

WESTBOROUGH COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

A bluebird with a blue head and back, and a rusty-orange breast, is perched on a thick, textured tree branch. The bird is looking down and slightly to the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of blue and brown tones.

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

*[westboroughlandtrust.org](http://westboroughlandtrust.org)*

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

# President's Letter

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Forming alliances and building strong collaborations has always been a hallmark of the Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT). This year, we're excited to announce the formation of the WCLT's Land Restoration Committee (LRC), chaired by Rupali Shinde and Julia Rissmiller.

What is the Land Restoration Committee? The LRC is dedicated to supporting the rehabilitation of lands stewarded by the trust that have been degraded or damaged over time. Restoration efforts may include reforestation, soil conservation, invasive species removal, and the reintroduction of native plants and wildlife. Each project is guided by science-based best practices, with the goal of restoring ecological balance and biodiversity.

Currently, the LRC is continuing work begun in 2023, when Rupali and Julia launched the Westborough Pollinator Garden. This initiative has actively engaged local students in both classroom and hands-on outdoor learning experiences. Through their efforts, students are leading the restoration of native pollinator populations by propagating and planting carefully selected native species. All work is conducted in close coordination with the Town's Conservation Commission and informed by expert guidance. We hope the LRC inspires new energy and interest in land restoration and complements the important work already being done by our Education, Stewardship, Land Preservation, and Membership committees. If you're interested in getting involved or learning more, please contact us at: [volunteers@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:volunteers@westboroughlandtrust.org)

## Board of Directors

### Officers:

- Lorena Altamirano (President)
- Peter Dunbeck (Vice President)
- Karen Yeowell (Secretary)
- Vincent Servello (Treasurer)
- Steven Rowell (Assistant Treasurer)
- Brian O'Keefe (Member at Large)

### Board of Directors:

- Janet Anderson (Director)
- Michelle Scerbin (Director)
- Derek Strachan (Director)



*Members of Westborough Student Council helped Rupali Shinde, chair of the Land Restoration Committee, tackle invasive bittersweet and honeysuckle in the Bowman Conservation Area. This was a continuation of the project we started in the fall 2024. This area will be slowly restored using native MA plants. This work is supported by the Westborough conservation commission.*

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# SCHOLARSHIPS

The Westborough Community Land Trust (WCLT) awarded two **\$1,000.00** scholarships and three honorable mentions to graduating Seniors in Westborough. These awards were made on the basis of student essays written for the WCLT's annual Earth Day Essay Contest.

**Tyler Monaghan** received the WCLT scholarship for his essay describing Sandra Pond and how it has inspired him and provided comfort to him. Tyler's love for the pond came through clearly, and the fact that Tyler shared that love with his sister and friends is especially meaningful. Tyler completed a research project on global freshwater sources and the wildlife they support. Tyler's passion for Sandra Pond and nature is evident in the essay and this passion will no doubt continue to grow throughout his life. Tyler is a Senior at Thayer Academy. Tyler plans to attend Wesleyan University in the Fall. He would like to graduate with a degree in Physics or Engineering and will be part of the Men's Varsity Soccer team.



**Noah Nourse** received the WCLT scholarship for his essay describing some of the history of Nourse Farm and the roles he played while helping his family at the farm. The essay explains a great deal about the importance of preserving farms, noting that "...the farm provides so much more to the community than just the produce grown. It is a place where people can enjoy nature and learn about history, all while helping to preserve the 15th oldest continuously running family business in the United States of America." Noah constructed a nature trail with nine signs on the farm property. The pride he shows in the farm came through clearly in the essay. Noah is a Senior at Westborough High School. He plans to attend Denison University in the fall and will be majoring in international business.



**Brooke Felton** received an honorable mention for her essay describing fishing experiences with her late grandfather at Sandra Pond. The time spent with her grandfather showed Brooke the importance and beauty of nature. Brooke is a Senior at Westborough High School and plans on studying Forestry in college.

**Aryan Bhatia** received an honorable mention for an essay describing Lake Chauncy and the importance of the choices we make regarding the environment. Advocating for composting, recycling and reducing our carbon footprint was an important component of the essay. Aryan is a Senior at Westborough High School and will be attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute in the Fall in the engineering program. Aryan will be playing football for WPI as well.

