

WHISPERS IN THE FOREST

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

Newtown Forest Association, Inc.

SUMMER 2008

The NFA is Connecticut's oldest private land trust and a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization. The NFA is dedicated to the preservation of open space forests, meadows and watershed areas. With over 80 years of experience and over 1000 acres protected, the NFA has been helping Newtown retain its rural character. Join or Donate Now and support the NFA to continue its mission and expand and care for the land it owns and preserves.



Are you a "GOOD NEIGHBOR"? Do you want to be a GOOD NEIGHBOR? Go to www.newtownforestassociation.org/infagood-neighbor.html.

ANNUAL MEETING, NEW OFFICERS, REVISED BY-LAWS

On May 8, 2008 the Newtown Forest Association, Inc. (NFA) held its Membership's Annual Meeting, at the Cyrenius H. Booth Library. The NFA is a private not-for-profit land trust that owns over 1000 acres of forest, meadows, ponds and wetlands in Newtown that it will protect in perpetuity to enhance our community for passive recreation and wild-life sanctuaries.

The NFA board obtained the memberships approval to adopt a revised set of by-laws, the slate of officers and directors and presented a summary of the activities they had conducted over the past year and its plans for the balance of 2008.

The board slate remained consistent year over year with the only change being R.T. (Bob) Eckenrode, former Secretary, assumed the responsibility of President and Martha Wright, former President, assumed the responsibility of Secretary. The Board expressed its appreciation and thanks for Mrs. Wright's leadership over the past 3 years. In addition to Mr. Eckenrode's role as Secretary, he was co-chair of the Stewardship Committee where he developed stewardship and property management plans for several properties. He was the visionary of the Holcombe Memorial Garden, honoring the property donor Joesephine Holcombe, which serves to demonstrate the use of native plant species for a low maintenance educational garden surrounding our offices.

Under Mrs. Wright's leadership the NFA, and its Board, have focused heavily on governance activities and have established a platform for the organization to grow by adopting many land trust best practices, including the adoption to ascribe to the

Standards and Practices established by the Land Trust Alliance (a nationally recognized not-for-profit established to serve as a resource to the land trust community).



From Left to Right: Bob Eckenrode, Carly Wilson & Martha Wright

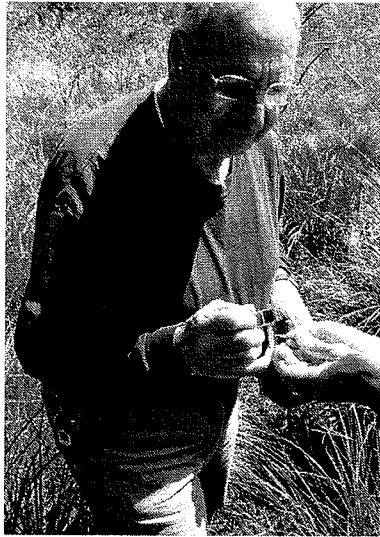
Mr. Eckenrode plans to continue the efforts of strengthen the NFA's infrastructure and developing long-term stewardship plans for each of our properties; much of which is focused on wildlife habitat enhancement, encouraging biodiversity, and good forest health, addressing abutting property owners property line posting and encroachment and invasive species control are also issues that will continue to be addressed. In addition, the NFA is seeking additional assistance in these stewardship efforts by requesting neighbors to volunteer in some capacity who live near or adjacent to NFA lands. If you are interested working outdoors, and want to get involved, in our efforts please contact us at 203-270-3650. (continued page 5)

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WHISPERS IN THE FOREST

BEETLES SURVIVE WINTER AND GET TO WORK



Bob Merola gets a close look

Just under a year ago, biological control of Purple loosestrife began at an NFA site here in Newtown. The beetles overwintered and colonized at the site. They've begun to emerge and propagate.

You may recall that Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) has been designated by the State of Connecticut as an invasive plant. It was banned from commercial sale in Connecticut in 2005. Purple loosestrife is one invasive plant for which biological control agents (such as *Galerucella* beetles) have been identified, tested and released.

At a visit to the site on May 31st this year, recently elected NFA President Bob Eckenrode and NFA Treasurer Guy Peterson, hosted Donna Ellis, University of Connecticut, Department of Plant Science and 2007 "beetle farmer" Bob Merola. Donna is an extension educator at the University of Connecticut and Co-Chair for the Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG).

