



SPRING 2017 Landlines

SIMSBURY LAND TRUST

Since 1976

Join the SLT Hiking Club!

Like to hike but don't want to go alone? Looking for a group to hike with? Join our Hiking Club! This group meets once a month, generally on Saturday. The hikes are in and around Simsbury, and vary in length from 2–6 miles. Don and Sally Rieger lead the group and scout the trail in advance, giving you the heads up on what the terrain is like and what to bring on the hike.

There is no cost to join, and signing up puts you on the email list to receive notifications about the monthly hike and updates if needed regarding weather and location. Please contact the office to join the group at amyzeiner@aol.com.

JUNE HIKING CLUB HIKE

Saturday, June 3, 2017 • 9:00 a.m.

60 Westledge Road

Our June hike will also be a Connecticut Trails Day Hike on Simsbury's West Mountain Trails. This means we may have more folks join us than usual.



The hike begins at Simsbury Land Trust's trailhead at 60 Westledge Road, where there is off-street parking. It will traverse the 60 Westledge property with its Hop Brook bottomlands and historic dam. It will follow the red trail from there, up to and along a ridgeline affording splendid views of the Farmington Valley and beyond. A fairly steep descent will lead to the white trail through the saddle, which connects to the blue trail. The blue trail returns to the starting point through a dramatic and geologically significant valley. The loop totals about six miles, much of it steep and with somewhat difficult footing. **This is a strenuous hike suitable only for those who are fit. It is not recommended for small children.**

Wear suitable shoes or boots. Bring drinking water, a snack if you wish, insect repellent and perhaps a hiking stick. Because it is a Trails Day hike, please register in advance with the land trust at 860-651-8773 or let Don and Sally know you are coming if you are late signing up (860-658-7317).

Now That You Have All That Property, What Are You Going To Do With It?

By Sally Rieger, Trustee

In 1976 a group of Simsbury folks recognized the need to protect land in town with significant ecological value, that offers important views or that has geological features which define the character of Simsbury. They founded the Simsbury Land Conservation Trust and began the work of acquiring ownership or easements on important parcels. The organization's name was later changed to Simsbury Land Trust, but its objectives have remained the same.

When I became a member of the SLT board in 2005, board discussions centered on acquisition. The 2005 Annual Report defined those efforts:

"We are currently operating under a 10-year campaign to protect approximately 1,000 acres of additional land. Our focus is on several scenic and natural corridors that include the town's primary ridges and wetlands, as well as on scattered farm fields and natural meadows. Within these corridors, we give weight to parcels that will connect an otherwise partitioned area, expand or complete a partial habitat, or improve the buffer around a protected area."

Now the Simsbury Land Trust has protected over 1,100 acres, including the West Mountain properties that offer a loop trail over five miles long, the 62-acre Wagner Woods and the Owen–Mortimer and Tanager Hill properties which connect to town land and to Penwood State Park. We also have conservation easements that protect Tulmeadow Farm, Rosedale Farms and George Hall Farm from development. In other words, with a great deal of public and private support, WE DID IT!

So now the main focus has turned to stewardship. Stewardship involves working to protect the conservation values for which the land was acquired. Success at doing that requires engaging the public in those efforts by opening our properties to public use in ways consistent with land conservation.



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(continued on page 2)



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LANDLINES —

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Letter from the President

— Fred Feibel

Since my teenage years the Boy Scout motto “Be Prepared” has struck home for me. I like to plan ahead and be prepared for as much as I can. Just look in my garage. This is why I am convinced of the necessity of building the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to prepare the Simsbury Land Trust for an uncertain future.

Currently all of our great programs, our office space, our two part-time employees, mailings, newsletter and the stewardship projects on our properties are paid for almost entirely by membership donations. Each year we work exhaustively to grow the membership or at least to keep it at the same level. Currently we have a truly remarkable membership that has provided support at a heroic level.

This support has led to the preservation of over 1,100 acres of open space. It has led to a trail system of National Park quality. Simsbury Land Trust property management is second to none. Our programs are varied and interesting so that no one can feel left out. This group, with your help, has brought open space preservation and conservation to the highest level of consciousness in the people of Simsbury.

