Scout Pack 83 along with their parents and leaders were at McCann Family Farm where they put up six new bluebird houses donated to the pack by a Somers resident. Over the past year Somers Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts have been helping NCLT with several activities including refurbishing trail blazes at Whitaker Woods as well as putting up the bird houses. Last fall Somers Boy Scout Ryan Nero built an information kiosk at Bald Mountain Preserve for his Eagle Scout project.



*“Stop inviting walls into wide open spaces.” --- Buddy Wakefield*

## 2023 Activity Schedule

Check News and Events at [www.northernctlandtrust.org](http://www.northernctlandtrust.org) for latest announcements

**Sun. April 23** – Culver Pond - 10:00 - We will take a 2 ½ mile loop hike to explore and look for signs of Spring at Culver Pond in Stafford. Culver Pond and Rock of Dundee Brook is one of the origins of the Scantic River. This will be at a leisurely pace. The parking area is on Gilbert Rd., which is a gravel road, left off Mountain Rd. from Somers. For questions call Albert Grant, 860-623-5487

**Sat., May 6** – 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 7** - Hike on McCann Family Farm - 10:00 AM. Comfortable trail walk thru field and forest. Wild flowers and good bird-watching habitat. 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

**Sun. May 14** - Mother's Day hike at Nipmuck Woods - Family hike in Stafford - 10:00 AM. Leisurely one mile walk on the Nipmuck Adventure Path. We will be stopping along the way for stories and exploring the natural world including two very impressive glacial erratic boulders. Good event for families with children as well as anyone who enjoys being around children. If some prefer a longer hike, we will split the group with those that wish hiking the newly created Woodland Trail. Meet at the large pull-off on the south side of Rt. 190 a short distance past Rockwell Road, east of the center of Stafford Springs. For questions or additional information, contact trip leader Richard Bailey, 860-559-3901, [dweezle-ct3@att.net](mailto:dweezle-ct3@att.net)

**Sat. June 3**- 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 2 ½ mile hike will be scenic, with bridge crossings and beautifully constructed and well-preserved stone walls. 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](mailto:albert_grant@sbcglobal.net).

**Sun Sept 10**– 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. The trails are steep and rocky in some places but not difficult with good shoes. The distance will be about 2 ½ 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

**Sun., October 8** – Skyline Scenic Area – 10:00 AM - Foliage hike with great views of the valley to the west. The distance will be about 2 1/2 miles, up and downhill. Meet at the rear of the Somers Town Hall, 600 Main St. to car pool. For questions call Albert Grant, 860-623-5487.

**Sun., October 15** – Fall foliage along Railroad Brook gorge in Vernon. Hike 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 challenging 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.

*“To the mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders.” --- Lao Tzu*



**LANDMARK: *Newsletter of the***

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Somers, CT. 06071**

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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.

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

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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 \_\_\_**