Donna, Bob, Guy and Bob observed significant Purple loosestrife plant damage at the site. Purple loosestrife plants were approximately 8-12 inches high

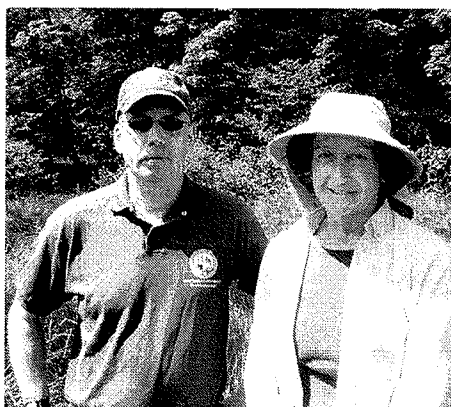
and displayed the telltale pinhole damage caused by the beetles. Clusters of beetle eggs were observed on many plants and several adult beetles were also seen nestled in the tender shoots at the top of the plants.

As a beetle farmer in 2007, it was a gratifying experience to see the early results of last year's efforts. Donna Ellis was heard saying "I was very pleased to see the impacts that the beetles were making so soon after their release in the wetland."

In their continuing efforts to preserve the land, NFA approved and allowed two Newtown Master Gardener 2008 interns to dig Purple loosestrife plants at the site for their Beetle Farmer outreach program this year. They will collect beetles at some other site in CT, farm/raise the beetles and ultimately release them at some other CT site, thereby continuing the effort to control the invasive and banned Purple loosestrife.

This is a good example of maintaining and improving our wetlands through good stewardship.

The NFA wants to thank Bob Merola for his assistance on this project and the drafting of the following article.



Bob Eckenrode & Donna Ellis during our site visit at our beetle release site.

PRESIDENTS NOTES

Greetings Friends and Neighbors,

I would like to take this opportunity to express to you what an honor it is to assume the position of President of the Newtown Forest Association. As CT's oldest private land trust we are also Newtown's largest private land owner. The responsibility for overseeing the health and maintenance of these lands is one we take very seriously. In accordance with Newtown's plan for conservation and development, as a private landowner, the NFA has an important role to play in preserving the rural character of the town by preserving and maintaining the health the natural resources we oversee.

With continued guidance from our outgoing President and current Secretary, Martha Wright, our current board and volunteers have made great progress in helping our organization move forward in many areas. We have been able to enhanced guidelines for better stewardship of our properties, grow membership, a proactive effort to include abutting neighbors and volunteers, and a working relationship with the. The Land Trust Alliance, the Connecticut Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Connecticut Land Conservation Council These activities have enabled the NFA to be more efficient in the way we do things and succeed in the goals we have set out to accomplish. I welcome members and non-members alike to share in our efforts to enhance, maintain, and enjoy some of Newtown's greatest forests, meadows, ponds and trails. I look forward to meeting with you and I guarantee this will be a rewarding experience we can all appreciate for generations to come.

Warm Regards,
R.T.Eckenrode
President

ANOTHER GREAT EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT

In another effort to expand the long-standing relationship between local Boy Scout Troops and the Newtown Forest Association (NFA), 17 year old Shane Price, Troop 370, completed his community service project requirement towards achieving the coveted rank of Eagle Scout. The Eagle Scout rank is achieved after fulfilling a variety of advancement requirements, plus the completion of a community service project that demonstrates the candidates' leadership qualities. Shane approached the NFA extending the offer to conduct his Eagle Scout community service project on one of the NFA preserves and asked for some ideas. The NFA is never at a loss for identifying one of the projects on its "to-do list" to an eager and will young Scout. Scouting has a history of instilling youth with qualities of leadership, character building and community service while gaining an appreciation and respect for the outdoors and our environment.

The project that Shane formulated and the NFA approved was for the NFA's 78 acre Holcombe Preserve located at the corner of Great Hill and Birch Hill Road and involved a combination of trail maintenance, bridge building and wildlife enhancement. There are three aspects to a project, first the planning, second the securing of supplies and manpower and lastly the execution.

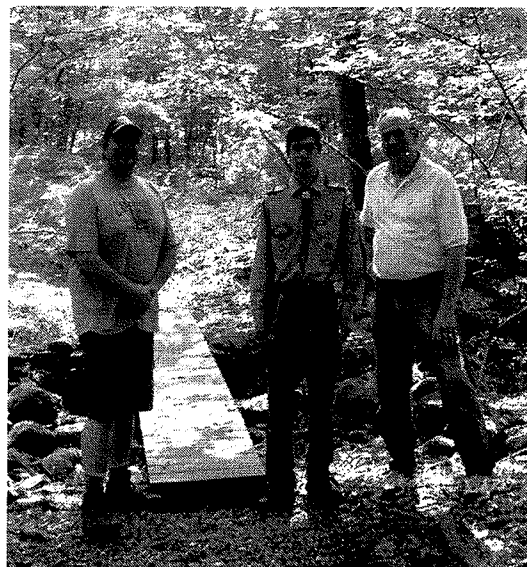
Trail maintenance aspect of the project involved the replacement of a 7-foot walk bridge that crossed an environmentally sensitive area and the clearing of debris scattered on the trail and the creation of multiple brush piles to serve as wildlife habitats. Brush piles serve as a common wildlife enhancement tool for conservation and promote shelter for a variety of ground nesting species. The larger part of the project involved the installation of a new 16-foot walk bridge to improve the safety of visitors who hike a section of the trail. Shane was able to secure the donation of IPÊ wood from Rings End Lumber in Bethel to use as bridge decking material.

