



Westborough Community Land Trust 2013 Annual Report



Westborough Community Land Trust



Isla Duckett



Jennifer Reilly

WCLT Scholarships Awarded

In 2013 the Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) was pleased to award two scholarships and one honorable mention to graduating Westborough High School (WHS) seniors. Selections were made on the basis of essays that seniors submitted in WCLT's annual Earth Day essay contest.

Isla Duckett won a scholarship for her essay proposing an incentive program for student athletes, their coaches, and town businesses to work together to pick up and recycle the plastic water bottles that litter the playing fields and surroundings after sporting events. She will attend St. Andrews University in Scotland.

Jennifer Reilly received a scholarship for her essay suggesting that the Westborough Reservoir be celebrated by the community through activities that increase its popularity and use while promoting healthy habits and an appreciation of nature. She plans to attend college and pursue a degree in environmental science.

Erin Reynolds was recognized with an honorable mention for her essay describing a special meadow and adjacent undeveloped land near her neighborhood and suggesting the area as one worthy of preservation. She will attend college and plans to study environmental engineering or biology.

"This year we received a fine group of essays that showed us how much Westborough's natural environment has meant to young people who have grown up with it," said Annie Reid of the WCLT Scholarship Committee. "Parents and townspeople shouldn't doubt that their kids love playing outside in the woods and fields and the track team enjoys practicing at Veterans Freedom Park."

President's Letter

Dear Members and Friends,

The Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) with help from dedicated committee members and numerous volunteers has continued to advance its mission for Westborough in many ways during the 2012-2013 season. I want to thank those many volunteers who helped make everything happen.

The Land Preservation Committee continued to focus on a number of acquisitions and expects to conclude two or more projects in the coming year. One notable event was the receipt of a trail easement to replace a round-about walk down Adams Street with a safe and much pleasanter trail that connects the Gilmore Pond end of the Upper Jackstraw Brook Reservation to the trailhead for Libbey Conservation Area. WCLT is thankful to John and Pamela Staffier for making this improvement to the Charm Bracelet trail possible.

The Stewardship Committee has focused on enlisting volunteers to periodically monitor and report on the condition of all of the Charm Bracelet trails. The committee is writing detailed management plans for our properties beginning with Upper Jackstraw Brook and has also begun a year-long study of the ecology and nutrient levels in Gilmore Pond in order to better understand what might be done to maintain pond quality in the years to come.

The Education Committee has sponsored monthly programs of interest to a wide spectrum of the community. Programs have included locating animal tracks, seeing live owls, pulling up invasive garlic mustard, and studying the mysteries of seashells. Two high school seniors will receive \$1,000 scholarships based on their Earth Day essays. Please read the reports of the various committees.

The Board of Directors held a strategic planning workshop in November. Future priorities and important areas of focus in keeping with WCLT's mission were identified and will be used to guide the actions of WCLT over the next five years. The three top priorities were funding for acquisitions, attracting more volunteers to get our work done, and developing better operating procedures for WCLT. A Finance Committee has been created to review the finance and administrative processes that underlie the operations of the land trust as a nonprofit organization.

I hope that all of you are finding WCLT endeavors that interest you and are telling all your friends! Please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Board of Directors if you believe that there are projects or activities that we should undertake or if you would like to become more actively engaged in carrying out our mission to protect open space.

John Metzger, President

Committee Reports



Land Preservation Committee

The Land Preservation Committee (LPC) continues its involvement in various support activities to ensure the protection of open space throughout the town. We have worked extensively with the Stewardship Committee on the construction of new trail projects and the maintenance of existing trails. We have also worked directly with Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) in situations where their experience and expertise provide a great opportunity to obtain or protect properties for the public good.

The LPC has negotiated numerous land transfer agreements with everyone from single-family homeowners to the Massachusetts Electric Company. This year we expect to obtain the outright ownership of a 0.4 acre parcel on Haskell Street, a 12.3 acre parcel on East Main Street, and a 22.5 acre parcel off Otis Street. We are also in negotiations with several land owners in the Orchard Swamp area (between Route 9 and Haskell ballfields) for an additional 49 acres that will extend our ownership in that one area to over a total of 120 acres. With these acquisitions, WCLT's total outright ownership of property in town will exceed 240 acres.

We have created a priority list of additional trails and easements that we would like to obtain to finalize a contiguous loop of nearly 28 miles of Charm Bracelet trail that connects the various open space areas and neighborhoods in town.

Finally, we have continued our support role on the design and construction of various components of the entry route to the Gilmore Pond Park, a 14 acre open space preserve off Quick Farm Road and Gilmore Farm Road. This year, with help from Steve Venincasa, we completed the installation of pear trees, cedar split rail fencing, granite posts, and a stone dust trail to access the park from his new subdivision road. Additional shrub plantings, ground covers, and a gate are planned for later this year.

As always, we continue to seek the involvement of other WCLT committees in our work, and we commit to working tirelessly to further the goals of the land trust and to protect the natural resources of the town for the enjoyment of all.

Randy Waterman, Chair

Don Burn, Craig Richov, Jim Tashjian, Sharon Williams

Education Committee

WCLT members' support enabled the Education Committee to offer another successful year of programs encouraging all ages to explore the natural world, with a mushroom discovery walk led by field guide author Larry Millman at the Headwaters Conservation Area in September; a foliage hike past Mill Pond with Marge Fisher in October; a geology walk with Andy Koenigsberg at Veterans Freedom Park and along the Malley Trail in November; an exploration of the winter landscape in Wile Forest with Ann Marie Pilch of Tower Hill Botanic Garden in January; an illustrated presentation about local seashells by Scott Shumway in February; and a spring ramble with Don Burn from the Assabet headwaters to Nourse Farm in May.

