



Aspetuck
Land Trust

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

DEAR ASPETUCK LAND TRUST MEMBER,

I grew up in the “garden state” but the problem was my part of N.J. had precious little garden. At my house, we didn’t even have good dirt.

Before my parents bought their tract home in the early 1950s, unscrupulous developers had scraped off and sold all the topsoil left by the farmers who had owned the land. I remember a stark neighborhood of nearly identical three-bedroom split level homes with slim saplings tied to poles stuck in the ground in front of each home.

Flash forward to somewhere around 2005. Together with a wife, two daughters and a Labrador retriever, I am the stereotypical New York City commuter living in a leafy Fairfield neighborhood graced with “mature plantings.” On the weekends our family sometimes heads inland to hike as we have discovered that Aspetuck Land Trust has serene preserves we can enjoy together. We make contributions to the land trust. We attend an annual meeting one sunny June day under a tent on land that would eventually become our Randall’s Farm Preserve in Easton. After the meeting, I am talking with folks and somehow, I am offered a position as a trail steward at Fairfield’s 15-acre Harwood Preserve. My volunteer journey with Aspetuck Land Trust begins. Memories of over built suburban N.J. slip far away. The Harwood Preserve becomes my sanctuary. It still is. In 2011, as I approach retirement, I am asked to join Aspetuck Land Trust’s Board of Directors.

Tick tock. It is now October of 2017. Our dedicated, longtime president, Dick Ritzel, who lately lives mostly in Florida, decides to step down. I am elected to take his place. Yikes! Well, frankly the year turned out quite well, thanks in part to support from people like you and great staff like David Brant, executive director, and Alice Cooney our administrator. Here are just a few highlights:

- After deciding that we may need to make some changes in our by-laws and nomination process, our wise, hard-working board embarks on a consultant-led, rigorous self-assessment. We’re also reminded our job is to focus on three things—strategy, policy and fundraising. We agree to re-dedicate ourselves to those goals.
- Yale Law School Environmental Law and Policy Expert, Dan Esty, delivers the Haskins Lecture to a packed audience on Nov. 15. He tells us the funding landscape for open space grants has changed. Budgets are squeezed in Washington and Hartford. He says it’s up to local individuals and land trusts like ours to “drive the bus” when it comes to raising funds and acquiring open space.
- On Nov. 27 we issue a news release announcing the purchase of 38-acres of forest land in Weston, adjoining our Honey Hill Preserve. The deal is funded with ALT funds (your donations add up, thank you very much) and generous grants from Audubon Connecticut, the William C. Bullitt Foundation and amazingly, even the State of Connecticut chips in!



*Donald Hyman, President, Aspetuck Land Trust.
Photo credit Nancy Moon.*

- We have a huge number of nor'easters over the 2018 winter. Trees are down across many of our trails. Teams of volunteers work to clear them.
- On April 25, 2018, ALT announces the start of a new board supported campaign to collaborate with the Wilton Land Conservation Trust and work toward saving 350 acres of unprotected forest land spanning Weston and Wilton adjacent to 2,100 acres of already protected land. It will become, subject to final review and comment by our members at our June 21 annual meeting, part of a larger planned strategy to create a 17,000-acre greenbelt corridor including adjoining or nearby parcels of open space in Westport, Fairfield and Easton.

That brings my story up to about right now. I hope it sounds exciting because it has been just that. I feel very bullish about our future. This year I magically turned 70! I plan to take advantage of the tax law provision that allows me to make a once a year tax free donation to ALT directly from my IRA. I am proud to say we now have 1,133 members who support our mission and give us donations large and small.

Would any of you veteran members be interested in serving on our Board of Directors? They're a great group. Or, would you like to simply work as an active member in land management? Help with fundraising? Strategic planning? Event planning and management? Communication and marketing? I'd love to hear from you. Please send me a letter telling me where you're qualified and how you'd like to help. I have told you my story. Please tell me yours.

