



The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

2013 Summer Newsletter

The Connecticut River: Restoring New England's Great Watershed & Freshwater Source of LI Sound

By Kim Lutz, Director

The Connecticut River Program The Nature Conservancy

The Connecticut River is at the very heart of New England – its past, present and future. As I work to understand more about this great river and the 44 major tributaries that are part of its vast watershed, I'm struck by what we might learn if we had been around to see and experience all that the river has witnessed.

Imagine a floodplain forest along its shores, where silver maples reach their branches skyward. Some of these trees are more than six feet in diameter and are among the oldest species in the watershed's streamside forests.



Shoreline Restoration

Haddam Neck from the north: the site of the former Connecticut Yankee Nuclear Power Plant, which was dismantled in 2007. Photo courtesy of CYAPC

If these trees could talk, they would reveal much about the rich history of the Connecticut, stretching back to when Native Americans trapped shad using weirs of woven branches, and reaching forward to when countless trees were felled to build Springfield, Hartford, and other East Coast communities.

Indeed, by the 19th century, a scant 20 percent tree cover remained along the Connecticut. This is a very different landscape than what we see today, with forests covering nearly 80 percent of the watershed, and myriad birds and other woodland creatures making these forests their home.

Our silver maples would describe floods, especially the record wind and water damage caused by the 1938 hurricane when 10 to 17 inches of rain fell in the Connecticut River Basin. These maples would recall the recent floods caused by Tropical Storm Irene and Super Storm Sandy, when flooding washed tons of muddy soil from farms in Vermont and New Hampshire into Long Island Sound.

The river's natural flow is affected not only by storms and floods, but by the more than 2,000 dams that disrupt the river's flow and its essential "heartbeat" of seasonal highs and lows.

Over the last few centuries, as dams were built to power industry, provide drinking water and generate electricity, the river's natural flow has been increasingly disrupted, adversely affecting the broader ecosystem it supports.

For instance, higher flows caused by winter snow melt provide cues for fish to migrate and help scour low-lying areas

along the river, creating fresh surfaces on the floodplains where seeds can germinate.

The maples would also recount the story of pollution during the mid-20th century when the Connecticut River was famously described in the *New York Times* as America's "best landscaped sewer."

We would also learn of the loss of the American elm, an important tree species in the basin and once the most populous tree in the floodplain forest. While still found in the Connecticut River watershed, these trees generally only mature to sapling-size, when they become infected by Dutch elm disease, a fungal pathogen that has been decimating our elm trees for 80 years.

(continued on next page)



American Elm Restoration

Christian Marks, Floodplain Ecologist for The Nature Conservancy, planting disease-resistant American elm on a flood plain in Wethersfield. ©Christian Marks/TNC

... continued from page one)

The silver maples would teach us a lot about the river's past, but they would also inspire us with stories of its renewal.

With the enforcement of the 1972 federal Clean Water Act and other legislation, the river became fishable and swimmable for most of its length. Forests were allowed to regenerate. Numerous partnerships and organizations throughout the four-state watershed – from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge to American Rivers and the Connecticut River Watershed Council – have worked collaboratively over the past decades to address important issues affecting the health of the river and its watershed.

The outlook for the Connecticut River in the 21st century has improved greatly, but there is still much more to do.

To that end, TNC is focusing its work in the Connecticut River watershed on three important R's: we're working to **re-manage**, **reconnect** and **restore** the river and its vital habitats.

As we consider the **re-manage** aspect of our strategy, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to effect positive change for the river. Five hydropower facilities, currently licensed to generate electricity by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), have their licenses coming up for renewal. The relicensing process is lengthy, spanning a five-year period and involving many partners. But by engaging partners and other stakeholders in the process, plans for the release of water and management of river flow can consider both hydropower generation and the needs of the fish, fauna and floodplains along the river critical to its health as an ecosystem.

TNC is working with scientists and others in the watershed to provide decision-makers with the best available data to explore various management alternatives that hopefully will provide the opportunity to improve water flow and fish passage for more than 150 river miles.

In order to **reconnect** parts of the river, we are removing many obsolete dams that are relics from 19th century when they were used to turn water wheels that powered mills. These dams are not only barriers to fish migrating upstream,

The Connecticut River By The Numbers:

- ◆ Length: 410 miles;
 - ◆ Watershed encompasses more than 11,000 square miles in four states;
 - ◆ 20,000 miles of streams;
 - ◆ 44 major tributaries;
 - ◆ 2.3 million people live within watershed;
 - ◆ Provides drinking water for 4.3 million people;
 - ◆ Contributes 70 percent of the freshwater input to Long Island Sound.
- Source: The Nature Conservancy

but they can also increase water temperatures by slowing water flow and trap sediments that could nourish floodplains downstream. Some old dams are dangerous and can fail under the pressure of increased storm water flow.

