



LYME LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

2011
ANNUAL REPORT

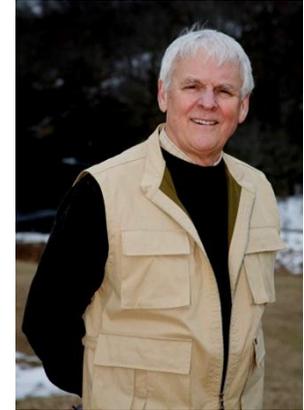




president's message

2011 was an eventful and successful year for Lyme Land Conservation Trust. Once again we are indebted to our hard working volunteer Board, scores of member-volunteers who help us in so many ways, and to our generous members and donors whose monetary support means so much.

True to our core mission to preserve land, we were able to protect another 90 acres this past year. In October, aided by Town Selectmen Parker Lord and Steven Mattson, State Representative Marilyn Giuliano cut the ribbon as we dedicated the new 40+ acre Chestnut Hill Preserve on Sterling Hill Road. A great deal of credit goes to our Stewardship Committee and the volunteers for creating a trail that links up with the trails in the Nehantic State Forest. It never would have happened without a state DEEP grant, a matching pledge from the HJ Promise Foundation and the support of many generous donors in Lyme. In late December, we gratefully accepted a conservation restriction donated by Mac Godley on 50+ acres located at the corner of Mount Archer and Tantumorantum Road. Our 65th easement!



The Land Trust Alliance, a national association of land trusts, honored Lyme Land Conservation Trust in their annual report citing our staunch defense of conservation easements.

I doubt those of us who were there will forget the Annual Meeting held June 19th, Father's Day, on the beautiful grounds of Director Andy Baxter's home. We honored some of our founders and Land Trust pioneers before watching a spectacular display of falconry.

This will be my last report as President. At the Executive Committee meeting in December, John Pritchard was nominated as President, and voted in at the January 3, 2012 Board Meeting.

Recently, the Board determined that the time had come to create the positions of Executive Director and Environmental Director to better manage our increased responsibilities. Both are part-time staff positions, non-voting officers of the Corporation, reporting to the Board of Directors through the President.

Recognizing the accomplishments of Project Manager Lisa Niccolai, the Board promoted her to Environmental Director. I agreed to serve as Executive Director. We bade a grateful farewell to Executive Assistant Linda Bireley who ended her staff relationship with the Trust.

As I look back over the nearly nine years I served on the Board, I am struck by the commitment people have to their Land Trust – members, volunteers and donors. Because of them, and people who have had the same commitment since 1966 when the Land Trust was founded, it is not hard to see why this town, Lyme, is so special.

January 2012



mission statement / imperatives

MISSION STATEMENT

Lyme Land Conservation Trust preserves the quality of life for Lyme residents by protecting the natural, scenic and historic land and water resources of the town, and by promoting public education and scientific study of these resources.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

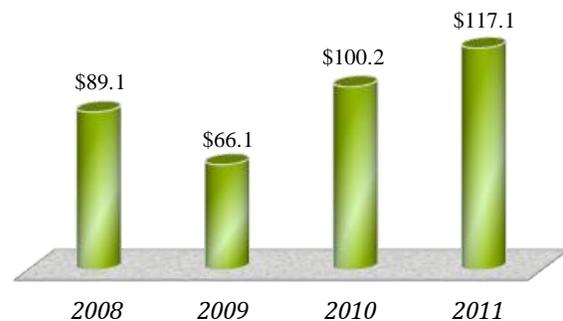
- I. Conserve environmentally sensitive land, historic landscapes and the aesthetic and cultural qualities of Lyme.
- II. Raise public awareness of Lyme's natural resources and heritage and the benefits of Trust activities. Continue to cultivate broad-based support within the community.
- III. Administer a systematic stewardship program to monitor, manage and protect land, and to defend in perpetuity the conservation objectives of Trust properties.
- IV. Carry out the work of the Land Trust in a fiscally and legally responsible manner.



2011 accomplishments

Looking over the past year, Lyme Land Conservation Trust reached significant milestones in each of our core functions: Preservation, Stewardship and Education. An innovative capital campaign, which will serve as a template for future fundraising, culminated in the protection of the Chestnut Hill Preserve. By dint of our stewardship monitoring program, all LLCT properties were inspected and, where necessary, remediation completed. Moreover, opportunities for member engagement increased through well-attended events, informative newsletters and a newly-refurbished website.

