



Site Lines

WINTER 2019

SOUTH KINGSTOWN
LAND TRUST

IT TAKES A VILLAGE...

One of the most important elements in the life of a community-based organization such as the South Kingstown Land Trust is the degree to which it participates in and cooperates with other groups to achieve a significant common good. In our case, that “good” is the overall sustainability of South Kingstown’s sense of place and environmental quality, including continued availability of high-quality water supplies, clean air, viable agricultural lands, maintenance and improvement of natural ecosystems, adaptation to climate change, and access to healthful recreational opportunities in the context of a well-planned community.

Achieving these goals takes monumental efforts, and your Land Trust, comprised of 600 dedicated dues-paying members, 14 trustees, and the equivalent of 3 full-time staff members might seem hardly up to the task. And yet, so far, SKLT has succeeded in protecting and caring for over 2,800 acres of open space, critical watershed areas, farmland, forest lands, and important historical and cultural landscapes. Fortunately, with other private conservation and governmental holdings, such as The Nature Conservancy, Rhode Island Audubon Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and Town of South Kingstown, 33 percent of South Kingstown’s total land area is protected. Interestingly, that about equals the amount of developed property in our town.

The critical question for a sustainable community is the future of the remaining undeveloped land. Environmental burdens of development could double. Buildings require infrastructure, roads, drainage systems, sewage and trash disposal, demands on aquifers. The already-impacted streams, ponds, estuaries, aquifers and natural biological



systems we rely on would likely decline, as would the town’s quality of life and sense of place. The need to conserve more of the vital natural resource base remains clear.

While the challenges are serious, there is also a wellspring of support for conservation in South Kingstown and our region. An impressive 81 percent of South Kingstown residents voted in favor of the recent bond issue for environmental issues. We thank the town’s administration and council for their support in critical open space acquisitions, and the town government for its active and engaged planning department and board.

SKLT is indebted to a network of organizations for cooperative land acquisition and management projects. In addition to those cited above, local Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, garden clubs, foundations, civic organizations and friends like you help SKLT succeed!
~Clarkson Collins, SKLT Land Management Director

SKLT ANNUAL MEETING AND COYOTE PRESENTATION

Our Annual Meeting will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday, April 28 at the Barn, followed by a presentation with Dr. Numi Mitchell, lead scientist with the Narragansett Bay Coyote Study (NBCS). Launched on Aquidneck Island in 2004, NBCS has secured funding to expand its research area throughout Rhode Island for a new five-year study. Working with SKLT, the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and Rhode Island residents, the study will help control the coyote population and work toward a more peaceful coexistence.

Humans try to eliminate coyotes by hunting, trapping, and poisoning, which do not work as a population control strategy. Believe it or not, coyotes control their own numbers by regulating reproduction based on food availability. If coyotes are removed lethally, the population



"Cliff," a coyote captured and collared on Cliff Ave. in Newport, wearing a GPS tracking collar, relaxes on a Middletown Lawn. Photo: Dave Hornoff/The Conservation Agency

will likely go up as competition for food goes down. Reducing food availability should lead to a reduction in the coyote population.

If the NBCS can identify and control coyotes' food sources, the animals will reduce their numbers naturally—a humane and passive way to manage populations and work toward coexistence. Mitchell is using GPS tracking collars to find out where coyotes are spending their time. A healthy

alfa-male coyote dubbed "Ghost" was trapped in fall 2018 on a South Kingstown Land Trust property, tranquilized, collared and released back into the wild. Mitchell is tracking this coyote in search of its food source.

Join us as Dr. Mitchell shares research-based strategies for the management of and coexistence with coyotes in Rhode Island. RSVP online at sklt.org/events-calendar/ or by calling 401-789-0962 x204.

"FULL SNOW MOON" HIKE

Tuesday, February 19, SKLT will hold a Full Moon Hike at Weeden Farm. According to the "Farmer's Almanac," the February full moon is traditionally known as the "Full Snow Moon," since the heaviest snows typically fall in this month. Because hunting is more difficult at this time of year, some Native American tribes were known to call this moon the "Hunger Moon." The fields at Weeden provide the perfect landscape for viewing this astronomical delight. Following the brisk hike, warm up around a bonfire outside the Barn with s'mores and a hot drink. We plan to hike if it's clear and cold, but are prepared to cancel if hiking or driving conditions are unsafe. RSVP required: 401-789-0962 x204. Space is limited.



MONITORING DAY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!



SKLT Trustee, Heather Mae Breau, with property folder

More than 160 properties are protected by SKLT. Each and every one is formally inspected annually in a process called “monitoring.” Monitoring Day 2019 will be held on Saturday, March 30, starting at 10 a.m. at the Barn (rain date March 31). Heather Mae Breau, an active SKLT member and trustee, under the tutelage of Sophie Page Lewis, has assumed the role of overseeing SKLT’s monitoring program. Here, we take a moment for a Q&A with Heather Mae all about Monitoring Day!

