

President's Report: "Planting" For The Future

By Tim Lewis, President

Winter is not spent idly by for farmers and gardeners. This is the perfect time to pour over seed and plant catalogs in preparation for spring planting time. Likewise, GMCT is already actively involved in planning for the coming spring, summer and beyond.

Plans are underway for the next phase of planting at the Wood Parcel as we move into Year Two of our Climate Smart Land Stewardship Project. The plant catalogs are arriving in GMCT's mailbox from the Connecticut Conservation Districts that offer us discounted prices for native plants. Rocky Hill is in the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District, while Wethersfield and Glastonbury are in the North Central District, so we have two catalogs to choose from, each offering a slight variation of choices. Lucky us! We will not be able to take delivery prior to Earth Day, but be sure to check our website and Facebook page for volunteer opportunities up to and including planting days.

Some GMCT members are taking an active part in the development of Rocky Hill's Community Farm on the site of the former Straska Farm. While not an official GMCT function, these members will take part in a citizen committee that is in the process of being formed similar to the "Friends of Kycia Farm, Inc." non-profit group. They hope to aid the town of Rocky Hill as it acts on recommendations from a UCONN Task Force. Plans include using the newly constructed barn for community educational events related to gardening. GMCT is happy to see this 80+ acre farm preserved as open space and kept in agriculture. Three farmers in Rocky Hill are currently leasing farm fields there, keeping them in production.

Applications have already been submitted at the high schools in Rocky Hill, Wethersfield and Glastonbury for our fifth Betty Schmitt Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship program was instituted by a generous donation from the Schmitt family, and it continues to be supported with memorial donations to GMCT by families of former GMCT members and directors who

have passed on in recent years. Donations may be made <https://gmct.org/donations/> and selecting "Betty Schmitt Memorial Scholarship Fund."

GMCT was invited to participate in the Wethersfield School Superintendent Search Community Partner Focus Group in January. GMCT Director Kathy Beaty sat down with parents and other community representatives to offer feedback on the needs and challenges facing the new Superintendent.

The invitation came from Kim Bobin, Wethersfield's Family and Early Childhood Coordinator. Kim also focuses on School Family Community Partnerships. We met Kim on one of our Brisk Winter Walks two years ago, and have kept in contact with her since. She has introduced GMCT to Wethersfield High School staff. This opportunity opened doors for GMCT to reconnect with the Environmental Club and meet students, resulting in student volunteers aiding GMCT.

This spring, Kim also connected the GMCT with Troop 85 and we have recruited Eagle Scout Reid Welch to lead a Poetry in the Park accessible picnic table project. (see story page 6)

We are coming off of another very successful Brisk Winter Walk season. All of our events were very well attended with an average of 27 eager participants. This does not include the two gentlemen who showed up for the Wolf Parcel and DeMille Easement Walk we canceled on account of a winter storm forecast. We were not sure everyone would get the memo, so Jim Woodworth volunteered to "stand guard" for this one just in case. The storm held off and our two walkers filled two bags of trash along Folly Brook. We don't want to leave anyone out in the cold!

This walk includes a venture out onto the Hartford Dike that is south of MDC and north of the Folly Brook Nature Area. This is where we normally point to empty nests in the Great Blue Heron Rookery that is located in the Nature Area. We have plans for a follow-up walk in late March. This should afford walkers the opportunity to see the Great Blue Herons on their nests while the trees are still bare. This plan may be the start of a new tradition! Look for our announcement and be sure to bring your binoculars!



New Rocky Hill Community Farm barn at the former Straska Farm

2025 Annual Meeting Agenda

1. Minutes of Annual Meeting March 26, 2024.
2. Treasurer's report for fiscal year 2024 (see p. 3)
3. President's 2024 Annual Report (see p. 1)
4. Report of the Nominating Committee (see below)
5. Election of Directors to serve through 2027.
Motion: That Diana Evans, Brenda Sullivan, and Derek .