The Conservancy has been working with partner organizations such as American

Join The 17th Annual Connecticut River Watershed Source To Sea Cleanup October 4 & 5

The Source to Sea Cleanup of the Connecticut River watershed system – rivers, streams and banks, parks, boat launches, trails and more — is organized annually by the Connecticut River Watershed Council.

Each fall, thousands of volunteers of all ages and abilities head out to places of their choice all along the four-state watershed (NH, VT, MA, CT) to clean the Connecticut River and its tributaries on foot or by boat.

In 2012 more than 2,000 volunteers pulled over 99 tons of trash from over 91 miles of river banks and waterways.

Volunteers use human power and heavy equipment to pull out everything from recyclables and fishing equipment to tires, televisions, and refrigerators.

This year's Source to Sea clean-up is scheduled for Oct 4 & 5. You can get involved in a variety of ways. To report found trash, volunteer, join or start a group visit www.ctriver.org or contact Cleanup Coordinator Jacqueline Talbot at: 860-704-0057; or by email at: cleanup@ctriver.org.

Rivers to remove dams and provide "Brookies" (our local trout species) and other fish expanded access to clean, cool water. To date, we've removed more than 10 dams in the four basin states, opening up more than 100 river miles of habitat. We are also working on legislation to make it easier for private land owners to remove dams.

The final "R" in our approach is **restore** – and this is where trees once again figure prominently in the river's conservation narrative.

The Connecticut River Basin has a unique restoration opportunity in an innovative collaboration between TNC and the U.S. Forest Service to restore American elm trees east of the Appalachians.

Since the 1930s, the US has lost more than 100 million American elm trees to Dutch elm disease (DED) and only a handful of fully-grown elms have proven tolerant to the disease. TNC and the Forest Service are propagating DED-tolerant elms in a nursery in Ohio.

The hope is that disease-tolerant elms planted in more than 25 locations across all four states in the watershed will return the elm to the Northeast, where these stately trees once graced many communities' main streets and dominated floodplains.

Thirty elms – five specimens from each of six DED-tolerant types – have been planted in each location. The hope is that this elm "dating service" will enable genes of the various species to mix, crossing disease-resistant strains with each other and other trees on-site, and ultimately create even more varieties of disease-resistant elm.

If the project proves successful in the Connecticut River Basin, more specimens will be planted in natural settings across the eastern US. These trees will be part of floodplain forests that trap soil, filter water and serve as natural sponges, potentially mitigating the devastation of floods that are occurring with increased frequency.

Leonardo da Vinci once said, "In rivers, the water that you touch is the last of what has passed and the first of that which comes." This brings me back to the silver maples of the Connecticut River Valley.

I'm convinced that when these trees drop seeds next spring, their saplings – along with people and natural communities throughout the watershed - will experience the best of what is yet to come for the river.

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust Newsletter

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President's Message

Lyme's Role In Restoring The Connecticut River



John Pritchard
President

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Those attending the Land Trust's Annual Meeting on June 14 got a special treat.

Kim Lutz, the scientist in charge of The Nature Conservancy's Connecticut River Program, gave us a wonderful slide presentation of the past, present and future of the river that is so important to us here in Lyme.

She spoke of the river's attributes in its pristine state; of its degradation through excessive damming, pollution, and flood plain and watershed destruction during the industrial revolution; of its recent resurgence meriting its designation as the nation's first Blue Way; and of the remaining restorative work needing to be done.

She also spoke of The Nature Conservancy's program for the river: of flood plain restoration; of removal of small dams leading to enhanced river connectivity; and of promoting more natural river flows through main stem dam regulation and watershed protection. We at the Land Trust have been working for years on one of the most important elements of this program -- watershed protection. And The Nature Conservancy has itself been a major force in helping preserve environmentally important land in Lyme.

Those of you who were not able to make it to our Annual Meeting can read all about it in our featured article in the newsletter.

Have a wonderful remainder of your summer!

Would You Like to Support the Lyme Land Conservation Trust?



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Introducing A New Generation Of Conse

By Linda & John Sargent

We imagine many readers share our hope that future generations will continue to feel a deep connection to nature and a commitment to land preservation. We recently took part in our family's effort to preserve Walbridge Woodlands in honor of John's father, an avid conservationist. Our extended family hopes that this preserve as well as others under the jurisdiction of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust will become sites for children to develop life-long connections with nature.

