



NORWALK LAND TRUST NEWS

Fall 2015

White Barn Property

Norwalk Land Trust members and concerned citizens attended multiple public hearings on a developer's proposal to construct 15 houses near NLT's White Barn Preserve.

The developer's proposal would erect five out of fifteen houses along the edge of the Preserve, with the nearest house less than 30 feet away. There is zero distance between the development's proposed area of disturbance and the Preserve.

NLT partnered with Save Cranbury Association (SCA), a neighborhood group, to retain an attorney and experts to help protect the White Barn Preserve. After a June 29 public hearing, the developer obtained a wetlands permit on the condition that he add a split-rail fence between the Preserve and the development, plant 16 additional trees,

narrow the entrance road, and add a box culvert allowing wildlife to pass under the entrance road.

At the well-attended Zoning Commission Public Hearing, NLT's and SCA's attorney, Keith Ainsworth, and experts argued against the plan's density and proximity to a sensitive nature preserve and loss of important wildlife habitat. Attorney Ainsworth noted that the developer seeks special permission to build at a higher density than the neighborhood currently allows, in exchange for placing half of the parcel into permanent conservation. The proposed conservation land does not qualify, Ainsworth said, because it contains an expandable utility easement where the utility company will enter, cut trees, use herbicides, and perform activities which are decidedly not conservation.

For updates on this story, please see continuing coverage on NLT's Web site, www.norwalklandtrust.org, in *The Hour*, and at www.nancyonnorwalk.com.



4th Grade Education Program Continues

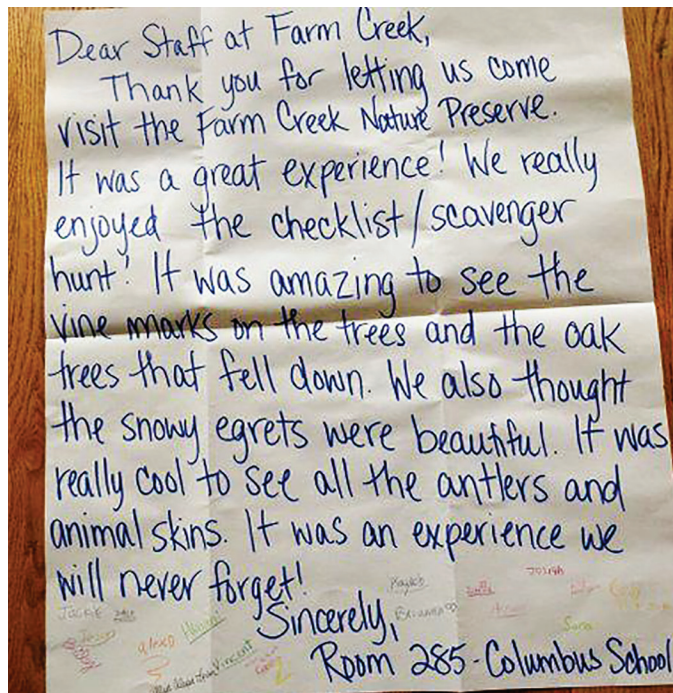
It was a record year for the 4th grade Outdoor Classroom program sponsored by Norwalk Land Trust!

There were 11 Norwalk elementary schools participating in the program this past spring. This translates into 726 children. When the Outdoor Classroom started in 2010 there were 220 children and six schools! There is strong teacher support for this outing, and their willingness to schedule the in-school visit we make, followed by the field trip to Farm Creek, is much appreciated.

Twenty-seven guides volunteer their time to help kids understand natural science on the Farm Creek trails as they search for plants and animals that are common to an estuary and a woodland forest. At a "touch table" they can see and touch a variety of nests, insects, and "weird things."

The Land Trust program is closely coordinated with the Norwalk science curriculum, and funding is provided by an anonymous donor, whose support pays for buses, supplies and other costs, making the trip feasible for the students and teachers.

The "touch table" always needs replenishing and perhaps you have something you can donate. Because the children handle everything, and it is one of the aspects of the fieldtrip that the children love, contributions are needed. Paper wasp nest? Any kind of nest? Dead bug? Horseshoe crab? Let us know at info@norwalklandtrust.org.



