Simsbury Land Trust 2020 Annual Report



FACES BEHIND THE PLACES

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SLT board met via Zoom so our work could continue during COVID.

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Editor: Amy Zeiner *Design:* John Johnson Art Direction and Design *Thanks to our photographers:* Danielle D'Ermo, Rocky Piccirillo, Robert Shea

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." ~Helen Keller

What do you do when you can't go to work, attend school, eat out, go to the movies, travel or many of the other activities we once took for granted? You take a hike. And that is exactly what many in Simsbury have been doing. A walk outside in nature has been a wonderful relief from the confines of the house and the stress of uncertain times. Over the past eight months since the first COVID pandemic shutdowns, the Simsbury Land Trust trails have seen substantially increased use. SLT mailed out over 100 copies of our Simsbury Walkbook to local residents, and the Simsbury Land Trust received support from a near record number of members this year. We hear frequently from Simsbury residents how they have walked SLT trails they never knew existed and how much they have come to value our Town's abundant open space and trails.

None of these trails and properties that are helping us weather these challenging times would be available, however, without our many dedicated volunteers and stewards who help to keep the trails safe and passable. In August, when Isaias brought high winds and tree damage to many trails, Simsbury Land Trust stewards and other volunteers turned out within days to clean up the fallen branches and saw and remove the trunks blocking the paths. Volunteers have donated hundreds of hours patrolling the property perimeters, writing reports, removing invasive species, planting native shrubs and meadows, trail clearing, and repairing damage to existing trails. Others volunteers serve on the SLT board to help to ensure funding, provide education and recreational activities, as well as guidance to keep the organization functioning. Our volunteers, with our extraordinary staff, are the indomitable forces that keep the Simsbury Land Trust functioning even during these challenging times.

We dedicate this annual report to these volunteers — they are the faces behind our places. And with the increased success of the Simsbury Land Trust over the years, the need for such volunteers continues to grow. As you hike the trails and make your annual donation, we encourage you to consider becoming even more involved, if you can, to become one of the faces behind the places, to keep the Simsbury Land Trust the valued organization it is.

Margery Winters



Faces Behind the Places

Open space, scenic vistas, farmland, open fields, ridgelines, bogs a few of the things you think of when you hear Simsbury Land Trust. What you don't think about, but is vitally important, are the people behind the land. Board members, stewards, land donors, hikers, bird watchers, easement monitors and members — each plays an important role in making the Simsbury Land Trust what it is today. Every year in the annual report we celebrate the property and the 1,108 acres of land we are so fortunate to have in Simsbury. This year we celebrate the people who make it all possible.



STEWARD – Christine Fleming

After almost 40 years of traipsing through and becoming familiar with Simsbury Land Trust properties, I wanted to become involved with the organization. I became a steward last year and have thoroughly enjoyed watching over The Bog. It's a unique piece of Simsbury and I look forward to caring for it for many seasons to come.



EASEMENT MONITOR – Steve Osborn It's great that Simsbury Land Trust has been able to help preserve some of our historic and iconic local farms. I'm fortunate to be able to see both the environmental benefit of our easement concept and to learn firsthand from the owner the joys and challenges of managing a successful farm.



TRUSTEE – Katie Piccirillo When I first moved to Simsbury in 2014 I was both excited and

impressed to discover the vast areas

of protected land and extensive hiking

town. As I began to explore more and

more, I also felt an obligation to give

organization that stewards this land,

back. In an attempt to support the

I joined the Simsbury Land Trust. While it's easy to take the natural landscapes, outdoor spaces, and vistas we enjoy for granted, their long-term viability is hardly ever certain. I want Simsbury to have this beautiful protected land and these incredible trails forever: I also know it

means we must work for it.

trails that scatter about this lovely



LAND DONOR – Laird Mortimer

25 years ago, when we purchased these 60 acres and a house deep in the Simsbury woods, we sought peacefulness. We found it. No other houses nearby and the Simsbury Land Trust around us. We enjoyed walking on our land and having a few picnics for our church. The Owen-Mortimer trail runs about an acre from our house. Nobody ever bothers us. We are happy that we bought this quiet virgin land and are still happy for the Simsbury Land Trust hikers to make good use of this small, but connecting plot.

