

Joshua's Trust News

Protecting Land and Preserving Heritage. Forever.

Spring 2025

JOSHUA'S TRUST WELCOMES A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Joshua's Trust is pleased to announce the appointment of David McCarthy as its new Executive Director. David joins us from the Wilton Land Trust where he made a profound impact on conservation, community engagement, and financial sustainability. He holds a Master's of Environmental Management from the Yale School of the Environment. His graduate work concentrated on forestry, natural resource management, climate change adaptation, policy and international diplomacy, as well as the practice of values-based communication and resilience.

JT's Board President, John Hankins, commented, "We're excited to add someone of David's caliber to the leadership position at Joshua's Trust, and we're confident that his conservation background, infectious energy, and demonstrated capabilities as a problem solver and innovator will be a game changer for our organization."

At the Wilton Land Trust, David significantly raised the Trust's profile and enriched the community by instituting internship programs for high school and college students, developing community partnerships, strengthening engagement with the Scouts, and organizing all-age community volunteer workdays. His efforts not only connected more people with nature but also fostered and inspired the next generation of conservation leaders.

David's leadership extended to strengthening the WLT's financial health. Through his energetic approach to donor engagement and corporate partnerships, membership increased by 60% and contributions grew close to 300% over his tenure. He played a pivotal role in securing major sponsorships, making the organization younger and more agile to ensure the organization's continued relevance and long-term sustainability.

When not working, David enjoys being a father, husband, and an all-around family-man. When time allows, he enjoys world travel, astronomy, photography, antique furniture restoration, riding his bicycle and motorcycle, and exploring New England's history and the great outdoors with his wife Kelly, six-year-old daughter, Clara, and three-year-old son, Miles.



Continued on Page 4



Mailing address:

PO Box 4
Mansfield Center, CT 06250

Email:

administration@joshuastrust.org
www.joshuastrust.org

Visit us at:

The Atwood Farm
624 Wormwood Hill Rd., Mansfield Ctr.
Phone: 860-429-9023

STAFF

Executive Director: David McCarthy
Development and Communications
Manager: Michelle Poudrette
Stewardship Coordinator: Alex
DiMauro-D'Amico
Finance Administrator: Joyce Fountain

OFFICERS

President: John Hankins
Vice President: Karen Zimmer
Secretary: Marie Cantino
Treasurer: Mike Willenborg

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Rob Beach, Mansfield
Marie Cantino, Mansfield
Jim Cole, Andover
John Hankins, Mansfield
Erin King, Mansfield
Chris Kueffner, Mansfield
Scott Matthies, Chaplin
Chris McKleroy, Hampton
Debbie Pallatto, Mansfield
Bill Penn, Andover
Mike Willenborg, Mansfield
Terry Wollen, Mansfield
Karen Zimmer, Mansfield

Logo Design:

Amy Kalisher, amykstudio



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



PRESIDENTIAL MUSINGS

SUNSETTING THE CRITTER

By John Hankins

Change is hard, and the recent transition of the Joshua's Trust logo from the "Joshua's Mark" image we'd been using since the formation of the Trust in 1966 has been no exception. Joshua's Mark was a depiction of the signature of Attawanhood II, who was referred to by the colonists as "Joshua," a member of a leading family of the Western Nehantics, one of the Mohegan Tribes.

As the story goes, Joshua expressed his friendship with the English colonists by bequeathing 136 square miles of land in five present-day towns (Mansfield, Chaplin, Hampton, Windham, and Scotland) to 16 English colonists in 1675. In recognition of this event, the founders of our organization chose Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust, typically shortened to "Joshua's Trust", as our name, and to use Joshua's mark, known affectionately to Joshua's Trust insiders as "the critter," as the basis for our logo.

The area given by Joshua roughly aligned with the region where our organization's founders wanted to focus their land conservation efforts. Since that time, our operational area has tripled and now encompasses 14 towns.



Over the years the appropriateness of the use of a native American icon to depict our organization has been occasionally questioned: Did Joshua actually own the land that he sold to the colonists? If so, was his concept of ownership aligned with the colonists' view of ownership? Was there coercion involved? Is it appropriate for us to use Joshua's mark without permission of Joshua or his descendants? How do current native Americans in our region feel about the gifting of land by Joshua?

Continued on Page 5

FIRE - NOT JUST A NATURAL DISASTER; JOSHUA'S TRUST COMPLETES ITS FIRST PRESCRIBED FIRE

By Alex DiMauro-D'Amico, Stewardship Coordinator

Public perception, when it comes to forest fires, is pretty complicated. Really, any fire burning outdoors and outside of our fire pit is seen as a hazard and its effects are seen as destructive. Smokey Bear is partially responsible for this, but more notably, our own actions over the last century have caused us to forget that fire is a natural process that has been a part of our world for millions of years. Prescribed fire, when done correctly, can actually mitigate catastrophic wildfires while also helping to maintain wildlife habitat and promoting healthy and diverse vegetation.

