



SUMMER 2021

Pen and ink illustration by Margaret A. Race

Our Mission: The Winchester Land Trust serves as steward of the town's rural character and natural heritage, striving to foster the preservation of Winchester's unique lands forever. Working with government representatives and public and private landowners, the Trust informs and educates the community to promote the benefits of land conservation and balanced growth.

"What A Joy On All Counts!"

by Cindy Roys

When I retired three years ago, one of my intentions was to hike more. After a 40-year career in an engineering office, where I was confined to half-hour lunch-time, walks in a nearby woods or around a park pond, I longed for the luxury of more time in nature. So, I set about making a daily hike my priority. Winter, spring, summer, fall...I learned to dress for each season and love them all in their own unique beauty. Especially during the restrictions of recent pandemic times, walking became my lifeline to sanity. Breathing the

fresh air and walking among the trees is a tonic for the soul.

One of my discoveries has been my own town of Winchester's land trust properties. Lesser known than the state parks, land trusts are a treasure of wilderness and nature. Trails are clearly-marked and well-maintained by volunteers. I especially love Houlihan Woods, which is a gem. But Hurlbut Field and other Winchester land trust properties each hold their own magic. I have explored and found many other local towns have land trust areas, which are varied and splen-

did in their own ways as well. One can find easy short walks, or longer more challenging hikes. What a joy on all counts!

I encourage you to investigate land trust properties as an alternative to the state parks, which while lovely, are often more popular and congested. Seek out these quiet land trust areas right in our own town of Winchester, and beyond. You will be surprised and delighted by what they have to offer!

— A special thank-you to Cindy Roys for sharing her thoughts with us.



Cindy and her dog, Maggie, eager to start their hike.



One of the easy-to-follow trails at Houlihan Woods/Michael Giordano Tribute Area.



Cindy's adventurous grandchildren, Sierra and Charlie.

PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY CINDY ROYS

Investing In Chestnut Trees

by Doug Pfenninger

A little over a century ago, a traveler on Connecticut roads would have been dismayed to see many dead or dying trees in the forest. The American Chestnut, which accounted for forty percent of the trees in some areas, was dying from a blight introduced when Japanese Chestnuts were brought to this country in 1904. Two decades later it was American Elms that began dying from Dutch Elm disease – a fungal disease that hitched a ride with veneer logs imported from Europe in 1928. Today we are witnessing the decimation of our Ash trees which are being attacked by Emerald Ash borer, a beetle that came into the country in 2002 aboard wooden packing crates from China.

The pattern is obvious: our native trees did not co-evolve with the exotic pests that destroy them. Plants that evolved with local pests over the millennia developed toxins that deterred attacks from native insects and immunities to indigenous fungal diseases. When we introduce pests from across the seas, either deliberately or accidentally, we are exposing our native flora to attack from pests and disease for which they have no defense.

The Winchester Land Trust, working with the American Chestnut Foundation, is attempting to develop Chestnut trees that have both the characteristics of our native Chestnut and the resistance of the Chinese Chestnut. The process is slow but it may receive a boost in the near future if scientists are successful in analyzing the genome of the Chestnut tree and determining which gene is responsible for blight resistance. Using gene splicing techniques to create a tree with this gene constitutes genetic modification and thereby requires extensive scrutiny before being approved. In a world that includes so many human-caused environmental calamities, using science to save the trees we love may be a fitting solution.



PHOTO BY JACK SWATT

Volunteers planting experimental hybrid chestnut seedlings at Hurlbut Field, Winchester Center

Wonder – Season After Season, Year After Year

Winchester Land Trust protects just over 500 acres including 50 acres with easements. We routinely check on those properties and keep our eyes open for acquisitions. We recently added acres to one of our properties (*see details on the next page*) and will continue protecting wildlife corridors, indigenous flowers and plants for today's enjoyment – and for future generations.



PHOTO BY BARBARA DOUGLAS

Taking Care Of Our Trails



PHOTO BY GINA DECKER

Board members and volunteers met early (to beat the heat) on a recent Saturday to maintain trails. The enviable tasks included: carrying gravel to stabilize a difficult section of the trail, gathering rocks to secure a new sign, and moving student benches to the Nature Classroom.

