

**NOTICE OF
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
GREAT MEADOWS CONSERVATION
TRUST, INC.**

DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1990

TIME; 7:30 P.M.

PLACE; The Cora J. Belden Library, Church Street
Rocky Hill, in the Stepney Room.

- AGENDA:**
1. Annual reports to the members.
 2. Election of three Directors to serve until the 1993 Annual Meeting.
 3. Any other business which may come before the meeting.

PROGRAM: A GLANCE AT THE PAST by archaeologist, David Cooke of Rocky Hill. A specialist in pre-historic archaeology, Cooke is Dig Chairman of the Albert Morgan Archaeological Society. He will give us a look at some important sites in the Great Meadows of Rocky Hill, Wethersfield and Glastonbury through slides and artifacts in his collection.

AFTERWARD: Our traditional Great Meadows Punch and cookies.

Bring Your Friends.

THE MEADOW VIEW Vol. II No. 2
May 1990

THE CONNECTICUT RIVER – TOO ATTRACTIVE ?

Be sure that you read the article "On the Connecticut, a Sweet Smell of Success" by Richard Conniff, with the elegant photographs of Robert Benson in the April issue of the Smithsonian. Under the title is an interesting byline, "When it was dirty, people shunned it. Now that it's clean, they flock to it. Question: Was the Connecticut better off before?" This deserves special comment.

Now that the river has been considerably improved in regard to pollution, the potential recreational uses of the river valley have begun to attract a great amount of attention. In the Hartford area much is heard of the projects of Riverfront Recapture which are directed to improving access and recreation opportunities along the River in Hartford. A floating restaurant is currently under consideration for East Hartford and an ambitious boat launch is being planned at the Putnam Bridge in Wethersfield. Other projects recently undertaken in the Hartford area include a marina at Putnam Park West adjacent to the Putnam Bridge boat launch site and another marina in Rocky Hill south of the ferry.

It appears that there is need for overall planning of development along the Connecticut River, and for this the Department of Environmental Protection is the logical agency. However, it is not entirely reassuring to learn that within DEP there are no less than seven separate units that have major responsibilities for various aspects of river management. It is hoped that there is good communication. It is encouraging, however, to learn that, based on the recommendations of the recent Environment 2000 conference, an Advisory Group has been established to define a statewide river management program. We certainly hope that this new Advisory Group is actively evaluating these numerous current projects to assess their merits in regard to preservation of the outstanding features of the Connecticut River Valley!

ROCKY HILL QUARRY PARK – GOOD NEWS!

The \$1000 Cooperator's Gift Contribution from the Great Meadows Trust towards the purchase of the quarry property, presented by Clyde Brooks, president, received a warm round of applause at

the April 2nd. Rocky Hill Town Council meeting. The Council Chamber was filled to standing room only, and applause broke out when the Council unanimously approved the transfer of town funds for the purchase. The 80 acres adjacent to the Great Meadows is being acquired by the state under Connecticut's Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program. The State Bonding Commission approved its 50% share at its March 23 meeting. The efforts of everyone who contributed their support have made the preservation of this land possible.

This unique property has many notable features: fantastic views, the oldest tree in Rocky Hill (a 300-400 year old white oak "witness" to the Constitution; rich Native American Artifacts (two sites have been recommended to the National Register); abundant wildlife (a natural refuge for birds and other animals during floods).

A walk through the quarry is being planned by the Rocky Hill Recreation Department and will be led by two members of the Trust's Operations Committee. If you would like to join the walk, call Christy Hass, Director of Parks and Recreation, at 563-1451 for details.

MORE ON PUTNAM BRIDGE BOAT LAUNCHING RAMP

Dean Kraska, Supervising Engineer with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) attended the February 22 meeting of the Operations Committee of the Trust and presented plans for the boat launch ramp to be built under the Putnam Bridge, adjacent to our Standish property. He described the project in detail and discussed various concerns raised by the Committee.

Mr. Kraska was directed in 1987 to find potential public boat launching sites on the Connecticut River north of Middletown and Portland. Criteria included accessibility, use of State property and minimum impact on adjacent property. The three and a half acre site at the west end of the Putnam Bridge was selected.

A preliminary layout was withdrawn in June 1989, and a planning meeting was held with the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Army Corps of Engineers and DEP. The resulting design presented by Mr. Kaska would create the largest boat launching site in the state and accommodate 175 cars. It would include a seasonal aluminum floating dock as well as the permanent ramp.

Timber piling and concrete blocks would be the principal materials. A 15 by 30 ft. building would house restrooms.

The estimated cost of the project is \$1.3 million, and construction would be by DOT as part of the rebuilding of the I-91/ Route 3 interchange in 1991. DOT's involvement is also a mitigation of environmental damage during construction of the Baldwin Bridge in Saybrook. Kraska indicated that the facilities would be staffed, however, no funds have yet been allocated for operation or maintenance.

Members of the Operations Committee were concerned with the proximity of the site to the Great Meadows and the possible disturbance to adjacent lands, including the Trust's adjoining Standish Parcel. Changes to the river bank profile were seen as creating more turbulence and washouts during floods. As it is, some erosion does occur on the Standish land. The location of the launching site on the outside of a major bend in the river suggests that currents might be strong enough to endanger boaters.

