



# Friends of the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve

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## Newsletter—Summer 2016

FOHNP thanks Dominion for printing this newsletter

### A Message From the President

The summer of 2016 continues to emphasize the importance of our focus on preserving the hills. As a result of the rain deficit this year, some of our beloved wetlands that normally hold water year-round were dry by mid-August.

This underscores the vital role wetlands play in the health of the Hills' ecosystem. Anything that affects the viability of the wetlands affects the health of the Hills.

That's one of the many reasons why we, CT Fund for the Environment (CFE) and Save The River/Save The Hills (STR/STH) continue to oppose the excessive development proposed by Landmark Development, as discussed in an excellent article by FOHNP's Legal Defense Committee chair Mike Dunn, on Page 2.

Mike's article points out the challenges we have faced—and continue to face—in our efforts to preserve the Hills. Our efforts have resulted in significant legal costs. If you would like to show your support for our efforts, you can make a tax-deductible contribution to the cause on our website at [www.oswhills.org](http://www.oswhills.org). We also happily accept checks, made payable to FOHNP and mailed to PO Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357

Ironically, Mike pointed out during the EL Zoning Commission hearings that Landmark's preliminary application has a building directly in a wetland!!! Talk about wetlands impacts!

On the positive side, early summer in the Hills saw a BEAUTIFUL display of Connecticut's state flower, the Mountain Laurel. Also, a picturesque display of mushrooms, on Page 4, gives you just a glimpse into what else the Hills have to offer.

Also on the positive side was the hugely successful kick-off reception for the Coalition to Save Oswegatchie Hills on June 9. Over 50 people attended the event, held at the East Lyme Community Center. FOHNP Board member, Julie Clements-Reagan, put together a great exhibit not only depicting the wildlife in our precious Hills but also clearly illustrating the impact of proposed development. Exhibits are now at the Waterford Community Center through mid-October and the Waterford Library through September. Check it out.



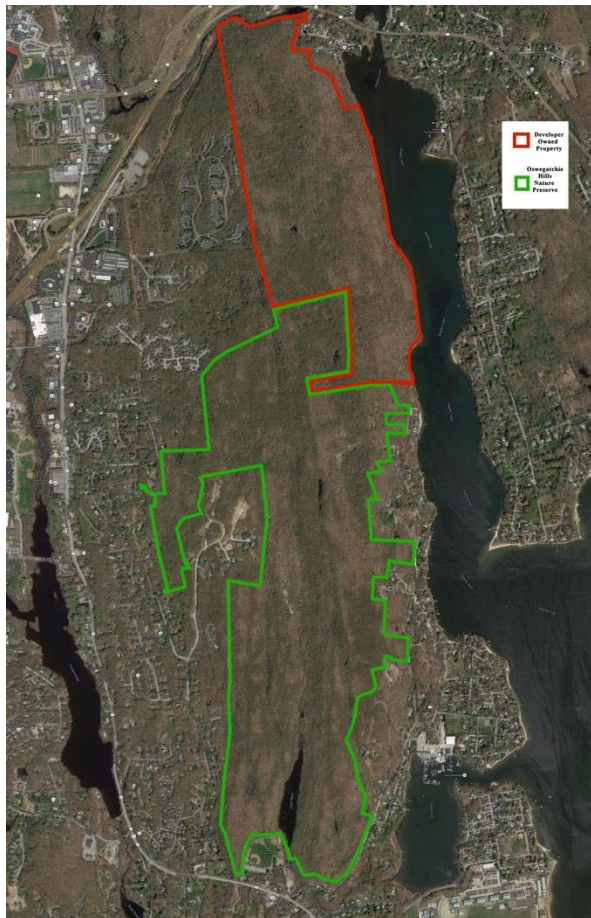
*Kris Lambert*

President

## Court Battle to Save The Hills Continues

We have won many major victories over the years in creating and expanding the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve. During the past decade, the preserve has been created and expanded to the current 457 acres with many acquisitions. We're very proud of our accomplishments.

Recent decisions, however, reinforce the fact that the battle for the last remaining 236 acres of pristine land is a long, ongoing effort.



