



# The Steep Rock *VISTA*

The Newsletter of the Steep Rock Association

Spring 2002

## Trustees Vote to Enact Leash Law

Acting on a recommendation from the Stewardship Committee, the Steep Rock Board of Trustees voted on March 23 that all dogs must be leashed when on Steep Rock property. The properties include the Steep Rock and Hidden Valley Reservations as well as the Macricostas Preserve and the Pinnacle area at Lake Waramaug.

"We can't wait any longer", said Ed White Co-Chairman of Steep Rock's Stewardship Committee. "Every year we have more reports of really dangerous situations out there." Incidents including large, enthusiastic, friendly dogs overwhelming walkers, aggressive dogs frightening people, dog bites, and dogs attacking other dogs became more frequent over the last three years.

The main entrances to Steep Rock and Hidden Valley reservations will be posted as soon as possible. Trustees and all official Steep Rock volunteers have been notified of the new policy and have been asked to help make sure the new policy is obeyed.

**DOGS**  
**MUST**  
**BE**  
**LEASHED**  
**AT ALL TIMES**

Steep Rock Association  
860-868-9131

*New signs will be located at entrances to  
all Steep Rock properties*

## Illegal ATV's Damage Trails, Endanger Hikers and Equestrians

Most of the public is aware that no motorized vehicles of any kind are permitted on Steep Rock properties. In spite of this, many trails in the Steep Rock Reservation, especially in the area near the Tunnel, the Clam Shell and the Double Ford, have been seriously damaged by illegal ATV's (All Terrain Vehicles) and motorbikes trespassing in the reservation. This dangerous activity poses a serious threat, not only to the trails themselves, but to hikers and especially horseback riders.

Groups of two to five ATV's have been reported several times, entering Steep Rock from Roxbury and New Milford. A popular time for the illegal activity is on Sundays, usually in the late afternoon before dusk.

(All terrain vehicles are three wheeled motorized bikes with balloon like tires. It is illegal to operate the vehicles on CT roadways or on private property.)

**CT General Statutes Sec. 14-387,**  
**Rules of Operation states in part: "No**  
**person shall operate an all terrain**  
**vehicle in the following manner: On**  
**posted land without the written**  
**permission of the owner."**

Steep Rock continues to post areas known to be entry points, with "No Motorized Vehicles Allowed" signs. We are working with local law enforcement agencies as well as those in New Milford and Roxbury to combat this illegal activity. New Milford police have adopted specific procedures for handling complaints of all terrain vehicles being operated on private land, including

**A charge of 3rd Degree Criminal**  
**Trespass,**  
**a Class C Misdemeanor.**  
**The ATV's can be seized**  
**as evidence and impounded until**  
**released by the court.**

# This Spring's FAQ (Frequently Asked Question): What About the Drought?

## Tracking the Drought

Connecticut is facing what may be the worst drought on record. Above-average rainfall is needed soon to avoid a crisis, that is, a continuing decline in ground water levels. The chance of receiving that amount of rain is about 25 percent. Looking ahead, a year or two of above-average rainfall is needed to bring surface and ground water back to satisfactory quantities.

The years 1960-1964 were our worst-case drought. until now Recent readings of US Geological Survey (USGS) streamflow and groundwater monitors show generally lower levels now than then. (For ground water, 54 of 71 monitors recorded record lows in February.)

Rainfall since October 1, 2001, has been 39 percent of normal. There is no snow pack to provide fresh supply as the weather warms. The Department of Environmental Protection has canceled the spring freshet release, a discharge from reservoirs ordinarily mandated in order to scour out stream channels. Meanwhile streamflow is at 25 percent to 40 percent of normal levels. If the drought worsens, the DEP may cut back on other normally required releases from water supply reservoirs into rivers. Denise Ruzicka of the DEP Water Bureau, said recently that such cutbacks would be linked to heightened conservation measures by water suppliers.

River and watershed groups can track the drought in their regions through the USGS website at <http://ct.water.usgs.gov> The DEP plans to bring drought information on line this month. The USGS website provides locations for streamgages and ground water monitors in the state. River groups should also pay special attention this year to flow levels. In rivers that receive waste discharges, low flows are likely to lead to higher concentrations of contaminants. In high-quality, Class A waters, low flows lead to higher temperatures and, often, less dissolved oxygen. These changes can have severe negative effects on aquatic life. The Shepaug River, above its confluence with the Bantam River, is a Class A river.

## Saving Water

If you have a private well, and it has ever run dry, you are probably already conserving. If you have a private well and it has never run dry, it may this year. Start conserving now.

