



Simsbury Land Trust
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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Thank You Chuck, Karen & Sally

It is time to say thank you and farewell to three stalwart and long-time board members, Chuck Howard, Karen Brand, and Sally Rieger. As they pass on their leadership roles to a new generation of board members we want to express our gratitude for their outstanding contributions of service.

An active volunteer in Simsbury and board member of SLT since 2005, Chuck Howard served as vice president of the Board of Trustees, a six-year term as president, and since as president emeritus. He was involved in the 10-year capital campaign, the Campaign for Simsbury, which saw the most dramatic increase in the acres preserved by the organization and the acquisition of many of SLT's most treasured preserves. He brought his considerable legal expertise and negotiation skills to help shepherd these acquisitions to fruition. His thoughtful insights and advice at board meetings will be missed.

On the SLT Board since 2005, Karen Brand served on the Board of Trustees as vice president and secretary. As chair of the Governance Committee, Karen was the Board's trusted voice on all by-law and governance issues. She was also extremely active on the Hikes and Recreation Committee and a property easement steward. A long-time advocate of Simsbury's open space preservation, Karen was involved in the Keep the Woods organization that worked successfully to preserve Ethel Walker Woods.

Soon after joining the SLT Board of Trustees in 2005, Sally Rieger became chair of the Stewardship Committee which she chaired until 2021. Sally also chaired the SLT's Education Committee and led innumerable hikes on SLT properties and beyond. While overseeing the hosts of tasks that such chairmanships and committee work entailed Sally also served, and continues to serve, as chair of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Study Committee, a group under National Park Service auspices aimed at securing further protection for the river.

Chuck, Karen and Sally have contributed their considerable skills, knowledge, passion, and dedication to the organization and have helped make SLT what it is today. They have set a wonderful example for those who follow.

Welcome to the most recent addition to the SLT Board of Trustees, Michele Kneirim. Michele moved to Simsbury with her husband, a Simsbury native, in 2014. Michele initially became involved as a steward for the Simsbury Land Trust at Rosedale Farms where she was able to monitor the trail with her two young children in tow. She later became involved with helping to plan and lead family hikes so she could continue to share the same love for hiking with her own children and other young families in town. Michele is hoping to encourage and share this love for the trails and open space in Simsbury with others through involvement with the SLT.



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> LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As life slowly returns to normal, or what is now the new normal for all of us, it is interesting to look back on what has been accomplished notwithstanding the unsettled nature of the past few years. Our stewardship volunteers deserve special kudos for their efforts in keeping our trails in good shape despite their extensive use during the pandemic. Although our membership levels have dropped from their pandemic peak in 2021, we are confident that the value of our open space and trails has become more apparent than ever and we welcome new and old members to join and rejoin SLT.

As discussed in further detail throughout this report, this past year SLT has focused on several new mapping initiatives to update our trail maps for the benefit of our members and visitors, as well as to help us with stewardship of our preserves. Invasive plant removal is underway at Tanager Hill, Wagner and Glover and extensive native plantings are planned for the future. Such activities will be an increasingly important focus of our stewardship and conservation efforts and will be necessary to maintain the ecological health of the preserves. We hope you will help us by doing the same — removing invasives and planting natives — in your yards.

This year marked the return to in-person events. Our education, recreation and family activity committees are actively planning special events that highlight our preserves and the issues that affect them. And a few social events are planned as well — we look forward to getting together, just for the fun of getting together again.

We hope you will join us!

Margery Winters



A group from a local business spent a morning removing invasives at Wagner Woods.

Mapping Then and Now

Maps play an integral role in the operations of the Simsbury Land Trust and have a variety of functions and applications. Maps are used for acquisition, stewardship, conservation and property plans, trail work, the website, trail signage and the Simsbury Walkbook.

A significant amount of our financial and staff resources has gone into mapping this year.

Acquisitions begin with property maps and surveys. Board members visit the parcel to determine the conservation value and to see where it falls in relation to other SLT and Town properties and existing open space corridors. Stewards use maps to determine where to place trails, where maintenance needs to be done, and to indicate issues on the property.

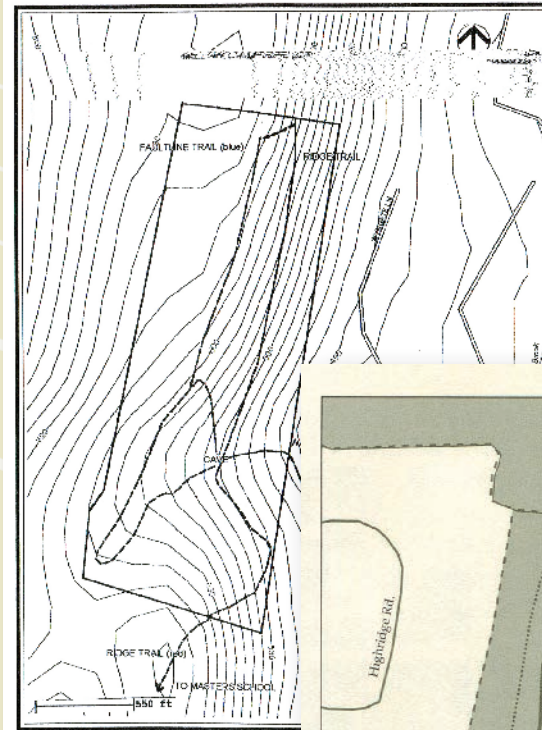
The Conservation and Habitat Committee uses maps to develop and update property plans. Currently efforts to manage and inventory invasive plants have brought a new use to the maps. SLT has purchased a land management software program that will incorporate all parcel information into one online platform that will be accessible to our stewards on their cell phones.

Trail and Simsbury Walkbook maps have changed drastically over the years. Initial maps were drawn by hand, text was updated and parcels added for subsequent versions of the Walkbook. Currently we are updating all SLT maps by hiring a local map company to walk the trails and update maps using newly collected trail data. With these new maps you will be able to use your cell phone to locate yourself along the trail. Trail signs and our website are also being updated using the latest mapping technology and GIS information.

