

# Waltham Land Trust

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

JOURNAL FALL 2011



## A DREAM IN GREEN: THE HARDY POND CONSERVATION AREA

*Marc Rudnick*

Although Lakeview neighbors are familiar with the view across its shimmering waters, surprisingly few other area residents have glimpsed Hardy Pond, a 45-acre great pond wedged between Lake Street and Trapelo Road in North Waltham. This well-hidden water body was made locally famous by the Hardy Pond Association, a neighborhood group that doggedly and successfully pursued a decades-long effort to get the pond dredged, gas-powered motorboats banned, and damaging nutrient and sediment inputs under control. The pond provides recreational opportunities galore – summer sees dozens of kayaks, canoes and fishing boats afloat on the open water, winter brings skating, ice fishing and hockey games. Swimming, while not prohibited, is discouraged by a muddy shoreline, a shallow weedy bottom, and an armada of fearsome snapping turtles that call Hardy home.

Even fewer folks venture beyond Hardy Pond to the large green space along its western shore. Here native and invasive species battle for control of some 30-plus acres of wetlands, maple swamp and second growth forest that form an integral part of the pond ecosystem. Together these resources provide food and habitat for an astounding variety of wildlife: more than 140 bird species have been documented here, along with coyote, deer, fisher, raccoon, opossum, muskrat, groundhog, abundant turtles and frogs, and numerous species of fish, small rodents, and snakes. Unfortunately, this green space is crisscrossed with property lines laid out long ago, and is owned by a dozen different parties – several have proposed unsuccessful development plans for houses, schools and other uses. Development has chopped away at the edges of this green space, but it remains largely intact, some areas frequented by nature lovers along narrow foot trails, others inaccessible thanks to tangles of vines and marshy ground underfoot.

As a result of the staggering development boom of the past 30 years in Waltham, places once ignored because they were wet, rocky, or remote, like the Hardy Pond wetlands, are now under threat from developers running out of easier opportunities. Protecting these acres has long been a dream of the Hardy Pond



Association, and two recent changes have significantly improved the chances of that dream coming true. The first was the adoption by Waltham voters in 2005 of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which has created a local commission that recommends projects for Waltham's three to four million dollars a year in CPA funds. Acquiring open space is one of four allowable uses for these funds, along with historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation. The second significant change was that the Hardy Pond Association has become a project of the Waltham Land Trust, broadening the small neighborhood group's ability to get this local green space protected.

In the first year that CPA funds were available, both the Waltham Land Trust (WLT) and City Councillor Ed Tarallo submitted separate proposals to protect different parts of the Hardy Pond wetlands. Sadly for these efforts, there were some growing pains to go through integrating the CPA into Waltham's body politic. Despite the enthusiastic support of the CPA committee, the two proposals languished – one already approved and one still pending legal review – long enough that the authority to act on them expired.

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## A Dream in Green *from page 1*

With Hardy Pond Association as a project of WLT, and clarification and improvement of CPA and City procedures regarding open space and other projects, the time was ripe to mount another campaign to save this green space. Working together with City Councillor Tarallo, WLT's Land Committee drafted a CPA application this spring that built upon both of the original project submissions, as well as the recommendations of a WLT-funded study of this area by the Conway School of Landscape Design. Dubbed the Hardy Pond Conservation Area, our 1.3 million dollar project would implement a comprehensive plan to acquire the land, protect the resources and improve the hydrology and public access. The result would be a city-owned Conservation Area permanently protected by a conservation restriction held by the Waltham Land Trust.

If approved, the project would involve several phases:

- Acquiring parcels in tax arrears will bring about 1/3 of the acreage into city ownership.
- The project's Land Protection Specialist will negotiate acquisition or protective easements on another third of the acreage.
- Applying a conservation restriction to the entire area will protect the final third – land already owned (but without permanent protection) by the City of Waltham and the Waltham Land Trust.
- Extinguishment of “paper roads” within the Hardy Pond Conservation Area will erase the subdivision originally laid out for this area.
- Construction of passive recreational elements (trails, boardwalk, bird blind, signage, kiosks, and dock) will improve access for the public.
- Addressing poorly designed dikes and utilities will improve the hydrology of the wetlands and pond.
- Establishing a stewardship fund will assure maintenance and protection of the Hardy Pond Conservation Area.

