

the OAK LEAF



a publication of the white oak land conservation society

Winter 2005-06

Muschopauge Brook Finally Protected!

After more than three years of effort on the part of many people, the wild forest surrounding Muschopauge Brook is now guaranteed to remain wild forever. Within the past few weeks, the last land transfer was accomplished, wrapping up a long project involving many partners – White Oak, The Trust for Public Land, the City of Worcester Water Department, the landowners, the state of Massachusetts, and the federal government. This is good news for water drinkers in Holden and Worcester, since the brook feeds directly into the Quinapoxet Reservoir, the most northerly one in the Worcester system (Holden now purchases much of its water from Worcester).



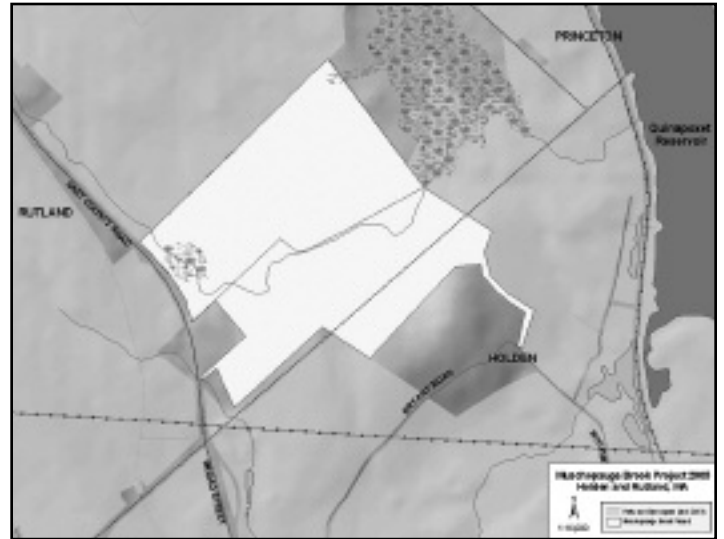
Judy Haran and Craig MacDonnell of TPL celebrate Muschopauge project success

The project was started early in 2002, when Jack Namiotka called us to see if we could help him and his wife Susan Hanson to sell development rights on their parcel in Jefferson to the city of Worcester. White Oak applied to the Forest Legacy Program of the US Forest Service for funds, but did not make the cut that year. In 2003 we began our partnership with the Trust for Public Land, a national conservation entity

with a Massachusetts office in Boston. We introduced them to the watershed protection team at the City of Worcester, where they were soon signing a contract to become the agent for land acquisition for the Worcester reservoir system.

Craig MacDonnell, who spearheaded the project, is familiar with Worcester County – he's already helped the Princeton Land Trust preserve land, and he's been working with Jim French on the Sterling airport project for over a year. Along with his assistant Chris Lapointe, he was able to find outside funds to supplement the money that Worcester had already set aside for land purchases. Approximately \$2,000,000 was needed for this project alone. In the end, Worcester provided \$1.1 million, the Forest Legacy Program provided \$400,000, and the state Dept. of Environmental Affairs came up with \$500,000 through their Drinking Water Protection grant program.

The land, which straddles the Holden/Rutland border, adds to existing protected land on three sides, thus ensuring habitat protection for resident wildlife and migratory waterfowl. Both of the parcels are heavily forested, contain lots of wetlands and beaver ponds, and are among the most remote places in the area, with no trails and very few human visitors. The newly-protected land abuts the large (and practically inaccessible) Holbrook Swamp. Moose live in the area, as do otters, fisher, fox, herons and several species of owls. Muschopauge Brook, which



New conservation lands on Holden/Rutland line

has its headwaters in the vicinity of Route 68 and Wachusett Street in Rutland, runs directly through the new preserve. The land acts as a filter for the water entering the reservoir, removing pollutants and other impurities, and thus preventing the need for further chemical treatment downstream.