What prompted you to lead SKLT’s monitoring program?

Initially, my love of being outside! For me, making sure the land we have promised to protect stays protected should be our number one priority. Sophie Page Lewis patiently took me under her wing and taught me everything she knows. She made SKLT monitoring what it is today. I hope to make her proud by continuing to lead the great program she created.

Why is monitoring so important?

We have a serious obligation to ensure the properties in our care stay perpetually clean, open, and exactly as we received them. If we don’t inspect them, any number of terrible things might happen. We also have obligations to easement deeds, accreditation, and other state/federal organizations to do what we promised. Keeping open space open makes all the difference.

Can I monitor if I’ve never monitored before?

Absolutely! The best way to get started is to join us on our annual Monitoring Day. We offer plenty of instruction and we can pair you up with a more experienced volunteer. You will learn everything required to do the task successfully. It’s an important job, but you should also expect to have lots of fun!

What can I expect Monitoring Day to be like?

We gather at the Barn in the morning for coffee, instruction, and an overview of what is expected from our volunteers. Then we assign properties and supply you with a folder containing maps, any restricted uses, and a set of questions to answer. We offer you trail mix, tick repellent, trash bags, and off you go! Working in small groups is efficient and fun. An open mind and great attitude are a requirement. You will also need a camera (your phone will work well) to take a few photos at each property you monitor. When you return to the Barn with your findings, we reward you with a beautiful lunch.

What are the next steps SKLT takes after volunteers help out on Monitoring Day?

After monitoring is complete, we collect all the data and note any issues found on the properties. SKLT staff will take measures to have any issues corrected. We then store all this information so it can be retrieved in the future should something come up and we need to refer to it. But the biggest, most important part of all of this is the annual monitoring of the properties. The work done on this day is invaluable and we are appreciative and grateful to all who attend.

LAND TRUST + LIBRARY = A MATCH MADE IN NATURE!

SKLT's mission to protect and preserve open spaces throughout South Kingstown in perpetuity only just begins with the protection of the land. Thus, it is critical that the youth of our community build knowledge and experience of these special places so they are fully prepared and delighted to accept the mantle of stewardship.

Building on our All Ages "Park Rx" monthly hikes to reach further into the community, and with a generous grant from BankNewport, SKLT will be partnering with the South Kingstown Public Library to create a "Young Naturalist Backpack Program," in which families can check out backpacks filled with items that will encourage and enable them to explore the more than 12 miles of trails through SKLT's beautiful natural areas. This program is based on the library's highly successful museum pass system and will be

offered to families at no cost.

With BankNewport's donation, SKLT will place backpacks at the Peace Dale Library, Kingston Free Library, and Robert Beverly Hale Library, ensuring an opportunity for all families in our town to participate. Each backpack will contain SKLT's trail maps, magnifying glasses, binoculars, field guides, and other tools that young explorers can use to interact with and learn from nature. Donated copies of my book "The Rhode Island Family Hiking Guide and Journal" will be included to provide a variety of tips to hike safely and successfully with children. This book also helps parents and caregivers learn why it is so important to spend time



outdoors.

This spring, SKLT will work with the South Kingstown Public Library to launch the program with an event and marketing plan so that all families are aware of and make use of the program. Stay tuned for more information! ~Jeanine Silversmith, SKLT trustee and member

PARTNERS IN FARMING

With a shortage of affordable farmland in Rhode Island, SKLT works hard to support local farming in a number of ways.

We lease more than 365 acres of farmland for the production of a variety of produce, products, and livestock, including peppers, corn, cattle, hay and organic vegetables. We also participate in a statewide consortium to connect farmers to farmland. Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/farmland.php), Land For Good (www.landforgood.org), SKLT and others have come together to form a central database of available farmland in the state. And, we provided scholarship support for a local family to attend Farm Succession School to help them determine what is best for them and their farm. We encourage you, our members, to support local farmers markets and CSA's. And mark your calendar for Saturday, June 29, when SKLT and the Hale House will co-host a celebration of local foods.



SKLT PROTECTS MORE FARMLAND!

SKLT is excited to announce that we successfully preserved 23.6 acres of farmland off Curtis Corner Road. Landowners John and Amy Eidson have worked and loved this land for 35 years, first leasing it and now owning it. They've long wanted to protect this land in perpetuity and, in early 2017, initiated the process to sell the conservation easement to SKLT.

When the Eidsons first leased the land, it was in various stages of reforestation, with some cedars growing in the southern fields. At first, they used only the cleared land and slowly worked on clearing brush and removing stones from the overgrown fields. The entire property has prime or statewide important agricultural soils. They produce mostly horse quality hay, which they sell locally.

The Eidsons also hay abutting properties—in total, they farm 44 acres. All these fields were originally part of the Irons Farm. In a nod to that history, the Eidsons' business is named Irons Gate Stable.

