

25TH ANNIVERSARY



Westborough Community Land Trust

President's Letter



25 years ago, a small group of local residents formed the Westborough Community Land Trust, primarily to preserve open space from the pressures of rapid land development. Over the intervening years, this organization has grown into a thriving non-profit organization that has engaged hundreds of friends and neighbors to fulfill this original mission, as well many goals that the founders likely did not envision. This all-volunteer organization has protected more than 200 acres of open space, including our most recent acquisition this past year in the Orchard Swamp area. We made open space throughout town accessible by building, marking, and maintaining a trail network that has grown to more than 60 miles. The highlight of this system – the new Gilmore Pond All-persons Trail – opened last year and truly allows everyone to enjoy nature regardless of visual or mobility impairments. Just as importantly as these material achievements, this organization engaged the community by holding hundreds of educational events, and has fostered the next generation of socially-conscious citizens by supporting nearly 100 Eagle and Gold Scout projects and 30 college scholarships.

Reflecting on these achievements can only lead to one thought – how can we top this in our next 25 years? In many ways the challenges seem greater, as open space becomes rarer and we struggle with sustainability both locally and globally. However, when I read what follows in this Annual Report, I see the thoughtfulness of our scholarship essay winners, the energy that went into new open space acquisitions and mapping initiatives to increase accessibility, and the creativity to organize a full slate of fall activities. How can I not be excited for the future?

Please join us in celebrating the past and looking toward the future by taking part in the 25th anniversary events listed below - The 25 mile trail challenge, a guided walk with a founding WCLT member, and our big anniversary bash. See you there!

Chris Sassetti, President



Board of Directors

Officers

Chris Sassetti – President
Peter Dunbeck – Vice President
Gillian Beamer – Secretary
Vincent Servello – Treasurer
Neil Feldman – Assistant Treasurer

Exec Committee

Chris Sassetti – President
Peter Dunbeck – Vice President
Gillian Beamer – Secretary
Vincent Servello – Treasurer

Board of Directors

Gillian Beamer
Peter Dunbeck
Scott Henderson
Chris Sassetti
Michelle Scerbin
Vincent Servello
Karen Yeowell
Warren Anderson
Adam Last

The Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) awarded two \$1,000 scholarships and two honorable mentions to graduating Westborough High School (WHS) seniors. These awards were made on the basis of student essays written for WCLT's annual Earth Day Essay Contest.

"This year's group of essays was more upbeat than last year's, probably due to life being less dominated by the pandemic. Nature helped several students cope," said Annie Reid, WCLT scholarship committee chair. "Also, we could tell from the essays that WCLT's long-running,

annual town-wide Earth Day Cleanup has been helping to raise kids' awareness of both the litter problem in town and the beauty of our natural environment. Students mentioned using the town's trails and conservation areas, including the Charm Bracelet trails, Mill Pond, Lake Chauncy, Bowman Conservation Area, Hoccomocco Pond, and Sawink Farm. In addition to families and scouting, we saw that courses in art, photography, and environmental science helped students develop environmental consciousness."

WCLT Scholarship Winners

Harrison Smith won a scholarship for his essay describing both his reawakening to nature and the beauty of Westborough through a surprise trailside encounter with a swan and his intention to "play the swan" by helping other people connect with nature. He will attend Boston College in the fall.



Harrison Smith

Chocoria Jiang received a scholarship for her essay describing the role that Lake Chauncy played in inspiring her appreciation for all bodies of water, the growth of her interest in the oceans and marine conservation, and her use of art to focus awareness on marine conservation issues. She plans to attend NYU for an individualized major in studio art, design, and environmental studies.



Chocoria Jiang

Read the winning essays on the WCLT website at <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/pr/2022-scholarship-award>.

Sophie Scerbin received an honorable mention for her essay describing how positive experiences on the trails at Mill Pond with the Girl Scouts and at the Westborough Reservoir brought her closer to nature and inspired her to create a program with interactive activities that help children experience nature and the world outside their phones. She plans to attend Roger Williams University.

Lindsay Hall was recognized with an honorable mention for her essay describing how she found peacefulness in nature and relief from stress after tumbling to the ground while jogging on Mill Pond trails, and how she has been motivated to give back to the environment by picking up trash and seeking ways to protect the environment. She will attend a four-year college.

Since 2006, WCLT has awarded 28 scholarships to graduating seniors in Westborough and 28 honorable mentions. See the WCLT Scholarship Hall of Fame at <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/hall-of-fame#ScholarsHOF>. With our Earth Day essay contest and scholarship program, WCLT aims to inspire young people to become keen observers of our natural spaces, as well as reflective thinkers regarding the impact of human activity on our environment.

