



Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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Newsletter—Fall 2013

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

A Message From the President

A couple of weeks ago I joined some of my fellow Board members for a hike in the Hills. We were in search of a well-like structure found by other hikers. After a trek, we found what we were looking for—a hole in the ground surrounded by quartz rocks. It didn't look like a natural formation, so leaves, roots and debris were pulled aside to reveal stones that lined part of the depression. Was it a well? A root cellar? Perhaps more exploration is warranted.

We certainly enjoyed a wonderful afternoon. After all, that is what hiking in the Hills is all about – exploring a fabulous nature preserve and coming away with a renewed understanding of how important it is to protect this valuable asset.

Protecting the Hills continues to be the major focus of the Friends. The ongoing efforts of Landmark to build on pristine acreage keep us on our toes, attending public hearings, meeting with subject experts, and working with legal counsel. While we give our time and energy freely, there are costs associated with this work for attorney fees, research, and surveys. We also incur expenses for management of the Preserve – for special projects, and for maintenance of the trails.

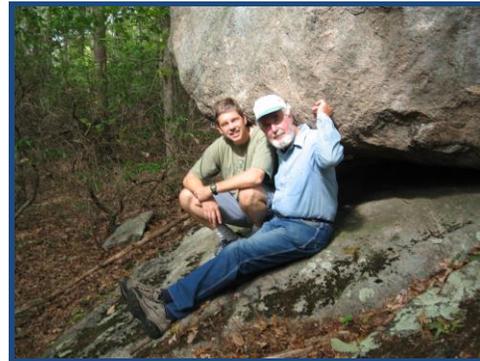
That is why your financial support of the Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve is so important. Have you made your gift this year? If not, please consider one as the year closes. Gifts can be made online at www.owshills.org or sent to our Membership Chair at P.O. Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357. Thank you in advance for your support.

Kris Lambert

President

Effort to Preserve OHNP Celebrates 15th Anniversary!

On July 8, 1999, an editorial titled “Preserve This State Treasure” appeared in The Day. It detailed efforts underway to preserve the Hills. The effort began in 1998, when current FOHNP Board Members Mike Dunn and Marvin Schutt (pictured below) realized that the impending development of the Hills would dramatically alter this pristine area.



Their partnership ultimately led to the formation of the Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, which has played a critical role in the formation of the Preserve. Both Mike and Marvin are past Presidents of the Friends.

More than 300 people and/or organizations have been involved in this very successful venture, including the Town of East Lyme, the East Lyme and Niantic Land Conservation Trust, the Trust for Public Land, the CT DEEP, and hundreds of individuals who have donated the moneys necessary to purchase land.

And the fight goes on!

Set Aside January 25, and Put on Your Dancing Shoes!

If you're looking for a really good time and want to help a good cause, join us at 7:00 PM, January 25 at the American Legion Hall in Niantic.

FOHNP is having a concert/ fundraiser, featuring the Boathouse Blues (pictured below) and The Magneatos. This is a repeat of a concert held this past January, which was well-attended, highly successful and a good time for all who attended.



More details will be provided as the time approaches.

Riparian Buffer Project Complete!



On October 5, volunteers from several organizations planted the final 85 native plants to complete the riparian buffer project. Thirty-nine Silky Dogwood plants and 46 Shadblow plants were planted by the following volunteers:

- From Girl Scout Troop 63800, Annemarie Gucwa and Amelia Green;
- Paul Parulis from The Trust;
- Ray Heller, from Dominion Environmental Lab;
- Harlan Montague and Jay Cunningham;
- Drew Kenny, the project's voluntary landscape architect and owner of Outdoor Lifestyles, and his assistants, Jose and Jayron;
- FOHNP Board members, Greg Decker, Susan Gonzalez, Don Danila, Sean Ashburner, Jim Hall, and Rich Gallagher.

The purpose of this project was to alleviate a severe erosion problem on the slope between Clark Pond and the ball field at Veterans Memorial Park. Thanks again to the Town of East Lyme Parks & Rec Department for preparing the planting holes prior to the planting.



Over the past two years, a total of 261 plants, consisting of nine different native species (3 species of Juniper, Bayberry, Serviceberry, Highbush Blueberry, Sweet Pepperbush, Grey Dogwood and Silky Dogwood) were planted in this area. The native plants are supplanting the invasive plants that were removed from the pond's shoreline this spring. The hillside was also seeded with wildflower meadow mix in early spring and will be supplemented this coming spring. Funds for the project were provided by contributions to the "Friends" from the Dominion Foundation and two grants awarded to the Town of East Lyme and FOHNP.

