



JOSHUA'S TRUST

NEWS | JULY 2026

Conservation Happens Because of You!

INSIDE: Welcome messages from our new Board Chair & Executive Director, Conservation & Organizational Updates, & More!



ANDOVER • ASHFORD • CANTERBURY • CHAPLIN • COLUMBIA • COVENTRY • EASTFORD • FRANKLIN
HAMPTON • LEBANON • MANSFIELD • SCOTLAND • TOLLAND • WILLINGTON • WINDHAM • WOODSTOCK

From the Board President



Jim Cole
Board President, Joshua's Trust

My career in conservation began somewhat inauspiciously when I spent \$60 on a multi-day bus ticket from New York's Port Authority Terminal to Green River, Utah. I had taken time off from college to work as an intern with the Student Conservation Association. Since it was springtime, most of the available positions were in the desert Southwest, so I became an assistant ranger at Canyonlands National Park.

It was a truly educational experience for a kid who had never been west of the Mississippi. I learned that quicksand is, in fact, a real thing—and that attempting to drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle through it is not advisable. One seasonal ranger also taught me an invaluable lesson in dealing diplomatically with visitors. When asked, “How long does it take to see the park?” He replied, “Lady, it takes a lifetime.”

More than a few bus rides later, I returned to college, completed graduate school, became a professor at UConn, and moved to Columbia. That was when I first became aware of Joshua's Trust. In 2022, I became a steward at the Utley Hill Preserve in Columbia. As I approached retirement, a cycling buddy—and our outgoing president, John Hankins—persuaded me to become more involved with the Trust. I joined the Board of Directors in 2023 and subsequently took on several leadership roles within the organization. I've never looked back.

What a great time to be president of Joshua's Trust! As we celebrate our 60th anniversary, we are building remarkable momentum in fulfilling our core mission of land conservation.



Sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrina*) growing at Two Sisters Tract in Chaplin

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This past year, we acquired five properties totaling more than 230 acres, and we are actively working on several exciting conservation projects that we expect to complete in the near future.

These accomplishments are possible because of our dedicated staff, led by our new Executive Director, Christina Maillhos; our active and engaged Board of Directors; and the many talented volunteers who generously contribute their time and expertise. Together, we are ensuring that Joshua's Trust continues to

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Front Cover Design & Photos: Melica Stinnett

Spring Appeal

Preserving the Legacy & Story of Atwood Orchard

Melica Stinnett
Development & Communications Coordinator, Joshua's Trust

In the northwest corner of the Joshua's Trust headquarters at The Atwood Farm in Mansfield Center, Connecticut, lies an orchard of nearly thirty heirloom apple trees. The trees stand quietly—certainly more quietly than the throngs of bees that arrive each spring, filling the orchard with their vibrant hum as they move among the abundant blossoms.

The Atwood Orchard, one of the oldest intact orchard plantings in the region, is part of the rich legacy of the Atwood Family—a legacy entrusted to Joshua's Trust through Isabelle Atwood's generous bequest of The Atwood Farm and its surrounding 65 acres in 2012.

Joshua's Trust is embarking on a campaign to raise \$20,000 to preserve Atwood Orchard's heirloom apple trees and steward The Atwood Farm's future as an educational and research resource for our community, and we need your support!

For more than a century, these trees have quietly stood watch over the farm and its stewards. Through generations of change, they have remained rooted in the enduring rhythms of the natural world: spring awakening, flowering and pollination, summer growth, autumn harvest, winter dormancy. Season after season, year after year, the orchard has persisted, bearing witness to the passage of time while continuing to sustain life around it.

The Atwood Farm's bountiful legacy—generously left to us by Isabelle Atwood—is only part of the story. Your support is the other part. We hope you join us on this exciting journey to preserve and share this land and legacy for the next generation of youth to sit under the shade of Atwood Orchard's wise apple trees and dream up an incredible future.



Read the full story—told through an ArcGIS StoryMap—and join our appeal!





