

Waltham Land Trust

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

WALTHAM



JOURNAL FALL 2006

Shady's Pond Conservation Area

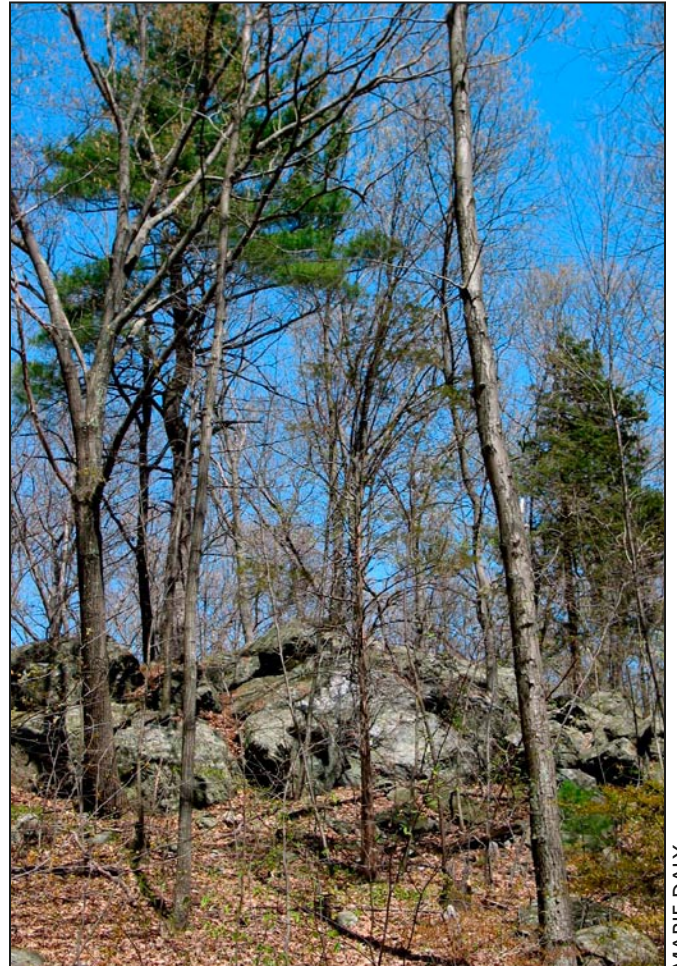
Marie Daly

In 2005, the City of Waltham acquired 34+ acres of woods and wetlands from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and the parish of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted. The land stretches from Trapelo Road and Old Lexington Road to Lexington Street, and lies adjacent to the Northgate Gardens Condominiums, the Chesterbrook Gardens apartments, the Bishops Forest Condominiums and the woods next to the Northeast School. Venerable stonewalls crisscrossing the woods manifest this land's history, which dates to 1636. The area was long used for wood lots, pastures and orchards, and in fact, the remnants of an old hilltop orchard still stand there today. In purchasing these woods, Waltham has not only ensured that this important flood control area for the Chester Brook watershed and integral part of the Western Greenway will remain, but the City has also preserved a significant symbol of our disappearing agricultural past.

Although the parcel has been named Shady's Pond Conservation Area, the land had long been historically associated with the Stearns family, and had been called "Sam Stearns' woodlot" in the past. In 1636 the first English immigrants to Watertown (which then included Waltham and Weston) divided up the town's lands among its inhabitants. In what was later to become Waltham, the land was divided into four squadrons or dividends, and each dividend was subdivided into 25 or more lots. Isaac Stearns, who had immigrated to Watertown in 1630, was allotted several parcels, including Lot #15 in the Fourth Dividend. He never lived there, and his homestead was located on "Elbow Hill", on Lexington Street in Belmont. He may have used the land as a wood lot, and as a source of meadow hay. In 1645 Stearns purchased the adjacent Lot 16⁴, located where Bow Street and the rectory of Our Lady Church now lie, and these two parcels stayed in the possession of the Stearns descendants for two hundred years.

Part of these two parcels went to Isaac Stearns' grandson, Isaac Stearns and his wife Mary Bemis, while

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MARIE DALY

One of the high points in the City's new Shady's Pond Conservation Area.

