



SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

Newsletter

Fall 2016

South Hero Land Stewards Volunteers Care for our Natural Areas and Trails



Green Up Day and Beyond: Community Participation Keeps our Trails Open

For the past several years, South Hero Land Trust has worked closely with the Town of South Hero to organize Green Up Day, a statewide day of service devoted to cleaning up the streets in our communities. Over 150 volunteers turned out to help this May! In addition to picking up litter and debris on South Hero roads, volunteers joined teams at White's Beach, the South Hero Rec Trail, and Round Pond Natural Area to clean up trash, cut back brush, and dig up invasive wild parsnip. We are so proud of the work these volunteers did, to get South Hero ready for a summer of fun outdoors!



Rising 8th Graders Clear Wild Parsnip at Round Pond Natural Area

Soon after Green Up Day, Folsom teacher Julie Pidgeon contacted SHLT about engaging her rising 8th graders in a service learning day. SHLT staff partnered with Ms. Pidgeon and co-teacher Ms. Ames to organize a day-long field trip. 14 students spent a morning digging invasive wild parsnip at Round Pond Natural area, clearing the field along Landon Road of the noxious weed for another year. This was followed by a walk through the natural area, lunch on the shore of Lake Champlain, and an ecological exploration during the afternoon. Many thanks to the students and teachers for their hard work!



Volunteers Open Connector from Round Pond to Landon Trails

South Hero Land Trust worked with the Lake Champlain Land Trust, the VT Dept of Forests, Parks, & Rec, and volunteers from the South Hero Recreation Commission this spring to open a new connector trail from the Landon Community Trail to the trails at Round Pond. *Learn more on page 7!*

SOUTH HERO



LAND TRUST

a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which give South Hero its distinctive quality of life.

PO Box 455
South Hero, VT 05486
tel: (802) 372-3786
www.shlt.org

email: info@shlt.org
emily@shlt.org

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Choosing this Place

A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

During my first year as ED, I've thought a lot about South Hero Land Trust's role in our community. Founded as a land conservation organization, we have grown over the past 19 years. First, through our Farm Initiative. Projects like our Guide to Agriculture, the start up of the Champlain Islands Farmers' Market, and other farm viability work are tools for land protection, helping us support viable farms in our community, the backbone of our working landscape. Second, through our outreach and education programs. We conserve land FOR our community, and that means helping our community connect deeply to the land, through walking trails, art, and more. Living on, learning about, and loving the land enriches our lives, and creates a foundation for a culture of stewardship.

From our inception, South Hero Land Trust has been deeply committed to South Hero. During our Annual Celebration at East Shore Vineyard this July I spoke about committing to a place. I said that committing to a place is a practice. Like all practices, it asks us to be patient and work hard. It asks us to dive deeply and spend time with a single community, acre, tree, insect, or moment. It also asks us to step back and see the larger picture- who is part of our community, what are their needs, what are our common goals, what resources we have, how can we work and live together? And then it asks us to care- deeply, energetically, and unabashedly. Finally, it asks us to demonstrate care through thoughtful action- to show up, be willing to learn, give of ourselves, work together.

At South Hero Land Trust, we are committed to this place, our special Island town. For 19 years we've worked toward a shared vision of land-conservation and community development. A vision of thriving farms, clean water, healthy soils, vital village centers, lively gathering spaces, access for all to the natural landscape that makes Vermont so special... the same hopes for the future that I believe you share. We have listened carefully and actively, we've made compassion our first priority and creativity our second, we are always ready to pull on our barn boots and work hard, and we do our best to be patient.

We have been gratified to see the growth of our local farms- in number, size, and creativity. On top of that, the growing liveliness of our local businesses and downtown is awesome to be a part of. In just the last two or three years, we have seen two food trucks, a new café, two yoga studios, a second vineyard and tasting room, summer burger nights at local farms, and more open in South Hero. We have come together and said- our community matters- and look what we've done! We are supporting local businesses, planning for walkability, and concentrating development in the villages. And many of these new or growing businesses are utilizing local foods from our farms.

