

**MIDDLESEX**



**LAND TRUST**

# *The* MIDDLESEX LANDSCAPE

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

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The Middlesex Land Trust, Inc.

Spring 2011

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## **MLT ACQUIRES BOARDMAN LANE PROPERTY IN MIDDLETOWN TO PROTECT SAWMILL BROOK WATERSHED**

The Middlesex Land Trust has purchased 53.8 acres of land in the Westfield section of Middletown, as the result of a joint project between the Land Trust and the United States Army. Using funds from the Federal Base Relocation and Closure Act and the Compatible Use Buffer Program, the Land Trust worked closely with the Army to preserve a beautiful and ecologically important tract of open landscape in the Sawmill Brook watershed.

The new Land Trust property is on Boardman Lane, a narrow country lane off of Middle Street, at the base of Stantack Mountain. It was part of the Noah Bacon homestead, and has been farmed continuously for at least two centuries. It lies across the street from an 18th century cemetery whose headstones bear the names of prominent early landowners in the area: Wilcox, Boardman, Bacon, and Higby.

The Boardman Lane tract contains sensitive upland and wetland habitats and is being preserved to mitigate the loss of 1.5 acres of wetlands due to the construction of the new Armed Forces Reserve Center on nearby industrially zoned land. The property carries a permanent conservation easement which provides for the land to be preserved and protected as open space in perpetuity. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will carry out a detailed program of invasive species removal, replanting with native shrubs and grasses and monitoring on the property. After 5 years of this, the land will be accessible to the public.

Acquisition and stewardship funding was made available through the Army's Compatible Use Buffer program. This program allows the Army to reach out to partners to identify mutual objectives of conserving land, protecting habitat, and preventing development of critical open areas around existing military bases without acquiring new land for Army ownership. However, this is the first time that the Army has used the Buffer program to protect property not directly adjacent to one of its facilities.

"We are extremely pleased to be able to partner with the community - and the Middlesex Land Trust in particular - to accomplish the purchase and management of this parcel that benefits regional conservation and serves the mission needs of the Armed Forces Reserves Center", said Dr. Virginia Busby of the ACUB Program at the Army Environmental Command.

The Boardman Lane Preserve is near several other parcels of protected land. The property lies just downstream from the Land Trust's Highland Pond preserve, and on Stantack Mountain the Land Trust owns and manages the Benson and Marino properties. About a mile north of Boardman Lane the City of Middletown recently purchased the development rights to 32 acres of farmland. These purchases help protect species habitat, enhance water quality, maintain the open landscape and provide recreational areas for enjoying nature in a beautiful section of Northern Middlesex County.

*Please turn to page 3*

The Middlesex Land Trust Inc. is a non-profit 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 CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

When the early winter snows had only covered the ground with a few inches of white, I had the pleasure of hiking two of our preserves. On the Kruger Farm Preserve in Haddam Neck, I followed our relatively new trail, which after crossing the power lines, bears left and then follows the edge of the property, providing nice views looking down on the brook as it descends in a ravine towards the Pine Brook. One of the pleasures of the day was the call of a barred owl, while the other was seen in the evidence of an even stealthier resident, a single, fresh footprint in the snow left by a fisher bounding between trees. Days later, on the Sellew Preserve in East Hampton, I chanced upon another similar track in the snow.

Now neither of these preserves is large enough on its own, to support a fisher. These solitary predators need relatively large tracks of undeveloped habitat, and will roam miles within their home range. It struck me that these tracks, while miles apart, could have been made by the same animal. Both preserves loosely connect to other protected open space, and broad reaches are connected by the Salmon River State Forest. Within this patchwork of forest, however, are many large parcels with no conservation protections, leaving the current value of this ensemble at risk in the future.

