



Aerial view of microburst damage at Hidden Valley Preserve. Reich Bridge at top of photo.

CLIMATE CRISIS HITS HOME

While the Maui wildfires, Texas heat, and California storms make headlines, the Litchfield Hills are also experiencing volatile climatic impacts. Since 2020, our preserves have been hit by two tropical storms, wilted under scorching temperatures, survived droughts, dealt with floods, and withstood the deep freeze of polar vortexes. The event frequency can no longer be considered random. This past June, a microburst hit the beloved Pine Pass in Hidden Valley Preserve and damaged about 15 acres of forest (see photo and click [>more](#)). Abnormal climatic conditions impact the health and vigor of native species, which are being overwhelmed by invasives like Japanese barberry (below), and SRA is vigilant in monitoring for hitchhiking invasives like spotted lanternfly (below). Any one of these events stresses our resources and the ability to keep trails open. Together, they pose an ominous challenge to our beloved, green-forested hills. What can we do? Join us this month as SRA co-presents *Common Ground with Jane Whitney: "Climate: Minutes to Midnight"* which promises a deep conversation about the ecological, political, economic and future impacts of the climate crisis (info below). And if all this news makes you feel glum, come join us for Steep Rock's Annual Community Picnic, September 9th at the Riverside Pavilion. You're guaranteed to have a great time!

See you on our trails!

Brian Hagenbuch, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Featured Highlights



Targeting an Invasive Threat

Steep Rock recognizes invasive plants and animals as some of the most significant threats to the well-being of our protected natural and agricultural lands. Our August trail work party tackled a stand of Japanese barberry in Steep Rock preserve. Japanese barberry not only impairs valuable wildlife habitat, but also occurs in a high recreational use areas. SRA prioritized management because of human health considerations—barberry provides ideal conditions for white-footed mice and deer ticks associated with tick-borne illnesses. [>more](#)



Beware of Hitchhikers!

The Steep Rock team is on high alert for the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF), which has been found in extraordinarily high numbers in southwest CT and metro NYC. Adults are now emerging and beginning to disperse. If you are heading from those areas to Steep Rock--“Look before you leave!” Prevent the spread of SLF by inspecting your car and belongings before you visit our preserves. Hitchhiking is one of the easiest ways for SLF to spread. For more info on SLF and how you can help reduce their spread click [>more](#)

Lidia Ryan/Hearst Connecticut Media

Upcoming Events



Annual Community Picnic

September 9, 2023, 12:00pm-2:00pm

You're invited! Join us on for Steep Rock Association's Annual Community Picnic. All community members are welcome to join us for food, fun, and games! Due to the Tunnel Road Bridge replacement, the picnic will be at the River Walk Pavilion, 11A School Street in Washington Depot. RSVPs appreciated. [>more](#)



Climate: Minutes to Midnight?

September 10, 2023, 4:00pm-5:00pm

Join us at **Common Ground with Jane Whitney** for a broad discussion of the science, economics and politics swirling around the apocalyptic headlines of the climate crisis. An outstanding panel examines what state and local communities are doing to mitigate political stasis, how to break the logjam, the role climate issues play in national, state and local elections, and what private citizens and companies can do. Steep Rock is co-sponsoring the event. Register for free using the code: CLIMATE8. Panelists: Katharine Hayhoe, Dr. Britt Wray, Michael Mann, Ben Jealous, Ian Bremmer. [>more](#)



Summer Saunters: Hillside Farm

September 13, 2023, 5:30pm

Join Executive Director Brian Hagenbuch on a series of casual walks through Steep Rock's Preserves. Wednesday, Sept. 13 we will explore Hillside Farm, 397 Nettleton Hollow Road. Acquired in 2021, this 86-acre parcel on the border of Washington and Woodbury includes a rich diversity of habitats and species. Be among the first to tread on this new trail. [>more](#)



Monthly Trail Work Party

September 16, 2023, 10:00am-12:00pm

Our monthly Trail Work Party is a great opportunity to connect with fellow hikers and to learn what goes into building and maintaining our trails. This month we will be working on erosion control on the Pinnacle Valley trail in Macricostas Preserve. No experience needed, ages 16+. [>more](#)



Mindfulness Hike

September 17, 2023, 8:30am

Mindfulness boosts memory and focus, promotes empathy, and reduces stress. Hiking helps build stronger muscles and bones, improves sense of balance, supports heart health and improves quality of sleep. A mindfulness hike will help you will feel happier and enjoy other hiker's company. Join us with our special hosts Roxanne Kraft and Alan Arellano for this unique experience, ages 16+. [>more](#)



Autumn Equinox Firepit Party

September 23, 2023, 5:00pm

Join us on Saturday, Sept. 23rd, 2023 as we welcome the fall season! Meet at 5pm behind 116 Christian St, New Preston. Hike the hayfield before the event (optional!), followed by refreshments at the firepit. Parking at Macricostas Preserve, overflow parking at 116 Christian St. [>more](#)



Photo: Carol Santoleri

Heritage Walks: Macricostas Preserve

September 24, 2023, 10:00am-1:00pm

Enjoy a moderate to hilly 4 mile hike with Executive Director, Brian Hagenbuch. Explore SRA's Boulders Trail in Macricostas Preserve. This trail meanders through woodlands, glacial erratics, waterfalls, and vernal pools, and will include a short side-loop to Waramaug Rock, with its breathtaking views of Lake Waramaug, the second largest natural lake in Connecticut. Ages 16+. [>more](#)



Tunnel Road Connector Hike

September 30, 2023, 11:00am-2:00pm

Discover two of western Connecticut's most pristine nature preserves, learning of their natural communities, history, and unique attributes from guides who intimately know and steward the land. On Saturday, Sept. 30, join Steep Rock Association (SRA) and [Roxbury Land Trust](#) (RLT) on a 4-mile inter-town hike along Tunnel Road. Ages 16+. [>more](#)

SAVE THE DATE - Upcoming October Events

- Oct. 1- 22, 2023: **3 Peaks in 3 Weeks**, Registration coming soon!
- Oct. 8, 2023, **Washington Harvest Festival**, River Walk Pavilion
- Oct. 11, 2023, [Fall Saunters with SRA at Johnson Farm Preserve](#)
- Oct. 21, 2023, [Monthly Trail Work Party](#)



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