BIRD WATCHER – Zellene Sandler

Though I live in Bloomfield, I support the SLT because I hike and bird the land trust properties. Tanager Hill is one of my favorites, not only for its beauty, but also for the variety of warblers and other birds that are seen here, including the uncommon Hooded Warbler. Thanks to the efforts in building the boardwalks and maintaining the trails, the property is easily hiked and enjoyed. Another little gem is the Glover property. Though small, one can see wrens and swallows nesting in the birdhouses, and learn about native plants from the informative signs. A great spot for a short walk, especially with kids.





HIKER – Sarah Langdon

I started hiking with the SLT Hiking Club several years ago. The leaders and other members of the group were very welcoming and knowledgeable and it wasn't long before I decided to join SLT. I love to hike the properties that SLT protects. Some days, I just want an easy walk through the woods and other days I want to challenge myself. Simsbury Land Trust has something for whatever mood I am in.



DIRTY BOOTS KIDS CLUB – Future Faces

While our activities have been paused in 2020, we would be remiss if we didn't acknowledge the future of the SLT. Young children participating in the Dirty Boots program and hiking with their families are the future of our organization. We welcome them and looking forward to seeing them grow up with the SLT.

MEMBERS – All of you!

Each of the 824 member families in 2020 played an important role in helping the Simsbury Land Trust protect 36 beautiful parcels of open space in Simsbury. We thank you for this continued and generous support!

Who Does the Work for SLT Properties?

Sally Rieger, SLT Trustee

About a month ago, Simsbury Land Trust received a letter thanking the SLT for its wonderful and well-marked West Mountain Loop Trail. We are proud of our reputation for maintaining our trails while also managing our properties so they will continue to provide good habitat for native plants and wildlife as the climate changes.

Managing the Simsbury Land Trust's trails and properties requires lots of hands-on effort, comparable to yard work, but on a very large scale. Volunteers are the ones who do most of the work. Many are property stewards or monitors whose basic job is to keep an eye on a particular property or trail and to report back to the Stewardship Committee on any problems needing attention. Many go beyond this basic function, putting in lots of time and energy. Not all of the volunteers who work for the Simsbury Land Trust have assigned properties. Some are people who come to our workdays and take on a job then, and some are people who get in touch, looking for an ongoing project to do. We need them all! Here are some of the hands-on jobs that our volunteers do:

- Clear downed trees from trails (there is more storm damage now than in earlier years).
- Cut back vegetation intruding on trails and paths.
- Cut overhanging branches over our mown paths. These are in the way when the mowing is done.
- Build and maintain our boardwalks, bridges and the large and small information kiosks.
- Build, install and repair bird nesting boxes (bears occasionally break into these).
- Spray the poison ivy around benches.
- · Control invasive plants that degrade wildlife habitat.
- Post and replace various signs like the boundary signs that mark most of our borders.
- Complete Federal and State monitoring requirements for the farms on which we hold conservation easements (Rosedale Farm, Tulmeadow Farm and Woodlot, George Hall/Pharos Farm).

 Monitor and mark the borders of the properties the Simsbury Land Trust owns, checking for problems such as dumping of yard waste and unauthorized paths.

Volunteers also have some jobs that are not "on-theground" including:

- Mapping trails using GIS, creating the maps for our kiosks, and replacing them as needed.
- Designing our boardwalks, bridges and kiosks.
- Ordering our building materials and preparing them for installation by cutting lumber to size, drilling holes, etc.
- Attending conferences and workshops to stay informed about best practices in stewardship.
- Obtaining expert advice from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the North Central Conservation District and private professionals as needed.
- Working with Eversource on SLT-owned right of ways to ensure protection of the land's conservation values.



