

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

WINTER 2002

by Marc Rudnick

Priority Parcels: A Report Card

Last summer, the City of Waltham made its first open space preservation acquisition, the 26-acre *Chester Brook Woods* parcel, abutting the Storer Conservation Land. At the same time, the Waltham Land Trust put forward its list of ten open space resources in Waltham that are of the highest preservation priority. These areas were chosen for their access to neighborhoods, beautiful views, biological diversity, and prominent natural features. They have in common their vulnerability to future development and their potential for enhancing life in our city. Much has happened since last summer so here's a brief status report on those parcels and others on an expanded list.

Chester Brook Woods The Waltham Land Trust is encouraging the city to apply conservation restrictions to this 26-acre parcel as well as to the recently acquired 6-acre Jericho Hill site.

Jericho Hill The 6-acre hilltop rising above Lincoln Woods was acquired by the City this winter!

Our Lady Some 26 acres of meadows, woods, streams and ponds behind the church are the subject of an anticipated deal with the city - preservation of the parcel in exchange for affordable housing to be developed elsewhere in Waltham. Another six acres of this forest are a part of the housing authority's Chester Brook Gardens development. There has been some talk about additional housing here, but no official proposals to date. Twenty-three more unprotected acres belong to the Northeast School, where expansion plans are rumored.

Lincoln Woods This 26-acre parcel has become controversial — the subject of competing interests in conservation and development. Our land committee continues to watch this property closely. Encouraged by the owner's attendance at our annual meeting, we hope to open a dialog regarding the future of Lincoln Woods.

Stigmatine Espousal Center Half of this 40-acre campus is the wooded eastern slope of Jericho Hill. The City Council's Open Space Committee has recommended

that the city seek a right of first refusal should the Stigmatine Fathers ever seek to dispose of the property.

Olympus Hospital Development is imminent, though the permitting process (in both Lexington and Waltham) has barely begun. The heavily wooded Lexington side contains an essential leg of the hoped-for Greenway loop hiking trail. On the Waltham side there are wetlands, woods and historic structures. The City of Waltham owns a few acres of the parcel, originally intended for recreation.

Indian Ridge This 21-acre wooded hill is the subject of a huge housing development proposal. The ongoing ZBA hearings have been underway since early last summer and continue February 19.

Berry Farm Twenty acres of Polaroid's immense campus is a wooded parcel with a vernal pool that already seems like a part of Prospect Hill Park. Although complicated by Polaroid's financial collapse, the City Council Committee proposes acquiring the property.

Waltham High School Fifteen acres of woods at Waltham High School includes another link of the

Greenway trail. Since surviving a threatened hockey rink development, there's been no further public discussion of this site.

Fernald State School Everyone wants a piece of this campus, as the hospital is apparently winding down operations. The City Council Open Space Committee has recommended that the city acquire this parcel.

Waltham Landfill/Cram's Cove This 15-acre South Side woods abutting the Charles River is the focus of a neighborhood effort to preserve open space and develop the site for passive recreation. An environmental review is ongoing.

Wayside Rail Trail This project has largely lost support at the state level, but Waltham has taken some beginning steps in planning for the eventual development of its segment.

The Waltham Land Trust will continue to monitor these and numerous other open space parcels in the city and encourage their conservation.



Amy Rothstein

one of Hardy Pond's many muskrats

by David Kehs

How Lincoln Preserves Open Space

This is the first in a series of articles about the efforts to preserve open space in the cities and towns adjacent to Waltham.

The citizens of the Town of Lincoln, Waltham's neighbor to the northwest, began their efforts to preserve some of their town's open space in the late 1950's. The Lincoln Land Conservation Trust (LLCT), a private, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization was founded in 1957, one of the first land trusts to be established in New England. A year later, the town established its Conservation Commission. In addition to enforcing state and local environmental regulations, the Conservation Commission is responsible for acquiring open space and overseeing the town's conservation lands.

Through the efforts of these groups, as well as the National Park Service and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, a total of approximately 2000 acres of Lincoln land has been protected from development. In some cases land has been donated outright by families and individuals who wished to preserve the rural character of the town. For other properties, land has been purchased by the town or by the LLCT, often at a bargain price. For such parcels, the property owners desired to have their lands protected for the enjoyment of future generations, but they did not feel that they were in a financial position to donate the property outright. By selling their property to the land trust or the town at a below-market price, these property owners were able to receive some cash, in addition to taking a tax deduction for the difference between the sale price and the full market value of their land.

