



The Warren Conservator

Fall 2017

President's Letter



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

With its cooler temperatures and colorful foliage, Fall is a very busy time for New England land trusts. That has certainly been the case for the Warren Land Trust - between events and our regular board meetings, we have had something on the calendar every weekend since Labor Day. If you were unable to join us, we hope you will learn more about what we've been up to from this newsletter or our newly updated website, or by attending our annual meeting on November 18th (more information below).

Most of this programming celebrates the natural resources and beauty surrounding us today. Some of it celebrates our history. But one recent event - a lecture I attended on October 15th - was aimed squarely at the future. Coordinated by Small Area Land Trusts of NW Connecticut, the talk's title was decidedly un-sexy: "Economic Growth and Land Conservation." But the topic is a timely and important one, as relevant to our corner of Connecticut as on the national level. The speaker was Professor Dan Esty, founder of Yale's Center for Business and Environment and director of its Center for Environmental Law and Policy. A significant aspect of his career involves an effort to reframe the historic tension between land conservation and economic development, seeking instead balance and mutually reinforcing benefit.

A number of Professor Esty's suggestions were big-picture: reduce government regulation in favor of economic incentives for environmentally friendly corporate behavior; encourage investment in environmentally sustainable technologies; employ big data to better understand the relation of economic actors to the environment. But he also offered suggestions for our local land trusts. These included reflecting on the desirability of balancing land conservation and economic growth in our own communities; making a compelling case for the value - including the potential economic value - of land conservation; and taking a long-term perspective, both economically and environmentally. He also underscored the importance of partnerships and dialogue: between land trusts and business/economic organizations, between rural and urban communities, and among conservation organizations.

Our mission, of course, is land conservation and protecting the rural character of our town - and we are dedicated to it. At the same time, we recognize the importance of a community that is dynamic and vibrant. There are no easy answers ahead, and the path forward from intention to action is not a clear one. But it seems a path worth exploring as we seek a future that respects and protects our town's environment and natural resources, while also supporting its economic well-being.

Sincerely,

Rebecca

WARREN LAND TRUST

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Warren Land Trust Mission Statement

The Warren Land Trust is a conservation organization 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.

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Notice of Annual Meeting

WLT Annual Meeting Features Presentation and Visit to our Newest Preserve

The Annual Meeting of the Warren Land Trust will be held on Saturday, November 18th, 2017 at 9:30AM at the Warren Town Hall, 50 Cemetery Road. All Land Trust members are encouraged to attend and participate. Non-members are also welcome to attend - this is an excellent opportunity to learn about our conservation work! The business portion of the meeting should last approximately one hour. We will summarize the year's undertakings and our plans for 2018.

Following the annual meeting, enjoy refreshments and learn about the features and history of our newest parcel - the Willis Tanner Farmland Preserve, on Above All Road. We will then celebrate this recent acquisition with a walk on the path around the farm field's perimeter - a great way to enjoy a late fall day under the open skies of one of the highest points in Warren.

Questions? Contact us at info@warrenlandtrust.org.

Housatonic Heritage Walk: The Radar Station at Above All State Park

This year's Housatonic Heritage Walk – co-sponsored with the Warren Historical Society – provided something a little different. Instead of a challenging hike or visit to a remnant of our colonial past, we took a short walk to a nondescript, graffiti-embellished concrete block building set amid tall weeds.

Why lead unsuspecting hikers to this unattractive and downright spooky place? It may not be charming or picturesque, but this site represents an important part of our local history. The bunker-like building was part of a radar station in the SAGE (Semi Automatic Ground Environment) Air Defense network, operational from 1957-1968 – the height of the Cold War.



In January 1928 the State Park and Forest Commission purchased property for the park from Charles Stanley of New Britain for \$560. Additional acreage was donated by Seymour Strong, whose family owned much surrounding land. Visiting the park in 1929, a Hartford Courant writer enthused “before its commanding summit lies a vision of rolling hills for miles in every direction...It is as yet entirely undeveloped...as an object of a hike it is one of the finest in the state.” Today, the parcel remains largely undeveloped, but is thickly forested, with most long views obscured.

In 1957 the park's radar station joined a massive system of computers linking similar stations across the US – a safety net protecting against Soviet nuclear air attack, a threat that felt frighteningly real at a time when the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still fresh. Warren was a “gap filler” station, providing low altitude coverage out to 65 miles. The tower is gone, but the remaining main building once held radar equipment, while the back room housed a generator.

