

# Westchester Land Trust

## Another 31 Acres Preserved!

☘  
*Introducing the  
O'Connell  
Boulder  
Field Preserve*

☘  
*Habitat  
Enhancement  
Projects at  
WLT Preserves*

☘  
*H2H  
Update*

☘  
*LTA  
Reaccredited*



**It's Our Nature**

## Dear Friends,



The Westchester Land Trust was founded in 1988 by a group of passionate volunteers committed to protecting land in Westchester and eastern Putnam counties. Their reasons were simple... land was being developed at an exponential rate, and someone needed to make sure that the environment we all share would still be here for the future generations to come.

That mission holds true today, as we proudly announce the protection of a critical landholding within the watershed of the Peekskill Hollow Brook, which is part of the Peekskill and Cortlandt drinking water supply system. The 31-acre O'Connell Boulder Field Preserve (cover), located on Barger Street in Putnam Valley, is a shining example of what our organization can achieve with the collaboration and support of the community. In fact, fellow conservation organization Hudson Highlands Land Trust partnered with us throughout this acquisition, and will hold the conservation easement on the land as an added layer of permanent protection. We're thrilled to protect this important parcel of land.

Of course, protecting land is just the first step... as it's our responsibility to care for it thereafter in perpetuity. We've been working on several Enhancement Initiatives to maintain and improve the health of the ecosystem and the appearance at several of our Preserves including the Frederick P. Rose Preserve in Lewisboro, the Westchester Wilderness Walk/Zofnass Family Preserve in Pound Ridge, and the Hunter Brook Preserve in Yorktown. You can read about some of these projects on page 4, but I invite you to visit these Preserves throughout the year to see the improvements for yourself.

But we couldn't do the work that we do, without the continued generosity of our friends in the community, as well as the continued time and energy of talented volunteers. In keeping with that spirit, we're delighted to announce that at our Annual Benefit this June (back cover) we will honor long-time Board Member, Benjamin F. Needell for his long-standing commitment to land conservation in our community. Ben has been a Senior Partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP in New York City for almost 35 years, and a member of our Board of Directors since 2001. We hope you'll join us in honoring Ben, and supporting our land conservation efforts through this event.

So, 2015 looks to be another exciting year for our organization. We hope you'll follow our successes on Facebook, subscribe to our bi-weekly eNews, or read about them in our newsletter and on our website. Because, it's only together that we can protect the land we all share.

Sincerely,

Lori J. Ensinger  
President

## WLT Permanently Protects

# 31 Acres

## in Putnam Valley

The Westchester Land Trust (WLT), in partnership with fellow conservation organization Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) recently protected a critical landholding within the watershed of the Peekskill Hollow Brook, which is part of the Peekskill and Cortlandt drinking water supply system.

The two parcels of land, which will be combined and renamed the O'Connell Boulder Field Preserve, are located on Barger Street in Putnam Valley, NY. The land was donated to WLT by the executors of the estate of William O. O'Connell, who owned the property. WLT will maintain sole ownership of the Preserve, while HHLT will hold a conservation easement on the property, which will permanently protect the land and its natural resources.

The O'Connell family is thrilled that their father's land will be protected forever. "We are so happy that the Westchester Land Trust has protected this land. Our father loved this property and cared for it for many years. By creating this preserve you have given our family a great legacy. Thank you," said Mary O'Connell, Mr. O'Connell's daughter and co-executrix of his estate along with her sister Margaret O'Connell.

"Protecting the Preserve was a major priority for our conservation organizations because of the historical significance and environmental benefits it affords the community," said WLT's President Lori J. Ensinger. In addition to helping protect the Peekskill and Cortlandt drinking water supply, the Preserve lies within an area designated by Congress in 1996 as one of forty-nine federally recognized National Heritage Areas. Additionally, the Highlands Region was designated a Nationally Significant Landscape in *continued next page >*



## ABOUT THE NEW PRESERVE

the Federal Highlands Conservation Act signed into law in 2004.

There were also other natural synergies prompting this collaboration. The O’Connell Boulder Meadow Preserve is located near other properties protected by both conservation organizations including WLT’s 28-acre Danner Preserve and conservation agreements that HHLT holds with ten private landowners in Putnam Valley covering over 346 acres. The preservation of contiguous, non-fragmented corridors of wildlife habitat is one of the primary conservation goals of both organizations.