All of this takes an engaged local community, committed to this place. We are proud to be part of just such a community here in South Hero. South Hero Land Trust, and our community, are investing in things that really matter. There is more work ahead of us. But together, we are ready to keep up the good work and look to the future. Thank you for your commitment to this place, and for being such an important part of this journey with us.



A Legacy of Stewardship

A Conversation with Bob & Ann Buermann of Paradise Bay Farm

A History on the Land

When Bob Buermann's grandfather bought the Conro farm in the 1920s, his intention was to hold the land for a while and then sell it for development. With the eventual addition of two adjacent farms, he owned 500 acres of farmland on Kibbe Point, including Buermann Hill (once known as Conro Hill). Bob's father began raising and milking Jersey cows in the mid-1940s. He farmed until the year Bob was born, when he went to work for the state as a geologist. John Roy, another local dairy farmer, used the land for crops and pasture for his heifers until the 1990s.

Bob and his three siblings were raised in the old farmhouse, built by Henry Conro on his return from the Civil War. Related to the Allens and Robinsons (longtime SH farm families), Bob is the 9th generation of his family in the Islands.

Ann Buermann grew up on a dairy farm in Ohio, milking Guernsey cows. After college in Tennessee, and a couple years working in Chicago, she made friends with a long time summer visitor and multigenerational friend of the Buermanns who was moving to VT full time. Ready for a change, Ann packed up and moved to South Hero to be close to her friend. Here she met Bob, whom she married.



The Green Mountains from Buermann Hill, which was conserved in 2006.

The Roots of a Family Farm

Bob and his siblings eventually inherited the land. After Bob and Ann considered what they would do with their portion of the property, they selected a parcel of farmland on Richards Road and the scenic Buermann Hill.

Ann had grown up with animals, and says "they were my best friends." She wanted her daughters "to grow up with animals, and learn how to care for them." While Ann was thinking about what kind of animals she'd like to raise, Bob found himself in a series of conversations with retired UVM Extension agent Win Way, who emphatically believed that the best thing to do with land, in order to to care for it and keep it open, was to actively use it. This struck a chord with Bob, who wanted to be a steward of their land, and he was convinced that farming would be the best way to care for it.



Ann Buermann knows the names of every sheep in her flock, from Diva to Clover. She occasionally bottle feeds lambs whose mothers aren't up to the task.

Knowing that she didn't want to raise cows (milking twice a day was out of the question), Ann considered smaller animals to raise. She wondered if sheep would be a good match. First, she decided to learn to spin, because as she puts it, "otherwise, what's the point?" She bought her first wheel, an Ashford, which she had to build from a kit, and then taught herself to spin.

In 1989 they built their house off Richards Road, in 1990 they built the barn, and in 1991 they bought their first four sheep from Sue Johnson, a Hinesburg farmer who Ann met through a spinning guild. Sue continued to be a mentor for Ann, helping her with questions about breeding, lambing, and more throughout the years.

Paradise Bay Farm Today

Ann and Bob now have a flock of 75 sheep at Paradise Bay Farm. They are very social animals, and love human attention. Ann knows the names of every sheep in her flock. Most of the wool is processed into roving for hand-spinning. Roving is long strips of clean, carded yarn. Ann sends wool to Hampton Fiber Mill, in Richmond, VT and Zeilinger Woolen Mill in Michigan. The roving is dyed and spun by Ann at the farm in South Hero.

She sells the yarn, as well as knitted hats and woven scarves (and her ever popular gingerbread sheep cookies!) at the Champlain Islands Farmers' Market. Ann has been a vendor at the market since its second year. She loves being part of the market community, and being around so many hard working people who are truly interested in what they do - our local farmers, bakers, cooks, and artisans. She also sells at various regional festivals, like the annual Vermont Sheep & Wool Festival in Tunbridge. Paradise Bay Farm also produces meat. Depending on the year, they send 10-15 young sheep to the Royal Butcher in Randolph, VT. She sells the custom cut lamb as whole or half animals. Contact Ann for information about purchasing lamb.

