



Wilton Land Conservation Trust

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2007 Annual Report

The Wilton Land Conservation Trust has been working to protect open space in the Town of Wilton for 43 years. Its mission remains to promote the preservation of the natural resources of the Town. We are a private, nonprofit trust whose members support its efforts through charitable donations and field work. The Land Trust now owns or holds conservation easements on 101 properties totaling more than 700 acres. We are pleased to report the following highlights of our activities in the past year.

Protection: The Land Trust continued to focus on Schenck's Island Park under its agreement with the Town of Wilton to restore and maintain a savannah-like meadow there. With funding from the Trust and the Town, the agreement extends the Trust's role until 2017. Schenck's has become the Trust's signature project for the next few years. Trustee Teresa Mucci, an ecological landscape designer, has taken management responsibility for this project, working with the Department of Environmental Affairs. Over the past year work parties organized by Teresa and Trustee Charlie Flynn, including Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, have removed invasives and cut vines, especially along the Norwalk River. A Wilton High School group known as the Bittersweet Brigade has been removing vines this fall. Teresa managed a professional team over two days to cut Micro Stegnum, or Japanese stilt grass, before it could go to seed. The northwest corner of Schenck's abutting the "bridge to nowhere" was cut exposing a handsome stone wall. Teresa organized pro-bono vine removal by local firms C.J. Robinson, Evergreen Arborists, Ridgewood Lands, Laurel Rock and Lee Horticultural Services. The entire field area will be mowed later this fall in preparation for spring planting (barring more emergence of invasives) to create areas of distinct plant communities and create wildlife habitat, according to the plan prepared by Larry Weaner Landscape Design Associates.

The Trustees voted unanimously to name the Trust-owned, three-acre parcel at the south end of Schenck's Island the Richard C. Wheeler Preserve in memory of an early Trustee who was committed to removing invasives from the parcel. Signage is being designed.

The Land Trust and the Town continue to discuss a conservation easement on Town-owned land located between Whipple Road and Erdmann Lane in south Wilton.

Real estate developer Wilton Building Group LLC donated two parcels totaling 3.7 acres as part of a subdivision on Vista Road. The properties are especially valuable as they link to existing Trust and Town properties on Vista Road and Bald Hill Road.

Working with the Conservation Commission, the Trust continues to identify and negotiate new open space parcels for purchase and/or easement protection.

The Land Trust mourns the passing of E. Dan Cappel, a long-serving Trustee until his recent retirement. Dan was the scientist on our board and brought unique, science-based perspective to many Land Trust decisions. Early this year, the Trustees voted to name the Trust's annual scholarship for a graduating Wilton High School senior the E. Dan Cappel Senior Scholarship Award. Last spring's award went to Brendan Boepple.

We co-sponsored a talk by Department of Environmental Protection Educator Diane Joy, filling in for Commissioner Gina McCarthy on the "No Child Left Inside" campaign in April. We sponsored other environmental talks at the Wilton Library. Julie Belaga, Co-chair, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, spoke at the February annual meeting.

Stewardship: Our activities include posting and monitoring boundaries, maintaining open fields, restoring meadows, clearing and maintaining trails, and removing invasive species and dangerous trees. Volunteers from the local DAR chapter cleaned up the Comstock Cemetery on Ridgefield Road, and we cooperate with abutting property owners on various issues. Clean-up is almost complete on the former Stephenson property on Honey Hill Road, and we will clear and maintain the former Walter property on Ridgefield Road.

The Land Trust has been named for memorial gifts in the name of Lawrence Goodwin, a volunteer planner and caretaker of the state-owned Quarry Head Park and the neighboring Harrison Smith Preserve. We are grateful to the Goodwin family. We plan to install a sign recognizing Larry's work. The Trust has also been named for memorial gifts in the name of Virginia Bradley Bepler, a Wilton native interested in local history.

Management: We are in our seventh year as a membership organization with almost 500 members. Write us, visit our Web site (www.wiltonlandtrust.org) or e-mail us at inquiry@wiltonlandtrust.org if you would like to become a member and/or volunteer.

Trustees elected to three-year terms at the February annual meeting are: David Lynch, Donald Marquardt, Teresa Mucci, Robert Russell, James Snedeker and Thomas Walker. Joseph Philbrick was elected at the November Trustees meeting. Trustees re-elected Bruce Beebe, President, Charles Flynn and Robert Russell, Vice Presidents, Dawn Bennett Ladenheim, Treasurer and Nancy Faesy, Secretary. Jeffrey Golterman, George Lamb and Donald Marquardt retired from the Board and were thanked for their service.

We are pleased to enclose a map and description of our larger parcels that are readily accessible to the public and that readers are encouraged to visit. See the Conservation Commission's *A Walker's Guide to Wilton* for detailed trail maps.

Officers and Trustees, 2007

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