- Determining when to hire professional help for mowing, removal of dangerous trees, control of invasive plants, large trail improvement jobs, etc.
- Developing habitat enhancements like the pollinatorfriendly area at Wagner Woods.

It has been exciting and a big accomplishment over the years for Simsbury Land Trust to have acquired the properties that are now the public's favorites among our varied holdings: 60 Westledge, the West Mountain Loop Trails, Wagner Woods, and Owen-Mortimer and Tanager Hill. We have been happy to provide the public with places for great outdoor activity, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when trail use has been very high. We could not offer our trails as a place for public recreation without our volunteers. We also depend on the public to support us through membership and donations to pay for equipment, supplies, publications, movies, speakers, office space and our office staff who provide financial and executive oversight.

Thank you Volunteers!

SLT would like to thank the following volunteers who help us care for our properties.

Meg Addis	Tom Crawford	Dave Kozak	Don Rieger	Lori Stethers
Blake Anderson	Brian Czak	Dennis Lockwood	Sally Rieger	Camilla Thompson
Mary Baier	Danielle D'Ermo	Scott Lockwood	Paula Robinson	Joe Treacy
Scott Barnett	Arch Edgar	Jim Miller	Rick Robinson	Don Uhl
Karen Bellino	Lori Fernand	Diana Moody	Robin Scofield	Pat Uhl
Jerry Berube	Christine Fleming	Steve Osborn	Nancy Scott	Susan Van Kleef
Holly Beum	Jim Fleming	Bob Palmer	Bob Shea	Chip Ward
Olivia Birney	Marshall Greenberg	Lucas Pepe	Joan Skelly	Chris Warren
Teresa Bludeau	Bill Howard	Katie Piccirillo	Brett Sloan	Faith Weidner
Chris Bombara	Jerry Jarrett	Rocky Piccirillo	Marlene Snecinski	Mel Wolpert
Karen Brand	Patti Kellogg	Bruce Powell	Joe Springman	Biff Zoephel
Dick Clark	Michelle Knierim	Diane Powell	Rick Stanley	

If you volunteered last year and we somehow missed your name — thank you!



Thank You Don and Sally Rieger

Walk any Simsbury Land Trust trail and you will see their work: a bridge, a new trail, a meadow of wildflowers. Or it might be something unseen, such as the absence of a fallen tree across the trail or a no longer present patch of invasive plants. Many of the things that enhance your hikes on SLT properties are the result of untold hours of research, planning, supervising, and just plain elbow grease on the part of two extraordinary members of the Simsbury Land Trust, Don and Sally Rieger.

When Sally Rieger joined the SLT Board of Trustees in 2005, Sally and her husband Don became involved in stewardship, taking over property management from then board member, Bill Howard. Don and Sally reorganized and expanded this committee to include a team of more than 25 property monitors. Over the years their stewardship responsibilities expanded as many new properties or easements were acquired by the SLT, including: Rosedale Farm; George Hall/Pharos Farm; the trail through the Tulmeadow Woodlot to Town Forest Road; the West Mountain Trails; and the Glover, Owen-Mortimer, Tanager Hill, Wagner Woods, and Michael Donlin properties. For each of those properties acquired during this period, Don and Sally took on the task of conducting environmental reviews and provided written reports for each potential new property.

It is difficult to properly tally all the other tasks that Don and Sally accomplished as head of the Stewardship Committee. Don created property and trail maps for

each property. They successfully applied for grants that helped fund conservation practices such as Japanese barberry control at Wagner Woods, buckthorn control at the Case property, and bird-friendly mowing practices at Wegner Field. Don and Sally worked with the town, the state and CT Forest & Parks on trail construction and management,

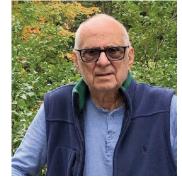


and worked with the utility company to improve management practices of their right of ways over Simsbury Land Trust land. Don and Sally also fostered a relationship with Aquarion and, at their request, Aquarion worked to remove Japanese knotweed upstream of Hop Brook at 60 Westledge.

