



Westborough Community Land Trust



Daisy Girl Scout Troop 65247 and friends helping with the 2023 Earth Day Cleanup

## 2023 Annual Report

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



# President's Letter by Chris Sassetti



As we turn the page from our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, one has to wonder what comes next. We remain proud of our perennial efforts steward more than 200 acres of open space, maintain 60+ miles of trails, pursue new acquisitions and easements to expand the Charm Bracelet, and engage the community with educational events and volunteer opportunities. However, a healthy organization also takes on new challenges, and I am happy to share that our focus on increasing the accessibility of our trails is both continuing and expanding. These efforts began with the belief that a “Community Land Trust” needed to serve the entire community, including those that have difficulty navigating a traditional trail. This led us to create that Gilmore Pond All-Persons trail that allows everyone — even those with sight or mobility limitations — to enjoy this peaceful spot. This improved trail opened in 2021, and that was only the beginning. A generous Silver Anniversary donation to the organization is supporting the design and construction of sensory and educational stations to this trail, enhancing the experience for everyone and creating a destination for nature lovers in the center of Westborough.

As an all-volunteer organization, these efforts are only possible through the generosity of our members, and the creativity and effort of our amazing network of volunteers. In particular, new ideas and energy comes from new faces and perspectives. If you are not a member, please consider joining. Even if you are a member, you can always contact us at [volunteers@westboroughlandtrust.com](mailto:volunteers@westboroughlandtrust.com) to learn about our current efforts and new ways to get involved.

Looking forward to another great year!

***To date WCLT has preserved more than 206 acres of land and acts as stewards for close to 400 acres in Westborough. To carry on these activities, WCLT has Land Preservation, Stewardship, Education and Membership committees.***



# WCLT Scholarships

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Since 2006, WCLT has awarded 30 scholarships to graduating seniors in Westborough and 30 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. This year's winners reflected on some of our favorite natural sites in town, and a strong spirit of responsibility to steward this precious and vulnerable resource so others can enjoy it.



**Sage Ellison** received a scholarship for her essay describing Lake Chauncy as a beautiful place to enjoy family, friends, reading and watching the sunset. Sage described Lake Chauncy as a place that brings people closer to nature. Sage

reminded all to help clean and protect the areas nature has given us to enjoy and to keep a clean environmental footprint. Sage will be attending Fairfield University and plans on studying business marketing.

**Ellen Maguire** received an honorable mention for her essay describing Bowman Conservation Area and the work she did as a Girl Scout. Ellen connects with younger Girl Scouts by teaching and working with them to learn about nature. Ellen will be attending the University of Connecticut and plans on studying psychology.



**Evan Fallon** received a scholarship for his essay describing his time spent at Gilmore Pond. Gilmore Pond showed Evan the importance of spending time outside with nature and the contributions that it made to his happiness. Evan's

Gilmore Pond Eagle Scout project enabled others to enjoy the outdoors as well. Evan will be attending URI and will be going into Pharmacy.

**Breno Junqueira** received an honorable mention for his essay describing the serene beauty of Lake Chauncy. Breno sends a call to action to keep such beautiful places clean and protected. Breno will be attending UMASS Amherst as a kinesiology major.

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## WCLT 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  
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Vincent Servello – Treasurer

### Board of Directors

Gillian Beamer  
Peter Dunbeck  
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Brian O'Keefe  
Chris Sassetti  
Michelle Scerbin  
Vincent Servello  
Karen Yeowell



PHOTO/JANET ANDERSON



# Stewardship Committee

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Thanks to Keith Martin for over 5 years of excellent service and contributions to Westborough's Open Space as Stewardship Chair. The Committee is now co-chaired by Scott Henderson and Brian O'Keefe.

This year, the Stewardship Committee and helpful volunteers conducted the annual trail check program covering 65 trail segments all over town. Issues were reported and fixed or added to the project list. No need to wait for the Spring, reports are always appreciated any time of year. We owe a huge thanks to the chainsaw crew who often clears an obstruction within days of notification.

