

THE

Oak Leaf

A PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE OAK LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

SUMMER 2014

Candles and Brainstorms



Rotary Lodge in the daylight. Photo by Michael Struckus

White Oak held its first-ever candlelight brainstorming session on Thursday, June 12 at our Rotary Lodge building, located on our Potter Sanctuary property. Originally conceived as a more conventional meeting, the lack of power to the site ended up adding a very special ambiance, which included candles, a fire in the river-rock

fireplace, pizza, and other treats.

More than a dozen community members were welcomed to join with the White Oak Board of Directors to discuss questions about how to best utilize Potter Sanctuary and how to promote White Oak's mission. In his opening, Ralph Peck, White Oak's board president, also mentioned ways in which the community

could help White Oak, such as joining the Board of Directors, working as a volunteer property steward, or participating in our semi-regular work parties.

The group came up with a number of suggestions, including raising the organization's profile through social media, developing hikes and other programs for kids and their families, expanding our relationship with local Boy and Girl Scout troops, making Potter Sanctuary's two buildings available for rent by White Oak members, sponsoring nature camps, building a stroller/wheelchair-friendly trail, and allowing Frisbee golf on the property.

The evening concluded with many of the attendees stepping forward and offering to assist White Oak with our goals. The positive feedback from all who came convinced the White Oak board that this needs to be an annual event! We thank Tim and Kristin Baird, Nancy Wilson, Dick Harris, Laurie and Larry Altobelli, Jane Peck, Brad Bloget, Duncan Leith, Penny and Dick Callahan, Craig McColl, and Michael Struckus—along with his awesome dog, Jimmy—for participating in this fun and informative night. 🌿

“Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.”

—Henry James

A Happy Resolution

by
ANTHONY COSTELLO

Land trusts and developers will often compete for the same parcel of land. When a large piece of land comes up for sale, a land trust sees an opportunity to preserve valuable open space, but the developer sees an opportunity to build something of value to the community. Each argues for the benefits of their preference, but in reality neither choice is always the best, since so much depends on the characteristics of the local community.

White Oak members may remember that a few years ago the former Christmas tree farm on Salisbury Street came out of the temporary protection of Chapter 61 (classification as forest land), and the town assigned its right of first refusal—the option for a conservation organization to purchase the property before it goes to a developer—to White Oak. However, White Oak was not able to match the offer the developer had made, and in the end this opportunity proved more than White Oak could manage.



The land lay fallow for a while, and the Christmas trees grew too large for most homes. Meanwhile, Holden's planning board adopted a policy for cluster development, in which the developer trades freedom from some planning restrictions in return for preserving part of the land as open space.

Happily, the Lane Company took advantage of this policy, and the Christmas tree farm will become a cluster development with an open space extending from Salisbury Street to Autumn Circle to be managed by White Oak. We are grateful to Steven Lane for his far-sighted approach to development. 🌿

White Oak Helps Mayo Students Celebrate Earth Day

Board member Jennifer Leith, a beloved longtime teacher at Mayo School (now retired), went back to school this spring to help celebrate Earth Day.

Fourth- and fifth-grade students presented poems and words of wisdom from environmental leaders including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Chief Seattle. Jennifer inspired the group to think locally, showing the whole school a PowerPoint program she had developed featuring photographs of White

Oak's open spaces, followed by a sing-along of songs written by the students.

"It was great to be back at school, and wonderful to see how much the students care about the environment," Jennifer said. "It's a real treat to share my knowledge about White Oak, so hopefully students will want to visit the open space right here in their backyards."

The celebration concluded with many students taking the White Oak Ranger pledge, to preserve and protect the environment for the future of Holden and Planet Earth. 🌿



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White Oak is a member of the Land Trust Alliance and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

The Joys of Stewardship

Porcupine Hill/Potter Sanctuary (PH/PS) steward Michael Struckus walks the trails at PH/PS every day, along with his active dog, Jimmy. They monitor the trails and buildings at the properties and provide regular reports to White Oak's board on overall conditions. A longtime conservationist, hiker, and photographer, Michael has shared some of the photos he has from PH/PS. 🌿

A On the Newton Trail. Jimmy and a friend check trail conditions.

B Views from the trail.

C Potter Lodge, post-renovation.

D Jimmy reviews how far he's come.



Love to Go A-Wandering?

Once again, White Oak has benefited from our strong partnership with Greater Worcester Land Trust (GWLT) and Executive Director Colin Novick. Their regular trail work crew has completed a section of the Asnebumskit Trail that crosses over some of White Oak's Conservation Restriction land and our White property, tying White Oak into a lengthy system.

Visitors can easily access the trail via White Oak's new parking area at the

White property, located on South Road, where there is room for several cars. A sign is already in place, and soon a kiosk will also be installed, to provide additional information.

A reminder to hikers that portions of the trail are built on easements across private property, so trail users should not wander from the trail. We welcome shaggy, four-legged visitors as well, as long as they are on leash or under voice control. Happy hiking!



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LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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