After fifteen years, Don and Sally are putting away their shovels, saws, and maps and are passing their Stewardship leadership roles to new volunteers. It is difficult to adequately express the gratitude that the Simsbury Land Trust has for their outstanding contribution of service over these many years. The Simsbury Land Trust is a stronger, better organization for their efforts. In the future it will take many more than two volunteers to accomplish all that Don and Sally have achieved.

Other Board News

Time to say thank you and farewell to long-time board member **Elliot Schulman.** Elliot is resigning after serving on the SLT board for over 17 years. He served both as chair and member of the Governance Committee, as a member of the Finance Committee and various other roles in his time with the SLT. We will miss seeing him at our monthly meetings, and hope to see him and wife Natalie at our dinner in the spring. Thank you Elliot!



Also leaving the board this year are **Mary Baier**, **Brenda Sullivan** and **Jerry Jarrett**. We thank them all for their service to the SLT.

This past year we welcomed new board members **Tom Crawford**, who is serving as co-chair of the Stewardship Committee, **Danielle D'Ermo**, who is our new Secretary as well as SLT photographer, **Katie Piccirillo**, who leads hikes and helps as a steward and **Camilla Thompson**, who also serves as a property steward. Thanks to all of them for joining the board and sharing their time and talents.

Giving and the Pandemic

Ted Almy, SLT Trustee

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred a surge in visitation to Simsbury Land Trust properties as hundreds, perhaps thousands, of "cabin-fevered" residents and their families turned to our properties for safe and enjoyable outdoor recreational activity.

With this surge, of course, comes additional stress and wear and tear on our properties and the need for continued financial support to help the Simsbury Land Trust maintain trails and insure our properties are as safe and cared for as possible.

Donation of securities is a familiar, longstanding gifting method that can offer significant tax advantages to the donor. All gifts of stock receive a full-market value tax deduction and avoid all capital gains taxes. Stock gifts will be credited to the supporter based on the high/low average selling price on the day of transfer.

In 2018 Congress enacted a new law that allowed tax-free charitable cash donations of qualified IRA distributions. At that time, if you were 70½ or older, IRS rules required you to take required minimum distributions (RMDs) each year from your tax-deferred For Simsbury Land Trust donors with charitable intent and a desire to support the SLT, there still may not be a simpler, more tax-efficient way to give than directly from your IRA.

retirement accounts. This additional taxable income could push you into a higher tax bracket and reduce your eligibility for medical credits and other deductions. Under 2018 tax reform, the IRS made permanent the provision which allows you to satisfy your annual required minimum distribution (up to \$100,000 yearly) with a direct transfer of funds from your IRA to a qualified charity like the Simsbury Land Trust. As long as the qualified charitable distribution amount comes directly from the IRA to the charity, it can be excluded from your taxable income.

The pandemic triggered the 2020 CARES Act which among other things suspended the IRA Required Minimum Distribution requirement for the 2020 year and also pushed the RMD age from 70½ to 72. IRA holders, however, can still make income tax-free charitable distributions. For Simsbury Land Trust donors with charitable intent and a desire to support the SLT, there still may not be a simpler, more tax-efficient way to give than directly from your IRA.

For more information and assistance on donating to the Simsbury Land Trust and/or HFPG Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund, please contact us at 860-651-8773 or amyzeiner@aol.com.

Hiking Etiquette

Sally Rieger, SLT Trustee

Simsbury Land Trust owns and maintains about 12 miles of paths and trails open to public use. We want you to get outside and use and enjoy our trails. If you are not already a Simsbury Land Trust member, we hope our trails and properties inspire you to join land conservation efforts that benefit wildlife and people. When you're out on a trail, there are common rules of "trail



etiquette" that make a happier and safer experience for all trail users. You'll find similar rules on many trails you hike, wherever your feet take you.

