



Steep Rock Celebrates Bronson Farmland Acquisition

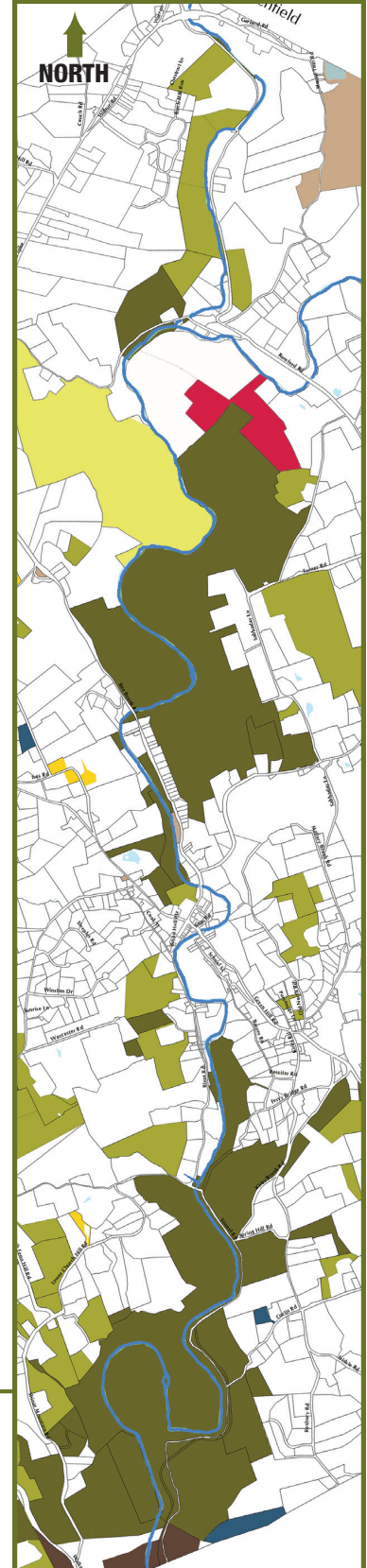
The Board of Trustees and Staff are delighted to announce the acquisition of 68.9 acres of prime farmland and forest adjacent to the northern boundary of Hidden Valley Preserve. Preservation of this critical property was made possible through the generous donations of numerous major contributors and a \$500,000 Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant from the State of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

The property (in red), located off Sabbaday Lane, had been owned and farmed by the Bronson family since the 1930s. Fortunately for us all, Estelle Bronson's conservation ethic and love of the land has helped preserve the rural character of the valley by keeping this property free from development.









To fully appreciate the importance of this property from the perspective of open space, farmland preservation and the protection of wildlife and water resources, one must only look at its strategic location. This promontory (or ridgeline), over-looking the confluence of the Shepaug and Bantam Rivers, is one of the last large, "stepping stones" of undeveloped land along the Shepaug River corridor from Litchfield to Roxbury. Acquisition and protection of the Bronson Farmland tract confirms Steep Rock's long-range vision and continued commitment to conserving this critical riparian corridor.

In the future, Steep Rock plans to extend the existing trail system at Hidden Valley Preserve to this newly acquired property with an eventual link to the Bantam River Valley. The agricultural fields will continue to be farmed as they have been for the past eighty years.

Steep Rock's Vision: To conserve the Shepaug River Corridor from Litchfield to Roxbury.



MAP COLOR KEY

 Steep Rock Owned	 State Owned
 Steep Rock Easement	 State Easement
 Weantinoge Land Trust Easement	 Town Easement
 Bronson Farmland Tract	 Roxbury Land Trust Easement

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From the Executive Director **“First Impressions”**

Amazingly, my first year at Steep Rock has already come and gone! In that whirlwind of time, I have greatly appreciated the support and guidance of the Board of Trustees, the competence and camaraderie of staff, and the welcoming warmth of the Washington community! Beginning a new job, in a new location, surrounded by new faces, is always challenging and often daunting. Although this first year has been extremely busy and at times overwhelming, it has been very rewarding. We have advanced our mission in some areas and are on the cusp of major improvements in others. Years ago, a former employer told me that you can't fully understand a job until you have been in it for an entire year ... experiencing the full cycle of responsibilities. So, as I begin my second year at Steep Rock, I do it with a greater understanding and appreciation of the organization, the community, the expectations and my own abilities. I am entering this next year with greater confidence that I can lead this energized organization to new heights in the years ahead.

Steve

Meet the Staff

Steve Law, Executive Director

On July 1, 2010, Steve began his tenure as the new Executive Director. Steve earned a B.S. in Wildlife Management from the University of Maine and brings to Steep Rock a vast amount of experience in natural resource management, environmental education and real estate. For the past 18 years, Steve worked for Mecklenburg County in Charlotte, NC where he created and managed (for 13 years) a highly respected and award winning Division of Natural Resources. After leaving the Division, Steve served for five years as a real estate coordinator for the County with the primary responsibility of acquiring land for parks, nature preserves and greenways. Steve is a native of South Salem, NY.

Tammy Sherman, Administrative Assistant

Tammy joined Steep Rock Association in December 2010. She has been assisting her husband since 1999 as office manager for a construction business located in New Milford, CT. Tammy's strengths include bookkeeping, database management, events coordination, organization and customer service.

Clark Gifford, Land Manager

Clark has worked for Steep Rock Association since 2003; first as Trails Assistant and now as Land Manager since 2006. As Land Manager, Clark is responsible for the stewardship of all Steep Rock's land holdings. A significant amount of his time is focused on managing the thirty-six miles of trails in the three main preserves. He also has a particular interest in native plants. In 2008, Clark started the Native Plant Propagation Program, collecting the seeds or cuttings from native plants growing on Steep Rock property for propagation. Once established, these young native plants are transplanted to disturbed areas to prevent erosion and to discourage the establishment of invasive species.

