



2010 SPRING/SUMMER WINDING TRAILS PROGRAM CALENDAR ENCLOSED

Winding Trails

Community-Outdoors-Leadership & Lifeskills



Save Walton Pond

DEAR FRIENDS,

Last winter we informed you that we would no longer be printing our seasonal newsletter in the traditional sense because we are trying to be green. You can now get all the information online including program details and registration. We are mailing you this publication because of a very important project.

For the past 10 years we have been working on plans to dredge Walton Pond, restore Trout Pond, replace two dams, and install educational boardwalks. Two years ago we hired the engineering firm Civil Strategies, LLC to design the plans. In the fall of 2008 we submitted the permits for local, state, and federal approval. We are expecting to have all necessary permits in hand by mid April. Construction on this project is expected to start this summer and continue throughout the fall. Throughout this process we have used the newsletter to bring you periodic updates. At an estimated \$1.6 million, this project will be 5 times larger than any other capital project ever undertaken by Winding Trails. We feel it is extremely important that everyone understand the importance of Walton Pond to Winding Trails, our camp, education programs, and the environment as a whole. The information provided in this newsletter will provide details on all aspects of the project. In early summer we will begin a major gift initiative for Walton Pond. I hope you will find it in your heart to make a significant tax deductible donation.

The other important piece of this newsletter is the calendar of events for the next 6 months. The spring and summer are full of events for children, families, and adults. Detailed information on these programs can be found on our website. We are also very pleased to announce our new online registration. This online registration is in response to our member survey last summer. We hope you find it informative, quick, and easy.

As we move further into 2010, I encourage you to take full advantage of all Winding Trails has to offer you. Our guiding principles of fostering a love for the outdoors, creating a sense of community, and developing leadership and life skills are at the heart of all we do. The Board of Directors and staff are committed to these principles and our mission.

I look forward to seeing many familiar faces as well as new ones throughout the year. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Scott Brown, CPRP
Executive Director



SAVE WALTON POND

Walton Pond is the heart and soul of Winding Trails and it is dying. The Pond is Winding Trails' historical beginning and the most important environmental and educational resource in the park's 375 acres of protected natural open space. Located in the center of the property below Garmany Hall, Walton Pond anchors a 700 acre watershed that extends to parts of the Highlands, Devonwood and Avon Old Farms School before continuing on to the Farmington River, the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound.

Walton Pond is an 8 acre body of water that is filling with mud and sediment. The Pond has lost 40% of its original water holding capacity and gets worse by the day. With 8 feet of mud in the north end of the pond, the once thriving populations of brook and brown trout have been replaced with an explosion of pond weeds more suited to the warm shallow water. These weeds play havoc with the dissolved oxygen levels of the pond that jeopardize the remaining aquatic wildlife, including one of the healthiest fresh water mussel beds in the state.

Walton Pond is critical to Winding Trails' programming. On its shores, over 50,000 children have started their day at summer camp. Walton Pond is home to all environmental education and nature programs. It is the only safe place to ice skate in the winter and provides canoeing and kayaking for camp and weekend rentals relieving boating congestion on Dunning Lake.

Save Walton Pond is the most critical environmental and programming problem Winding Trails has ever faced. It is also the most expensive capital project undertaken. The following articles will outline; the history of the pond, the problem, the solution, the benefits of the new pond, and how you can get involved to help Save Walton Pond. Thank you for your support, your generosity, and your time volunteering.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

There is no single culprit, but rather a debilitating combination of time, nature, progress and a lack of understanding. One issue is the size of the dams. The present dams at Walton and Trout Ponds were built in 1938. The boys of Avon Old Farms built good dams by virtue of their lasting for 60 plus years. The dams, in hindsight, were built too small to withstand heavy flooding. The overflow water would just breach the dams and flow into Poplar Swamp and then the school/Winding Trails would just fix the erosion caused by the breach. Today, every time Walton Pond breaches its dam, it threatens Winding Trails drive, the only access road into Winding Trails and endangers Dunning Lake.

