

# The MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

Serving the towns of Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Cromwell, Portland and East Hampton

Volume 15, No. 2

Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.

Spring 2003

## Hike and Potluck Picnic Planned for Annual Meeting

### Mark Your Calendars!

The annual meeting of the Middlesex Land Trust is scheduled for Saturday, May 31, 2003, 10:00 a.m., at the Ball Field at Hurd State Park in East Hampton. We plan to conduct a brief business meeting, to be followed with an easy hike and potluck picnic. To get there, take Route 151 to Hurd Park Road. Follow the signs to the park and ball field. In case of foul weather (steady or heavy rain), the meeting will be held at the Connecticut Forest and Park Association, Route 66, in Middlefield, also at 10:00 a.m.

All MLT members and interested parties are invited and encouraged to attend. Please join us and learn more about what *your* Land Trust is doing and our plans for the future. We guarantee John LeShane will make the hike fun for all!

For more information or to sign up, please contact Ralph Urban, 267-6836, or Diane Moore, 349-9817.

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## Please Renew Your MLT Membership

Don't forget to send in your renewal for the MLT. Your dues go directly toward new land purchases as well as land stewardship activities.

Every member is an important component of our Land Trust. As a membership organization, our strength comes from you, our members.

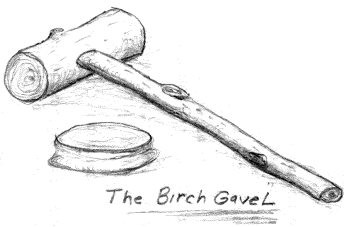


## Land Trust Board Members Take Legislative Action

Board members have taken action on several critical issues that have come up in the 2003 legislative session near and dear to the Land Trust: the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and the proposed elimination of funding for open space in the state budget.

Land Trust Board members advocated for a bill to require registration of all ATVs. The purpose of the bill is to encourage safe and courteous operation of ATVs on all land to minimize damage to hiking trails, plants and wildlife, and protect hikers and their pets using the trails.

Two weeks ago, Land Trust Board members were among over 250 open space advocates who jammed a hearing room at the Legislative Office Building. They were there to demonstrate their concern about Governor Rowland's proposal to eliminate state open space funding in the next two-year budget and the "lump-sum" funding provision for the DEP's open space programs that has been crucial to its successes in the past two years. (See the Chairpersons' Corner on page 2 to find out what you can do to help.)



# The Chairpersons' Corner

Dear MLT Members:

A quick glance out the window reveals that a cold and snowy winter is receding rapidly. Canada geese are heard honking overhead once again. We have spotted our first orange-breasted robins, and patterns of green are beginning to appear in our yards. If you look carefully, new budding can be seen on most of the varieties of deciduous trees native to our corner of the globe. The melting of the heavy snows has once again saturated the ground, helping to relieve our earlier drought condition, and mud season is upon us. While the road sand and mud are still with us, new life is sprouting all around us if we take the time to look and smell.

The Land Trust has not slumbered over the winter months by any means, but we do look forward to spring with renewed vigor and enthusiasm. Indeed, the challenges are greater than ever. The construction boom in northern Middlesex County, like elsewhere, continues unabated, increasing the pressures on our finite supply of open space and natural areas. At the same time the drastic fiscal straits of our state government means that the state's financial support for open space and farmland protection is in great danger. The Governor's proposed budget would eliminate ALL such funding. The important, if incremental progress made in recent years may grind to a halt unless we act now.

The role of the Middlesex Land Trust, like other land trusts, has never been more crucial as we push forward to preserve more acreage in Connecticut. *We urge all of our members to contact the Governor and their state representatives and senators to voice support for maintaining funding for open space protection. These matching state funds and grants have been, and will be, critical to preserving our woodlands and working landscapes.*

As reflected in our ongoing membership renewals and new memberships, MLT members share a passion for preserving our natural landscapes and resources. Please join us at our annual meeting on May 31, 2003 (see page 1) and learn more about our successes and future plans.

*Ralph and Diane*

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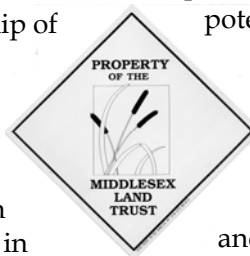
## The Costs of Stewardship

The MLT currently owns and manages over 525 acres in northern Middlesex County, consisting of some 45 parcels. As our name implies, this land is "entrusted" to us for its care. Thus, stewardship of these lands is a core mission of the organization.

For many years, faithful MLT board member John LeShane has spearheaded our stewardship efforts, and members have given generously of their "sweat equity." However, in addition to these volunteer efforts, stewardship does have its costs. Signage for marking property lines and providing visitors information costs money to purchase and maintain. Trail maintenance, including bridge building and repair, maintaining culverts and drainages, and seeking to minimize foreign and invasive plant species all

have their costs in time and materials. One of our wonderful recent acquisitions, Highland Pond preserve, even requires dam maintenance, potentially quite costly.

Depending on the characteristics of the parcel and how critical the need for its preservation, the MLT takes future stewardship costs into consideration in deciding to acquire or accept a given parcel, and in the case of subdivisions, often seeks stewardship funding as part of the acquisition. By building funds for stewardship into our land acquisitions, we can assure our preserves are managed properly for both conservation and recreation.



