



The Steep Rock *VISTA* Fall 2005

Hidden Valley Bridge Lost to Heavy Rains on October Stephen Reich Memorial Fund Dedicated to Rebuilding Bridge

The Shepaug River bridge in the Hidden Valley Reservation was swept away during the torrential rains that fell on the area in October. Record rainfall amounts fell, close to the levels recorded in the 1955 flood. The bridge was critical to the trail system in Hidden Valley, linking the two major areas of the Reservation.

Arthur Deacon & Sons built and installed in the bridge in 1987. It replaced the original one, built in the early 1960's by Forester John Marsh and Steep Rock's intern at that time, Mike Alex. The 1987 bridge was delivered to the site in two sections, each transported separately down the railroad bed from Rumsey School. The two sections were secured to cement abutments secured to a large boulder near the center of the river. We believe that the high water and subsequent fast moving current caused a fallen tree, or some large object, to slam into the abutments, loosening and lifting the bridge. The displaced abutments are still in the river and one side of one section was found near the Route 47 bridge, but nothing else of the bridge has been found.

On Sunday, October 23, Ray Reich, Stephen Reich's father, presented Michael Jackson, President of Steep Rock, with a check for \$10,000. The same amount was awarded to the 160th Regiment Nightstalkers Association. These two organizations were chosen by the Reich family to be the beneficiaries of the memorial fund named for Stephen, who was killed in Afghanistan last summer.

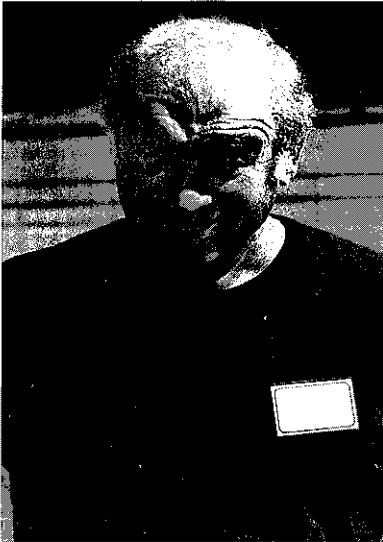
The Reich family have asked Steep Rock to use the money to help fund the rebuilding of the Shepaug River bridge in Hidden Valley. We hope to have the bridge rebuilt the bridge by Memorial Day.

We hope you will consider an additional donation to Steep Rock to help us rebuild the bridge in honor of this fine man who loved Steep Rock and Hidden Valley so very much.

You may also contribute directly to the Stephen Reich Memorial Fund, which continues to accept contributions. The Fund is being run in partnership with the First National Bank of Litchfield, PO Box 391, Washington Depot, CT 06794.



Visit www.steeprocksassoc.org for more flood photos and information.



Vinnie Forese Retires in December 2005

Vinnie Forese, a familiar figure to anyone who uses Steep Rock with any regularity, will retire as Steep Rock's Forester in December of this year.

Vinnie began work for Steep Rock in January of 1980. He took over the job when Steep Rock's first Forester, John Marsh, left the position to become first selectman.

Among many other tasks too numerous to list, Vinnie patrolled the reservations, mowed the fields, cleared the trails, cut fallen trees, rescued lost hikers, apprehended trespassing dirt bikers, and cooked hamburgers and hot dogs at our annual picnic for more than 25 years. Vinnie says he's missed only three picnics in all that time.

John Millington, Steep Rock's Chairman of the Board said Recently, "I'll miss Vinnie Forese. Not only is he my friend, he has been a great steward of Steep Rock. Whether clearing a tree that had fallen across a trail or policing the Reservations, Vinnie was there. He's truly a legend and we'll miss him."

A new Land Manager position has been created that consolidates the tasks of the former Forester and Trails Assistant jobs.

More than 90 applicants responded to our local newspaper ads for this job. A Steep Rock sub-committee interviewed many applicants and finally chose Clark Gifford. Clark was Steep Rock's Trails' Assistant for two years before he was selected to be our Land Manager.

Since Vinnie and Clark have already been working together for two years, the transition period consolidating the two jobs has proceeded smoothly.

We thank Vinnie for all his hard work and wish him a happy and healthy retirement.

Hidden Valley White Pine Plantation Timber Harvest Planned

We've hired a CT Certified Forester, Ian Branson, to work with us on several forest management projects. The first one, long overdue, is to thin the White Pine Plantation in Hidden Valley. The following is taken from Ian's proposal to us.

Background: The harvest area consists of a 12 acre, mid-1950's plantation of eastern white pine which was planted along with red pine to reclaim old fields and land along the Shepaug River damaged by the 1955 flood. The red pine portions of the plantation were cleared in the mid-1980s to salvage trees killed or weakened by the red pine scale. In the 50 years since it was planted, the white pine portion of the plantation was never thinned. Today it is overstocked, and the intense competition between trees has resulted in a stand that is growing slowly and is full of low quality trees and snags.

