



Site Lines

Fall 2021  *Open Space Makes All the Difference*



The Invaluable Contributions & Talents of SKLT Volunteers

The South Kingstown Land Trust stewards the land and properties it owns to maximize the positive impact that protected open space and cultural landscapes have for all facets of our community. We are able to engage in so many projects due to the ongoing support and participation of many, many volunteers.

Osprey have made a terrific comeback and many return to South Kingstown every spring ready to build an eyrie (nest) on a high tree or post that is close to the water and not too close to other places where predators could hide and stalk their young. This summer, as an Eagle project, Life Scout Charlie Lucia worked with SKLT staff and other members of Troop 1 Wakefield to construct and erect a platform and pole to provide this valuable habitat at Weeden Farm.

Volunteers are not only critical to land stewardship but also with the ongoing communication and appreciation of our members and supporters. This summer, a cheerful group of volunteers met at the SKLT Barn to assemble and address more than 2,000 invitations to the Great Outdoors Celebration and almost 1,000 *Site Lines* newsletters. These projects provide supporters who are unable or less inclined to physical, outdoor work with the opportunity to connect with each other, the staff, and make a difference in the success of SKLT's mission.



Photo: Ted Watson



Photo: Kevin McCloskey

Volunteer boardmember Kevin McCloskey oversees the ongoing restoration of the Perry Grist Mill with tremendous volunteer effort. This summer included the lifting and cleaning of the millstone, removing a plywood floor, milling, and installing an oak plank floor. The wood for the floor was collected from Weeden Farm, and then cured and milled by volunteer Dave Goss.

On November 1st, we will be hosting a Volunteer Open House from 5 to 7 p.m. at The Barn. We look forward to celebrating our cadre of amazing volunteers who help us with everything from trail maintenance and wall building to label sticking and event hosting; and helping new volunteers find their niche and share their talents. This will be a great opportunity to learn about the work SKLT staff and volunteers are doing to foster climate resiliency and serve the needs of our community.

MILESTONES

Fall is a magical season. The sun rises later, sets earlier, and the angle of the sun can make things either sparkle or evoke a poem by E.A. Poe. The beaches may have quieted, but the squirrels and Land Trust are hard at work.

Thanks to all who attended and contributed to the Annual Meeting. So delighted that many were present to welcome our new Board members and share our successes from last year. The Board leadership has changed, see below, and there are lots of great plans underway.

SKLT has been blessed by the foresight of past leadership to prioritize hiring staff dedicated to land protection and we are forever grateful for the success and longevity of Joanne Riccitelli's tenure. Her dedication to land protection has been invaluable. She leaves SKLT with big shoes to fill and a dozen project in the works. To say we wish her well with her future pursuits is an understatement.

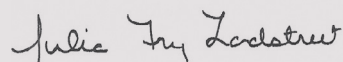
In the five years since y'all were gracious enough to bring me on board as Executive Director, we have

accomplished virtually all the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan, so the process has begun to draft an update. Members, supporters, and the community at large will be asked to respond to a survey to help SKLT stay on a successful course to satisfy our mission and meet community needs. Thank you in advance for taking the time and share your thoughts and insights.

While our focus is to serve our community, we do so in accordance with national standards. I am proud to report that SKLT was awarded Re-accreditation by the national Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission. The standards are high and the process grueling, but SKLT takes its responsibility to this exceptional community very seriously.

Thank you to the staff, board, and volunteers who keep us focused.

In gratitude,



Julia Fry Landstreet
Executive Director



SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST

Officers

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Treasurer: James Farrell

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Heather Mae Breau
Clarkson Collins
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Charles Lewis, Director Emeritus
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Julia Fry Landstreet
Executive Director

Tyler Maikath
Land Management Director

Michael Bontecou
Land Operations Coordinator

Matt Eldridge
Marketing & Development Coordinator

Address

17 Matunuck Beach Road
South Kingstown, RI 02879
401-789-0962

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Website: sklt.org

Email: info@sklt.org

The mission of the South Kingstown Land Trust is to protect and steward the natural resources, open spaces and cultural landscapes for the benefit of our communities now and forever.