WLT Foraging walk at Prospect Hill Park

Russ Cohen

A large and enthusiastic group of about 35 Land Trust members and other erstwhile foragers spent a pleasant evening in June poking around the base of the City of Waltham's Prospect Hill Park, searching for wild edible plants. Here are some brief notes outlining the comestible and other virtues of some of the more

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UNDERNEATH IT ALL: EARTH DAY, 2007

Inge Uhlir

The Waltham Land Trust formed in 1999 with an ambitious agenda: to preserve, protect, restore and enjoy the natural open spaces in the city. Since then many of you have joined us at walks and talks, read about our priority list of properties, and learned from others who have special knowledge about farms, history, waterways, turtles, frogs and birds.

Underneath it all, the land, water, forests and marshes in our city are what sustain these features and creatures. So it is natural that the Land Trust has been a participant in Earth Day celebrations since our beginning. Now, we are taking a leadership role in planning an Earth Day 2007 Celebration that will strengthen and highlight many of the hidden natural resources that make Waltham such a great place to live, work and play. As we highlight these natural resources it is our obligation to be aware that human activity can at times pose a threat to those valued elements in our environment. Thus, the Earth Day 2007 Celebration will also focus on the many steps that Waltham residents are already taking to protect their environment.

Twelve like-minded organizations have joined with WLT, the City of Waltham and the Patriots Trail Girl Scout Council to make Earth Day 2007 truly home grown. The initial group formed a steering committee in June to draft a program that we can all be proud of. The center of activity will be at 240 Beaver St (U. Mass Field Station) and 265 Beaver St (Girl Scout Activity Center) with free transportation to other activities at the Lyman, Paine and Gore estates and Prospect Hill Park.

We hope that this new direction will become a tradition in the city. It will include citizens' ideas and actions to make the use of our natural resources sustainable. At our recent introduction to the public at Waltham Day on the Common we received a lot of good suggestions. (For example one new home will be heated with photovoltaic cells. Another resident grows shiitake mushrooms on a poplar log.) If you did not sign up then, please send your name and contact information to info@walthamlandtrust.org or call 781-893-3355 to tell us what interests you want to share for Earth Day 2007.

The cooperation of the city and especially the departments that care for and plan for our lands and waters will be key to our success. We are grateful to Mayor McCarthy for having endorsed our draft program and promised the city's assistance.

SAVE THE DATE Sunday April 22, 2007 from 10 AM to 4 PM at the green heart of the city, 240 and 265 Beaver St., Prospect Hill Park and the Estates.

The Earth Day 2007 Steering Committee is made up of the following organizations:

Charles River Watershed Association
Community Farms Outreach
Farmers' Market
Friends of Stonehurst
Gore Place
Green Rows of Waltham
Hardy Pond Association
Historic New England/Lyman Estate
Patriots Trail Girl Scout Council
Prospect Hill Park Advocacy Group
Waltham Garden Club
Waltham Land Trust

Contact person: Inge Uhlir, Waltham Land Trust
781-893-3355 (WLT) or 781-899-2844 (h)
iuhlr@walthamlandtrust.org.

Jericho Hill area resident Jeremy Price helped organize the May 7th cleanup and then brought his one-year-old son along to help out.



INGE UHLIR

Shady Pond *from page 1*

another part went to his grandson Samuel Stearns and his wife Mary Hawkins. Isaac Stearns built a house on Bow Street soon after his marriage in 1708. The original Trapelo Road did not cross the extensive wetlands at the bottom of the hill, but rather circled the wetlands on the north side. When the road was eventually straightened and built across the marsh, the old road was renamed Bow Street. Likewise, Lexington Street ran along a path now named Old Lexington Road. To this day, one can still walk along historic Bow Street and view the archaeological remains of houses and stone walls.

