

January 2005



www.westfordconservationtrust.org



Editor - Diane Duane

Westford's Walden - East Boston Camps Special Town Meeting - Mon. February 7th

The Westford Conservation Trust strongly supports **Article 1**, the \$13.5 million proposal to purchase 286 acres of land at East Boston Camps. A **Special Town Meeting** will be held on Monday, February 7th at 7:30p at the Abbot school to vote on this article. The acquisition of this land is tied to a conservation restriction (CR), which would help maintain open space and protect it from development. A committee is currently revising the CR draft in an effort to make the it as effective as possible. As the town prepares for this purchase, we will also need to name a grantee, a group that will oversee the Conservation Restrictions placed on the land. Funding from the Community Preservation Act requires a conservation restriction for land purchased with CPA funds. A \$500,000 Drinking Water Protection Grant has also been submitted to the state. The protection of the high-yield Stony Brook aquifer, which supplies water to several of our town wells, is yet another important reason to protect the land as open space. The main parcel would be preserved for conservation and recreation. The smaller, 29 acre parcel is being considered for playing fields. The Westford Land Preservation Foundation (WLPF) is currently conducting a private fundraising campaign to further reduce the cost of this purchase to the town. If you wish to donate by January 31, 2005, please use the donation/pledge form on the back of the newsletter.

Trust Donates \$15,000 to East Boston Camps



Westford Conservation Trust treasurer **Mark Tincknell** hands over a \$15,000 check to **Nancy Rosinski**, treasurer of the Westford Land Preservation Foundation, toward the purchase of East Boston Camps. WCT President **Marian Harman** is pictured on right. The Trust board voted to donate this large sum in support of the importance we place on the purchase of East Boston Camps as well as our commitment to the open space needs of Westford.

Winterfest at East Boston Camps!

Come join us for a day of snow sculpting, skating, ice fishing derby, cross-country skiing, tracking and nature walks, hot cocoa and snacks. Proceeds will benefit the fund-raising effort for East Boston Camps, and also the East Boston Social Clubs, which run the camps. This event will be held at East Boston Camps on Saturday, **January 29th** from 9am-3pm. Tickets are \$50/family or \$20 Adults, \$15 Kids under 12. Under 6 are free.

Annual Meeting Recap

Our recently held Annual Meeting was most enjoyable and informative. Thanks to our guest speaker **John Hanson Mitchell** for presenting a wonderfully amusing and engaging evening. Mr. Mitchell is a well known nature writer and editor of Sanctuary, the award winning magazine of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. The evening was spirited with lively discussion and readings from his book, **Walking Toward Walden**, his real life adventure involving a 16 mile "straight line bush-whack" from the site of the Westford Knight to the Concord grave of Henry David Thoreau. Mr. Mitchell spoke about the "identification of a place through observations through time", to know and experience a "sense of place" - a sacred joy for that special familiar place.



Conservation Trustees of the Year

This year's recipients were **Priscilla Elliott** and **Mary Lambert**. In 1994, Mary Lambert donated 18 acres of land off of Lowell Rd. to the Westford Conservation Trust. Mary's late husband, Ben, was a visionary in conservation work, and many years ago was one of the founding members of the first land trust in Westford. Mary has a great knowledge of the wildflowers which grow on her properties. This land also serves as a refueling stop for many migrant birds. Its also a nesting site for many birds such as the wood thrush, red-eyed vireo, great-crusted flycatcher, oven-bird, and common yellowthroat. This and the adjoining Harman land, which together make up the 30-acre **Frances Hill Wildlife Sanctuary**, have truly become an oasis for wildlife, since the area is surrounded by development. Trails are accessible from Lowell Rd., Chamberlin Rd. and Hunt Rd. In 1999, Priscilla Elliott donated 8 acres of land on Hildreth St. to the Westford Conservation Trust. This land, which she named the **Prospect Hill Wildlife Sanctuary**, comprises a flat agricultural field on Hildreth St., and a beautiful forest which rises up to the top of Prospect Hill, where it abuts Water Department land and a Town of Westford water tower. Behind an impressive stone wall grows a Massachusetts State Heritage Tree- the largest shagbark hickory in the state. A green wooden gate across from Wright Lane, and a wooden sign marks the trail entrance. The Trust Directors are very grateful to Priscilla Elliot and Mary Lambert for their generous donations of land, and are pleased to award them the Conservation Trustee Award for 2004.



Shagbark hickory

Annual Meeting - Elections

were re-elected as **directors** to 3 year terms. Diane Duane was elected for a 3 year term, to replace Kathy Deschenes who retired. Lennie Palmer was elected for a 1 year term to complete Elizabeth McGuire's term (who became an Associate Director). The following **associate directors** were elected for a 1-year term: Elizabeth McGuire, Shelagh Brady, Mike D'Antuono, Rose Marie Koester, and Bill Morton. Bill Harman was re-elected as Clerk, and Mark Tincknell was re-elected as Treasurer.

Ron Deschenes presented the report of the nominating committee, whose other members are Dick Emmet and Peter Severance. Mark Tincknell and Tom Spuhler

WCT Annual Summary by William Harman, Clerk

This annual meeting marks the 20th year anniversary of the founding of the Trust. Many of the current activities of the Trust are continuations of programs that we have been developing over a number of years. Therefore a review of this year is also largely a review of the entire 20 year history of the Trust.

Education

We believe that education is the most important of all of the Trust's activities, because of the continuing requirements throughout all of society and into the far future. Our education programs have evolved over many years. **Scouting.** During the year we have fulfilled several requests for making presentations to Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts. These are excellent opportunities for education about trails, wildlife, and plants.