Caelin be elected to serve as Directors for their respective terms
6. Election of Officers by the Directors to serve until the next annual meeting. Motion: That Tim Lewis, Diana Evans, Pete Hinman and Richard Doran be elected to serve as President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, respectively of the GMCT for the 2025 – 2026 term.

Nominating Committee Report

Retiring Directors:

Paula Tamburro (Glastonbury)
Jim Zagroba (Rocky Hill)

New Directors"

(Town - Term of Office – Term Expiration)
Diana Evans (Wethersfield – 2nd – 2028)
Brenda Sullivan (Glastonbury – 1st – 2028)
Derek Caelin (Rocky Hill – 1st – 2028)

New Directors (to be appointed by Board)

TBA (Glastonbury – 1st – 2026)

Directors Continuing Terms:

Alan Baglia (Rocky Hill – 1st – 2027)
Kathy Beaty (Rocky Hill – 2nd – 2027)
Paul Bourdon (Wethersfield – 1st – 2027)
Pete Hinman (Wethersfield – 2nd – 2027)
Tim Lewis (Rocky Hill – 2nd – 2026)
Tom Pilch (Glastonbury – 1st – 2026)

Officers:

President – Tim Lewis
Vice President – Diana Evans
Secretary – Pete Hinman
Treasurer - Richard Doran

Meet the New Board Members

Derek Caelin (Rocky Hill) is an environmental organizer and a technologist. Professionally, Derek works for a nonprofit technology company, and has built tools for environmental storytellers and soil scientists. Prior to moving to Rocky Hill, he spent a decade in Washington D.C. working in international development and training nonprofits on free and open source tools for organization. In his personal life, Derek participates in various civic organizations geared toward sustainability, including Rocky Hill's Sustainability Task Force, the town's Open Space and Conservation Commission, and the "Friends of the Rocky Hill Community Farm" group. In his free time, Derek is writing a book on modern environmental themes in "The Lord of the Rings." Derek participated in GMCT's website "reboot," helping the team transition to a WordPress website and update its donation form.

Diana Evans (Wethersfield): I've been a member of GMCT since I moved to Wethersfield in 2014 and served three terms on the GMCT board; I've also served as Vice President. I am deeply committed to GMCT's mission of preserving the Meadows, as open land disappears across our state. I've participated in many of GMCT's activities, from brisk winter walks to events and volunteer work at the Wood

Parcel to GMCT picnics. I am recently retired from 40-plus years of teaching Political Science at Trinity College and serve on the boards of several organizations, including Common Cause in Connecticut

Brenda J. Sullivan (Glastonbury) is a seasoned herbalist and market gardener based in South Glastonbury, Connecticut. As the founder of Thompson Street Farm LLC, Brenda has transformed her property into an enchanting micro-farm that is a testament to her dedication to sustainable agriculture and her love for the natural world.

With a particular affinity for lavender, medicinal herbs, and vibrant flowers, Brenda has honed her craft in growing various plants. Her expertise extends to creating handcrafted goat's milk herbal soaps and bath products sold under the name Farm to Bath. Her bath and body products are a labor of love and reflect her commitment to using locally grown, natural ingredients.

As an author, Brenda has channeled her extensive knowledge of and passion for nature into creating nature-themed children's books. Her works are designed to inspire young readers to explore and appreciate the environment around them, fostering a sense of wonder and stewardship for the earth.

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: _____ Pay via [PayPal](#) or
Send Check payable to Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc. to P.O.Box 171, Glastonbury, CT 06033

Membership Committee Annual Report, 2024

By Pete Spangenberg, Membership Chair.

The GMCT has grown its membership over the years and I'm pleased to report that we currently have a roster as follows: After receiving a generous donation in January from long time individual life member Richard Booth, we have upgraded Richard and Barbara Booth to Lifetime Family Membership status, bringing the count up to 10 family life members. We added Cynthia Greenblatt and Whit Osgood in 2024 and State Representative Kerry Wood in 2025 to the roster of lifetime Individual members bringing us to 53. Thank you to all our life members. We added 6 new family memberships in 2024 and now have 50 Family Annual memberships current on dues. We added 17 new Individual Members and currently have 52 Individual Annual Members current on dues. Welcome to those new members and thank you to all who have renewed and donated. There are approximately 70 individual or family annual members who we hope will continue their memberships and renew soon. In addition, GMCT provides an additional 55 no-fee annual memberships to governmental officials, farmers and the game clubs in the meadows, and certain individuals honored by their contributions to the Trust.

