



THE MEADOW VIEW

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

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JUNE 1992

GMCT ANNUAL MEETING MAY 12, 1992

Forty seven people came to the Trust's Annual Meeting on the evening of Tuesday, May 12th. Last year's pot luck dinner preceding the meeting was so popular that we did it again with great success. It was held in the parish house of the First Church of Christ Congregational in Glastonbury. Our famous Great Meadows Punch was served from a bowl wreathed in flowers. Tables were decorated with lovely arrangements of spring blossoms in baskets. A lucky person at each table whose birthday came nearest the date of the meeting got to take the bouquets home.

The treasurer, Ingrid Boelhouwer, reported that the accounts had been audited by a volunteer at the Glastonbury Bank & Trust Co. Copies of the Annual Report were available at the meeting.

Trust President John Lepper gave reports for all committees and summarized the year's work and activities. He thanked the membership for its continued support and invited more member participation. In particular, he asked that anyone who learns of any meadow land available to please let Deborah McIntosh know.

An award of recognition of an outstanding member was given to a surprised and pleased W. Thayer Chase, who was characterized as a **F-R-U-M-P**, Frugal, Responsible, Unpretentious, Modest Person. He was given a framed Duffy Schade photograph of trees reflected in a pond.

Reelected to serve as Directors until the Annual Meeting of 1995 were: Deborah McIntosh, Frank Child and Eleanor Revill.

Following the business portion of the meeting there was an illustrated talk on the COVERTS program by Steven Broderick, Extension Forester with the University of Connecticut. See "Does a Grouse Need a House?" below.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The salient points of President Lepper's report to the Annual Meeting are given below. He included summaries of some of the committee reports.

The Membership Committee chaired by Joan Mihm noted that 84% of the members have already renewed their membership and that we have gained six new members during the year.

The Finance Committee, chaired by Peter Stern, has ably managed our money, investing it in conservative mutual funds with an excellent return. We received a \$25 matching grant from the Times Mirror Corporation.

Land Acquisition Chair Debbie McIntosh has been pursuing land purchases or easements in all three towns but none are complete at this time. Members can be very helpful if they will let us know of any land available in the meadows.

The Land Management Committee chaired by Peter Revill visited 22 of our 31 parcels at least once during the year. Most of the inspections were made over the winter. No major problems were reported. The parcels in Glastonbury and Rocky Hill that we lease to farmers seem to be properly cared for.

Program Co-chairs Jolly Steffens and Betsy Katz have expanded our program activities. In the fall we toured Earle Park in Glastonbury and participated in a lecture/tour of the man made wildlife pond at Holland Brook Nature Center. On March 5, the Trust sponsored a panel discussion on the Greenways program that is taking shape in Connecticut. A walk had been planned for members to explore the Hockanum Meadow this May 17, but was cancelled due to ground conditions. A boat trip on the Lady Fenwick is planned for September 26.

Publicity Chair Duffy Schade has been keeping

Trust activities before the public eye with press notices, her photography and a GMCT display at Glastonbury's Earth Day.

Our new and updated brochure has been printed, the work of Jolly Steffens and her committee, with photographs by Duffy Schade.

This is the fourth year of our involvement in the proposed boat launch ramp at the Putnam Bridge north of our Standish Parcel. President Lepper's report covered most of the developments described elsewhere in this issue under "I-91/Route 3 Interchange", and "Boat Launch Informational Meeting Held by DEP". He noted that in the fall of 1991, with DEP hearings approaching, our attorney, Jim McIntosh, assigned Robert Snook to represent the Trust. Mr. Lepper expressed his appreciation for all the work Atty. Snook and his firm, Day, Berry and Howard, have done for us. As matters now stand, the Town of Wethersfield and the Trust oppose the building of the boat launch at that location, and all await the next moves by DEP.

Last Spring we took a position on sand excavation on the Wethersfield-Rocky Hill line near the river bank. We feared that it might cause erosion problems during floods. However the Wethersfield Inland Wetlands Commission did not see it that way and granted approval. DEP showed no interest at all.

Last summer we became involved in an issue at the Rocky Hill Quarry Park for the creation of which we had made a financial contribution. Claiming he had a right of way through the park to his wife's property, Richard Johnson cut a broad roadway through the park without permission. Its progress was halted by State Archeologist Nick Bellantoni on the grounds that the area is known to contain Native American artifacts. Discussions have taken place between the various parties involved but a solution has yet to be found. A National Historic Landmark, a burying ground for slaves, and a 300-year old white oak have become obstacles to alternative means of access.

