



NORWALK LAND TRUST NEWS

norwalklandtrust.org | Fall 2009

Annual Meeting 2009 Guest Speaker: Chris Bosak Co-Managing Editor for *The Hour*

by Lorraine Dowdey



Chris Bosak
Co-Managing Editor, *The Hour*

The Annual Meeting 2009 promises to be a memorable event of stimulating conversation for wildlife and nature aficionados as well as an epicurean delight. It will provide participants with lively and provocative remarks from this year's special guest speaker, the bird watching and nature columnist for *The Hour* newspaper Chris Bosak, who also serves as the paper's business editor and co-managing editor.

He has written more than 500 columns on the joys of bird- and nature-watching, often incorporating his adventures with his two young boys, Andrew and William. Each column by Bosak includes a photograph he has taken in the New England wilds or simply out of his window at the feathered friends dining at his birdfeeders.

"I lived in Vermont right out of college. Working second shift hours, I had little to do during the day other than walk or mountain bike in the woods," said Bosak.

"Looking back, I realize how fortunate I was to be in such a situation. Those years fostered my love of nature and my passion for wildlife has only grown since,"

he added.

Chris Bosak appreciates all bird species, but counts hooded mergansers, American oystercatchers, common loons and great blue herons among his favorites. His favorite wildlife quarry, however, is moose a species he tracks down during an annual camping trip in New Hampshire.

He realizes that his love of nature, which he is now passing on to his boys, would never be possible without organizations such as the Norwalk Land Trust and others that appreciate the value of open space. According to Bosak: "Without protected open space and land saved in perpetuity for wildlife, nature-watchers like myself would have nowhere to go to enjoy our hobbies. More importantly, the birds, mammals, reptiles and other critters that live on those lands would have nowhere to live. How sad it would be to lose more species

because they had nowhere to live." He continued, "Sure, many species have adapted to humans and our encroachment on their homes, but many more species depend on open space for survival." Chris Bosak is looking forward to an evening of indulgent conversations at this year's annual meeting.

SAVE THE DATE!

Monday October 26th Annual Meeting 2009

Set aside Monday, October 26th from 6:30- 9 PM for the Norwalk Land Trust's Annual Meeting. Once again this year, Mayor Richard A. Moccia will recognize the Land Trust for its accomplishments in the meeting being held in City Hall's Community Room. Chris Bosak, *The Hour* Newspaper nature columnist, business editor and co-managing editor will be the featured guest speaker. The event promises to be a lovely evening of stimulating discussions with a sumptuous array of food and beverages. So, get out your calendar and save the date!

Upcoming Norwalk Land Trust Board Member Election

Members of the Norwalk Land Trust Board of Directors are elected for three-year terms at our annual meeting. At the Norwalk Land Trust Annual Meeting in the Norwalk City Hall Community Room on October 26, the following people will stand for election for a term ending in 2012:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Rich Baskin | Midge Kennedy |
| Rich Henry | Kathy Siever |
| Peter Hynes | Roger Willcox |

Each of these people brings experience, energy, and valuable skills to our organization. We are thankful to have such great volunteers.

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The President's Message

by Marny Smith, President



Marny Smith

Finding the elusive volunteer to help watchdog and steward a Land Trust property has never been a problem on the Roton Avenue section of the Farm Creek Preserve. Tia and Ian Sidey moved to Roton in 2002 and immediately became fascinated by the creek and how best to care for it. It didn't take long for them to understand that the spartina alterniflora grasses growing in the creek bed were good for the health of the creek and that the phragmites australis growing nearer the road were not an asset to a wildlife preserve.

The Sideys invited their neighbors to join them as creek stewards, to conduct research about tidal creeks, to help keep it trash-free through regular cleanups, and to eradicate "exotic invasives" where necessary. Newsletters describing their efforts may be found at their FarmCreek.org website.

Silt from the last dredging of the Five Mile River harbor had been dumped between the edge of the creek and Roton Avenue. Phragmites is a "pioneer plant" that grows on disturbed soil. It thrives and other plants are quickly discouraged. Once the phragmites root system becomes established it is almost impossible to get rid of without using a chemical – glyphosate – recommended by the DEP. Neighbors did not want toxic herbicides used in the creek, however.

The Sideys applied for and received a substantial grant from Patagonia for their grass roots efforts. That, plus generous donations from neighbors and Trees and Trails NLT memberships provided enough money to hire Brian Bruni to cut back the phragmites once a month to discourage it from spreading further. High tide bush and groundsel and other more desirable native shrubs and trees like bayberry and wild crabapple now have a chance to grow. In fact, they are thriving, thanks also to this year's abundant rain.