We continue our work to improve the newly acquired Depres Conservation Area. Most recently, four bridge sections were installed on a beautiful Saturday morning by lots of volunteers including WCLT members and local Boy Scouts. We had tremendous help from the Town's Department of Public Works and Conservation Officer. The 66 acre area is accessible from Eli Whitney St. and Fay Mountain Drive.

New kiosk display cases are coming. You may have noticed the new display case at Gilmore Pond. Look for more coming soon; maybe even by the time you read this.

We are in active planning for more cooperative projects with the new Town Conservation officer, Jennifer Miller. Projects are coming at Depres (trail creation), Bowman (possible bridge and step repairs) and elsewhere to improve safe access and recreation.

To further support safe access, Stewardship is working to produce weather resistant placards with QR codes and basic location and trail information for many of the trail areas in town.

We have welcomed new members to the Committee, and to the trail work volunteer list. We also had a slight uptick in Scout projects so the future is bright. We're looking forward to another great year of maintaining and enjoying Westborough's wonderful open space!

*Committee members: Brian O'Keefe, Scott Henderson, Keith Martin, Mark Fox, Hank Rauch, Karen Yeowell, Don Burn, Guido Lonardo, Drew Musacchio, Bill Bickel, Scott Shumway, David Fredman*



*Trail north of Lake Chauncy*

PHOTO BY JANET ANDERSON

***WCLT is stewarding almost 400 acres of land in town. We are also working with the Department of Conservation and Recreation to build trails on and monitor roughly 1700 acres of state-owned property.***

# Education Committee

Education Committee had another full year of events. We also welcomed a new member, Michele Ramirez, to our committee.

In September, naturalist Joe Choiniere led a mushroom walk attended by 52 people. The enjoyable 25th Anniversary celebration in October at Nourse Farm featured a display by Caterpillar Lab of Manchester, NH. In November, 28 people joined our 25th Anniversary hike led by Tim Buckalew.

Debbie Gallagher's tracking walk in January, and February's nature photography talk by Nancy Wright, both drew 41 people. Two live snake shows in March by the Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team's Rick Roth delighted 371 people in all.

April's Litter Cleanup was another record-breaker, with 500 people volunteering. This included a record eight businesses and 20 clubs sending out teams of employees or members. Participants signed up online and had a week to clean their area. Several people cleaned two or more routes. Our town has never looked better! About 50 attended the Volunteer Appreciation

Picnic. Thanks to Rachel Radin for the online signup. Read about the cleanup here: <https://patch.com/massachusetts/westborough/westborough-litter-cleanup-success-nodx>.

In late April, a nature walk for families at Gilmore Pond was WCLT's contribution to Westborough Unplugs Week. May's always-popular geology walk was led by Andy Koenigsberg. Our June Annual Meeting speaker, Brad Smith of the American Chestnut Foundation, related the story of the American Chestnut tree.

Also, in October/November and April/May, we co-sponsored eight bird walks with the Forbush Bird Club.

Once again this year we gave out two scholarships and two honorable mentions to high school seniors based on our essay competition. Annie Reid continues to write her wonderful monthly Nature Notes articles; she has now written over 300, and all can be viewed at <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/nn/nnindex>.

*Committee Members: Janet Anderson, Kris Allen, Sharon Dankwardt, Paula Kirk, Kathy Leblanc, Rachel Radin, Michele Ramirez, Annie Reid*



*Left: Protecting Open Space in Westborough: The History of WCLT with Tim Buckalew. Middle: Mushrooms of Westborough. Right: Snakes of New England and the World*

PHOTOS/JANET ANDERSON



# Membership Committee

From May 2022 through April 2023, WCLT received 183 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 \$27,000 for the 12 months ending April 30, 2023. Our email list has increased to around 760 active recipients.

Our 25th anniversary activities in calendar year 2022 included a campaign to increase membership by offering new memberships starting at \$25 and to increase total fundraising by asking renewing members to increase their contribution by 25%. We reached a successful conclusion, welcoming 17 new members and raising an additional \$7,000. We thank our many friends for helping us celebrate 25 years.

We continue a strong relationship with our business partners EMSEAL Corporation, Pearson Advisory Investor Relations, Thomas Financial Associates, Arturo's Ristorante, Julio's Liquors, and Servello CPA. 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.



