

2020 Annual Report: President's Message

from Victor Herson



Wintonbury Land Trust's mission is to promote the preservation, improvement, protection, and conservation of natural resources for the benefit of the community. This includes protection and promotion of clean water, soil, farms, woodlands, and open space as well as development of trails, parks, and wildlife corridors.

We now protect 300 acres from development in perpetuity. While acquisitions always are “on our radar screen,” last year we focused on strengthening the organization by improving existing properties, enhancing financial stability, and recruiting additional volunteers to fill key roles. Accordingly our leadership remains strong, and we have a sound financial foundation to sustain us going forward. We also continued to connect people with nature through trail hikes, socials, and educational events.

The current pandemic has required all of us to adapt in many ways. WLT needed to meet these challenges by modifying or canceling important events and fund-raisers. Yet as we persevere, this period reinforces and highlights features we value: places to walk and hike, the wonders of nature and her natural resources, and our connectedness. Accommodating the increased demand for trail use, expanding the availability of local food from our farms, and coordinating with other groups to present virtual educational events are some of the ways your WLT has contributed to the resilience of our community. We remain grateful for your confidence and support.

Highlights of 2019-2020

Stewardship of Protected Lands

- Hawk Hill Farm and Stout Family Fields: Volunteers cleaned the barn and corral and removed vegetation from the trails. Completed the restoration of fields assisted by a CT Dept. of Ag. grant.
- Thrall Farm: Completed the metal roof on the barn.
- Lisa Lane Farm: Improved trails, raised community garden beds, and other infrastructure assisted by a Urban Green & Community Gardens grant from CT DEEP and the efforts of Ironwood Community Partners, Keney Park Sustainability Center, and the Town of Bloomfield.
- Sinnot Farm - The Knoll: Completed field work to maintain habitat.
- Van Otterloo Preserve: Removed barbed-wire fence hazard.

Connecting People with Nature

- Speer Preserve Winter hike, Connecticut Trails Day hikes, Over the Mountain Hike with Simsbury Land Trust, Fall social and full moon hike, and a three-hike "course" provided for UCONN's Adult Learning Program.
- Partnered with Bloomfield Leisure Services and Senior Services for a series of environmental lectures.
- Hosted the North Central Conservation District's annual plant sale at Hawk Hill Farm.

Capacity Building

- With assistance from the American Farmland Trust, recruited a new tenant for Hawk Hill Farm: The 4 Five Farm. Partnered with ProBono Partnership to create an updated lease with attorneys Kaitlyn Romania and Jessica Seger Bula at Dechert, LLC.
- John Deere tractor (vintage 1955) donated by Kelly Baker and repaired by Pete Bartkoski and Dale Bertoldi is now functional for light stewardship and ready for expanded duties when a brush hog becomes available.
- Wine & Dine annual fundraising event revised and rescheduled for September 26.