SKLT thanks our federal and state partners for grants that helped fund this purchase: the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Land Easement Program and the State Agricultural Land Preservation Commission.

Land protection runs in the Eidson family; Amy's father



restricted an eight-acre parcel directly north of this land so that it wouldn't be developed. The Eidsons sold this easement to SKLT at a discount. "We are excited and relieved that for our lifetime and beyond, this beautiful rolling farmland crisscrossed by over a mile of magnificent stone walls will be preserved and protected," said Amy Eidson. SKLT thanks them for their contribution and their dedication to preserving the land. ~Joanne Riccitelli, Land Protection Director



STONE WALLS COMPLETE AT WEEDEN FARM

Weeden Farm, acquired by SKLT in 2002, needed extensive work done to its historically significant stone walls. We began restoration back in 2006, and after 12 years of toil, we are happy to announce that the major work is now complete! Though ongoing maintenance and restoration will continue, join us in celebrating this impressive accomplishment!



MILESTONES

Without a doubt, 2018 was a banner 35th birthday year for the South Kingstown Land Trust. We honored our founders with a plaque at the Barn and are grateful for their foresight.

Thanks to our many new and renewing members, contributions to our Annual Fund, and fabulous support from the business community, we met our financial goals! Please take the time to review the list of donors and to thank them (and yourself) for preserving the beauty and quality of life unique to South Kingstown.

We have a full calendar of events, hikes, programs and projects in store for 2019. In addition to those listed on page 8, a committee is hard at work on the annual Great Outdoors Celebration & Live Auction in August. For the foodies in our midst, the Matunuck Preservation Society has unearthed a Hale family grocery list and menu, and planning is underway for SKLT to co-host a local food event at the Barn in June. And, back by popular demand, we will host a Car Show in July, complete with a jonnycake cook-off at the Barn. If any of these sound fun, please call; we are always looking for volunteers and would love to have your help.

SKLT remains a small grassroots organization, and your support and participation is critical to the stewardship of our town. Monitoring Day is a chance for volunteers to experience and explore hidden protected places throughout our community and a chance for us to thank you with a festive lunch afterward. You will be surprised at what is hidden in plain sight here in South Kingstown.

Winter can be long and dark in New England. Don't forget to go outside, stare at the stars, and listen for the owls, then come inside and join us as we study and preserve this fabulous community.



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

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

Trustees

Heather Mae Breau
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Executive Director
Joanne Riccitelli
Land Protection Director
Clarkson Collins
Land Management Director
Michael Bontecou
Land Operations Coordinator
Doug McGovern
Land Operations Coordinator
Angela Brunetti
Development Coordinator

Main Office
227 Robinson Street, Wakefield, RI 02879
401-789-0962
Field Office (SKLT Barn)
17 Matunuck Beach Road
401-783-4999

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! SKLT 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 gift to SKLT and qualify to be an EverGreen member through:

- ☐ Estate Plans ☐ Trust ☐ Other

- ☐ I am a landowner interested in preserving my land.
☐ Please contact me about making a Legacy gift.
☐ My employer will match my gift. I've enclosed a matching gift form.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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



GIVE THE GIFT OF OPEN SPACE

Need a gift idea, or just want to share your love of SKLT? Give the gift of conserving and protecting the natural resources, cultural landscapes, and open spaces of our town! We now offer the option of gift memberships to SKLT. Visit sklt.org and click the membership option on the left to order a gift membership today!

The recipient of your gift will receive our newsletter three times a year, discounts, advance invitations to upcoming events, and inclusion on our email list. Give a gift that is unique, fun, educational, and always tax deductible!

Thank you to all who support our mission.





SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST
227 ROBINSON STREET
WAKEFIELD, RI 02879

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Site Lines



Join Us For These UPCOMING SKLT EVENTS

Every 1st Sat	10 a.m.	All Ages Rx Hike, Browning Woods Trail
Tue, Feb 19	4:30 p.m.	Full Moon Hike & Bonfire, Weeden Farm/ the Barn
Thu, Feb 21	8:30 a.m.	3rd Thursday Hike, Thewlis DAR Trail
Thu Mar 21	8:30 a.m.	3rd Thursday Hike, Biscuit City Preserve
Sat, Mar 30	10 a.m.	Monitoring Day, the Barn
Sun, Mar 31	10 a.m.	Monitoring Day Rain Date, the Barn
Thu, Apr 18	8:30 a.m.	3rd Thursday Hike, Crawley Preserve
Sun, Apr 28	3 p.m.	Annual Meeting, the Barn
Thu, May 16	8:30 a.m.	3rd Thursday Hike, DuVal Trail
Sun, Aug 11	4 p.m.	Save the Date! Great Outdoors Celebration & Auction, the Barn

For programs and
events, please register
online 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