

LYME LAND TRUST BULLETIN

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

Vol VII, No 1
June 1994

EDITORIAL

A CONSERVATION LEGACY

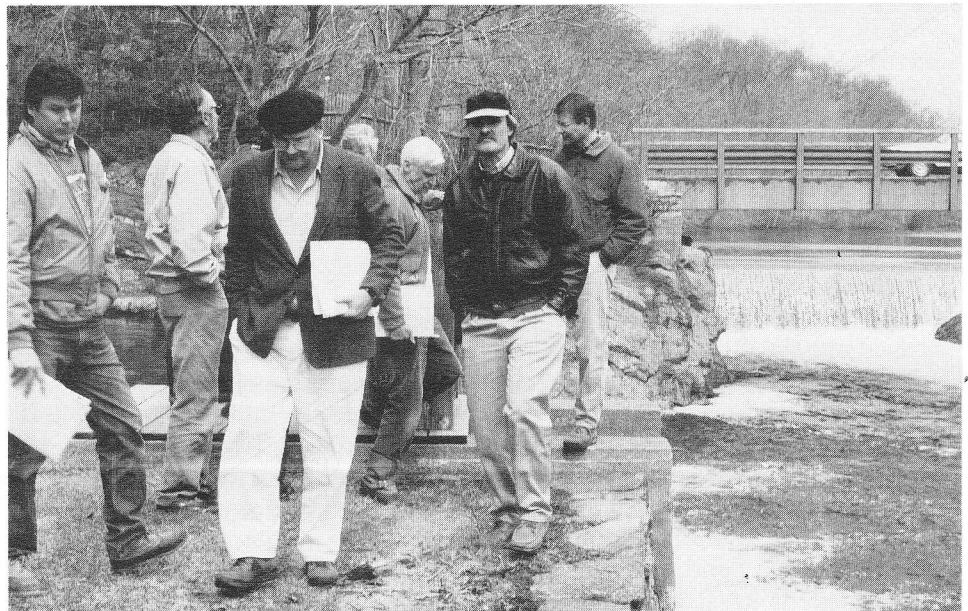
Ever since the first settlers moved into Lyme over 300 years ago, the land has supported a variety of life-sustaining resources. Trees were harvested for houses, ships, heat and cooking. Large fields were cleared to grow crops and provide animal pasture. Millions of stones taken from the fields were assembled into miles of walls to mark property boundaries and contain domestic animals. The many clean, clear streams teemed with salmon, shad, and trout while also providing water power energy for mills. Wool from the many sheep farms was woven into a variety of textile fabrics for family use or resale and many other products were produced from working the land.

With few other resources available, these settlers and their succeeding generations understood the value of the land making up the Town of Lyme as they depended on it for all of the essentials of their lives. Caring for their land was an instinctive attitude. In today's world, it's very important that we do not lose that instinctive attitude for land stewardship. Lyme is very fortunate to have many families with generations of connectedness with their land. They should be encouraged to preserve this heritage of stewardship. Many other families moved here because they treasure the rural open space fabric of fields, rolling hills and clear streams. They also have acquired a responsibility for land stewardship.

Protecting land, the primary nat-

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Study group at Moulson Pond dam



FISH RESTORATION FOR THE EIGHT MILE RIVER

By Stephen Gephard, Senior Fisheries Biologist, D.E.P./Fisheries Division

Historically, several species of anadromous fishes ascended the Eight Mile River—probably as far as Devil's Hopyard State Park. Anadromous species spend their juvenile life in freshwater, their adult life in saltwater, and return to their stream of origin to spawn. Salmon are well-known anadromous fish. When early settlers built dams to power their grist and sawmills, fish runs were blocked and many disappeared.

Most of the dams that once blocked the Eight Mile River (and its East Branch) in the towns of Lyme, East Haddam, and Salem are now gone. The Rathbun dam, underneath the Mount Archer Road bridge, is the first dam that anadromous fish encounter, and its nine-foot height blocks all migration. There are few

dams upstream and plenty of suitable habitat to support expanded anadromous fish populations. The D.E.P. has long wished to get fish around the dam but lacked the opportunity to do so. An opportunity presented itself in 1993 when the dam owner, Bob Stone, and environmental consultant Anthony Irving contacted the D.E.P. with an idea of a fishway. Bob, whose company has operated a small hydroelectric facility below the dam, was in the process of selling some property and thought that something could be done for fish at the dam.

The D.E.P. generally does not have money to build fishways around privately owned dams. However,

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FISH RESTORATION FOR THE EIGHT MILE RIVER

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when the D.E.P. successfully sued the Department of Transportation (D.O.T.) over pollution of a river, the judge mandated that the D.O.T. fund some projects for the D.E.P. A number of pre-fabricated fishways were purchased and the D.E.P. has earmarked four of those for use at the Rathbun dam. Other materials and labor will be necessary, and since the D.E.P. does not have funds for that, a local fund-raising effort will be conducted. A working group consisting of representatives from the D.E.P., Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Town of Lyme, and local residents are working on a final plan for the fishway. It is possible that work *might* begin as early as this summer.

