



THE FALLS RIVER SOCIETY *Protect the world you love*

Making a Bequest to the Land Trust

By Jim Denham

The Falls River Society was established to recognize those who have chosen to support the Essex Land Trust's efforts with a planned future gift from their estate. Individuals become members once we have received notification of their planned gift.

We feature Falls River Society members in our annual list of members and supporters unless they request to remain anonymous. Over the years, 18 supporters have chosen to include the land trust in their estate planning.

Fisher Buell
Elizabeth Callender
Sarah Cochran
Ann Comstock
Jeff Croyle
Daniel Dewey

Elizabeth Dewey
Harriet Cheney Downing
Jean R. Hanor
Janice Knauth
Stephen Knauth
Pam Peters

Robert Nussbaum
Philip Putnam
Barbara Sarrantonio
Fred Szufnarowski
Richard Tredwell
Estelle Ives Zahn



Janice and Stephen Knauth

We asked two recent benefactors, Janice and Stephen Knauth to share with us their thinking about the land trust and why they decided to include the land trust in their plans.

What is it about the land trust's mission that is most important to you? What values that are important to you do you see connected to the land trust and what it does?

Some years ago, I began looking for an organization to join that would get me involved in the community. I was initially attracted to the land trust because of its mission of preserving open space. I grew up in Westbrook next to what is now the McKinney Preserve and spent a lot of time in the woods; it was my playground. So, I appreciate what Nature has to offer.

Is there something particular about the land trust that stands out for you?

I also grew up a baseball fan and I love the idea of a team dedicated to and working towards a common goal. As I became involved, I was struck by the group's can-do attitude and the practical way it got things done using the talents of its members to best advantage. That's teamwork. Janice and I like the way it involves the community – from Essex Elementary School, Valley Regional High School and the Eagle Scouts to the various businesses that generously give time and equipment.

Tell me about your involvement with the land trust – what motivated you to become involved? Was it a member, a volunteer, a land acquisition campaign?

Former land trust president Bill Grover had been reading my stories in *Soundings* boating magazine and asked if I would do some writing for then-editor Carol McElwee. I jumped at the chance. The Millrace had just been acquired, and I found myself working in the field, too, with Bob Nussbaum, Al McGregor, Dana Hill and others – all wonderful people. It was hard work, requiring a team effort with men splashing around in the Falls River building gabions and setting up bridges.

Why did you decide to support the land trust's Falls River Society?

Janice and I were fortunate to retire with a bit of a nest egg, and we have no children to pass it on to. So, after providing for such family as we have, we agreed that leaving behind a substantial legacy to the land trust would be a good thing to do. For Janice, it's all about the many trails and the great variety of terrain all close by. She and her friend walked over 150 miles during COVID, and walking remains an important pastime today. I just like to sit and think, to watch a stream, hear a bird.

While making a major donation can be hard to do while working, a legacy donation comes when Janice and I won't need the money any longer - so this was our chance to pay into the future.

What would you say to someone who is considering making a bequest to the land trust?

Dedication, organization and community involvement – those are some of the qualities that made the Essex Land Trust an obvious choice for us. There are a host of organizations to consider, but the Falls River Society is a local option and that was important. Janice and I see our contribution producing a tangible result someday, perhaps in the form of a new piece of open space for future residents to enjoy.

Making a Legacy Gift

Including the Essex Land Trust in your estate plan is a meaningful way to invest in the future of our community. Many legacy gifts offer valuable tax benefits. Each represents a flexible giving opportunity to match your gift to your goals and values — Make the right choice for you. Some options include: A bequest from a will or trust, an IRA or insurance beneficiary, a life income arrangement such as a charitable gift annuity, trust, or real estate.

