

OPEN SPACES

STAMFORD LAND CONSERVATION TRUST, INC.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." — Margaret Mead

SPRING 2026



The Stewardship Issue

CARING FOR OUR LAND

Honoring John Stone 1960-2026

The environment, after all, is where we all meet, where we all have a mutual interest. It is one thing that all of us share. — Lady Bird Johnson

Dedication	2	Beyond Preservation: The Work of Land Stewardship	4-5	Knotweed Jungle to Native Meadow: Restoring Woods End Preserve	6-7
Thank You, John Stone	3				



DEDICATION

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.” ~John Muir

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

President

Vice President

Marina Pia DeLuca

Treasurer

Rodney Pelletier

Secretary

Lizzie Zawy

Directors

Aubrey Carter

Harry Day

Charles E. Janson, Esq.

David Merrick

Mark Putrino

David Stein

Trustees Council

David Emerson

Robert C. Graham, Jr.

Steven D. Grushkin, Esq.

Ralph A. Nichols, Esq.

Richard W. Redniss

June Rosenthal

Arthur Selkowitz

Robin Stein

David Stuckey



Dedicated to

Stamford Conservation
Land Trust President

John Lynwood Stone, Jr.
1960-2026

It's never easy to say goodbye, and it is much harder when a death is unexpected.

The Stamford Land Conservation Trust (SCLT) is lucky that John moved to Stamford, fortunate that he wandered into an annual meeting years ago, and grateful to have called him a friend and leader.

Saying John was passionate about the Land Trust is an understatement; it was a tireless, relentless dedication for him. He loved the land, the preserves, and the open space. His perseverance over the years has made the future brighter for SLCT than it would have been without him.

His shoes will be difficult to fill, but we have a committed board and core group of volunteers who are up to the task. We also, more than ever before, invite you to become part of the SLCT.

Help us create a legacy, not only for John, but for the entire Stamford community.

The Stamford Land Conservation
Trust Board of Director



THANK YOU, JOHN STONE

When I joined the Stamford Land Conservation Trust in 2017, the board was small but very active and dedicated. John Stone was officially our Treasurer; but in reality he was much more.

Whether it was acquisitions, treasury, stewardship, or communications, John always had an opinion, and he could be pugnacious. But no one worked harder or cared more about making the Stamford Land Trust successful in its mission to preserve and protect open space in our community. John brought an entrepreneurial, can-do attitude to the board, and as we got better acquainted and understood each other better, our friendship grew.

It was John's initiative that ultimately led to many new projects, from bringing tech to stewardship through a trail camera and drone photography, to applying his physics background to the construction of an osprey tower and a deer enclosure.

He was there for the first knotweed pull at our Woods End Preserve, and there were many mornings when it was just the two of us ripping out knotweed in the dead of summer. Thanks largely to John's efforts and focus, the preserve has transformed from a knotweed jungle into a lush, native wildflower meadow.

John's ambitions for the Land Trust knew no limits. I'm not sure if he realized he was working with a volunteer nonprofit rather than a hungry start-up. After our last volunteer event this fall, when we planted and installed deer fencing around fifteen young shrubs and trees (a new record), John called me and one of the first things he said was, "What can we improve for next time?"

How can we get more shrubs and trees planted?"

It was amusing, but that's who he was. He was always motivated and inspired. This winter, John had just finished his first year as President of the Land Trust, and he

had set us on a positive path. The organization owes him a lot for what he helped us achieve.

One thing that stays with me after John's passing is something he told me several times: "We need to have redundancy in case one of us gets hit by a bus; we need to make sure this place keeps running." That unfortunate reality has now come true, and our board will be challenged by John one last time.

We hope you'll help us rise to the occasion and honor John's memory by getting involved with the SLCT in whatever way you can. Whether it's removing invasive species, planting native plants, serving on a committee, making a donation, or becoming a board member, we'd be happy to have you. Let's work together to keep Stamford green.

As John always said...I'll see you in the forest.

Aubrey Carter
Head of Stewardship





Beyond Preservation:

the **WORK** of **LAND STEWARDSHIP**

When land is saved from development and preserved as open space, many people assume the work is finished. In reality, that's when the work truly begins.

Protected land does not simply maintain itself. Forests change, invasive species spread, trails shift, and ecosystems evolve. Caring for preserved land requires ongoing attention, monitoring, and restoration. This ongoing care is known as land stewardship.

The Stamford Land Conservation Trust (SLCT) currently stewards more than 550 acres across 50 preserves throughout our city, ensuring these natural areas remain healthy, accessible, and resilient for generations to come.

Monitoring Our Preserves

Many SLCT properties are monitored through annual visits by board members and volunteer stewards. Each steward is assigned one or more preserves to visit at least once a year.

During these visits, stewards document any changes to the property and complete stewardship reports. These reports help SLCT track how the land evolves over time

and ensure that preserve boundaries are respected. They also help identify any issues such as invasive species, storm damage, or unauthorized human activity.

Restoring Native Habitat

Some preserves require a more hands-on approach. In areas heavily impacted by invasive plants, SLCT volunteers undertake active land management.

This often involves removing invasive species, so native plants can return. In many cases, native seeds already exist dormant in the soil and will naturally reemerge once invasive plants are removed. To further strengthen these ecosystems, volunteers also introduce native plant species that are well-suited to the habitat.

Why Biodiversity Matters

Increasing biodiversity is one of the most important goals of stewardship. Invasive species often dominate landscapes, creating monocultures—large areas where a single plant species grows. While these plants may flower briefly and provide temporary food for pollinators, they leave long gaps in the growing season when little food is available.