- Stay on the trail. Many trails abut neighbors' yards, so wandering off the trail
 may cause you to trespass. Also, our trails are routed to avoid environmentally
 sensitive areas like steep slopes and amphibian breeding areas. Sometimes it
 would be quicker for you to cut off a switchback, but please don't, because you
 will contribute to soil erosion.
- 2. Hikers going downhill should yield to hikers going uphill.
- 3. If you pack it in, pack it out! Don't dispose of trash or food waste on or along the trail. Sometimes animals pick up and eat inedible objects, and they are better off eating natural food. Other hikers don't want to see your masks, gloves, tissues, apple core or banana peels!
- 4. Do not approach or feed wild animals, both for their and your wellbeing.
- 5. Hike quietly and enjoy the natural sounds. Talk softly and don't talk on your cell phone except for emergencies, but you are welcome to use it as a camera.
- 6. Leave plants and other natural features for others to enjoy.
- 7. If you are hiking with your dog, follow any signs about leash requirements. Carry a plastic bag to clean up after your dog if necessary and carry it out with you. Even where permitted, it is best not to let your dog run loose. Dogs running in grassy meadows are a threat to grassland birds. Loose dogs are much more likely to cause dangerous encounters with predators like coyotes and bears. Also, many dogs like to chase and harass or catch wildlife.
- 8. If you need to relieve yourself when hiking, find a spot well off the trail, not near water. Many hiker websites recommend finding a spot 200 feet from the trail.

Note — With the increase in use this year, it is more important than ever to follow these basic trail guidelines to make hiking more enjoyable for everyone.

Allow nature's peace to flow into you as sunshine flows into the trees.

~ John Muir

Financial Highlights

Statements of Activities

For the Years Ended June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2019

		2020			2019	
	WITHOUT DONOF RESTRICTIONS	R WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS		WITHOUT DONOF RESTRICTIONS	R WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
CHANGES IN						No. and
UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS						
Revenues:						
Membership Contributions	\$120,835		\$120,835	\$111,284		\$111,284
Bequests				33,298		33,298
Contribution Income – Restricted *		\$13,197	13,197		\$30,640	30,640
Investment Income	22,4 <mark>70</mark>	32,021	54,491	25,074	-33,325	-8,251
Other Revenue	500		500	2,260		2,260
Total Revenues	143,805	45,218	189,023	171,916	-2,685	169,231
Expenses:						
Administrative	43,372		43,372	33,316		33,316
Salaries and Benefits	40,492		40,492	33,355		33,355
Membership	24,967		24,967	25,255		25,255
Stewardship	13,860		13,860	15,120		15,120
Total Expenses	122,691		122,691	107,046		107,046
Revenues Over Expenses	21,114	45,218	66,332	64,870	-2,685	62,185
Other change in unrestricted assets:						
Unrealized (loss)/gain on						
short term investments	5,651		5,651	9,728		9,728
Change in net assets	26,765	45,218	71,983	74,598	-2,685	71,913
Net assets, beginning of year	427,651	14,862,840	15,290,491	353,053	14,865,525	15,218,578
Net assets, end of year	\$454,416	\$14,908,058	\$15,362,474	\$427,651	\$14,862,840	\$15,290,491

* Restricted Contribution Income is funds donated to the Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund held at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Balance Sheet

Fiscal Years Ended June 30, 2020 and June 30, 2019

	June 30 2020	June 30 2019
Assets		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$456,844	\$422,284
Prepaid Expenses	and the second	5,367
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	456,844	427,651
OTHER ASSETS		
Investments Held by Others	295,868	250,651
Land	14,612,189	14,612,189
TOTAL OTHER ASSETS	14,908,057	14,862,840
Total Assets	\$15,364,901	\$15,290,491
Liabilities and Fund Balance		
Current Liabilities		
Deferred Revenue - Annual Dinner	\$2,428	
Total Current Liabilities	\$2,428	an and a
Fund Balance		
Fund Balance Unrestricted	<mark>\$</mark> 454,416	\$427,651
Restricted – Richard A. Davis		
Unrestricted Restricted – Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund	295,868	250,651
Unrestricted Restricted – Richard A. Davis		
Unrestricted Restricted – Richard A. Davis Endowment Fund	295,868	250,651



Membership Donations

We want to thank the community for its generous support this past year. This was a near record year for numbers of members! None of the Simsbury Land Trust's accomplishments would have been possible without our membership and our many remarkable volunteers and donors.

