



The Steep Rock *VISTA* Summer 2006

Change at Macricostas Preserve's Agricultural Field

The following letter was recently sent to Steep Rock's members. Washington's residents, whether members of Steep Rock or not, are important stakeholders in the Macricostas Preserve. Because we want to keep everyone informed, we reprint the letter to share with you the exciting developments on the agricultural field.

Dear Friend of Steep Rock,

You may have noticed all the activity in the 50-acre agricultural field at the Macricostas Preserve, and if you have, you must be wondering what is happening. The farmer who has been growing corn for the past several years has terminated his lease. Steep Rock now has the opportunity to fulfill a long-term goal much sooner than we'd hoped, namely, to convert the cornfield into hay production, as recommended by the USDA. This has been a goal since it was proposed by the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences in their *Macricostas Preserve Management Plan* in 2003.

Steep Rock has found a farmer willing to take on this conversion -- a time-consuming, major undertaking. It will be at least the summer of 2007 before the field is in hay production. The activity you see now is a large scale clean-up. Steep Rock and farmers leasing the field have made some modest clean-up efforts before, but there was still much to be done. There were multiple farm dump sites with all types of metal machine remnants, tires, and glass. There has been a steady encroachment of vegetation along some parts of the field's edge; in some places you can see the original stonewall edge of the field

through as much as 15 feet of brush. So far, the farmer has cleaned up these dump sites as much as possible, filling two large dumpsters to capacity, and has begun the process of cutting back the field's edge.

Once the field is in full hay production, the farmer has told us he may need a structure to store the cut hay and possibly some equipment. When this property came under Steep Rock's ownership there were two houses and seven barns, most in disrepair. All the barns and one of the houses have been demolished. The State of Connecticut holds a conservation easement on the whole Macricostas Preserve as part of the deal that allowed Steep Rock to purchase it in 2000. We have been in contact with the State and they have approved all aspects of the project, including the possible construction of one or two structures as storage barns. To that end, recent activity visible from Route 202 on the southern side of the field has been cleaning up two existing chicken barn foundations, for use as the foundations to any new structures.

This is an outstanding opportunity - a farmer willing to take on this large project and assume much of its cost. We are grateful to everyone who has helped make this goal become a reality, including Steve Solley, Bobby Seymour, Dave Stygar from the CT DEP, and Tim Potter. I hope you share our excitement for this new chapter in the Macricostas Preserve.

Sincerely,

Susan Branson, Executive Director



Two 30 yard dumpsters were fill with debris. Seventy one dumped tires were found and disposed of.



Some of the wire fencing, vehicle axles, truck chassis, and large amounts of assorted metal that was found and taken away.

Hidden Valley Stephen Reich Memorial Bridge Progress Report

NEW BRIDGE AT THE SAME SITE

The new bridge will be in the same location as before. Like the bridge that was lost, there will be two (approximately) fifty foot spans, with an abutment on the large boulder in the middle of the river where the two sections meet. The approach to the bridge from the west side of the river, where the walkway and steps led down to the previous bridge, and the abutment and steps to the bridge from the east side will have to be completely redesigned and rebuilt.

FIBERGLASS BRIDGE

Steep Rock's Board of Trustees has approved replacing the wooden truss bridge that was lost last fall, with a fiberglass bridge. Fiberglass bridges are less costly, are stronger, and last longer than wood. The material weighs much less than wood, and thus is easier to transport to remote sites. The Reich family agrees that this type of bridge is best for the site.

The company we have been consulting with, ET TechTonics, has a very informative website, www.ettechtonics.com, for anyone interested finding out more.

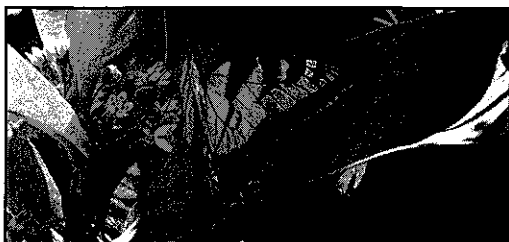
CONTRACTOR TO BE CHOSEN

Steep Rock has sent requests for proposals to four contractors. We have heard back from two, and each has estimated the total cost at over \$125,000. Once the contract is awarded, we will apply for the necessary permit from the Town of Washington's Inland Wetland Commission and proceed with construction and installation as soon as possible. If we can raise the necessary funds, and if the weather cooperates, we hope to have the bridge in place by the fall of this year.

FUNDRAISING CONTINUES

In October, Ray Reich presented a \$10,000 check to Steep Rock to help fund the rebuilding of the Hidden Valley Bridge. We asked the community to help us raise the rest of the money. This effort, which is in addition to our Annual Membership Drive, has raised nearly two thirds of the amount we need, and includes a second \$10,000 contribution from the Stephen Reich Memorial Fund.

During the Memorial Day weekend, Steep Rock Trustee Wendell Minor signed copies of his latest book YANKEE DOODLE AMERICA the Spirit of 1776 from A to Z and donated the proceeds to the Stephen Reich Memorial Fund and the Hickory Stick Bookstore will continue to honor Wendell's gesture by donating proceeds to the fund from sales of the book through the Fourth of July.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail. Photo by B. K. Stafford

YOU CAN HELP

Please consider a donation to Steep Rock to rebuild the bridge. You may also still contribute to the Stephen Reich Memorial Fund. Your donation to the Memorial Fund will be divided evenly between the Steep Rock Association and the 160th Regiment Nightstalkers Association, the two organizations chosen by the Reich family to be the beneficiaries of the funds raised.