We are concerned about research showing children are becoming estranged from the outdoor environment. The timely book, Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv speaks to this divide and points out the ills of the "wired-generation" resulting in what is being called "nature deficit disorder." Louv believes that this "broken bond can be healed right in our own backyards." It is up to adults to open the door to safe, accessible and playful experiences in nature.

Children's academic experiences can

be greatly enriched through ongoing, thoughtfully planned and respectful experiences with the lives of plants and animals and with natural cycles. It is important that teaching empathy and care for nature is designed into the lesson plans. We hope partnerships with local schools, like the successful Earth Day 2013 program at Lyme Consolidated School, can be developed for Walbridge Woodlands and will be a part of establishing the value of environmental literacy in school curriculums.

Children's hearts are where the seeds of our next generation of conservationists need to be planted. In listening to people who work to protect and work in harmony with nature, we usually hear about a special natural place that they visited when they were children, and/or about an elder who took time to encourage thoughtful and empathetic observation and about times when they could run free and play and pretend in natural settings. These kinds of experiences allow children to weave their own feelings for nature into their lives.

What we find most exciting and promising in nature learning is an approach that deeply engages children through play and shared

meaningful experiences. For young children, the deepest and most effective experiences and learning take place with their parents, special adults, in small mixed age groups of peers, and in the context of play. We envision programs at Walbridge Woodlands like the following:

— Small groups of children ages 4-8 with a couple of adults could spend mornings during different seasons floating sticks, getting wet and spending time gently exploring.

— Parents of infants and toddlers could come with their children to sit on blankets under the springtime forest canopy and look up to the new tiny leaves or the helicopter seeds floating down. Children could toddle around as petals fall from the trees, or have fun splashing in puddles if it turned out to be a rainy day.

— Groups of teens could be invited to play team building games and work to clear trails.

— School age children and parents could go on scavenger hunts in which no

Lyme Land Trust Partners With School & Families

By Emily Bjornberg

On Earth Day in April, The Lyme Land Conservation Trust (LLCT) joined in partnership with the Lyme Consolidated School Parent Teacher Organization to provide the children of Lyme with a close look at and a new understanding of their natural surroundings.

The LLCT volunteers rotated through each class with age-appropriate activities that are designed to teach the importance of

taking care of the earth using experiential involvement techniques.

Kindergarteners, who needed to stay close to the school, learned about the community garden, as well as the geological activity that formed the stones that make up the building. "My kindergartener loved the Earth Day activities," said Cathy Weber Cooper of Old Lyme. "She learned a lot of new things about the natural environment that exists right around her school. I think the folks doing the program did a great job explaining things so the younger kids could understand. It was very appropriate for their age and abilities."

Older students hiked down to the Eightmile River behind the school and enjoyed a scavenger hunt in the Pleasant Valley Preserve. "My daughter's favorite part was the vernal pool," explained Shaleigh Reynolds. "She loved being able to look for, identify, and touch all of the slimy things that exist in that temporary little ecosystem."

In some cases, the activities were tailored to fit in with existing science curricula. According to Virginie DeLandevoisin of Lyme who is the parent of a fifth grader, "My daughter loved seeing the effects of riverbank erosion. It fit right in with what she was already learning, making her science lesson especially poignant and memorable."

All the students were given seedlings to plant in their backyards



Former Land Trust President Anthony Irving explains to Lyme school children how springtime vernal pools provide habitat for forest amphibians. Photo by Humphrey S. Tyler

Conservationists To Steward Our Landscape

materials are collected, instead participants look for and then record their finds on a prepared handout.

The results can often be impressive, even for students who have spent almost all of their lives indoors in urban environments. For many young people there is a natural inclination to want to spend more time with nature. Photography can be a good way for children to creatively express their impressions of nature. The annual land trusts' photo contest has a youth category that illustrates this point.

We hope the Lyme Land Trust is ready to make use of the varied natural areas it stewards to give young children opportunities to play and explore in nature while respecting the land and the plants and animals that make it home.

Linda & John Sargent are members of the family that generously provided the Lyme Land Trust with the resources for creation of the Walbridge Woodland Preserve in memory of John's father, David C. Sargent. John is active in the New London Environmental Educators' Coalition.



Sixth graders from New London Interdistrict Arts and Communication charter school taking a close look at insects on a field trip to the Tributary Mill Conservancy in Old Lyme.
Photo provided by John Sargent

Activities For Kids' Earth Day, Trails Day & Swim Day

with "Happy Earth Day" notes attached from the LLCT encouraging families to attend future Land Trust activities.