Ninety-five of the protected acres will continue to be owned by Jack Namiotka and Susan Hanson, while the city of Worcester will own the development rights (which are, in effect, extinguished by this purchase). The other parcel, located entirely in Rutland, was sold by Clea Blair directly to the city. Also acquired this year for watershed protection were the development rights on a 75-acre wooded parcel on Tatnuck Brook, off Bailey Road, owned by the Prachniak family of Holden. The TPL/Worcester team is currently working on several other watershed projects in Holden, Princeton and Rutland. If you have land to sell that drains into the reservoir system, contact us at info@whiteoaktrust.org, and we'll pass it on to the TPL team.



Notes from the Fields – Help Wanted!!

The Stewardship Committee has had a busy year. We've located boundaries never seen before (at least, by us!) and were cheered to find fewer problems than before on one of our older parcels, the Zwiep parcel. We've found evidence of two encroachments. The serious one is on the Wilson CR on Sunnyside Avenue; land clearing by contractors, said to be for future playing fields, resulted in several tons of earth and boulders being dumped on this property, and some trees destroyed. The inadequate erosion controls, coupled with a very wet year, have sent a lot of silt down into the spring-fed brook, which feeds into Tannery Brook. As this issue goes to press contractors have just started removing some of the boulders and have started measures to ensure no further erosion will occur at this site.

The second evidence of encroachment is actually our own fault! The White Oak Trail



Dick Callahan reviews a property boundary with Anthony Costello

has inadvertently wandered over the edge of our land, into land owned by the state – fortunately, only by a foot or two. This will be corrected.

In 2006 we plan to put up markers at the corners and edges of our properties, as well as road signs to identify them. This should help prevent trail lapses in the future. We'll be looking for lots of help on this project.

The Committee still has two parcels which need to be walked, photographed, and written up before the snow flies – would you like to help? We'll happily train anyone who likes to get out in the woods and scramble through thickets. The Committee has its own Yahoo chat group, where stewards can share observations and questions, and help each other with those perplexing boundary conundrums!

For more information contact Anthony at 508-829-4829 or ajcjh@charter.net.

Nature Education: Still Going Strong

The two Manning Street young men who established White Oak in 1978 practically grew up in the woods in their northeast quadrant of Holden. Those friends, George Dresser and Huck Truesdell, never foresaw a time just a generation later when the woods would be off limits to most children, even in Holden.

The term Nature Deficit Disorder describes a new malady getting attention throughout the United States: the lack of learning and playing time in the woods. A new book on NDD, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv quotes a 9-year old who said, 'I like to play indoors 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are.'

Reasons for NDD are several and evident: suburban woods diminish due to development; after school activities occupy children; computer games and television are easy to reach; with both parents working, kids are under the care of sitters; and dangers lurk in the woods when kids are out of sight.

Nature education stands right beside land preservation as purposes for the establishment of White Oak. Evidently the need is greater now than when our charter was written. Our Nature Education Committee is ever on the lookout for ways to support Holden and WRSD teachers in getting kids together with nature. Here are results of some of our activities in the '04-'05 academic year.

- funding and volunteer staffing for Grade 7 science students of Jennifer Schmohl to do digital photography of trees behind their school as part of their biology curriculum at **Mountview School**
- funding for a program for **Mayo School** 4th graders on moths and butterflies, provided by a Broad Meadow Brook (Audubon) staff educator
- volunteer leadership of a childrens' activity (making pine cone bird feeders) at a **Davis Hill School** math and science evening program

- 7 outdoor study sessions at **Mayo School** where a volunteer joined teacher Jennifer Leith in taking her Grade 4 class of 25 kids into the 100-acre town forest behind the school
- attendance at the Massachusetts Environmental Education Society (MEES) daylong workshop at Holy Cross, which teems with great presentations from environmental organizations around New England.

Our nature education committee is open to new contacts and suggestions to expand our work. Call (508) 829-5739 to join us. Our White Oak Founding Fathers, George Dresser and Huck Truesdell, both went on to professional careers, in law and wildlife, natural outgrowths of their childhood time in the Holden woods. Proof enough of its value!

