

# VISTA

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15TH ANNIVERSARY**

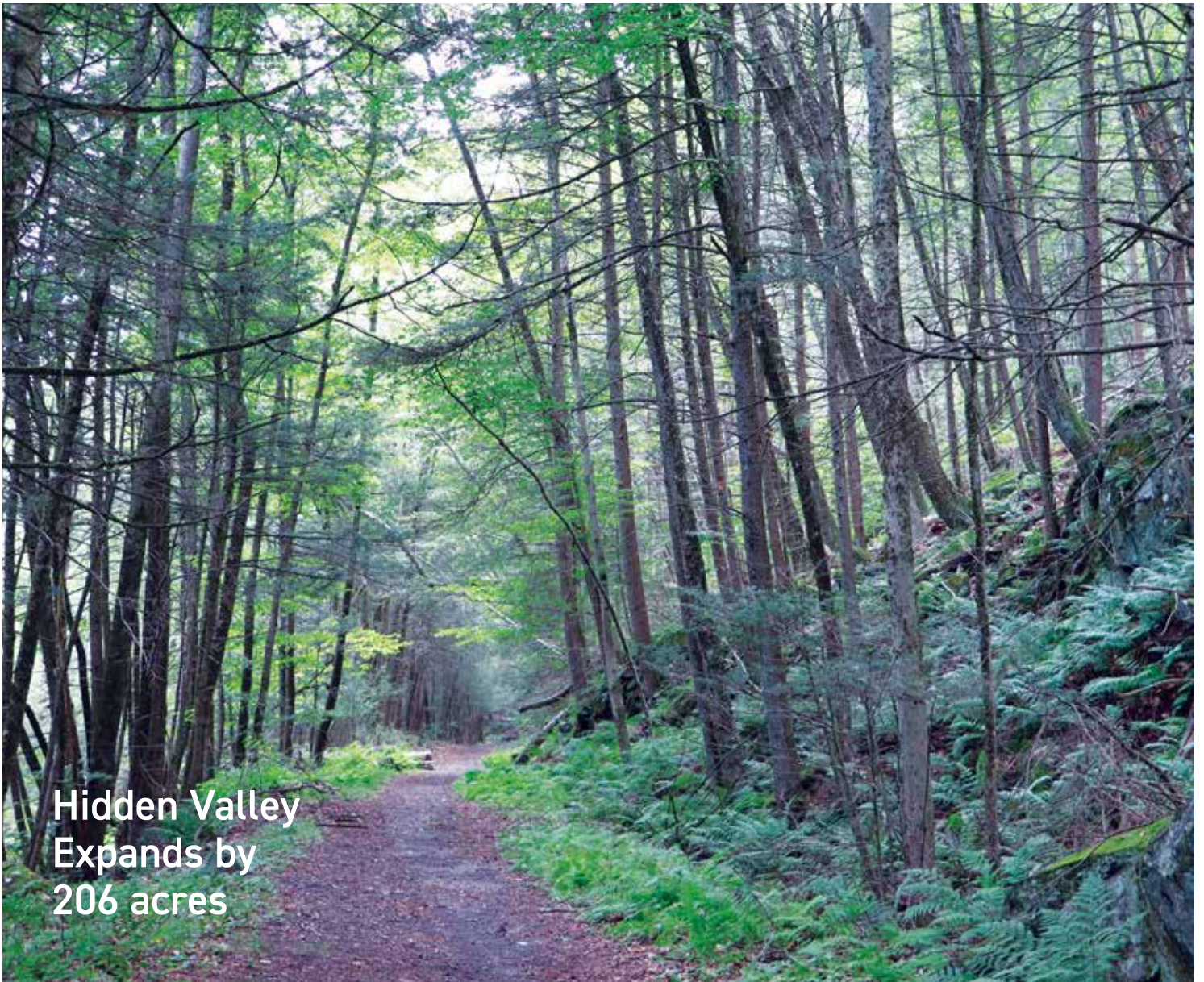
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Hidden Valley  
Expands by  
206 acres



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### Brian Hagenbuch, Ph.D.

Executive Director

### Denise Arturi

Judea Garden Head Gardener & Volunteer Coordinator

### Merlin Ennis

Trails & Preserves Manager

### Rory Larson

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### Johanna Maches

Office Manager

### Monica Roberto

Development Director

### GET IN TOUCH

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# BEHIND THE SCENES



Five-acre wetlands in Pinnacle Cliffs parcel (see pg. 10)

In this VISTA, we take you “behind the scenes” of our land trust, offering you a glimpse of the day-to-day activities and long-term work involved in protecting and stewarding the lands you love.

From acquiring critical conservation lands to stewarding our forests and waterways and ensuring high quality hiking trails for your outdoor enjoyment, Steep Rock has been a leader in conservation of the Litchfield Hills for nearly 100 years. This year we are celebrating Judea Garden’s 15th growing season with a full slate of activities.

We’re also recognizing some of our Trustees and volunteers for their impact and contributions to Steep Rock.

And don’t forget to sign up for some of the events and activities we have planned in the coming months. It’s all in this issue. We hope you’ll join us.

Enjoy! — Brian Hagenbuch

Be the first to know about new trails and events. Sign up for our eNewsletter: [steeprockassoc.org](http://steeprockassoc.org)

**Steep Rock Preserve**, 2 Tunnel Road, Washington Depot, CT.

**NOTE: TUNNEL ROAD CLOSED THROUGH NOVEMBER 2023**

**Macricostas Preserve**, 124 Christian Street, New Preston, CT.

**Hidden Valley Preserve**, 198 Bee Brook Rd., Washington Depot, CT.

**West Mountain Preserve, Johnson Farm**: 37 West Mountain Road #2, Washington, CT.  
Hillside Farm: 397 Nettleton Hollow Rd. Washington, CT.