Public water supplies are also finite. Most major reservoirs (28 of 35) are below average levels, and 10 of 35 are at record lows. Four water utilities have already declared an emergency and mandated some conservation measures. Many others are asking for voluntary conservation. Please don't wait for an official announcement. Follow commonsense water saving. Here are some reminders:

- Don't leave water running from the tap while you answer the phone, look for the dental floss, etc.
- Fix dripping faucets and running toilets.
- Do not water lawn. Grass will withstand a drought. It may turn brown but it will come back. (Meanwhile you won't need to cut it so often.)
- To wash your car, use a bucket or two of water, not the hose.
- Operate dish and clothes washers with full loads only.
- Take short showers. A bathtub one-third full can be as refreshing as a full tub.
- Reduce toilet flushing when possible.

*Our thanks to Margaret Miner, Rivers Alliance for this timely article.*





# Macricostas Preserve Update



## Barns Will Be Demolished

After an exhaustive study of possible solutions to the question "What do we do with the barns at 124 Christian St.?", the Meeker Swamp Advisory Committee recommended to the full Board of Trustees that the buildings be demolished. The barns are a serious liability for Steep Rock. They are in poor condition. In some places the roof has collapsed. There is no particular historical significance in the structures and restoring them would cost several hundred thousands of dollars.

The barns were built before Wetlands regulations were enacted, and they were constructed in what is now a regulated area. One of them is actually in the wetland. Steep Rock submitted an application to the Washington Wetlands Commission for this project and after two sessions of a Public Hearing the Commission voted unanimously to approve the project. Work will begin as soon as possible and take about three weeks to complete.

## Boundaries are Posted

Boundaries of all Steep Rock's contiguous properties in the Macricostas Preserve area are now posted. These properties include the Macricostas Preserve itself, the Kimmel gift, accepted in 1996, the Davis gift, donated in 1997, the Couch property, purchased by Steep Rock in 1996 and the Weisman piece, given to Steep Rock by Weantinoge Heritage Trust in 2000. The properties total 368 acres. The perimeter of these contiguous properties measures more than four miles!

## Potters, Deneaults Continue Farming

Steep Rock has leased much of the Macricostas Preserve's agricultural land again this year. Tim and John Potter will continue to farm the 50 acre cornfield and Ken and Jennifer Deneault will once again use their leased acreage as pasture for their horses.

## Yale Helps With Stewardship

Steep Rock's Stewardship Committee submitted an RFP (Request for Proposal) to the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies recently, asking for help in formulating a stewardship plan for the Macricostas Preserve and the contiguous Steep Rock properties in that area.

"Management Plans for Protected Areas", is part of the curriculum of the school's masters degree program. Second year graduate degree candidates spend their fall semester on projects such as the one we've proposed.

Our RFP asked for an in depth study and description of the wetlands and aquifer, agricultural land, forest cover, historical and archeological features, as well as suggestions for trail locations, an overall management plan and recommendations for the responsible stewardship of this invaluable resource.

Steep Rock should know by this summer whether we have been selected as one of Yale's projects for the fall 2002 semester.



*Members of the Yale Chapter of the American Society of Foresters gathered recently in Hidden Valley for a "Tree Identification" Walk.*

# Hemlocks Doing Well

## Adelgid on Decline

### Beetles Reproducing

Adelgid populations are down significantly and the beetle is reproducing and has spread to the river. The beetle release site in Steep Rock was at the top of Steep Rock itself and the adelgid infestation was not continuous to the river, so the fact the the beetles made it is a good sign that they are seeking out the adelgid.

We reported in our Spring 2001 *Vista* that we hoped the serious winter and heavy snowfall that year would slow the spread of the adelgid and give the beetles more time to disperse. We believe that is the case.

In addition, according to Dr. Mark McClure, at the CT Agricultural Experiment Station in Windsor, the cool spring and summer of 2000, manifested in growth rates in the year 2001, resulted in significant growth of the Hemlocks.



*Hemlock woolly adelgid egg sacs.. It's the time of year to be on the lookout for them. They look like tiny q tips. Report any sitings to the Steep Rock office*

### *Hemlocks, cont.*

The big concern this year, of course, is the current drought. (see Drought Article, p.2).

Mark McClure and his research team visit Steep Rock and Hidden Valley every year to survey and assess the adelgid and beetle populations. We expect a report from this year's visit later in the summer. For now, though, it appears that, although the scale is still present, the adelgid has been struck a major blow by the weather and by the beetles introduce by Dr. McClure.

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PO Box 279  
Washington Depot, CT 06794

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