



Winter 2023

SHARON LAND TRUST

New Leadership for the Sharon Land Trust



We are thrilled to announce that Jennifer Dillon, a member of the Sharon Land Trust's board for three years, has been elected president. A Sharon resident, Jennifer earned her BA and MBA from Columbia University and has been employed by Goldman Sachs and the Asia Society. Most important, she is deeply committed to the town and to the SLT's goals of conserving and preserving our land to benefit both our natural landscape and our community. "My husband, Derek, and I bought our house in Sharon in 2000," she explains. "He and I grew up in Darien and Princeton, respectively, and Sharon reminded us of those areas before they became overwhelmed by suburban development. Because of that experience, I know change is inevitable—and we have all noticed increased demands on our land and infrastructure, especially since 2020. I believe there is a balance to be struck to manage development and preserve the character of the area. SLT's role in that complicated process is fairly simple:

We want to protect our open spaces, particularly the forest and farmland that surround the town. These spaces not only help define Sharon's landscape, but also they are critical ecologically and socially. It is wonderful to see local businesses thrive while the SLT has been able to acquire and safeguard land and provide more public access and trails than ever." She continues, "We owe a huge debt to Chris Clow and Roger Liddell for that. Chris has added significantly to the properties we own or hold easements on, while Roger has focused on land stewardship, building all of those amazing trails and managing invasive species. The board and staff have done a great job of raising SLT's profile, and I am really excited to continue that work. When I see the signs marking SLT's miles of public hiking trails and nature preserves, I'm filled with pride and a sense of community. Everything is maintained through donations of funds, lands, and volunteer hours—and there are so many ways for people to get involved." Please join us in welcoming Jennifer into her new role!

A Special Thank You to Christopher Clow & Roger Liddell



As a new president takes over the Board of Directors, we wish to express our gratitude for the hard work and dedication of Christopher Clow and Roger Liddell, who have been co-leading the organization for nearly four years.

Chris has been involved with the Trust for more than 20 years, serving on the board as well as in the positions of Treasurer and Vice President. During his six years as chair of the Acquisitions committee, Chris was instrumental in securing the protection of what are now the Benton Hill Preserve, the D'Alton Preserve, the Bucksbaum Preserve, and the VonAhn property—nearly 400 acres in total.

Roger has been involved with the Trust for 20 years, including as Co-Vice President. Roger chairs the Stewardship committee and has overseen a major shift in management strategy for our public preserves. Under his leadership, the SLT has increased the miles of trails open to the public and also focused our efforts on the control of invasive species.

Roger and Chris have a passion for Sharon which has fueled the organization and accelerated our outreach in the community. They both remain on the Board and will continue to chair their respective committees. We thank them both for so ably steering the SLT ship!

Sharon Land Trust
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Roger Liddell
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A Note from the Executive Director

The Sharon Land Trust is celebrating 40 years of protecting land in the northwest corner of Connecticut!

It all began in 1982, when a group of concerned Sharon residents gathered together to talk about protecting the rural heritage of the town. They were dismayed by land developers who were targeting some of the most beloved landscapes in town. One of these properties was the iconic Twin Oaks field. This group of residents decided to take action: They raised the funds to purchase the Twin Oaks field and protected it forever.

Today, the Twin Oaks Preserve is part of a large network of protected lands in town. More than 3,500 acres is protected by the Sharon Land Trust, either via conservation easements with private landowners or owned by the Trust and open to the public. This land protects water and air quality, provides habitat for wildlife, and helps to mitigate the effects of a changing climate.

With 25 miles of trails open to the public, it is easy to get outside and enjoy these protected lands and soak in the bucolic nature of our community. Just in time for the coming warm weather, we have new trail maps that will help you to locate the perfect location for a walk. **Download them at sharonlandtrust.org**

With best wishes,

Maria Grace

Executive Director



The Sharon Land Trust is proud to be an **ACCREDITED LAND TRUST BY THE LAND TRUST ALLIANCE**. The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction, showing that Sharon Land Trust meets the highest national standards for excellence and

conservation permanence. Sharon Land Trust joins more than 1,200 land trusts across the United States that have gone through rigorous third party reviews of policies and procedures that streamline operations and lead to more effective land conservation. **Learn more at www.landtrustaccreditation.org**

**Stay up to date and engaged by
subscribing to our email newsletter and
following us on social media!**

It's the best way to stay connected and learn more about our work!



