

“ We choose to support the Wilton Land Conservation Trust for the many ways they preserve and maintain the land. They also work to educate residents about the importance of caring for our woodlands and meadows and to understand threats to our local environment, such as invasive plants.

~ Tina and Woodson Duncan

# WILTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

Protecting Wilton's Natural, Scenic,  
and Historical Landscapes

## STAY CONNECTED

WWW.WILTONLANDTRUST.ORG

P.O. BOX 77

WILTON, CT 06897

(800) 983-3552

INQUIRY@WILTONLANDTRUST.ORG

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## WILTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

2021 ANNUAL REPORT





# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

STEPHEN H. WHITE



Our properties experienced a considerable increase in foot traffic during the year, and our membership numbers have continued to climb. Wilton residents went from being locked in their homes to discovering their back yards and the variety of open spaces the town of Wilton affords them. Among them were the many properties of the Wilton Land Conservation Trust.

While invasive species continue to threaten people’s back yards and the Land Trust’s properties, we can all affect change by making some seemingly small steps that will help curb these menacing plants that plague so much of our town. To help, we’re taking steps to improve the ecosystems of our town, and we are actively managing for invasive species across our properties. We’re incorporating education about the invasive species plaguing our environment into our communications, events, and stewardship activities. We expect to continue this approach and build upon it in the future.

It is a time of renewal at the WLCT, and I want you to know that your Land Trust is hard at work. We are building a more vibrant organization that is fully engaged with our community. We are building a stronger and more diverse board. With our newfound energy, we’re improving Wilton’s open spaces, enriching the community with programs, and inviting people who want to get involved with this critical work to join us.

Thank you for sustaining this one-of-a-kind community.

Sincerely,  
**Stephen H. White**  
*President*

## OUR MISSION

*The Wilton Land Conservation Trust protects Wilton’s unique natural, scenic, and historical landscapes through conservation and stewardship. The WLCT is a community-focused land trust dedicated to preserving land for open space, protecting biodiversity, and promoting environmental awareness and education.*

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

David E. McCarthy

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Stephen H. White

### VICE PRESIDENT

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### VICE PRESIDENT

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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DAVID E. MCCARTHY

## THE WILTON COMMUNITY CARES ABOUT NATURE



Last June, I joined the Wilton Land Conservation Trust as its Executive Director with one primary goal in mind: to build a stronger, more diverse, and inclusive community centered around nature. Thanks to you, it’s happening! With over 100 new members, we, the WLCT community, are the future I envisioned just one year ago.

Over the past year, we’ve developed and hosted more events than ever to bring families together, outdoors and enjoying nature. We made history at 183 and established an American chestnut tree orchard. We built new partnerships to bring communities together and increase opportunities for people to enjoy nature. Ever so, I am most proud of our Stewardship Sunday Series because it brings our community together like nothing we’ve ever done before.

I am deeply grateful for the support, time, energy, and enthusiasm of our members and volunteers. Thank you for taking the time to get to know your neighbors, your environment, and your land trust. I am honored to have such a dedicated membership. Conservation takes a village; together, we will improve our environment, conserve more open space, and enrich the Wilton community. We can’t do what we do without you; thank you!

It’s been an absolute delight getting to know you, our friends, members, volunteers, and community. I had so much fun working with you on our preserves, hiking with you on our trails, learning about turtles with you at “183”, painting with you at Slaughter Field, and listening to stories with you and your families at our book reading events. Thank you for spending your valuable time with us, supporting our community, and caring about Wilton’s environment. Most of all, thank you for making my job great!

Sincerely,  
**David McCarthy**  
*Executive Director*



*The WLCT proudly partners with the Pollinator Pathway of Wilton. Together, we’re happy to share a native flower to plant in your garden that attracts and feeds birds and butterflies.*



*The Trumpet Honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens) is a hummingbird magnet!*



*This non-invasive vine not only provides nectar but also gives hummingbirds a dense vine-y place to build their nest and raise a family.*



# WE ARE WILTON'S LAND TRUST



Living in Wilton means you are bound to drive past an open meadow, live near a preserved forest, fish in a protected stream, or hike on a conserved trail. We are Wilton's land trust, and we are all about those spaces. We are dedicated to building a community that's centered around nature while protecting, enhancing, and conserving open space in Wilton.

## WLCT AND CONSERVATION ACROSS THE U.S.A

Land is conserved by Federal, State, and local governments. Private nonprofit organizations called land trusts also preserve land. A 2015 national census conducted by the Land Trust Alliance revealed that land trusts across the nation had conserved 56 million acres, an area double the size of all the land in national parks across the lower 48 states.

