

The MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

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

Intrepid Hikers Raise Money for Meshomasic Land Preservation

On October 17 three members of the Meshomasic Hiking Club hiked 45 miles on the Airline Trail to raise money and awareness for the need to protect the Meshomasic Forest Landscape. This area, designated by The Nature Conservancy as one of Connecticut's *Last Great Places*, includes portions of Portland and East Hampton here in northern Middlesex County.

The Meshomasic Forest Landscape spans seven towns in three counties from Portland's Great Hill Pond to Manchester's Case Mountain. Among the important natural features of the area are Meshomasic State Forest, New England's oldest state forest, Gay City State Park, Meshomasic (a Native American word meaning the place of many snakes) and Kongscut Mountain, as well as the watersheds of the Connecticut River, Wangunk Meadows and the Salmon River.

In order to further protection of this large forest block and its diverse wildlife, in September 2003 The Middlesex Land Trust created Meshomasic Forever Wild, a fund to support acquisition of private parcels in and around Meshomasic State Forest. Funds raised by the hikers will match a challenge grant from The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation.

Intrepid hikers Chuck Bernstein, George Rolland, and John LeShane (long-time MLT Board Member) started their trek at 2:30AM in Putnam, CT. They reached the cranberry bog in East Hampton at 6:10PM where they were greeted by club comrades.

The hikers raised over \$1600. In addition, through articles in the local papers written by journalist and club member Alice Stelzer, the public was made aware of how easily private holdings—about 50% of the forested area—could be developed resulting in forest fragmentation, environmental degradation and loss of wildlife habitat.

Anyone interested in contributing to this fund can send a donation to Meshomasic Forever Wild, The Middlesex Land Trust, deKoven House, 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT 06457, or contact John LeShane, 342-0658, for more information.



Hikers George Rolland, John LeShane, and Chuck Bernstein (left to right) bask in the glory of their completed 45 mile hike.

Many thanks to the hikers, and to the following, who contributed generously to the fund as part of the hike:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Richard Adami | Susan Kirk |
| Wayne & Cynthia Andrus | Ron Kowalsky |
| Herbert & Annemarie Arnold | Stanley & Julie Malcolm |
| Donna Campbell | Amy Mariotti |
| Jo-Anne Clark | Donna Monnes |
| Denis & Linda Cunningham | James Mullen |
| Jeanne Dilworth | David & Paula Rose-Sandler |
| Theresa Dixon | Howard & Sari Rosenbaum |
| Michael & Barbara Emmons | John & Carol Shade |
| Dorothy Goertz | Maura Sheil-Hughes |
| Pat Govoni | Paul & Brenda Sullivan |
| Elsie Hale | Sylvia Torning |
| Deborah Hall | Scott & Andrea Williams |
| Richard & Jean Harmon | Stuart Winqvist & Irene Kuck |
| Cathy Hull | Carlton & Katherine Winslow |
| Daniel & Lori Kearney | |

The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve open space in northern Middlesex County (Durham, Middlefield, Middletown, Cromwell, Portland and East Hampton).

Board of Directors

Diane Moore, Durham
Co-Chair

Ralph Urban, East Hampton
Co-Chair

Donna Monnes, Cromwell
Treasurer

William Hincks, East Hampton
Secretary

Douglas Bonoff, East Hampton

Jane Brawerman, Middletown

David Brown, Middletown

John Forneris, Portland

William Howard, Esq., Middletown

Cathy Hull, Portland

Alan Hurst, East Hampton

George King, Middletown

John LeShane, Portland

Joyce Powzyk, Middletown

John Shomsky, Middlefield

Thomas Wells, East Hampton

Stuart Winquist, East Hampton

The Middlesex Landscape is published by:
The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.
deKoven House Community Center
27 Washington Street
Middletown, CT 06457
860.343.7537
info@middlesexlandtrust.org
www.middlesexlandtrust.org

Fall 2004 Contributors:

Editing/Layout/Design: Jane Brawerman, Joyce Powzyk, Katherine Winslow

Articles: Douglas Bonoff, George King,



The Chairpersons' Corner

Dear MLT Members:

The political season has now come and gone. The onslaught of television, radio and print campaign advertising is, thankfully for many, over. We are told we are a nation closely divided. Some celebrate victory, others shake their heads. There are new political faces and familiar old ones. There will be changes in some leadership roles, while others will remain unchanged. Plans are no doubt already being laid for the next campaign.