To make any legacy gift, it is important that you get the advice of your financial advisor and attorney. If you or your advisors have any questions, contact us: info@essex-landtrust.org

Volunteer Spotlight - Paul Greenberg

25 years of "Caring for our world here at home"

By Bob Nussbaum

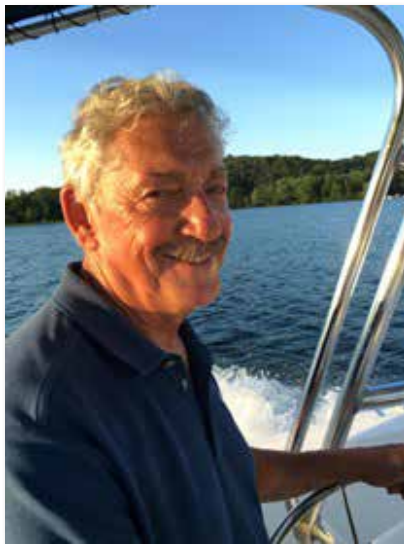
Did you ever walk the Canfield trails and wonder where all the nature signs came from? One of Paul Greenberg's first volunteer projects, almost 25 years ago, was for his Master Gardener's Class. He created the 17 signs, had them produced and then donated them to the land trust. What the old-timers know is that if you volunteer for the land trust long enough, you get to play around in most parts of the organization. In Paul's case, that has included everything from being a property steward, planning events, supporting the Thatchbed Island ospreys, land acquisition and service as a board member and president. Paul is the longest continuously serving member of our current board.

Thatchbed Island

At the center of many of Paul's volunteer efforts is Thatchbed Island, for which he has been the steward for many years. His long involvement with Thatchbed began with observing it from his back yard on South Cove. Intrigued with the annual return of the ospreys, Paul got a DEEP permit to install our first osprey platform, which he erected in 2003 with a team of volunteers, including Al Macgregor, Chief Steward at the time. Over the years, Paul's consistent attention to the Thatchbed ospreys, whom he nicknamed Ozzie and Harriet, would lead to a second platform and then a nest camera which relayed live video from the nest to Paul's house and then to the internet. The year 2003 was also the first of many Source to Sea Connecticut River cleanups that included Thatchbed Island. Thirty-one volunteers and four skiffs brought a mountain of debris from it to fill dumpsters in the Essex Yacht Club parking lot.

Land Acquisitions and Being President

The other major focus of Paul's volunteer efforts has been land acquisition. From 2003 on, Paul has been a key participant in the land trust's land acquisition program, and Chair of the Land Acquisition Committee (LAC) since 2011. Over the years, under the leadership of Chet Arnold and Paul, the team has met regularly to review land acquisition priorities and then reach out to prospective donors and sellers. As Chet recalls, he focused on the development of our planning tools, while Paul took the



lead on the outreach to landowners. "There are few large chunks of land left in Essex and so the land trust has had to build open space corridors piece by piece," says Chet. "That mode of operation takes a tremendous amount of persistence and patience, working with owners, lawyers, funders, the town, and the Board. Paul has done the lion's share of that work."

As Paul has noted many times, land acquisition can be "feast or famine," many years with no transactions then several at once. One of the land trust's busiest acquisition periods took place in 2007-2008, while Paul was land trust president. Heron Pond, Platt/Bushy Hill, the Millrace and ad-

ditional acreage on Thatchbed Island were acquired and several other projects were in the initial stages. In 2014-15, Paul was on the team that worked with the Trust for Public Land on the tri-town effort to protect The 1,000 Acre Preserve, the successful culmination of a 10-year collaborative conservation effort. Looking back on the list of priority conservation targets that the original LAC developed in 2005, Chet observed that "it's amazing how successful – and how faithful to the list – we've been over these 25 years, and that is largely due to Paul."

Paul's presidency was also a time of organizational capacity building, with the development of the committee structure that we are still operating under, the implementation of an online donor management system, and the establishment of the Conservators Rock at Cross Lots in recognition of our life members. Paul also initiated our trail guide efforts leading to our first trail guide, developed with Steve Haines of Haines Design, and with Jim Denham volunteering to help with text and map content.

Paul's involvement with Thatchbed Island has come full circle. He is now on the town committee charged with finding ways to preserve the island and restore the areas lost to erosion. In reflecting on Paul's many volunteer efforts, First Selectman Norm Needleman summed it up well, "Our community depends on the efforts of volunteer leaders like Paul, who has served as president of the land trust, chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals, and is now on the Ad Hoc Committee for Thatchbed Island."

