



Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.
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 www.gmct.org



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

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Tim Lewis: President's Report — I am amazed at what we were able to achieve!

I think it's fair to say that this past year has been like no other that we can remember. Despite what we have all experienced during the past 12 months, I am very happy to report that the Great Meadows Conservation Trust has continued to fulfill its mission "to promote, for the benefit of the general public, the preservation of the Great Meadows and environs along the Connecticut River." Looking back, I am amazed at what we were able to achieve.

First, we acquired an additional parcel in the early days of the pandemic shutdown. Since we could not all gather in one office, I met with our attorney, Brian Smith, on April 8, in the middle of what was to be the first of many high wind storms during the year, to sign the documents for the purchase of the Dowd Parcel on Elm Street in Wethersfield. Talking through our masks as strong winds were howling, Brian and I went over the documents in my open garage, on the hood of my car, being careful not to let the wind grab the papers out of our hands! It was, without a doubt, the strangest closing I have ever participated in. Nevertheless, this newly acquired 1.4 acre parcel becomes the 50th parcel for the Great Meadows Conservation Trust to protect and preserve!

Our annual participation with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA) Trails Day weekend had some altered plans. We had hoped to offer a paddle trip from Wethersfield Cove to Rocky Hill Ferry Landing. Due to COVID restrictions, the CFPA was forced to cancel the



Left: Son Ben and Grandson James plant an Elm tree. Right: Granddad Tim with a load of water chestnut from Hale's Creek.

event altogether, and to promote "Every Day is Trails Day in Connecticut!" As you know, several state parks were forced to close because of overcrowding, but many have found our Wood Parcel trails to be very satisfying for getting out into nature. Jim Woodworth and other volunteers work very hard to keep the trails maintained for all to enjoy. As for Trails Day 2021, stay tuned. Spoiler alert, there will not be anything that requires a shuttle.

To add to our network of trails, a group of hardy GMCT volunteers opened and improved a beautiful path on our DiPaola parcel, located on North Meadow Lane in the Rocky Hill meadows. The trail follows along Goff Brook, and also passes through a grove of disease resistant elm trees we planted a few years ago. It was a very nice trail to cross country ski this winter. If you are looking for somewhere new to walk, check it out.

GMCT, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy, planted an additional 20 disease resistant elm trees in October at our Wood Parcel. I am proud to have planted one with my son, Ben, and grandson, James. Other local residents and organizations also participated. The trees have been cataloged (and caged to protect them from hungry deer) and will be monitored for their progress as they grow.

Also regarding the Wood Parcel, we are working with the CT Environmental Review Team to develop a long range plan for our signature parcel. In addition, GMCT has just been awarded a CT Humanities grant to extend the Old Wethersfield Heritage Walk signage to our parcel.

Virtual Annual Meeting Ballot on Page 7! The Nominating Committee has nominated five great new and returning Directors for new 3 year terms on the Board. Please mark your ballots and mail them to the Trust (P.O. Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033). Note: Only "members in good standing" can vote. If you are a Life Member, or you've joined or renewed since last October, you are in good standing. If not, mail your renewal with your marked ballot. *And, by the way, there is a Director vacancy from Glastonbury that can be filled by the Board. Contact President Tim Lewis if you'd like to serve.*



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Hooded mergansers enjoy the late afternoon sun by the bank below the Goodwin Trail in East Hartford.

Every Day is Earth Day—Don't miss the signs of Spring! As Spring unfolds visit the Wood and the DiPaola parcels early and often!

Walk the Goff Brook trail at the DiPaola and the Wood parcel trail along Beaver Brook and keep your eyes open!

The first trout lily, leaves speckled like a trout, have poked up through the brown autumn leaves. Soon the bright yellow flowers will bud and burst open, brightening the forest floor.

And the spice bush buds are swelling, soon those tiny flowers will spread a cloud of yellow through the woods.

Last fall a beaver family and a muskrat family, aquatic rodent species that share the swamp, each built lodges on the Wood parcel.

The muskrat lodge is located in a grove of cattails visible from the bench along the trail. The muskrat at right was swimming at the outflow of the pond. A muskrat may have several litters of young who begin leaving the lodge and swimming at about 30 days. Muskrats are more likely



Trout lily



Spice bush buds



Muskrat in Beaver Brook



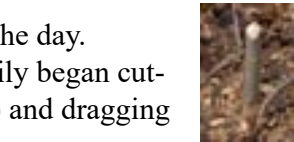
Muskrat lodge nestled among the cattails

to be active at night, or later in the day.