The WLCT and land trusts across the nation are collectively responsible for managing twice as much land as the National Park Service. However, unlike land managed by the government, land trusts, like the WLCT, depend on membership contributions, gifts, volunteers, and grants to carry out our work.

## GET TO KNOW US BETTER

The WLCT is a community-focused nonprofit organization that conserves land, protects biodiversity, enhances ecosystems, and builds community. The organization comprises of a group of volunteers known as the Board of Trustees and an Executive Director, the only paid staff. We are not a municipal government body or Commission. Closely tied to our community, we are a nonprofit founded in 1964 by a group of Wilton residents concerned with losing the spaces they once walked, hiked, and cherished.

Today, we're doing much more than managing our expansive portfolio of 840+ acres. We've evolved into a dynamic, inclusive, and educational organization: one with the Wilton community at its core. We're working to build a stronger, inclusive, diverse, and inspired community that's centered around nature. We are developing and implementing a strategic plan that creates more recreational opportunities, conserves more open space, improves the environment, and connects more families with nature.

### LAND CONSERVATION IN WILTON

We conserve land in many ways, and Wilton residents play a significant role. The WLCT works with landowners to develop conservation goals and make arrangements to bequeath, donate, or place a conservation easement on their land. When we work together to preserve land, it's preserved forever, and the process can bring various tax benefits to those who donate land.

### ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION IN WILTON

We care deeply about the condition of Wilton's environment. The WLCT enhances ecosystems by integrating the latest science and best practices into our land management plans, stewardship work, restoration projects, and educational community programs. Every year, we work toward a conservation and land management strategy that protects, maintains, and improves the lands we all love and cherish.

### COMMUNITY BUILDING IN WILTON

The WLCT recognizes the connections between community and conservation, and we're eager to enhance the two across Wilton. We're committed to building a stronger community around nature by offering more opportunities to our friends, members, and the greater Wilton community.

photo by Doug Bogan



## STEWARDSHIP: VOLUNTEERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Thanks to our volunteers, partners, and generous community, we're able to maintain our trail networks and enhance wildlife habitat.*

### OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL MAINTENANCE

We know that the best way to experience nature is to get out there and enjoy it. That's why we emphasize visitor safety and experience. To ensure that our visitors experience nature safely and with minimal disruption to the natural environment, we follow an ecologically-based mowing regimen at our meadows that promotes native flowers and grasses and minimizes disturbances to the birds, bees, and other wildlife.

We are consistently working to reduce erosion and off-trail soil compaction by protecting wetlands and streams with boardwalks and bridges. With new walkways and signage, our preserves are more accessible than ever and can be enjoyed more safely by our community.

### HABITAT RESTORATION AND MAINTENANCE

The WLCT manages a diverse portfolio of habitats, landscapes, and biomes found across the many ecosystems we protect. We foster healthy native flora and fauna habitats by keeping our management plans, stewardship work, restoration projects, and community education up to date with the latest science.

We're actively removing invasive species from our woodlands and planting native species to restore ecosystems, enhance habitat, and support the abundance of native wildlife. Wilton residents play a significant role in the quality of Wilton's open spaces, too. The WLCT depends on its volunteers to keep its preserves healthy and accessible.

### STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY PROGRAM

By combining education and environmental management, Stewardship Sundays — led by WLCT's youth interns — is an opportunity for people of all ages to get out there, improve the environment, meet like-minded folk, and take home some skills to apply in their yard and garden. All are welcome, come and join us!



### HENDERSON POND

The WLCT and our neighbors around the Henderson Pond have come together to revitalize the pond and restore its surrounding upland habitat. The pond abuts WLCT's Keelers Meadow: a 5-acre native wildflower and pollinator preserve.

Over time, the pond has lost its depth due to sedimentation. Shallower waters have initiated a cycle that can lead to pond death: warmer waters >> more alga >> less oxygen >> plants and aquatic life suffer and then slowly die out. Together with our six neighbors, we are working on a plan to revitalize the pond, improve buffer zones, and enhance wildlife habitat in and around this shared natural resource.

### JOIN US:



*Meet your community, improve our environment, and take home some hard skills.*

### GET INVOLVED WITH THE WLCT

The environment needs your help. Consider donating your time, skills, passion, and philanthropy by becoming a member and joining one of our volunteer teams. Volunteers join us on workdays, become members of WLCT working committees, pitch projects, create partnerships, and much more.

Are you interested in supporting stewardship work in our community? Consider joining one of our volunteer teams. Please subscribe to our eNewsletter, follow us on social media, and email us to learn more: [inquiry@wiltonlandtrust.org](mailto:inquiry@wiltonlandtrust.org).



