

WESTBROOK LAND CONSERVATION TRUST



Trout Lake Drive: A tidal impoundment adjacent to the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge with access from a town road. It has the potential for future regional educational opportunities. (photo: Kristin Elliott Leas)

The Lower Connecticut River and Coastal Region is one of the most fruitful and attractive ecosystems in the world. Ocean frontage, rich fresh water and saltwater wetlands, fertile farm fields, productive forests,, and cedar swamps exist here around the final watersheds of the Connecticut Rivers. Unlike nearly all the other major river mouths , the lower Connecticut River culminates in Long Island Sound through a largely unspoiled natural landscape that still retains most of its inherent integrity and its function as an intact ecosystem.

Westbrook, Connecticut is a historic town located near the mouth of the Connecticut River. Natural areas include saltwater frontage on the Sound, consisting of beaches, barrier islands, and river frontage at the confluence of the Menunketesuck and the Patchogue Rivers. Northern uplands consist of hardwood forests, farm land, and scattered residential development. In addition to natural features, Interstate 95, the Amtrak Northeastern Corridor, and the Boston Post Road (Route 1) run east and west through our town.

The Westbrook Land Conservation Trust was founded in 1968 as a nonprofit corporation whose mission is “the preservation of real property of the town of Westbrook for scientific, educational, and recreational conservation purposes.” Currently, the Trust owns 30 properties in fee totaling 140 acres, and an additional 51-acres in a conservation easement. The fee properties range in size from a 0.2-acre actively used open space preserve with a trail connecting a residential area to the local elementary school and town library, to a 41-acre preserve of upland forest that will act as a trail linkage between other properties preserved in Westbrook and Old Saybrook. The remainder of the fee owned parcels are managed in passive conservation open space, and include tidal and inland wetlands, streams, vernal pools, and upland forests. Through the protection of its owned and eased lands, the Trust helps to provide linkages in the Menunketesuck Greenway from the Weber Woods/Cockaponset State Forest to the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. The Trust is seeking members to assist with a number of projects, including the development of management plans for its protected parcels and preserves; construction of boundary and trail signage; improvement of educational and recreational opportunities and appropriate access on conservation lands, and the development of a strong stewardship program.



Ortner Drive: Existing stone drainage structures at a section of an abandoned road that bridges an inland wetland and that makes a wonderful trail. (photo: Kristin Elliott Leas)

For further information about volunteer opportunities, please contact us:

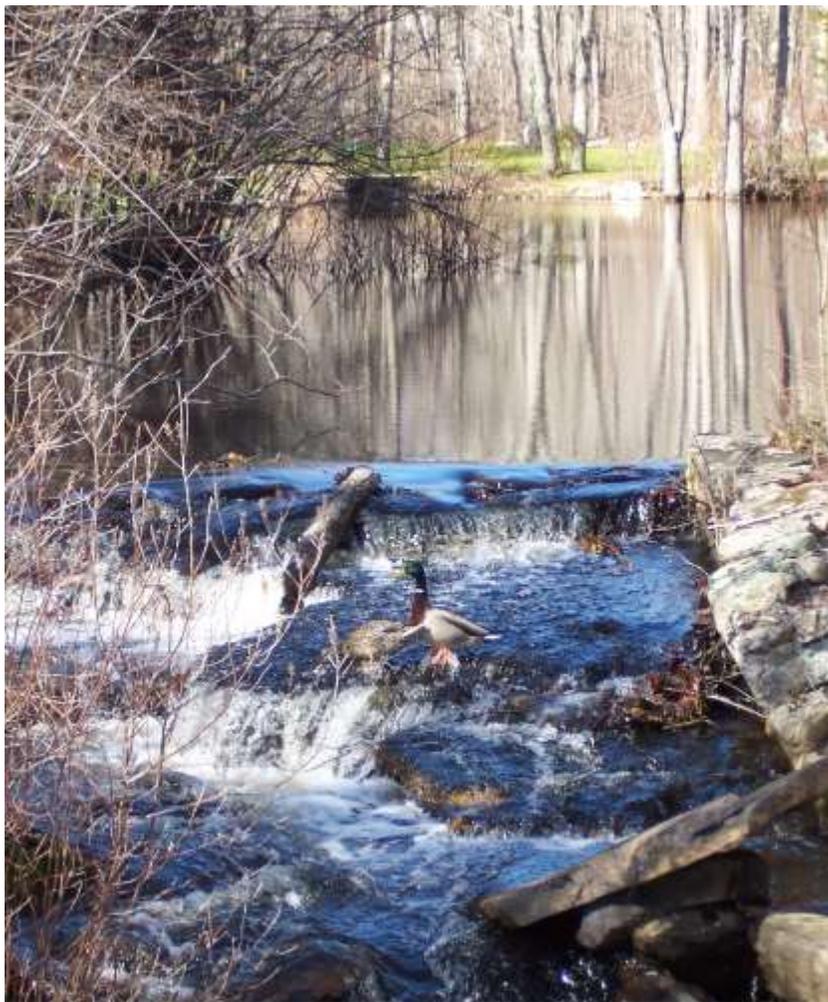


A Message For Property Owners

The landscape that we love and enjoy today is the result of the care and stewardship of landowners who went before us. Through the work of local land trusts, many families have created arrangements that not only express their care for the land, but also respond to financial factors. The Westbrook Land Conservation Trust stands ready to help property owners to define their wishes, explore practical options, and arrive at the most advantageous plan for the future. The American real estate and tax systems provide for a wide variety of conservation options that we can discuss with you; naturally, you will want to retain your own legal and financial counsel in these regards as your exploration and decision-making process continues. *If you are interested in conserving your land* we would look forward to an informal discussion with you at your convenience.

Gift of Conservation Easement

A conservation easement is an agreement where the landowner permanently gives up the right to develop all or a portion of a property. A qualified land trust holds the rights to enforce the terms of the easement, which is recorded on the land records and runs with the title to the land. The terms require future owners to conform to the conservation wishes of the donor. The landowner still owns the property, and can occupy, rent, bequeath, or sell it as desired.



Gift of Fee Simple Ownership

A landowner may make a gift outright of all or a portion of the title to their property to a conservation land trust in order to protect it in perpetuity (forever). As the owner of the property, the land trust then becomes responsible for stewarding the property and protecting its conservation and wildlife values.

Gift with Retained Life Estate

A landowner may give title to their property to a land trust, but retain the right to occupy the property for the term of their life, or the lives of a couple in the case of joint ownership. A conservation gift requires careful planning between the landowner and the land trust to ensure the most mutually beneficial course of action. Conservation arrangements may result in significant tax benefits for the landowner under relevant state and federal tax law.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Boone Circle dam and pond (photo: Kristen Elliott Leas)

