

# The Steep Rock *VISTA*

The Newsletter of the Steep Rock Association

Summer 1998

## Walter S. Logan Wetlands Given to Steep Rock *Weantinoge Trust Gives Preserve in Spirit of Cooperation*

In a move that epitomized the spirit of cooperation that exists between Weantinoge Heritage Trust and the Steep Rock Association, Weantinoge board members recently voted to transfer ownership of the Walter S. Logan Wetlands to the Steep Rock Association.

Mrs. Walter S. (Verna) Logan donated the 37 acre parcel to Weantinoge in 1975 after Steep Rock declined to accept the Romford Road property. At that time, Steep Rock would not accept properties that were not contiguous with existing properties it owned or that were not in the Shepaug River corridor.

It was the offer of this land in 1975, that sparked a lively debate among the Steep Rock Trustees. That debate that ultimately led to the policy of examining each property offered to it, whether as a gift or a conservation easement, on a case by case basis, and occasionally accepting gifts of land in parts of town other than along the Shepaug River. Until it was given to Weantinoge, the land had always been in the Logan family. Walter S. Logan, Verna's husband, was the sixth and last male descendant of the original owner, John Logan. The land was granted to John Logan by King George III in 1741!

*cont.*



*Guy Peterson, a member of the Board of Directors of Weantinoge Heritage Trust, presents the deed to the Walter S. Logan Wetlands to Hollis Clark and Barbara Reed. Hollis and Barbara are the daughters of Verna Logan, who originally donated the property to Weantinoge. Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Reed are accepting the property on behalf of the Steep Rock Association. Hollis's husband Ted is Vice President of Steep Rock and is a member of its Land Preservation Committee.*

### *Logan Wetlands, cont.*

The land is primarily wetlands, and is the headwaters of Mallory Brook, which flows into the Shepaug River. It is a significant wildlife habitat area, and is part of an important north/south corridor of preserved land - by gifts and conservation easements to Steep Rock - along Nettleton Hollow Road and Romford Road.

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## THREE NEW TRUSTEES ELECTED *Alex, Hauser, Matthews Chosen*

At the Steep Rock Board of Trustees Annual Meeting in May of this year, Mike Alex, Rita Hauser and Ed Matthews were elected to serve on the Board.

**Mike Alex**, a well known and respected Washingtonian, was born and raised here. He is a land surveyor and knows the town and the Steep Rock Reservations "like the back of his hand". He worked for Steep Rock under John Marsh's guidance in 1973 and 1974. He and John blazed all of Steep Rock's boundaries at that time, and they did it on horseback! He helped build the first Hidden Valley bridge over the Shepaug River. The Trustees are delighted to welcome Mike back - this time as a Trustee.

**Rita Hauser**, an international lawyer, is known throughout the world for her public service and philanthropic work. She and her husband Gus (a former Steep Rock Trustee) have been longtime Steep Rock supporters. The Hauser Foundation provided the matching funds to build the Hauser Suspension Bridge in the Steep Rock Reservation. Rita and Gus are avid walkers and spend as much time as they can on the trails in Steep Rock and Hidden Valley.

**Ed Matthews** is fast becoming a familiar name in Washington mostly because of his commitment to saving the Shepaug River. He is President of the Shepaug River Association and an articulate spokesman for the cause. Edwin is a sculler, and rows in the mornings on Lake Waramaug. He is a member of the Lake Waramaug Authority, whose purpose is to enforce the State's boating laws and ensure safety for all those using the Lake. Edwin, an attorney for the international firm of Coudert Brother in New York, has been an environmental crusader for many years.