The Middlesex Land Trust is similarly both static and changing. Year after year our preserves display their glorious seasonal changes as vibrant, growing natural spaces, often reflecting the natural succession of flora and fauna. With our steady stewardship they will always be there for nature lovers to enjoy and marvel at. Your MLT Board is similarly composed of both new members and old campaigners. New energy and enthusiasm is joined with steady experience, knowledge and commitment. It is indeed the best of both worlds.

Thanks again for your continuing support for this institution and its mission. As we grow and change, we maintain an unwavering commitment to preserving natural landscapes in northern Middlesex County. We look forward to the opportunities and challenges in the coming new year as we continue to protect our vital open spaces.

Ralph and Diane

MLT Institutes Membership Changes

To ease confusion, The Middlesex Land Trust's membership cycle will be on a calendar year basis starting in January 2005. Those of you who have already renewed for the 2005 calendar year – *Thank You!* The rest will receive a membership renewal notice in early 2005 instead of in the fall as in previous years. We hope this makes record-keeping easier.

Some of you may choose to make a year-end donation to our annual fund in addition to your membership. Donating to our annual fund gives you an added opportunity to support the vital work of The Middlesex Land Trust with a year-end tax-deductible contribution.

Finally, to reflect the rising cost of conducting land trust business, we have decided to increase our Individual Membership fee to \$20 as of January 2005. All other membership levels will remain unchanged. If you are a student or elderly and have undue hardship with this increase in dues, please contact us at 343-7537.

Our members are the lifeblood of this organization. Your support enables us to accept donations of property as well as conservation easements, and ensures that these lands remain in open space for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. Thank you for your support!



1000 Members in 1000 Days Tally
As of mid-November, total membership stood at 325.
If you know someone who might be interested in becoming a member, please ask them. *Thank you for keeping MLT strong!*

Backcountry Skiing on MLT Preserves



Recent winters have been fairly kind to local skiers; here's hoping that these trends continue. Southern New England storms can drop substantial snow on lee slopes, and under the right conditions our backcountry skiing compares favorably to northern locales.

The best local cross-country skiing is found at Hurd Park in Middle Haddam, where a variety of trails offer challenges to skiers of all abilities. On the park roads and trails, heavily used and unfortunately accessible to ATVs, ski conditions degrade quickly after each snowfall. For skiers who can handle ungroomed trails and rough conditions, MLT properties offer nearby alternatives.

With its north-facing slopes, the Sellew Preserve in East Hampton tends to hold its snow longer than more exposed locations. The trails are steep and rocky in places and require careful route-finding, but are generally suitable for intermediate to experienced skiers. Beginner skiers will find more amenable conditions on the adjacent flat-graded Airline Trail, starting at Cranberry Bog.

Mica Ledges Preserve in Durham includes numerous trails that are skiable to the limits of individual ability. The main wood road, extending about one mile back to remote and scenic Dot's Pond, is a wonderful tour for the beginner to intermediate skier. Additional wood roads branch off, running westerly to the traprock ridgeline and southerly into the town of Madison. With sufficient snow cover, determined skiers can ascend to the Mica Ledge outlooks and nearby Mt. Pisgah via the Mattabesett Trail.

Many of the smaller MLT Preserves offer short but scenic ski tours, while the Shenipsit Trail and various old roads in Meshomasic State Forest provide longer routes. Before venturing into more remote areas, study a map and familiarize yourself with the proposed route. Always bring sufficient food, water and extra clothing to deal with unexpected delays.

Guided ski tours will be led this winter on MLT properties and other public lands in conjunction with the Meshomasic Hiking Club. The proposed dates of these events, based on anticipated trail conditions, will be announced in the local media.



Trail Work Progresses at Palmer Preserve

On Thursday, September 16, five land trust members gathered at the Palmer house to begin scouting the planned trail route on the 80-acre Palmer Preserve in Portland. With its proximity to the abandoned Airline railroad bed, the Land Trust hopes to eventually connect with the State Airline Trail in East Hampton, which extends all the way to Willimantic and the East Coast Greenway.

Our proposed route starts on Middle Haddam Road and up Snow Drop Hill where many years ago the Palmers had planted snow drops, a flower that blossoms every spring even while late snow still lingers on the ground. An existing rock-lined trail ascends to the 20-foot summit where a gazebo once stood. The trail then descends past a quaint pool where the new trail will offer a route past granite ledges or a meadow walk to the woodlands beyond.