Contributions to Steep Rock for the bridge may be sent to:
Steep Rock Association

Reich Bridge Fund

P.O. Box 279

Washington Depot, CT 06794

Contributions to the Memorial Fund may be sent to:

Stephen C. Reich Memorial Fund

c/o The First National Bank of Litchfield

P.O. Box 391

Washington Depot, CT 06794

Contributors to Steep Rock for the Stephen Reich Memorial Bridge (as of May 30, 2005)

Sheila Anson	Audrey & Daniel Meyer
Arthur D. Deacon & Son, Inc.	John Millington
Mark Averill	Eliza & Michael Paolucci
Penny & Bill Bardel	Kirsten Peckerman
Jayne Bentzen & Benedict Silverman	Peter & Janet Poskas
Victoria Marsh Chemiske	John & Anne Potter
Jane Conn	The Stephen Reich Memorial Fund
Paul L. Cornell, Jr.	Barbara Paul & Charles Robinson
Dale Stull Demy	Matthew L. Root
Natalie & Elisha Dyer	John & Carol Santoleri
Susan & Michael Eanes	Regine Laverge Schade
Gretchen & Philip Farmer	Pat & Dick Sears
Kirsten Feldman & Hugh Frater	Wendy & Greg Seeley
Emily Fitzhugh	Elizabeth Seideman
Michael Gorra	Sarah Shepard
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Mr. & Mrs. Tim Ingrassia	Washington Parks & Recreation
Louise King	Charles T. Treadway, III
Mark Kentzman & Caroline Vanderlip	Lee & Cynthia King Vance
Michael & Jill Lloyd	Hedda Windisch von Goeben
Paula & Eric Madoff	William Wehrhahn
Linda McGarr	Barbara & Peter Wodtke

Updates

White Pines Thinning

A contract has been signed to thin the white pine plantation in Hidden Valley, the project we told you about in the Fall 2005 *Vista*. Jamie Lintner of Forest Works, LLC has been retained to do the logging. Weather and ground conditions will dictate when the project will begin.



This photograph of some of the white pines in Hidden Valley shows clearly the crowding in the stand. All of these trees were planted fifty years ago, yet some are only 4 to 6 inches in diameter. Others are bigger and taller—14 to 16 inches in diameter, but none have reached their maximum potential. White pines can grow as tall as 120 feet and reach 30 inches in diameter. The thinning will remove many of the spindly trees in the stand, giving room for the biggest and the best specimens to recover from the overcrowding.

Shepaug River

On Tuesday, May 23, Governor Jodi Rell announced that she would recommend that the State Bonding Commission approve the \$3.5 million appropriated for improvements to the Water Company's system. At a press conference held at the Waterbury Water Company's Water Treatment Plant, Governor Rell praised those who have worked so tirelessly on the effort to fulfill the requirements of the settlement agreement between the Town of Washington and the City of Waterbury.

Senator Andrew Roraback received much of the praise for his work on getting the funds into the bonding package, as did Gina McCarthy, head of the CT DEP, Mayor of Waterbury Michael Jarjura, Curt Johnson of the CT Fund for the Environment, Margaret Minor of Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, Steep Rock's John Millington and several others.

Funds will now be available for Waterbury to make the necessary changes to its system that will allow significantly more water to flow into the Shepaug as well as provide plenty of safe drinking for the citizens of Waterbury and the other towns to whom the city sells water.



Annual Membership Drive - Please Join Us!

We have 480 members thus far this year, and have raised \$156,000 towards our goal of \$200,000. Please consider becoming a member of Steep Rock. We rely on Membership contributions for 80% of our operating budget. Without these contributions we cannot fulfill our stewardship obligations, which increase with every passing year. Our fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30, so we have only 3 months left to realize our goal.

Please detach and mail your check, made out to Steep Rock Association.

Name _____

PO Box/Street _____

Town _____

State, Zip _____

Send To:
Steep Rock Association
P.O. Box 279
Washington Depot, CT 06794



Old



New

Notice the change in our logo? Trustees voted to change the Steep Rock's name and logo to more accurately reflect what Steep Rock is—a land trust. Our Certificate of Incorporation states our purposes as: "To accept, receive, acquire, hold, manage, maintain, preserve and improve land and real property, including conservation easements and other easements and interests in land and real property, in the Town of Washington and towns adjacent thereto for the use and enjoyment thereof by the citizens and residents of the Town of Washington and adjacent towns and of Litchfield County and by the general public for conservation and recreational purposes..." Wendell Minor, a Trustee of Steep Rock, designed this beautiful logo, and its newer incarnation, which now clearly identifies Steep Rock as a land trust.



Eastern Tailed Blue. Photo by B. K. Stafford



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Washington Depot, CT 06794

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Amanda Branson, *Office Assistant/VISTA Photographer*

New Information on Steep Rock's Web Site

There are two exciting additions to our website: birds and butterflies. One of our newly elected Trustees, Peary Stafford, has updated the list of birds found in the Steep Rock, Hidden Valley, and the Macricostas Preserve. The original bird list was created by Michael Harwood in 1987. Peary has also made the first list of butterflies found in the reservations.