


Simsbury Land Trust
2013 Annual Report

A young child with light brown hair, wearing a brown t-shirt with a butterfly pattern and khaki pants, is standing in a lush green forest. The child is holding a large orange butterfly net with a wooden handle. A butterfly is visible inside the net. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees.

*Preserving land
for future generations*

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Inside back cover

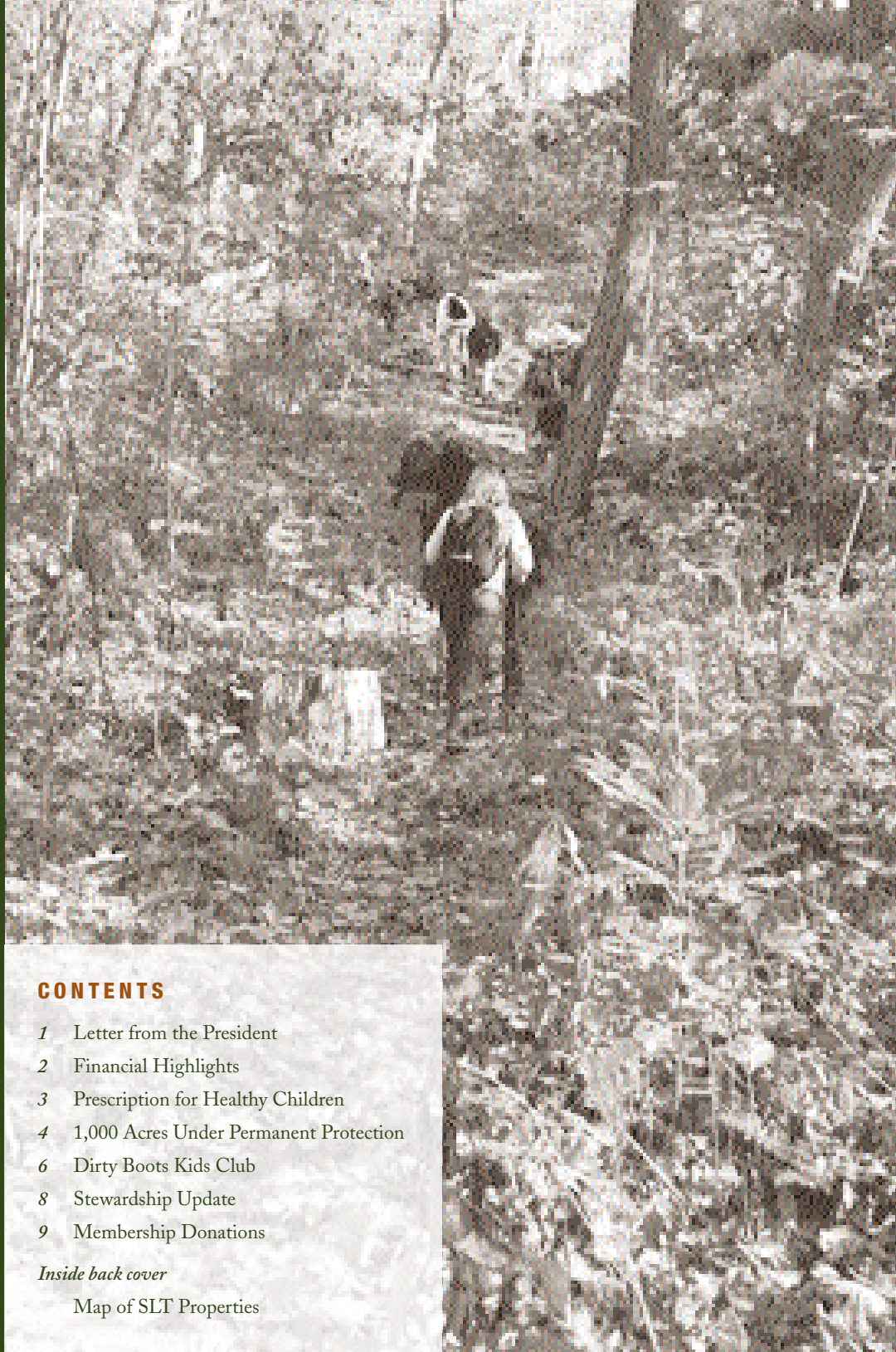
Map of SLT Properties

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.