HHLT’s Executive Director Andy Chmar said, “The conservation easement adds the assurance that this property will provide scenic enjoyment for the public, contribute to the health of the Peekskill Hollow Brook watershed, and conserve another area of vital wildlife habitat for generations to come. HHLT is pleased to be partnering with WLT on a project that provides so many positive outcomes for the community.”

Signage marking the Preserve will be installed later this spring. There is the potential for a 1 ½ mile trail which would afford visitors passive recreational opportunities. Additionally, the conservation partners will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the community to celebrate the creation of the Preserve in the near future.

Located on Barger Street in Putnam Valley, NY, the O’Connell Boulder Meadow Preserve is visible from New York State park lands as well the Taconic State Parkway, which is on the National Register of Historic Sites.

It is a truly scenic open space primarily featuring a wooded upland with maturing deciduous trees including a mix of oaks, maples, birches, and hickories. A notable feature of the upland area is a large number of boulders and large stones, and a prominent rock outcropping of ledge along the northern boundary – thus, the name O’Connell Boulder Field Preserve.

The extensive central wetland, which covers approximately 14-acres, is a mix of wooded swamp, shrub swamp, and shallow marsh. A perennial stream flows from the east to west across the wetland, and a second intermittent watercourse is a tributary from the northwest. The wetland, as previously mentioned, is part of the watershed of the Peekskill Hollow Brook, which is part of the Peekskill and Cortlandt drinking water supply system.

## Westchester Land Trust Earns Continued National Recognition...

### RENEWED ACCREDITATION AWARDED BY THE LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION



In December, WLT achieved renewed land trust accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. Lori J. Ensinger, WLT President, said, “The Westchester Land Trust is truly honored to have been recently awarded renewed accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This distinction, first awarded to our organization in 2008, sends an important message to our community that WLT is committed to and continues to achieve national standards for excellence in land conservation.”

Additionally, Jonathan Wiesner, Chairman of the WLT Board, said, “As a consequence of the rigorous accreditation renewal process, WLT has improved its policies and procedures and today we are a stronger and more efficient organization that is strategically focused on our core mission to preserve and protect land in Westchester and Putnam Counties.”

Fewer than 15% of all land trusts nationwide are accredited. “Westchester Land Trust is one of the first land trusts to achieve renewed accreditation, a significant achievement for the land trust and a significant major milestone for the accreditation program. They are an important member of the 285 accredited land trusts that protect three quarters of the 20,645,165 acres currently owned in fee or protected by a conservation easement held by a land trust,” said Commission Executive Director Tammara Van Ryn. “Accreditation renewal, which must be completed every five years, provides the public with an assurance that accredited land trusts continue to meet exceedingly high standards for quality.”

Each land trust that achieved renewed accreditation submitted extensive documentation and underwent a rigorous review. “Through accreditation renewal, land trusts are part of an important evaluation and improvement process that verifies their operations continue to be effective, strategic and in accordance with strict requirements,” said Van Ryn. “Accredited organizations have engaged citizen conservation leaders and improved systems for ensuring that their conservation work is permanent.”

2 The meadow at the Frederick P. Rose Preserve in summer



## Stewardship Team Launches Enhancement Projects at WLT Preserves.

The Westchester Land Trust took advantage of the frozen ground to kick-off a Meadow Enhancement Project at the Frederick P. Rose Preserve in Lewisboro this winter. From grasses to goldenrods, beetles to blue birds -- many plants and animals call meadows “home.” Meadows, like the one at the Frederick P. Rose Preserve, are one of the most threatened ecosystems in our area. They were once more common, but many have grown into forests and others have been permanently altered by development. To thrive, meadows need abundant light, and the one at the Frederick P. Rose Preserve is currently being shaded-out by nearby trees. After rigorous assessment of the area, WLT removed this tree (1) as well as a few others to increase light on the meadow. This project will ultimately increase the size of the meadow and help its plants and animals to thrive well into the future. (2)

Later this spring, WLT will also work to restore the 1 ½ acre blueberry orchard just north of the Brady Farm Trail -- home to more than 50 large highbush blueberry plants, as well as many other native shrubs – as well as reclaim the Brady Farm Trail by removing 200’ of encroaching invasive shrubs (Japanese barberry and multiflora rose). WLT would like to thank Sandra Priest Rose as well as Adam R. Rose and Peter R. McQuillan for generously supporting this project.