Interns at Farm Creek



Top: Stephanie Sisk bags invasives from Farm Creek Preserve. Above: Emily Nixon, to the right of Linda Scull, poses with a fourth-grade group after a tour of the property.

This year NLT hosted two interns at Farm Creek: Stephanie Sisk who is a candidate for a Connecticut Master Gardener certificate, and Emily Nixon, a high school senior in Darien. Stephanie helped us all summer with stewardship at the Preserve. Emily worked during May and June both with the Outdoor Classroom program and at the White Barn Preserve. Stephanie and Emily practiced plant and tree identification, invasives identification and eradication, and learned about Land Trust stewardship and the estuary in the preserve. They also were guides in the Norwalk 4th graders program in May and June.

NLT and the children have enjoyed Stephanie and Emily, have benefited from their help this summer and wish them the best in their future endeavors. We hope to see them next summer on our stewardship team.

Left: A much-appreciated letter of thanks from the fourth-grade class at Columbus School.

With Help from Our Many Friends

The all-volunteer Board of Norwalk Land Trust gratefully recognizes the many volunteers and groups who gave their time and efforts during the past 12 months to protect and maintain open space in Norwalk for the public good. THANK YOU. This couldn't be done without YOU.

Outdoor Classroom Volunteers

This spring, presentations were given by NLT Board Members in 4th grade classrooms in eleven of the 12 Norwalk elementary schools, covering the salt marsh ecosystem and tidal estuary at Farm Creek. These students then visited Farm Creek Preserve to see the real thing. Trained volunteer nature guides led the students in groups of 5 to 6 to see the life abundant in this estuary environment.

Betsy Bain	Poppy Luchars	Lynne Pratt
Vickie Bennett	Lynn Massey	Linda Scull
Penny Carroll	Gloria Miller	Stephanie Sisk
Carol Giunta	Emily Nixon	Marny Smith
Mindy Green	Suke Nolte	Karin Weller
Cindy Hogan	Jenny Orr	Barbara Wright
Carol Hooper	Rita Phillips	Carol Wrigley

Property Issues and Stewardship

Marti Cooper	George Jackson	Marny Smith
Robert Cutler	Diane Lauricella	Pema Tenzin
Kate Davies	Celia Maddox	Amy Verel
David Gable	Emily Nixon	Gail Wall
Carol Giunta	Peter Scull	
Gary Holda	Stephanie Sisk	

Businesses and Organizations Donated Their Services

Brown & Co., Tree Specialists
Oak Hills Park Nature Advisory Committee
Department of Recreation And Parks, City of Norwalk
RiverWatch/HarborWatch at Earthplace
Save Cranbury - Again
Norwalk Tree Alliance
Douglas M. Thom Design
West Norwalk Association



Save the Monarchs with Free Milkweed Seeds!



In the fall of 2014 over 100 requests for packets of milkweed seeds were satisfied by Norwalk Land Trust, most going to local residents. Now the milkweed plants in the Farm Creek Preserve meadow are bursting with seeds. They will be gathered, fluff removed, and packaged to give to those requesting them. In 2016 the migrating monarchs will need their special plants to lay eggs on, to ensure their survival.

If you would like to grow milkweeds for monarchs, please request seeds by visiting our website norwalklandtrust.org, or email your name and mailing address to info@norwalklandtrust.org. Or request seeds using the membership form in this newsletter.

The seeds will be distributed beginning in October.

Featured Property: Hoyt Island



Hoyt Island, Norwalk Land Trust's three-acre bird sanctuary and wildlife preserve, has emerged as a sustainable habitat on Long Island Sound for the northern diamondback terrapin.

The terrapin has been added to the list of species of special concern being assembled for 2015 by the Wildlife Division of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. While the size of the colony on Hoyt Island is indeterminate, the number of sightings is characterized as numerous.

Eleven turtles and their cousin the diamondback terrapin are native to Connecticut. Where turtles are essentially fresh water or sea water inhabitants, terrapins live on land and water, typically in brackish environments like the salt marshes and the tidal estuary of Hoyt Island, 500 yards offshore from the Village Creek neighborhood.

At one time terrapins were considered a gourmet food, then they virtually disappeared from the table. Even as populations rebounded, it has been illegal in Connecticut to collect them from the wild or keep them as pets.