Letter from the President

This year's theme for our annual report is preserving land for future generations. In previous years our annual reports have had themes including trails, stewardship, properties and even a history of the SLT, but our focus has always been — and continues to be — on preserving land for future generations. This is the driving force behind all that we do at the Simsbury Land Trust. As my time as president of the Simsbury Land Trust comes to an end after six years, I want to take this opportunity to reflect on how the various aspects of the Simsbury Land Trust's activities have supported our goal of preserving farms and beautiful open spaces and protecting these incredible natural resources in our town for future generations.

Our endeavors have been on many fronts, but none is quite as visible as actually acquiring land or preserving it through conservation easements. With your generous support, we have much to be proud of in this regard. Indeed, our annual report last year was built around a large map which showcased all of the trails and properties that the land trust has acquired or preserved. There is no doubt in my mind that these efforts have made our town a better place, both for the present and the future. This work still continues, as you will read about in this report.

While some might say that property acquisition is our defining mission, our focus on future generations has involved much, much more. Once land is preserved, it is important to take care of the land in order to preserve it for the future. Consequently, over the past six years we have greatly expanded our stewardship efforts and made increased funding of stewardship efforts a high priority. As a result, we have not only been able to accomplish the routine tasks such as trail maintenance and repair, we have begun to address in a systematic way longer term issues such as controlling invasive plants and developing plans for long term funding for stewardship efforts. Our strategic planning process is another way we sought to plan for the future. Coming out of this

process were initiatives leading to the creation of an endowment fund with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (which we hope you all will consider as a lasting legacy for the Simsbury Land Trust) as well as expanded programs and outreach — such as the Green Scenes Documentary Film Series and the Dirty Boots Kids Club — which involve more

people and help educate about the need for and benefits of preserved open space and important issues facing the natural environment. Developing future generations who will appreciate, use, and enjoy the preserved farms and open space is a mission just as vital as preserving the land itself.

I am very proud of the Simsbury Land Trust's accomplishments in the past and am confident that this work will go on making our town a wonderful place to live for us as well as future generations. None of this would have been possible, however, without the broad and strong support and encouragement from our members and supporters in the town of Simsbury. I am at a loss to describe how much I have enjoyed the opportunity of serving as the president of this fine organization for the past six years. We have been blessed with a terrific staff, a hardworking and dedicated board, and great donors and volunteers. I want to thank everyone for their hard work. I will be continuing on the board and will serve the SLT in other ways, but I am confident that the Simsbury Land Trust will continue to flourish with Fred Feibel as its new

president. I thank you for your support during my time as president, and look forward to seeing you on the trails!

Sincerely,



Chuck Howard
President



*Developing future
generations who will
appreciate, use, and enjoy
the preserved farms and
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Financial Highlights – 2013

Statement of Revenues and Expenses January 1 – December 31, 2013

	CAMPAIGN	OPERATIONS	TOTAL	TOTAL 2012
Revenues				
Land Acquisition Contributions	\$301,768		\$301,768	\$ 36,871
Land Donations	150,000		150,000	
Grants	150,000	\$ 32,013	182,013	35,520
Membership Contributions		113,926	113,926	124,245
Simsburyopoly Income		250	250	5,330
Miscellaneous Income		12,385	12,385	13,412
Total Revenues	601,768	158,574	760,342	215,378
Expenses				
Administrative	9,525	33,038	42,563	51,990
Salaries and Benefits	10,187	30,561	40,748	44,298
Membership		26,291	26,291	35,400
Stewardship		24,028	24,028	16,961
Other		350	350	1,551
Total Expenses	19,712	114,268	133,980	150,200
Excess of Revenues Over Expenses	\$582,056	\$ 44,306	\$626,362	\$ 65,178