Since late 2013, WLT has been engaged in a major project at the 150-acre Westchester Wilderness Walk/Zofnass Family Preserve (WWW/ZFP) in Pound Ridge. Thanks to the work of scientists and interns from the New York Botanical Garden involved in an ongoing cataloguing of the plant species found within the preserve, and an ongoing partnership with the Invasives Species Strike Force of the New York – New Jersey Trails Conference, two key areas were identified as sites for an

## SOIL AWARD

Westchester County recently recognized WLT’s enhancement work at the Hunter Brook Preserve with a Soil and Water Conservation Achievement Award. These awards recognize activities and projects in the County that best promote the conservation, management and restoration of soil and water resources.



WLT ACCEPTING SOIL & WATER AWARD: (from left to right) George Oros, Chief of Staff for the Westchester County Executive’s office; Susan Carpenter, WLT’s Director of Land Preservation; David Emerson, WLT’s Director of Stewardship; and Kevin J. Plunkett, Deputy Westchester County Executive.

1 Tree removal helps meadows thrive.



enhancement project – one at the Southern Loop/Western Loop and the other at the Eastern Loop, West Side. Two deer exclosures, each roughly an acre, (3) were installed and invasive shrubs were removed. By keeping deer out of these sites, WLT will demonstrate just how much white-tail deer shape our forests. WLT would like to thank Paul Zofnass & Renee Ring for their continued support of our work at the Preserve.

In collaboration with the Watershed Agricultural Council, WLT continued a riparian planting project at the Hunter Brook Preserve in Yorktown, first begun in 2012. To date, more than 100 trees and shrubs were planted along 4-acres of the brook’s floodplain in an effort to stabilize the floodplain, mitigate storm and flood damage, improve water quality, and enhance the overall habitat. We chose trees and shrubs that typically live on floodplains (for example, sycamore, willows, river birch) that are expected to thrive in the wet, sandy soil of the Hunter Brook. (4)

3 Deer exclosure at the WWW/ZFP Preserve



4 Tree planting work at the Hunter Brook Preserve





## HUDSON TO HOUSATONIC CONSERVATION INITIATIVE UPDATE

Last fall, the Westchester Land Trust (WLT) launched the Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) Conservation Initiative—a landscape scale, inter-state collaboration of more than three dozen local and regional conservation partners across Westchester, eastern Putnam and Dutchess Counties in New York and Fairfield County in Connecticut. H2H is led by WLT, Highstead Foundation (on behalf of Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership), Mianus River Gorge and Housatonic Valley Association.



More than 50 conservation leaders from local and regional organizations, as well as municipal partners in Westchester and Fairfield Counties, took part in a full-day intensive training program on Saturday, February 1st at Teatown Lake Reservation to gain the tools necessary to engage local landowners in the care and conservation of their woodlands.

During the training, leading conservation professionals coached H2H partner attendees in a variety of possible engagement strategies including agroforestry, backyard birding, and estate planning. The workshop built upon lessons learned at H2H's first workshop in December which focused on aligning stewardship practices with climate resiliency.

The vast Hudson to Housatonic region is home to thousands of private woodland owners whose land plays a critical role in providing wildlife habitat, carbon storage, air purification, and buffer tributaries contributing to the drinking water supply for millions of people who live in NY and CT. Many of these woodlands also have attributes making them more adaptable to changes in the climate. H2H documents these key features, harnesses their natural synergies, unites partners across parcel, town, county and state lines. The activities funded by the H2H initiative are designed to appeal to these woodland owners leading to tangible long- and short-term conservation and stewardship gains.

For more information about H2H, please contact Kara H. Whelan, Director of Conservation Programs, at 914-234-6992 ext. 12 or Kara@westchesterlandtrust.org.

This project is funded in part through a grant awarded by the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. H2H is part of the Landscape Scale Restoration Program of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**YES!** I want to make a contribution to protect the environment and enhance natural resources right here in Westchester and Eastern Putnam Counties:

- \$2,500    \$1,000    \$500    \$250  
 \$100    \$50    other \$.....  
 I have enclosed/will send a matching gift form from my employer.  
 I wish my gift to remain anonymous.  
 I have remembered the Westchester Land Trust in my will.  
 I am interested in volunteering. Please contact me.

Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and our tax ID# is 13-3507910. For more information, please call us at 914-234-6992.

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Email .....