The other grandson, Samuel Stearns, lived on Trapelo Road across from what is now Manning Road. He used his remote parcel at the western end of Trapelo Road as a woodlot. New England farmers did not clear-cut their woodlots, but rather culled out trees as a way of maintaining a steady supply over time. That woodlot came down to Samuel Stearns' grandson, also named Samuel Stearns, who died intestate in 1817. Local historian Phinehas Lawrence described the wildlife and history of the woodlot in 1858 (see inset). The old Stearns farm on Bow Street went out of the Stearns family in the early 19th century, and was owned by various farmers into the 20th century.

The last individual owner of the old Stearns parcels was a farmer, Thomas Maher, who lived in the old Bow Street mansion. His farm stretched across Trapelo Road in a long lot that doglegged to Lexington Street (see 1892 map). In 1929, the Maher land was taken by eminent domain for the establishment of the Middlesex County tuberculosis sanitarium. The historic Stearns mansion burned down in the 1950s, and the land on the south side of Trapelo Road was sold in 1959 to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston for the parish of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted. The parish built a new church on the south side of the street, but 34 acres of the former Maher farm were left undeveloped. When the Archdiocese proposed selling these acres for development, many Waltham citizens and their leaders expressed concern that any development there would increase downstream flooding along Chester Brook. Connected to the Chester Brook corridor on the south and the Bow Street parcels on the north, the new conservation area is an important link in the Western

Greenway, a swathe of open space that ranges from Belmont and Lexington through Waltham. In 2005 the City of Waltham purchased the 34-acre site to keep the land undeveloped, to maintain the integrity of the Western Greenway and to provide the public an area for passive recreational use.

Near the corner of Trapelo and Lexington streets is a large tract of land, which every sportsman, in this vicinity who has ever cracked a rifle, or arrived at the dignity of shouldering a shot gun, knows as the "Sam Stearns wood lot." Game of numerous kinds, including partridges, woodcocks, quails, rabbits, and particularly gray squirrels, were formerly very plentiful here; but the sporting lads of our own and neighboring towns have made such a fearful havoc among it, that it is now with the greatest difficulty that a brace of any description can be bagged. A century and a quarter ago, this was the property of Samuel Stearns, and upon his decease in 1746, it passed to the ownership of his son, also Samuel. It remained in his possession until his decease, in 1817, and the property was afterwards distributed among the numerous heirs to the estate. Although it contains many brave old oaks, which for centuries have withstood the ravages of time, of storms, and of the woodman's axe, still, its present appearance indicates the want of a legitimate proprietor.

...Phinehas Lawrence, 1858

1892 Map showing Maher parcel



Foraging from page 1

than three dozen species of wild edible plants that can be found in the Park. Before doing that, I must note that a sign posted at the entrance of the Park states that picking plants is **not** permitted, so please do **not** infer from this article that it is OK for you to harvest any edible plants from Prospect Hill Park. That said, fortunately, all of the edible plants described below are very common and can readily be found elsewhere (perhaps even in your own yard).

While many people have heard that **Dandelions** (*Taraxacum spp.*) are edible, many people are put off by their bitterness. That is probably because they did not harvest the right portion of the plant at the right time. The tastiest part of the plants are, in my opinion, the flower buds before the flowers open, when they are still tucked into the basal rosette of the plant. After gathering these and washing carefully to remove any grit, I simply plunge them into boiling water for 60 seconds, and then eat them on the spot or incorporate into other dishes like soups, casseroles, omelets, etc. Dandelion buds are among my favorite vegetables (wild or domesticated), with a flavor that resembles a cross of spinach, artichokes and Brussels sprouts.

Although well-known by macrobiotics and used in Japanese cuisine, you may be more familiar with the **Burdock** (*Arctium spp.*) plant by its round burrs that get caught on your socks in the fall. Nevertheless, the same plant produces a large edible taproot which may be boiled and eaten (it has an Artichoke-like flavor, as the plants are cousins). The young leaf stalks, or the developing flower stalks are also edible.

Russ Cohen, author of Wild Plants I Have Known... and Eaten, led a very well attended "Eat Wild" walk at Prospect Hill Park on June 21st.



INGE UHLIR

Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), a plant held in high disrepute by ecologists and gardeners due to its invasive nature, is edible in the spring when young and tender. The shoots can be steamed and eaten hot or cold like Asparagus, and the peeled larger shoots can be used as a substitute for Rhubarb (as in Strawberry-Knotweed Pie).

