



ANNUAL MEMBER NEWSLETTER

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Sharing the Land with Beavers

Beavers have taken up residence in the Cumberland Land Trust's Bland Preserve located off Nate Whipple Highway. Their presence was discovered after the Board investigated flooding of the existing access trail in October of 2014. The arrival of the beavers in this location did not surprise state wildlife managers at the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) who have been monitoring a dramatic comeback in beaver populations across Rhode Island. Once plentiful, beavers were wiped out in RI through unregulated trapping in the 18th and 19th centuries. Absent from the Rhode Island landscape for more than 200 years, sightings of beavers began to be reported again in RI in the 1970's. DEM reports that beavers are now once again common in several watersheds across the state including our location within the Blackstone River watershed.

Beavers are considered second only to humans in their capacity to change the environment. Semi-aquatic mammals noted for their prominent front teeth and flattened tail, beavers are herbivores that possess an impressive instinctive ability to build dams and alter stream hydrology. Beavers build dams to



Note pond leveler top center, green cage

provide access to food and protection from predators. In the process, they may use their incredibly strong teeth to gnaw through and fell trees to provide building material and food. Dam building is exactly what has happened at the Bland Preserve. Attracted to a flowing stream, beavers have used branches, sticks and mud to create a series of dams across a small stream that in turn backed up and enlarged the ponded water in the upstream swamp. They also built a sizable lodge as their shelter.

While it is only natural to have beavers reside in the protected habitat of the Bland Preserve, the resulting higher water levels in the swamp created concerns. Flooding of the access trail steadily worsened and an up gradient property owner was also experiencing backyard flooding. In response to the situation, the CLT Board engaged a wildlife consultant with expertise in management of beavers and developed a plan to mitigate the flooding concerns. After securing a required state permit in January 2017, earlier this spring the CLT moved forward to install pond-leveling devices with the aim of restoring stream flows impeded by the beaver dams in order to reduce water levels in the swamp. The devices utilize piping and protective caging to allow increase water flow through the dams. Initial installation in February, 2017 was successful in lowering the water levels by about two feet. The CLT will be monitoring effectiveness over time, as the clever beaver has been known to sometimes clog the devices. The CLT has also received permission to re-route a portion of the trail access from Nate Whipple Highway and is currently planning to make the trail improvements later this year.

Beavers...

It is a core part of the CLT mission to protect the natural habitat values of its properties conserved as open spaces. Recognizing that the Bland Preserve offers habitat that is suitable for beavers, it is a goal of the CLT to carry out management of the preserve in a manner that allows us to share this special place with this fascinating species while limiting changes in hydrology. While most benefits of beaver works (dams and wetlands) are hidden, they are nonetheless very real. This species can be an important ally in solving the earth's major environmental problems. Did you know their incisor teeth are fortified with iron and appear orange giving them the strength to cut through trees and continuously grow and self-sharpen?

Now that the pond levelers are fully functional we will be proceeding to reroute our trail through the wetlands with a 236-foot long bog bridge system. (See related stewardship story and grant funding on page 3.)

Randy Tuomisto and Sue Bundy



Pond leveler installed April 2017. Prior to the pipe and cage system installation, the dry land was all under water.



The beaver hut January 2015. The hut has doubled in size in the last two years from five to ten feet tall and wider. Apparently the family has grown.



JUNE 2, 2015 FIELD MEETING.

Pictured left to right are:
John Faile CLT board,
Randy Tuomisto CLT President,
Michael Callahan Beaver Solutions, LLC
(Consultant)
Frank Matta CLT board,
and Michael Boday CLT board

Pictures by Joe Pailthorpe, CLT board

Land Acquisitions

The Land Trust has been working on several acquisitions over the last three years that will expand existing holdings in the area of Scott Road and Lippitt Estates. We have partnered up with the Pawtucket Water Supply Board and the Town of Cumberland for funding to acquire 24 lots both near and on Little Pond in Lippitt Estates.