Last year, we added to protection of this conservation patchwork in the Salmon River watershed with the purchase of two key parcels which now make up the Pine Brook Markham Preserve (see Fall 2010 newsletter). Across the county in Middletown, we also partnered with the U.S. Army in a unique collaboration which resulted in our ownership of our newest 53 acre preserve on Boardman Lane (see article in this newsletter). This new preserve lies downstream from our Highland Pond Preserve, on the Sawmill Brook, affording additional permanent conservation and public access within the Sawmill Brook watershed.

Our ability to continue to build on our 20+ year legacy with the acquisition of our two, latest preserves, is the direct result of the past financial support provided by our members and friends. There is still much to do, to assure the future protection of key wildlife habitats and water quality in our community. Please continue to show your strong support for your local land trust in this difficult economy and help us continue this work. You can be very proud of the legacy built with your past support.

Sincerely,



Stuart Winquist Chairman *Think Globally – Act Locally*

## A NEW TRAIL FOR A NEW PRESERVE

Imbedded in a 1000-acre forest block in the southern part of East Hampton lies the Pine Brook Markham Preserve, one of the newest preserves of the Middlesex Land Trust purchased in 2010. This heavily wooded preserve borders the pristine Pine Brook, a major tributary to the wild and scenic Salmon River.

From the border of the preserve, the brook flows 2 1/2 miles to its confluence with the Salmon River, passing through significant stretches of protected forest thanks to the combined efforts of the Land Trust, the towns of East Hampton and Haddam, The Nature Conservancy, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Connecticut.

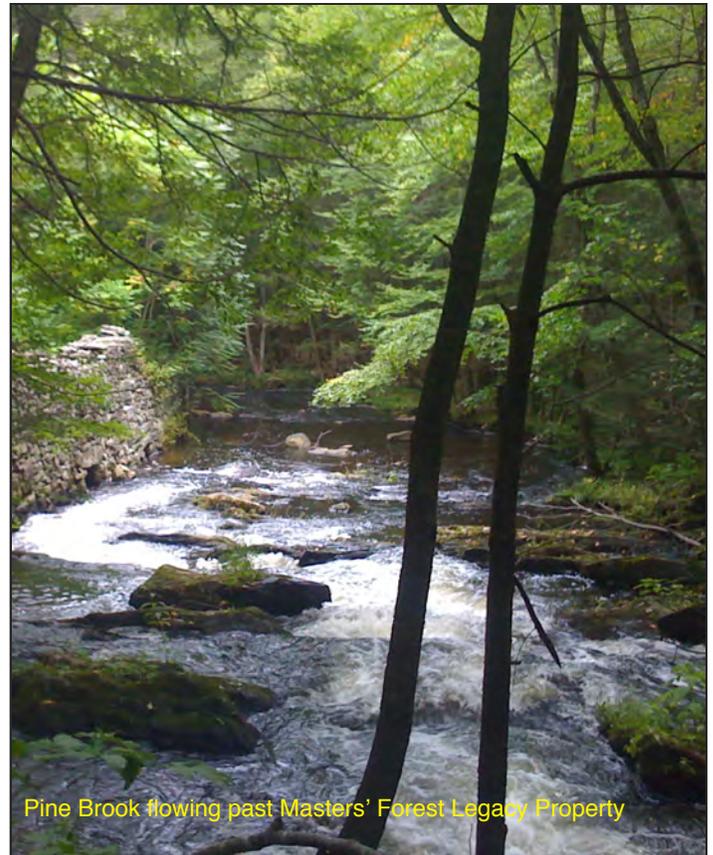
When the Land Trust initiated the purchase of the property, a logging operation was slated to be done as many yellow-blazed trees can silently testify. Through the conservation work done by the Land Trust the trees will thankfully remain; their fading yellow tattoos as quiet reminders of what could have been their fate.