By restoring native plant diversity, SLCT helps ensure that flowers bloom from spring through fall, providing a steady food supply for pollinators. Different plant species support different insects, which in turn support birds and other wildlife. Greater plant diversity leads to greater insect, bird, and fungal diversity, strengthening the entire ecosystem.

Healthy ecosystems are also more resilient. A landscape dominated by a single species can be devastated by a disease or pest that targets that plant. Diverse ecosystems are better able to withstand environmental challenges.

A Volunteer Effort

Because SLCT is a volunteer-driven organization, the scope of stewardship projects depends on available time and resources. Over the years, volunteers have experimented with different restoration approaches, learning from both successes and challenges.

Every project adds to our understanding of how best to care for the land.

At its heart, stewardship is about people working together to protect the natural spaces that make Stamford special—and ensuring those landscapes remain healthy for generations to come.





The Stamford Land Conservation Trust has invested significant time and energy restoring the Woods End Preserve. Though the preserve is small—just under three acres—it includes about fifty yards of roadside frontage on Woods End Road, just off High Ridge Road.

When we first began restoration work, the entire roadside was buried beneath a dense monoculture of Japanese knotweed, an aggressive invasive plant that towered nearly fourteen feet high. The wall of knotweed completely concealed what lay beyond it.

Just behind that thick stand of invasive plants, the land drops about eight feet into a healthy, intact wetland filled with native skunk cabbage and maple trees. Yet before our work began, you would never have known that wetland existed.

On a humid day in August 2019, a small group of volunteers took the first determined steps toward restoring the area. Armed with gloves, shovels, and persistence, we began ripping out the knotweed that had dominated the roadside for years.

Restoration did not happen overnight. For several years, volunteers returned multiple times each season to remove new knotweed growth and slowly reclaim the soil. Native wildflowers were planted from plugs to jumpstart the ecosystem's recovery.

Today, those efforts are beginning to bear fruit.

Among the native plants introduced to increase biodiversity are two species of milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca* and *Asclepias incarnata*), essential host plants for Monarch butterflies, as well as two species of lobelia (*Lobelia cardinalis* and *Lobelia siphilitica*), which attract hummingbirds.

Another native plant, pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*), has returned naturally and now provides food and shelter for catbirds, whose calls often echo through the preserve.

What was once a towering wall of invasive plants is steadily transforming into a diverse native meadow—proof that dedicated stewardship, even on a small piece of land, can restore both beauty and ecological balance.

This project also reflects the broader mission of the Stamford Land Conservation Trust. Across more than 550 acres of protected land, stewardship means more than simply preserving open space—it means actively caring for the land so native ecosystems can recover and thrive.

Woods End Preserve shows that restoration is possible with patience, persistence, and community effort. Every invasive plant removed and every native seed that takes root helps bring the landscape one step closer to the way nature intended.

Ecological restoration isn't done in a season. It's a long-term process, and we're well underway at Woods End.





JOIN THE STAMFORD LAND CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

Did you know you can become a member of the Stamford Land Conservation Trust by donating as little as \$50 a year? Your membership supports the SLCT’s mission to preserve open space throughout the City of Stamford. You will also receive our newsletter, learn first-hand about various events and activities, and be eligible to vote at our annual meetings.

There are lots of levels of participation, in addition to being a regular member:

- Advocate @ \$250
- Partner @ \$500
- Forester @ \$1,000
- Steward @ \$2,500
- Conservationist @ \$5,000
- Or a donation of your choice

Become part of the Stamford Land Conservation Trust family and help us conserve land for years to come.

You can donate by using the DONATE NOW button on our website at www.stamfordland.org.

If you prefer to donate by check, you can mail your donation to Stamford Land Conservation Trust at:
1127 High Ridge Road, Suite 312, Stamford, CT 06905.

If you’d like to gift securities, please contact: info@stamfordland.org.

All contributions are tax-deductible.

GIFTING LAND

Donating land for conservation creates a lasting legacy that benefits our community and future generations.

DONATING LAND

- Creates an immediate tax deduction for the appraised value of the donated property*
- Ensures the land is left in its natural state

The two most common ways to protect land are an outright donation, sometimes known as “fee simple,” and a conservation easement:

- Outright donation transfers ownership to the land trust, releases the owner from all future tax liability, and protects the land as open space forever.
- A conservation easement allows the landowner to retain ownership while protecting the land in perpetuity and reducing the owner’s tax burden.

If you’re thinking about donating land for conservation, please email us at info@stamfordland.org. We can help you develop a conservation plan that works best for you. Please remember, we are not tax advisors. Anyone planning a land donation should consult their own legal counsel.

*There is generally a modest one-time fee of \$2,500 associated with a land donation to cover ongoing stewardship expenses.

VOLUNTEERS ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR ORGANIZATION!

Getting involved doesn’t have to be financial. There are stewardship opportunities across all our preserves and many ways for you to participate. We regularly host events, such as our Nature Walks and Preserve Cleanups, and welcome community involvement.

To volunteer, please email us at info@stamfordland.org.

STAMFORD LAND CONSERVATION TRUST CONTACTS

- Email: info@stamfordland.org
- Phone: 203-578-7258
- Website: www.StamfordLand.org
- Address: 1127 High Ridge Road, Suite 312, Stamford CT

STAMFORD LAND CONSERVATION TRUST

1127 HIGH RIDGE ROAD, SUITE 312, STAMFORD, CT 06905-0247



**BETWEEN
EVERY
TWO
PINES IS A
DOORWAY
TO A NEW
WORLD.**

– John Muir