



Friends of the OSWEGATCHIE HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

Newsletter – 1st Quarter 2025

A Message from the President

In March Dave Baer, one of our board members, and I attended the annual conference of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC). The conference is the state's largest conservation gathering and CLCC's premier event, bringing together hundreds of volunteers, staff, board members, environmental professionals and advocates. Held at Wesleyan University, it is a day-long event, featuring a wide array of workshops and the opportunity to network with many individuals who, like us, are passionate about protecting the land and the environment.



Dave and I attended several very informative workshops on topics that included the pros and cons of collaborating or merging with land trusts; the importance of checking up on organizational health; and the process for putting together a land conservation transaction. The highlight of the day, however, was the keynote speaker, Dudley Edmondson, an established photographer, author, filmmaker and presenter. His presentation, titled "The Browning of America and its Impact on Conservation and Outdoor Recreation," was inspiring. The term "browning of America" does not refer to the effects of global warming or climate change as you might first think, but rather to the evolving demographics of America and the impact of these changing demographics on environmental and social challenges. The presentation included stunning photographs and thought-provoking, recorded interviews with Black and Brown scientists and activists who are "leading the charge for environmental justice and innovation."

At the end of the day, I came away inspired but also a little overwhelmed by all that we learned. These are challenging times for conservation and the environment, and groups like the Friends must remain informed and engaged. Protecting and preserving the land is up to all of us.



In late March, Greg Decker spotted some beautiful mosses and lichens in an area near pitch pine trees on the ridge. A great confirmation of the healthy ecosystems and air quality in the Hills!

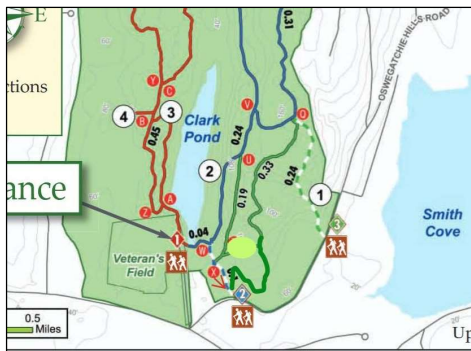
Kris Lambert

"In wilderness the ability to embrace freedom and be your true self is the healing medicine the mind needs."

~ Dudley Edmondson
Keynote Speaker at 2025 CLCC Annual Conference

Hills Updates!

Thanks to Greg Decker and the awesome volunteers on the Stewardship Committee!
They work tirelessly to maintain and improve the trail system all year!



← The Green Trail has reopened! It's safer, easier and less prone to erosion. See Updated Trail Map on left

Bill Chantrell installed a new wood duck box, bringing the total of houses in the Hills to six. See photo of Bill on right



Clear Cutting in the Hills Continues

In an email from March 5th as well as in our Fall 2024 newsletter, we wrote to update you about the clear cutting occurring on the Landmark property in Oswegatchie Hills; the image below is from 1-16-2025. As a reminder, in 2017 an application was approved by Inland Wetlands Agency (IWA) "as of right" for "non-regulated activity" for a tree farm... to be known as River Valley Farm" on the property.

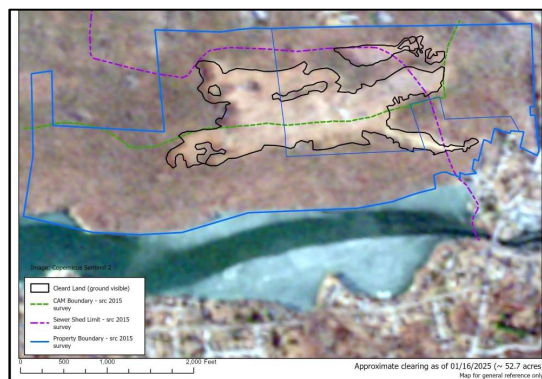
Since early last year, when clear cutting began, we have coordinated efforts with Save the River-Save the Hills and our legal counsel, Save the Sound, to seek ways to stop the clearing. Don Danila, board member, and Kris Lambert, president, spoke at multiple Inland Wetlands Agency (IWA) meetings to request a review of Landmarks' actions.

During the IWA's March meeting, a letter of concern from Save the Sound was read into the meeting minutes. At that same meeting, a memo from Gary Goeschel, the town's Inland Wetlands Agent, was submitted. Mr. Goeschel stated that Landmark's actions of clear cutting are in "compliance with" [actually "exempt from"...] the regulations. Tree clearing for the purpose of establishing a farm, e.g. a tree farm, is allowed under the agricultural exemption. Mr. Goeschel also stated that, in speaking with property owner Glenn Russo, he learned they plan to continue clear cutting for the tree farm. At this point it appears that we have exhausted all possibilities to bring the operation to a halt. We will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as needed.

For further information, referenced documents are on the town of East Lyme website: "<https://eltownhall.com/government/boards-commissions/inland-wetlands-agency/>". Or watch the video of the March IWA meeting at "https://youtu.be/kThs32sa6Ak?si=zPqUc7DV31_2qRcL" (from approximately 51 minutes).

Excerpt from Mr. Goeschel's memo dated February 26, 2025:

... The applicant's narrative states that the tree farm is approximately 230-acres and they are proposing to "selectively harvest the native hardwoods on the various sections of the property and plant in their place." As noted at the Sept. 11, 2017 IWA meeting, the minutes record the applicant addressing a possible phasing of the cutting operation: "We are looking at 5 acres and depending on how it goes they will expand to more areas... never any intention of limiting it to a specific amount of acres." Together it appears that the applicant proposed selective harvesting and replanting on the entire farm area, about 230 acres. The IWA determined that this was an 'as of right' farming operation and exempt from wetlands permitting requirements.



