

# The MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

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

Volume 19, No. 2

The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.

Fall 2007

## MLT RECEIVES MATCHING GRANT FROM STATE FOR KRUGER FARM PROJECT

We are very excited to report that The Middlesex Land Trust (MLT) was awarded an Open Space Matching Grant of \$219,000 by the State of Connecticut for the Kruger Farm Project in Haddam Neck. Haddam Neck Spirit and MLT have been collaborating on this project for over a year. MLT signed a purchase agreement for this wonderful 50-acre open and wooded parcel in June, and the grant award has paved the way to drive this to conclusion. The purchase price is \$418,000. More than \$15,000 has been spent already for appraisals, professional services, expenses and contract deposits. MLT has committed \$125,000 of existing land acquisition funds. We have obtained firm commitments of over \$55,000 from individual donors.

**We need your support now!** We still need to raise the remaining \$40,000 to cover the purchase and additional stewardship expenses in order to receive the money from the state and close on this property. Please help us and be a part of a lasting legacy! For additional information about the Kruger Farm Project, see the article below.

Donations can be sent to The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc., deKoven House, 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT 06457. MLT is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organizations and donations are tax deductible. Please write Kruger Farm in the memo section of your check. **Thank you for your generous support!**



MLT Kruger Farm Project Committee member and Haddam Neck Spirit member Jerry Graham accepts the \$219,000 check from Governor Jody Rell and DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy for the Kruger Farm Project. **We still need your help to complete protection of this property!**

## MLT AND HADDAM NECK SPIRIT COLLABORATE ON KRUGER FARM PROJECT

Fifty Billion Dollars. \$50,000,000,000. That is the amount that Americans spend on bottled water each year. I picked up this little nugget while listening to the news on my evening commute. Even more astounding was that 25% of that is for Aquifina and Dasani, (Pepsi Co. and Coca Cola brands), which is filtered and bottled tap water from municipal water supplies, and from a practical standpoint, nearly free to begin with.

So what is the value of pure, clean water? What are we willing to commit from our own wallets to protect

our watersheds that provide clean water for wildlife and recreation, as well as for drinking?

In northeast Middlesex County and beyond, the Salmon River Watershed sprawls over eight towns. Some critical areas are already protected within state and local lands, but many large, undeveloped private parcels will be changing hands over the next five to ten years. Their continued status as open space is at risk. Degradation of stream water quality starts to occur

*(Continued on page 4)*

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).

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## The Chairpersons' Corner

Dear MLT Members:

It is truly a pleasure to be addressing The Middlesex Land Trust (MLT) membership through our newsletter after a long hiatus. For those of you who are new to the land trust in the past five years, I served as Chairman from 1997-2002.

We are indeed fortunate to have had Diane Moore and Ralph Urban at the helm for the last five years, stewarding our organization and strengthening our financial standing, and we thank them for their significant contributions.

The collective Board and its members have been very active the past five years and I have a lot of catching up to do, but I also hope to bring some new energy and ideas to the Board.

Something you will hear about often in the future is Board development. Last winter your MLT board participated in a facilitated retreat to discuss where we had been, where we were then, and where we were headed. One of the items that became apparent to me in particular was our need to reach out to our community and rebalance our board with a variety of stakeholders that may not now be represented.

We also realize that as we grow and evolve (believe it or not we are now twenty years old) we will need to involve more volunteers on our working committees and draw upon the strengths they bring to the table.

Before you panic, however, involving volunteers in our land trust does not mean we have to gather around a table to meet. We look forward to getting new volunteers involved in stewarding our lands, leading hikes for community groups – from boy scouts and girl scouts to senior center bird watchers, and perhaps in providing photo journals of the seasonal changes that occur on our properties.

We need your help in asking a neighbor to join the Middlesex Land Trust to picnic, hike or bird watch on our preserves.

We need your help in fundraising and FUN raising to enjoy the natural areas we have now, and those we hope to acquire in the future.

We also need your help to introduce our youngest generation to farms and fields. I just finished reading *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv. This compelling book speaks to the issue of a generation growing up with “nature deficit disorder,” because kids these days spend so much time indoors playing video games and text messaging their friends instead of meeting outdoors and enjoying their natural surroundings.

Let's look forward to the future together.

*Alan*



## MLT CELEBRATES 20 YEARS AT 2007 ANNUAL MEETING

On a beautiful, sunny April 21, 2007, a small group gathered for the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of The Middlesex Land Trust at the Palmer Preserve in Portland. We gathered to take stock of our 20<sup>th</sup> year and look forward to the next twenty. We gathered to recognize a few special volunteers. And we gathered to take a walk with friends old and new on the land warmed afresh in the Connecticut spring.

