

The Steep Rock VISTA

The Newsletter of the Steep Rock Association

Summer 1997

Shepaug River Update...

Steep Rock, Washington, Roxbury Land Trust, Roxbury Vote to Join Litigation Lawsuit Filed in Litchfield

In our last regular newsletter (summer of 1996) we reported that Governor Rowland established a Task Force to study the Shepaug River. Here's an update of what has happened since then.

TASK FORCE

The Task Force was charged with studying the "implementation of the agreement between the town of Washington and the city of Waterbury" and "the responsibilities of the towns and the effects of the diversion of the Shepaug River." The Task Force submitted its report to the Legislature on January 1, 1997.

The findings of the Task Force included the following items:

- The lack of streamflow produces an environment that is not healthy.
- It appears possible that ... Waterbury could operate...in a manner that would allow for a smaller diversion and greater streamflow.
- The most direct way to restore streamflow would be to increase the amount of water released into the Shepaug River

The Task Force recommended that:

- Duly authorized representatives of Waterbury and Washington meet to achieve an understanding of the 1921 agreement with the town. (This is the contract that stipulates the 1.5 million gallons per day release of water between May and November.)
- If an understanding was not reached they should negotiate a resolution.
- The meetings and discussions should begin immediately (January, 1997) and end by April 30, 1997.

NO NEGOTIATIONS

In spite of several attempts by First Selectman Allie Chapin to schedule a meeting with Mayor Giordano, Waterbury did not respond to his overtures, and no meetings took place before the April 30 deadline.

LAND TRUSTS VOTE TO JOIN IN LITIGATION

In May, Steep Rock's Board of Trustees voted unanimously to join with the River Association and become a plaintiff in the litigation against the city of Waterbury.

Shortly thereafter, the Roxbury Land Trust's Board of Directors, also in a unanimous decision, added their name as an additional plaintiff

TOWNS VOTE TO JOIN LAWSUIT

On July 17, 300 townspeople voted unanimously for the town of Washington to become a plaintiff in the action against Waterbury. The next night, the citizens of Roxbury also voted without dissent to join the suit.

SUITS FILED IN WATERBURY AND LITCHFIELD

In an attempt to get a home court advantage, Waterbury filed suit against the River Association and other plaintiffs in Waterbury Court on July 21st. However, the next day, the River Association, along with Steep Rock and other plaintiffs, started a suit in Litchfield against Waterbury.

MOVING FORWARD WITH THE LAWSUIT

On August 18th the River Association filed papers to dismiss Waterbury's action and to have the case heard in Litchfield. A decision is expected in the Fall, and unless Waterbury shows it is willing to stop its unlawful diversions and protect the river, the Association will push forward diligently with its suit.



Shepaug River, summer 1997.

Steep Rock Summer Intern



Wielding her loppers and bow saw, Amanda Branson prepares to maintain trails in Steep Rock. Amanda is Steep Rock's summer intern for 1997. She'll be a senior at Nonnewaug High School in the fall.

4th of July 5K Race In Steep Rock for Second Year

For the second year in a row, the Fourth of July race was run in Steep Rock. A festive atmosphere prevails during the race along Tunnel Road next to the Shepaug River. Michael Hall of Washington, won the 5K Road Race this year. He beat a field of 50 entries. Michael will be Captain of the Shepaug High School track team this coming year. Members of last year's team were the Berkshire League Champions.

Senior Project: Steep Rock Brochure

As many of you know, at Shepaug High School each senior is required to complete a project. In 1995, senior Jaimie Rooney organized a horse show and donated its profits to Steep Rock.

This year senior Dan Gueniat created a brochure for Steep Rock. The brochure includes a brief history of Steep Rock and then describes several of Dan's favorite hikes in both Steep Rock and Hidden Valley. Dan included a map showing the trails he described.

Part of the project was a presentation before staff members and invited guests. During the presentation, Dan described the purpose of the senior project and all of the steps he went through to create the brochure.

Copies of the brochure are available at several locations in Washington, including the 1st National Bank, the Town Hall and the Gunn Library.

Steep Rock is pleased to once again be a part of the Senior Project program.

New Trustees

VICTORIA M. CHERNISKE

Victoria M. Cherniske, more commonly known as Tara, has lived in Washington for the greater part of her over-forty years. Her interest in Steep Rock is soulful, as her father, John Marsh, was the forester for many years and Tara's youth included pruning trees and maintaining the trails in the Reservations. Her family operated a horse farm on Wykeham Road and she spent many hours exploring the Steep Rock and Hidden Valley trails on horseback. Tara is Washington's Judge of Probate and a proud mother of three children.

She is "honored and delighted to be elected a member of the Steep Rock Board of Trustees" and will make every effort to see that the purposes of the Association are realized.

JOSEPH L. GITTERMAN, III

Joe Gitterman, a Wall Street escapee, lived in South Kent with his family for over 30 years.

During a career change, they decided to move to Washington Depot. Proximity to Steep Rock was their number one priority.

"Steep Rock is a very important part of our lives and its preservation is something we feel very strongly about. I am delighted to be elected to the Board of Trustees."

Among other responsibilities, Joe is a Trustee of the Westminster School in Simsbury.