[Facebook.com/SharonLandTrust](https://www.facebook.com/SharonLandTrust)



[@SharonLandTrust](https://www.instagram.com/SharonLandTrust)

PROTECTED - 170 Acres on Indian Mountain



CT State Representative Maria Horn and SLT consultant Shelley Harms visit the VonAhn Preserve. Thank you, Maria, for your support!

In September 2022, the Sharon Land Trust completed the purchase of a 170-acre parcel of farmland and forest, owned by the late Otto VonAhn, along Millerton Road in Sharon. The purchase preserves ecologically important land on the southwestern side of Indian Mountain. The Trust relied on a CT Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) grant, as well as funding under the federal Highlands Conservation Act, administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and private donations.

Protecting the VonAhn land from development more than doubled the current acreage of conserved land on Indian Mountain. When combined with adjacent protected lands, including Sharon Land Trust's Goodbody Preserve, as well as properties protected by Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy, Housatonic Valley Association, the Salisbury Association, and the State Department of Agriculture, the VonAhn Preserve is the heart of a 500-acre block of forest and farmland.

The purchase creates a continuous belt of protected land between Indian Lake and Mudge Pond, including nearly 1 mile of undisturbed ridgeline, 3 acres of wetlands, headwaters that drain into Indian Lake, and 120 acres of core forest populated with hemlock, pine, and hardwoods that are between 60 and 100 years old. This property is home to 11 species of rare, endangered or threatened flora and fauna, including the timber rattlesnake and the American kestrel.

The purchase created a corridor of protected lands to support the migration of wildlife, health of keystone species, and overall biodiversity. It will also become a valuable resource for recreation. The Trust is building a public 2.5-mile hiking trail loop that will connect to the existing trail system at the adjacent Goodbody Preserve. The new trail is slated to open in summer 2023.

The Sharon Land Trust would like to acknowledge Kathy Blackshaw and her vision and generosity to protect the land that she and the late Otto VonAhn have lived on for more than 40 years. Kathy wanted to be sure that the land was protected from development and allowed to remain wild, as nature intended.

SHARON LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP

October 1, 2021 - December 31, 2022

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| \$5000+ | Virginia Norris | | Harold Gurnee |
| Anonymous | Sally & Charlton Pettus | \$100+ | Titi Halle & Peter Felske |
| Lisa & Timothy Bazemore | Suzanne Purdy & Boris Vuchic | William Arnold | Geoff Haydock & Kelly Beckwith |
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| Purdy & Joshua Eaton | Patricia Rowell & Ron Becker | Thomas & Lynn Blagden | Dr's Katherine Holden & Joshua Jaffe |
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| William D. & Carole P. Bailey Family Foundation | Shereen & Steven Berger | Leslie & Nicholas Moore | Jane Kaczmarek |
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| Deborah & David Moore | | Carol Gourley | Anne & Henry Putzel |

SHARON LAND TRUST MEMBERSHIP

October 1, 2021– December 31, 2022

Membership, continued...

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Carol & Larry Rand | | Peter Kukresh | In memory of James Thornton Metz |
| Jeremy & Greg Rassen | \$10+ | Kevin & Leanne Lafond | Kathleen Metz |
| Liza & Greg Reiss | Carole Ascher & Robert Pittenger | Ina & Stan Lane | |
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| Beverly Sullivan | Brett Figlewski | Margaret & Stephen Szalewicz | In memory of Denise Mauler Kurish |
| Missy & Richard Talbot | Christal Fredlund Preszler | Garrett Thelander | David R. Kurish |
| Thomas Taylor & Laura Ramsey | Elizabeth Gall | Rebecca & Scott Thornton | |
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| Holly Kempner & Warren White | John & Patee Hecht | Lisa & Tim Bazemore | |
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| Robin Zitter | Sally Kaplan | | To honor Jake Fricker's volunteerism |
| Kim Zwick & Kevin Hill | Lynn Kearcher & Carl Chaiet | In Memory of William Oliver Bailey 1926 - 2005 | Elizabeth M. Hill |
| | Larry King | The William O. and Carole P. Bailey Foundation | |

Saving Our Native Habitats

One of the goals of the Trust is to act as a steward of our lands, and we are focused on the pressing and overwhelming spread of invasive plant species such as Oriental bittersweet, European buckthorn, multiflora rose, and Japanese barberry. Most of these plants are aggressive and outcompete native vegetation. This degrades the habitat for wildlife and hurts the ecological and agricultural value of the land.

