



2021

# ANNUAL REPORT

## Westborough Community Land Trust



WCLT preserves, protects, and promotes Westborough's open space.



# President's Letter

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Our trailwork at Gilmore Pond was rained out today, leaving me free to relax at home. So, why am I so disappointed? Initially, I attributed my disappointment to missing time outside with my son and his teenage friends that have been helping with the project. Those kids get the work done, and somehow always find ways to have fun with each other. However, this line of thought made me reconsider my disappointment. Am I really so different from the kids? Sure, I am excited by the goal of making the first all-persons accessible trail in town, and I look forward to more of the community being able to see Gilmore Pond when the leaves turn in the fall. But today, I'm missing the opportunity to get outside and solve some problems with friends – and let's be honest, I'll miss the cold beer when we finish.

Which makes me reflect, on this rainy day, about how our all-volunteer organization can possibly maintain 60+ miles of trail, continue to protect land, and hold frequent educational events to increase awareness and use of the outdoors. Sure, we are all committed to the mission. But I suspect that others also find that it's simply fun to accomplish the mission with friends. I'll end by thanking all of our volunteers and supporters for an amazingly enjoyable and productive year, and invite everyone to get involved. Any of our committees would welcome more participation, but today I'll highlight our Land Preservation Committee. This group is on a roll after helping to protect more than 100 acres of land over the past year, and is continuing its work to protect land and to connect these parcels and expand the "Charm Bracelet" trail system. If you'd like to get involved contact [president@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:president@westboroughlandtrust.org).

Chris Sassetti, President

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## Board of Directors

Chris Sassetti, *President*  
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*Gilmore Pond in the fall.*

PHOTO BY GARRY KESSLER

# WCLT Scholarships

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In 2021 the Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) awarded two \$1,000 scholarships and two honorable mentions to graduating Westborough High School (WHS) seniors. Awards were made on the basis of essays submitted in WCLT's annual Earth Day Essay Contest.

"We had a wonderful group of essays this year. Forty percent of the essay writers were fond of the Bowman Conservation Area. Other areas enjoyed were Cedar Swamp, Lake Chauncy, Mill Pond, Libbey/Wile, Upper Jackstraw Brook, and the Charm Bracelet trails," said Annie Reid of the Scholarship Committee. "Families, scouting, and courses in photography and in the environment helped these young people develop connections to the natural environment."

**Leila Ahmed** won a scholarship for her essay describing



how she enjoyed nature in the Bowman Conservation Area while growing up, became interested in the human impact on the area, and planned a garden of pollinator-attracting native plants there. In college she plans to pursue a degree in

environmental science or environmental engineering.

**Colleen McGrath** received a scholarship for her essay



describing how, through photography, she grew from a teenager feeling confined by Westborough into someone who loves nature, especially in Westborough, strives to live more sustainably, and carries a trash bag along with a camera.

She plans to study education at Boston College and is leaning toward a career in secondary education.

**Michael O'Keefe** received an honorable mention for his essay describing how, through Boy Scouts, his childhood enjoyment of nature developed into a passion that led him to carry out numerous projects focused on the upkeep and improvement of Westborough's trails and conservation areas, and to understand that we are all responsible for the upkeep of our natural resources. He plans to study engineering in college.

**Infanta Antony** was recognized with an honorable mention for her essay describing how, through scouting, she came to love exploring nature, especially in the Bowman Conservation Area, and with other Girl Scouts made a video to help protect Bowman by informing people about its wildlife, water supply, and history. She plans to attend college in the fall and aims eventually to become certified as a physician's assistant.



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*Since the beginning of our scholarship program in 2006, WCLT has awarded 26 scholarships to graduating seniors in Westborough, as well as 26 honorable mentions. ([Click here to see the WCLT Scholarship Hall of Fame](#)) The Earth Day Essay Contest and the scholarship program are ways that we encourage environmental awareness and support the environmentalists of tomorrow.*



[Click here to read the winning essays](#)



# Stewardship Committee

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

As is true every year, WCLT has benefited tremendously this year from the help of Boy Scout and Girl Scout volunteers. This year, our Eagle Projects included the removal of invasive plants at Gilmore Pond, as well as bridging projects on the Upper Jackstraw Trail, the Malley Trail, and the Tree Farm Trail at Bowman West. And with six more Eagle Projects currently in the works, we're poised for another strong year of scout-led trail improvements.