A permitting process is being developed to ensure complete compliance with all state legal requirements. To keep up with developments, questions can be directed to Adrian Freund, Chief of DEP's Water Bureau, tel. 566-3245, or to Dean Kraska at the Administrative Offices, 566-5191, or to the Portland Engineering Office, 344-2513.

ZONING AND THE GREAT MEADOWS

The paper, *"Protecting The Great Meadows From Development Pressures"*, by Peter Stern, member of the Trust's Operations Committee, reviews the zoning powers of Glastonbury, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield to control development in the lowlands. Stern notes that, so far, "The fact that this valuable natural resource has been reasonably protected from urban encroachment is due to the annual floods of the Connecticut River and to our realization that much larger floods inundate the Meadows at intervals that seem shorter with every passing decade. However he notes that "Today, a mighty bridge crosses them, and the daily commuter can view the meadows and the river from its great height, depending on the rate of speed of travel. One can also observe buildings and structures, some encroaching on the shoreline, others tugging at the outer edge of the flood plain." To ensure future protection of the land, ownership of key parcels by government or

conservation minded groups is an essential contribution, "But in order to protect the bulk of the 4000 acres and their border lands, we must rely on the zoning power of our municipalities."

Stern is pleased that all three towns have zoning aimed at restricting construction in the flood plain, partly to afford space for floodwater storage and passage, and to preserve the land for ecological reasons. The paper presents details of zoning in each town under the headings Purpose, Applicability, Definitions, Permitted Uses and Waivers. Stern's comments are appended to each section. From his overall remarks it appears that Glastonbury and Wethersfield have very specific regulatory requirements, and Rocky Hill has few. However Rocky Hill does have simple sweeping provisions that can be said to cover most of the controls of the other towns.

"We recommend Stern's paper for its fine coverage of flood plain zoning, and strongly suggest that a copy be in local environmentalists' files. A copy can be picked up at the Trust's annual meeting, or obtained by mail. Please send a sufficiently stamped, addressed envelope large enough to hold eight letter sized sheets to Great Meadows Conservation Trust, P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033, marked "Zoning paper request."

EARTH DAY

The Great Meadows Conservation Trust joined in Earth Day observances with an exhibit at the Holland Brook Connecticut Audubon Center in Glastonbury on Saturday April 21, and at the Community Center in Rocky Hill on Sunday April 22. Our display, put together by Duffy Schade and Peter Stern, included maps and Duffy's beautiful photographs of the meadows. Members of the Trust hosted. Many visitors asked questions and picked up literature. Copies of Peter Stern's paper on flood plain zoning was a popular item.

BEAVERS IN GOFF BROOK

During the inspection of the Mancini Parcel earlier this year, Land Management Committee members John Lepper and Peter Revill came across beaver gnawings on trees next to Goff Brook. Several people have expressed surprise at this, thinking that the brook could no longer support this type of wildlife.

The affected wood consisted of one small tree and a large sapling, and the cuts included bark stripping as well as the characteristic pencilpoint shaping of the downed trees. The site is just west of Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, on the north side of the brook close to the old ice pond dam.

We would like to know of any other beaver sightings in or near the meadows. We think that there should be some as so many streams in this region are called "Beaver Brook". However, pollution and environmental changes have probably taken their toll. Please call John Lepper at 529-2290, or Peter Revill at 529-9254 about these rodents.

WETHERSFIELD NEWS

It looks as if another busy season is under way in the meadows for the Wethersfield Police Department. On Sunday April 8, they received a report that several vehicles were operating recklessly on state property under the Putnam Bridge. The police response resulted in the arrest of a Newington man. They also found that the East Hartford police had a warrant for his arrest for failure to appear in court. The suspect was turned over to the East Hartford police.

In the last Meadow View we reported on the proposed changes to the definition of a farm being considered by the Wethersfield Town Planning and Zoning Commission. They included some serious impacts on farming, namely that a farm must consist of 5 acres or more, and that a farm must have two or more owners. There was heavy opposition to the changes in which the Great Meadows Trust joined. The Commission has rejected the changes.



P.O. Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033



BOOK REVIEW

Eleanor Buck Wolf has just published a book celebrating her wild animal friends. "Creatures at my Doorstep" brings you anecdotes of encounters with weasels, raccoons, skunks, flickers and many other creatures that inhabit the environs of 400 Hartford Avenue, Wethersfield. Charminglly illustrated by the author, this book will inform while it enchants you as typical tracks of each animal are shown, and characteristic behaviors and habitats are woven in. The author is one of the founding members of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust and a dauntless activist for conservation causes.

The book is available at the Wethersfield Historical Society and the Readers' Bookstore at 632 Cromwell Ave., Rocky Hill @ \$8.80 + tax.

CREDITS

Material for this issue has been provided by Clyde Brooks, Betsy Katz, John Lepper, Eleanor Revill, Donald Watson and Editor Peter Revill

MEMBERSHIP

For membership information, please write to Membership Chair., Great Meadows Conservation Trust, P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033