



Friends of the OSWEGATCHIE HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

Newsletter—Fall 2017

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

A Message from the President



My wife Ceil and I had the opportunity recently to visit the Galapagos islands, 600 miles west of Ecuador. These thirteen islands and various volcanic

outcroppings are the ultimate example of a well-known worldwide conservation effort. They contain such diverse and unique wildlife that they inspired Charles Darwin to develop his theory of evolution and became the world's first UNESCO World Heritage Site.

All during our visit we were in constant awe of the terrain and the ability to observe the animals nesting, nursing or playing in such close proximity. They seemed oblivious to our presence. It was as if we were the first humans to visit the islands.

The entire world should be thankful for those who had the foresight to protect this wonderful archipelago. We came away inspired, and it reinforced the need to conserve whatever precious natural environments we have left. I feel good knowing that we are doing our part by working to save our own Galapagos here in East Lyme, the Oswegatchie Hills.

Undertaking any conservation project that benefits society and our well-being comes at a price. FOHNP is incurring hefty legal costs to stay in the fight to conserve the Hills. We are, however, confident that Connecticut Fund for the Environment's (CFE) legal staff is the best and most experienced legal team we could have in representing both us and STR/STH on the two court cases presently in the State Courts. To help defer CFE'S legal expenses, FOHNP has contributed \$30k over the last three years and recently pledged another \$30K for the next three years. STR/STH has contributed a similar amount and has pledged to continue their support.

2018 will be a very important year in this battle as both the sewer and zoning cases are back on the court dockets. We must continue to sustain this level of engagement and not waver. We are all in.

As this year draws to a close, please consider a year-end donation to help us stay in the fight. If you have already made a gift this year, we thank you. This is the price of thoughtful conservation. In making a contribution you become a stakeholder in saving this region's Galapagos, the Oswegatchie Hills.

Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve Tenth Anniversary a Success!



On Saturday, October 14, a special celebration took place to honor the tenth anniversary of the official opening of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. The Open House took place at Veterans Memorial Field.

While the weather tried to rain on our “parade,” it did not dampen the spirits of nearly 50 people who attended the affair.



Since November 2007, this preserve has grown to almost 460 acres. Its wild and rocky terrain provides habitat for diverse ecosystems and hiking and birdwatching for people along the densely developed southeastern Connecticut shoreline.

Speakers included FOHNP President Greg Decker, State Senator Paul Formica, former US Congressman Rob Simmons, East Lyme First Selectman Mark Nickerson, and Waterford First Selectman Dan Steward.



In addition to proclamations from state and town officials, a special presentation was made to the original cofounders of FOHNP, Marvin Schutt and Mike Dunn (below). A plaque honoring the pair has been mounted on a special piece of granite, which now greets visitors at the entrance to the preserve.



The legal battles to protect the adjoining 236 acres of undeveloped forest continue.

The Friends of OHNP and Save the River-Save the Hills have been environmental intervenors since the first court cases. In 2015, Connecticut Fund for the Environment joined the cause.

We continue to stand firm in our goal to preserve and protect this final piece of undeveloped Oswegatchie Hills and see it added to the neighboring nature preserve, instead of letting it become a site for ill-conceived development.

Landmark Development Back on Zoning Commission's Calendar

A status conference was held on November 27th in the Landmark Development vs. East Lyme Zoning Commission. This may be an indication that additional public meetings may be scheduled in the future. In addition, CFE has filed a 36-page brief on our behalf regarding the separate and important appeal of the Water and Sewer decision. We will keep you posted on any further developments.

Cub Scouts Build Bluebird Nesting Boxes for OHNP



On a sunny day in late October, Cub Scout Den Number 7 joined members of FOHNP to build bluebird nesting boxes, which are being installed in prime bluebird habitat up in the Hills. The Scouts were diligent and built a total of ten boxes.



Stewardship Committee member, and mom of one of the scouts, Susan Gonzalez, summed it up best in a note to Greg:

“A heartfelt ‘Thank You!’ to everyone for making this event so successful and fun. The kids were thrilled to be able to construct the bluebird boxes and really felt a sense of accomplishment with each one built. I think some of the kids would have kept building them until Greg ran out of wood! It was a perfect day and it was great to see so many smiling faces.”



Visit our website at:
www.oswhills.org

And our Facebook page at
www.facebook.com/fohnp

Blue Trail Undergoing Relocation



Left to right Jay Cunningham, Linda Veglianti, Sandra Austin, Jim Hall, Ray and Penny Heller, and Mike Roche.

In September, FOHNP volunteers cut and cleared the new section of the Blue Trail in order to by-pass the steep rocky incline that is challenging. It will also bypass the wet area on the east side of the stream, which the old trail crossed, reduce the impact to this wet area, and eliminate the need to install a bogwalk. The new section still incorporates an incline, but it is not so steep and slippery.

Because this realignment must be noted on the trail map, we are delaying opening it until we can plan and implement another trail modification. The Stewardship Committee is currently working on a plan to help our town's emergency responders identify their location on the trail system while performing a search and rescue in the Preserve.

Once the plan is finalized and approved by East Lyme's police and fire departments, we will edit the trail map to reflect both improvements. This will reduce printing costs by not having to make multiple changes. The new trail section will then be noted and opened for use.

CFE Video Features The Hills



Save the Hills Coalition created a compelling video with Ayla Fox from Shed Light Productions! This short video documentary profiles the Oswegatchie Hills and Niantic River estuary and the ongoing quest to save them. Enjoy stunning aerial footage of the lower watershed, people hiking in the Nature Preserve, and kayakers on the Niantic River. **Check it out on www.oswhills.org.**

Enjoy and then get involved!

Renew your membership in Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve today to help ensure that the Hills are preserved for future generations.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

(Please note that the Friends of Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve will never 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 Nature Preserve, ATTN: Membership Chair, P.O. Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357