



*Friends of the*  
**OSWEGATCHIE HILLS**  
**NATURE PRESERVE**

## Newsletter – Spring 2019

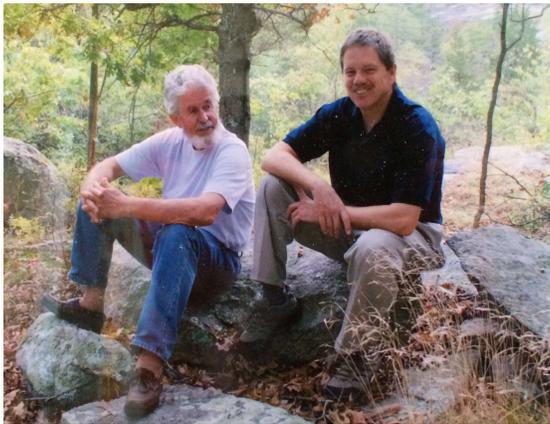
### A Message from the President

Shortly after I took up the gavel again as president, we learned the sad news of Marvin Schutt's passing. It seemed only appropriate for Mike Dunn, co-founder with Marvin of the Friends, to pay homage to a man whose vision and determination resulted in the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. I know his spirit will forever live in his beloved Hills.

*Kris Lambert*

### In Memory of Marvin Schutt

Marvin Schutt, as observed by friend Paul Whitehouse, brought the concept of civic-mindedness to a whole new level. When the East Lyme Rotary Club honored him as Person of the Year in 2012, and read his accomplishments, Marvin's response was "I did all that?" I worked shoulder to shoulder with Marvin for almost 20 years in the effort to save Oswegatchie Hills. He called me "brother" and us "partners in crime" as we created the foundation of the Friends organization in 1999. The Friends grew into a full-fledged non-profit corporation with Marvin as its first president and we worked nearly full time together for years. It was both challenging and rewarding weaving together the fabric of the many people who created the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.



Marvin was a "people person" and it was important to him that *everyone* be acknowledged for their efforts. At one point, he typed up a list naming hundreds of people whose combined efforts created the Nature Preserve. That list survives Marvin, as does the beautiful 465 acre Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve that is now protected for future generations. Above all else, Marvin was caring. He was also hardworking, intuitive and sometimes stubborn. The latter trait fueled his perseverance to "get the job done".

Marvin's wife Marilyn was both the love of his life, and the wind beneath his wings. She helped him keep his numerous priorities organized and was the invaluable compass he relied on when the waters got rough. Every year, the two would paddle their canoe from Saunders Point to Grimsey Beach for the annual Niantic River Kayak Regatta. Being connected to his natural environment, Marvin knew that the odds were high a southerly breeze would pick up, making the afternoon return trip quite difficult. But with unsinkable determination, and for years after more "reasonable" couples would have decided it was too much, M&M would climb into their canoe each August and head up the river. Marvin knew that trip home would be a battle against the wind. But he also knew that sometimes the things most difficult to do, are the very things that are most worth doing!

Marvin my brother, you paddled strong and accomplished much! It's your turn to float gently now and rest with a warm breeze at your back. It was an honor and a pleasure to share some of your journey. *Mike*

The family has asked that gifts in Marvin's memory be made to the Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.

## Clark Pond Bridge

From a plank walkway to a beautiful bridge - and entirely funded by passionate individuals and community support. With dedication and perseverance, a beautiful new bridge now welcomes everyone to the preserve! Come enjoy the peace, listen to the birds and hike the trails on this beautiful land.



Greg Decker and Franz Edson leveling the foundation pins



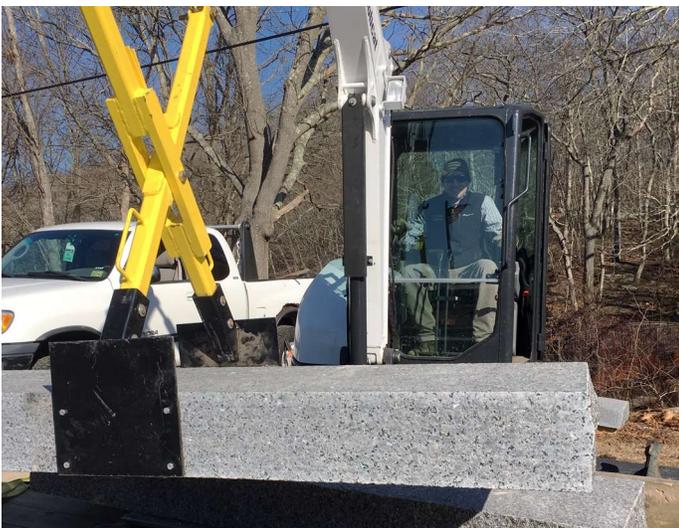
The bridge sections arrive from Minnesota



One of three beams at the bank



The framing is coming together!



