

LYME LAND TRUST BULLETIN

The Lyme Land Conservation Trust

October 1997



Sterling City field in winter.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

In 1988, the Land Trust embarked on a program to save open space around the Eightmile River. Its purpose was to preserve the pristine beauty, to keep "the River and its valley as they are for future generations" according to the project brochure. Since this initiative several properties both large and small have been protected. The latest are a gift from David McCoy along the Eightmile River and the preservation of property on Sterling City Road by a group of neighbors with the help of the Land Trust. Whereas we in Lyme have proprietary concerns as to the impacts of development along the river, there is widespread recognition of the value of the watershed outside the community.

One example is the Eightmile River Watershed Project which is a partnership of the three towns in the 63 mile watershed, including East Haddam, Salem and Lyme, along with The Nature Conservancy Connecticut Chapter and the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service. The watershed committee is made up of representatives of the three towns, of which I am a member. Its purpose is to support and guide communities in their efforts to protect the watershed through education and programs on land use planning strategies. The importance of this project has further been recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Silvio Conte Refuge, both of whom have supplied funding.

So why is there widespread interest in the Eightmile River Watershed? In the words of the watershed partners, "There are not many places like the Eightmile River Watershed left in southern New England. Its small towns, clean waters and abundant forests all combine to make it one of the most unspoiled areas in the region. The watershed is home to a

GENEROUS DONORS AID STERLING CITY PURCHASE

A prize parcel of agricultural land in the heart of Sterling City is the latest acquisition of the Lyme Land Conservation Trust. The Trust's purchase of a three-acre lot from Martha Blum is to be part of a 12 acre conservation zone consisting of this and adjacent properties.

The area in question centers on the large field just west of the intersection of Sterling City and Birch Mill roads. The six acre field formed two lots of a larger subdivision, which was never completed. Some years ago Paul Harper purchased half of the field, and Gary and Martha. Blum retained the other half. The Land Trust was asked by neighboring land owners to become involved when the Blum property was put on the market.

As a result of the Land Trust's purchase, Mr. Harper is donating a conservation easement on his three-acre lot, and Templeton and Suzanne Brown, whose property abuts the field on the south, will also donate an easement on a two-acre stretch between the field and Falls Brook. The Land Trust already holds an easement on a four-acre woodlot to the west of the field. (See Map).

Reasons for Acquisition

The Land Trust board voted to acquire the three-acre parcel because of its prominent location, and its fulfillment of Land Trust criteria for acquisition:

- It is prime agricultural land which the Tiffany Farm currently cultivates;
- It is part of the watershed of Falls Brook and ultimately of the Eightmile and Connecticut Rivers;
- With 1,000 feet of road frontage, the 12 acre parcel will help retain the rural character of Lyme.

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Falls Brook: easement area and field on right

Sterling City Purchase continued

The purchase price was \$120,000. The Land Trust was most fortunate to have five large donors who covered this price, consequently the Trust did not need to dip into its acquisition fund and then undertake a fundraising effort to replenish the fund.

The donors are abutting property owners Paul Harper, Templeton and Suzanne Brown, Ethel Feltham and Richard and Catherine Zall. Henry and Lois Willard, new residents in town, have also made a most generous gift. Having moved to Lyme to enjoy its rural character, the Willards are now helping to preserve these qualities.

Anthony Irving, Trust president, said, "The Land Trust is very pleased to be part of this conservation effort and to work with residents who care so much to preserve the rural quality of the town."

This is only the second time in its three decade history that the Land Trust

has made a purchase of land. The first was the 23 acre Hand-Smith property at the confluence of the two branches of the Eightmile River, off Hamburg Road. All other lands held by the Trust have been outright gifts of land or conservation easements.

An easement (called a conservation restriction in Connecticut law) is the donation or sale of some uses of the land, usually development rights, to a qualified organization while the owner retains all other rights to the land. The value of the easement is considered a charitable gift for tax purposes.

Dedication of Sterling City Preserve.

The Land Trust has named the four parcels, which total 12 acres, the Sterling City Preserve. A dedication ceremony and a tour of the property will be held on Saturday, October 11 at 2:00 p.m. Rain date, Sunday October 12 at 2:00 p.m. The public is welcome, and refreshments will be served.

HELP BUILD THE ACQUISITION FUND

The Land Trust was extraordinarily fortunate to receive large donations to cover the purchase of the Sterling City property and did not need to deplete its reserve funds or undertake a fundraising effort. The Trust may not always be so well supported in the future.

