

The Warren Conservator

Spring 2011



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Agriculture in Warren: Past, Current and Future

The Town of Warren has a long history of engagement in agriculture, and looking back one can see how the ways of the past are now being used today. There is a resurgence of smaller farms looking to grow products that are fresh and local. Agriculture in our town has ranged from harvesting woodlands to make charcoal during the revolutionary war, to the long and colorful history of our dairy farms, to the culturing of grapes for the production of wine.

Many of the farms in years past were diversified and produced different products which the farmers used for their families. Excess was sold or traded locally. The farms were complete systems; they were nearly self-sustainable. The animals ate in the pasture while they fertilized the fields. Out of necessity there was an



Christmas trees growing at the Angevine tree farm

understanding and respect for the basic principles of agriculture. As time progressed farmers began to use fertilizers and other petroleum-based products. Today we are starting to realize how these techniques are not sustainable. As a result the farming community is moving towards providing

fruits, berries, meats, vegetables and other sustainable agricultural products that are healthier for you, as well as for the farmer. This shift is accomplished by learning from our past, farming with an open mind and not being afraid to try new techniques.

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Land Trust Auctions Off Kayak at Warren Fall Festival

Attendees of the Warren Fall Festival would have noticed something new as they stopped by the Land Trust booth this past October. In addition to our ever-popular bird-houses, logo t-shirts and baseball caps, the nose of a bright-red, brand-new Perception Prodigy kayak poked prominently out from the roof of the booth. Land Trust supporters (and kayaking enthusiasts) could - for a mere five dollars - buy a chance to win this terrific prize. The sunny and crisp fall weather brought a fine crowd out to the Festival, and raffle ticket sales were brisk. A small crowd gathered when the time came to draw the winner, generating some real suspense. In the end, the lucky winning ticket-holder was Marc Dickstein of Hardscrabble Road. Dr. Dickstein, his wife Deborah and their three children were absolutely thrilled, and look forward to taking the kayak out on Lake Waramaug as soon as the weather warms up. The kayak was



Our booth at the 2011 Warren Fall Festival. From left to right are board members Ted Morse, Jack Baker, May Hill, David Scofield and Tom Sarsfield.

donated with assistance from Clarke Outdoors in West Cornwall, so all proceeds - close to \$800 - went to the Land Trust's conservation efforts. We raised an additional \$239 from donations and other merchandise sales. Those of us staffing the Land Trust booth over the course of the Festival really enjoyed the raffle and the excitement it generated, so keep your eye out for another kayak at our booth in October 2011!

Accreditation Process Update

As we reported in the Fall 2010 issue, the Warren Land Trust is in the process of seeking accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission ("LTAC"). Accreditation will demonstrate to the public and our peers that our organization meets the highest standards in land conservation. Upon accreditation, we will join a small and prestigious group; thus far only two land trusts in Connecticut have been accredited.

As a first step of this process, we thoroughly reviewed the "Land Trust Standards and Practices" established by the LTAC. These are rigorous guidelines directed to both Organization Strength (including mission, compliance with laws, and board accountability) and Land Transactions (such as, evaluating and selecting projects, ensuring sound transactions, and stewardship). On December 18, 2010, the Warren Land Trust voted unanimously to adopt these Standards and Practices.

We have now initiated a comparative assessment of our current policies and procedures with the adopted Standards

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From The President's Desk

At the conclusion of 2010, the Land Trust experienced the velocity and enthusiasm for exciting and positive growth in 2011. I assured our supporters and readers that I would try to keep you informed of our activities and am pleased to tender this letter.



We had the pleasure of visiting with Bill Arnold and Connie Mannes of the Kent Land Trust in January and, under the leadership of Dan Hulsberg, we are commencing on the long and challenging road toward formal Accreditation with the National Land Trust Alliance. Dan will have a more detailed article in the *Conservator* outlining our goals and tests. Our Board feels a particular responsibility to our mission, donors, members, and citizens of the town of Warren to defend the conservation of this special area. We are sensitive to the fact that we pursue thoughtful, contextually appropriate enforcement to ensure conservation objectives over the long term. Accordingly, we need community support for monitoring and implementing our work. Please contact any of our Board members for information as this process continues.