Committee members: **Kim Bent; Joanne Crystoff; Joyce Godfrey; Sandy Johnson; JoAnne O'Brien; Nancy Wilson; Molly Woodbury.**



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\$500+

Anonymous

SILVER OAK CIRCLE

\$250 – 500

Anonymous

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Judith Haran & Anthony Costello

Stephen & Valerie Loring

David & Kim Sabourin

Nancy Rocheleau

Virginia Ursin

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Jane and Russell Dye

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David & Faye Ellis

Myai & Patrick Emery-Le

Elinor Erickson

*We have tried very hard to make this list accurate; please accept our apology if your name is missing or misspelled.
This list includes only contributors for the 2005 year.*



White Oak Land Conservation Society 2005 Contributors

WHITE OAK SUPPORTERS

\$5 – 49

Timothy Ethier
Andrew Fagerquist
Robert & Nancy Ferguson
Rodney & Natalie Ferris
Maureen & Larry Floryan
Marilyn Franklin
Helene & Larry Freed
James M. French
Gary & Karen Gaskin
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Neil & Clare Wishart
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Marcia Zwiep

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Looking for Something to Do Outside of Holden?

Make winter in New England a time of wonder for yourself and your family by taking advantage of the natural history programs and outdoor experiences offered by other organizations in Massachusetts. We've listed a few that caught our eye below. Please contact the program sponsors directly for more information.

WINTER WONDERS WALK, *Garden in the Woods, Framingham*

Sunday, January 22, 1:30–3:30 p.m. **Family Program:** Children with Adult Companion

Come to the Garden in the Woods to see a puppet show about winter survival, to make a "track-finder," to walk through the wintry woods, and to enjoy hot drinks and a winter craft activity. We will hike down into the snowy woods, over an icy brook, and beside

a meadow looking for signs of winter residents and their activities. Learn how our foxes, rabbits, squirrels, turtles, frogs, trees, and wildflowers survive the long snowy months.

Fee: \$7 member/\$8 nonmember per person (for each adult and each child)

Limit: 24 participants. Register through their website www.newfs.org.

The Garden in the Woods offers a wide variety of programs all year long: check out their offerings at www.newfs.org.

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING AT NOTCHVIEW:

The Trustees of Reservations offers skiing on groomed trails at Notchview in Windsor (western Mass.): 30 km. of trails of all difficulties; 17 km. groomed and tracked; 8 km. skate groomed. Notchview has two trail shel-

ters plus the Budd Visitor Center. Choose between classical skiing and skating trails; snowshoe rentals also available. There's even a loop for skiing with your dog!

Fees: Members: free. Nonmembers: adults \$10, children \$3.

Notes: Call about lodging at one of the Hilltown Bed and Breakfast Inns or stay at TTOR's Field Farm Guest House. Call for updated ski conditions or check on the Web: www.xcskimass.com.

Telephone: 413-684-0148; **E-mail:** westregion@ttor.org; www.thetrustees.org.

HOLLY DAYS AT TOWER HILL BOTANIC GARDEN, BOYLSTON:

November 30th - December 30th. During the annual Holly Days celebration, Tower Hill is transformed: hundreds of trees and wreaths adorned with hand made ornaments, dazzling light displays, and entertainment each weekend turn the garden into a holiday fantasy for the whole family. The Orangerie blooms with bananas, passion flowers and palms. Make progress on your holiday gift list during special sales in the gift shop. Afterward, enjoy a delicious light lunch at Twigs Cafe. Closed December 24th and 25th. www.towerhillbg.org; (508) 869-6111

Admission-\$8.00 Adults, \$5.00 over 65 and under 18. Free to members and children under 6.

WHITE OAK RECEIVES \$5,000 GRANT

The Stoddard Charitable Trust of Worcester has generously awarded White Oak a grant of \$5,000 to be used towards the hiring of a part-time coordinator for the new **Wachusett Area Land Trusts Collaborative**. The Collaborative, which originally included Sterling and Grafton land trusts, now includes White Oak, Sterling Land Trust and Princeton Land Trust. It will be housed temporarily in Sterling in donated office space, until a permanent home can be found. Our new coordinator, Sharon Kneeland, will be onboard by the time you receive this newsletter. (Look for a profile of her in the next issue!) She'll be assisting all three land trusts with membership databases, mailings, events, newsletters, and coordination of volunteers, to ensure that all necessary tasks get done as efficiently as possible. Don't be surprised if you get a call from her soon if you've ever offered to volunteer for anything...



