



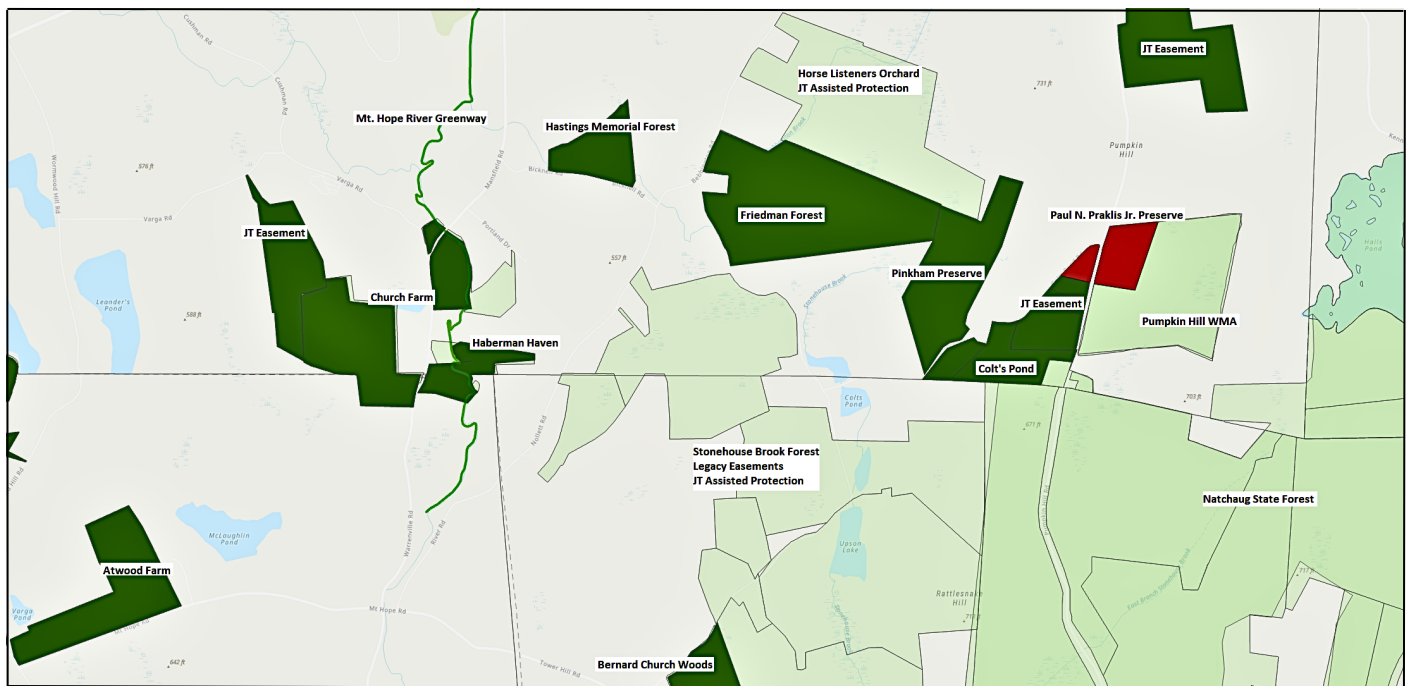
## ONE BITE AT A TIME: Another Piece of the Landscape Puzzle is Secured in Ashford

by John Hankins, President

“One bite at a time” was the punch line to one of my favorite jokes growing up: “How do you eat an elephant?” I was a literal kid fascinated by the idea of eating an elephant, but the larger metaphor of achieving your goals in manageable increments was lost on me. Land preservation in the highly-fragmented landscape of Connecticut is very much a “one bite at a time” proposition.

Our opportunities to acquire or otherwise protect large parcels are rare and getting rarer. Instead, it's often a process of methodically identifying and stitching together smaller parcels that together can create and protect the large unfragmented tracts that are so important for wildlife habitat, bird migration, watershed protection, and the general preservation of our rural landscape. Although identifying opportunities to protect land in the key places, with the right characteristics, and with conservation-minded owners can be a challenge, we occasionally get lucky.

