

WESTBOROUGH COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

2026  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

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

# President's Letter

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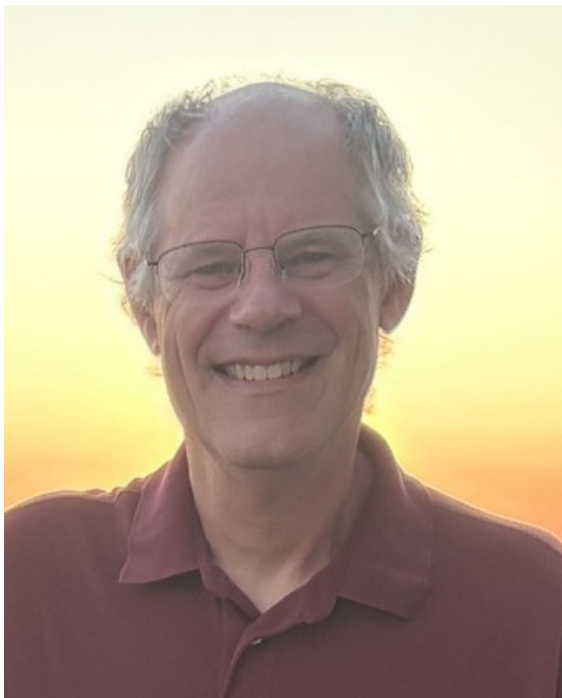
2026 saw a number of members increasing their role within the WCLT. At the last annual meeting we elected new directors for half the positions on the Board of Directors, along with a President and a Vice President new to the roles. In addition to serving on the Board, several directors also joined the Land Preservation Committee, helping ensure that that group can continue its valuable work. I am grateful to these members who stepped forward, and also thankful for the existing directors who guided us all in our new roles and helped preserve the smooth functioning of the Board.

WCLT continues to serve the Westborough community, be it by adding trails and leading hikes on new properties (Ellis-Walker), coordinating the town wide litter cleanup in the Spring, organizing educational programs for all ages, removing invasive species and replacing them with pollinator friendly, native alternatives, maintaining the extensive trail network in town, and trying new ideas, such as the lights at Gilmore Pond around at the beginning of the year.

WCLT cannot function without a committed group of volunteers to support and spearhead its initiatives. New members stepping forward help ensure that our work can continue and are also a source of new ideas to bring the organization forward. I encourage you to reach out to [volunteers@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:volunteers@westboroughlandtrust.org) to learn more or to discuss volunteer opportunities with myself, the various committee chairs, or any member of the board.

I am excited about the coming year and seeing what we can accomplish together.

Mark O'Connell



Mark O'Connell

## Board of Directors

### Officers:

- Mark O'Connell - President (Exec Com)
- Brian O'Keefe - Vice President (Exec Com)
- Vincent Servello - Treasurer (Exec. Com)
- Steve Rowell - Asst Treasurer (Exec Com)
- Karen Yeowell - Secretary (Exec. Com)
- Janet Anderson (Exec. Com)
- Rupali Shinde
- Tom Askew (Exec. Com)
- Jim Rhein
- Sam Plummer
- Tom Bryan
- David Buffo
- Peter Dunbeck
- Lisa Ruberti

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# LAND RESTORATION COMMITTEE

Land restoration committee was established in 2025 and is co-chaired by Rupali Shinde and Julia Rissimiler. The aim of this committee is to restore open spaces in Westborough, by clearing invasive plant species and replacing them with native, pollinator friendly species. The group executed several projects over the course of the year:

## 1. Bowman Conservation area Pollination Garden expansion

After the initial installation of a pollination garden at Bowman Conservation (77 Bowman St) in 2023, we have continued to expand the project to a secondary site along Piccadilly brook. The committee liaised with the Conservation Commission, the WHS student council, and the WHS Environmental Club to eradicate bittersweet and other invasives at the site. The team planted around 70 plugs of pollinator friendly species that were winter-sowed by the WHS Environmental Club. See [link](#) for details.

## 2. Invasive species identification and eradication awareness campaign

Sam Plummer and Rupali Shinde participated in the Central MA Connections in Faith – Environmental action day initiative. Sam delivered an informative presentation on identification and eradication of common invasives found on properties in Westborough. He also led a walk at MacCallum wildlife area to help attendees identify invasive species.

