



# THE MEADOW VIEW

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

Vol. III No.1

February 1991

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

This is a brief review of the activities and accomplishments of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust in 1990.

### Membership

Our Membership Chair, Joan Mihm, reports that at the end of 1990 membership is 183 with a net gain of 30 for the year.

We are pleased to announce three new Life Members:-

Mrs. Lotte Tschinkel of Glastonbury  
Ms. Joyce Bauer of Wethersfield  
Mrs. Christine Myles-Tochke in Maryland

We are saddened to report the loss by death of:

Mrs. Kenneth Geyer of Wethersfield  
Mrs. Ruth Brooks of Rocky Hill  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ford of Rocky Hill  
Ms. Pauline Tyler of Glastonbury

### Operations Committee

The Operations Committee, which conducts the ongoing business of the Trust, meets 7 or 8 times a year and currently has 21 members. Ingrid Boelhouwer of Wethersfield was welcomed to the Committee.

### Land Acquisition Committee

No new land acquisitions were made during the year so that the total acreage in the three towns stands at 94.8, including 19.6 acres of conservation easements. However, the Trust received a generous bequest of \$ 5512 from

the estate of Bernadette Holden of Rocky Hill who died November 30, 1988. This gift is greatly appreciated and will provide the means for further acquisitions by the Trust.

### Land Management Committee

Peter Revill, Land Management Chair, reports that one third of the Trust's holdings were inspected in 1990. In general, the properties are in good condition, and 12 1/2 acres are leased to farmers in the area.

### Finances

Treasurer Judy Parker reports that the Trust's finances are in good order and that we are living within our means. She is keeping the Trust's money in the safest banks she can find.

### Newsletter

The Trust's newsletter, "The Meadow View" was in its second year of publication in 1990. There were three issues in 1990, and the editor, Peter Revill expects that there will be three in 1991.

### Riverwatch

The Trust received recognition for initiating Riverwatch at the Eighth Annual Convocation of Land Trusts. Details are reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Riverwatch program passed to the Connecticut River Watershed Council for primary management this year with the Trust as a cooperator. This river protection plan very much needs higher visibility to insure its continued effectiveness.

## **Trust Activity in the Towns**

### Glastonbury

There was no significant change in the status of Glastonbury land holdings in the year. The Walker property, a tract of 2.6 acres along the Connecticut River near the ferry crossing, on which the Trust holds a conservation easement, changed ownership when it was purchased by a bordering landowner who outbid the Town.

The President appeared twice at informal public hearings of the Glastonbury Council as an "enemy of the people" to present the environmental concerns of the Trust in regard to permitting affordable housing under a cooperative development by the Council of Churches and a private developer. The site is a 27-acre parcel in the flood plain of the Connecticut River, 80% below the 100-year flood line, and within river encroachment line. It is currently farmed.

### Rocky Hill

The principal activity in Rocky Hill was the Trust's active role and financial participation in aiding the Town, in collaboration with the State of Connecticut, to acquire the quarry property on the hill for which the town is named. The land, purchased under the Connecticut Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program, will be a state public open space. Prior owners had proposed high density housing on the land which overlooks the Rocky Hill Meadows.

### Wethersfield

The principal activity in Wethersfield revolved around the proposed marine developments under and near the west end of the Putnam Bridge, namely the projected state boat launch ramp on bridge land and a private floating dock. An up-to-date report on this is given elsewhere in this newsletter. The Trust has an immediate concern as its Standish Parcel is next to the boat launch ramp site. A special task force headed, by John Lepper, Trust Vice-President is monitoring the situation.

## **Trust Public Meetings and Activities**

The principal activities for the members of the Trust and members of the public consisted of exhibits on Earth Day in April at the Audubon Holland Brook Nature Center in

Glastonbury and in Rocky Hill, the Annual Meeting at the public library in Rocky Hill, and a walk at the Rocky Hill Quarry Park site October 14.

We look forward to another busy year.