Generally speaking, it can be hard to make the case for intentionally setting fires when most of the flames we see in the news are scorching natural areas, climbing up 200 foot tall trees, decimating entire towns, and costing the U.S. millions of dollars to extinguish. It seems that the lens through which we view fire on the landscape has been getting hazier and hazier as natural spaces continue to shrink.



A special thank you to Norcross Wildlife Foundation in Wales, MA for lending us the specialized equipment for the day.

A “natural” fire, in terms of disturbance, should not incinerate every living thing in its path. When we observe scorching hot, million-acre fires in California, they’re burning so aggressively largely due to the high density of fuel that accumulates as



Alex with Scott Matthies at H.E. Preston Sanctuary

a result of suppressing fires for the last hundred years. Before widespread settlement and the subsequent procedure of fire suppression, fires burned regularly through much of North America, including Connecticut. This was part of a natural and ecologically beneficial cycle that has since been disrupted by our growing population density. Connecticut used to be a lot more open, due in part to the presence of fires. Lightning strikes started many of these fires, and so did the Indigenous People who inhabited the Northeast. They used fire as a management tool to encourage the growth of nut-producing trees like oak and chestnut, as well as to improve hunting and travel.

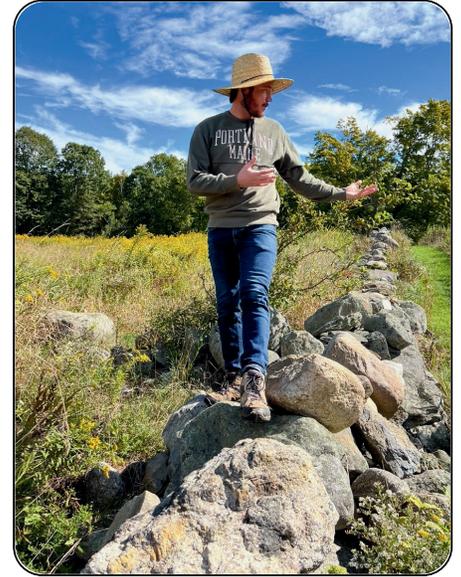
Fires are also instrumental in maintaining open grassland habitats that are vitally important for a variety of bird species including bobolinks, savannah sparrows, upland sandpipers, eastern meadowlarks, and grasshopper sparrows, as well as many insects, amphibians, and mammals. In grasslands, fire can help remove the accumulated thatch and promote the growth of native grasses and plants while inhibiting the encroachment of woody plants that would otherwise overtake the area. Fire can also be effective in keeping invasive species, like barberry and bittersweet, at bay.

Continued on Page 6

JOSHUA'S TRUST WELCOMES A NEW ED (CONTINUED)

A native Nutmegger, David brings enthusiasm, experience, and a deep passion for connecting people with the natural world. “Listening is key,” he said. “I’m new to the community and eager to connect with folks to partner, learn, and advance our mission.”

Beyond his work with land trusts, David has a strong background in conservation, policy, and environmental communication and education. He has served on the Board of Directors for the Southwest Regional Conservation District and worked for the Town of Branford’s Department of Inland Wetlands and Natural Resources, where he protected wetlands, served as Tree Warden, and led community and sustainability initiatives. His work with Yale’s Urban Resources Initiative and Yale Climate Connections further highlights his expertise in fostering community-based stewardship and environmental storytelling.



“I have an open-door policy and want to hear from you, don’t be a stranger,” says McCarthy.

David’s experience also includes international conservation efforts, from policy writing for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Washington, DC, to climate adaptation projects in Samoa and New York City. He has studied forestry in Germany’s Black Forest, farmed organic vegetables in New Haven, and taught English in Beijing, bringing a global perspective to local conservation efforts.



“I am thrilled to be here and eager to advance conservation in the Quiet Corner. My goal is to strengthen Joshua’s Trust, protect native species and habitat, and expand environmental stewardship. Through the enhancement of our educational programs, communications, and community engagement, we will create meaningful nature-based experiences and deepen our community’s connection to nature.”

We are thrilled to welcome David to our team and look forward to his leadership in furthering our mission of Protecting Land and Preserving Heritage, Forever.

WANT TO SEE MORE OF JOSHUA’S TRUST?
Follow us on social media or subscribe to our eNews.