The NFA recommended the use of IPÊ as this wood is an environmentally responsible choice which naturally resists rot, decay, insects, and mold without the use of toxic chemicals used in other decking products. It is naturally fire resistant and is an incredibly strong and dense wood, and is most often harvested from naturally sustainable forests. It has very high wear durability in daily use and is resistant to splintering and checking.

It's also beautiful and has been awarded the best decay resistance rating available - "HIGH 25+ years", however it has been known to last longer, there just isn't a higher rating! Weather has little to no effect upon the structural integrity of IPÊ wood. The sun will eventually transform the wood from it's original reddish-brown to a beautiful silver patina. Due to the dense cell structure of IPÊ (all heart wood) it's not only naturally resistant to insects but also to decay, rot, and molds.

Shane solicited his family, friends and members from his Scout troop to volunteer to assist him with the completion of this project that involved approximately 150 hours of community service.

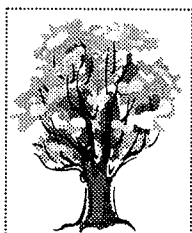
The project was a great success for the NFA and, similar to many Eagle projects in the past, will benefit the entire community by enhancing the trails that the NFA owns, maintains and opens to the public. The NFA is grateful to Shane for his project and he should be proud of his efforts and the efforts of his volunteers. We hope that the many visitors appreciate Shane's efforts and congratulate him on his Trail to Eagle.



From Left to Right: Guy Peterson, Shane Price and Mr. Labreque

NEWTOWN FOREST ASSOCIATION, INC.

2008 MEMBERSHIP CARD



Name _____
Address _____

E-Mail _____
Phone Number _____

Please make checks payable to: N.F.A. and return to PO Box 213, Newtown, CT 06470. The NFA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID #06-6079549

- Individual Member \$15
- Family \$20 # in Household ____
- Donation \$ _____
- I would like to volunteer. I am interested in the following:
 - Office work
 - Good Neighbor Program
 - Property Stewardship
 - Other _____

WHISPERS IN THE FOREST

NFA NEEDS YOUR HELP TO ADDRESS ILLEGAL DUMPING

This Summer the Town of Newtown, Wetlands Enforcement Division, (the "Town") notified the NFA that extensive illegal dumping/filling-in of the wetlands had occurred at our Nettleton Preserve (the "Preserve") off of West Street and caused significant damage to the wetlands and the riparian buffer to the creek that crosses the property.

The Preserve was donated to the NFA under the provision that it was to be designated as a wildlife preserve, and only passive recreational activities are to be permitted. This is not to be used for area residents to discard their yard waste.

The Town has informed us that the NFA could face fines and will be required to incur significant costs to remediate this illegal dumping area. The Town does acknowledge that the NFA is not responsible for the illegal dumping/filling-in of its wetlands nor does it condone this action by its neighbors. Putting aside the fact that the dumping is occurring on highly regulated wetland areas; it is occurring on private property.

NFA is the oldest private land trust in the State of Connecticut and a 501(c)(3) charitable not-for-profit organization. We are not a town or municipal entity. We are private landowner just like you, although our purpose in owning property is to protect it in a natural state for wildlife and passive recreation. While we are pleased to open many of our properties to the public for passive recreational use, we must strictly prevent illegal dumping. Illegal dumping has not ever been allowed on this, or any NFA property.

We are asking for everyone's help in stopping this trespass on our land. Here is what you can do:

1. If you are responsible for the past or present dumping or filling-in of wetlands with your yard waste on our property, please immediately cease doing so.
2. If you know of others that use the Pre-

serve for illegal dumping of yard waste, please let them know that such use is prohibited and must stop. Please contact us or try to engage them and request that they contact the NFA directly and collectively work on a remediation plan. Such remediation may require permits in many instances and we can assist in those efforts.

3. Please contact the Newtown Police Department if you notice illegal dumping by people using the Preserve. They have been made aware of the problem and will be helping us put an end to this problem.



Please leave a message on voicemail at 203-270-3650 or via EMAIL to one of our Board Members to report any illegal activity or unauthorized use.

The NFA has recently taken several additional measures to help stop the illegal dumping, including posting the Preserve with "NO DUMPING" signs, bar-ways preventing truck and tractor access and more of our "NFA Wildlife Preserve"

signs on portions of the boundaries.