If this sounds like fun to you, write to: winchesterlandtrust@yahoo.com WLT has many volunteer opportunities, from writing articles to trail maintenance. Please contact us if you are interested in getting more involved.

FRCC Awards Grant To Survey Newly-Donated 6.5 Acre Property

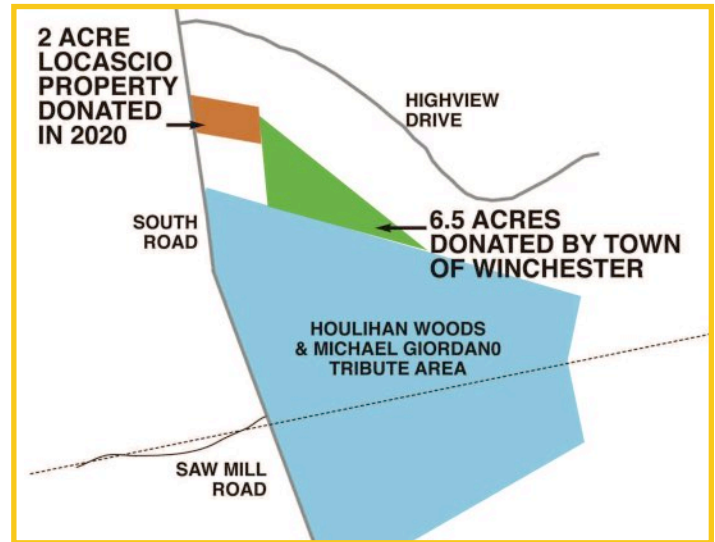
by Jen Perga

In May, the Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC), awarded a \$3,000 grant to the Winchester Land Trust. The grant will pay for a survey of a 6.5 acre parcel donated by the Town of Winchester. The Highview Drive parcel connects WLT's 2-acre Locascio property to Houlihan Woods and the Michael Giordano Tribute Area.

FRCC was established by Congress "to promote the long-term protection of the Farmington River" (farmingtonriver.org). The National Park Service provides funds to FRCC for disbursement to further protect water quality of the "Wild and Scenic" Upper Farmington River.

The Highview Drive parcel is a critical pathway for wildlife. The Locascio property has frontage on South Rd, enabling animals to cross the road safely. The 6.5 acres of protected land provides access to the much larger Houlihan Woods property and ample habitat. The forests in this area shelter many animals, including: eastern coyote, wild turkey, porcupine, beaver, red fox, raccoon, black bear, skunk, bobcat, and fisher. WLT's acquisition of the parcel ensures that it will be protected in perpetuity.

WLT thanks FRCC for generously awarding this grant that preserves habitat and improves water quality in



the greater Farmington River Watershed by protecting trees, roots and soils that filter rain and snow melt. The new property and part of HW/MGTA drain to Taylor Brook which supports brook trout.

Collaboration between WLT and the Winchester Public Schools will include new signage promoting appreciation and learning opportunities for our students about our local flora, fauna and watersheds.

Thank you again, FRCC!



PHOTO BY BARBARA DOUGLAS

Louise Van Alstyne, who also handles WLT's correspondence with efficiency and devotion, explains how to interpret trail blazes on a May hike.



PHOTO BY DIANE JACOBSEN

WLT celebrated Connecticut Trails Day with a hike at HW/MGTA, led by Diane Jakobsen and Jen Perga. Hikers were well-prepared with boots, hiking poles and binoculars. One intrepid participant even brought loppers/cutters to trim bush on the trail.

Be part of our mission. Stay in touch!

Please make sure we have your current contact information.

See the latest WLT information on our Facebook page

Visit our website: www.winchesterlandtrust.org.

Email us at winchesterlandtrust@yahoo.com

Call us at 860.379.9622.

Mail to P.O. Box 10, Winchester Center, CT 06094

**Winchester Land Trust is grateful for the support
to help preserve the beauty around us.**

Board of Directors

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Doug Pfenninger, Vice President

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Winchester Land Trust will be held on Sunday, August 29 at 4 pm in the gazebo on the Winchester Center Green.



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Winchester Center, CT

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Winchester Land Trust has a great variety of items that look good – *and do good by supporting our mission.*

We have hats, t-shirts, shopping bags and totes.

WLT gear is available at hikes, the annual meeting and tents at local events.



PHOTOS BY PAUL ENEA