Art Johnson, the steward of our newest preserve, showed us a camping spot where artists once gathered to reflect and observe nature. A short distance past the camp, the trail route reaches a great boulder where a stonecutter many years ago had begun to break off a chunk of granite but stopped, leaving the rusting iron wedges embedded in the partially cracked stone.

The route soon reaches the railroad bed where several loops are planned. A waterway passes beneath the bed though a granite stream conduit high enough to allow hikers to walk through in low flow summer months. On the other side of the bed, one trail would climb to the top of the rock cut above Route 66 for a southwestern vista, while another would veer east toward the big hayfield where deer are commonly seen grazing in the early evening hours. Here a group of scenic maples stands near a pool that Prudence Palmer restored in the 90s to the way it appeared during her childhood years.

The trail would then connect with an existing trail on the Taylor Brook Preserve that the Palmers gave to the Trust in 1993. This trail travels north along Great Hill Pond Brook crossing Middle Haddam Road, then passes through the great granite viaduct under the railroad bed, through a hemlock shrouded valley and terminates at the Okumsett Preserve downstream of a spectacular 20-foot waterfall. With a short walk along the road, the loop can be closed as the trail reenters the Palmer preserve on Breezy Corner Road and returns through the woods to Middle Haddam Road.

Anyone interested in helping with trail work should contact John LeShane at 342-0658.

The Gift That Never Stops Giving

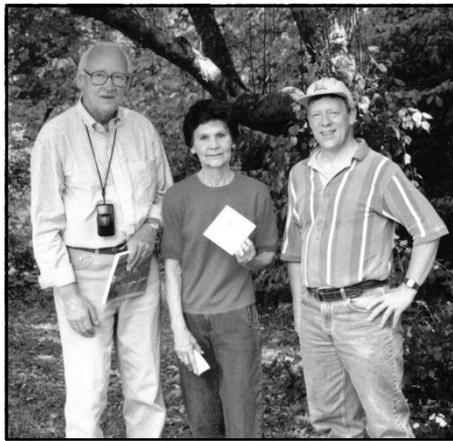
Connecticut lacks natural resources, except for its landscape and the talents of its people—some indigenous, but most of us from all over the world.

Lately the State and many towns have invested in preserving our landscape. Even more needs to be done, and we are the ones to do it.

Giving woodlands, wetlands and farmlands to local land trusts benefits our neighbors, but we donors gain even more. The gift spares us future property taxes and earns us an income tax deduction. Further, if the land is adjacent to our home, its market value rises because future buyers will know that their new landscape won't be marred by development. But until then, the landscape we gave away remains ours to enjoy for the rest of our lives.

Donating land has all those rewards and one more: the satisfaction of knowing that we have left footprints that can never be weathered away or paved over. Giving to unborn generations is the sweetest gift that we can give to ourselves.

Written in March 2004, by George King, a Middletown resident, land donor, faithful supporter and current Board Member of The Middlesex Land Trust.



Following their generous donation of seven acres north of Sisk Street in Middletown, Honorary Members George and the late Eleanor King are shown here with then MLT President, Alan Hurst, at the dedication of the King Preserve on July 17, 1999.

Upcoming MLT Outings

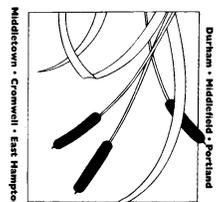
Please join The Middlesex Land Trust and Meshomasic Hiking Club for a hike. Contact John LeShane to RSVP or for more information at 342-0658. Bad weather cancels.

Campout at Highland Pond, Middletown, Saturday, December 11, 2:00PM. Stay overnight at the MLT boathouse at the pond, or just come for a campfire. No children please, but dogs welcome; hiking boots only; bring food and drink for the length of your stay. Meet at Commuter Lot Exit 20 off I-91. RSVP by 12/10.

Solstice at Oak Ledges, Portland, Tuesday, December 21, 4:00PM. Campfire and readings to welcome the winter solstice. Kids welcome, but please no dogs; sneakers OK; bring drink and food to share. Meet at John's house on South Rd in Portland. RSVP by 12/20.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

LAND TRUST



MIDDLESEX

The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.
27 Washington Street
Middletown, CT 06457

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MIDDLETOWN, CT
Permit No. 273