



# THE LAY *of* THE LAND

Madison Land Conservation Trust

SPRING 2013



Members of Troop 494 working on the new trailhead (left). Stephen Hansen by the newly completed steps (above).

## Eagle Scout Trail Project

**Prospective Eagle Scout Stephen Hansen** and Troop 494 made significant improvements to Princess Drive trailhead in the Neck River Uplands last fall. Since acquisition in 2003, the Neck River Uplands have been the site of one of the most popular trail systems maintained by the Trust. Unfortunately the original access to the trail at Princess Drive was marred by an entrance which was steep, slippery and difficult to navigate. But no longer! Thanks to the efforts of Stephen Hansen of Madison Boy Scout Troop 494, walkers need no longer be deterred from using this excellent trail system. Now the visitor will be greeted by the sort of easily accessible entrance that such a fine system deserves.

Access to the new trailhead consists of a sequence of steps constructed of heavy-duty landscape timbers filled with several inches of processed stone. At the bottom of this wooden stairway, Stephen and his fellow scouts have built a set of sculpted stone steps which lead directly onto the main trail. The total length of the improved trailhead is approximately 100 feet. As one might expect from good conservationists, special care was taken to allow for good drainage and erosion control. Planning, materials acquisition, and some very hard labor by Stephen and his willing crew of fellow scouts, parents and scout leaders came to more than 125 hours.

Stephen's project was a major step toward earning the rank of Eagle

Scout. With the completion of this project he joins the company of two fellow scouts Matt Smith and Dave Andersen, each of whom also directed Eagle projects in the Neck River Uplands.

Stephen's work leaves a tangible legacy to the Neck River Uplands that will be appreciated by visitors for years to come. The Madison Land Conservation Trust is fortunate to be the recipient of his outstanding efforts and the generosity of his donors: Madison Lion's Club, Madison Exchange Club, North Madison Wine and Spirits, Madison Veterinarian Hospital, Dr. Doug Callis, Shoreline Pediatrics, Mike Ott and the Town of Madison, and Guilford Savings Bank.

*Thank you!*

The Madison Land Conservation Trust maintains 35 miles of trailways with 21 trails, and protects over 1600 acres of land. If you would like to become more involved with the work of the MLCT, please contact Mike Maloney at [mike@maloneyllc.com](mailto:mike@maloneyllc.com).



### Meet Our Newest Board Member, Mary Elliott

Mary Elliott moved to Madison two years ago and first became involved in the Land Trust through the Outreach Committee. She started and continues to manage the MLCT Facebook site (and invites you to “like” this site to stay apprised of MLCT events and to enjoy photos from the trails!).

Mary earned a B.A. from Yale University, a Ph.D. in English from Boston College, and—in her previous life—taught college writing and literature at B.C., Gonzaga University and Whitworth College in Spokane, WA. She writes on the side and likes to play the fiddle and ride her bike, and loves hiking Madison’s beautiful MLCT properties with her husband and four children.

Follow Mary’s work on the Land Trust’s Facebook page. “Like” our page and receive updates about upcoming hikes. Check out photos from recent events. Have a suggestion, comment or question? Go ahead and post it on our page. We’d love to hear from you. Find us at: [facebook.com/Madisonlandtrust](https://www.facebook.com/Madisonlandtrust)

## Property Owners Can Receive Many Benefits when Donating to the MLCT

Have you ever considered donating property to the Madison Land Conservation Trust? Did you know there can be many benefits to doing so beyond the knowledge that the beauty of the land will be preserved in perpetuity and the community enriched for future generations? The Trust is eager to work with anyone interested in preserving land and its natural resources and is happy to provide detailed information on the many ways landowners can also benefit.

Federal tax laws encourage protection of open space and provide opportunities for significant income and estate tax savings for those who protect undeveloped land. Land that is gifted reduces future estate taxes and eliminates local property taxes.