Late in the fall, the beaver family began cutting quaking aspen saplings (rt.) and dragging them upstream to a new lodge near the Maple Street/Rte 3 culvert. As spring approaches, they've begun building dams downstream from the lodge.

Beavers give birth to one litter in April or May. The babies can swim at birth, but won't venture out of the lodge until about 30 days. Beavers are mainly nocturnal, but will occasionally be found swimming during the day. Can you see its little ears?

Will you be the first to spot a baby beaver or a muskrat?



Beaver swimming in Beaver Brook



Beaver lodge in the brook near Rte 3.

Visit the GMCT Earth Day booth

GMCT will be participating at the Earth Day Event on Saturday, April 24 from 10am to 2pm at the Rocky Hill Congregational Church. This outdoor event will include tables and displays and an opportunity for you to learn how organizations work to preserve our environment. Their plans have not been finalized, but may also include a guest speaker. For more information, contact Elaine Sellenberg at RHCC.

Mark your Calendars! CT Trails Day Events: June 5 and 6

Wood Parcel Nature Hike for little kids

Sat., June 5: 10:30 am to 12:00pm. Nature hike for little kids at the Wood Parcel, Over the bridge, through the woods, by the turtle pond, along the field, co-led by Jim Woodworth(860-808-9968).

Wethersfield to Glastonbury Bike Ride

Sun., June 6: 9:00 am to 12:00pm Bike ride, starting at the Wethersfield Cove, around the village, through the meadows, across the Ferry, and back. Co-led by Jim Woodworth and Kevin Sullivan of Bike/Walk Wethersfield.

Wethersfield Cove Paddle

Sunday, June 6, 10:00am - 11:30am. (Novice level) Limit 15 boats. Join GMCT's Paul Woodworth and USCA Certified Canoe Instructor Dan Pelletier, in a paddle around Wethersfield Cove. Explore the north side of the cove and Folly Brook. View bird life and learn about clean water efforts. A limited number of boats are available. For more information and pre-registration (required!) call or email Tim Lewis 860-558-4819, info@gmct.org. Life vests are required. Bring water and sunscreen. Heavy rain or high water cancels.

Connecticut River Paddle

Sunday, June 6, 10:00am - 11:30am (Intermediate Level) Limit 15 boats. Join the Connecticut River Conservancy's Lower River Steward Kelsey Wentling and GMCT's Tim Lewis for a paddle on the CT River. Launch from the Glastonbury Boathouse and explore the meandering CT River, Crow Point Cove and Keeney Cove. Observe bird life and natural and man made changes to the River. For more information and pre-registration (required!) call or email Tim Lewis 860-558-4819, hand2dplow@yahoo.com Life vests are required. Must provide your own boat. Bring water and sunscreen. Heavy rain or high water cancels.

Message from Timothy Lewis, President

While we are all hoping to be able to return to some sort of normalcy, we are not quite there yet. We are happy to hear the Governor's recent announcement that many restrictions regarding social gatherings and restaurant capacities are being lifted. However, we are also aware that there are many who are still waiting for their first or second COVID vaccinations. We want all of you to be safe. Therefore, we are cancelling our Annual Dinner again this year.

In lieu of holding election of Directors at the Annual Dinner, we have included the slate of Directors to be elected on a special ballot below. We have a good line up of candidates! Please use this ballot to cast your vote, and return it in the mail with your membership renewal. Note that only "members in good standing" may vote. If you have already renewed or joined since October 2020, you're in good standing!

We sorely miss our Annual Dinner and the ability to get together with you socially. The Board of GMCT is exploring holding an outdoor picnic this summer, provided the current positive health trend continues. Obviously, no final plans have been made at this time, but we are all hopeful that we will be able to make this a possibility. We will keep you posted! *Thank you for your understanding and your support!*

2021 Nominating Committee Report

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Rick Doran, Diana Evans, Ralph Moyer, Peter Spangenberg, Jim Woodworth

RETIRING DIRECTORS: Diana Evans (Wethersfield), Lilly McKenzie (Rocky Hill), Whit Osgood (Glastonbury).

DIRECTORS CONTINUING TERMS: Tim Lewis (Rocky Hill-2nd-2022) Peter Spangenberg (Wethersfield-2nd-2022) James Zagroba (Rocky Hill-1st-2022) Penny Rusnak (Glastonbury-1st-2022) John Ferguson (Glastonbury-2nd-2023) Linda Nielson (Wethersfield-2nd-2023)

Unexpired Director Term Vacancy - (Glastonbury - 2023) to be filled by the Board of Directors.

