



ALF

2013
ANNUAL
REPORT



A LOOK AHEAD

We do three basic things at Aspetuck Land Trust.

- 1) **We preserve** local open space by acquiring land through donations or purchases.
- 2) **We conserve** the land we own by protecting or improving habitats.
- 3) **We engage** the public on the land.

Where do we stand in these three areas and what are our plans for the future?

Preserve: Since our founding in 1966, we have preserved over 1,700 acres of land and maintain 45 trailed nature preserves open to the public. To prepare for the next hundred years of land preservation we have embarked on a major land mapping project that will enable us to proactively identify future open spaces to preserve.

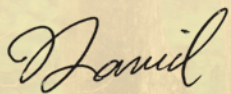
Conserve: Just because we own open space doesn't mean we leave it alone. We conduct wildlife surveys and actively manage our properties to improve their conservation value. As native plants and animals become more stressed due to development and climate change it's more important now than ever to protect and improve important local habitats before they disappear.

Engage: A big part of what we do is maintain nature preserves so people can enjoy and explore nature. We think it's good for people to get outside. How are people going to care for this beautiful planet if they have no connection to it? This is especially true for children. Our efforts to engage children in nature through our Natural Playground, Short Hikes for Short People, and Jr. Trail Steward Program are important.

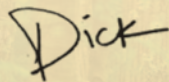
We can't do any of this without the support of nearly 1,000 local members like you who care about your local environment and open space. You make your little corner of the planet a better place by supporting something larger than ourselves – nature.

We are local. We are your neighbors. We are your land trust.

Thank you for your support.



David Brant
Executive Director



Dick Ritzel
Board President

PS: If you are interested in supporting the Land Trust at this time, we've made it easy by enclosing a pre-addressed envelope. Or you can donate online by visiting www.aspetucklandtrust.org. Thank you!

Board Members

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VP: Lisa Brodlie

VP: Alan Goldbecker

VP: Heather Williams

Sec: Cynthia Williams

Executive Director: David Brant

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Princie Falkenhagen

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Nancy Moon

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Tom Johnson

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Westport

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Ruth Glendinning

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PRESERVING LOCAL OPEN SPACE

New Fairfield Property Preserved

The Aspetuck Land Trust accepted a donation of 4.57 acres of land at 199 Horseshoe Lane off Merwins Lane. The land donation means a total of 131 acres of land in Fairfield within 22 separate preserves are now managed by the land trust and designated as protected open space forever.

Southport Park Open to the Public!

This beautiful 11 acre park in the heart of historic downtown Southport is the result of a collaboration between Aspetuck Land Trust, the Sasquanaug Association, Southport Conservancy, and the Southport Area Association to restore the property's natural beauty while enhancing its community appeal and improving plant and wildlife habitats. This is a great open space for joggers, hikers, dog walkers and children of all ages. See our website to learn more.

Planning for the Next 100 Years

We are planning for the next 100 years of open space land preservation by working with the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies to map all of the land parcels in Easton, Weston, Westport, Fairfield, and the two connecting towns of Redding and Wilton. This will allow us to preserve more land and create a more connected landscape for people and wildlife. Aspetuck Land Trust is also a member of the Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership which is working to create more open space connectivity throughout Fairfield County.



Stone walls at the new 4.5 acre open space in Fairfield donated by Jean B. Uehlinger. This brings the total amount of open space in Fairfield managed by Aspetuck Land Trust to 131 acres of land on 22 separate preserves.



The playhouse for children at Southport Park opened in 2013. Photo credit: Derek Sterling



2013 Financial Highlights

2013 contributions income from individuals and grants was \$385,366. This includes a bequest of \$115,007 and a \$50,000 donation for our Land Stewardship Fund. Expenses were \$262,439. Our general endowment fund earned 15.13% and increased to \$1,522,456. These funds are used for land purchases and to offset extraordinary expenses not covered by membership contributions.

Cover photo & Flowering Dogwood, Caryl & Edna Haskins Preserve, Westport. Photo credit Derek Sterling.

CONSERVING LOCAL HABITATS

Our local habitats are under stress from development and climate change. Aspetuck Land Trust is working hard to increase the resiliency of our local open spaces. We received a \$33,500 grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service to improve 35 acres of wildlife habitat in our 1,009 acre Trout Brook Valley Conservation Area in Easton/Weston. Trout Brook is the largest and most ecologically diverse of our open spaces.