While **Black Locust** (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) trees have only one edible portion (the flowers) and they are only available for a short period of time (a ten day period around Memorial Day), they are delicious, with a sweet, jasmine-like scent. The flowers can be eaten raw right off the tree, can be stripped of their central stalks and thrown into a salad, or be used fresh (or frozen) to make delicious Black Locust Fritters.

The blue, Dandelion-like flowers of **Chicory** (*Cichorium intybus*) are also edible, as are the young leaves (available in the spring and again in the fall), but it is the root that is the best-known edible portion of the plant, as it makes an excellent (albeit caffeine-free) substitute for coffee. Gather the roots at any time of the year, roast them slowly in an oven until they're brittle and aromatic, grind up by hand or in a food processor, and then brew a beverage from the grounds in a similar manner to coffee.

Another plant related to Chicory whose edible flowers can be used to make a pleasant beverage is the Chamomile-like **Pineappleweed** (*Matricaria matricariodes*). This low-growing plant is often found in gravelly areas and can be readily identified by its greenish-yellow, rounded cone-shaped flowers without any petals that when crushed smell just like canned pineapple.

We encountered several "weedy" species on the walk that are native (but considered weedy because of their tolerance of highly-disturbed sites). We came across many **Staghorn Sumac** (*Rhus typhina*) plants, the ripe red berries of which make a very acceptable Lemonade substitute. [By the way, there is nothing to fear from any Sumac with red berries; **Poison Sumac** (*Toxicodendron vernix*), which can cause worse dermatitis than its close relative Poison Ivy, has drooping clusters of greenish-white berries.] Also along the mowed field at the bottom of the hill were **Milkweed** (*Asclepias syriaca*) and **Pokeweed** (*Phytolacca americana*) plants. While the shoots of both of these perennial plants are harvestable in the spring and edible (after boiling for 7 minutes), Milkweed

has three additional edible stages showing up later in the season.

At the base of the old ski slope we encountered a large **Elderberry** (*Sambucus canadensis*) bush. While the white, umbrella-shaped flower clusters are sometimes eaten (I think Black Locust flowers are tastier), and the berries are not good to eat raw, the cooked and/or dried berries can be used to make jams, jellies or wine, or added to baked goods (I especially like to combine them with apples for sauce or pie). Lastly, **Evening Primrose** (*Oenothera biennis*), like Burdock, has edible roots that can be used in stir-fries or used to make pancakes (by simply substituting

an equivalent quantity of evening primrose roots for potatoes in a potato pancake recipe).

All the of plants discussed above are written up in greater detail (along with recipes for many of them) in my foraging book, *Wild Plants I Have Known...and Eaten*, first published in June of 2004 by the **Essex County Greenbelt Association** (<http://www.ecga.org>, the land trust covering northeast Mass.) and now into its second printing. (More info about the book is available at http://users.rcn.com/eatwild/press_release.htm). FYI, foraging is a permitted activity at all Greenbelt properties that are open to the public.

BBQ & BLUES SPRING FUNDRAISER A SUCCESS!

Elisabeth Carter and Karen Patterson

This past April the Waltham Land Trust again showed the city how to have a great time with our Third Annual Green Space Blues Jam. Stonehurst at the historic Robert Treat Paine Estate was rockin' to superb live blues from acclaimed guitarist Mike Williams and his Greenspace Jam Allstars. Joining the band this year was special guest vocalist Michelle "Evil Gal" Willson. Close to a sell-out crowd of 150 open space and music lovers enjoyed the Blues Jam tradition of finger-lickin' BBQ from Jake's, Metro West's best ice cream from Lizzy's, and a busy bar of wine, beer and soda from Gordon's. New on the menu this year was a pasta entree for the vegetarian crowd generously donated by The Skellig. Thanks to all our guests, volunteers, and sponsors, the evening was a great success, raising nearly \$3,000 for Land Trust projects and bringing 25 new members to the Land Trust. You know who you are, but so that

everyone else does, we're listing you here. A hearty round of applause to:

The Green Space Blues Jam Planning Committee and volunteers

Elisabeth Carter and Karen Paterson, Co-Chairs
Gisela Calnan, Bill Fowler, Maureen Fowler, Ridgely Fuller, Sue Genser, Juana Ham McDougall, Doug Prentiss, Bob Rees, Sarah Robinson, Lesya Struz

Our Sponsors

Autodesk, Inc.
The CDQ Charitable Trust
Marcou Jeweler's, Inc.

