



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

I became president of the WLCT just last fall, and then unfortunately I found I needed to step back from that role for a short time. I put Rock Singewald, as vice president, in the impossible position of having to step up quickly. The Board also eased the burden to keep things moving. They have all been tremendous and I am grateful for all of the Board's and volunteers' amazing help and support.

Since I started as president, we have been working to establish a new administrative model for the Land Trust. We are using the services of Jan Reitsma as a part-time Executive Director. And we have established some new committees and working groups. This has allowed us to take on the wide range of activities you will find described in this newsletter.

This has opened up new ways to help out. We are looking for volunteers for one-time efforts, such as working on trails or assisting with events. We also are looking for folks who may be interested in focused yet longer-term activities, such as monitoring one of our preserves or adopting a trail (Stewardship), helping with our social media presence (Communications), or teaming up on coordination of our fund drives (Development). So, help us – by becoming part of our crew of conservationists.

And as always, we are tremendously grateful for your membership support and donations.

We all look forward to getting out of pandemic mode and being able to meet in person again in the near future. Very soon, we will be doing the kinds of events and activities at our various preserves that we've enjoyed so much in the past. Stay tuned for more details. And please reach out to me, Rock, or any of our board members if you can help us – in any way – with our ongoing work of monitoring and maintaining the properties, planning for the future, and communicating effectively about our vision and mission as a Land Trust.

E. Jenny K. Flanagan, President, WLCT



Contact the WLCT



<http://www.warrenlct.org>



The Warren Land Conservation Trust, Inc



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PO Box 565, Warren, RI 02885

A SIGNIFICANT DONATION TO THE WLCT

The Warren Land Conservation Trust is pleased to announce the acquisition of 24.76 acres of valuable wetland habitat along the Palmer River. This was a generous donation from Ms. Karen Burnes of Westport, Massachusetts. The property is located at 314 Market Street and encompasses Assessor's Plat Map 21, Lots 2, 11 and 50. This is next to 1.4 acres of saltmarsh already stewarded by the Trust. The merger of these properties forms the Sowams Meadows Preserve, totaling 26.14 acres. A strict wetlands protection easement covers 94% of the donated land and is held by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.



WLCT Vice President Rock Singewald and President Jenny Flanagan place a conservation sign on the newly acquired Sowams Meadows Preserve

This important donation has been in the works for several years as noted in the last newsletter. It constitutes a 14% increase in land held by the WLCT and brings the total land protected and stewarded by the Trust to 199.56 acres.

Nearly all of this new preserve is protected by an easement with the US government, saving the property for habitat protection, including pollinator habitat. We are in the planning stages for a public access trail.

HAILE FARM PRESERVE WORK UPDATE

by Rock Singewald, Vice President

Last year, the WLCT applied for and received funding under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (part of the USDA) for conservation work in the forest portions of the Haile Farm Preserve. Based on the Forest Stewardship Plan completed in November 2019, the 4-year EQIP grant will help us pay for work removing invasive species and improving habitat conditions for wildlife and the health of the woodlands.

We just completed the first step of the 4-year plan by mowing and clearing brush in a section of meadow on the edge of the forest just north of the pond. This meadow has a great mix of native grasses and wildflowers that provides excellent habitat for pollinators as well as for ground nesting birds and small animals. The meadow faced an invasion of multiflora rose, bittersweet and autumn olive, so we mowed the area to knock back the invasive plants and give the good native plants a better chance to thrive. It was a tough job and we are thankful for the hard work of the crew from Staton's Landscaping who braved the 10 foot high stands of briars and brambles to clear the area. It looks barren now, but later this spring it will come back to its natural glory for us all to enjoy.



One of our March trail crews

We had a great turnout of 12 for our first trail work party of the season on March 13. We managed to amass quite a pile of debris from along the trails, did a lot of trimming, got rid of some fallen tree limbs and started cutting our way through green briar on a new trail. There was another great turnout on our second work party on March 27, with a very productive workday out at Haile Farm Preserve. The new Osprey View Spur Trail is closer to completion thanks to the efforts of all our trail volunteers.