**Steep Rock Campus at Macricostas Preserve**, 116 Christian Street, New Preston, CT. Administrative offices and Judea Garden.

## MISSION

Steep Rock Association is a nationally accredited land trust whose mission is to conserve ecologically and historically significant landscapes and riparian corridors in and around Washington CT and to enhance the community’s connection to nature through outreach, education, and passive recreation.



Railroad Tunnel at Steep Rock Preserve

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

We recently sat down with Erin Pierson, a dedicated Steep Rock volunteer who exemplifies the transformative power of volunteering and the lasting impact it can have on future generations.

**What inspired your involvement with Steep Rock?** When we moved to Washington, we thought it was really important to get involved volunteering. So immediately I started looking for volunteer opportunities. I grew up hiking so getting involved with trails and wilderness preservation at Steep Rock was a great fit for us.

**Share your projects with us:** My first trail party was a just under a year ago. I've worked on a couple of different projects at Steep Rock from helping to plan Judea Garden's 15th Season anniversary events, to the Midwinter Bald Eagle Count with my husband on a

freezing cold day. It's been a great first year! Steep Rock is such a special organization in that it has multiple angles to what it does. It provides everything from wilderness preservation to outdoor access, to education, to the food donations available to neighbors in need through Judea Garden.

**What are some unforgettable moments for you?** Steep Rock has done a fantastic job building a community. A special moment at Steep Rock that stands out for me was at the bonfire party for the spring equinox. What a great way for volunteers to get to know each other, meet the staff, and celebrate the changing of the seasons. Having opportunities to socialize with great people and reflect on Washington's magnificent landscape and the changing seasons was a really wonderful experience for us.



*Erin Leigh Pierson, Steep Rock Volunteer*

**What inspires your commitment to our work?** I remember growing up near Westchester and hiking the same trails that my dad hiked as a child. When we take care of trails, they'll last for generations.

So the idea that I can work on or help preserve a Steep Rock trail that potentially my grandchildren could hike is the definition of community involvement and stewardship and preservation to me.

## HIDDEN VALLEY EXPANDS 25%

### *Behind The Scenes on Land Acquisitions*

Steep Rock is thrilled to announce the purchase of 206 acres of critically important conservation land, marking a significant milestone for our Hidden Valley Expansion. Situated between Hidden Valley Preserve and Mt. Tom State Park, the four parcels (Cook, Mt. Tom, Bantam, and Asrar) boast a diverse range of unique and vital wildlife habitats, rare species, and breathtaking views along the Shepaug and Bantam Rivers. The expansion provides new opportunities for passive recreation, welcoming hikers, cyclists, and equestrians.

Yet, the true essence of this accomplishment lies in the decades of relentless dedication, planning, outreach, fundraising, grant writing, and other essential efforts invested to secure these parcels. Approximately 17 years ago, the

Steep Rock Board embarked on the mission to identify and acquire high-priority conservation areas in Washington. The Cook parcel was immediately recognized as a top priority if it ever became available.

In 2018, the Steep Rock Board established a comprehensive set of criteria to guide our decision-making process for land acquisitions. The Cook parcel was formally designated as one of the three strategic priorities. When the opportunity arose in 2020, Trustees and Staff worked closely to shape the initial round of grant applications.

However, the path to acquiring these parcels has been marked by an arduous journey spanning the past three years. We encountered numerous delays and unforeseen obstacles, many of which were beyond the control of SRA. These challenges included the disruptive

impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, contractual setbacks, administrative and legal postponements, prolonged grant review periods, and more. Undeterred, we remained resolute in our determination to see this project through.

During the final stages of awaiting grant approval, we identified a potential funding shortfall. Gratefully, an SRA Trustee extended a generous \$100,000 Match Challenge, which garnered support from over 100 people. The Challenge exceeded our goal, raising \$267,234 including the Match. In total, SRA successfully raised over \$2.9 million, which includes nearly \$2.2 million in grant funds and almost \$750,000 in private donations. This achievement represents our most triumphant acquisition to date.

*cont. on pg. 10*

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR HVX CAMPAIGN MAJOR GIFT DONORS (\$25K+)**

CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

Lilah Hilliard Fisher Foundation

David L. Klein Jr. Foundation

John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Highland Conservation Act Grant

Anonymous

Paul Cappuccio and Matt Shea  
Steven Fisch and Ariana Meyerson  
Hugh Frater and Kirsten Feldman

Valerie Friedman

Tim and Stephanie Ingrassia  
Edwin and Patricia Matthews

# EVOLUTION OF A TRAIL

## *Uniting Hands to Craft a Hiking Haven. Behind the Scenes at Hillside Farm*

In April, volunteers from Steep Rock embarked on an exciting project: constructing a new half-mile trail at Hillside Farm, the latest addition to West Mountain Preserve. Creating a sturdy hiking trail requires a long-term commitment, attention to many details, and a team effort. Let's delve into the process and understand what it takes to build a trail that is both enjoyable and sustainable.

The journey begins with meticulous mapping and planning. Before any construction begins, staff must carefully assess the terrain, taking into account factors such as slope, vegetation, wetlands and streams, and other natural features. This crucial step ensures that the trail is designed to harmonize with the environment, providing hikers with an immersive experience while reducing negative impacts on the surrounding natural area.

