



Site Lines

WINTER 2020

SOUTH KINGSTOWN
LAND TRUST

“WORKING” BEHIND THE SCENES AT SKLT

It is possible to have many “favorites,” and this issue of *SiteLines* is a favorite, as we thank the hundreds of members, donors and businesses who make the SKLT’s work possible, and there is plenty to do. Other favorites are our work and our staff.

Our “work” begins with a landowner with the vision and desire to protect their land from development. Joanne Riccitelli orchestrates the many facets of a land protection project. Land protection projects typically take between 18 months and 18 years and involve the skills and time of every staff member. SKLT secures the funding for land protection predominantly through local, state and federal grants. We serve as the passthrough organization from the funder to the landowner for land protection grants, only occasionally having such hard costs as survey, title, or appraisal, covered. Contributions of the donors listed in this *SiteLines* provided the staff needed to work with landowners, assess projects, visit sites, write grants, secure services, generate baseline reports, write management plans, etc.

This is the time of year when Michael Bontecou (*pictured*) spends quite a bit of time cleaning up fallen trees from our trails and removing an endless stream of nip bottles (Fireball is a winter favorite) from woods and roadsides. Donors listed here also support his ongoing repairs from vandalism, maintenance of signs and structures, chronic encroachments, and the

development of new trails.

Doug McGovern generates maps, maps and more maps. Annual monitoring folders require maps. Our properties and trails maps need constant updating. Doug is continually improving trailhead signage and installing boundary markers to facilitate monitoring. He also visits each of our new properties to document existing conditions and generate a baseline report—it’s

no easy feat to penetrate walls of rhododendron and curtains of bull briar. Donor support makes it possible, but he may not always have the chance to thank you.

Donors also provide the resources that Angela Brunetti needs to better know and serve our members, donors, corporate sponsors, land protection and land stewardship partners. SKLT offers a minimum of 30 hikes and programs

annually, free and open to all, plus outreach and education programs for all facets of the community.

The work of the Land Trust extends far beyond what is outlined above and is accomplished by our part-time staff, with support from dozens of volunteers. While it all starts with a land protection project, SKLT was created by and for our community to protect and steward South Kingstown’s natural resources, unique history, and sense of place for the enduring benefit of the community.

~Julia Landstreet



“GROW HOPE” GRANT PROVIDES GAME CAMERAS

We are thrilled to have received the GFWC Women’s Club of South County’s “Grow Hope” community grant. The grant enabled SKLT to purchase two game cameras with corresponding security boxes and scandisks to be used for monitoring and stewardship of our land. Our trails and properties suffer occasional vandalism throughout the year: signs are torn down, fences and gates are removed, motor bikes are ridden on trails, and shooting ranges get set up in the woods. These cameras are equipped to send photos to SKLT stewardship staff in real time, so we can respond quickly and efficiently when situations arise. Happily, we will also be able to capture images and videos of the wildlife and habitat in our care! SKLT thanks the GFWC Women’s Club of South County for such generous support.



TOADS ARE ON SKLT ROSTER THIS EARTH DAY!

SKLT is proud to be helping restore populations of Rhode Island’s endangered eastern spadefoot toads in partnership with the University of Rhode Island’s Natural Resources Science Department, the R.I. Department of Environmental Management, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and other conservation organizations.



In 2017, URI professors Nancy Karraker and William Buffum approached us about helping them find areas with the very specialized soil types, hydrology, vegetation, and topography needed for spadefoot breeding habitat.

It turned out that we have just such a place in Tuckertown, not far from Worden and Tucker Ponds. With the assistance of national expert Tom Biebighauser, the site was inspected in April 2017 and mapped for potential locations for specially designed breeding habitat installations.

The present plan calls for starting early morning on April 21 with training on wetland creation, and continuing two more days in the field, rain or shine. If all goes according to plan, we will be able to celebrate Earth Day on April 22 admiring the new spadefoot habitat.

We will need volunteers to help with various tasks involved in the installations, including working with hand tools and tugging and placing the large impermeable membrane in the shallow excavated areas, among other site work. We will reach out in March looking for volunteers interested in helping.