Bob was an engineer at IBM for many years, and describes the similarity of mindset that both farmers and engineers need - which is an affinity for problem solving. Farmers and engineers need to be able to assess any situation, decide what tasks need to be done and what the logical order is, and then connect the skills, tools, or people that can help to each task. While the two fields are very different, Bob's skills at problem solving have grown from and aided his roles at IBM and Paradise Bay Farm.

Looking to the Future: Conserving Buermann Hill

Conserving Buermann Hill made sense to both Bob and Ann. Ann has always had an affinity for the land and farms. Bob references the Native American concept of being stewards - that we don't own the land, instead we are its caretakers. Bob loves being out in the woods, and standing atop Buermann Hill close to sunset, where he can watch night come to Camel's Hump and Mount Mansfield. Ann loves to watch the fields from her kitchen window, seeing the sheep in the pasture with the woods and mountains behind. They knew that they wanted to preserve the hill from the day they became its caretakers.

Bob and Ann approached former SHLT Director Minner Hobbs, and asked for her help. They wanted the hill to always look as it does today, open, well cared for, and with beautiful views of the lake and mountains. South Hero Land Trust was pleased to help, and brought in conservation partner Lake Champlain Land Trust to hold the easement and steward the land in perpetuity. Buermann Hill was conserved through a donated conservation easement in 2006, and SHLT is grateful to Ann and Bob for their generosity to the community.

Bob and Ann are continually working on the right balance of uses for Buermann Hill. In addition to providing winter hay to the sheep, they have been working with UVM Extension on a couple of projects. They participated in an experimental project to grow sunflowers for bio-fuel. The flowers grew well, but the deer decided to harvest the seeds before picking time. This year they planted several acres of milkweed! Milkweed fiber is a surprisingly useful crop. It can be made into booms to soak up hydrocarbons from oil spills, used as acoustic insulation in ambulances, and has a better thermal rating than goose down, so it can be made into extremely warm clothing. Plus, their field will be an important food source for threatened monarch butterflies and other insects.

We are excited to watch the milkweed grow, and see what else is in store for Buermann Hill and Paradise Bay Farm. Many thanks to Ann and Bob for sharing their story with us!



Blue-faced Leicesters have distinct "Roman" noses, and curly threadlike wool.

A Year of Exploration & Discovery

Photos from our First Six Months of Naturalist Walks



From top, going clockwise: walkers on Tracking Excursion at the Landon Community Trail in March, learning about sugaring at Crescent Bay Farm in April, finding snails and butterflies on the SH Rec Trail, birding along the "creek" in June, and examining the ice at Allen Point in February, .

Conservation & Community

Celebrating 19 Years at East Shore Vineyard

Considering Access & Inclusivity

We celebrated 19 years of conservation & community at East Shore Vineyard on July 24th. Thank you to all who were able to join us!

We welcomed Dr. Amy Seidl, ecologist, author, and professor, as our keynote speaker. Dr. Seidl's remarks on the importance of public lands, stewardship, and deliberate inclusivity to our work in land conservation and community building were well received and much discussed over dining room tables in the following weeks.

She quoted activist John Muir, who wrote in *The Yosemite* that, "everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul." She praised SHLT as a "model of civic participation, of a well-conceived mission, of people working together to accomplish an ideal in a very complex world."

And she asked us to go farther, to think more deeply about a few questions as we move into the future of land conservation. "What is our strategy to include all comers to our public lands and open spaces, our land trusts and forest parks? How can we make new visitors feel... [like] active participants in the democracy, governance, promotion and stewardship of open space?" We are looking forward to giving these questions and more careful consideration in the coming months, and hope that you will join the conversation.



