

ANNUAL REPORT – 2008

The Madison Land Conservation Trust (MLCT) has had a busy and gratifying year. In August, we paid off our mortgage on a nearly 70-acre parcel of land at the traffic circle, our Neck River Uplands (NRU) Northern Parcel. We bought the parcel for \$557,992.00 from the South Central CT Regional Water Authority in 2003 using a state grant and a mortgage from the water authority. The mortgage was paid off with many generous contributions from individuals and organizations who believe in our mission. By fully paying the loan this year, we avoided paying any interest on the mortgage. The Northern Parcel is one of two that make up the 115-acre NRU. We plan to avoid paying interest on the Southern Parcel by paying off that mortgage on schedule in 2010.

The MLCT was honored in September by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection with a DEP Green Circle Award. The award recognized two large acquisitions – the 115-acre NRU, and the 16.6-acre Greist property just north of Race Hill Road. The Greist parcel is part of the MLCT's Ironwood Preserves, which now comprises more than 100 acres. The MLCT was also recognized for its annual participation in Green Up Clean Up Day.

MLCT now has approximately 1600 acres of land and 35 miles of trails, most if not all of which is due to the hard work of the **Land Acquisition Committee** over the past 44 years. The Committee, chaired by Dr. David Skelly, continues to explore the possibility of future purchases, including water authority lands that will become available for purchase in the next five to ten years in Madison. The Committee is working with the town's Conservation Commission, town officials, and the Trust for Public Lands to investigate and identify these and other parcels worthy of preservation as open space.

Land acquisition is only part of the work done by the MLCT. Equally important is the stewardship of the hundreds of acres that we already own, including 28 acres on which we hold conservation easements, and 35 miles of trails. It is no small task. Our **Encroachment Committee**, **Stewardship Committee**, and **Trails Committee** decided this year to hold joint monthly meetings to better coordinate their responsibilities.

The **Encroachment Committee**, chaired by Joseph Oslander and Gerald Rourke, has investigated seven encroachment sites on our land this year. Encroachment issues take a long time to resolve and require delicate negotiation. Thanks to the committee's efforts one matter has been resolved and most of the remainder should be resolved in the near future. Similarly, our **Stewardship Committee**, chaired by Stewart Hudson, has the daunting task of keeping an eye on those 1600 acres to ensure that we are fully cognizant of all our boundaries, and all problems occurring within these boundaries, such as downed trees, dam leaks, and the spread of invasive species. The Stewardship Committee this year completed a summary check of all our properties and has set goals for next year. Stewart Hudson and Gerald Rourke will be leaving the board at the end of the year. We thank them for their service and wish them well.

The **Trails Committee**, chaired by Terry Kensler, assisted by 14 trails stewards, managed the land trust's 21 trails, which cover 35 miles. This year four work parties cleared and blazed trails, including a new leg of the Jefferson Park Trail, and cleared invasive plants from Ox Pasture. A number of hazardous trees were taken down by members who specialize in that area. Under the tutelage of David Roach, the Trails Committee is continuing its GPS mapping of all trails, with the goal of uploading all maps onto our website. And, true to its reputation, the Trails Committee organized several terrific hikes this year, including a Ground Hog Day hike attended by more than 80 hikers, a vernal pool hike led by Dr. David Skelly and attended by a similar number of adult hikers and their children, the Selectman's Hike in June and the annual Autumn Moonlight Walk. In addition, the Trails Committee organized our Green Up Clean Up Day effort and worked with two Eagle Scouts who completed projects on our lands.

Finance Committee -

The **Membership Committee**, chaired by Andrea Hopkins attracted 62 new members through a townwide membership campaign, for a total of 72 new members so far this year. The committee was responsible for attracting dozens of new members to the land trust. MLCT membership now totals more 597 families and individuals. The Membership Committee also facilitated the transfer of our membership data to a new computer online program that provides more flexibility in organizing important data.

MLCT's new **Outreach Committee**, chaired by Deborah Heinrich, got off to a running start. The Committee has developed an events policy and a website links policy, and has organized our first annual photo contest, which will take place in 2009. A number of businesses have come forward to sponsor the contest, including the Source, which will run three ads for us beginning in February. The deadline for submissions is August, and the winners will be announced at our annual meeting next November. Information about the photo contest can be found on our website at www.madisonlandtrust.org.

The Outreach Committee and the Membership Committee are involved in our membership newsletter, edited by board member Emily Eisenlohr.

MLCT for the second consecutive year awarded an **Environmental Science Gift** of \$1,000 to Daniel Hand High School. Directors Joseph Oslander and David Skelly presented the gift to teachers John Gaskell and Mike Docker. It will be used by Mr. Gaskell in his Principles of Ecology course, and by Mr. Docker in his Marine Science and Technology course. This gift helps us to fulfill one of the purposes of the land trust – to promote scientific study and educate the public about local natural resources.

In the area of administration, Kirsten Livingston agreed to become an administrative consultant to the MLCT. She is a former board member and officer of the land trust, and granddaughter of former board member Betty Lowry. Kirsten Livingston helped the MLCT transition to a new computer program this year, and continues to organize our membership and campaign data.