



THE MEADOW VIEW

The Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. in Glastonbury, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield, Connecticut

February 1989

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This is the first of our newsletters of which we expect to send you two or three a year. We hope that these opportunities to communicate with our friends and with our members will keep you better informed about the details of the operation of the Trust.

We would like your opinion of The Meadow View and we hope you will contribute news and views.

Frank M. Child, President

GREAT MEADOWS CONSERVATION TRUST

ANNUAL REPORT - 1988

A number of events of great importance to the stature and health of the Trust occurred in 1988. In my mind they tend to overshadow the equally important day to day and month to month activities which comprise our guardianship and stewardship of the lands we hold. Therefore, let me say something about the latter first.

The Land Management Committee, under the chairmanship of Peter Revill, has seen increased activity. The number of acres we lease to farmers has increased. These parcels, along with our other parcels, are part of a program of visitation and inspection. A consultant in Forest and Land Management was employed to assist in the placement of stakes to mark the boundaries of parcels west of the river. The abutters of

the parcels have been notified of this project. A similar staking program is planned for the east side of the river this coming year.

Although we organized no hikes for the public this year, we held instead a Connecticut River Canoe Trip (co-sponsored with the Connecticut River Watershed Council and organized by Duffy Schade) in July, and a Great Meadows Hay-Ride (organized by John Lepper and narrated by Frank Morris). The hay-ride will long be remembered for the historical insights of Mr. Morris, the drenching rain, and the stalwart company of Leslie Carothers, Commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection.

Many members of the Trust were active during the year testifying and lobbying for the protection of meadow lands and the lands bordering the meadows. In Glastonbury, the fight to 'Save Red Hill' continues; in Rocky Hill it may be possible to save the Quarry and the Rock itself as a park (the State has offered to pay up to \$500,000 of the purchase price); and in Wethersfield a plan appears to be emerging to place a parking lot and boat-launching ramp directly under the Putnam Bridge. While the need for a ramp is real, the location is on one of the swiftest sections of the river.

In July we were pleased to receive a check for \$5,000 from United Technologies/Pratt & Whitney of East Hartford. This amount was a penalty negotiated with the State as a consequence of an illegal accidental discharge into

Willow Brook. We were pleased to have been selected as the environmental organization to receive the pensum.

Now for the overshadowing events, of which I spoke. Early in the year, with the help of Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly, the Great Meadows segment of the Connecticut River (the five-mile stretch from the Rocky Hill ferry north to the inlet to Keeney Cove) was placed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI). The listing recognizes the important natural and scenic values, the significant fisheries and archeological sites, and the historical importance of the Great Meadows segment. The three towns are now eligible to receive assistance from the National Park Service in region-wide planning to conserve and maintain this valuable and largely undeveloped piece of river. I believe that this listing on the NRI will be of great use and benefit to the Trust and to the towns in the coming years. We all owe a large measure of thanks to the many members and non-members who worked long and hard to get this listing accomplished. A copy of the documents has been deposited with each Town Manager's Office.

In late winter, while walking the meadows, John Lepper was surprised to see a vast amount of clear-cutting in the Folly Brook Nature Preserve, south of the Hartford dike, at the border between Wethersfield and Hartford. He passed the word to Eleanor Wolf who succeeded in contacting officials who brought the tree-felling to a halt after 23 acres had been cleared. The culprit (the State Department of Transportation) has a reputation for handling chain-saws with alacrity. The work was done to remove obstructions in the glide-paths approaching Brainard Airport. Many agencies and organizations have become involved with the settlement and correction of the incident, including the Great Meadows Trust. Currently, a conservation easement is being negotiated between the City of Hartford (owner of the Folly Brook Preserve) and The Nature Conservancy, in order to better protect the

flood-plain forest. In the future, we hope that the trimming of trees, necessary to keep the flight-paths unobstructed, can be done by judicious pruning, rather than by wholesale clear-cutting.

The intensity of the publicity and reaction to this event, now usually known as "Stump City", became the centerpiece of our Annual Meeting in June. We enjoyed hearing again about the special ecological features of a flood-plain forest from Ken Metzger, staff botanist with DEP. We also had our thinking challenged by Astrid Hanzalek who spoke on the stewardship of flood-plain forests. Hanzalek claimed all the laws are in place, only enforcement is needed. She recommended 1) prevention as the first line of defense, prevention achieved by educating the public, educating officials, and by a public relations campaign; 2) early detection of infractions; and 3) an organized River Watch, an association of people who visit the river who would watch for tree-cutting, excavation, dumping, etc., and who have access to a hot-line telephone which will funnel their observations to appropriate authorities for possible action.

