

WESTFORD Conservation Trust

October 2001
Editor, Kathy Deschenes



Join us for the Trust's Annual Meeting

When: Thursday, November 1st at 7:30 pm
Where: Parish Center for the Arts, Westford Common

Speaker

This year's speaker is Alan French, Chairman of the Bay Circuit Alliance (BCA). Alan will be presenting a slide show and discussing the BCA's sixty-year old dream: The Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway. The trail that the group is developing is really a concept of linking existing open space, parks, and trails from Ipswich to the Kingston shore. A portion of the trail goes through Westford. The BCA works with communities and government agencies to promote this concept and consult on issues related to the trails.

Alan's presentation will illustrate the "scenic, historic, and environmentally important sites that make up the 'jewels' of the 'outer emerald necklace'". Maps and local information will be available as well as information on how you can help complete the trail. If you would like to check out their website ahead of time, go to www.serve.com/baycircuit.

Conservation Person of the Year

Every year the Trust presents an award to a person who exemplifies the spirit of Conservation in the town. Who will it be this year? Come to the meeting and find out!

Business

Since this is our biggest meeting of the year, the Trust also conducts a little business as well. Reports will be presented by the Treasurer, Secretary, and the Land/Trail Stewardship Committee. Our bylaws state that elections for Directors, Associate Directors, Clerk, and Treasurer be held at the annual meeting as well.

Fun

There will be refreshments provided. At the end of the evening we hope you'll stay and mingle with fellow Conservation enthusiasts.

What have we been doing since our last newsletter?

Well, lots! But here's just a sampling:

- * In May and June, we conducted our annual Spring Walks. They were very successful and, as always, reminded us that we need to open our eyes to the natural wonders around us every day - not just once a year.
- * Annual scholarships were presented to Westford Academy graduates Ryan Janoch, Seth Berkowitz, and Ryan Joyce. We received many impressive applications and wish to thank all those who applied for their interest in Conservation.
- * In June, we hosted a booth at the annual Strawberry Festival for the first time. We also offered walks on the nearby Tom Paul Trail. It was a great way for us to meet members and fellow townspeople. We enjoyed every minute of it - especially the part with the strawberry shortcake.
- * In August, we filed the dreaded non-profit tax returns. Our fearless Treasurer, Mark Tincknell, fought tooth and nail with some pretty nasty-sounding forms, but lived to tell the tale (and file them again next year).
- * We continued to stay involved in on-going land issues like supporting the passage of the Community Preservation Act at the Spring Town Meeting.
- * We worked at clearing and marking several hiking trails and also worked on several land acquisition projects.

We may break for the summer, but Conservation never rests!

Letter writing made easy!

Did you ever want to write a letter to Congress about an environmental issue near and dear to your heart but you just never found the time? Well, thanks to the internet, you can send pre-written letters with a simple click of your mouse button.

Go to www.saveourevironment.org and find out just how easy it is!

New Westford Trail books available!!

Thanks to Bill Harman for updating the trail book with the latest and greatest information. The books are available at Town Hall and Roudenbush for \$3 apiece. Get yours - and get walking!

Call for email addresses!!!

In order for the Trust to contact you when there is an important issue, we could do so more efficiently by email. Please help us update our database by sending your email address to:

Marian Harman at marianharman@aol.com THANKS!

Land Steward Committee by Peter Ewing

The Land Steward Committee is responsible for the stewardship and trail maintenance of protected open space in the town of Westford, under the ownership of the Town Conservation Commission and the private non-profit Westford Conservation Trust. Steering committee members are: Peter Mahler, from the Conservation Commission; Kate Hollister, a long time volunteer for many programs throughout town and also a member of the Trust; and Peter Ewing, a member of the Trust.

We are a new steering committee and our first objective, which we accomplished over the summer, was to reconnect with and update the database of land stewards. The next step was to match stewards with land parcels. This helped us to answer the question of how many parcels are orphaned and without a steward.

However, the most important elements of the Land Steward Committee are the volunteer stewards who have adopted a parcel or trail network, usually ones near their homes that they use themselves to take a walk and enjoy the scenery. Stewards keep an eye on the property and the condition of the trails. They send in reports semi-annually, which take about 5 minutes to fill out.

While the total number of parcels seems countless, many are smaller parcels without trails; up to this point we have focused on larger parcels with established trails systems. Ellen Harde, who maintains the Roudenbush Map of Westford, has identified the larger parcels with trail systems. Thus, the Roudenbush map is a great resource to find and explore Westford's scenic hideaways. It can be obtained from the Roudenbush Center on Main Street. Another great resource is Bill Harman's "Westford Trails" which provides an in-depth description including the flora and fauna of many of Westford's featured properties. This guide is also available at the Roudenbush Center.

There are about 15 larger parcels with trail systems, some of which are large enough to require more than one steward. Also, there are a few trails that link various parcels, such as the Tom Paul Trail which goes from the Town center at the village green through various parcels eventually linking up with the Stone Arch Bridge and Russell Bird Sanctuary.

To date, the emphasis of the new steering committee has been on land owned by either the Conservation Commission or the Conservation Trust. However, there are other, less advertised public trail easements on private conservation land. Many of these trails are part of residential subdivisions. One such trail goes through the common land surrounding Lakeside Village. These trails also need stewards to check on them periodically and make sure the trails are still accessible.

At present we would love to have a half dozen additional stewards. Properties needing adoptive stewards include Mill Pond (22 on the Roudenbush Map), Farmer Parcel (44), Martina Gage Town Forest (18), and Mystery Spring and Tadmuck Swamp (23). If you are interested, please contact Peter Ewing at 392-3614 or 392-0135. We would walk the parcel with you, review what trails and/or other assets are on the property, and answer any questions you have about being a volunteer.

Property Highlight

Each of Westford's trails has its own unique features and attractions. The Slifer Conservation Land along Keyes Pond is a great spot for a short walk and family picnic. It is off Keyes Rd in the northwest corner of town. The property was one of the first acquired by the Town back in 1988. Since then the Town has also purchased adjacent property along Snake Meadow Brook and the Picking Gould Farm. Ernest and Marie Slifer once maintained a large garden and picnic area, with terraces down to Keyes Pond. The garden has become overgrown and wild, making it a perfect garden restoration project. Recently, Ellen Harde organized a walk on the property and pointed out many of the original perennials and the basic layout of the garden. A restoration project is planned for the spring of 2002 in which the Garden Club has generously decided to help out and support financially. Undoubtedly, there will be a need for additional volunteers.

What is a monthly Conservation Trust meeting like, anyway?

Every first Thursday of the month from September to June (with the exception of the annual meeting in November), the Trust meets at the Emerson Hospital Health Center on Rte. 110 in Westford at 7:30pm. We love to see members stopping in to get involved or simply to get some information. Here's a typical meeting agenda:

Conservation Topics

- flora and fauna reports

Agenda Review

- does anyone want to add an agenda item to be discussed?

Minutes from the last meeting

- reviewed and approved

Treasurer's Report

- where are we at financially? what do we have coming up for expenses?

Trail/Land Stewardship Committee Report

- issues relating to the upkeep and preservation of conservation trails

Town Meetings and ballot issues

- anything that is related to Conservation that we need to get involved in?

Land Issues

- this includes issues related not only to Trust property but also to Town conservation property as well

Sound like something you'd like to be a part of? Please feel free to stop by and join in these and other discussions with us. Things can get pretty lively sometimes! We'd love to hear what you have to say!



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