Many neighboring Land Trusts have incorporated farmlands into their protection and we are examining the possibilities of working with local owners to create agreements that would be mutually beneficial to the owners and the Land Trust. Members of our board have also been in contact with the Connecticut Farmland Trust to discuss potential opportunities for cooperation.

Board members Laura Moore Brown, Barbara Page and Rebecca Neary are working in concert to update our database that will enhance communication for informational materials, fund raising, and methods of donation. All of this should be finalized in the next three months and we hope that this streamlined system will ensure that communication will flow more easily.

Tom Sarsfield has done splendid work in continuing to upgrade the quality and information of our website. In this information-age revolution, it is a continuous challenge and you will notice some positive changes every few months.

Finally, under Barbara Page's leadership, the financial stability of the Land Trust remains strong. It should be mentioned, however, that we will need to raise substantial funds to support organizational assessments necessary to complete our move toward accreditation. We are enthusiastic about the success of 2010 and - we think - realistic about the many opportunities and challenges we face in 2011. Please accept my sincere thanks for your spirited support of this worthwhile endeavor.

Ted Morse
President

Dorothy Maier and the Founding of the Warren Land Trust

This article inaugurates a series on the Warren Land Trust leadership and membership. It is adapted from a longer piece incorporating much interesting information about the Land Trust's history. We encourage you to read the unabridged version on our website: www.warrenlandtrust.org.

The Warren Land Trust owes its founding to outrage generated by Iroquois Energy's plan to build a natural gas pipeline across Litchfield County, its 100 foot right-of-way to cut through the heart of Warren. The fight against the pipeline went on until 1989 when massive grass roots opposition led Iroquois to establish a route further south. That battle won, Warren resident Nancy Binns, together with Dorothy Maier and other leaders in "Fight the Pipe" felt it important to form a land trust to ensure that the rural character of Warren would have a permanent advocate. On August 17, 1989 an organizational meeting was held at Town Hall and a Board of Directors elected.

It was a natural that Dorothy would be an active participant. When she and her husband Samford (Sandy) Maier moved to Warren after his retirement in 1978, they immediately became involved in the community; they began the Prime-Timers, Sandy was long-time treasurer of Warren, and both volunteered with the Fire Department as EMTs. Dorothy relates that in the middle of the land trust's organizational meeting she had an ambulance call and returned to find she had been elected president. Nancy Binns was VP, Blake Levitt, Secretary and Ben Hoffman, Treasurer.

The WLT had an immediate infusion of funds no longer needed by Concerned Citizens against the Pipeline, as well as donations from individuals and

a foundation. Possible gifts of land included 17 acres at Sunset Ponds. We were off to a good start with Dorothy to keep us in touch and in line. At first, the board met every few months with, as Dorothy puts it, "the elves at 23 Cornwall Road" sending out notices, always with her hand written admonition, "We must have a quorum!"

In our second year the WLT received its first donations of land, and soon had more than \$15,000 in the general fund. There was some turnover in board membership, and Dorothy herself wanted to step down as President before the October annual meeting that year, but her resignation - needless to say - was not accepted. The author took on the position of Secretary at this



point. Dorothy pointed out to the new Secretary her egregious spelling errors in the typed minutes, and thus began the Secretary's practice of mailing Dorothy a copy for her corrections before sending the minutes out. Not much gets past Dorothy.

Board members have also enjoyed our first president's keen sense of humor. For example, when the February 1995 meeting had to be cancelled because of an unexpected Town Meeting, Dorothy sent out a notice to all directors listing pending business with a handwritten addendum: "First one who calls with any complaint or correction will be the next President!!"