The second occurred in the early 1990's when Trout Pond dam, the smaller of the two dams, started weakening and undercutting with time and wear. The pond had already become too shallow to sustain finfish, so the logical answer, barring full replacement, was to reduce the stress on the dam by reducing the amount of water it was retaining. This process worked well, but had unintended consequences. The soil composition of Winding Trails is sand and gravel. The positive side of this reality gives us crystal clear water in our wells, ponds, lakes, and streams. The negative, in this equation, is the amount of sand and silt that flows easily downstream within the waterways on property and from increased development surrounding us. As we reduced the dam size by removing weir boards and conversely the amount of water behind the dam, we were also reducing the amount of sand and silt Trout Pond was able to capture before it flowed into Walton Pond. This combination of time, nature, progress and unintended consequences has given a death sentence to Trout Pond and is expanding its death grip on Walton Pond. In order to get a view of the physical pressures Walton Pond is experiencing today, let's look at some of the grim realities.

In the beginning, Walton Pond was a true 8 acre body of



water, with a fairly uniform depth of 8 feet. Over the years, since the Trout Pond dam ceased to provide protection from silt run-off, Walton Pond started filling in. The silt flows down the streams and straight through Trout Pond and as it reaches Walton Pond it slows down enough to settle out. This process creates two problems, a permanent sand bar at the inflow to Walton Pond and a mud build-up on the bottom. That sandbar has claimed roughly 1.5 acres of Walton Pond in the last 25 years. Earlier we spoke of exponentially compounding problems. Translated into the last three years, the sandbar has claimed roughly another 18 feet of Walton Pond. It will not take many years before it merges with the island.

Unfortunately, the growing blob of sandbar is not the worst problem we are confronting. It is the silt or the more conventionally known, pure, rotting, stinking mud. What used to be 8 feet of water or habitat has been replaced by mud. Today we have 6 inches of water and 8 feet of silt in the north end of Walton Pond. As you progress southward down the pond, the mud depth decreases to 2 feet of mud and the water depth increases to 6 feet of water at the boat dock at camp beach. Today, that amount of mud equals almost 25,000 cubic yards which is presently sitting at the bottom of Walton Pond and Trout Pond. To give you an idea of how much mud that is in layman's terms, let's look at some numbers. If we took all of that mud out in gallon milk jugs, we would need over 5 million containers. In order to get that number of milk jug containers, all of the CT dairy farmers would have to stop milking their cows for almost two whole months. If we decided to open a spa, we would have enough to fill 126,250 bathtubs with mud. If we added mud wrestling to our program line up, we would be able to build over 50,499 mud wrestling rings. If we tried to flush the mud down the toilet, it would take over 1.5 million flushes to accomplish this task, and double that if we used only low flush toilets. And finally, we could provide mud facials for over 40 million people. Now, that is a lot of mud. Trout Pond no longer sustains any fish. We have lost all the trout in Walton Pond due to its shallowness. We have one of the largest and most thriving communities of fresh water pond mussels in the state including the threatened Eastern Pond Mussel, but there are none living north of the island. Each year they must move south down the pond in order to survive. The shallowness of the rest of the pond has caused a critical outbreak of pond weeds, including invasives, like milfoil and curly pond leaf. While some pond weeds have a positive impact on habitat, overgrowth plays havoc with dissolved oxygen levels in the water and leads to stress on the ecosystem as a whole. To gain perspective on this growing problem, let's summarize the results. Walton Pond began roughly as a 21 million gallon body of water. The growing sandbar has displaced about 4 million gallons of water and the accumulation of mud, another 4 million gallons. That means our 21 million gallon pond is down by 8 million gallons. That is almost a 40% loss of the original pond over the years. Without intervention to save the pond, everything except for swamp dwellers will die off in the next few decades.

On a positive note, we have a plan to save it.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Winding Trails is committed to restoring Walton Pond while protecting critical habitat, expanding educational opportunities, and stabilizing the aquatic environment into the next century. The Board of Directors, the Area & Facilities Committee, and the staff have been working on this project for more than ten years. We have been working with the Farmington Wetlands Commission, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Southern Connecticut State University, and a group of experts and volunteers in order to incorporate "best practice." Baystate Environmental Engineers did preliminary environmental impact studies. We have hired Civil Strategies LLC to update those environmental studies, design and map the project, and take us through the permitting process. As of February of 2010, we have all the permits in place except for Army Corps of Engineers who is reviewing the project as we write. If everything continues on schedule, the project will start this summer with the majority of work to be done in the fall and completed in early January 2011. The following is a general overview of what will take place to Save Walton Pond.

