



Westford Conservation Trust Newsletter

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JANUARY 2009



WCT Winter Walk with Kate

January 3rd turned out to be a beautiful winter day for a hike with Trust Land and Trails Stewardship Committee member **Kate Hollister**. The group hiked through the Richard Emmett Conservation Land starting at Trailside Way down the Red Line, across Nashoba Brook then back to the pond and Trailside. A great workout of about 3 miles!

Join Us for “First Saturday” Hikes /Walks



A brisk hike on the Tom Paul trail on a beautiful December day is just one of the many options available to our trust members. Come and join the fun with our “Tuesday Trampers” group; or start a new group - the possibilities are endless!

The Westford Conservation Trust is leading hikes on the first Saturday of each month this winter and into the Spring. These hikes are open to anyone who is interested in participating. An April 4th hike on Stepinsky Land is also planned. Feel free to call or email **Paul Cully** with questions. 978-692-2498, pac4patriot@comcast.net or check our website for more info, *as this description does not include all details of each hike.*

Saturday, 07 February 2009, 9 AM: Bear Hill and MIT Haystack Observatory

This hike will go from Keyes Road, up to an outlook on Bear Hill (where on a clear day you can see Mount Monadnock in NH), and then we will proceed to the Haystack Observatory on the MIT land and back to our cars. This hike is easy to moderate, but hilly. Participants should dress for the weather. Plan on about 2 ½ hours for the hike.

Saturday, 07 March 2009, 9 AM: Emmet Conservation Land, Texas Road to Nara Park

This hike will leave from the entrance to the Emmet Conservation Land on Texas Road, cross Nonset Brook, ascend and follow the Esker Trail, skirt Nashoba (Kennedy) Pond briefly, and then connect with and follow the old Red Line to Acton and Nara Park. On our return we will follow the Red Line back only part way and cross Nashoba Brook via the new bridge over it, and return to Texas Road directly from there. This hike is nearly all flat and easy, but somewhat long – plan on about 2 ½ hours for the hike.

WCT Annual Meeting Summary

Thanks to our guest speaker, **Ron McAdow** for such a fun yet informative presentation on the antics and behavior of local wildlife. Our well attended event even included a wonderful slide show of photos from trust members—thanks to Marian and Bill Harman for putting this all together!

Congratulations to founding member & Trust Director **Elizabeth McGuire** who received a special presentation from our president, Marian Harman in recognition of all her hard work and expertise for

the Trust. Liz will be stepping down as Director but continuing as a trust member.

Eric Fahle was awarded the Conservation Trustee Award for 2008. An environmental Analyst and Hydrogeologist by profession (he works at the Mass Dept. of Environmental Protection), Eric also finds time to serve as Chairperson for Westford's Conservation Commission. He has been a member of the Trust, the Master Plan Committee, Environmental Protection Sub-Committee, and Stony Brook



*Conservation Trustee of 2008 - **Eric Fahle** receives a framed print from Director & Photographer Frank Winters.*

Master Plan Committee, to name just a few. Thank you Eric for your knowledge and leadership in our town conservation efforts!

Education

The Trust actively engages in educating the public about the wise use of natural resources. Here are just a few of the programs we have supported in 2008.

Bird Feeder Program The Trust continues to fund and support the Cornell "Bird Sleuth" program for all Westford 4th grades. Many thanks to Trust members Shelagh Brady, Bill and Marian Harman, Rose Marie Koester and Bill Morton for their participation in this

program.

Scholarships This year, the Trust awarded \$1000 each to WA senior **Patrick Sheridan** and UMaine freshman **Benjamin Engel**. Both are pursuing an interest in conservation.

Living Labs This year, the Trust awarded \$800 to the Living Lab Project at the Day School.

Envirothon The Trust continues to support MA Envirothon, contributing \$1000 to this program

which consists of competing teams of high school students testing their environmental knowledge.

Calendar Project The Calendar project, directed by Trust Director Frank Winters, is in its 4th successful year - a "celebration of Westford scenery & wildlife".

Science Fair This year as in previous years, Trust Directors and members participated as judges at various grade levels.

Land Stewardship and Trails

We participate actively with the joint committee for land stewardship and trails as well as the Cons Comm, clearing, marking and maintaining a large number of trails each year. To volunteer to help or become a trail steward, contact Bill Harman at 978-692-3907.

Trails Booklet Our newest

'*Westford Trails*' booklet will soon be available. Several new maps and trails have been added. Thanks to Bill Harman and all his hard work!

Eagle Scout Projects We have actively worked with Eagle Scout candidates whose projects involve trails or wildlife.

Boundary Issues We are happy to announce that two serious bound-

ary issues have been resolved, thanks to some dedicated Trust members.

Invasive Species The Trust continues to work on this issue with primary focus on the Prospect Hill property at this time.

Guided Walks Trust members led guided walks in the Spring, Fall and Winter on several local trails.