We were asked by residents in the Middletown Avenue area of Wethersfield to help oppose a proposal for congregate housing in the flood plain. The action was successful.

We had taken a position in opposition to a floating dock at Putnam Park. The matter died when the applicant failed to answer questions by DEP.

We urged the Wethersfield Police Department to use their Police Explorers in the meadows to curtail vandalism and illegal dumping. So far there has been no action.

Mr. Lepper noted that through our involvement in these various actions we have opened dialogues with other meadows landowners, such as the game clubs. He stressed that as we move into 1992-1993, we are planning a review of the by-laws, and a long range planning study. Mr. Lepper thanked the membership for its support and invited more member participation.

DOES A GROUSE NEED A HOUSE?

Stephen Broderick, Extension Forester to the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, spoke at our annual meeting held on May 12. His discussion of The Coverts Project was called "Does a Grouse Need a House?"

His answer to that question was "No". He explained that though a grouse does not need a house, the species does need areas with low-growth which produce large numbers of insects for feeding, and a good over-story of trees to provide protective covering for the birds. A "covert" is a thicket that provides sheltering cover for wildlife. The Coverts Project is a cooperative effort between the Ruffed Grouse Society and the Cooperative Extension System, designed to reach and teach private woodland owners and land trusts about habitat improvements. The program is concerned with the full spectrum of wildlife.

The Coverts Project established demonstration programs in five forests around the state in 1983. These areas are used as outdoor classrooms during Covert Project annual training seminars and follow-up workshops. Every year thirty woodland owners and/or environmentally concerned individuals are selected to participate with the understanding that they will become Coverts Project Cooperators. As such they will manage the woodlands they own or oversee, and actively reach out to motivate and educate other woodland owners.

As half the total area of the Trust's parcels is wooded, it might be worthwhile investigating if there is anything we could do with our woods to improve their value as wildlife habitats.

OFFICERS ELECTED

The Board of Directors at its meeting May 28 1992 elected the following officers to serve for the year 1992-1993 :

President	John Lepper
Vice President	Peter Revill
Secretary	Eleanor Revill
Treasurer	Ingrid Boelhouwer

NEW ENGLAND WEATHER

Whether the weather be cold, whether
the weather be hot,

Whether the weather be fair, whether the
weather be not,

Whatever the weather, we'll weather the
weather

Whether we like it or not."

Here in New England where warm and cold fronts meet from the south and west, forecasters are plagued with weather's unpredictability. Especially in Connecticut where 'if you don't like it, wait a minute' too frequently catches us in the rain without an umbrella.

Before the days of radio and TV, farmers had to rely on their own observations and judgement of weather signs to know when to plow, when to plant, when to cut hay or when to gather in the crops.

After centuries of dealing with the vagaries of weather, sailors and farmers built up a fund of sayings about changes in the atmosphere which accurately predict our local weather - at least for the short term, oftentimes upstaging the scientifically based forecast.

In the old days when the Connecticut River was busy with ships sailing for the coast and overseas, mariners looked to the sky before starting a voyage.

Red sky at night, sailors' delight

Red sky in the morning, sailors take warning.

Farmers did not cut hay when they heard 'thunder at dawning, sailors take warning', but 'thunder at night, sailors' delight' predicted a good day for farm chores.

'Rain before seven, clear by eleven' worked out more times than not, and we children could go off to school with a minimum of raingear.

With supply stores far away or non-existent, barns were stocked with feed that was expected to last the animals until the next season's crop.

'Half the oats and half the hay,

Half winter's passed away'

was a gauge both on how well the feed was lasting and on how soon Spring might approach when 'April's showers bring May flowers.'

Clouds were studied for fairly accurate longer range predictions. Fair weather clouds, those puffy white masses, beautiful against a deep blue sky, usually gave us several days of clear weather; mackerel clouds (so named because they looked like fish scales) meant rain in two or three days. When dark cumulus clouds with anvil-shaped heads built up in the northwestern sky, farmers hustled to get in the hay, and sailors

furled the sails before the oncoming thunderstorm. Here in Wethersfield rare and very severe thunderstorms build up from the southeast.

When winds blew so that leaves showed their undersides we could predict that the 'wind is blowing up a storm'.

Nor'easters brought three-day storms. In winter when fine-flaked snow started to fall shortly after noontime and the temperature fell into the teens; when the wind howled across the chimney tops and school 'let out' early; a real blizzard was coming making the exciting possibility that school would be closed for several days.

Nowadays even in New England weather forecasts are accurate enough so that most of us prefer to watch TV weather station predictions rather than to study the clouds and weather vanes.

