



Wilton Land Trust

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Conserving open space, restoring habitat,
and cultivating the next generation of
environmental stewards.

Wilton Land Trust
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Letter from the President

Dear Friends of the Wilton Land Trust,

2025 was a transformative year for the Wilton Land Trust. In May, we welcomed Whitney Beaman as our new Executive Director and opened the Land Trust's new home at Chestnut Meadows. Whitney quickly got to work strengthening and reorganizing the organization from her office in the barn, which has quickly become a powerful symbol of the Land Trust's future and a space for stewardship, collaboration, and community engagement.

In the fall, after stewardship days ended, we took time to reflect and work on our governance. We engaged a consultant to help us assess our organization against the best practices of other Connecticut land trusts. I am pleased to say that the report was favorable. We do some things well, but there are areas for improvement, and that will be part of our focus in the coming year. This assessment and our response will help strengthen the Land Trust as it looks to the future and continues to preserve and protect Wilton's open space.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not ask for your support. When you drive through our town, pause to take in some of the beautiful vistas and preserves we maintain. If you like what you see, enjoy walking through Slaughter Fields, birding at Schencks Island, hiking the Gregg Preserve, or taking a short walk at Chestnut Meadows, remember that we rely on member donations to maintain our 837 acres of open space. Help us keep Wilton the beautiful community it is by supporting the Wilton Land Trust.

I hope to see you on the trails this summer.

Craig E. Johnson
President

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Our Mission

To enhance the well-being of the Wilton community by preserving ecologically diverse open spaces and fostering meaningful connections with nature.

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of the Wilton Land Trust,

Since 1964, the Land Trust has been committed to preserving the landscapes that define Wilton. Today, we steward 86 preserves and safeguard 837 acres of forests, meadows, and waterways for future generations.

Over the past year, I have seen that commitment in action. Together, we strengthened stewardship efforts, improved trail access, completed our American Chestnut Orchard, and welcomed the community into the newly opened Daniel Offutt Barn at Chestnut Meadows. We mobilized hundreds of volunteers and expanded hands-on conservation and outdoor learning opportunities for youth.

As a community-supported nonprofit, everything we do, from trail maintenance to habitat restoration, is made possible by the dedication and generosity of the people of Wilton. We are neighbors clearing storm debris, students blazing trails, and colleagues planting trees.

Every accomplishment this year reflects the collective action of this town, and the work ahead will depend on that same spirit. Thank you all for being part of this work — for showing up, giving your time and resources, lending your expertise, and sharing your love of nature.

With gratitude,

Whitney Beaman
Executive Director





2025 By the Numbers



STEWARDED

837 ACRES ACROSS
86 PRESERVES



ENGAGED

670 PEOPLE AT
18 EVENTS



MAINTAINED

15 MILES
OF TRAILS



RESTORED

280 NATIVE TREES,
SHRUBS, AND FORBS

DEDICATED

250 VOLUNTEERS SPENT
1600 HOURS

Milestones

Daniel Offutt Barn Open

The Daniel Offutt Barn at Chestnut Meadows has become the heart of our conservation, immersive learning, and community engagement efforts.



American Chestnut Orchard Complete

Once dominant in eastern forests, the American Chestnut is now the focus of regional restoration efforts. With 100 trees planted, our orchard supports national research and local education.



Wilton's First Firefly Sanctuary

Once common across summer meadows, fireflies are declining due to habitat loss and light pollution.

With the establishment of Wilton's first Firefly Sanctuary at Chestnut Meadows, we are restoring native habitat and creating safe breeding grounds for this beloved species.



Organizational Growth

This past year was one of meaningful momentum for the Wilton Land Trust, with steady, substantive progress across every dimension of our organization.

We welcomed a new Executive Director and brought fresh energy and perspective to our board by electing two new Trustees and five new Officers. With the future in mind, we offered three college internships to cultivate the next generation of environmental stewards and created a new part-time Community Engagement Coordinator role to expand our outreach.

Thanks to a Connecticut Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) grant from Santa Energy, we are outfitting the Daniel Offutt barn with an audiovisual system capable of supporting hybrid programming, allowing us to engage participants who cannot always join us in person.

Financially, the organization closed the year on a strong note, with reserve investments growing by 17 percent. This reflects both careful stewardship and favorable conditions, positioning the Wilton Land Trust with confidence and stability as we enter 2026 and beyond.

