

Waltham Land

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



QUARTERLY

SPRING 2001

FROM THE BOARD...

Dear Members and Friends:

With regrets, we have accepted the resignation of Faith Boudreau, one of eleven Founding Directors of the Waltham Land Trust.

Serving as Associate Treasurer, Faith kept her finger on the pulse of our growing membership. She made time for building this fledgling organization because she believes the work of the Land Trust makes Waltham a better place for us and for future generations. Faith believes, as we do, that when we care for the environment we care for each other.

Stephen Rourke

Marie Daly and Roger Wruble

Hospital Grounds Enhance Western Greenway

Built in the 1920s, the old psychiatric hospital situated between Trapelo Road in Waltham and Concord Avenue in Lexington was designed to surround patients with a beautiful, harmonious and natural environment. Doctors believed that strolling around the lovely grounds promoted good mental health, an idea that still has merit some seventy years later. When changes in patient treatment moved away from institutional care to outpatient therapy within the patients' own communities, the last patients were moved out in 1992.

As the patient population dwindled at Met State, concerned citizens began to advocate for the preservation of the 317 acres of land, of which only about 45 acres were developed. Centrally located within the Western Greenway, the open space at the hospital consists of state-protected cattail marshes, red maple swamps, mature oak-hickory forest, young forest, and open meadows. The 300-foot Mackerel Hill provides wonderful lookouts over the site into Boston and as far as the Blue Hills to the south. A system of unpaved carriage trails winds throughout the woods and marshes, providing access for hikers and other visitors. There are fourteen vernal pools on the property, four of which have been certified due to the presence of wood frogs. Great-horned owls, red-tailed hawks, American woodcocks, and many other birds nest in the woods and marshes, making it a premier bird-watching site.

Responding to citizen advocacy for open space preservation, the state conducted a tri-community planning process involving Waltham, Lexington, and Belmont. The state committee developed a planning document, subsequently approved by the legislature and signed by Governor Weld in 1996, that calls for the preservation of 212 acres of the open space at Met State as part of an MDC Reservation.

A nine-hole Waltham community golf course is planned for 60 acres on the "front lawn" of the old hospital. With pressure from conservationists, Waltham has agreed to minimal use of pesticides on the proposed golf course. Development of affordable housing on the 45 acres of already developed land has been planned by Lexington. There has been a great deal of discussion regarding the traffic from the Lexington housing on the site, which Waltham wants accessed from Concord Avenue rather than Trapelo Road. (In 1996, Trapelo Road bore some 20,000 vehicles per day, whereas Concord Avenue had 5,000 per day.) The access road continues to be a sticking point in the negotiations among the communities. But some progress, however slow, has been made, and all hope for final agreement this year.

For more information about the Western Greenway, please visit our website at www.walthamlandtrust.org

Inge Uhler

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A Two-Way Street

Accounts of harm to the environment are almost daily events: clear-cutting rain forests, massive oil spills from super-tankers, organic waste floods from agribusiness factories, highway expansion through sensitive natural areas, pesticide residues in water supplies. In the aftermath of such insults to land and water and air we cringe at pictures of mudslides, dying shorebirds, poisoned ponds and rivers, and feel helpless to stem the growth in asthma among urban populations or the decline of suburban songbird populations. We begin to tune out the bad news because it has come to seem inevitable.

Is it too late to turn the tide? How different was our world five, ten, thirty years ago?

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Edmund P. Tarallo, Guest Correspondent

What is GIS?

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is a state of the art tool designed specifically for integrating, analyzing and mapping various types of spatial information. GIS is computer-based and allows for the storage, management, analysis, and display of geographic and associated attribute data. In other words, descriptive information (attribute data) can be linked to geographic features (spatial information) by means of a tabular data-set that can be displayed on a map, either digitally (on screen) or plotted/printed out as a hard copy (paper) map. A geographic feature may either be a point location, a linear feature such as a stream or roadway or a polygon feature, which defines the boundary of a parcel or area of land. Each geographic feature (data set) is represented as a separate layer on a map that can be placed over other layers. An immediate benefit of having GIS is that once the data is in the computer it can be used for many different applications. GIS allows the user to understand the relationship of the information from a spatial or geographic point of view.