## 3. Winter Sow Workshop and Pollinator friendly native species awareness campaign

Rupali Shinde conducted a Winter Sow workshop at Hastings elementary school with the kindergarten class. The seeds included pollinator friendly species on the comprehensive list released by Dr Robert Gegear. See details of Dr. Gegear's work [here](#).

The committee members Sam Plummer, Nikki Venne, Abhay Srivastava, and Lisa Gallo would like community members to join us as we embark on exciting projects in the coming months. Our aim is to provide members of all ages, especially young students, the opportunity to create a meaningful impact through small acts of environmental action.

We look forward to hearing from you at [landrestoration@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:landrestoration@westboroughlandtrust.org)

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# STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

We worked this year on almost every property we list on the WCLT Maps page. The remaining sites have been prioritized for next year. We're also working with the state and town to update our agreements that allow us to do this important work.

As always, our chainsaw crew was fast, effective and diligent in making sure our trails are easily walkable.

Design of Gilmore Pond Sensory Nature Trail continued with the production of audio content, acquisition of accessible signage, and major efforts to replace invasive flora with natives. The improved trail is expected to open in September.

Trimming and bridges were a fantastic highlight this year. We were able to move long boards with the help of the Town DPW. Hikers have more walkable trails through mowing thanks to Town Conservation office efforts. None of the above happens without our committee members who are out in all kinds of weather putting in the time, planning, and labor making sure we have safe hiking,

I mention the weather because the recent Nourse Farm walk in the rain this year is a great example of how it all comes together. The walk, supported by Education Committee, was completed over new bridges and newly mowed paths. We are excited to expand our cooperation with the Farm.

Watch our Maps page for new additions and updates. We're also planning to post maps at trailheads using new material to better withstand the weather.

Improvements were made to Bowman, Zwicker, Ellis Walker and others. Bowman saw stair replacements thanks to local Scouts completing their Eagle projects.

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 which trails need work:

[trailreports@westboroughlandtrust.org](mailto:trailreports@westboroughlandtrust.org)

Go walk a trail!

Thanks,  
Brian O'Keefe and Scott Henderson

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

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# LAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

This past year for the Land Preservation Committee (LPC) was a rebuilding year getting the committee going again. The effort involved getting new members, and trying to repair relationships with landowners that were damaged by actions out of our control. The committee's goal continues to be promoting the acquisition and protection of new open space parcels, establishment and maintenance of trail easements, and preservation of existing open space parcels in Westborough.

The major success in the last year was working with the Commonwealth's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to establish a new agreement for building and maintaining trails on DCR land in town. This required a lot of coordination with the WCLT Stewardship committee, and we are pleased to announce we believe we will finalize the agreement shortly.

The LPC continues to work with other WCLT committees and other groups and individuals on several potential land protection projects. We are always happy to talk to landowners about protecting properties in the town. We are also looking for new members to help us protect those properties and act as the legal group for WCLT.

Land Preservation Committee members:  
Don Burn, Chair

Tom Bryan · Lisa Gallo Ruberti · Craig Richov, Members  
Jim Tashjian · Randy Waterman, Advisors



Raptor Show

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Find WCLT on



# Education Committee



25th Anniversary Hike



April's Litter Clean Up

Education Committee had another full year of events.

On October 5, 34 people attended our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Charm Bracelet walk led by Don Burn. An amazing 72 people turned out for our American Chestnut Orchard tour on October 26. On November 16, 27 people toured Westborough's newest open space, the Ellis-Walker property.

Our January walk was cancelled for extreme cold. Our talk "Coexisting With Bears" by MassWildlife's Meghan Crawford in February brought 63 attendees. And two live raptor shows in March by Tom Ricardi delighted 315 people!

April's Litter Cleanup was a success, with a record 700 volunteers. This included teams from 26 clubs and businesses, and 40 households. Thanks to Rachel Radin for the online signup, the Westborough DPW for supplying bags and picking up the full ones, and Mugford's Flower Shoppe for donating flowers to the volunteer families. Read about the cleanup [here](#).

