

Simsbury Land Trust

2007 ANNUAL REPORT



*Preserving the Natural Beauty and
Environmental Health of Our Community*



In wildness is the preservation of the world.

Henry David Thoreau

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This page, clockwise from top:
Susan Van Kleef, Dick Clark,
Dick Clark, Dick Clark

Front cover: Rick Wartens

Back Cover: Dick Clark

Facing page: TJ Donohue



Letter from the President

We tend to measure progress in numbers but in most cases the real measure of an achievement is in its content, not its size.

As of year end 2007, the Simsbury Land Trust owned land or easements protecting over 30 individual sites totaling more than 750 acres. The real value in saving these properties is in their incredible variety, in the quality of the habitat or feature that each represents and in the contribution each adds to the magnificent scenic landscape that we enjoy here in Simsbury.

Consider this land. The Simsbury Land Trust protects wetlands that include swamps, bogs, stream beds and watersheds, wet meadows, seasonal streams and vernal pools. It protects large stretches of ridgeline, slopes to either side of it and land at the base. It protects valuable agricultural soils and field habitat. In many cases, the SLT carefully chose these sites, persistently solicited them and worked hard to make the transactions happen. In other cases, generous neighbors chose to donate land that they believed had conservation value out of proportion to its size.

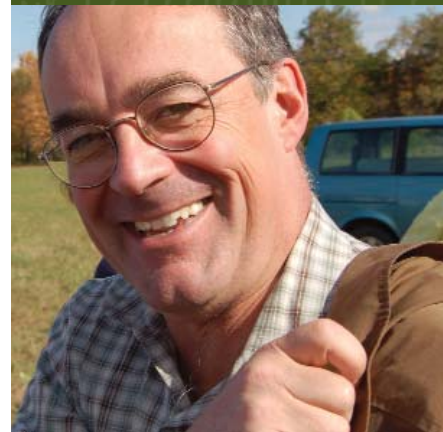
The Simsbury Land Trust has succeeded in protecting a number of signature properties such as The Hedgehog, Rosedale Farms and Tulmeadow Farm. These important sites are widely recognized and universally appreciated. But equally important are smaller, less glamorous sites acquired by the SLT that provide a necessary protective buffer to land already protected, a vital connection between sites or a needed transition from the tame to the wild. Many birds need a minimal area or they do not breed. Amphibians need their entire migration route in order to complete their cycle of life. This need for a functional whole often leaves an initial acquisition incomplete and of significantly lesser value. By also expending time and energy on these less noticed parcels, the SLT has increased the conservation value of adjacent sites.

As I drove past several Simsbury Land Trust properties one winter weekend, I noted with pleasure multiple tracks in the snow from boots and skis and snowshoes. These reminded me of one of the most important benefits of protecting these properties: they preserve an opportunity for all of us, particularly our children, to live in a modern, densely populated suburban region with all its benefits, and still be able to walk down the street and experience nature, the outdoors and our history up close and first hand.

I want to thank each of you for the support and generosity you have provided to make all of this possible and I look forward to seeing the results of your continuing energy, commitment and cheer for years to come.



Dick Davis
President



Financial Highlights – 2007

Statement of Revenues and Expenses

	January 1 – December 31, 2007			
	CAMPAIGN	OPERATIONS	TOTAL 2007	TOTAL 2006
Revenues				
Campaign Donations ⁽¹⁾	\$460,459		\$460,459	\$351,052
Grants	181,688	\$ 5,602	187,290	9,600
Land Donations	42,000		42,000	
Gain on Sale of Real Property				18,506
Annual Appeal Income		3,526	3,526	9,395
Membership Dues		84,462	84,462	90,646
Miscellaneous Income		15,855	15,855	1,124
Total Revenues	\$684,147	\$109,445	\$793,592	\$480,323
Expenses				
Administrative	41,234	24,613	65,847	61,623
Salaries and Benefits	22,185	22,185	44,370	38,746
Membership		23,714	23,714	31,991
Acquisition Expenses	7,508		7,508	6,848
Stewardship	2,355	7,459	9,814	17,347
Depreciation		994	994	845
Total Expenses	73,282	78,965	152,247	157,400
Excess of Revenues Over Expenses	\$610,865	\$ 30,480	\$641,345	\$322,923

(1) Campaign donations not included here are grants of \$500,000 from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and \$632,500 from USDA-NCRS Farmland Protection Program because the funds were received subsequent to year end.

