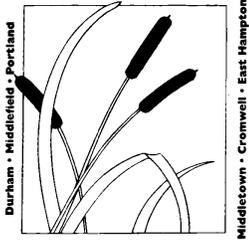


**MIDDLESEX**



**LAND TRUST**

# The MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

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

Volume 16, No. 1

The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.

Winter 2004

## Meshomasic Forever Wild Fund Grows To \$9,000

The Middlesex Land Trust (MLT) *Meshomasic Forever Wild* fund is now at \$9,000 and continues to grow thanks to the Meshomasic Hiking Club, private individuals and the "kindness of strangers."

The Meshomasic Hiking Club, a group of 306 outdoor enthusiasts from throughout Connecticut, donated \$2,000 to the *Meshomasic Forever Wild* fund at the MLT's February Board meeting. John LeShane, President and Founder of Meshomasic Hiking Club (founded in 1998), presented the check to Diane Moore, Co-Chair of MLT. Diane remarked, "We are honored to receive this check from our partners at the Meshomasic Hiking Club. This kind of grass roots effort is exactly what is needed to enable us to conserve more land in this important forest ecosystem."

As we reported in our last issue of *The Middlesex Landscape*, the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation generously funded *Meshomasic Forever Wild* in the amount of \$5,000. Foundation funds must be matched dollar for dollar with private funds raised by MLT, and the "kindness of strangers" acknowledged for any land protected with this fund.

The Hiking Club's \$2,000 donation brings the total private match raised to \$4,000. Previous matching funds received by MLT include generous donations of \$1,000 from Mr. Henry Lord, photographer and conservationist, and \$1,000 from an anonymous donor.

An additional \$1,000 in private matching funds is needed to fulfill the Foundation's challenge. MLT is a 501(c) 3 charitable organization and donations are tax-deductible.

Fund monies will be used to help conserve land in central Connecticut's largest contiguous block of forest, home of Meshomasic State Forest, the Shenipsit blue-blaze trail, public reservoirs, town and land trust open space. It is important habitat for a variety of wildlife species, contains important water resources and public access for outdoor recreation.

For more information or to donate to the *Meshomasic Forever Wild* fund, please contact Katherine Winslow at the MLT office, 343-7537 or by email at [advancingconserv@aol.com](mailto:advancingconserv@aol.com).



MLT Co-Chair Diane Moore accepts the \$2000 check from Meshomasic Hiking Club President John LeShane

## MLT Awarded Certificate of Appreciation

In November 2003 The Middlesex Land Trust was recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation by The Rockfall Foundation at its Annual Awards Celebration. Diane Moore, Co-Chairperson of MLT, was honored to receive the certificate from J. Stanley Watson, President of The Rockfall Foundation, a charitable and educational organization established in 1935 by the late Colonel Clarence S. Wadsworth. The award was given "for your vision and leadership in protecting environmentally sensitive land in upper Middlesex County since 1986; for your exceptional record of preserving more than 500 acres of land... ; for working cooperatively with other land trusts; for providing public access to the land; and for your distinctive record of producing and sharing hiking and canoe trails, brochures and educational opportunities." Thank you for your support in these shared accomplishments!

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).



## The Chairpersons' Corner

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Dear MLT Members:

As we write these words, Old Man Winter is again demonstrating his icy muscle. The thermometer at dawn read a bone-chilling two degrees Fahrenheit, and we will be lucky if we break into the double digits, with weak sunlight angled low in the sky. The earth, so recently sopping and soggy, is rock-hard, and the weather folks proclaim the dangers of long term exposure of skin, in light of Minnesota-like wind chill readings.

Of course, this happens most every year, if only for a few weeks. Sometimes it's surprisingly early, in December, sometimes in late winter; but no matter – it seems we're entitled to at least one Arctic blast of air each year before we return to our generally moderate, if often damp and overcast climate. Many grumble, others book their flights to the Florida Keys. We are not accustomed to the extreme, and it takes us several days to adjust. So used to ease, convenience and comfort, we suddenly cannot take such things for granted – water pipes freeze, furnaces balk, cars don't want to start, door locks stick, ice must be scraped.

