

LAND TRUST YEAR END REPORT for 2020

The Land Trust had an exceptionally productive and fulfilling year.

Acquisitions

Yoakum Preserve: In June we closed on 244 acre parcel on the south side of Mt Riga. It was purchased from Alice Yoakum at a generous discounted price. It was funded with a \$650,000 CT Open Space Grant, a \$250,000 Federal Highland grant, the John T and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, and an anonymous donor through the Housatonic Valley Association. These funds covered the total \$1,000,000 purchase price.

Accepted a 1.4 acres donation adjacent to our Sycamore Field property on the Housatonic River from Monet Land Investments.

Completed the 7th easement on 20 acres with the Findley's on Prospect Mt.

Applied for a state Open Space grant to help purchase 114 acres adjacent to the Appalachian trail near routes 112 and 7. Applied for an Appalachian Trail Conservancy grant and received \$30,000 toward the purchase price.

Started work on accepting a donation of 4.5 acres along the Rail Trail.

We joined in an application with through HVA and Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Inc. for a Federal NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) \$10,000,000 grant to protect the highlands and nearby lowlands in our Regional Conservation Partnership's focus areas. If the grant is approved we have identified a landowner interested in negotiating a conservation easement.

Stewardship

Monitored all 41 properties where we hold conservation easements.

Boundary signs were designed installed on properties we own.

Schlesinger Bird Preserve: Received a heavy brush-hogging in one area to maintain bird habitat.

Dark Hollow: Invasive barberry spraying done on Lower Trail, storm fallen trees cleared on Summit Trail.

Yoakum Preserve: Started working on building a 4.5 mile hiking trail. This included a very successful volunteer work day.

Pope Preserve: We built a 1.3 mile public access loop trail, replaced 2 collapsed culverts, removed trash, installed the roadside donor sign and a trail map sign.

Vincent property: Landscaped and seeded the muddy and rutted roadside area.

Sycamore Field: Cleared tornado downed trees.

Tory Hill: Sprayed phragmites. Monitored replacement of 4 transmission towers along the Eversource right of way.

Identified and marked 15 trees to be removed to open the view of the Salmon Kill valley at Bill's View along the Appalachian trail on our Prospect Mt. property.

Met with Northeast Wilderness Trust to explore adding Forever Wild easements on some of the properties we own.

Education and Outreach

February 14th Co-sponsored with 12 other land trusts and environmental organizations Sue Morris talk "Wild Cousins of our Best Friends: Wolves, Coyotes and Foxes" at HVRHS.

April 4th Joint Scoville Library Zoom presentation: "World Around Us—Connecticut's Comeback Cat: Bobcats at Home," presented by Kyle Testerman, Wildlife Outreach Specialist, CT DEEP.

April 11th Harbingers of Spring: Birds, Plants, and Amphibians. Joint Scoville Library Zoom presentation by Bethany Sheffer, Volunteer Coordinator and Naturalist, Sharon Audubon.

April 18th Academy Building exhibit; BIRDS IN CRISIS: WHAT CAN I DO? It is a partnership with Sharon Audubon andHVA/Greenprint. Scheduled opening reception was canceled and the exhibit was also made available on the web site.

April 25th Birds in Crisis - What Can I Do? Joint Scoville Library Zoom presentation by Dr. Eileen Fielding, Director of the Sharon Audubon Center.

June 13th Annual Schlesinger Bird Walk was canceled.

September 30th Exhibit of paintings by Tom Key: Landscapes of New England, many featuring scenes of land trust properties.

October 8th – Dr. Mark Plotkin: The Amazon: What Everyone Needs to Know. Zoom presentation in collaboration with Scoville Library,

Sponsored Salisbury school programs with Sharon Audubon.

Participated in meetings with the Housatonic Valley Association and the Berkshire Taconic Regional Partnership to explore how to coordinate on at regional level.

Heritage Walks scheduled for September were canceled.

Other

October 6-8th 5 committee members and the Executive Director attended the Land Trust Alliance Annual Rally by Zoom.

October 17th Sponsored the 2020 Connecticut Land Conservation (Virtual) Conference .

Arranged for the purchase and installation of 2 benches on the town owned Rail Trail.