The Hardy Pond Conservation Area will be a partnership between the city and the land trust, the former owning the land and the latter owning the conservation restriction. When the city council re-convenes in the fall, we anticipate that Councillor Tarallo and Councillor George Darcy, whose wards surround Hardy Pond, will introduce a resolution to apply together with the Waltham Land Trust for CPA funds to create the conservation area. We're certain that the City Councillors would be delighted to hear from WLT members about their support for the Hardy Pond Conservation Area.

## Vegetated Buffer Zones

If you live near water or wetlands, you can help improve the water quality and reduce aquatic weed growth by planting a buffer zone between your lawn and the pond.

Vegetated buffer zones help filter nutrients and pollutants before they reach the pond, minimizing the impact of pesticides and fertilizers from our lawns and oil and grease from streets and driveways. Native shrubs, ground covers, and trees in the buffer zone use the excess nutrients and their roots to slow the surface run-off, providing cleaner water to the pond. Lawns are inadequate buffers, for they only hold soil in place. Grass is not thirsty enough and grass roots are not deep enough to absorb even a fraction of the run-off during a rainstorm. With a VBZ, lawn maintenance will be reduced, wildlife habitats will increase, and visual diversity will be added to the landscape.

While it is most important for shoreline and wetland abutters to plant a buffer zone, nearby residents can greatly aid in this effort by planting a similar area.

An effective buffer zone can be created by following these suggestions:

- Use a variety of native shrubs, ground cover, and trees—because in combination they take up the most water and nutrients.
- Make the buffer zone as wide as possible.
- Leave the VBZ undisturbed—do not rake the leaves and limit foot traffic to a bark-mulched path.
- Do not use fertilizers or pesticides in the VBZ.

### Trees

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)  
Birch (*Betula* species)  
Black Gum or Tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*)  
White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*)  
Willow (*Salix* species)

### Shrubs

Shadbush (*Amelanchier canadensis*)  
Sweet Pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)  
Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*)  
Witherod (*Viburnum cassinoides*)  
Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corybosum*)  
Fetterbush (*Leucothoe racemosa*)  
Swamp Azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)  
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

### Ground Covers

Ferns (many species)  
Dewberry (*Rubus hispidus*)  
Pachysandra (many species)  
Daylily (*Hemerocallis*)



## WESTERN GREENWAY TRAIL UPDATE

By Dave Kehs

The volunteer trail builders who have been working on the Western Greenway Trail have not been slacking off this season. In the Spring of 2011, about two dozen trail builders showed up on two different weekend days to construct a trail in the Lexington portion of “Lot 1”. Lot 1 is now under the control of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. The new trail begins on Walnut Street just north of Cart Path Lane. The trail runs parallel to Walnut Street for about 100 yards and then heads into the woods, eventually connecting with the existing Lot 1 trail that goes to the water tower in Lexington. This new “Walnut Street Connector” (which is on the property that was formerly part of the Middlesex County Hospital) provides the missing link between the already-constructed trail through the former Met State property and the trail



SONJA WADMAN

*Director Dave Kehs helps clear brush for the Western Greenway Trail!*

network in the Lexington portion of “Lot 1”. The new connector trail is just under .4 miles in length.

A second trail-building project involved clearing part of the Waltham portion of “Lot 1” as well as cutting a trail through a state-owned portion of the former Middlesex County Hospital known as “Lot 3”.

