

LYME LAND TRUST BULLETIN

December 1989

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

Vol. III No. 2

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

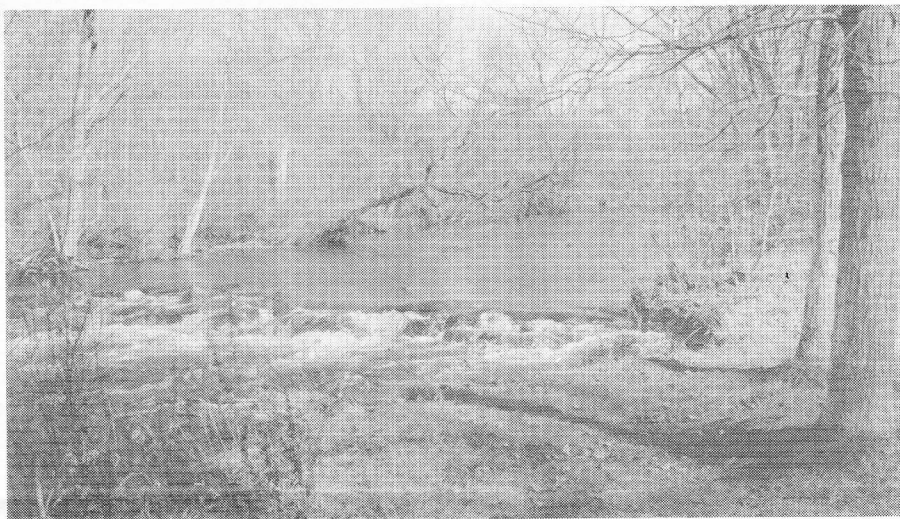
Dear Neighbors:

Anyone conversant with the language of conservation is familiar with the term "diversity of species". It describes the principle of the balance found in nature, without which there cannot be a functioning ecology. Unfortunately two other terms, associated with the same principle, "endangered species" and "vanishing species", are also heard all too frequently today. The whole concept of open space, which is our hallmark, is based upon the need for habitat of the existing diverse species, including, of course, *homo sapiens*.

What does all this have to do with Lyme? Only this: all of our efforts to preserve open space can become meaningless if the human ecology of our town lacks balance. In December at the annual Town Meeting the residents of Lyme will be asked to consider and vote upon an ordinance authorizing the creation of a partnership with the State which will investigate and make recommendations to the Town on the subject of affordable housing. This is too important an issue to leave to any small group which might have strong views on the question. It should be addressed by all concerned and an informed vote taken.

(continued on page 3)

THE EIGHT MILE RIVER PRESERVE: CAN A LAND TRUST DREAM BECOME A REALITY?



Just about a year ago Paul Harper brought into a Land Trust board meeting a large-scale topographical map of Lyme and an overlay he had prepared showing all areas of the town currently being preserved by any known means; in other words, property owned or otherwise permanently protected by the State, the Town, the Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy or any other conservation organization. He pointed out a number of additional locations which he thought should (ideally) be considered for future preservation and asked that all of his fellow trustees think carefully about the matter and produce their own priority lists of potential conservation areas, with reasons for their choices, to present at the next board meeting.

There turned out to be an interesting, if not particularly surprising, consensus of ideas among the

board members, and the clear winner was the valley of the Eight Mile River. The reasons for the selection were compelling: the area is readily identifiable; the River is one of Lyme's most ecologically important and scenic landmarks; much of the River and its valley are almost totally unspoiled (from the town's northern boundary south to the little MacIntosh Road bridge there is hardly a building to be seen); and it was felt that wide support for its preservation, from both bordering landowners and the townspeople of Lyme generally, could be developed within the capabilities of the Land Trust organization. Consequently, the board agreed to proceed with whatever preparation might be needed to launch a campaign to preserve as much as possible of the land along the entire length (some four miles)

(continued on page 2)

DREAM BECOME A REALITY?

continued from page 1

of the Eight Mile River, including its East Branch (along Salem Road), that lies within the boundaries of Lyme, and to dedicate the area so protected to a separate Eight Mile River Preserve.