Balance Sheet

	December 31, 2007	December 31, 2006
Assets		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 439,964	\$ 575,633
Pledges Receivable – Net	153,255	155,526
Prepaid Expenses	10,215	30,200
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	603,434	761,359
FIXED ASSETS		
Land	6,747,218	5,946,937
Office Equipment – Net	2,519	2,273
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	6,749,737	5,949,210
TOTAL ASSETS	\$7,353,171	\$6,710,569
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accrued Liabilities	\$ 2,389	\$ 1,132
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	2,389	1,132
FUND BALANCE		
Beginning Fund Balance	6,521,111	6,198,188
Board Designated Stewardship Fund	30,000	30,000
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	158,326	158,326
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	641,345	322,923
ENDING FUND BALANCE	7,350,782	6,709,437
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$7,353,171	\$6,710,569

Conservation Progress in 2007

For quite a number of years, the Simsbury Land Trust has applied persistent effort to securing protection for two of the most prominent natural features in Simsbury — its working farms and the western ridge.

Western Ridge

The western ridge, just east of West Mountain, is one of the richest and best preserved trap rock formations in Connecticut. Including Saddle Ridge, Hedgehog and Sugar Loaf, it consists of a ridgeline that stretches across the Town's western boundary, large portions of both eastern and western slopes, numerous seasonal streams and vernal pools, and vegetation and wildlife common to more northern and more southern states but rare in Connecticut.

In March of this year, the Simsbury Land Trust completed the purchase of 75 acres from The Master's School. This was a major milestone since it completes the north/south protection of the west ridge from Firetown to Westledge Road. A total of 500 continuous acres of this trap rock habitat is now protected through ownership by either the SLT or the Town of Simsbury. Additional work is needed along the periphery to improve the buffer between developed areas and the more vulnerable sections of the ridge, but the continuity is now ensured.

In addition, this corridor adds to and extends the protection of several thousand contiguous acres of forested highlands already protected by McLean Game Refuge, the towns and land trusts of Canton and Granby, the State of Connecticut and the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) that stretches north from the center of Simsbury to the Massachusetts border.



Photos Clockwise from top: Hunter Neal, Rick Wartens, Hunter Neal





Simsbury's Working Farms

Prior to World War II, Simsbury consisted primarily of farmland. Farmers raised crops in the valley and the hills to the east and west were a mix of open pasture and woodlots. Today, some of those fields have grown back to forest, most are covered with residential development. Fields are now the scarce resource here as they are across Connecticut. This is a concern for two reasons. For one thing, Simsbury, as with other towns along the lower Farmington and Connecticut Rivers, has some of the richest and most productive soil types in the US. The luxury of locally grown fruits and vegetables and the necessity of growing at least some of our own food will become increasingly important for both the security and health of the next generation. In addition, with beaver activity and wildfire highly restricted, farms are the only practical means of maintaining a field habitat that is essential for a range of plants and wildlife, particularly birds, that depend on grasslands and fringe habitat for their existence.



There are seven family operated farms in Simsbury. Several of them are permanently protected. The Town Farm has been owned by the Town for years. More recently, the Town has purchased development rights to the Joe Hall Farm and is in the process of completing the purchase of development rights from Flamig Farm. The Simsbury Land Trust purchased a 109 acre conservation easement from Rosedale Farms in 2004 and a 167 acre conservation easement from the 260 acre Tulmeadow Farm in 2006.

Besides The Master's School purchase in 2007, the SLT also completed raising the funds to purchase another conservation easement from Tulmeadow Farm. This covers the field where the three roads, Westledge, West Mountain and Sugar Loaf Cut meet as well as the remaining field across Westledge to the north. This adds another 20 acres to the 167 acres of Tulmeadow Farm already protected. This addition is especially important because it provides a necessary buffer between residential development and the farm operations and a visual transition between the two.