The **Communication, Education & Membership Committee (CEM)** acts as the principal liaison to our constituents. The **Communications** subcommittee is charged with promoting awareness of LLCT programs and general conservation issues. In 2011 members received two 12-page newsletters, and multiple postcard mailings and e-mail blasts announcing upcoming events. (Press releases and handbill posters offered additional coverage.) We also finished an overhaul of the website incorporating expanded content and user resources.



Land Trust Revenues

(in \$ thousands)

Excludes donations and grants for land acquisition

The **Events** subcommittee, despite historic weather disturbances, educated, entertained and enchanted members and guests with a full slate of activities. Jenny Dickson from DEEP taught us about bats and the conservation challenge they pose. The Photo Contest, mounted by Tony Sullivan, attracted 350 submissions from 85 photographers. Humphrey Tyler guided hikers through the Eno Preserve and Mt. Archer Woods, and conducted three Saturday walks along the Eightmile River. A new program, Singing Leaves, examined the nighttime sounds of crickets and katydids. Linda Bireley described forest regeneration on-site at the Jewett Preserve. Another trek featured Don Gerber and Evan Griswold discussing timber harvesting and forestry management. Many local painters joined us, together with the Lyme Art Association and the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, in a Paint-Out celebrating Grassy Hill Preserve. A reception honored the winners as their pictures hung in the museum. Lisa Niccolai drew hikers from 3 months old to 75 years with a scavenger hunt at the Beebe Preserve. Andy Baxter generously hosted the Annual Meeting highlighted by Brian Bradley and his “Skyhunters”. Susan Ballek helmed her customary Lord’s Cove kayak tour - always a treat. Lastly, a ribbon-cutting ceremony inaugurated the new Chestnut Hill Preserve.

The **Membership** subcommittee’s 2011 campaign generated 366 members, well short of expectations largely due to a concurrent appeal for the Chestnut Hill property. As a result, membership renewals were often indistinguishable from – or precluded by – acquisition-related donations. Although minimal leeway existed in timing these solicitations, the outcome showed the importance of coordinating our fundraising efforts.

The **Development Committee** directed a major fundraising drive supporting the Chestnut Hill acquisition. The Land Trust in 2010 obtained a DEEP grant for half the property’s purchase price; a private foundation later pledged the other half payable over three years. To bridge a gap in cash flows, we devised a strategy that



2011 accomplishments

raised funds for the closing which, upon receipt of the grant and pledge, were then recycled for stewardship and future acquisitions.

The **Finance Committee**, streamlining business processes and strengthening controls, completed several reengineering initiatives. Data security and accessibility improved following the introduction of electronic file retention. All financial documents are now scanned and stored in secure locations with redundant backups. To ensure chairpersons authorize their committee's expenditures, an invoice approval procedure was implemented. Most importantly, using three service providers we rationalized our bank and brokerage portfolio while adding online access to account balances and transactions.

The **Preservation Committee**, with generous support from the DEEP and the HJ Promise Foundation, purchased 40 acres of prime conservation land on Sterling Hill Road - the new "Chestnut Hill Preserve". This parcel lies adjacent to Nehantic State Forest and the Emerson and Newberg easements, encircled by permanent open space. In addition to preventing forest fragmentation and saving wildlife habitat, its protection safeguards Route 156's scenic view corridor. In the waning days of the year, we also received an easement from Mac Godley on 51 acres along Tantomorantum and Mt. Archer Roads.



The newly-acquired Chestnut Hill Preserve on Sterling Hill, with existing open space depicted in various shades of green

The **Stewardship Committee** monitors easements, responds to landowner inquiries, investigates violations, and upholds the terms of our 65 conservation easements and the care of 32 properties owned by the Trust. Given the scope and complexity of these responsibilities, over one-third of the operating budget is earmarked for stewardship. During 2011 we inspected all fee and easement properties, documenting matters for resolution. We installed and/or upgraded boundary markings on numerous parcels. Chestnut Hill, before its debut, needed signage and trails. New signs also grace the Beebe, Honey Hill, and Plimpton entrances. (Beebe, too, acquired parking space.) Stewardship administered a follow-up treatment of invasive *Phragmites* in Rams Horn Creek. Beginning in late summer, extraordinary weather necessitated extensive clearing on trails open to the public. Outside the woodlands, we supported enforcement actions and reviewed requests for construction in areas abutting easements. Volunteer stewards received a Stewardship Manual in conjunction with one-on-one training. We finalized management plans for The Hemlocks and Beebe plus baseline reports for Keeny Road/Crowley. And our remaining property records were uploaded to *ConservationTrack*[®], concluding a multi-year project.