**Juhie Jain** received an honorable mention for an essay describing how Gilmore Pond became an important place to go and think. The essay combined nature with science and engineering. Quoting from the essay, "Nature isn't just beautiful. It's efficient. Smart. Resilient." Juhie is a Senior at Westborough High School and plans on completing an undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering with a minor in entrepreneurship at Tufts University



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# STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE



Cedar Swamp Before



Cedar Swamp After

Scott Henderson and Brian O'Keefe are proud to co-lead the strong and very active Stewardship committee.

We completed dozens of projects throughout the year. A by no means inclusive list of projects includes:

- Blazing and Mapping at Libbey Wile and Zwicker
- Bridges new and repaired at Libbey Wile and Indian Pond
- Stairs at Bowman

A special shout out to Hank Rauch, Burt Osterweis and Troop 382 for the new bridge at Sandra Pond. This one took thousands of WCLT dollars and hundreds of volunteer hours to create a safe, dry crossing.



New Bridge at Sandra Pond

We are extremely grateful to our members of the 'Chainsaw Gang.' Blockages are cleared sometimes within hours.

Thanks to some deep research and patience the trimmer is back in action. You'll see more trails being trimmed back all over town. Our annual check of every trail in town occurs every spring; if you're helping us with this, or at any time of year, let us know the trails that need work: [trailreports@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:trailreports@westboroughlandtrust.org)

The bluebird boxes were a long dormant project for us. Many have now been resurrected, and we have several new ones across town.

There is lots to do and we're always looking for support.

Thanks,

Brian and Scott

Don Burn, Jon Crandall, Mark Fox, David Fredman, Jim Rhein, Ken Kelly, Rich LeLacheur, Guido Lonardo, Jim Noyst, Hank Rauch, Chris Sassetti, Derek Strachan, Karen Yeowell, Scott Shumway

# Education Committee



Earth Day Litter Cleanup

Education Committee had another full year of events.

In October, 20 people attended an informative tour of the recently conserved Zwicker property in search of flowers and insects of the meadows with Garry Kessler. An amazing 92 people turned out for Sam Plummer's gorgeous sunrise and full moonrise walk at Lake Chauncy in November.

Our Winter Walk in January at the Headwaters Conservation Area drew 27 people. A tour of Fales School's green features in February brought 70 attendees. And two live animal shows in March by Animal Adventures delighted 385 people!

April's Litter Cleanup was a success, due to 600 volunteers. This included teams from 30 clubs and businesses and 30 households. Thanks to Rachel Radin for the online signup, the Westborough DPW for supplying cleanup bags and picking up the full ones, and Mugford's Flower Shoppe for donating flowers to the volunteer families. Read about the cleanup [here](#).

In early May, 25 people attended a rainy nature hike and scavenger hunt for kids at Gilmore Pond as WCLT's contribution to Westborough Unplugs Week. Sam Plummer led a spring tree and plant walk in early June. Our June Annual Meeting presenter, Westborough's Animal Control Officer Melinda MacKendrick, presented stories from her career.

We ran a table at Sustainable Westborough's March Environmental Action Fair, reaching many people who previously had not known about WCLT.

In addition, this year we co-sponsored eight bird walks with the Forbush Bird Club.

Based on our annual essay competition, we gave two scholarships to high school seniors, as well as three honorable mentions.

Annie Reid continues to write monthly Nature Notes articles. All 300-plus articles can be viewed [here](#).

*Education Committee members: Janet Anderson, Chair; Kris Allen; Sharon Dankwardt; Paula Kirk; Kathy Leblanc; Sam Plummer; Rachel Radin; Michele Ramirez; Annie Reid*



# MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

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From May 2024 through February 2025, WCLT received 169 memberships, membership renewals, and annual appeal contributions. Responses to the WCLT membership drive and annual appeal are a critical source of funds. Membership and annual appeal contributions totaled nearly \$20,000 for the 10 months ending February 21, 2024. Our email list has increased to over 800 active recipients.

We have begun to rework our business partnership plans. Stay tuned for exciting ways for local businesses to engage with WCLT.

Please encourage those around you who appreciate Westborough's natural bounty to join WCLT. Check our calendar to 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, Land Preservation, 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 [here](#). Please volunteer!