"It was a wonderful experience for everyone," said Trudy Burgess. "The PTO would like to extend a heartfelt Thank You to the Land Trust and its volunteers for the hard work they put in making the day a success. The students were engaged, had fun and learned a lot about their natural world. Turning out the next generation of conservationists is important to us all, so I look forward to working with the Land Trust in the future!"

Land Trust Environmental Director Lisa Niccolai led the LLCT volunteers, including Anthony Irving, Evan Griswold, Ralph Lewis, Marta Cone, Kiernan Wholean and Linda Bireley. Trudy Burgess led parent volunteers to help things go smoothly.

The Land Trust has many activities to connect kids to the outdoors. For upcoming family-friendly events, see the Events Calendar on this newsletter's backpage & look for the "LLCT Trekkers" logo. If you are interested in joining these activities, email Emily Bjornberg at ejbjornberg@yahoo.com.

Emily Bjornberg is founder of the Lyme Trekkers, an outdoor activity club for preteens.



Family Hike & Swim Pleasant Valley Preserve Sat. Aug. 24



Learn from local experts about the creatures that live in Lyme's forests & fields, have a snack at the swim hole and then jump in for a swim. Meet at 10 AM at the swim hole in the Eightmile River in Pleasant Valley Preserve behind Lyme Consolidated School (just off Macintosh Road). For more info call: 860-575-1127.

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Photo by Leslie Lewis

Lyme Middle Earth

Saturday June 1 was Connecticut & National Trails Day, which the Land Trust celebrated by turning the Beebe Preserve into a Hobbit adventure where young Elves built a new section of Rivendell and explored the Misty Mountain forests.

More Than 300 Intrepid Cyclists & Sponsors Make First Land Trust Tour de Lyme A Big Success



**By George Moore
LLCT Executive Director**

How do you picture success?

One would be the scene of more than 300 smiling people standing in the rain and trying to decide between a vegan lunch from the G-Monkey truck or a BBQ from Four Mile River Farms after cycling as much as 55 miles through a beautiful New England countryside.

That was the setting when road and mountain bikers joined more than 30 volunteers for a great picnic lunch after completing the Land Trust's first Tour de Lyme fundraiser on May 11.

Tour de Lyme was more than a year in the planning, and we often wondered if anyone would show up. However, as the event drew closer, pre-registrations soared, and when registration closed on May 10, we had 326 riders signed up. Although the threatening weather caused about 30 no shows, almost 20 additional riders came and registered onsite.

Riders came from eight states from Maine to DC (and one from Colorado), including entrants from 74 Connecticut towns.

We attracted some serious riders – about 40 percent signed up for the 55 mile challenge! We had a nice family turnout with youngsters joining their parents on the shorter Family Ride. Mountain Bikers were

Photos by Joe Standart, Lisa Niccolai and Harley Manning



well represented and most chose a rigorous ride that included two preserves and the Nehantic State Forest.

The important question is did the riders and volunteers have fun? The many smiling faces in the pictures on www.tourdelyme.org would suggest that indeed they did.

A goal was to showcase the results of 45+ years of land preservation – lightly travelled roads, ideal for cycling. We did that. Feedback from the riders was that they loved our rural roads and trails.

Finally, we wanted to develop an annual fundraising event unique to the Lyme Land Trust that would allow us to reach a broader audience than our small population affords. We did that.

A great deal of thanks goes to our sponsors who believed in an unproven Tour de Lyme and put up a total of \$22,000 in cash and goods in kind. We could never have succeeded without the hard work of over 30 volunteers and the support of our volunteer Board.

Lyme's terrific Emergency Response crews were positioned onsite and happily, their services were not needed. We are deeply grateful for their wholehearted support.

Last but not least, our thanks to the good sports who paid to ride in Tour de Lyme and despite the rain, helped us raise almost a net \$40,000 for your Land Trust. And, of course, let us not forget the people of Lyme who with characteristic good grace accepted 300 riders out on our roads.



2014 Tour de Lyme Set For Sunday May 18

\$350,000 Capital Campaign Launched For Land Acquisition, Stewardship & Accreditation

The Lyme Land Trust has announced a \$350,000 capital campaign to raise money for several near term needs, including funding of the installment purchase of the 100-acre Banningwood Preserve, rebuilding the Templeton Brown Preservation Fund, and increasing the Rufus Barringer Stewardship Fund.

In announcing the capital campaign, President John Pritchard said, “The Lyme Land Trust has entered an exciting period of its history. In the last couple of years, membership has increased dramatically, and we recently held our first and highly successful road and trail cycling event, the Tour de Lyme.”

Pritchard pointed out that in the last two years the Land Trust has acquired two important new preserves—Walbridge Woodlands between the town’s Hartman and Young preserves, and the new Banningwood Preserve on Roaring Brook in the Hadlyme area that helps protect one of the Connecticut River’s important watersheds.

