



# **THE MEADOW VIEW**

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

Vol. III No.2

May 1991

## **ANNUAL MEETING AND POTLUCK DINNER JUNE 7th**

We're trying a new approach to the Annual Meeting this year. We are having a potluck dinner before the meeting, so we'll have more time to get acquainted with each other before we get down to business. After the Annual Meeting there will be a program of interest to us all on the State's RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, illustrated with slides made by American Rivers. James McBroom will be the speaker. So come, bring your friends and join us for our traditional Great Meadows punch at 6:00 P.M. to start what promises to be a congenial and worthwhile evening. Details will be found on the white sheet enclosed. It would be great if we gained some new members that evening!

### **GIFT TO THE TRUST**

One of our long time members has made a generous gift to this land trust. Hugh Campbell, formerly of Wethersfield, who now lives in West Hartford, donated ten shares of Loctite Corp. in February, which quickly grew to be twenty shares when the stock was split two for one. His gift is greatly appreciated by all of us. It will be a significant help in furthering the Trust's ongoing work of protecting the Great Meadows for future generations.

### **ELEANOR WOLF HONORED BY THE HARTFORD COURANT**

We note with great pleasure that Eleanor Wolf, member of our Operations Committee and past president and former director of the Trust,

received one of the two Arts and Humanities Awards at the Hartford Courant's Eighth Annual Volunteer Recognition Reception. The recognition was for her work with the Wethersfield Historical Society. The certificates were presented by Raymond A. Jansen, publisher and chief executive officer of the Courant on April 25 at the Connecticut Historical Society. Eleanor's photograph, along with those of the other honorees, was printed in the Courant of April 14 and later. Congratulations Eleanor!

### **MIDDLETOWN AVENUE WETH. PROPOSAL**

A recent application for a zone change in Wethersfield from A and C Residence to Planned Development Elderly Housing between Middletown Avenue and the meadows was denied by the Town



Planning and Zoning Commission. Also denied were a special permit and site plan approval for the 10 1/2-acre parcel.

The action was taken because of "the Commission's concern for the public health, safety and welfare. The Commission viewed the scale and density of the proposed zoning as being incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood, and also viewed it as an intrusion into an area of the flood plain."

If approved, R.O.J. Limited of West Hartford had plans to build a three-story, 84,728-square foot congregate housing complex for the elderly.

The project would have contained 65 condominium units.

Location of the building would have been within 200 feet of the Connecticut River Channel Encroachment Line and would have required the relocation of the 100-year flood line.

The application was strongly opposed by local residents and those concerned with the protection of the flood plain, including the Great Meadows Trust.

Speaking for the Trust, Vice President John Lepper pointed out that of the seven major floods that had occurred since records have been kept, three have been over 30 feet, and the last flood in 1984 was just under 30 feet, the first floor level of the proposed building. He also reminded the Commission that in 1984 all roads in the area were under water and closed to traffic.

Lepper also said, "Even though this applicant proposes only to infringe on a fraction of the flood plain, each developer's fractional piece adds up to a bigger piece and soon a measurable portion of the flood plain is gone."

The Wethersfield Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission also heard this application and denied it, "based upon the belief the proposed activity would create a condition which may adversely affect the health, welfare and safety of the community."

This is the second time R.O.J. Limited has applied for this project and been turned down. They did not exercise their right to appeal.

## STATE BOAT RAMP

The saga of the Department of Environmental Protection boat launch project at the Putnam Bridge in Wethersfield continues.

Earlier this year, the Wethersfield Town Council ~~unanimously voted to oppose~~ the project. The Council is concerned about the potential impact on the meadows and increased traffic on already congested town streets.

In response to inquiry from State Representative Richard Tulisano, Rocky Hill, Emil H. Franzel, Commissioner, Department of Transportation, said the boat launch construction had been removed from the I-91/Rte.3 interchange construction documents and the DEP water resources permit application. Frankel also said, "It has become obvious of late that local support for the DEP boat launch may be lacking."

Although DOT claims to have separated the boat launch from the interchange, their latest construction plans include grading to the bank of the river under the Putnam Bridge. Their expressed reason is the need for fill. DOT estimates they will need more than 300,000 cubic yards of material for the project from various sources.

Wethersfield Town Engineer James E. Sheehy has stated that the potential damage to the 1.5 square miles of farmland south of the Putnam Bridge far exceeds the necessity for balancing the cuts and fills. Whether or not a boat launch is ever built, the excavation of the area under the Putnam Bridge could expose the meadow land to severe erosion by opening a greater waterway than now exists.

Sheehy has also expressed concern about a 1,000-foot length of Great Meadow Road, which is also part of the exit ramp from I-91 north to Wethersfield, being left at elevation 24 feet. At this elevation the road would be under 5 feet of water in a 100-year flood.

In late March several members of the Wethersfield Town Council, Town Manager, Town Engineer, Chairman Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, and Great Meadows Trust Vice President John Lepper met with officials from the DEP Bureau of Water Management Inland Water Resources Division, and a representative from DOT, to discuss the issue of balancing cuts and fills and disruption of the meadows. As of this writing no response has come from either agency.

### PLEASE NOTE

This Newsletter is now printed on recycled paper thanks to Pioneer Lithographers who have found a source of the right color and size.