Warren Anderson, Chair  
Lorena Altamirano

# \$20K

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CONTRIBUTION TOTAL

Membership and annual appeal contributions totaled for the 10 months ending February 21, 2024.

# 800

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ACTIVE RECIPIENTS IN EMAIL LIST



January 12 Winter Walk at Mill Pond led by Sam Plummer

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# LAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Land Preservation Committee had a difficult year, due to the loss of all but two of our committee members. Some relationships with landowners with whom we were working were recently damaged by factors outside our control. As a result, we spent what little time we did have trying to rebuild efforts to protect land in town.

We are very much in need of additional committee members, especially those who possess specific skills. If you are an attorney, an appraiser, a civil engineer, or someone with strong people skills, please consider joining Land Preservation Committee by emailing

[landpreservation@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:landpreservation@westboroughlandtrust.org). A strong Land Preservation Committee is integral to a vibrant Westborough Community Land Trust.

Submitted by Don Burn, Committee Chair, Craig Richov, Committee Member



Children at the March show put on by  
Animal Adventures



Sunset and Moonrise Walk led by Sam  
Plummer, November 2024



Join Land Restoration Committee Display



Evie Click at the Scavenger Hunt

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Charm Bracelet 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hike

**Sunday, October 5, 2025, 1:00-3:00 pm**

Westborough's Charm Bracelet trail loop network was created by the Westborough Community Land Trust 25 years ago. It was introduced at WCLT's inaugural hike at the Bowman West property on October 9, 2000. We will re-create much of that walk, with commentary about the history of Bowman West, the early days of WCLT, and the work that has been done at that property and our other trails in the past 25 years. The "Father of the Charm Bracelet" Don Burn will be the walk leader. About 2.5 miles of walking on woodland trails. Free, open to the public, no reservation needed.

**Location:** Meet at Minuteman Park on Upton Road, Westborough.

Trail Maps: [Map 1](#) & [Map 2](#)

### The American Chestnut Story: An Orchard Tour

**Sunday, October 26, 2025, 1:00-3:00 pm**

Did you know there is an American Chestnut tree breeding orchard in Westborough? American Chestnut trees once dominated North American forests. With their huge size and their ability to produce many bushels of tasty nuts per tree each year, they were a cornerstone of ecosystems and livelihoods. Chestnut blight, a fungal disease, killed most of these trees in the decades following its introduction from Asia in 1901, but exciting efforts are being made to bring this tree back to its former glory. Learn the fascinating story behind the work that is being done on this tour of the American Chestnut orchard and the surrounding property! Led by Bill Davis of the American Chestnut Foundation. Free, open to the public, no reservation needed. Less than 1 mile of walking on easy woodland trails with one moderate hill.

**Location:** Meet at the Mass Wildlife Field Headquarters, 1 Rabbit Hill Road (off North Drive) in Westborough. Park at the "P" near the lower left corner of the map linked below.

[Trail Map](#)

### Tour Westborough's Newest Open Space

**Sunday, November 16, 2025, 1:00-3:00 pm**

Did you know that at Westborough's Spring 2024 Town Meeting we voted to protect the Ellis-Walker property off Bowman Street? Come tour Westborough's most recently protected open space with Mark Silverberg, Chair of Westborough's Open Space Preservation Committee. Familiarize yourself with the public trails there, and learn about what makes this property special and the process by which it has been protected. About 2 miles on uneven woodland terrain. The walk is free, open to the public, no reservation needed.

**Location:** Drop off any passengers at the garage between 89 and 93 Bowman Street, where the walk will begin. Then park at the Bowman Conservation area, 72 Bowman Street. We will run shuttles to bring drivers to the trailhead. Do not park along Bowman Street.

Trail map not yet available.

For more info on events go [here](#)

For questions contact: [events@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:events@westboroughlandtrust.org)

Before leaving check [here](#) for cancellations



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## 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** and **Thomas Financial Associates**. 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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## 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 hikers of varying distances and difficulties is on our [website](#) trail challenge. Different hikes were periodically highlighted on the WCLT Facebook page. Please post selfies or favorite trail photos to encourage others to try a new trail.



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Find WCLT on