Tia and co-volunteers Brenda Ashooh and Frani Taylor have kept the corridor along Roton looking like a peaceful preserve and wildlife habitat through diligent pruning. Ian Sidey and Bucky Taylor have wielded chainsaws as necessary. Passersby admire the Shasta daisies, Rosa Rugosa, Shadblow, Red twig Dogwood, Winterberry, and Viburnum thriving at the McKinley Street end of the creek. They are kept looking their best by this same crew of volunteers. We wish we could clone them for our other properties!

Thank you, Farm Creek volunteers. 🍃

Weathering the Economic Times

By Midge Kennedy, Treasurer

The Norwalk Land Trust is feeling the effects of the recession. While our existing members have been very loyal, our hope for growth in 2009 revenues has diminished. Support has waned on raising the \$550,000 balance for the Farm Creek Campaign.

There is an expense where members can help: our 'communication' cost. With two annual newsletters, and several membership letters and notices, printing and postage add up over the year. Bulk mail rates have increased 56% in 2009. Emailing some of this information including this newsletter would save thousands of dollars over time.

Please send your email address and other contact information to us at norwalkLT@optonline.net. We always appreciate your help. Let's hope for better times ahead. 🍃



The dedication of the granite bench to Allan McKissock, Jr. From left to right is state Senator Bob Duff, state Representative Chris Perone and NLT President Marny Smith.

Remembering Allan McKissock, Jr. NLT President from 1993 - 2003

by Peggy Holton, Vice President

The Farm Creek Preserve is an oasis of natural beauty for all seasons. Visitors are now able to enjoy the view from two new stone benches on the rise at 34 Sammis Street overlooking Farm Creek and its marshes. Both benches are of the granite natural to this area.

A plaque on the eastern bench celebrates Allan McKissock, Jr., President of the Norwalk Land Trust from 1993 through 2003. The bench was purchased with donations in his memory following Allan's death in 2005. The dedication on July 11, 2009 was a glorious morning, with many of Allan's descendents attending. Numerous birds and other wildlife could be seen or heard in the background – perhaps also cheering the man who did so much to protect their habitat. (The Natural Resources Inventory compiled by The Nature Conservancy in 1981 lists 54 species of birds sighted in the area, and the list continues to grow.)

Allan's involvement with the Farm Creek Preserve began in 1976, when a developer wanted to buy the Kulze property, channel Farm Creek from McKinley Avenue to the Sammis Street Bridge in an underground culvert, fill the land and build condominiums on it. Allan and a small band of local, dedicated conservationists were able to convince Mr. Kulze to donate the property along Roton Avenue to The Nature Conservancy instead. This pioneering group (The Farm Creek Committee of the Nature Conservancy) evolved into the Norwalk Land Trust. Title was passed to the Norwalk Land Trust in 1993. It has since become part of the 16 acre Farm Creek Preserve. Allan was there working for open space throughout Norwalk, always with a smile and a twinkle in his eye, until he stepped down in 2003. 🍃



Naming rights to the western bench pictured above located in Farm Creek is available. There is only \$550,000 to go to raise the \$4.5 million in the Campaign for Farm Creek Preserve.



Chuck Schoendorf

An Interview With Chuck Schoendorf, A Major Farm Creek Benefactor

Q Where did you grow up?

A I was born and raised in Albany, New York where I attended public schools.

Q When did you come to Norwalk and how long have you lived here?

A I've been in Norwalk 36 years. In 1973, I moved to a house on Devil's Garden Road off Rowayton Avenue. It was built in 1887 and was a crash course in old home ownership. But I loved it. From there, I moved to two other homes in Rowayton over the years.

Q What is your field of business?

A I have been a commercial insurance broker for over 30 years. My undergraduate degree was in Mechanical Engineering from Clarkson University. Following that, I received an MBA in Accounting & Finance at The University of Rochester. My first position after business school was with Price Waterhouse in Stamford. I had my own agency from 1983 until 1995 when I sold the business and went with it to Craig M. Ferguson & Co. in Stamford, which was since acquired by Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services. Gallagher recently relocated to 40 Richards Avenue, just up the road from here, a tick under 3 miles from home. I have no thoughts of retiring for at least ten years, maybe, when I will be 70.

Q Is there anything in your professional career that made you want to get involved in conservation?

A No. I just like to see things preserved in their original or natural state or form, no matter what it is; land, a building, a house, a car, everything. When I see land or buildings from a former era being leveled or developed, and transformed into something inconsequential or unattractive I cringe. And I ask myself, did that have to happen? That was literally the thought that made me offer 34 Sammis Street to the Norwalk Land Trust and forego the development and profit potential it represented.

Q What are your hobbies?