An obvious question arises as to why we should go to such an effort when the River valley is already protected from development and other man-made incursions by existing Inland Wetlands regulations. Those regulations, which



emanate from the federal, state and our own town governments, have been effectively in place only since 1974, a mere fifteen years. They have been amended from time to time, mostly for the better; but given

a broad change in the political atmosphere or in the public attitude toward conservation, which might result from the influence of special interests sometime in the future, today's regulations could be further amended to the point where they have little impact or even be eliminated entirely. (In this connection it is perhaps worth recalling that in the early 1970s, before federal and state legislation and local ordinances implementing such laws were enacted, the Lyme Conservation Commission began an organized program to encourage owners of land bordering the Eight Mile River to grant "scenic easements" to the Land Trust, which was then in its infancy. Thus, the idea clearly did not originate with the present board. The effort then was abandoned, however, when the prospects for adoption of strong Inland Wetlands regulations became a reality.) So, as added insurance to our faith in regulatory responsibility, what the Land Trust offers, either by its ownership of land in fee or holding a conservation easement, is permanent, unchangeable preservation of that land in perpetuity, more durable protection by far than any deed restriction, local rule or federal or state law.

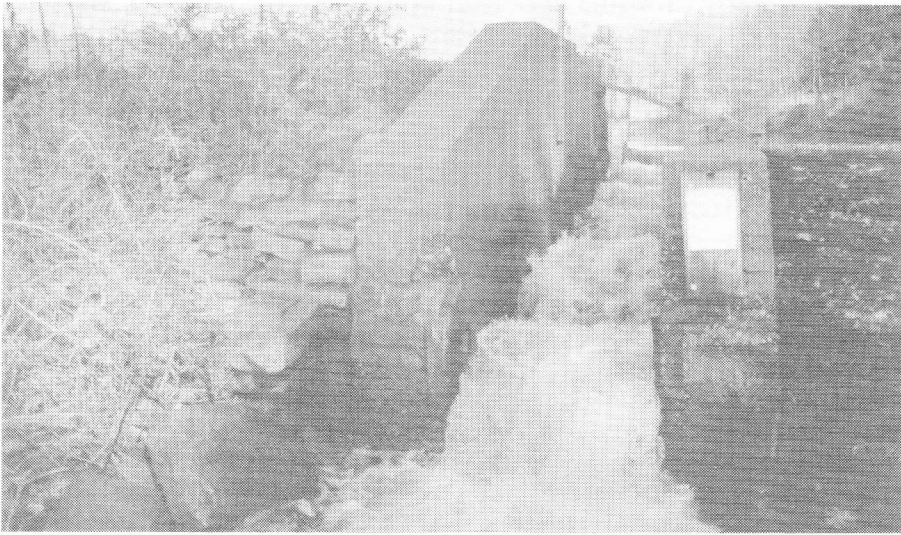
The Land Trust's purpose, as we all know, is the preservation of Lyme's natural resources for the ultimate benefit of everyone in town. Almost all the land we own and easements we hold have come to us by gift, and that must continue to be the case, since the Trust has relatively little money. We have occasionally in the past, however, made a few small purchases and are prepared, if necessary, to conduct a town-wide fund raising appeal to enable us to acquire land which is key to the Eight Mile River Preserve and cannot be obtained otherwise than by purchase. If we are successful in creating it, we plan to fund and maintain the Preserve as a separate and distinct entity rather than simply to fold the property into our other holdings.

We will, for example, mark the boundaries with special signs or plaques and possibly identify certain significant parcels with the name or designee of the donor, and a separate committee of the Land Trust board will be responsible for stewardship of the area.

Creation of the Preserve is without doubt a very ambitious undertaking for the Land Trust, and it will certainly not be achieved in a short time. As a measure of the enormity of the job, if we are able to obtain interests in only 100 feet of the land on either side of the River for its entire length in Lyme (which is both unlikely and unnecessary, owing to the already developed nature of the property bordering the River at its southern end), it would involve the acquisition of almost 100 acres, or the equivalent of about one-third of all the land protected by the Land Trust since its beginning in 1966. But we are undaunted. We have produced a simple but attractive brochure (a picture of the cover of which is shown on this page) for use in soliciting donations of land and easements, and possibly in fund raising, and have begun to call on riparian landowners. So far no one we have talked to has been the least bit negative, but one problem we have encountered is that several of the properties along the River are on the market, which means that no decision will be made until a new owner takes over. Another hurdle is the fact that benefits to a donor are likely to be more psychic than tangible, tax deductions generally being limited by the nature of the land involved and the state of current tax laws. Since the whole project, however, is really for the long term good of all the townspeople of Lyme, we are confident of eventual success.