Sincerely,

Donald Hyman

President, Aspetuck Land Trust

We've made it easy to support us by enclosing a pre-addressed envelope. Or you can donate online by visiting our secure website at www.aspetucklandtrust.org. All donations are tax-deductible.

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*Cover image: Stonebridge Waterfowl Preserve in Weston.
Painted by David Dunlop.*



PRESERVING LOCAL OPEN SPACE

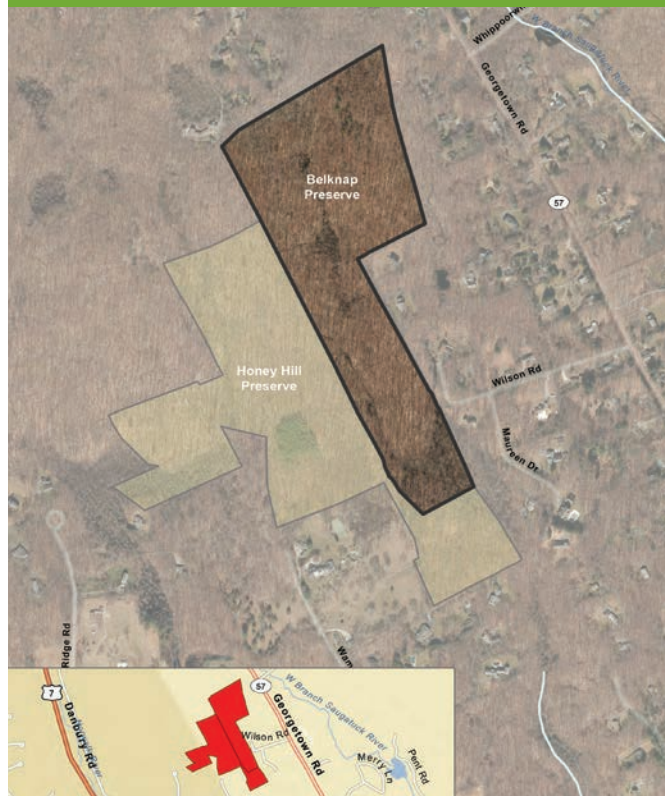
38-Acre Property Purchased in Weston

In 2017, Aspetuck Land Trust purchased the 38-acre Belknap property in Weston adjacent to our existing 51-acre Honey Hill Preserve. Funds to purchase this property were raised from the State of Connecticut Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (\$165,000), Audubon Connecticut in lieu Fee Program (\$200,000), and the William C. Bullitt Foundation (\$50,000).

The land has been owned by only two families since it was granted by the English monarchy to the Sturges family and purchased by Chauncy Belknap in 1927.

Come join us on Saturday, July 21, from 10 am to 1 pm for cake and refreshments at the Belknap homestead on Wampum Hill Road in Weston to celebrate this important acquisition and take a guided “forest block” hike. RSVP to administration@aspetucklandtrust.org

Recently acquired 38-acre Belknap Preserve.



Stone walls on the newly acquired 38-acre Belknap property in Weston. Photo credit Hallie Schwab.



Aspetuck Land Trust Announces Effort to Save 350-Acres in Weston and Wilton

The 38-acre Belknap acquisition is a key parcel in Aspetuck Land Trust's efforts to preserve 350 acres on the Weston-Wilton border adjacent to over 2,100 acres of already protected land.

Aspetuck Land Trust's efforts to preserve the Weston-Wilton Forest block is supported by a \$10,000 grant from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust, which seeks to create a model for how to engage suburban landowners in land preservation and stewardship activities. Our efforts are part of the Hudson to Housatonic Initiative (H2H), a regional land preservation effort which seeks to preserve large tracts of land between the Hudson and Housatonic Rivers in New York and Connecticut.

Aspetuck Land Trust hosted a packed community forum on April 25 at the Weston Library to announce the initiative and solicit feedback from the public. Eighty-nine percent of participants said that development has been detrimental to the area, and eighty-eight percent said that the region needs to protect more open space.