The Waltham portion of “Lot 1” was purchased by the city in 2009 and is sometimes referred to as “Bow Street”. Part of this colonial-era road had become overgrown and a large tree had fallen, making it virtually impassable. Volunteers cleared the old roadway, and used a chainsaw and an axe to clear out the fallen tree. Bow Street, which was officially abandoned by the City of Waltham in 2003, runs just behind Falzone Field on Trapelo Road. A few historic house foundations can still be seen from the former road which is now a trail.

In order to travel from Bow Street/Lot 1 to Trapelo Road, it is necessary walk through the six-acre state-owned property designated as Lot 3. While the future of Lot 3 is still up in the air, the Friends of the Western Greenway have obtained a license to construct a trail through that property. That trail was cut this summer and the southern endpoint is just opposite the Shady’s Pond Conservation Area sign on Trapelo Road. Further grooming on this trail is still needed and there will be further work days this fall. But it is now possible for a hiker to walk from the former Met State property, through the former Middlesex County Hospital property, and into the Shady’s Pond Conservation Area with just two road crossings.

In near the future, the Waltham Land Trust and the Friends of the Western Greenway hope to put the finishing touches on a trail from the Shady’s Pond Conservation Area to the Storer Conservation Area (Paine Estate). This will require an easement from the two Bishops Forest Condominium Associations (this easement is currently under negotiation) and permission from the Greater Boston YMCA (recently approved). With these final “missing links” in place, we’re looking forward to some all-day hikes along the Western Greenway through Belmont, Lexington, and Waltham. Lace up those hiking shoes now!

### Fall Fundraiser Dinner at the Elephant Walk, November 14th

This year, the Waltham Land Trust is very excited to host a Monday Night Benefit Dinner at the Elephant Walk, a family-owned restaurant on Main Street that has been serving award-winning Cambodian and French cooking since 1991. On November 14th, WLT supporters will be offered a choice of starter, soup or salad, and entrée for just \$40. Vegetarian, vegan and



gluten-free options will be available. A separate appetizer will be passed initially as our group gathers. A cash bar with fine wines, cocktails, beer and non-alcoholic drinks will be open all evening, half of which the Waltham Land Trust will receive at the end of the benefit. Tickets must be purchased in advance—stay tuned for the “on sale” announcement on our website, in future emails, and on postcards that will be mailed to those without email. Hope to see you there!

## WALTHAM FIELD STATION AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

*(This is the second of a two-part article begun in the Spring Journal.)*

Dee Kricker

With the departure of a significant university presence in 1989 and with dwindling resources for maintenance and repair of the aging Waltham facility, the question of what to do with the site became an ongoing dilemma for UMass. Concerns about potential liability resulting from deteriorating structures and inadequate revenue to support operations combined with limited capacity to initiate a long-range planning process, left the use and management of the site problematic. In addition, frequent personnel and departmental changes at the Amherst campus preoccupied administration and Waltham was, as one official stated, “not on their radar,” for many years. Coincident with the downsizing of programs at the Field Station was the demise of the last of the local family farms, including the closing of the popular DeVincent’s farmstand just up the street, farmland that was converted to athletic fields by Bentley College. By the mid-90s it seemed that Waltham’s more than 350 year agricultural history was nearing a close.

### Renaissance of Community-Based Agriculture

It was during this fallow period that two ideas for repurposing the underutilized fields at the former Cedar Hill Farmland germinated. In 1993, a small group of aspiring gardeners rented a dormant field to incubate Waltham’s first community garden, Green Rows of Waltham (GROW). It was the perfect location: pliable land, daylong sun and available water for irrigation. Soon, plots were staked and rented out for a small fee, a shed and small greenhouse were erected, an irrigation system was installed and elated gardeners got down hoeing and tilling ’til the cows came home. GROW quickly became a valued refuge for DIY gardeners who spend their leisure moments working the soil for precious homegrown tomatoes. Sun-glazed and content, they bend into the beauty of the gardens, toil away, and take more than bounty from the soil.