Our Waltham Vendors

Gordon's Fine Wine and Liquors
Don and his gang of merry caterers from Jake's Dixie Roadhouse
Nick and the gals from Lizzie's Ice Cream
Desi and friends from The Skellig

And additional thanks to

Framingham State College
Jen Fuchel, Invitation Designer
Marcia Goodwin, Stonehurst/The Robert Treat Paine Estate
Mayor Jeannette McCarthy, City of Waltham
McLean Hospital's Waverley Place Project
Ron Vokey, City of Waltham Planning Director
Mike Williams and the Greenspace Jam Allstars:
Shinichi Otsu, Ralph Rosen, Scotty Shetler, Jessie Williams, and special guest Michelle Willson.

And of course **Our Guests!**



Members of the the Greenspace Jam Allstars gave the crowd a great show at the 2006 event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please check www.walthamlandtrust.org for changes to event dates and times. For more information, contact Karen Patterson at kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org or 781.893.3355

Sunday, October 22nd 2-4 PM

Waltham Land Trust Fall Foliage Walk at Prospect Hill Park. Join us for a last look at the fall foliage, and a preview of our 2nd annual New Year's Day hike to Boston Rock in Prospect Hill Park. Light refreshments will be served at the top. Meet at the South entrance to the park, on Prospect Hill Rd, off Main St. Carpool if possible as on-street parking is limited. Call 781-893-3355 or email kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org for more information.

Wednesday, October 25th 7-9 PM

Waltham Land Trust Annual Meeting. The Waltham Land Trust will hold its Annual Meeting at the Waltham Public Library. Business portion of the meeting will begin at 7 PM. The meeting will open to the public at 7:30 PM with refreshments and a presentation by Paul Hellmund, co-author of *Designing Greenways* (2006) and the co-editor of *Ecology of Greenways* (1993).

Sunday, November 5th 1-4 PM

Waltham Land Trust Stewardship Day. After a summer and fall of use and sometimes abuse, many of Waltham's open spaces need some attention. From picking up trash to posting signs and removing invasive species, the Land Trust needs your help to keep our open spaces clean and green. Please register so we will know how many participants to plan for (supplies, work locations, etc.). To register, call 781-893-3355 or email kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org.

A large group participated in the WLT-sponsored walk through the Beaver Brook North reservation in August.



MARC RUDNICK

Looking Ahead to 2007!

Monday, January 1st, 2007

Waltham Land Trust 2nd Annual Boston Rock Walk, Prospect Hill Park. Join us on a First Day Walk to Prospect Hill Park's Boston Rock to view a great panorama of Waltham and the Boston skyline. Bring family and friends. Hot refreshments at the destination. Monday, January 1, 2007.

Friday, March 23, 2007

Waltham Land Trust Fourth Annual Green Space Fundraiser will once again be held at the historic Robert Treat Paine Estate, Stonehurst. This is a fun, exciting event that also raises important funds to support the work of the Land Trust. For more information or to volunteer on the Planning Committee, call 781.893.3355 or email kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org.

Sunday, April 22rd , 2007, 10 AM – 4 PM

Earth Day Celebration! The Waltham Land Trust, Patriots Trail Girl Scouts, the City of Waltham and twelve other coordinating organizations are hosting a fun, exciting and educational Earth Day Celebration. Many of the events will be held at the UMass Field Station and Girl Scout's Cedar Hill campus, with other venues to include the Robert Treat Paine, Gore, and Lyman estates.

The Waltham Land Trust Thanks Business Partners!