The Weston-Wilton Forest Block is considered rare and resilient habitat critical to the long-term survival of native Connecticut species threatened by the effects of climate change and fragmentation from development. A "pollinator pathway" has been established to encourage people living within the forest block to plant native pollinator plants to support the ecological health of the area.

Everyone has a role to play to improve and repair our shared environment and everyone can make a difference.

To learn more, or to support this effort visit aspetucklandtrust.org



Aspetuck Land Trust Executive Director David Brant discussing the Weston Wilton Forest Preservation Initiative at a community forum in Weston on April 25. Photo credit Nancy Moon.

350-Acre Weston-Wilton Forest Block

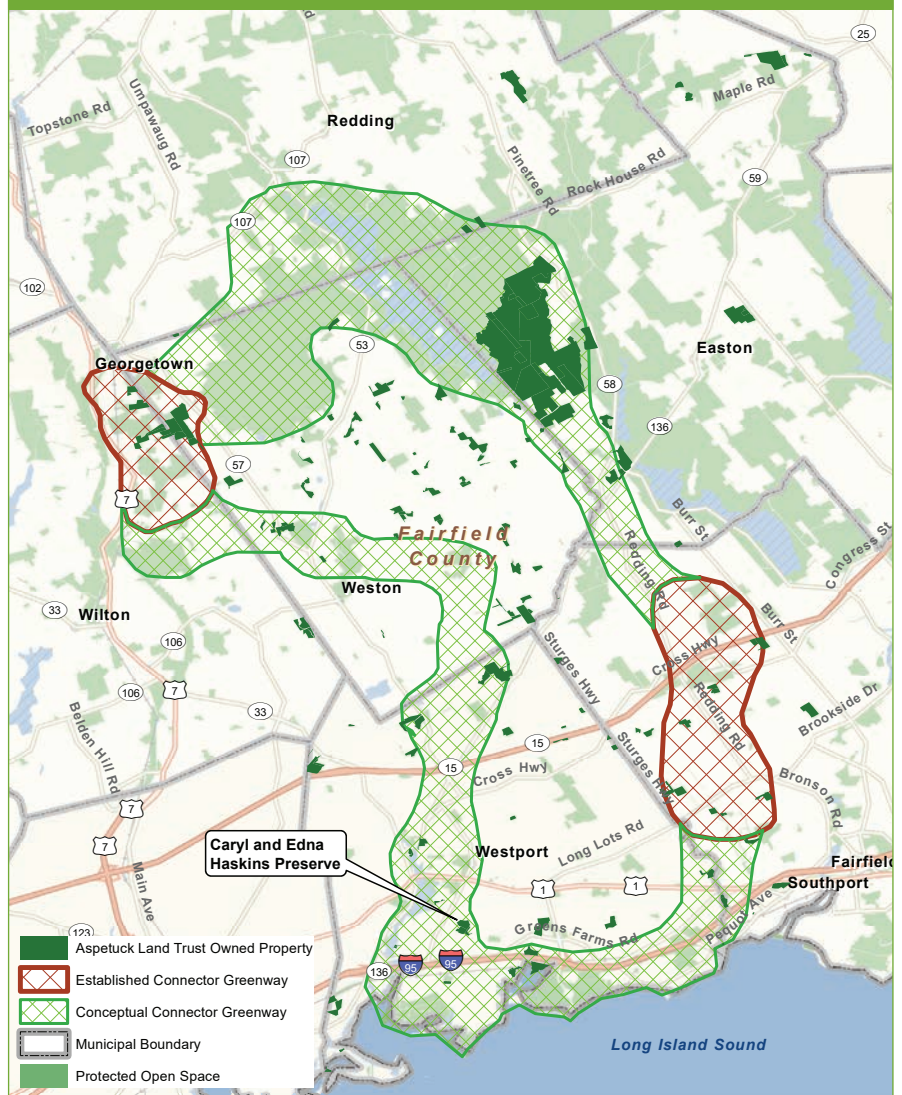


Aspetuck Land Trust Annual Meeting June 21

Aspetuck Land Trust’s annual membership meeting will take place on Thursday, June 21 from 7:00 to 7:45 pm at the Fairfield Museum and History Center located at 370 Beach Road, Fairfield. Members will be asked to approve a slate of directors – Class of 2022 – which consists of Stephan Grozinger (Weston), Bill Kraekel (At-Large), Jeff Galdenzi (Fairfield), Walter Greene (Westport), and Kirby Brendsel (At-Large).