## The Abe Temkin Preserve



Tucked between Wangunk Meadows to the west and south, 290 foot Walnut Hill to the north, and the old Paley Farm to the east, is the 33 acre Abe Temkin Preserve. It was named for the donor, Abe Temkin, the developer of the Paley Farms subdivision, who conveyed the original six acre parcel to the Trust in 1993. In 1996, his son Steven donated the remaining 27 acres.

The greater part of the Preserve is a ravine carved out by Hale's Brook after glacial Lake Middletown's ice dam broke several thousand years ago. The four square mile watershed of Hales Brook flows to the Connecticut River from its source below Belltown and Clark Hills. Near its source can be found the remains of Camp Bennett on Pray's Pond where the first camp for black children in the country was located.

In the center of the preserve rises a high plateau that parallels the brook on the east side and another significant ravine on its west. Due to its defensibility and proximity to water, the state archaeologist has identified this area as having a high likelihood for

past Native American occupation.

On the plateau and slopes the forest is dominated by upland species of majestic oaks, maple, beech, birch and hickory, whose size and stature suggest an age of 80-120 years. Rising from the floodplain of the ravine, the great, white trunks of giant sycamores tower over the brook.

Last year, Eagle Scout candidate, Aaron Burgess built a bridge to connect our trail on the east to the trail on the west. Abutting landowner Dave Varni has generously allowed the Land Trust to extend the trail through a portion of his property. Just recently Drew Rusnak of South Glastonbury agreed to create an interpretative trail to fulfill the requirements for his Eagle Scout badge. A grant from the Rockfall Foundation will help finance the project.

The Preserve is in north Portland off of Route 17. Coming from Portland, turn left onto Paley Farm Road and follow to Cedar Terrace on your left. The unmarked entrance to the trail is on your right just past the first house at the top.

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## A Lunchtime Escape

Now here's a little exercise I think all of you should try...especially on those days when the stresses of job or family are getting particularly difficult to handle. Take an extended lunch and head out to one of our wild little parcels of land for half an hour or so. I recently had the opportunity (need) to do just this, and in the process reminded myself of just how valuable a small parcel of open space can be.

Give this a try and see how it works for you. Hop in your car and head for the Highland Pond Preserve in Middletown. Take Exit 20 from I-91 and turn west onto Country Club Road (away from Middletown). After about 400 yards take a right onto Bell Street. About 4/10 of a mile down Bell Street you will find an old trolley path on your left marked by a rusting hinged gate. Park your car off to the side of the road, grab your lunch or a good book, and head off down the path. A couple of hundred yards later you'll find the dam at Highland Pond. Take off your shoes, turn your jacket into a pillow, and lie back on the

warm cement of the dam. Close your eyes. Listen. Take it all in.

On my last visit, ice still covered the pond and the high water thundered over the top of the damn like galloping horses. Closing my eyes, I was drawn in by the chattering of gray squirrels darting through the branches of the trees around me. Sparrows rustled through the leaves looking for some old seeds or berries revealed by the thaw. I was wooed by the mating calls of the native trout (ok, I may have been dozing off at this point in time, but I swear I heard something). Eventually I did have to drag myself from my sun-soaked trance and head back to work, but I did so with a renewed spirit and a new stride.

So if you find yourself needing a break – take one on us. Come enjoy one of our little sanctuaries and take back part of your day. The results can be amazing.





## Upcoming Work Parties

Join us for one (or all!) of our upcoming work parties.

Help us spruce up our preserves, get some fresh air and exercise, and have fun! Please bring shovels, loppers, axes, mattocks, adzes and work gloves. Steady rain cancels any of the events. Contact John LeShane, 342-0658, for information.

**Thursday, May 15, 4:30-7:30 PM, Abe Temkin Preserve, Cedar Terrace (off of Paley Farm Road), Portland.** We will be building a trail through the preserve.

**Saturday, May 31, 9 AM-12 PM, Coginchaug Quarry/Mica Ledges Preserves, Durham.** Meet at the end of Cream Pot Road. We will be working on the trails.

**Wednesday, June 11, 5-8 PM, Pocotopaug Preserve, Bay Road, East Hampton.** We will be doing trail work.

**Saturday, June 28, 9 AM-12 PM, Delbert Harris/Jackson Farms/South Farms/Marino Preserves, Middletown.** Meet at the Harris Preserve on Wilcox Road. We will be establishing a trail. If you have a bush hog you can bring, please contact John LeShane.

**Thursday, July 17, 5-8 PM, Pine Brook Preserve, Chestnut Hill Road, East Hampton.** We will mark boundaries and work on the trail.

### The Middlesex Landscape Contributors:

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Articles: Bill Hincks, John LeShane, Diane Moore, Ralph Urban

## Middlesex Land Trust Membership Application

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

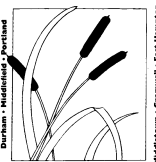
- This is an address change
- Annual Membership..... \$10
- Sustaining Membership.....\$35
- Patron Membership.....\$100
- Life Membership .....\$1000
- I would like to learn more about donating land or conservation easements.
- I would like to donate time.
- Stewardship Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:  
Middlesex Land Trust, Inc., and mail to  
27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT 06457

*The Middlesex Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization so your dues & contributions are tax deductible*

*Don't forget your employer's matching gift form!*

### MIDDLESEX



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