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The map above highlights protected spaces within 15 square miles from Mansfield Center to Ashford. The dark green areas are Joshua's Trust fee-owned properties and easements. Light green areas are protected spaces. The red sections are the Praklis property. Created by Bryan Avery, JT's Land Protection Manager.

# JOSHUA'S TRUST NEWS

## JOSHUA'S TRUST

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Volunteer Coordinator: Andy Woodcock

Stewardship Coordinator: Ada Snodgrass

Land Protection Manager: Bryan Avery

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Manager: Michelle Poudrette

### OFFICERS

President: John Hankins

Vice President: Karen Zimmer

Secretary: Marie Cantino

Treasurer: Gail Bruhn

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Terry Wollen, Mansfield

Karen Zimmer, Mansfield



The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by John Hankins, President



The smooth transition of power at Joshua's Trust was achieved at May's Board meeting when Rob Beach willingly passed me the presidential gavel without even a mention of voter fraud. I'm hoping I can follow in the footsteps of a long list of Presidential predecessors that have served since 1966, including my late father Dave who raised his hand three separate times for the role in the 1980s and outgoing President Rob Beach who has graciously served as my chief mentor over the last year.

The new guy would like to make a splash, and here's what I have in mind:

*The Issue:* In the last several years we have transitioned to a more professional organization with an outstanding staff of six employees who are supported by a capable board and several hundred volunteers. Our capabilities have increased dramatically since our early days, and we have become increasingly focused on identifying critical parcels and accelerating the rate at which we protect land.

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## THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS





# DOES JOSHUA'S TRUST EVER SELL PROPERTY?

by Karen Zimmer, Vice President

The mission statement for JT includes the words “to permanently protect and maintain the land and preserve the heritage of northeastern Connecticut for the benefit and well-being of present and future generations.”

We take our responsibility to protect land seriously. There are a few situations that may seem contrary to this promise.

1. Occasionally someone donates or bequeaths a house or a piece of land with the written permission that we may sell the property and use the proceeds to further our mission. In fact, our new Tower Hill Preserve in Chaplin was given to us with the written permission that the Trust could sell the house and up to five acres, which we did. The proceeds from the sale of the house will be used to further our land stewardship and protection efforts.

2. We protect conservation land by either owning and stewarding the land ourselves, or by holding the deed for a conservation easement on privately owned property. When we hold a conservation easement, the land is owned by someone else, while the easement places specific restrictions on the property that help maintain the conservation value of the land. Such restrictions often include prohibitions such as not subdividing the land or putting additional buildings on the land. Joshua's Trust monitors every easement property at least annually, to ensure that the restrictions are adhered to.

Since the land is privately owned, it may be sold to another private owner, and the conditions of the conservation restriction remain with the land. These properties are marked with medallions like those used to mark our preserves. If you look closely, the medallions specify whether the property is a “preserve” (owned by us), or a “conservation easement” owned by a private land owner.



## WANT TO SEE MORE OF JOSHUA'S TRUST?

Follow us on social media!



@joshuastrust @joshuas\_trust @JoshuasTrust\_ joshuastrust.org

Property that is privately owned with a conservation easement is not open to the public and you may sometimes see “for sale” signs posted on such land. We do not sell our preserves, and we work very hard to make sure that we defend all the land that we promise to protect.





## SUSTAIN THE LANDS THAT SUSTAIN US

*With gratitude from Judy Wollen*

I owe Joshua's Trust a lot. The forests and their trails have rebuilt me, and they sustain me.

After spending months in bed with cancer, my body was a mess. My arms and legs were weak; my back hurt; my abs were soft and flabby. Worst of all, my mind was in a constant fog and my spirit was low. But I'm healthy now, because of you who are "sustaining members" – the ones who make regular donations. You sustain the land and natural resources.