Another option is a “bargain sale,” which is the sale of property to the Trust at a price below fair market value. Selling land to the Trust at reduced value can eliminate many costs such as capital gains taxes, broker’s fees, survey fees, subdivision approval costs, and/or long term financing arrangements, resulting in a profit somewhat less than that of sale on the open market. To accomplish this, a bargain sale must be carefully crafted and structured.

**Donation of a perpetual conservation easement** to the Trust can also protect land and its resources while potentially providing tax savings to the owner. The owner retains title and may live on and use the property, sell it, or pass it on to heirs. Easements can be written to meet the needs of the owner as long as the conservation resources of the property are protected. Tax savings are possible, resulting

from the difference between the value of land with the easement and its value without. The easement does not have to cover all the property, preclude all use by the owner—e.g., farming or fishing—or allow public access. Federal income tax deductions may be taken when a conservation easement provides significant public benefit and is donated exclusively for conservation purposes defined in the tax code.

**A Retained Life Estate** is a method of donating property to the Trust while allowing you to continue to live in your home. Title to the property is transferred to the Trust, subject to the donor (and/or heirs) retaining the right to occupy the property for life or for a period of years. You can continue to live in your home, and remain responsible for all normal expenses. If you should later decide to move, you may rent all or a portion of the residence to someone else. Once the Trust assumes possession of the property, it is maintained as open space in perpetuity.

**If you are considering one of these options**, consult us early in the process so the Trust can be involved in drafting agreements. This guarantees that the Trust will be able to accept the offer and to care for the land.

To ensure the quality of life in Madison, and the value of property for appropriate use, it is critical that some land, particularly that with value for recreation or for protection of water resources or wildlife, be preserved in perpetuity. Now is the time to set such land aside.

If you are interested in discussing options for protecting property, please call **Mike Maloney at 203-458-4000 X202**.

## Groundhog Day Hike, February 3

Outdoor enthusiasts of all ages joined us at the Indian Rock Shelters Trail for our Groundhog Day Hike. With MLCT President Mike Maloney as our guide, we started our walk at the tell-tale grafted beech tree, headed north through laurel stands and along a moss-covered stone wall, crossed a stream flowing into the Hammonasset River watershed and followed the blue-blazed trail to the magnificent rock shelters. Here, as evident from nearby archeological findings, Hammonasset Indians sought protection from winter storms and drew from the abundant water—now frozen waterfalls and icicles—that cascaded to the stream below.

After exploring the first cave, we made our way to the second shelter, a marvelous natural structure notable for its overhanging roof’s rich palette of reds and browns. Although more intrepid scramblers might opt to climb the rocks leading up to this cave, we took photos and continued along the trail, crossed the Neck River and stopped by Bartlett Pond (now called Sunset Lake). Here, as in other spots along the trail, threads of quartz appear sewn into the granite. Struck by the ice-covered water and reluctant to head back to our cars, we enjoyed one last still, winter moment. Some of us promised ourselves that we would return in the spring when the turtles come out of hibernation.

Learn more about the Indian Rock Shelters Trail on our website at: [madisonlandtrust.org/indian-rock-shelters](http://madisonlandtrust.org/indian-rock-shelters)

**RIGHT (L-R)** Hikers explore one of the rock shelters. The tell-tale grafted beech tree at the start of the Indian Rock Shelters Trail.



**ABOVE** Amy Steffen and some enthusiastic young hikers show the six letterbox stamps they collected after successfully finding all of the letterboxes hidden along the Neck River Trail.