Several of the new maps are on the pages that follow. Download the Avenza app or visit our website to get the newest maps as they become available. Neighboring land trusts — Granby and Canton — both have engaged the same map company and we hope to offer an interactive map that incorporates open space and trail data from all three towns.

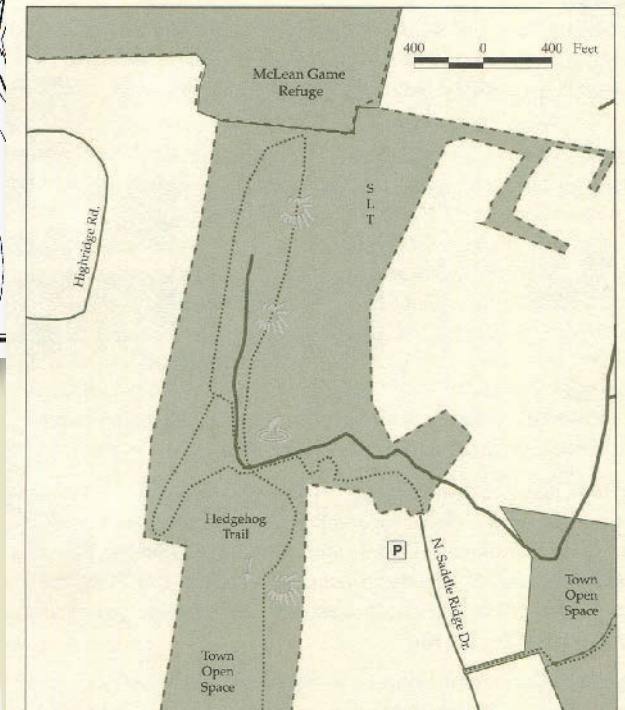
We hope you take some time to visit our trails and enjoy our new trail signage and try out the Avenza app for yourself. Happy Trails!

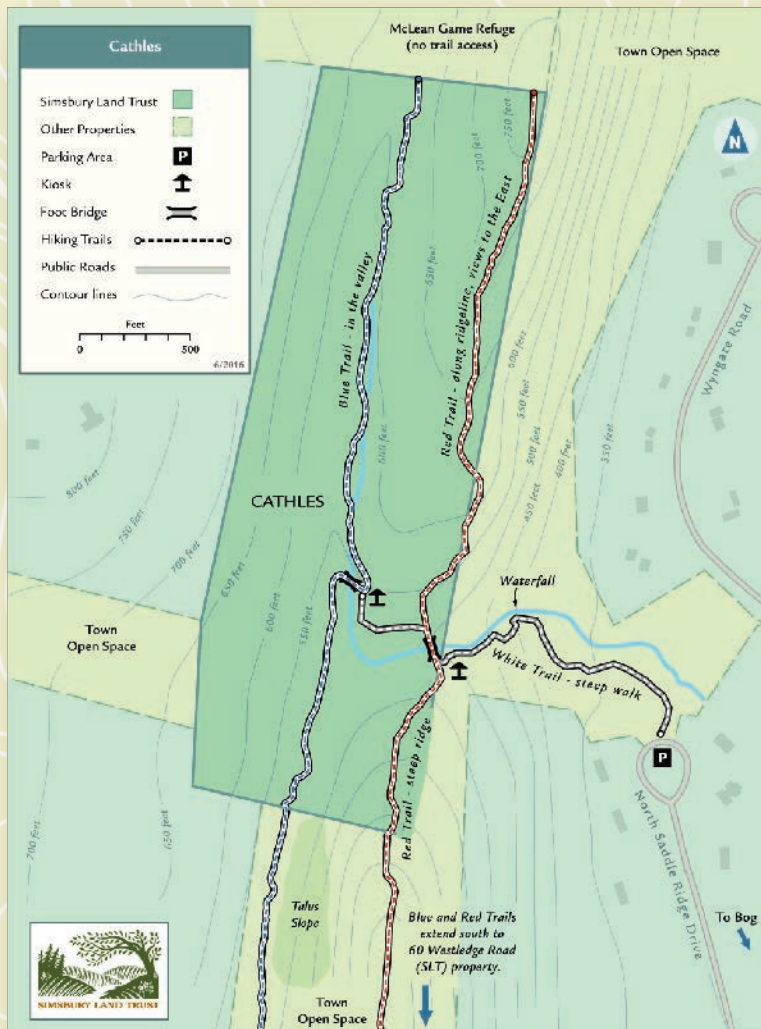
THE CATHLES TRAIL



(left) The Simsbury Walkbook was published circa 2000.