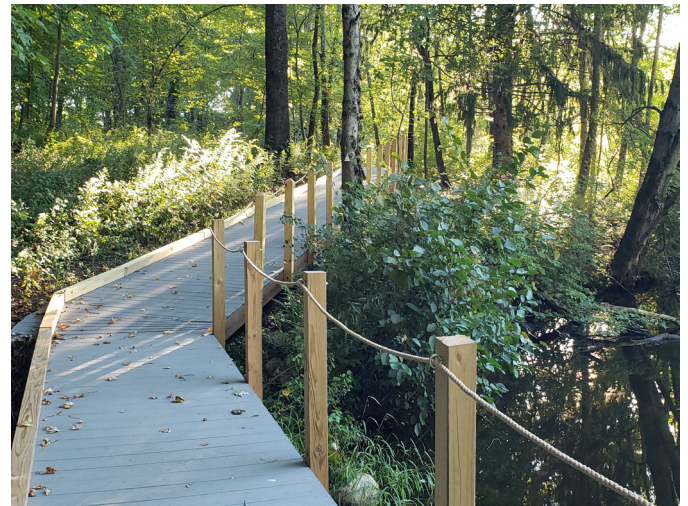
Stewardship Committee



The Stewardship Committee maintains and manages WCLT lands. We also develop and maintain trails on other town lands, encouraging public enjoyment of our open spaces while preserving habitat for our native plants and animals.

In the second half of 2021, we completed construction of the Gilmore Pond All-Persons Trail, our largest stewardship project in recent memory. We modified the existing Gilmore Pond Loop Trail to be accessible to all persons, including the mobility- and visually-impaired. The full trail loop and Quick Farm Road entryway are graded in compliance with ADA regulations and are fully navigable by wheelchair. This project was funded through a MassTrails grant and required over 1,000 volunteer hours to complete.

We are excited that Westborough has recently purchased and protected two significant parcels of open space: the Despres Conservation Area and Zwicker Farm. WCLT has added blazes to the existing trails in Despres, and we are currently working with the Conservation Commission to plan bridge construction at several stream crossings. At Zwicker Farm, we are in the early planning stages for a loop trail through the beautiful meadow.



Gilmore Pond Trail

PHOTO BY JANET ANDERSON

Every spring, our committee and volunteers check the conditions and perform basic maintenance on every trail segment in the Charm Bracelet trail system. This year, we're in the process of doing this for 66 trail segments covering more than 50 miles of trails throughout Westborough.

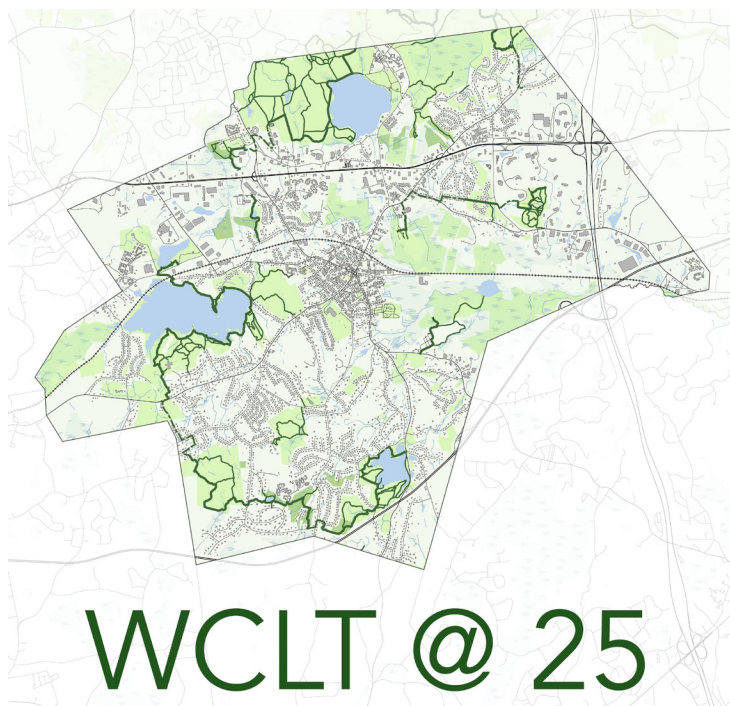
Finally, in honor of WCLT's 25th anniversary, we are hard at work updating our trail maps and piloting a new type of placard/blaze for trail intersections. By the end of the year, we will have beautiful, up-to-date, accurate trail maps for all of Westborough and new ways to navigate the Charm Bracelet.

If you would like to sign up for our mailing list to be notified of volunteer opportunities, if you'd like to join our committee, if you know a scout looking for ideas for a Gold or Eagle project, or if you find a trail segment that requires maintenance, please contact us at stewardship@westboroughlandtrust.org.

