



Annual Membership

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Presidents Message

I want to take a moment to say Thank You! The last year has been challenging for so many of us. And yet all of you, our loyal members and donors, have continued to step up in support of your land trust. Your recent generosity is a testament to the important role nature has played in our lives over the past year. Natural outdoor spaces are providing healthy and safe activities, a break from the routine, and a reprieve from everyday encounters.

I have had the privilege of seeing this first-hand at many of our land trust sites. Families are coming out to hike our 6 trails, each offering a different hiking experience to enjoy. Something that we all need so much of now.

Our lives have changed, but the importance of CLT's work has not. The donations we receive from our contributors make it possible for us to work with more landowners to conserve their land and protect the open spaces we all love. That will never change. Now more than ever, please know that your donations are critical to our success.

Randy Tuomisto

The Butterfly Project - Fundraiser

Phantom Farms has generously planned a summer long fund raiser to support Cumberland Land Trust. Their announcement from Keri Stenovitch is as follows:

"The 2020 Pandemic has forced all of us to make great sacrifices and changes from our jobs, our circle of friends and family, our everyday lives. We have been challenged physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Phantom Farms has declared 2021 our Year of the Butterfly, to not only recognize the changes we have endured, but also to celebrate the strength and courage needed to triumph as individuals and as a community. To symbolize all that we have withstood and while we continue to forge on, we will be creating a mosaic butterfly using painted rocks.

On May 1, 2020 the Butterfly Project will begin. We welcome all who would like to participate and show support. You may either bring a painted rock or paint a rock here at the farm, and we welcome you to place your design in the garden. The rock painting can be a simple splash of color or an intricate or fun design."

Take your children on a walk through CLT properties

Why a walk in the woods? According to author, Richard Louv ("Last Child in the Woods"), research studies highlight the benefits of direct exposure to nature for children. Evidence abounds linking a rise in attention disorder, depression and obesity due to a lack of nature in children's lives. Several other studies tie our physical, mental and spiritual health directly to an association with nature.

The youth of today will shape the condition of our earth – our very daily lives. They need to examine the wonder and joy of nature and not allow that frontier to disappear. That frontier exists in the many CLT properties that flow thru Cumberland.

Walk the properties, turn off the electronic devices. See, smell, feel, what nature has to offer, and enjoy!

Michael Boday

Open Space Trails Support Our Well-being During COVID Pandemic

It was on March 11, 2020 that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic. Restrictions on travel and requirements for social distancing quickly followed. With gyms and many other facilities closed, the public turned to outdoor recreation for relief. As a result, researchers and resource managers across the country have documented a surge in use of our public green spaces during the pandemic. Here are just a few statistics to illustrate this trend. Nationally, the Rails to Trails organization survey of 250 entities reported July 2020 usage of trails was up from 25% to 200% - and an average of 60% - over the same time in 2019. A business consulting group, NPD, using point of sale data to assess outdoor recreation, documented that national binocular sales reached \$16 million by June 2020 - up 22% over the prior year. Have you taken up birdwatching perhaps? Here in New England, a study by the University of Vermont Gund Institute for the Environment found that 64% and 54% respectively of survey respondents reported increased time spent observing wildlife and taking photos in nature during the pandemic. Next door in Connecticut, a trail census reported that as of March 2021 the average usage at 13 of the most popular multi-use trail locations was up 77% when compared to March 2020. In Cumberland, while we lack readily available data to **quantify** trends, CLT observations of activity at both Land Trust and Town open space preserves have shown increased use as well. Board members visit the properties regularly and have noted larger numbers of both parked vehicles and hikers.

"Hiking is more than just fun. It's good for you too!". Public health experts agree with this statement from the American Hiking Society. Whether walking along a level path or taking on more challenging and varied terrain, the exercise of hiking can deliver health benefits that may include relieving stress, promoting physical and mental well-being and lessening the adverse effects of conditions including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and arthritis. Given the benefits, the CLT is really pleased to see more residents and visitors alike getting outdoors and newly discovering the beautiful network of trails right here in Cumberland. We are heartened that these special green spaces have provided a healthy, positive recreational outlet during the global COVID-19 crisis. As the threat of COVID-19 abates, the CLT encourages all to continue to enjoy hiking trails within our protected open spaces and do so responsibly by being aware of and following the rules posted at the trailheads. See you out on the trails.