As we move forward, change is one of the few things we can count on. The best way to deal with the possibility of a less active board or a less engaged membership is through a strong endowment. Please help to ensure our legacy by continuing to be active SLT members and by supporting the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund at the HFPG generously.

Thank you for all you do.



Now That You Have All That Property *(continued from page 1)*

What we do for stewardship

The stewardship work accounted for in this article mainly gets done by dedicated and diligent volunteers. We do as much as possible with volunteers. All of our properties except a few minor ones have “property monitors” whose official responsibility is to report on “their” properties, using a SLT form, in spring and fall. Luckily, many of the monitors do much more than just report twice a year. Many take on maintenance jobs like trash pickup and trimming along trails and come to our spring and fall workdays. The spring and fall reports alert us to what needs attention at a workday or on an emergency basis. When necessary we hire professionals, but that can be expensive. However, some jobs like the summer and annual mowing are beyond the scope of volunteers.





Stewardship work done on our properties includes:

- Controlling invasive plants. It is the largest single chore and stewardship expense we face, and that work will never be finished. Invasive plants outgrow and outcompete natives. By impeding the growth of native plants, invasives reduce the food available for native insects. A lot of wildlife depends on insects for food. Also, invasives can alter forest structure and change soil chemistry and hydrology. These things affect wildlife. Japanese barberry has a negative impact on human health because it harbors more ticks infected with Lyme disease than areas without barberry. We had a large scale professional barberry control project at Wagner Woods. We work on Oriental bittersweet near our trails because it kills and topples trees. Multiflora rose makes areas impassible for people while it shades out native shrubs and tree seedlings. It is the main invasive plant on the Glover Property where we had to have a professional removal job done in order to be able to establish walking paths and boardwalks.
- Removing dangerous trees along and across our trails and, when necessary, hiring an arborist to do the work. After the 2011 storm there were so many trees that presented a danger along the trails that we substantially overshot the Stewardship budget's "Contingency Fund".

- Protecting our vernal pools as well as we can because they are the breeding areas for toads, frogs and salamanders, some of which can only reproduce in vernal pools. We site trails away from vernal pools, and try to maintain adequate buffers around them.
- Providing nesting boxes for bluebirds on the properties with open fields and wooded borders.
- Establishing a native plant garden at Glover Property to demonstrate the landscape value and wildlife value of certain species of shrubs.
- Establishing trails and paths to invite people to use our properties. How a trail is routed determines where most people will walk. We avoid steep slopes and wet areas to the extent possible.
- Providing maps for the longer trails, both online and on paper.
- Maintaining trails, trimming encroaching vegetation, putting in water bars and stepping stones as needed.
- Providing boardwalks to protect wetland plants but allow public access in numerous places, and we have two viewing platforms with seating at the Bog and at the Knapp property.
- Building bridges where stream crossings require it.
- Mowing our fields and meadows. At Tanager Hill, Wagner Woods, and the Case and Glover properties, we provide mown paths in the growing season and have the meadows mown annually to maintain them as grassland.
- Building and maintaining informational kiosks at major properties.



Things to Come in 2017

This summer, based on advice from the Connecticut DEEP, we hope to initiate a follow-up project where Japanese Barberry was removed from Wagner Woods during the past two years. We'd like to put in some native plants where the barberry was to discourage its return. We're planting some native shrubs around one of the vernal pools at Tanager Hill. We also have three benches to construct there. And we'll be cutting Oriental bittersweet from some trees along one of the trails. At Glover, we've hired a contractor to brush hog the remaining multiflora rose and will extend the paths there. Depending on Mother Nature, we may be removing some of the mountain laurel we planted last year that seems to have succumbed to the drought. The bridge on the public walking path at Rosedale Farms needs repairs and that will be attended to. And of course, something else is sure to crop up.

In conclusion, I will say that over the years, Simsbury Land Trust has enjoyed and benefited from a great deal of public and private support in its acquisition efforts. Saving a property from development is very exciting and it matters a lot to people in our community. We are very grateful that the community has been faithful in supporting our acquisition efforts.