But even weather forecasters might enjoy hedging their bets' with the saying farmers and sailors could always use to cover their mistaken forecasts:

'All signs fall in a dry (or wet) spell.'

Eleanor B. Wolf

GREENWAYS ON THE WAY ?

The program on Greenways, sponsored by the Trust on March 5 at Glastonbury's Naubuc School, attracted members and others interested in the progress being made in Connecticut. Peter Stern, Chairman of the Glastonbury Conservation Commission and a director of the Great Meadows Trust, presided at the discussion which included a state-wide look at the greenway concept and more detailed plans in various parts of Connecticut.

Karl Wagener, Executive Director of the State Council on Environmental Quality, suggested that there could be a bike or walking trail within 15 minutes from one's back door. Wagener called greenways one of the best century-old ideas around, with precedents such as the "emerald park necklace" around Boston designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, and the 2,000-mile Appalachian Trail.

Showing maps of state and local parklands and other types of open space threading through Connecticut, Wagener said that there are already many projects that could be called greenways, but that there was as yet no statewide effort to link them up.

He noted that it would take cooperation among all kinds of agencies, local, state, public and

private and everybody involved in land preservation. The Council, an advisory group, will come up with a report this spring urging greenway links in Connecticut.

Greg Burnham of Hamden described the four-year effort of the Farmington Canal Rails to Trails Association. It is starting in the New Haven area on a greenway that would run to Northampton, Massachusetts, along the 65-mile route of the old canal that was superseded by a railroad. The Association began as a group to block a shopping mall in Hamden and later became interested in the "Rails to Trails" movement. Burnham said he was meeting soon with an East Coast group which has the ambitious goal of creating an interstate greenway through the megalopolis of the northeast coast.

Two greenway enthusiasts described the effort to create a linear park for hiking and boating along the length of the Hockanum River from Vernon through Ellington, Manchester and East Hartford to the Connecticut river. Douglas Smith, Chair of the Manchester section, said efforts in his town to protect the six-mile strip of the river are twenty years old. His group holds monthly public walks and a spring canoe race, as well as meeting with landowners and government officials and working on a future park plan.

Towns along the Hockanum have state grants of over a million dollars for each for their projects. Mary Glenn, Vice-Chair of the Vernon committee, said Vernon has a rare possible combination of an urban greenway through the Victorian mill town of Rockville, spilling out into a marshland that is a natural wildlife sanctuary.

Glenn noted that most of the river parallels Route 83 and offers a remarkable contrast to that commercial strip. Vernon, Manchester and East Hartford are all employing the same planner for their stretches of the river.

The Connecticut River parkway planned over the past decade by Riverfront Recapture was described by Ellen Miller-Wolfe, Executive Director. The vision is to "turn Hartford around" so that it is no longer cut off from its river. Riverfront Recapture has members from 72 towns and \$12.5 million in state bonding, as well as support from corporations. The big advance of the year, said Miller-Wolfe, is the federal agreement to lower I-91 and build a platform over it leading to the river. At the same time, the Founders Bridge will be widened with walking access to the parks on both the Hartford and East Hartford sides. On the west, the group wants a

greenway from Windsor to Wethersfield Cove, and on the east, between the Bulkeley and Charter Oak Bridges.

In the following question and answer discussions the emphasis was on the need for local leadership and inter-town cooperation. Peter Stern, in closing, said he believed the meeting was the first of its kind to showcase greenway efforts in various parts of the state

I-91 - ROUTE 3 INTERCHANGE DEP DECISION

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held a hearing on November 7, 1991 on the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Inland-Wetlands Application involving the cuts and fills required to build the Interchange. As noted in the February 1992 *Meadow View* the project had once included the Putnam Bridge boat launch ramp, but this was separated out to avoid delaying the highway work due to the procedural problems arising with the ramp.

On March 16, 1992, Lewis J. Miller, Hearing Officer, Office of Adjudication, DEP, issued his long awaited decision. Miller recommended that the requested Wetland and Stream Channel Encroachment Line permits be issued to DOT. He also recommended that the bridge maintenance access road required by DOT should be on the north side of the site, and that a dike across the ravine on the south border of the site be built.

The Town of Wethersfield and the Great Meadows Trust had argued for the access road to be south of the bridge because the high ground of Great Meadow Road would remain as some protection against flooding.

The basic requirements of the Stipulation of Fact Agreement between the various parties signed prior to the November hearing were observed, namely cutting the river bank no lower than elevation 16, and building the ravine dike. As a result the Town of Wethersfield's Engineering Department has prepared plans for the dike and forwarded them to DOT which has agreed to build it. The Town is committed to maintain it.