Thanks to a grant from the Westborough Cultural Council and the generosity of the Knights of Columbus, WCLT presented Mark Wilson of Eyes on Owls, who introduced six live owls and their hoots and behaviors to a multigenerational audience of more than 200.

At our annual Earth Day Town-wide Clean-up, chaired by Bruce Tretter, 85 volunteers collected a record 150 bags of trash from local roadsides. The Department of Public Works supplied and picked up the trash bags.

The Annual Meeting featured Tom French of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program at MassWildlife, who discussed humans' role in the rollercoaster history of wildlife in Massachusetts.

WCLT continued its fight against invasive species with a public education project about garlic mustard, including a feature in Nature Notes, a display at the Westborough Public Library by Janet Anderson, and a "garlic mustard pull" at Bowman Conservation Area in late April. The purple loosestrife biocontrol project spearheaded by Annie Reid continues to raise and release *Galerucella* beetles in local wetlands.

We look forward to another year of programs emphasizing the importance of protecting local natural resources.

Kristina Allen and Vivian Kimball, Co-chairs

Janet Anderson, Kathy Leblanc, Leslie Leslie, Elaine Moore, Barbara Muise, Debbie Okita, Annie Reid, Sharon Williams



Membership Committee

WCLT has more than 260 memberships, including 375 individual members and five new memberships. Membership renewals, in June of each year, are a critical source of funds and human resources. Membership dues totaled over \$12,300. Membership renewals increased significantly from last year. The 2012-2013 Annual Appeal raised \$7,300.

Active members are crucial to our success in protecting open space and preserving the natural beauty of Westborough. We encourage everyone to participate in WCLT-sponsored events and to get involved in committees and stewardship projects.

Membership renewal letters have been mailed. The Annual Appeal will take place in November to coincide with year-end giving. Thanks to all WCLT members and friends for their loyal support.

Maureen Johnson, Chair

Outreach Committee

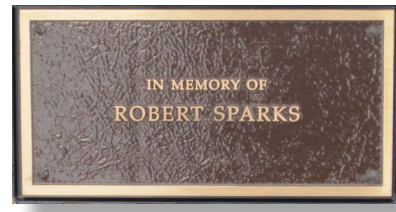
The mission of the Outreach Committee is to create events that reach out to the wider community and increase awareness of what WCLT's name means and why the Westborough Community Land Trust is important. We strive to make people aware of the town's natural resources, including the trail system, and to advocate for these resources. We also support all of the other WCLT committees.

The Outreach Committee is looking for new members to join our committee. We continually stress the importance of new members. Their imagination and energy are invaluable. We also encourage WCLT members to work with the Stewardship Committee, clearing and maintaining trails and removing invasive plants, the Education Committee to plan their programs, and the Membership Committee to generate financial support for WCLT projects.

We are currently planning bus tours to inform members and others interested in learning where the trails are, where to park, how to enter the trail areas, what they'll see, how long the trails are, and whether the trails are loops or not. We plan to coordinate these tours with the Spring Festival next year. We hope to have a trial run in the fall. In the meantime, the WCLT web site offers information about the trails that WCLT maintains and where they are.

Sue Abladian, Chair

Kris Allen, Ellen Bishop, Maureen Johnson, Vivian Kimball, Rickey Lopatin, Rachel Radin, Annie Reid, Sharon Williams



Stewardship Committee

This year we welcomed two new members, Jerry Breecher and Brian O'Keefe, and their energy and input.

Organizing trail monitors and trail maintenance has been a consistent focus. Each committee member has assumed monitoring responsibility for one or more properties, walking trails regularly, reporting on conditions, and calling in help when needed.

We have also benefitted from some significant trail adoptions. Troop 100, under the supervision of Scott Shumway, continues its work at the Walkup/Robinson reservation with two to three work parties each year. Troop 382 is adopting the Upper Jackstraw Brook/Gilmore property starting in June. Troop 4 is working on the Crane Swamp Extension trails near the Haskell Street ball fields. The Westborough High School Environmental Club will monitor the Country Club trails between West Main Street and Gibbons School. Of particular note, our youngest volunteer, Ben Solod, aged 9, is now our trail monitor for the Charm Bracelet from the Assabet River along Mill Pond to Andrews Street. The work of these young people is invaluable to our mission and is greatly appreciated.

In addition to the commitment and work of the Scout troops, we have benefitted from Eagle Projects completed by Justin DiPlacido (Troop 382), who removed invasive plants and trash at Indian Pond, and Kevin Koenigsberg (Troop 100), who removed fences at Westborough Wildlife Management Area.

A second major focus has been the Gilmore Pond property. We are assessing the water quality of the pond to determine whether it should be treated to address rising phosphate levels. Jerry Breecher is leading this effort. A biology student of Scott Shumway's from Wheaton College will assess a number of variables at the pond as her senior honors thesis.

We are re-blazing the trails at Bowman Conservation Area, which Hank Rauch oversees.

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

Marge Fisher, Chair; Jerry Breecher, Don Burn, Mark Fox, Brian O'Keefe, John Metzger, Hank Rauch, Al Sanborn, Scott Shumway, Sharon Williams