Land Management Committee Annual Report, 2024

By Larry Lunden, Land Management Chair

This year we have not acquired any new parcels. This keeps our total at 197 acres.

Linda Nielson passed the torch managing our parcel inspections. I thank her for her efforts as she pursues other projects. Pete Spangenberg has taken over the leadership of the inspectors. I thank him for keeping our inspections up to date. The regular reports are a requirement of the Land Trust Alliance best practices standard.

Gerry Hayes is continuing to run our leasing program. I thank him for continuing this major project that carries out one of the main goals of the trust.

Parcel Inspection Annual Report, 2024

By Peter Spangenberg, Inspections Manager.

On behalf of the Land Management Committee, I'm pleased to report that 53 of the 54 GMCT Parcels requiring inspections were inspected between November 2024 and February 2025 with reports submitted. Despite a significant effort by Rick Doran and myself, the Bacon parcel W-06 in Wethersfield could not be accessed directly due to overgrowth of vegetation and uneven terrain, thus our viewing from about 300 feet distant will have to suffice. I would like to thank all those who undertook inspections including seasoned veterans and new inspectors willing to assume the duty going forward. GMCT inspectors included: Alan Baglia, Kathy and Jeff Beaty, Paul Bourdon, Rick Doran, Ken Etheridge, Sandi Kelly, Whit Osgood, and Paula Tamburro. New inspectors are always welcomed. An expansion of the Microsoft Database for tracking inspections allows a running record of every inspection for every parcel and other useful functions such as generating fill in the blanks report templates for any parcel. The Google Maps layer showing the locations of all GMCT parcels proved useful in determining parcel boundaries.

GMCT Farmland Lease Program Annual Report, 2024

By Jim Woodworth, Stewardship Chair

The GMCT farmland lease program, managed by Gerry Hayes and Rick Doran, involves five farm operations spread over each of our three towns, 26 of our small parcels, totaling nearly 62 acres of prime farmland. The lease income funds our stewardship program.

The most valuable land in the Elm Street "Great Plain" area are the 8 acres leased to Anderson Farms growing sweet corn on our Wood and Frechette parcels. This area, at a higher elevation, floods only during major floods that have generally occurred every 30 years or so—the so called "100 year" floods of 1927, '54, '84, and the "500 year" floods in 1936 and '38. In this era of climate change...we're overdue for a major flood!

The balance of the GMCT parcels east of I91 in Wethersfield and Rocky Hill and in the Glastonbury meadows is at a lower elevation that floods annually during the spring freshet, but occasionally during the growing season, resulting in major crop losses. Fair Weather Growers leases 23.5 acres in Rocky Hill and Wethersfield, primarily for green beans and sweet corn for their farm stand and CSA program. FWG moved most of their vegetable crops out of the meadows after the catastrophic flood of July 2022. Winding Brook Turf farm leases 8 acres to grow turf in both towns, as well. Overbrook Farms of Manchester leases 17 acres in Point Meadow, growing "pig corn" to feed their pigs. And Botticello Farms leases 5.2 acres in the Glastonbury meadows area, growing sweet corn for their farm stand.

GMCT Treasurer's Annual Report, 2024

By Rick Doran, Treasurer—The Operations account closed calendar year 2024 with \$42,533 of income and \$25,169 of expenses. The annual budget for 2025, as developed by the Finance and Development committee was presented to the Board at its February meeting. The budget was proposed in a balanced position with \$29,470 of income and expenses. The investment account with Vanguard increased 9.3% in 2024 even after transferring \$9000 to TD Bank to pay for expenses for Land Stewardship and Scholarship Awards

Brisk Winter Walks – 2025!

