



THE Spruce NEWSLETTER

Summer 2009

P.O. Box 2276 ▪ Huntington Station ▪ Shelton, Connecticut 06484

A Tale of Two Benches

The Shelton Land Conservation Trust's Nicholdale Farm property has always been an inviting place to visit. Open fields, quiet woods, a babbling brook, and well-marked trails offer opportunities to experience the natural world in a variety of habitats and moods. Whether your interest is a meditative walk in the woods, an opportunity for nature study, a kite fly in an open field, a wildlife photography outing, or a brisk run around the wide mowed pathways that border the pastures, you can probably find just the spot to indulge your outdoor interests.

Until recently though, if you wanted to just sit and watch the clouds drift by or listen to an afternoon chorus of crickets you would need to plop down in the grass or find a convenient rock to host your idle musings. That has now changed with the addition of two benches to the Nicholdale landscape. Both are set in quiet, out-of-the-way locations that invite a pause to allow the spirit of the place to settle on the stilled awareness or to engage in a deep and meaningful conversation with a friend.



The benches are as different as their settings. The first, which was placed in the late summer of 2008, is a thick pine slab sawed from the mill of Phil Jones. It is about five feet long, six inches thick, and holds the gentle curve of the tree trunk from which it was hewn. The slab rests on two rounds of tulip that escaped being split for the wood stove to serve a more uplifting purpose. The bench can be found in a little bower created by a canopy of overhanging apple boughs not far from the most recently constructed scout bridge at the western end of Nicholdale Brook.

The second bench, added this spring, is a traditional garden bench with wrought metal sides and varnished wooden slats. It is the gift of Esther Resnik, mother of board member Bruce Nichols, in memory of her sister Lee Karney. Located at the south east corner of the first broad field beyond the brook, this bench offers a beautiful vista of grass, sky, and wooded hills. Set in a quiet spot beneath a canopy of trees and flanked by a nearby weathered stonewall, the location invites the sitter to contemplate the incredible miracle of beauty and diversity that is the gift of Nicholdale and the natural world.

Perhaps the next time your wandering takes you to the Nicholdale Farm property you might consider seeking out one of these benches and adding another dimension to your experience of this wonderful parcel.



More Good Neighbors Are Needed

It's a real comfort when you know that you have good neighbors, especially when you have to be at work, or away on vacation. Should anything unusual occur, either accidentally or, heaven forbid maliciously, knowing that you have a good neighbor to keep an "eye" on things not only reduces your stress level, but may also help to safeguard your material interests.

Those are the kind of neighbors we truly appreciate, and those are the kind of neighbors that we desperately need. The Trust currently owns over 35 parcels of undeveloped land ranging in size from .3 to 44.7 acres throughout the City of Shelton. With a small volunteer staff of officers and Board members, we can't be "home" to keep an "eye" on things. And, that is where good neighbors come in. We're hoping that neighbors living adjacent to, or near our various parcels will step forward to help us keep an "eye" on things by becoming one of our Land Monitors.

Our Land Monitors are asked to be alert to such things as boundary encroachment by neighboring landowners and illegal dumping on Trust Property. They also watch for illegal hunting, use of trail bikes or "ATV's" on Trust land, or hazardous conditions such as old trees that may have fallen onto, or are leaning precariously over a neighbor's property. Monitors are instructed not to take specific actions themselves in attempting to remedy a given situation. They are asked to merely observe, and report back to the Stewardship Committee. Activities or events that are illegal, or represent a serious hazard or threat to the public should be immediately reported to the proper authorities, e.g. brush or forest fire, or discharging of firearms near a populated area, etc.

If you live adjacent to or near one of our land parcels, and you wouldn't mind being a "good neighbor," then please consider becoming a Land Monitor. The commitment is minimal, but that

See "More Good" on back page...

In Good Times, and In Bad...

On Saturday, April 4, 2009, Trust President Joe Welsh, and Board Members Bruce Nichols and Joe Palmucci attended the 26th annual Connecticut Land Conservation Conference. The event is designed to give land trust members an opportunity to sharpen their skills, meet with others in the field, and learn of the latest issues and challenges facing the land conservation community.

The full day event was kicked off by guest speaker, Russ Brenneman, and his keynote address entitled "Volunteers: The Foundational Building Blocks of CT Land Conservation. Brenneman, a leader in the land conservation effort, gave an overview of land conservation and how it began in the late 19th century with citizens concerned about the industrial impacts on the environment. Their concerns led to the formation of the CT Forests and Parks Association, which was influential in acquiring land for open spaces and hiking trails.

Referring to the current dismal economic situation, Brenneman noted that many great parks and lands that we are able to enjoy today were acquired in some tough times of economic uncertainty.

The state of the economy did not dampen the enthusiasm, and hard work of spirited volunteers. Their efforts and investments made in good times and bad have all resulted in great returns for succeeding generations. Their concern and dedication continue to be a voice in support of conservation for open spaces and active farming.

Following his address the real work began, and the Trust trio attended a series of workshop sessions. The topics covered included Preserving Family Lands, Tools For Farm Friendly Towns, Habitat Based Management Plans, Web Tools and GPS, Trail planning and Maintenance, Record keeping, Fundraising, and Advocating for land conservation in tough economic times.

Between workshop sessions the attendees were able to visit various information booths, and talk with experts in the field. It was a great day and they brought back quite a bit of information that will prove useful to the Shelton Land Conservation Trust. One of the strongest messages they came back with was that no matter what the state of the economy, our work has lasting benefits, and offers great returns for future generations to enjoy. So, to all who volunteer, support our efforts, and keep lands open,

Thank you!