Community Affairs

Westford Wildlife Watch

Monthly columns in the Westford Eagle are written and submitted by Trust president Marian Harman. Articles include reports of wildlife sightings around town, contributed by many observers. This year saw 2340 reports! Some interesting sightings included a nesting raven pair, nesting hooded mergansers; pintail ducks; bobcat, moose and black bear sightings.

Website Our webmaster, Mike D'Antuono provides an impressive

site for access of pertinent information. All trail info is also posted on our website.

Water Quality Testing Trust members participate in early morning monthly water testing from May-October at 10 test sites. With support from the ConsComm, the Water Department and the Selectman, data is compiled and shared with the **Organization for Assabet River** (OAR) and the **Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection** (DEP).

Other Organizations We are members of the **Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition**, attending the annual conference in Worcester. We are also members of the nationwide **Land Trust Alliance** (LTA) which is working on new standards and practices for small land trusts. We also support the **Bay Circuit Alliance** (Bruce Freeman Trail). The Trust has been working with **Sudbury Valley Trustees** adding an additional layer of protection on several Trust owned properties.

Trails Report by Kate Hollister

Kate presented her report as a member of the **Land & Trail Steward Committee**. With the resignation of **Lenny Palmer** and **Peter Mahler** from the committee, we wish to thank them for their years of hard work and support. **Bill Harman** will represent the WCT and **Frank Winters** will be the Conservation Commission representative.

The purpose of the Land & Trail Steward Committee is to monitor and maintain conservation land under the control of the WCT and the Conservation Commission. Some big contributors are the boy scouts. We've benefited from several **Eagle Scout projects** this year. A few of them are:

Trevor Wellman—A footbridge & bench on the Snake Meadow Brook trail.

Brandon Casperson—A new footbridge to cross a brook in the conservation land near Habitat for Humanity house in Westford.

Matt Lauer—Orienteering course beginning at the trailhead on Texas Rd.

Michael Johnson—Trail signs & markers at East Boston Camps.

Matt Cusworth—Making a video on Westford trails, to be shown on Westford cable TV.

We have 50 or so unsung heroes who quietly go about walking the trails and keeping them clean and pruned. Our Tuesday morning group is our 'muscle' group. When we get a report of a trail that needs extra help, they go out and do the work. As an example, this group re-routed the trail head to the Peace Trail at the Boston Rd. entrance as well as re-routing part of the trail around Greystone Pond that had been flooded.

Thanks to all the people who have helped to maintain our public trail system this year. Residents are often astounded to learn that they have these gems so close to home!

A recent letter regarding a trail created by Trust members for the Abbott school –Thanks to our Tuesday morning hiking group for keeping this trail cleared!

*Hi Mr. Turner,
I am writing to let you know about a project my 4th grade class is doing at Abbot. We are taking advantage of the nature trail next to Abbot. I take my students out every 3 weeks to do nature journaling, sketching, seasonal observations, and photography. We have recently started posting our nature discoveries through photos and blogs. You can see our blog site that documents what's happening on the trail at:*

<http://abbnature.edublogs.org>

Thank you to whomever created this trail for us to learn and explore!

*Donna Breen
4th Grade Teacher
Abbot School*



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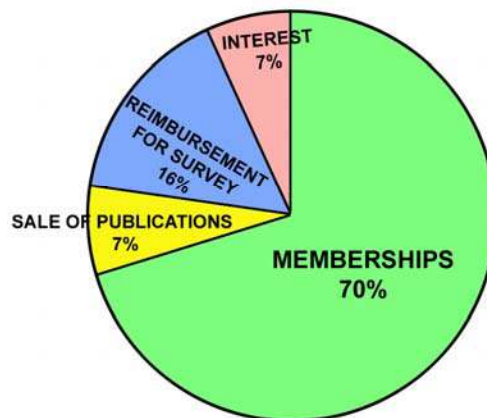
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Trust Finances

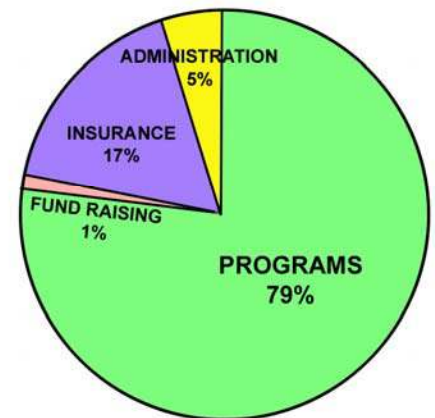
In January of each year, Trust Directors study the finances of the Trust, reviewing the expenses during the previous year and making a budget for the current year. The two charts below provide a summary of the categories of income and expenses for calendar year 2008. One should realize, of course, that most of the Trust's activities are volunteer, so the financial items do not reflect the actual activities. For example, legal work in 2008 was provided pro-bono.

Overall, the Directors are satisfied that the finances of the Trust are currently sound and the funding is being used effectively.

Income and Expenses in Calendar Year 2008



Income for 2008



Expenses for 2008