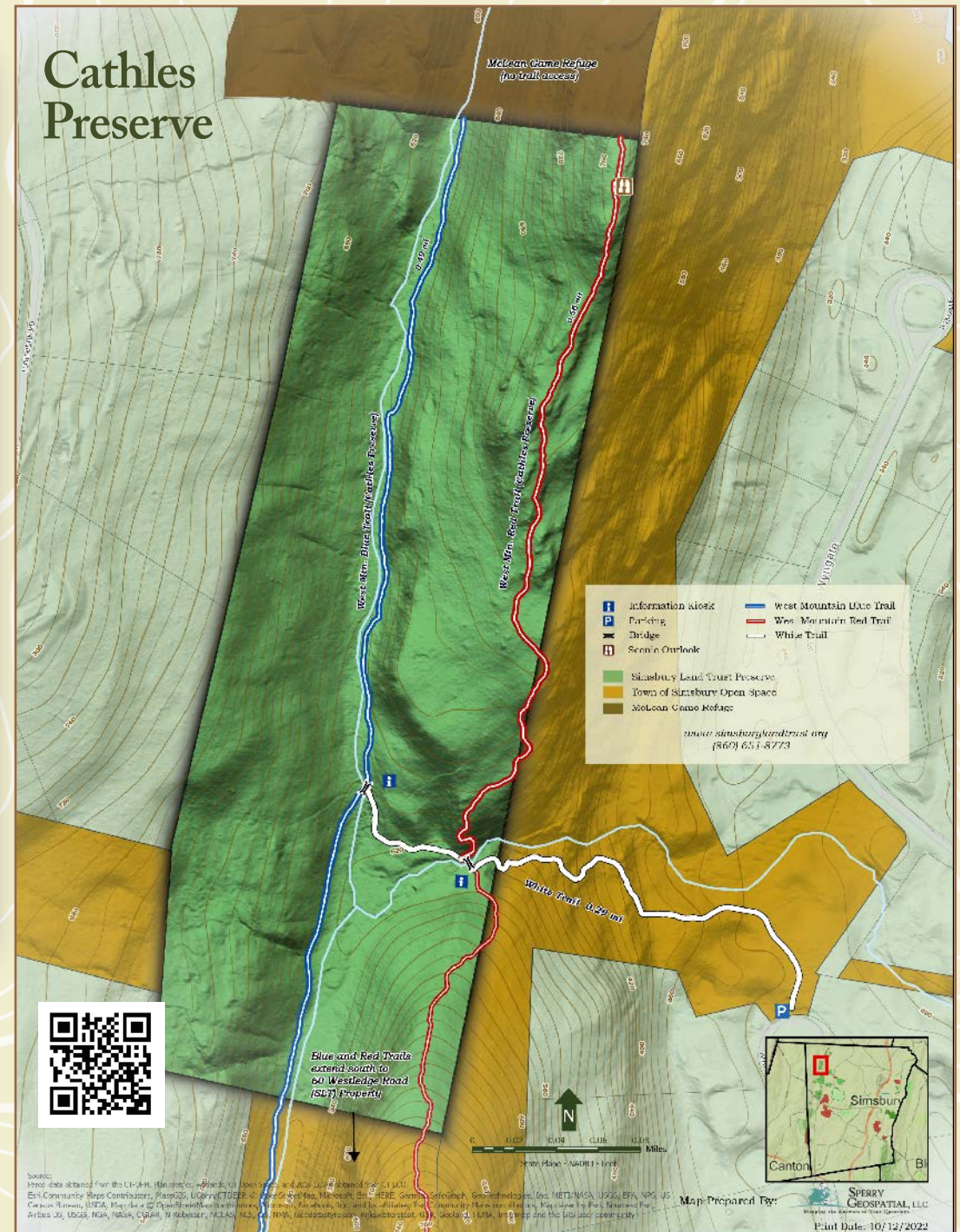
(below) This Simsbury Walkbook edition was published in 2005.





In 2016, Simsbury Land Trust created a full-color Walkbook that included an overall town-wide open space locator map and 27 detailed property maps, 14 of which are managed by SLT.

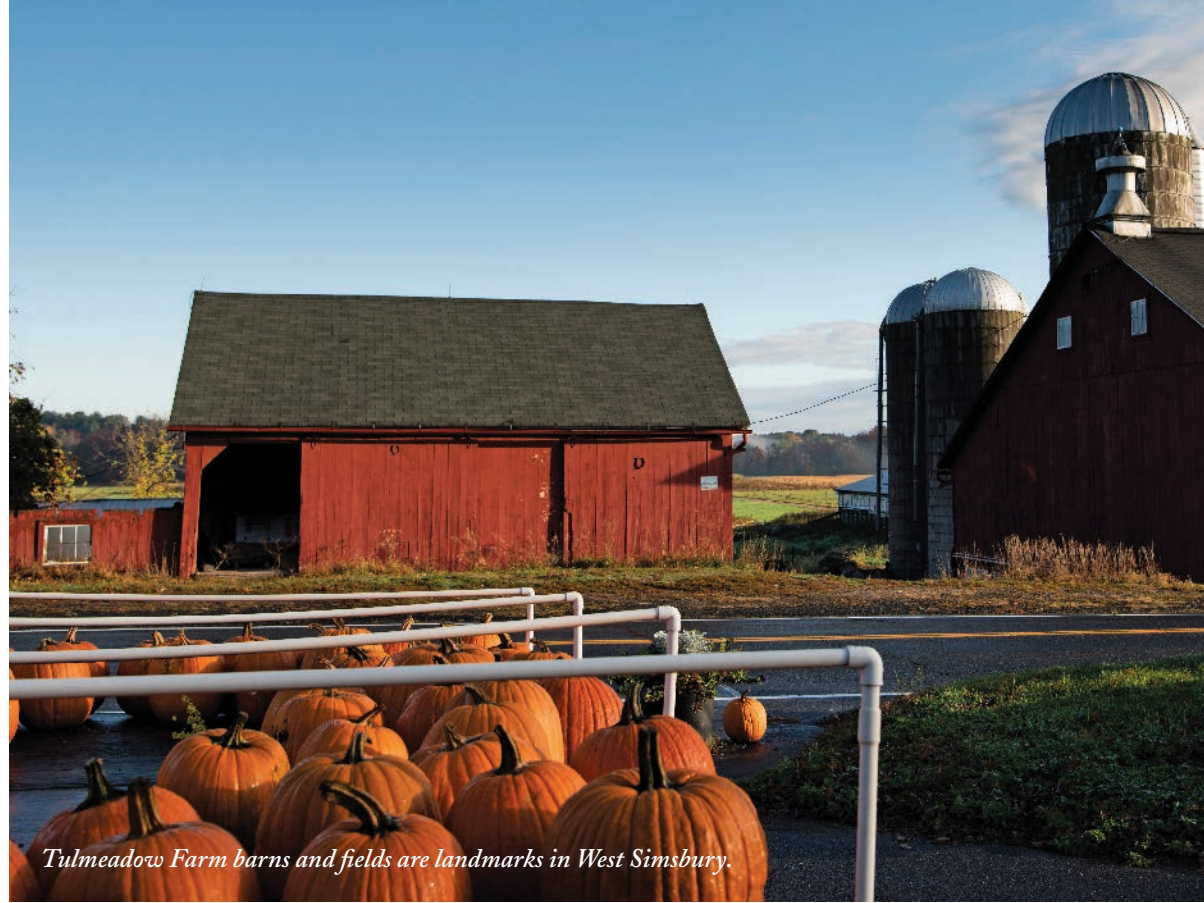
Our newest series of maps are available for download on the Avenza app.



