

# The Steep Rock VISTA

The Newsletter of the Steep Rock Association

Spring 1995

## Land Exchange Benefits Everyone

### A Win-Win Situation

Steep Rock and the town of Washington worked together recently to complete a series of land exchanges.

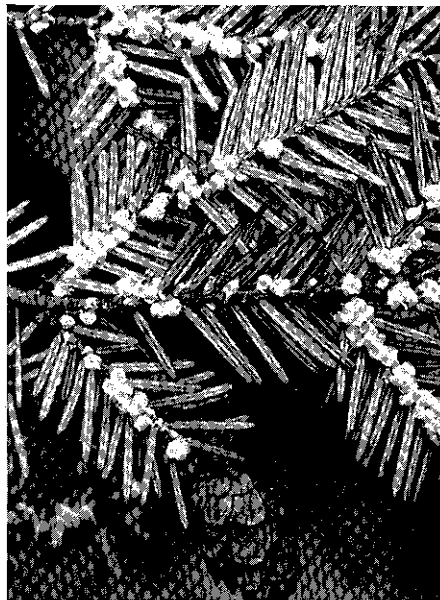
Steep Rock conveyed 12 acres of land on Blackville Road to the Town of Washington. The Blackville Road land is adjacent to the property purchased by the town for its garage.

Washington transferred 9.5 acres of town-owned property west of Bee Brook Road and east of the Shepaug River, (excluding the firehouse property) to Steep Rock.

In turn, Steep Rock will lease the property back to the town (for \$1 per year for 99 years) for passive recreational purposes in exchange for a conservation easement covering the portion of the firehouse property extending 100 feet from the center of the Shepaug River. The town also conveyed a 1 acre parcel west of the Bee Brook Bridge (along the Shepaug River) and 0.2 of an acre of land along Bee Brook Road.

The 0.2 acre on Bee Brook Road will allow Steep Rock to finally straighten out property line confusions with adjacent property owners and make the entrance to Hidden Valley from the south side of the Shepaug River clear and safe for horses and hikers.

Deeding the land south of the firehouse to Steep Rock, and placing the easement on the firehouse property, guarantees the preservation and protection of a vital section of the Shepaug River. Protection of the entire Shepaug River corridor is one of Steep Rock's most important objectives and is mentioned in the Town Plan of Development as critical to maintaining Washington's rural character.



*Hemlock woolly Adelgid. Be on the lookout for it! Call the office if you think you see it! See back page for more information.*

*by Susan Branson  
Executive Director*

### Annual Fund Drive

Steep Rock's Annual Appeal and Membership Drive will end in August. Please consider a donation to help us maintain Steep Rock trails and carry out our stewardship obligations. Any contribution will make you a member of the Association. You'll receive a Steep Rock decal as an acknowledgement.

### Preservation Through Land Exchange

Following the devastating flood of 1995, Washington residents dreamed of preserving land along the Shepaug River. Part of that dream included property located south of our new firehouse on Bee Brook Road. At a town meeting, as part of the town's redevelopment plan, residents approved a motion to preserve this and other properties as a "waterside reservation". Three decades later we realized that this plan could be modified by future town meetings.

I am please to announce that four separate parcels of land totalling approximately 12 acres will be preserved forever through a series of land exchanges between Steep Rock Association, the Town of Washington and the State of Connecticut. A 99 year lease back to the town from Steep Rock will ensure that Washington residents can enjoy the land along the river for recreational purposes for years to come. I have asked the Recreation Commission to explore possible plans for a walking trail and bicycle paths utilizing the property between the firehouse and Dobber's Restaurant. Although no funds are immediately available, this concept will be included in our master plan for recreational land throughout the town.

Indeed this is a story with a happy ending. The dreams of our predecessors are now a reality thanks to the foresight of community-minded individuals. Washington's tradition of preservation with the interests of future generations in mind continues because of the co-operation of town officials, Steep Rock Association and our citizens.

*by Alan J. Chapin  
First Selectman, Steep Rock Trustee*

### Steep Rock Picnic

September 9, 1995

Saturday, September 9, is the date for the annual Steep Rock Picnic. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend. Invitations will be sent in August. Our down-pour date is the next day, Sunday the 10th.

## Harwood Birdwalk Booklets for Sale

To those of you who walk the Michael Harwood Birdwalk, we're happy to announce the publication of a booklet to accompany the numbered sign along the trail. Written by Trustee Linda Potter, the booklet provides descriptions of many species of plantlife that birds depend on for food. We also republished a birdlist first introduced by the late Michael Harwood in 1987. The booklet and birdlist are on sale at the office for \$2.00. This modest fee helps us pay the printing costs. If you're not familiar with the Birdwalk take some time to explore it. Look for the sign at the parking area near the riding ring. It is a short, easy walk.

