

The NRT Report

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield Newsletter

Special Notices:

Town Meeting

May 6th, 7:30 P.M.

Mansfield High School Auditorium

Vote YES on CPA

See feature article

NRT Annual Meeting

May 30, 2002
7:30 P.M.

Village at Willow Crossing
Community Center

Cobb Street
Off South Main
Please attend.

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2003 Membership Dues are due!

Dues are \$25.00 per year.
Send to:
NRT
255 Fruit Street
Mansfield, MA 02048.

Community Preservation Act

By Leonard F. Flynn

The Conservation Commission and the NRT are co-sponsoring Articles 30 and 31 at the annual Town Meeting on May 6th, which will allow the Community Preservation Act (CPA) as a referendum question on the ballot at the next election.

The Community Preservation Act is enabling legislation designed to help towns plan ahead for sustainable growth and raise funds to purchase open space and recreation land, preserve and acquire historic places and landscapes, and to create and repair affordable housing. CPA allows towns to levy a community wide surcharge on property tax to create a local Community Preservation Fund (CPF). The CPF must be used exclusively for the three purposes stated in the Act. The state has \$43 million in the Community Preservation Trust Fund (CPTF) from which it will provide matching funds to the towns that accept the CPA. The Trust Fund money is raised from fees at the registry of deeds and is in the bank and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Mansfield, for many years, has been one of the fastest growing towns in the state. We lag behind most surrounding towns in the percentage of land set aside for public open space. Our current major open space project is the Canoe River green belt, which will run the length of the river through Sharon, Foxboro, Mansfield, Easton and Norton. The primary purpose of the greenbelt is to protect our major drinking water supply, to create a riparian corridor for wildlife and wetland protection, and to provide recreational opportunities. Because of the extreme development pressure in Mansfield we estimate that if the project is not completed within five years, the land will most likely be sold for residential subdivisions. The CPA will provide a dedicated source of funding that will make it possible to complete this project and implement the other purposes of the Act.

The rapid residential growth in Mansfield has caused an anomaly in the population distribution of the town. The influx of new homebuyers between ages of 30 and 45, with school age

An Investment in Our Future

children, results in Mansfield having the largest percentage of children in the state under the age of 14. This causes an unusual financial burden on the town for new schools and municipal services.

Every new house built costs the town more in services than it pays in taxes. The conservative estimate for per pupil costs is \$6,800 – the average single-family residential property tax is \$3,500. Any developable land purchased as open space will reduce the number of new houses built, thereby reducing the need for new schools and public services. The open space acquired will be used for water protection, conservation, recreation, scenic vistas, wildlife protection and wetland protection – all important factors in our quality of life. The CPA will give Mansfield a dedicated source of money to buy open space and protect the character of our town that we enjoy and value.

The CPA is an investment in Mansfield's future that will add value to every property and eventually reduce the escalating tax burden for all taxpayers.

The formula for calculating the surcharge on your property is:

Your Assessed Value less \$100,000 ÷ 1,000 x \$15.45 x .03 = SURCHARGE

CPA 3% Surcharge Chart		
Based on 2002 Tax Rate of \$15.45		
<i>average residential property in bold</i>		
If your home is assessed for:	Your CPA surcharge will be:	per Tax Bill:
\$ 100,000	\$ 0	
\$ 150,000	\$ 23.18	\$ 11.59
\$ 200,000	\$ 46.35	\$ 23.18
\$ 227,670	\$ 59.18	\$ 29.59
\$ 250,000	\$ 69.53	\$ 34.76
\$ 300,000	\$ 92.70	\$ 46.35
\$ 350,000	\$ 115.88	\$ 57.94
\$ 400,000	\$ 139.05	\$ 69.53
\$ 450,000	\$ 162.23	\$ 81.11
\$ 500,000	\$ 185.40	\$ 92.70

(Continued on page 4)

President's message

An unexpected and pleasant surprise!

The Natural Resources Trust has accepted a gift of 7.4 acres of land in the north end of town from Ted Mahoney III of Plainville. The land is situated between Charles and Thompson Streets to the north and south, and between Kingman and Wessel Streets to the east and west. We had initial concerns about accepting a land gift in one of the most densely populated areas of town, but after a site walk by the Board of Directors we realized that this heavily wooded parcel would provide an oasis of open space and add to the quality of life and real estate value of the neighborhood. The land is approximately sixty percent wetland and forty percent upland. A surprise attraction was the sighting of a deer on the parcel, by Lou Andrews and Colin Cauldwell, during the site walk.