But where there are challenges and inconvenience, there are also opportunities. The natural world, so often an afterthought or something not considered at all, briefly takes center stage, or at least attains a higher priority in the pantheon of our daily thoughts. We need to plan ahead a bit to temporarily accommodate a natural force greater than ourselves – the car must be warmed up, we must take care in planning our attire for the day, we need to allocate extra time to allow for icy roads. And on these intensely clear, cold nights, if we can get away from the city lights, we are rewarded with a glorious array of stars wheeling overhead, and the moonrise clear and sharp in the inky night sky. We are reminded that we are not the center of the universe, but rather a part of something much bigger than ourselves deserving of our respect and protection.

Few experiences can top seeing fabled Orion arise on a clear, cold winter night over the bare trees or evergreens, and in this neck of the woods there are few places better for viewing such sights than the hundreds of acres of preserved open spaces saved by our Land Trust and its many generous donors. Judging from the strong early returns of our latest membership campaign (see *1000 Members in 1000 Days* tally below), our many readers know the joys of a winter evening's stroll in the woods and fields of Middlesex County. Thanks to all for your ongoing support and for sharing your passion for protecting these lands and the joys they can bring us all.

*Ralph and Diane*

**Interested in making a financial donation to The Middlesex Land Trust?** Perhaps you'd like to consider donating appreciated stock. Making a donation of this sort benefits MLT and can have significant tax advantages for the donor. Contact Carlton Winslow, MLT Board Director, for more details, 343-7388.

**1000 Members in 1000 Days Tally**  
As of mid-February, total membership stood at 258.  
If you have received a membership renewal for 2004, please respond! We apologize if you received duplicate mailings – please be patient as we work out the glitches in our membership database. **Thank you for keeping MLT strong!**

## In Memorium

In December 2003, The Middlesex Land Trust and the natural world lost a good friend with the passing of Prudence Palmer. "Pru," as she was known by her closest friends, and her husband TJ were longtime supporters of the Land Trust and over the years had generously donated several parcels of land. Cobalt Landing, a small but significant preserve on the Connecticut River provides canoe and small boat access to the river. The 7.2 acre Taylor Brook Preserve offers a walking and wildlife corridor along Great Hill Pond Brook and connects with 3 other Land Trust parcels further upstream. Prudence was well known for her love of the Arts and Nature. Sadly in January, only one month after Prudence, TJ also passed away. The Land Trust and the community alike will miss their spirit profoundly, but their memory will live on in the beautiful nature preserves they have left us. Thank you for the many generous donations given in memory of the Palmers.

## Flagship Preserves Project Funded

The Middlesex Land Trust (MLT) was awarded a \$2,000 grant from the Middlesex County Community Foundation made possible with support from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust for our *Flagship Preserves* project. This grant will be used to increase visibility and public use of MLT's most notable preserves, also known as flagship preserves. These include Abe Tempkin in Portland, Mica Ledges in Durham and Sellew Preserve in East Hampton, among others. Watch for upcoming hikes and work parties, as well as post cards with photographs of these special places.

## Join the MLT Board

The Middlesex Land Trust is in the market for new directors! If you are committed to land preservation and stewardship and can attend our monthly meetings, generally held on the first Tuesday of each month at deKoven House in Middletown, please let us know. Our meetings generally run about 2 hours, as we review the status of various land preservation initiatives, plan land stewardship and outreach activities, and address financial planning and resource allocation issues. We are especially seeking greater representation from the Towns of Cromwell and Middlefield. Come share your enthusiasm with us. Contact Ralph Urban, Diane Moore or any Board member listed in this newsletter, or call the MLT office at 343-7537.

Tom Wells



Great Hill Pond Brook runs through the Taylor Brook Preserve, generously donated in 1993 by Prudence (Taylor) and TJ Palmer.