A My hobbies are really my passions; food, wine, and cars; three things that I can enjoy every day. I love to cook, to grow food and to eat food. Gardening is incredibly gratifying. As for wine, I cannot imagine having dinner without it.

I've been crazy about cars since I was 5 or 6. I have 5 collector cars. The newest is 25 years old. The others are between 40 and 60 years

old. They're great fun. I know, I'm a lucky dog. Right now, I am looking for a 2 cylinder Fiat 500 from the 60's to get me to work on Richards Avenue. The Mini Cooper I now have is barely warm when I arrive.

Q What inspired you to purchase 34 Sammis street?

A I first noticed the Hart property in the 70's, soon after moving here. How could you miss it? The stone villa and barn weren't like any other houses in Rowayton. And no house in Rowayton had so much land, especially on the Creek. Nor could anyone miss the Harts, trawling through town in those land yacht cars of theirs. They were quiet and reclusive people yet stood out like crazy. I'm told that lots of people had designs on the property but I must say I was not consciously one of them. What did happen was that I took an early morning walk in the winter of '06 and noticed a realtor's sign at the curb. It had come on the market that day and the asking price was \$3 million. I had no personal need or use for the property but knew it represented an incredible value so the next day I offered the full asking price. The response came back that they had eight offers and we should all come back in 48 hours with our highest and best offer with no contingencies for financing, environmental studies, or zoning. I thought hard and then bid \$4 million. Later that day I was told I won it by \$5,000.

Right after the closing, while thinking about the possibilities, it occurred to me that the place had remained so natural and undeveloped for so long that it would be great if it could remain as a park of some sort. Around that time Marny Smith of the Norwalk Land Trust (NLT) called and asked if I would consider giving them an easement to connect the two adjacent open spaces. I had no idea the NLT even existed, so I said I would sell the property to the District or the City, or the NLT, if 34 Sammis could permanently become a park. Marny said the NLT was the logical party but they had no money at all and that all of their land had been donated to them. I said what about raising the money from donations, as I believed Pinkney Park and Bayley Beach had been acquired that way years before? Soon after that the NLT came back to say they would give it a whack. And the rest is history, as they say.

Q How do you see 34 Sammis being used going forward?

A Going forward I would like to see the space continue to be as rustic as it is now, including the stone barn. The second floor, the door and the windows may need replacing but I can't see anything more than a sympathetic restoration. It never had insulation or HVAC and never should. I would like to see more examples of native vegetation around the property. Manicured lawns and gardens with ornamental trees and shrubs don't belong there. As for use of the space, I can imagine it as a special spot for passive use by painters, photographers, students, walkers, lookers and thinkers, to come and do their thing. And as we have seen, it also works well for Discovery Days and low key fund raising dinners or gatherings.

Q Do you plan to continue to be involved with the property?

A I'm delighted to remain active with 34 Sammis Street, whether it be in fund raising or helping with the house and grounds effort. With the Harts gone, I don't suppose anyone has spent more time over there than I have. I've visited the place several times a week most weeks for over two years. It was a great place to have owned and to visit, and it still is. 🍃

In-Kind Benefactors Are Essential to Norwalk Land Trust

The Norwalk Land Trust is the grateful beneficiary of gifts of services, expertise, and time from many people and businesses who care about open space. We happily recognize and applaud these contributors for 2009:

Individuals

Sarah Balsley
Heather Crawford
Penny and Charlie Carroll
Laure Dunne
Jean Fitzgerald
Andy Glazer
Marcia Glazer
Mindy Green
Stephen Maye
Don Nash
Margo Packer
Pamela Proctor
Chuck Schoendorf
Tia and Ian Sidey
Ann and Peter Tombros
Frank Varro
Barbara Wright
Ed Wright

Businesses / Organizations:

Brown and Company, Tree Specialists
CDC Landscaping and Carting LLC
Conservacion Patagonica
Fat Cat Pie Company
The Glazer Group
Oxygen Design, LLC
Pound Ridge Stone
Rowayton Library
Rowayton Seafood
The Total Printing Center

In addition, numerous volunteers have provided essential energy, muscle, and high spirits at clean-up days on land trust properties.

The Norwalk Land Trust is happy to recognize our nucleus of 2009 corporate members:

Daniel Minchik, D.D.S.
Rondo Music Society
Round Meadow Landscapes, Inc.
SmartEquip Corporation
TD Bank



Phragmites australis, the common reed, is a large perennial grass found in wetlands.

