



November, 2015

Dear Fellow Members and Friends of Middlebury Land Trust (MLT),

Thank you very much for your past support of open space preservation in Middlebury! I am excited to share with you our accomplishments and activities since my last report to you.

We have preserved 47.3 additional acres of open space, 21.9 acres through permanent protective conservation easement and 25.4 acres by outright purchase. This brings our **total preserved open space to 1891 acres**, of which the 1099 acres within Town lines represent an astonishing **9.3% of the totality of Middlebury**. We could not have done this without the amazing generosity of our donors, and we can all take great pride in these accomplishments.

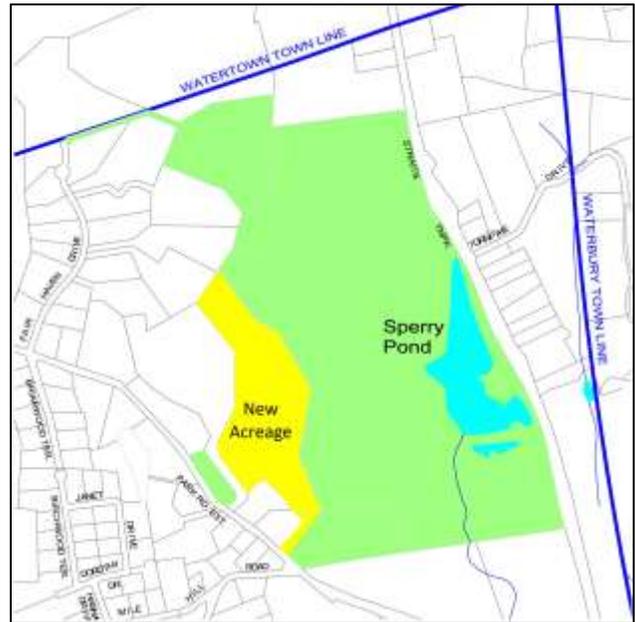
Our volunteers, board, and warden have given countless hours of their time to the careful stewardship of our holdings, hacking away invasive knotweed, maintaining our extensive hiking trails, evaluating trail extensions and connections, uncovering buried boundary monuments, documenting the plant and animal life that shares our habitats, and many other such tasks. The result is **a collection of beautiful outdoor areas available for passive recreation to all residents** of our Town, such areas including meadows, fields, forests, ponds, streams, and bogs. I encourage you to visit these places and experience for yourself some of the best that Middlebury has to offer.

In addition to our outdoor activities, the volunteer board members of the MLT have been spending a lot of time in meetings, working on the many administrative and legal issues that arise continually in the ongoing management of any properties. Particularly important right now is **a major effort to document fully every one of our 58 properties**—boundaries, geologic features, plant and animal life, and other virtues known as conservation values. These values are entrusted to our **stewardship “in perpetuity,”** meaning forever, and **we are pledged to defend them on behalf of the public against encroachments, incursions, and any other detrimental activities**. Updated baseline and management plans will allow us to qualify for special insurance that includes assistance in litigating against polluters and encroachers when necessary.

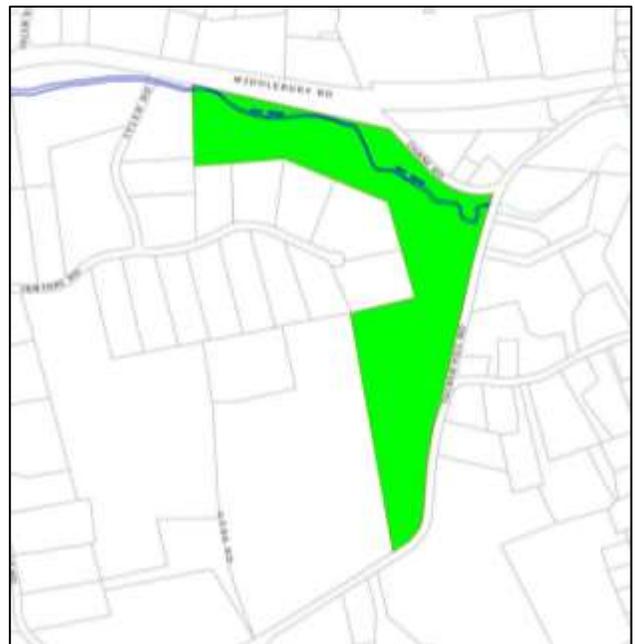
A summary listing of some **notable recent specific activities and accomplishments** follows:

- **Finalized acceptance of 21.9 acres under conservation easement by generous donation of former MLT president, Lem Sperry, Jr., increasing the Juniper Hill Preserve and surrounding properties to a total of 175.7 acres** (see Map 1 on page 2 and Photo 2 on page 4). Consider one day pulling off of busy Route 63, parking in our small parking area, and spending a delightful hour or so enjoying the beauty of Sperry Pond with its many species of birds.