Plastics: A Blessing and a Scourge

By Tom Sobeleski

Do you realize it's very likely you have plastic in your body? While it's more visible in our rivers and oceans, and photos of fish and animals ensnared in plastic abound, it is silently becoming a scourge in our own bodies. We are unwittingly swallowing or breathing in small plastic fragments or microplastics (MPs) - minute particles every day. The numbers are numbing. Studies estimate we ingest 250 grams/year - a dinner plate of plastic particles. Other studies equate it to a credit card worth of plastic/week/person. Nano plastics have been detected in human blood, lungs, and placentas.

products? It's a delusion, says Professor Katherine Owens, Director of the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Hartford. "We know 95% of plastic packaging is not recycled," Owens told *Woods & Waters*, "and that 90% of all plastic ever made has never been recycled."

Disintegration and Leaching

Professor Owens notes the problem goes back to an assumed benefit - plastic's durability. "It is important to remember that none of these materials were designed to be recycled," she says. "Trying to recycle them after their useful 'life' is always a bit of an exercise in futility." Plastic products "may take decades to breakdown," she added. "But



Numbing Numbers

- 95% of plastic packaging is not recycled
- Almost 500 pounds of plastic waste discarded/person/year
- 5,000 microfibers/cubic meter in Long Island Sound
- 80 microplastic particles ingested /person/day
- 100,000 animals die from plastic entanglements each year
- A garbage truck of plastic waste is dumped into the ocean/minute
- 240,000 microplastics in an average liter of bottled water
- 50,000 microplastics ingested/year from eating seafood

A synthetic compound of chemicals and oil, plastic first materialized as celluloid in the 1800s and began to enter homes after Bakelite was patented in 1909. It was hailed as "the material of a thousand uses." From there it progressed into nylon, polyester, and elastic and was on its way to becoming ubiquitous in our lives. Its development transformed culture with its light weight, flexibility, and durability. It's pervasive - in packaging, containers and myriad other items; even our clothes.

A 1954 ad for Dixie cups in *Life* magazine touted a dispenser in every kitchen to reduce dishwashing and risks of broken glass. Marketing for plastic products promoted a throwaway lifestyle. A *Life* magazine story in 1955, "Throwaway Living: Disposable Items Cut Down Household Chores," highlighted throwaway pet bowls and tin foil pans, among other items. Now that attitude has reared its unforeseen consequences.

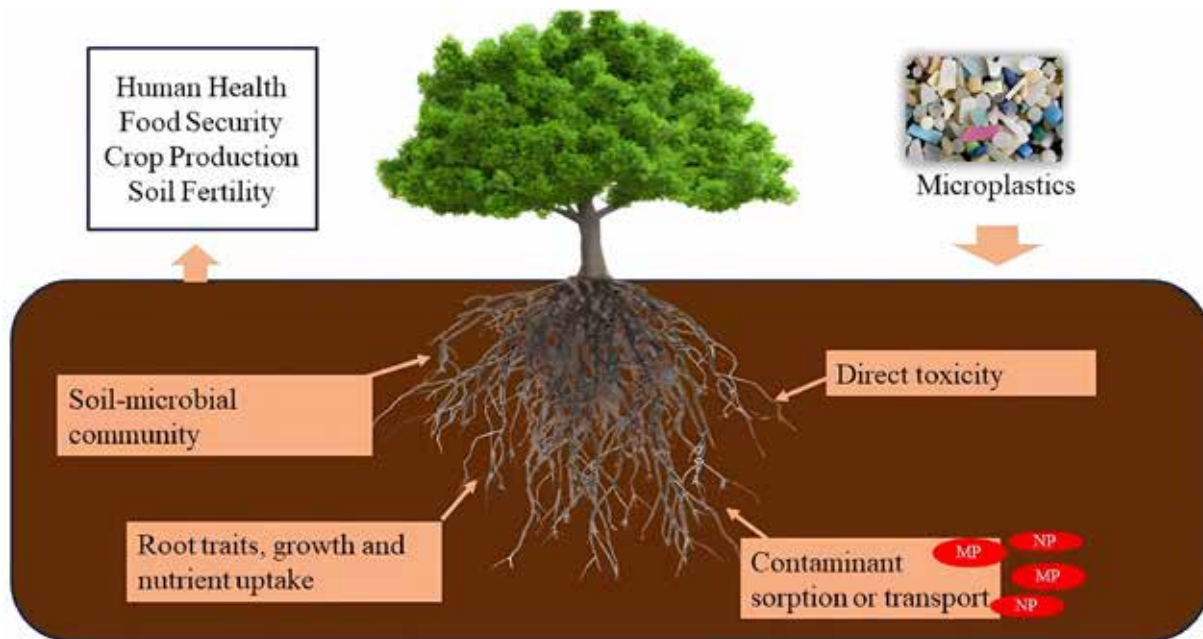
How did plastic, which seemed to hit a sweet spot of usefulness and disposability, become a threat to our health? How does it infiltrate the bodies of humans, fish, animals? Doesn't our fervent recycling mean it's remade into new