Invasion of the Invasives

By Tia Sidey, Farm Creek Volunteer

Seven years ago you could hardly walk along Roton Avenue by the Kulze Preserve without being swatted in the face by Phragmites (the tall grass with the purple plume) or an Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven) sapling. Slowly, with a number of volunteers, we have addressed some of the worst of these, while being very careful not to use any chemicals that could cause a problem to Farm Creek or Long Island Sound.

Brute force by many was used to remove the Rosa multiflora. Every year, Spring Trash Bash volunteers removed the Norway Maple saplings and carefully created spaces around the newly emerging Crabapple and Groundsel trees (Baccharis halimifolia) that were buried amongst the Phragmites. Professional help was needed to remove the Ailanthus trees (each of which can produce as many as 325,000 seeds a year) as well as the large Norway Maples. Both these species are allelopathic, which means they actually release chemicals into the soil that inhibit the growth of other plants. At present we are selecting appropriate plants to put into these newly opened spaces.

This summer, in an area by the Kulze Preserve sign, we have conducted a small study to see what would grow if the Phragmites was kept under control. No herbicides were used; we cut the Phragmites about every two weeks, hand cutting where necessary. The results have been amazing. Spartina patens and Distichlis (both indigenous grasses) are creeping up the bank of the creek, where they should be, and many High Tide Bushes (Iva frutescens) are now sprouting. This indigenous flora has shown that it will re-establish itself naturally where Phragmites is kept at bay. 🌿

Potpourri



The Norwalk Land Trust has created an Affinity Membership Program with TD Bank, successor in Norwalk to Commerce Bank. Any TD Bank depositor can designate his/her account to belong to the Program, and the Land Trust will receive benefits. There's no cost, and no loss of interest, for the depositor. It's an easy and no-cost way to improve the trails and trees of our properties. For more information call 846-6072.

Farm Creek on You Tube...

Rowayton resident and NBC Today Show senior producer Don Nash created a pro bono video on Farm Creek, which can be viewed on You Tube. It's 4 minutes and 23 seconds. The video takes a look at the history of Farm Creek in Rowayton and how a community came together to save that beautiful piece of property where wildlife and humans can co-exist, forever. Norwalk Land Trust president Marny Smith is the narrator.

NorwalkLandTrust.org

The NLT website has been reinvented, crammed with pictures, descriptions, info and links, and you're urged to have a look! Thanks to Scott Kuykendall of Oxygen Designs in East Norwalk for months of work and a great result.

Kayak Anyone?

Norwalk Land Trust takes to the water! For those who haven't been down under the Rowayton Market to "Down Under Kayaks" -- please find time to go. Kim Beaumont, owner of this collection of waterwear, boats and gear, cool people and kids and reggae music, is a great NLT supporter. Kim helped generate hundreds of thousands of dollars to The Norwalk Aquarium and other charities through Kayak For A Cause. Her staff will gladly arrange water tours of Farm Creek and the Preserve, and trips will benefit the Land Trust. Call 642-3660 or visit downunderkayaking.com -- or, better, go!

Discovery Day Coming Up

The third annual Discovery Day will be held from 1 to 4 PM on Sunday, November 1 at Farm Creek Preserve, 34 Sammis Street in Rowayton. Designed for kids, there will be a nature scavenger hunt, face painting, music, eats and more. Come see this beautiful preserve with its glorious fall colors. Please park at the Rowayton School on Roton Avenue, north of McKinley Street.



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For more information about NLT, please email us NorwalkLT@optonline.net.

Lorraine Dowdey, Editor



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The end of the year is already upon us. Please consider making a year-end contribution to the Norwalk Land Trust. Your gift to NLT is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Our Mission...

Norwalk Land Trust recognizes the need to balance nature and development. Acquiring and preserving land protects nature and benefits Norwalk's present and future generations. Norwalk Land Trust is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserve open space in Norwalk.

Please join the Norwalk Land Trust for 2010.

You are supporting continuing preservation of Norwalk open spaces! **Thank You.**

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Email _____
 Phone (____) _____

Norwalk Land Trust does not share your member information. All membership contributions are tax deductible.

2010 Annual Membership

- \$30 Individual
- \$50 Family
- \$100-\$249 Supporting
- \$250-\$499 Trees and Trails Contributor
- \$500-\$999 Trees and Trails Steward
- \$1,000+ Trees and Trails Leadership
- Other
- Matching gift form enclosed

Amount enclosed \$_____ check payable to Norwalk Land Trust or from my PayPal account \$_____ to norwalkLT@optonline.net

Please contact me about: property donation
 volunteering other

Please use my email address to send me electronic newsletters and communications: YES NO

Please clip and mail to: Norwalk Land Trust, PO Box 34, Norwalk CT 06853

For Corporate membership, please email norwalkLT@optonline.net or visit us at norwalklandtrust.org.