Stewardship Committee members:

Keith Martin, *Chair*

Don Burn • Marjorie Fisher • Mark Fox • Scott Henderson • Guido Lonardo • Joe Massery • Drew Musacchio • Brian O'Keefe • Hank Rauch • Scott Shumway • Karen Yeowell



WCLT @ 25

This has been another full year of programs, and our committee remains very enthusiastic about the work we do, educating the public about the importance of open space. We were fortunate to have two new committee members join us this year: Debbie Gallagher and Sharon Dankwardt. Over the summer, our online wildflower hunt raised awareness of wildflowers, with 65 of 75 flowers found. In early October, 38 people enjoyed a walk introducing Zwicker Farm. In late October, the grand opening of the Gilmore Pond All-Persons' Trail brought out 43 people. In November, a walk introducing the Despres property was attended by 57. That walk was preceded by a Nature Discovery event for kids, attracting about 15 kids plus their parents. Our January Westborough State Hospital history walk was attended by 65 people, and 20 people came to a talk in February on making maple syrup at home. In October/November and April/May, we co-sponsored eight bird walks with the Forbush Bird Club. The March live snake show was cancelled when the presenter contracted Covid.

Our April Earth Day Litter Cleanup was successful as usual. Participants signed up online and cleaned their

areas over the course of a week. A record-breaking 400 volunteers participated, and Westborough is much cleaner. About 100 attended the Volunteer Appreciation Picnic. Thank you to Rachel Radin for the online signup. Read about the cleanup here: <https://patch.com/massachusetts/westborough/westborough-cleans-nodx>

A May Day hike put on by Girl Scout Gold Award recipient Sophie Scerbin, introducing her "Exploration Rangers" project, attracted 24 people of all ages. A late May geology walk was cancelled due to extreme heat. The June Annual Meeting featured nature photographer Peter Christoph on "Owls of New England."

Annie Reid wrote 11 fascinating "Nature Notes" columns; view all 296 at <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/nn/nnindex>. And our annual Earth Day essay contest awarded two scholarships and two honorable mentions again this year.

Education Committee members:

Janet Anderson, *Chair*

Kris Allen • Sharon Dankwardt • Debbie Gallagher • Paula Kirk • Kathy Leblanc • Rachel Radin • Annie Reid

THE 25-MILE TRAIL CHALLENGE IS BEGINNING!

Help WCLT celebrate its 25th anniversary by hiking 25 miles of the 60+ miles of Westborough trails.



Go for a hike and keep track of your mileage. You are welcome to complete the 25 miles any way you wish, but we encourage you to try some new trails.

After you reach a total of 25 miles, email 25miles@westboroughlandtrust.org with your contact information so we can add you to our list of 25-milers and send you a cool commemorative patch.

Not sure where to start? A list of suggested hikes of varying distances and difficulties is on our website <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/trail-challenge>.

Different hikes will be periodically highlighted on the WCLT Facebook page. Please post selfies or favorite trail photos to encourage others to try a new trail.

Membership Committee



From May 2021 through April 2022, WCLT collected 201 memberships and membership renewals. Responses to the WCLT membership drive and annual appeal are a critical source of funds. Membership and annual appeal contributions totaled nearly \$28,000 for the preceding 12 months ending April 30, 2022. Our email list has increased to around 690 active recipients.

We found some data missing from prior membership reports, so wish to correct the record:

May 2019-April 2020

Total contributions: \$13,641 (2020 annual report incorrectly stated \$7,000)

Total number of contributions: 110 (2020 annual report incorrectly stated 144)

May 2020-April 2021

Total contributions: \$15,197 (correctly reported in 2021 annual report)

Total number of contributions: 137 (correctly reported in 2021 annual report)

The 2021-2022 period represents a significant increase in contributions and memberships, in large part because of the summer 2021 campaign to reconnect with expired members. We thank these friends for renewing their association with WCLT.

This year, we welcomed Servello CPA as a new business partner. We also continued a strong relationship with our existing business partners EMSEAL Corporation, Pearson Advisory Investor Relations, Thomas Financial Associates, Arturo's Ristorante, and Julio's Liquors. We thank them for their support.

Please encourage anyone you know who may have recently discovered Westborough's natural bounty to join WCLT. Check our calendar and participate in WCLT-sponsored events or get involved in WCLT committees and stewardship projects.

Several WCLT committees have requested supplementing their present make-up with fresh members: education, nominating, and membership. Any WCLT member can serve on these committees. Time commitment is minimal, usually only one meeting and one other event per month. To get involved, contact the appropriate committee chair at <http://westboroughlandtrust.org/contact>. Please volunteer!

Membership Committee members:

Warren Anderson, *Chair*

Lorena Altamirano

WCLT values our business partners

We thank our business partners for helping WCLT preserve and protect more land and offer trails and educational programs: **Servello CPA, EMSEAL Corporation, Pearson Advisory Investor Relations, Thomas Financial Associates, Arturo's Ristorante, and Julio's Liquors.**

How can your organization join WCLT as a business partner? Find out by contacting bizpartners@westboroughlandtrust.org.