Balance Sheet

	DECEMBER 31, 2013	DECEMBER 31, 2012
Assets		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash – Unrestricted	\$ 177,541	\$ 175,956
– Restricted	194,416	94,209
Prepaid Expenses	44,811	33,242
Investments Held by Others	90,729	70,786
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	507,497	374,193
FIXED ASSETS		
Land	13,353,004	12,852,535
Office Equipment – net	57	407
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS	13,353,061	12,852,942
TOTAL ASSETS	\$13,860,558	\$13,227,135
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accrued Liabilities	\$ 9,223	\$ 2,162
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	9,223	2,162
FUND BALANCE		
Beginning Fund Balance	13,182,473	13,091,505
Board Designated Stewardship Fund	42,500	42,500
Restricted Stewardship Fund		10,457
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets		15,333
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	626,362	65,178
ENDING FUND BALANCE	13,851,335	13,224,973
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$13,860,558	\$13,227,135

The Great Outdoors: Prescription for Healthy Children

Margery Winters, SLT Trustee

Ask a child from Simsbury to tell you about nature and they will eagerly tell you many interesting facts about African or Amazonian animals that they learned watching Animal Planet. But take many of these same enthusiastic children on a walk through the woods, as I have for years as a naturalist at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, and you hear a much different story — nature is too hot, too wet, too cold, too steep, too buggy, and much too dirty. Frequently they recoil in horror at the thought of picking up a beetle or touching a leaf (all leaves are suspected poison ivy). Surprisingly many teachers admonish their students to touch nothing. Mud, on shoes, clothes, or skin, is an anathema. Squirts of hand sanitizer are dispensed routinely at the end of each hike.

For many of our children, nature has become a virtual experience or what they experience on the trip from their front door to the school bus or on the soccer field. Childhood has moved indoors; our children are spending half as much time outside as they did 20 years ago, as much as six hours a day in front of an electronic screen, and obesity levels are rising. This is not good for our children or their understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

But kids are genetically programmed to get dirty and the muddier the better. As grandmothers have known for years and recent research is just discovering, playing outside is good for children! According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, spending time outside raises levels of Vitamin D, protecting children from bone problems, heart disease, diabetes, and other health issues later in life. Research reported in the journal *Optometry and Vision Science* found that children who spent more time outside during the day tended to have better distance vision. Just being outside in nature has been found to relieve stress levels in children. Unstructured time outdoors running, jumping and climbing strengthens bodies and minds. But getting dirty, that's where the real

health benefits accrue. Playing in the dirt helps children build stronger immune systems. When children are quarantined from nature and their exposure to soil parasites, bacteria, and viruses is limited early in life, they may face a greater chance of having allergies, asthma, and other autoimmune diseases. The

National Wildlife Fund website has more on how children benefit from contact with soil in their report *The Dirt of Dirt*.

And not only does the health of our children depend on their direct experience with the great outdoors, but the health of our great outdoors is dependant on this interaction as well. There is no virtual equivalent to the personal delight in finding a salamander under a rotting log, the surprise of spring wildflowers pushing up through the forest duff, or the excitement of catching dragonflies. Without a personal connection to our local environment, nature is something removed from everyday life and the need to preserve our wild areas diminishes. Land conservation begins when children experience nature first hand splashing through puddles, digging in mud, catching bugs in a jar, building with sticks, scraping a knee; using their senses to appreciate the natural world around them. As the old proverb goes, we don't save a place we don't

love, and we can't love a place we don't know. It is not only important to preserve and manage our wild open spaces but to make sure we introduce our children to the natural world. And opportunities abound in Simsbury to do so, thanks to the State, Town and Simsbury Land Trust trails, even in your own back yard. Send the kids outside and let them get muddy — it's what Mother Nature, M.D. would prescribe.