The Banningwood Preserve was purchased with installment

notes, Pritchard explained, and the capital fundraising campaign is needed in part to pay off these notes.

“Finally,” said Pritchard, “we’ve been selected by the Land Trust Alliance to apply for accreditation. This is a wonderful opportunity, but it’s a selective process and has stringent criteria for approval.”

Pritchard explained that one of the accreditation criteria is that a land trust demonstrate it has the monetary resources and financial stability to steward the open space preserves entrusted to it, so the capital campaign is needed to help grow the Rufus Barringer Stewardship Fund that the Land Trust has set aside for expenses related to maintaining and protecting its preserves and conservation easements.

“While we’re honored just to be considered for accreditation,” said Pritchard, “we also believe our goal in the past few years of achieving best practices coupled with demonstrating improving reserves from this Capital Campaign will meet the national quality standards measured in the accreditation process.”

Lyme Land Trust Prepares To Apply For National Accreditation

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust Board of Directors voted recently to pursue accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), a national association representing more than 1100 member land trusts across the country.

LTA accreditation recognizes land trusts for meeting national standards, upholding the public trust, and ensuring that conservation efforts are permanent.

The Lyme Land Trust was selected in a lottery registration. The final application document that will be submitted to the

LTA will include hundreds of pages of policy and program documents.

The application process itself will help the Land Trust fine-tune its policies and streamline its operations. In preparation for accreditation, the Land Trust has already made several improvements to align its procedures with national standards and better steward its properties.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission was established as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance in 2006 to operate a voluntary accreditation

program to verify that land trusts are using standard “best practices” to assure the land entrusted to their stewardship is being used and preserved as donors originally intended and in compliance with state and federal statutes.

For more about accreditation visit landtrustaccreditation.org.

There will be an opportunity for public comment during the application phase. In the meantime, if you have any questions, call 860-434-4639 or send an email to info@lymelandtrust.org.

Land Trust Sponsoring “Swallow Cruise”



Sept. 27, 5-8 PM. Cruise aboard the *RiverQuest*. \$40 per person. Non-members welcome. Preregistration & payment required at: www.lymelandtrust.org/swallowcruise. For more information email: Info@lymelandtrust.org; or call: 860 434-4639.

Plimpton Family Donates 23 Acre Easement



Carol & Kenneth Plimpton, left and center, in May donated a 23-acre conservation easement to the LLCT on their Sterling City Road property. It is next to the 80-acre Elizebeth Plimpton Memorial Preserve. LLCT VP Don Gerber is on right.



The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

PO BOX 1002, Lyme, CT 06371

Lyme Land Conservation Trust Calendar of Events

All events subject to change. Dates & times will be announced by press release & e-mail, and will be posted on the Land Trust website and Facebook page. Consult the Upcoming Events page at www.lymelandtrust.org/news/events/ for the latest information. To reduce costs & paper, the Land Trust no longer mails postcard notification of all events. To receive email notifications, send an email to: info@lymelandtrust.org with a request to be added to the events e-mail list.



Children's Hike & Swim



When - Saturday Aug 24, 10-11 AM

What - Do you like walking in the woods with your parents? Want to learn more about the creatures that live in the woods of Lyme?

Come join our hike through the Pleasant Valley Preserve. We'll hike for an hour and have a snack at the swim hole. Bring your swim suit and jump in after we're done. For information: www.lymelandtrust.org, or call: Emily at: 860-575-1127

Where - Park at swimming hole on the Eightmile River just off Macintosh Road.



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Connecticut River Sunset Swallow Cruise Spectacular

When - Friday Sept. 27, 5-8 PM

What - "Tree Swallow Spectacular" cruise on the *RiverQuest* excursion boat. Preregistration & prepayment required: www.lymelandtrust.org/swallowcruise. Cost: \$40 per person. For more info email: Info@lymelandtrust.org or call: 860-434-4639. Non-members welcome.

Where - *RiverQuest* excursion boat departs from Eagle Landing State Park, Haddam, CT.

Annual Paint-Out Art Exhibition "Celebrating Lyme's Beauty"

When - Ongoing until Sept. 1
10 AM - 5 PM Mon-Sat., 1-5 Sun.

What - The tradition of *plein air* painting in Lyme continues with this special exhibition of landscapes created in and around Lyme's Pleasant Valley Preserve in April and May. Following its debut in the Lyman Allyn Art Museum's Glassenberg Gallery, the artwork traveled to the Lyme Art Association and will be available for purchase all summer.

Where - Lyme Art Association, Old Lyme, CT.