A Thank You & Farewell From Joanne Riccitelli

I've had the most wonderful opportunity to protect land in our lovely town for 23 years – forests, farms, drinking water protection areas, ponds, cultural landscapes, and fields. I've met dozens of landowners, each unique but united in their desire to keep their land just the way it is, forever. With the help of many, I've been able to raise over \$15 million from a variety of sources and protected about 2150 acres in town – I can't imagine a more satisfying or fulfilling career!

In preparing to leave this job, I find myself thinking about when it started. I am most thankful to those who hired me back in 1998: Clark Collins and Chris Little and the rest of the board from those days. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) played a significant role then, both in interviews and with training. I didn't realize at the time, but the SKLT board of 1998 made a bold choice to hire a land protection director as their first full-time employee. The rationale was that focusing on protecting land would most benefit SKLT –establishing SKLT in the public's eye as an effective agent worthy of their support.

A program was established in the early days called the Community Partnership. At first, we convened monthly - Town of South Kingstown planning department, RI Department of Environmental Management Planning staff, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Champlin Foundation, TNC and others as needed, like Audubon and Narrow River Land Trust. Supporting this early work was Pete August of URI's Environmental Data Center (and SKLT board) with maps of priority natural resources. It was an effective and efficient partnership, which led to strong relationships between the parties which continue today. On many occasions, one agency would yield the lead on a project to a more logical partner, with everyone knowing that protecting the land was the ultimate goal.

I have continued handing off to partner agencies projects that were better suited to them, and vice versa. In the end, the result has been more protected land in South Kingstown. The partnerships focused on protecting the land have been fruitful, truly a grand endeavor.

Thank you all for just the best time!

- Joanne Riccitelli, Land Protection Director 1998 - 2021



Creating Climate Resilient Habitat at Biscuit City Preserve

Biscuit City Preserve and its small network of trails in Kingston is one of SKLT's most beloved properties due to its historical significance and proximity to neighborhoods and URI. This year, the trails have not only been busy with their regular visitors but also SKLT staff and volunteers working tirelessly to improve the property's ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

As South Kingstown experiences more frequent and severe flooding impacts from severe storms, like Tropical Storm Ida, both natural and man-made wetlands will be increasingly important for their stormwater holding capacity. Thanks to generous funding from the Mary LeMoine Potter Fund of the RI Foundation, Biscuit City is now the proud home of a flourishing man-made wetland. This rain garden is strategically placed to intercept stormwater runoff, and filters the pollutants carried along in those waters. Planted with native, locally grown shrubs and perennials, it creates excellent habitat for birds and butterflies, while preventing polluted runoff from entering Biscuit City Pond.

In addition to the rain garden, SKLT has partnered with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve habitat diversity and wetland buffer resiliency along the banks of Biscuit City Pond and the stream with additional plantings. These native plants, such as cranberry viburnum and silky dogwood shrubs, stabilize the soils, and provide food and habitat for insects, migratory birds, and small mammals.

As we have improved wildlife habitat, we have also repaired and enhanced the trail around the pond by adding crushed bluestone, reinforced by timbers to hold it in place. These repairs proved necessary after nearly 7" in. of rain fell in August, followed by Tropical Storm Ida dumping 4" in. of rain on Sept. 2nd, a storm historic in its intensity.

SKLT will continue to assess our properties for strategic opportunities to enhance their public accessibility and resiliency to the impacts of climate change.

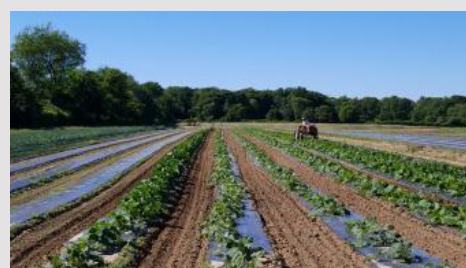
17 Acres of Farmland for Lease at Hollis Tucker Farm

Looking for farmland?