The New Year! Wood Parcel—Brisk Winter Walks 2025 stepped off on a mild, but muddy late Indian summer day, along the Wood parcel trail, and out across the corn, spinach, strawberry, beet, and turf fields, and along the marsh, to the former Comstock, Ferre field where Beaver Brook flows under I91.



DiPaola Parcel—Walking in from Goff Road, the Brisk Walkers took a turn around the “Goff Brook trail” along the Brook, observing the tagged trees of the Nature Conservancy Flood Plain forest study transect and the planting of disease resistant Elm trees in the DiPaola parcel, then headed out into the windswept reach of the Rocky Hill meadows to the “T” with the view of the Kestrel boxes, turf, corn and bean fields, and the trees lining the bank of the River.



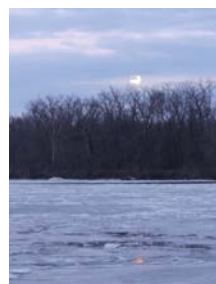
Elm Street—Through the gate under I91, walkers headed out Elm Street and then south along the River on Elm Street Extension between turf fields and ice flows in the River to Meadow Road with a view across the Rocky Hill meadows. Out on the River a small flock of common mergansers were floating in the open water, while a lone loon dived and resurfaced in the frigid water.



Glastonbury Ferry Landing—Gathering at Ferry Park, walkers took a turn around the trail past the Betty Schmitt bench with a view across the River and then headed up stream across the Horton and Packard Farms to the Coal Wharf, protected from development by the GMCT Walker easement. The huge sandstone blocks have protected the Wharf from over a century of ice flows. Fragments of coal are still found in the soil from the coal deliveries carted by farmers up to the factories. Archaeological digs reveal the earliest settlement east of the River when Wethersfield settlers first arrived.



The Wolf Moon Rise—Gathering at the Keeney Center and strolling down Main Street as the sunset faded in the West, walkers were rewarded as the full Wolf Moon peeked over the trees and out between the gray mid-winter clouds to glimmer in the openings in the ice flowing down the River and stacking up on the beach..



Wolf Parcel, Folly Brook Nature Area—While the weather gods were kind to the Winter Walkers, a storm threatened on the day of the Wolf parcel walk and the cancel message went out via Facebook. Two walkers missed the message, and walked into the Wolf parcel along Folly Brook. In a short time, they had filled two re-purposed grain bags with trash. On the extended drive behind the dike, under Rte 15 and I91 and the walk up and over the dike down into the Folly Brook Nature Area, they observed the cluster of heron nests in the rockery and the eagles nest. The rain held off! Join us in March for a view of the rookery alive with nesting herons!



The Putnam Bridge Trail and Point Meadow—With the broad ice covered River spread out below and the highway wooshing by behind the high Jersey barrier, walkers crossed the River and descended the ramp down into Hockanum meadow where fields of pig corn stubble, farmed by Overbrook Farms in Manchester, spread out to the treeline. A highlight was a visit to the former National Champion green ash tree (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*). The former pasture tree shaded grazing livestock on hot summer days. As flood plain forest succeeded pasture, the noble tree was surrounded by a circle of daughter ash trees. Now all vanquished by the rapacious emerald ash borer, the thick trunk and branches yet thrust skyward.



Hockanum Meadow—Winding up Winter Walks 2025, Bruce Morton hosted the walk on the Goodwin University Trail, partially paved and accessible down to the Wethersfield Town line and hoping to be paved to connect with the Putnam Bridge next summer. The walkers posed in front of the kiosk boasting a Phil Lohman historic map before heading down along the River. With side loop to Keeney Cove, the trail passes over the “Wethersfield triangle” to the Putnam Bridge



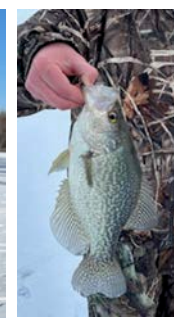
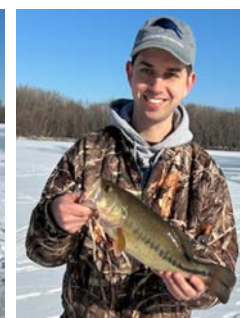
Crow Point — Pasture to Mine to Nature Preserve in 75 years