Our stewardship team is actively working to plan and execute management strategies on each of our public preserves. These plans will detail ways to control the spread of these harmful plants and forge a new path of management that will increase agricultural production and improve the ecological value, including wildlife habitat.

Recently, stewardship volunteers visited the Hamlin Preserve to save some specimen trees from being strangled by invasive vines. The focus was an established hedgerow that forms a border with the walking path. With chainsaws, handsaws, and loppers in hand, volunteers cut back these vines and rescued sugar maples, American elms, red cedars, and white ash. They discovered a large, living American elm that stood majestically even though it was being smothered with vines. Tom Zetterstrom, SLT volunteer and renowned tree expert, estimates the elm to be 95 feet high and approximately a century old. With proper management and care, this elm could live another 100 years and thrive on the land.

With active management, a group of dedicated volunteers, and proper planning and funding, we are charting a course of controlling the widespread wrath of invasive plant species and improving our lands for the benefit of people and wildlife. **Volunteers are always welcome!** Visit <https://sharonlandtrust.org/ways-to-give/volunteer/> to learn more and sign up.



SLT Vice President Roger Liddell and SLT Stewardship Director Tim Hunter pose with some large invasive bittersweet vines before cutting them to protect the native trees. *Photo by Tom Zetterstrom*



SLT volunteer Edmund Mander takes measurements of the height of the majestic American elm at the Hamlin Preserve. *Photo by Tom Zetterstrom*

Students, Join Us This Summer!



Since 2016, the Sharon Land Trust has been offering a two-week **STUDENT WORK PROJECT**, allowing the youth of Sharon an opportunity to work on trail building and maintenance as well as habitat and wildlife enhancement projects, in return for a weekly paid stipend. In 2022, local students spent two weeks on SLT's public preserves, hiking 28 miles, hauling up to 150 pounds of tools and supplies, and having a fun (if busy) time on our beautiful trails. They cleared brush and learned the ins and outs of trail construction, including creating an ideal trail corridor. They rebuilt a rock stream bridge and secured 20 feet of new crib wall. They learned the proper

use of tools like rock hammers, hand saws, and pick maddocks. They had an up close experience with American kestrels and they made new friends, explored some of the wildest landscapes in Sharon, and gave back to the community by improving the trail network for all who enjoy it.

The Student Work Project is just one way that the Trust interacts with our area's young adults; we also work with local schools for volunteering opportunities, and offer a scholarship for young people going into a college, university, or vocational program studying conservation, earth, or environmental science.

Sharon Land Trust will offer the student work project in 2023 for youth going into grades 9 to 12 (ages 14 to 17). An educational stipend of \$12/hour will be awarded at the end of the program. Applications will be on the SLT website March 1st. Also, we are hiring Land Steward Assistants, our paid summer long internship program for college students.

Email info@sharonlandtrust.org or call the office at (860) 364-5137.

Tribute Benches

The Sharon Land Trust's **TRIBUTE BENCH PROGRAM** allows members to honor a loved one with a bench and plaque placed in a special spot on a SLT public preserve. We have been pleased to install several over the past year, including the one to the right honoring a beloved companion. The next time you're out for a walk, look for these special benches at the Goodbody Preserve, Benton Hill Preserve, or this one at the Twin Oaks Preserve. If you would like to honor someone in this way, visit

<https://sharonlandtrust.org/ways-to-give/memorials/>



NEW TRAIL MAPS!

Trail maps of SLT's public nature preserves have been published!
 They are available to download on the SLT website, sharonlandtrust.org.
 Requests for paper copies can be made to info@sharonlandtrust.org.