(Note: The SLT would prescribe signing your child or grandchild up to become a member of the Dirty Boots Kids Club! See the related article (page 8) and contact the office for additional information about the program.)



1,000 Acres Under Permanent Protection

Dick Davis, SLT Trustee

With the completion of our two most recent acquisitions, the purchase of a 50-acre conservation easement on the George Hall Farm, and the acceptance earlier in 2013 of William Macke's gift of 19 acres just south of Onion Mountain, the Simsbury Land Trust now protects 1,035 acres of prime conservation land.

We have always felt uncomfortable emphasizing numbers in describing the accomplishments of the SLT. The quantity of acres, the cost in dollars, the number of transactions, are all poor measures of our true value. 1,000 is a traditional milestone. It has a certain ring to it, it catches attention, it is substantial and it does represent achievement for the organization and for the community. However, the true achievement of these 1,035 acres is in their content. Among these hundreds of acres we find outstanding examples of each of the Town's major habitats. We find expansive scenic vistas that still overwhelm the manmade environment. And we find meaningful natural corridors and trails that connect them. These lands are truly worthwhile places. With the SLT's careful stewardship, these natural surroundings will continue to contribute to the intellectual, emotional and physical well-being of generations to come.

In 1976, its founders hoped that the Simsbury Land Trust would become one of a number of important tools the community would use to protect its natural surroundings. That initial vision, the care and persistence with which it has been executed, and the unbelievable generosity and commitment of countless friends and neighbors all combined to make this assemblage of land possible.

GEORGE HALL FARM

This year we recognize George Hall with sincere and special thanks. Without his persistence and patience in working with the SLT, we would not have found a way to permanently protect the 50 acres of fields where he has spent his entire life. The culmination of the combined efforts of George, the Town

and the SLT, after overcoming a number of challenging permutations, consisted of several outcomes. At the end, the SLT has purchased, for \$300,000, a permanent conservation easement on George's 11-acre farm at 180 Old Farms Road.

George has purchased the 39-acre Pharos Farm from the Town of Simsbury for \$480,000, and the SLT has purchased a conservation easement from George on Pharos Farm for \$250,000. (For those following the math, the remaining \$70,000 paid by the SLT was applied to the removal of various liens from the property). Together, these elements of the transaction make for a more economically stable business operation and improve the chances for the farms' long term success. In addition, because it removes non-agricultural development rights from the combined 50 acres, it reduces the value of the land making it significantly more affordable for future farmers.

Each participant gained benefits from this transaction. The Town ended up with \$480,000 and it gets to benefit from Pharos Farm remaining in its current and historical use far into the future. George Hall gained ownership of an additional 38 acres of prime farmland in exchange for giving up the development value of the combined 50 acres. The SLT obtained



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George Hall owns and operates the largest certified organic farm in Simsbury.

Phyllis Meredith Photography

protection for another 50 acres of prime farmland soil and the opportunity for another family owned farm to survive. Every operating farm strengthens the agricultural infrastructure of the Farmington Valley and without that infrastructure, no single farm could exist. The two primary features of the SLT easements are the prohibition of non-agricultural development and the requirement that the fields be cut annually whenever they are not actively farmed, thus preserving them for future agricultural use. In addition, the SLT gets access and limited offsite parking for its 63-acre Wagner Woods, adjacent to the 180 Old Farms Road site.

Fifty percent of the funds for the two agricultural conservation easements came from a grant to the SLT from the USDA-NRCS Ranch and Farmland Protection Program which provides for the preservation of soils tested as US Prime or CT Important. US Prime and CT Important are the highest soil productivity ratings. In this case the NRCS achieves its objective at a cost of 50 cents on the dollar. The remaining funds were private donations from members and friends of the SLT.