The area of the Wethersfield meadows known as CrowPoint was mined by White Oaks Construction for the soil to elevate I91 and the Route 3 Putnam Bridge approach in the early 1960's. A farming and recreational area was transformed into a man made Cove of the CT River. Over the course of 65 years, nature has transformed the mine into a rich fish and wildlife area. Herons, osprey and eagles fish the cove to feed their young in the summer. In the winter, however, the osprey migrate to the Amazon, the heron, except for a few stragglers, head south, and when the Cove ices over, even the eagles head down river looking for open water.

Under the ice, however, wintering fish seek shelter in the coves from the elements. When the ice is thick on Wethersfield Cove, ice fishermen from miles around converge around their fishing holes. Crow Point Cove is surrounded by private property, purchased a few years ago by Goodwin University. and will be the site of a flood plain forest restoration project with the Nature Conservancy and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (see sign at left).

The GMCT Brisk Winter Walk out to Crow Point co-hosted by Bruce Morton of Goodwin University gave walkers a perspective of Crow Point. Photo at right shows the walkers gathering at the inlet from the River. The photo on the left, however, shows the view of ice fishermen on the Cove. Tom Hock and his sons, Justin and Nathan, Wethersfield Game Club members, were enjoying the brilliant winter sunshine on the Crow Point Cove ice, tending their fishing lines.

Below, from left to right, is a remarkable display of the Connecticut River fishery in the arms of Justin, left, and Nathan, right, holding an armload of channel catfish. Check out the whisker! Next, is Justin holding a northern pike...note the long snout! The long menacing jaw is full of inward tilted needle sharp teeth. Mind your fingers, Justin! Nathan is holding a bowfin, a largemouth bass and dangling a calico bass to complete the fish identification lineup for those of us who are birders, not fishermen! Catch, photo, and release!



Eagle Scout project— A Poem on a Picnic table coming to the Wood parcel

Eagle Scout candidate Reid Welch has accepted the challenge of leading the Scouts of Troop 85 to “engineer” the base and to assemble and install an accessible picnic table at the Wood parcel. The table will be topped with the poem, written by Margaret Gibson several years ago as part of the Writing the Land program, capturing the natural scene at the Wood parcel. The poem will be printed on an aluminum “wayside” sign that will be bolted on the top of the table. The table site is at the end of the existing accessible trail over the bridge, along the marsh and pond leading to the corn field.

Reid is pictured at right with Stewardship Chair Jim Woodworth at the site of the picnic table, showing the view of the Beaver Brook marsh in the background.

Reid has been researching picnic tables and stone needed for the site. This is in preparation for an application by the GMCT for an AARP Community Challenge Grant to fund the installation of the public art, benefiting Senior Citizens in many ways.

The grant application deadline is March 5; awards are in June. The site preparation, purchase and installation of the table, and poem sign installation is planned to be accomplished over the summer, followed by a dedication poetry reading by Margaret Gibson, who will also lead a poetry writing workshop.



Climate Smart Stewardship continues in 2025

Plans are under way to continue our projects to remove invasive species, by cutting, mowing and herbicide treatments this Spring and summer. Follow up foliar herbicide treatments for invasive bush honey suckle, multiflora rose and Japanese knotweed are scheduled for August.

Following our planting of 30 native shrubs last fall, we'll be planning a spring planting spree focusing on planting evergreens along the edge of the Route 3 highway, and continuing pollinator shrub planting along the corn field.

Stay tuned for volunteer opportunities to join us in preparing and planting in April around Earth Day and continuing into May. Of course, newly planted shrubs and trees will need regular watering through summer and fall.

Graver Tree Service work removed invasive trees, created wood chip piles and woodpecker habitat.

Early in the New Year after the ground was at least partially frozen, Bruce and Alex Graver and their crew and equipment altered the landscape at the Wood parcel.