OFFICERS*

President - Tim Lewis

(Rocky Hill - 2nd - 2022)

Vice President - Penny Rusnak

(Glastonbury - 1st - 2022)

Secretary - Peter Spangenberg

(Wethersfield - 2nd - 2022)

Treasurer - Richard Doran

***To be elected by Board members.**

Special Annual Meeting Ballot—Please mark your ballot and send to address below— Slate of Five New Directors to be elected by Members in Good Standing

Good standing = Life members and those who joined or renewed their membership since Oct. 2020

Vote to elect these five new directors by marking the boxes next to their names. See Note*

Kathleen Beaty (Rocky Hill - 1st - 2024). Kathy is retired from a career in Direct Marketing, and has become a Master Gardener and as part of her master Naturalist program, with her husband Jeff, has caught, on their trail cameras, beavers and muskrats at the Wood parcel, and deer, coyote and bobcats at the DiPaola parcel.

Gerry Hayes (Wethersfield - 2nd- 2024). Retired from DOT finance, and active at his church, Gerry is beginning his second Board term. He's been active in Trust cleanup, invasive control and planting projects.

Peter Hinman (Wethersfield - 1st - 2024). Pete is semi-retired from a career in property management, owns Forest Products, LLC, and operated Craftsbury Christmas Tree farm in Durham. He and his wife Sara enjoy kayaking, biking, and hiking with son in Higganum and visiting grandchildren in Seattle.

Sneha Jayaraj (Rocky Hill - 1st - 2024). Sneha recently earned a Bachelor's degree in economics and psychology, and a Masters in Public Policy from UConn and is currently a part-time student in law at CUNY. She is currently working for the CT DPH as a COVID-19 Interventionist, Contact Tracer, and Vaccine Coordinator.

Thomas Kehoe (Glastonbury - 1st - 2024), Tom, GMCT president 2012-2016, is rejoining the board. A retired General Counsel for Alstom Power, Tom bikes and skis, and visits his 6 children and many grandchildren. During his tenure as State Rep (2005-2009) from Glastonbury, Tom sponsored the Complete Streets legislation that underlies the ongoing bike and pedestrian improvements today.

*Note: These are non-competitive positions for the five vacancies on the board. You can vote for all five of them.

To Join or renew your membership! Go to www.gmct.org/membership or use this form.

() \$20 - Individual () \$350 - Life Member Name _____

() \$30 - Family () \$550 - Family Life Membership Address _____

Phone : _____ Email Address: _____

Send Check payable to Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. to P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033

ERT slowed by Covid-19 and Winter springing forward

The Environmental Review Team studying the Wood parcel from many perspectives was slowed first by Covid-19 and then the deep freeze and snow. At right, Joe Barsky forestry expert, braved the cold, to record forestry data from locations around the wooded areas. Chris Allen, the wetlands expert also braved the cold to observe the wetland, brook and marshy areas.

Soon, agricultural experts Vivian Felton and Fernando Rincone of NRCS and soils expert Kip Kolacinskis, will meet with farmers Dave and Chris Anderson in the corn field to provide insight into cover crop and erosion issues, and Catherine LaBardia of the State Historic Preservation Office is expected to visit soon, as well.



Honoring Betty Schmitt with a bench with a view in Ferry Park

by Sandi Kelly

Longtime GMCT member Elizabeth “Betty” Schmitt passed away on Oct. 15, 2020. Betty was GMCT’s Land Acquisition Committee chairperson, a past member of the Board of Directors and a lifelong environmentalist. An architect by training, Betty’s sense of order and structure often helped shape decisions made by the Board.

Betty earned her Bachelor of Architecture degree from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) as well as her Bachelor of Fine Arts. She then went on to earn her Master of Education degree from Harvard, 1974. She worked for the State of Connecticut Department of Education, as a Bureau Chief and Special Assistant to the Commissioner. In later years as Project Coordinator and State Improvement Grant Division of Educational Programs. Betty was a great supporter and advocate of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, The Friends of Nayaug, and The Glastonbury



Tree framed view of the historic Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry from the bench to be installed in memory of Betty Schmitt in Ferry Park this Spring, funded by contributions in Betty Schmitt’s memory.

Historical Society. She was awarded multiple honors relating to her staunch advocacy of public education.

Betty had requested memorial donations be made to the GMCT. The Trust received a generous number of contributions and has decided on several ways to honor Betty’s memory.