## Washington Horse Show to Benefit Steep Rock

Sunday, August 6. This is the fifth year of the show since it was reactivated. The horse show committee has rearranged the prize list so that many of the jumping classes, including the Washington Hunter class, will be running during the middle of the day. Lunch will be available on the grounds at the Cafe le Cheval.



Photo by Tumer Eren

Rider Elizabeth Eren and her horse Governor were participants in the 1994 Washington Horse Show. This year's show will be held on Sunday, August 6, 1995, starting at 8 AM.

## New Entry Signs and Bulletin Board

Look for new signs posted at the main entrances to Steep Rock and Hidden Valley. We've replaced the registry boxes with the new signs and a suggestion box. They list many of Steep Rock's important Rules and Regulations. Signs that have fallen into disrepair will be removed. We hope you like the new uncluttered look of the entrances. Watch the Bulletin Board at the Riding Ring, too. We've moved it to a better location - it's straight ahead as you enter the parking lot at the riding

## Steep Rock Elects Trustees

Steep Rock Association recently elected three new members to its Board of Trustees. William Fairbairn, Wendy Federer and Michael Jackson officially joined the Board of Trustees at its Annual Meeting on May 12.

### William Fairbairn

Bill is a partner in the firm Cramer and Anderson and has practiced law for 20 years. He serves on the Shepaug Valley Regional Board of Education and is a Director of the Village Improvement Society. He, his wife Martha, and their two children live on Green Hill Road in Washington. Bill says, "I have enjoyed hiking and camping in Steep Rock since 1962. Martha is a frequent horseback rider in Steep Rock."

### Wendy R. Federer

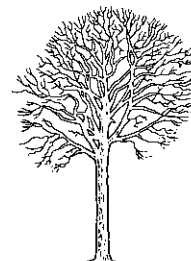
Wendy received her J.D. from the University of Bridgeport School of Law and is an Associate in the firm of Kernan & Henry in Heritage Village in Southbury. A resident of Roxbury, Wendy is on the Board of Directors of the Roxbury Land Trust and is a member of the Rotary Club of Washington. She's an avid tennis player and also enjoys downhill and cross country skiing.

### Michael Jackson

Michael has been coming to Washington, Connecticut since the early nineteen seventies and has resided here permanently since 1988. He, his wife Pam and their three children make their home in Hidden Valley, which they enjoy all year round. He has worked for Lehman Brothers for the past twenty six years and is a practicing psychoanalyst. Michael is also a member of Washington's Board of Finance.

The following Trustees were re-elected for an additional term of three years: Ted Clark, Alan Chapin, Bob Ficks, Gus Hauser, George Murphy, Susie Payne, Fourgie Smith and Steve Solley.

In addition, the Trustees elected the following slate of officers: George Ward - President; George Murphy - Vice President; Fourgie Smith - Vice President; Carlos Canal - Treasurer; and Susan Branson - Secretary.



ring. Trustee Cindy Brissett plans to post additional information about Steep Rock there, and she'll be using the Bulletin Board to keep you informed of current and upcoming events.

# Facts For FAQ'S

With this issue of VISTA, we begin a section devoted to answering some frequently asked questions (FAQ's). What have you been wondering about? If you have a question - about the environment, land preservation, the Steep Rock Association, the Steep Rock and Hidden Valley Reservations, Land Trusts in general - just ask and we'll get the facts for you. You may call the office: 868-9131, or write us: PO Box 279, Washington Depot, CT 06794, with your questions. In this issue of VISTA, we explain Greenways and Conservation Easements.

## What Is A Greenway?

A greenway is a corridor of open space that may protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical landmarks and offer people a place to walk and enjoy other recreational activities. Greenways can be located along waterways, or along other defining natural features such as ridge lines, man-made corridors (i.e. an unused right-of-way), abandoned town roads, wood

roads or scenic barge canals. It can be a green space along a highway or around a village. Greenways can be the missing links that connect existing green areas and which give all people access to the out-of-doors. In short, a greenway can be as wide as a river valley or as narrow as an abandoned rail bed. Greenways can serve many purposes. They can act as rural greenways to preserve natural habitats and wild life migration, encourage restoration of valuable landscapes, and support both recreational and educational programs. In our cities and suburbs, greenways can encompass both natural and man-made features. They are a way for communities to create convenient access to local attractions: fresh air

and green lands. In order to perpetuate greenways throughout the State of Connecticut, Governor Weicker formed a commission several years ago to look at the prospects of linkages throughout the state - linkages that will one day allow Connecticut citizens to step out of doors and within fifteen to twenty minutes be on a Greenway path that could, in effect, thread through the entire state. We still have a long way to go. No question. But the fact that a commission has submitted a report which shows that this can be done - and that report has been accepted by the Governor - is indicative of what can happen in this state.

