



Wilton Land Conservation Trust

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Anthony P. Grassi
Trustee Emeritus

2008 Annual Report

Who We Are: The Wilton Land Conservation Trust has been working to protect open space in the Town of Wilton for 44 years. Its mission remains to promote the preservation of the natural resources of the Town. It is 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 and Stewardship: 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 manages this project, working with the Department of Environmental Affairs. Over the last year the entire property has had a timed cut to eliminate the seed crop of this year's plants, and the 7.5 acre central portion has had an herbicide treatment to prepare for seeding of native wildflowers and grasses later this fall. Piles of slash have been removed, woodchips spread and walking paths kept mowed. Numerous volunteers, including Trustees, Cub Scouts and others, have pitched in to help clear invasive plants and vines; in June Deloitte & Touche's annual Impact Day sent a 40-person team to clear areas along River Road, affording new views into Schenck's. The Town has fenced and improved the parking area.

Trustees installed signage for the newly designated Richard C. Wheeler Preserve on Schenck's Island on the Trust-owned, three-acre parcel at the south end of Schenck's Island. An informal gathering celebrating Dick Wheeler's extraordinary commitment to restoring Schenck's Island was held at the Wilton Library in the spring and included Dick's widow, Mary Beth, and numerous friends.

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. Much of the Walter Preserve on Ridgefield Road and Keeler Ridge Road has been cleared of brush and vines to reveal a variety of spruce trees, and the property will be mowed regularly. A new entrance to the Marble-Van Haelewyn-Richards and Sackett Preserves has been created on DeForest Road near Ridgefield Road, and a new map kiosk has been erected at another DeForest Road entrance to the preserves. Trustees will manage major trail work in the Harrison Smith and Wheeler Preserves this fall and winter.

While no new properties were added to Land Trust holdings in 2008, negotiations continue with a number of landowners for significant property donations, below-market sales or easement protection. These properties will continue to be an important aspect of the Town's updated Plan of Conservation and Development.

Management: We are in our eighth year as a membership organization with almost 500 members. Our 2007-2008 campaign has received more than 450 new and renewed memberships to date. The Land Trust welcomes this support for its mission and activities. Trustee Bill Ziegler, who has led our membership campaigns most ably in recent years, decided last spring to retire from the Board and has done so effective October. Tom Walker has graciously agreed to take on membership responsibilities.

Trustees Tom Burgess, Jay Dulberg, Nick Lee, George Ongley and Joe Philbrick were re-elected to four-year terms by members at the February 2008 annual meeting. At a subsequent meeting Trustees re-elected Bruce Beebe, President, Charles Flynn and Robert Russell, Vice Presidents, Dawn Bennett Ladenheim, Treasurer and Nancy Faesy, Secretary. Steve White was elected to the Board at its October 2008 meeting.

Trustee Joe Philbrick has upgraded our Web site, and we are working to make available downloadable preserve trail maps. We urge members and others to visit (www.wiltonlandtrust.org) and e-mail us at inquiry@wiltonlandtrust.org if you would like to become a member and/or volunteer.

The Land Trust has been named for memorial gifts in the name of Nicholas Parisot who died last June. More than 100 donations have been received to date, and funds will be applied to projects suggested by Nick's parents reflecting his love of the outdoors.

Winner of the Wilton High School E. Dan Cappel Senior Scholarship Award last June was Jeffrey M. Noonan who will apply the \$1,000 award to his studies at Providence College. WHS Ecology Club leaders, Tyler Kamen and Ross Gormley, won the Land Trust's Junior Book Award.

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

Officers and Trustees, 2008

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