Some parcels of land were found to be too expensive for outright acquisition by the land trust or the town. In order to preserve a significant portion of such parcels, an innovative approach was adopted. The Rural Land Foundation, a subsidiary of the LLCT, was formed in 1965. In a typical transaction, the Rural Land Foundation borrows money to acquire a property and develops part of the property, using the profits from the development to repay the loan. The remainder of the property can then be set aside for conservation. This now-common scheme, often called "limited development", was employed for the first time in the United States to acquire the Wheeler Farm property in Lincoln.

Today, Lincoln's conservation lands are crossed by over 75 miles of trails that are accessible to the public for hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and biking (with some restrictions). A number of easements have been obtained to allow the trails to be connected over private land. A full-time land manager, several part-time summer rangers, and numerous volunteers maintain the land and trails and provide education on natural resources and public safety.

With over 400 families as members, the LLCT is still active in its mission of protecting open space in Lincoln and providing educational programs and forums about Lincoln's natural resources. A trail guide, *A Guide to Conservation Land in Lincoln* was published by the LLCT in 1992 to help visitors find the trails and identify the flowers and wildlife. Now out-of-print, this guide can be borrowed from the Lincoln Public Library, or it can be viewed at the Conservation Commission office. A trail map was produced in 1995 and is available for \$3 at the Conservation Commission office. See you on the trail.



Beaver Pond

Arthur Uhlir

by Philip Keyes

Acton Land Stewardship Committee

Vernal Pool Slide Show and Discussion

Acton's Land Stewardship Committee (a volunteer subcommittee of Acton's Conservation Commission) sponsored a slide show and discussion about vernal pools and how to certify them on Wednesday, February 13 at 7:00 P.M. Waltham native Brian Butler (Principal of Oxbow Associates, Inc.), a well-known expert on vernal pools, made the presentation. His slideshow discussion

explored the nature of vernal pools and the types of flora and fauna that inhabit them.

Massachusetts has more than 2000 certified vernal pools, yet tens of thousands remain uncertified. Vernal pool species include the spotted salamander, blue-spotted salamander, Jefferson salamander, marbled salamander, wood frog, spadefoot toad, and fairy shrimp. March is the best month for certifying vernal pools.

To learn more about Acton's Land Stewardship Committee, see their website at

<<http://www.globalreach.com/ActonLSCOM/>>.

By Chris Rodstrom and Monte L. Pearson

WLT Establishes Land Preservation Fund

Goal is \$75,000 to Preserve Open Space in Waltham

The Waltham Land Trust recently began a campaign to raise \$75,000 for a Land Preservation Fund. The Fund will be used to acquire and preserve open space in Waltham. Support by Mayor Gately reinforced by the City Council votes to purchase six acres on the top of Jericho Hill and 26 acres at Chesterbrook Woods has helped to inspire many generous donors. All donations to the Land Preservation Fund are tax deductible. Money from the fund will be available to help protect important undeveloped properties through a variety of methods. Purchasing an option on a property is one such method. This technique gives the Land Trust the ability to buy a parcel of land at a set price for a certain period of time. An option will enable the Land Trust, working with the city or other land preservation groups, to appropriate or raise the funds needed to permanently buy the land. Once the land is purchased, the money used for the option revolves back into the Land Preservation Fund and is again available to assist in another open space acquisition.

The Challenge The fundraising campaign got off to a fast start in November 2001 when an anonymous donor offered an ambitious challenge – to match every gift the Waltham Land Trust received of more than \$500, up to a total of \$5,000. The Board of Directors immediately began contacting potential donors. By December 15th the Waltham Land Trust had received seven donations of \$500 or more, including a gift of stock worth more than \$5,000. Matched with \$5,000 from the anonymous donor, the amount of money donated to the Land Preservation Fund in November and December totalled nearly \$16,000. This generous support and initial success is a good sign for the rest of the campaign. In order to have enough money to make purchase options on significant pieces of property, the Board has set a goal of raising \$75,000 for the Land Preservation Fund by December of 2002.

Chris Rodstrom, a Director and a member of the Land Trust's Development Committee, told the Board at its December meeting, "We have been very successful raising money for the Land Preservation Fund in 2001 and hope to hear from many more donors who are passionate about preserving open spaces in the city during 2002." We urge anyone who is interested in contributing to the Land Preservation Fund or who wants to help with Development Committee work to call Chris at 781-894-2320.