Washington Webelos Busy Helping Steep Rock

The picnic table at the edge of the river in Hidden Valley was made and put in place by Washington's Webelo Scouts. The boys are between the ages of 8 and 10 and their Scoutmaster is Duncan Woodruff.

The boys also made the arrows that direct hikers along the blazed trails in both Steep Rock and Hidden Valley.

Steep Rock congratulates and thanks all of the Webelos. Without their help, these projects might never have been completed.



Webelos Ray Ranieri, Ian Kimball, Andrew Mello and Adam Woodruff proudly show the tools they used to make the picnic table that now resides in Hidden Valley.

Waramaug Rock Protected by Easement Long Range Mission Taking Shape

Another of Washington's magnificent vistas is preserved and protected in perpetuity thanks to the thoughtful consideration of an anonymous benefactor.

For many years Steep Rock has been concerned about the preservation of Waramaug Rock (often called the Pinnacle at Lake Waramaug, its correct name is Waramaug Rock) - the high point that overlooks Lake Waramaug with glorious 360 degree views of the Lake, Washington, Warren, Kent and New Milford. On a clear day, who knows how far one can see! The historic trail up to Waramaug Rock has been enjoyed for generations, but many who use it are not aware that it traverses private property from bottom to top and down again.

SUMMIT PRESERVED

During the past year three major steps toward this long term goal of protecting the area were taken. First, Steep Rock was granted a three-acre conservation easement on the summit of Waramaug Rock, and a Public Access Easement along a significant portion of the trail. The summit easement guarantees that the land will "remain in its natural scenic and open condition" and the trail easement will allow "members of the public to enjoy

the benefits of access to Waramaug Rock" **but only on foot.** (Both quotations are taken directly from the easement documents.)

CONTIGUOUS LAND PURCHASED

Second, Steep Rock purchased 14 acres of land from the Couch family. The mostly forested lands is contiguous to the Waramaug Rock easement and includes another significant section of the trail.

TRAIL IS FOOTPATH ONLY

Steep Rock's stewardship plan for the trail includes posting signs that notify the public the trail is under our stewardship, is a footpath only, and that motorized vehicles and mountain bikes are prohibited.

PORTION OF MEEKER SWAMP DONATED

The third step taken to protect the Waramaug Rock area occurred when 68 acres of land on the east side of Waramaug Rock were donated to Steep Rock by Mr. Lee Davis. Not only is the land contiguous with the "back" side of the summit (the view to the east), but it includes a portion of Meeker Swamp, one of the largest and most significant wetland areas in the town of Washington. *by Susan Payne, Chair Land Preservation Committee.*



Steep Rock Trustees Elaine Luckey, Hedda vonGoeben and Sheila Anson at the summit of Waramaug Rock.

New Booklet Available **Creating a Legacy for Future Generations** **Giving to Steep Rock**

The booklet is available at no cost from the Steep Rock office. It explains a number of ways available for the private landowner to protect his land during his lifetime, and to guarantee how his land will be used in the future. Also explained are the possibly significant tax benefits that can be realized in an estate plan that includes giving in some form to Steep Rock.

Trustee Wendy Federer worked diligently to put together the brochure, and she is one of several Trustees willing to answer any questions you might have after reading the booklet.

Beginning with Ehrick Rossiter, who founded Steep Rock with his gift of 186 acres of land "known as Steep Rock", donors of land and conservation easements exemplified by those who've seen to the protection of Waramaug Rock, have shown a deep commitment to preservation in general, and the town of Washington in particular. These unique individuals, and there have been many since the year 1925 when Mr. Rossiter gave his gift, have looked into the future and determined how it should be.

To have a booklet sent to you, please call the Steep Rock office: 860-868-9131.

Picnic Date Set for September 6 Downpour Date Sept. 7

Mark your calendars for Saturday, September 6. That's the day of the Steep Rock Annual Picnic. Everyone is invited. It's our way of saying thanks for supporting us throughout the year. Members of this year's Picnic Committee are Trustees Sheila Anson, Cyndi Brissett and Bill Fairbairn. If you'd like to help, and we'd love you to help, please call one of the committee members.

The picnic is held in the Steep Rock Reservation in the Girl Scout Area along the river. Follow River Road until Tunnel Road. The barway at the Railroad Bed will be open. Then follow the signs.

This year we've chosen a "theme" for the picnic - the Shepaug River and our efforts to save it. Members of the Shepaug River Association will be on hand to bring us up to date .

Showers or Shine - Good Food - Good Times
PLEASE JOIN US!



Three presidents of Steep Rock attended last year's picnic. George Ward, on the left, served as President for eleven years and is now the Chairman of the Board. John Millington, center, is the current President. On the right, Bob deCourcy, now an Honorary Member, was president for 12 years.

Steep Rock Association
PO Box 279
Washington Depot, CT 06794

Steep Rock Association

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Ehrick K. Rossiter

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Vincent L. Forese

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/VISTA EDITOR

Susan Branson



The Stewardship program is well underway. Foresters are completing their inventory and field work and beginning to write a Stewardship Plan. In the photo above, from left to right, Susan Branson, State Forester Larry Rousseau, Stewardship Coordinator Tom Worthley, and Vin Forese prepare to walk in Steep Rock.

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