From the brook crossing on Pine Brook Road, a new trail will be installed this Spring. The trail will begin on and follow an abandoned road down a short steep section to a small brook crossing. Here the trail will turn and enter the forest on the left and run along the cascading brook past a piney knoll on the right and into a wetland amphitheater surrounded by steep hillsides. Then ascending, the trail will loop back to the forest road, re-cross and descend again to Pine Brook. On the left side of the trail the precipitous ledges of Masters Mountain rise up. (I have taken the liberty to name this otherwise unnamed hill for Anna Ruth Masters who owns the protected Forest Legacy property that occupies the flat top summit). Having reached Pine Brook, the trail will follow it upstream through a dense stand of mountain laurel to a small ledge summit - a perfect place to meditate on the surrounding scenery. A short walk from here will take the hiker back to the old road and trail head. The entire trail will be about a mile long or roughly a half-hour walk.

This Spring a Middlesex Land Trust work party will build the new trail and later will be offering hikes along with the Meshomasic Hiking Club on this new preserve as well as other preserves located nearby to the south.

Come join us on a work party and help build a trail! Or come enjoy a walk on one of our sponsored hikes. Look for them both in our newsletters or online. See you in the woods!

by  
John LeShane



Pine Brook flowing past Masters' Forest Legacy Property

### BOARDMAN LANE PROPERTY *Continued from front page*

The Middlesex Land Trust is thankful to have partnered with the Army on the successful purchase, preservation and enhancement of the Boardman Lane property. This joint project has provided for the permanent protection of sensitive upland and wetland habitats in the Sawmill Brook watershed, as well as provide public access to a beautiful open landscape. It's a great result for the community of Middletown, the watershed, the Land Trust and the Army.

by  
Stephen H. Devoto and David M. Brown

## CONGRESS RENEWS CONSERVATION TAX INCENTIVE

Congress just renewed a tax incentive for private landowners who protect their land with a voluntary conservation easement. The incentive, which had expired at the end of 2009, is now available through December 31, 2011 and is retroactive back to January 1, 2010.

Conservation minded landowners now have until December 31, 2011 to take advantage of a significant tax deduction for donating a voluntary conservation agreement to permanently protect important natural or historic resources on their land. When landowners donate a conservation easement to the Middlesex Land Trust, they maintain ownership and management of their land and can sell or pass the land on to their heirs, while forgoing future development rights.

The enhanced incentive applies to a landowner's federal income tax. It:

- Raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a voluntary conservation agreement from 30% of their income in any year to 50%;
- Allows farmers and ranchers to deduct up to 100% of their income; and
- Increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to 16 years.

Our whole community wins when thoughtful landowners conserve their land this way, protecting wildlife habitat, clean drinking water, scenic landscapes, recreational spaces, and productive agricultural lands.

Conservation agreements have become an important tool nationally for protecting our watersheds, farms and forests, increasing the pace of private land conservation by a third, to over a million acres a year. This is especially important now that the latest reports show that America is losing land to develop-

ment at the rate of 1.5 million acres per year.

The Middletown Land Trust joins America's 1700 land trusts and their two million supporters in thanking Congress for making this important conservation tool available.

To learn more about donating an easement to the Middlesex Land Trust, please call David Brown at (860) 343-7537 or send an email to [info@middlesexlandtrust.org](mailto:info@middlesexlandtrust.org)

## STEWARDSHIP WORK HAMPERED BY HISTORIC WINTER

The stewardship committee was ready to go in January but with a record five feet of snowfall in the month to contend with, we postponed any serious work until some of it could melt. Several projects await us. Last year the Land Trust received a donation of two big telephone poles to use as a bridge over the brook crossing on the Highland Pond Preserve in Middletown. The old trolley line had sported a bridge there several years ago, but since then the timbers have rotted away. We are planning a work party on the weekend of April 2nd and 3rd to move the poles into place and build the deck. Another major project is the cleanup of the downed timber, the result of one of the several wind storms this past fall, on the Palmer/Taylor Brook Preserve. A great deal of dead wood from our work could be salvaged for fuel. While the removal of downed firewood from Land Trust property without prior written permission is not allowed, the Land Trust is working on a way to make the wood available to the public. Most of the trails on our preserves have been reopened and new trails are being planned. This spring we will be building and blazing a trail on the Pine Brook/ Markham Preserve – our newest preserve in East Hampton. Land trust members are welcome to join in the work parties. Contact John LeShane at 342-0658 for dates and information.