# PARTNERING FOR A STRONGER COMMUNITY: CENTERED AROUND NATURE

A firm believer in the power of partnerships, the WLCT works with local organizations to create and enhance educational opportunities in Wilton. We've listened to the needs of our community and connected with a broad range of partners to put together new, exciting, and unique community programs.

### TREKKING TOGETHER

The WLCT continues to explore new grounds with the Woodcock Nature Center with two-hour spring and fall guided hikes. Together, we're connecting more families with nature.



### STEWARDSHIP AND PATRIOTISM

The WLCT and the Daughters of the Revolution continue to partner on stewardship workdays that improve the resting grounds of Revolutionary War patriots at the Comstock Hill Cemetery. Together, we are improving the environment and maintaining trails.



### EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

This year, Matthew Dooley designed and built four boardwalk sections along the Nick Parisot Memorial Trail as an Eagle Scout project. Thank You, Matthew Dooley, The Dooley Family, and Troop 20, for the beautiful gift!

### CREATE AND CONNECT: A PAINTING WORKSHOP

The WLCT partnered with Wilton Go Green and artist Karen Siegel for our first painting workshop. Participants were guided through painting a watercolor landscape while immersed in one of the most beautiful meadows in all of Connecticut: WLCT's Slaughter Field.



### TURTLE TIME

The WLCT partnered with TheTurtleRoom for a truly immersive and educational experience for kids and families to learn about turtles and tortoises.



### BOOKS AND A BLANKET: A CHILDREN'S BOOK READING SERIES

The WLCT and Tutor Chest created three new, unique, and immersive book reading experiences. Families relaxed in nature and enjoyed a relaxing story, arts and crafts, and a short nature walk.

### MIDDLEBROOK SCHOOL: TOWN WALKING TRIP 2021

It was a delight participating in Middlebrook School's 6th Grade Town Trip. David McCarthy, WLCT's Executive Director, connected with middle schoolers on Schenk's Island to talk about nature, the environment, and historical land use.

# BUILDING COMMUNITY AROUND NATURE: MADE POSSIBLE BY YOUR MEMBERSHIP

### CONSERVATION TAKES A VILLAGE

The WLCT strives to build a stronger, diverse, and inclusive community centered around nature. Together, we can enrich our community, advance conservation efforts, and enhance the forests and meadows we call home. Join the WLCT community, become a Member today!

### PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WILTON'S YOUTH

Inspiring the next generation is part of the WLCT's mission. The WLCT provides professional internship opportunities for Wilton's youth to broaden their understanding of conservation science, support land management, run workshops for the greater Wilton community, and steward our open spaces.

*We're not only investing  
in our environment but  
in our community and  
its youth.*

*~ David McCarthy,  
Executive Director*

## 2021 INTERNS & FIELD RANGERS



the Wilton Varsity Field Hockey team, Indoor Track team, and wants to study Environmental Engineering in college.



the summer of 2021.

**Julia Elmasry** is a senior at Wilton High School. She's lived in Wilton her whole life, and connected with the WLCT to learn more about her community and the environment. She's on the Wilton Varsity Field Hockey team, Indoor Track team, and wants to study Environmental Engineering in college.



tained clear and safe trail networks for our visitors. He was an instrumental force within the WLCT, and he will take all of his experience with him to UMaine.



to provide a fun and enriching volunteer experience for the Wilton community.

**Eli Grass** served as WLCT's Field Ranger and Open Space steward - a paid position - from March through August. In his role, he led workshops, ran workdays, trained interns, and maintained clear and safe trail networks for our visitors. He was an instrumental force within the WLCT, and he will take all of his experience with him to UMaine.

**Gavin Fusco** is a senior at Wilton High School. He's interested in STEM-related subjects and hopes to find innovative ways to solve real-world problems. From volunteer to paid staff, Gavin hopes

### RECOGNIZING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

#### JUNIOR BOOK AWARD

The WLCT gives a Junior Book Award to a rising senior that demonstrates outstanding environmental leadership and a commitment to their community. David McCarthy, Executive Director of the WLCT, presented Julia Elmasry with WLCT's 2021 Junior Book Award.



#### E. DAN CAPPEL AWARD

The WLCT E. Dan Cappel Senior Scholarship Award is given to a senior in honor of E. Dan Cappel, an incredible and memorable Wilton High School science teacher who was instrumental in protecting the environment in the face of Route Seven's proposed reroute through Wilton. The recipient of this award demonstrates the willingness to preserve Wilton's biodiversity. David McCarthy, Executive Director of the WLCT, presented Eli Grass with WLCT's E. Dan Cappel Senior Scholarship Award of \$1,500.