Stewardship somehow seems less exciting. Just as there is a lot of pleasure in buying a new home, but not so much in having it painted or in having the electrical system upgraded, so we are all pleased to have acquired a lovely, worthwhile piece of land, but the ongoing and never-quite-finished work of stewardship feels less appealing. Nevertheless, it is what ultimately will protect our favorite places from degradation and keep conserved parcels viable for wildlife and public use.

We hope our children and grandchildren, and yours too, and generations after them, will enjoy seeing the things our kids thought were fun and interesting. Things like a bird bringing a caterpillar to its young, toads and toad eggs and then tadpoles in a pond, catching a glimpse of a fox or an otter. Join the land trust if you are not a member and make an extra donation to our stewardship endowment if you can. It is a gift to everybody's future.

Overlooking the Forest for the Trees

By Margery Winters, Trustee

It took me decades before I finally found the entrance to the trail at Belden Forest, a 42-acre town-owned property nestled behind the Simsbury Public Library. What a surprise it was to discover its towering and massive 100-foot-tall white pine trees. The tallest tree species in eastern US, white pines were reported to have grown to over 225 feet in height in pre-colonial times. Barring disease, hurricanes, or logging, perhaps these trees on this protected open space will one day attain such spectacular heights.

While my eyes are drawn upwards by the magnificent trees in Belden Forest, science is revealing an equally amazing forest structure in these old woods, overlooked but much closer to hand in the top two feet of the forest floor. Structurally, roots make up as much of the tree's total biomass as its leaves and branches and these roots can extend from the trunk two-to-three times the width of the tree's canopy, 50 feet or more beyond its outermost branches. Roots from one tree overlap and grow into the roots of adjacent trees of similar and different species.

This under-appreciated array of roots is only a small part of the hidden forest structure however. Forest trees thrive as a result of a mutually beneficial relationship with fungi called mycorrhizae ("fungus roots") that grow into and serve as an even more vast extension of tree roots. These mycorrhizae "roots" are tiny: a pinch of soil can contain up to seven miles of their microscopic tube-like structures. In exchange for 20–80% of the sugars produced by leaves during photosynthesis, the mycorrhizal fungi help transfer water, carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients and minerals from the soil and between other trees and plants in the forest community.

This vast interconnected mycorrhizal network in the forest soil has been called the wood-wide web. Trees growing in areas of abundant resources send nutrients and water via the mycorrhizal network to plants located in less favorable conditions. Dying trees transfer their nutrients to other trees, sick trees are given nutrients from healthy trees, and mother trees preferentially send nutrients and water to their seedlings thorough this network. Additionally, trees use the mycorrhizal network for communicating information on insect attacks, alerting neighboring trees to step up their production of defense chemicals to ward off such assaults. All these actions contribute to the forest's overall health and well-being.

New research is just beginning to unravel the complex forest relationships facilitated by this wood-wide web. The largest and oldest trees like the giant white pines in Belden Forest have been found to have the most numerous and complex connections with other trees in the forest and new seedlings have been found to have the best chance of surviving when they were connected to the networks of such large old trees.

All these new findings have profound implications for our appreciation of how forests function as a living community, not a stand of individual trees. To truly understand and appreciate the forest before us, science is reminding us of the old adage — see the forest and not the trees.



"Dying trees transfer their nutrients to other trees, sick trees are given nutrients from healthy trees, and mother trees preferentially send nutrients and water to their seedlings thorough this network."

To learn more about the Wood Wide Web and its role in forest health, visit:

<http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-secrets-of-the-wood-wide-web>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/the-wood-wide-web/478224/>

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/artful-amoeba/dying-trees-can-send-food-to-neighbors-of-different-species/>



Helping Simsbury Land Trust Plan for the Future

By Ted Almy, Trustee

Your membership donations are vital, and support the everyday operations and functions of the Simsbury Land Trust. But there are additional stewardship and long term needs that are not covered by membership contributions. You can support stewardship by giving in one (or more) of these ways:

Through a gift to the Simsbury Land Trust Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund

Launched in 2015, the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is a \$500,000 campaign that will allow the Simsbury Land Trust to continue and expand its work protecting properties and provide financial flexibility and resources for critical property stewardship needs. We are pleased to report that thanks to some initial generous support the endowment has reached \$200,000 and provided approximately \$8,000 in vital income for stewardship activities in 2016.