## THE RIVER VIEW

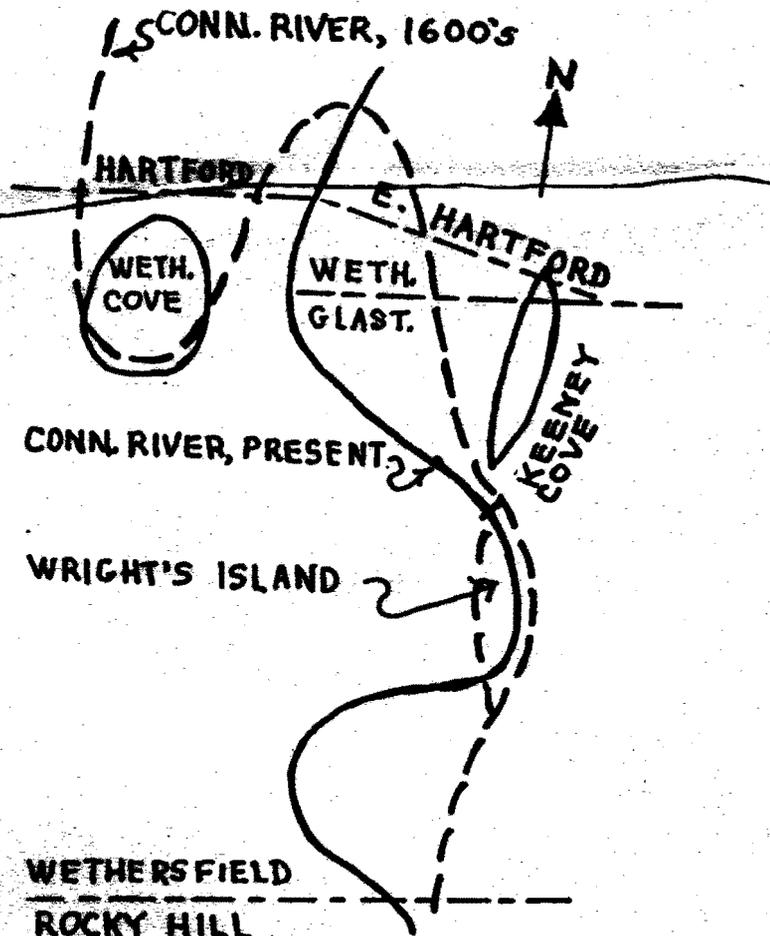
Did you know that the volume of water flowing down the Connecticut River is greater than that of the "mighty" Hudson? When the snow melts and we watch flotsam and jetsam rushing by and see trees bending and being ripped up by blocks of ice we understand the force of the river.

The Great Meadows in Glastonbury, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield allow the flooding waters to spread out in all directions, reducing the strength of the current and adding fertile silt to the farmland.

Sometimes floods carve new channels through the alluvial river-bottom soil, leaving old channels as lake-like bodies of water. That's what happened around 1700 when the river cut across a hook (called by the Indians Hocconum) to form the Wethersfield and Keeney Coves.

An airview of the Hartford South Meadows (now Brainard Field) taken before the dike was built in the 1930's shows the remnants of several river channels left as the river gradually cut its way across the meadows from just east of Wethersfield and Hartford Avenues to its present location. It ran south until a ledge of rock on the north shore of the present Motor Vehicles Department property in Wethersfield deflected it north into Hartford where it again reversed itself to flow south through Keeney Cove into Glastonbury, then it split into two channels to form "Wright's Island". All that now remains of the island is a term applied to the great river bow between the three towns.

Man-made attempts to harness the river are only partially effective, and they are especially vulnerable during flood-times, even high banks



### CONNECTICUT RIVER CHANGES

can erode away. That happened to a street in Wethersfield, Burbank Road, near the present tank farm. A whole row of houses on the river's bank was lost to floods within the last one

#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

This application is for those who wish to join the Great Meadows Conservation Trust and help to keep the flood plain of the Connecticut River as open space for agriculture and natural enjoyment.

#### Membership Chair

Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.  
P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033

Please enroll \_\_\_\_\_

(name, address, telephone no.)

as \_\_\_\_\_ Member(s). Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ annual membership

dues. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Membership categories: Individual Member \$10. Family Member (parents and children under 16) \$15.  
Life Member \$200.

hundred and fifty years.

Rivers in flood attempt to flow in a straight line making any land on the outside of a river bend vulnerable to erosion. When extreme flooding increases the force of the current, such erosion can be catastrophic.

Even today the Connecticut River is a working force, eroding banks on one side, adding soil to the opposite and always seeking the straight way. In the Wethersfield Meadows during flood times, there are signs of a new channel being formed which would cut across the bow of the meander into the ancient river bed, perhaps again forming "Wright's Island".

One thing is certain, the Connecticut River is not static and, as a result, building within its flood plain is hazardous - especially where the current eats away at the shoreline. Farming, recreation and other open space uses are compatible with the meadows, but flood plains belong to the river and man-made structures invite destruction when the Connecticut River is on a rampage.

Eleanor B. Wolf

## PUTNAM PARK DOCK

The latest and, we hope, final word on the Putnam Park Dock proposal has come from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

In late December 1990, Arthur J. Rocque, Jr. Director, Coastal Resources Management Division, DEP wrote to Ocean and Coastal Consultants, Inc., consultants for Putnam Park Associates. Rocque instructed them to respond to

organizations opposing the dock application, and to send him copies of the replies, by January 31, 1991. If replies had not been received by that date, the application would be considered withdrawn.

In his letter, Rocque asked why shops and restaurants for boaters were listed as existing although none could be found when staff visited the site.

No responses were received by the January 31, 1991 deadline and DEP closed the file on the application.

## TRESPASS

Responding to the increasing misuse of four-wheel drive vehicles in the meadows, the Wethersfield Police Department made arrests in three separate incidents over the weekend of April 5-7. Three drivers were charged with third degree criminal trespass and released on promise to appear in court.

The three men, one from Plainville, another from Cromwell, and the third from the University of Hartford were arrested on the complaint of a property owner after their vehicles became mired in his field.

## CREDITS

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



P.O. Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033