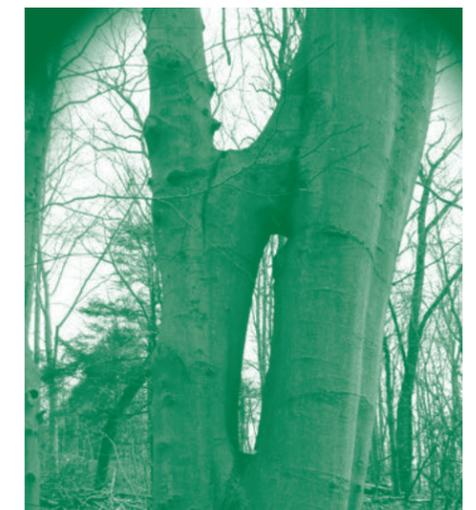
## Letterboxing Hike, March 10

Just days after a winter snowstorm, sunshine greeted us for a letterboxing hike along the Neck River Trail. This relatively short trail offers a remarkable variety of ecological settings including a lovely stretch along the Neck River. We were glad to be wearing boots as we trudged through the melting snow, and scrambled over and under natural obstacles along the trail.

Letterboxing is like an outdoor treasure hunt, where hikers follow

clues to find boxes hidden in stone walls or hollow trees. Each box contains a rubber stamp and logbook for hikers to mark their finds. Our enterprising searchers followed rhyming clues and used compasses to locate six hidden boxes along the trail.

Find more letterboxing clues at [www.letterboxing.org](http://www.letterboxing.org). For more information and photos from the Neck River Trail, visit our website at: [madisonlandtrust.org/neck-river-trail](http://madisonlandtrust.org/neck-river-trail).



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## Take a hike!

**April 14, 1:00 p.m. Spring Wildflower Hike, Papermill Trail** Join Yale botanist Michael Donoghue for a spring flora hike, and learn what's coming up in the riparian and upland habitats along one of our most scenic trails. See the remains of a historic mill and the work of beavers along the Hammonasset River. The hike will leave from the trailhead on Fawn Brook Circle.

**May 5, 1:00 p.m. Birding Hike, Neck River Uplands North** Search for spring migrants with ornithologist Mike DiGiorgio. Also, view the newly-installed entrance to the preserve constructed by Eagle Scout Stephen Hansen. This lovely trail features three streams that flow into the Neck River, as well as upland plateaus. Waterproof footwear is recommended. The trailhead is on Princess Drive.

**June 9, 1:00 p.m. Amphibian Hike, Blinshed Loop** Join Yale ecologists Kealoha Freidenburg and David Skelly on a search for frogs, toads, salamanders and

newts. The trail features extensive wetlands and old logging roads through the woods. Please wear boots and bring a dip net if you have one. The hike will run rain or shine. The trailhead is across the street from the Country School on Blinshed Road.

**September 15, 1:00 p.m. Marsh Walk, Ox Pasture** Salt marshes are one of the most productive ecosystems on earth. Discover how plants and animals are adapted to survive in this ever-changing environment. Also, learn about research into the nesting behavior of diamondback terrapins, the only turtle species to live in the brackish waters of tidal marshes. Boots and long pants are a must for walking on the marsh. No dogs please. The trailhead is on Canoe Road, off of Garnet Park Road.

**October 13, 6:45 p.m. Autumn Moonlight Walk** Bring a flashlight and join us for an evening stroll on the Garvan Trail at the Surf Club. As always, a bagpiper will lead the way. After the walk, refreshments

will be served in the Surf Club building, and members of the Astronomical Society of New Haven will set up telescopes for viewing the moon, planets and stars in the night-time sky.

**November 3, 1:00 p.m. Shepherds Trail Hike** This trail is one of our most demanding, with several short, steep sections and rocky areas that can be slippery when wet or icy. We'll encounter a variety of ecosystems from lowland wetland swamps, woodlands and small meadows to upland forests and rocky, exposed outcrops. The hike yields spectacular views at the summit. This hike is not suitable for dogs or very young children. The trailhead is on Shepherds Trail.

**Trail maps and directions** are available on the MLCT website. Dogs are welcome on a leash, except as noted above. Hikes will be cancelled in case of inclement weather. Check the MLCT website or Facebook page for updates.