This spring a bench will be installed at the South Glastonbury ferry landing, in a quiet corner at the bend of the ferry park trail.

The bench will face up river, with

a view of the historic Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry as it makes its crossings. An engraved plaque on the bench will thank Betty for her tireless support of the Great Meadows and for being a strong steward of the environment.

The balance of the contributions will be used for three equal scholarships: one to a high school student in each of our three member towns, who is focused on environmental studies.

2020 Treasurer’s Annual Report

Rick Doran, Treasurer

Our budgeted operations closed the year 2020 above break even, with \$14,225 of income and \$13,440 of expense. The budget for 2021, as developed by the Finance & Development Committee, was presented to the Board at its February meeting. The budget for 2021 was proposed at a balanced position of \$17,000 of income and expense for the calendar year. Thank you to the Finance Committee members Ralph Moyer and Jim Zagroba for their counsel and advice.

Our investment account with Vanguard increased by 4.4% in calendar year 2020 compared with the year end asset value on December 31, 2019. But once the assets are adjusted for a withdrawal made to acquire a parcel in

Wethersfield, the assets gained 9.1% over 2019.

An audit of the Treasurer’s log books and registers will be performed to review all transactions, debits, credits, in the checking account and the Vanguard account. Written evidence will be found to explain and justify all of the fiscal and investment activity during calendar year 2020. Auditors John Ferguson and Gerry Hayes will conduct the annual audit by the end of April.

The operations account remains in a positive position secured in our checking account at TD Bank. The balance in the checking account can cover our expected expenses in the first half of 2021.

Land Management Report 2020

by Larry Lunden, Land Management Chair

This year Sandi Kelly has graciously taken on the task of coordinating the parcel inspections. She has organized the inspectors to keep our inspections up to date. I extend my appreciation to her.

We acquired a new parcel this year. The Dowd parcel is about 1.4 acres adjacent to the Frechette Field parcel on Elm St. This is a divided parcel, where the residence was split off and the rear area was sold to the trust. It is covered with shrubs and brush. We held an informal Land Management walk to introduce the parcel. We now have 190 acres under ownership or easement, in 50 parcels.

I am training several of our inspectors on the use of a GPS receiver to find our parcels. Being out in the meadows, there are few reference points to help us locate the parcels. Using satellite signals, the receivers can locate our position to within 10 feet.

Report on Leases – 2020

by Deb Creeden and Rick Doran

In the past, the GMCT leases had been a fairly straightforward process: each lease includes a cover letter, leasing terms, plus a lease description (Schedule A), which need to be printed and either mailed or hand delivered to each farmer. The Trust will normally print them at our local library, but with so many local services and businesses closed due to the pandemic along with the still-unfolding CDC guidelines regarding social distancing, the lease process was switched over to email for three of our four active farmers (Botticello Farms, Fair Weather Growers, Winding Brook Turf Farm). The Trust hand delivered the printed lease documents to David Anderson of Anderson Farms, who doesn’t have email.

Our other farmer, Rick Botticello of Overbrook Farm, is also receiving his lease agreement in the printed form

via USPS. Due to flooding and high water throughout the growing season, Overbrook Farm was again unable to cultivate our ten acres of land at Point Meadows in Glastonbury. The Land Management Committee again agreed to waive the rental fee in 2020. Rick Botticello has again expressed interest in farming our acreage in 2021, provided he can plow the fields and plant his corn crop. GMCT intends to give him the opportunity to cultivate the land in 2021.

Our farm leases generate about \$4,100 of income for Stewardship and Land Management when all of our 55 leased acres are put into farming use. In 2020, we collected \$3,440 land rental fees. This was a collaborative effort, between the Trust and our farmers, to manage our farm leases during a most unusual time. But, for our farmers it was still business as usual to keep their farms running.

As opposed to the webpage which takes web design knowledge to update, the Google Drive is easy for anyone with the login information to access and post inspection reports. At this stage there are a number of maps, inspections and other documents posted and we’re working to get all inspectors comfortable and utilizing it.

We have a good baseline for moving forward with inspections on a regular schedule. This is critical to our status as an accredited land trust.

Parcel Inspection Report 2020

By Sandi Kelly

On behalf of the Land Management Committee I’m happy to report that all of our parcels have been inspected, including the hard to access Woodhouse and Bacon parcels deep in marsh in Wethersfield. Many thanks to our inspectors who have been dedicated in following the inspection schedule.

Ed Chiucarello of the Rocky Hill Walk Bike group and the Rocky Hill Historical Society designed a Google Drive location for LMC documents to be posted.