Beginning in August, a Great Meadows committee has been collaborating with the Connecticut River Watershed Council and the Connecticut Audubon Society to establish a River Watch hot-line. You may read in this Newsletter of our progress in designing a trial first year. Funds for the trial will come from part of the pensum we received from United Technologies. In a month or two **River Watch** will be announced to the public.

This ends my Annual Report. Again, I would be most happy to hear from you about our work.

Frank M. Child, President
Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.
February 13, 1989

RIVER WATCH

The president, in his Annual Report, describes the unhappy creation of "Stump City", and Astrid Hanzalek's suggestion that River Watch be established to guard against future violations of the landscape.

During the fall, Frank Child and other members of the GMCT operations committee, along with David Sutherland and Kate Sauvage Powell of Connecticut Audubon, met with Ms. Hanzalek and Rick Boynton, new CRWC staff, to explore the concept further. Eleanor Wolf, Judy Parker, Chris Sprague, and Jolly Steffens along with Dr. Child and Ms. Hanzalek formed a working committee, and this month a pilot project is to be launched in the towns of Wethersfield, Rocky Hill and Glastonbury.

In addition to the adult citizen role, there is another component of River Watch which involves high school students. Initiated in Vermont and now a pilot project in Suffield, Connecticut, high school biology students will do field research on the river, take samples, analyze them in the lab, then seek the sources of pollution and report to authorities for follow-up.

RIVER WATCH is action taken by citizens out of their concern and the need to protect the river and its environs from further damage and degradation.

**RIVER WATCH HOT LINE
241-0500**

WETHERSFIELD MEADOWS HAYRIDE

On Sunday afternoon, Nov. 13th, 21 hardy (or foolhardy) members and guests climbed onto Frank Morris's hay-laden flat bed trailer beside the Putnam Park building and set off on a 5 mile ride through the Wethersfield Meadows behind Frank's tractor. It had been advertised "rain or shine." There was a light drizzle as we began to move. Optimists all, including our guest, DEP Commissioner Leslie Carothers, we were sure the weather would clear.

We bumped along, stopping occasionally, so former town councilman and farmer Frank Morris and John Lepper could comment on what we were seeing, illegal dumping by the roadside, the Connecticut River, farmed fields, some of the Trust's properties, earth removal for the building of I-91 and other changes to the landscape.

The weather did not clear. In fact the rain came down harder. We were all in rain gear of varying degrees of water-proof quality. One couple sat on beach chairs above the high water mark. The rest of us sat on the hay-strewn flat-bed, which had a 2 inch rim around the edge, just enough to hold water, so we were sitting in a puddle for a good portion of the trip. The last part of the trip took us across Maple St. where some sensible riders in cars gave astonished looks at this hay wagon load of voluntarily soaked people.

Nobody caught cold from this adventure, as far as we have heard.

BIRDS IN THE GREAT MEADOWS

The Great Meadows are a lovely place to be any season of the year- it is one of those rare places that seem to be a world apart from everyday things. It is also a place to observe a great number and variety of birds. With different habitats available, one can see at this time of year ducks, gulls, mergansers, hawks, owls, kingfishers, woodpeckers, tufted titmice, nuthatch, brown creepers, mockingbirds, cardinals, tree sparrows, song sparrows and white-throated sparrows. With a good ear and eye, perhaps you might find a kinglet or a winter wren or a great blue heron. If winter birding is not your thing, then wait for spring to call back the meadowlarks and bobolinks. They are a sight to behold!

BE A MEADOW VIEWER!

Become a Meadow Viewer! Meadow Viewers will help the Land Management Committee keep an eye on the Trust's properties and easements, and report any changes or disturbance to the land.

We have thirty-three parcels of land covering almost a hundred acres, and can offer a choice of grassland, cultivated areas, swamps, woodland and riverfronts for you to visit. You might want to become the Meadow Viewer for one particular piece of land, or prefer to roam around and see several parcels. For more information, telephone or write to Peter Revill, Chair, Land Management Committee at 460 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067, tel. 529-9254.

MEETING ON LAND AND LEGISLATION

A PUBLIC MEETING on the current status of legislation on land conservation will be held at the Holland Brook Nature Center, 1361 Main St. Glastonbury at 7.30 p.m. March 6. Representatives of the legislature and the Land Conservation Coalition will be present.

CREDITS

Riverwatch	J. Steffens
Hayride	E. Revill
Birds	C. Sprague
Editor	P. Revill

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P. Revill	Land Management
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