

# the OAK LEAF

a publication of the white oak land conservation society

Fall 2007

## TPL invests in Worcester County

The South Road home of White Oak members Chris and Sue Durham was the setting for a recent celebration hosted by the Trust for Public Land. The gathering marked the official completion of several Worcester Watershed land conservation projects within the towns of Holden and Rutland – with a total of over 350 acres preserved. Congressman Jim McGovern was the featured speaker, along with Bob Moylan of Worcester Dept of Public Work and Craig Macdonnell of the Trust for Public Land.

Congressman McGovern said, “I’m very pleased to be a part of this important progress in protecting our vital natural resources and maintaining a safe water supply for our community. I’m particularly pleased with the use of federal Forest Legacy funding is making this achievement possible. I want to commend the Trust for Public Land for all of their hard work. I will continue to work in Congress to protect open space and encourage smart development.”

Craig Macdonnell took advantage of the occasion to announce the formation of the Worcester County Conservation Initiative, a program of the Trust for Public Land. The initiative was begun in 2006 with seed money donated by two local activists – Judy Haran of White Oak and Ken Crater of the Grafton Land Trust. Both are members of TPL’s Massachusetts Advisory Board, and both had seen how effective TPL had been in their communities. They asked TPL to commit to help the many towns in Worcester County that have no staffed land trust to work on land protection. TPL put together a WCCI working group, and came up with a campaign plan – to form a volunteer committee representing many areas of Worcester County, and to

- hire two half-time land acquisition specialists to work only in Worcester County\*



Congressman Jim McGovern

- engage some Worcester County towns in “greenprinting”, a process by which townspeople decide on conservation priorities
  - pursue “Conservation Finance” goals – i.e. help communities pass the Community Preservation Act or pass bonds to buy land
- A campaign goal of \$500,000 was set, and as of 9/1 almost half of that had been raised, through the generosity of many individuals and a few foundations. The committee now has members from Holden, Rutland, Hubbardston, Grafton, and Dudley. After the fundraising phase is complete, the committee will shift its focus to identifying and prioritizing the many potential conservation projects across the county.

Would you like to help with this exciting effort? Here are some ways:

1. Suggest someone for the committee from a town not listed above;

2. Suggest a potential land conservation project
3. Donate!! \$250,000 is still needed, and every donation brings us closer to the goal. Send all contributions to Amelia Bishop, Development Office, Trust for Public Land, 33 Union St, Boston MA 02108.
4. Know someone who might be interested in hearing more about this who doesn’t get this newsletter? Send their contact info to [whiteoaktrust@hotmail.com](mailto:whiteoaktrust@hotmail.com).
5. For more information on TPL, go to [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org) and select the MA page.

*\*TPL is a national nonprofit, and their income comes primarily from landowner donations on the conservation projects they complete. The head office in San Francisco mandates that if new staff are being added, fundraising must be done to cover the cost of the positions for the first three years; after that they are considered to be self-supporting.*



# Eagle Lake Campaign

As all of you know, Mass Audubon and White Oak are partnering to purchase the land on the southern shore of Eagle Lake owned by the Lundquist family, together with a large parcel of woodland on the other side of Kendall Road. In all there will be 157 acres. White Oak has held a conservation restriction on part of this land for some years. Although at one time the Lundquists ran it as a summer camp, which many long time Holden residents attended, in recent years it has been off limits to the public. When this purchase is completed it will be open, like the Audubon sanctuary on the western shore, for anyone to visit. Though conservation restrictions protect land from development, public access should be the ultimate goal for places like this with unique scenic beauty and so much wild life.

When James went off to the California gold rush Edward stayed in Boston, and eventually founded the Charles River Ironworks, which grew to a very large business. By the 1880s Edward Kendall was a rich man, and started buying back the land which had once belonged to his father. In 1902 he built the house which the Lundquist family later purchased. In the following years Edward built a toboggan run, boat houses and a barn, and after he sold the ironworks in 1905 retired to Holden. Until he died in 1915 he farmed with his family the land his father had owned before him. Kendall Square in Cambridge is named after him. Members of the Kendall family continued to live in the house until 1934.