Clyde S. Brooks

## **THE GREEN UP AWARD**

The Trust received at the Eighth Annual Convocation of Land Trusts held in Hartford, the certificate worded as follows:

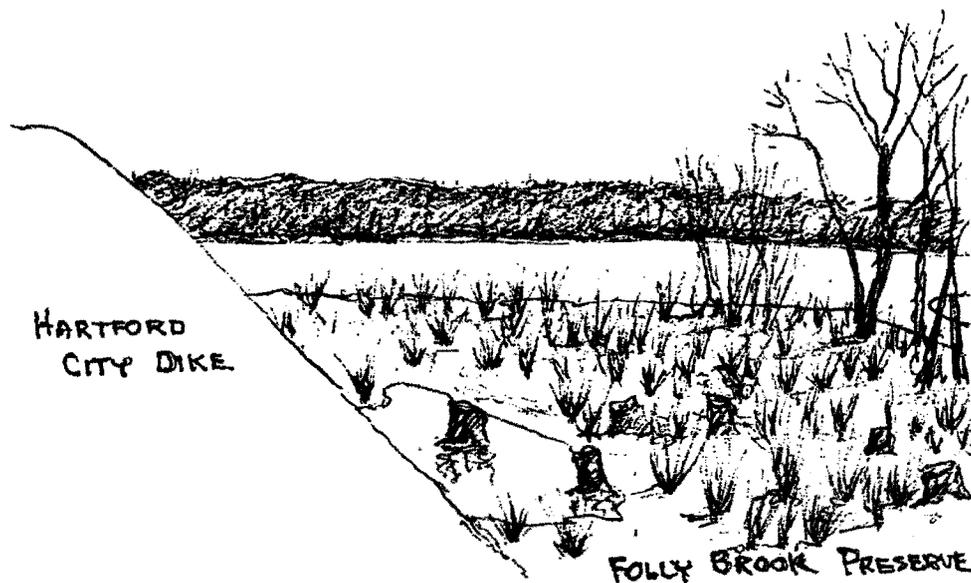
*THE CONNECTICUT LAND TRUST SERVICE  
BUREAU  
heraby extends the  
GREEN UP COOPERATIVE AWARD  
to the  
GREAT MEADOWS CONSERVATION  
TRUST  
for their River Watch Program designed  
to deter misuse and abuse of the Connecticut  
River*

*November 3, 1990*

This award was presented by Carolie Evans, Director CLTSB and accepted by Jolly Steffens. A check for \$50 accompanied the award, it was contributed by Fred Butt of Washington Insurance Services which underwrites land trust insurance.

The accompanying citation states: "The COOPERATIVE AWARD goes to the GREAT MEADOWS CONSERVATION TRUST for the "River Watch" program. The Trust worked with the Connecticut River Watershed Council, the local police, DEP, and the Coast Guard to deter misuse and abuse of the Connecticut River in Glastonbury, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield. This first of its kind program sets a valuable example to others in the conservation community of effective ways to work cooperatively within our towns to see that our natural resources get used wisely with an eye towards the future. We commend the trust's creative thinking!"

Several awards for various accomplishments are given every year at the convocations. We are proud to be recognized!



***FOLLY BROOK NATURAL AREA, NOVEMBER 1990***  
***by Eleanor B. Wolf***

**UPDATE ON "STUMP CITY"**

In November, almost three years from the date that the Department of Transportation began its infamous tree cutting of twenty two acres in the Folly Brook Natural Area resulting in "Stump City", I was privileged to be invited to accompany Kenneth Metzler, Senior Biologist with the Department of Environmental Protection, into this once-forested flood plain of the Connecticut River.

The first scientific study of this preserve was made by Dr. William Niering and Dr. Frank Egler soon after this eighty acre site was set aside in 1956. Carried on by Professor Antoni Damman of the University of Connecticut, and Kenneth Metzler, it was heartbreakingly interrupted by the tree cutting episode. Now two new sections, 20 by 20, meters are under study with control plots at Keeney Cove in Glastonbury and in the Rocky Hill meadows.

On this exceptionally warm November morning, we drove through the gates at the South Meadows Pumping Station and along the road which skirts north of the dike, tunnels

under two highways and finally climbs the dike beside the odoriferous sewage plant. Viewing the area from the top of the dike, the changes just since I had last seen it about a year ago were remarkable. Then, only dead stumps interrupted the cleared land with a few sprouts of silver maple a few feet in height. Now, except for the ponds, excavated for building the dike in the 1930's, where monstrous stumps showed no sign of regeneration, maple sprouts and new growth six to ten feet tall covered most of the acres with a few clumps of trees thirty or more feet in height.

I was glad to have my witch hazel walking stick, and that it was Ken, not I, who was carrying the load of tools and the metal detector. Heavy equipment used by DOT in its clean-up efforts had added further damage to this sensitive alluvial river bottom soil, and this made walking difficult. Having gone with scientists before, I knew that they usually go to their destination in a ruler-straight line, so I guessed that Ken was respecting my gray

hairs when he led me on an easier but more round-about route to the study site. Here, a thicket of silver maples made locating the boundary pins possible only by using the metal detector.

