



# Annual Newsletter

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[www.CumberlandLandTrust.org](http://www.CumberlandLandTrust.org)

June 2020

## President's Message

### It Takes a Community to make a Land Trust

When it comes to conserving and caring for green space it takes a community. Every potential green space CLT hopes to conserve requires meaningful involvement with many organizations and positive influences from community leaders of all kinds to make its protection possible. Every conservation project requires CLT to work closely with a community's residents, elected officials and local businesses to succeed. We interact with many people on each project, all interested in helping to make their community a better place through the protection of green space. So yes, conservation takes a community.

Having protected over 641 acres in the past 30 years, we realize just how important community support, influence, and involvement is to ultimately protect open spaces for the community, and how excited residents are to actively volunteer on the land once it is protected. We are continually energized by this collaboration and enthusiasm.

There is no better example of this than the recent acquisition of Mercy Woods. This high-profile, high-impact project, started in 2014, generated an enormous outpouring of community support and hands-on involvement. The support of the residents, elected officials, civic leaders and local businesses enabled the CLT to raise substantial funding resulting in the creation of Mercy Woods.

We're able to accomplish our work in the strategic areas of land conservation, land stewardship, community conservation, and nature-based education thanks to all of our supporters. Our work simply wouldn't be possible without funding

from individuals, foundations, businesses, and government supporters. A sincere "Thank You" to the organizations and individuals who supported our 2019 efforts in improving the quality of life for all in our community

**Randy Tuomisto**

## Pending Coming Events

- **Land Trust Days**, Blackall Preserve hike, Labor Day, Monday, September 7<sup>th</sup>
- **Will be posted at** [www.ExploreRI.org](http://www.ExploreRI.org) and [www.CumberlandLandTrust.org](http://www.CumberlandLandTrust.org)

**Registration will be required.**

*(Pending Virus event guidelines)*

- **Annual Meeting**, Arnold Mills Community House, Saturday, October 17<sup>th</sup>.  
*(Pending Virus event guidelines)*
- **Annual Wine Tasting Fundraiser**, Blackstone River Theatre, Friday, November 13th  
*(Pending Virus event guidelines)*

**On-going private hikes** available with experienced, knowledgeable Land Trust guides. These two folks hike very frequently on our many Land Trust or Town conservation properties. Maps can be downloaded from our website:



[www.CumberlandLandTrust.org/Hiking](http://www.CumberlandLandTrust.org/Hiking)

### **Guides:**

**Deb Mitchell – 743-4192**

**Jerry Frechette – 258-0396**

## The Word is Out: Sadly, Our Planned BioBlitz is Postponed

It is with great regret that the CLT had to postpone (due to the COVID-19 Pandemic) the 2020 Rhode Island BioBlitz in partnership with the RI Natural History Survey which had been scheduled for June 12 and 13 at Mercy Woods Preserve in Cumberland.

**What is a BioBlitz you ask?** A BioBlitz is an attempt by volunteers, working scientists and avocational naturalists, to tally as many species of plants and animals as they can in 24 hours on a particular parcel of land. It is designed to bring the community of naturalists together, to demonstrate the biodiversity that surrounds us, and promote the value of these species to the quality of our lives and to the local community. The RI BioBlitz is the Natural History Survey's flagship public program. Conservation and management of natural resources is more effective and efficient when you have information about those resources occupying or contained within a conservation property.

One of the Cumberland Land Trust's largest, newest, and most premier properties at 229 acres, Mercy Woods offers an incredible multiple-season landscape to explore. Featured along trails recently improved by CLT are dense, mixed hardwood and white pine forest with an understory of various shrubs such as maple leaf viburnum, low bush blueberry, witch hazel, several varieties of ferns, and mixed-use fields and meadows.

The Cumberland Land Trust was thrilled to be selected by the Survey to host this wonderful program this year at Mercy Woods. Working cooperatively with Survey, the CLT was preparing to bring together diverse scientific resources (in upwards of a hundred scientists and naturalists) to the property to provide perspectives on the natural communities that inhabit this wonderful place. The data that was to be collected would prove invaluable to our overall understanding of the property and help to direct the newly partnered management and protection strategy afforded to this land in conjunction with the goals outlined in the Town of Cumberland's adapted Mercy Woods Conservation and Management Plan.

It is especially discouraging to have to postpone Rhode Island's 21st annual BioBlitz due to the ongoing COVID-19 emergency. However, the CLT and the RI Natural History Survey are not letting go. We both remain optimistic that the Rhode Island

BioBlitz at Mercy Woods will be rescheduled for a future, albeit yet to be determined, date in time.

**David Newton**

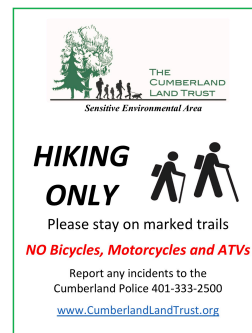
## To bicycle or not to bicycle, that is the question.

Recently, the Cumberland Land Trust has received queries as to why bicycles are not allowed on its managed properties.

First of all, it is a matter of safety for both the hikers and riders. Many of the trails are narrow and are not suited for the safe passage of both hiking and biking traffic, especially as the number of hikers on all the properties has increased dramatically during the COVID-19 crisis this spring.

Secondly, many of the trails are newly cut, blazed (marked), are located on slopes and are highly susceptible to erosion, especially from wheeled vehicles.

One of our hikers suggested that a possible answer would be to dedicate one of the Cumberland Land Trust properties to mountain bikers so that hikers and bikers would not be intermixed. After careful consideration, it was determined that the Cumberland Land Trust could not reconcile this solution with its responsibility to maintain healthy green spaces for the Town's flora and fauna. In areas where mountain biking is prevalent, the terrain tends to change dramatically to suit the jumps, bumps and hairpin turns so loved by bikers. Those potential changes to the landscape would not be healthy for our wildlife.



All is not lost to Cumberland bikers though. The town managed Diamond Hill Park is friendly to bikers as is the similarly named but state-owned Diamond Hill Management Area on the west side of Diamond Hill Road, where many of the earlier described biking landscape

modifications have been made.

So, in answer to the question, bicycling is not allowed on properties managed by the Cumberland Land Trust. **Trailhead signs now show that our trails are for "Hikers only". Note, horses are also not allowed.**

**Jerry Frechette**

## The Benefits of Rhode Island's Forests<sup>1</sup>

Rhode Island's forests and trees may seem like a green backdrop to our state landscape, but they are in fact hard at work generating a wide range of services and values. The state's forests make the Ocean State a place where humans and native wildlife can live and



thrive. Some forest benefits can be quantified, but others are most accurately explained in words. While public interest is sometimes focused on certain forest values, the holistic value

of the forest is greater than the sum of any individual value.

**Clean Air** - Rhode Island's forests provide significant air quality benefits to the state by absorbing hazardous air pollution. Rhode Island's trees provide more than \$30 million annually in pollution removal benefits.

**Clean Water** - Clean water is essential for drinking, safe recreation, a thriving economy, and healthy wildlife habitat, and forests play an important role in keeping Rhode Island's waterways safe and clean. More than 80% of Rhode Island's population relies on surface reservoirs surrounded by mostly forested watersheds for clean drinking water.

**Economic Importance** - Forest conservation brings economic benefits to Rhode Island cities and towns.

In the forest and wood products sector, 513 firms



generated 2,496 jobs with \$408 million in gross sales in 2016. Forest-based recreational activities contribute an estimated \$375 million dollars in sales annually to the Rhode Island economy, in addition to 1,500

jobs with an estimated \$37 million payroll annually.

**Climate Change Mitigation** - Natural lands are increasingly becoming recognized for their unrealized potential to play a much larger role in climate mitigation efforts. In 2016, the Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan prepared by the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council advised that meeting the state's emissions goals could be compromised by continued loss of forested land and recommended exploring a "no net-loss of forests" policy. Forests contribute to climate mitigation by storing carbon as biomass and by sequestering carbon from the atmosphere.