Farms Nourish Us in Many Ways

Why are family-owned farms important to Simsbury? Simsbury farmland is rated as having “prime soil” by the US Department of Agriculture. This is a valuable natural resource. The remaining farms in Simsbury have been a part of the town for over 200 years in some cases, so they are also a part of the town’s historical heritage.

Locally grown produce is fresh, affordable and more sustainable. Because family farmers live on their farms, they strive to be responsible stewards of the land and preserve the environment for future generations. They have a vested interest in the community and are more likely to use sustainable farming techniques to protect natural resources and human health, including lower pesticide use. Local farms are a business, provide jobs and are also a significant tourist attraction. The farmers purchase goods locally.



Tulmeadow Farm barns and fields are landmarks in West Simsbury.



George Hall Farm is a certified organic farm.

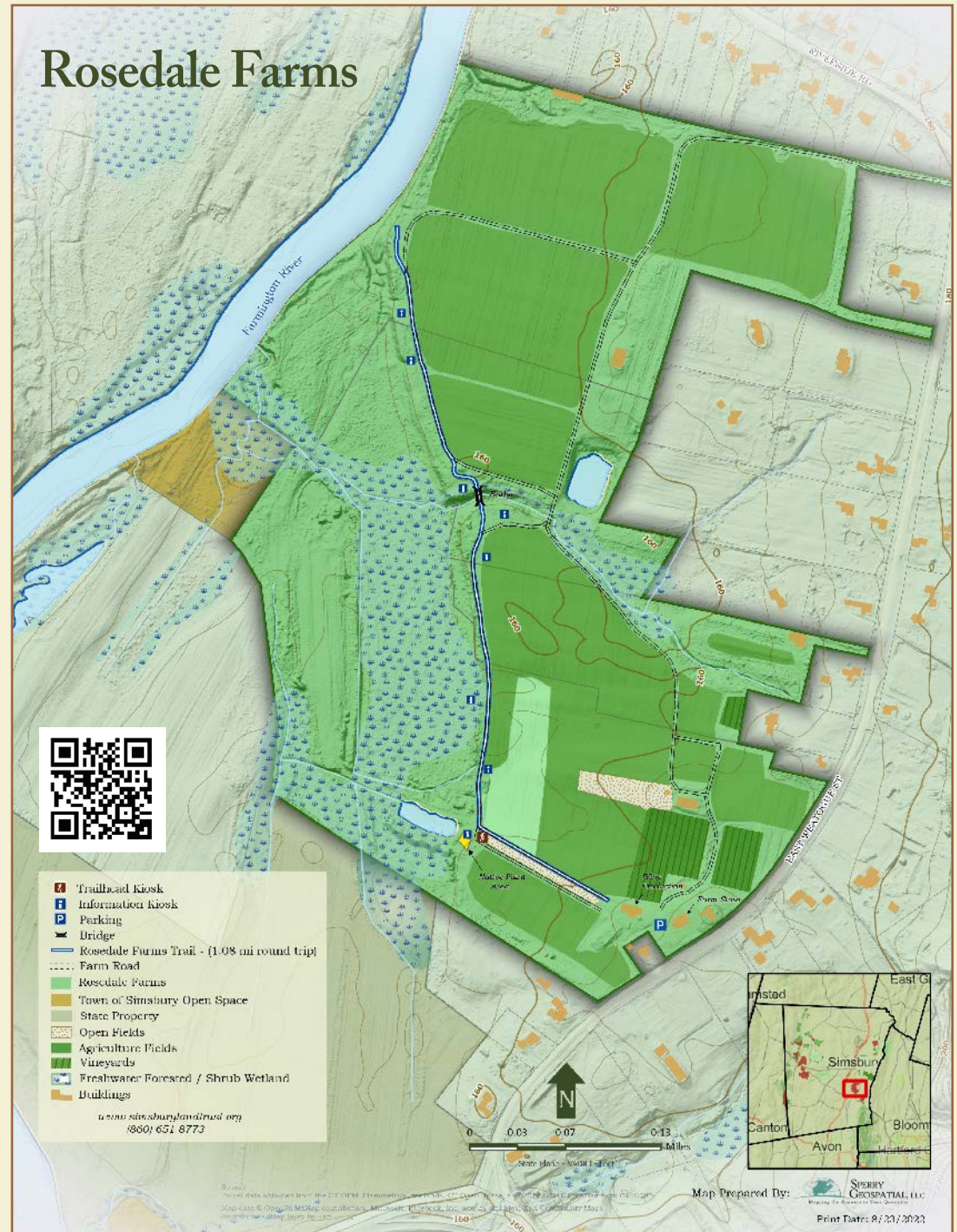
The preservation of farmland protects scenic vistas, green space and wildlife habitat. The farm fields in the foreground of the Simsbury landscape open up grand views of the hills beyond. Fields provide habitat for non-woodland plants and animals that would disappear without the active cutting provided by farming.

SLT holds easements on 109-acre Rosedale Farms, 260-acre Tulmeadow Farm, and 50-acre George Hall/Pharos Farms in Simsbury. Each farm offers a seasonal CSA share and we hope you consider trying one next year. In addition, several of the farms offer produce and other items for sale in their farm stores. We encourage everyone to support our local farms to protect this valuable resource.