Ken reported that a year ago annual plants predominated, now perennials were coming back, among them a large growth of flowering rush, a plant not native to this area. One surprise was the condition of the dike. Because of the clear-cutting, erosion was expected along this river front barrier. Instead, probably because cut branches had been piled here, a thick growth of silver maples, interspersed with a few black willows and cottonwoods, had prevented that expected erosion.

In the mud along the bank I recognized numerous animals tracks- raccoons, muskrats and the deep imprints made by the cloven hoofs of deer. Feather stitched among them were the delicate footprints of mice. Ken reports that many birds favor this part of the preserve in the spring and summertime.

At present a verbal agreement exists between DEP, The Nature Conservancy and the City of Hartford on the proper maintenance of this section of this preserve. Cutting will be allowed along a narrow strip at the foot of the dike to prevent tree roots from growing into and damaging the dike. Beyond this some supervised cutting will be allowed along a wider strip to maintain flight path clearance for the Brainard Field runway approach. The remaining area will be undisturbed unless individual tree branches grow into the flight path. They may be removed only under close supervision by the Nature Conservancy.

We all deplore the tree cutting affair, but now perhaps it will not happen again that a foreman can say that the few trees needing to be trimmed are hard to locate so "we might as well cut the whole thing."

Eleanor B. Wolf

**FOR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**  
Write to Great Meadows Conservation  
Trust, P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury,  
CT 06033 or phone 633-1806

## PUTNAM BRIDGE BOAT LAUNCH RAMP

As a result of issues brought to the public's attention during the campaign for the 9th State Senatorial District seat in November 1990, State Senator Cynthia Matthews obtained an agreement from Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Leslie Carothers for an environmental study and public hearings on the proposed boat launch project.

As of writing, no environmental study has been produced and no hearings have been scheduled. Nevertheless, the Department of Transportation plans to go to bid in February for the I-91/Rte.3 Interchange project, with construction to start in the fall. The work includes the relocation of Great Meadow Road and construction of the boat launch ramp.

## PUTNAM PARK DOCK

In October 1990, Putnam Park Associates filed an application with the Town of Wethersfield seeking a permit and a site plan and design review to place a 314 ft. by 6 ft. steel floating dock along the river bank at their property on Great Meadow Road, adjacent to the proposed boat launch ramp.

The Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Commission gave its approval on December 19th, but the Town Planning and Zoning Commission turned it down on January 15th. The issue is dead in Wethersfield for the present.

To protect and secure sections of the dock during high water the applicant had proposed to remove them when the river is forecast to reach the 14 ft. stage. Method of removal would have been to tow them by truck to the town launch ramp or remove them by way of the proposed State boat launch facility under the Putnam Bridge.

During the hearing before the Town Planning and Zoning Commission there was no

**ROCKY HILL QUARRY PARK- Help with  
the cleanup in March! Call Parks and  
Rec. Dept., Town Hall 563-1451**

support for the application.

Eleanor Wolf, speaking for the Great Meadows Conservation Trust (GMCT), suggested that removing the docks at the 14-ft. river stage was impractical since this rise occurs two or three times a month in the spring and fall, and that floods of 20 feet or more have occurred in every month of the year since records have been kept. Ms. Wolf further pointed out that at 14 feet the Cove parking lot would be under water.

The terminal manager of the Amerada Hess tank complex immediately north of the proposed dock spoke in opposition to the application focussing on Hess's need to maneuver containment booms around tankers without interference from private boat traffic. Hess keeps their booms in the water at all times. He also expressed concern that should a fuel spill occur a boat at Putnam Park might ignite it.

Wethersfield's Fire Marshall raised concerns about adequate fire protection, pointing out that the terrain prevented fire apparatus from coming within 300 feet of the proposed dock. He felt that the fire extinguishers proposed by the applicant would be inadequate.

Later in the month, the same application was made to the Inland Wetlands and Water Courses Commission.

During their hearing, John Lepper, speaking for GMCT, expressed concern over the lack of planning, river bank erosion, fuel and sewage spillage from boats using this facility and potential for major environmental damage as a result of oil barges and pleasure craft operating in close proximity. The GMCT asked that the application be turned down on the basis that there is no comprehensive plan for the river.

A letter from Glastonbury's Conservation/Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commissions raised concerns about noise on the river, safety, DEP's inadequate policing of the waterway and undercutting of the river bank by boat wakes.