The purchase of Pine Brook Falls Preserve from The Nature Conservancy as the result of a collaboration increased our holdings to a new milestone of 643 acres of protected open space in northern Middlesex County. We looked back at our most successful publicity and fundraising event to date, the Pine Brook Falls fundraiser held this past winter at the Goff House in East Hampton, which netted more than \$12,000 to support the purchase of Pine Brook Falls.

We thanked the many volunteers who helped board member Tom Heidel make the Pine Brook Falls Fundraiser such a great success, with a special recognition of Tom's sister Kathleen Conklin for her tremendous contributions to the success of the event.

The stewardship effort on our preserves was considerable with eleven work parties held in the past year. We recognized our core group of stewards, John LeShane, John Shomsky, Doug Bonoff and Art Johnson, who erected three new preserve signs and cleared and maintained thirteen miles of trails.

Former co-chairs Ralph Urban and Diane Moore stepped down after leading the organization for the past five years. When they first stepped forward five years ago, it was on the condition they would share the Chair responsibilities for one year, when presumably someone else would step forward. We are deeply appreciative of Ralph and Diane's "extended" service. They have presided over the addition of 112 acres and major changes in our financial position. Most importantly, they have kept us viable during a period where we as a board have struggled to keep up with the increasing responsibilities that our success has brought us. Many thanks to Ralph and Diane!

John LeShane reflected on the changes the Land Trust has experienced before leading a hike across the Palmer Preserve and into the Kelley and Okumsett Preserves. The walk was enjoyed by Land Trust members from ages 4 to 75. It was a great way to welcome the spring and start off a new year.



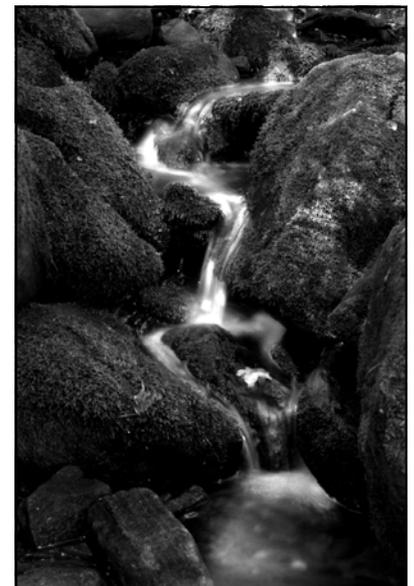
Tom Wells (left) and board member Bill Hincks pause for a photograph in MLT's Pine Brook Preserve.

### SPECIAL RECOGNITION—TOM WELLS

One of our long time directors stepped down from the board when his term expired last spring. Tom Wells, who served on the MLT Board for fifteen years, has been a good friend and staunch supporter of the Land Trust. He donated countless hours in meetings and work parties. His beautiful photographs have graced many of our newsletters and display boards, and have helped us show people in the community what we are working to preserve. He has also made generous donations of fine art prints of his photographs for the Pine Brook Falls silent auction and to use as 'thank-you' gifts for special volunteers. His tenure helped guide the metamorphous of a Land Trust that held only one property in its first five years, to an organization that has acquired 52 separate parcels protecting 643 acres, 149 of those acres in his hometown of East Hampton.

We gratefully acknowledge and thank Tom for his service these past fifteen years, and we look forward to his continued contributions.

This stunning photograph taken by Tom Wells graced the cover of our successful Kruger Farm Open Space Grant application.



Kruger Farm Project (Continued from page 1)

generally when the percentage of impervious cover in a watershed exceeds six percent. Parking lots, roads and rooftops all contribute to the deterioration. While sound land use planning and storm water management practices can prevent and mitigate some of the impacts, protection of truly high quality streams and rivers requires preservation of key watershed lands. We are fortunate to have a resource as incredible as the Salmon River at our doorstep. To ensure its long-term integrity, we need to do more to fill the gaps of protected lands to buffer the watershed's rivers and streams from development.