In Connecticut, land conservation organizations like ours enjoy the benefit of vigorous state laws protecting their property rights. These laws include tough remedies against encroachment, which is defined to mean "to conduct an activity that causes damage or alteration to the land or vegetation or other features thereon." This specifically includes damage done by illegal dumping, ATVs, constructing unauthorized trails, cutting trees and shrubs, destroying or moving stone walls or erecting unauthorized structures, such as fences. Encroachers are required to remedy the encroachment by restoring the land to the condition it was in prior to the encroachment. The land trust's remedy may include damages, multiple damages, injunction, and attorney fees.

Any court action will seek reimbursement of our costs, management fees, if any, reasonable attorney fees, and whatever damages are appropriate. We regret that this has become necessary, but, like any neighbor, we must protect our property, which we intend to preserve for generations to come.

In addition to the prohibition against illegal dumping on our property, the use of motorized vehicles, hunting, trapping or the discharge of firearms (including paint-ball guns) of any sort are also prohibited activities on NFA property.



Blackman Preserve Fights Back Against the Invasives

The NFA gives the Blackman Preserve a facelift. The NFA has always engaged someone to mow the meadow annually despite this, the invasives have really started to spread further into the field.

This property is in a highly visible location along RT 6, and the abundance of dead trees (many of which were State owned), were not only becoming unsightly, but a hazard.

The NFA hired an arborist to remove the dead and unsafe trees and the invasives. This was a large project and it was just not practical to have volunteers try to undertake.

We made sure to hire an arborist to ensure that we carefully preserved several native shrub and tree species at the property. Blackman Preserve was a textbook example of most every type of invasive species commonly found in this area, including: Multiflora Rose, Norway Maples, Japanese Barberry, Russian-Olive, Oriental Bittersweet, Common Reed Phragmites and Japanese Honeysuckle.

The NFA contemplated several alternatives as to how to have the remediation managed, and how to handle of the debris. A decision had to be made as to whether or not the fallen trees would be chipped and removed, or left on site and whether or not the invasives would be cut at the base and/or dug up to remove with the roots. Other decisions also had to be made related to the invasive debris; would it be removed from the site, piled and left to decompose or piled and possibly burned. Each decision had its consequences and NFA further consulted with various State agencies and other land trust allies who are also taking on similar tasks.

Ultimately we cut the invasives down to the ground and covered them with the woodchips. We also arranged to have the invasive debris removed offsite. Actually digging up the roots of the invasives can bring to the surface many dormant invasive plant seedlings, possibly accelerating the next batch of nasty plants. It is further recommended that a carefully applied topical herbicide be used upon the remaining stems, how-

ever, the NFA chose not to take that course of action for a number of reasons.

The removal of the debris was also important. Just piling and moving the pile to another location, although providing wildlife refuge, serves to spread the plants to a new area. In addition the animals will ultimately feed on the seeds and further spread the undigested seeds to a broader area.

This project was part of our ongoing and continuous Stewardship and Property management plan. For each property which has been donated, we either follow a general plan of maintenance or tailor a plan specific to an individual property. It was time, for a number of reasons, to focus on Blackman at this point in time and address the invasives as part of our overall plan.

We really think our goals were accomplished with this project. The removal of the dead trees and invasives will make the property easier and safer to care for, and really improved the aesthetics of this highly visible NFA parcel.

NFA Receives Another Donation of Land

On December 31, 2007, the NFA was deeded a 4 acre parcel as a donation from Mrs. Sidney Edison.

The NFA is eternally grateful to Mrs. Edison as this represents a gift that will last FOREVER and adds to the NFA's inventory of over 1000 acres. Putting aside the enormous benefit that permanently preserved property has to our community (in the form of wildlife sanctuaries, watershed protection and nature's own carbon dioxide filters) it precludes new development which is a strain on our communities infrastructure and adversely changes Newtown's rural character.



Photograph looking North into Upper Paugussett State Forest

protected from future development for generations to come.

existing protected open space parcel, you greatly enhance the combined properties ecological benefits. Abutting parcels like this are the most desirable type of donations we can receive and meet most all of the criteria we establish for accepting land that we honor to protect and care for in perpetuity.

There are no hiking trails directly on the property, however the existing trails in Upper Paugussett State Forest pass very near. The preservation of this parcel preserves the exceptional experience and views those hikers get when traversing those trails.

It was out of the pure love of this open space land that Mrs. Edison wanted to make this donation as she wanted to ensure this parcel was permanently pro-

One of special benefits of this donation is that it directly abuts Upper Paugussett State Forest. Any time you have the ability to add additional acreage to an

Again, many thanks to Mrs. Edison and look to our website in the future for additional pictures and information.