Shortly after GROW was established, a second idea for the Beaver St. land was hatched by Oakes Plympton, a modern day gleaner who salvaged vegetables from regional farms and delivered the produce to food pantries and homeless shelters. The idea was to try growing vegetables for charity by farming vacant fields at the rear of the field station. With lots of ambition, but little experience the impromptu farming experiment turned out to be an enormous task that produced lots of weeds, but not many vegetables. However, the



DAVID KRICKER

enterprise attracted volunteers willing to work out the kinks to develop a viable working farm based on a model of sustainable agriculture known as CSA - Community Supported Agriculture. By selling seasonal shares of organic produce for which the consumer paid a sum in advance, a predictable stream of revenue was generated to hire experienced farmers and staff, who along with an active board of directors, plowed ahead to create Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF). Now in its sixteenth year, WFCF is part of a mushrooming nationwide movement that connects people with their farmed land and provides access to nutritional local food networks.

Both the community farm and garden maintain a long waiting list each season due to high public interest in their activities. In addition, WFCF continues to provide food to local food banks and they now operate a market for lower-income folks:

*Anyone can come to the market and fill a bag with vegetables for \$5. Some pay with cash, some with SNAP, which we began accepting this year thanks to a partnership with the Waltham Farmers’ Market. We also partner with many local direct-service organizations to provide vouchers for a free bag to many of their clients. Last week, we gave away a record 72 bags of produce at the market. On July 28, the Boston Globe reported that doctors at Boston Medical Center “are seeing more hungry and dangerously thin young children in the emergency room than at any time in more than a decade of surveying families.” One thousand pounds. It’s the least we can do. —Farm Manager Amanda Cather*

### Envisioning the Future: An Agricultural Preserve?

Recently, UMass officials have initiated a strategic planning process that will result in recommendations **continued on page 5**



## Field Station continued from page 4

regarding their future investment in the Waltham site. To date, the planning process has included holding a series of meetings with tenants to gather information regarding current programs and possible new directions for site use; completing a feasibility study to assess conditions at the site and to outline potential buildout options; and conducting phone interviews with stakeholders, potential partners and other interested parties. Current users have expressed their strong desire to continue utilizing the site for their programs and they have been eager to participate in the planning process. Their fundamental vision is to preserve the rich historical and ecological integrity of the site and to promote its use as a place where the public can learn about and become involved in sustainable agriculture, community-based food systems, and ecological land practices. Among other ideas, current users put forth the following wish list for the site:

To preserve the land for farming, gardening, and ecological land-use projects that serve the public interest; to protect the natural and wetlands areas as an integral link within the Western Greenway open space corridor; to provide a place to conduct research and education around environmental, farming, gardening, and food issues; to preserve the historical agricultural legacy; to honor Cornelia Warren's bequest that her name be attached to the site; and to renovate or construct new structures using green building methods and energy efficient technology.

This vision would provide UMass the opportunity to invest in a model "Agricultural Preserve" dedicated to the arts and science of sustainable farming, ecological land-use practices, and community-based programs about food systems. Such a center would be an invaluable local asset complimenting the industrial and high-tech legacy of our region.

## Who uses the Field Station today?

In addition to UMass Extension programs and 4-H, the following non-profit groups are key tenants at the site today:

**Green Rows of Waltham (GROW)** is a thriving community garden of more than 100 plots cultivated by area residents. In keeping with Greater Boston community gardening policy, growers pay a small fee.

**Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF)** - WFCF's mission is to promote local agriculture through growing and distribution practices that are socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. We forge relationships between people, their food supply, and the land from which it grows. We envision communities in which sustainable agriculture plays a central role in creating universal access to the food and beauty of local farms.

**Waltham Land Trust (WLT)** - WLT's mission is to acquire, preserve or restore land in a way that balances conservation and access, maximizes its natural value, 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), bio-diversity is increased, and a legacy of conservation is perpetuated in Waltham.