Many thanks to our Community Steward awardees Chuck Hulse & Terry Robinson!

Inaugural Community Steward Awards Given

We were truly excited to honor two community members for their passion for connecting our community to the land we live on. Terry Robinson, who just retired from teaching at Folsom School, was a thoughtful teacher who went above and beyond in her efforts to bring the community into the classroom and instill in her students the knowledge that learning happens everywhere. From historical research and interviews with community members, to tours of South Hero farms and historic sights, her students developed a deep understanding of place and our landscape.

Chuck Hulse, retired doctor and local naturalist, just became a Master Naturalist through the Cornell based New York Master Naturalist Program. In addition to walking the Landon Community Trails every week for a year and creating a digital photographic guide to wildflowers at the Landon Farm (which is now posted on our website), he has also collaborated deeply with us to create our 2016 Naturalist Series. Thank you Chuck and Terry, for all of your work! We

continued from page 1: Volunteers Open Connector from Round Pond to Landon Trails

The trail begins directly across Landon Road from the Landon Community Trail Parking Area, runs through the fields, and comes out directly across from the East Shore Vineyard entrance. From there it is a very short walk (turn left) to the entrance to the Round Pond Natural Area- look for the orange gate! Many thanks to the South Hero Recreation Commission and local volunteers for keeping this trail open for us all!

Join the South Hero Trail Stewards!

We hope to continue creating opportunities for our community to get out on the land and become stewards of our natural areas, trails, fields, and forests. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, and getting notifications of upcoming volunteer events, email Emily at emily@shlt.org or call 372-3786. See you on the trail!

Discover South Hero

Join South Hero Land Trust to explore our local natural areas and learn about topics from wildlife tracking to the night sky!

2016 Naturalist Walk Series

October 4 **Mysteries of the Forest**

Explore the forest with state forester Nancy Patch, as she takes us through the Tracy Woods, explaining how we can manage our local forests to promote ecological diversity, healthy plant and animal habitat, and sustainable timber production. 4:00-5:30 PM. Meet at the South Hero Recreation Path Parking lot at the corner of Tracy and Lakeview Roads.

Black-eyed Susan:
Rudbeckia hirta



November 11 **Owl Hoot**

Join us for a unique nighttime birding excursion on Fox Hill at Crescent Bay Farm. Expert birder Sean Beckett will join us again for this fun birding event! Grab your flashlights and headlamps, and get ready for a new look at nighttime in nature. 7:00-9:00 PM. Meet at the Snow Farm Winery parking lot.

New England Aster:
Symphyotrichum novae-angliae



December 3 **Evergreens & Red Berries**

Local naturalist Chuck Hulse will lead our final walk of the year. Celebrate a year of naturalist explorations, and learn about the most colorful parts of the winter landscape, evergreens and berries. What role do they play in winter animal habitat? 10:00-11:30 AM. Meet at Round Pond Natural Area.

Our Naturalist Series is free and open to all. RSVPs encouraged but not required. E-mail emily@shlt.org or call 372-3786 with questions, or to RSVP.

Harvest Fest & Winter Market Dates

Special Harvest Fest Market

Saturday, October 8th

10 AM - 2 PM

at the St. Rose of Lima Church

with music, yoga, kids' activities, & more...

Winter Market Dates

Saturdays from 10 AM - 2 PM

at the SH Congregational Church

October 22nd

November 5th & 19th

December 3rd & 17th



ISLAND FARMS. TABLE FRESH.

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER



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Please Renew Your Support Today!



Whether your favorite South Hero memories are of welcoming new lambs at Paradise Bay Farm, catching frogs along the trails at Round Pond, or apple picking at Hackett's Orchard, you know this special place needs to be protected. South Hero Land Trust is working hard to protect the unique landscape and island community where we raise our children, grow our food, explore, learn, and find inspiration. Our members make that work possible.

Please, become a member or renew your support today!