



Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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Newsletter—Spring 2013

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

A Message From the President

Living adjacent to our beloved Hills, we have been fortunate to observe many bluebirds this winter – and into the spring. We've seen many more than in previous years, and surely they're nesting in the Hills! We've also observed a pair of brown creepers—almost every day, so I think that they, too, are nesting nearby.

We are so lucky to have the Preserve. Providing a safe haven for birds and other wildlife, it also offers recreational opportunities and a natural “laboratory” for all. This Preserve also brings responsibilities for those who oversee it.

Managing a 420-acre preserve is no easy task, especially when Mother Nature intervenes. Sandy and the February “blizzard” caused lots of downed trees and broken limbs, so numerous work parties spent hours clearing trails. A muddy section along the Blue Trail required construction of a bogwalk (see Page 3); and the Riparian Buffer Project, which should be completed this spring, has taken lots of volunteer time. All this work is managed by the Stewardship Committee, chaired by Greg Decker, also vice-president of the Friends. I can't thank him and the other volunteers enough for the many hours they put in. Because of the work they do, the FOHNP was recognized by the Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association for its outstanding stewardship.

The Friends also received several grants this past year: the New England Grass Roots Environment Fund awarded us \$1,000 for “equipment to remove invasive species ...and replacing them with native species.” In November we received

\$2,500 from Dominion, and a month ago we received the Les Mehrhoff Plant Biodiversity Preservation Grant, detailed below.

Even with the good news, dark clouds still hang over the Preserve. Landmark continues its efforts to build high density housing on pristine land with frontage on the Niantic River. Landmark appealed the decision of the Water & Sewer Commission regarding sewer capacity for the proposed project. Our efforts in that case are detailed on Page 2. I'm grateful to Mike Dunn, chair of the Land Acquisition Committee, who has spent many hours working with our attorneys, Paul Geraghty, and Jason Westcott, to support our arguments and provide the Board with helpful, timely information.

If we value the Hills, if we want them preserved in perpetuity, if we want the bluebirds to always have a sanctuary, then we must continue to fight. Join us on Saturday, May 4, 2013 at 10:30 in the East Lyme Room of the Library for the FOHNP Annual Meeting so you can learn more.

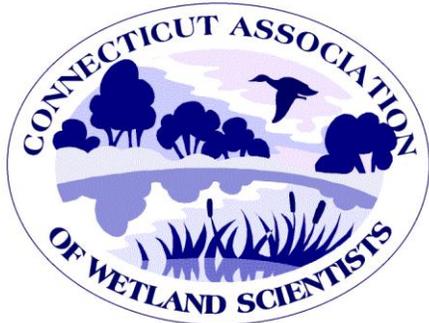
Kris Lambert

President

Save a tree! If you would prefer to receive an electronic version of this newsletter rather than hard copy, please submit your e-mail address to:
fohnp06357@gmail.com

OHNP Riparian Buffer project receives prestigious grant

The Riparian Buffer Project, which has been detailed in previous newsletters, received a boost in the arm when it was awarded the Les Mehrhoff Plant Diversity Preservation Grant for 2013. The grant provides \$1,000 for use on the project.



An e-mail from Cynthia Rabinowitz, of the Connecticut Association of Wetland Scientists, to Gary Goeschel, Town of East Lyme Planning Director, and Jennifer Lindo, Land Use Administrative Assistant, made the announcement:

“I am delighted to inform you that the Board of Connecticut Association of Wetland Scientists has selected your application for invasive species mitigation at Clark's Pond as the recipient of the Les Mehrhoff Plant Diversity Preservation Grant for 2013.

“There were several excellent projects represented in this year's pool and the decision was challenging.”

The award was presented at the annual meeting of the Association on March 21. Gary and Jim Hall of FOHNP received the award.



Cynthia Rabinowitz presents the award to Gary Goeschel, EL Town Planner, and Jim Hall, FOHNP.

FOHNP Intervenes in Landmark Appeal

FOHNP and Save the River-Save the Hills (STR-STH) have jointly filed as interveners in Landmark's appeal of the recent decision by the EL Water and Sewer Commission. The decision, issued December 11, 2012, denied Landmark's request for dedication of 118,000 gallons per day of sewer capacity for a proposed development of 840 units in the Oswegatchie Hills.

FOHNP and STR-STH consider the proposed development to be excessive, inappropriate for the area, and “likely to have the effect of unreasonably polluting, impairing or destroying the public trust in the air, water and other natural resources of the State of Connecticut.”

We agree completely with the Water and Sewer Commission's decision, and are encouraged that Judge Frazinni, the only judge to have decided in favor of Landmark vs EL, has removed himself from hearing further appeals.

Connecticut State Archaeologist Visits the Preserve

State Archaeologist, Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni, made a recent visit to the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve to examine a potential archaeological site located in the preserve. The site contains the residue resulting from many years of fires in a rock formation.



Dr. Bellantoni investigates a potential archaeological site in the Preserve.

According to Dr. Bellantoni, the site is of potential interest, and merits further investigation. Considering the known history of Native American activity in the area, it is reasonable to surmise that it could have early origins. "In order to determine if this is the result of ancient Native American activity, an excavation will be performed," said Dr. Bellantoni. "If enough carbon is found from the source, we may be able to perform carbon dating. If it is older than three to four hundred years, carbon dating would determine the approximate age."



Girl Scout Project in The Hills

With the help of local-area Girl Scout Troop 63800, FOHNP is continuing its ecological survey of the Hills. This effort is a supplement to the survey conducted in 2010-2011, found at:

http://www.oswhills.org/uploads/1/1/9/2/11925417/ohnp_terrestrialecologysurvey.pdf.

The purpose of this survey was to determine general habitats, identify different plant and animal communities, and determine the presence of wetlands in the Preserve.

The survey itself will be conducted by taking information from nine 100' by 100' quadrats in different regions in the preserve. All trees in each quadrat with over a 12" circumference will be identified, catalogued and analyzed.

This supplement will more completely quantify the tree species found in the Preserve, and analyze environmental factors that favor one tree species over another.

Watch for progress report articles on this project in future newsletters.

Lauren Harrington
Girl Scout Troop 63800

Bogwalk Constructed on Blue Trail

On Saturday, March 30, a team of volunteers put their collective "shoulders to the wheel" and built a 70 foot by 24 inch wide "bogwalk" (wooden plank walkway) on a section of the Blue Trail. This portion of the trail is muddied and difficult to traverse, and the bogwalk will protect the trail from degradation.



We're very grateful to volunteers (l. to r.) John Templeton, Kathy Slufik and Don Danila, who took a well-deserved break during the construction to mug for the camera.

The white oak timber was custom cut and donated by Dave Trykowski of Perma Treat Corp. in Durham, CT. Dave routinely makes donations of lumber to non-profits for such projects. The heavy wet timber was transported to the site by tractor and a crew from the Parks & Rec. Dept. Parks & Rec. employees, Mike Rak and Jake Pickerell, made several trips into the woods, and each time they did, they enjoyed the coyotes watching them.

Many thanks to Perma Treat Corp. and Parks and Rec for their support, along with our dedicated volunteers.



Hikers began enjoying the bogwalk even before it was finished. They also appreciated the volunteers' efforts!

College Student Joins FOHNP for Summer Internship

Amy Whitehouse, daughter of FOHNP Board member Paul Whitehouse, is joining the Friends this summer as an intern. Amy, an Environmental Studies and Sociology double major at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, is applying the skills she is learning at school to help manage the Preserve.



Amy was born and raised in East Lyme, and was active in school sports while she attended East Lyme High School. She was on the soccer team, and was captain of indoor track and tennis. She was also active in student government. Amy remains active in civic matters, as a member of Habitat for Humanity, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and the Social Justice Leadership Program.

Amy will be providing leadership for the Girl Scout project discussed in this issue. She is also joining the Preserve's Management Council, and will be helping with numerous environmental projects under the direction of the Council. FOHNP is happy to have Amy's expertise and enthusiasm. Welcome aboard, Amy!

Seen Around the Preserve

On a cold January day, Greg Decker took FOHNP Board member, Susan Gonzalez (shown below) and her family on a walk across a frozen Clark Pond to inspect and clean the two wood duck boxes on the north end.



Susan's son Rowan cleans out one of the wood duck nesting boxes. The boxes are cleaned each year to make way for the next brood in the Spring.



Greg shows Rowan the remnants of a wood duck egg.



The yellow-spotted salamanders are back! Photo by Jim Hall.



Friends of the
Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

Box 163, Niantic, Connecticut 06357 • www.oswhills.org

Membership in Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve is an important way to ensure that the hills we love so much are preserved for future generations. If you are interested, please consider joining.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email _____ Phone _____

(Please note that the Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve does not share or sell member information.)

Enclosed is my gift in the amount of:

\$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other _____

If your company matches gifts to non-profit organizations, please be sure to enclose a matching gift form.
Thank you for your gift!

Please make checks payable to FOHNP, Inc. and mail to:

Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve
ATTN: Membership Chair
P.O. Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357.