**Mass Farmers Markets (MFM)** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to partner with farmers, consumers, and communities to foster, enhance and



sustain farmers market in Massachusetts in order to improve regional farm viability, consumer nutrition, and community social and economic development. MFM consistently provides support services to all Massachusetts farmers markets and the communities that house them, and these services are of increasing priority as interest in markets continues to surge. MFM believes strong connection between our state's consumers and producers contributes to a healthy society in three important arenas: family nutrition and food security, agricultural viability and open space preservation, and the economic and social revitalization of neighborhoods.

**Boston Area Climate Experiment (BACE)** is designed to characterize ecosystem responses to climate change in a New England old-field ecosystem. UMass Boston researchers measure responses of several variables, including growth of wildflowers, grasses, and tree seedlings. BACE was constructed with funding from the National Science Foundation and is supported by the National Institute for Climatic Change Research. BACE is endorsed by the Global Land Project.

**Boston Area Gleaners (BAG)** is dedicated to rescuing surplus farm crops for food pantries and shelters. BAG also salvages produce, bread and prepared foods from retail stores for donation.

## LAND TRUST SUPPORTERS STAY ACTIVE THIS SUMMER

*Sonja Wadman*

It was a warm summer this year, with lots of bright sunshine interrupted by the occasional thunderstorm, and the Waltham Land Trust offered fun programs for varying interests and participants. We kicked off the season with two Western Greenway activities on National Trails Day, June 4<sup>th</sup>. In the morning, WLT's hard working trail builders blazed a path through Lot 3 on the north side of Trapelo Road, opposite Our Lady's Church. In the afternoon, Land Trusters walked along established Western Greenway trails in the woods north of the High School, through Chester Brook Woods and into the Storer Conservation Area at Stonehurst. The next Saturday was the third Annual Waltham Charles Riverfest. Unfortunately, the threat of thundershowers resulted in Riverfest being canceled, but the supporters of the Waltham Land Trust were undeterred! Over a dozen people joined leaders of WLT and a Trustees of Reservations ranger on a slightly damp stroll along the Charles Riverwalk. The Land Trust ended June with an evening of fun at 240 Beaver Street, the UMASS Waltham field station, home of WLT's office and the Waltham Fields Community Farm. WFCF co-sponsored the night's activities, which began with

*Whitney-Farrington-Cooke House situated at the base of Mackerel Hill just across Trapelo Road from the National Archives.*

foraging enthusiast, Russ Cohen, leading participants around the edges of farm, field and forest in search of wild edibles. In the outdoors potluck that followed, diners were treated to a delicious Juneberry pie, baked with fruit Russ had picked the day before from a Boston park. The evening ended with families looking up at the stars from blankets and through telescopes that made the rings of Venus clearly visible.

In July and August, WLT focused on conducting outreach at the Waltham Farmer's Market on alternate Saturdays, plus one special activity each month. Towards the end of July, on a very sunny Sunday afternoon, about 30 Land Trust supporters, including Mayor McCarthy, joined co-founders Marie Daly and City Councillor George Darcy on a walk up Mackerel Hill and a tour of the Whitney-Farrington-Cooke House. Ms. Daly shared that the historic house, which was built in 1858 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1989, is recently believed to have been the site of former smallpox inoculation facility. Councillor Darcy informed the group that the City Council is considering purchasing the historic property to preserve it as part of the open space corridor along Trapelo Road.

Finally, on a pleasant Wednesday afternoon in early August, volunteers from the Land Trust removed ten trash bags' worth of invasive Japanese knotweed from the Charles Riverwalk in an activity led by the Trustees of Reservations' Summer Youth Corps. It was a great summer, and we look forward to seeing folks soon at one of our fall events!



MARIE DALY



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### October Walk Along the Charles

*Tuesday, October 11, 5 p.m.*

Meet at Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center, 564 Main Street

The Fall Walking Group in October will stroll along the Charles Riverwalk from Moody Street upstream towards the Prospect Street Bridge and the Watch Factory.