@joshuas_trust @joshuastrust joshuastrust.org

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

 **nicabm**
National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine

 **State Farm**

 **CAPITOL**
CHRYSLER | DODGE | JEEP | RAM

 **MANSFIELD SUPPLY**

 **Shenipsit Striders**

SUNSETTING THE CRITTER (CONTINUED)

We also asked the question “Does the critter accurately represent what Joshua’s Trust is and does?” Our territory no longer lines up with Joshua’s original gift, and there always remained uncertainty of what type of animal Joshua was trying to depict with the symbol. “What’s up with that four-legged creature?” was a question we often fielded, and we wondered if it made sense to use an image that has no meaning for people outside of our organization.



In late 2022, the Board of JT voted to suspend the use of the original logo. Our staff developed a temporary “place-holder” logo that included our name and a large “JT” with the words “Established 1966” across the center. It was functional, but spectacularly dull, and did not say much about the mission and values of our organization. The solution? FORM A COMMITTEE!

Our logo committee started meeting in early 2024, and realized almost immediately that we’d need some help from a pro. We retained Amy Kalisher of Amy K Studios in Chaplin, a local graphic artist who counts among her talents herding corporate cats that are in the process of re-branding. Amy brought not only graphic skills to our team but also provided a structure for our discussions, starting with consideration of what we wanted our logo to communicate about our organization. The team went to work and provided lots of helpful input for Amy’s consideration: “We need wildlife, maybe a fox.” “We need a building to show that historical preservation is important. Make it look like a grist mill.” We need a landscape to show we

value the land.” “What about stone walls?” “Trees! We definitely need trees, maybe an oak, or a pine.” “And a stream, we can’t forget about the importance of water resources.” Amy patiently listened and then gently told us “That’s a lot to put on a logo but I can give it a shot.” She returned a week later with a clever mash-up graphic that included a fox, a stone wall, a building, a landscape, a stream, and some inspiring words.

The committee met, and then I called Amy with our conclusion: “I’m so sorry, Amy, you did all that work for nothing, the group thinks now that the logo is too busy and it would be more impactful if we went with a single strong image.” “On the contrary,” Amy replied, “I was hoping you’d say that. I knew you were asking for too much but it’s a process, and I had to produce what you’d asked for before you’d be willing to consider simpler layouts.” The idea we ultimately settled on features the broad expanse of a single oak tree on a rolling landscape. It’s consistent with the dominant feature of our northeast Connecticut landscape, and its stature suggests permanence. We’ve kept the “Established 1966” in the logo to reinforce that, like the tree, our organization has been around a long time, and that we’re here to stay.

As for the critter, it will never completely leave us. It’s emblazoned on 50 years of letterhead and newsletters in our files, adorns many legacy t-shirts and hats in your closets, and is carved into much of the older signage on our trail systems where it will provide the imagery to go along with a trivia question for future generations of visitors. It has served us well.



FIRE - NOT JUST A NATURAL DISASTER (CONTINUED)

The absence of fire in these open areas can cause a sort of positive feedback loop through a process called mesophication. Areas that were once open will become overgrown by more fire-sensitive plant and tree species which in time creates a closed canopy that becomes much harder to burn due to shade and moisture in the understory. Fire-adapted plants that are less shade-tolerant will disappear from this area along with the fauna that depend on those species.



Photo courtesy of Norcross Wildlife Foundation

Prescribed fires also serve as a valuable tool for wildfire mitigation in the face of climate change. As our climate warms, wildfires will become more prevalent in this part of the country. Last fall, over 100 wildfires burned in Connecticut. Intentionally and carefully burning fire-prone areas will ensure that these flammable fuels will not burn at the mercy of a wildfire when weather conditions may be more extreme. Controlled burns are carefully conducted under conditions that allow for a safe, low-intensity fire.

This past March, we completed our first prescribed fire. It took place at our H.E. Preston Nature Sanctuary in Hampton. It was a 1.5-acre burn in a field that was previously mowed. Our hopes are that by burning it, we will promote more native plants and grasses whose growth may have been suppressed due to an accumulation of dead plant matter, kill some of the invasive barberry that is widely established on the property, and ensure that the meadow remains open enough to support wildlife that depend on this habitat.

This achievement was made possible by a collaboration with Norcross Wildlife Foundation in Massachusetts. Over the last several months, we helped them plan and implement a 26-acre burn on their property and they in turn supplied tools and people to assist with our burn. They also very generously made a donation that will go towards fire equipment of our own so we can continue to improve and maintain these habitats through controlled burns.

Fire will always be a part of our landscape, whether we are lighting it ourselves or not. With more controlled burning, we can remain more resilient to a changing climate and maintain habitats that could otherwise be lost to mesophication. We hope that in the future fire can be seen as a viable ecological tool and not solely as a natural disaster.