Members will also be asked to provide feedback on our vision to create a 17,000-acre Conservation Corridor, a conceptual greenway, in the towns of Fairfield, Westport, Weston and Easton including the Weston-Wilton Forest block section mentioned earlier (see map). After the business meeting ends at approximately 7:45 pm, we invite you to stay for local wood fired pizza from Skinny Pines and craft beer from our friends at Aspetuck Brew Lab. **RSVP to administration@aspetucklandtrust.org**.

Conceptual Greenway Connections for the Four Town Region



What Have We Preserved Lately?

Preserving local open space is one of the most important things your membership contributions support. Since 1966, Aspetuck Land Trust has protected 149 properties on 1,800+ acres in the towns of Westport, Weston, Fairfield, Easton, Redding, Wilton, and Bridgeport. We have big plans to preserve more land. This tree represents recently preserved acreage.

TAKING CARE OF THE LAND



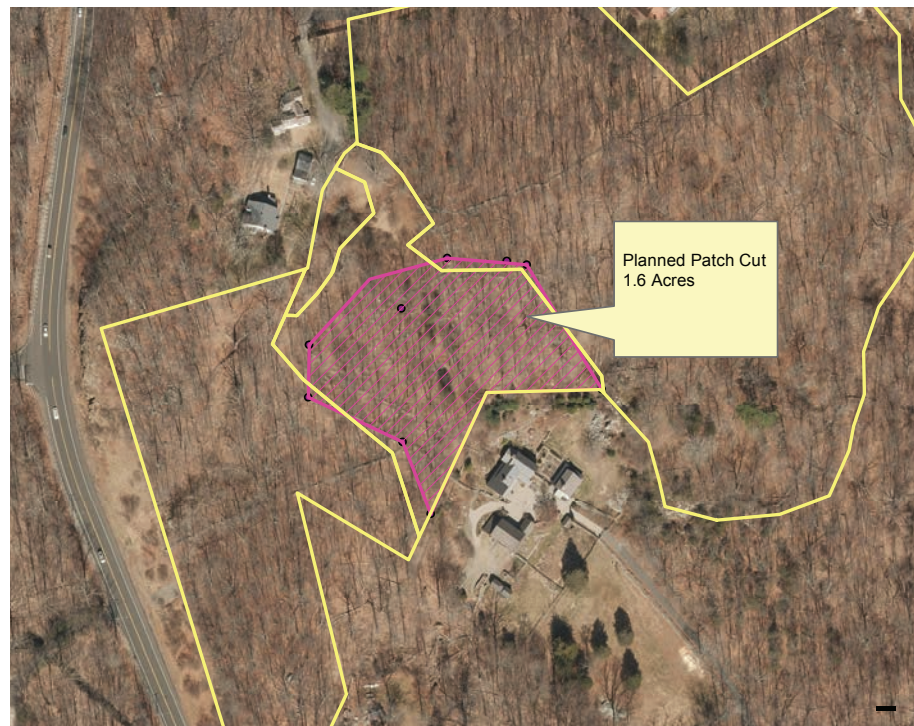
Restoring Bird Habitat at LeGallienne Bird Sanctuary in Weston