*By John Millington  
Steep Rock Trustee*

## What Is A Conservation Easement?

In legal terms, an "easement" is a right which you have over somebody else's land. A common example is a right-of-way: a right you may have to cross the land owned by another. A "conservation" easement, as the name implies, is defined by Connecticut statute as an easement "whose purpose is to retain land or water areas

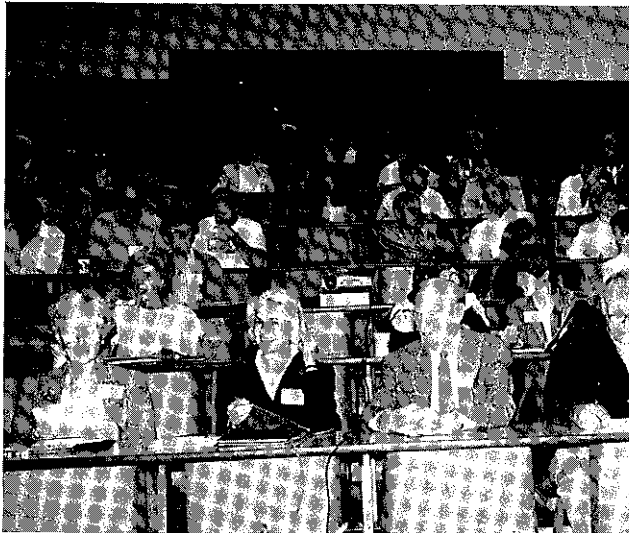


Photo by Lesley Olsen, LTSB

*Steep Rock's Hedda vonGoeben, Susan Payne, Bob deCourcy and Susan Branson attended the Land Trust Convocation in November. This yearly educational event is sponsored by the Nature Conservancy. Land Trusts throughout the state gather to exchange ideas and hear presentations from experts and fellow conservationists.*

predominantly in their natural, scenic or open condition or in agricultural, farming, forest or open space-use". In short it is a promise to maintain land predominantly in its natural condition - a promise that is beneficial to the public and which usually rewards the landowner with income tax and estate tax benefits. To be eligible for tax benefits the easement must be given in perpetuity to a governmental body or to "a charitable corporation or trust whose purposes include conservation of land or water areas". Our own Steep Rock Association is qualified to accept such gifts. In fact Steep Rock now holds conservation easements protecting over 750 acres of Washington's forests, farms and open lands.

For you as a landowner, a conservation easement has the following advantages:

1. You will still own your land.
2. You will get an income tax deduction for your gift of the easement.
3. You will reduce the value of your estate by giving away your land's development value, so your land can pass to your heirs with lower estate taxes.
4. You will have the satisfaction of preserving your land in its natural condition in perpetuity.

Before taking any steps to make such a gift, however you should consult a lawyer to make sure you comply with all statutory provisions.

*By Ted Clark  
Steep Rock Trustee*

## STEEP ROCK BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Susan Branson

## Lookout For The Woolly Adelgid

The Hemlock wooly Adelgid has been reported in two locations in Washington, but we still have not seen it in Steep Rock or Hidden Valley. You know that our magnificent stands of Hemlock trees have been under seige from the Hemlock scale for several years. Three years ago, the Hemlock looper swept through Steep Rock Reservation killing many already weakened trees. Since then the Hemlocks have been holding their own, and we have even seen some new growth on younger specimens. The Adelgid, though, is the most serious threat - once it becomes established, it can kill Hemlocks in one or two years. Be on the lookout for it - we are anxious to know if and when the insect arrives and where it is in the Reservation. The Adelgid is easy to identify this time of year - the egg cases look like small Q-tips at the base of the needles. Call the office (868-9131) if you think you've seen it.

## Picnic 1994



*Picnic Co-Chair Cindy Brissett confers with Constable Ken Fitch.*



Photos by Deb Forese

*Sheila Anson, Co-Chair, checks with chief cooks Alan Chapin, Ken Williams and Vin Forese.*

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