# TOWN CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

## **WEC, Garden Club Forum** *Large Crowd Hears Speakers*

An open forum "Maintaining Our Rural Character" was held May 14th at the Gunn Library, sponsored by the Washington Environmental Council and the Washington Garden Club with behind the scenes encouragement from many, including the Steep Rock Association. The panelists, Russell L. Brenneman, President of Connecticut Forest and Parks Association, and David Sutherland from the Nature Conservancy, focussed with extraordinary cohesion on how a community can come together to explore the meaning of "rural character", what land use decisions need to be examined, and the importance of community involvement. Both Russ and David stressed that a town's rural character will be determined by its residents' willingness to listen to and work with each other. They also pointed out the importance of education. Knowledge of the issues involved is vital if we are to take advantage of the current enthusiasm for open space preservation. The Wykham Room was filled to overflowing with representatives from town commissions, interested citizens, and representatives from local environmental organizations. A stimulating question and answer period followed the presentations. Hopefully the forum was one small step towards the future we share.

*Addie Roberts*

## **Washington Primary School** **Field Trips** *Sponsored by Garden Club & WEC*

For the past three years, the Washington Garden Club (WGC) and the Washington Environmental Council (WEC) have co-sponsored a very successful series of programs, activities and field trips for the students at the Washington Primary School.

In May and June of this year, an exciting group of field trips to Steep Rock and Hidden Valley were added to the program.

First, 44 first graders visited Hidden Valley to study water habitats with David Parsons, an educator from the Ct. Department of Environmental Protection. While half the class was with Dr. Parsons, the other half was studying the woods environment with WGC volunteers Mary Ewing and Kathy Whitney.

Next, second graders were introduced to the history of Steep Rock by Susan Branson, Executive Director of Steep Rock. The children, led by Cathy Setterlin, former

*cont.*

### *School Field Trips, cont.*

director of the Pratt Center, and WGC volunteer Natalie Dyer, then embarked on a walk along the Michael Harwood Birdwalk to learn about the trees, birds, and rocks.

Next, Starling Childs, professional forester and naturalist who knows Steep Rock well, having just completed a professional study of the Reservation, donned his Sherlock Holmes hat and led 48 fifth graders on a fabulous "nature's mysteries" hike to the top of Steep Rock. Feedback from the children proved what an exciting and educational experience this was. The final trip of the year, taken on a gorgeous day in June, was a "fern walk" in Hidden Valley. Roxbury resident Pamela Edwards, a landscape designer certified by the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, enchanted the children with both folklore and factual information about the lush ferns growing in the area.

*Debbie Swigart*



*Washington Primary School second graders at Steep Rock.*

## **Town Greenways Committee**

*ed. note: The Shepaug Greenway was established in 1992. Its course runs from the confluence of the Shepaug River and Lake Lillinonah in Bridgewater north to the Appalachian Trail in Cornwall. When the Greenway was first formed some sections of it were unconnected.*

The Town Greenways Committee was formed on December 1, 1997. Its focus is to link the Steep Rock and Hidden Valley Reservations through Washington Depot. The project is divided into three phases:

1. Connect Steep Rock to the Primary School recreational area.
2. Establish a walking route through the Depot to the Firehouse and then to Hidden Valley.
3. Connect Hidden Valley to Mt. Tom State Park using old town roads.

The future focus is to link the Town's Greenway with neighboring towns.

*Continued on next page.*

## Steep Rock's Land Preservation Committee

Steep Rock's Land Preservation Committee continues to focus on the protection of the Shepaug River Corridor, the historic trail to Waramaug's Rock (a.k.a. The Pinnacle) and natural preservation corridors such as the Nettleton Hollow/ Romford Road area. The primary vehicle of preservation is the conservation easement. A Monitoring Committee is in place under the leadership of Wendy Federer. Each easement is visited at least once per year.

Please call the office (860-868-9131) for a copy of our brochure "Creating a Legacy for Future Generations - How to Give to Steep Rock".

*Susan Payne, Chair*

### Goshawk(s) Gone?

You may remember from the spring *VISTA* that we were preparing to close trails in Hidden Valley when the goshawks became active again. And you may have noticed that no trails have been closed yet. That's because we've had no reports of goshawk aggression. Why? We think one of the pair died. In early May, Linda Potter and Hedda vonGoeben found the remains of a bird (including the hawklike scull), along the railroad bed. We've sent the remains to the Ct. Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, for a positive identification.