FOHNP Board Member Helps Grow Organic Vegetables, and Young Minds

Editor's Note: This is the first of an occasional profile to introduce members of the FOHNP.

Sean Ashburner, FOHNP Board member and math teacher at East Lyme Middle School (ELMS), is excited that his students will soon be creating custom scale drawings for the 2014 ELMS Organic Community Garden Project. Seventh and eighth grade students at ELMS are applying math and science knowledge to grow organic vegetables and help out the local community. Students design their gardens using math, to consider optimal placement of vegetables and paths, as well as various space requirements for each vegetable. This project is possible thanks to the enthusiasm of students and administrators at ELMS, collaboration with Michelle Jeff (ELMS science teacher) and Anne Haling (ELMS social studies teacher), and contributions from local community members.

Tom Kalal, master gardener and owner of Cranberry Meadow Farms in East Lyme, volunteers his time and expert guidance as he works with students in the garden. Student volunteers from ELMS and East Lyme Youth Services tend to the garden and harvest the vegetables, which are donated to the Shoreline Soup Kitchen. In the fall, students see the garden in full bloom, and are proud of their hard work and dedication. Students are learning where their food comes from, and are discovering that fresh vegetables are actually delicious.

This past month, Mr. Kalal helped the students build a compost bin in the garden, and students learned the importance of composting. One student has even taken it upon herself to roam the cafeteria during lunch time with a large bag, collecting whole food scraps from fellow students, ensuring that compostable food doesn't end up in the garbage can!

FOHNP and East Lyme & Niantic Land Conservation Trust Team up to Repair Red Trail Bridge

In mid-November, Greg Decker of the Friends and Paul Parulis of the Land Trust teamed up to repair the bridge on the Red Trail. Originally built by Boy Scout Troop 240 a few years ago, the bridge was showing its age, and the original materials were replaced with solid red oak.



East Lyme & Niantic Land Conservation Trust Ramps up Efforts in OHNP

The East Lyme & Niantic Land Conservation Trust (Land Trust) has been increasing its presence in the preserve during the past year. The Land Trust membership has expanded from three (3) to twenty-seven (27) since efforts were begun in February 2013 to re-activate the Land Trust. The Trust is a member of the Management Agreement with the Town of East Lyme and FOHNP, which sets out responsibilities for management of the Preserve.

Beginning in April 2013, the monthly meetings of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve (OHNP) Management Council have included representatives from the Land Trust, a welcome addition.

The Land Trust board and members have just completed the annual inspections of the Land Trust's 25 parcels located around town. Six of these parcels are located in the Oswegatchie Hills.

At the November 21st Management Council meeting, three members of the Land Trust attended and provided an update on the work done to date in the Hills to identify boundary lines, as well as the size and locations of the six Land Trust parcels.



Paul Parulis locates a boundary marker

Locating boundary markers is no small task. A boundary marker can be as simple as a metal peg protruding from a rock that has been grown over with mosses, lichens and even small trees. During the boundary walks, performed by Paul Parulis and Ralph Bates, some unique bronze markers were identified, including one with a pine tree and several others with symbols such as a "T" and "L" (see the picture below). Plans are

underway to pass along the details of those six parcels to the Town, to help update the OHNP Trail Guide Map on its next revision.



FOHNP Board members took a recent excursion off the west Blue Trail to examine this structure that was brought to our attention by a nearby homeowner. It is a quartz-lined pit of some sort, possibly a cistern or well. Many years of weather and plant growth have filled in the pit, and its depth could not be determined.

As Seen on The Preserve



We have pretty creative hikers!



Susan and her dog Eli walk the Hills on a regular basis: "I love these woods! They are so beautiful and quiet. It's a great way to unwind after work. My family says I'm more fun to be with after I've had a good workout on the trails!"

Check us out on Facebook

 FOHNP has a Facebook page! Check it out at www.facebook.com/fohnp for updates on Preserve activities and opportunities. We'd love to hear your feedback as well. Feel free to post your own comments and photos.



A Green Heron hunts among the Clark Pond lily pads.