



NORWALK LAND TRUST NEWS

A newsletter of Norwalk Land Trust

www.norwalklandtrust.org

Spring 2009

A Word From the President: Marny Smith



Marny Smith

The word for this spring 2009 newsletter is THANKS!!! -to everyone who has enthusiastically joined in our fund-raising efforts to complete the Farm Creek Nature Preserve. In the two and a half years that 13 dedicated members of the Creeker Campaign Committee have met every Friday morning to give progress reports and plan events that will attract donations, we have been given votes of confidence by the support of many more people. Volunteers abound!

There has never been a shortage of artists in Norwalk and the village of Rowayton is a hotbed of creative people. Musician Dre Towe and her Sugar on Top band performed at our first Discovery Day. Children from artist Mindy Green's art classes donate darts and crafts to sell; Ed Wright, guitarist, made a CD of music inspired by Farm Creek and donated half the proceeds to the fund-raising effort; Caricaturist Tom Glover gave an afternoon of his time drawing over a hundred caricatures of Discovery Day visitors while guitarist Bill Knolman set the stage with his mellow singing. And now we have another gift of time and artistic talent - a story for children of all ages, A Farm Creek Fable, written and illustrated by Jean Fitzgerald.

Jean lived in a house on Farm Creek for over thirty years. She observed the comings and goings of the creek wildlife, the pecking order that held sway, and she came to know many of the birds and wild creatures well enough to understand their characters and behavior. Now in her eighties, to fill her time last summer, Jean began to write about a Cat and a Crow who become friends living near the little stone barn down on the creek. Depicting the characters she had come to know, she wanted to demonstrate that animals have their own society and even the oddest pairings can get along.

The story comes alive with her charming pen and ink drawings of Cat, Crow, King Fisher, Rackety Raccoon, Lord and Lady Heron and Miss Bittern to name a few. We hope to have A Farm Creek Fable printed into a book this spring and will be selling it as yet another way of bringing in cash to support our effort to finally retire the mortgage on this property. Stay tuned..

And as I said, THANKS!!!

UPDATE: The State of Connecticut

By Senator Bob Duff/ NLT Advisory Board

Connecticut, like the rest of the country, is currently facing the most difficult economic conditions in recent history. While the legislature has made significant cuts to many state programs — and more cuts in the future are a sure thing—we must make sure that we're cutting wisely, that we're positioning our state for future growth and that we're preserving those very important things that clearly define who we are as a state and community.

“ The many letters and e-mails sent by Norwalk Land Trust members to the governor and state legislators demonstrated the significance of this program, which serves as a model for the rest of the country. ”

This January, funding provided for various programs—including open space preservation—through the state Community Investment Act was preserved for the current fiscal year. The many letters and e-mails sent by Norwalk Land Trust members to the governor and state legislators demonstrated the significance of this program, which serves as a model for the rest of the country. As we continue to cope with the budget crisis in Hartford, your ideas are important, and I'd urge all members to continue to communicate with state officials about this important program.

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Chasmars Pond

The Latest Acquisition

By Peter Law

Due to the generosity of Wendy and James McPartlan, the undeveloped parcel of land stretching from the rear of 337 Rowayton Avenue to the edge of Chasmars Pond is now under a conservation easement held by the Norwalk Land Trust. This is the 26th property to be acquired by the NLT through ownership or conservation easement, bringing the total protected acreage to 87.7. As with all NLT properties, this new acquisition will remain as open space in its natural state in perpetuity.

Norwalk Land Trust incorporated in 1973. Its 26 properties range from .1 to over 16 acres. Four are conservation easements. With the exception of 34 Sammis Street, all owned properties have been donated.

Gifts of title or conservation (no-build) easement can be win-win transactions for everyone involved. The donor benefits from lower property taxes, and a tax deduction for donating to a 501 (C) (3) entity; NLT benefits from the new land in its care; and nature benefits because another natural area has been saved from potentially polluting development. For more information email us at NorwalkLT@optonline.net. 🌿

Our Farm Creek Challenge

By Midge Kennedy/Treasurer

The Farm Creek Preserve is a beautiful and serene place for Norwalk residents; it provides protection for the flora and fauna living in this tidal estuary, and to the salt marshes and mudflats so necessary to the health of Long Island Sound.

During the past two and a half years the Norwalk Land Trust has faced its biggest challenge ever: the \$4.5 million price tag on 34 Sammis Street, the last property to be acquired to complete the Farm Creek Preserve. If it had been sold for development there could have been three houses right in the middle of 14 other acres of open space. Today we have \$850,000 left to raise – a difficult sum anytime, but more so than ever in today's economy.



