

The Warren Conservator

Fall 2011



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From The President's Desk



The past six months have produced a breath-taking pace of growth and constructive change at the Land Trust. Happily, we are dealing with two potential easement acquisitions that we hope to have completed by the end of 2011. Unhappily, we said good-bye with sincere thanks and appreciation to Ann Martindale, William De Seta, and Tom Paul. All of these Board members were instrumental in advising, writing for, and leading the Land Trust for the past decade and their contributions steered our work in a responsible and thoughtful manner. We will miss their leadership and multi-faceted influence for a long time. The Board has been active in recruitment and we hope to confirm promising new members at the November annual meeting. We have used several yardsticks to seek members with diverse talents in organizational skills, experienced land stewardship, and financial acuity to guide us in the years to come.

In August, the Land Trust received \$5000 in funding in conjunction with our application to the Land Trust Alliance/ Connecticut Land Conservation Council Challenge Grant Fund. Our intent is to apply this money to our three-year

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Warren Land Trust Fetes Its Supporters

A crisp early autumn day was the perfect complement to a warmly festive atmosphere as the Warren Land Trust held its annual cocktail party thanking supporters and land donors. A mix of local business people, representatives of town organizations, writers, artists, retirees and part-time residents mingled with Land Trust board members in the garden of Vice President Rebecca Neary and her husband Jim Neary, who hosted the event at their home near the center of Warren. Some seventy guests enjoyed wine and hors d'oeuvres



Land Trust Supporter Mark Rosenthal (L) in conversation with President Ted Morse (R).



Land Trust Director Jack Baker describes the benefits of conservation easements.

catered by The Rooster Tail and congregated around the stone patio and outdoor fireplace. Board members were pleased to see so many friends and neighbors present. It was also gratifying to have in attendance both outgoing and prospective members of the Board of Directors, representing the Land Trust's past accomplishments and its future.

Although the gathering on September 17th was primarily a celebratory one, representatives from the board of directors took the opportunity to update supporters on the trust's recent activities. Warren Land Trust President Ted Morse described work the board was undertaking to systematize its policies and procedures as a prelude to applying for accreditation by the national Land Trust Alliance and Jack Baker, a member of the board's Land Acquisition

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From The President's Desk (Con't.)

effort to gain formal accreditation by the National Land Trust Alliance.

We were blessed with a beautiful setting at Jim and Rebecca Neary's home on Melius Road to have a party to thank the many donors who have supported us in the past year. A separate article and pictures appear in this newsletter.

We are striving to establish greater engagement with the town administration in various ways and expect to have more information to share with you as those efforts bear fruit. For example, in the spring we will coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Commission on the town cleanup and swap meet organized to commemorate Earth Day. We have found that there are many areas where we can be mutually supportive. Our desire is to become more knowledgeable about land-related issues of concern to the community and make stronger connections throughout the town. Although our primary mission is to acquire

conservation easements and land donations, we also desire to foster the relationship between community members and our natural environment. Some of the projects we are undertaking are long-term. The accreditation process, certainly, has reminded us that it can be difficult to accomplish conservation goals in a short period of time. Working with new partners and with different constituencies, however, can only strengthen and broaden support for our goals. Before every decision, we always ask "who will benefit from this and who could be hurt by this." In this way, the clear winner will be the Town of Warren as we work in partnership with a community that values a high quality of life and land for the next generation and ourselves.

We hope to see you at our annual meeting in November and hope that you will express any ideas that we could implement for the improvement of our natural surroundings.

Ted Morse, President

Update on the Accreditation Process

By: Dan Hulseberg

The accreditation process is in full swing. As we reported in the Spring 2011 issue, the "Land Trust Standards and Practices" established by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission were adopted by the Warren Land Trust as an initial step toward accreditation.

The Warren Land Trust has since embarked on, and in fact completed, a comparative assessment of our current policies and procedures with the adopted Standards and Practices. To facilitate an unbiased and effective assessment, the Warren Land Trust enlisted the services of Manes Consulting L.L.C., which has assisted a number of land trusts throughout Connecticut with similar objectives.

The assessment involved a candid and exhaustive review by Manes Consulting of virtually all aspects of our organization. In this regard, the assessment included the collection and rigorous inspection of relevant



documentation, including our bylaws, written policies, financial records, and meeting minutes. Additionally, in-depth and personal interviews were held with board members to evaluate our practices and procedures, such as the selection, acquisition and stewardship of land parcels and easements.