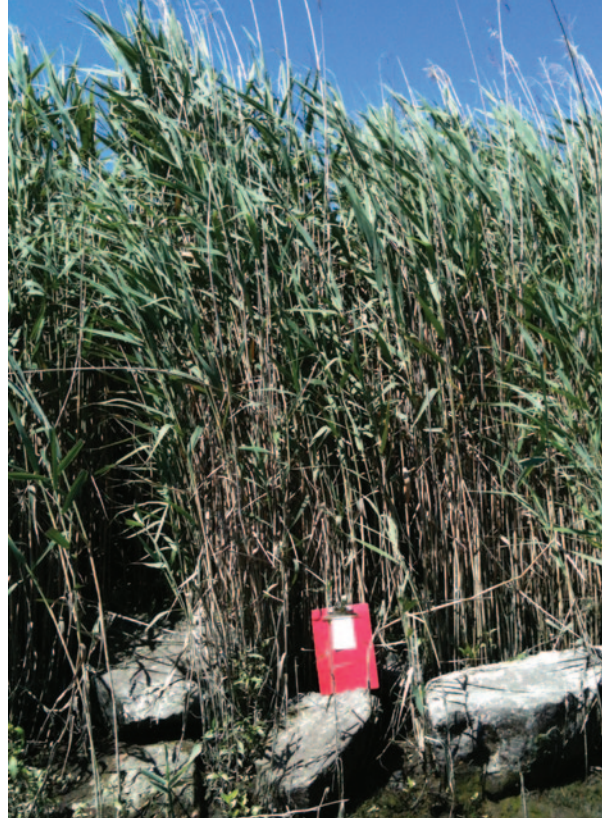


Land Trust executive director David Brant (left) and habitat manager Lou Bacchiocchi creating early-successional habitat in Trout Brook Valley at marker #1 on the white trail.

We began our first project at marker # 1 on the white trail, near the fish ladder at Hawley's Brook. We are cutting trees and removing invasives to expand the meadow to create 7 acres of early successional habitat which will benefit birds, small mammals, pollinating insects and Eastern box turtles which use the surrounding fields to lay their eggs.

What is an early successional habitat?

Early successional habitats are a big concern to us at Aspetuck Land Trust because Connecticut has lost many of these areas to forest succession, development and other changes in land use. Think about all the old farmland in the Connecticut landscape that grew into mature forest. As this happens, fields, orchards and young forest are lost along with the wildlife that depend on this type of habitat.



Invasive Phragmites have taken over the salt marsh. They grow over 15 feet tall, impeding views of the river and crowding out native plants and wildlife.

Phragmites Invading Westport Salt Marsh

Aspetuck Land Trust has initiated a major project to restore native plants, animal species and wildlife habitat to 12 acres of salt marsh in the Saugatuck River estuary in downtown Westport. The project will remove invasive



Sign announcing the restoration project painted by local artist and Land Trust member Gail Bell. Photo credit Nancy Moon.

Phragmites australis, a fast growing, non-native wetland reed which grows up to 12 feet tall, and which has taken over the estuary and surrounding area. Salt marshes are a signature feature of Westport's landscape, and this project will make the river and marsh more visible, colorful and attractive for people and wildlife, especially birds which will be attracted to the native plants which will grow when the Phragmites are removed.

This project is supported by local environmental organizations including the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, Save the Sound, Earthplace, Connecticut Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy and the Westport Conservation Commission. **To support this project send your donation to: Aspetuck Land Trust, Save the Salt Marsh Fund, P.O. Box 444, Westport, CT 06881-0444.**

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Educational Hikes

We offer educational and specialty hikes for children, adults and families where you can have fun and learn about the diversity of our 45 trailed nature preserves on over



Milan Bull from Connecticut Audubon Society and his dog Edge.

1,700 acres. Many of our hikes are for Land Trust "members only" but some are open to the public like our "Tails, Trails & Tales" hike featured below. Visit www.aspetucklandtrust.org to sign up for our 2014 hikes.

Tails, Trails & Tales Hike

Due to popular demand, Aspetuck Land Trust is repeating its "Tails, Trails & Tales" hike, a roughly two mile hike and conversation focused on finding a sustainable balance for off leash dog walking and environmental protection on conserved land. The event is led by conservation biologist Milan Bull, his dog "Edge" and noted dog trainer Jason Hoffman.



American Kestrel held by hawk hike leader Larry Fischer.
Photo credit Jack Ferrell



Aspetuck Land Trust member and artist James Prosek in his Easton, CT studio. "The land trust helps protect open spaces, nature, the sources of our awe and inspiration as artists... I have spent a good part of my life on Aspetuck Land Trust open spaces— these lands are a large part of why I continue to live here." **Easton Artist James Prosek**

Nature Inspired Art Show a Success

Last November, Land Trust volunteers organized an art show at the Weston Public Library which raised \$3,350 for the Land Trust's conservation and education programs. The show involved nearly 40 regional artists who find inspiration for their art in local nature. Thanks to land trust board members Jacquie Littlejohn and Grayson Braun for organizing this event and to Newman's Own for donating the wine!

Local Seniors Eat Blueberries

Aspetuck Land Trust held its first-ever 65+ blueberry picking last summer. Special thanks Aspetuck Land Trust board member Bud Martin from Weston for creating this event. This year's picking day is Saturday, July 19, from 10am – noon. To join us, RSVP to dbrant@aspetucklandtrust.org.



Blueberry lovers from last year's event. From Left, Vidal Clay of Westport, Brenda Ungerland of Southport, event organizer and Aspetuck Land Trust board member Bud Martin of Weston, Relly Coleman of Westport, native Eastoner Joe Kusnierczak and her niece Mary Randolph, and Aspetuck Land Trust board member Tom Johnson.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY (CONT'D)

Haskins Lecture Series Established in Recognition of Westport Scientists

Author and Activist Bill McKibben Addresses Global Climate Change

On August 9, author and Environmental Activist Bill McKibben kicked-off Aspetuck Land Trust's Haskins lecture series at the Pequot Library in Southport. The lecture was created to honor Westport scientists Caryl and Edna Haskins who donated their estate on Green Acre Lane to Aspetuck Land Trust. The estate is now a nature preserve bearing their names. Two hundred Land Trust members turned out to learn about global climate change from McKibben, who was called "the planet's best green journalist" by Time Magazine.



Caryl Parker Haskins



Edna Haskins

The purpose of the Haskins Lecture Series is to educate the public on a science-related conservation issue that's related to a land conservation activity or issue faced by Aspetuck Land Trust. Caryl Haskins, a noted scientist, author, inventor, philanthropist, government advisor, and pioneering entomologist in the study of ant biology, died in 2001 at 93. His wife, Edna who also studied ant biology died in 2000 at the age of 88.

To learn more about Caryl and Edna Haskins visit the Haskins Preserve page on our website.

Improving Our Trails

Trail building volunteers took time out for a picture last fall during the re-routing of the white trail in Trout Brook Valley. The group was led by the Fairfield County Chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association which has helped to improve many of our trails in Trout Brook Valley. The new trail which is scheduled to be completed this spring will be more interesting for hikers and bikers, with better views through more interesting terrain. To join our trail maintenance team, please contact dbrant@aspetuck-landtrust.org.



Photo credit Dave Francefort



Aspetuck Land Trust Trail Stewards at our 2013 annual trail steward meeting. Trail stewards help to clear and improve trails and monitor our 45 trailed nature preserves. Contact us if you are interested in becoming a trail steward.

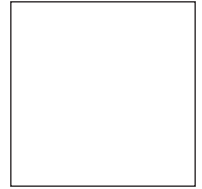
Land Trust board members attend the CT Land Conservation Council Conference. From left: Land Trust board president Dick Ritzel (Easton), Rob Klee, Commissioner CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, Nancy Moon (Fairfield), Heather Williams (Westport).





Established 1966

Aspetuck Land Trust
P.O. Box 444
Westport, CT 06881



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What Can I Do To Help?

If you are interested in supporting the Land Trust at this time, we've made it easy by enclosing a pre-addressed envelope. Or you can donate online by visiting www.aspetucklandtrust.org. Thank you!

Donations are tax deductible and a receipt will be provided. Members receive a member decal, 4 town map, access to special events and member only hikes and the satisfaction that you are supporting YOUR local environment.

Stay connected. Become a Fan of Aspetuck Land Trust on Facebook.

Sign up on our website to receive our fun and occasional e-newsletter.

Legacy Gifts

Making a gift to Aspetuck Land Trust through a bequest in a will and/or or a revocable living trust allows the donor to decide how his/her estate will be distributed and enables the donor to take advantage of tax-saving opportunities. Please consult your attorney or financial advisor.



Photo credit Derek Sterling.

Land Trust Annual Meeting

Join fellow Land Trust members on June 11, from 7 – 9pm at the Pequot Library in Southport for the Land Trust's annual meeting. The theme of this year's meeting is "Who is Aspetuck Land Trust?" Join us for a presentation about what Aspetuck Land Trust does in the community and provide feedback to us about where you think our focus should be.

A short business meeting will precede the discussion and members will be asked to approve a slate of directors – Class of 2018 – which consists of: Alan Goldbecker (Easton), Raphael Hodgson (Fairfield), Bud Martin (Weston), and Bill Kraekel (At-large). Hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be available.

The Aspetuck Land Trust (ALT) is a local non-profit land conservation organization founded in 1966 to preserve open space in the towns of Westport, Weston, Fairfield and Easton. ALT nature preserves provide passive recreation and educational opportunities for people to learn about and enjoy nature, while preserving the flora and fauna and rural characteristics of local towns. ALT maintains 45 trailed nature preserves and other conservation-only properties on over 1,700 acres of land. ALT has over 1,000 local members who support the organization through annual membership contributions. For more information visit www.aspetucklandtrust.org