The Saltmarsh Sparrow Trail has been temporarily closed to attract a pair of birds to nest on the platform installed last year in the marsh. Your cooperation in avoiding the trail for a few weeks is appreciated.

Given the coming of spring, our Trail Team is actively working on the development of the planned Betty Hallberg Trail and the Osprey View Trail (making sure not to disturb the returning birds). If you wish to be notified of the biweekly workdays, please use the volunteer link on our web site warrenlct.org or email us at warrenlct@gmail.com.



Woodland area where the new Betty Hallberg trail passes.

A problem has been noted with trash left along the trails (primarily fast food container refuse). Please "pack it in and pack it out" and if you happen to see someone else's trash, don't be shy about being a good steward and picking it up for disposal.

We are happy to allow dogs at Haile Farm provided that their waste is removed. Again, pack it out to maintain our pristine environment.

Last year we had two of our trail sections adopted by WLCT members for ongoing maintenance, the Saltmarsh Sparrow and Tom's Island overlook spurs. If anyone is interested in adopting another section of trail at HFP or Jacob's Point please let us know. It is such a big help to have members looking out for a small piece of the trail and doing any maintenance that is required.

HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

by Saltmarsh Sparrow research project volunteer Deirdre Robinson

Rare events in the natural world can inspire awe and offer hope. Such is the case with one particular Saltmarsh Sparrow (*Ammospiza caudacutus*) who hatched on July 7, 2019 at Jacob's Point in Warren, RI. Her story is representative of the struggle of her species, which has survived as an obligate saltmarsh specialist for millennia. With rising tides due to climate change however, coastal marshes are flooding and sparrow nests are being inundated with greater frequency. This specific sparrow offers a rare glimmer hope for members of the Saltmarsh Sparrow Research Initiative, who are bearing witness to the extinction of an extraordinary species.

Why is this species extraordinary? It demonstrates a polygamous breeding strategy, nests on the ground and escapes from predators by running rather than flying, has only a rudimentary “song”, does not defend territories, and breeds nowhere else in the world except in healthy coastal marshes from Virginia to Maine. The female sparrow is among the hardest working of birds. She alone constructs the nests, incubates the eggs, and feeds and defends the chicks while they are nestlings – and even after they fledge. Her perseverance is rewarded only when the nesting cycle is not in synchrony with the flooding cycle.



To read this fascinating article in its entirety, go to our website at www.warrenlct.org.

JACOB'S POINT UPDATE

by Mike Gerhardt, Past President

Recently the WLCT applied to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to have Jacob's Point participate in their Wetland Reserve Easement program. This was done in conjunction with the abutting property owned by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

Under this program, the NRCS acquires a strict conservation easement on the property and then pays for work to restore and improve the wetlands. A marsh management plan developed by Save The Bay was intended to add “runnels” on the property to allow fresh water to flow out and more salty water to flow in (a key strategy to control phragmites growth).

It is a competitive granting process and given the monies available, the NRCS was able to fund two projects that ranked higher than the Jacob's Point applications. However, the reviewers have indicated that they are seeking additional funds in order to be able to approve our proposal.

Stay tuned to see how the WLCT works continually to sustain and restore the natural habitats we steward.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

A December article in the *Warren Times-Gazette* focused on the business success of Jade Engineered Plastics. This was a follow up Letter to the Editor:

We at the WLCT also think that Jade will be an outstanding asset to the community. The new Jade facility abuts the Haile Farm Preserve, which is protected and stewarded by the Warren Land Conservation Trust. About a year ago, we were looking for a way to access a planned trail on our property and approached Steve and Lee Holland about the possibility of crossing their property to do so. They readily agreed and an easement was worked out. As the work progressed, they assisted with the grading of that section of the trail. In recognition of their cooperation and assistance, we have named the new trail the Jade Trail. They have also indicated that they look forward to their employees using the trails at Haile Farm Preserve and we look forward to working with the Jade management on other projects in the future.