### LET'S MOVE Waltham Walks At Stonehurst

*Sunday, October 16, noon to 4 p.m.*

Stonehurst, 100 Robert Treat Paine Drive

Let's Move is a national initiative of First Lady Michelle Obama that has been endorsed by the City of Waltham. Join us for guided tours of the mansion's grounds and the Storer Conservation Area, healthy Halloween treat alternatives, craft activities, and more. Free trolley shuttle service between Waltham Common and Stonehurst.

### 99 Restaurant Fundraiser

*Wednesday, October 19, 5-10 p.m.*

99 Restaurant, 110 South Street

Bring the family to the 99 Restaurant and 15% of the entire bill (food and drink) goes to the Land Trust. Good for dine-in and take out. As the date approaches, download and print the WLT certificate from our website, or call our office to have one mailed to you.

### Waltham Land Trust Annual Meeting

*Tuesday, October 25, 7:30 p.m.*

First Parish in Waltham, 50 Church Street

Get to know other Land Trust members at our annual meeting where we will hear from engaging speakers, receive updates on the Western Greenway and the Rail Trail in Waltham, discuss Land Preservation in Waltham, and vote on WLT Board Directors.

### November Walk Along the Charles

*Saturday, November 5, 10 a.m.*

Meet at Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center, 564 Main Street

The Fall Walking Group in November will stroll along the paths of Charles Riverwalk from Elm Street downstream towards the Mary Early Footbridge.

### Fall Fundraiser Dinner at The Elephant Walk

*Monday, November 14, evening*

The Elephant Walk Restaurant, 663 Main Street

Meet other Land Trust supporters while enjoying a delicious Cambodian and French three-course meal (starter, soup/salad, entrée) for a fixed price of only \$40. WLT will also receive half of the proceeds from the cash bar offering fine wines, beer, cocktails and non-alcoholic drinks. Tickets must be purchased in advance—stay tuned for an announcement on our website, in future emails, and on postcards that will be mailed to those without email.

## 2011 ANNUAL APPEAL GOING STRONG

Many thanks to the thirty-six Waltham Land Trust members and supporters who contributed \$4327 this past summer to the 2011 Annual Appeal. With this strong support, we will be able to make real progress completing the Western Greenway this fall and next year.

Donations were made to honor the following people:

- Peter Braff
- John Muir
- Grove Wadman

Donations were made in memory of the following people:

- Angelo & Josephine Castellana
- Barbara Kizik
- John Rohrbaugh
- Alvin Paul Rose

We are still accepting 2011 Annual Appeal donations! Please contact Program Director Sonja Wadman at [swadman@walthamlandtrust.org](mailto:swadman@walthamlandtrust.org) or 781-893-3355 to make your donation and help build the Western Greenway.

## HELP WLT GO PAPERLESS

Join the 116 Land Trust members who have selected to have their Journals sent to them electronically. By opting out of the mailed hard copy, these supporters are helping WLT reduce our carbon footprint and save on costs associated with printing, postage, and transportation.

Please send an email with your name to Sonja Wadman, [swadman@walthamlandtrust.org](mailto:swadman@walthamlandtrust.org), with the subject header *Electronic Journal* if you'd like the next Journal emailed to you. Please remember that receiving newsletters is a privilege of membership. Be sure you are up-to-date with your dues so you don't miss the Spring 2012 Journal!

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**Waltham Land Trust Journal** © 2010 Waltham Land Trust  
is published by Waltham Land Trust, Inc.  
PO Box 541120, Waltham MA 02454-1120.

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

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### **Waltham Land Trust's Mission**


The Waltham Land Trust's mission is to create  
a legacy of land conservation in Waltham by  
promoting, protecting, restoring, and acquiring  
open space.

We envision growth in public appreciation of  
natural resources, preservation and restoration of  
native habitat, and increased biodiversity to foster a  
healthier environment.

Please send any comments to the return address below,  
or email to <[memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org](mailto:memberlink@walthamlandtrust.org)>.

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