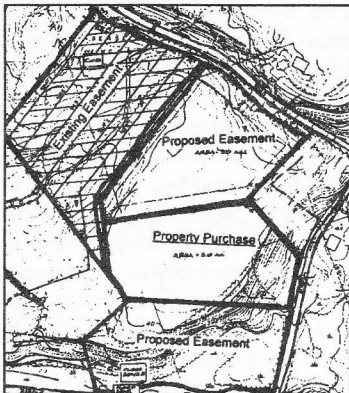
Because the population of Lyme is small, and the cost of land ever increasing, there is a limit to the ability to raise sufficient funds on short notice. The best way for the Land Trust to be in a position to act quickly in the face of a special opportunity or an emergency, is to continue to build up its acquisition fund.

We hope that members and other residents might consider an additional donation to this fund and join those who have given so generously to the Sterling City purchase. Even small contributions, which go into a CD, help build our reserves. It is the combination of these many small gifts over the years that gave us the funds that enabled us to negotiate for the Sterling City acquisition. But with \$35,000 in our acquisition fund, the Land Trust will be very short if we are to participate in future land protection projects that require a larger commitment on our part.

Checks should be mailed to the Land Trust, Box 1002, Lyme CT. 06371. The Land Trust can also accept stock and other securities. For details, call our treasurer, Robert Barney, 434-2082. Donations are tax deductible.

President's Message continued

remarkable diversity of plants and animals, including many rare species. The people who live in the watershed value these resources and consider it a treasure."



Parcels of the Sterling City Preserve

The Watershed Project began by inventorying existing water, land and community resources and processing the information onto computer generated maps. These maps are being used to help in the identification and analysis of environmental resources, current land use patterns and the potential for future growth. Making this information available to local commissions and community groups, such as the Land Trust, helps with planning for the future of the watershed.

But this effort does have limitations. As development pressures increase, all the excellent information generated by the Watershed Project only goes so far to support the town's goals for balancing conservation and growth - it can not

make it happen. Even with regulation and acquisition of property, the town can not keep Lyme the way it is. Development can be moderated, but only in a limited way.

The real burden falls to individual property owners and how they see the future for their land. For those interested in preservation there are a number of strategies that address the financial questions of keeping the land in open space. The Land Trust has the expertise and the desire to help, and we will happily make ourselves available to anyone who wishes to pursue this goal of protecting the watershed and the many other important lands in Lyme.

Anthony Irving, president

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

At the annual meeting in June, two new board members were elected:

Marilyn Wilkins has spent almost four decades teaching environmental and life sciences in Connecticut and Massachusetts, mostly in Junior High schools, and currently is teaching adult education classes. She grew up in the shoreline area, and has lived in Lyme more than thirty years, most recently on Uncas Lake. She is a member of the Audubon Society and other environmental groups.

Linda Bireley, holds a PhD in biology and oceanography, with a particular interest in fish migrations, and habitat conservation. She works for Northeast Utilities at the Environmental Laboratory at Millstone, studying the impact of the plants on Long Island Sound. Since the Connecticut River is a major tributary to the Sound, she finds the work of the Land Trust very congenial. She has been in Connecticut since 1973, the last decade in Lyme.

Thomas Childs Jr. has also joined the board filling a vacant term. Tom has retired after a quarter century as securities advisor to several major banks, but reports that he began his career as an editor with the Natural History Press, a joint venture of the Natural History Museum and Doubleday. He was an editor for Ian McCarg's *Design with Nature*, which has become the classic exposition of environmental planning on a regional scale. Two years ago Tom and his wife gave a conservation easement on a field overlooking Hamburg Cove, which has preserved an important view.

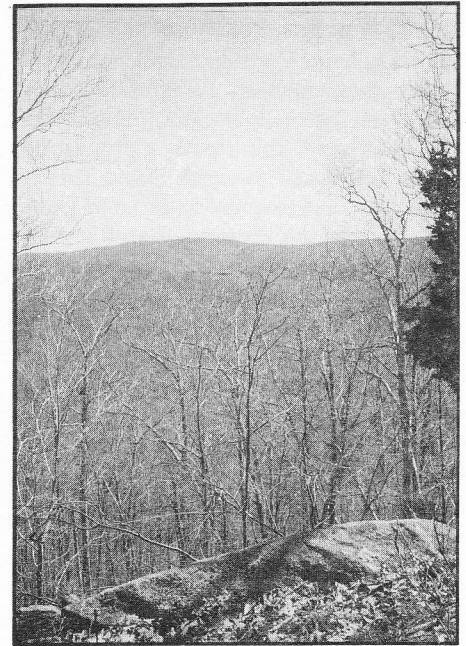
NEW HIKING TRAIL IN PLEASANT VALLEY PRESERVE

In the winter of 1992, the Nature Conservancy Connecticut Chapter announced the donation of 235 acres from Catherine and Elizabeth Fehrer. It was named the "Pleasant Valley Preserve" after the area made famous by Lyme impressionist painters, including the sisters' father Oscar Fehrer. The parcel originally known as the Stark Farm, had been in the family since 1919.