WHITE OAK LAND
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY

Address: P.O. Box 346, Holden, MA 01520

Telephone: 508-829-4829

Email: info@whiteoaktrust.org

Website: www.whiteoaktrust.org

Board of Directors:

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

USE YOUR JUNK TO SUPPORT LAND CONSERVATION!

You can now sell junk (or treasure) on ebay and earmark some or all of the proceeds as a donation to White Oak, as part of the ebay Giving Works program. Giving Works listings tend to sell at higher prices, because ebay buyers are more willing to purchase and/or pay more for items that benefit a nonprofit. ebay will send you a receipt for your donations, which are (of course) tax-deductible. If you're already a seller on ebay, just go to the "Sell Your Item" form; in the Pictures and Details section, look for the "Donate Percentage of Sale" line, and click on "Add". If you're not already an ebay seller, what are you waiting for? It's a great

way to get rid of all those unwanted Christmas presents, as well as old books, music, clothes, tools, and miscellaneous items that clutter up our lives. It's safe to say that there is nothing you can't sell on ebay. Except, of course, for prohibited items such as body parts and live animals (see ebay for details). The Giving Works program can be used in any ebay category except Real Estate or Mature Audiences. This writer recently sold a 1946 TWA airline ticket, some reel-to-reel tapes, and a stack of old magazines. Registration is easy and free. So, start your housecleaning as soon as possible, and help White Oak (or another charity) at the same time!



CARNIVAL CHILI



- 4 T. olive oil**
- 1 pound dry red kidney beans**
- 1 large onion and 2 cloves of garlic minced**
- 1/2 cup diced celery and 1 minced green pepper**
- 1 pound ground beef**
- 1 large can (28 ounces) tomato puree**
- 1 bay leaf, 2 t. cumin, 2 T. chili powder, 2 t. salt**

Soak beans overnight in water. Saute onion, garlic and celery in olive oil. Brown beef in the same olive oil. Drain soaked beans and add fresh water to cover them. Assemble these ingredients in a large pot with tomato puree, green pepper, bay leaf, cumin, chili powder and salt. Cook slowly until the beans have softened (about 3 hours). Add water as needed. Heating capacity is limited at Trout Brook; please have your chili as hot as possible if you're bringing it to Winter Carnival.

SAVE THE DATE: Winter Carnival Arrives February 12!

Come and join members and friends at the Trout Brook Conservation Area on Manning Street for a celebration of Winter. We'll have live music, hot chili, nature exhibits, tractor-drawn hayrides, guided nature walks, snowshoeing, skating, cross country skiing and special programs for children. The fun begins at 11 a.m. and wraps up around 3 p.m. Admission is free; there is a nominal charge for food and drink. It's a great event for families and a fun way to spend a winter Sunday afternoon!

Traditionally White Oak members and friends have brought steaming pots of chili to this event. We've included the recipe, on the left, to encourage you to participate in this event. (many of our cooks admit to using canned beans rather than dried beans and this is fine!) If you'd like to help out with the food for this event contact Jo-Anne Crystoff at jocrystoff@aol.com. We're also seeking donations of deserts, cookies, etc.

WINTER TRACKING DAY

Join us on Sunday, January 22nd for an afternoon of exploring animal tracks in the winter woods. The event will be led by Paul Wanta of The Tracking Way. Paul and Heather Lenz are co-founders of In This Place, a nonprofit organization in Wendell, MA that runs wilderness workshops for adolescents centered on nature awareness and creativity. During the



Beaver tracks in snow

afternoon, we will learn techniques for finding, identifying and aging tracks. We will also spend time looking for and recognizing animal sign (everything other than tracks) to help us figure out who we're sharing the woods with. Children over 5 welcome. Sponsored by the White Oak Nature Education Program. Contact us at info@whiteoaktrust.org to register. Limited to twelve participants.

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WHITE OAK LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY
POST OFFICE BOX 346
HOLDEN, MA 01520