



The Warren Conservator

Spring 2022

**WARREN
LAND TRUST**



Snowshoe Clinic Makes for Wintery Outdoor Fun

Warren Parks & Rec and the Warren Land Trust collaborated to bring two snowshoe clinics to the community this winter.



WLT Board Member Dave Schneiderbeck led the clinics, which took place on WLT's Dorothy Maier Preserve. Frosty fun was had by novice and experienced snowshoers alike. What a great way to be reminded that our preserves can be enjoyed year-round!



President's Letter



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I hope you find much of interest in our Spring 2022 newsletter; we certainly do have a lot going on! Many of those activities are described below.

Some very important aspects of our work, however, are not...like strategic planning, in which we are currently engaged. Not as much fun as blazing trails or planning interesting programming, but deeply necessary for an organization like ours.

Think, for instance, of the Warren Land Trust of ten years ago. It was an all-volunteer, financially solid responsibly governed organization operating out of the President's living room and the Land Committee Chair's barn, with a small, carefully stewarded portfolio of preserves and conservation easements, including a couple of trails.

Fast forward to today: we maintain twice as many properties, take care of over twice as many trails and a farm preserve, and with cautious confidence expect to increase the number of acres under our protection substantially in the next couple of years. We are still all-volunteer, with 16 actively involved board members (and part-time administrative help and office space in Town Hall!); we are still financially solid, and we are as responsibly governed as ever. Having received national Land Trust Alliance accreditation, we are obligated to adhere to their rigorous Standards & Practices; our stewardship of preserves and easements remains thorough. Whew!

The strategic planning we are now undertaking gives us an opportunity to take a breath and look back, and then look forward - to the next few years and well beyond. Can we keep growing at this pace? Should we? What longstanding aspects of our work remain most important to us? Which more recent phenomena in the field of land conservation feel compelling and relevant to our organization: managing the effects of a changing climate? strategic conservation? farmland preservation? pollinator pathways and habitat corridors? environmental justice? food security? What kind of capacity and what resources will we need to realize our mission and our vision for the Warren Land Trust of the future? This exercise is perhaps not as enjoyable as a walk on one of our preserves. It is important, however, and very exciting, really. Stay tuned to find out more as we undertake this essential endeavor.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Neary

WLT Annual Meeting 2021: Projects and Prospects

The 2021 Annual Meeting was held in-person at Town Hall on Saturday, November 20th. It was such a treat to welcome back friends and neighbors, and tell them about 2021's accomplishments and our plans for 2022.

In addition to resuming some in-person programming, continuing to adopt best governance practices, and serving as responsible stewards of our preserves and conservation easements, 2021 also saw the addition of new board member Deirdre McDonald, continued progress on two large acquisition projects, and closing on the new Keith Family Preserve. We highlighted this exciting new addition with a fascinating presentation on the history of the Keith Family in Warren - thanks to Warren Historical Society Curator Heather Forstmann for such an interesting and engaging talk!

We were honored to have a number of Keith family members present at the meeting, many of whom joined us for a sneak-peek walk on the Preserve following the business meeting and presentation. Their stories about growing up on the property made what was already an enjoyable hike on a lovely wooded parcel truly something special.

WLT Supports Warren Community Garden @ Wasley Farm

Spring is officially here and, with garden prep in mind, Warren Land Trust is excited to announce its sponsorship of the newly established Warren Community Garden @ Wasley Farm ("WCG"). Inspired by partnerships between neighboring community gardens and their local land trusts in Kent, Washington and Litchfield, WLT will act as a legal and fiscal sponsor for the garden.

Located at 224 Cornwall Road, the 100-acre Wasley Farm was purchased by the Town of Warren in 2011 from longtime residents Irving and Barbara Wasley. Establishing the Warren Community Garden at the Farm is in keeping with the spirit of the Wasleys, who are fondly remembered as ardent organic gardeners and generous neighbors.