A powerful tool for open space applications

By using GIS, planners can identify, inventory and map areas of land that are suitable for open space preservation. Information describing the characteristics of each parcel can be attached to each polygon thus allowing a planner to determine the size, ownership, level of protection and primary use of each open space parcel. The tabular data describing each parcel can be easily updated providing an up-to-date picture of a community's open space resources.

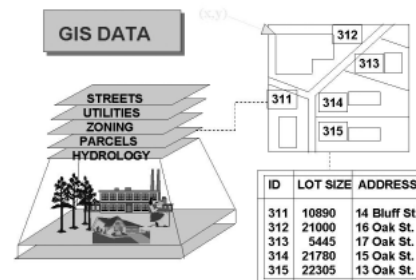


Diagram courtesy of ESRI

Planners working on open space applications may use GIS for the acquisition, development and maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes. GIS can also help planners in determining areas that are best for the acquisition of historical properties and farmland for preservation purposes.

GIS is a valuable tool for Environmental/Natural Resource planners working for the acquisition of open space. It helps determine the habitat of endangered species, locations of vernal pools and areas that contribute water to municipal wells (i.e.: Zone II aquifers) and prime agricultural soils. Using GIS, a planner can view existing open space parcels, analyze the land between open space parcels and by overlaying other GIS data layers such as land use, forest cover and wetlands, determine what type of habitat exists in an area. This type of information can help in planning appropriate habitat corridors between existing and potential open space parcels. Parcels with a chapter 61 designation may prove critical for a community when planning for new habitat corridors and open space parcels.

Finally, GIS coverages of existing and abandoned railroad rights of way can help planners determine the expansion of hiking and biking trails. It is important to note that many of these examples listed currently exist in GIS data layers and are easily downloaded from the Web at no cost, giving planners more information and tools to support their efforts.

Stephen Rourke

WLT Supports Park Grant

The Waltham Land Trust Board of Directors enthusiastically supports the application by the City of Waltham for a state grant to begin the renovation of Prospect Hill Park. Based on a Master Plan, developed over years with public consultation and professional input, the phase one upgrades would restore some of the most utilized parts of the park and become the cornerstone of open space preservation in the City.

The maintenance of treasured open space is an obligation to future residents. WLT is pleased that Waltham leaders understand this obligation and have committed resources to make it possible. In particular, we commend Catherine Cagel of the Planning Department for her diligence and enthusiasm for this project.



View east from Prospect Hill Summit

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Continued from front page

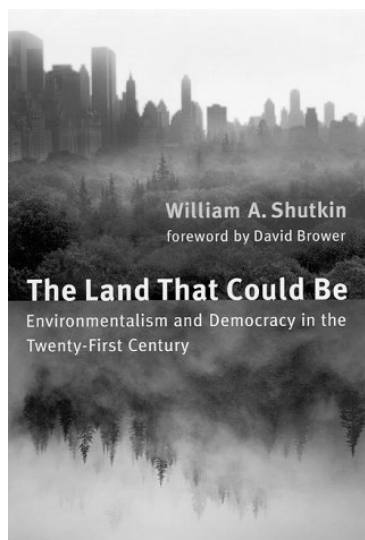
If you recall enjoying a spring morning, a fall sunset, the first snow, a rose perfuming the air you join a lot of other people who have built a strong link to the benefits of an unspoiled environment. In return, that memory is the first building block toward saving the world ... or our part of it, piece by piece, city by city, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block. We have been shaped by our collective recall of "the way things were" and together we have the ability to protect and restore what we treasure.

That is the message of the new urban environmentalism described with great power in a recently published book, **The Land That Could Be**, by William A. Shutkin (MIT Press, 2000). Shutkin combines current examples, vividly described in richly annotated text, with the philosophy of the founders of environmentalism to inspire grass roots action to make our world a better place.

And while that is happening, in many places, in many ways, a re-growth of a sense of community is a natural dividend. As we understand the inter-relatedness of our inanimate environment, we learn to acknowledge and then value our connections to other people. In many cases the spontaneous contacts of daily living are powerful tools to accomplish goals beyond the reach of individuals.