On May 3, 15 people attended a forest ecology walk, and on May 9, we had a table and hike at Nourse Farm, both of which were WCLT's contributions to Westborough Unplugs week. Also on May 9, Sam Plummer gave a talk to 35 members of Connections in Faith on invasive species. On May 17, 21 people attended Sam Plummer's invasive tree and plant walk. Our June Annual Meeting presenter was author Brad Timm.

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 seven bird walks with the Forbush Bird Club.

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

Annie Reid continues to write monthly Nature Notes articles. All 300-plus articles can be viewed at <https://westboroughlandtrust.org/nn/nnindex>.

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

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# SCHOLARSHIPS

This year the Scholarship Committee, a sub-group of the Education Committee, received eight entries in our annual Earth Day Scholarship Essay Contest. We awarded two **\$1000** scholarships and two honorable mentions to graduating high school seniors in Westborough.

**Alana McCarthy** received a WCLT scholarship for her essay describing her experience working with the beekeeping club, which showed a deep scientific understanding as well as passion for the role bees play in the natural world. As stated in the essay, "Being involved in beekeeping in Westborough has brought me closer to nature, as I am able to explore my passions in a way that makes a difference to the environment..."

Alana is a Senior at Westborough High School and will be attending Skidmore College. She will be majoring in biology on pre-med track; followed by medical school and a career as a doctor.



**Ishan Saxena** received a WCLT scholarship for his Earth Day essay comparing two natural environments in Westborough and in India, showing a deep understanding of what conservation looks like. As stated in the essay, "...natural spaces remain healthy only when communities actively care for them."

Ishan plans to attend the University of Connecticut (Storrs Campus) with an interest in majoring in Finance. Ishan then plans on getting his Masters in Business Administration after completing his undergraduate degree. Ishan's goal is to work in the field of Financial Analytics.



**Kevin Goyette** received an honorable mention for his essay about Sandra Pond and his passion for birdwatching. Kevin is a Senior at Westborough High School and is applying to college to study ecology with the goal of becoming an ornithologist.

**Anvi Arora** received an honorable mention for the Earth Day essay about Sandra Pond and Chauncy Lake describing her interest in protecting the environment through volunteer work. Anvi is a Senior at Westborough High School and will be attending the University of Connecticut for a B.S. in Pathobiology. Following this, Anvi plans on going to medical school and eventually work as a Pediatric Doctor. Her long term goal is to provide services in an affordable way to those who don't have access to affordable medical care.

*Scholarship Committee Members: Lisa Greenwald-chair, Sarah Fillmore, Janet Anderson, Annie Reid, Jim Rhein, Kris Allen*

# MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

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From March 2025 through April 2026, WCLT received 187 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 \$24,000 for the 14 months ending April 30, 2026. Our email list has increased to nearly 900 active recipients.

Our update to the business partnership plan is still in progress. We hope to roll out a new business partnership plan later this year.

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, 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, Chair

# \$24K

CONTRIBUTION TOTAL

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Membership and annual appeal contributions totaled nearly \$24,000 for the 14 months ending April 30, 2026.

# 900

ACTIVE RECIPIENTS IN EMAIL LIST

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Gilmore Pond Sensory Trail Grand Opening**

**Sunday, September 27, 2026, 1:30-3:30 pm**

Join WCLT in celebrating the completion of the All-Persons Sensory Nature Trail at the Gilmore Pond Woodland Park. We have undertaken a multiyear project to make the trail around Gilmore Pond accessible to everyone, regardless of ability. Come see the result of that effort!

**Location:** Gilmore Pond Woodland Park

### **Mushroom Walk**

**Sunday, October 18, 2026, 1:00-3:00 pm**

Mycologist Larry Millman, author of Fascinating Fungi of New England and Fungipedia, will lead us on a short, interesting walk identifying local mushrooms. This walk will focus only on identification; edibility will not be discussed.

**Location:** TBD/NA

### **Family Nature Hike and Scavenger Hunt**

**Sunday, November 15, 2026, 1:00-3:00 pm**

Come on a kid-length hike where youngsters will explore nature with their parents, followed by a fun scavenger hunt for ages 6 and up to practice what you have learned.

**Location:** TBD/NA

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