Dorothy's antenna was constantly tuned to possible gifts of land or conservation easements. During her tenure, these came to include the Cashion, Brush, Eel Pond and Skidmore Preserves, among others. In addition, the "elves at 23 Cornwall Road" annually sent out fund drive letters that drew an impressive response. By October 1996 the WLT had more than \$50,000 in the general fund, nearly half of it due to Dorothy's friendship with the executor of the Reichart Foundation, which gave an annual donation. In 2001 the WLT received a state grant of \$25,000 towards the purchase of 40 acres of pristine woodland with the WLT contributing \$29,000. The same year a gift of \$125,000 from adjacent landowners enabled us to acquire 32 acres from the estate of Nancy Kennedy.

In 2002 Sandy Maier became ill; Dorothy was coping with that as well as Land Trust meetings. She sent an urgent notice to board members in November "We must have a quorum!! This meeting will have a significant impact on the future of the Land

Trust!!!" At the annual meeting Dorothy announced that Graham Brush, Jr. - a generous land donor and longtime board member - had died.

In 2003 Tom Paul joined the board and was elected Vice President; Dorothy now had a firm back-up and talked of resigning. At the next year's annual meeting Dorothy at last had her resignation accepted (reluctantly) and Tom Paul became President, with Ann Martindale as Vice-President. The Board honored Dorothy by naming the 32 acres on Sackett Hill Road the Dorothy Maier Preserve.

The WLT benefited in the next few years by the infusion of younger and computer savvy board members including Carolyn Brau (who took over as Secretary in 2007), Tim Angevine, Barbara Page (elected Treasurer), Ted Morse (elected President in 2009), Daniel Hulseberg and Tom Sarsfield. Of the original board members only May Hill and Dorothy remain. Sandy Maier died in 2006, but Dorothy, as always, continues to play a vital role on the WLT Board of Directors, and will celebrate her 89th birthday November 21st this year. She has missed only one meeting in 22 years--without her, the WLT might not exist.

May Hill

**The WLT currently holds over 542 acres under permanent protection.
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. Simply cut off the bottom of this page and send it to our mailing address below, along with your check. We will send you a receipt along with our thanks for your generous, 100% tax deductible contribution. Please include your name and address and choose the type of membership you would like:

___ Family Membership \$20

___ Land Protector \$100

___ Land Caretaker \$300

___ Land Conservator \$500

___ Land Steward \$1,000

___ Land Grantor \$2,500

Please make checks payable to: The Warren Land Trust, Inc.

MAIL THIS FORM AND CHECK TO: The Warren Land Trust, Inc. 140 Town Hill Road, Warren, CT 06754

Please make any necessary corrections to your name and address on the mailing panel and submit to the WLT.

Town Clean-Up and Swap Meet in Commemoration of Earth Day

Help keep our town clean and beautiful! Once again this year, the Warren Department of Parks and Recreation will sponsor a Town Clean-Up Day and Swap Meet in honor of Earth Day. Events will be held on Saturday, April 30th (with a rain date of May 1st), from 9AM to 1PM. Come to the parking lot between the old Town Hall and the Firehouse, where you can choose or be assigned an area of town for clean-up and receive trash collection bags. Don't forget your gloves and sturdy shoes.

If the Town Clean-Up Day is a way to keep Warren tidy, the Swap Meet can have the same effect on your attic or garage. Any item you would like to give away or

swap can be brought to the parking lot. Once there, you can sign up for a table to display your items and take an opportunity to see what others have brought that you may want to exchange. It's a great way to reuse and recycle!



Litter on Melius Road

Update on the Accreditation Process (Con't.)

and Practices. This assessment will enable us to benchmark our existing practices and records, and to develop a workplan to address any identified gaps for accreditation. In support of these efforts, the Warren Land Trust has decided to enlist the guidance and services of Manes Consulting L.L.C., which has assisted a number of land trusts throughout Connecticut with similar objectives.