THE WILLIAM MACKE FAMILY GIFT

Many of you will remember that in 2006, the Simsbury Land Trust negotiated a purchase and sale agreement with Dr. Herbert Arnold for 67 acres of ridge land at the Canton boundary just south of Onion Mountain. It then arranged to assign the PSA along with \$25,000 to the Canton Land Trust in exchange for a conservation easement. The Canton Land Trust then obtained a CT-DEP grant and provided an additional \$35,000 from its members to acquire the property subject to the SLT easement. The purpose of this purchase for



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the SLT was to protect another 67 acres of its western ridge from residential development. For the CLT this transaction enhanced conservation land that it and the Town of Canton already owned there.

In early 2013 the Macke family moved to Ohio and as they were marketing their Simsbury home they decided to gift to the SLT 19 acres of excess land adjacent to the Arnold property. Although this site is one of the few SLT properties that does not have direct public access (it must be accessed via Town-owned land and the Arnold property), this is

nonetheless a critical conservation site. It is one of the few stretches of eastern slope along the West Ridge that remains unobstructed from the top to the extensive wetlands below. From McLean Game Refuge to Notch Road, streets and housing development separate the ridge-top from the wetlands. This prevents certain wildlife from its life-cycle migrations. As a result, the populations of certain reptiles and amphibians have dramatically declined in Simsbury over the past several decades.

Thanks to the awareness and generosity of the Macke family, this wildlife can continue to thrive in this small corner of the Town.

Go Outside and Get Dirty with the Dirty Boots Kids Club!

Catching frogs, looking up close at bugs — dead and live ones, making butter out of cream — and eating it, tracking animals in the snow and learning how to make tracks, grinding corn and running through the corn maze. It doesn't get any better than that! All of these activities, and more, are a part of the Dirty Boots Kids Club program.

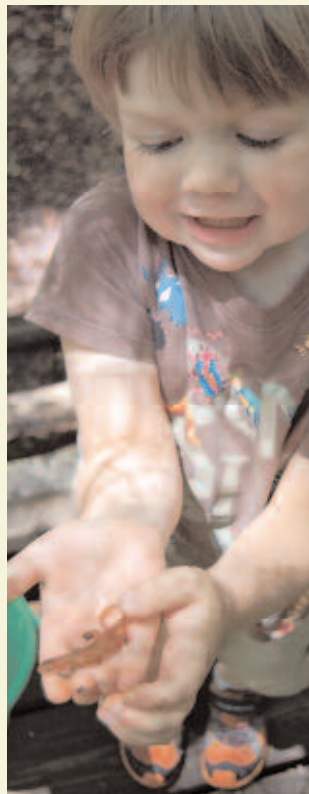
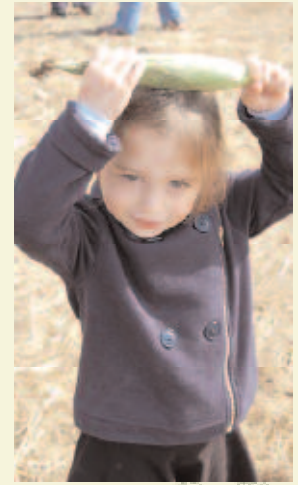
Getting our children — or grandchildren — out into nature is an important job for parents and grandparents, and is an important part of the Simsbury Land Trust's job as well. We spend our time, money and effort preserving parcels of land and building trails to benefit future generations. The Dirty Boots Kids Club grew out of this desire to get more children (and their parents or grandparents) out on our trails.

Children can participate in the program free of charge (if a parent or grandparent is a member) and receive a knapsack, special kids trail and activity book, a water bottle and invitations to four members-only programs each year. Membership in this program continues to grow and the activities are fun for all ages. Generous sponsorship from Educational Playcare allowed us to offer this program to members at no charge. (Non-members can participate for \$10.00 per child.)