The Goshawk's death raises many questions: Do Goshawks mate for life? If one of the pair dies, what happens to its mate? Will it look for a new mate? Will it stay in its territory? Will another pair take over the territory? If so, how long before new ones move in? We'll try to have a follow up story in the next *VISTA*.

We're saddened by the loss of such a beautiful creature. Still, it's good to be able to walk the Hidden Valley trails that had to be closed for so many summers.



*Star Childs and Washington Primary School fifth graders.  
See article, p. 2.*

### *Town Greenways Committee, cont.*

#### Members of the Committee include:

- Susan Payne, Chair/Steep Rock
- Elaine Luckey/Board of Selectmen
- Sheila Anson and Joan Gauthey/Parks & Rec Commission
- Bill Fairbairn/Village Improvement Society
- Dirk Sabin/ad hoc Conservation Plan
- George Ward, Susan Branson, Peter Talbot, Bob deCourcy/SteepRock
- Addie Roberts/Planning Commission
- Jack Boyer/Senior Housing
- Fred Roberts, Ken Daniels, and Ray Underwood

Volunteers are welcome. The Committee meets the first Monday of the month at 4:30 P.M. in the Land Use Room at the Town Hall.

*Susan Payne, Chair*

### Annual Membership Drive Ends August 31

Steep Rock's Membership Drive corresponds to our fiscal year- September 1 to August 31. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, or if you want to become a member, there is still time. A contribution of any size entitles you to membership for one year. The funds raised help us to maintain the Reservations. Clip and use this form to send in your donation.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
PO Box /Street \_\_\_\_\_  
Town \_\_\_\_\_  
State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Send To:  
Steep Rock Association  
PO Box 279  
Washington Depot, CT 06794

**Steep Rock Picnic Saturday,**  
**September 12, 1998**

*Noon 'til 2*  
*Save the Date!*  
*Everyone Welcome*

**Trial Date Set**  
**In Shepaug River Battle**  
*May 5, 1999 Designated*

In what was described as a victory for the Shepaug River Association, Waterbury Chief Administrative Judge Joseph Pellegrino ruled, on April 24, that the two cases regarding low water flow in the Shepaug River ( one filed in Waterbury by the City of Waterbury, and the other filed in Litchfield by the Shepaug River Association) would be consolidated and assigned to a "complex litigation docket". The complex litigation designation was created in March of this year to handle difficult environmental cases and lawsuits between municipalities - cases that are expected to take a long time. Judge Pellegrino said that the beauty of the complex docket was that it could take care of the inefficiency created by the competing lawsuits, that is, having the same issue before two judges. Judge Beverly Hodgson will hear the case in Waterbury beginning May 5, 1999. It will be the first case of the complex litigation category. Bill Bright, of Cummings and Lockwood, attorney for the River Association was pleased with Judge Pellegrino's ruling. The association had sought all along to have the cases consolidated. Attorneys for the City of Waterbury were satisfied because the case will be heard in Waterbury.

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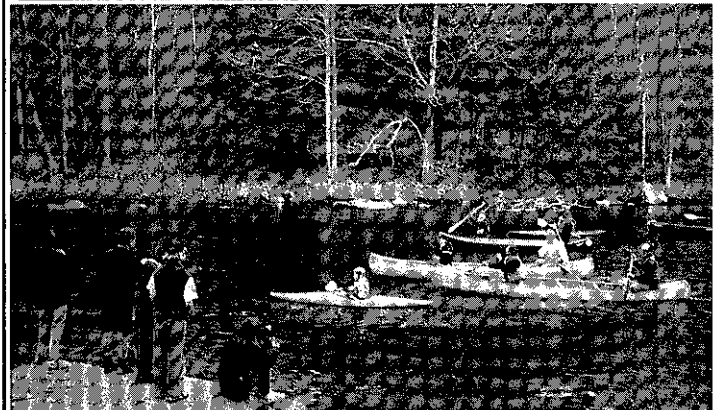
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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/VISTA EDITOR**

Susan Branson



*Paddlers await the start signal at this spring's Annual Shepaug River Canoe Race, sponsored by Washington Parks and Rec Commission and the Shepaug River Association.*

Steep Rock Association  
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