- **Completed acquisition of 25.4 acres of forested open space by purchase from George A. Goss, Jr.,** fronting on Tucker Hill Road, Chase Road, and Middlebury Road (see Map 2 and Photo 1 below). We are particularly hopeful that residents, especially those close by this new preserve, will step to the plate and **help us replenish the funds** used in this major acquisition.
- **Participated as a formal Intervener before the Connecticut Siting Council in opposition to the proposed 785 megawatt power plant at the Oxford-Middlebury line,** attempting to draw attention to the **many adverse effects** such a plant would have on Middlebury generally, land trust preserves in particular, and especially the health of all area residents. **This fight continues.**
- Assisted the Town with its decennial updating process of **Middlebury's Plan of Conservation and Development.** A particularly exciting outcome of this process has been to **increase the Town's overall goal of open space from 20% to 25%,** based on successes to date.
- Collaborated with the newly formed **Lake Quassapaug Association** in its efforts to establish an **ongoing non-chemical eradication program against highly invasive Eurasian milfoil and other invasive species** from this important scenic and recreational Middlebury resource. Already **LQA has achieved major success** with its program of suction harvesting and has expanded the program for 2016 and beyond.
- Completed **improvement of the walking path around Lake Elise,** with generous donations of material from O & G Industries. This trail is beautiful almost any time of year and even walking but a short segment of it can provide a wonderful respite from the hustle and bustle that constitutes most of our lives.



Map #1



Map #2



Photo #1 Along northern (Rte. 64/Greenway) boundary of recent purchase.

- Assembled, reviewed, and **digitized maps, deeds, and annual stewardship reports** pertaining to MLT-owned properties and placed in the cloud for easy access and permanent retention. These extend back over 50 years, and one recently discovered five-page handwritten easement even dates all the way back to 1908.
- Began project of posting **boundary signs** on all of our fee-owned properties, summarizing rules and restrictions (such as “No Dumping”) and now including a **QR code allowing visitors to link instantaneously** to our website and to additional information in the future.
- **Co-hosted the annual Fenn’s Farm Open Day** commemorating nine years since the **joint project with the Town** of Middlebury to purchase and preserve forever this iconic and historic farmstead.
- **Hosted a guided hike over the Foote Path Trail**, from Sperry Pond to Abbott’s Pond, on Connecticut Trails Day, June 6th. The designer and **primary maker of this trail, Wayne Foote, led this event.**
- Sent representatives to participate in the annual meeting of the **national Land Trust Alliance**, the annual meeting of the statewide **Connecticut Land Conservation Council**, as well as **regional meetings** in our part of the state. Participants at these meetings study current trends in land conservation, including enhancing public access, developing partnerships with other organizations, and learning modern day technologies like accessing online digital land data, GPS “multi-layered” mapping, and utilizing drone-mounted cameras for monitoring remote tracts.

Our Warden, Ben Lynn, regularly monitors our properties, and our volunteer Property Stewards annually report property conditions and management program status. All of our properties are available for responsible use by local residents, subject to the restrictions posted on our signs. We continue to encourage the use of our properties for educational purposes by local schools and colleges.

Particular note should be made of our **two fishing ponds: Larkin Pond at Fodder’s Folly off of lower South Street, and Lake Elise** off of Middlebury Road/Route 64 and Long Meadow Road. **Fishing permits are available to MLT members** for a nominal fee to cover our costs. Fishing is catch and release only (to avoid depletion). Other rules are posted on our website, where an application can also be downloaded.

I urge you to **visit our website, www.middleburylandtrust.org**, to view further details of our work, our programs, and our holdings, including a comprehensive map (click Holdings tab). You can also **Like us on Facebook** at **<https://www.facebook.com/MiddleburyLandTrust/>**. **Even better, I urge you to get outside and visit some of our properties themselves they are all wonderful places to enjoy nature, get a little exercise, and renew the spirit.**

As we enter this season of counting our blessings and giving back, I ask you to **please support Middlebury Land Trust with your 2016 membership dues and, if possible, a bit extra to tangibly support and advance our work.** We are presently working especially on making our properties more generally accessible and user-friendly, and to that end your contribution now will enable us to enhance those efforts. You may earmark any additional contribution for a special project of your choosing, and you may also contribute in honor or memory of someone else who loves nature.

If you are interested in volunteering, even if only for a single project, I promise you will find the work interesting and rewarding, so please let me know. As an almost wholly volunteer organization, there is much to be done, always interesting and uplifting, and more often than not outdoors. **We are in**

particular need of volunteers interested in technology and in helping us develop programs of interest to families with children.

You can also **help us by telling your friends and neighbors about us** so that together we can enlarge the capacity and scope of this essential community organization.

For all your support, the Board and I thank you once again!

To contact us please write us at P. O. Box 193, Middlebury, or, if urgent call me directly at home, 203-758-2240. You can reach us by email at middleburylandtrust@gmail.com as well as on Facebook as noted above.

With all best wishes,

W. Scott Peterson, M.D.
President



Photo 2. Sperry Pond, in Juniper Hill Preserve, Middlebury, CT (Image by Chris Parker).