At first, my good husband just took me for drives in the countryside, but then he encouraged me to strap on my walking shoes and take short strolls in the woods, always on one of the many Joshua's Trust trails. The maps made walks easy to find and follow. With the soft ground underfoot, I began to feel the healing magic of the forest. Sunbeams penetrating the yellow chestnut tree leaves wakened my spirit.

As bird songs called us further on the trails, I stood straighter and wanted to make it to the next bend. The pleasure of hearing water gurgle in the streams we crossed was the most beautiful music I'd heard in a year! Within about three months my husband (and you!) "walked me well." Now that I am cancer free... and my spirit and body are whole...I long to join you in continuing to make this gift available to everyone, by making "sustaining gifts."

Just yesterday, as my cancer doctor marveled at my state of health, she asked how I'd recovered so completely, and so rapidly. As she and I are both aware, while I am no doctor, I attribute much of this healing to that time I spent "forest bathing;" breathing good air, enjoying the feeling of "coming home" to the forest, and turning my eyes and my heart to natural beauty. Though I won't try to quote it here, I have read that some doctors are starting to "prescribe" spending time in nature for both mental and physical healing.

Terry and I find that when we give monthly, our gifts add up! We get a sustainable sense of pleasure from sharing month after month. We'd love to have you join us in giving a Sustaining Gift of \$5, \$10 or even \$100 every month to keep this Joshua's Trust gift of health and joy available to sustain all of us.

## Become a Member

Membership is given for one year to anyone who donates monetarily to Joshua's Trust. Our members are critical to the mission of Joshua's Trust and have the important role of voting on new Trustees at our annual meeting every April. Become a member of Joshua's Trust today by returning the envelope in this newsletter.



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER (CONTINUED)

By necessity, we are managing ourselves more like a business by finding ways to create a more consistent cash flow. Periodic donations, grants, and bequests will continue to be our life blood, but these need to be supplemented by steady sources of income. Monthly recurring gifts from our members are one example.

**My Offer:** I will give Joshua's Trust \$50 for each individual who agrees to be a "sustaining member", which is someone that gives a recurring gift of at least \$5 per month for at least a year. At the end of each calendar year JT will give you a receipt with your total annual contribution.

**Your Role:** Fill out the attached card or go to the donate tab on our website ([joshuastrust.org](http://joshuastrust.org)) and indicate that you'd like to make a monthly donation of a certain amount. That act will then activate another \$50 that I will be contributing beyond my normal contributions as a thanks for your gift. If 20 people do this it'll cost me \$1,000 and I shall have a smile on my face.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH NEW TRUSTEE, TERRY WOLLEN

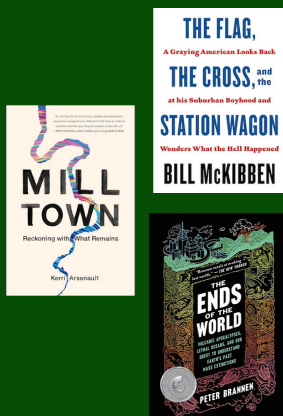
**How long have you been involved with Joshua's Trust?** Our involvement in Joshua's Trust was through Andy Woodcock and the opportunity to work with others on trail projects. Through that introduction we learned about the abundance of trails around the area and the link to the concept of Land Trusts. A second round of involvement was opened up for us when Judy needed to recover her energy and strength following a bout with cancer. She came out of that therapy weak and tired. We launched into frequent walks on our nearby Hop River Trail and then on more vigorous hikes in the woods, compliments of Joshua's Trust and Mansfield Parks and Rec trails.



**What prompted you to get involved?** Our involvement came easily as we volunteered for the trail work as well as Judy's involvement with her skill set of resource development.

**What's your favorite Joshua's Trust property and why?** So far, I do not have an overall favorite trail. If there is a solitary favorite, it lies hidden in the trails that we have yet to hike. We try to hike a different trail each week. Meanwhile, we are bonding to the Josias Byles Sanctuary trails as we share steward duties and get intimate with the curves and contours of the landscape.

## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JT CRITTER BOOK CLUB



In May, the J T Book Critters completed its sixth year reading Nature, Science, and Environment books.