Located at the base of Talcott Mountain, Rosedale is the second largest family operated farm that remains in Simsbury and is one of Simsbury's landmark properties. The sandy floodplain soil found at Rosedale is among the most productive in Connecticut. The farm is famous for the quality of its corn and more recently, for its vineyards and wines, but it also sells a wide range of fruits and vegetables, as well as flowers, at its farm store. Besides its extensive fields, the farm has over 1,400 feet of river frontage and associated wetlands. SLT maintains a walking trail along the farm road to the river, which is subject to closure from time to time to accommodate the farming operations.



SLT volunteer stewards maintain the trail and the bridge, post educational signage, and recently built a new kiosk. In addition, stewardship easement monitors meet with the farm owner and review the terms of the easement agreement, verifying that all terms are met. This is an annual event, and we are fortunate to have several dedicated volunteers who have been taking care of this for SLT since we purchased the easement. These reports are then filed with the State DEEP and USDA to assure compliance.



Miles of Ridgeline Rise Above Simsbury

People often talk of a recognizable sense of place, a particular character, when they speak of Simsbury. Much of this derives from its location within a pleasant river valley tucked between two dramatic traprock ridges. Traprock ridges exist in New England in a very limited area, primarily along the southern Connecticut River Valley, and Simsbury has more of these volcanic outcroppings within its boundaries than nearly any other town in Massachusetts or Connecticut. The ridges contain an unusual variety of distinct habitats and, as a result, support a disproportionate number of state-listed uncommon, rare, or endangered plants and wildlife common to more northern and more southern states but rare in Connecticut. They also provide exceptional hiking opportunities, enhanced by several miles of trails the Simsbury Land Trust maintains.



Simsbury Land Trust protects many ridgeline parcels. Owen-Mortimer, Tanager Hill, James, Fletcher, Holcomb and Glover are on the eastern ridge. 60 Westledge, Master's School, Fonteyne, Cathles, Cannon, Friedman, Hendrick and Donlin are all part of the West Mountain Trail system on the western ridge.

The Metacomet Ridge serves as Simsbury's eastern border and is notable not only for its imposing presence but also for its unique geology and ecology. The extensive Metacomet Trail runs the length of the ridge; Penwood and Talcott Mountain state parks are situated there. The panoramic Tower Trail is doubtless the most heavily hiked trail in the valley.

The western ridge is one of the best-preserved traprock formations in Connecticut. A total of 500 continuous acres of this traprock habitat is now protected through ownership by either the SLT or the Town of Simsbury. These add to the several thousand acres of contiguous forest highlands stretching north from the center of Simsbury to the Massachusetts border that are preserved by the McLean Game Refuge, the towns and land trusts of Canton and Granby, the State of Connecticut, and the MDC (Metropolitan District Commission).

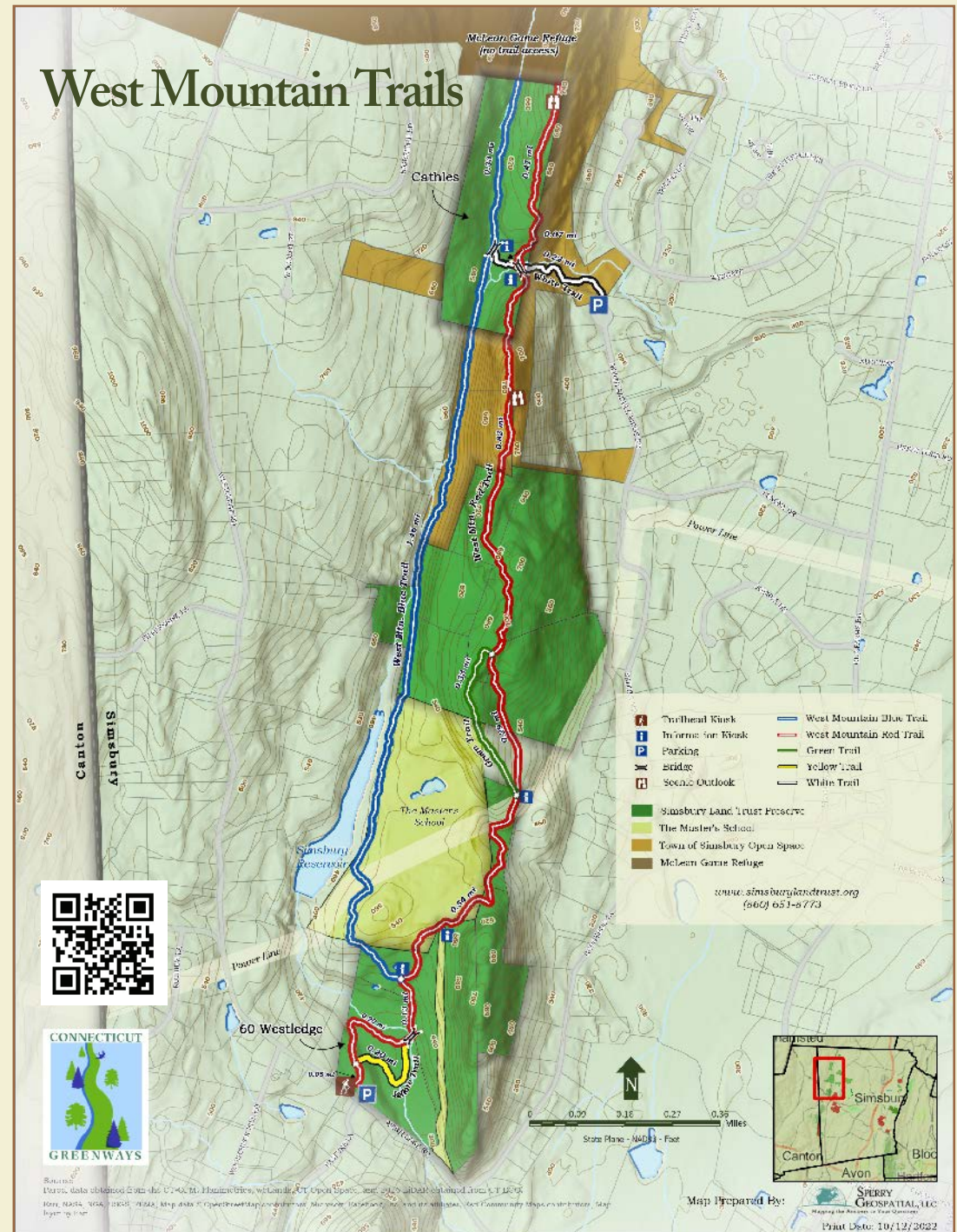


The West Mountain Trails provide spectacular views along the ridge.