WE'RE NOT JUST  
A LAND TRUST:  
WE'RE A COMMUNITY



photo by Doug Bogan

## 183 RIDGEFIELD ROAD: TOGETHER, WE CONSERVED ONE OF THE LAST FAMILY FARMS IN WILTON

### HISTORY

In March of 2020, the 13-acre 183 Ridgefield Road Preserve "183" was forever conserved as an open space with the support of our friends, members, and a State of CT OSHA grant. The purchase of 183 has helped re-energize our organization with new members, new volunteers, and renewed interest. Since its acquisition, the WLCT has been hard at work refining and implementing its vision for the preserve. All the while, we are maintaining and enhancing its native grass and wildflower meadow.

### MASTER PLAN

The preserve will have a park-like atmosphere. Visitors will experience a 360 panoramic view of the natural landscape that preserves the agrarian history of the property, inspires art, and charms hikers. Trails and informational kiosks will provide passive and active recreation and education. We will site an open space for outdoor educational lectures and events for the community to enjoy. 183 will be our home, and we are eager to have you over.

photo by Doug Bogan



### RAISING THE DANIEL OFFUTT BARN

Last June, the Daniel Offutt Estate donated a small antique barn to the WLCT with funding to relocate and rebuild it. Presently, we've erected the antique post and beam frame. Soon, the barn will reemerge to reclaim its place in local history as the Daniel Offutt Barn at the 183 Ridgefield Road nature preserve.

The antique barn complements the property's agrarian past and will be used as storage. In the future, the WLCT will seek approval to use the barn for small educational programs centered around nature and agriculture.



### AMERICAN CHESTNUT TREE PLANTING

On Saturday, May 22, 2021, history was made at 183. In partnership with the American Chestnut Foundation, with our passionate volunteers and support from Ring's End, we established a germplasm conservation orchard (GCO) to help restore the American chestnut tree from the brink of extinction.

The orchard functions to cross-breed American chestnut trees and increase their resistance against the chestnut blight. With the community, we planted ten trees, and we will do so each spring until we reach our goal of 100. As the trees grow and mature, they will produce nuts to seed future orchards. The hope is to cultivate a blight-resistant tree to reforest its original habitat from Maine to the southern Appalachians.

## WLCT ANNUAL MEETINGS: LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR LAND TRUST

WLCT ANNUAL MEETINGS ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR LAND TRUST, MEET FELLOW NATURE-MINDED COMMUNITY MEMBERS, AND ENJOY A FEATURED GUEST SPEAKER.

### 2021

At the 56th Annual Meeting of the WLCT, we celebrated a year to remember, remotely, with our friends and members. Attendees heard from our new President, Stephen H. White, got to know our new slate of officers and received a State of the Land Trust address by David E. McCarthy, Executive Director.

### 2022

You are cordially invited to the 57th Annual Meeting of the WLCT, where we will hear from our President, Treasurer, Committees, and Executive Director. The meeting will be held remotely, via zoom, on Wednesday, February 23th, at 7:00 pm.

The highlight of the evening is our guest speaker, Dr. Mark C. Urban. He is an international award-winning scientist, the Arden chair and professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at UConn, a global expert on climate change impacts on nature, and an author of over 70 scientific articles.

The WLCT welcomes all to attend. Please RSVP at [wiltonlandtrust.org](http://wiltonlandtrust.org); We hope you'll join us.

## BECOME A MEMBER: SUPPORT CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY IN WILTON

### WLCT MEMBERS CARE ABOUT WILTON'S ENVIRONMENT

Our members are concerned with the quality of Wilton's natural ecosystems, and they chose to do something about it. They know that we can accomplish more together than apart and that the best way to experience nature is to get out and enjoy it! There are many reasons why our members choose to support the WLCT, and we are grateful for their support.

### SUBSCRIBE TO OUR SUSTAINED GIVING CAMPAIGN BY CHECKING THE MONTHLY BOX WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP GIFT

*Being part of a community only starts with where you live, it continues with getting involved. WLCT contributes to the core of our town and being involved with this organization is wonderfully fulfilling.*

~ Mike Conway

*Conservation activities organized by the WLCT have been a great opportunity to teach my children to appreciate nature and value community service. I'm grateful for the efforts of the WLCT in preserving open spaces in our town and for strengthening our community through stewardship and social events.*

~ Justin Phillips



### JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

There are many ways you can help the Wilton Land Conservation Trust with its mission, and it all starts with membership. 100% of our operational funding comes from our generous members. Become a part of something truly great by joining or renewing your membership with the WLCT. Members receive news updates, invitations to special events, and quarterly eNewsletters.



