



THE Spruce

NEWSLETTER

October 2005

P.O. Box 2276 ■ Huntington Station ■ Shelton, Connecticut 06484

Grant Funds Spur Nichodale Work

The roar of diesel engines, the grinding of gears, and the cracking, snapping, and crushing of branches, vines, and roots (almost all, invasive plant species) were some of the unusual sounds emanating in recent weeks from the usually tranquil, and bucolic Nichodale Preserve. The heavy equipment, and increased activity were brought about as a result of Grant Funding provided by the Iroquois Gas Transmission Company, and the USDA NRCS (United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service).

The Trust had applied for, and received earlier this year, monetary grants from Iroquois in the amount of \$10,000, the focus of which, is to assist in the preservation and enhancement of open space and the development



Gerry R. from G.R. Services operates an ASV mower, clearing away much of the unwanted brush and invasive vegetation

of recreation in the communities along the gas pipeline route. The Grant received from USDA-

NRCS is a 10-year cost-share contract, for the purpose of helping to increase wild-

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Gift Memberships

Is there a special occasion coming up? Need a unique gift for someone that "Has Everything?" SLCT is now offering \$30 gift memberships that can be purchased on behalf of that special someone, for holidays, birthdays, or any occasion.

Upon receiving your gift request, we'll immediately mail-out a "Welcome Aboard" kit that includes an official Land Trust membership card, a Land Trust T-shirt (sizes are L and XL), and the latest editions of the Trust's brochure, and newsletter. Also, the "New" member will

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Nichodale... *Continued*

life habitat.

The Trust has wasted no time putting this money to good use and thus, the increased level of activity at Nicholdale. The funding has enabled the Trust to significantly clear the overgrown fields and begin a long-term commitment of maintaining over 20 acres of open-field habitat.

From the contractor's perspective, the best time to accomplish the initial clearing work was early spring, but due to the heavy snow cover, the earliest start date fell just before the growing season. That presented other complications, not for the contractors, but for the native wildlife, because

that time period coincides with their nesting season. So, it was decided to wait until mid-August before doing any clearing to allow nesting species a chance to do their thing.

By September the operation was in full swing in as Ron's Tree Service moved in with their heavy equipment, the most impressive piece of which, was the hydro ax. The machine has a hydraulic shear that was quickly put to good use clipping large clumps of autumn olive, and in short order, transforming them into a pile of woodchips.

Now that the major clearing has been done, there is still plenty of work left for volunteers, but at least it is now manageable thanks

to the large equipment. This project remains a work in progress. We still have a lot of work to do so if you

Gifts... *Continued*

be eligible for addition to the Trust's e-mail notification list, enabling him or her to keep up with the latest developments, activities, and events. Just provide us with the proper e-mail address.

So, to really surprise and delight your conservation-minded loved one, consider a Land Trust gift membership, you'll not only be giving them a great gift, but you'll also help support our environmental and conservation ef-

Shelton Day 2005

and of course, membership forms.

Six visitors signed up as new Land Trust

See Shelton Day—Pg. 3

Sunday, October 2, dawned sunny, bright, and warm – in short, a perfect day to celebrate Shelton Day 2005. And, that sunny disposition was more than matched by the faces and demeanor of the hundreds of Shelton residents and out-of-town visitors that paraded up and down Howe Avenue, visiting the many booths and displays along the way.

One of those booths, of course was the Land Trust's, staffed by dedicated volunteers in one or two hour shifts throughout the day. They handed out 200 Trust brochures to the many visitors, that stopped by, along with other information about the Trust and its activities, as well as hand-outs on such things as Shelton hiking trails, Connecticut native plants, invasive plant species,



Trust members (L-R) Bob Liddel, Bob Carreau, and Lise Olson take their turn staffing SLCT's Booth at this year's Shelton Day festivities. Note the new Land Trust T-Shirt displayed at the right. The shirts are available to members for \$15. Available sizes are Large and Extra Large.

Vandalism Woes

Vandalism woes continue to plague Trust efforts to preserve and maintain “islands” of natural habitat within the city of Shelton.

