

# THE Oak Leaf

A PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE OAK LAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

SPRING 2023

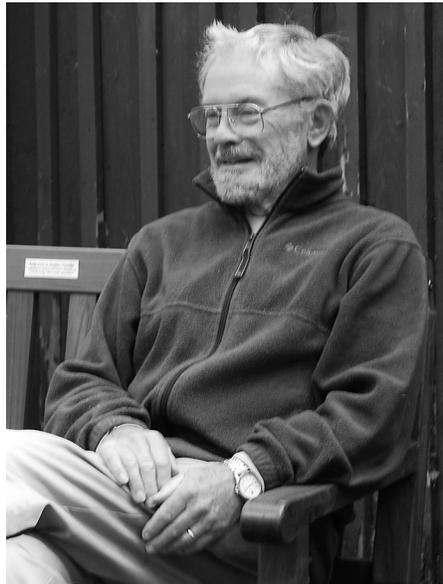
## We're still here!

**G**reetings, *Oak Leaf* subscriber! Please forgive our long absence. White Oak Land Conservation Society has been working diligently on a long-term project since you last heard from us, and between that and a global pandemic our all-volunteer Board has had its hands full. If you're not already following us on Facebook, please do so—we post updates there periodically, and we promise not to inundate your feed.

In March of 2020 our world changed and the Board shifted to meeting virtually instead of in person. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the White Oak Board has worked to maintain our trails and properties, knowing that access to open space is vitally important to promoting collective and individual well-being within the greater Holden community.

### Anthony Costello retired

After many years of service in various roles, Anthony Costello retired from the White Oak Board in October of 2020. Anthony's contributions to White Oak cannot be overstated; he held a great deal of the institutional memory of the organization and understood the ins and outs of each of our properties. His tireless work in support



of White Oak, from the tiniest details to the most laborious undertakings, was a driving force in our success as an organization.

Anthony has left his mark everywhere within our organization and on White Oak's properties. He navigated very complex land acquisitions with many moving pieces and involved parties, such as the former Carrick property and the expansion at Holbrook Forest. He built the kiosks and sign posts, and hung the signs that mark the entrance to our properties; he wrote articles for the

*Oak Leaf* and the website, and he spent countless hours blazing and clearing trails for all to enjoy. His cheerful demeanor, even temperament, and meticulous attention to detail were immeasurable assets at Board meetings and he mentored more than one fellow Board member in his years on the Board.

We are deeply grateful for Anthony's many years of service and are working on ways to more formally recognize his work with us. 🌿

## Potter/Rotary vandalism

If you have visited our Porcupine Hill/Potter Sanctuary trails in the last year or two, you may have noticed some damage to the buildings on those properties. Sadly, they were the targets of vandalism. If you're on our email list, please stay tuned for an invitation to a work party to help clean up and repair some of the damage to these buildings.

“Happiness? The color of it must be spring green.”

—Frances Mayes

# Salisbury Street acquisition

**F**riends, we're very excited to tell you about the completion of a three-year project to preserve approximately 100 acres of land on Salisbury Street in Holden! Read on for more details.

In the early summer of 2019, the Puffer and Heininger families—the owners of a combined 113 acres on Salisbury Street—approached White Oak to ask whether we would be interested in acquiring their land, with the provision that at least 85% be preserved. White Oak's Board unanimously agreed that this was a unique opportunity to preserve a beautiful piece of land in Holden, and that we would move enthusiastically forward with the acquisition process. The owners were invested in conserving the land for future generations to enjoy, and they generously agreed to give White Oak two years to raise funds for the land's asking price. The White Oak Board entered into an agreement to purchase the 113-acre parcel, and then began the painstaking process of surveying the land, which abuts other protected land including a large parcel of Fox Hill subdivision common land.

Board member Kenneth Strom performed the lion's share of the survey work, and we owe him a great deal of thanks—without his expertise and hundreds of volunteer hours, this acquisition would not have been possible! Craig McColl and Conor Boyan also worked with Ken to survey the boundaries of the property. Survey work continued as weather and season permitted.

The pandemic slowed everything down significantly. We were unable to meet in person for Board meetings or for work days, and yet our volunteer Board members persevered in their work to survey and document the entire property. Once the survey was complete, White Oak Board members Paul McManus and Scott Morrison worked with Ken Strom to create and file with the Planning Board an Open Space Residential Development ("OSRD") Plan, which would create a small development of six small house lots on Salisbury Street and would preserve the

remaining land as untouched open space. The permitting process took yet more time, and the owners of the land generously granted us an extension on our option to purchase the land. Several neighbors objected to the OSRD plan, but at White Oak's request, agreed to meet to discuss the project overall. Fortunately, some neighbors, most notably the Burroughs family, understood the project's benefits and offered to purchase, at a fair price, several acres to address the financial necessities of a project that involved creation and sale of four somewhat larger house lots in lieu of the six OSRD lots.

Early in the process, Pamela Harding, Holden's Town Planner, suggested that White Oak request funds from the town's Open Space Preservation Fund. In 2020, the Holden Town Meeting voters granted White Oak \$250,000 from the fund toward the project. In the summer of 2022, White Oak created a plan for four standard-size lots instead of six smaller lots, and sold those lots to Gallo Builders through an auction process; and two neighbors purchased small parcels around their existing homes. These combined funds, along with \$20,000 from White Oak's own limited reserves, comprised the \$1.12 million purchase price. Without these funds from the town and from the sale of a small fraction of the land, the entire parcel would likely have been sold and turned into a 74-house development.

We are deeply grateful to the Puffer and Heininger families for their patience and desire to see the majority of the property preserved; to Pamela Harding for her support; to Attorney George Dresser, the founding White Oak Board member who provided many hours of pro bono legal representation; to our Board members, who gave so many hours of their time to work on this project; and to all of our White Oak members at large, whose support helped make this acquisition possible! White Oak has closed on the land, and we can't wait to welcome the Holden community to visit the incredible approximately 100-acre property that is now protected in perpetuity. 🌿



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





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## ANNUAL MEETING

During our November annual meeting, we welcomed two new members to the Board: **Maria Corrigan** and **David Ayers**. **Conor Boyan** also stepped down to an Associate Board member role, as he left for college in Maine in the fall.

Our keynote speaker was **Jason Stolarski**, Aquatic Biologist from Mass Wildlife, who presented a program titled "Landscape Conservation is Fish Conservation." Jason is a resident of Holden who enjoys hiking and biking on White Oak land. His main message to White Oak was that land conservation is fish conservation—it's the easiest way to protect fish populations. Jason studies coldwater fish populations throughout Massachusetts, and he explained that these populations are much healthier in the less developed/more conserved areas of the Commonwealth. He shared a map of coldwater fish populations in Massachusetts; there's a pretty clear dividing line between areas that have been heavily developed and less developed/conserved. The vast majority of coldwater fish are found west of I-495. So if you care about diversity of species, fishing, and habitat restoration, land conservation is crucially important.