Proper permitting is another crucial aspect of trail building. Securing necessary permits ensures compliance with regulations and that the trail has minimum impact on the environment.

Once planning and permitting are in place, the real work begins. Staff and volunteers invest dozens of hours of manual labor to bring the trail to life. At Hillside Farm, the dedicated team started by mowing a path through the fields. They meticulously cut and filled uneven areas to create a smooth and safe path for hikers. To conquer challenging terrain, such as wetlands or marshy areas, the team will build bog bridges and a boardwalk, allowing visitors to traverse these sections without disturbing the delicate wetlands.

The initial phase of the project saw the combined efforts of ten hardworking volunteers who devoted 25 hours of work. However, the trail is under construction with the bog bridging and boardwalk yet to be finished. The goal is to have the entire trail ready for public access this summer.

Creating sustainable hiking trails that will last for years is not a one-time effort; regular upkeep is necessary to ensure its longevity and enjoyment. Continuous mowing of the paths is essential to keep the trail well-maintained and accessible to hikers year-round.

On the third Saturday of every month, Steep Rock hosts a "Work Party" where volunteers engage in a variety of projects, from building



*SRA Volunteer Work Party initiating construction of Hillside Farm Trail in April 2023.*

trails, to removing invasive species, to creating trail amenities that enhance the hiker experience. No experience necessary to volunteer for our monthly Work Party. Whatever the work may be, the goal remains the same: stewardship of our beautiful preserves.

To join our Work Parties, visit [SteepRockAssoc.org/event-programs](https://SteepRockAssoc.org/event-programs) or contact Merlin Ennis at [merlin@steeprocksassoc.org](mailto:merlin@steeprocksassoc.org).



*Photos (from left): Taft School Girls Tennis Team prepares beds at Judea Garden; SRA's Denise Arturi leads Storytime and seed starting at the Gunn Junior Memorial Library; Root vegetable harvest from Judea Garden.*

# JUDEA GARDEN

*Celebrating 15 Years of Growing and Giving*

Judea Garden—The Giving Garden, a Steep Rock Association Community Project—is thrilled to announce the commencement of our 15th season and the celebration of the Garden, the People and their Stories.

This remarkable milestone highlights a decade and a half of hard work, dedication, and community involvement that has allowed the garden to flourish and provide fresh produce for the less fortunate in the region.

Judea Garden supports local families in need with fresh, healthy produce including tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, peppers, and more. The garden has also become a vital community hub where volunteers unite to cultivate the land and make a difference.

Judea Garden's 15th season showcases SRA's unwavering commitment to fighting food insecurity. From a small patch of land, we have grown into a sustainable operation, feeding countless families in our community. The garden has

also served as a model for other organizations and communities to follow, inspiring similar projects in the region and beyond.

To celebrate the 15th season Judea Garden is hosting an Open Garden event on August 19th, 2023. Enjoy food, drinks, garden tours, and learn about their mission and goals.

"We're thrilled to be celebrating our 15th season and the growth of Judea Garden," said Denise Arturi, the Manager & Head Gardener of Judea Garden. "We're grateful to everyone who has supported us over the years and contributed to our success. We look forward to continuing to serve our community and inspire others to do the same."

Come to Judea Garden events and support our mission. See our calendar of events (on right).

Contact Denise Arturi at  
denise.arturi@steeprocksassoc.org  
or 860-868-9131.

**How it all began:** Judea Garden was the inspired idea of Ann Burton and Marlene Smith of St. John's Church. Begun in response to the 2008 economic downturn when funds dwindled and need rose, the two conceived of an ini-

tiative to grow the food needed to help their neighbors. They were soon joined by Sarah Gager and Denise Arturi and Judea Garden was established on a plot of land in Macricostas Preserve where it has flourished ever since.



Judea Garden Board (from left) Susan Samelson, Sarah Gager, Nunzio Defilippis, Denise Arturi, Marlene Smith. Ann Burton not pictured.



## Judea Garden 15th Season Celebration Calendar

Garden to Exercise, Exercise to Garden. June 24, 2023, 9:00AM

Round Table/Potluck: Does Food Insecurity Really Exist in Litchfield County?  
July 20, 2023, 6:00PM

Kids in Judea Garden  
July 29, 9:00AM-12:00PM  
15th Season Celebration and Open Garden