PLEASE NOTE: Gifts to the Endowment Fund must be made DIRECTLY to the HFPG and can be made conveniently through the following link:
www.hfpg.org/index.php/donate/view-fund/simsbury-land-trust-endowment-fund. In addition an envelope for donating to the fund is included in this newsletter.

Through a Planned Gift

A bequest to SLT or the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund translates your commitment to protect Simsbury open space, farmland, and scenic vistas into a lasting legacy. If you are considering a general use gift to the Simsbury Land Trust as part of your estate plan, you can add a simple provision to your will or trust such as: "I give (specific amount, percentage or residue) to Simsbury Land Trust Inc. Tax ID# 06-0958573, having its principal offices at 10A Phelps Lane, Simsbury, CT 06070, for its general purposes." Please note that planned gifts to the SLT Endowment Fund require different language specifying the SLT Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving as the recipient. The SLT and HFPG can work with you and your attorney to craft the appropriate language.

Through your Corporate Matching Program

Many employers have charitable matching foundations, which will, in many cases, double your contribution to Simsbury Land Trust, either a membership contribution or a donation to the endowment. Please contact your employer's human resources department for information on whether your company has a matching gift program.

For more information and assistance in customizing a large or planned gift, or to notify us that you have already done so, please contact us at 860-651-8773 or amyzeiner@aol.com.



Preserving Simsbury Open Space Since 1976

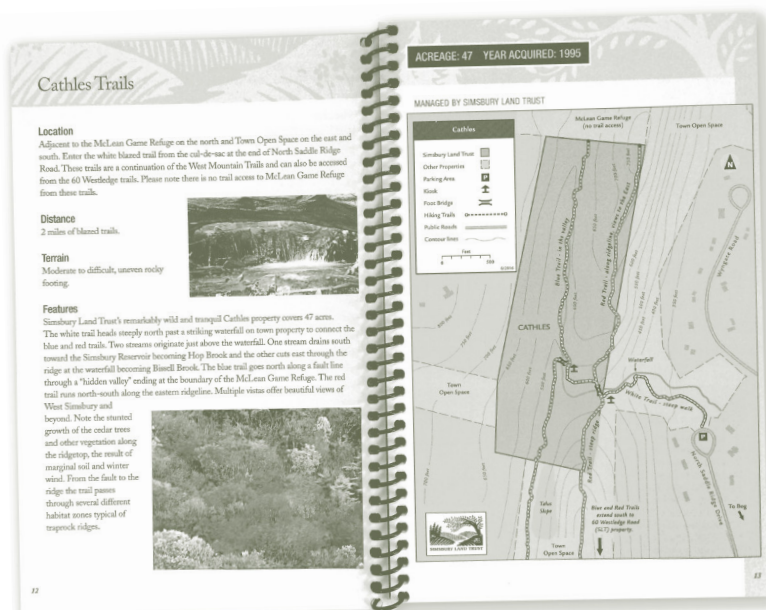
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Visit our website at
www.simsburylandtrust.org
to join or renew today.



Are You a Simsbury Land Trust Member?

Each year close to 700 generous Simsbury residents support the Simsbury Land Trust through membership contributions. We also have a small but growing number of members who live in the surrounding towns. These donations provide the important funds for our daily operations, including stewardship, education and recreation programs, newsletters, the Walkbook, our two part-time staff members and the rent on our small office.

Membership is based on the calendar year. Each year beginning in late October or early November we send renewal information to current and past members. We also include information on how to join or renew in our newsletter we send town-wide. This

All who join or renew will receive a copy of the revised full-color Simsbury Land Trust Walkbook, featuring 27 hikes with maps and descriptions, geological information and photos of all properties.

year we followed up with handwritten notes to those of you who have not yet renewed.

There is no entrance fee at our trailheads. There is no charge for our hikes and educational talks. Anyone can wander the over 1,100 acres of open space we protect. But there is a cost associated with having all of these things, and we need your help to pay for them.

If you are not currently a member, or have not yet renewed for 2017, please consider joining. Visit our website at www.simsburylandtrust.org to join online, or contact the SLT office for membership information.

Thank you, and happy trails!