Over the past year we initiated several projects to improve local wildlife habitats. We prioritize projects that will have the largest conservation impact. In 2017, we began efforts to improve bird habitat on the 13-acre LeGallienne Bird Sanctuary in Weston. Our goal is to improve habitat for scrub shrub birds like the Chestnut Sided Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee and Common Yellow Throat. These birds are dependent upon low growing shrub thickets and are among the fastest declining birds in Connecticut. They are declining because there is a lack of shrub habitat. We are restoring this habitat by removing large trees to create a 1.6-acre early-successional wildlife opening, which we will replant with gray dogwood, bayberry, highbush cranberry shrubs and cedars, which are more attractive to birds. Tree cutting was done between September and March to avoid disturbing birds during fall migration and spring breeding season. We are conducting annual bird counts to track changes in bird populations and hope to see more birds return because of our efforts. Thanks to Matt Bartelme of Barts Tree Service for donating his crew and equipment to help with this project.

Aspetuck Land Trust's Lou Bacchiochi felling trees in the patch cut area.



Common Yellow Throat



Removing Invasive Phragmites in Westport

Building upon our successful three-year effort to remove invasive phragmites from our 3.2-acre Taylortown Salt Marsh preserve in the Saugatuck River estuary in downtown Westport, we have begun work on removing phragmites from the Allen Salt Marsh and Talcott Wakeman Vineyard Preserves in Westport. Removing this invasive plant is accomplished by a three-year mowing and spraying regimen that results in increased wildlife diversity and improved views of our beautiful salt marshes and estuaries. **To make a donation visit ASPETUCKLANDTRUST.ORG / CARING FOR LAND / WESTPORT PHRAGMITES**

Aspetuck Land Trust Common Reed (Phragmites) Removal Projects



Phragmites grows up to 15 feet tall, completely blocking the view of Allen Salt Marsh.



Nesting ospreys at Allen Salt Marsh Preserve in Westport.



Mowing the phragmites at the Allen Salt Marsh Preserve.

Newman Poses Preserve Improvements

This spring, with help from interns from Staples High School, we are improving the entrance at the 39-acre Newman Poses Preserve in Westport. The property, which was made possible by gifts of land by the Newman and Poses families, is named after actor and philanthropist Paul Newman who lived nearby, and Lillian Poses, a neighbor and friend of Mr. Newman's who worked on the New Deal in the FDR administration. Gault Energy is donating topsoil and gravel, the Town of Westport is lending their Public Works crew, Barts Tree Service is removing trees, and Oliver's Nursery is donating native plants. Local carpenter Dan Magner is designing a new preserve sign.

To make a donation visit ASPETUCK-LANDTRUST.ORG/CARINGFORLAND/NEWMANPOSESIMPROVEMENTS



Newman Poses Preserve. Photo credit Jim Freund.

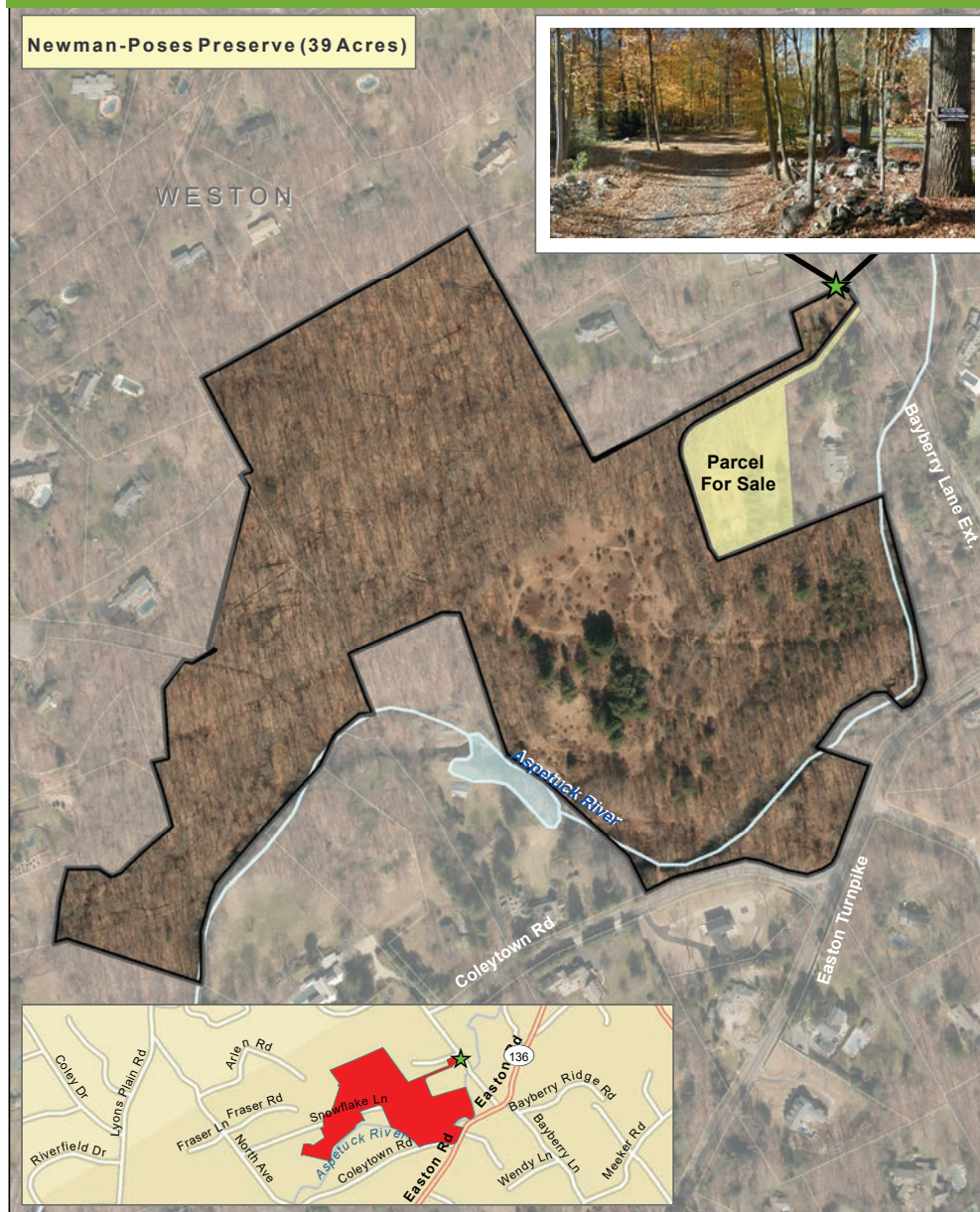


Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward



Lillian and Jack Poses

Newman-Poses Entrance Enhancements and Beautification Project



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

First Annual Pumpkin Picking a Success!

We held our first ever pumpkin picking in 2017 in the Trout Brook Valley orchard. It was a great event and many families came out to pick their halloween pumpkins in a real pumpkin patch. Thank you to farmer Bob Haydu of Greenfield Farm for growing the pumpkins. We plan on doing it again this fall.



Aspetuck Land Trust members picking pumpkins in the Trout Brook Valley orchard.



Eco-Camp

As part of our efforts to get more kids outside, we created an Ecology Camp for middle school students last year at the Caryl and Edna Haskins Preserve in Westport. For more information or to enroll your child, visit the News section on our website.



Eco Camp participants. Photo credit: Stephen B. White

Aspetuck Land Trust Receives Environmental Champion Award

Aquarion Water Company presented Aspetuck Land Trust with an Environmental Champion Award at a ceremony held June 3, 2017, at Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo. This follows the Green Award we won in 2016 from Town Vibe, publisher of Fairfield Magazine. Aquarion recognized Aspetuck Land Trust's "significant contribution to the improvement of environmental quality through the protection, conservation, restoration and stewardship of Connecticut's water, air, soils, and plant and wildlife habitats." We were honored to receive this award on behalf of our 1,133 member/supporters who make our land conservation efforts possible.