In addition to the invasive shrubs removed in 2024, the arum cork tree, imported from Asia, dominated an area of the Wood parcel forest. Fortunately, only one small female cork tree had existed, but numerous large mature male cork trees dominated a part of the forest on the south side of the Wood parcel. Cork trees, like other invasive species can out-compete and crowd out native trees and shrub species. Native trees and shrubs will be introduced into this area over time.

Graver's crew topped several of the trees (right) leaving 20 foot snags. The snags will be girdled and killed with herbicide in the fall, as the tree prepares for winter by drawing nutrients down into the roots. Over time the snags...like so many dead ash, cherry and elm trees in the Wood parcel forest, will host various insects, prized by woodpeckers for food, as well as hosting nesting holes, often inhabited by other birds after the wood peckers are done. In photo at right, a Graver worker perched in the



cherry picker drops another section of an arum cork tree. At left the hungry chipper draws in whole logs and spews out chips at an amazing rate. At right an incredibly deft grapppler grabs whole logs and feeds them into the chipper. At the bottom right, several mulberry trees along the corn field with plumes of vines growing over them, were cut and

chipped by Graver's crew. The planting of shrubs between the cornfield and the forest around the pond will continue last fall's planting with more sunlight available after the removal of the trees. While mulberries are not native, they are prized by birds for their fruit. One of the 4 or 5 mulberry trees was left for the birds.





Save the Dates!

The State of the Birds!
**The Importance of Landscape Scale
 Habitat Conservation
 And Protecting Birds from Pesticides**

7:00 pm Thursday March 27

Keeney Memorial Cultural Center

200 Main Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109

**Learn about the Great Meadows
 Important Bird Area designation
 and the threat to birds posed by
 Neonicotinoid pesticides**

Presenters —



Joyce Leiz
Executive Director
The Connecticut
Audubon Society

Joyce became executive director in 2024, after a 30 year career in non-profit development.



Milan Bull
**Senior Director of Science &
 Conservation**

Miley oversees all of the organization's conservation work, including their public advocacy program in Hartford. He is a long-time expedition leader for Connecticut Audubon Society's EcoTravel program,

and has led trips throughout the Americas, Australia, Antarctica, and Africa.

Companion Bird Walk!

Saturday, March 29 10:00 am
Meet at the GMCT Wolf parcel -
410 Hartford Avenue

We'll carpool out behind the Hartford dike that divides the Folly Brook Nature area from the South Meadows Industrial Park to view the Heron Rookery as the heron begin nesting and before the trees leaf out.

Free to all with the support of
The Friends of the Kycia Farm, Inc.
The Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.

Annual Dinner Meeting
Tuesday, March 25, 2025

5:30 PM

Special guest speaker
Peter Picone, Wildlife Biologist
CT DEEP Wildlife Division

Wildlife Conservation and Improving Habitat

The **"You Can Do It"** Approach



By: Peter Picone, DEEP Wildlife Biologist.

Please join the GMCT members and friends
at our Annual Dinner Meeting on
Tuesday, March 25th
Casa Mia on the Green,
600 Cold Spring Road, Rocky Hill.

The cost of the dinner — \$40 per person
for members or guests.

Social hour from 5:30 to 6:30 with cash bar and dinner beginning at 6:30. A short annual business meeting will follow dinner, with reports from the president and committees, election of directors by the membership, and election of officers by the new Board of Directors.

Following the business meeting is our special guest speaker, Peter Picone, Wildlife Biologist from CT DEEP Wildlife Division. Peter will be sharing his vast experience and insights on Wildlife Conservation and Habitat Management

To Register and pay online:
Go to www.gmct.org/event-registration.

By USPS!

Please enclose a check payable to "GMCT" and mail to: GMCT Annual Meeting
 c/o Rick Doran, 223 Main Street,
 Wethersfield, CT 06109



Great Meadows Conservation Trust, Inc.

P. O. Box 171

Glastonbury, CT 06033

www.gmct.org

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— Graver's Tree Service work

Page 7 — 2025 Annual Dinner, Audubon Society Presentation

Critter cam view of the Wood parcel marsh just below the culvert outflow