As I walked beneath the shade of the trees on a recent hike at a popular Joshua's Trust preserve, I stopped to take a drink of water. Before I joined Joshua's Trust, I probably would have appreciated the shade, the birds, and the quiet, then continued on my way once the mosquitoes found me. Now I know just enough to have all kinds of questions. Questions like: How did Joshua's Trust come to own this land? Who first imagined the trail route and what were they hoping to highlight? Is there a Joshua's Trust volunteer steward for this particular piece of land and have I met them yet? What do we know about the history of the land? And what hopes and plans do we have for its future?

The answers to many of those questions are tucked away in the file cabinets at Atwood Farm. They tell the stories of generous donors, dedicated volunteers, thoughtful conservationists, and community members who believed these places were worth protecting. Those stories remind me why land preservation and history matter. They remind me why Joshua's Trust matters. Most of all, they remind me that conservation doesn't happen on its own. Conservation happens because of people.

I've long admired Joshua's Trust and its mission. After spending these first weeks getting to know the organization more closely, my admiration has only grown. I still have so much to learn about our preserves, our history, and the sixteen towns where we protect open space and work alongside local communities. But every visit to a preserve and every conversation has deepened my appreciation for the care, dedication, and vision that have shaped Joshua's Trust over the past sixty years.

As you read through this newsletter, I hope you'll notice the people behind the work. You'll meet trustees sharing their time and talents to guide Joshua's Trust, volunteers and conservation experts lending their skills and knowledge, staff members and volunteer stewards caring for our preserves, and community partners helping protect both our natural and cultural heritage.

Every one of these stories is another reminder that conservation happens because people choose to care.

Whether you volunteer, make a donation, attend a program, advocate for open space, or simply spend time enjoying the lands we protect, you make this work possible. In a very real way, conservation happens because of you.

Thank you for the warm welcome and I look forward to continuing to learn more about the stories that connect us all, both on the trails and in the records at Atwood Farm.

Christina

Christina Mailhos
Executive Director, Joshua's Trust

P.S. During a recent guided contemplative walk, Trustee Debbie Pallatto shared Danna Faulds' poem "This Is What I Have to Say to You." The poem's reflections on presence, purpose, and connection to the natural world resonated deeply with me as I begin this new role and continue learning about the people and places that make Joshua's Trust so special.

This Is What I Have To Say To You
By Danna Faulds

This is what I have to say to you...
Live as if the earth exhales blessings in
your direction,
As if trees speak their deepest secrets In
your ear,
As if bird songs can lift you outside your
Ordinary state of mind and bring you
into truth.
Be the creative juice flowing through the
universe.
Be compassion in action and wholeness
in motion.
Be silence and stillness, the ocean of
love so
Palpable that not one cell of you
disputes the truth
That you are love.
Be so open to your destiny that it
Unfurls like a banner in the sky, a sign
saying, "Live with gratitude, generosity,
and grace."



American Chestnuts Return To The Atwood Farm

John Hankins
Vice President, Joshua's Trust

As you walk through the forests of southern New England it's hard to ignore that there's a war going on. The evidence is all around us in the form of trees that are dead or in the process of dying as a result of attacks from a number of formidable foes.

Their names are familiar to us—in recent years we've experienced Beech leaf disease, emerald ash borers, spongy moths (oaks), and woolly adelgid (hemlocks) among others. It's not a new story—the oldest of us can remember the Dutch Elm disease of the 1960s, which changed the character of Main Streets across the eastern U.S. But the grand-daddy of New England forest depredation began in the years before any of us blessed this planet...

Prior to 1900, the American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) was the king of the deciduous forest in southern New England and throughout the Appalachian region from Mississippi to Maine. The most impressive of these chestnut trees were over 100 feet tall, and the trees are a critical part of our history as a source of high-quality lumber and a prolific bearer of nuts that were a critical fall food source for species such as deer, turkey, and black bears. The trees often out-competed oaks because of their rapid growth, relative fire resistance, and consistent large annual nut crop.