FISHWAY BUILT IN JOSHUA POND DAM BY STATE BUREAU OF FISHERIES



In addition to its ecological purpose, the fishway is an attractive enhancement to the dam and Pond. The Land Trust intends in the near future to ask Mr. Gephard, who lives in East Haddam and is president of its land trust, to conduct a tour of the dam and fishway and give a talk about the project, a program to which our members will of course be invited. In the meantime, however, since access to the dam involves crossing private property which does not belong to the Land Trust, we ask that no one attempt to walk to the dam to look at the fishway or for any other purpose.

One of the many benefits looked for by the Land Trust when it acquired the Lower Pond on Joshua Creek last year from the State of Connecticut and undertook to repair the broken dam at its southern end was realized last summer, well ahead of our most optimistic schedule. In early August a crew from the Bureau of Fisheries of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, under the guidance of Stephen R. Gephard, Fisheries Biologist, constructed a fishway (often known as a fish ladder) in the weir at the eastern end of the dam. It is designed to enable certain species of fish, especially alewives, to ascend from the Connecticut River, when it is high in the spring, into the Pond in order to spawn.

The fishway consists of seven sets of stacked oak 2" x 10" boards, placed across the weir, each stack about six inches higher than the previous one going up the dam from the River, spaced more or less evenly (i.e., about four feet apart) along the 24-foot length of the weir. The top board of each stack has a five-inch wide notch at its center, and water from the Pond spills over these sets of boards in a manner that will

allow alewives and some other fish to swim up from the tidewater into the Pond, where they will spawn. Later on the fish, including the newborn, will return over the fishway into the River and become food for striped bass and other larger species. The fishway will not affect either the level of the Pond or its outflow capacity, and the boards are removable in case the water level should need to be lowered for any reason. Mr. Gephard and three or four of his staff spent two full days installing the fishway, having previously cut all the necessary lumber to size. They also cleared a good deal of brush from the dam.

Mr. Gephard decided to proceed with construction of the fishway even though the Land Trust has completed only the initial phase of its proposed refurbishing of the dam, which was to repair the breach caused by the 1982 flood, so as to allow the Pond to re-fill, and to clear away some of the accumulated vegetation, which is harmful to the dam. The second stage, which has not yet begun, will involve clearing the remaining brush, grading the entire length of the dam to level and shoring up the damaged masonry of the spillway.

President's Letter

(continued from page 1)

Back to ecology. Lyme has an opportunity to preserve its diversity by means of affordable housing. Let us take advantage of the opportunity offered, become informed and then make an informed decision when required.

Sincerely yours,

Rufus Barringer
Rufus Barringer
December 1989

The Lyme Land Trust Bulletin

is published several times a year by the Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Inc. as a matter of interest to its membership and to the general public in Lyme. Its editorial board, to whom readers are invited to direct questions and suggestions, consists of Paul Harper, John Friday and Parker Handy.

THREE NEW TRUSTEES ELECTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

The Land Trust elected three new trustees at its Annual Meeting held last June 6th at the Lyme Public Hall. They are Wilson G. Bradford of Brush Hill Rd., Beverly Crowther of Beaver Brook Rd. and James O. Matschulat of Norwich Salem Rd. Three serving trustees were elected to additional terms, and three others, Virginia Bladen, Joseph N. Greene and Jonathan Isleib, retired from the board.

The present Board consists of the following:

Rufus Barringer
Wilson Bradford
John Bugbee
Bonnie Corey
Beverly Crowther
Gerald Dahlke
Jane Davison

President

Judith Duran
John Friday
Parker Handy
Paul Harper
James Matschulat
Hiram Maxim
Joan Meyers
Graham Reynolds

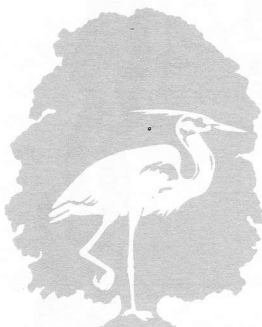
Treasurer
Vice President

Secretary

The meeting, which was well attended despite rainy weather, had as its featured speaker Leslie Carothers, Commissioner of the State Department of Environmental Protection. We were honored to have her with us, and her remarks made it clear that she is a strong conservationist.

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