~Clarkson Collins

SPRING INTO EXCITING SKLT HAPPENINGS

We Need You on Monitoring Day, March 28

On Saturday, March 28, we invite you to go off the beaten path and join us for our annual Monitoring Day, one of our most important stewardship responsibilities. The intensive efforts requires a slew of SKLT volunteers to help our staff visit every single property to identify any violations or problems that need to be addressed. We'll meet at the Barn at 10 a.m. for a short training

session, pair rookies with veterans, and send everyone off. As a thank you, we provide lunch back at the Barn around noon. We welcome everyone—young, old, experienced, and new—to come and monitor the land that SKLT has conserved in perpetuity. Please bring a camera/phone for photos, and RSVP online at: sklt.org/events-calendar/

Opening Day Trout Season Youth Fishing at Biscuit City on April 11

On April 11, bring the kids to help us open trout season with our youth-only fishing event at Scott Evans Memorial Pond at Biscuit City in Kingston. Last spring marked the reopening of this pond as a “youth fishing pond” for ages 14 and under, thanks to the combined efforts of SKLT and the R.I. Department of Environmental Management. The site is accessible and offers ample parking, making it ideal for young children, parents and grandparents.

Originally dedicated to Scott Evans, a child who in 1974 was struck and killed by a car while fishing from the bridge, the pond was dredged and stocked with trout by DEM. But over time, it filled in with silt and eventually was dropped from DEM's stocking program. In recent years, Biscuit City neighbor and SKLT board member Ellen Grebstein spearheaded efforts to restore the pond habitat and youth fishing. The pond will be stocked with brook and rainbow trout, and on opening day, SKLT volunteers and staff will be on hand to help young fishermen have a great day. ~Rick Wilson



Members-only Annual Meeting with Bat Presentation on April 26

SKLT's Annual Meeting will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday, April 26 at the Barn, 17 Matunuck Beach Rd., followed by a presentation on “The Natural History of the Bats of Rhode Island with an Update on White-nose Syndrome.” Peter August's overview of bat diversity around the world will spotlight their remarkable foraging habitats, behaviors and mating systems. He'll also discuss local bat species, how insect-eating bats survive when insects are absent and the impact White-nose Syndrome has had on our (once) most common bat, the little brown bat.

Following his career as a University of Rhode Island professor, Peter focuses on local conservation issues as a member of the board of The Watch Hill Conservancy and the R.I. Natural History Survey, and as secretary of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council.

SKLT membership required. Join or renew at www.sklt.org, or contact 401-789-0962 x.204/angela.brunetti@sklt.org to check your membership status. Members, please RSVP online at sklt.org/events-calendar/

SKLT PRESERVES 35 ACRES IN THE MATUNUCK HILLS

In August 2019, SKLT purchased two parcels near the north end of Tucker Pond, south of Tuckertown Road. Previously owned by the Tucker and Witham families, this property abuts two other SKLT properties and contributes to a multi-agency conservation effort focused in the Matunuck Hills. Nearby land is protected by The Nature Conservancy, R.I. Department of Environmental Management, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and the Town of South Kingstown.

The Matunuck Hills complex of glacial kettle ponds is one of the few excellent occurrences of this globally rare ecosystem. Unique plant species have evolved to survive on the shores of these ponds with fluctuating water levels. The property has frontage on Tucker

Pond and is in the State's Natural Heritage designation. It is in a critical groundwater protection area. Keeping this land in its natural state will contribute to the protection of both groundwater and surface waters, crucial for these ponds with their clean water quality and seasonally varying water levels.

The property has uplands and wetlands, black and red oak canopy and a remarkably dense rhododendron thicket. Invasive plants are noticeably absent.

Funding for the acquisition was provided by DEM and the Bafflin Foundation, and a significant "bargain sale" was contributed by the landowners. With the completion of this project, SKLT has now protected more than 2,900 acres of land.

