

Waltham Land Trust



Waltham Land Trust, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving our community's natural resources for the future through education, open space acquisition and protection.

QUARTERLY

FALL 2001

Marc Rudnick

Land Selection Criteria

What are Waltham's most valuable places? Close to 2,000 acres are largely undisturbed open spaces. Today



Chris Rodstrom

about 750 acres of that total are relatively protected and are under state or municipal ownership. How does the Waltham Land Trust decide which open space parcels are priorities for preservation?

In order to avoid being arbitrary (throw a dart at a map of the city) or biased (save my back yard) the board embarked on a thoughtful, two-year process to define various attributes of undeveloped places that make them worth saving. Here are the results.

Open Space Evaluation Criteria

The criteria below are qualifying standards for properties to help determine if the Waltham Land Trust would become *actively engaged* in their protection, investing the organization's time and resources. The objective of any land protection project carried out by the WLT should be to provide benefits to Waltham and carry out the mission of the WLT. For a project to qualify, it must meet at least *one* of the five resource criteria. The

continued on last page

Marie Daly

Met State Update

The disposition process of the former Metropolitan State Hospital took a major step forward in October with the subdivision agreement among Belmont, Lexington and Waltham, the Metropolitan District Commission and the Massachusetts Division of Capital Assets and Management. The agreement subdivides the property into lots for the MDC reservation, Waltham's municipal golf course, and the Lexington affordable housing component. The entrance from Trapelo Road will empty into a parking lot around which any through-traffic will have to wind. Following the course of the current entrance road, the MDC parkway will also have speed bumps to slow traffic. One of the last sticking points resolved concerned a portion of land in Waltham, near the old nurses' residence. Waltham is adamant in maintaining the conservation/recreation zoning of this parcel, which will be incorporated into the MDC Reservation. The parcel will provide a link between the western and eastern portions of the reservation.

The current timetable for turning over the land to Waltham and the MDC is now projected to be about May or June, 2002. Cleanup of land contaminated with asbestos, lead paint, oil, coal ash and solid waste is proceeding. A cell phone tower has been located on the old water tower on top of Mackerel Hill, next to the Gaebler Unit. The tower is nearly invisible when viewed from a distance. 50% of the revenues from the tower will go to the MDC reservation. When and if the water tower is no longer used by the Fernald Center, the water tower and the antenna will be removed.

The WLT Land Committee ranked the proposed 240-acre reservation land as one of the most ecologically valuable open spaces in Waltham. The parcel has 14 vernal pools, 100 acres of marshes and red maple swamps, ancient trees, historic structures, large areas of mature forest interlaced with a good trail system, scenic views of Boston and the Blue Hills, a permanent stream (Beaver Brook) and glacial eskers. The long-awaited opening of this reservation will greatly enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Waltham, Lexington and Belmont.

New Members of our Board of Directors

WLT members voted at our Annual Meeting October 17, 2001 to elect two new members to our Board of Directors. The term of office for Elected Directors is three years. The Board now has 15 members to lead our organization in the challenging years ahead. Brief biographies of our newest Board members follow:

David Kehs A resident of Waltham since 1980, Dave Kehs explores our open spaces in the city and in neighboring towns of Lincoln and Weston. A recent orienteering meet renewed Dave's interest in Prospect Hill Park. This prompted him to join the Prospect Hill Advocacy Group, through which he learned of the Waltham Land Trust.

In addition to volunteering at the National Archives on Trapelo Road, Dave has participated in a number of Reagle Players productions, including 1776 this year. When he is not biking or walking in the great outdoors he also finds time to do whitewater rafting.

Dave is an active participant on the Membership, Outreach and Education Committee and has helped lead recent nature walks on Jericho Hill. He is developing expertise in map making and has volunteered to keep a clipping file for WLT.

Allison Mooney Land preservation is one of Allison Mooney's lifelong interests and current vocation. At Mass Audubon's Habitat Sanctuary in Belmont she presently coordinates efforts to revive Weeks Pond through the removal of invasive exotics and planting of native species. Additionally, she leads walks, assists in the office and teaches nursery school naturalists.

Professionally, Allison taught elementary students for 16 years in formal and informal settings in public and private schools. At Wheelock College she has taught teachers about hands-on science instruction.

She plants vegetables, fruit, flowers and herbs around the home she shares with her husband, two daughters and five pets. Her family advocates the use of bicycles for recreation and transportation through business and by example.

As a WLT member and its board Allison is pleased to be a part of a network of people who value the priceless qualities of the natural environment. Her future efforts will include leading walks on Jericho Hill and promoting the "Western Greenway" planned to connect open spaces in Belmont, Lexington and Waltham, a project endorsed by WLT and Massachusetts Audubon Society.

LOCAL NEWS: Waltham Election Results

Citizens of Waltham went to the polls on Election Day, November 6th, to vote on Question 1, the Community Preservation Act, a measure to raise funds for affordable housing, open space, and historic preservation projects. Question 1 was endorsed by the Waltham Land Trust. The CPA garnered 41% of the 5,894 votes cast.

Voters in Ward 8 have elected Stephen F. Rourke as their next city councilor. Councilor-elect Rourke is a member of the board of directors and president of the Waltham Land Trust.

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An electronic version of this newsletter is available on our website. www.walthamlandtrust.org

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Allison Mooney, Joris Naiman, Chris Rodstrom,

Inge Uhler, Roger Wrubel, Eileen Zubrowski.

We want to hear from you.

Please tell us your thoughts about the Waltham Land Trust. Does the Quarterly contain information you find useful?

Write to us about your favorite open space jaunts in Waltham. Please suggest a topic or guest author for a future issue. Do you have special environmental expertise that you would like to share with WLT members?

We might post your letter on our website or print it in an upcoming newsletter! (Please include a phone number for us to contact you; your number will not, of course, be published.)

Please send your ideas to Waltham Land Trust, Inc., P.O. Box 1120, Waltham, MA 02454-1120 or else email to memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org.

Elisabeth Carter

Eight Great Open Space Places in Waltham

This is the final installment of a two-part article.

If you're looking for a pleasant way to pass an hour enjoying the outdoors, Waltham has much to offer.

Many residents take advantage of our woods, river walks and other open space, but some newcomers and visitors might not be aware of the secrets of the City of Choice. For instance, while you probably know that the Charles River runs through town, did you know that three historic mansions and their grounds of nearly 200 acres are open to the public in Waltham? Or that we can enjoy a Great Pond minutes from City Hall? The

Waltham Land Trust would like to encourage every citizen of Waltham, and visitor, to enjoy the open spaces we have today.

To help you find them, here is a selection of our favorites. Happy trails!

5 Storer Conservation Land and Stonehurst, the Robert Treat Paine Estate

You can easily enjoy hours at this city-owned historic estate and conservation land. Located off Beaver Street, the core of the 109-acre parcel of land was originally landscaped by the famous Frederick Law Olmsted, the same designer who laid out the Arnold Arboretum and Boston's "Emerald Necklace." Much of the landscaping

had grown wild until recent efforts to restore Olmsted's original design intent to the 6-acre core of the estate. Some of the original specimens are now visible, and lawns flow into graceful wildflower meadows. The Paine house is a visual treat from the outside and open for tours Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons at 1, 2, and 3 PM and by appointment. One third of the house is a classic Second Empire that was moved from a nearby location to the crest of the hill under Olmsted's direction. A dramatic stone and shingle-walled addition with curved windows and rounded walls was designed by H.H. Richardson, a famous American architect who rarely worked on private dwellings. A curved stone retaining wall designed by Olmsted bridges the gap between the great glacial rock formations on the site and the house, also made up of glacial boulders gathered from the site. The home is quite naturally a National Historic Landmark. For information on house tours call Stonehurst at 781-314-3290.

The real treat here for outdoors enthusiasts, however, is the extensive forest that stretches all the way to the Waltham High School parking lot, including three main trails and ten interconnecting ones. You will see a variety of forest flora, including a stately hemlock woods, two vernal ponds and abundant white pines, red oaks, beeches and maples. Depending on the time of year, you might come across ripening blueberries or blackberries, like we did in July. At that time the parking area



Stonehurst

was inundated by Queen Anne's Lace and Black-Eyed Susans. Besides the occasional patch of poison ivy, which is easy to avoid if you stay on the trails, we spotted sassafras, mountain laurel, wisteria, sumac, poplar, and too many small plants to mention. You might even find a salamander under a rotting log. Trails are well marked with maps, though for the best experience, pick up a trail map at the Conservation Commission in the 911 building complex, 163 Lexington Street, between the police and fire departments, during regular business hours. The map indicates three levels of handicap difficulty for the trails, terrain contours and adjacent roads, and it's free.

To get there, take Lexington to Beaver Street to the DeVincent Circle rotary. Go most of the way around it, passing the Lyman Estate on the right, and stay on Beaver Street. Not far from the circle, a sign on your left says Stonehurst. Turn in there and head up the hill past a few residential homes and a wildflower meadow. When you get to the end, take a hard right into the parking lot, the only place you are allowed to park on the site. Three trails head out from this lot, or you can walk back past the signs to the estate house area and other trails. You can also park at the high school and enter the trails from that end. The property is open sunrise to sunset year round, and pets are welcome if leashed at all times. Always clean up after your pet and yourselves, taking only memories, leaving only footprints. Call the Conservation Commission at 781-314-3845 for more information and for guided trail walks.

6 The Lyman Estate

Also located off Beaver Street, the Lyman Estate, another National Historical Landmark, is owned by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Its handicap-accessible grounds are open to the public during daylight hours year round. The mansion is generally closed except for private events. The 37 acres of landscaped gardens, woodlands and cultivated fields, established in 1793, was originally the country home for shipping tycoon Theodore Lyman. It's a nice place for a picnic or a seasonal stroll along gravel paths through perennial gardens. Plant lovers can also visit the wonderful historic 19th century greenhouses, which are especially welcome respites midwinter when you haven't seen anything alive and green for months. Instant tropical vacation—and it's free! (A small donation gratefully accepted at the entrance.) Greenhouses are open Monday through Saturday 9–4 year round, and sometimes Sundays, such as when the Camellias are in bloom. Some of the winter-flowering Chinese trees have been growing here for over 100 years. There is also a nice selection of orchids, a small nursery and periodic

plant sales. Grounds are occasionally closed for private functions; to check ahead, call them at 781-891-7095.

7 Gore Place

Another country home, this one originally belonged to Massachusetts' 7th governor [1809–1810], Christopher Gore. Wonderful formal gardens—hedges, herbs and flowers stretch out from the 19th century Federalist and Palladian-style mansion. This estate is also privately owned and sometimes rented out for special functions, but otherwise the public is welcome on the grounds during daylight hours. Come stroll, sneak a glimpse of chickens, sheep and historic goats, have a picnic, or even bring your dog for a walk (leashed, of course).

The house, full of period antiques, is open for tours Tuesday through Sunday; cost is \$7 and benefits the non-profit Gore Place Society, which owns the estate. A path called the Mile Walk leads around the perimeter of the property, and a shorter one called the Straight Walk, leads from the sheep pasture to a meadow.



G. E. Kidder Smith

Gore Place

Altogether there are 45 acres of gardens, hills and farmed land that straddle Waltham and Watertown, the remainder of the original 450-acre estate. In the spring you can come for the annual Sheep Shearing Day held the last weekend of April, a real country-style family day with music, food, crafts, costumes and more. For more information on the society, tours and special events, call 781-894-2798.

8 Hardy Pond

Hardy Pond is located in the Lakeview area of the city, west of the Wal-Lex shopping center and south of Trapelo Road. As a registered "great pond," it is owned by the state and managed by the city. (Qualifications of a great pond include being larger than 20 acres, and Hardy Pond is around 45.) Back in the early 1990s, an association of neighbors rallied together to procure state and local funds for dredging the pond, which had become stagnant and overgrown with invasive weeds. About 60% of the work has been completed, vastly improving its appeal. While most of the property surrounding the pond belongs to private home owners,



Amy Rothstein

Ice on Hardy Pond.

there is excellent public access off Lake Street adjacent to Lazzazero Field where you could slip a canoe, row-boat or small sailboat—no gas-powered motors—into the water. Much of the shore is wetland marsh and woods, and over 135 species of birds have been spotted here. How many can you find in an hour? Let us know! Besides water and seasonal birds, other wildlife spotted here has included deer, raccoon, opossum, painted turtles, snapping turtles, muskrats, and of course fish.

There are also a couple very short paths through the woods and wetlands, one off Seminole and one off Hibiscus, each a 10-minute walk, max. In summer, bring your bug spray, wear long pants and watch out for the P.I. (poison ivy). In winter, if it gets cold enough, bring your skates!

These are just a few of the open space treasures of Waltham, though there are many more, public and private. Some are at risk of being developed. Others the city may soon procure in a bold plan endorsed by the City Council last June to generate an interconnected ring of green throughout the city. To keep abreast of open space happenings, join the Waltham Land Trust

and receive our newsletter and email announcements of pending relevant actions and events. Also check out our website at www.walthamlandtrust.org.



Amy Rothstein

Preparing a skating area on Hardy Pond.

Our Mission

We are a group of Waltham citizens who want to save open space in our city. Our mission is to acquire, pre-serve or restore land in a way that:

- balances conservation and access,
- maximizes the natural value of land,
- reduces habitat fragmentation, and
- permanently protects and conserves natural resources;

So that

- public appreciation of natural resources grows,
- native habitat is preserved and restored, environmental quality of life is improved (air, water, noise and light pollution are reduced),
- biodiversity is increased, and

A legacy of conservation is perpetuated in Waltham.



Amy Rothstein

Land Selection Criteria *continued from page 1*

Strategic Considerations should then be investigated for qualifying projects to help determine the appropriate land protection approach, including timing, technique, partners, etc.

Resource Criteria

1. Ecological characteristics

a) Wildlife habitat

- Intact natural community
- Minimal disturbance
- Rare native habitats
- Nesting/brooding sites
- Support landscape ecology functions (e.g. wildlife corridors)
- Viable size

b) Wetland resources

- Vernal pools, riverfront, stream, marsh, pond, floodplain, isolated land subject to flooding, wetland buffers

c) Priority plant communities (defined by Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program)

d) Rare species

2. Geologic features

a) Cave

c) Large erratic

e) Esker

g) Promontory

b) Cliff

d) Ledge

f) Kettle hole

3. Historical and cultural significance

a) Significant historic events/person

b) Historic buildings or remnants

c) Ancient tree or feature

d) Working landscape (farm or forest)

e) Drinking water resource

f) Reaches under-served populations

4. Recreational/Educational significance

a) Contains areas currently used, or with potential for:

- Environmental or cultural history education
- Classroom extension
- Scientific research

b) Scenic views

c) Trail systems

d) Waterways

5. Connectivity

a) Links already protected areas (including playground, school, conservation land)

b) Links to significant unprotected open spaces

c) Near other protected area (if not contiguous)

d) Provides public access to protected areas

e) Provides wildlife corridors

Strategic considerations

1. Timing

a) Property "at risk" of being lost/developed

b) Timely opportunity for conservation

c) Available (willing donor/seller)

2. Financial considerations

a) Local support for protection

b) Acquisition costs

c) Upkeep costs

d) Liability, incl. environmental contamination

e) Project marketability

3. Future use

a) Recreation potential

b) Existing uses to expand/protect

c) Mixed uses to support preservation