Enclosed is my check payable to Westchester Land Trust.  
 Please charge me credit card:  Amex    MasterCard    Visa

Account no. .... Exp. .... CSV .....

Signature .....

To contribute online, please visit [westchesterlandtrust.org](http://westchesterlandtrust.org)



Our redesigned website: [westchesterlandtrust.org](http://westchesterlandtrust.org)

## Visit our New Website

WLT has unveiled its new website, thanks in part to a generous grant from the Land Trust Alliance. Stunning photos of permanently protected land throughout Westchester and eastern Putnam Counties give our site its striking appearance. Streamlined menus make accessing vital information easier.

Do you have land that you would like to protect, visit "Protecting the Land" for the latest information on legal and financial benefits of preservation. Love to explore the great outdoors, visit "Enjoying the Land" to find maps and descriptions of our 11 preserves with trails open to the public. Want to nurture your environment, maybe farming is your thing – it's there too. Check out the latest news, and if you like what you are seeing – consider using the "How to Help" tab.

We hope you will visit us on-line often at [westchesterlandtrust.org](http://westchesterlandtrust.org).

## WLT Adds Four New Board Members for 2015...



Betsy Lifschultz



Renee Ring



Jen Schwartz



Susan Todd

WLT's President, Lori Ensinger, recently announced the addition of four new members to its Board of Directors. "We are honored to welcome such an impressive slate of talented and dedicated individuals who will add their leadership and experience to our Board of Directors," said Ensinger.

Mount Kisco resident, **Betsy Lifschultz**, is a retired teacher with experience in several school districts including Eastchester, Yorktown, Bedford, and most recently, Chappaqua. She is the former president of both the Chappaqua Library Board and the Chappaqua PTA, as well as a former Board member at the New Castle Historical Society.

**Jen Schwartz**, a Bedford Resident, is a former school administrator, teacher and college guidance counselor having worked at The York Prep School in New York City as well as The Harvey School in Katonah. She is also a past president of the Bedford Free Library Board of Directors.

Croton-on-Hudson resident **Susan Todd** is an Academy Award nominated producer, writer, director and partner in Archipelago Films, a New York-based media company. She has worked as a producer at WNET - Channel 13, and as a Director of the Fellowship for International Understanding through Film at Jacob Burns Films Center, where she taught classes in filmmaking.

**Renee Ring**, an attorney, lives in Pound Ridge with her husband Paul Zofnass. Together, they helped WLT create the Westchester Wilderness Walk/Zofnass Family Preserve – a 150-acre ambassador preserve in Pound Ridge. She is currently a member of the Board of Directors at the Historic House Trust of New York City and the University of Virginia Law School Foundation, as well as a past Board member at several other organizations including the Pound Ridge Land Conservancy.



Paul Zofnass



Peter Kamenstein

## ...and Bids a Fond Farewell to Two

While the organization welcomed four new Board members, it bid a fond farewell to two long-standing Board members—Peter Kamenstein and Paul Zofnass—both of whom retired in December. Everyone associated with the Westchester Land Trust would like to thank Peter and Paul for their many years of service, outstanding generosity, and tireless commitment to land preservation in Westchester and eastern Putnam Counties.



Westchester Land Trust  
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Bedford Hills, New York 10507



914.234.6992

[westchesterlandtrust.org](http://westchesterlandtrust.org)

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WHAT'S GOING ON



# It's Our Nature!

Westchester Land Trust  
Annual Benefit

**SAVE THE DATE**  
Saturday, June 13, 2015  
Old Salem Farm  
North Salem, NY

**HONORING**  
Benjamin F. Needell



## FARM VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

**A**nother farming season is upon us! Join our resident farmer, Doug DeCandia on the farm. There's something for everyone, from planting seedlings in the spring, to weeding, tending, and harvesting crops throughout the summer and fall. Everyone is welcome—no experience necessary! All the produce goes directly to the Food Bank for Westchester.

### LOCATION

Sugar Hill Farm  
403 Harris Road, Bedford Hills

### WHEN

The 2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month,  
April – October, from 10am – 2pm  
April 14th & 28th  
May 12th & 26th  
June 9th & 23rd  
July 14th & 28th  
August 11th & 25th  
September 8th & 22nd  
October 13th & 27th

To volunteer, contact Kate Sann,  
Land Preservation Associate at  
[kate@westchesterlandtrust.org](mailto:kate@westchesterlandtrust.org) or  
914-234-6992 ext 15.

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