



# Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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## Newsletter—Winter 2016

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

### A Message from the President

I have just put up the calendar for 2016. Hard to believe another whole year has gone by! As I flipped through the 2015 calendar, I was reminded of what a busy year it was for the Friends, especially in the spring and summer.

In March, when Landmark LLC filed its newest application for developing our beloved Hills, a joint task force with Save the River-Save the Hills was organized to develop a strategic approach for the fight. Mike Dunn, co-founder, and chair of the Land Acquisition Committee, put untold hours into coordinating our legal defense and recruiting expert witnesses to testify at the public hearings in June.

And finally in August, the East Lyme Zoning Commission conditionally approved the preliminary plan. Yes, the conditions were “very, very stringent,” to quote the chair of the Commission, and “need[ed] to address the very serious environmental concerns,” but I think it is safe to say that all of us who had fought so hard to get the application denied were disappointed and disheartened.

And yet we rallied – the fight must continue if we are to save those precious 236 acres, especially since Landmark has once again filed an appeal of the decision, because they are also dissatisfied with the conditional approval which would limit the number of housing units.

The ultimate goal is to work towards a land swap or purchase at fair market value to allow us to add these 236 gorgeous acres to the preserve.

To bolster our efforts the Friends, together with Save the River-Save the Hills, have entered into a new relationship with the Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) by retaining their services for legal counsel.

Additionally, a private foundation that has supported many CFE endangered lands programs over the years has stepped up to help CFE and us spread the word even further. With CFE’s guidance, the foundation’s funding, and the work of Suzanne Thompson, the newly designated Outreach Coordinator, we are taking the fight to the region and the entire state. See the article beginning on Page 4 for more information on this effort.

And so as we begin the New Year, a time when we typically make a list of resolutions, I have one major resolution at the top my list: “Save the Oswegatchie Hills”. Please put it at the top of your list too.

Here’s to an early spring!

*Kris Lambert*

**Save the Date! FOHNP Annual Meeting,  
May 7, East Lyme Community Center**

## FOHNP Welcomes the Newest Members to the Board of Directors

In May, two top quality people were added to our Board of Directors at our annual meeting. Please welcome Julie Clements-Reagan and Franz Edson. Each brings the talent needed to help us meet the challenges we face over the next several years. Annual Meeting attendee, Jim Lahey, said that “the quality of the new members elected during our meeting is, in a word: “Impressive!”

### Julie Clements-Reagan



Julie has nearly thirty years of experience in graphic arts and design, beginning as the manager of technical publications for Duke Communications International, beginning in 1985. She was

responsible for the production of all monthly and quarterly publications, and the management of the design team.

Julie then established JCReagan Design, where she, among other things, redesigned the prestigious veterinary medical journal, "Veterinary Clinical Pathology" and was responsible for its production through 2006.

Julie is currently the Graphics Coordinator for the Children's Museum of Southeastern Connecticut in Niantic. She is responsible for:

- Design/production of quarterly newsletter
- Website redesign and updates
- Event and program photography
- Social media presence

Julie has been on the Tippecanoe Environmental Counsel in Indiana; the Purdue Women's Club; and the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, West Lafayette, Indiana. On the Board of the Friends, she will be helping with communications and outreach.

### Franz Edson



Franz graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering and a minor in Ocean Engineering. In July of 1979 he joined Electric Boat (EB), where he held positions of

increasing responsibility for many mechanical systems. Franz received a Master of Business Administration from RPI in 1983.

His many accomplishments at EB include

- Advanced SEAL Delivery System (ASDS) Program Manager;
- United States Representative to NATO for Submarine Rescue;
- SSN23 Multi-Mission System (MMS) Program Manager;
- SSN23 Special Projects Program Director;
- Director of Combat and Weapon Systems;
- Director of Submarine Concept Formulation and Payload Integration.
- Director of Mission Systems and Director of Business Development.

Franz is on the Stewardship Committee and is working on a strategic plan for the Friends.

## OHNP Trail Map Being Revised

The FOHNP Stewardship Committee is updating the trail map to include the recently purchased 43-acre Bayreuther property.

As part of the revision, a new short .2 mile spur trail will be added to the map. This will bring hikers to a Quartz Pit, along with an interesting rocky outcropping that can be crawled through.



The trail will have signage and be blazed blue over white on the new map as it turns west off the Blue Trail.

The Stewardship Committee and several volunteers cut a short .2 mi spur trail to the two new “Points of Interest” features. Plans are to extend this trail south in the future as the



Blazing the trail are (l to r) Susan Gonzalez, Ralph Bates, Bruce MacDonald, Greg Decker and Jeff Cunningham.

Preserve is further explored for other features. And a small portion of the Blue Trail will be rerouted onto the newly acquired property and those changes reflected on the new map.

## The Oswegatchie Hills: a Poem

Long-time member of FOHNP, Jim Lahey, sent us this poem about The Hills. It is a “from the heart” summary of what The Hills are all about.