We ended in May with Bill McKibben's *The Flag, the Cross, and the Station Wagon*, a mix of memoir and modern environmental history.

In April, we discussed the winner of the 2021 Rachel Carson Environment Book Award, *Mill Town* by Kerri Arsenault, a beautifully written investigation linking culture, economy, and the environment.

In March, we read about the earth's five previous mass extinctions in the award-winning, *The Ends of the World* by Peter Brannen, a gifted science journalist.

The book discussion group is coordinated by Kristine and Robert Thorson.

## ONE BITE AT A TIME (CONTINUED)

The envelope from the Windham County probate office caught Executive Director Michael Hveem's attention when he picked up the mail at the Mansfield Center post office in early May. Inside was a notice indicating that Joshua's Trust was the recipient of certain assets of the late Paul Praklis of Pumpkin Hill Road in Ashford. Beyond that there was no specific information – intriguing. Paul Praklis was not known to us – he had never donated to our organization and none of us even recognized his name. Inquiries to neighbors revealed that he was a quiet man who lived alone and mostly stuck to himself. A drive-by of his address revealed an abandoned house and an overgrown lot, clearly a place no one had lived in for several years. Follow-up conversations with a niece in North Carolina revealed that he had no children and had not lived at the property for at least two years.

Within a few weeks of the initial notice, a follow-up letter arrived from the probate court, indicating that Mr. Praklis wished to donate his 24 acres on Pumpkin Hill Road near the intersection with Colt's Pond Road to Joshua's Trust. It was clear that he had thought this donation through, as he had also included funds specifically ear-marked to demolish the existing abandoned house to return the site to its natural state. The importance of this parcel to Joshua's Trust is more about where it is than what it is. It is the final piece in the conservation jigsaw puzzle in this area that connects JT's Friedman Forest to the state-owned Pumpkin Hill Wildlife Management Area to the east and encompasses portions of the upper watershed of Stonehouse Brook, a conservation priority for the Trust. The Praklis contribution to the jigsaw puzzle of parcels in this area is shown in the map on the cover page. As shown in the figure, Mr. Praklis's donation is in close proximity to land donated by his neighbor and long-time Joshua's Trust friend Margaret Pinkham. We suspect that Margaret's donation of her own land to Joshua's Trust may have been contagious, a variant of a philanthropic virus that we are happy to see thrive.

Paul Praklis may or may not have understood how important his donation of land would be in our mission to connect larger parcels of undeveloped land in this part of Ashford, but regardless of his vision we are humbled and honored that he entrusted us to be the stewards of this land in perpetuity. The abutters to the Praklis parcel are excited about having Joshua's Trust as a neighbor and we're hoping additional land in this area can be permanently protected, to further un-fragment a fragmented landscape. One bite at a time.

### Have you heard of the Joshua's Trust Bequest Challenge?

When you inform Joshua's Trust of your decision to include our organization in your will or living trust, a generous donor will match your future gift with an immediate donation of \$750. All you have to do is let us know using the online form and we will receive immediate funds to help protect habitat today.

To learn more about the Bequest Challenge visit [joshuastrust.org/bequest-challenge](https://joshuastrust.org/bequest-challenge).

### A reminder about RMDs

If you are 73 or older the IRS requires you to withdraw a certain amount of money from your IRA and workplace retirement accounts each year. This is called a required minimum distribution (RMD). You may be able to lower your taxable income with a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) to an eligible, 501 (c)(3) organization. Please speak with your financial or tax advisor regarding RMDs, QCDs, and other retirement account withdrawal strategies.



# AT LAST

by Hill Bullard

Twenty two years ago the ad hoc Boundary Committee was formed as the Trust did not know the boundaries of most of its properties, largely un-surveyed at that time. The committee and crew consisted of myself and many draftees. Straight lines through the woods were determined by human chains, necessitating many draftees.

