

Hedgerows

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Washington Township Land Trust Mission Statement

The Washington Township Land Trust was organized to protect and preserve ecological, cultural, and historical integrity of the areas that contribute to and enhance the rural character of Washington Township and its environs. The Trust also promotes public interest in conserving land for open space uses in harmony with the natural environment and acquires interests in land by purchase or donation. It also manages land and property easements for the benefit of the public and educates the public to be stewards of the land.

Combating Invasive Species

On a bright, sunny day in October, several WTLT trustees and advisor Chris Steffan met with Dr. Michael Van Clef, Program Director of the NJ Invasive Plant Strike Force Team, to determine how to combat the severe intrusion of invasive plant species in Mill Pond Park. Mugwort, stilt grass, knotweed, multiflora rose, and the aptly-named “mile-a-minute” are taking over and crowding out more attractive and ecologically balanced native species. Dr. Van Clef (aka “Mike”) took notes, shared his observations and suggestions, and promised to submit a detailed written report. The upshot is that we must take a patient and systematic approach over several years to manage if not eradicate the intruders. Mowing, pulling, treating with particular herbicides on a prescribed schedule is the only way, he said.

As the group walked along the Columbia Trail towards Mill Pond Park, they posed for a photo beside the new sign for the park. It was made and installed, gratis, through the good offices of Russ Nee of the Morris County Parks Commission. The sign is consistent with the design and qualities of the other signage on the Columbia Trail, and we are delighted with it!



The new Morris County Park Commission provided sign at Mill Pond Park. Present left to right, Jim Fitterer, Nancy Gable, Mike Van Clef, Chris Steffan and Dick Kellner.



Search For New Board Members

With the announced pending retirement of trustee Dick Kellner from his position as WTLT Treasurer and the death last spring of long-time trustee Sue Penney, the Board of Trustees is seeking to expand its numbers. Especially needed are people with experience and/or strong interest in such areas as law, finance, digital communications, fundraising, accounting, natural environment, public relations, local history, architecture, and others. Busy people understandably are wary of getting overinvolved in such voluntary work, but the time commitment can be adjusted according to one's schedule and availability. Those interested should contact any of the trustees, or leave a message at (908) 876-5986 or wlandtrust@gmail.com.

Items Of Interest

- ✦ Recent grants from the 1772 Foundation (\$6,750) and the Highlands Coalition (\$2,500) have been gratefully received.
- ✦ A hunting program initiated by trustee Joe Koller is up and running. Registered hunters on selected WTLT properties, in addition to helping control the excessive deer population, are also functioning as stewards of those properties. In the past year 17 illegal hunting stands have been removed and 3 trespassers have been confronted.
- ✦ On September 21-22, we again hosted visitors to the Obadiah LaTourette Grist and Sawmill in the annual Morris County “Pathways of History” program.
- The WTLT Board of Trustees voted unanimously to support the NJ Senate resolution (SCR 134) concerning a “Green Amendment” to the state constitution. We thus joined dozens of non-profit groups, such as the Highlands Coalition, in the effort to establish access to pure water, clean air, and a healthy environment as a right of all New Jersey citizens.

To Our Members And Friends

“Don’t it always seem to go/ That you don’t know what you’ve got/ Til it’s gone ...”

Joni Mitchell’s 1969 hit song, “Big Yellow Taxi,” speaks to our ambivalence towards development. On the one hand, “development” means prosperity; on the other hand, “development” means construction at the expense of destruction. If what is destroyed is a slum and what is built is attractive and affordable housing, all is well; but if what is destroyed is a beautiful natural ecosystem and what is built is “a parking lot/ With a pink hotel, a boutique/ And a swinging hot spot,” the development process is a net negative, a descent into commercial vulgarity.

Human beings have transformed the natural world to suit their desire not only to survive but to prosper. Cities—perhaps the most obvious and spectacular of human developments—are in a sense “unnatural,” for, unlike beaver dams and birds’ nests, they are built not through instinct but through the human capacity of creative freedom—a freedom that, as the story has it, is subject to error, poor judgment, or what some call “sin.” At the root of our decisions and actions are our values. Such are some general considerations that give context to our more particular and immediate concern.



In 1991, after the dilapidated Obadiah LaTourette Grist and Saw Mill was condemned by the township, the Washington Township Land Trust—formed the year before by a group of public-spirited citizens to “protect and preserve the ecological, cultural, and historical integrity” of the township—purchased the mill to save it from being razed. They did so because they valued it and what it represented to them: a legacy from past generations of residents dating back to 1750, before the War of Independence. After thirty years of dedicated volunteer work, the mill is well on its way to restoration, but for the past several years, progress has been slowed to a crawl, with the dwindling resources of WTLT mainly devoted to repairs rather than restoration. We have managed to raise about half of the \$50,000 needed for foundation repairs. We need a push, a big push, to get the job done.

Our immediate need is to expand the Board of Trustees. The present Board is down to nine aging members, and we need to at least double that number. For those of you who care about our town, its history, historic buildings, and its beautiful natural environment, for those of you who value such things, we invite your participation. We have saved the mill at the center of Long Valley from destruction; to restore it, we need you.



Charlie Dauchert admiring the mill from Mill Pond Park. He looks forward to the Annual Meeting in April.

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL MEETING OF WTLT (April, 2020 – TBA)

Membership dues are due now. Your support is appreciated and is essential to keep the Land Trust moving forward.

Washington Township Land Trust Annual Membership

- Individual \$25 Family \$35 Business \$100



Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

E-mail (For WTLT use only) _____

Donation (optional)

I wish to donate \$_____ for:

- Land preservation
 Mill restoration work
 Mill Park plantings/maintenance

Make check payable to: WTLT
PO Box 4
Long Valley, NJ 07853

*Volunteers and Professional Services Needed.
Contact any WTLT officer for details.*



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