In one of the latest incidents, a group of unsupervised and misguided young teenagers set fire to a sofa that was carried onto one of the Trust’s parcels off Tahmore Dr. Damage was done to part of the trail and a wooden bridge built by an Eagle Scout a couple of years ago. A plaque on the bridge was destroyed, and vulgar graffiti was spray-painted on it. There was also some indications of drug use in that same area.



The incident has been reported to police, and an investigation is in progress. Reports on these activities were forwarded to the Trust by vigilant neighbors, and friends of the Land Trust.

Although the Land Trust has an established “Land Ranger” program, it is entirely staffed by volunteers that do their best to periodically supervise their assigned parcel of land, but it is a near impossible task for one individual to maintain a “watchful eye” on a day-to-day basis. For that reason, the Land Trust is appealing to you, and all of our Shelton neighbors, to please report any unusual or illegal activities that might occur on Land Trust property.

Late Word:

As this issue was going to press, the Trust was notified that the police had visited the suspects, and shortly thereafter, the burned sofa was removed, and the bridge repainted.

Shelton Day... Continued

members, some of whom purchased either a Trust T-Shirt (See photo with Gift Membership article), or hat, or both. A number of visitors also participated in the Trust’s raffle, which was won by Mark Brown. The Trust’s officers sincerely thank all the volunteers that helped to make the day a success.

Calling All Volunteers

We are looking for anyone interested in helping with our stewardship efforts at Nicholdale and other parcels. We are looking for people to help with educational outreach, hands-on management of invasive species, fund-raising, grant-writing, news article writing, coordinating volunteers and work parties. We are also looking for reliable Trust Land Rangers to periodically supervise and report on assigned parcels of open space maintained by the Land Trust.

Scouting Activities

Under the guidance of SLCT’s Scout Representative Bob Wnek, the Trust offers a great campsite to all scouts. Located on the Nicholdale Preserve, the camp is used by various troops throughout the community. Scouts also help the trust with the stewardship and other projects on our parcels. Currently AJ Keegan a scout from Troop 28 is working on a section of trail improvements including a bridge crossing.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT DEDUCTIONS UNDER ATTACK:

Join the Fight to Stop the Proposals

By the Land Trust Alliance

On January 27, 2005, a report released by the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation shocked the land trust community by proposing major decreases in the federal tax deductions for conservation easements and bargain sales. *The proposal, if adopted, would end the work of land trusts as we know it.*

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) is engaged in a vigorous response, working with a coalition of national conservation leaders and allies. But to succeed, we need the help of every friend, staff member and board member.

The New Tax Proposals

The Joint Committee has proposed that *deductions for conservation easements be limited to 33% of appraised value. No deduction will be allowed for the donation of an easement on land used for a personal residence.*

The Committee also proposes changing the deductions associated with donations or bargain sales of land by limiting such donations to the owner's "basis"—that is, the cost of the land plus any capital improvements made over the years.

The Impact on Land Trusts

If enacted, these proposals would severely set back our conservation work. Saving land is often the primary motivation for donating a conservation easement, but we know that tax deductions enable many more people to donate.

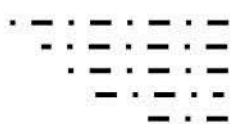
Please Help Today

You must act today, because our organization depends on the tax incentives the Joint Committee on taxation has attacked. Letters to our US Senators and Representative asking them to help in fighting these proposals are essential. Our local opinion does count. Draft letters and more information—including how to email or write our elected officials are on the LTA Web Site at www.lta.org.

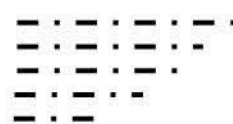
You can also make a gift to the Land Trust Alliance to turn back these harmful changes in tax law and instead maintain momentum on positive reforms for land trusts.

Land Trust Alliance
1331 H Street NW Ste 400
Washington, DC 20005-4734

For more information, go to
<http://www.lta.org/publicpolicy/ppc.htm>.



E-MAIL ALERT



To be better informed about Land Trust activities, and local conservation issues, why not join the Trust's E-mail Alert list. To be added, simply send an E-mail to jbanks@snet.net.

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