WCG is launching its first growing season this spring and has a rapidly expanding group of gardeners and volunteers who are planning the garden and expect to begin tilling as soon as the ground permits. The garden will be re-established in the same location nurtured by the Wasleys and, with the generous help of Arbor Services of CT, the existing orchard of apples, peaches and pear trees, and blueberry and elderberry grove will be rehabilitated.

Interested gardeners can rent a plot for the season and a portion of the garden will be dedicated to growing produce for the Warren and Washington Food Pantry. If you would like to sign up for WCG emails and get involved, please email Kathy Newton at newt198@optonline.net.

WLT Receives Grant Funding for Acquisition

Earlier this winter, the Warren Land Trust was the recipient of a generous grant from the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, to be used to help acquire 248 acres on Cunningham Road. The John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation was created for the purpose of protecting and improving the welfare of animals of all kinds including the protection of wildlife, including endangered species, flora and fauna.

This acquisition will permanently protect significant natural resources and wildlife habitat in the sensitive and increasingly developed Lake Waramaug and East and West Aspetuck River watersheds. Located between the Kent Land Trust's (KLT) East Kent Hamlet Preserve and Wyantenock State Forest, the Cunningham Road Preserve will connect these two parcels and other adjacent conserved land to create a protected open space bloc of over 1000 acres. This protected area, which includes substantial core forest, will be a valuable asset for regional climate change mitigation strategies, and will benefit landscape conservation and greenway connectivity by protecting and complementing existing preserved open spaces that aid wildlife migration.

The Cunningham Road property also affords excellent recreational opportunity for hikers, bird watchers, and history buffs. Existing wood roads will be expanded and enhanced to connect with the abutting Kent Land Trust property and its significant trail network. The Cunningham Road parcel features numerous interesting and some rare species of birds. And the property includes the homesite which was the birthplace of Charles Grandison Finney, major figure in the Second Great Awakening and a President of Oberlin College, whose students erected a monument in his honor on the property.

The exciting recreational potential of the Cunningham Road Preserve in combination with KLT's East Kent Hamlet Preserve was recognized by the State of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), which recently jointly awarded WLT and KLT a Recreational Trails Grant. CT DEEP had previously indicated support for the Cunningham Road acquisition by presenting it with an Open Space and Watershed Acquisition Grant in 2021. WLT is grateful for this financial assistance in support of an important acquisition.

GiveLocal! in 2022 and Enhance Trails On Our New Keith Family Preserve!

GiveLocal!, the CT Community Foundation's online giving campaign benefitting regional non-profits, will take place on April 26th and 27th this year, and the Warren Land Trust will be participating! From 7am on the 26th to 7pm on the 27th, with just a few clicks, you can support our effort to enhance recreational access at the Keith Family Preserve. We are planning a system-wide expansion and upgrade of the trail network, trail mapping, trailhead kiosk installation, and improvement of existing parking. We are grateful that Joyce Keith generously bequeathed the property to WLT, and we thank the Keith Family for their gracious support. And your GiveLocal! donations can make something so wonderful even better!



It's easy to make a secure contribution: just go to www.GiveLocalCCF.org. We will send out a live link by email blast before and during the campaign; you'll also be able to find it front and center on our website. And did you know that when you contribute through GiveLocal!, your donation is augmented by bonus funds provided by the Connecticut Community Foundation and generous Give Local sponsors? So your generosity will have even greater reach.

We can't wait to begin work on this exciting project as the weather improves, we thank you in advance for your support, and we look forward to seeing you out on the trail!



Warren Land Trust Board Members

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Warren Land Trust Mission Statement

The Warren Land Trust is a conservation organization dedicated to the preservation of the rural character of Warren. Its mission is to preserve farmland, open space, natural and endangered resources such as wetlands, forests and wildlife habitats, to encourage outright gifting of land for permanent protection and the use of conservation easements to preserve open space.

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Over 900 acres are permanently protected by the WLT.