Stewardship Goals: The long-term stewardship goal (50 years) is to convert the plantation to an aesthetically pleasing, well-stocked stand of large, high quality, vigorously growing pines. Portions of the stand around high-use areas will be managed to maintain an open understory, while other areas will be encouraged to revert to natural mixed hardwood/pine regeneration. The currently proposed harvest is intended to be a *first step* in setting the stand on an improved growth trajectory toward the long-term goal. In addition, the currently proposed harvest will accomplish the short-term stewardship goals of

- 1) releasing the highest quality trees from crown competition, thus allowing them to increase their growth rates,
- 2) removing some of the lower quality merchantable timber and capturing its economic value, and
- 3) enhancing the appearance and safety of the stand by removing as many of the small-diameter suppressed trees and snags as is economically feasible.

We have a permit from the Inland Wetlands Commission. Trees have been marked and loggers are being interviewed. Whether we begin this winter depends on several factors, among them the weather, and whether we find a logger willing to adhere to the strict environmental terms of the proposal.

More photos of Vinnie at
www.steeprockassoc.org

Members of the Steep Rock Association For Fiscal Year 2004-2005

The Steep Rock Association is a land trust, founded in 1925 by Ehrick Rossiter when he purchased the 100 acres of land that included Steep Rock itself.

Steep Rock has always relied on contributions from friends to help defray the costs of managing the land we own. This financial support is crucial to our operating budget..

We are most grateful to the following members for their support the fiscal year October 1, 2004—September 30, 2005.

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New Trustees Elected

Manny Clark grew up in Miami and moved to the area in 1980. She says after all this time she's "still awestruck by the beauty of the Steep Rock Reservations."

Mary Anne Greene and her husband Doug moved to Washington in 1980. Mary Anne and her family have enjoyed countless hours hiking, cross country skiing, kayaking, and simply appreciating its beauty. Mary Anne says "I realize what an asset Steep Rock is to the town, and I look forward to serving on the Board."

Yolanda Joseph "I fell in love with Washington when I first came to our town in 1971. I loved the beautiful fields and meadows. And I was assured that nothing would ever change here. Well, there have been some changes, but thanks to Steep Rock and vigilant members of the community, the charm, the beauty and the open spaces are still with us today."

Special Thanks

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Annual Membership Drive Begins

Steep Rock's Annual Membership Drive begins October 1, the beginning of our fiscal year.

Please renew your membership now, and if you're not yet a member, please join us. You may have already received our Appeal letter with an enclosed return envelope. If not, you may use the form below to send in your donation.

Our dedicated board of trustees and core of volunteers work hard to stretch our dollars, as does our modest staff, but we need more help. With rising insurance costs and increasing operating expenses, we count on our members to help us keep Washington's beautiful natural places safe and secure.

This year's budget is over \$250,000, and we must rely on gifts from members for more than two thirds of that amount.

We thank you for your past support. With your help we can continue to fulfill our mission of preserving and protecting open space.

**This year, please consider making an additional donation to help us
rebuild the Hidden Valley Bridge over the Shepaug in memory of Stephen Reich**

Memorial Contributions

Over the years many contributions have been given to Steep Rock by those wishing to honor departed relatives or friends. The following is a list of those so honored.

Bruce Bailey	Lathrop Johnson	James E. Sayles
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Clayton Ferry	Stephen Reich	George Ward
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Please Become a Member of Steep Rock. We Need Your Support!

A contribution of any size entitles you to membership for one year, and helps us to maintain the reservations. Please use this form to send in your donation.

Send Maps

Stephen Reich Memorial Fund

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PO Box /Street _____

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State, Zip _____

Send To:
Steep Rock Association
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Amanda C. Branson, *Office Assistant*

Macricostas Maps Ready

The trail map of the Macricostas Preserve has been printed and complimentary copies have been sent to all 2004-2005 members of Steep Rock.

We now have beautifully designed, accurate maps of all the Reservations.

The maps are for sale in three locations: the Steep Rock office (second floor of the old firehouse building in the Depot), the Hickory Stick Bookstore and the Gunn Memorial Library.

The cost is \$3.00 each, or all three for \$8.00.

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Taft Girls Help Out XCcountry Team Tackles Invasive Honeysuckle

The members of Taft School's girls cross country running team have regular 4-5 mile practice runs in Steep Rock. On Monday, October 24, for their community service workday, they spent 4 hours hauling out honeysuckle as fast as Vinnie Forese and Clark Gifford could cut it. They helped clear a large area near the Riding Ring. And then they ran their regular 5 miles!



Taft girls x country team, from the left: Coach Chad Faber, Natalie Lescoart (Captain), Jane Kinney (Captain), Kaitlin Hardy (Captain), Helena Smith, Mary Walsh, Jaymie Oppenheim, Kate Kruse, Eliza Whetzel, Carola Lovering, Kacey Kionsky, Lyssa Lincoln.