August 19, 2023, 4:00PM-7:00PM

Plein Air Artists Welcomed: Every Tuesday Morning  
8:00 am – Noon

Painting, Photography, and Mixed Media Contest  
June 1 to August 11

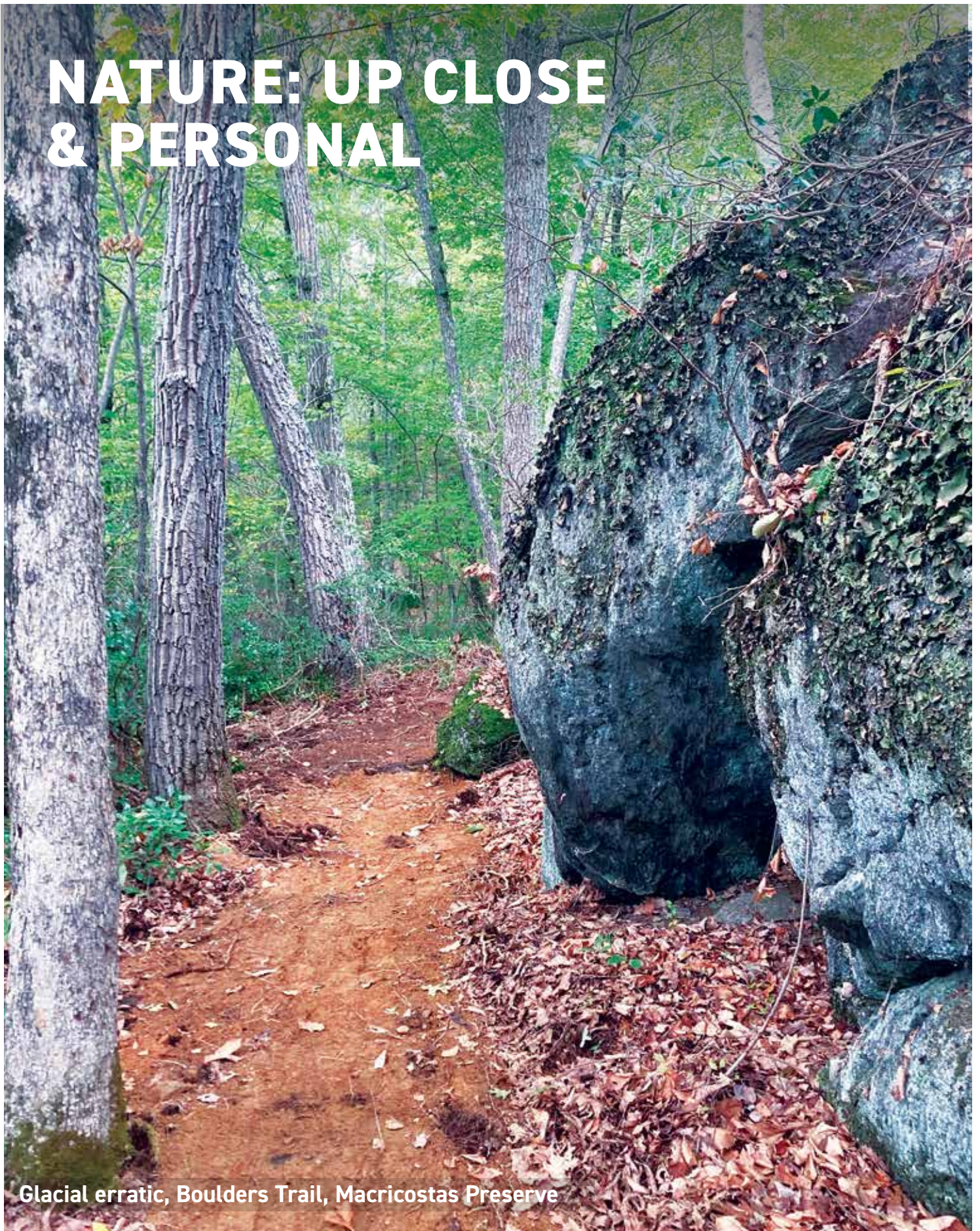


Judea Garden volunteers ready the ground to plant our first crops.



The same section of Garden 15 years later. The Garden has grown lush with the help of many hands.

# NATURE: UP CLOSE & PERSONAL



Glacial erratic, Boulders Trail, Macricostas Preserve

# EVENTS

## JUNE

### PLEIN AIR ARTISTS

#### WELCOMED: EVERY TUESDAY MORNING 8:00 AM – NOON

Judea Garden invites artists and photographers to visit and draw inspiration from the garden's beauty amid the hillsides of Macricostas Preserve. Who knew vegetables could be so beautiful?

### PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND MIXED MEDIA CONTEST:

June 1 to August 11

Can the beauty of Judea Garden be captured in a piece of art? Artists of all ages are invited to interpret the essence of Judea Garden in an artistic image by entering a Painting, Photography, and Mixed Media contest. The images will be carefully judged, and first-place winners will receive gift certificates and publication of their work. Each photo or piece of art submitted must be of Judea Garden or otherwise be clearly associated with the Garden and its mission.

### ROSSITER RUN VIRTUAL 5K RUN/WALK

June 1-20. The main entrance to Steep Rock Preserve may be closed and group events restricted, but the annual Rossiter Run 5K lives on! We are embracing this unique opportunity to offer runners, hikers, and walkers other 5K routes in our preserves in 2023. We are mapping out alternate routes and invite you to explore our other preserves in this friendly health and wellness event. Please visit [steeprockassoc.org/5K](http://steeprockassoc.org/5K) for details. All ages.

### WEED & WINE WEDNESDAYS ARE BACK AT JUDEA GARDEN! STOP BY WEDNESDAYS

June 7 through August 23, 5:30-7:00 PM. Come weed the vegetable beds at Judea Garden alongside fellow gardeners, then enjoy a glass of wine on us! Please bring your own glass. No registration required. Ages 21+.

### SUMMER SAUNTERS WITH SRA: HIDDEN VALLEY BRIDGE LOOP

June 15, 5:30PM

Hidden Valley Preserve, 198 Bee Brook Rd, Washington Depot  
Join Executive Director Brian Hagenbuch on a series of casual walks through Steep Rock's Preserves. We will walk the Hidden Valley Preserve Bridge loop, which will include the Henry David Thoreau Bridge and the Reich Memorial Bridge. Ages 12+.

### MONTHLY TRAIL WORK PARTY

June 17, 10:00AM – 12:30PM

Join our monthly trail work party! The work party meets at 10:00am the third Saturday of every month from April through November. No experience necessary, just a willingness to get your hands dirty and have fun. Ages 16+.

