

Connecticut Forest & Park Association 2007 Annual Report

A milestone is something that I think one would see along one of the Connecticut Forest & Park Association's Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails, although I confess that I never have seen one. There are Selectmen's Stones, rocks inscribed with a date and placed at town boundary corners by Selectmen on their perambulation duties. There are cairns, piles of stones, used to mark trails above tree line or in otherwise treeless areas. Milestones, though, I have never seen. Yet 2007 was a milestone year for the Connecticut Forest & Park Association nonetheless.

The year was one of growth and accomplishment. The WalkConnecticut program, envisioned in 2005, funded in 2006, took its first step forward in 2007 as Leslie Lewis joined the Association staff. Leslie joined CFPA shortly after her retirement from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection as its Trails and Greenways Coordinator. Leslie immediately began developing a statewide network – now a WalkConnecticut Steering Committee – of those that support the development of trails and greenways. She applied for a sizeable grant from the Connecticut Department of Public Health to develop and staff a website at www.walkconnecticut.org, convene the committee, implement the WalkConnecticut program with its goals of promoting walking and its benefits to public health, and to host a conference at the conclusion of the funding period.

The CFPA development program grew substantially in 2007, too. Thanks to the loyal support of our generous donors, the 2007 Annual Fund surpassed \$100,000 in revenue before the end of the year, an Association first. Starr Sayres, who retired as the Association's Development Coordinator early in 2008, quintupled annual giving to the Association during her five-year tenure on the staff. As Starr announced her retirement plans early in 2007, the Association commenced a search for her successor. We completed the search with great success with the hiring of James Little as the Director of Development. No member of the staff has worked with CFPA in as many roles as Jim: as a trust officer for American Savings Bank, Jim managed the CFPA endowment, and as an English teacher at the CREC magnet school in Bloomfield, Jim served on the CFPA Board of Directors and chaired our Finance Committee. Jim began work as Director of Development even before his official start in September, with volunteer work for CFPA that lasted the summer and provided an orientation. Once on the job, Jim worked closely with Starr, he jumped immediately into outreach by leading hikes, staffing display tables and giving talks, and he improved working conditions in the office by seeking better equipment, a better database, an improved office layout and a revamped website. The continued growth of the Annual Fund, outreach to the community, corporations and schools, and expanded public relations will be Jim's major tasks for the coming year.

The Association's education program again thrived under the leadership of CFPA Education Coordinator Lori Paradis Brant and the guidance of our Education Committee. We were most proud that Lori was named the Environmental Educator of the Year for 2007 by her peers at the Connecticut Outdoor and Environmental Education Association. Lori also served as president of that body, and took an active role in environmental education on a regional and national basis. Our Education Committee assisted the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection with its No Child Left Inside initiative. Directors Ruth Cutler and Caroline Driscoll sponsored a "No Child Left Inside" resolution at the Annual Meeting of the National Wildlife Federation in Washington, D.C., and the resolution was unanimously adopted. Under Lori's direction, one aspect of WalkConnecticut did move forward even ahead of Leslie Lewis, and that was the Family Hikes program. Lori led four training and information sessions for 34 adults who were interested in learning more, and she and the WalkConnecticut Family Hike Leaders led 17 hikes with 148 participants across the state. WalkConnecticut Family Hikes are offered the last weekend of every month, along various trails and across a diversity of habitats. As part of the initiative to reach out and connect families to Connecticut's outdoors, the education program also received a \$5,000 grant from REI (Recreation Equipment, Inc.) now with a retail store in West Hartford. Using backpacks stuffed with supplies to watch wildlife, hike, letterbox and more, the REI Family Adventures Packs are rotated through ten public libraries

in the Greater Hartford area. The WalkConnecticut Family Hike Leaders also use a set of packs kept at the Association as they connect families to the land. Through 10 different student programs, led either on school grounds or the John R. Camp Outdoor Classroom and Demonstration Forest; 900 schoolchildren learned about the ecology of the forest. This number is added to the 406 after-school participants, including YMCAs and scout groups who enjoyed programs related to vernal pools, literature and the land as well as seasonal explorations. Twelve adult and educator workshops were led for 150 adult participants, and the Project Learning Tree curriculum was used successfully to integrate the environment and classroom learning. In total, Lori taught 51 programs and directly reached 1604* participants. The education program received \$12,065.00 in funding for working with teacher-preparation college classes, family outdoor programs, and student programs. The Paul F. Pikula Fund, an endowment lovingly created by the family of this former Trail Manager, helped 605 students enjoy the outdoors through one of CFPA's programs. This endowment keeps the spirit of Paul alive and engages those who may not otherwise have exposure to the splendor of the great outdoors.

The Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System had an exceptional year in 2007 as well. Trail Conservation Coordinator Ann Colson returned to her regular staff position after editing and publishing the *Connecticut Walk Book: West* at the end of 2006. In November, the *Walk Book* received a National Outdoor Book Award as a "Work of Significance," and CFPA staff and volunteers were awarded a Certificate of Merit by the Rockfall Foundation in honor of the *Walk Book*. Volunteer Rob Butterworth led another sellout Winter Workshop, and the spring workshop was held in western Connecticut at Macedonia Brook State Park. Louise "Weezie" Perrine served as Trails Chairman for most of the year, with Bob Morrison returning once again to the Chairmanship in December. Trails Day 2007 was another record-breaking event, with 130 events held across the state and Connecticut again holding the biggest celebration of Trails Day of any state in the nation. The Aspetuck Valley Trail was dedicated and officially opened as a new, Fairfield County Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail just before Trails Day. Credit for the opening of this trail is due to Eric Bengtson and his host of volunteers, all of whom were recognized by name at the ceremony, as well as Aquarion, The Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut DEP, and Ann Colson. CFPA's amazing trail volunteers contributed 8,600 hours of their time to the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trails in 2007; in addition, AMC-CT volunteers put in 3,182 hours on the Appalachian Trail. Combined, the total volunteer hours this year on more than 900 miles of trail was 11,782, the equivalent of \$303,386.50. Congratulations and many thanks to all our trail volunteers! Finally, the New England National Scenic Trail Designation Act was introduced in the House of Representatives as H.R. 1528 and in the Senate as S. 923. Both Connecticut Senators and all five Connecticut Members of Congress co-sponsored these bills. On May 15, 2007, I testified before the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands in support of this bill. If passed, the bill would designate the Metacomet and Mattabesett Trails in Connecticut, and the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts as the nation's ninth National Scenic Trail.