Science Fair. This year as in previous years, Trust directors supported the Science Fair at Day School in March, acting as judges.

School Bird Feeder Program. We are following the "Classroom Feeder Watch" program developed by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. We have installed bird feeders at the three schools having fourth grade classes. Along with instruction, the students make observations and enter these into a nationwide database. During the current year, we provided the financial support to continue the Cornell program. We also monitor the feeders, supplying birdseed, and making repairs as necessary. In one case, at Abbot School, we purchased and planted shrubs to improve the cover for birds, and also relocated a second feeder on the other side of the school. We also made presentations to each of the 18 fourth grade classes.

Spring Walks and Biodiversity Day. This year as in many previous years the Trust offered a morning Bird Walk in May and a Wildflower Walk in June. Then at the time of the State's Biodiversity Day events in June, we provided a "Stream Critters" walk and a ponding walk. These events have been scheduled again for the coming year, and are already listed in the Roudenbush catalog of coming events.

Envirothon. The Trust continued to support the Envirothon at Westford Academy. This year, we donated \$1000 to this program.

Scholarships. The Trust has been offering one or more scholarships to graduating seniors at Westford Academy. This year scholarships were granted to four students, with a total of \$2750.

Land Stewardship and Trails

The Trust currently owns 17 parcels of conservation land and also administers another 17 conservation restrictions and trail easements. We participate actively with the joint committee for land stewardship and trails with the Conservation Commission, clearing and marking a number of trails this year.

Boundaries. We are working on a project to identify and mark all of the property boundaries of our lands. Experiences to date have taught us that boundary incursions are not uncommon. In one case, we identified a boundary incursion, and have subsequently corrected it by a land swap. We realize now that it's important to get all of the boundaries marked as soon as possible. The eastern boundary of the Lambert Conservation Land was identified and marked this year. We arranged to get advice from Mass Audubon, advising us on the process they are using to monitor their properties.

Trail Booklet. We are continuing to issue a booklet "Westford Trails", making updates from time to time. Material for the next version is currently being assembled, and all contributions are welcome, either as new or improved maps, or as descriptive text.

Community Affairs

Newsletter. The Trust issues a newsletter to all members three times a year, and also places color copies on our web site. Diane Duane is our current editor.

Newspaper For many years, the Westford Eagle has been publishing monthly articles called "Wildlife Watch" written by Trust president Marian Harman. Each article includes, among other things, reports of wildlife sightings around town, contributed by many observers. Marian continued to publish these articles in 2004, and it appears that the readership following is steadily growing as well as the number of contributing observers.

Web Site. The Trust now has a large web site (developed by Mike D'Antuono), consisting of many Westford photos and trail maps. The Trust has made arrangements for an easy-to-remember web address, "www.westfordconservationtrust.org".

Eagle Scout Projects. The Trust is continuing to work with Eagle Scout candidates whose projects involve trails or wildlife. In most cases, the Trust provides funding to offset expenses for lumber and other materials.

Turtle Monitoring. A turtle monitoring project was begun this year, which includes hiring Oxbow Associates to conduct wildlife inventories in certain areas. In addition, a small radio transmitter is being used, making it possible to follow a specific turtle through a year. The Trust is supporting this project financially.

Coordination. Many other organizations in Westford have activities that overlap or interact with our Trust. We are working to coordinate our interactions with: The Conservation Commission, and the Land and Trail Stewardship Committee, which was jointly created by the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Trust.

The Trust made a contribution of \$1300 to **East Boston Camps** during the year 2004. We also support the **Bay Circuit Alliance** (which has initiated the Bay Circuit Trail). We are regular members of the **Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition**, and have benefited from their legal advice on several occasions. And we are regular members of the nationwide **Land Trust Exchange**, which is currently recommending certain standards for all Land trusts. After a substantial study, we have adopted these standards for our operations.

In Summary, This has been another very active year for the Trust, in which we have built on many previous years of progress. In 1986, shortly after the Trust was founded, the amount of land in Westford that was permanently protected as conservation land was 2% of the total land area. Currently, this has risen to about 14%. It's clear that the activities of the Trust are an important and viable resource for the protection and management of land conservation issues.

Trust Walks to East Boston Camps

Trust members will lead site walks at East Boston Camps every weekend day through January 30, 2005. Saturday walks will be held at 10 a.m. Sunday walks will be at 1 p.m. Walks are free of charge. Dogs on leash are welcome. Meet at the main East Boston Camps sign on Depot Rd. This is a great way to see and learn more about this 280 acre parcel of "undisturbed forested uplands and small wetlands, sections of Stony and Keyes Brooks, and scenic Burge's Pond".



Peter Severance leading trail walk

EBC Confidential Pledge/Contribution Form

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____

Make a pledge for \$ _____ (paymt month/year)

Please make tax deductible check payable to: **Westford Land Preservation Foundation**

Please mail to: P.O. Box 235, Westford, Ma. 01886

The funds will be held/used only for the protection of East Boston Camps in Westford, Ma.

Signed: _____

Name as you wish to be acknowledged (please print) _____

I wish to remain anonymous

Mailing address: _____

Telephone Number _____ Email address: _____

Name of Company, if matching funds available: _____

Please submit this form with your check or pledge. All gifts are tax deductible.

If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Rosinski at the WLPF (978) 692-6202

Please make all pledge payments by
January 31, 2005.

Donate online at www.westfordlplf.org



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P.O. Box 255
Westford, Massachusetts 01886



Do you know who made these tracks? Go to our website to find out!