### SUMMER SOLSTICE FIREPIT CELEBRATION

June 21, 5:00PM

Steep Rock House, 116 Christian St, New Preston  
Join us as we welcome summer and celebrate our Rossiter Run virtual 5K participants! We will celebrate by the firepit behind Steep Rock House and offer light refreshments. All ages.

### GARDEN TO EXERCISE, EXERCISE TO GARDEN

June 24, 2023, 9:00AM

Gardening is a great way to stay fit and reduce stress. Like any exercise or sport, conditioning

will help you perform better and reduce the risk of injury. Gain valuable insights from fitness trainer Dani Gelfand on the appropriate techniques that will make your gardening experience both fun and safe.

## JULY

### PLEIN AIR ARTISTS

#### WELCOMED: EVERY TUESDAY MORNING 8:00 AM – NOON

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### PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND MIXED MEDIA CONTEST:

June 1 to August 11

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### ODONATA (DRAGONFLY & DAMSELFLY) SURVEY BLITZ

July 15, 9:00AM-5:00PM

Macricostas Preserve, 124 Christian St, New Preston  
What odonates (dragonflies and damselflies) inhabit Washington, and what does their presence or absence mean for local and regional conservation? SRA aims to answer these questions and we need your help. Join our team of "dragon hunters" for an educational and scientific day of sampling odonates in SRA preserves. We'll start by reviewing odonate ecology, transition into capture technique training, and then begin the hunt for as many different species of dragonflies and damselflies at a given survey site. Inclement weather will postpone the survey to Sunday, July 16. Ages 16+.

*events cont. on next page*



*Participants on Steep Rock's May 28 "Bird Safari" hosted by ornithologist Olaf Soltau*

**Sign Up for Events:**  
[SteepRockAssoc.org/  
events-programs](http://SteepRockAssoc.org/events-programs)

# EVENTS

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## JULY (CONT.)

### MONTHLY TRAIL WORK PARTY

July 15, 10:00AM – 12:30PM  
Join our monthly trail work party!  
No experience necessary, just a willingness to get your hands dirty and have fun. Ages 16+.

### 3 PEAKS IN 3 HOURS

July 15, 8:00AM-11:00AM  
Steep Rock Preserve, 2 Tunnel Rd., Washington Depot (Access via Spring Hill Rd.) Join Steep Rock Association and special host Carla Mascaro on this unique adventure to conquer all 3 of SRA's peaks in 3 hours. Limit: 15 people, Ages 21+.

### SUMMER SAUNTERS WITH SRA: MACRICOSTAS HAYFIELD

July 18, 5:30PM  
Macricostas Preserve, 124 Christian St, New Preston  
Join Executive Director Brian Hagenbuch as we explore the hayfield at Macricostas Preserve. Ages 12+.

### ROUND TABLE/POTLUCK: DOES FOOD INSECURITY REALLY EXIST IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY?

July 20, 2023, 6:00PM  
The simple answer is yes. Learn from professionals in the fields of food insecurity about the effects of hunger on our neighbors and what we can do to change it.

### KIDS IN JUDEA GARDEN

July 29, 9:00AM-12:00PM  
Introduce kids to vegetable gardening in a fun new way. Unleash their excitement through an enjoyable blend of activities. Vegetables will never look the same.

## AUGUST

### PLEIN AIR ARTISTS WELCOMED: EVERY TUESDAY MORNING 8:00 AM – NOON

Judea Garden invites artists and photographers to visit and draw inspiration from the garden's beauty amid the hillsides of Macricostas Preserve.

### PAINTING, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND MIXED MEDIA CONTEST: JUNE 1 TO AUGUST 11

Can the beauty of Judea Garden be captured in a piece of art? Artists of all ages are invited to interpret the essence of Judea Garden in an artistic image by entering a Painting, Photography, and Mixed Media contest. The images will be carefully judged, and first-place winners will receive gift certificates and publication of their work. Each photo or piece of art submitted must be of Judea Garden or otherwise be clearly associated with the Garden and its mission.

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### SUMMER SAUNTERS WITH SRA: BRONSON FIELD POLLINATOR MEADOW AT HIDDEN VALLEY

Aug. 14, 5:30PM  
Hidden Valley Preserve Seasonal Parking, 287 Sabbaday Lane, Washington Depot. We will visit the Bronson Field Pollinator Meadow. Ages 12+.

### MONTHLY TRAIL WORK PARTY

Aug. 19, 10:00AM – 12:30PM  
Join our monthly trail work party!  
No experience necessary, just a willingness to get your hands dirty and have fun. Ages 16+.

### 15TH SEASON CELEBRATION AND OPEN GARDEN

August 19, 2023, 4:00PM-7:00PM  
Join us for a joyous celebration as we invite everyone to commemorate the incredible feat of Judea Garden's 15 seasons of growing and giving. Come and experience the beauty of our gardens, meet our dedicated interns, and raise a toast to all the volunteers—past, present, and future—who have been instrumental in making this project a resounding success. Let's come together, share in the jubilation, and create lasting memories as we celebrate this milestone in our journey.

Sign Up for Events:  
[SteeprockAssoc.org/  
events-programs](https://www.steeprockassoc.org/events-programs)

## SEPTEMBER

### PLEIN AIR ARTISTS WELCOMED: EVERY TUESDAY MORNING 8:00 AM – NOON

Judea Garden invites artists and photographers to visit and draw inspiration from the garden's beauty amid the hillsides of Macricostas Preserve.