The Land Conservation program at CFPA gained its own staff in 2007. Katherine Winslow became the Association's first Land Conservation Coordinator in 2007, but left in October to become a property agent for the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Most fortunately for CFPA, Damon Hearne joined the staff as Land Conservation Coordinator in October. Damon was also serving as the Coordinator for the Eightmile River Wild & Scenic River Study, and had previously worked for the Farmington River Watershed Association and several land trusts across the nation. Damon set right to work with our Land Committee, chaired ably by Dan Donahue, and successfully saw to closing gifts of conservation restrictions on 72 acres of Connecticut Light & Power property on the Connecticut River in the Maromas section of Middletown, and (continued on next page)

*If comparing participant numbers to other numbers from other organizations, it is important to note that some organizations count all the fair/festival participants. For example, if they had a table at the Durham Fair and the Durham Fair boasts 10,000 fairgoers, then they use the 10,000 participants figure in their program tally. The numbers reported above reflect direct contact only, not contact at fairs or through outreach tables at events.

Late in 2007 CFPA completed a conservation easement on over 300 acres of working forestland owned by the Glenney family in Lisbon. The Glenney easement was an exciting accomplishment because it took advantage of the new federal tax incentives that allow landowners to apply a very significant portion of the donated easement value toward income tax deductions. This same conservation tax incentive has been extended for 2008 and 2009, which should allow us to continue to grow our conservation program.

The Board of Directors saw significant changes in 2007. While both men remained on the Board as Directors, Dick Whitehouse, President from 1999 to 2007, turned over the gavel to David Platt. David was elected President of CFPA at the 2007 Annual Meeting held in the Pavilion at Rocky Neck State Park. Jean Jones also joined the officer ranks of the organization, being elected a Vice-President, and joining fellow Vice-Presidents Eric Lukingbeal and David Sullivan. Gordon Anderson was reelected Treasurer, and Executive Director Adam Moore as Secretary. Joining the Board as new Directors were William Breck, David Leff and Karen Mignone. Leaving the Board after 30 years of service was Sally Taylor. Sally was made an Honorary Director and was presented with a Certificate of Honor for her dedicated service to the Association. For his years of dedication as a trail volunteer, Trails Chairman, Director and President, Dick Whitehouse was presented with the George M. Milne Citizen-Conservationist Award.

Another exciting accomplishment this year was the full inventory and index of the collection housed in the Camp-Ellsworth Library of the Association's headquarters. This sizeable project began at the end of 2005 in the good hands of volunteer Mal Bochner. Spending a couple hours a week in the library, Mr. Bochner, a retired international affairs professional from UCONN, donated over 275 hours of his time to help make the library one that could be used following the Library of Congress system. Each pamphlet, binder, video, book and other text was identified, labeled, organized and catalogued in an index on the library computer. Luckily for the Association, he has stayed on as volunteer librarian and continues to assist with keeping the library organized and maintained now that staff and members are able to use the collections for research and ideas.

The year featured a record-breaking Annual Fund, three new staff members, a new Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail, an award winning book, the first color cover of Connecticut Woodlands, an award-winning staff member, a bill in Congress and a change in Board leadership, yet even these achievements are not what I consider to be the milestone. The milestone, the accomplishment of the year, was the staged dramatic reading of *Forces of Nature* on November 9, 2007. Envisioned by Starr Sayres, *Forces of Nature* is a play in three acts written by playwright Stephen Most. The play was made possible through a very generous gift from Astrid and Fred Hanzalek, by a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council, and through many generous sponsors and supporters. The play explored the relationship between forester Gifford Pinchot, naturalist and writer John Muir, and President Theodore Roosevelt. Over 600 people packed the Belding Theater at The Bushnell in Hartford for the reading. The reading of *Forces of Nature* was directed by Michael Wilson, Artistic Director of the Hartford Stage Company. Actors Brian Dennehy, James Naughton, John Benjamin Hickey portrayed Roosevelt, Muir and Pinchot, respectively, while actor Nafe Katter read stage directions. At a reception preceding the show, DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy presented a gubernatorial proclamation that proclaimed the day, "Gifford Pinchot Day," to Leila Pinchot, great-granddaughter of Gifford and a current student at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Commissioner McCarthy's remarks were later sent to each of the employees of the Forest Service and printed in Volume 72 Number 4 of *Connecticut Woodlands*. In addition to raising over \$60,000 for the Association's education program, *Forces of Nature* gave CFPA recognition on a national scale, it electrified the environmental community in Connecticut, and it built new bridges between the arts and the environment in our state. As Executive Director, I am grateful to have served an Association with the audacity to make *Forces of Nature* happen.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam R. Moore
Secretary, Forester and Executive Director