The Tulmeadow Farm Woodlot

Completing this latest acquisition from Tulmeadow Farm makes it possible to focus our efforts in the coming year on the final portion of the farm, the 73 acre woodlot. Just as protecting all the pieces of the trap rock ridge helps ensure the long term health of the whole, so too with the farm. The Tullers have harvested wood from their land since the farm was established in 1768. Until the past couple of decades, the family operated its own saw mill on the property and several of the existing farm buildings were built from its own trees. The Tullers continue to professionally manage the woodlot and still take a cutting every seven to ten years, providing a periodic but regular source of capital to help maintain the farm.

Besides the economic importance of this last 73 acres, this land is in a unique location, connecting two of the Town's largest areas of open space, the Onion Mountain/Town Forest/Ethel Walker/Stratton Pond State Forest corridor on the south to the Tulmeadow/Flamig Farm/Western Ridge/McLean Game Refuge to the north. Development of this woodlot would not only remove an important source of income for the farm but it would very effectively partition a large portion of the town's open space.

One of the reasons we set an initial goal of protecting as much of Simsbury's remaining farmland as possible was the recognition that a single farm, no matter how rich in assets or how well it is managed, stands a poor chance of long term survival. As with many enterprises, there needs to be a critical mass of farming operations in order to sustain the critical infrastructure of supplies, services and other support. For this reason, it is with great satisfaction that we note the success that the neighboring towns and land trusts of Canton, Granby, Avon and Farmington have had recently in providing similar protection to farms in their respective towns.

Ongoing Donations of Land

Besides the fortunate accomplishments with The Master's School and Tulmeadow Farm, we are also pleased to report two other acquisitions in 2007. The Simsbury Land Trust accepted 15 acres along Hop Brook left to it by the late Alice Irene Weldon. She valued this parcel for the bird habitat it provides and wished that it remain for similar use. It is adjacent to another 20 acres of open space owned by the Town and by a neighborhood association. And toward the end of 2007, the SLT was also pleased to accept the gift of a seven acre easement from Neal and Laura Landerman.





Recreation and Education

More people than ever before took advantage of Simsbury's natural resources during 2007. The Simsbury Land Trust sponsored over 15 activities that either highlighted or took place on its land. These included two hikes on the newly acquired west ridge property, a farm-to-farm bicycle ride that covered five area farms, a town-wide membership celebration that included hikes and hayrides to the Tulmeadow Farm woodlot and pasture, a GPS and geocache hike, a moonlight farm tour and the popular Pilfershire hike. In addition, many more walked the Simsbury Land Trust trails on their own throughout the year. Several education events were also held, including a mushroom foray, an archeology talk, along with the creation of the Rosedale Farms and Tulmeadow Farm Quest booklets.

Stewardship Activities

In order to protect special features of the land as well as to make some land more accessible, the Simsbury Land Trust Stewardship Committee made extensive trail modifications during 2007. With recent acquisitions along the ridge, we were able to move and extend sections of that trail network making it easier to get to, more interesting and less disruptive to some of the more vulnerable natural habitats along the ridge. The SLT continued its management of invasive species at the Case Property under the guidance of and funded by the multi-year state sponsored Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program. They installed additional benches, informational kiosks, educational signs, maps and provided other materials to help visitors get more out of their walks and hikes. And they spent a large part of their volunteer time in routine maintenance including, most notably, the rebuilding of the Rosedale Farms Bridge that was badly damaged in last spring's flooding.

Visit our new website — www.simsburylandtrust.org

During 2007 the Simsbury Land Trust completely updated and renovated the website. The new site provides up-to-date information on hikes and other activities, maps, historical information, photographs, news and other current events.

New information and added features are posted monthly. In addition, you can now join or renew your membership online by credit card and RSVP to recreation and education events. Check the site often for the latest information and activities.



Photos From top: TJ Donohue, Dick Clark, Dick Clark, Susan Van Kleef, Hunter Neal, TJ Donohue

Donor Recognition

We want to thank the community for its generous support this past year. None of the Simsbury Land Trust’s accomplishments in 2007 would have been possible without our membership and its many remarkable volunteers and donors.