17 acres of tillable farmland is available for lease at SKLT's Hollis Tucker Farm at 247 Tuckertown Road. The lease has a length of five years with option to extend in additional five-year increments indefinitely.

This lease or leases are available for cropland, fruit, and hay production.

Learn more and submit your proposal on New England Farm Finder or email questions to tyler.maikath@sklt.org





Saving the American Chestnut: Tales from the Orchard

During the 2021 season, volunteers from SKLT, the MA/RI Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation (MA/RI-TACF), URI, and the URI Master Gardeners (URI-MGP) had special workdays to “inoculate” chestnuts with blight to test their resistance - in addition to hundreds of hours of regular work maintaining fences, mowing, pruning, weeding, and invasives removal. Many chestnuts put on several feet of growth in the plentiful rain, living up to their reputation as one of our fastest-growing native hardwoods. The bittersweet sure liked the rain too! For many volunteers, the outdoor work amidst the beautiful trees was a great escape from pandemic-related isolation, no matter how fast that bittersweet grew.

The hot inoculation day went smoothly thanks to assistance from SKLT Land Management Director Tyler Maikath and intern Lucianna Faraone Coccia, volunteers and interns from MA/RI-TACF, and summer regulars from URI-MGP. “Inoculation” includes inserting a small amount of the chestnut blight fungus into a hole punched into the bark, then taping over; trees wall off this invader with varying success, and we rate the trees’ resistance after a period of time. The least resistant trees are removed.

Why care about the American chestnut? What is the blight?

The American chestnut was an important pollinator, wildlife, and human food source before the blight. American chestnut grows quickly; the rot-resistant wood provided a local, renewable resource good for many purposes. Chestnut blight is a fungus native to Asia that causes disease in chestnut species there, but the trees have many evolved defenses; it is more like the “common cold” to the chestnuts there. Our native American chestnut had never encountered this fungus, and had no defense. Blight was likely introduced around 1900 and spread across the full range of American chestnut within fifty years, killing billions of adult chestnuts. So few mature adults remain that the species is “functionally extinct”. Fortunately, not all American chestnuts were killed, and roots sometimes resprout, so we are able to create offspring from the few temporarily surviving blooming trees.

One restoration approach, used by TACF, is “backcross breeding” -- breeding a mostly-American tree that includes Chinese chestnut resistance and local American genetic diversity across the range. Our orchards are part of that project; the first SKLT planting began in 2009, and plantings continued until 2017. The most resistant trees will be kept, but most will be removed.

The current and broadened hybrid chestnut breeding, and potential new orchards with partners in the Burrillville Land Trust (who visited Tuckertown orchards this summer) are all exciting developments. Our heartfelt thanks to the efforts of so many in this important work!

- Yvonne Federowicz, American Chestnut Foundation

Upcoming Presentations this Fall

Falconry in Rhode Island with Jim Gwiazdzinski

Monday, October 26th - 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Flock to the SKLT Barn to learn about the ancient art of falconry from Rhode Island master falconer Jim Gwiazdzinski. You'll learn what falconers do and how to become a master falconer before getting the unique opportunity of viewing one of these beautiful birds of prey up close.

Free to members, \$10 suggested donation for non-members



Pro-Forestation: Growing Forests to Combat Climate Change

Wednesday, November 10th - 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

What is pro-forestation? Susan Masino, Professor of Applied Science at Trinity College, will explain the importance of growing existing natural forests in addressing the crises in climate and biodiversity. You will learn how proforestation is a more rapid, powerful, and practical option for sequestering carbon than afforestation (planting trees) or reforestation (replacing logged forests).

Free to members, \$10 suggested donation for non-members



Volunteer Open House



Monday, November 1st

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

South Kingstown Land Trust's success depends on you, our community volunteers!