The end of the American Chestnut as our dominant tree species is now a familiar story to us. In 1876 a Japanese Chestnut was inadvertently planted in Flushing, NY. With this tree came a vascular disease caused by an Asian bark fungus. The "chestnut blight" was first noticed in the zoological park known today as the Bronx Zoo in 1904, and by 1906 it was estimated that 98 percent of the Chestnut trees in New York were impacted by the blight. You know how the story ends – over the next several decades the



blight spread throughout the range of the tree, eventually wiping out virtually all of the 4 billion standing chestnut trees and erasing the American Chestnut's dominant presence in our forests.

Interestingly, the blight affects only the portion of the tree above the ground, often leaving a healthy root system intact. As the main stem of the tree dies, new shoots often sprout up from the roots, and it is common to see American Chestnut trees in our current forest that may be able to grow to heights of 10-15 feet before they succumb to the blight to start the process over again.

Several groups have been working to develop a strain of the American Chestnut that is resistant to the blight in an attempt to return healthy versions of the tree to our eastern forests. The general approach has been to cross-breed the American Chestnut with other varieties of chestnuts, most commonly the Chinese Chestnut. The goal is to develop a tree that has the characteristics of an American Chestnut but enough of the blight-resistant characteristics of the Chinese Chestnut to fend off the inevitable attacks that are consistently slaying less-resistant "purebreds".

(Continued on page 11)

ABOVE: Chestnut with radicle (downward-growing root that emerges from a sprouting chestnut); Installing posts and fence around each planting location; Bag of sprouted chestnuts awaiting planting; Volunteers amending soil before planting; Installing protective 'grow tubes' around each chestnut

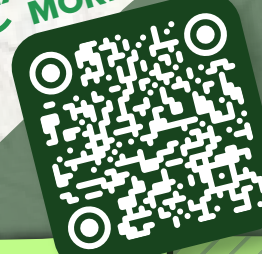
Where will you explore this summer?

Check out some of our featured preserves!

Whether you're hiking a favorite trail or discovering a place you've never visited before, every outing is a chance to connect with the land you're helping preserve—and to see firsthand why this work matters.

TOGETHER, WE'VE PROTECTED OVER 5,500 ACRES OF LAND ACROSS 16 TOWNS IN 60 YEARS!

EXPLORE MORE!



OFF THE BEATEN PATH...

CHENES ROCHES PRESERVE
WILLINGTON



H. E. PRESTON NATURE SANCTUARY
HAMPTON



PAPPENHEIMER PRESERVE
SCOTLAND

UNIQUE HABITATS

TWO SISTERS TRACT
CHAPLIN
early successional forest



PIGEON SWAMP PRESERVE
LEBANON
marsh meadow riparian



MADELINE REGAN PRESERVE
TOLLAND
rare & endangered ecosystem



Map Design: Melica Stinnett

SCENIC VIEWS



KNOWLTON HILL PRESERVE
MANSFIELD

HISTORY & HERITAGE



WOLF ROCK NATURE PRESERVE
MANSFIELD



SCHMID OVERLOOK
COVENTRY

THE GURLEYVILLE GRISTMILL
MANSFIELD CENTER



GURLEY-MASON MILL SITE
MANSFIELD



EASY ACCESS & PARKING



UTLEY HILL PRESERVE
COLUMBIA

ALLANACH-WOLF WOODLANDS
WINDHAM



THE ATWOOD FARM MUSEUM & JOSHUA'S TRUST OFFICES
MANSFIELD CENTER



HUBBARD SANCTUARY & AGNES' PASTURE
CHAPLIN

FRIEDMAN MEMORIAL FOREST
ASHFORD



TOLLAND

WILLINGTON

ASHFORD

WOODSTOCK

EASTFORD

COVENTRY

MANSFIELD

CHAPLIN

HAMPTON

ANDOVER

COLUMBIA

WINDHAM

SCOTLAND

CANTERBURY

LEBANON

FRANKLIN



Behind the Scenes of Land Conservation: Why Annual Monitoring Matters

Alex DiMauro D'Amico

Stewardship Manager, Joshua's Trust

Every year, our stewardship staff and volunteers set out to visit each and every one of our roughly 150 conserved properties to conduct annual monitoring. These annual visits are an essential part of our stewardship responsibilities, helping us ensure that the lands entrusted to our care remain protected indefinitely.