In its time, the SAGE network was, according to MIT scholars, the “most grandiose systems engineering effort and the largest electronic system ever contemplated” – a precursor to the internet. Hundreds of radar stations transmitted signals over phone lines to 24 direction centers; computers would process incoming data to send targeting information to air bases ready to intercept approaching bombers and launch surface-to-air missiles.

By the late 1960s, new technologies rendered the SAGE system obsolete. The radar station was abandoned, the tower taken down. The site is only sporadically maintained; we are grateful to Pete and Will Brodhead for clearing the path to and around it. Local historian Peter Vermilyea has written evocatively about Litchfield County's “hidden history:” we are glad that he and so many others were present to help us and WHS reveal a key piece of that history!

Top: On the trail to the old radar tower site.

Bottom: The radar tower and equipment building as it was in the mid-1960s.



Fall Festival

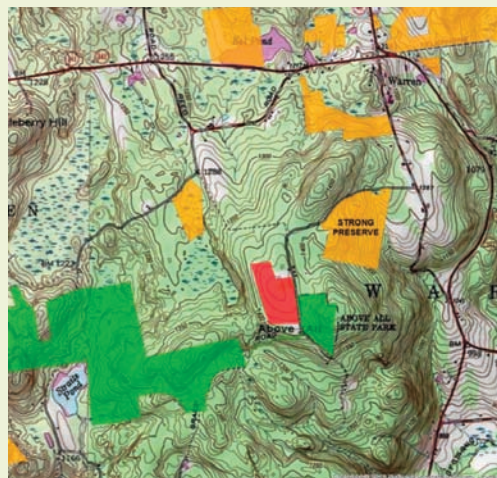
As is tradition, the Warren Land Trust was represented at the Fall Festival over Columbus Day weekend. Festival visitors from Warren and well beyond stopped by to look at our maps, enter our prize drawing, and sample a land trust trail cookie. Thanks to Angevine Farm, The Smithy, and Litchfield Distillery for donating great prizes. Warren resident Martha Winkel, who won the Smithy gift basket, certainly seems pleased! And thanks as well to those board members who set up and took down the charmingly rustic, but pretty darn heavy and unwieldy land trust Fall Festival booth!

Warren resident Martha Winkel



SPOTLIGHT ON LAND TRUST HOLDINGS: Introducing - The Willis Tanner Farmland Preserve

We are excited to report that earlier this Fall we received a donation of 25 acres on Above All Road: the Willis Tanner Farmland Preserve. This open field at one of the highest points in town is comprised of prime farmland soils, and is a foraging and nesting habitat for local avian life. Development rights were previously conveyed to the CT Department of Agriculture, and the property has been farmed with hay and corn. The parcel will remain farmland under our ownership; there is also a passive recreational trail around the field's perimeter, which makes a pleasant destination for an easy, peaceful walk. The preserve is also located in close proximity to the WLT's Strong Preserve, also on Above All Road, and Above All State Park, which was the location of this year's Housatonic Heritage Walk. We are grateful to Patricia Tanner Downes for this donation. The preserve is named after her father, Willis Tanner, who served as Warren's First Selectman for an astonishing 31 years – from 1948-1979. It was under his tenure in that office that the town acquired Warren Woods and the town recreation area on Lake Waramaug.



Earth's Palate Farm

In early October the Board of the Warren Land Trust met with enthusiastic young farmers Renee Giroux and Kevin MacPherson, who now manage land on a WLT conservation easement on Town Hill Road. All concerned are strong supporters of environmentally friendly local farms and pastures.

Renee and Kevin gave a tour of the property they are calling Earth's Palate Farm. Renee is superbly qualified for her work, with degrees and certification in holistic and natural horticulture, and over 20 years of experience. Her son attends the Warren Primary School. Kevin combines ingenuity and great skill with his hands; for example, he is currently constructing a moveable chicken coop on wheels.



Renee Giroux and Kevin MacPherson

At the moment, Renee and Kevin are growing hydroponic greens and raising chickens for eggs and meat. They have plans to add pigs, sheep and other animals. They observed that the property's many stone walls show that the land was used for animal grazing in the past and is perfectly suited for it. They plan to have sheep and pigs graze and forage in areas further out on the property, as farmers in the past did. A moveable fence will allow animals to relocate once an area becomes overgrazed.



Hydroponic greens

Future plans include greenhouses for earth-grown plants; developing an apple, pear, cherry and nut orchard; and creating an herb garden so Renee can make tinctures to enrich the soil and keep trees and plants healthy and disease-free.