Membership Donations

Star \$1,000 and above

Aetna Foundation, Inc.
The Gryphon Fund
Pinnacle Investment Management, Inc.
– John and Cathy Eckel
SKY Investment Group LLC
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Richard and Diane Brainerd
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Rick and Kristi Wartens

Steward \$500-\$999

Connecticut Forest and Park Association

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Sponsor \$100-\$249

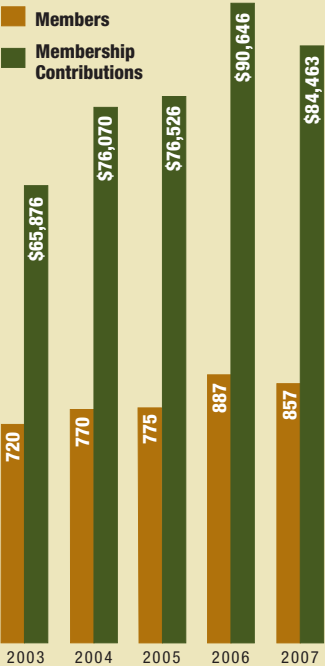
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ING Foundation
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The Prudential Matching Gifts Program
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The Stanley Works
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An-Ping and Sarah Hsieh
Blake and Sherry Irons
Mr. and Mrs. Gary M. Jachym

Membership

Our members are the key to our success. Money raised through membership contributions provides financial support for operations, land acquisition, stewardship and other needs. A high level of membership demonstrates strong community support for our mission when we seek grant funding for our projects. Over 10% of Simsbury families are members of the Simsbury Land Trust.



Laurinda Jaffe	Fran and Ron Sethre	Dick and Faith Brayer	Dr. and Mrs. Walter Hampton	Carol Olsen
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Marilyn and Alan Yates
Louis and Janet Zarchen
Zeilman Family
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Farmington Valley Jewish
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Kane's Market
West Avon Garden Club
West Street Wines and Spirits

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Anonymous
Susan Anwander
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Elizabeth Banco
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*I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man
if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time
tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority.*