Aspetuck Land Trust board members and staff are congratulated by U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal at the Aquarion Environmental Champion Awards ceremony.

LEAVE A LEGACY



Protect the places you love by making a gift to the Aspetuck Land Trust in your estate plans. By naming Aspetuck Land Trust as a beneficiary of your will, living trust, or retirement account, you can make a visionary gift that will conserve land for generations to come.

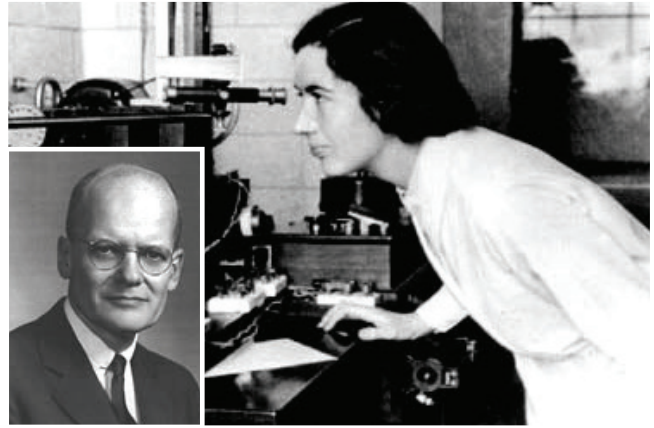
To recognize our legacy supporters, we created the Aspetuck Land Trust **Open Space Legacy Society** to recognize people like you who have made a planned gift to Aspetuck Land Trust.

Individuals who have made a planned gift, and have let us know, will become a member of the **Open Space Legacy Society**. As a member we will plant a blueberry bush in your name and you will be invited to periodic **Open Space Legacy Society** activities. Upon receipt of your bequest to Aspetuck Land Trust we will recognize you by including your name on a permanent “Legacy of Open Space” memorial in the 1,009 acre Trout Brook Valley Preserve orchard overlooking Long Island Sound.

For more information contact David Brant at 203-331-1906, or dbrant@aspetucklandtrust.org. or visit [ASPETUCKLANDTRUST.ORG / HELP SAVE LAND](http://ASPETUCKLANDTRUST.ORG/HELP_SAVE_LAND)

The Legacy of Caryl and Edna Haskins

In 2002, Caryl and Edna Haskins donated their 22-acre estate on Green Acre Lane in Westport to Aspetuck Land Trust with the stipulation that a portion be sold to generate funds to create a nature preserve in their name. The Haskins were both scientists known for their pioneering work in entomology. To honor their scientific legacy, Aspetuck Land Trust created the Haskins Lecture and an Ecology Camp for children to inspire the next generation of scientists.



Caryl and Edna Haskins



Eco Camp participants



Daniel Esty speaks at the Haskins Lecture about environmental protection in the Trump Era. Photo credit: Derek Sterling

Aspetuck Land Trust Receives \$45,000 from Newman's Own Foundation

Aspetuck Land Trust was awarded a \$45,000 grant from Newman's Own Foundation, the independent foundation created by the late actor and philanthropist Paul Newman. Paul Newman made a difference and this grant reminds us how important individual supporters are to Aspetuck Land Trust's efforts to preserve local open space. We can all be philanthropists by giving our time, treasure and talent to causes that we believe in. Paul Newman and Newman's Own Foundation have been long-time supporters of Aspetuck Land Trust with more than \$1 million in donations since 1999. Thank you, Mr. Newman. Your legacy lives on in the good deeds of others.



Paul Newman with campers.

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Howard J. Aibel, who died on March 9 from complications from pneumonia. Howard was a land donor and long-time member of Aspetuck Land Trust. Howard's legacy will live on in the land he donated and in the other charitable causes he generously supported, including the Westport Country Playhouse, which renamed its campus The Howard J. Aibel Theater Center at Westport Country Playhouse in February thanks to a \$3 million donation from Mr. Aibel. "Howard had a great spirit. He loved beauty, whether it was found in the land, art or in the theatre. There was kindness in his eyes and in his deeds," said David Brant, land trust executive director.