Farm Creek Preserve

Last September, a Challenge Grant was initiated by The Tombros Foundation, which will match 50% (up to \$500,000) of the next \$1 million raised. If we take full advantage of this challenge it will put us over the top!! Donations have come in all sizes; but NOW is an opportunity to make a donation half again as big as you might have made. 🌿

For more information and to download a donation form go to the Norwalklandtrust.org website and click on Farm Creek Campaign.

Where are the Norwalk Land Trust Properties?

Zip	Norwalk Area	Property Count	# of Acres	% of All Acres ^o
06850	West Norwalk	4	11.5	13%
06851	Cranbury / Cross Street	9	32.9	38%
06853	Rowayton	6	17.0	19%
06854	Central / South Norwalk	<u>7</u>	<u>26.4</u>	<u>30%</u>
		26	87.8	100%

Four are conservation easements held by the Norwalk Land Trust on land owned by other parties. The rest are owned by the Trust outright, and all but one were gifts.

Some of these properties are easily accessible, and each year we maintain and add trails for easy walking and exploring (dogs on leashes please). Other places are primarily wetlands, serving valuable functions such as filters for water run-off and underground aquifers, and providing welcome homes for wildlife. We invite volunteers to join in our property clean-ups and project workdays. Check the website for details.

Save the Dates

**May 9, June 13,
July 11, and August 8**

A series of Open House at Farm Creek begins this spring from 10am until 12pm on May 9, June 13, July 11, and August 8.

These events are open to the public and will include walking tours, nature talks, art exhibits, food and refreshments and much more! Visit the website NorwalkLT@optonline.net for more information.



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Stewardship Corner

Spring Cleaning...

By Kate Davies

As the weather warms, it is time to shake off our winter layers, get outside, and enjoy the fresh air, brightening sun and the reemergence of spring in the natural areas around us. This is a great time to visit our Land Trust sites and check to see how they have fared over the winter and how things are growing in the new warmth. As stewards of the parcels that have been entrusted to us, we are interested in everything that happens on our properties.

While the cold and snow which made exploring difficult during the winter are receding, the next weeks present the challenge of water in its more liquid forms: puddles, vernal pools, streams, swamps and deep, gushy mud. Many of our properties include significant wetlands, and this is the time of the year when they are likely to be most true to the name: most-wet. In fact, many wetlands may only look wet during spring, and some, not even then. A natural wetland is defined NOT by the presence or absence of water, but by the types of soils found on the site. Different soils support different communities of organisms, from the tiniest bacteria living in the soil, to the frogs and salamanders, to the mosses and lichens, to the certain plants that thrive in higher or lower concentrations of moisture and oxygen, and the animals that prefer the leafy privacy of the woods. The short, fat spears of skunk cabbage are an early spring marker of a nice, juicy wet swamp. Be sure to wear your boots!!

The first things we look for are the THINGS that do not belong there – the mostly man-made things that have escaped their proper disposal systems and rolled, blown or been tossed out into what might look like unoccupied pieces of property. Some of our discoveries are truly amazing: it is hard to imagine how so many tires get so very far from any car, and how very many nickels for so very many plastic bottles somehow escape collection in easier places.

“Many of our properties include significant wetlands, and this is the time of the year when they are likely to be most true to the name: most wet.”



Skunk cabbage growing out of a puddle on NLT property.

Watch the web site for announcements of visits to a site near you, bring gloves and a big garbage bag and you may find the most surprising thing of the day!!

After the leaves have started to emerge, we are able look for PLANTS that do not belong. Some plants are identified as “alien invasive species” – this means that they are plants that originally evolved somewhere else, but once established here have been taking over and crowding out the original inhabitants. This is a problem because the original plants provided food and shelter for the original animals, birds and butterflies. The Monarch butterfly, when it is still a caterpillar, only eats certain varieties of native milkweeds. If a spreading thicket of Multiflora Rose smothers the milkweed, the caterpillars cannot find food. Surprisingly, many of these problem plants start out as ornamental plants sold in garden centers and nurseries, like the common Barberry and the Burning Bush, both popular for their brilliant scarlet fall foliage. As it turns out, both these shrubs are all too successful outside the garden where the seeds are spread by passing birds. Down by the shore, the tall, graceful plumes of the Phragmites reeds are all but ineradicable and they displace the smaller native Spartina grasses which have provided the right habitat for the tiny creatures who live in the salt marsh.

Volunteers are welcome to help with property clean-up. To sign-up, send an email to norwalkLT@optonline.net.

Upcoming Spring Clean-Up

April 25

9:30 am Farm Creek

(between McKinley and Sammis St. bridge) — meet @ 50 Roton Avenue (Farm Creek.org will provide coffee and gloves for volunteers.)

10:00 am 34 Sammis Street

Bring your leaf rake. NLT will provide paper leaf bags and gloves. For additional spring clean-up schedules check the NLT website.

Norwalk Land Trust News is published twice a year by Norwalk Land Trust. For more information about NLT send an email to NorwalkLT@optonline.net.

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