### ANNUAL STEEP ROCK COMMUNITY PICNIC

Sept. 9, 12:00PM-2:00PM.  
Riverwalk Pavilion  
All community members are welcome to join us for food, fun, and games!

### SUMMER SAUNTERS WITH SRA: HILLSIDE FARM AT WEST MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

Sept. 13, 5:30PM  
Hillside Farm, 397 Nettleton Hollow Rd, Washington, CT  
Ages 12+.

### MONTHLY TRAIL WORK PARTY

Sept. 16, 10:00AM – 12:30PM  
Join our monthly trail work party!  
No experience necessary, just a willingness to get your hands dirty and have fun. Ages 16+.

### FALL EQUINOX FIREPIT EVENT

Sept. 23, 2023, 5:00PM  
Steep Rock House, 116 Christian St, New Preston. Join us as we welcome the Fall Equinox at our Firepit. All ages.

### TUNNEL RD. CONNECTOR HIKE

Sept. 30, 11:00AM – 2:00PM  
Steep Rock Preserve, 2 Tunnel Road, Washington Depot  
Join SRA and Roxbury Land Trust for a 4.5-mile intertown hike on Tunnel Rd., traversing nature preserves protected by both organizations. Experience the fall foliage, marvel at the Shepaug River, and learn about land stewardship along the way. All ages.



Participants on Steep Rock's May "Wildflower Walk" With Peary and BK Stafford.



# “A WAY OF LIFE”

## Legends & Legacies

We recently had the privilege of conversing with long-time Washington resident John A. Herrmann, Jr. With a remarkable tenure as a Trustee, John has been an integral part of our land trust since 1985. His dedication and exceptional leadership skills have seen him assume various pivotal roles within the organization. John's journey at Steep Rock commenced as a Trustee. Recognizing his leadership talents, he was appointed as VP, serving from 1999 to 2006 then Chairman from 2008 to 2014. He remains on our Board of Trustees.

**What's your Steep Rock origin story?** I got involved in 1985 after having met George Ward and playing golf with him. He co-opted me for the board. My wife Anne and I had been in Washington for a year. We came here because we thought it was a quiet place to be, and we love the wooded landscapes.

**Describe Steep Rock through your eyes:** After you've been involved with Steep Rock long enough it becomes a way of life. It is walking the trails, helping protect and steward the land, helping others learn about conservation. That goes way back to Steep Rock's founding, why Ehrick Rossiter donated the land to the community. I've met wonderful people because of my association with Steep Rock.

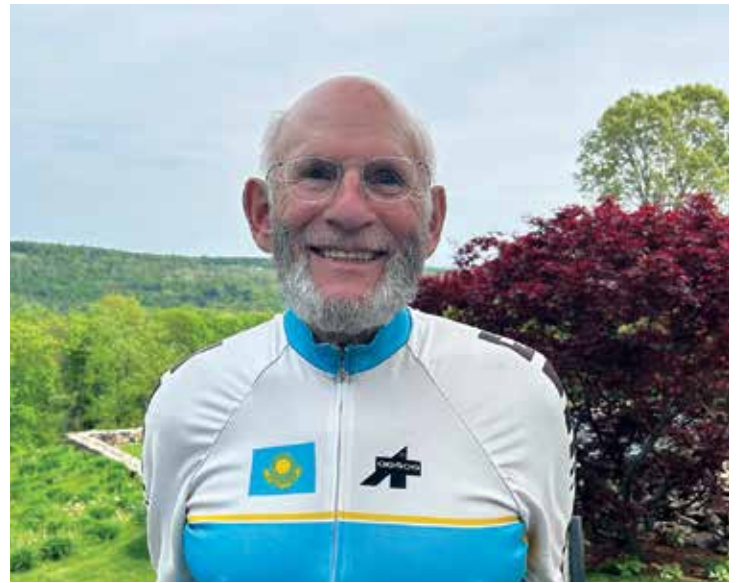


Monica Roberto, SRA's Development Dir. with John Herrmann at the Rossiter Circle Dinner

If you care deeply about something, if you treasure it and wish to take care of it for future generations, there's no better way to do it than to leave money to the organization in your will.

**What drives your stewardship gifts to Steep Rock?** I have gotten a lot of satisfaction out of what we've built since I got involved. Hidden Valley has expanded, we acquired West Mountain and Macricostas Preserves. There are so many more beautiful trails. But once you acquire land, you have to take care of it. Year after year. Stewarding land is vital and requires more resources than some people may realize. My gifts have largely been to support stewardship at Steep Rock.

**What inspired you to leave a legacy gift in your will to Steep Rock?** It comes down to this: if you care deeply about something, if you treasure it and wish to take care of it for future generations, there's no better way to do it than to leave money to the organization in your will. It's simple to do. You can leave a gift in your will, trust or financial account. Speak with an attorney or financial advisor for guidance. It's sad that you won't be around to see what it's used for, but a planned gift in your will can be extraordinarily important to a land trust. I've tried to do that without any restrictions on the gift that I made. I don't want my name on a barn. I don't want my name on a trail. I don't want my name on a bench. I just want to be sure Steep Rock survives for future generations. This place is extraordinarily special.



John Herrmann, Steep Rock Trustee & Legacy Society Member

## PLANNED GIVING

Planned giving is a valuable strategy that allows individuals to make charitable donations while maximizing tax benefits and providing long-term support to their favorite organizations. Here are some popular ways to create a legacy through planned giving.