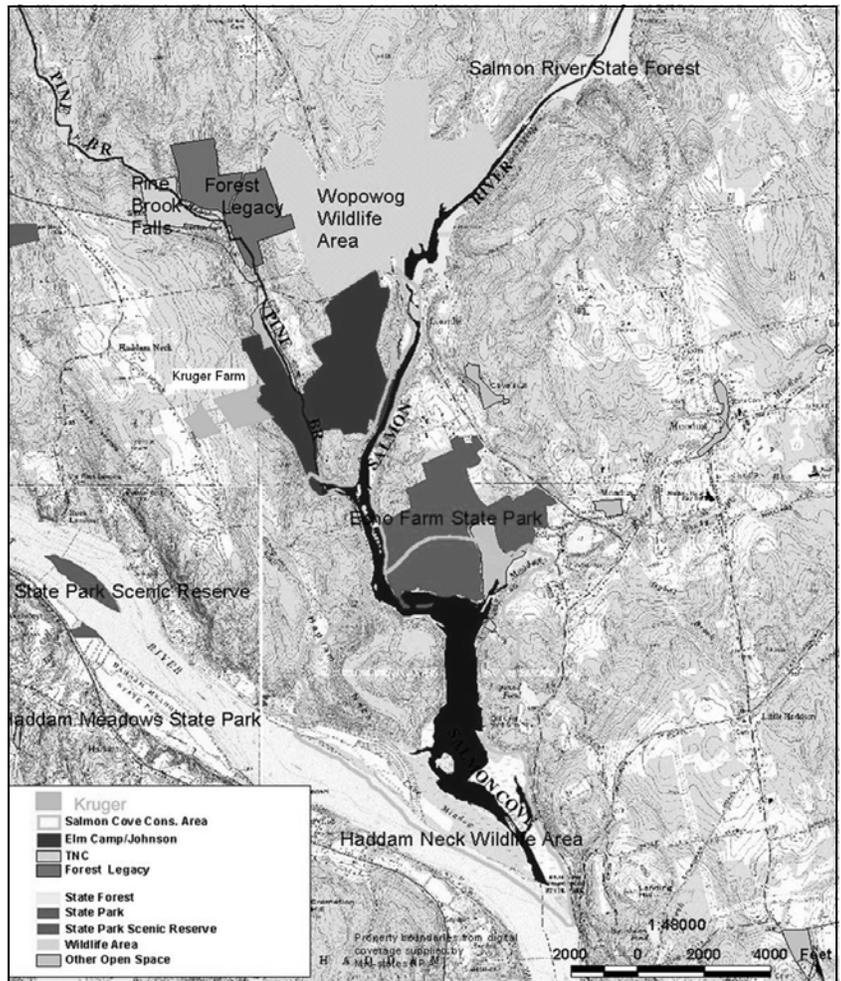
The Middlesex Land Trust has been active in protecting the Pine Brook corridor, a key tributary of the Salmon River. Wetlands in the highlands of Meshamosic State Forest form the source of the brook, which empties into the Salmon River in the freshwater tidal portion of the river. In addition to the two previously donated parcels off of Chestnut Hill Road in East Hampton, we closed this spring on the 40-acre Pine Brook Falls Preserve off of Sexton Hill Road as the result of a collaborative project with The Nature Conservancy.

Our latest land protection project in the watershed has been a collaboration with Haddam Neck Spirit to protect the 50-acre Kruger Farm in Haddam Neck. At one time a working dairy farm, the property contains woodlands, a small hayfield, wetlands and a feeder creek to Pine Brook. It is contiguous with the 289-acre Johnson Preserve, which fronts on both Pine Brook and the Salmon River, and is currently held by the Town of Haddam and The Nature Conservancy. This in turn, is contiguous with the Haddam Land Trust's 22-acre preserve on Pine Brook. It lies within one of two areas in Connecticut identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for additions to its Silvio O. Conte Refuge, which protects migratory fish and birds in the Connecticut River Watershed. Preservation of Kruger Farm will also help conserve the vanishing rural, southern New England landscape of fields and stone walls, and provide increased public access to this special area.

We have been working on the Kruger Farm project for more than a year, and two cornerstones of this protection effort are now in place. The first was establishing an agreement with the seller who patiently waited while we put together our bid, which

we finalized together in June. The second was securing a State of Connecticut Open Space matching grant, which we submitted the application for at the end of June after many weeks of work. While submission of this grant application marked a significant effort by many volunteers, much work still lies ahead. With the successful award of the \$219,000 matching grant in October, **we still have \$40,000 to raise to cover the purchase price of \$418,000 and anticipated expenses.** We have already spent over \$15,000 to cover appraisals, biological assessments, a deposit and other expenses. More than \$10,000 has been donated by private donors specifically for these expenses, and over \$55,000 has been pledged by individuals for the purchase. MLT has committed \$125,000 of existing land acquisition funds to this project.

While we are working to increase our base of support and searching for sources of funding not previously tapped, **your generous support is crucial to the successful purchase and protection of the Kruger Farm,** and what we hope will be continued momentum for conservation of this special natural area in our neighborhood. Further information on the Pine Brook Corridor can be found our Winter 2007 newsletter.