As an accredited land trust, we follow the standards and practices established by the Land Trust Alliance. These standards require accredited land trusts to regularly monitor both fee-owned preserves and conservation easements to confirm that conservation values are being upheld and that protected properties remain in good condition.

Annual monitoring allows us to document the current state of each property, identify potential management needs, and address issues before they become larger problems. During a monitoring visit, we inspect boundary markers, assess trails and infrastructure, look for signs of unauthorized activities, document habitat conditions, and verify that easement terms are being followed.

For the conservation easements that we manage, monitoring is especially important. Because these properties remain under private ownership, annual visits help ensure that the conservation restrictions agreed upon by landowners and Joshua's Trust continue to protect important natural resources, wildlife habitat, farmland, forests, and scenic landscapes, even as the land changes ownership over time.

Beyond accreditation requirements, annual monitoring reflects our commitment to responsible stewardship. Conserving land is more than acquiring property or holding easements—it is a long-term promise to care for these places. By regularly visiting and documenting our protected lands, we can better understand changing conditions, plan future management activities, and ensure that the conservation values we protect continue to thrive.

When visiting Joshua's Trust preserves, please remember:

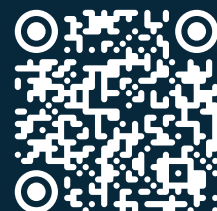
- Park in designated areas only
- Stay on marked trails
- Respect other visitors
- Carry out what you carry in
- Refrain from cutting or collecting living plants
- Keep your pet on a leash at all times

The following are prohibited on Joshua's Trust land:



Encounter an issue on our trails? Let us know!

Our Trail Issue Reporting Form is the best way to notify us of any issues encountered on our properties. Use the QR code above or on our website.



Stewardship Updates



Stewardship staff replaced the boardwalk at **Knowlton Hill Preserve** in Mansfield earlier this spring.



The **Gurleyville Gristmill** received some updates this spring! Pictured above is the new hand railing at the mill's entrance, installed by volunteer Tom DeJohn, and the new stone staircase installed by Peter Baldwin. Thank you to Tom & Peter for their time and craftsmanship!



This spring, we installed three Purple Martin houses with the support of the **Connecticut Audubon Society**. Next time you are at one of our preserves below, take a moment to quietly observe the houses to see if a colony has moved in!

Knowlton Hill Preserve | Mansfield
Hubbard Sanctuary & Agnes' Pasture | Chaplin



With the help of an **implementation grant** from the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC), we recently acquired a "skid unit" for our work truck! This piece of equipment slides right into the bed of our truck, effectively turning it into a mini fire engine. It includes a 125-gallon tank, a gas-powered pump, and 50' of hose. This skid unit allows our prescribed fire crew to conduct safer & more efficient burns by providing a reliable and mobile water supply, increasing our ability to manage habitats, control invasive plants, & reduce wildfire risk across our preserves.



Joshua's Trust and CLCC recently **hosted a workshop** on the use of prescribed fire as a land management tool. Bringing together conservation professionals from across Connecticut, the workshop featured presentations, live demonstrations, and a site visit to **Madeline Regan Preserve** in Tolland. There, participants learned how Joshua's Trust is actively using prescribed fire to restore and manage a rare habitat—work made possible through funding from a CLCC Climate Smart Stewardship Grant.

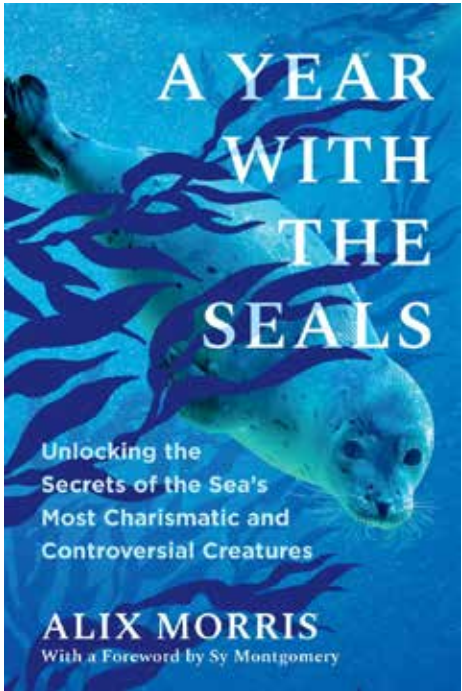
Book Critters Report

Robert & Kristine Thorson
Coordinators

The Joshua’s Trust book group finished the 2025-2026 year with two hopeful books.