Wethersfield's Conservation Commission asked that no action be taken until a comprehensive plan of development for the river is in place. The Commission raised concerns about additional pollution of the

river and the fragility of the river bank in the area.

If the floating dock and the State boat launch facility were both built, the two projects would take approximately 1,000 feet of contiguous river bank at a fragile and sensitive point in the river.

## GMCT STARS AT CONVOCATION

Bob Farrell, former GMCT director, and Jim Coe, member, served on a panel at the 8th Annual Convocation of Land Trusts on November 3rd, 1990 at U-Hartford. They told about 50 assembled representatives of various land trusts how it is possible to save a tract of land from threatened development, even on a shoestring budget, through grass roots citizen action and the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program. With their track record of success in organizing the Rocky Hill Neighborhood Association which saved the Rocky Hill Quarry from three threats of proposed multiple unit dwellings, they related the saga that has culminated in the State's and Town's cooperative purchase of the 80-acre site, just eight miles from downtown Hartford, for a park to be kept in its natural state in perpetuity. GMCT is proud to have been an encourager at every step and a cooperater with a contribution of \$1,000 toward the purchase price.

## PRESERVATION AWARDS TO TRUST MEMBERS

The Wethersfield Historical Society recently presented its 1990 Preservation Awards to five of its members who happen to be members of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust.

Honored were Eleanor Wolf, member of the Operations Committee, past president and a former director of the Trust; W. Thayer Chase, member of the Operations Committee and former director; and Corinne Willard and

Lee and Ann Kuckro, members. Both Wolf and Chase are Life Members

These recipients were selected for their outstanding contributions to the cause of preserving Wethersfield's historic, cultural and natural resources.

The Meadow View congratulates these outstanding award recipients for their accomplishments, and salutes the Governing Board of the Wethersfield Historical Society for its excellent choice of such well deserving people.

## WETHERSFIELD COVE BIRDS

All Fall, increasing numbers of Canada geese collect along the west shore of the Wethersfield Cove, plucking grass from close-mown hillsides or wading in the water, until December a flock of over sixty of these large, honking birds gather here. In recent years they have been joined by one or two pairs of Snow geese.

On the open water a flock of Mallard ducks, numbering over fifty, gather. Called 'dippers', they approach the shallows to tip up and feed along the bottoms. Small groups of Mergansers dive in unison for fish while an occasional grebe displays why he got his name - Hell-diver.

Seagulls, too numerous to count, sit headed into the wind or fly back and forth on graceful wings, their mournful cries increasing as they fight over food.

Now in January, with the Cove frozen over, the geese and Mallards have left and the seagulls spend hours sitting quietly on the ice.

A pair of Red-tailed hawks perch in the trees in the Folly Brook Preserve, their extraordinary vision enabling them to see Meadow mice many yards away, Meadow mice who are safe in their tunnels until they come out to scamper on top of the snow between their small, round entrance holes.

The muskrat house, invisible among the reeds all summer, now pokes above the ice in the swamp.

Winter also brings its interesting sightings along the Cove.

Eleanor B. Wolf

## MEADOW VIEW WALKS

Three walks in the Great Meadows will take place in February, weather and river stage permitting. Sponsored by the Land Management Committee, they will combine sightseeing with inspection of some of the Trust's parcels. The winter cold should ensure frozen ground, an advantage in normally wetter areas.

The Glastonbury Walk - Saturday, February 9, 1:30 P.M. Meet at Point Road (off Naubuc Ave. south of Rt.3 overpass).

The Wethersfield Walk - Saturday, February 16, 1:30 P.M. Meet on Great Meadow Road at the Putnam Bridge.

The Rocky Hill Walk - Saturday, February 23, 1:30 P.M. Meet at the boat ramp next to the ferry landing.

PLEASE call Peter Revill (529-9254) on the morning of the walk to let him know that you intend to go. Expect long walks, dress warmly. There will be no driving in the Meadows in Glastonbury, some driving in the other two towns might be possible. The walks will last about two hours.

## RECORDS HELP NEEDED

The Land Management Committee needs help in consolidating maps, deeds, photographs, condition reports and other data on the Trust's holdings and easements. It is planned to prepare a reproducible file with all essential information about each parcel. Written material will have to be typed. There will be no need to go out to the field for this project.

Volunteers, please call Peter Revill at 529-9254 soon!

### CREDITS

Material for this issue has been provided by Clyde Brooks, John Lepper, Ellie Revill, Eleanor Wolf and Editor Peter Revill

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