Photo courtesy of Norcross Wildlife Foundation

A FOND FAREWELL TO BRYAN AVERY

It is with mixed emotions that we bid farewell to Bryan Avery, JT's Land Protection Manager. Bryan joined Joshua's Trust in 2022 and has made quite an impact in just three short years. His passion for land conservation and creative approach were instrumental in expanding our ability to identify, research, and ultimately conserve more land than ever before. His work didn't just advance the Trust's mission—it accelerated it, energizing and pushing us forward with an energy and dedication that will resonate for years to come.

Bryan took pride in this work, was driven to conserve open space for future generations, and made an indelible mark on the organization in his three years. "My son Magnus and I are deeply grateful for my time at Joshua's Trust," he said.

Bryan's unwavering diligence and hard work have created invaluable opportunities across short, mid, and long-term horizons, enabling the Trust to scout and soon secure hundreds of acres of land. His legacy is deeply embedded in the fabric of our organization, and we will continue to build upon the strong foundation he has so carefully, thoughtfully, and tirelessly established.

Bryan with Magnus at Tinkerville Brook Preserve in Ashford



Bryan is inspired by and desired to acknowledge the remarkable women who have shaped conservation in this area. "Women like Atwood, Cutler, Dunnack, Jencik, Pinkham, and Zaring stand as powerful examples of compassion, generosity, and dedication," Bryan remarked. Bryan shared that their contributions have not only had a profound impact on him, but have also left an enduring legacy on Joshua's Trust and the conservation movement throughout Connecticut.

Bryan, we wish you all the best on your next adventure! You will be greatly missed. Thank you, also, for introducing us to Mary Oliver's poem, *Wild Geese*. You've inspired us all, friend.

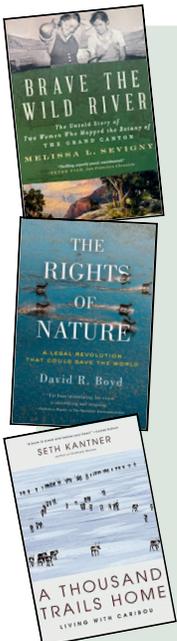
READING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM JT BOOK CRITTERS

JT Book Critters discussed three nonfiction books during the winter.

In ***Brave the Wild River*** by Melissa L. Sevigny, two intrepid female scientists undertake the first botanical survey of the Grand Canyon in 1938. The boating expedition with the women and a small crew lasted 43 days. Journalists and others publicly doubted they'd survive the treacherous Colorado, known then as the world's most dangerous river. They did, making headlines in their day.

In February we discussed ***The Rights of Nature: A Legal Revolution that Could Save the World*** by David R. Boyd, a Canadian environmental lawyer, professor, and recent United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment. The book introduces the growing global movement giving legal standing to non-humans such as rivers, ecosystems, and animals, raising discussable eco-philosophical, ethical, and cultural questions.

In March we read an award-winning book with over 120 color photographs titled ***A Thousand Trails Home: Living with Caribou*** by Seth Kantner. Kantner, an Alaskan author, wildlife photographer and commercial fisherman, was born and raised in a caribou-centered subsistence lifestyle in northwest Alaska. His insightful writing about caribou and the rapid environmental and cultural changes in the Arctic is informed by a lifetime of personal connection.



JOSHUA'S TRACT
CONSERVATION AND HISTORIC TRUST, INC.
PO BOX 4
MANSFIELD CENTER, CT 06250

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Willimantic, CT 06226
PERMIT NO. 23

What's Inside:

Welcome to JT's New ED
Sunsetting the Critter
JT Conducts Prescribed Fires
Farewell to Bryan Avery
Reading Recommendations from JT
Book Critters

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

Our members are critical to the mission of Joshua's Trust. Be a part of land protection, habitat restoration, historical preservation, and more with a donation today.

Your donation makes you a member for one year. Join Joshua's Trust today by returning the envelope in this newsletter or by visiting our website at joshuastrust.org/ways-to-give.

Please call Michelle Poudrette, JT's Development and Communications Manager, at (860) 429-9023 for questions about membership.

SPRING EVENTS

4/26
4:00 PM

JT's 59th Annual Meeting
Knowlton Memorial Hall, Ashford

5/3

2:00 PM

Maypole Celebration
at Atwood Farm

5/10

10:00 AM

Contemplative Walk
at Knowlton Hill Preserve

5/18

1-5 PM

Guided Grist Mill Tour
Gurleyville Grist Mill

5/31

8:30 AM

The Forest, Management, & Birds
of Two Sisters Tract

Visit joshuastrust.org/events for details.