This year the theme for the club is farms, with each program held at a local farm. In the fall the kids went to Tulmeadow Farm to learn about cows, how to make ice cream and butter, took a walk along the SLT trail from the farm store, and were treated at the end to an ice cream cone, courtesy of Tulmeadow Farm. The second program was all about corn, and they went to Rosedale Farms. Each child got to help grind corn to make cornmeal, heard a story about corn, ran through the corn maze (courtesy of Rosedale Farms) and ate corn muffins and corn chips. This spring the program continues with a trip to Flamig Farm to see and learn about baby animals, and to the Community Farm of Simsbury to learn where our food comes from and how plants are grown.

Teaching your children the joys of the outdoors is a gift for a lifetime. Please consider signing your children or grandchildren up for the Dirty Boots Kids Club today!





Trail Work and Habitat Management

Sally Rieger, SLT Trustee

Simsbury Land Trust divides its stewardship functions into four areas of responsibility: recruiting property monitors for major properties, developing and maintaining trails and paths on appropriate properties, protecting and enhancing habitat, and monitoring the farm conservation easement properties to ensure compliance with legal requirements. This year we are pleased to report that all of SLT's properties with trails had monitors. These willing volunteers give their time to check and report on conservation needs and trail conditions on their assigned areas several times each year.

Trail development continued at the Glover property this year and the SLT was fortunate to have work done by Eagle Scout candidate Tommy Kim. His project included the planning and installation of the new boardwalk. Other trail work included the building of two small bridges at Glover, extension of the bridge in the Case Meadow and the regular trimming along existing trails and paths at Case, Wagner Woods, and the West Mountain Trails. Special attention was given to the Ketchin Quarry by Bill Lorenzen, who spent his summer cleaning up the property, restoring the trail and removing invasive plants. An arborist was hired to remove several dangerous trees along the West Mountain trail system.

Habitat management work included the continuation of invasive plant control at the Ketchin Quarry and the Glover and Case properties as well as the reseeding of several disturbed areas with native grasses and wildflowers. A professional forester prepared a forest management plan for Wagner Woods, with a view to seeking grant funding for Japanese barberry control. Also, workday volunteers helped with an alder thicket restoration project at Case Meadow and property monitors checked and cleaned bluebird boxes at Case, Wegner Field and Wagner Woods.

Stewardship compliance volunteers are responsible for formal annual inspections of Rosedale Farms and Tulmeadow Farm. A report on each inspection is filed in order to comply with the terms of the federal funders of these conservation projects. The inspections and any follow-up changes that need to be made ensure that the properties are in compliance with the legal agreements that the Simsbury Land Trust and the property owners have made.



INVASIVES WORK PLANNED FOR 2014

This year property stewardship requires the usual maintenance work such as trimming along our trails, but the big project facing Simsbury Land Trust is dealing with extensive areas of invasive plants at Wagner Woods. We are primarily focused on autumn olive around the field and Japanese barberry in the woods. Japanese barberry is a particular concern because not only does it create a dense understory in the woods that

prevents native wildflowers and shrubs from growing, but it harbors deer ticks. Wooded areas infested with Japanese barberry have a greater percentage of ticks carrying the bacterium that causes Lyme disease. (Note: Wagner Woods is heavily used by walkers, and as we suggest for all wooded hikes, wear light-colored clothing with long pants and long sleeves, and tuck your pants into your socks before your hike. Check for ticks after returning home from your hike.)

Unfortunately, professional help to control invasive plants is expensive, and it is work that volunteers cannot do. You can help us to manage these “villains” that reduce the conservation value of natural areas by making a contribution to the Simsbury Land Trust Stewardship Fund. All contributions help make our trails and properties more enjoyable places to visit!

*These willing volunteers
give their time to check and
report on conservation needs
and trail conditions on their
assigned areas.*

Membership Donations

We want to thank the community for its generous support this past year. None of the Simsbury Land Trust's accomplishments in 2013 would have been possible without our membership and its many remarkable volunteers and donors.