Simsbury Land Trust and Town properties have preserved the integrity of 500 acres of continuous traprock ridge from McLean Game Refuge to the Tulmeadow Farm Triangle. The system of north-south trails through the West Mountain Preserves maintained by the Simsbury Land Trust provides several different habitat zones typical of traprock ridges.

The 60 Westledge Trails can be approached as a short, separate loop trail or as the southern starting point for the West Mountain Trails. Descend the stone stairs along the red trail to Hop Brook where you will see the remnant of an old stone and earthen mill dam. To complete the loop, at the wooden bridge follow the yellow trail which takes you up a second set of steps back to the parking area.

To access the ridge, follow the red trail north across The Master's School driveway and up onto the ridge. A green trail branches off then reconnects for another option to the peak with several scenic vistas. Alternatively, the blue trail branches off the red trail at the northern end of the 60 Westledge Preserve and drops into the valley just north of the Simsbury Reservoir. This rugged streamside path follows a geological fault line where a steep ravine separates the very old metamorphic bedrock of West Mountain from the relatively newer igneous rock of the mountain's eastern ridge. The sharp fracturing of this basalt produces the talus along the base of the slope. Both the red and blue trail lead through the Cathles Preserve to the border with McLean Game Refuge (Please note: there is no trail access to the Refuge from these trails.) The white trail on the Cathles Preserve connects the blue and red trails and leads steeply past a striking waterfall on town property. Each of these trails provides at least some exposure to traprock ridge habitat. If you have the opportunity to hike both the red and blue trails, contrast the different types of climate and vegetation you encounter on each.



Find Yourself in Nature

Prior to colonial settlement, as much as 20 percent of the state was grassland or meadow habitat. However, changes in agricultural land use, suburbanization, and reforestation have taken a toll on grassland habitats and the species that depend upon them. Today, there is less grassland habitat in Connecticut than at any other time in history, threatening further species loss and reducing Connecticut's biodiversity.

Grasslands require periodic mowing to prevent natural succession from rendering them unsuitable for species that require this habitat. SLT manages meadows on the Tanager Hill, Wagner, and Wegner Preserves. Simsbury Land Trust is working to identify the best management practices for the effective, long-term stewardship of these unique habitats for the birds and other wildlife that depend on them.

It is estimated that forests cover approximately 60 percent of Connecticut. In addition to providing valuable wildlife habitat, forests reduce water quality impacts associated with development and its associated impervious surfaces. Research is showing that visiting a forest has real, quantifiable health benefits, both mental and physical.

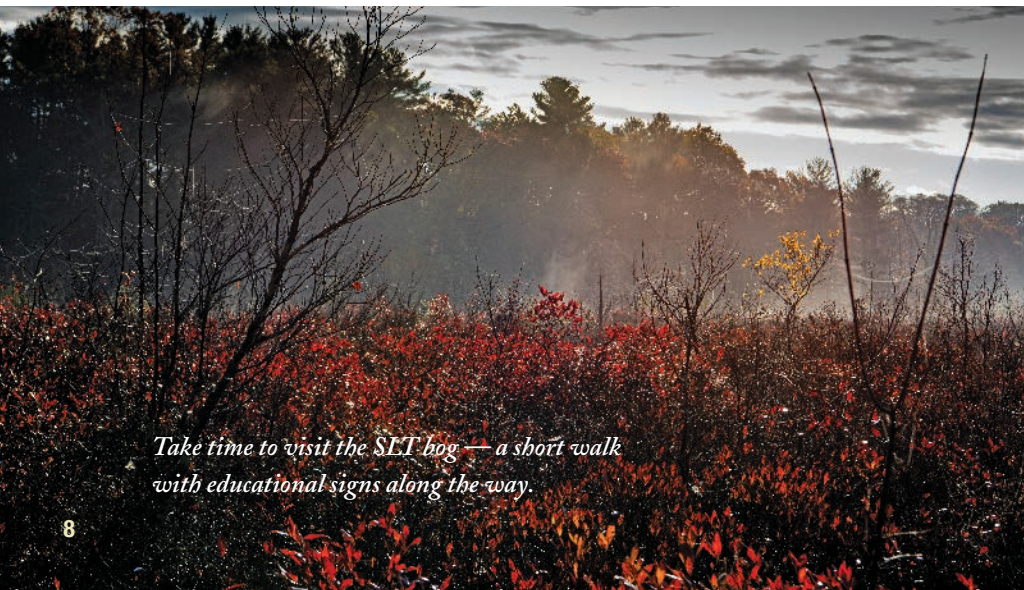


*Owen-Mortimer
provides an excellent
opportunity for birding.*

SLT protects several forested areas, including Wagner Woods, Tulmeadow Farm Woodlot, the West Mountain Trails, and the Owen-Mortimer and Tanager Hill Preserves.

Wetlands are among our most important types of open space, providing the essential function of water retention and purification. They also harbor a disproportionately high number of plant and wildlife species compared to other natural habitats in Simsbury. There are several types of wetlands in Simsbury, defined primarily by the distinctive plants and animals each supports. Among these are the river and its tributary streams, year-round ponds, red maple or brush swamps, bogs, wet meadows, and seasonal vernal pools. The loss of any one of these wetland types would diminish the rich variety of plants, insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals that share this part of the earth with us.

