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Cumberland Land Trust spruces up Blackall Preserve



Standing near the trailhead of property once owned by her family, **Holly (Blackall) Applegate**, center, gathers with several board members of the Cumberland Land Trust. Her family donation of \$1,900 will be used, in part, to provide maps inside map boxes for hikers exploring the trails at the 132 acres off Old West Wrentham Road. From left are Cumberland Land Trust board members Michael Plasse, Marcia Green, President Randy Tuomisto, Applegate, Joseph Pailthorpe and Frank Matta.

By **ETHAN SHOREY, Valley Breeze Managing Editor**

CUMBERLAND – A \$1,900 donation to the Cumberland Land Trust by the family of Holly (Blackall) Applegate will fund maintenance work on the 132-acre Blackall Preserve, at 8 Old West Wrentham Road, announced Joseph Pailthorpe of the Land Trust.

The preserve is a town property once owned by the Blackall family. In August 2016, the Land Trust received Town Council approval to manage the preserve's trailheads and trails.

Work by Cumberland Land Trust volunteers included installing security barrier gates and signage at three locations along Old West Wrentham Road and

one on the west side of the property near the Highland Corporate Park.

Adding gates at properties such as these is important for keeping unauthorized vehicles out while maintaining access for vehicles that need to get in, said Pailthorpe. Keeping ATVs and other vehicles out helps preserve properties and protect hikers from danger, he said.

About four of the Land Trust's properties in town have trails, and five need security, he said. Members are also planning to add security measures at the 229-acre Mercywoods Preserve.

Additionally at the Blackall Preserve, Rhode Island Land Trust Council board member Roy Najecki, working with Troop 1 Arnold Mills Eagle Scout Daniel Bradley and about 20 Scouts, cleared and blazed trail networks of 2.5 miles in October and November. Najecki also provided a first draft map that marks the three trails for hikers. It's now available in a map box at the main trailhead at 8 Old West Wrentham Road.

More stewardship will continue in 2018 to mark and map a fourth trail, Pailthorpe said. Another security gate will be added in early spring on the west side of the preserve. Two more map boxes and updated maps will be provided over the next several months. Trailheads on Old West Wrentham Road have ample off-road parking, Pailthorpe noted.

"The Land Trust is extremely grateful to have the Blackall family support for both funding and discussing family history that helped name the trails. Now that trails have been cleared, marked and mapped, the number of hikers has increased," Pailthorpe said.

Land Trust members have noticed a significant reduction in the number of ATV riders on properties where security gates and other measures have been installed, Pailthorpe told *The Valley Breeze*. At one property, an ATV rider mentioned that he'd been coming to ride for years, and Pailthorpe responded that "it's a different ballgame now."

He said he doesn't envision the Land Trust or the town acquiring a property for ATV riders to use. "I don't see that happening in Cumberland," he said. "We're not big enough for that type of thing."

The town purchased 70 acres from the Blackall family in 2003, and Colin Kane of the Peregrine Group donated an additional 62 acres of former Blackall property in 2009 in conjunction with the planned development of the Highland Hills Apartment complex in Highland Corporate Park.