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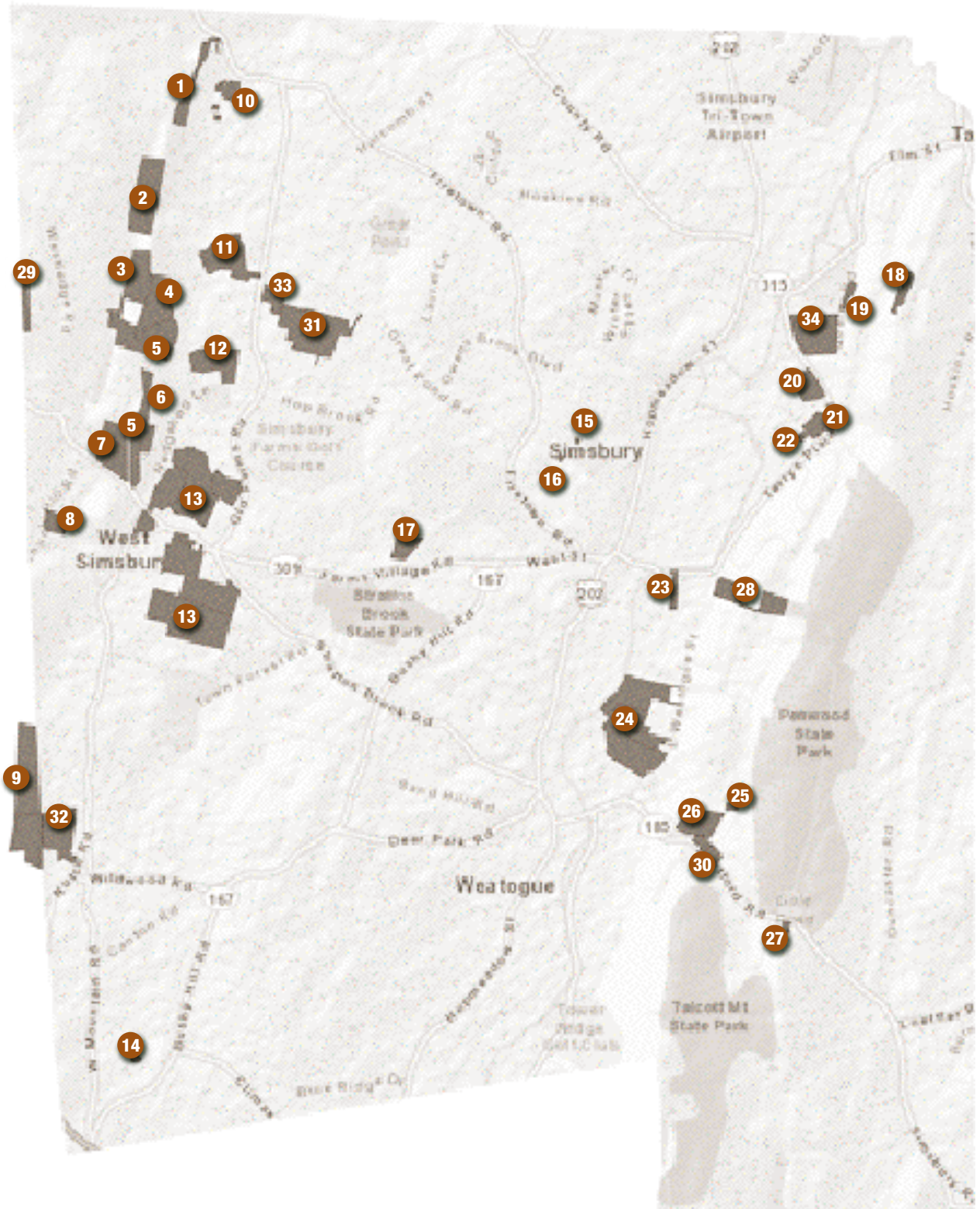
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