Recently, Kathy Herz, wildlife biologist with Connecticut DEEP, reports the new regulations to be enacted this year classifying the northern diamondback terrapin as a species of concern.

Her colleague Brian Hess, also a wildlife biologist, said preserving a remote wildlife habitat like Hoyt Island "really does matter."

"A densely-populated urban state like Connecticut is a tough place for turtles to live," he said. "They are threatened by development, climate change, vehicle traffic and the potential for viruses and disease. Keeping the island as a sanctuary is important to the survival of a number of species that are imperiled."

The island was deeded to Norwalk Land Trust in 1979 by the late Countess Eleanor Czapski (1901-1982), an environmentalist, longtime Wilson Point resident and a member of the Guggenheim family.

Above: Hoyt Island shoreline along with an insert of a typical diamondback terrapin.

President's Letter

Going to the polls...

Elections are ahead, and there are Norwalk Land Trust issues. When you talk with candidates, ask them what they think, and tell them what we think.

City government for the past several years has balked at the idea of protecting and preserving city-owned open space. I have heard it said that Norwalk does not want to "give up" open space (it has some 90 parcels, spread throughout town). We agree, and have advocated for the City to offer NLT conservation easements, whereby the City of Norwalk continues to own the property, but NLT, through members, volunteers and others, stewards and protects the land forever.

Land without this sort of protection often gets developed. Ask the neighbors near NCC, who were promised an open 10-acre buffer but awoke one morning to see surveyors at work on the City-owned land. It couldn't have happened under an NLT easement. We would have recruited the neighbors to keep watch and help in stewardship. Development would have been illegal.

So, Mr./Ms. Candidate, how do you feel about science education for our 4th grades? Clean water, land and air for human and other species living or visiting Norwalk? Replacement of invasives with native plants? Open space?

What do you think?



Sincerely,
John Moeling,
President

Fodor "Farmers"

On the first Tuesday of every month, at 7PM, your Norwalk Land Trust Board meets in the new, elegant Fodor Farm barn. The barn is energy-efficient and comfortable, and thanks are due to the staff of Norwalk's Department of Recreation and Parks, who set up and schedule the property.

On the Flax Hill Road side of the barn, the old farmhouse restoration is nearly complete, and NLT will occupy a space on the second floor of the building where deeds and records can be stored and committees can meet year-round to deal with stewardship, acquisitions, events and other needs.

The facilities will be shared with other Norwalk non-profit organizations. Each group will contribute a nominal monthly fee to cover the building's utilities costs, that will be lower than fees for similar space elsewhere.



2 Nearwater: Some readers may wonder at Norwalk Land Trust's neutrality, and not know we long ago attempted to purchase this property to preserve it in a natural state. An agreement with the owner involved a six-figure down payment. Neighbors objected, and lawsuits were threatened; NLT was able to rescind the agreement and get the payment back but on one condition: NLT would take no position regarding the property.

For more information and volunteer opportunities, please visit our Web site:
norwalklandtrust.org



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Our Mission

Norwalk Land Trust seeks to balance nature and development by acquiring land and preserving it in its natural state for the benefit of Norwalk residents and future generations.

Please clip and mail to: Norwalk Land Trust, PO Box 34, Norwalk CT 06853

2016 Annual Membership

You are supporting continuing preservation of Norwalk open spaces. Thank you!

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

E-mail

Phone

_____ \$30 Individual

_____ \$50 Family

_____ \$100-\$249 Supporting*

_____ \$250+ Trees and Trails*

_____ Other (all gifts appreciated)

_____ Matching gift form enclosed

_____ Please send milkweed seeds to plant for the monarch butterflies

*_____ Yes, please send the 2016 NLT Desk Calendar. They are \$15, or complimentary with memberships of \$100 or more.

For corporate/professional memberships, please email info@norwalklandtrust.org or visit www.norwalklandtrust.org.

Norwalk Land Trust does not share member information.

All membership contributions are tax deductible.

I am interested in: Volunteering as a nature guide _____ Volunteering for stewardship work _____ Property Donation _____ Other _____

Please use my e-mail address to send me electronic newsletters and other communications: Yes _____ No _____

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