Sue Bundy

STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

Foot bridge at Mercy Woods – Sumner Brown Road:

Over a wet meadow, a short distance from the parking lot a 24-foot bridge was installed. Water drains from the woods that create a mud flat. No more muddy shoes!

Bridge built by Joe Pailthorpe, pictured are board members Jerry Frechette, Randy Tuomisto, and Mike Plasse doing the installation.



Memorials:

We installed two donated memorial sitting benches. The donations were from Amy and Chris Daley and the James and Sally Terry family.

Terry



Daley



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Expanded parking lot at Mercy Woods Sumner Brown Road. The town provided surplus boulders and recycled gravel to increase the capacity to about 30 vehicles from 16. On several occasions during the covid year enough parking was lacking. The expansion will also aid in special planned events. Thanks to our Public Works crew. They provide service to town recreation which includes trails that CLT manages.



The Land Trust now has a 30 by 20-foot **Utility-Shed** on the Mercy Woods property . We now have a place to store all our trail maintenance tools and equipment that have always been scattered at the homes of our board members. Mayor Jeff Mutter gave us exclusive use last year.



With new garage door



Rowbottom preserve, West Road. We installed a security gate to block out ATV's that has been damaging our trails. The breach was from West Road coming through private property.



Blue bird meadow at High Rock Preserve

Ten replacement boxes were built and installed. The original boxes were built by the boy scouts about 15 years ago. In the last 3 years 3 newer boxes were installed as memorials. We now have 13 boxes in this historic farm field.



Original boxes

Its Spring! Stay on Trails! And Step Lightly! Our Spring Ephemerals Will Thank You!

Have you ever noticed the little plants emerging alongside of our forest and meadow trails, especially during the springtime? Not all of it in Cumberland is poison ivy! I can assure you! As a matter of fact, upon further visual inspection you may notice a vast and divergent crop of Ephemerals, some of which are abundant and easily identifiable. But many are protected by State law and some may also be quite rare in Cumberland, Rhode Island. Here are just a few as examples that were observed this spring:

Take for example the eastern red columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*). This flower is small but showy in that its bright red with a rim of yellow. It is native to woodland and along rocky slopes in eastern North America and can be found during the early to mid-spring aside our trails on some of our properties. On our property, this mass of columbines is well protected by a thicket of brier and poison ivy.



How about jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*)? This unique plant is common to the eastern half of the US and is commonly found in the spring on a number of our properties. In the Fall, the mature plant displays a stamen with a cash of bright red berries that is a food source for birds and rodents. It takes two years for the plant to mature and produce the flower and later the berries which contain the seeds for the next generation.



Maybe we will stump you on this one. Bear corn or Squaw root (*Conopholis americana*) is a perennial non-photosynthesizing parasitic plant that is found in hardwood forests such as our own where oak and beech are co-located. It is found in eastern North America from Florida to Canada but is not easily spotted in the brown leaf mulch and generally takes 4 years to mature and send up these corn-like stalks. Indian pipe (not shown here) is another example of a non-photosynthesizing plant sometimes found on our properties.



Other examples in our forest understory include solomon seal, and rare blue cohosh, ginseng, the pink and (also as reported) even more elusive yellow lady slipper. Bluets and buttercups dart our meadows. If you happen to see any of these wonders while hiking this spring, please be excited, but also be protective and reverent of our intriguing and wonderous springtime meadows, vernal pools, and forest understory because these flowering plants are precious.

WHERE DO YOUR DONATIONS GO? WITHOUT DOUBT, TO GOOD USE!

The Land Trust has invested in 641 acres for 34 properties with most of the funding coming from grants totaling over \$2.2 million dollars of mostly out-of-town monies. CLT leverages your membership donations by 12 to 1. The 2018 Mercy Woods investment was \$100,000 of your money, our largest in our 32 years.

We do only two expenditures with your donations: Acquisitions and Stewardship. We also operate with 100% volunteer labor amounting to many thousands of dollars every year.

We are currently working on a large acquisition, after eight years of negotiations, that will include a large amount of grant money and with a potential completion within the next 6 to 9 months.

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