Drew Kenny installing steps



Grand Opening ~ April 13, 2019

# The Clark Pond Bridge Story

By Franz Edson

It all started innocently enough. Let's build a bridge. What's so hard about that? Well, Greg Decker and I would find out over the next 24 months. Throughout our planning and engineering process, one tenet stood out above all others. We could not disturb the fragile ecosystem in the vicinity of the proposed bridge. So, any approach that needed large cranes, backhoes, etc. was out. Accordingly, we needed a bridge that we could man handle and assemble on site. We found a company in Minnesota that could build a prefab bridge to our specifications, then disassemble and ship it to us. Typical large concrete foundations were also not workable, so Greg Decker solved that problem by finding a product called pin piers, that are minimally invasive, and can be installed with hand tools.

Last winter, we completed the engineering to ensure the bridge and foundations would be robust enough. We looked at static loads, live loads, snow loads and so on. After a lot of calculations, we were happy with the factors of safety. In parallel, Kris Lambert was working the fund-raising end. Several local companies and organizations as well as many individuals provided very generous support.

With the help of Drew Kenny, owner of Outdoor Lifestyles in East Lyme, we installed the foundations this Fall. It wasn't as easy as we thought it was going to be, but after a few days they were installed, leveled and plumb. Finally, our six large bridge crates were delivered. Again, with Drew's help, we set the three bridge beams on the foundations. After staining the treads and handrails off-site, Greg and I installed them all over a period of a couple of very cold weeks. Lastly, a large group of volunteers hand dug a large area on either side of the bridge so we could compact gravel and crushed stone to act as a base for the granite steps.

As you walk over the bridge, enjoy the view and reflect on what a treasure the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve is.



*From left to right Dan Steward, Mark Nickerson, Greg Decker, Franz Edson, Paul Formica, Holly Cheeseman celebrate the bridge grand opening on Saturday, April 13, 2019*



*Marilyn Schutt wife of co-founder Marvin Schutt was the first person to cross the bridge. Here she admires the view and reads the information plaque about Clark Pond.*



*Greg Decker and Franz Edson*

## Best Place to Take a Hike

You always knew it - now more in Southeastern CT will discover the joy of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.



**The Days Best of Readers Choice Award for Top 3 'Places to Take a Hike'!**

## Seen Around the Preserve

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, CT Trails Day, over 50 hikers participated in guided hikes of the Hills. They were fortunate to spot two lady slippers, a special treat!



## 2019 Annual Meeting

The annual meeting took place on Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. We were joined by State Senator, Paul Formica, as well as State Representative, Holly Cheeseman and East Lyme First Selectman, Mark Nickerson; they all offered remarks about state and local challenges and expressed thanks and offered continued support for the FOHNP mission to maintain and expand the nature preserve which will provide a lasting resource for future generations to enjoy.

Rich Gallagher, as chair of the Nominations Committee, provided the slate of the officers and board members. This year, in order to avoid having the terms for president and vice president expire at the same time, the president's position was up for election for a one year term. Kris Lambert was elected to that position for the one-year term, Greg Decker will continue to head the stewardship committee.

In addition, the following were re-elected to two-year terms: Dave Hughes, vice president; Raechel Killeen, secretary, and directors, Mike Dunn, Don Danila, Franz Edson, Caren Linden and Liz Paganetti. Don and Caren were granted waivers to continue to serve since they have served for six years.



Kris Lambert and Mike Dunn present Greg Decker with gifts of thanks and recognition from the board

East Lyme High School Anthropology teacher, Will Reed, along with student Caitlyn Sievers displayed some of the significant finds from a fall archeological dig in the Hills. They discussed the process and the research that followed to identify the items from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Caitlyn's journal, along with boxes of artifacts was turned over to Greg Decker, to be kept as part of the historical record.



Save the Date – 8/17/19  
Save the River – Save the Hills  
Kayak Regatta