Help us Reach our Goal

With just several weeks remaining in our 2010-2011 fiscal year (ending September 30th), we are facing a budget deficit of \$20,000. If you have not yet contributed to Steep Rock this fiscal year, please help us now. Steep Rock is supported solely by private contributions. Your dollars enable us to (i) maintain our preserves for the enjoyment of hikers, equestrians, paddlers, campers and other outdoor enthusiasts, (ii) manage habitats to enhance wildlife diversity, and (iii) acquire and preserve additional lands critical to the protection of our rivers, forests, farms and wildlife. Please give as generously as possible. Donations may be made by check or on-line at www.steeprockassoc.org.

Conservation Easement Donations

In December 2010, Steep Rock gratefully accepted two new conservation easements, bringing the total acreage protected by our easements to approximately 2,580 acres. Bill and Marjorie Coleman's donation of a 1.958-acre easement buffers more than 1,200 linear feet of frontage along Walker Brook. Although small in size, this parcel contributes to the protection of a significant water resource. Walker Brook is a Cold Water Stream, and as such, is designated by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) as a conservation priority as a Freshwater Aquatic Key Habitat Type. Walker Brook is known habitat for a population of wild native brook trout, a DEEP-listed "At-Risk Fish Species"; and is identified by the State as an important surface and ground water resource.

Dale Geurts' donation of a 9.08-acre easement adjacent to Macricostas Preserve expands this conservation area, which encompasses Macricostas and adjoining easement-protected lands, to 528 contiguous acres. This property is dominated by a mature, 150-year old hemlock/hardwood forest with an abundance of large snags and cavity trees that provide suitable habitat for a variety of cavity-nesting species, including Chimney swift, Great crested flycatcher and Hairy woodpecker. All of these DEEP-listed "At-Risk Bird Species" have been documented at Macricostas Preserve.

Gould Family Foundation Donates Pedestrian Bridge

Thanks to the generosity of the Gould Family Foundation, the Hidden Valley Preserve will soon have a new pedestrian bridge. Last spring, when the Department of Transportation (DOT) decided to replace the Highway 47 (Bee Brook Road) bridge over the Shepaug River, the Town of Washington requested a pedestrian bridge component to provide safe passage for Hidden Valley visitors walking between the two parking lots. Steep Rock Association supported this request. Although DOT obliged, their design, based on required safety features (high fencing), was considered by many to be less than aesthetically pleasing. As a result, the Gould Family Foundation stepped forward and offered to provide Steep Rock Association with a grant to fully-fund the design and construction of an alternate bridge a bridge located within the preserve that blends into the environment.

Gray Organschi Architects has since been hired to design this environmentally-friendly bridge. On May 7th, the Steep Rock Board of Trustees approved the preliminary design, thus opening the door to begin the public review and approval process. To help defray the cost of this bridge, the Town secured a STEAP Grant from the State. Although this grant is exclusively for the bridge, it still required a Town vote to approve its expenditure. Townspeople present at a special meeting on June 2nd overwhelmingly approved the use of this grant for the new "Steep Rock Bridge".

The public review process is now underway and upon approval by the Washington Inland Wetlands Commission and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the construction will begin in late Fall. It is currently anticipated that the new bridge will be completed and available for public use in Summer 2012. Look for periodic updates about this project on our website:

www.steeprockassoc.org.



Proposed design of planned pedestrian bridge at Hidden Valley Preserve.

DOT Replacing Hwy. 47 Bridge

In June, the Department of Transportation's (DOT) contractor began the process of replacing the Highway 47 (Bee Brook Road) bridge over the Shepaug River at the entrance to Hidden Valley Preserve. In spite of the best efforts of Steep Rock Association and the First Selectman, the large black oak and the sycamore tree near the bridge fell victim to this new construction. The sycamore was removed to facilitate a one-lane road that will serve as a temporary by-pass around the bridge during construction. The oak, deemed unhealthy by the DOT arborist, was removed for safety reasons. As it turns out, the oak was quite hollow and its remaining lifespan was certainly limited at best.

For the next several months, visitors to Hidden Valley Preserve will undoubtedly experience minor inconveniences regarding parking. The north parking lot will be closed completely and the south parking lot will have limited disruption. Throughout the construction period, Steep Rock staff will be communicating and working with the DOT contractor to minimize the impact on preserve visitors. We ask for your patience until the new highway bridge is in place.

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Changing of the Guard

The Board of Trustees and Staff want to extend special thanks to Manny Clark, Bill Fairbairn and Yolanda Joseph who "retired" from the Board in May. At the same time, it is our pleasure to welcome back returning Trustee, Randy Bernard and new Trustees: Todd Catlin, Eric Madoff and Audrey Heffernan Meyer. We would also like to recognize Susan Payne and Wendy Federer for their many years of service as former Trustees and Committee members.

Save the Date

Steep Rock Annual Picnic **FREE**
Saturday, September 10th; 12:00 noon; Steep Rock Preserve
Plenty of food and fun for everyone! Bring the entire family and enjoy the great outdoors!

An Evening with Doug Tallamy **FREE**
Thursday, October 13th; 5:00 p.m.; Washington Town Hall
Join this renowned author of *Bringing Nature Home* as he shares a powerful and compelling message about the importance of native plants in sustaining biodiversity. Learn how the choices we make as gardeners and weekend yard warriors affect the diversity of wildlife around us. This program is co-sponsored by Steep Rock Association, Washington Garden Club, Washington Conservation Association, Washington Environmental Council, Roxbury Land Trust, and Roxbury Bridgewater Garden Club.

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