In addition to his other skills, Kevin is a professional pastry chef hoping to apply his talent as a baker at the farm. Board members present had the good fortune to sample the products of his expertise and can happily endorse his talent.

Renee is also a founding member of the NWCT Food Hub, whose mission is to facilitate collection, distribution and marketing of local farmers' produce, increasing their capacity and access to buyers. For their part, buyers should benefit from easier access to high-quality, locally grown food — with the added benefit of keeping business in the Northwest Corner and reducing transportation costs.

Hike and Harvest Picnic at the Mullas'

The Warren Land Trust kicked off a busy fall season with an early September hike and harvest picnic graciously hosted by Adil and Zarinna Mulla, proceeds from which benefited the land trust's land conservation and programming efforts. Attendees were treated to a walk through the many highlights of the Mullas' property, consisting in part of a conservation easement protected from development and stewarded by the Warren Land Trust. We visited an old quarry; the longtime refuge of "the Russian hermit;" remnants of a former Christmas tree farm; and ruins of a colonial-era homesite whose ownership remains a mystery. All the while, Adil provided entertaining commentary on the property's history, natural and ecological features, forestry practices, mushroom cultivation, and a host of other topics. Returning from the hike, we enjoyed a delicious seasonal lunch prepared by Zarinna Mulla while taking in panoramic views of the countryside from their porch.

What a wonderful way to enjoy the great outdoors – thank you, Adil and Zarinna!

Top: Zarinna and Adil Mullas
Bottom Right: Zarinna's beautiful gardens.
Left: Attendees smile for the camera.



Earth's Palate Farm is a promising example of creative use of a conservation easement, combining respect for the land and responsible environmental management. We welcome Renee and Kevin to Warren, and wish them success in this exciting venture.

Earth's Palate chickens



Not a member?

Fill out this form and send it to us at the address below with your check or go to www.warrenlandtrust.org and become a member online. Your membership is 100% tax deductible and will help us to continue to protect more than 650 acres of land. Come join us!!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Please make checks payable to The Warren Land Trust Inc
and mail to: The Warren Land Trust, 50 Cemetery Road, Warren, CT 06754

Interested in volunteering? To find out how you can help,
email Rebecca at info@warrenlandtrust.org.



**50 Cemetery Road
Warren, CT 06754**

Email: info@warrenlandtrust.org

www.warrenlandtrust.org

WLT Has a New Logo!

If you've been to any of our events or received any of our email blasts in the last month or so, you may have noticed that we have a new look! We loved the old tree logo image, but felt it was time for something fresh and clean-lined. Thanks to a grant from the Ellen Knowles Harcourt Foundation, the creative

minds at Miles Finch Innovation, and the meticulous eye for detail of board members Lissie Chandler and Waltraud Tammen, our inchoate ideas about what the Warren Land Trust represents today have taken visual form. If you love our new logo as much as we do, you'll be glad to know it is featured on hats, tote bags, t-shirts, and bumper stickers, which will be for sale at our annual meeting and other WLT events.



Cider Run 2017

The chilly drizzle at the start didn't dampen spirits at this year's Warren Cider Run 5K, co-sponsored by the Warren Land Trust and Warren Parks & Rec. A record number of runners participated in this run/walk to benefit the Warren Parks & Rec scholarship fund. As in past years, the 169 Towns Society, whose members aspire to run a race in each of Connecticut's 169 towns, turned out in force, as did Warren runners and walkers. Race director Carla Angevine was as always a smiling presence out on the course, and managed to win her age group to boot. A big thank-you to race sponsors, runners, and volunteers, and congratulations to 2017 Warren Parks & Rec scholarship winner Christopher Schullery, who will study Engineering at Central CT State University.



Trails Day Hike, 2017: The East Kent Hamlet Preserve

This year's CT Trails Day hike was held on June 3rd at the East Kent Hamlet Preserve, former site of the Camp Francis Girl Scout camp, which was acquired by the Kent Land Trust in 2014, with the support and financial assistance of the Warren Land Trust. It's a scenic and historically significant parcel – the site of an 18th century hamlet (hence the name) which once boasted mills, shops, a church and post office; as well as a beloved family retreat in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Of its 250-some acres, one-third are in Warren...including part of the Red Eft Trail, which includes 3 miles or so of rolling, forested terrain. A good-sized cohort of hikers was not deterred by a little rain at the event's outset, and the sun came out in due course. And we even caught sight of the trail's namesake, the red eft!