PHOTO/JANET ANDERSON

*Celebrating WCLT's 25th Anniversary at Nourse Farm.*

Several WCLT committees have requested supplementing their present make-up with fresh members: education, stewardship, 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!

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



# Land Preservation Committee

The LPC continues its involvement in various support activities to ensure the protection of open space throughout the Town. We have worked with the Stewardship Committee on the construction of new trail projects and the maintenance of existing trails, and in support of the protection of 206 acres of the property, we currently own.

We are continuing our effort to protect the open land in the 123-acre Orchard Swamp area (between Route 9 and Haskell ballfields). The committee is in the process of renewing our relationship with a number of landowners who would like to see their resources protected. We also are working to establish more structured relationships with the town and several state agencies holding land in town.

We continue to work toward finalizing the Charm Bracelet easements in order to establish a 28-mile continuous loop trail, plus a potential 40 miles of side trails that will connect the various open space areas and neighborhoods throughout the Town. At present, we are working on fourteen easements that we hope to acquire expanding trail opportunities on the east and west sides of town.

***If you would like to talk about planning for the future of your land, please contact the Chair of the Land Preservation Committee or WCLT President. We will be happy to help you plan for the future.***

Protecting open space is a collaborative effort between our organization and the Town's Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee. We look forward to continuing the productive relationship, particularly as the Community Preservation Act that was approved by our citizens begins to provide additional resources for this effort. As always, we continue to seek the involvement of other WCLT Committees in our work and we commit to working to further the goals of the Trust and to protect the natural resources of the Town for the enjoyment of all. Additionally, we welcome any thoughts or recommendations WCLT members may have to further the committee's efforts.

*Committee Members: Don Burn, Rob Connor, Craig Richov, Jim Tashjian, Adam Last*

## THE 25-MILE TRAIL CHALLENGE!

Hike 25 miles of the 60+ miles of Westborough trails and earn a badge to proudly wear!



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](mailto: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.



Westborough Community Land Trust

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Westborough, MA

## 2023 Annual Report

## Calendar of Events

For more info on events go to [www.westboroughlandtrust.org](http://www.westboroughlandtrust.org) ☀️ For questions contact: [events@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:events@westboroughlandtrust.org)  
Before leaving check <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/> for cancellations.

### The American Chestnut Story: An Orchard Tour

**Sunday, Sept 24, 2023, 1:30-3:30 pm**

Did you know there is an American Chestnut tree breeding orchard in Westborough?

**Meet at** the Mass Wildlife Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough. Free, no reservation needed. Less than 1 mile of walking on easy woodland trails with one moderate hill.

**Trail map:** [https://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/map\\_FishWildlife.pdf](https://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/map_FishWildlife.pdf)

### Tree ID for You and Me: Family Fall Adventure

**Sunday, Oct 15, 2023, 1:00-3:00 pm**

Learn to identify and appreciate the trees that make up our Westborough forests.

**Meet at** SVT Walkup & Robinson Property: Take Connector Road to Friberg Parkway. Take the first right into the dirt road to access the property. Across from 600 Friberg Parkway. Free, no

reservation needed. Less than 1 mile of walking on easy woodland trails with one small hill.

**Trail map:** [https://www.svtweb.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/walkup\\_interpretiveguide.pdf](https://www.svtweb.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/walkup_interpretiveguide.pdf)

### Be Kind to the Earth: Family Event Sunday, November 5, 2023, time TBD

As part of Westborough's Kindness Week, WCLT will host a Be Kind to Nature table at the Kickoff to Kindness Week event, at Westborough High School. Then join us on an older-kid-friendly trail walk starting right at the event. Free, no reservation needed. About 2 ½ miles of walking on town sidewalks and woodland trails.

**Trail map:** [https://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/mill\\_pond\\_map.pdf](https://westboroughcharm.org/guide/maps/mill_pond_map.pdf)

### SAVE THE DATE!

### Who's Watching You? Owls of New England and the World

**Saturday, March 9, 2024**

**Two one-hour shows: 9 am & 11 am**

More info to come!

