



Bethel Land Trust

2014 Spring Newsletter

The Janet P. Miller Preserve – It's About Love

The Bethel Land Trust has recently been donated a great gift. This gift brings us both great joy and sadness. The following summarizes not only the essence of this joy and sadness, but also the ideals of the Land Trust.

In 2012, John Miller, a Bethel resident since 1951 and a long time Director with the Bethel Land Trust, approached the Land Trust to establish a preserve in memory of Janet, his wife of 66 years. The couple met at the end of World War II. They raised their four children in a small home built in the 1860's, situated on 14 acres of meadows, wetlands and forested areas, adjacent to our largest preserve – Wolfpit Preserve on Wolfpit Road in Bethel, CT.

Through the years, John and Janet's children played in and explored the preserve and its trails, which were built and maintained by John until he was well into his eighties. Years passed. The children grew and moved away, leaving John and Janet alone to enjoy the Wolfpit Preserve and their 14 acres. On any given day, they might observe deer, rabbits, foxes, bats, beavers or perhaps even a bobcat. Janet often drew pictures of the birds and wildlife. The drawing below is one of hers. I wonder how many nights the Miller household watched lightning bugs or fell asleep listening to owls and spring peepers.

As John and Janet aged, they were confronted with the same issues as all of our elder citizens -- declining health, increased taxes and distance from their children. But Janet was in love with the property, especially the birds that visited the bird feeders outside their kitchen window. There were discussions of selling some or the entire homestead, an easy conclusion for some, but not for the Millers. They loved nature. They loved their home. And they supported land conservation.

Sadly, Janet passed away in 2012. John decided to donate 10 acres to the Bethel Land Trust to establish the **Janet P. Miller Preserve**, which was finalized this past January. John is now 94 and he is still able to enjoy the deer, rabbits, foxes and birds. He can still see Janet sitting on the bench along Wolfpit Brook enjoying the sound of their children's laughter and the sounds of nature. His action of land conservation ensures that the land will be preserved in the state that he, Janet and their children enjoyed for all those years.

Thank you John and Janet!



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President's Message

Don Warfield

We are grateful to the many land donors, contributors and community leaders that have supported the Bethel Land Trust and its goal of land conservation.

The Bethel Land Trust, founded in 1977, began with an idea (or a seed, if you will) shared by a few, to stop the loss of land, and by extension, preserve the way of life that we hold so dear today. Since 1977, the Bethel Land Trust has dedicated itself to meeting the land conservation challenges that our community has faced and continues to face – negative impacts on its scenic qualities, fragmentation of its forested habitat, diminishing recreational opportunities, and the conversion of our agricultural lands to support ever increasing development pressures.

A map of 1997 Bethel looks very different from the map of 2014 and the 2014 map will look very different in five to ten years. As the Town nears full development, the Bethel Land Trust goals have not changed:

- Protect natural, scenic, historical, cultural, archaeological and recreational resources
- Reconnect fragmented landscapes
- Conserve working landscapes
- Connect where people live to outdoor recreation
- Increase and sustain our community's environmental and social health as well as our economic capital
- Achieve balance between the built and natural environments.

Will we value our residences here nearly as much if our town were to lose its semi-rural character?

There has been a fundamental change in how our town administration and fellow citizens view and support land conservation, most recently with the purchase of the Franc property. To be sure, there will be additional opportunities. The scenic views of Bethel are powerful and inspiring, with its forested areas of sugar maple, oak and beech, the waters of its reservoirs, the apple orchards of Blue Jay Orchards and the unnamed meadows, creeks and brooks. However, despite the work of the Land Trust and others to date, much of the landscape in Bethel remains unprotected, potentially compromising the natural beauty recognized as essential to this community's way of life. In short, there is still much work to be done.

Each of you can help in a meaningful way to formulate a community-based vision of land conservation. We hope you will join with your neighbors who are continuing their Land Trust membership and give generously to help accomplish our mission that is so important to the Bethel community.

***** Calendar of Events *****

Sunday, May 4th

Bethel Land Trust
Annual Meeting
1:30 p.m. at the
Bethel Library
Guest Speaker:
Congresswoman
Elizabeth Esty



John O'Neill, Treasurer,
will also provide an
overview of our activities
for the coming year.
Members will be asked to
vote on suggested
changes to the bylaws
and elect the slate of
Directors.

Sunday, June 1

Franc Park Hike
1:30 p.m.

Weather permitting, a
hike of the Frank Park
will be lead by John
O'Neill.

The hike will leave from
the parking lot located
across the first
driveway opposite
#151 Plumtrees Road.
A moderate hike that
will last about two
hours.



Work Parties

Several work parties
involving trail maintenance
and the removal of
invasive flora will be
scheduled throughout the
year. Notices will be
posted via Facebook and
sent to our e-mail list.



***** Membership *****

Renewal

If you have not done so,
now is the time to renew
your membership for the
2014 membership year.
Please continue your
support of the Bethel Land
Trust and renew today.

New Members

If you are not a member,
you can contribute by
sending a check to:

Bethel Land Trust
P.O. Box 332, Bethel, CT
06801 or make an online
contribution via our
website;
www.bethellandtrust.org

**BLT Kicks Off Business
Membership Drive**

This year, for the first time, the
Bethel Land Trust is actively
encouraging business
memberships.

All businesses joining the BLT
receive a BLT window decal.
Membership at \$500 or above
also receive a guided hike of
the Wolfpit and Janet P. Miller
Preserve for 10 clients,
employees, family or friends.

We need your support, join us
as a charter member of the
business program.

**Sponsor Opportunity
Fall Newsletter**

Continuing our efforts to
increase public
awareness and gain
more wide-spread
community support, semi-
annual issues of the
Bethel Land Trust
Newsletters are planned.
We are looking for
sponsors to cover
production expenses for
the next two newsletters.
The fall issue is planned
for October and next
spring's issue is planned
for April.



BETHEL LAND TRUST

P.O. Box 332 _ Bethel, CT 06801

Preserving Bethel Open Space Since 1977



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Please see inside for news and planned events