However, the assessment also afforded a valuable educational

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A Pleasant Encounter with May Brawley Hill

This article continues a series on the Warren Land Trust leadership and membership.

May Brawley Hill, one of the "founding mothers" of the Warren Land Trust has been an integral part of the growth, preservation, and vision for the town of Warren. May moved to Warren in 1975, and with her family purchased and developed 80 acres on Brick School road while raising 30 sheep! May grew up and was schooled in Salem, North Carolina. She graduated from Salem College in Winston Salem where she majored in History of American Art. As well as museum catalogue essays in her field, she has written three books on American gardens.

As with so many citizens of Warren, her family was attracted by the town's rural simplicity, openness, and quality of life while bringing up her children. The specter of the Iroquois Pipeline threatened the Northwest Corner



in the middle 1980s and the Town of Warren was not exempt. The potential damage that callous development with negligible concern for the environment would cause spurred many residents to organize and create organizations such as the Warren Land Trust. May joined her neighbor Nancy Binns and others - including Land Trust founder Dorothy

Maier - to forge ahead, and soon the Land Trust became a reality!

This enthusiastic group sought to preserve, protect, and maintain a quality of life that had become synonymous with the Northwest Corner. May relates that at first the Land Trust board meetings were informal. For the first decade, when she served as secretary, she would take notes, type them on a manual typewriter, and send the minutes of each meeting out to the members. Hard as it is to believe, these were pre-computer days, but as May related, "things got done, and done with passion."

Together with Dorothy Maier, May serves as an invaluable bridge between the Land Trust's origins and a present-day situation which finds us with

substantial eased and fee properties and robust financial health. May related that she has felt "re-energized" by the Trust's activity of the past few years and that "there is a really impressive group of new people on the Board."

At the conclusion of the interview, May mused about the future as she discussed the feelings we have for the whole town. "So much is happening in the country right now which is not good, but rather polarizing and spiteful, why not keep our own local situation in order with good values and decency?" Why not, indeed? Thank you May Brawley Hill for doing just that!

Ted Morse

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Warren Land Trust will be held on Saturday, November 19th, 2011 at 9AM at The Academy, Sackett Hill Road. All Land Trust members are invited and encouraged to attend and participate. The meeting should last approximately one hour. Among the issues on the agenda: President Ted Morse will provide a general update of Land Trust activities, Treasurer Barbara Page will report on our finances, and Accreditation Committee Chair Dan Hulseberg will describe our progress toward accreditation by the national Land Trust Alliance. We hope to see you on November 19th.

The WLT currently holds over 542 acres under permanent protection. IF YOU AREN'T A MEMBER OF THE WARREN LAND TRUST, WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN NOW!!

Becoming a Member of The Warren Land Trust is easy. Simply cut off this page and send it to our mailing address below, along with your check. We will send you a receipt along with our thanks for your generous, 100% tax deductible contribution. Please include your name and address and choose the type of membership you would like:

____ Family Membership \$25

____ Land Protector \$100

____ Land Caretaker \$300

____ Land Conservator \$500

____ Land Steward \$1,000

____ Land Grantor \$2,500

Please make checks payable to: The Warren Land Trust, Inc.

MAIL THIS FORM AND CHECK TO: The Warren Land Trust, Inc. 140 Town Hill Road, Warren, CT 06754

**Please make any necessary corrections to your name and address
on the mailing panel and submit to the WLT.**

Land Trust Board Participates in Forestry Management Seminar

While most members of the Land Trust Board were sipping wine and chatting with supporters at our annual cocktail party on September 17th, Tim Angevine was in the middle of a four-day seminar in forest and wildlife management at the Yale Forestry Camp in Great Mountain Forest, Norfolk, CT. This volunteer program, known as the Coverts Project (a covert being a thicket providing sheltering cover for wildlife), is sponsored by the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, the state Department of Environmental Protection and the Highstead Arboretum in Redding, CT. The project affords owners of woodlands an opportunity to learn more about their forests and the wildlife residing there; in exchange, seminar attendees agree to share what they have learned with others in their community. According to its organizers, the program's objectives are two-fold: to help landowners understand why and how management can enhance wildlife habitat and improve forest health and productivity; and to inspire and help landowners pass their knowledge on to their peers.