Targeted species include alewife, blueback herring, sea-run brown trout, and Atlantic salmon (which will be stocked into the River for the first time this spring.) Bass, trout, sucker, eel, and sea lamprey are also expected to use the fishway. All of these species can be expected to increase in numbers. Alewife and blueback herring ("buckies") populations should skyrocket. Moulson Pond, owned by the Land Trust, is great alewife habitat and bluebacks could spawn at least as far as Rt. 82. In addition to simply increasing the numbers of fish, the project will also help support organisms that rely on fish such as ospreys, otter, mink, heron, kingfisher, and other fish. Even tiny aquatic insects, which are the backbone of the freshwater ecosystem, will benefit from the expanded forage base. Similar benefits will be realized in Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, where the fish support marine mammals, birds, and other fish such as bluefish and striped bass.

I have been gratified by the support and the pledge for future involvement by the Lyme Land Conservation Trust. This project has the makings of true community, cooperative effort that will benefit the environment and improve our quality of life.



Peggy Clucas with her grandson

CLUCAS PROPERTY AND BILL/GAHAGAN EASEMENT GIVE TO LAND TRUST

Just before the end of last year the Land Trust was pleased to receive two very generous gifts of land interests from conservation-minded town residents. Mrs. Margaret M. Clucas gave the Land Trust almost 24 acres of her land on Brush Hill Road, and Mrs. Sally J. Bill and her three children granted it a conservation easement on just under nine acres of land on Route 156. The two donations bring the total holdings of the Land Trust to some 301 acres owned in fee and easements on about 446 acres, for overall land interests amounting to just under 748 acres.

The gift from Peggy Clucas consists of beautiful and varied land on the south side of Brush Hill Road, west of the land on which her house stands, on Tantumorum Road, to the Gould property. It is entirely unspoiled and contains a large pasture, a stream and a good bit of wooded acreage. Mrs. Clucas, who is extremely fond of Lyme and its rural atmosphere, has said that she doesn't want to see her land developed, which her gift assures. Her interest in and familiarity with the Land Trust runs in her family. Her brother is William G. Moore, who used to live in Lyme and was a founder and the first president of and an early donor of land to the Land Trust.

The land covered by the easement granted by Sally Bill and her children is on the east side of Route 156 and runs from the property of Fritz (her son) and Alva Gahagan northward to Salem Road. All of it is devoted to agriculture and is farmed by Jack Tiffany, as are other tracts of land in



Sally Bill

which the Land Trust has interests. Fritz Gahagan has been vice president of the Land Trust and continues to be involved in its activities. He and his wife recently granted the The Nature Conservancy an easement on a large parcel of their land, which includes a section of the Eight Mile River, to the west of Route 156.

The Land Trust is, of course delighted to receive two such generous gifts and grateful to their donors. Preservation of such lands is in the best interests of Lyme, and the hope is that others will be inspired to similar action.

FISHWAY PROPOSED FOR MOULSON POND DAM

Prompted by inquiries from local residents, the Department of Marine Fisheries for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has initiated a feasibility study into the construction of a fishway over the dam at Moulson Pond on the Eight Mile River. The Lyme Land Trust, owner of Moulson Pond and some of the contiguous land, has been invited to participate on the study committee. Others on the committee include local property owners, the owners of the dam and officials from the Town of Lyme, together with representatives from several departments of DEP.

Two meetings have been held, starting in January, and considerable research has taken place in the meantime. Issues being discussed include design and location of the fishway, impact on the flowage of the River, property rights, visual impact, ownership and management, liability and expected performance of the fishway in restoring anadromous fish to the upper

A CONSERVATION LEGACY

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ural resource in Lyme, is a town-wide responsibility shared by every property owner. The Lyme Land Trust serves as a catalyst and facilitator by promoting an understanding of this responsibility and identifying the many opportunities for land preservation. For a land trust's true role is to enlighten property owners on the environmental and economic benefits from land preservation and to stimulate independent initiative to act. With the Land Trust performing this role and the property owners of Lyme coming to recognize this inherited land stewardship responsibility, Lyme's legacy of wide-open rural spaces will be preserved.

Hiram P. Maxim
President

FISHWAY PROPOSED FOR MOULSON POND DAM

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reaches of the River.

Stephen Gephard, Chief Fisheries Biologist for DEP, believes the proposed fishway should have a very high success rate. The State Department of Fisheries considers the Eight Mile River to be Connecticut's most important river for migratory fish on the Connecticut River after the Farmington and Salmon Rivers. A vital condition for restoring these species is the natural attraction of the River system. In the case of the Eight Mile River, all of the species expected in the River are already reaching the foot of the Moulson Pond dam, searching for a way over it to their preferred spawning habitat.

Among the fish likely to seek spawning habitat are sea-run brown trout, alewife, sea lamprey, shad, blueback herring and possibly Atlantic salmon. Once over the dam, these fish could travel as far as Devil's Hopyard with the assurance of high water quality, long stretches of the River bordered by undeveloped land and many ideal lo-

cations for spawning.