E. B. White

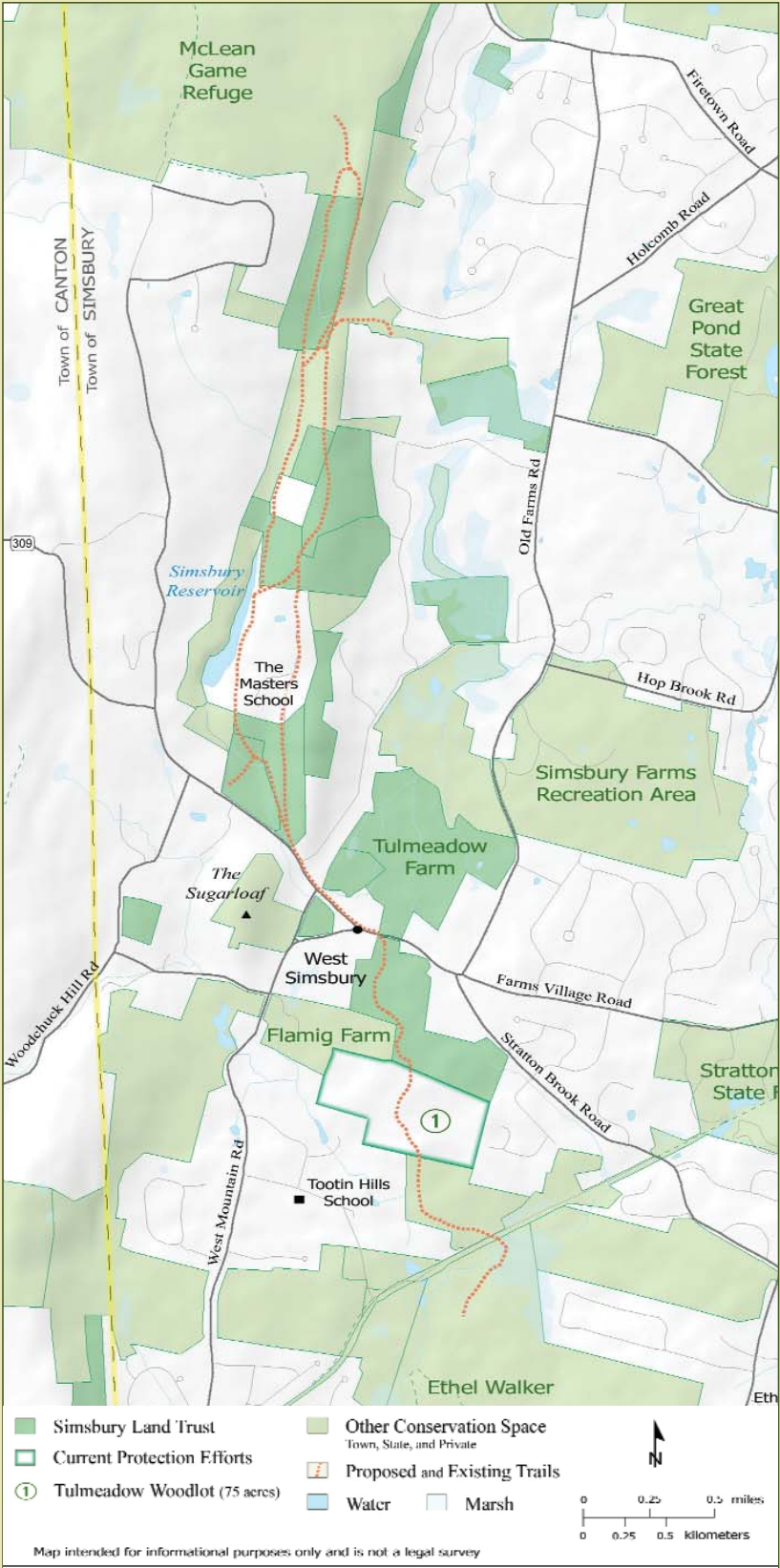
The West Ridge Corridor

The West Ridge Corridor consists of two distinct features, the 500 acre trap rock formation that runs from McLean Game Refuge on the north to Onion Mountain on the south and 750 acres of sand hill field and forest from Tulmeadow Farm to the Ethel Walker Woods. This north/south corridor intersects at Town Forest with an east/west corridor that stretches from Onion Mountain on the west to Simsbury High School on the east. Most of this land is protected in its natural condition by the Town, the State and the Simsbury Land Trust.

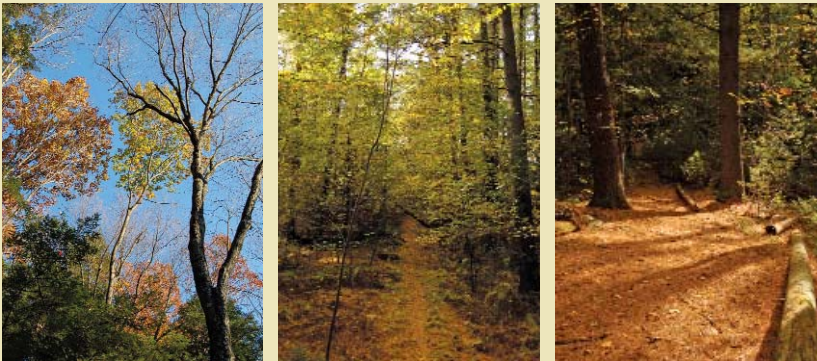
Although there are a number of smaller but important adjacent parcels that remain unprotected along the corridor, there is one major remaining link at risk, the 73 acre Tulmeadow Woodlot (see page 5). As you can see from the adjacent map, were this to be developed, that development would effectively and thoroughly partition this corridor. For this reason, the SLT is currently attempting to assemble the \$2,800,000 needed to purchase a final conservation easement from Tulmeadow Farm.

Not only does this corridor provide prime wildlife habitat, a major contribution to the community's visual character and the benefits of two family farms, but because of its length, it makes it possible for residents in a large portion of the town to access this natural area from their own neighborhoods and experience the outdoors without the time and effort of a lengthy drive. With a continuous corridor, a continuity which the Tulmeadow Woodlot will help provide, those that choose may one day be able to walk from the center of Simsbury across protected land in neighboring towns all the way into Western Massachusetts.

2007 SLT land purchases included 75 acres from The Master's School and a 20 acre easement from Tulmeadow Farm. The current Simsbury Land Trust project is the 73 acre Tulmeadow Woodlot.



Not only is the Tulmeadow Woodlot the key link in an impressive natural corridor, it also provides important income to the farm and consists of a wide variety of succession habitat.



