



# Wilton Land Conservation Trust

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Thomas J. Walker, Jr.  
Stephen H. White

Anthony P. Grassi  
*Trustee Emeritus*

## 2010 Annual Report

**Who We Are:** The Wilton Land Conservation Trust has been working to protect open space in the Town for 46 years. Its mission remains to promote the preservation of the natural resources of the Town. The mission is consistent with the recently updated Town Plan of Conservation and Development which emphasizes the value to citizens of open space. The Land Trust is a private, nonprofit trust whose members support its efforts through donations and field work. The Land Trust now owns or holds conservation easements on 107 properties totaling more than 770 acres. We are grateful to our more than 450 members, listed herein, for their continuing financial support. We are pleased to report highlights of our activities over the past year. Common themes include engaging young people in our work and reaching out to other organizations whose missions we share.

**Youth:** For the past two years we have worked closely with the Wilton Youth Council's Project 2012 team consisting of Wilton High School students who will graduate in 2012. In spring 2009 three work teams helped clear an overgrown meadow in the Harrison Smith Preserve near Ridgefield Road, working with Trustees, parents and neighbors. They also planted a tree in memory of classmate Nicholas Parisot. Last spring, working with Trustee David Lynch and parents, a Project 2012 team cleared trails and rebuilt a footbridge in the Gregg and Belknap Preserves and opened up a wall in the Stephenson Preserve. All three preserves are in the Mayapple, Seeley and Honey Hill Road area.

We are supporting two Eagle Scout candidates in major projects. One is a footbridge in Land Trust property off of Vista Road. Another is construction of a kiosk with trail map at the main entrance to the Harrison Smith Preserve. Earlier, separate teams of WHS girls and Cub Scouts have worked in Schenck's Island Park where the Land Trust is restoring a meadow. All of these young people are learning new skills in their stewardship work as well as gaining greater appreciation for Wilton open space. Please see the enclosed pictures of teenagers at work.

The Land Trust gave the annual E. Dan Cappel Senior Scholarship Award of \$1,000 to Terrence Reedy at last May's WHS awards assembly. He is studying finance and environmental science at Bryant University. The Junior Book Award was given to Gabriel Rosen.

**Outreach:** The Land Trust participated in a number of environmental organization events last spring, including the Norwalk/Wilton Tree Festival in Cranbury Park and the Wilton Go Green Festival in Wilton Center. This fall we participated in the "10-10-10" walk from Allen's Meadow to the Wilton Library where we had an exhibit. Our displays in these venues generate interest in open space and our activities in acquiring and maintaining properties. More recently, we participated in a meeting of the Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership whose members are area land trusts and town conservation commissions and whose focus is sharing best practices. The Land Trust monitors progress in the potential Norwalk River Valley Trail involving Wilton and a number of other towns in the river corridor. And we

have welcomed occasional work parties from the Norwalk River Watershed Association.

**Protection and Stewardship:** In December 2009, the Town of Wilton granted to the Land Trust a conservation restriction on 4.5 acres abutting Erdmann Lane and Whipple Road in south Wilton. While the property includes a playing field, much of it remains in its natural state of woods with pedestrian and equestrian trails. The restriction allows the Town to build one more playing field, but this is considered unlikely. The Land Trust worked closely with neighbors who sought protection of this property in a residential area.

Acquisition of new properties is only one measure of the Land Trust's progress. We have undertaken substantial maintenance projects including fending off black swallow wort in the Slaughter Fields, removing Japanese stilt grass, tear thumb vines, Canada thistle, mugwort and other invasives in our meadow restoration project in Schenck's Island Park, and eradicating purple loosestrife in Keeler Ridge Meadow. Mowing and other regular maintenance continues in these and other preserves.

Meadow restoration on seven acres of Schenck's Island Park remains our signature project because it is extraordinarily ambitious and because it is in the center of town. In addition to removing invasives, we are mowing once a year. The meadow and our Wheeler Preserve at the south end of the "island" hosted another Impact Day work team from Deloitte & Touche in June.

**Management:** We are in our 10<sup>th</sup> year as a membership organization. Our 2009-2010 campaign netted 399 renewed and new members, an increase of 13% over the year-earlier campaign. Importantly, 46 are new members. Trustees Tom Walker and Frank Mabley managed the appeal.

Trustees Bruce Beebe, Nancy Faesy, Craig Johnson, Frank Mabley and Jim Snedeker were elected to terms ending in 2014 at the annual meeting held last February. Officers elected by the Trustees at its October 2010 meeting were: Bruce Beebe, President, Bob Russell, Vice President, and Nancy Faesy, Secretary. Long-serving Trustee Charlie Flynn retired from the Board earlier in the year. His many years of service, especially his seminal work in organizing the Land Trust's meadow restoration project in Schenck's Island Park, were recognized at the meeting.

Trustee Joe Philbrick has created an open space map of the Town, including Land Trust properties, Town parks, reservoirs and other open space. A large version is used for our event displays. Smaller versions are available by request to our web site, [www.wiltonlandtrust.org](http://www.wiltonlandtrust.org). While visiting the web site note the handsome bird photographs by Trustee Tom Walker.

We continue to fund Wilton Library purchases of books on land conservation and ecology.

**Officers and Trustees, 2010**

Bruce E. Beebe, President	Thomas Burgess	Frank Mabley	James P. Snedeker
Robert H. Russell, Vice President	Jay M. Dulberg	David Michael	Thomas J. Walker, Jr.
Dawn Bennett Ladenheim, Treasurer	Elizabeth Fink	Teresa Mucci	Stephen H. White
Nancy Faesy, Secretary	Nicholas F. Lee	Joseph Philbrick	
	David L. Lynch	Thomas M. Sinchak	Anthony P. Grassi, Emeritus