PLANNED GIVING:  
CREATE YOUR CONSERVATION LEGACY TODAY

PROTECT THE FORESTS AND MEADOWS YOU LOVE BY  
INCLUDING THE WILTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST  
IN YOUR ESTATE PLANS.

PRESERVE YOUR LAND FOREVER

Want to see the land you care about turned into protected and preserved open space? Then consider donating or bequeathing your land to be preserved forever.

The WLCT works with landowners to consider the potential qualifications of their land, achieve the donor’s conservation goals, and turn your property into a special place to be enjoyed in perpetuity.

ALTERNATIVE GIVING

You can create your lasting conservation legacy by naming the Wilton Land Conservation Trust as a beneficiary in your will or living trust, life insurance, or retirement accounts. Including the WLCT in your estate planning is an honorable way to preserve Wilton’s rural character and ensure that open space exists for generations to come.

DESIGN YOUR CONSERVATION LEGACY

There are many ways you can support the WLCT in addition to membership contributions: land donations, conservation easements, memorial gifts, tribute gifts, and alternative giving. The WLCT is eager to work with you to support your conservation goals and create your lasting legacy. Learn about the possible tax benefits for Wilton residents, and start designing your conservation legacy today: david@wiltonlandtrust.org, (800) 983-3552.

When people ask us if we like living in Wilton, we tell them we do because of Wilton’s ongoing efforts to conserve open space and preserve its history. The WLCT is vital to these efforts.

~ Jen and Maurizio Morello

MEMBERSHIP 2020 - 2021

Hero - \$10,000 +

Mark and Linda Rubinstein

Leader - \$5,000 - \$9,999

Craig Johnson and Kimberley Young  
Jennifer Morello  
Robert and Kathryn Sollmann  
Ginny and Roger Valkenburgh

Benefactor - \$2,500 - \$4,999

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Peter Brooks  
Woodson and Christina Duncan  
Paul and Carol Evanson Family Foundation  
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Chris and Catherine Stroup

Conservationist - \$1,000 - \$2,499

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\*MATCHING GIFT

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Barbara Valk  
The van Heyst Family  
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Sustainer - \$100 - \$249

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Member - \$50 - \$99

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Carol Kane  
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Mr and Mrs James Lillis  
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Sophie and Vincent L Marshall  
Robin McCorry  
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Kitsey Snow and Tim Nuland  
Del Overby  
The Paturynski Family

Alison and Chris Perry  
John and Frida Piazza  
The Prior Family  
Prudential \*  
Betsy and Bill Raftery  
Jennifer Ringelheim  
James and Vida Rothschild  
Barbara Sage  
Beth A. Schneider  
Mr. and Mrs. Schott  
Kit and Nancy Smith  
Carolyn and David Synder  
Sound Control Technologies \*  
Stop and Shop \*  
Lana Taubin  
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Taylor  
Ian Tesar  
Karen Thomas  
The Torpe Family  
Jimena A Vignola  
Michael Waskom  
Pat and Fred Wernig  
Sam and Allison Wiley  
Katrina Yao  
Elfriede Yoder  
Lisa and David Zappaterrini

Supporter - Up to \$49

Amazon-Smile \*  
Joshua Baron  
Candra Bohjalian  
Jean Boland  
Wessel and Susie Boshoff  
Madeleine Bourdeaux  
Toni Boucher  
Maria Buchanan  
Campbell Soup Co \*  
Mary Cavanagh  
David and Subha Clarke  
Frank and Barbara Dahm  
Chloé Davis  
Douglas Davison  
Linda Fairchild  
Eileen Foley  
Chunli He  
Joan Holmes  
Travis Hood  
Donald and Nancy Hulnick  
Jaimie Jacobson  
Penelope Koechl  
Cheryl Lallo  
Fran Lamster  
Emily Liebert  
Elizabeth Marcal  
Nicole Marino  
Linnea Martin  
Andrew McCulloch  
Kirk Minnis  
Ellen J. Raleigh  
Donald and Adrian Offinger  
Adriana Pagan  
Pitney Bowes \*  
Julie Ponticello  
Mary Preston  
Ellen and Quentin Moore  
Justin Ramsteck  
Cecile Roth  
Sara Sicono  
Ngan Smith  
Elliot and Janice Zelevansky  
Mary Zwecker

Solving the problems of global warming, disappearing natural habitats, and everything else that concerns so many of us today begins locally. The Wilton Land Conservation Trust has at its core the protection of “open space” in a town where we must maintain the balance between reasonable development and the preservation of the natural order.

~ Dr. Mark & Linda Rubinstein

\*MATCHING GIFT