The land was under consideration for Chapter 40B low and moderate-income development before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). During the ZBA hearing period, Ted Mahoney called and asked me if the NRT would be interested in accepting the land as a gift. We then contacted many of the neighbors of the parcel for their opinions to the proposal. The

response was very much in favor but some doubts were expressed about the NRT and our plans for the property.

The NRT organized a meeting with the neighbors at the Mansfield Library to explain the purpose of our organization, and to discuss their concerns and ideas on the use of the land. They were pleased with our purpose statement and expressed a desire to keep the land in its natural state. I explained that we take the stewardship of our land very seriously and we would need their cooperation and help to preserve and protect the land for the public and future generations. We also have discovered there has been some encroachment on our land by abutters, and some dumping of debris along some of our property lines. With the cooperation of the abutters these problems will be corrected and we will be able to keep this land as public open space in perpetuity.

We also explained our policy for the public use of NRT land-Take nothing off the land, leave nothing on it, and enjoy the natural beauty and tranquility it provides.

Leonard F. Flynn



Trailside Needs Your Help

What's The Problem?

Blue Hills Trailside Museum is facing serious financial uncertainties. On December 5, 2001, the Museum's 2002 state funding was cut 62%, from an anticipated \$462,500 to \$175,000. To meet this major shortfall, the Museum has eliminated 1/3 of staff positions, including educators, and is now closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The future of the Museum is in jeopardy. Governor Swift has proposed zero funding for Blue Hills Trailside Museum in her budget for 2003 (effective July 1, 2002). Due to reductions in charitable contributions, Massachusetts Audubon Society is financially unable to continue to operate this state-owned facility without state-appropriated funding.

How You Can Help?

Blue Hills Trailside Museum needs your support. Please write to Governor Swift, Senate President Birmingham, and House Speaker Finneran. Ask them to reinstate funding for Blue Hills Trailside Museum in the 2003 State Budget. Please refer to line item #2444-9004 in your correspondence.

Governor Jane Swift

State House
Boston, MA 02133

Senate President

Thomas F. Birmingham

State House
Boston, MA 02133

House Speaker Thomas Finneran

State House
Boston, MA 02133

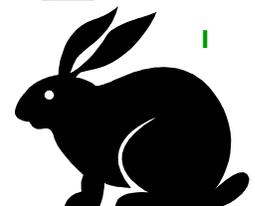
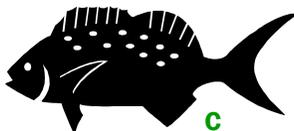
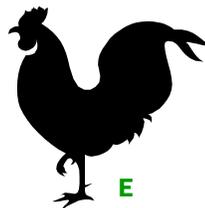
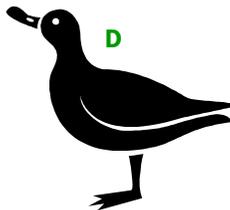


Kid's Stuff

Where would you *most likely* find these critters?

1. In or on the water?
2. In a tree?
3. On the ground?

Can you name them?



Harry's Notebook by Harry B. Chase, Jr.

DRAKE FARM WAS THE HEART OF THE GREAT WOODS

I remember the abandoned Drake Farm in the Great Woods as a peaceful place of small fields laced together by winding paths within a grid of old stone walls. Around the fields grew cedars and pines, and a few half-wild apple trees contending with the scrub cherries. There was a boulder my imaginative Boy Scouts called Elephant Rock because it resembled an elephant lying down.

Fifty years ago I knew the farm's owner, a granddaughter of previous owners. With her okay, I camped there with my Scout troop. All that May night the whippoorwills called, and at dawn we woke to a chorus of bird songs. I always encouraged the boys to name things. They named this place Bird Woods.

The original deed to Drake Farm dates from 1768. Who Drake was nobody knows. His farm lay at the geographic heart of the Great Woods, in Norton on the Mansfield line, almost a mile from the nearest road. By 1794 it belonged to Judge Samuel and Ruhanah Morey whose daughter Fanny married Laban Wheaton, founder of Wheaton College; Wheaton himself owned it in 1799.

After 1828 George and Marberry Barker lived there in a small house near Elephant Rock. Close by were a well, a barn and an

apple orchard. A good spring for the cattle never ran dry. Beside a tiny brook was a flat rock the little girls used as a pretend tea table.

