



Friends of the OSWEGATCHIE HILLS NATURE PRESERVE

Newsletter – Summer 2018

A Message from the President

“It’s a destination worthy of exploring.” This is what we want residents and visitors to say about the Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve when someone asks them what to do in East Lyme.

The goal of the Friends is not only to save the remaining mile of fragile coastal forest but also to make the existing, protected acreage a destination similar to the other wonderful resources in town like McCooks, Hole-in-the-Wall, Niantic Boardwalk and the new park on Main Street.

To do this, we must inspire people to come and walk the Hills and to see for themselves what a hidden gem they have in their own backyard and then to tell others. The Hills will impress them and leave them with a sense of just having visited an area that somehow refreshed their being. “I’d love to do that again” should be the thought they leave with.

When you pass by a house, you can tell a lot about the inside by how the outside is kept. FOHNP subscribes to the same thinking in its management practices. That’s one of the reasons we are undertaking a major entrance improvement project (the second phase of a three phase conservation effort). The destination’s entrance needs to be welcoming, giving a visitor a sense of what’s on the other side of the door.

And the Friends are working to ensure that the entrance says “Welcome”.



The bridge will be similar to the one above

The details about the project and installation of a 45’cedar bridge have been covered in past newsletters. This initiative is not only beautiful, but will improve safety, prevent erosion and reduce impact to the wetlands. It takes passionate volunteers and dollars to make something a reality. Please be sure to read the last page of this newsletter and consider becoming a plank owner with a gift of \$200 or more. Of course a gift of any amount is welcome and will help make the project a reality so you can tell others “It’s a destination worth exploring.”

Two New Board Members Elected

At the May annual meeting we were pleased to welcome Tara Borden and Mike Sheehan as new directors. Tara is a lifelong resident of southeastern Connecticut, a Hills runner and Assistant Director of the East Lyme Public Library. Mike Sheehan, a Niantic native, is a local attorney with the firm of Conway, Londregan, Sheehan and Monaco.



We welcome them to the team and value their expertise and enthusiasm!



Pitch Pine Conservation Update

The pitch pine nursery plans are moving forward! A field at the entrance to Vets Field, adjacent to the Nature Preserve, will be the future home for a pitch pine nursery and ecosystem demonstration area. Currently there is white plastic in place to sterilize the soils and eliminate the invasive mugwort, the first step in this process.

The area will have planted pitch pines left to grow to maturity, as well house a raised garden bed to raise pitch pine seedlings. The saplings will then be transplanted up to the ridge tops in the Preserve to help repopulate the dwindling

FOHNP, PO Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357

imperiled species. Stay tuned for more details as this project progresses.

Community and Area Businesses Offer Valuable Support to OHNP

Maintaining the nature preserve is a community effort – we want to acknowledge and thank the volunteer members and organizations from the town Cub Scouts to regional large and small businesses and banks. Their donations of time and money are helping us conduct our various conservation projects. We are striving to be a regional destination and gem for visitors and their generosity is helping to make this a reality.

- Drew Kenny owner of Outside Lifestyles for his design support for the Bridge project including help with the landscaping, trail improvements and installation of the bridge's Pin Pier foundation.
- UBS of East Lyme and Rafferty Building Materials of MA for the donated the Pin Pier footings for the Bridge project
- Dave Hughes from Wild Birds Unlimited, The Dominion Foundation, Chelsea Groton and Niantic Rotary for their generous donations towards the Bridge Project
- Lowes of Waterford who donated the split rail fencing for the purple martin house
- Connecticut Ornithological Association's grant for the Purple Martin House & Pole
- Petie Reed from Perennial Harmony for 8 Native Grasses to beautify the Purple Martin Conservation Project
- Bruce Dasinger, FOHNP Stewardship Committee Member, for 10 swamp milkweeds to help promote monarch butterfly conservation.
- Cub Scouts from Den 7, Pack 23 who installed 5 of the 11 blue bird nesting boxes they made last fall.
- Fred Latham owner of Latham Saw Mill who donated the wood planks for the Pitch Pine Tree Nursery solarization effort.
- Steve Unwin's assistance customizing garments with the new FOHNP logo.

www.oswhills.org

Legal Update Decisions Coming at Any Time

It has been a busy spring on the legal front, after over a year of inactivity on the East Lyme Zoning and Sewer appeals. Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE) has joined us and Save the River-Save the Hills as environmental intervenors and represents us as we continue our efforts to protect the remaining 236 acres abutting the Hills from proposed development.