For the Stewardship Committee, our big project this year is the continued renovation of the Gilmore Pond trail loop, which is supported in part by a MassTrails grant. In mid 2020, we broke ground on this two-year project, and at the time of this writing, over 600 volunteer hours have been invested in it. A new stone-dust tread surface has been installed around 3/4 of the loop, and we constructed a 20 foot bridge across the pond's inlet and installed

approximately 110 feet of boardwalk. We owe a special thank you to the students and staff of Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School who contributed over 300 hours of labor to the boardwalk design and construction. This spring and summer, we will be installing an additional 100+ feet of boardwalk, a post-and-rope handrail, and some additional stone dust tread, which will make the entire trail wheelchair- and stroller-friendly, starting from the Quick Farm Road trailhead and looping around the pond. We are aiming to have a "grand re-opening" celebration in the fall, once the construction is completed.

We will need a lot of help this spring and summer building and installing the remaining boardwalk sections and railing posts. If you're at all handy with basic carpentry (or are just willing to lend a hand), please let us know at [stewardship@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:stewardship@westboroughlandtrust.org).

*Stewardship Committee: Keith Martin (chair), Don Burn, Marjorie Fisher, Mark Fox, Scott Henderson, Guido Lonardo, Joe Massery, Brian O'Keefe, Hank Rauch, Scott Shumway, Karen Yeowell*



*Scott & Brady Henderson assist with boardwalk construction at Gilmore Pond.*



# Education Committee

The Education Committee had a busy 2020-2021. In early October, a total of 50 people enjoyed two **Twilight to Moonlight walks**. In October and November, two walks highlighting sections of the new **Boroughs Loop Trail** drew 18 and 30 people, respectively. In January, Chris Sassetti led 30 participants in **exploring Bowman West** in winter. Nancy Wright did a great job organizing our **photography contest**, which drew 133 entries from over 70 people. Eight prizes were awarded, including both adults and youth. Garry Kessler's February virtual talk on the **Galapagos Islands** was viewed by 45 people. [Click here to see Garry's talk.](#)

Due to Covid-19, the March **live animal show** was again postponed. Instead, we launched a **Facebook wildflower hunt**, which will run through October. Five April/May **birding walks** were co-sponsored with the Forbush Bird Club. An April virtual program on the "**Legacy of Birding in Westborough**," co-sponsored with the Historical Society, can be viewed [here](#).

Our **April Earth Day Litter Cleanup** was a huge success. Participation by groups resumed this year, and families and individuals signed up online and cleaned their areas over the course of a week. A record-breaking 350 volunteers filled well over 250 trash bags, and Westborough is much cleaner. Thank you Rachel Radin for the online signup. [Read about the cleanup here.](#)

We co-sponsored "**Alien Invasion**," a talk on invasive plants, in May. In addition, a **May Family Nature Hike** attracted 24 people of all ages. The **June Annual Meeting** featured nature photographer Peter Christoph on "Birds of the New England Swamp."

Annie Reid wrote 11 fascinating "**Nature Notes**" columns; view all 285 by [clicking here](#). And our annual Earth Day essay contest awarded two scholarships and two honorable mentions again this year.

*Education Committee: Janet Anderson, Chair; Kris Allen, Paula Kirk, Kathy Leblanc, Rachel Radin, Annie Reid, Nancy Wright, and Katie O'Neill*



*Janet Anderson leads the November 2020 walk.*

PHOTO: WARREN ROGERS



*Walkers cross the aqueduct on the Boroughs Loop Trail walk, November 2020.*

PHOTO: JANET ANDERSON



*Girl Scout Troop 11130 participates in the Earth Day Litter Cleanup.*

PHOTO: MICHELLE SCERBIN



*Hikers view the goats at Chestnut Hill Farm, November 2020.*

PHOTO: JANET ANDERSON



# Membership Committee

From May 2020 through April 2021, WCLT collected 137 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 over \$15,000 for the preceding 12 months ending April 30, 2021. We also took a major step of consolidating our email lists into one platform. It now totals around 650 active recipients.

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

During the pandemic, WCLT's trails and properties offered a safe, much-needed outdoor experience to

connect with nature. Please encourage anyone you know who may have recently discovered Westborough's natural bounty to join WCLT. Our regular activities are starting back up, so please 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!