The Waltham Land Trust's Business Partnership Program is helping to make Waltham an even better place to live, work, play, and do business. If you are a Waltham business owner (or know someone

who is) and would like to work with the Waltham Land Trust, please contact us at 781.893.3355 or kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org for more information.

Autodesk, Inc.

610 Lincoln Street
781-839-5300

Citizens Bank

Waltham Hannaford
55 Russell St
781-894-3004

FastSigns

922 Main St
781-642-7446

Gordon's Fine Wine & Liquors

894 Main St
781-893-1900

Jake's Dixie Roadhouse

220 Moody Street
781-894-4227

Lizzy's Ice Cream

367 Moody Street
781-893-6677

Marcou Jewelers

318 Moody Street
781-899-2220

Myofascial Pain Treatment Center

1275 Main St
781-894-9430

Park Lodge Hotel Group of Waltham

(Marriott Courtyard/Holiday Inn Express/Home Suites Inn)
455 Totten Pond Rd
781-890-3000

The Skellig

240 Moody Street
781-647-0679

Stanton Insurance Company

230 2nd Ave
781-893-3200

Superior Shoe & Boot Service

839A Main St
781-893-6930

Think Globally, ACT Locally

Whether you've volunteered for the Land Trust in the past, or have always meant to but never quite got around to it, now is the time to get involved! Below we've highlighted several volunteer opportunities, but if you have skills not mentioned here that you would like to offer, please do so. Karen can be reached at 781.893.3355 or via email at kpatters@walthamlandtrust.org.

Land Stewardship Committee – Join this new committee and help plan, organize and carry out land stewardship projects on various open spaces in Waltham. We need help with everything from trail creation and maintenance to periodic monitoring of trails and open spaces.

Events Committee - Help plan, lead or promote fun recreational, social and educational events for Land Trust members and the public.

Membership and Fundraising Committee – Now more than ever, we need to get more people involved

with the Membership and Fundraising Committee. Without funding, we cannot do the important land preservation work that our members value. We particularly need people with grant writing, membership development, and marketing experience, but the only real prerequisite is a love for Waltham's open spaces and the desire to protect them. So please consider getting involved in this important aspect of the Land Trust's work.

Office Assistance – Membership in the Land Trust is growing and we need to keep track of our members so we can provide timely communications with them about Land Trust events, advocacy and membership dues. If you have a few hours a week, or even a month, to come in during business hours and help Karen out with this please let her know.

Green Space Fundraiser Planning Committee – Planning will start soon for the 4th Annual Green Space Blues Jam. We need help with the planning aspects, soliciting business sponsorships, or helping with day of set-up and take-down.

Waltham Land Trust Journal

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An electronic file (pdf) of this newsletter is available on our web site, <www.walthamlandtrust.org>.

Officers: Katherine Buttolph (President), David Kehs (Vice Pres.), Marie Daly (Clerk), Diana Young (Treasurer)

Directors: George Darcy III, Daniel Melnechuk, Joris Naiman, Stephen Rourke, Marc Rudnick, Lesya Struz, Inge Uhlir.

Program manager: Karen Patterson

Waltham Land Trust's 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,
- ♦ 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.

Please send any comments to the return address below, or email to <memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org>.

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ANNUAL MEETING


Please join us! On Wednesday, October 25th at 7 PM at the Waltham Public Library, the Waltham Land Trust will hold its Annual Meeting and is pleased to announce that Paul Cawood Hellmund will be the guest speaker. Mr. Hellmund is the Director of the Conway School of Landscape Design. He is co-author of *Designing Greenways* (2006) and he co-edited the 1993 book, *Ecology of Greenways*, which was recognized by the American Society of Landscape Architects with a national award. He also was principal author of Colorado State Parks' widely circulated *Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind*. The focus of his design, research, practice, and teaching is improving the relationship between people and nature, especially in urban, suburban, and degraded landscapes. He sees finding a balance between nature and people as a key factor in creating sustainable communities and he seeks collaborative design as essential to progress in sustainability.

If you're not already a WLT member and have received this complimentary copy, please consider joining today!

Please renew or join

To renew or join, please visit www.walthamlandtrust.org or call 781-893-3355

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