We invite the community to walk on the new Jade Trail, which is located across New Industrial Way to the north of the Haile Farm Preserve sign.

Sincerely,

Jenny Flanagan, President, WLCT
Mike Gerhardt, Past President, WLCT

A NEW NAME FOR A NEW PROPERTY: SOWAMS MEADOWS PRESERVE

by Jan Reitsma, special consultant to the WLCT

As reported above, the Land Trust acquired approximately 25 acres last year through a generous donation from Karen Burnes. This includes another significant portion of the saltmarsh that borders the Palmer River and was referred to as the Barker Preserve. The donation was made possible through the purchase of a conservation easement by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the US Department of Agriculture. Its conservation objectives include preserving and restoring habitat for the saltmarsh sparrow, as well as other species, both in the marsh and in the upland portions. NRCS is currently working on a conservation plan that will guide the restoration and management of this land. Wenley Ferguson of Save The Bay is the expert lead on the saltmarsh portion, which will include better drainage of stormwater from the marsh. Currently the marsh has too much standing water for too long periods of time.

Wenley is working closely with NRCS as well as the Land Trust, an arrangement already proven to work just to the north, at the Haile Farm Preserve. When the initial

conservation plan has been completed, the next step will be permitting, in particular by the RI Coastal Resources Management Council, of the various elements and activities proposed, including the cultivation of “pollinator habitat.” The Land Trust is grateful for the lead role NRCS is playing in both planning and permitting.

At its most recent meeting, the Board of Trustees voted to rename this property the Sowams Meadows Preserve, recognizing the pre-colonial use and naming of the land by the Pokanoket. The preserve will include parcels also owned by the Land Trust off Belcher Cove, further south. It is our hope that more parcels will be added in the future, and that ultimately a continuous corridor of saltmarsh and adjacent undeveloped upland, from Belcher Cove to the Swansea border (and beyond) can be protected permanently.

In addition to conservation and ecological values, this would also preserve storage capacity for flood waters, an increasingly important issue as sea levels continue to rise and Warren has to grapple with the likelihood of increased flooding.



In agreement with the WLCT, Warren Fire Department crews performed smoke training in the house on the recently donated Sowams Meadows Preserve.

The property includes a house and barn on a relatively small lot that is not subject to the conservation easement. The cost of rehabilitating these structures is too high for the Land Trust. The Board has decided to explore selling the lot, which would help in raising funds for future restoration and management activity. Updates will be posted on the web site and Facebook. This will include information on when and where public access will be possible. Stay tuned.

SPRING FUNDRAISER

In past years, the WLCT has been fortunate to receive funding through our local state representatives and senator. Through the hard work of board members, we are optimistic that our full request will be funded again this year.

Yet, as discussed throughout this newsletter, the amount of property we steward continues to grow. With this comes more responsibilities to maintain and conserve these properties as well as upgrading and promoting public access. These obligations require funds for trail creation including materials, tools and signage, as well as landscaping and other professional services.

We will be reaching out to you this spring to ask for your support for these and other projects that we will be taking on.

2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

E. Jenny K. Flanagan – President

Rock Singewald – Vice President

Martha Antaya – Secretary

Finn Brudevold – Treasurer

Board Members – Bill Aylward, Michael Gerhardt, Ed McAloon, Scott Spear, David Weed

PLEASE DONATE!

We hope you agree that the Warren Land Conservation Trust’s ongoing work to protect open space in Warren and make it accessible to the public is necessary to the community. ***So please complete the form below.*** Or you can go to our **SUPPORT US** page on our web site warrenlct.org.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

The WLCT is a federal 501(c)3 non-profit corporation.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> | Individual \$15 |
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Name _____
 Address _____

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*Make your check out to
 “Warren Land Conservation Trust”
 and return this form to:
 PO Box 565, Warren, RI 02885*

*This publication was compiled and edited by Ed McAloon,
 WLCT Board Member.*