**Bequest.** Whether you designate a specific amount or leave a percentage of your estate, your legacy gift will empower Steep Rock's conservation work. **Bequest Language:** I give to Steep Rock Association, Inc., a nonprofit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Connecticut, with a principal address of 116 Christian Street, New Preston, CT 06777 (PO Box 279, Washington Depot, CT 06794) and EIN# 06-6069060 [the sum of \$\_\_\_\_] or [\_\_\_\_% of my residuary estate] to be used for its general purposes.

**Non-cash assets.** Donating certain non-cash assets like land can

provide significant tax benefits while advancing our mission.

**Beneficiary designations:** Your retirement plans and life insurance policies can all help conserve the natural spaces we cherish in the Litchfield Hills.

**Qualified charitable distributions (QCD):** If you are 70 ½ years old or older and have a traditional Individual Retirement Account (IRA), you can use your required minimum distribution (RMD) to support Steep Rock through a QCD gift. Contact your IRA administrator and ask that your RMD distribution be a direct charitable rollover to Steep Rock.

Consult with your attorney or financial advisor. These experts bring specialized knowledge and expertise that can help ensure your charitable goals will be realized in the most impactful way possible.

If you have already included Steep Rock in your estate plans, thank you! Please let us know so we can welcome you to our Legacy Society. To learn more, contact us (860)868-9131 or visit [www.steeprockassoc.org/legacy](http://www.steeprockassoc.org/legacy)

# THE PRESERVE DOCTOR IS IN!

*Behind the Scenes at How Steep Rock Studies Stream and Forest Health*

Since our founding nearly a century ago, SRA's primary objective has been to steward our preserves for healthy wildlife habitat and passive recreation.

Like an annual checkup at the doctor's office, each year we survey conditions in our preserves, identify threats, and develop plans to promote ecological health. Our natural areas tell us about their overall state through the research we conduct, which is critical given the ever-increasing threats from the climate crisis. Data analysis then helps us determine management strategies to treat symptoms and improve vitality.

This summer, we're monitoring SRA's Hidden Valley Preserve – a 900+ acre expanse of cascading

watercourses, lush meadows, and forests young and old in the heart of Washington. Among Hidden Valley's many critical habitats – rare and specialized places essential to conserving imperiled wildlife – are tributary streams flowing into the Shepaug River.

SRA staff and interns will be investigating water temperatures in Bee Brook and Mallory Brook. By analyzing average, maximum, and seasonally fluctuating stream temperatures, we can determine their ability to support sensitive organisms like brook trout as well as their vulnerability to habitat degradation from warming temperatures.

We will also be studying the streams' channels and surrounding area, measuring streambank

dimensions, vegetation, and shade as well as potential impairments (e.g., erosion, barriers, lack of buffers, etc.). Taking a comprehensive look at streams provides a thorough understanding of current conditions and enables SRA to prioritize actions and assess the effectiveness of habitat improvement strategies. For example, a lack of in-stream fish cover may be improved by adding large woody material, canopy cover can cool water temperatures, stabilized banks reduce the eroding forces of floods, and removing culverts helps aquatic organisms safely seek refuge.

Switching our preserve diagnosis to forests, one of the coolest microclimates in Hidden Valley Preserve is a narrow tract of forest classified as Rich Hemlock-Northern Hardwood Seepage Forest. This forest type is unique and uncommon in this part of Connecticut. The combination of slope direction, groundwater seepage, shade, and rock-laden slope have created conditions for northern-loving plants found nowhere else in our preserves. It also makes these forests vulnerable to changes in temperature and precipitation.

This area will serve as SRA's second forest monitoring plot, in addition to one set up in Macricostas Preserve in 2022. Our research entails various measurements of trees and vegetation. Only through repetitious monitoring and data collection will we be able to determine the impact of a changing climate on our forest ecosystems and what we can do to help maintain forest health.

Like a medical doctor, Steep Rock is monitoring the health of our preserves, diagnosing symptoms, and attempting to steward the long-term wellness of our forests, fields, and waterways so that our wildlife and our visitors can thrive in nature for generations.

## HIDDEN VALLEY EXPANDS

*cont. from pg. 3*

Such a monumental feat would not have been possible without the collective efforts of numerous parties. SRA takes pride in its collaboration with partners such as the Town of Washington, State and Federal government agencies, peer regional land trusts, and the countless donors who supported this endeavor.

While the process of acquiring land for conservation typically does not span 17 years, it does begin with a visionary outlook and demands an unwavering commitment, patience, perseverance, coordination, and collaboration. Through these virtues, we have successfully safeguarded these precious 206 acres for perpetuity.

## PINNACLE CLIFFS RECEIVES FUNDING

We are pleased to announce that the State of Connecticut recently approved a \$406,250 Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant to SRA to pursue protection of the 30.6-acre Pinnacle Cliffs parcel adjacent to our Macricostas Preserve (photo pg 2).