Approximate Location of Cleared land as of 1/6/25

Annual Meeting - May 17, 2025

Please join us on Saturday, 5/17/25 at the East Lyme Library for the annual meeting. We will gather at 10AM in the East Lyme Room to swear in new officers, hear updates on the nature preserve and enjoy a special slideshow. This is your opportunity to learn first-hand about what is happening in the preserve and to ask questions. Hope to see you there!



CT Trails Day

There are three hiking opportunities to enjoy CT Trails Day on 6/7/25

Long Hike, 9AM (Moderate 3-mile) Enjoy a three hour information filled hike exploring the Oswegatchie Hills nature preserve. The hilly terrain will feature multiple rock formations, glacial boulders, imperial pitch pine stands and more.

Naturalist Walk, 9:30AM (Easy 1 mile) Join Al Burchsted, local naturalist, on a casual walk-a-bout learning about plants, insects and the local ecosystem in the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.

Red Loop Trail, 10AM (Moderate 1.5-mile) Explore the lower portions of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve, with views of Clark Pond, glacial boulders, imperial Pitch pine stands and a small rocky outcrop that kids would enjoy crawling through.

Registration opens May 14th at the following link:
ctwoodlands.org/events/ct-trails-day

Run for the Hills



Save the Date!

The 4th Annual Run for the Hills 5K will be held on 9/13/25 at 10AM

Enjoy a fun run around the beautiful preserve while supporting the Hills. All proceeds go directly to maintaining this special place of quiet beauty!
Registration is now open!

Check out OSWHills.org or Run SignUp for Additional Details

Lots of Activity in the Hills!



Our beavers have been very busy!



Pileated Woodpecker's handiwork

FOHNP thanks the following members for their generous support in 2024

Beth Acton
Stephen Alligood
Sandra Austin
Frank & Lori Balantic
Jeff & Anne Barnhart
Jane & Ralph Bates
Robert Bell
Norman & Sally Bender
Karen Bloustine
Boats Inc.
Heather Bordeleau
Carol Borsari
Carol Bourque
Maryellen Brousseau & Jack
Kohanim
Lisa Burch
Laura Burchell
Linda Burchsted
Holly Camerota
Jane & Al Capozza
Robert & Claire Carter
Margaret Caste
Charter Oak Federal
Credit Union
Holly Cheeseman
Chelsea Groton Bank
Carmin Cimino
Levi Citarella
Julie Clements-Reagan
Conway, Londregan, Sheehan
& Monaco
Bruce & Kristi Cooper
Deborah Cromwell
Bill & Ann Curatolo
Robert & Patricia Cutillo
Don and Cathy Danila
Bruce and Denette Dasinger
Justin Daubar
Tess Deshefy-Longhi
Kathy Doherty
Deb Moshier-Dunn & Mike Dunn
East Lyme Rent-A-Space
John Eberle
Franz Edson
Natalie Edwards
Peter & Patti Emanuel
Anthony Enders
Jill Fallon

Fast Signs
Paul Formica
Everett Fortin
Tom & Jane Fox
Mary Ellen Gladue
Linn Golubchik
Cordette Grimsey
Barbara & Peter Guerra
Malcolm & Betsy Hall
James & Stefania Hall
Malcolm & Betsy Hall
Claire Hambrick
Ray Heller
Molly Helms
Regina Hitchery
John & Jessica Hoadley
Burt & Lois Hobby
June Hoyer
Mary Jean Hull
Ed & Donna Jutila
Zita & Arthur Kachadourian
Denis Kaminski
Eric & Barbara Kanter
Gerald & Claire Kavarnos
Raechel Killeen
Doug Kolowsky
Peter Kreckovic
Kris & Brian Lambert
Robert Linden
Barbara Low
Karen Lungren
Larry Magee
Sandra Maheu
Robin Maillert
John & Madeline Makiaris
Jeanne Manfred
Steven & Margot Marenakos
Steve & Floy Marks-Hamilton
Elizabeth Martin
Joseph & Kathleen Mascaro
Lucy Masi
Beverly & Gerald Mayer
Jack & Angie McLean
Nicole & Paul Michaud
George Milne
Emanuel Family Fund
Karen Mullen
Barbara & Greg Murin
Sally & Rob Myers

Tom Nebel
Pik Ng
Niantic Plumbing
Ken & Eileen O'Pasek
Janice Orsini
Liz & Jim Paganetti
Paul Parulis
Neil Passman
Ken & Pat Payne
Norman Peck
Pete & Janne Petersen
Creig Peterson
Isabella Peterson
Linda Raffa
Laurie Ranelli
Kevin & Susan Reardon
Marc & Georgann Ritter
Riverhead Building Supply
James Rives
Judy & Dick Robertson
Dave & Mary Royce
Robin & Gene Ryan
Susan & Mike Sheehan
Jennifer Siskind
John & Becky Starrett
Sharol Stewart
Cecelia Sullivan
Diane Sullivan
Jack & Gay Suplicki
Jeremy Susco
Allan Taylor
Jane & John Templeton
John & Patricia Thompson
United Way of MA Bay
Greg & Mimi Vymola
Paul Warms
David & Carol Weber
Joan Williams
Joseph & Karen Wysocki
Yankee Remodeler
Albert Yost
Christine & Robert Young
Susan Zimmerman
Amy Zinsser

Editor's Note: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. However, if you find any error or omission, please let us know.