Winter Walks 2021—Pre-registered, masked, socially distanced and nature nurtured

Following CDC guidelines and C.F.& P. protocol: pre-registration via Eventbrite, one leader per 10 in a group, 8 walks, 226 walkers

A New Years Day tradition—42 walkers at the Wood parcel and along the fields

At right, walk leader Ed Chiucarello captured masked walkers in a selfie, with spinach row perspective. Far right, walkers, spinach rows, puffy white clouds and blue sky. Lynn Ofori, Linda Nielson and Jim Woodworth also lead groups in staggered departure times.



Newly cleared and marked Goff Brook Trail hosted 21 walkers

Gathering at Goff Brook Lane, guided by Ed Chiucarello and Jim Woodworth, groups walked past the gate, down



Meadow Road, out across the Goff Brook culvert, where the sign and map drew them into the DiPaola parcel, around the Goff Brook trail, to the elm tree planting, far right, where Kathy Beaty had set up the trail cam capturing deer, bobcat, coyote, and walkers, too. From there, the groups headed out North Meadow Road (above left) with expansive views of the fertile Rocky Hill meadows and views toward the trees along the river where the eagles were busy building a new nest to replace the 7 year old nest blown down by Hurricane Isaias. At right, a late March view of the new nest with just the round top of a white head and the yellow bill showing over the sticks.



Wethersfield Game Club's Wood duck program services over 180 boxes

The WGC, founded in 1933, was organized by hunters who loved the meadows with its rich marsh waters that attracted water fowl by the flock. Club members built blinds in the marsh to enable hunting during the fall season.



At right, Scott Lynn stands in the duck blind he inherited from his dad. Over the years to support the beautiful, but declining, wood duck species, that nest in cavities in trees, club members began putting up nesting boxes throughout the meadows. Above in the clearing in front of Lynn's blind, in a grove of button bush, club members Vinnie, Scott and Jeff open a duck box, clean out the egg shells, and fill it with clean wood shavings. Above far right, DEEP reports that mallard ducks that build vulnerable nests on the ground are declining, so Club members installed several mallard "hen houses" this year: wire lined with straw elevated above predators. Lower right, GMCT's duck box near the Wood parcel pond is refilled with fresh shavings by Sam Woodworth with help from his dad, Paul.



Winter Walk and spring paddle in the Wolf Parcel and the Folly Brook Natural Area

The walk on a blustery winters day in the Wolf parcel and then out along the dike past the eagles nest and down into the FBNA revealed glimpses of great blue heron nests high in the trees. At right, we lined up for a photo in front of a river bank beaver lodge. On a spring warm day, a paddle in the spring freshet by Jim Woodworth and Tim Lewis revealed a glimpse of an eagle sitting on eggs in the nest, and a growing heron rookery bustling with nest building activity. Far right, count the heron nests!



A brilliant late January Wolf Moon rose and glistened on the River

As the sun was setting in the west a good sized group parked at the Keeney Center and strolled down Main Street to the Cove and out along Folly Brook to the river bank, clad in a clean blanket of snow. The open space near the channel marker, tilted askew a few winters ago by thick blocks of ice, provided social distance space for the group to view the majestic moon rise and send out its reflection.



The Goodwin Trail: awesome views of the River from the East

On the East Hartford side of the River, Bruce Morton led walkers along the paved and plowed handicapped accessible portion of the Goodwin College trail and a hardy group continued on the unplowed, unpaved part of the trail to the Putnam Bridge. The informational sign in the photo at right, matches the sign at the north end, and will greet walkers and bikers who have crossed the Putnam Bridge on the "pedestrian path" once the DOT has completed the approaches from Wethersfield and Glastonbury: summer 2022? Both sides of the river will be connected and close the loop through the meadows, across the ferry, and along the soon to be completed sidewalk on Main Street/Route 17, South Glastonbury and back up to Naubuc Avenue.



Crow Point and Glastonbury Boat Launch walks showcased both sides of the River

The walk to Crow Point found less litter than usual and filling a few bags of trash left a satisfyingly clean shore where trash that flows over the bank into the Cove in high water is caught and left behind by the receding floods. Directly across the River, the Glastonbury Boat launch was a starting point for another walk with eagle sightings and even a glimpse of a wily coyote crossing the river on an ice bridge. When we reached the Glastonbury meadows, the eagle that had moved down stream from Crow Point, took off from its perch on a snag. The coyote was spotted heading out across the stubble of the harvested corn field.