they never biodegrade, they just become smaller and smaller pieces of waste."

While it may take centuries to fully decompose, plastic leaches chemicals into waterways and soils, and when exposed to sunlight and erosion, it disintegrates into tiny pieces. These make their way into oceans, soil, air, and ultimately into our bodies through inhalation and ingestion. Microbeads and fibers are being found in the Connecticut River. September's Source to Sea CT River cleanup collected 4,500 plastic bottles and 120 trash bags of Styrofoam pieces. UCONN's Avery Point campus in Groton measured an average of 5,000 microfibers/cubic meter in Long Island Sound. Turtles and fish mistake plastic bags for jellyfish. MPs have been detected in dolphins' breath. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres claims, "By 2050, there could be more plastic than fish in the ocean."

Seafood provides MPs a path into our bodies. But not just seafood. A recent study by the Ocean Conservancy and University of Toronto concludes that MPs are present in 88% of the proteins we eat. Sampling included beef,

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EFFECTS OF MICROPLASTICS ON SOIL ENVIRONMENT

pork, chicken, seafood, and plant-based alternatives and showed no statistical difference between water and land food sources. MPs have also been detected in fruits and vegetables; they are prevalent in fertilizers and then absorbed by plant roots.

Given this evidence, one might conclude that all plastic manufacturing should be outlawed. But Professor Owens reminds us that “it is important to acknowledge that plastics are important to daily life,” with numerous useful applications from hospital equipment to our phones and cars.

Our individual steps to affect change can seem fruitless. But they will gradually change our cultural mindset and reduce demand for plastic products. Ultimately, “This is not a problem we can solve by recycling,” John Hocevar, Oceans Campaign director at Greenpeace USA recently said. “We have to stop making so much of it. It really is that simple.”

For more information, feel free to reach out to Professor Katherine Owens, Director of the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Hartford, <https://katowens.com/>

Lifestyle Adjustments

To reduce plastic pollution, society must stop producing single use plastics and improve recycling efficiency. Individuals can take these steps to reduce risk.

- Stop drinking any beverage from a plastic bottle
- Stop microwaving in plastic containers
- Eliminate plastic cutting boards
- Store food in glass containers rather than plastic
- Replace plastic bags in the produce aisle with reusable mesh bags
- Lobby legislators to insist on real plastic recycling

There's Good News Out There ...

Editor's Note: We begin 2025 with a new feature, titled "There's Good News Out There" in which we showcase some positive and reaffirming happenings. Feel free to share your Essex Land Trust related "good news" by contacting Jim Denham at jgdenham@gmail.com

Mill Pond's Kayak Launch Benefits All

Over the years, our family has spent many hours kayaking on Mill Pond. We have enjoyed watching turtles, purple martins, beavers and the setting sun from our kayaks, and we have always treasured the convenience of launching right in our own neighborhood. When Essex Land Trust installed a kayak launch in 2023, our first thought was it would be great to launch without slipping on roots or losing a sandal in the mud. But upon closer inspection, we realized the launch had an even more meaningful purpose for our family. As we navigate life with my husband's Parkinson's diagnosis, we have made adjustments in our lifestyle and activities to match the physical challenges of living with Parkinson's. Thanks to the accessibility this stable ramp provides, kayaking continues to be on the list of ways we



can enjoy the outdoors. We appreciate being able to launch easily and look forward to many more paddles on the Falls River. – *Katherine Ryan*