Grab a friend and stop by the Barn to learn more about the variety of opportunities to volunteer and make a difference in protecting and stewarding open space. You'll peruse the "Job Fair"-style booths and find which opportunity is best for you, whether that's removing invasive plants, picking up litter, working events, or stamping envelopes!

Free, registration required as space is limited.

Guided Hike at Biscuit City & Potter Wood Trails

Thursday, November 18th

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Trek through the beautiful meadow and woodland known as Potter Wood owned by the Kingston Improvement Association before crossing the street to Biscuit City Trail. You'll visit the historic mill foundations and pond and witness the recent projects that have improved the trail and wildlife habitat.

Free, registration is required as space is limited.



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

- ☐ Individual \$30 ☐ Family \$50
☐ Steward \$100-\$249
☐ Guardian \$250-\$499
☐ Conservationist \$500-\$999
☐ Benefactor \$1,000-\$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 _____

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 _____

OTHER SUPPORT

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

Please make checks payable to: South Kingstown Land Trust, 17 Matunuck Beach Road, South Kingstown, RI 02879

SKLT Earns National Recognition with Renewed Accreditation



SKLT was awarded renewed accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (LTAC), an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, a national land conservation organization that represents more than 1,000 land trusts nationwide.

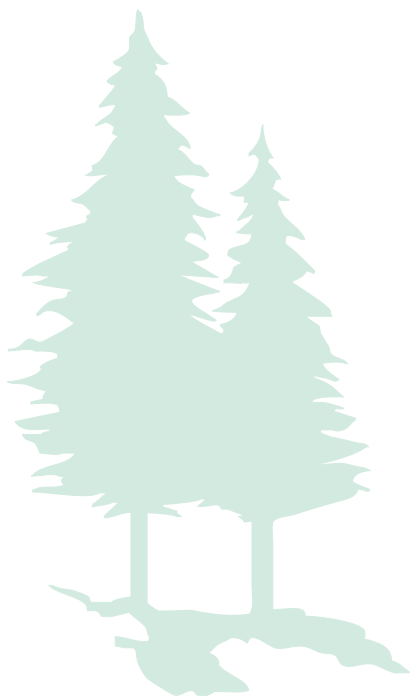
"Renewing our accreditation shows SKLT's ongoing commitment to permanent land conservation in South Kingstown," said Julia Landstreet, executive director. "We are a stronger organization than ever for having gone through the rigorous accreditation renewal process. Our strength means our community's beautiful open spaces will be protected forever, making South Kingstown an even greater place for us and our children."

"SKLT has made an extraordinary commitment to excellence, trust, and permanence in land conservation. The Commission especially recognizes SKLT for its successful capital campaign to grow its stewardship fund and build two buildings," reads the Land Trust Accreditation Commission's summary of findings.



SOUTH KINGSTOWN LAND TRUST
17 MATUNUCK BEACH ROAD
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RI 02879

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Join Us at an Upcoming Program or Event

Please register for all programs and events in advance at sklt.org/event-tickets

October 26	6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Falconry in Rhode Island with Jim Gwiazdzinski, <i>The Barn</i>
November 1	5 - 7 p.m.	Volunteers Open House, <i>The Barn</i>
November 10	6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Pro-Forestation Presentation with Susan Masino, <i>The Barn</i>
November 18	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>Biscuit City & Potter Wood Trails</i>
December 16	9 - 11 a.m.	Guided Hike, <i>DuVal Trail</i>
January 11	6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Fishers & Other R.I. Critters with Laken Ganoe, <i>The Barn</i>

HUNTING SEASON PRECAUTIONS

Attention hikers! Please wear at least 200 sq. inches of solid day-glo fluorescent orange such as a Hat or Vest.



* 2nd Saturday in September until the last day of February *

December Shotgun Season: Vest required (500 sq. inches)



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Not on the SKLT email list?
Contact Matt at matt.eldridge@sklt.org