IF YOU AREN'T A MEMBER OF THE WARREN LAND TRUST, WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN NOW!!

Becoming a Member of The Warren Land Trust is easy. To join or donate online, visit www.warrenlandtrust.org or cut off this page and send it to our mailing address below, along with your check. We will send you a receipt with our thanks for your generous, 100% tax deductible contribution. Please include your name, address and email so that we may include you in our email updates. Choose the type of membership you would like:

<input type="checkbox"/> Land Guardian	\$5,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Caretaker	\$ 300
<input type="checkbox"/> Land Grantor	\$2,500	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Protector	\$ 100
<input type="checkbox"/> Land Steward	\$1,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership	\$ 25
<input type="checkbox"/> Land Conservator	\$ 500	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	\$ _____

Email: _____
 Please make your check payable to: The Warren Land Trust
 MAIL THIS FORM AND CHECK TO: The Warren Land Trust
 50 Cemetery Road, Warren, CT 06754

To join or donate online, visit www.warrenlandtrust.org
 Please make any necessary corrections to your name and address on the mailing panel and submit to the WLT.

Annual Meeting Program: The Keith Family Preserve, George Keith, and 20th-Century Warren

The Keith Family Preserve, a generous bequest from Joyce Keith of over 60 acres off of Cornwall Road, was a focus of the 2021 annual meeting. Historical context for this gift, and the important role that the Keith family played in Warren's 20th-century history, was provided by Warren Historical Society Curator Heather Forstmann. Mrs. Forstmann drew on resources in the Historical Society's collections, as well as a treasure trove of information in the form of an oral history provided by Elaine Layman. These fascinating oral histories, collected and compiled by Warren Historical Society volunteers Marylyn Hendricks and Jon Garvey can be accessed on the Warren Historical Society website: www.warrencthistoricalsociety.org. Click on the "Archives" tab,



and then on "Oral Histories." Below is a condensed version of Mrs. Forstmann's presentation, focusing on George Gilman Keith II (1907-1961), the first member of the Keith family to settle in Warren.

George Gilman Keith II was a true advocate for Warren. From 1930 when, at the age of 23, he answered a help wanted ad to become a herdsman for Ludlow Melius, until his untimely death in 1961 from leukemia, he was always helping someone.

After 9 years on Melius' Reverie Farm, Keith moved his wife and three young children to what would become Keith Road. Warren was truly a small town at that time: the population in the 1930s was approximately 300 people, rising slightly to 328 in the 1940s.



WARREN OBSERVATION POST

With the advent of World War II, fear was in the air in Warren. There was talk of building a watchtower to spot enemy aircraft, but townspeople thought the expense too great. So Keith paid out of his own pocket to build a wooden tower behind the Academy – a 10x10 room with a telephone and wood stove, and glass windows providing 360 degree views of town - manning it with his wife and children ages 12, 9, and 6. Soon curiosity got the better of the townspeople and the number of watchers, two at a time, grew to 200. Planes spotted would be called in to Mitchell Field with information on their direction and bearing.

Similarly, when Connecticut winters proved too much for existing local plowing efforts, George Keith took the initiative to go to Vermont...and returned with "the Monster" – a massive snowplow attached to a front-end loader, to which he added auxiliary fuel tanks so as not to have to refuel while clearing roads in Warren and surrounding towns. The plow – which garnered a fair share of publicity – was housed at one of the commercial garages on Keith's property.



Like others in Warren, Keith was concerned about the town's future. He helped bring many new families to town (among them the Allmands, Youngs, and Scofields), selling smaller lots on Keith Road, White Oak Lane, and Laurel Mountain Road – a part of town that became known as Keithville. Keith also worked to enhance the community in Warren, helping to establish the Volunteer Fire Department, turning what was effectively a bucket brigade into an organized, modernized fire service. Keith and Sons also helped in the construction of the 1949 Town Hall (the current Community Center) and the Warren School.