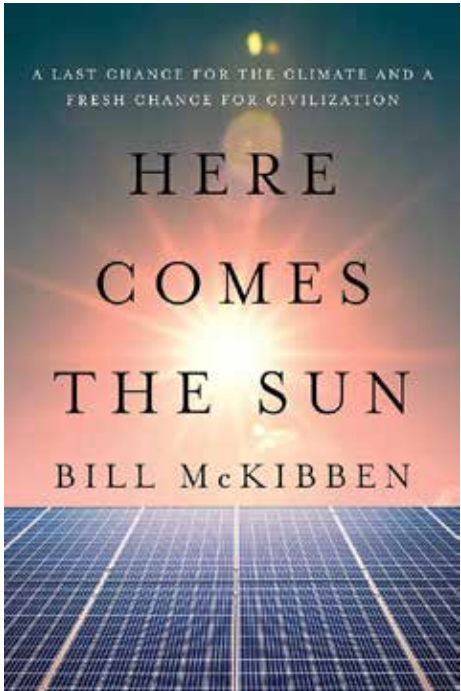
Our April pick—*Here Comes the Sun* by Bill McKibben—features some good news about solar power. A few days after our book discussion, McKibben spoke about renewable energy at UConn’s Teale Lecture Series and highlighted Edwin Way Teale. Teale is northeast Connecticut’s Pulitzer Prize-winning nature writer and (along with his naturalist wife Nellie) the “patron saint” of our reading group.

Our May read—*A Year With the Seals* by Alix Morris—is set mostly along the New England coast. The book introduces charismatic seals like Hoover and Andre. It also presents the complex conservation issues associated with rising seal populations following the



Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The June meeting is a free choice book month when we meet in person to celebrate and reflect upon our annual journey of reading and learning together.



The Joshua’s Trust Book Critters group reads nature, science, & environment books and is open to members on a space-available basis.

Please direct inquiries to: bookcritters@yahoo.com

Introducing Our New Trustees



Steve Ferrigno is a lifelong resident of Mansfield, having attended Goodwin Elementary, Mansfield Middle School, and E.O. Smith High School before returning to earn his M.B.A. from the UConn School of Business. He spent 25 years as a Realtor with Ferrigno-Storrs, Realtors LLC, building deep relationships across the community and gaining extensive knowledge of local land use and development. Steve now serves

as the Executive Director of the Mansfield Downtown Partnership, where he works to support local businesses, strengthen community connections, and enhance the vibrancy of Mansfield’s downtown and business environment. He lives in Mansfield with his wife and their two children, and in his free time enjoys woodworking and skiing, fishing, and hiking with his family.



Hank Gruner is a herpetologist and retired Vice president of Programs for the Connecticut Science Center. He has extensive experience coordinating wildlife conservation and education projects across all sectors. Over the last 40 years, he has scoured the forests, fields and wetlands of New England studying and promoting the conservation of amphibians and reptiles. He is co-author of the book *Conservation*

of Amphibians and Reptiles in Connecticut. His volunteer work includes serving on the Andover Conservation Commission and the Board of the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History. He and his wife are residents of Andover and are the stewards for the Polonski Parcel in Andover. In addition to his appreciation of nature, Hank is an active grandfather and avid music fan.