Although the accreditation process is very complex, we are extremely pleased and appreciative to have received the support and wisdom of the Kent Land Trust, which was accredited in August 2010. On January 28, our president Ted Morse and representatives of our Accreditation Committee, including committee chair Dan Hulseberg, met with Kent Land Trust Treasurer Bill

Arnold and Executive Director Connie Manes. At that meeting, Mr. Arnold and Ms. Manes generously shared many insights and recommendations gleaned from their own experiences.

We are very excited about the accreditation process and prospects. We recognize it will be a time consuming and labor intensive effort, but certainly worth the investment. However, we also recognize the accreditation process will incur a significant increase in expenses, including application fees, property surveys, baseline studies, and dedicated funds for property maintenance and easement stewardship. We will be undertaking special fundraising efforts in the coming year to defray costs and appreciate in advance any support you can provide; stay tuned as our plans continue to develop. Dan Hulseberg

Agriculture in Warren: Past, Current and Future (Con't.)

The farming heritage and landscapes in Warren are part of what makes our town what it is today. The people in town recognize this, and came together to create the 'Town Plan of Development and Conservation.' As that document shows, townspeople made it clear that Open Space and Farmland Preservation are among our top priorities. The Warren Land Trust is hoping to use that initiative to encourage action. We are currently looking at various strategies to best use the available resources to work with the farming community to preserve farmland in Warren.

If you are interested and would like to be involved, please contact any Warren Land Trust board member, or the author at timothyangevine@hotmail.com. Also consider contacting any of your town Selectmen and attending town and selectmen's meetings. Don't forget the most important way to preserve our farms and farmland is through community support.

Timothy Angevine

**140 Town Hill Road
Warren, CT 06754**

Email: info@warrenlandtrust.org



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**We're on the web:
www.warrenlandtrust.org**

**Warren Land Trust
Mission Statement**

The Warren Land Trust is an advocacy group 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.

SPOTLIGHT ON LAND TRUST HOLDINGS

The Douglas Preserve

Tucked deep in the woods between Melius Road and the junction of Cornwall Road and Route 341 is the Land Trust's Douglas Preserve. Obtained by the Land Trust in 1986 and donated by Muriel and James Douglas, the land was once part of a larger tract managed by the Nature Conservancy, whose signs can still be spotted on the property. This 17.02-acre parcel is adjacent to, and can only be accessed from, our Melius Road Preserve, which will be profiled in a future issue of the Conservator.

The Douglas Preserve remains in its natural state, as was stipulated by the terms of its donation, and seemed untouched by human activity at the time of our last inspection. The preserve is a diverse natural habitat. Its majority – some 60% of the land - consists of bog or wetlands, which collect and drain into a 3-foot wide stream. Another 30% of the preserve is forested, dry land and 10% is made up of steep cliffs with rock outcroppings. Combined with our Melius Road property, the secluded Douglas Preserve maintains a quiet woodland area near the center of Warren.



**Tax Incentives for Conservation
Easements Renewed**

At the end of 2010, Congress renewed a tax incentive for landowners who protect their land with a voluntary conservation agreement. Conservation-minded landowners now have until December 31, 2011 to avail themselves of a significant tax deduction for donating a voluntary conservation easement to permanently protect important natural or historic resources on their land. When landowners donate a conservation easement to the Warren Land Trust, they maintain ownership and management of their land and can sell or pass the land on to their heirs, while foregoing future development rights.

The renewed conservation tax incentive applies to a landowner's federal income tax in the following ways:

- it raises the deduction a donor can take for donating a voluntary conservation agreement from 30% of their income in any year to 50%

- it allows farmers to deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income

- it increases the number of years over which a donor can take deductions from 6 to 16 years

Preserving Warren's open space and agricultural lands by means of conservation easements has always been part of the Land Trust's mission. We are ready to help landowners who wish to protect our town's landscape while availing themselves of this valuable tax incentive. For more information, see our website, www.warrenlandtrust.org, and click on "Preservation Strategies," or contact any member of our board of directors.