According to Roger Reynolds, CFE's Chief Legal Officer & General Counsel, judicial decisions could come at any time on both the Zoning Appeal Case, heard on May 17, and the Sewer Appeals case, heard on April 10. We will keep you updated.

Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition Update

The Coalition's efforts to raise public awareness and support for protecting and preserving the remaining 236 acres of the Oswegatchie Hills are ongoing as we await judicial decisions.

The 45-second trailer for our Save Oswegatchie Hills video was shown to a sold-out crowd at the premiere of *Little Pink House* at Garde Arts Center in New London in April. Our video was recently viewed by East Lyme High School biology classes as well as online by over 22,000 viewers since its release last November. If you have not seen it yet, check it out through the link on our webpage (www.oswhills.org).

Lyme Land Conservation Trust is our newest Coalition member organization. In addition, Coalition Coordinator Suzanne Thompson attended the annual Thames River Watershed Flotilla hosted by the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District for town leaders, municipal employees and conservation organizations in the region in order to raise awareness of our mission.

CT Trails Day a Big Success Again



With hike leaders Rich Gallagher and Greg Decker, over 30 hikers enjoyed hikes in the Hills! Some explored the newly cut trail to a small crawl-through cave, (on the previously a dead-ended Blue/White spur trail), which now continues past the Quartz Pit, south, back to the main entrance. This new trail, is blazed red, creating a loop along a ridgeline, providing hikers with the opportunity to explore around glacial boulders and enjoy wonderful vistas of the wetlands on either side of the ridge. A revised trail map will be printed in the near future to reflect this new addition.



Next generation exploring the crawl-through cave

Visit our website at:

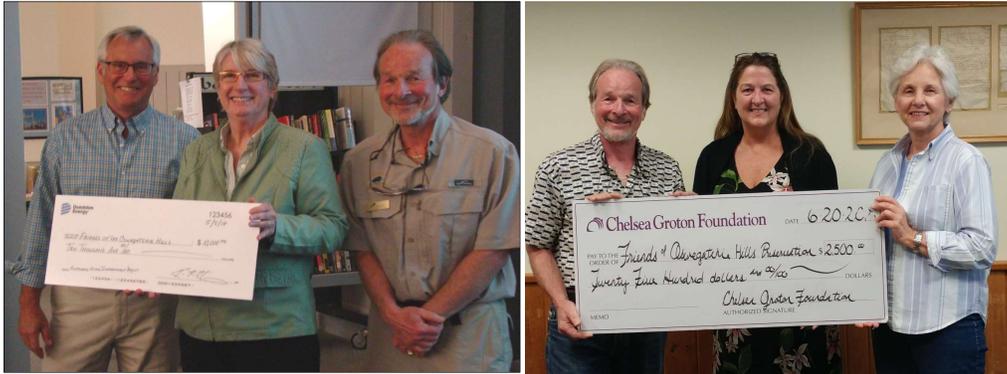
www.oswhills.org

And our Facebook page at

www.facebook.com/fohnp

Just \$10,000 More Needed to “Bridge the Gap.”

We have been seeking funding for our entrance improvement project since last fall. To date we have raised \$34,800 in cash, including grants from Dominion and the Chelsea Groton Foundation as well as gifts from board members, local businesses, and other members of the Friends. In addition we have received in-kind gifts of material and labor totaling over \$12,000 ! But we still need your help to raise the final \$10,000. Please look at the form below and make your gift now. Thank you.



*On left Nancy Bulkeley on behalf of Dominion Foundation presents Franz Edson and Greg Decker a check for \$10,000 for the Bridge Project
Photo on right is Dana Chapel from Chelsea Groton Foundation presenting a check for \$2,500 to Greg Decker and Kris Lambert*

We thank them for their support and ask for yours!

Become a Plank Owner and Help “Bridge the Gap”

You can help – without screwing a screw, hammering a nail or even lifting a single plank. By making a gift of \$200 or more, you will become a plank owner of the Clark Pond Bridge and you and all your fellow plank owners will be recognized with a plaque at the bridge. Even if being a plank owner isn’t for you, a gift of any amount will help us build the bridge.

Yes, I want to be plank owner. Here is my gift of \$200 or more.

I just want to help build the bridge. Here is my gift in the amount of _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Please make check payable to FOHNP, Inc. and indicate “BRIDGE PROJECT” on the check.

Mail to: Friends of the Oswegatchie Nature Preserve, ATTN: Membership Chair, P.O. Box 163, Niantic, CT 06357, or visit www.oswhills.org to donate online.