George Keith and his family were also involved in some of the area's more unusual occurrences. When a Navy plane crashed in town in 1960, it was temporarily stored in the Keith Garage...as was sensitive equipment prior to its installation at the Cold War radar station on Above All Road. And when the West Cornwall covered bridge was threatened by ice jams and state officials didn't respond to the town's appeals for help, Keith & Sons dynamited the jams without injury to person or property, saving an iconic landmark.



But for all its involvement in key moments in Warren's history, the Keith Family will also be remembered for their strong support for family – their own, and those of others – and their ties to the woodlands where they built forts, climbed trees, and caught frogs. And now that land – which Joyce Keith inherited from her husband Eddie, George Keith's youngest son – will be shared with the community, who will explore it and make their own memories there.

The Warren Conservator



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www.warrenlandtrust.org



Earth Day Town Clean-Up Challenge!

Let's make 2022's Earth Day Town Clean-Up the best one yet! As the snow has melted, revealing a winter's worth of roadside trash, we are challenging our community to join us in covering every road in town. To sweeten the deal, WLT, Warren Parks & Rec, and the Warren General Store are rewarding helpers with a surprise token of appreciation!

Stop by the sign up table in front of the Warren General Store on Saturday 4/23 between 10am and 1pm. Select your route, grab trash bags and gloves, and go pick up some trash! There will be a dumpster available at the Town Garage so you can drop off what you find. If you come across something too large, heavy, or *(continued below)*

Warren Land Trust Accepts Conservation Easement

In January, the Warren Land Trust was pleased to accept a conservation easement of 35 acres on Kent Road in Warren. The acreage, like all conservation easements, remains privately owned but will not be developed. Originally donated in 1981 by Myriam Hinrichs Sloane to the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), the property was converted to a conservation easement held by HVA. Above all a water quality- and watershed-protection agency, it has been HVA's longstanding policy to assign its conservation interests to local land trusts that are qualified to hold those interests in land, ensuring their protection in perpetuity.



The Sloane easement features abundant oak forest, along with black and paper birch. Its rocky ledges give way to a stream leading to a beaver pond. It also abuts the Kent Land Trust's East Kent Hamlet Preserve (the former Camp Francis Girl Scout Camp) and, along with other nearby conservation land and State Forest, creates a valuable wildlife connectivity corridor.

Interested in learning more about conservation easements?

Check out this resource from the Connecticut Land Conservation Council:

https://ctconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/Protect-the-Land-You-Love_FINAL-web.pdf.

Or contact us at info@warrenlandtrust.org

Earth Day Town Clean-Up Challenge! Continued

messy to handle yourself, email us at info@warrenlandtrust.org, and we'll take care of it. And if you want to participate, but won't be available on 4/23, a DIY clean-up is always an option! Let us know in advance where you want to work, or check in after the 23rd to see if any areas weren't covered.

Earth Day is an annual reminder to appreciate and care for the one beautiful planet we've got, so let's make it a great one!

Welcome to the WLT Board of Directors, Deirdre McDonald!

If you ski at Mohawk, hike local trails, or cycle our town's hilly roadways, you might have come across our newest board member, Deirdre McDonald. Deirdre – along with her teenage son and her irrepressible dog Archie – was drawn several years ago to Warren's natural beauty and ample opportunities for outdoor recreation.

As Executive Vice President of Global Industry and Government Relations at Sony Music Entertainment, Deirdre helps plan and implement strategic initiatives globally in the areas of legislation, regulation and public policy. In that capacity, she acts as Sony's liaison to legislative bodies, governmental agencies and music industry trade organizations. Needless to say, her legal expertise, strategic mindset, and communications skills will serve her (and WLT!) well as a member of the land trust's Governance & Nominating and Outreach & Development Committees. Above all, however, we appreciate the enthusiasm and dedication she brings to our land conservation work. Welcome, Deirdre!