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The Board of Trustees gratefully acknowledges those who have permanently protected the community's open space by donating their cherished land to the Simsbury Land Trust.

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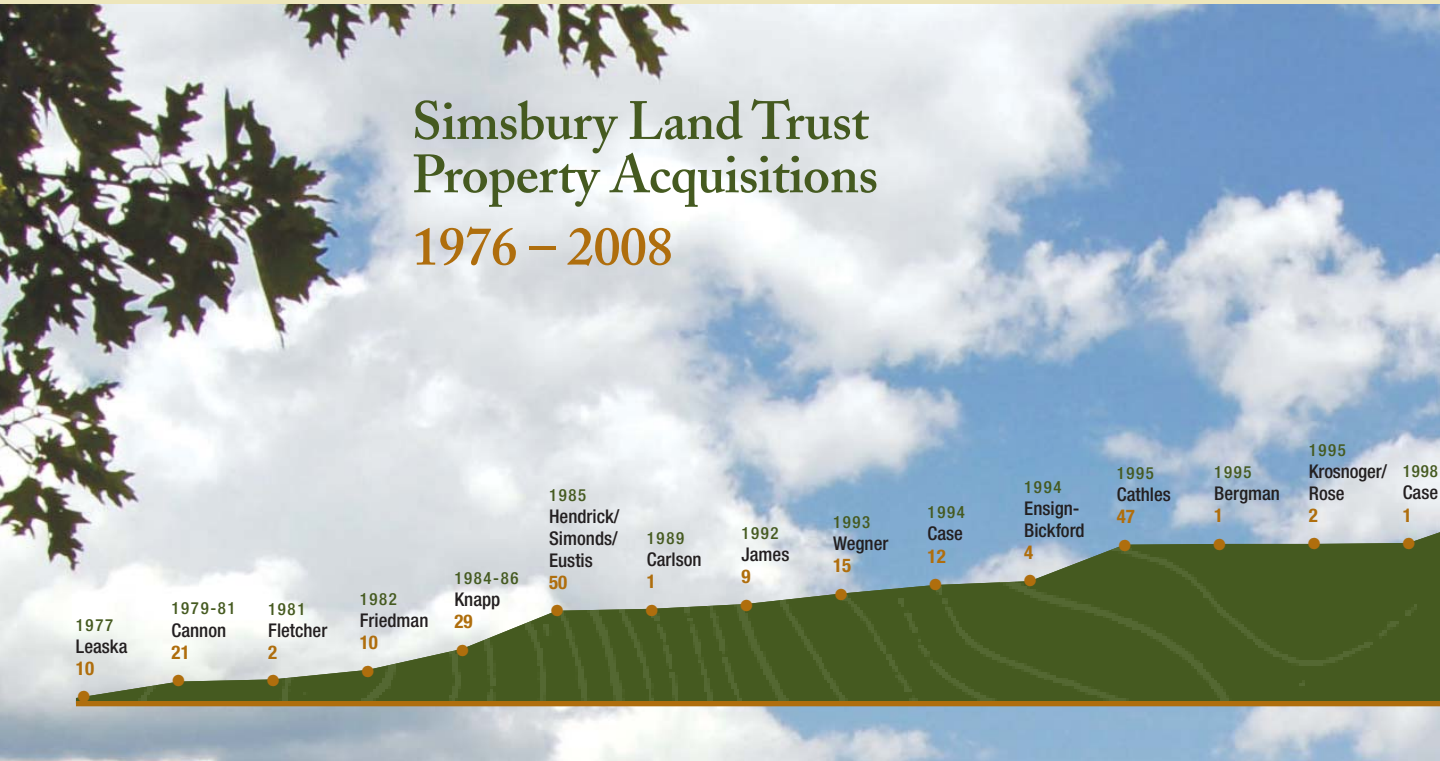
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Simsbury Land Trust
Property Acquisitions
1976 – 2008



MISSION STATEMENT

The Simsbury Land Trust is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect scenic vistas, geological features and farmland that visually define Simsbury's character and provide healthy habitats for local wildlife and plants. Our goal is to consistently craft, support and implement creative land conservation solutions for the benefit of present and future generations.

