



# Wilton Land Conservation Trust

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Donald Marquardt  
David Michael  
Teresa Mucci  
George H. Ongley  
William A. Ziegler

Anthony P. Grassi  
*Trustee Emeritus*

## 2005 Annual Report

The Wilton Land Conservation Trust has been working to protect open space in the Town of Wilton for 41 years. Its mission remains to promote the preservation of the natural resources of the Town of Wilton. We are a private, nonprofit trust whose members support its efforts through charitable donations. The Land Trust now owns or holds conservation easements on 99 properties totaling more than 700 acres. The 100<sup>th</sup> property is in the works. We are pleased to report the following highlights of our activities in the past year.

**Protection:** Our focus this year was follow-up work on major properties that were afforded protection last year: Keiser property on Sharp Hill Road, Agnew property on Nod Hill Road, Walter property on Ridgefield Road and Stephenson property on Honey Hill Road. Projects included razing of the Walter house and garage and removal of the driveway as per the deed transfer. We are developing plans for pedestrian access to this three-acre property on the northeast corner of Ridgefield Road and Keeler Ridge Road. Also planned is removal of small trees and invasives to improve the view overlooking the Comstock Brook valley. On the six-acre Stephenson property we arranged to have an old barn dismantled and rebuilt elsewhere. We cleared invasives and mowed much of this meadow permitting a re-emergence of wildflowers. This undertaking was supported by a generous gift from Mr. Stephenson.

The Trust has nearly completed a conservation restriction on Town-owned property located between Whipple Road and Erdmann Lane in South Wilton. Neighbors of this four-plus acre parcel behind the Montessori School approached the Land Trust to seek a restriction that essentially would limit the Town's right to do anything other than build another soccer field there. In effect, the property will remain open space for passive recreation which is highly valued in this part of Town.

Land Trust members are working with Town officials to negotiate purchase of development rights from owners of two parcels listed on the Town Plan of Conservation and Development to protect these high-visibility properties. Trustees continue to work with the Conservation Commission to identify additional parcels targeted for open space with the goal of protecting properties in all areas of Wilton. We are heartened by the support of generous owners who share our mission to preserve open space.

**Stewardship:** The Land Trust's properties require continuous stewardship. These activities include posting and monitoring boundaries, maintaining open fields, restoring meadows, clearing and maintaining trails, and removing invasive species and dangerous or unsightly trees. Trustees and volunteers have been active stewards this year.

Most prominent has been the major work completed at Schenck's Island in the center of Wilton. The Town owns 14 acres of the 17-acre parcel with the Land Trust owning the remainder. With a long-term plan to create an open meadow on much of the "island," the Trust had more than 1,000 trees removed by professionals at Town and Land Trust expense. On two work days in October and June, more than 100 volunteers from Deloitte & Touche LLP removed invasive vines along River Road, cleaned up slash left by the professionals and rebuilt a stone wall that crosses the property. Other volunteers managed by Trustees have participated in Saturday work days picking up rocks from the now-open fields and burning brush. Left carefully protected have been wildflowers, ferns and other important plants, especially along the banks of the Norwalk River.

Disappointing has been the Town-Land Trust debate over the future of Schenck's Island. The Trust has been working in Schenck's under a verbal agreement with the Town to create and maintain a savannah-like open meadow over 15 years. Potential installation of a special use on a part of this property has brought the Trust's work to a halt. It is hoped that the Town will revert to the original understanding and allow the Trust to complete what is arguably its largest and most visible project in Wilton.

Our plans to have a controlled burn at Keeler Ridge Meadow to revive wildflower growth were confounded by, at first, drought, and then rain on two potential burn dates. With some Trustees trained in controlled burns, we will plan a burn next spring. Volunteers from the DAR chapter are cleaning up the Comstock Cemetery on Ridgefield Road, and we continue to cooperate with abutting property owners in Town on various issues.

**Management:** We are in our fifth year as a membership organization with almost 500 members. We are grateful to this group for their financial support and to our many volunteers for their project work. If you would like to become a member and volunteer, please visit our Web site ([www.wiltonlandtrust.org](http://www.wiltonlandtrust.org)) and let us know via e-mail at [inquiry@wiltonlandtrust.org](mailto:inquiry@wiltonlandtrust.org) or at WLCT, P. O. Box 77, Wilton, CT 06897.

Long-time President Tony Grassi resigned his post at the February annual meeting after 14 years of devoted service to protecting open space in Wilton. His extraordinary leadership and commitment were recognized at the meeting. Despite residing now in Maine, Tony will continue to serve as Trustee Emeritus. Bruce Beebe succeeds Tony as president. Phil Reinertsen stepped down as Trustee after many years of valuable service. Newly elected Trustees this year are Nancy Faesy and Frank Mabley.

We are pleased to enclose a map and description of our larger parcels that are readily accessible to the public. If during your walks you note work needed to be done, please let us know. The Conservation Commission's *A Walker's Guide to Wilton* provides detailed trail maps of Trust and Town open space.

**Trustees 2005**

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