2012 goals

The addition of an Executive Director should allow the Land Trust to fully realize its fundraising potential while, at the same time, shore up our membership base. This, in turn, will ensure we can effectively steward our properties and capitalize on forthcoming opportunities for open space protection.

Communications' publications for the coming year will include three 12-page newsletters, each underwritten by a select sponsor, as well as promotional material comprising postcards, e-mail blasts, press releases and handbill posters. To guide hikers through the newest Land Trust property, a Chestnut Hill map is underway.

The **Events** subcommittee has arranged a busy line-up commencing in January with a lecture by our very own Linda Krulikowski on "Getting to know your backyard snakes". Next, WTIC AM's Gary Ginsberg will explain "What's Toxic, What's Not", followed by Richard Potvin of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge discussing habitat management for the endangered New England cottontail. We expect to hike the Beebe Preserve, identifying trees and tracks, homes and scat; visit a fish ladder with Linda Bireley; and, in the Spring, paint with the artists of Lyme at the Clucas field on Brush Hill Road. Members will be invited to join Barbara David and her property manager on a walk through her woods. We've scheduled a CT Trail Days event; another kayak tour of Lord's Cove; a breakfast honoring stewards, land and easement donors, and volunteers - and a date with Theo the bat.

Membership's annual campaign constitutes a key component of our program for building and maximizing a sustainable revenue stream. Beyond financial considerations, membership numbers demonstrate support and approval within the community. The 2012 drive, reversing recent trends, is forecast to increase the member base back above 400. Further growth hinges on recruiting new residents and attracting those who have never enrolled.

The **Finance Committee**, by means of prudent fiscal management and creative development projects, will optimize, protect and expand the Land Trust's monetary assets. Periodically rebalancing our investment portfolio should marginally improve yields in the current interest rate environment. We, too, must continually seek internal efficiencies; for instance, by processing e-invoices rather than paper bills from vendors. A fundraising brochure, first envisioned last year, rounds out the committee's 2012 agenda.

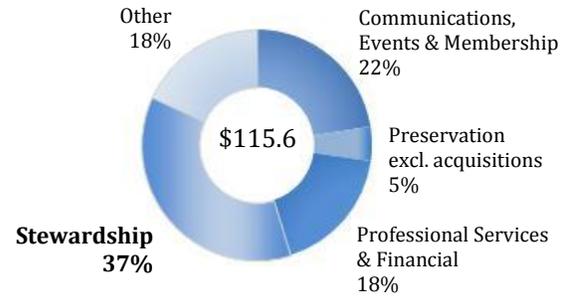
The **Preservation Committee**, again with help from grants and individual donations, will acquire one, if not two, major properties adjoining already conserved land, thus enlarging existing wildlife corridors. The committee is also in contact with other landowners from whom we may obtain, by gift or purchase, additional acreage in succeeding years. Early in 2012 we hope to close on an easement covering the balance of the Plimpton Preserve that permits a circular access trail through the property. There is likewise a possibility the Trust could receive easements on two smaller parcels.

The **Stewardship Committee** will renew its focus on protecting LLCT's properties and making certain that easements stand the test of time. Of our many priorities, completing the monitoring of all fee and easement properties remains paramount. When a deficiency or violation is detected, Stewardship must respond promptly



2012 goals

and proactively. We'll also continue upgrading signs and boundary markings and replacing deteriorated trail markers. Because documentation sustains an easement, both *ConservationTrack* and permanent land records require constant maintenance. An outside vendor, along with our Environmental Director, will supply missing baseline reports. And we anticipate formalizing Stewardship's policies and procedures.



Stewarding LLCT's 97 easement and fee-owned properties now represents the largest component of our cost base (in \$ thousands, 2011 data)