In December 2016 we acquired 6 lots from Lippitt Estates along with another 2 lots from Brown University and we are also acquiring 16 lots from the Conklin family.

Twenty-two of the lots on Theatre Drive off Scott Road are on the map as Lake Shore Drive which is an undeveloped paper road with 1,000 feet of shoreline on Little Pond. This wooded area of about 8 acres abuts our existing Otis Smith Farm Preserve at 267 Scott Road. No trails are planned, but it will be a watershed protection area to be named: ***“Conklin-Lippitt Preserve”***.

Another 4.5 acres were acquired from Lippitt Estates on Birch Road that will expand the existing Rowbottom Preserve that has an existing trailhead at 324 Lippitt Avenue.

Both the Otis and Rowbottom Preserves combined with these newly acquired parcels now total over 70 contiguous acres sandwiched between Scott Road and Lippitt Estates

5th Annual Land Trust Days

Rhode Island Land Trust Council will coordinate Land Trust Days from August through October. Land trusts around the state will host activities to celebrate the varied open space lands throughout Rhode Island. Watch website: www.LandTrustDays.org for upcoming event details. Last year the Cumberland Land Trust had over 50 hikers from around the state visit our town Monastery trails.

Land Trust Days for Cumberland will be held on **Monday, September 4, 2017**. We will plan on featuring our Nate Whipple Highway Atlantic White Cedar Swamp and re-opening our trailhead that has been flooded by beavers for the last two years.

Stewardship Grant- \$3,000

...Beaver solutions noted on page 2

A special ***trails grant of \$3,000*** has also been awarded for the construction of an alternate trail wetlands bog bridging system at our Atlantic White Cedar Swamp on Nate Whipple Highway that has been flooded by beaver damming for over two years. We have applied for and received a wetlands permit in January 2017 from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. The grant will cover 80% of our total cost.

Now under construction are 236 feet of a bog bridge system that will enable us to open our Nate Whipple Highway trailhead. Below is a picture of five partially completed 12-foot sections of the bog bridge.



Installation will take place in mid-June and into July. The new trail access will be ready for the noted Land Trust Days event.

Other dates

Annual membership meeting will be Saturday, **October 21, 2017**. Details will be announced later this summer.

11th Annual Wine Tasting Fundraiser
Friday, **November 17, 2017**



Expanded Volunteer pool

A year ago we announced a call for volunteers along with instituting more formal communications by email of guidelines and project list. We now have 18 volunteers that we can call on to help with our stewardship of our expanded property holdings.

We are very pleased with the responses we have had from both old and new volunteers. Some volunteers are actually doing landscaping to keep our trailheads both attractive and safe for our hiking public.

We have projects of all dimensions small and large. Some require hand work and others need equipment such as chain saws, weed wackers, etc. This year's project list has grown to **37** items.

Just as this newsletter was being written I received a call about two trees that were considered dangerous to our hikers on an active trail. A quick trip to the site confirmed the need to remove the "widow makers" for safety. This became a new project and then a phone call went out to one of our volunteers. Within two days the trees were removed and put onto the project sheet and immediately noted as completed. This is one of many stories! ***Thank you all!***

Joe Pailthorpe

Board Members

(Pictures posted on Website)

Randy Tuomisto, President

Mike Boday, Vice President

Sue Bundy, Secretary

Joe Pailthorpe, Treasurer

Alice Clemente Debbie Mitchell

John Faile Kevin Grady

Mike Plasse Frank Matta

Scout Projects

This year we have three new Eagle Scout projects that are in the planning stages:

- Bog bridging on the Tucker/High Rock Trail system.
- Two new picnic tables for two trailheads.
- Blazing and mapping new trails on the Blackall Preserve.

Gardening Volunteers

We have for years been planting flowers and trees at some of our trailheads. This year we formalized a volunteer "adopt a garden" program for various sites. Mike Boday, Deb Mitchell and MJ McEldowney have adopted various sites for planting flower gardens and maintaining them. They all focus on using native plants. Below is a recent picture at our High Rock Preserve at 215 Scott Road trailhead.



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