Connecting Communities with The Nest

We received an offer from Stuart Warner, an Essex Meadows Resident and former Essex Land Trust (ELT) Steward, to use the Geocaching Trail that he constructed. The Geocaching Trail was cleverly constructed on the grounds of Essex Meadows and presents a progressive outdoor orienteering challenge tracking coordinates and deciphering hints to find the next geocache along the trail.

We thought our friends at The Nest would appreciate Stuart's offer. The Nest, in Deep River, supports neurodiverse young adults with training, commu-



nity, and opportunities for independent socializing. ELT co-sponsored an event with The Nest on a sunny Saturday in November. Gatherers from The Nest along with Linda Bennet, the Director of Programs, joined ELT members for the fun. Stuart was also kind enough to join us to kick off the activity. We found the course quite challenging and a lot of fun. The highlight was the smiles and giggles when we found one of Stuart's "fake out" geocache locations which read, "what are you looking here for, this is not a geocache!" Many thanks to Stuart and to the team at The Nest! – *Tom Gezo*

Woods & Waters is published three times a year. **Jim Denham**, Publisher & Editor - A.C. Proctor, Essex Printing.

Board Members: **Jeff Croyle**, President, Nominating; **Bob Nussbaum**, Vice President, Development; **Deb Carreau**, Treasurer; **Carrie Daly**, Secretary; **Joel Anik**, Finance Committee; **Chet Arnold**, Special Projects; **Jim Denham**, Communications; **Tom Gezo**, Volunteers, Programs & Events; **Paul Greenberg**, Acquisitions; **Peter Holland**, At Large; **Leif Owens**, Preserves Manager; **Kathryn Ryan**, Outreach.

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ELT Briefs

Membership Update

The Essex Land Trust concluded 2024 with 444 family and 25 Corporate memberships, a total of 469 committed supporters. We registered 34 new members during the year. Membership dues help fund the organization's operating expenses and we want to thank all those who contribute their support and volunteer time to the land trust's mission in our community.

Essex Land Trust Accreditation Renewed

We're excited to share that our Accreditation has been renewed! After a rigorous verification process by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, the Essex Land Trust has proven

once again that we have sound finances, practice ethical conduct and responsible governance and can ensure lasting stewardship.

The Essex Land Trust has gone through a rigorous process to ensure we are operating at the highest possible conservation standards. Extensive documentation was provided to the Accreditation Commission and was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation prior to achieving this distinction. We are a stronger organization than ever



The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

for having gone through this rigorous process. Renewing our accreditation shows Essex Land Trust's ongoing commitment to permanent land conservation in the three Essex communities. We

are proud to continue to be one of over 450 accredited land trusts across the country to achieve this significant milestone.

Thanks to the Essex Land Trust Board in supporting the accreditation renewal process, with special recognition of Bob Nussbaum, Deb Carreau, Leif Owens and Joel Anik for their efforts in preparing and submitting the material needed for the accreditation renewal process.

Coyotes

Be on the lookout for coyotes in winter. Coyote breeding season in Connecticut is between January and March with their offspring born in the April to May period. According to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), "Coyotes are opportunistic and use a variety of habitats, including developed areas like wooded suburbs, parks, beach fronts, and office parks. Their ability to survive and take advantage of food sources found in and around these "man-made" habitats has resulted in an increase in coyote sightings and related conflicts." Pets which are not controlled by owners can, unfortunately, become prey to coyotes as they frequently pass through or reside in forests and preserves.

To learn more about Coyotes check out the following two DEEP URLs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/fact-sheets/coyote>

<https://portal.ct.gov/deep/wildlife/nuisance-wildlife/living-with-coyotes>



Coming Events – Mark Your Calendar!