~ Joanne Riccitelli

NEW TRAILHEAD SIGN AT THEWLIS WOODS

Travelers on Pine Hill Road in Wakefield will surely notice the recently installed trailhead sign at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Friendship Trail entrance at our Thewlis Woods property. A beautiful new and sturdy kiosk built by Girl Scouts Alex Crowshaw and Margy Keegan this summer shelters the new sign from the elements. The girls constructed the kiosk to fulfill requirements to receive their Girl Scout Silver Award. SKLT is very pleased to partner with the Girl Scouts in this great example of a successful volunteer project and looks forward to more collaborations like this one in the future.

~Doug McGovern



THANK YOU CINDY!

Cindy Sabato is the behind-the-scenes genius who, for 11 years (!), has designed our *SiteLines* newsletter. An SKLT member, volunteer, and past member of both the board of directors and development & outreach committee, Cindy has recently moved to Virginia and will be retiring from her work with us. We give our heartfelt thanks for her years of service and countless hours of time. Her clever input and creative eye will be sorely missed!

READY, SET, GO!

Build Now Protect Forever! SKLT needs your help to make this dream a reality. The

South Kingstown Planning Board gave us the green light at the November meeting after receiving a parking plan and an assurance of use for a neighbor. At the same meeting our Robinson Street landlord sought approval to build a second story and our neighbor began active planning to fully utilize where our equipment is stored. There is no going back now!

The only “going back” we do at SKLT is studying titles and the history of places and habitats we protect. Our business model is all about our commitment to

protect and steward the properties in our care for future generations. The success of the campaign is

imperative to the success of our organization. The stewardship fund, the tractor shed, and welcoming offices are critical for the Land Trusts’ ongoing stability and success.

The project was staked out in late December, the stone walls were breached, and we began to clear out the invasive vines, strangled trees, and shrubs. We are

using a “kit” for the tractor shed and if all goes well, and with your financial support, we will be able to move our equipment early this summer.

~Julia Landstreet



PROGRESS & PROMISE FOR THE PERRYVILLE GRIST MILL

During a grinding in 2018 the earthen mill race for the Samuel E. Perry Grist Mill breached in two places, and major repairs were necessary. After favorable environmental review by RIDEM wetlands division, substantial brush clearing and rebuilding of the eastern bank of the 700-foot sluice began this summer. The mill race and repair of the sluice gate will receive its final touches this spring. The work to date is impressive and gives the visitor a fine view of the workings of the small-scale industries that served the needs of South Kingstown’s agrarian community.



~Clarkson Collins



MILESTONES

Hard to believe it is 2020! Time is flying by and we are having a great time. The public launch for the Build Now Protect Forever campaign has been a long time coming. What a wonderful turning point for the South Kingstown Land Trust. Members will be receiving campaign information in the mail. I encourage you to read and call with any questions. SKLT did not enter this campaign lightly and we will not be successful without everyone's contributions. Thank you for making SKLT a philanthropic priority.

With over 2,900 acres and two historic properties in our care, stewardship is a way of life. SKLT staff is aided by a phalanx of volunteers who walk and tend our trails daily. SKLT provides publicly accessible trails free to residents and visitors alike and we are excited about adding the Alewife Brook Preserve trail by the end of this year.

No surprise it has been hard to fill the position of Land Management Director. A celebration dinner was held for Clarkson in January (some of us wore waterproof mascara). Luckily, he is not going far and will continue to provide thoughtful insight on land stewardship and management.

Speaking of shoes that are hard to fill, thank you Cindy for formatting and editing *SiteLines* for 11 years. You have made us look very good and have been an amazing volunteer!

Thanks to Heather Mae Breau, staff and volunteers, monitoring has begun for 2020. There will still be plenty for all in March, we look forward to seeing everyone then. It is a great way to explore our town's hidden treasures.

Above all thanks to the many donors listed in this issue – your support ensures that open space can make all the difference.



Julia Fry Landstreet

Julia Fry Landstreet, Executive Director

The mission of the South Kingstown Land Trust is to conserve and protect the natural resources and open spaces of our town for the enduring benefit of our community.

SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST

Officers

Chairperson: Martha Day
Vice Chairperson: Susan S. Lovejoy
Secretary: Linda Green
Treasurer: James Farrell

Directors

Jessica Bradley
Heather Mae Breau
Clarkson A. Collins
Ellen Grebstein
Kevin McCloskey
Timothy Philbrick
Jeanine Silversmith
Ted Watson
Caroline Wilkel
Charles Lewis, Trustee Emeritus
Sophie Page Lewis, Trustee Emerita
Michael Sherry, Trustee Emeritus

Staff

Julia Fry Landstreet
Executive Director
Joanne Riccitelli
Land Protection Director
Michael Bontecou
Land Operations Coordinator
Doug McGovern
GIS Manager
Angela Brunetti
Development Coordinator

Main Office
227 Robinson Street, Wakefield, RI 02879
401-789-0962
Field Office (SKLT Barn)
17 Matunuck Beach Road

Site Lines Design: Cindy Sabato

JOIN US IN PRESERVING OPEN SPACE IN SOUTH KINGSTOWN

Your support for open space preservation continues to strengthen our organization and invigorate our work. Join or renew your membership, make a general donation, or become an EverGreen member! The South Kingstown Land Trust is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, so your donation is tax-deductible. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP:

I want to: ☐ Join ☐ Renew at the following level:

- ☐ Individual \$30 ☐ Family \$50
- ☐ Steward \$100-\$249
- ☐ Guardian \$250-\$499
- ☐ Conservationist \$500-\$999
- ☐ Benefactor \$1000-\$2,499

GENERAL DONATION:

I'm already a member, but I would like to make an additional donation in the amount of \$_____.



EVERGREEN:

I have already planned a legacy gift to SKLT and qualify to be an EverGreen member through:

- ☐ Estate Plan ☐ Trust ☐ Other

☐ Please contact me about making a legacy gift.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please make checks payable to: South Kingstown Land Trust, 227 Robinson Street, Wakefield, RI 02879

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP:

This program allows our donors to easily establish and maintain their membership through a monthly, automatically recurring gift.

☐ I want to become a sustaining member at the monthly amount of \$_____. Please charge my credit card:

Credit Card # _____

Exp. _____ Billing Zip Code _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

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OTHER SUPPORT

- ☐ I'm a landowner interested in preserving my land.
- ☐ My employer will match my gift. I've enclosed a matching gift form.

WE HAVE AN amazon smile WISH LIST!

There's more than one way to give to the Land Trust! Consider a tax-deductible in-kind donation. From tick protection and sunscreen for staff and volunteers, to day-to-day office supplies, to materials for successful and eco-friendly events, and more, in-kind gifts help us out in so many ways.

And don't forget to add South Kingstown Land Trust as your Amazon Charity every time you shop on AmazonSmile- it really does work! You can find our wish list and AmazonSmile page at smile.amazon.com/ch/05-0516985.



SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST
227 ROBINSON STREET
WAKEFIELD, RI 02879

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Site Lines



SAVE THE DATE!

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|---|
| Every 1st Sat | 10 a.m. | All Ages Rx Hike, Browning Woods Trail |
| Thu, Feb 20 | 8:30 a.m. | 3rd Thursday Hike, Thewlis DAR Trail |
| Thu, Feb 20 | 6 p.m. | Spadefoot Toad Presentation & Potluck, the Barn |
| Thu, Mar 19 | 8:30 a.m. | 3rd Thursday Hike, Biscuit City Preserve |
| Sat, Mar 28 | 10 a.m. | Monitoring Day, the Barn |
| Sun, Mar 29 | 10 a.m. | <i>Monitoring Day Rain Date, the Barn</i> |
| Sat, Apr 11 | all day | Opening Day Youth-Only Trout Fishing, Biscuit City Preserve |
| Thu, Apr 16 | 8:30 a.m. | 3rd Thursday Hike, Crawley Preserve |
| Sun, Apr 26 | 3 p.m. | Members-only Annual Meeting & Bat Presentation, the Barn |
| Thu, May 21 | 8:30 a.m. | 3rd Thursday Hike, DuVal Trail |
| Sun, Aug 9 | 4 p.m. | Great Outdoors Celebration & Auction |

Please register
for all programs
and events at
[sklt.org/events-
calendar/](https://sklt.org/events-calendar/)
or call
(401) 789-0962 x204

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OPEN SPACE MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE