



# Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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## Newsletter—Spring 2017

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

### From the Editor

During our May 13 Annual Meeting, FOHNP underwent a significant changing of the guard:

- After six solid years, Kris Lambert stepped down from the Presidency;
- Greg Decker, long-term Board member and Stewardship Committee Chair, was elected the new President;
- Marvin Schutt, Co-founder and former President, became Director Emeritus;
- Jim Hall, Julie Clements-Reagan and Sean Ashburner retired from our Board. Jim and Julie will continue to provide assistance in non-Board capacities; and
- Liz Paganetti, a long-term neighbor of the Hills, became the Board's newest Member.

This edition is dedicated to helping you get to know these excellent individuals. We begin with Greg's introductory Message from the President.

### A Message from the President

Boy, do I have some big shoes to fill! Stepping up to lead a great group of dedicated volunteers and passionate people is going to be challenging, but also rewarding. Since the inception of the Friends group in 2001, there

have been three Presidents who have led the group with great enthusiasm and total commitment to preserve and protect the land we know as the Oswegatchie Hills. All have been absolutely unwavering about the cause.

Sometimes a passion develops early in life, as it did in mine. Growing up in Waterford at the top of Logger Hill, we explored the many acres



of woodland around our neighborhood. We were constantly outside in all seasons, all day and even sometimes at night. In the winter, after being outside in the snow getting soaked, we'd come in and, as

soon as our mittens were dried on the radiator, we'd be back out. The sights, smells, sounds and overall great feeling of being outside and surrounded by nature never left my consciousness.

When I married my wife Ceil in 1979, we bought a house in Niantic and, unbeknownst to us at the time, we had moved next to the most wonderful woods in southeastern Connecticut: Oswegatchie Hills. When our son became a youth we joined the Scouts: I became a Scout

leader and for 11 years we explored the Hills and the world. I hoped to instill in the Scouts my love for being in touch with nature.

Right when my son was leaving the Scouts, I met Marvin Schutt. Looking for another way to volunteer my time, Marvin introduced me to his passion, saving our backyard treasure, the Oswegatchie Hills. I bit and I haven't let go.

Mike Dunn and Marvin Schutt, co-founders of the Friends, took a grass roots effort and built the Friends group into a mighty force, opposing development and preserving land in the Hills. The previous President--the one from whom I have received the baton--Kris Lambert, has been building upon their efforts for the past 6 years. Kris, like me, developed a passion for the woodlands in her childhood home: in her case, in Salem.

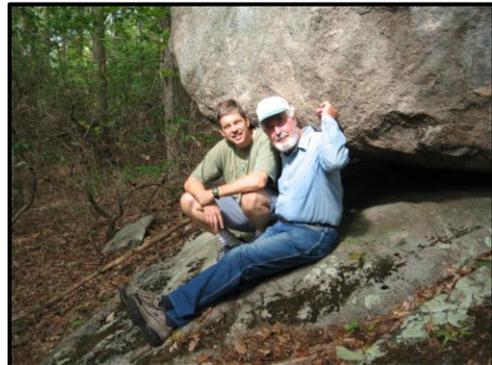
Transitioning from one President to the next is similar to what happens in a migrating flock of geese. The lead goose sets the pace for the rest of the flock and drives forward. It, however, cannot sustain the driving pace forever, and so it falls back into formation and another steps up to continue. It's my turn to lead for a while, and for however long it takes to get to our destination, I hope that waiting for us is additional undeveloped and preserved land. And we can instill in our children the love of and deep passion for nature that defines all of the Presidents and Board members of the Friends.

I thank all of you for accompanying us on this journey. And I want to convey to all that I and the FOHNP Board will do our best to ensure that we will prevail in achieving our mission.



## Marvin Schutt: Director Emeritus

Almost 18 years ago, like a couple of old draft horses, Marvin Schutt and I nudged along a dream that Oswegatchie Hills could be protected as a nature preserve. A lot of thought went into this vision. The title "Preserve" set the tone for protection and passive recreation, rather than a more active park such as Rocky Neck.



*Mike Dunn (l) and Marvin Schutt, co-founders*

Over the years, many people jumped on the wagon and contributed immensely. Some true thoroughbreds joined the team. It has been incredibly satisfying for me, and I know for Marvin as well, to enjoy this synergy and to be creative with so many great people!

Well, time has really flown, Marvin! Thanks in great part to your hard work, we have a 450 acre nature preserve to enjoy! In honor of many years of service and unwavering commitment to save Oswegatchie Hills, Marvin Schutt was bestowed the honor of the Friends' first ever Director Emeritus at our annual meeting on 5/13/17.

We are happy that Marvin will remain in the loop on communications and continue to contribute his wisdom to the board. As outgoing president Kris Lambert said so well in a recent email, "I think the board and the Friends would be a lesser organization if we did not have some presence of Marvin".

Marvin, it's been very rewarding doing this life's work with you over these years, partner. You gave a lot of yourself and for that we are all grateful!

With Love, Mike Dunn, Co-founder

## Introducing Our Newest Director

During this transitional year, we needed to infuse some new energy and enthusiasm into the Board. Long-term Board member, Paul Whitehouse, immediately let it be known that he had the solution: family friend and neighbor of the Hills, Liz Paganetti.

“I knew right away that Liz had all the qualities we were looking for, from her business management background to her experience in numerous facets of communications,” said Paul. “Couple that with her effusive personality and genuine passion for environmental conservation, and she is a perfect fit.”



Liz’s business acumen is seated in 35 years in the telecommunications field; this included more than 15 years in project management, including coordination of new product development. In addition, from 2001 to 2016, Liz was a small business entrepreneur, co-owning and operating an e-commerce business which specialized in environmentally friendly products.

“I am excited to work with this devoted team to preserve the Hills,” says Liz. “This group shows that a public/private partnership model composed of dedicated civic leaders and residents can really make an impact! I have always been passionate about protecting the environment and wildlife, and now fortunate enough to have time to support this important work!”

## Thanks to Kris for a Job Well Done!

After leading the Friends through six extremely busy years, Kris Lambert has stepped back for a well-deserved respite. We are very happy Kris is staying on as a Board member, and will be consulted by Greg as he begins his tenure.

Kris brought tremendous leadership and managerial skills to the job, and very quickly made use of her background to become a first class leader. During her



tenure, the Friends have played a major role not only in the successful management of the preserve, but also in its expansion through land acquisitions, and in fighting further development in the Hills.

“In the Friends organization, there is a before-and-after Kris Lambert,” said Mike Dunn, who preceded Kris as President. “The professional practices she has put in place have strengthened the board and elevated our game to a whole new level.”

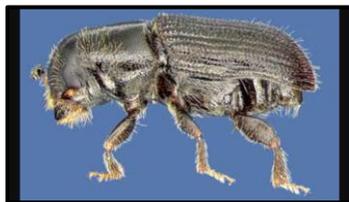
“Kris has such a sharp eye for the fine points of a well-functioning organization, and still maintains her clear vision of the big picture, keeping our meetings focused and productive,” said Raechel Killeen, Board member and Secretary of the Friends. “The positive force of her personal presence -- congenial, generous, energetic, conscientious, diplomatic (I could go on)-- inspires confidence and commitment in us all. We’re very grateful for her years of dedicated leadership.”

## Oswegatchie Hills being sampled for possible presence of harmful beetle

In our last newsletter (Winter 2017), you learned about a special ecosystem that exists in The Hills, but has otherwise disappeared over much of its historic range. We detailed a visit by DEEP forester Emery Gluck, who was very positive about the presence of the Pitch Pine/Scrub Oak ecosystem, and provided us with thoughts on what we can do to protect this precious resource.



One element affecting the resource is a parasitic insect. The Southern Pine Beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*), below (actual size: 1/2 of a grain of rice!), has affected the Jersey Pine Barrens lately, and has recently been found in Connecticut. This pest has been working its way northward for decades with the onset of global warming, and could provide a challenge to our pines.



As a result, the CT Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) has set up a sampling regimen in The Hills to test for the presence of the beetle. The test station is located on the southern outskirts of our Pitch Pine stand. It consists of a trap that uses ingenious devices to capture the insects and preserve them for identification.



AES Scientist Mioara Scott sets up the Beetle trap, while Greg Decker and Claire Rutledge of the AES Look on

The sampling is taking place over six weeks, and the results will determine whether or not action is necessary to protect our precious Pitch Pines from these parasites. A future newsletter will provide an update on results.



## Seen Around the Preserve



The South Eastern CT Adventures (SECTA) Meet-up group on a recent hike in The Hills