This past year the Land Preservation Committee (LPC) continued to promote the acquisition and protection of new open space parcels, establishment and maintenance of trail easements, and preservation of existing open space parcels in Westborough.

One of the most notable LPC accomplishments this past year was WCLT's acquisition of the Chase parcel. WCLT has had a goal of protecting Orchard Swamp, a 123-acre area between Route 9 and the Haskell ballfields, for the last 25-years. This 10-acre property, centrally located within Orchard Swamp, is an important milestone towards achieving that goal.

We are thankful to Greg Chase and the Chase family, who generously donated the property to WCLT in memory of Barbara B. Chase. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the efforts of LPC member James Tashjian, whose dedication and skills were instrumental in this accomplishment.

The LPC continues to work with other WCLT committees, Town boards and committees, Sudbury Valley Trustees, and others on several potential land protection projects. The recent acquisition of the Zwicker Farm and Despres Conservation Area properties by the Town for open space aligns with LPC's goals.

At the March 2022 Annual Town Meeting the townspeople considered and voted to place adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) on the November 2022 ballot. Read about the Town Meeting vote here: <https://www.communitypreservation.org/home/news/cpa-adoption-update-westborough-first-november-2022-ballot>. Additional information regarding the CPA proposal for Westborough may be found at: https://www.town.westborough.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf5176/f/uploads/cpaec_recommendation_report_final.pdf. If



A red-bellied woodpecker at its nest hole

PHOTO BY GARRY KESSLER

adopted, CPA funds would be dedicated to affordable housing, open space and recreation, and historic preservation.

The LPC continues to work with private and public property owners to maintain and establish easements for the Charm Bracelet trail network and other trail networks throughout the Town. As important links are established, LPC helps identify and works toward putting in place missing links of the Charm Bracelet with the ultimate goal of establishing the 28-mile continuous loop Charm Bracelet trail network.

We appreciate your support over the past 25 years and welcome your ideas, energy, and continued support for the next 25 years, and beyond.

Land Preservation Committee members:

Adam Last, Chair

Don Burn • Rob Connor • Craig Richov • Jim Tashjian

Calendar of Events

For the latest info on our events go to www.westboroughlandtrust.org or [click here](#).

Mushrooms of Westborough

Sunday, September 11, 2022

1 – 3:30 pm

Mushrooms, the fruiting bodies of fungi, are incredibly diverse in color, shape, and texture. Every autumn they attract our senses with the variety of diversity they bring to the forest floor. Over 1,000 species are known in Massachusetts, and one can often encounter 50 or more on a single woodland walk in the fall after rain. In addition to their beauty, they play a key role in the ecology of forests. We will look at how to recognize and identify mushrooms, review and use several field guides, and discuss fungus ecology on a leisurely walk in a woodland setting. We will not discuss edibility. Free, no registration required.

Meet at the trailhead for the Libby/Wile Forest, at the end of Carroll Drive, Westborough, MA.

For questions contact: events@westboroughlandtrust.org

Trail map: http://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/libbeywile_trail_map.pdf



Westborough Community Land Trust 25th Anniversary Party!

Sunday, October 2, 2022

Events 1 – 3 pm, Presentations 3 – 4 pm

Come celebrate a quarter century of WCLT making Westborough a better place!

Drop in at the tent at Nourse Farm from 1 – 3 pm, and enjoy an afternoon of events for all ages:

- The Caterpillar Lab from Marlborough, NH with a fascinating drop-in display of live butterflies, caterpillars, and chrysalises! <https://www.thecaterpillarlab.org/>
- Corn hole and games!
- Music!
- Self-guided farm hikes!
- Food for purchase at the farm stand and the Veg Out food truck!
- From 3 – 4 pm, learn and reminisce about WCLT's early days with speakers, recognitions, a slide show, and complimentary hors d'oeuvres.

Free, open to the public, rain or shine, no reservation needed.

Location: 80 Jasper Street, Westborough MA, off Nourse Street.

Parking available on Jasper Street. For questions contact events@westboroughlandtrust.org

Westborough Community Land Trust 25th Anniversary Hike

Sunday, November 6, 2022

1 – 3 pm

WCLT's first organized hike was at the Bowman West property. Re-create that walk, with commentary about the early days of WCLT and the work that has been done at Bowman West and our other trails in the past 25 years. Meet at Bowman Conservation Area on Bowman Street, Westborough. WCLT founding member Tim Buckalew will be the walk leader. Free; no reservation required.

For questions, contact events@westboroughlandtrust.org Map: https://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/bowmanwest_trail_map.pdf