Giving – A Personal Perspective

I donated 6 acres of land to Aspetuck Land Trust to preserve the woodlands which inspired my wife and me to move to Weston many years ago. I also wanted to support Aspetuck Land Trust's efforts to take care of the donated property and other lands they manage by making a cash gift of \$40,000 to the land trust's Stewardship Endowment Fund. Aspetuck Land Trust takes care of these open spaces in perpetuity and I wanted to help them in these important efforts.

—Howard J. Aibel, Weston



The late Howard J. Aibel from Weston in front of the property he donated to Aspetuck Land Trust.



Stone wall on the Aibel property in Weston.



The Seed

Dedicated to Howard J. Aibel

By Josh Brant, age 11

*There once was a tree,
On that tree was a branch,
On that branch was a twig,
On the twig was a flower,
And in that flower there was a seed.*

One day that seed flew away.

It traveled for days,

But never sat down to rest.

*Its journey ended where the wind didn't blow,
Where groves encircled trees and forests encircled groves.*

And on that day the seed rested.

It rested for a very long time until it grew a trunk.

On its trunk it grew a branch,

On that branch it grew a twig,

On that twig it grew a flower,

And inside that flower it grew a seed.

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2017 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

In 2017 the contributions and income received from individual members and foundation grants was \$377,962. General Operating Expenses were \$338,177.

Our Main Endowment Fund earned 16.06%, received \$3,345 in donations and funded our purchase of the Belknap Preserve in Weston in the amount of \$370,973. The account ending balance was \$1,557,839. During the calendar years of 2018 and 2019 grants and pledges have been promised which will reimburse this account for the cost of purchasing the Belknap Preserve (\$370,973). The funds in this account are to be used for land purchases and extraordinary expenses not covered by membership contributions.

Our Land Stewardship Endowment Fund earned 13.95% and ended with a balance of \$125,335. These funds may be used for major expenditures or emergencies, such as major capital improvements, major repairs, legal defense, and ensuring public safety on its properties.

Our Haskins Preserve Endowment Fund earned 12.55%, had disbursements of \$62,559 for the reimbursement of expenses related to the Haskins Preserve Maintenance, Programming, and the Haskins Lecture series. The ending balance on December 31, 2017 was \$1,434,287, the Net Income for this account was \$100,910.

2017 in Review

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

New Members	270	\$38,790
Friends: \$0 - 49.99	68	1,646
Individual/Family: \$50.00-99.99	436	22,502
Naturalists: \$100.00 - 499.99	503	74,512
Trailblazers: \$500.00 - 999.99	50	27,005
Stewards: \$1,000.00 +	64	126,610
Individual Members	1121	\$252,275
Foundations	12	\$125,687
		\$377,962

REVENUE

	2017 Actual	2018 Budget
Membership Income	\$252,274	\$293,000
Non Restricted Grants	75,687	70,000
Restricted Grants	50,000	8,000
Other	26,841	25,000
Total	\$404,803	\$326,200

EXPENSES

Property Acquisition	\$9,425	\$10,000
Property Maintenance & upgrades	114,532	100,150
Program Implementation	95,293	95,000
Administrative Costs	118,927	110,000
Total	\$338,177	\$315,150
Net Income	\$66,626	\$11,050

2017 ENDOWMENT FUNDS

	Main Account	Restricted Account	Land Stewardship Fund
Beginning Balance	\$1,684,526	\$1,333,377	\$109,995
Donations	3,345		
Investment Income	240,942	163,469	15,340
Programming and Maintenance Expenses		(62,559)	
Land Acquisition: Belknap Land Purchase Expenses	(370,973)		
Ending Balance	\$1,557,839	\$1,434,287	\$125,335



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Above image: Stonebridge Waterfowl Preserve in Weston. Painted by David Dunlop.



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