“Drake Farm wasn't always happy.”

Drake Farm wasn't always happy. In 1844 the Barkers' 15-year-old son Edwin came down with scarlet fever, caught cold and died, and was buried on the farm "near the sumacs." Much later, he was removed to Norton Common Cemetery. The Barkers too moved, out to Mansfield Avenue, abandoning the house, which fell or was pulled down about 1870. Afterward, they used the "Old Place" (as they called it) as a garden, then a cow pasture.

A few years ago Drake Farm was strip mined for gravel down to bedrock or groundwater, whichever came first. Walls, cedars, apple trees, sumacs, the "tea table" all went. Only Elephant Rock remains; too big to move, it perches forlornly on the brushy plain. Soon the farm will lose its identity and become part of a golf course. Golf is nice, but I'd give anything to walk the old Drake Farm again.

Harry has camped, hunted, surveyed, mapped and observed plant and animal life in The Great Woods for over 50 years.



GIRL SCOUTS CLEAN UP MANSFIELD By Jane Sheehan

NRT member Denise Brown's Junior Girl Scout Troop 911 were awarded status as a "Super Troop" by organizing Girl Scout troops in Mansfield, in a town-wide cleanup day, on Sunday, April 14. Sixty-three Girl Scouts, from Daisies (kindergarten age) through Seniors (to 17), participated representing eight troops.

Each troop did a conservation project and a restoration project. The conservation project involved cleaning up flower beds in public places and planting pansies. The restoration project was cleaning up trash. Some of the areas covered included the Maple Street Conservation area; Fulton's Pond between Dean and Union Street; the access road to the Dog Pound, off Fruit Street; Ware/Branch Streets, near the conservation area; East and Pratt Streets, near the Recycling Center, and Oak Street near the Scott-Goya Conservation land.

The day finished up with a gathering at the Scott-Goya property to enjoy making "s'mores" over a campfire and to hear presentations on conservation and water use from NRT representative, Jane Sheehan, and "The Water

Wizard," Steve Bishop of the Mansfield Water Department.

Hats off to the "Super Troop" and their fellow Scouts! Their awareness and sense of community responsibility speak well for the future of our town and whatever towns these girls reside in as adults. Perhaps if others had had a similar experience in their youth there would be a lower incidence of litter in our streets and public places!



We welcome your suggestions. We accept, for publication, articles that meet our goals and objectives of informing the public about conservation. Send articles to: NRT, 255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048, or via e-mail to nrtma@attbi.com. We reserve the right to determine which articles to publish.



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MANSFIELD, MA**

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield

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Email: nrtma@attbi.com

**"To acquire and preserve natural resources
for the use and enjoyment of present and
future generations"**

**WE'RE ON THE WEB:
WWW.GEOCITIES.COM/
NRTMA**

(Continued from page 1)

Here is an example:

\$228,900 (Assessed Value) – \$100,000
(exemption) ÷ 1000 x \$15.45 (tax rate)
x .03 (surcharge rate) = **\$59.74**
(surcharge) per year.

Use the chart to estimate your surcharge. No one likes to pay more taxes but the return on your investment will be great considering the matching CPTF money and other state and private grants that will leverage the surcharge money. Remember there is 43 million dollars in the CPTF now with an estimated 26 to 30 million each succeeding year. We will miss out on these funds if we don't adopt the Community Preservation Act.

VOTE YES FOR ARTICLES 30 AND 31.

Every citizen deserves clean water, clean air and access to open space.

Membership

The NRT welcomes new members!

Our dues are \$25.00 per year.

Dues can be sent to :
NRT
255 Fruit Street
Mansfield, MA 02048.

Please include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and your specific conservation interests; or visit our web site for an application.
E-mail us for a free brochure, or call Lou Andrews at 508-339-4155.

Your comments are welcome.

Please e-mail them to nrtma@attbi.com.

The NRT newsletter is published three times a year. All opinions and comments are those of the authors.

Lou Andrews—editor

The Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving natural resources for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations; and other conservation related activities.

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Contributions

The NRT welcomes donations to our land acquisition fund. These funds are dedicated to acquiring and protecting conservation land in Mansfield.

Please send your tax –deductible contribution to:
NRT, 255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048.

**15TH Annual
Canoe River Awareness Day
Well #5 Plain Street, Norton
May 18th, 8:30 to noon.
Presentations – Canoeing - Refreshments
Join us!**