The Nature Conservancy entered an agreement with the Lyme Land Conservation Trust to manage the preserve, which includes 3,500 feet along both sides of the Eightmile River. In addition to the Fehrer property, a contiguous 105 acre conservation easement was donated to the Nature Conservancy by Fritz and Alva Gahagan, increasing protection of the river.

The combination of these two tracts offers a diversity of habitats that one rarely sees packaged together. This is because the land runs from river to ridgetop, incorporating diverse site conditions that account for a variety of wildlife and vegetation complexes.

This past year the Land Trust cleared a new trail that incorporates the diversity and beauty of these two parcels. At around 2.5 miles, the trail wanders along the valley before ascending to the ridgetop at the northwestern edge of the preserve. From here there is a view southward to Mount Archer and Eastward to Nickerson Hill. The trail then wanders slowly downward through the woodland before crossing a stream and reentering the valley floor.



Nickerson Hill from Pleasant Valley.

The Pleasant Valley Preserve is open to the public for passive recreation including hiking, cross-country skiing and bird watching. Access is by right-of-way, a donation by the Jewett family, off McIntosh Road, just off Route 156. The northern section of the new trail over the Gahagan property is closed during November and December, the hunting season. Maps are available at the Park and the Town Hall.

Come See the New Trail on Saturday October 25, at 9:30 a.m. (Sunday rain date) the Land Trust will sponsor a trail dedication walk. On this approximately-three-hour hike, we'll discuss some of the natural phenomena found in the preserve as well as enjoy the beauty under the fall colors.



Eightmile River in McCoy Donation.

ANOTHER EIGHTMILE RIVER PARCEL PROTECTED

David McCoy has given the Land Trust more than an acre of property along the West Branch of the Eightmile River. The parcel begins where the river crosses under Route 156, and runs eastward for nearly 450 feet. There is a setback of 100 feet southerly from the river's center line. The West Branch of the river comes down through Devils Hopyard State Park and joins the East Branch just on the West Side of Route 156 from the McCoy property. This junction of the two rivers is in the Hand-Smith property, also a Land Trust holding.

Mr. McCoy's farsightedness has helped to ensure the future good health of the Eightmile River as well as preserving a piece of the town's rural charm, visible from the public highway.

NEW EDUCATION PROGRAM

This past school year the fourth grades at Lyme Consolidated School went on a geology walk in the Pleasant Valley Preserve. The walk started at the school and included the flood plain along MacIntosh Road, on which David Tiffany recently gave an easement to the Land Trust.

Once in the Preserve, Ralph Lewis, Land Trust board member and geologist, introduced students to the concepts of stream sedimentation, woodland succession in the pasture fringes, and glacial deposits, eskers and kettleholes on the Blue Trail.

The walk was part of the Land Trust's effort to make Pleasant Valley accessible and integral to the Lyme Consolidated School's curriculum. The Education Committee intends to develop a series of "stations" in the Preserve highlighting various aspects of the ecology, which will be essentially self-guiding for students and interested visitors to the Preserve.

Watch for the Winter Forum: Date to be announced. Discussion of alternate approaches to land ordinances to protect the environment while respecting property rights.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Operating income, fortunately, continues to exceed expenses, enabling the Land Trust to add surplus to the Acquisition Fund, which now totals \$35,000.

In our Plan for 1997, additional funds are budgeted for Education and Stewardship activities with most categories of expense remaining about the same as 1996.

Membership is growing each year and we are hopeful the trend will extend to 1997 as well.

Total land owned by the Land Trust and under easement has again increased through

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

the first eight months of this year, thanks to the ongoing donor generosity.

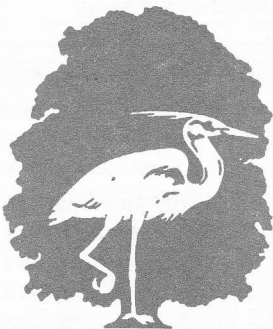
Robert Barney, treasurer

	1995	1996	plan 1997
Income			
Dues	\$8,871	\$10,005	\$10,000
Interest	\$924	\$3,369	\$3,750
Other	0	\$1,000	\$500
Total	\$9,795	\$14,374	\$14,250
Expenses			
Programs	\$1,352	\$2,448	\$2,450
Education	\$133	\$222	\$475
Stewardship	0	\$75	\$300
Assn. dues	\$600	\$575	\$575
Insurance	\$1,792	\$838	\$860
Postage	\$544	\$670	\$800
Other	\$736	\$831	\$945
Total	\$5,157	\$5,659	\$6,405
Surplus/Deficit	\$4,638	\$8,715	\$7,845
Operation Data			
Membership	366	392	—
Land / acres			—
Easement	508	805	—
Owned	301	301	—

LYME LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

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