

Westborough Community Land Trust

2009 Annual Report



Westborough Community Land Trust

President's Letter



Devon Drohan, Westborough High School senior, received the 2009 WCLT Scholarship.

WCLT 2009 Scholarship Awarded

As the winner of WCLT's Earth Day Essay Contest, Devon Ashley Barnhart Drohan, daughter of Leslie and Rick Drohan of 66 Flanders Road, received the 2009 Westborough Community Land Trust Scholarship. This award recognizes a deep appreciation and concern for the natural environment on the part of a graduating Westborough High School senior.

Devon's essay focused on sustainable living and made a case for reducing transportation-related energy consumption by developing a bike trail system in Westborough.

In the fall, Devon plans to attend the University of Massachusetts-Amherst to study theatrical set design and technical production.

Two seniors received honorable mention for their essays. They are Abhinav Gupta, who will attend Yale University, and Matthew A. Gitkind, who will enroll at Connecticut College.

The 2009 Scholarship Committee is very pleased with all the Earth Day essays submitted. WCLT values the students' many thoughtful ideas for caring for Westborough's natural environment.



The Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) has continued to enrich our community by delivering projects and programs, thanks to the strong support of our members. We have continued to acquire new parcels of land, adding to the acres available for passive recreation and natural habitat under our protection. Our invasive control program at Gilmore Pond is progressing, and we are expanding our invasive control program to new areas. The Education Committee has delivered another outstanding program of events, including a talk on snakes attended by over 170 people including scores of young people.

WCLT acquired two new properties last year. Indian Pond is 14 acres of wooded wetlands and a pond, which we intend to maintain both as habitat and an area for passive recreation. Pheasant Hill is 19 acres of woods crossing Jack Straw Brook with trails connecting to Gilmore Pond. WCLT now owns and protects over 150 acres of open space in Westborough, and our volunteers maintain over 100 additional acres of municipal open space and over 40 miles of trails.

Our Gilmore Pond restoration project is in its third year. Most of the shoreline and acres of woods have been cleared of invasive honeysuckle bushes, opening pleasing views of the pond and the surrounding woodlands. With completion of the shoreline-clearing project and upcoming dam restoration, the property is nearing a major milestone in our efforts to develop it as a local natural resource for passive recreation. Along with the Westborough Civic Club, hundreds of community volunteer hours have brought the property to this point, demonstrating just what individuals can accomplish. The area remains open to the public during this time, so feel free to come up to take a look or contact the Stewardship Committee if you are interested in more information or helping out.

Over the last year WCLT has also renewed its stewardship agreement with Westborough. WCLT continues to contribute hundreds of hours of volunteer time to monitor and manage Town conservation lands. In addition, WCLT has agreements with Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Department of Conservation and Recreation to expand our invasive plant control program to begin to control purple loosestrife on State property. WCLT is working with the Westborough High School so that students may participate in this program, further spreading the message that you can make a difference.

It is thanks to your enthusiasm, support, and dedicated work that WCLT can work to make a better Westborough. I hope that you will renew your membership for the next year and continue your involvement in our shared commitment to preserve open space in Westborough. We look forward to seeing you at WCLT events throughout the year.

Garry Kessler, President



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Committee Reports

Acquisitions Committee

The Acquisitions Committee is pleased to report that WCLT has recently acquired two major properties, including one that it pursued for over seven years. The first is a 19-acre parcel located in the Pheasant Hill Estates subdivision off Adams Street and Primrose Lane. This property makes a connection to several other WCLT properties to create a substantial contiguous corridor in the southeast corner of town. The second major acquisition is a 14.4-acre open space parcel in the Indian Meadow subdivision off Meadow Road and Indian Pond Road. This property contains a 2-acre pond and also connects to other WCLT properties and completes a critical link in the Charm Bracelet. In total WCLT currently owns approximately 160 acres of land in town.

We have also continued our work to protect several other critical properties identified by WCLT as deserving permanent protection. Some of these properties include land in two ongoing development projects on Arch Street and Otis Street, as well as several other remaining parcels in Orchard Swamp near Route 9 and Lyman Street. In addition, much of our time was spent in the pursuit of additional trail easements to improve or simplify the route for the Charm Bracelet as it weaves its way through town. We are also negotiating a conservation restriction for a unique parcel of property at the edge of the Cedar Swamp ACEC.

In our work we encourage the involvement and input of any other boards and committees. To further this approach, we regularly consult with DPW personnel, the Town Planner, the Conservation Agent and the Town Counsel. We have also begun to partner with other regional land protection organizations, such as the Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Grafton Land Trust.

We welcome any suggestions, ideas, or participation as we look for more opportunities to protect the natural resources of the town for the enjoyment of all.