For a year the crew struggled to locate boundaries using only the (usually poor) descriptions on the property deeds. After a quick consult with forester Dan Donahue, a Trust member, we acquired a quadrant compass - 360 degrees composed of four, 90 degree sections. This was soon followed by a surveyor grade metal detector and a 300 foot tape. We destroyed 2-3 tapes a year as they did not do well being rewound through brush, barberry and multiflora rose. Now, thanks to Rob Beach's grandson, we use a GPS App on our phones to determine distance - much easier. We soon learned to research the deeds and surveys of adjoining properties to supplement our property deeds. Research in town halls takes as much time as field work.



Boundary Crew from left to right:  
Greg Padick, Warren Church, Chris  
Mckleroy, Marilyn Schreiber, and  
Scott Matthies



Rob Beach adds boundary signage

At inception there were approximately 45 properties owned by the Trust and an equal number of properties where we held a conservation easement. The goal was to finish all boundaries in our lifetimes. Now we have a total of 139 properties including both those owned in fee and easements.

As the years went by we developed a steady core of knowledgeable volunteers and developed several crews to speed up the process. There were missteps along the way as we found ourselves wandering off course from time to time using our compass and the directions on deeds or surveys. It was then we found out (the hard way) that there are 4 different direction systems using our quadrant compass (three Norths - True, Magnetic, and Grid) plus an octant (versus quadrant) system. Also an azimuth system (360 degrees). There is also the dreaded internal angle survey - no directions! The latter was solved with \$2.00 protractors from Staples.

By careful reading of survey notes we can usually determine the direction system used but normally we double check and take readings on stone walls and other straight line objects on the property and use any declination from current magnetic North for the property. As Magnetic North is ever changing, we need tables to get older deed/survey deviation from current readings...

...This article will be continued in JT's Fall Newsletter. Stay tuned!

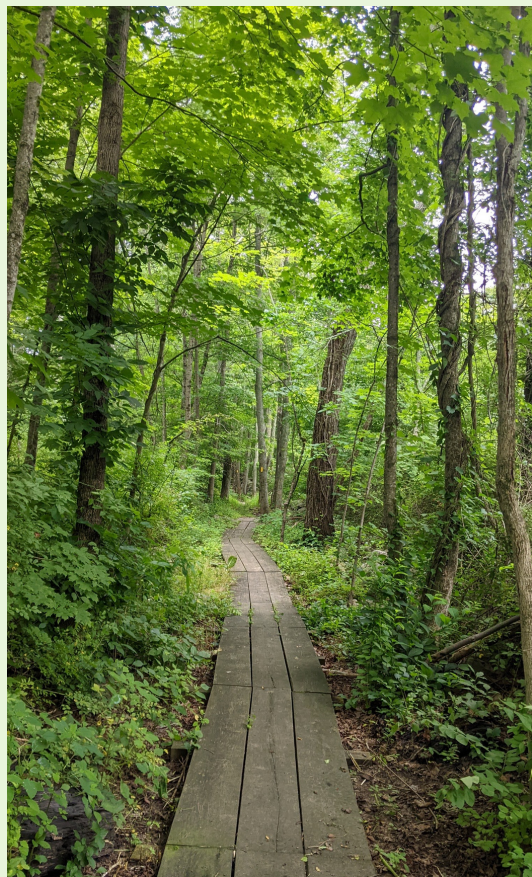


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## WEDNESDAY WALKS

Looking for a fun way to immerse yourself in nature? Have you ever wanted to explore a Joshua's Trust property but couldn't decide which one? Join us for our weekly Wednesday Walks and discover your new favorite trail.

Throughout the summer (and hopefully beyond), we will choose a different trail to explore each week. Hikes currently begin at 8:00 a.m. to beat the summer heat.

### Summer Schedule

- 7/19 - Tobiassen Memorial Forest in Tolland
- 7/26 - Utley Hill Preserve in Columbia
- 8/2 - Dorothy Goodwin Preserve in Mansfield
- 8/9 - Josias Byles Sanctuary in Ashford
- 8/16 - Chenes Roche Preserve in Willington

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram or subscribe to our emails for trail updates. Walks will also be posted on our website at [joshuastrust.org/events](http://joshuastrust.org/events).