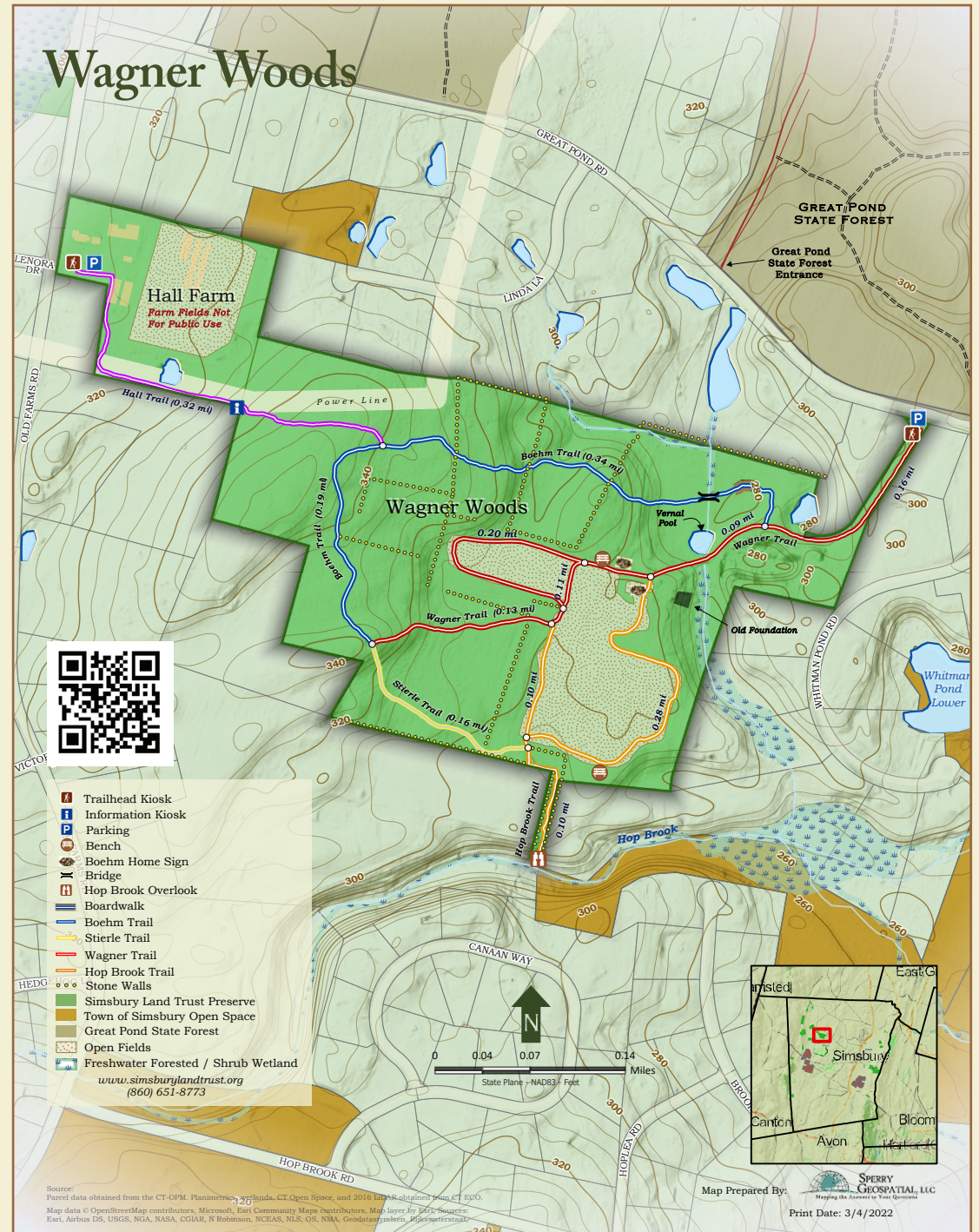
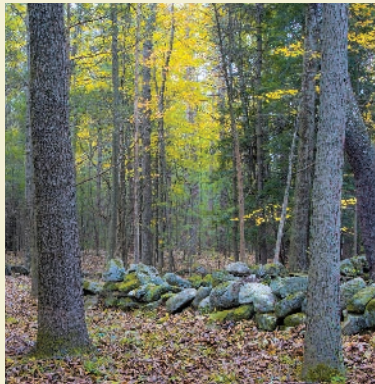
SLT protects the 39-acre Bog, the 29-acre Knapp Preserve, a 10-acre wet meadow, along with various other ponds, streams, swamps and vernal ponds that exist on our properties.



*Take time to visit the SLT bog — a short walk
with educational signs along the way.*

This diverse 63-acre preserve contains forest, wetlands, including several vernal pools, and an eight-acre hayfield/pollinator meadow. Wagner Woods is home to numerous wildlife species including at least 60 species of birds. The sheltered blue trail ambles through a cool forest of mostly pines, oaks, and maples. Numerous stone walls attest to the property's previous life as a farm. On the northwest corner of the large hayfield there are remnants of the farm building foundations. The nearby stream still shows traces of an old dam. A large population of bluebirds takes advantage of the many houses placed on the edge of the field and red-shouldered hawks are often seen gliding above.

Another remnant of farming days is the farm road (orange trail) that leads from the southern end of the field down to Hop Brook. The purple trail will take you through a wooded area along the edge of the Hall Farm property to Old Farms Road. For a longer hike combine Wagner Woods with Great Pond State Forest across Great Pond Road.



> FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Statements of Activities For the Years Ended June 30, 2022 and June 30, 2021

	2022				2021			
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS		TOTAL	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS		TOTAL
		TEMPORARY	PERMANENT			TEMPORARY	PERMANENT	
CHANGES IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS								
Revenues:								
Membership Contributions	\$130,734			\$130,734	\$131,057			\$131,057
Contribution Income – Restricted *			\$7,950	7,950			\$7,675	7,675
Land Donation		\$189,696		189,696				
Investment Income	27,796		34,724	62,520	24,595		10,512	35,107
Other Revenue	1,100			1,100	6,000			6,000
Total Revenues	159,630	189,696	42,674	392,000	161,652		18,187	179,839
Expenses:								
Administrative	37,876			37,876	36,828			36,828
Salaries and Benefits	38,790			38,790	40,481			40,481
Membership	19,629			19,629	21,476			21,476
Stewardship	19,843			19,843	9,401			9,401
Total Expenses	116,138			116,138	108,186			108,186
Revenues Over Expenses	43,492	189,696	42,674	275,862	53,466		18,187	71,653
Other change in unrestricted assets:								
Unrestricted assets used for land improvements	(27,569)	27,569		0	(15,801)	15,801		0
Unrealized gain/loss on investments	(49,552)			(49,552)	23,565			23,565
Total other changes in unrestricted net assets	(77,121)	27,569		(49,552)	7,764	15,801		23,565
Change in net assets	(33,629)	217,265	42,674	226,310	61,230	15,801	18,187	95,218
Net assets, beginning of year	515,646	14,923,858	18,187	15,457,691	454,416	14,908,057		15,362,473
Net assets, end of year	\$482,017	\$15,141,123	\$60,861	\$15,684,001	\$515,646	\$14,923,858	\$18,187	\$15,457,691

* 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, 2022 and June 30, 2021

	June 30 2022	June 30 2021
Assets		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$104,980	\$150,226
Short-term Investments	382,729	365,420
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	487,709	515,646
OTHER ASSETS		
Investments Held by Others	349,800	314,055
Land	14,846,492	14,627,990
TOTAL OTHER ASSETS	15,196,292	14,942,045
Total Assets	\$15,684,001	\$15,457,691
Fund Balance		
Unrestricted	\$487,709	\$515,646
Restricted – Richard A. Davis		
Endowment Fund	349,800	314,055
Temporarily Restricted	14,846,492	14,627,990
Total Fund Balance	\$15,684,001	\$15,457,691



> MEMBERSHIP DONATIONS

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

❖ 5 Year Donor
❖❖ 10 Year Donor

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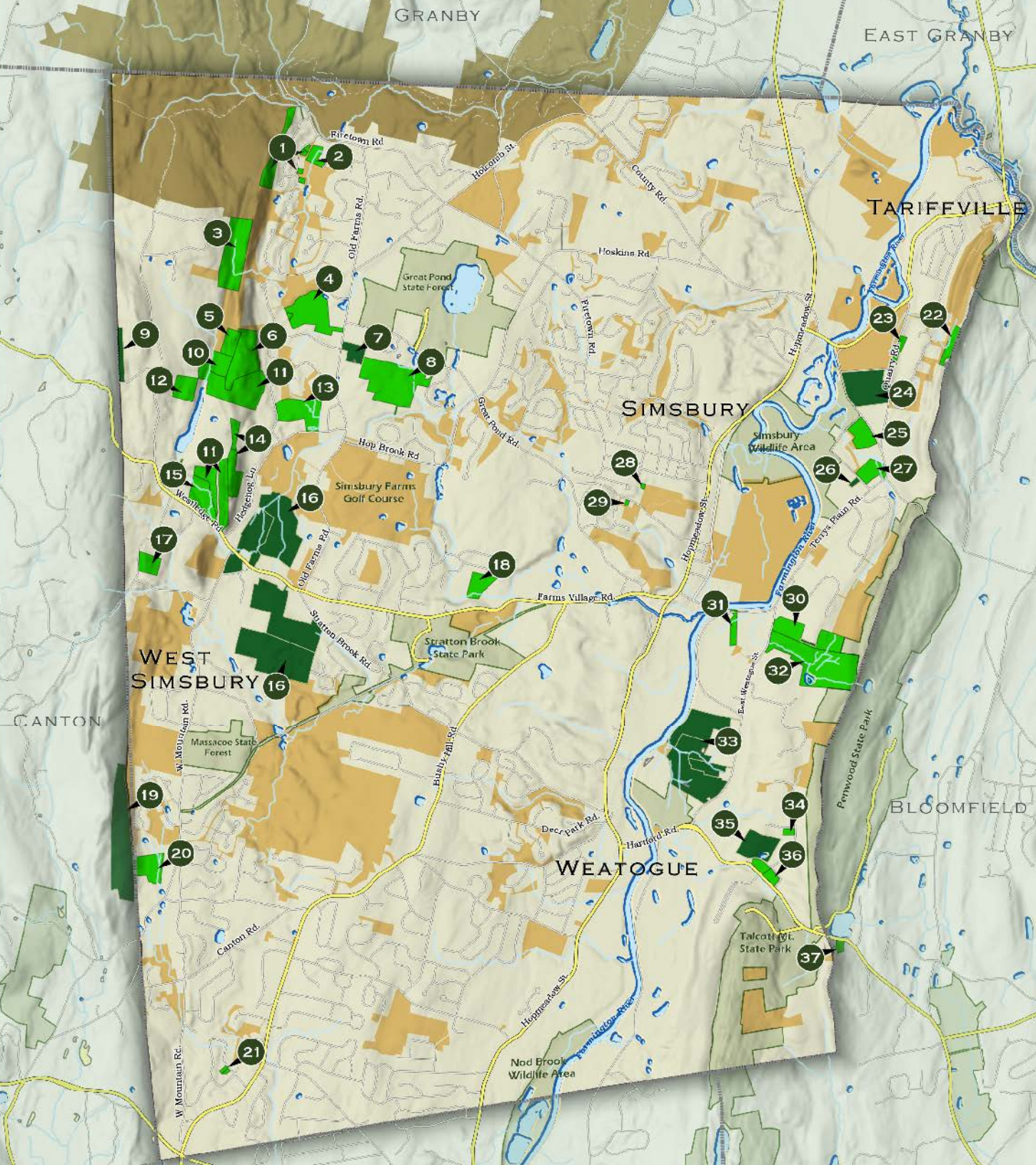
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