



THE MEADOW VIEW

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

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HELP SAVE THE ROCKY HILL - RIGHT NOW!

Great Meadows Conservation Trust members are asked to call the Governor's Office and their State Legislators immediately to urge approval of the purchase of 80 acres of land adjacent to the Great Meadows, known as the QUARRY SITE. This property would be acquired with a bond issue under Connecticut's Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program. By the time you receive this Newsletter the process for approval will be underway.

In December, the Rocky Hill Town Council unanimously voted that the Town be a Cooperator under the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program, and to fund 50% of the property purchase price. The state will fund the balance. The area is to be preserved and used for passive recreation. This unique piece of land not only adjoins the Great Meadows, but also overlooks the 5-mile stretch of the Connecticut River that was recently added to the Nationwide Rivers Inventory. The land had been proposed for large private housing projects in the past, but strong citizen action helped in the rejection by town agencies of several plans. Until the area is secured by the state, it remains open for development.

The Board of Directors of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust also adopted a resolution to become a Cooperator and pledged \$1000 towards purchase of this QUARRY SITE under the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program.

As a last step in bringing this open space project to completion, it is most important that the Governor and State Legislators be called by many and all to let them know of the significance of this piece of land and to encourage final approval of the bonding and purchase. Thank you for taking time to make these calls. The earlier the better! Numbers to call include:

Governor's Office	566-4840
Senator William A. DiBella	240-0460
Senator A. Cynthia Matthews	240-0560
Senator Michael P. Meotti	240-0590
Representative Robert D. Bowden	240-0587
Representative Robert G. Gilligan	240-8585
Representative Richard Tulisano	240-0530

If you have any questions, please call Great Meadows Trust Director Don Watson at 529-4373.

RIVER WATCH - REPORT ON THE FIRST YEAR

River Watch and its Hot Line have been in operation for one year. We give a brief history of the project and its future.

Concerned with increasing vandalism and degradation along the Connecticut River, Astrid Hanzalek, President of the Connecticut River Watershed Council, spoke to the members of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust at its annual meeting in 1988. She expressed the need for controlling action, and from her talk sprang the concept of River Watch.

A steering committee representing the Watershed Council and the Trust was formed, and a pilot project, possibly the forerunner of a much greater plan, was developed to serve the communities of Glastonbury, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield. This was and is River Watch.

River Watch is designed to act as a deterrent to misuse and abuse of the Connecticut River and its borders, including the flood plain meadows. It is a voluntary citizens watchers' organization intended to augment the limited patrolling power of local police of undeveloped areas along the river, and the limited state and Coast Guard patrols on the water. River Watch provides an alternative and confidential channel for citizens to report to authorities undesirable activities they observe along the river. As reports are recorded by River Watch, they provide cumulative data for citizen action to urge changes in the law or to justify increased law enforcement to protect the river.

Funded by a \$1,500 grant voted by the Board of the Trust, a message center was installed at the Watershed Council's office in Hartford. Southern New England Telephone donated the answering machine, and also printed, at no charge, 1000 River Watch Hot Line cards for distribution to volunteers.

In April 1989, well publicized meetings were held in each of the participating towns to initiate the River Watch project. Representatives of local police, town staff and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection were present to answer questions and offer guidelines to citizen volunteers in making reports.

A series of grid maps was prepared by the Trust to help people locate and report their observations. All calls were recorded on tape and a log kept by River Watch monitors. The monitors would refer the matter to a volunteer in the town concerned who would in turn contact the appropriate authorities for action.

During the first year, calls to the Hot Line included reports on such matters as abandoned cars, dumped trash and oil drums, out of season gunfire and other irregularities. Arrests have been made for illegal dumping.

There have been requests from other towns on

the river and the Farmington River Watershed Association for information on starting monitoring programs of their own. In response, a booklet with guidelines was prepared and is available from the Watershed Office.

A student project of testing Connecticut River water for pollutants, based on a national program started in Vermont, is in the planning stages in Connecticut. The Watershed Council is seeking funds for this program which, they hope, will be in place this spring in two or more river communities. The testing program will be joined with the River Watch project, and work with state and local agencies to protect the river and its environs.

River Watch will be represented on Earth Day, April 22 at the Connecticut Audubon Holland Brook Center.

TRUST TO PARTICIPATE IN EARTH DAY 20, APRIL 22

The first Earth Day took place in 1970, and marked the beginning of a new awareness and concern for the environment.

A nationwide celebration of this 20th anniversary is being planned. The Great Meadows Conservation Trust will be involved at the local level by participating at the Connecticut Audubon Society's Holland Brook Center at 1361 Main Street, Glastonbury.

John Bruchac, poet, novelist and story teller, who has won national awards for his writing, will highlight the celebration. Born in the Adirondacks, Bruchac's stories reflect the legend and lore of those mountains as well as his own Native American ancestry.

The Trust will be among a number of local groups setting up booths, demonstrations or programs at Holland Brook. We are in the early stages of planning our setup which will focus on the relief map of the Meadows now on permanent display at the Center. This map was funded by the Trust. We are hoping for your help in developing our program and exhibit, and/or to volunteer to be host and hostesses on April 22. For details, please call Duffy Schade at 633-4885.