Randy Waterman, Jon Nourse, Craig Richov, Jim Tashjian, Don Burn, Kris Allen



Education Committee

Our Family Nature Walks included hikes to Gilmore Pond in September, Wile Forest in October, the Lee property in November, the Country Club in February and the Bowman Conservation Area in May. Our August field trip to Crystal Spring Earth Learning Center in Plainville featured a local food celebration and sustainability presentations.

The Education Committee's major outreach event was our live animal Earth Awareness Program, "Snakes in Massachusetts and Beyond" by snake expert Rick Roth and his Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team. The event attracted more than 170 people and was made possible by a grant from the Westborough Cultural Council and the generosity of the Knights of Columbus.

Coordinated by WCLT Nature Educator Kathy Leblanc was an introduction to nature for 20 four-year-olds at the Westborough Congregational Church Preschool. Elaine Moore, Kris Allen, Barbara Muise, Annie Reid and Kathy Leblanc introduced local wild mammals using the fur-bearing pelt kit from the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. The Fishing Challenge at Sandra Pond during the town's Spring Festival featured a WCLT Nature Crafts Table organized by Susan Bush. WCLT Nature Educators also helped Scout troops with badge requirements and led a nature discovery program for the Girl Scout Town-wide Encampment at Camp Green Eyrie.

WCLT's most far-reaching educational undertaking is the purple loosestrife biocontrol project, supported by a Staples Education Grant. Now in its pilot stage, this project aims to control invasive purple loosestrife by raising and releasing loosestrife-eating beetles (*Galerucella*). Aided by WCLT's Vivian Kimball, Annie Reid, and Debbie Okita, the Westborough High School environmental science class led by science teacher Anita Lotti potted a dozen purple loosestrife plants and is now raising beetles on them for release at selected wetland sites.

The Education Committee welcomes Vivian Kimball, whose talents as a graphic designer improve our public outreach.

We appreciate Westborough residents' enthusiastic response to our nature discovery programs.

Kris Allen, Chair

Susan Bush, Rosemary Johnson, Vivian Kimball, Kathy Leblanc, Leslie Leslie, Susan Lippitt, Elaine Moore, Doug Mosher, Barbara Muise, Annie Reid



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Committee Reports

Membership Committee

There are currently more than 250 memberships, including 375 individual members. Membership has declined slightly over the past year, however 10 new members have joined this year.

We are happy to report that members continue to provide financial support in this difficult economy. Membership renewals, in June of each year, are a critical source of funds and human resources. Membership dues totaled over \$6,600. In addition, the 2008-09 Annual Appeal raised more than \$9,000. Special thanks to everyone who contributed throughout the year.

Active members are crucial to our success in protecting open space and preserving the natural beauty of Westborough. We encourage members from Westborough and surrounding towns who share a deep commitment to the preservation of Westborough's natural resources to participate in WCLT sponsored events and to get involved in committees to support WCLT initiatives.

Membership renewal letters have been mailed. Memberships will run through June 2010. The Annual Appeal will take place again in November to coincide with year-end giving. Thanks very much to all WCLT members and friends for their continued loyal support.

Maureen Johnson, *Chair*



Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee is responsible for the care of Westborough Community Land Trust properties. In addition, the Committee is responsible for designing and maintaining trails and developing infrastructure to encourage public enjoyment of local open space.

We continue our multi-year effort to improve Gilmore Pond, the headwaters of Jackstraw Brook. Through the wonderful support of the Westborough Civic Club in both financial and volunteer efforts, we intend to turn the area into a woodland park. We have now cleared two acres of invasive plants. We also started researching what is needed to rebuild the dam. This will be the largest capital project in WCLT's history, with costs approaching \$20,000.

We placed our first four property signs last year. If you drive down East Main Street, Lyman Street, Adams Street, or Gilmore Farm Road, you will see our property identified. In addition, we built a new trail connecting Mill Pond School with the Nourse Farm. Finally, we released the first four new trail maps for the walking trails in town, for Bowman Conservation Area West & WCLT Hidden Meadow, the Headwaters Conservation Area, Libbey Conservation Area and Wile Forest, and Upper Jackstraw Brook Reservation, which includes Gilmore Pond. These maps are color PDF files that can be downloaded from the WCLT and Charm Bracelet websites.

This year we will be developing new trails in several areas of town and continuing the work at Gilmore Pond. We will begin efforts at the new Indian Pond parcel to create public access, and we will place four more of our property signs.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who continue to work on projects and maintain trails. Without their support, we could not do our work.

Don Burn, *Chair*

Marge Fisher, Mark Fox, Scott Henderson, Garry Kessler, Steve Rowell, Sharon Williams

Associate members: Kris Allen, Barry Hall, Andy Koenigsberg, John Metzger, Doug Mosher, Harry Newell, Ellen Bishop O'Brien, Al Sanborn, Kim Simpson, Sue Wells