*Think Globally – Act Locally*

## WORK PARTY CALENDAR

**Sunday, March 27th, 9am - Highland Pond Work Party, Middletown:** brush pile removal. we will be removing an old beaver dam to prepare the site for a bridge. Bring work gloves and footwear suitable for standing in water. Meet on Bell Street off Country Club Road in Middletown. Call John LeShane at 860-342-0658 for more information

**Saturday, April 2nd and 3rd, 9am - Highland Pond Work Party, Middletown :** Installation of a bridge on the old trolley line on our 40-acre preserve. We are hauling two telephone poles to an old bridge crossing on the newly relocated and designated New England National Scenic Trail (AKA Mattabasett Blue Trail). Bring work gloves, other tools will be provided. Meet on Bell Street off Country Club Road in Middletown, Call John LeShane at 860-342-0658 for further details

**Saturday, April 9th, 9am - Sellew Preserve Work Party, East Hampton:** Trail work. We will be doing general trail maintenance on the 2-mile

trail system on our 40-acre preserve. Bring work gloves, loppers and saws. Meet at the end of Dogwood Drive off Smith Street. Call Doug Bonoff at ??? for additional information

**Saturday, May 1st, 9am - Palmer Preserve Work Party, Portland :** Trail work on the 80-acre Palmer Preserve. We will be opening and clearing existing trails damaged by the windstorm of 2010. Bring loppers, handsaws, work gloves. We will meet at the Palmer Barn on Middle Haddam Road. Call John LeShane 860-342-0658 for more information.

**Wednesday, May 18, 9am- Pine Brook Preserves Exploratory, East Hampton:** An 8-mile hike along a major tributary of the Salmon River. Moderate speed but with some bushwhacking and some trailless walking. No kids but dogs OK. Hiking boots only, bring food and drink. Bad weather cancels. Meet at the Rt 16/66 commuter lot in East Hampton. RSVP by 5/17 to John at 860-342-0658

### 2011 MIDDLESEX LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES – I would like to help protect open space in Northern Middlesex County in 2011!

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 \$\_\_\_\_\_
- donate appreciated stock
- learn more about donating land or conservation easements.
- donate time for stewardship, fundraising or office work: please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- 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 and contributions are tax deductible  
*Don't forget your employer's matching gift form! Thank you for your support!*

## MIDDLESEX LAND TRUST ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 30TH

Please join the Land Trust for our Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 30th at 10:00am. We will be meeting in Middletown to celebrate our most recent open space preserve located on Boardman Lane. (Please see article on front page.)

Since invasive species removal and environmental repair work on the wetlands will be underway in the Boardman Preserve, the meeting will be held across the road at 169 Boardman Lane thanks to the Giannetti family.

From Smith Street head up Boardman Lane about ½ mile and look for our gathering on the left, just past the historic Old Westfield Cemetery. There will be a brief business meeting and a discussion of the Boardman Preserve Project, after which refreshments will be served. All are welcome.

## MLT TO SPONSOR TAG SALE BOOTH AT PORTLAND EVENT

On May 7th, the Middlesex Land Trust will hold a tag sale at the Palmer Preserve's barn on Middle Haddam Road as part of Portland's Annual town wide Tag Sale Event.

We are looking for donated tag sale items. Anyone who would like to donate items for the sale can drop off items during the week of May 2-6th.

The proceeds will benefit the mission of the Middlesex Land Trust, including our goal to preserve the Palmer Barn and establish a community garden at the Palmer Preserve. We would ask that you not donate any clothing or electronics.

If you have any questions, please call Arthur Johnson at 860-342-5524 or John LeShane at 860-342-0658 And be sure to come by the Tag Sale on May 7th!

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