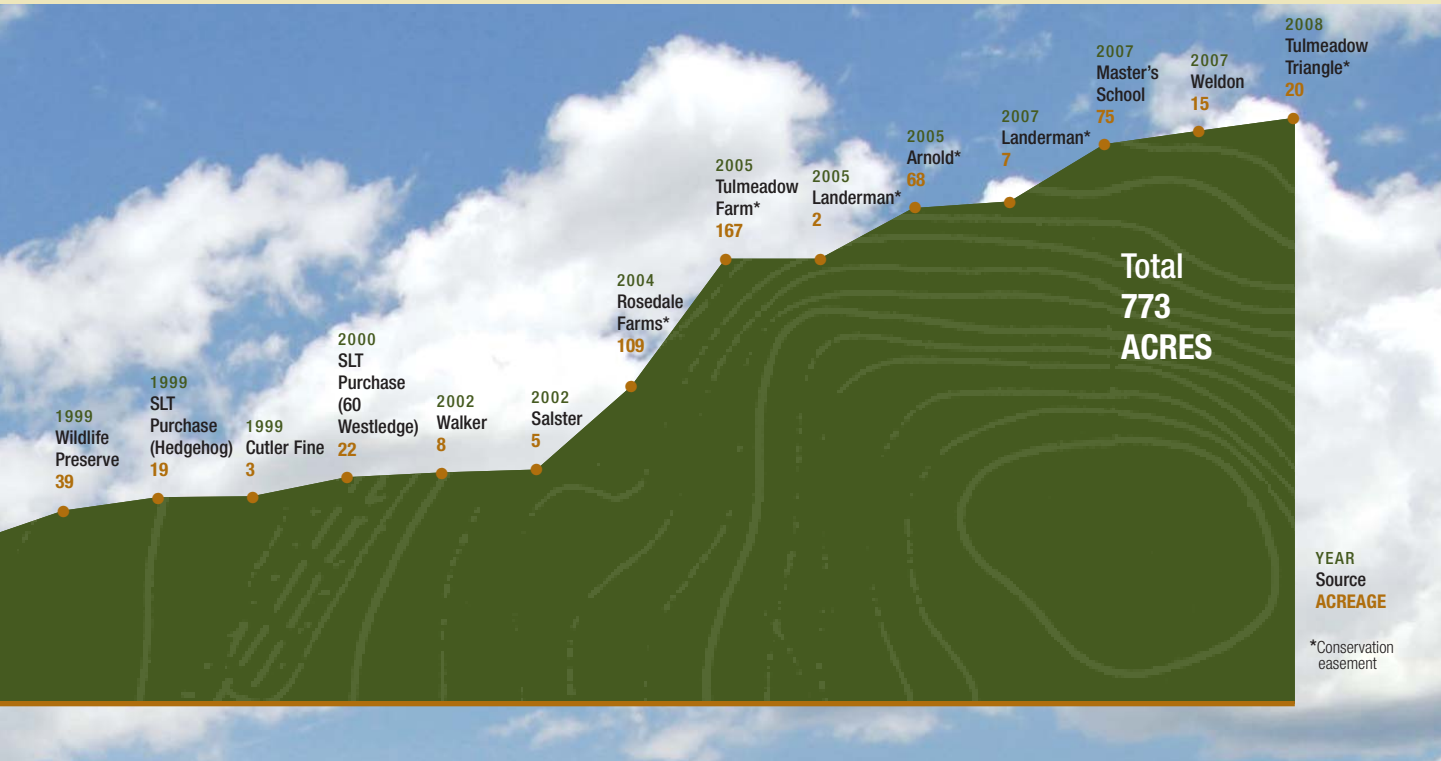
The Simsbury Land Trust seeks to accomplish its mission through:

- Acquisitions:** Soliciting and accepting gifts of land and interests in land from individuals and businesses.
- Partnerships:** Partnering with individuals, organizations, and governmental entities to accomplish our goals.
- Advocacy:** Participating in public policy dialogue at the local and state levels, in public and private forums.
- Stewardship:** Managing and using acquired properties in a manner consistent with our mission.
- Legacy Building:** Soliciting donations from individuals, organizations, foundations and businesses.



SIMSBURY LAND TRUST

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*In all things of nature
there is something of the marvelous.*

Aristotle



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