**Human Health and Well-Being** - Numerous research studies have connected access to trees and other natural environments with better physical and mental health. Providing access to green spaces to all Rhode Islanders is



necessary to ensure these benefits are distributed equitably – numerous studies have shown that it is more difficult for communities marginalized by racial and socioeconomic conditions to access green spaces. Forests support many of the recreational activities that Rhode Islanders engage in and 75% of residents consider state parks to be "very important." Trees and forests protect human communities from dangerous urban heat, flooding concerns, and the frontline impacts of climate change. Green infrastructure, including tree plantings, is a vital part of keeping Rhode Island communities safe.

**Cultural Value** - Rhode Island's forests continue to be used by indigenous people as places to gather resources



used for food, medicine, and culturally significant ceremonies. The forest as a whole, and many resources within the forest, have cultural value to members of the Narragansett Tribe, the

federally recognized tribe in Rhode Island. Traditional ecological knowledge – a term used to describe knowledge of the environment that has been passed down within indigenous communities – has proven to promote positive health, biodiversity, and conservation outcomes on landscapes in the United States and around the world. Many of Rhode Island's rural communities are fundamentally characterized by surrounding forestland. Forests bring a "sense of place" to these communities – a meaning and connection between people and their physical environment.

**Wildlife Habitat** - Rhode Island's forests provide unique habitats that support thousands of wildlife species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates, and close to 2,900 plants. Many species are forest interior dependent and rely on core forests for their habitat requirements. Wildlife species play a direct role in sustaining healthy forest ecosystem function that delivers value to humans and the landscape. Studies have shown that wildlife can improve mental health, and that outdoor recreation including wildlife viewing can alleviate symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. **Courtesy of Sue Kiernan Bundy**

<sup>1</sup>Excerpts from RIDEM report "The Value of RI Forest" For the full 2019 report: [www.demri.gov](http://www.demri.gov)

### **Lippitt Estate Little Pond update**

Since acquiring 30 acres September of 2018 from Lippitt Estates we have been cleaning up the pond area. With a partnership with the Pawtucket Water Supply Board we removed six large decayed trees and ground out five stumps. ***Overgrowth of vegetation has been cleared as pictured below.*** Gravel has been spread and graded. Over 200 feet of broken worn out fence has been removed. The virus has caused the installation of new fencing to be delayed. This 12-acre pond is an important part of the drinking water supply.



### **Board Members**

**Randy Tuomisto, President**  
**Mike Boday, Vice President**  
**Sue Bundy, Secretary**  
**Joe Pailthorpe, Treasurer**  
**John Faile - Kevin Grady**  
**Deb Mitchell - Dave Newton**  
**Mike Plasse - Frank Matta**  
**MJ MacEldowny. - Jerry Frechette**

### **The CLT has the following proposal for the Cumberland Town Council.**

The CLT Board of Directors proposes that a group of town officials dedicate two Saturday mornings, from 9-12:00, (Sept 5, 12, or 19, 2020), to assist in showcasing some of our truly unique and different properties. Each town official will select one of the following town or land trust properties, and encourage, and possible lead, interested individuals on a walk of the property. The walk will allow the participants to discover the beauty and diversity of Cumberland and to connect with the natural beauty of these treasured open spaces made possible by years of grassroots efforts and millions of dollars in funding support. The properties to be featured are: "Valley Falls Heritage Park", "Mercy Woods Preserve", the "Monastery Grounds", and the "Burlingame Preserve". **Michael Boday**

### **Welcome new members**

**Jack and Joan Boudreau**  
**Michael Cotton**  
**Robert and Dale Coupe**  
**Bob and Rena Dimuccio**  
**Patricia Swift Fulton**  
**James and Mary Ann Leach**  
**Fred and Margaret Manley**  
**John and Nancy McCutcheon**  
**Jared Mulloy**  
**Andrienne and Matthew Perry**  
**Charles and Kathleen Sweetman**

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