VISIT GMCT PARCELS WITH US -

-Says the Land Management Committee. The Spring inspections will start fairly soon, and members of the Trust are invited to accompany our teams that will drive and walk to see what Winter and people have done to our property. Please call John Lepper (529-2290) or Peter Revill (529-9254) for details.

THE LOCAL AUDUBON BIRD COUNT

The year's Hartford Audubon annual Christmas Bird Count was held on December 30th; a very snowy cold day. Similar surveys were held throughout the country during the holiday period, all within a seven and one-half mile radius from a central point. Every major city in the United States was included. Hartford Audubon Society has always participated and often rates in the top ten teams of people counting birds.

Although the birds were not moving about in such awful weather, 44 species and a total of 2013 birds were counted in the Wethersfield- Rocky Hill area by 15 feeder watchers and 7 people in the field, the highlight being several bald eagles on the Connecticut River. This count took place largely in the and near the Great Meadows.

What is impressive is that last summer's rain gave growth to an abundant supply of weed seeds. Robins were seen feasting on staghorn sumac berries, bluebirds eating evening primrose and pokeberry seeds, pine siskins enjoying seeds from evergreen cones and tree sparrows flying to the top of grasses, knocking them down with their weight and hopping along the stem to eat the seeds.

So not only was this count necessary for comparison with past years, but was also a great deal of fun and enjoyment to those who like the cold!

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

For information call Membership Chair Joan Mihm at 633-1806, or write The Great Meadows Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033.

BLESSING OF LAND ON EARTH DAY IN ROCKY HILL

The Town of Rocky Hill is celebrating Earth Day, April 22, with several events of interest to those who respect the land and the Connecticut River.

At 12.30 p.m. at the gazebo on the green near the Town Hall and Library, the Mayor will open the celebration, and other officials will address the gathering. Then a Native American Medicine Man, yet to be named, will bless the lands of Rocky Hill, an event of great significance in this town where so many Native Americans lived centuries ago. There will also be band and choral music.

Rick Boynton of the Connecticut River Watershed Council will give a talk and slide show on "The Connecticut River Today and Prospects for Tomorrow". River stage allowing, boat rides on the "Aunt Polly" will take place at 1.00, 2.15 and 3.30 p.m. For these, there will be a charge. In the event of inclement weather, the program will take place in the High School Auditorium.

For complete details, call the Rocky Hill Parks and Recreation Department, 563-1451.

PROPOSED PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCHING SITE AT PUTNAM BRIDGE

What could be the largest public boat launching site in Connecticut is being proposed for state owned property beneath the Putnam Bridge in Wethersfield. Originally conceived as a facility to accomodate 80 cars and trailers it is now planned to handle 175.

Designed by the Department of Environmental Protection, the \$1.3 million project will be constructed by the Department of Transportation as a mitigation of environmental damage done during construction on the Baldwin Bridge. DOT will include this project in their rebuilding of the I-91/Route 3 Interchange scheduled for construction in 1991. The boat launching site will be an unattended, no-fee facility.

Some members of the Trust's Board of Directors

and Operations Committee have expressed concern over the possible impact this project will have on the Trust's Standish Parcel adjacent to and downstream of the boat launching site, and on the meadows in general.

Dean Kraska, Supervising Engineer for DEP will make a project presentation to the February meeting of the Operations Committee.

WHAT IS A FARM, WETHERSFIELD?

The Wetherfield Town Planning and Zoning Commission is considering changes to its definition of a farm. Development Director Leonard Tundermann has proposed revisions "to bring the regulations up to date." He has suggested that a farm should consist of 5 or more contiguous acres, a change that would prohibit someone from farming less than this area. Farmers leasing land in the Meadows would be adversely affected. This is of concern to the Trust which leases some of its parcels for farming.

Another change would require farms to be owned in common, i.e., have two or more owners. This would create difficulties for some farmers.

The Trust's Vice-President, John Lepper, appeared before the commission to question the need for the area change, and discussed the resulting difficulties. He reminded the Commission that the Town Council was trying to find more

ways to retain farming and open space in Wethersfield but the changes seemed to be moving in the opposite direction.

Joseph Hickey, a Planning and Zoning Commissioner and a member of the Trust said he did not want to penalize farmers, and that people settling next to existing farms should move away if they did not like the farming operations.

The Mayor, Betty Rosania, speaking for the Council opposed the proposed change. A number of citizens also objected and supported agriculture. No one spoke in favor of the revisions. At the time of writing, the Commission had not voted on the changes.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE --

--"One Creature per Acre and Other Stories of the Old Rocky Hill Meadows" which was presented by Peter Revill at the 1987 Annual Meeting? Records beginning in 1847 were used as source material.

A transcription is available for \$ 1.50, postage paid. Please send request and check payable to the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc., P.O.Box 171 Glastonbury, CT 06033, att. The Meadow View.

CREDITS

Material for this issue has been provided by Christy Hass, John Lepper, Edith Schade, Joan-Marie Schaefer, Christine Sprague, Julianne Steffens, Donald Watson and Editor Peter Revill.



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