Barbara Scott was so impressed by Joshua’s Trust when she first learned about it that she became a member even before she and her husband moved to Storrs in 2020. Holding an M.A. in Latin American Studies and certified as an Occupational Therapist, her background also includes training as a volunteer watershed steward and collaborating with her adult son to develop trail maps and guides for a rain forest

preserve in Costa Rica. With life-long interests in both conservation and plants, Barbara’s gardening/landscaping focus for the last 25 years has been on managing invasive plants and restoring native habitats, an interest which in recent years she has brought to hands-on volunteer projects on Joshua’s Trust lands.

American Chestnuts Return to Atwood Farm
(Continued from page 6)

This is where Joshua’s Trust comes in! We’ve recently signed an agreement with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation (ACF) to plant and help maintain an “Improved Hybrid Orchard”. The first phase of the orchard was installed on June 9 by an enthusiastic group of Joshua’s Trust staff and volunteers on a small tract of rocky land behind our headquarters on Wormwood Hill Road in Mansfield known as the “Night Pasture.”

The first phase of the planting involved establishing a grid of 20 trees, which involved planting the nuts from existing ACF orchards of hybridized American Chestnut Trees from Guilford and Salem. The trees from which these nuts were produced were hybrids whose genetic make-up consisted of 75% American Chestnut and 25% Chinese Chestnut. At



Volunteers & staff prepare the site for the first phase of planting

each planting location we protected the seeds with a steel wire fence to ward off deer, cows, and other grazers and a grow tube installed into the soil to protect the roots from burrowing critters like voles.

Our arrangement with the American Chestnut Foundation will likely continue for 15-30 years and will be evaluated annually as the trees develop. After the first year, additional trees will be planted, with an ultimate goal of 100 trees. The trees typically start producing nuts at about the 8 to 10 year mark, with those nuts being used to create additional orchards at other locations. The Joshua’s Trust chestnut grove is just one of dozens of sites like this across the State of Connecticut and many hundred along the east coast. Most or all of the trees we plant are likely to succumb to the blight before they reach maturity. Those that demonstrate the most blight resistance will be favored for use in future propagation efforts in the ongoing march toward a blight resistant strain.

Like Joshua’s Trust, the American Chestnut Foundation plays the long game, and we can hope that through these efforts, a blight-resistant version of the American Chestnut will find its way back into the forests of Connecticut for future generations to enjoy. Stay tuned to this newsletter for updates!

Fire & Chestnuts: Some Burning Questions About New England Soils

Zach Placzek
Stewardship & Monitoring Assistant, Joshua's Trust

When people think about growing trees and maintaining soil health, fire is not typically part of the conversation in New England. However, over the past year, the Mycology and Soil Health Lab at UConn has conducted research to explore the use of prescribed fire as a forest management tool.

The UConn Mycology Lab partnered with the UConn Fire Department to conduct a series of prescribed burns within the UConn Forest. In addition, soil samples were collected following a prescribed burn at Joshua’s Trust H.E. Preston Nature Preserve in Hampton to compare post-fire soil conditions across sites. These burns were carried out to reduce fuel-load densities, thereby lowering wildfire risk, and to clear coarse woody debris from areas designated for a Resistant American Chestnut Orchard.

Researchers sought to understand how prescribed fire would affect soil health and below ground ecological processes, as well as what measures could support the successful establishment of chestnut trees. Their solution was to inoculate the soil at both sites using small amounts of soil collected from existing chestnut orchards. Control plots were left un-inoculated for comparison. By introducing microorganisms from healthy orchard soils into burned, exposed mineral soils, the researchers hypothesized that the soil micro-biome would recover more effectively than in un-inoculated areas.

The study found that inoculated plots exhibited higher rates of nutrient cycling and greater fungal diversity than un-inoculated plots. A diverse community of mycorrhizal fungi benefits trees and other plants by facilitating the storage and release of nutrients essential for root development. These fungi also help aggregate soil particles, improving soil structure and creating stronger root networks.

Prescribed fire can be a highly effective tool for managing invasive species, clearing land, and reducing wildfire intensity. When paired with soil inoculation, it has the potential to support the development of healthier orchards while fostering diverse communities of beneficial soil microorganisms.



Joshua's Tract Conservation &
Historic Trust, Inc.
PO Box 4
Mansfield Center, CT 06250

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