At this time DOT is having its highway consultant incorporate the dike in the construction plans, and DEP will review the design when DOT submits the project plans.

The Trust has strongly supported the concept of the ravine dike, and will work out agreements with state and town covering its property rights as the construction will run into the north end of the Trust's Standish Parcel.

BOAT LAUNCH INFORMATIONAL MEETING HELD BY DEP.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held an informational meeting at the Wethersfield Town Hall March 18 evening to describe and discuss the proposed boat launch ramp at the west end of the Putnam Bridge. Several senior DEP officials explained how the bridge site was selected as mitigation for the loss of a private marina due to the construction of the new Baldwin Bridge at the mouth of the Connecticut River. Apparently several other sites had been studied, but state ownership of the land and the desire to serve more people in the Hartford area led to the selection of the Wethersfield site.

It was emphasized that the original plan for the Department of Transportation (DOT) to construct the ramp in conjunction with the I-91/Rte. 3 interchange was seen as an efficient way to build both projects. DEP appeared to have been taken by surprise by the concern and growing opposition to the boat launch with the result that the projects were separated. DOT presented its highway plans to DEP at the November 7, 1991 hearing in Hartford; the results of which are reported elsewhere in this issue.

While DEP appears enthusiastic about building the boat launch, it admitted that it had not handled the regulatory process properly or sought to obtain public input. Mr. Rocque, Assistant Commissioner of DEP stated that a new assessment would be made of the project and the necessary public hearings held. This process might be completed within the next 18 months.

A lively public discussion followed the presentation. Arguments that the cut for the ramp would provide a channel for flood water to divide the western Wethersfield meadows in two, forming an island, were countered by DEP on the basis of their computerized engineering analysis. There appeared to be little public faith in such technical studies. A boater noted that the location of the ramp near a bend in the river would make launching small boats dangerous. The Mayor of Wethersfield was concerned with the effect of the ramp on traffic, policing, etc. The Chairman of the Connecticut River Assembly submitted a copy of the letter sent to DEP Commissioner Keeney stating that the Assembly had voted against the ramp. The reasons given included pollution from cars and litter, potential erosion and loss of farmland, public safety and aesthetics.

Peter Stern brought attention to Glastonbury's Conservation Commission's concern over

accelerated shoreline erosion due to additional boat wakes, increased conflicts between large, small, fast and slow craft, and noise along the town's waterfront.

Stern thanked the DEP representatives for their clear exposition of the planning and regulatory sequence that lie ahead, asking them to include Glastonbury in their notice list.

At the end of the meeting, DEP assured all that proper procedures would be followed, and even admitted that the coming assessments could result in a modification of the present ramp design, or even the cancelling of the project.

LEPPER URGES OPPOSITION TO BOAT LAUNCH

John Lepper, President of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, recently wrote to Connecticut State Senators DiBella, Matthews and Meotti; and Representatives Gilligan, Tulisano, Bowden and Munns requesting them to take a position opposing the proposed boat launch at the Putnam Bridge in Wethersfield.

In his letter, Lepper expressed the Trust's concerns with locating the facility on the outer bank of a sharp bend in the river. He pointed out that this section of the river bank receives the full force of the river during freshets, a situation that has been aggravated by the construction of the Putnam Bridge and the Route 3 causeway across the Point Meadows in Glastonbury. The letter emphasized that the boat launch could jeopardize an estimated one and a half square miles of meadow land which includes an intensely and profitably farmed area.

"We believe it would be prudent to refrain from any development along the Connecticut River until the Connecticut Rivers Management Program and the Silvio Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge studies have been completed," Lepper concluded.

Representative Bowden of Glastonbury responded stating that he has contacted the Connecticut Department of Transportation requesting drawings and briefing on the issue.

POLICE ACTIVE IN THE MEADOWS

The Wethersfield Police Department's battle with trespassers and vandals in the meadows continues. Recent arrests include a 17-year old Rocky Hill youth, charged in late March with simple trespass after allegedly causing \$300 worth of damage to fields. A similar charge was

filed against another individual on April 4. A few days later at 1.50 A.M. a 17-year old from Southington was charged with criminal trespass in the third degree while running his all-terrain vehicle through the meadows.

In recent years property and crop damage in the meadows has increased. The vigilance of the Wethersfield Police Department in combating this activity is appreciated by the Great Meadows Conservation Trust.

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

CREDITS

Material for this issue has been provided by Mary Goodwin, John Lepper, Eleanor Revill, Edith Schade, Julianne Steffens, Peter Stern and Editor Peter Revill

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P.O. Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033

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