Foundation Grants In addition, the Waltham Land Trust has received four foundation grants that will aid

the group's efforts to preserve open space in Waltham. Eileen Zubrowski, Chairperson of the Development Committee, told the Land Trust's Board of Directors at their December meeting that a total of \$15,000 for operating expenses was received (awarded to the Land Trust) in November and December. The generous grants of \$5,000 from the New England Land Trust Alliance, \$5,000 from the Cricket Foundation, \$3,500 from the Crossroads Community Foundation, and \$1,500 from the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund will enable the Waltham Land Trust to hire a fundraising consultant, work to expand membership, and support other Waltham Land Trust activities. The consultant will work with the Board of Directors to raise money for several projects including the Land Preservation Fund, membership recruitment, and publications.

Fundraising this Spring Look for your invitation to one of a series of small and large events. These events will be designed to help us all learn more about the opportunities we have to protect open space in the city. You will have a chance to study maps of natural areas, find out exactly how "options" and "bridge loans" really work, and to just have fun talking to other people who are interested in protecting open space in our community. The Waltham Land Trust is a 501 (c) (3) corporation. All donations of cash, stock, land or land rights are tax deductible. Please consult your tax advisor. If you like to plan or throw parties - we can use your help! The Development Committee will be happy to hear from experienced and/or motivated party people to help put on these up-coming events.

To party for a good cause, call Chris at above number or Eileen Zubrowski at 617-924-2033.

by Stephen Rourke

Gloria Champion Will Be Missed on WLT Board

Gloria Champion, a dedicated advocate for the environment and a founding director of the Waltham Land Trust, has found it necessary to step down from her role on the Waltham Land Trust Board of Directors.

We will sorely miss her special knowledge and expertise about the land we are dedicated to protecting. Her insight has been an invaluable asset to our deliberations and activities, and her outspoken defense of our local environment has been an inspiration.

We look forward to the time when Gloria can participate fully again, and resume illuminating our discussions with her always enlightening perspective, her good humor, and her solid-as-rock opinions.

In the meantime we wish Gloria all the best.

WALTHAM LAND TRUST QUARTERLY

is published by Waltham Land Trust, Inc.,
P.O. Box 1120 Waltham 02454-1120.

Waltham Land Trust, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable corporation,
and is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

Newsletter Editor: Bonnie Regelman Design: Amy Rothstein

An electronic version (pdf) of this newsletter is available on our
website. <www.walthamlandtrust.org>

Waltham Land Trust Officers and Directors:

Stephen Rourke (President) Marie Daly (Vice President)

Laura Cannon-Ordile (Clerk) Marc Rudnick (Treasurer)

Members: Lela Chiavaras, George Darcy III, Dave Kehs,

Daniel Melnechuk, Allison Mooney, Joris Naiman,

Chris Rodstrom, Inge Uhlir, Roger Wrubel, Eileen Zubrowski.

Coming Events

Massachusetts Land Trust Conference, Saturday,
March 23rd, Worcester Academy, Worcester. Sponsors:
Mass. Land Trust Coalition (WLT is a member) and The
Trustees of Reservations. Phone 1-978-921-1944 x1863
for more information.

Run of the Charles Canoe and Kayak Race, Sunday,
April 28th, sponsored by the Charles River Watershed
Association. Phone 508-698-6810 to participate.

Earth Day Celebration in Waltham tentatively set for
May 4, 2002. Look for WLT there. Other details to be
announced.

Please send any comments to Waltham Land Trust,
Inc., P.O. Box 1120, Waltham, MA 02454-1120 or to
<memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org>.

Waltham Land Trust
PO Box 54-1120
Waltham MA 02454-1120

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON MA
PERMIT NO. 56470

Join or renew your membership today!

Your membership renewal date is on your label. If there is no date,
this is a complimentary copy. Please consider joining today!

Waltham Land Trust Membership Application

- I wish to join for \$15 per year
- I wish to make an additional donation:
 \$15 \$25 \$50 Other: \$ _____
- I am interested in donating land or establishing
a conservation easement. Please contact me with
more information.
- I wish to help by volunteering. I have skills in:

Name _____
Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____
Phones _____
Email _____
Comments _____

Make your check payable and send with this form to:
Waltham Land Trust
PO Box 54-1120
Waltham MA 02454-1120