PHASE ONE

- Widen and reinforce Nature Trail and the top of Crowe's Curve with gravel to allow dump trucks to move the removed sediment over to Dunning Sand and Gravel for disposal
- Remove sediment in Trout Pond and create a half acre sedimentation pond
- Trout Pond will catch 86.4% of the sediment traveling downstream
- Build a rock road within Trout Pond that will be underwater and exposed when cleaning of sediment is necessary
- The present dam and certain trees will be removed and a new dam built

PHASE TWO

- Protect critical habitats from all construction including the area between the dock and the nature deck, the east side of the island, and the two areas with sedges at the north end of Walton Pond
- Capture fish, reptiles and amphibians out of Walton Pond and move them to other water bodies on property
- Through a set of collection techniques and moving protocols, will move the endangered Eastern Pond mussels to Dunning Lake until the project is complete

PHASE THREE

- Widen and reinforce Pond Trail and the east side of Nature Trail with gravel to accommodate dump trucks removing sediment to Dunning Sand and Gravel
- Remove 17,000 cubic yards of sediment
- Straighten the inflow stream at the north end and use rocks to increase the flow around both sides of the island to improve the health of the west side of the pond
- Create several deep pools to allow for the reintroduction of trout at a later date
- Submerge rock piles and trees to improve fish habitat and reproduction success
- Install board walks along the east side of both ends of Walton Pond to enhance aesthetics, access, and education
- Install a permanent bridge to the island that allows the water to flow north to south without interruption
- Remove old dam certain trees and install new one



HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Winding Trail's mission and guiding principals demand that we conserve and preserve its natural resources for today and tomorrow's children. Walton Pond and its watershed is the center of this property's ecosystem. Most organizations measure their assets in terms of buildings and equipment. Winding Trails believes that its natural resources are its greatest gift and therefore worthy of investing time and money to preserve them. Winding Trails needs your tax deductible financial support to complete this project.

DONATE TO SAVE WALTON POND FUND

- Winding Trails is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and gifts are tax deductible
- Your employer may match your gift — we can help you find out how
- Donations information is online at www.windingtrails.org
- Contact Terry Grady, Development Director at 860-677-8458 or email terry@windingtrails.org

SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

- Save Walton Pond is a community project, not a construction job
- This is a unique conservation opportunity, learn more about it

VOLUNTEER

- Spend a day or two helping with this project
- Volunteers needed August into September
- Opportunities will be posted
- Contact Mark Dale, Education Coordinator at 860-677-8458 or email mark@windingtrails.org

We are reminded of Gaylord Nelson's challenge, "The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard."

YOUR SUPPORT IS APPRECIATED AND VITAL



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS PROJECT? WALTON POND IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF WINDING TRAILS ECOLOGICALLY

- Winding Trails saves it's most important natural resource
- Walton Pond survives and thrives for another 75 years
- Improved water quality and depth
- The return of a blue water pond rather than slime green
- Survival of important habitat for fish, mussels, reptiles and amphibians
- Protect Dunning Lake and main road from a destructive breach
- Improved water quality entering the Farmington River
- Reduction of problem aquatic weeds
- New dam will allow fire trucks to get to the east side woods
- Walton Pond is critical to the success of Winding Trails recreationally
- Use of 100% of pond rather than half
- Recreational access to the pond through addition of board walks
- 50,000 future campers will have a chance to experience its treasures
- Keep camp boating at Walton, reducing congestion on Dunning Lake
- Permanent bridge to the island
- Hundreds of people enjoy ice skating and playing pond hockey on Walton Pond
- Improved ice conditions due to increased depth
- Improved fish habitats and breeding grounds
- Reintroduction of trout into Walton Pond
- Walton Pond is critical to the success of Winding Trails educationally
- An important natural resource to use for environmental studies
- Environmental education for local schools
- Educational access to pond through board walks
- Environmental education for members and campers
- A rich natural diversity of aquatic species



HISTORY OF WALTON POND

In order to understand Walton Pond, we must look back to its beginning. Our pond got its start 20,000 years ago under a sheet of ice measuring a mile thick in some places. Its massive weight would scrape the rock base that covered much of Connecticut. As the glaciers melted, the material would drop large deposits of glacial till which is mainly sand and gravel. The topography created by the receding glaciers left a shallow valley down the center of Winding Trails with several springs and streams running through it.