*Oswegatchie Hills and surrounding area. The current Nature Preserve is outlined in GREEN; the Landmark property is outlined in RED.*

### East Lyme Zoning Commission

Last August, the East Lyme Zoning Commission conditionally approved Landmark Development's Preliminary Plan for an affordable housing development in the Hills. The plan called for

- **840 housing units in 24 buildings;**
- **1767 parking spaces;**
- **36 acres of impervious surface.**

The Commission's decision, however, requires very rigid conditions and modifications before the Final Site Plan is submitted to the Commission for their review. These modifications were based to a large extent on testimony from the Friends and our partners, CFE and STR/STH. An example of such a condition is to address the discovery that the Preliminary Site Plan included a building **WITHIN AN EXISTING WETLAND!**

Landmark has appealed the Commission's decision, and the Friends, CFE and STR/STH have filed in opposition to Landmark's appeal.

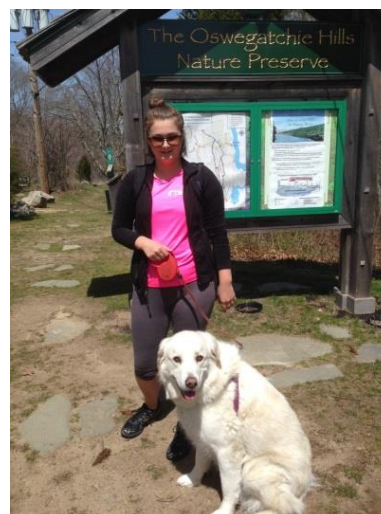
### East Lyme Water and Sewer Commission

On July 6, a state Superior Court judge ordered the town's Water and Sewer Commission to reconsider the sewage capacity it allowed in a 2014 decision.

Hartford Superior Court Judge Henry S. Cohn called the Commission's allocation of 14,434 gallons per day "excessively low" and remanded the issue to the Commission.

The Friends and partners will continue on as intervenors in the Water and Sewer docket. We, along with the Town, have filed to appeal this most recent sewer decision and are cautiously optimistic that our position is valid and strong.

## Seen Around the Preserve



*Waterford resident, Megan, loves to walk her dog Riley in The Hills.*





*This summer has seen a profusion of round leaf pyrola up in the Hills (ID'ed by Linda Vegliante)*



*Lots of Laurel this year!*



*Barred Owl, seen on the Red Trail*

## Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition Update

Thank you, Friends, for making our summer drive to build public awareness and support for Save Oswegatchie Hills a success! On June 9, Connecticut Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection Rob Klee helped us unveil the Coalition's display at East Lyme Community Center. Details of the event, displays and upcoming events are described in Kris's message on Page 1.

The road trip continued in July, with outdoor displays at Pine Grove Community's tag sale, Celebrate East Lyme Day and Old Lyme Midsummer Festival. Thanks to Greg Decker, David Hughes, Caren Linden and attorney Jason Westcott for helping at these events. Yes, local residents, neighbors and visitors to the region are interested in our cause.

## CFE Treks The Hills

A group of interns and others from CFE hiked the Hills on July 20, led by Board Members, Greg Decker and Rich Gallagher. It was followed by a visit to Three Belles Marina, where the owner described the Marina's efforts to protect the Niantic River ecosystem.



*Jason Westcott shows attendees the remaining land yet to be saved in The Hills.*



Our next stops for the display are also described in Kris's message. Stop by to see the collection of maps, photos and narratives that explain why it's so important that we preserve and protect the remaining northern one-third of undeveloped coastal forest and the aquatic ecology and water quality of the Niantic River. And please attend the opening reception at Waterford Community Center on Wednesday, Sept. 21, 5 - 6:30 pm.

Newest Coalition members include Waterford Land Trust, Eightmile Wild and Scenic Committee and Old Lyme Land Trust. See the latest list at [www.ctenvironment.org/oswegatchiecoalition](http://www.ctenvironment.org/oswegatchiecoalition). Suzanne Thompson, Save Oswegatchie Hills Outreach Coordinator, welcomes our ideas for new locations for the display. Contact her at [sthompson@ctenvironment.org](mailto:sthompson@ctenvironment.org), or at 860-434-5754

### There's a Fungus Among Us!

Visitors to our beloved Nature Preserve come for a variety of reasons: the serenity it brings to our sometimes hectic lives; the more than 150 species of interesting birds that live within our borders; the majestic trees; the beautiful wetlands; the interesting geological formations.

Sometimes we overlook the smaller things that make The Hills a fascinating, beautiful place to enjoy nature: many interesting and colorful mosses; a variety of lichens that provide food for wildlife and humans alike; and, as covered in this article, a fascinating variety of fungi!

No matter how much a mushroom looks like a pancake, very few of them are edible, and it takes an expert to know which ones are!

The following photos—just a sample of what is up there—were all taken in the Preserve.



*Image provided by Paul Parulis*



*Image provided by Paul Parulis*