Connecting People to Nature

We engaged the community through 18 immersive learning and outreach events across Wilton, including:

Ask an Arborist: Guided by Master Arborist Chris Teter, hikers identified native tree species, learned indicators of forest health, and examined the challenges shaping our woodlands at the Marble/Van Haelewyn-Richards Preserve.

Owl Release: In partnership with Wildlife in Crisis, we welcomed two rehabilitated barred owls back to their native habitat at Chestnut Meadows, highlighting the critical connection between wildlife and protected open space.

Books & A Blanket: In partnership with Wilton Library and Wilton Go Green, families gathered at Chestnut Meadows for story time, upcycled crafts, and a short meadow walk—inspiring a love of reading, recycling, and nature.

Birds & Binoculars: Led by birding guide Joe Bear, participants observed peak migration at Schenck’s Island, learning to identify local and migratory species while deepening our understanding of avian habitat.

Butterfly Blitz: Led by entomologist Victor DeMasi, this hands-on program invited participants to gently net, identify, and release bees and butterflies while learning about the rich diversity of pollinators in our meadow.

A Trek Through Time: In partnership with Hillside Cemetery and Rediscovering History, this lantern-lit stroll across Chestnut Meadows led participants to the historic Old Section of the cemetery at sunset, where the graves of founding families and the stories that shaped Wilton came to life.



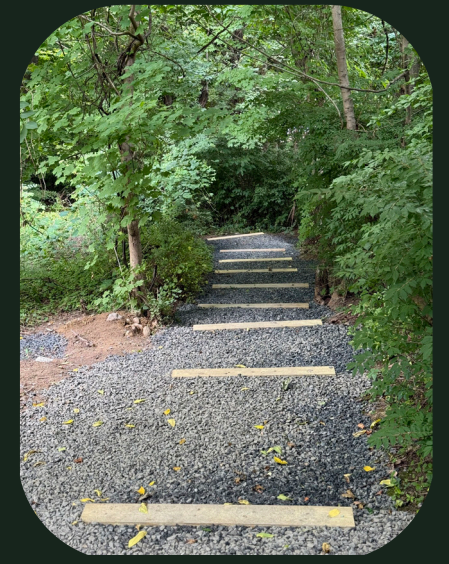
Explore our Woodlands and Wander our Meadows



Chestnut Meadows
13.5 acres



Gregg Preserve
92 acres



Harrison-Smith Preserve
25 acres

This Year We Planted:

American Hazelnut

American Sycamore

Black Chokeberry

Black Willow

Common Witch Hazel

High Bush Blueberry

Low Bush Blueberry

Northern Red Oak

Red Maple

Red Chokeberry

Red Twig Dogwood

Ruby Spice Summersweet

Shadblow Serviceberry

Silky Dogwood

White Oak





The Next Generation of Stewards

More than 30 high school and college students participated in Stewardship Sundays, Summer Stewardship, College Internships, and Scout Projects to:

- **Build** Forked-Tree Trail, complete with boardwalks and hand-painted signs
- **Construct** stairs to restore access to Harrison-Smith Preserve after a flood
- **Restore** habitat and manage the American Chestnut Orchard
- **Install** a “little library” of nature guidebooks to inspire visitors
- **Implement** GIS software to map and monitor preserves
- **Digitize** historic land records dating back to the 1960’s

Stewardship Sundays

More than 40 volunteers gathered throughout spring and fall to:

- **Complete** the 100-tree American Chestnut Orchard
- **Plant** a pollinator garden around the Daniel Offutt Barn
- **Beautify** the entrance to Chestnut Meadows with daffodils
- **Restore** habitat along the Norwalk River at Schenck’s Island

Partnership in Action: ASML

More than 220 volunteers spent over 1,500 hours restoring habitat at Gregg Preserve—clearing vast stands of invasive burning bush and planting native tree and shrub species — making the Wilton Land Trust one of ASML’s top ten charities by volunteer hours globally.



“Our financial health is strong thanks to every Member who gave. The Wilton Land Trust depends on donations to preserve and steward the open spaces that define Wilton's character. Your continued support ensures this legacy continues.”

-Mark Rice, Treasurer

Thank YOU!

The generosity of our 323 members powers our impact.

This report gratefully acknowledges gifts made between September 1, 2024, and December 31, 2025.

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• Joe Philbrick

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