## Hikers Enjoy Bucktown District

On Sunday, November 30, The Middlesex Land Trust (MLT) kicked off its *Meshomasic Forever Wild* Initiative with a hike in the historic Bucktown District of Portland. Cosponsored by the Meshomasic Hiking Club, the hike route passed through a mosaic of preserves. Beginning at Mattabesec Audubon Society's 15 acre Helen Carlson Sanctuary, the 24 participants walked along a boardwalk that meanders through the flooded heart of the cranberry bog past a beaver lodge and dam. Leaving the Sanctuary, the trail enters MLT's 9 acre Oak Ledges Preserve. Hikers ascended a 350 foot hilltop with a clear view of Meshomasic Mountain, the highest elevation in Portland, then descended into a shady glen of white pine and Norway spruce in a 60 acre block of Meshomasic State Forest. The trail followed a low ridge above a secluded marsh, reached a woods road that forked off toward the open grass and brushlands of the Northeast Utilities powerline right-of-way, and finally, arrived at the town-owned land surrounding the Portland Reservoir before returning along the Old Marlborough Turnpike through Buck Hollow where the old sawmill and pond once stood.

Bucktown was so-named for the Buck family, who resided there in the early 1800's and invented the famous buckboard wagon. In actuality, it defines a school district, which in this case is composed of 95% open space, most of it Meshomasic State Forest. In fact, there may be only a few more residents today than there was in 1780 when a whole community of homes was abandoned gradually due to the ravages of small pox, the Revolutionary War, and westward migration. It may bring comfort to some folks, if not to just our reptilian friends, that there may well be more rattlesnakes than humans living in Bucktown today!



## Upcoming MLT Outings

Join us for a hike! Please contact John LeShane for more information at 342-0658.

**Sunrise on Pisgah. Saturday, March 20, 6AM.** Come celebrate the return of Spring with a 4-mile sunrise hike up Durham's Mt. Pisgah with glorious views of the valley and countryside. Meet at the end of Cream Pot Road off Rte 77. Following the hike, those that would like to can join us for brunch in downtown Durham. Kids and dogs are OK; hiking boots preferred.

**Historic Bucktown Hike. Saturday, March 27, 1PM.** Take a 4-mile walk through the Bucktown District in Portland. Kids and dogs are OK; hiking boots are preferable. Meet on South Road in Portland at the entrance to the Cranberry Bog trail.

**Abe Temkin and Wangunk Meadows. Sunday, May 2 at 1PM.** Visit the new Tree Trail at MLT's Abe Temkin preserve in Portland. The 4-mile hike will trek down into Hale's Brook Ravine, up to a plateau believed to have been used by the Wangunk 'big bend' Indians, and through the state owned Wangunk Meadows. Kids and dogs are OK; hiking boots preferred. Bring snacks and water. Meet at the Hemlock Grange in Portland.

Look for an announcement for our 2004 Annual Meeting in the mail!



## Save These Dates...

**National Trails Day Mica Ledges Hike. Saturday, June 5, 9AM.** A 5-mile walk on the Mattabasett Trail over MLT's Mica Ledges Preserve.

**Canoe the Connecticut. Saturday, July 10, 8AM-12PM.** A trip up the Connecticut River to Pecauset Meadows and three of MLT's floodland preserves.



## Recent Events . . .

The Land Trust was one of four groups presenting at a workshop entitled *Managing Open Space* at the deKoven House in December 2003. The Rockfall Foundation and Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) co-sponsored this workshop for conservation commissions, tree wardens, land trust members, community volunteers and elected officials. Presentations by Northeast Utilities, CFPA, the Town of Greenwich and MLT were given to over 50 people from the area. Katherine Winslow, land conservation consultant for MLT, gave a slide show highlighting our diverse preserves, recreational opportunities, and management activities. For more information, contact Katherine at 343-7537.



*Photo of Katherine Winslow and Rockfall Foundation President Stan Watson Courtesy of The Rockfall Foundation.*

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