Some twenty-five people of all ages and from all over CT attended the seminar, which was led by Professor Tom Worthley of the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Department of Forestry. Topics covered included basics of forest and wildlife ecology; understanding forest growth; enhancing wildlife habitat for grouse, woodcock, songbirds, turkey and other wildlife; a guide to stewardship planning; and developing an outreach program for effective communication. Sessions were held indoors and out.

In addition to volunteering to help landowners make informed decisions about their woodland, the Coverts Cooperators (as the seminar graduates are called) agree to provide a local information session, open to the public and aimed at creating a forest management plan of action that will enhance wildlife habitats. Warren Coverts Co-operators from this year and years past will be working on this group project, coordinated by former Land Trust board member and Coverts Co-operator Jed Struckus. Despite having

to miss the party, Tim Angevine felt the weekend was well-spent: "As a Land Trust Director," he said, "the program gave me a much greater knowledge base when looking at the properties we manage, and helped me to think about various opportunities to actively manage certain of our parcels to create more potential wildlife habitat."



*Land Trust Supporters enjoy the annual Donor Thank-you Party.
L to R, Larry Hendricks, Nancy Scofield, Marylyn Hendricks.*

WLT Fetes Its Supporters (Con't.)

and Stewardship Committee, briefed attendees on the conservation easement process and its benefits. In concluding comments, Ms. Neary pointed out that as one of Connecticut's smaller and more rural communities, Warren presents a special opportunity for managed development and preservation of open space and agricultural land, an opportunity that the Land Trust will work in partnership with the Town of Warren to maximize.

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We're on the web:
www.warrenlandtrust.org

Warren Land Trust Mission Statement

The Warren Land Trust is an advocacy group dedicated to the preservation of the rural character of Warren. Its mission is to preserve farmland, open space, natural and endangered resources such as wetlands, forests and wildlife habitats, to encourage outright gifting of land for permanent protection and the use of conservation easements to preserve open space.

SPOTLIGHT ON LAND TRUST HOLDINGS

The Sunset Ponds Preserve

By: Bill DeSeta and Rebecca Neary • Photo: Bill DeSeta

Located off Cunningham Road in a large vale that encompasses wetlands and swamp, Sunset Ponds was acquired in 1991 as a gift from the New Milford Savings Bank. The 17.09-acre parcel gift is significant for the totality of both aquatic and land species supported by the swampy pond and its adjoining forest land. The pond supports sunfish, brown trout, bass, turtles, crayfish, numerous frog species and snakes. The surrounding forest is home to white tailed deer, raccoon, fox, rabbits, shrews, voles, bats and the occasional bear. Numerous wetland plant species densely populate the marshland.

This was one of the first acquisitions of the then two year-old Warren Land Trust, and was in some ways a more complicated transaction than other subsequent easements or land donations. The property in question was originally purchased from the New Milford Savings bank in 1989 by one party, which then proceeded to make application for a subdivision. The Bank,



however, was the entity donating the eased parcel, which was in turn signed off on by a third party which had purchased one of the subdivision plots. The relatively complex process was negotiated by Dorothy Maier, then President, with assistance by local lawyer David Miles, who was at that time a Land Trust Director.

Update on the Accreditation Process (Con't.)

opportunity for the Warren Land Trust. An initial assessment seminar was held with all board members to discuss in detail the requirements and expectations of each of the adopted Standards and Practices. This initial assessment seminar was graciously hosted by Cliff and Mo Jones at the Rooster Tail Inn. A second seminar was held with the board at the conclusion of the assessment to highlight the findings and recommendations for next steps.

As a result of the assessment, the Warren Land Trust has developed a work plan for the coming year to implement the recommendations toward accreditation. Separate committees have been established and tasked with action items in support of these recommendations. Additionally, we are pleased to report that the Warren Land Trust was awarded a \$5000 grant by the William and Mary Greve Foundation in conjunction with our application to the Connecticut Land Trust Challenge Fund. These funds will be used to help develop and implement our new policies for governance and land stewardship.

We remain excited about the accreditation process and prospects. This will be a time consuming and expensive effort, but certainly worth the investment. We will be undertaking special fundraising efforts in the coming year and appreciate in advance any support you can provide. Special thanks to Connie Manes for her tireless efforts, candid observations and insightful guidance.