Star

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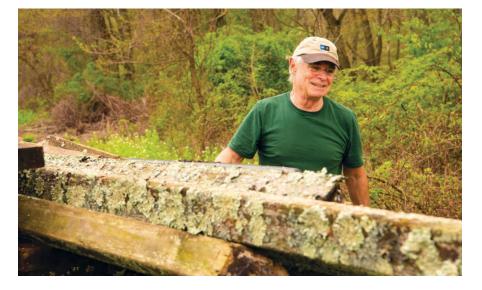
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"Not only must we be good, but we must also be good for something."

~Henry David Thoreau

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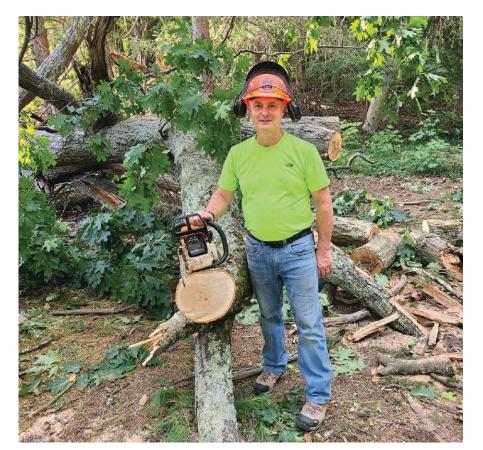
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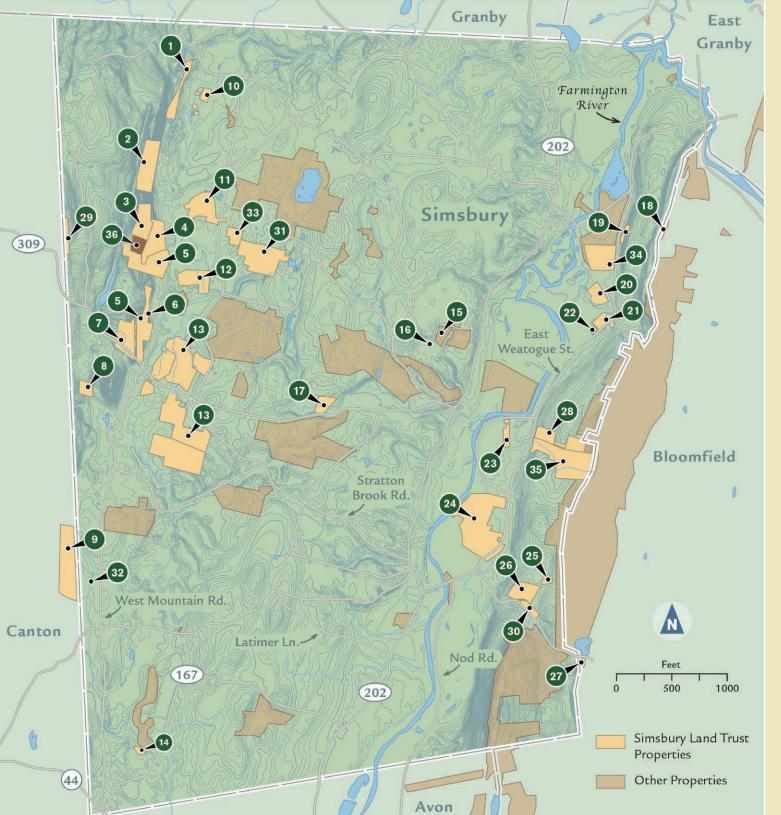
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