

THE Oak Leaf

A PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE OAK LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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A Dog's-Eye View of Land Conservation

by
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I work as a gardener/landscaper, and between that and owning dogs for the past thirty-three years, I spend a lot of time outdoors. One of the best things I do with my dogs has been to walk on local trails. White Oak's trails are some of our favorites.

Open space conservation is important to me, especially when I see all of the subdivisions being built now in the northwest corners of Worcester and stretching into Holden. As a kid I spent lots of time in the woods, and I spent my summers at the Nature Training School in Holden. But the main reason I got involved with White Oak was because of Nancy Wilson, who was on the White Oak board for decades. Back in 2008 she wrote a letter to the Telegram about what is now White Oak's Porcupine Hill/Potter Sanctuary, but used to be known as Ecotarium land, and before that, the Nature Training School. My late father, Edward Struckus, was head of the Worcester Parks Department, so I grew up in the parks, getting to know the open areas of the city—and the headaches of maintaining them, as well!

My prior dogs, Gypsy, Strider, Bounder, and JJ, as well as my current dog, PJ, were or are all herding and agility dogs, who thrive in the woods, leaping through brambles, over downed branches, and onto boulders. These



Photo by Michael Struckus.

PJ on the trail at Holbrook Forest.

pups often like to splash in the water, too, though they're not great swimmers. They also are under perfect voice control and always come back when called, which is critical when you are walking a dog in the woods, though I always make sure to have a dog treat in my hand, just to sweeten the deal.

Our favorite walk has got to be at Porcupine Hill/Potter Sanctuary, on Route 31, near Paxton. There are miles of nice wooded

trails back there. In fact, we like it so much that PJ and I are the property stewards, reporting to the White Oak board of any problems we encounter. But we don't limit ourselves. We are out somewhere pretty much every day, rain or snow or shine. I also always carry a hand pruner to clip errant growth along the trail. Every little bit helps!

Continued on Page 3

“Autumn carries more gold in its pocket
than all the other seasons.” —Jim Bishop

White Oak's New Growth

Just like an actual, live white oak, our organization is vital and growing. We now own the open space at the new Oak Hill subdivision. We're planning—and already starting to build—new trails to ensure public access both for the subdivision's residents and other visitors to this property.

Our Holbrook Forest property may also be expanding. We have just begun fundraising efforts to purchase an additional 28 acres. This will help create a chain of open space through that section of Holden.

Last but certainly not least, Annette and Robert Loring have generously donated to White Oak a portion of their property on South Road. This new open space helps maintain the rural character of this street, where White Oak holds a number of Conservation Restrictions and owns the White property, with its parking area and trailhead for the Asnebumskit Trail. 🌿



Photo by Anthony Costello.

White Oak is working to maintain the front field at Henrickson.



Photo by Jackie Lynn.

Even standing dead trees help wildlife.



WHITE OAK

LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Free and Open to All!

Sunday, October 4

Join us on Sunday, October 4, when we have not one, but TWO fun events planned.

In the morning, from 10:00 to 11:00, we have planned a dedication and official opening of Holbrook Forest, our property off Fisher Road, in Holden. Come explore all or part of this property, which features several beautiful trails.

The afternoon brings a "Dog Day" at Potter Sanctuary, on Route 31 (Paxton Road) from 1:00 to 3:00. Leashed pooches are

welcome to bring their favorite humans (humans without canines are invited, too!) for doggie treats, hot dogs roasted over a campfire, trail walks, and tail wags.

Thursday, November 12

Thursday, November 12 is the date for our annual meeting! White Oak board member Dick Callahan will share some of his extensive knowledge on bees and pollinators, preceded by a brief "business" meeting, and concluding with refreshments. 🌿



Photo by Jackie Lynn.

A peek through the trees at Potter Lodge.

Welcome, New Neighbors!

Lilac Hedge Farm is now part of the open space landscape in Holden.

Farmers with local roots, Tom Corbett and Ryan MacKay, have just purchased the former Sandstrom's Dairy Farm and will be working on sustainably farming cattle, sheep, hogs, and poultry. White Oak is pleased to have additional partners in conservation in town!



Tamworth piglets mugging for the camera. Photo courtesy of Howland Homestead Farm (howlandhomesteadfarm.com)

A Dog's-Eye View of Land Conservation

Continued from front page

Recently, we ventured out to Kinneywoods, which is owned by the Greater Worcester Land Trust (GWLT), a partner conservation organization. White Oak holds a Conservation Restriction on that property. I cleared a bit of the trail there, and checked out the connecting spur to the George Dresser Trail, named for one of White Oak's and GWLT's founders. While we were there, PJ reveled in the pond, getting nice and muddy in the process, but returning clean.

We also explored one of White Oak's newest properties, Holbrook Forest. It's im-

pressive that folks with limited mobility can walk there for most of the way. I am excited to see what White Oak does with its official opening ceremony there this October, and I'm so glad I'm able to support the work of this organization.

White Oak would like to remind visitors that leashed or voice-controlled dogs are welcome at our properties with trails: Porcupine Hill/Potter Sanctuary, White Lot, North Street, and Holbrook. Maps of the trails are available in a photo album on our Facebook page. And please... scoop dog waste from the trails! 🌿



Photo by Michael Struckus.

PJ exploring at Crystal Pond at Kinneywoods.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



**SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 4
10-11 a.m.**

Dedication and official
opening of Holbrook Forest,
off Fisher Road

**FRESH AIR,
FRIENDS, AND FUN!**



**SUNDAY,
OCTOBER 4
1-3p.m.**

Dog Day at Potter Sanctuary
on Paxton Road (Rt. 31)

**PUPS,
PROVISIONS,
AND PARTY!**



**THURSDAY,
NOVEMBER 12
7p.m.**

Location TBD
White Oak's Annual Meeting

**ALL EVENTS
ARE FREE AND
OPEN TO ALL!**