Shutkin provides four real-world case studies of successful projects across this nation from Roxbury/Dorchester, MA to Fruitvale, CA to Routt County, CO and Randolph Township, NJ. In each case it was the collective vision of residents that provided the spark to bridge the divide between business as usual and reactive opposition. Sharing these examples with positive outcomes lays out a blue-print for endless replication in different circumstances and cultures.

A sense of recognition resounds throughout Shutkin's text that draws the reader in to discover analogies with our histories as individuals and as a community. Who taught you to recognize a bird by its song? a flower by its leaf? the weather by a cloudform? Whom will you teach the same? Take a walk, catch a fish, plant a tree and next time bring a friend to do the same.



June 6 at WLT Public Presentation **Author is Featured Presenter** **Shutkin: "Community and Conservation"**

Featured speaker: Bill Shutkin, President, New Ecology Inc., professor and activist for environmental justice, and published author – recent publication: THE LAND THAT COULD BE. Waltham Public Library, 735 Main St., large lecture hall (lower level), Wednesday, June 6th, 2001 7:00 P.M.

Bill believes that each of us should engage in the life of our community in order to build a society with a physical environment that both reflects and reinforces the social ideals upon which it is based. Share your ideas about how people CAN make a difference.

Refreshments will be served. FREE admission. For more information call Inge Uhler (781)899-2844.

Eileen Zubrowski

WLT Receives Grant, Hires Consultant

Volunteers needed to help with capital campaign

Waltham Land Trust has hired consultant Monte Pearson, following an interview with the Development Committee, to assist with the first WLT Capital Fundraising Campaign. He will coach us as we learn to identify potential donors, write a case statement, reach out for potential corporate and foundation support, and develop special events. The funds raised will enable the Land Trust to move forward to protect open space in the City of Waltham by covering transaction costs of property transfer and creating a revolving fund for acquisitions. WLT may also be able to serve as an acquisition bridge – temporarily acquiring property on behalf of the City - for the City's priority open space projects.

Volunteer members are especially needed as we mobilize to initiate the capital campaign. Land Trust members who want to join the campaign can serve in the following arenas: public education and promotion, development of case statements for targeted properties, research, management of special events, database development, and outreach to donors. Members can serve for varying amounts of time, depending on availability.

Please contact Eileen Zubrowski, Development Chair (617-924-2033), if you would like to work on the fundraising campaign or if you would like to make a contribution toward the matching grant.

Our Mission

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

- ◆ balances conservation and access,
- ◆ maximized 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.

Volunteer Opportunities

Join the WLT Education and Outreach Committee (EOC). All WLT members are invited to help shape the direction of our efforts to involve more people in our activities.

Work is decidedly part time, from minutes to hours to days, for seasonal or regularly scheduled events. Compensation is generous amounts of satisfaction for helping to establish a legacy of land protection and enjoyment in the City.

WLT needs YOU

If you are a member of any group that could benefit from knowing more about WLT goals, have contacts to public and private organizations whose members like to learn about our land and water resources, can design fliers or brochures about WLT, or can help distribute information including our Quarterly newsletter.

For more information please contact Inge Uhlir at (781) 899-2844 or 75122.1245@compuserve.com.

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Editor: Bonnie Regelman

An electronic version of this newsletter is available on our website. If you would prefer us not to mail you the paper version, please let us know. Copies of the Quarterly are available at City Hall and the Waltham Public Library. We are grateful to THE CHATEAU and the First Parish Church for allowing distribution of the WLT Quarterly. Please contact us if you have other locations that can be used for distribution.

Waltham Land Trust Officers and Directors: Stephen Rourke *President*, Marie Daly *Vice-President*
Laura Cannon-Ordile *Clerk*, Marc Rudnick *Treasurer*, Gloria Champion, Lela Chiavaras, George Darcy III,
Dan Melnechuk, Joris Naiman, Chris Rodstrom, Inge Uhlir, Roger Wrubel, Eileen Zubrowski *Emeritus*: Faith Boudreau

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