*Warren Anderson, Membership Chair*

## 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](mailto:bizpartners@westboroughlandtrust.org).



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CREDIT: WARREN ROGERS

*Hikers enjoy the Sawink Farm to Cedar Hill walk, October, 2020.*



# Land Preservation Committee

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Over the past year the Land Preservation Committee (LPC) has continued to promote the preservation of existing open space parcels, and the acquisition and protection of new open space parcels in our community. The LPC continues to work with other WCLT committees, Town boards and committees, Sudbury Valley Trustees, and others on several potential land protection projects.

This year we have continued to work with private and public property owners to establish and maintain trail easements for the 28-mile continuous loop Charm Bracelet trail network and other trail networks throughout the Town. We have also worked with the Stewardship Committee on the construction of new trail projects, the maintenance of existing trails, and in support of the protection of existing open space parcels.

At the 2020 Annual Town Meeting the residents of Westborough voted to purchase the 31-acre Zwicker Farm property on Belknap Street property. LPC worked closely with the owners of the property to help bring this beautiful piece of land to the Town for consideration. The Town's recent acquisition of the Zwicker Farm property has protected this property for open space and has helped create an important link in the Charm Bracelet trail ([click here](#)). The LPC continues to grow with Rob Connor joining our group. Rob lives near the Despres property at 31-33 Eli Whitney Street acquired by the Town in the Fall of 2020, of which 61-acres are devoted to conservation and passive recreation purposes.

Our efforts to protect the open land in the 123-acre Orchard Swamp area (between Route 9 and the Haskell ballfields) are advancing through active negotiations with several landowners.

As always, we continue to seek involvement of other WCLT committees and members in our work and we are committed to working to further the goals of the Trust and to protect the natural resources of the Town for the enjoyment of all.

Respectfully submitted, LPC

*Adam Last, Chair; Don Burn, Rob Connor, Craig Richov, Jim Tashjian*



CREDIT: JANET ANDERSON

*Hikers cross  
Chestnut Hill Farm  
on the Boroughs  
Loop Trail walk,  
November, 2020.*





Westborough Community Land Trust

## 2021-22 Calendar of Events

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

### **Sunday, October 3, 2021 • 1:00-3:00 pm**

#### **Introducing Westborough's New Public Open Space #1: Zwicker Farm**

The town of Westborough recently acquired the Zwicker Farm property on Belknap Street. The property consists of meadows, wetlands, and old hayfields, with some existing trails. Explore this 31-acre newly-public open space area with Don Burn, long-time WCLT member, Charm Bracelet Trails creator, former Open Space and Recreation Committee member, and current Active Transportation and Safety Committee member. The walk will be about 1 mile, with stops to discuss the history and future plans for the farm.

**Park and meet** in the field across from 27 Belknap Street, Westborough.

**Questions**, contact [events@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:events@westboroughlandtrust.org)

### **Sunday, October 31, 2021 • 1:00-3:00 pm**

#### **Geology of Westborough - Clues in the Land**

Westborough, like the rest of New England, has a long geologic history, which can be traced back hundreds of millions of years. Clues to that history are found on the land all around us. Join geologist Andy Koenigsberg on a hike through the Headwaters Conservation Area, where he will show us how the landscape can tell us what Westborough was like in the distant and not so distant past.

**Meet at the Mill Pond School Parking lot**, 6 Olde Hickory Path, Westborough, MA.

About 3 miles on woodland trails.

**Questions**, contact [events@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:events@westboroughlandtrust.org)

**Trail map**: [https://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/hca\\_trail\\_map.pdf](https://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/hca_trail_map.pdf)

### **Sunday, November 14, 2021 • 1:00-3:00 pm**

#### **Introducing Westborough's New Public Open Space #2: Despres Property**

Westborough Town Meeting recently voted to acquire and preserve the 66-acre Despres Property on Eli Whitney Street, across from Fales School. This newly-blazed parcel of woodland was once pasture, and today the echoes of former farm fields can be found in miles of stone walls, an old lane, a hidden brook, and a curious stone landmark. Katie O'Neill and Declan O'Neill will lead this walk exploring Westborough's newest trails.

**Park** at the Fales School, 50 Eli Whitney Street, Westborough, MA.

**Questions**, contact [events@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:events@westboroughlandtrust.org)