## HIGHLAND POND PRESERVE GETS A BRIDGE

On August 25, 2007, The Middlesex Land Trust and Meshomasic Hiking Club teamed up to build a bridge over Sawmill Brook, which passes through the old trolley bed on our 40-acre Highland Pond Preserve in Middletown. The abandoned bed runs beside the 5-acre Highland Pond, famous for its huge snapping turtles and, most recently, its population of beaver. We indeed built a bridge, but not exactly.

Last year Jim Carta, the steward of the 40-acre preserve, asked the board if he could have the old boathouse that stood beside the pond. Built by Dr. Gordon, who donated the property upon his death, the boathouse was a liability to the trust. By removing it, Jim was performing a great service. However, he had no use for the 23-foot by 3-foot deck attached to the front of the structure. Joe Giannetti, a neighbor and Land Trust member, suggested we use it for spanning, as it turned out, the 23-foot gap in the trolley bed. With the expert guidance of Pat Wasserman, our chief engineer, we constructed some concrete block pilings and in a matter of a few hours we had a bridge.

And there's more good news! Connecticut Forest and Park Association, which manages the Blue Trail system, wanted to move the Mattabesett Trail off of Country Club Road. By rerouting the trail through our Highland Pond Preserve, it was possible to reduce significantly the section of road-walk. This trail is part of the 190-mile Metacomet Monadnock Mattabesett (MMM) Trail, which begins at the Connecticut River in the Maromas section of Middletown, runs through central Connecticut into Massachusetts, and ends at Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire. The MMM trail was studied for designation as a National Scenic Trail, and if all goes well, will become part of the New England National Scenic Trail, a continuous trail extending about 220 miles from the border of New Hampshire in Royalston, Massachusetts to Long Island Sound in Guilford, Connecticut.

The Highland Pond preserve offers about a mile of trail and is open to the public. Access to the preserve is off of Saw Mill Road.



### 2007 MIDDLESEX LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES—I would like to help protect open space in northern Middlesex County in 2007!

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

- Renewal                       New membership
- Individual Membership..... \$20
- Sustaining Membership.....\$35
- Patron Membership.....\$100
- Guarantor Membership .....\$250
- Benefactor Membership .....\$500
- Endower Membership .....\$750
- Life Membership .....\$1000+

- I would like to give an additional donation for: land acquisition \$\_\_\_\_\_ land stewardship \$\_\_\_\_\_
- I would like to donate appreciated stock.
- I would like to learn more about donating land or conservation easements.
- I would like to donate time for stewardship, fundraising or office work: please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like to give a gift membership: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: The Middlesex Land Trust, and mail to  
deKoven House, 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! Thank you for your support!*

## A PRUDENCE AND T.J. PALMER LEGACY



In the generous gifts the late Prudence and T.J. Palmer gave to The Middlesex Land Trust, the highlight of which was the 70 Acre Palmer-Taylor Preserve, they also included their manuscript for the book *Letters to Harry*. This book was a labor of love for many years for T.J. and Prudence. Now, with the imminent arrival of this publication, MLT members and the general public can purchase it with the satisfaction that all proceeds will go to the MLT. The manuscript has been carefully edited by Nancy D'Oench and Gay Smith in collaboration with the publisher, Northeastern Graphic. Here is Nancy's precis and invitation to the book that appears on the back cover.

*Henry Osborn Taylor (1856-1941) was an author, philosopher, and one of the world's foremost authorities on the history of civilization. His seminal work, The Medieval Mind, was published in two volumes in 1911 and reached its fifth edition in 1938. Born in New York City, Taylor spent the summers of his youth and adulthood in Portland, Connecticut, on the Connecticut River.*

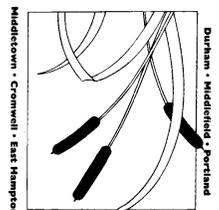
*After his death, Taylor's great niece, Prudence Taylor Palmer, inherited Knowles House, his summer home in Portland, and lived in it with her husband, T. J. Palmer, for over 20 years. It was not until the Palmers were preparing to move out of Knowles House that Prue and T. J. discovered a chest in the attic. In it was an adhesive file with 200 letters written between 1872 and 1874 to "Harry," as he was known in the family. He would have been in his teens; the letters were addressed to Austin, Nevada.*

*In this volume, Prudence and T. J. Palmer transcribe the letters and, thanks to their extensive research, paint a vivid picture of life in the 1870's. The reader will be introduced to Taylor family history and connections – from Horace Greeley to Harvard luminaries, learn about the rise and fall of silver mining in Nevada and the laying of the Airline Railroad in Connecticut, and glimpse social life in Manhattan and in the frontier town of Austin as reported in great detail by the newspapers of the day. Join Prue and T. J. as they travel across the country to learn about the life and letters of "Uncle Harry."*

More details will follow when the books are ready.

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