The final approvals for location and design specifications of the fishway are still in review and discussion, as are the means for financing the construction. In addition, regulations for ownership management and liability must still be developed. The Land

Trust believes this project has important environmental protection qualities and should be enthusiastically supported by all Town residents. The Town of Lyme should be proud that its River has such a high environmental reputation, and efforts must continue to preserve that reputation.

(See related article beginning on page 1)

THE EIGHT MILE RIVER ATTRACTS A LOT OF ATTENTION

The Land Trust's pervasive interest in preserving Lyme properties that border the Eight Mile River, initially declared formally in 1989, has been reaffirmed recently by its current Trustees. Thus it continues to be the Land Trust's principal goal. In the meantime, largely owing to the Eight Mile River's being a significant tributary of the Connecticut River and within its estuary, the Land Trust has been joined by some powerful allies on federal, state and private levels. Representatives of all those allies came to and spoke at a regular meeting of the Land Trust's board last March. The Trustees heard a brief description of the approach of each organization to preserving the Eight Mile River basin and how the Land Trust could be helpful to each.

Norman Olson, planning team leader for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which has been authorized by the Silvio Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge Act to study the entire Connecticut River valley, represented the federal cause. Their project is extensive and complex and is still in its relatively early stages. Since Lyme borders the Connecticut River and contains a good part of the Eight Mile River and all of some important coves, including Hamburg Cove, Mr. Olson welcomed whatever assistance the Land Trust and any of Lyme's municipal agencies might provide.

The State of Connecticut has its own project aimed at the Connecticut River and its tributaries. Elaine Hinsch, program manager for the project in the state's Department of Environmental Protection, explained some of the specific proposals being considered by the state, some of which are likely to become law in due course, and all of which would be helpful in preserving the area in question. Mrs. Hinsch applauded and encouraged the efforts of the Land Trust and other bodies having similar goals.

Private interests on a national and especially state level were ably represented by Carolie Evans and Juliana Barrett of The Nature Conservancy. A year ago last March the lower Connecticut River was designated by The Nature Conservancy as one of our hemisphere's Last Great Places, of which there are only forty. Included in the designation, of course, is the Eight Mile River. Dr. Barrett reviewed the acquisitions of land within the area made in recent years by The Nature Conservancy and, to a lesser but nonetheless impressive extent by the Land Trust, and explained that future efforts on the part of The Nature Conservancy would be along the lines of public education rather than further acquisition of property. The Land Trust will, of course, participate in The Nature Conservancy's program as well as pursue its own goals of land preservation.

Not that there was ever any doubt, it now seems clear that the attention given Eight Mile River by the Land Trust has been and continues to be well founded. As various articles in previous issues of the *Bulletin* have pointed out, actions taken by the Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy have already protected large stretches of the River that are bordered by open spaces. More remains to be done, however, because our goal—and that of other larger conservation organizations—is to preserve the Eight Mile River and its natural surroundings in their present state.

LAND ACQUISITION CRITERIA

To clarify its land acquisition goals, the board of the Land Trust at its January meeting adopted certain criteria to cover its future activities in adding land to its holdings, either in fee or through conservation easements. To qualify for selection the site must meet one or more of the following conditions: it must (1) contain waterways, wetlands or other land necessary for protection of water resources or wetland habitat; (2) protect scenic vistas; (3) have unique historic or archaeological value, and (4) provide connection or corridor to other protected open space land important for movement of wildlife and avoidance of habitat fragmentation.

In addition, the site should reinforce the Town of Lyme's Open Space goals to protect "large tracts of open and undeveloped land," to protect scenic views and to encourage "continuance of farming." It should not require unreasonable physical or financial stewardship effort and must be large enough to satisfy the reason it was selected.

YOUR MONEY AT WORK

The funds of the Land Trust come in two categories: annual dues and the Land Acquisition Fund. Dues forecast for the coming year are \$3,510, plus \$580 in interest, for total income of \$4,090, which is allocated as follows:

Administration	295
Insurance, dues, rents	1,050
Educational activities	2,345
Contingencies	<u>400</u>
Total	\$4,090

Many of our generous members also donate to the Land Trust's Land Acquisition Fund by contributing money in excess of their dues. This Fund, depleted last year by the purchase of the Hand/Smith property on the Eight Mile River but since then partially replenished by special donations, presently stands at \$29,260.

The assets of the Land Trust as of April 1, 1994, are:

Cash in Banks	\$ 51,025
Land in Fee	<u>411,577</u>
Total	\$462,602

There are no liabilities.

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 residents of Lyme. Readers are invited to direct questions and suggestions to Joan Rich, Editor, at 434-7091.

SAVE THE DATE:

LAND TRUST ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, June 21, 1994

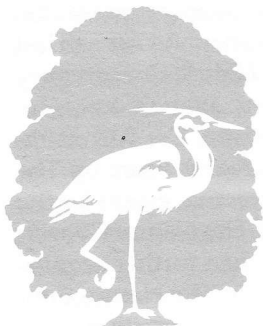
Lyme Public Hall

in Hamburg

7:30 p.m.

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