Photo by Karen Eisenhauer courtesy of www.hctv11.com

*A view from Eagle Lake*



Photo by Charlie Wyman courtesy of www.hctv11.com

*One of the many paths on the 157 acres*

The land has a fascinating history. Caleb Kendall moved to Holden from Shrewsbury around 1800, and built a saw and grist mill, powered by water from a dam across the Asnebumskit brook, forming what is now Eagle Lake. In 1821 he sold the mill to Samuel Clark, and eventually it grew to be the old cotton mill we know as Jefferson mill. Meanwhile Caleb built a second mill, with a mill pond which has become Kendall Reservoir. One of his sons, Edward, farmed the land and ran the saw mill until 1847, when he joined his elder brother James working at the West Boston Foundry.

Ivan Lundquist and his friends bought the property in 1938, and brought it back into active use again. They were enthusiastic skiers, and revived the toboggan run. Recognising, as Edward Kendall had, the magic of the knoll sheltered by tall pines overlooking the lake, they carefully opened it to an area for picnics and gatherings, and a beach which they and their friends could enjoy. They built a small cabin which became the center of the summer camp, where in the 1940s many children learned to enjoy the beauty of natural things, and met all the animals and birds that lived in or near the lake.

Edward Kendall wanted to conserve the land on which he had grown up and worked as a young man, and the Lundquist family have maintained this tradition, caring for the land but, like Kendall, sharing it with others, culminating in this sale which will open it to all in perpetuity. At the time of writing we have raised about \$140,000 of the \$160,000 we need to purchase the land and to create an endowment fund for its management. If you have already given a dona-

tion, thank you! If you have not, or are able to give more, there is still time to raise the last \$20,000. Donations can be sent to White Oak at PO Box 346, Holden, MA 01520, or to Mass Audubon at 208 South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773. All donations are tax deductible. Please be generous - and **thank you**.



WHITE OAK LAND  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY

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*White Oak is a member of the MA Land Trust Coalition and the Land Trust Alliance.*



## The dam at Eagle Lake.

Ever since the old earth dam for Eagle Lake was breached in the 1980s, the dam next to Jefferson Mill has been the only defense holding back the million and a half or more gallons of water in the lake. If the dam failed, hundreds of buildings, roads and houses on low lying land near the Asnebumskit brook would be at risk, starting with Jefferson Mill itself. Moreover, in flood conditions excess water from Pine Hill and Kendall reservoirs might find its way into Eagle Lake, following the old path of the brook. It is not surprising that the State Office of Dam Safety classifies the dam as “high hazard potential”.

Although the dam was repaired to good standards back in 1993, it still requires maintenance. After the floods of 2005, when many dams across the state were at risk of failing, all dam owners were required to have their dams inspected by specialist engineers. Fuss & O’Neill, who inspected our dam, found it in fair condition, but requiring maintenance and minor repairs. The most important repair was to remove the woody vegetation on the dam and spillway, which a team of hard working volunteers has completed, leaving the dam looking unclothed and untidy. It seems that woody roots, searching for water, tend to push stones aside and open gaps in the structure which become potential channels for a break through, which once started can enlarge rapidly.

The honey locust trees, which made the main part of the vegetation, started to sprout again within a week or two despite treatment to the stumps. They will probably need frequent attention to control their apparently irrepressible growth, though we hope that the chips from the cutting may help to deter them. (Chipping of the cuttings will be done mid September). The area now looks blighted. As soon as we are sure that weeds, poison ivy and trees are no longer returning, we can replant. Suggestions on how we may improve the looks of the dam will be welcome. We want a hardy ground cover with small roots that needs little or no attention, but is vigorous enough to deter weeds, bittersweet, and poison ivy as well as the honey locust.



*Before (top) and after the cutting at Eagle Dam*

Other repairs already planned may help to improve the looks of the dam. The concrete piers and training walls have to be patched and sealed, which should make them look cleaner and neater. The railings and beams have to be painted, which will improve their looks. Of course, the back drop of the mill itself, where renovations have been halted, does not help the overall appearance, but there is a rumor that work may be resumed shortly.

Repairing the dam in 1993 was achieved with White Oak’s first major fund raising effort, and it seems ironic that when we are again in the middle of a major fund drive the dam should be a drain on our resources for a second time. However, when we remember that at one point there was a real threat that the lake would be drained to provide land for development, maintaining the dam seems well worthwhile. Holden would not be the same without Eagle Lake!



# Appeal for Volunteer Stewards

**T**he volunteer stewards group needs more volunteers. The fall is a good time to explore one of our properties or CRs and to learn how to record the report which has to be done annually. If you enjoy a gentle hike (and the occasional scramble through undergrowth) and would like to join us, please give Anthony Costello a call at 508 829-4829.

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