Full Moon Hike

Wednesday, February 12, 7:00 PM

Johnson Farm, Reed Hill Road, Ivoryton

There'll be "a moon out tonight" for our Full Moon Hike at Johnson Farm. The first part of the hike is moderate and goes over rocky terrain with lots of roots and a bit of elevation. The trail then opens to meadow and pastureland for an open view of the moon. Following the hike, we'll head to a local venue for socializing. Bring flashlights and binoculars or scopes for some stargazing. Hike is weather dependent. Please check our Facebook page for updates. Dogs are ok but must be on leash at all times. Please register at: <https://bit.ly/FullMoonHike021225>

Creating a Backyard Refuge for Wild Birds

Monday, March 3, 2:00 PM

Essex Town Hall, West Avenue, Essex

A co-sponsored event with the Essex Garden Club. Jessica Penfield of Wild Birds Unlimited of Old Saybrook will present "Creating a Backyard Refuge for Wild Birds." Join us for some timely advice for your spring plantings.

Family Leprechaun Hike

Saturday, March 8, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Pond

Meadow Preserve, Park Road, Ivoryton

Join us for some St. Patty's Day fun with a self-guided family hike where you'll follow the Leprechaun Trail to find the Pot of Gold. Arrive any time between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM. There'll be rainbow stickers and shapes to find as you complete the hunt. Of course, there will be treats and beverages when you reach the "Pot of Gold." This event is co-sponsored with the Essex and Ivoryton Libraries. Essex Library will have a related story telling event on March 7. Event is weather dependent. Please check our Facebook page for updates. Dogs are not permitted at this event. Please register at <https://bit.ly/LeprechaunHike030825>

Connecticut's Changing Landscape

Friday, March 14, 10:00 AM, Essex Meadows,

30 Bokum Road, Essex

Julie Shaw of the DEEP Master Wildlife Conservation group will present: "Connecticut's Changing Landscape. How is Connecticut's landscape changing? Where? How fast? Join us for an overview of the transitions in the landscape over the last few hundred years and how it has affected the wildlife that is present in Connecticut.

Essex Land Trust Annual Meeting

**Thursday, April 24, 5:00 PM Essex Meadows,
30 Bokum Road, Essex**

Join us for an evening of camaraderie and celebration. The program will feature a review of the past year's accomplishments, plans for the upcoming year, and the election of board members. Parking is limited. Carpooling recommended. There will be a charge for the Social and the Annual Meeting is free. Smart attire suggested.

Naturalist Led Hike with Phil Miller

Thursday, May 8, 9:00 AM

**Great Meadow Preserve, Access Pettipaug Road
off River Road, Essex**

Break up your morning routine and enjoy a nature hike with naturalist Phil Miller who will feature the natural history of the Great Meadow Preserve. Bring along your bird-watching gear as this area is particularly great for sightings. This hike is weather dependent. Please check our Facebook page for updates. Dogs are ok but must be on leash at all times.

CT Trails Day Hike at Canfield Woods

Saturday, June 7, 10:00 AM

Canfield Woods Book Hill Entrance

31 Book Hill Woods Road, Essex

A great weekend each year in CT to explore some of the best hiking around. Tom Soboleski, one of our Canfield Woods Stewards, will lead this fun, moderate, hike over mostly gently sloping terrain. We'll start at the Book Hill Trailhead and meet there following the hike for refreshments. This hike is weather dependent. Please check our Facebook page for updates. Dogs are ok but must be on leash at all times.

Essex Land Trust Community Concert

Saturday, June 21, 5:00 PM

Main Street Park, 14 Main Street, Essex

Enjoy a fun filled evening at the Essex Main Street Park with Friends, Live Music, and views of Middle Cove. The Essex Land Trust is hosting the event featuring Malaena. Malaena is a 6-piece cover band whose sole mission is to perform music that "makes you want to dance." We'll be grooving to songs from every decade, from Top 40 to Motown to classic rock to current hits. Bring your family, friends, picnic baskets, blankets, your choice of beverages, and be prepared to sip, dance, and have some fun. Event is weather dependent. Please check our Facebook page for updates.

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