In the late 1800's, Noah Wallace moved to Farmington and became a developer and prominent citizen. An avid outdoorsman, he owned and was one of the founders of the Farmington Country Club. He bought property in Farmington and Avon known as "The Pine Woods", which included the location of present day Winding Trails. Wallace built cabins there and enjoyed hunting and fishing with friends.

In the early 1900's, Theodate Pope Riddle, Connecticut's first licensed female architect, Lusitanian survivor, and designer and matron of the Hill Stead House, purchased the Pine Woods from Noah Wallace to build Avon Old Farms School for Boys. Theodate purposely did not build a gymnasium at her school and required instead that the boys participate in fishing, forestry and farming to round out the physical side of their education. Verne Priest, an Indian guide out of Maine was hired by Mrs. Riddle when she opened the school in 1927. Verne's job as the "Woodsmen" was to manage and conserve the Pine Woods and watershed while teaching outdoor living skills to the boys of Avon Old Farms.

Walton Pond is believed to be named for Izaak Walton, a 17th century author who wrote *The Complete Angler*. Walton Pond and Trout Pond were created by the boys and staff of Avon Old Farms for fishing by building dams along Poplar Swamp Brook. There is no record of whether they were the first dams to be built, but the present dams at Walton and Trout Ponds were built in 1938 by the Nimrod Club of Avon Old Farms School. The Nimrod Club was dedicated to conservation as well as hunting

and fishing. By building a dam at the south end of the valley, the boys created Walton Pond, an eight acre body of water that is now the heart of Winding Trails.

The school also built a dam at Trout Pond (originally known as Upper Walton) that created a one acre body of water just upstream from Walton Pond. The Trout Pond dam served as a sediment barrier for the larger Walton Pond. The school simultaneously built a series of trout hatchery pools fed by springs in an adjacent stream. A Fish and Game Lodge was built on the hill overlooking Lower Walton Pond, Upper Walton Pond and a fish hatchery.

Mrs. Riddle closed the school in 1944 after a political dispute with the Chancellor. She immediately offered the school to President Roosevelt who accepted the gift and set up an Army Rehabilitation Hospital for blind veterans. In 1946 Theodate Pope Riddle died and the Veteran's Hospital closed a year later. In 1947 a group of Farmington residents approached the school/Army and leased the 20 acres of land surrounding Walton Pond and opened a summer camp for returning veteran's children. The Board of Directors of Camp Winding Trails volunteered their time and energy to get the camp up and running. In addition, each Board Member committed themselves to sponsor at least two children a year who could not afford to attend camp. These children received their first lessons and experiences at Walton Pond in nature, fishing, canoeing, and environmental studies. In 1948, Avon Old Farms School reopened its doors to students. In 1955, Camp Winding Trails approached the school and purchased Walton Pond and 300 acres surrounding it. This spirit of service in providing camping opportunities to those without resources has continued throughout our history. In 2009, Winding Trails and other generous donors sponsored another 71 children with the opportunity to attend summer camp. To date, over 50,000 children have attended opening ceremonies at Camp Winding Trails on the shores of Walton Pond, which is sadly now fighting for its life.



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MISSION STATEMENT

Winding Trails, Inc. is a non-profit, organization serving people from Farmington and surrounding communities, providing year round recreational and educational activities for the enjoyment and growth of families and individuals of all ages. Winding Trails is dedicated to the conservation and stewardship of our natural woodlands and waterways that allow outdoor programming, character development, and other activities that strengthen the lives of those we serve.



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WALTON POND IS DYING

The heart and soul of Winding Trails and its most important environmental and educational resource is in dire need.

THE PROBLEM

Age and design defects are causing a dangerous buildup of silt which is choking the life and utility out of the pond's water (*see page 2*).

THE SOLUTION

A three-phased restoration project to protect critical habitat, expand educational opportunities and stabilize the aquatic environment for our children and future generations (*see page 3*).

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Donate to the Save Walton Pond Fund (your gift to Winding Trails is tax deductible)
Contact Terry Grady, Development Director at 860-677-8458 or email terry@windingtrails.org or visit www.windingtrails.org

VOLUNTEER

Spend a day or two helping with this project. Contact Mark Dale, Education Director at 860-677-8458 or email mark@windingtrails.org

LEARN MORE

Contact Scott Brown, Executive Director at 860-677-8458 or email scott@windingtrails.org or visit www.windingtrails.org

Fostering a Love for the Outdoors / Creating a Sense of Community / Developing Leadership and Lifeskills