*Photos: Forest monitoring plot and tree tagged for identification.*

# WELCOME TRUSTEES

Steep Rock is thrilled to welcome Andria Budd, Carol Maxwell, Richard Rosen, and Steven Fisch as new Trustees to our board. With diverse backgrounds and a shared love for nature, these individuals



**ANDRIA BUDD** Andria Budd has always had a fondness for the gifts of Nature, part of her motivation to move to Kent from New York City. Andria's experience working on the floor of major financial institutions on Wall Street has made her appreciate nature even more. After graduating from Boston University where Andria earned her degree in Journalism, she was hired by the iconic WINS News Radio in New York City. She was then invited to apply for a rare opportunity at the time: a position as bond trader for Bear Stearns. From that point on, she was a full-fledged Wall Streeter, working for Prudential Securities, Deutsche Bank, and becoming an Executive Director at J.P. Morgan-Chase. But it was her sojourns to magical places, from the Appalachian Trails to the hilly terrain of Cold Springs, and places far beyond our states, including the mountains of Nepal, the peaks of Bhutan, and the incredible hikes that took her over and through the glaciers and ranges of Patagonia that make her an international hiker. Andria discovered the trails of Steep Rock and Hidden Valley and wanted to be part of SRA.

bring valuable expertise and a deep commitment to our mission. From Andria's financial acumen to Carol's extensive community involvement and passion for outdoor education, Richard's legal



**CAROL MAXWELL** Carol Maxwell is a 21-year Litchfield County resident and community member, currently serving as a Capital Campaign Major Gifts Officer at the Masters School, Dobbs Ferry, NY. Formerly the Director of Development at Rumsey Hall School in Washington for over a decade, she served in similar roles at the Canterbury School and Pilobolus, the modern dance company. Carol has served as a volunteer for several non-profits and currently is an active member of Steep Rock's Development Committee. Carol, her four children and family dogs all enjoy hiking the trails of Macricostas and Hidden Valley Preserves whenever they return home.

**STEVEN FISCH** Steven and his wife Ariana are residents of Warren CT. Steven is a graduate of Columbia college and holds a JD from NYU, where he currently serves on the board of trustees. He is the managing partner at Continental properties, a real estate development entity.

expertise and philanthropic contributions, and Steven's real estate development experience, our board gains a wealth of wisdom and dedication to further Steep Rock's mission.



**RICHARD ROSEN** Richard Rosen and his wife Joyce Silberstang have had a home in Washington since 2015. Richard retired as a litigation partner, specializing in capital markets litigation and directors' and officers' liability, at Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison in Manhattan at the end of December 2022 after 43 years at the firm. Richard is an active member of several non-profit boards, including the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. He is also Chair of the Board of the New York Festival of Song. Richard received his undergraduate degree from Brown and his law degree from Harvard. Richard serves on the Steep Rock Preservation Committee.

## EVENTS

*cont. from page 8*

### OCTOBER

#### WASHINGTON'S ANNUAL HARVEST FESTIVAL - CARVE FOR CONSERVATION

Oct. 8, 12:00PM-5:00PM

River Walk Pavilion, 11 School St, Washington. Bring your kids and join SRA as well as the rest of the town of Washington for some fall themed fun at the Harvest Festival. We invite you to visit our booth and carve the animals that call Steep Rock home. All Ages.

#### SUMMER SAUNTER: JOHNSON FARM AT WEST MOUNTAIN PRESERVE

Oct. 11, 2023, 5:00PM

West Mountain Road, Washington Join Executive Director Brian Hagenbuch on a series of casual walks through Steep Rock's Preserves. Wednesday, October 11. We will visit Johnson Farm at West Mountain Preserve. Ages 12+.

#### MONTHLY TRAIL WORK PARTY

Oct. 21, 10:00AM – 12:30PM

Nov. 18, 10:00AM – 12:30PM

Join our monthly trail work party! No experience necessary, just a willingness to get your hands dirty and have fun. Ages 16+.

#### JUDEA GARDEN FALL CLEAN UP

Oct. 21, 9:00AM-12:00PM &

October 22, 12:00PM-3:00PM

Clean away plant debris, prep beds, and plant seeds to greet us early next spring. All ages.



### JUDEA GARDEN 15TH SEASON TOTE BAGS

Minimum Donation \$20.00.

Your donation supports the distribution of free bags to the recipients of Judea Garden's organic produce. Purchase at the Steep Rock Office, 116 Chrisitan St., New Preston.



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# PRESERVING HISTORY

## *River's Edge Trail (a.k.a "Goat Trail")*

The River's Edge Trail, originally constructed as a horse trail in 1931, holds a significant place in SRA history and is a beloved destination for hikers. As an integral part of Steep Rock Preserve, this trail offers breathtaking views of the Shepaug River and takes you through a majestic hemlock forest, providing an unforgettable experience.

Time, the trail's popularity, and natural elements, however, have taken a toll on its condition. Years of foot traffic, storm damage, and erosion have left the trail in urgent need of repair. That's why we developed a comprehensive rehabilitation plan to restore 14 key locations along 1,742 feet of riverbank trail. By installing essential features like crib walls (erosion control), stone steps, copping stones,

and enhancing the existing trail, we will ensure its stability and durability, improve hiker safety, and reduce long-term maintenance efforts.

Given the trail's challenging terrain, using mechanized equipment is not feasible. Instead, we will employ traditional methods, quarrying stones onsite and shaping them with hand tools. Leading the project is Tahawus Trails LLC, who worked collaboratively with SRA to construct the highly popular Boulders Trail in Macricostas Preserve last year. Progress will be documented through video footage and serve as valuable training material for our volunteers.

We're halfway to our \$71,000 goal to fund this important project. To complete work this summer, we need the help of generous donors



like you. By making a donation today, you can actively contribute to the trail restoration and create a safer, more enjoyable experience for hikers. Your contribution plays a crucial role in maintaining the trail's natural splendor.

Join us in safeguarding this iconic trail for future generations. Donate now to support our River's

Edge Trail. Together, we can protect its historic significance and ensure its continued popularity among outdoor enthusiasts.

**Join forces with family or friends and make a positive impact by working towards the restoration of this trail: [steeprockassoc.org/river-edge-loop](http://steeprockassoc.org/river-edge-loop)**