From left to right: Jerry Banks, Pat Gajdosik, Marybeth Banks, Rudy Gajdosik, Helene Rombaux, Joe Palmucci, and Cathy Howland.

Off Road, Off Limits

It was an early spring morning and the phone rang at Joe Welsh's house. It was Bruce Nichols calling to say he discovered a 4x4 truck that appeared to be abandoned after it ran off the edge of the path into Nicholdale Brook. Joe and his son quickly arrived to investigate the discovery.

It was something they had never witnessed before. While ATV's have trespassed and damaged Trust property in the past, this was in a whole new category of bizarre. The truck was on the verge of rolling off the stream bank, and into the water. The license plates were removed, leading to the conclusion that the truck was abandoned. The tire tracks, which chewed up the property, were followed to determine how the driver accessed the property. It was obvious the Land Trust signs (prohibiting bikes, ATV's, and hunting, etc.) did not deter entry to the property.

Also responding to Bruce's call, a Shelton Police officer assessed the situation, and determined that the truck would need to be extricated using a tow truck. While waiting for the tow truck to arrive, and assessing the damage to one of the fields, the group was surprised when, what they thought was the tow truck coming down the



path, was instead a vehicle carrying the owner of the abandoned truck. He and his friends were once again trespassing on Trust property, this time hoping to pull the ditched truck from the stream bank.

"It was a good thing that we were there when they arrived," Joe stated, "because their rescue plan could have backfired, if the truck flipped over on them." With the officer still on site, Joe approached the group, and notified them that they were on Land Trust property and trespassing. They lamely stated that they had permission to ride on a local farmers property, and got confused as to where they were.

It was decided to resist the inclination to have them arrested in favor of having the officer issue them a citation, and obtain their promise to come back and repair the damage they caused. This alternative was deemed preferable, since Land Trust volunteers would have had to repair the damage otherwise. Hopefully, the message will get out to the off road community that Land Trust property is not only off road but, more importantly, OFF LIMITS to vehicles of all kinds.



Sunnyside CleanUp! Thank You All!

Keeping Busy

The Land Trust was well represented at two recent, local clean-up events. The first of these was:

Earth Day

The Trust's Joe Welsh, Marybeth Banks, and Marge Estok participated in a cleanup of Sunnyside Park in honor of Earth Day. Partners in this project included Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), Valley Community Foundation, Aquarion Water Company, Shelton Parks and Recreation, and the Trust. HVA had previously received grant funding from the Valley Community Foundation for native plantings and a riverside buffer garden to be planted along the riverbank, where invasive Japanese Knotweed was to be removed. Joining the Trust representatives, were Aquarion employees and city personnel. Not only were invasive plants removed and native plantings installed, but the volunteers also painted benches, picked up litter, cleared brush, and spread mulch, cleaning up a great town park. Thanks again to HVA and Aquarion for the invite to help.

Shelton Clean Sweep 2009

Shelton Clean Sweep was quite a success. The City's Anti-Litter Committee sponsored event had about 50 different groups throughout the city cleaning up roadsides and properties. While it is unfortunate that there are so many litterbugs, it is refreshing to see such a community wide effort to clean up our surroundings. This year's clean up efforts were concentrated along the Tahmore Drive Loop Trail, and a section of Rt. 108 from Willoughby Road to Nells Rock Road. Volunteers packed the back of Rudy Gajdosik's Truck with many bags of garbage, and other discarded debris. The volunteers even found some interesting treasures along the way that some took home to re-use. Thank you to all who helped.

More Good continued.....

volunteer service goes a long way in helping to preserve and protect the natural beauty of the land, and the community in which we live. To become a Monitor, or for additional information about the Trust, its holdings, or Land Monitors in particular, please call Hank or Jacke Lauriat at 203 929-4278.

You may also learn more about the Trust by visiting our Website at:
www.sheltonlandtrust.org



Support Our Local Farmers

As we look for ways to reduce our carbon footprint, eat healthier, and live more balanced lives, we need look no further than our own backyard. Local growers produce an abundant variety of plants, veggies, and other food items. Farmers continue to develop creative ways to attract customers such as various pick and harvest your own farms. Stone Gardens offers a CSA Program and a Farm Credit Program. Other Farms such

as Guy's Eco Garden offer certified organic produce. Some have flowers, landscape plantings, ice cream, wine, eggs, meat, poultry, or hay. We are indeed fortunate to live in a town that has such a vibrant community of farms that offer just about anything. And, if you cannot find what you are looking for at our local farms, you can always visit the Shelton farmers market, or venture over our borders to Monroe or Trumbull to sample theirs.



Wells Hollow Creamery on Bridgeport Ave.

Shelton Land Conservation Trust, Inc.

P.O. Box 2276 • Huntington Station • Shelton, Connecticut 06484

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Joseph Palmucci
Donald Pendagast
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Member Emeritus
Robert Stockmal

Associate
Margaret Paulson

2009 General Meetings
Wed. Sept. 9 - 7 pm
Wed. Nov. 11 - 7 pm
Additional meetings to be announced.
All general meetings will take place at the Shelton Community Center.

To be better informed about Land Trust Activities, and local conservation issues, why not join the Trust's Email Alert list. To be added, simply send an email to slctjoew@sbcglobal.net