## Oswegatchie Hills

*If you haven't, you must go see them  
Beauty only nature can create  
These hills stand there so proudly  
... While waiting for their fate*

*Married to the Niantic River  
Since water first came this way  
Seamless links to our environment  
... From the forest to the bay*

*These hills carry a Native American name  
A name befitting such a place  
Somehow escaping dozer, saws and blasting  
... This rare and open space*

*Our great state an original colony  
For centuries development has been our  
choice  
How eloquently these hills would defend  
themselves  
... If they only had a voice*

*Think of a natural place you love  
And the strong emotions felt from deep inside  
Do you remember saying to yourself  
... I'm so glad this place was set aside*

*While some say nothing lasts forever  
In our hearts we know this should  
Once gone... then gone forever  
Against the odds these hills have stood*

*It's really up to all of us  
This place so deserving of being saved  
Won't you help while we're still able...  
Before trails and paths are paved*

*If you care about the future  
A cause so easy to embrace  
Tell future generations...  
You helped preserve this special place*

J. F. Lahey  
Saunders Point

November 20, 2004  
Niantic, CT

## Walkway on Clark Pond Dam Benefits from Great Volunteers!



Thanks to some very dedicated volunteers over several days, the walkway on Clark Pond Dam was repaired with durable wood. The original walkway, installed about eight years ago, was beginning to deteriorate. It is now refurbished with White Oak, a more weather-resistant wood. The above photo of the repair effort shows some of about fifteen members of the Pequot Hiking Club, who interrupted their hike on November 17 to help with the effort. In the other photos, additional volunteers are shown over several days in December.



*FOHNP Volunteers finish the job*

“We are very fortunate to have a very dedicated core of volunteers,” said Greg Decker, FOHNP Board Member and Stewardship Committee Chairman. “It is no exaggeration to say their help is instrumental in providing a quality experience to the many people who enjoy the majesty of The Hills.”

## CFE Tours The Hills



To celebrate the start of the new relationship with the Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE), members of the FOHNP Board led CFE staff on a hike in the Hills in November. The gray, drizzly day did not seem to dampen the spirits of the hikers. The CFE folks were eager to learn first-hand about the history, geography and wildlife of the Hills. At the end, the hikers headed to Golden Spur, where the entrance to Landmark’s proposed development would be located. Envisioning a “boulevard” on which well over 800 cars would be traveling in that quiet, narrow neighborhood was quite an eye-opener.



*From left to right, CFE's Legal Director Roger Reynolds and Save the Sound Executive Director Curt Johnson, FOHNP Stewardship Chair Greg Decker and Friends President Kris Lambert.*

## Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition

Launching the “Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition” is our next step to enlist broad public support to protect and preserve the remaining 236 acres of The Hills. The Friends,

Save the River-Save the Hills, and Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) with its bi-state Save the Sound program are founders of the coalition. An alliance of organizations and individuals will create a strong united front of advocates to save our precious hills. Non-profits, businesses and individuals can sign on to express support. Friends and STR-STH members are automatically considered members of the coalition, as are CFE and Save the Sound supporters, but individuals can also sign on to express public support.

We hope to attract many coalition members, from state-wide conservation organizations and land trusts, nature and outdoors enthusiasts to civic groups and garden clubs. Organizations, businesses and individuals who have supported our efforts over the years are also encouraged to join as a reaffirmation of their desire to help us save the hills.

The coalition will formally launch in January. Look for the Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition on CFE's website [www.ctenvironment.org](http://www.ctenvironment.org), under the Endangered Lands section. Our three founding organizations appear at the top, and as organizations join, names will be added to the list of coalition members. The webpage links directly to the Friends and STR-STH websites.

Suzanne Thompson, STR-STH Board member and familiar face to many of us, has been contracted by CFE to develop communications materials, identify and reach out to state-wide organizations, and update our Boards on coalition-building progress. She is developing a presentation to take our message to a wider audience. She welcomes recommendations for potential coalition members. Contact her at [sthompson@ctenvironment.org](mailto:sthompson@ctenvironment.org) or at 860-434-5754.

## Seen Around the Preserve

East Lyme Parks and Recreation and Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve provided guided hikes on June 6, National Trails Day. Hikers came from around the state, and included local Brownie Troop 63053 (pictured below).



Al Burchsted, a renowned naturalist, led a group of about twenty hikers, who were treated to Al's passion for nature and knowledge of the flora and fauna of The Hills! These photos captured Al in action. A good time was had by all!



## Seen Around the Preserve (cont'd)



*Dave and Rose LaFleur are avid hikers who visit The Hills very often. They consider it one of the most enjoyable and peaceful hikes in the area.*



*Photo by Paul Parulis, Stewardship Committee*

*This beautiful wood thrush photo was taken in The Hills by Jeri Duefrene. It has become a symbol of the decline of Neotropical songbirds of eastern North America, having declined by approximately 50% since 1966. Recently, this important bird has become a summer-long inhabitant of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. Thanks, Jeri!*



*Photos below by Al Obue, Manchester, CT*

