



NEWSLETTER *Spring 2013*



Crab Creek looking East after Storm Sandy and before obstruction removed.



Crab Creek restored by removal of dam.

THE CHANGING FACE OF OUR SHORELINE ENVIRONMENT

While trivial compared with other areas of New York, New Jersey and the Connecticut shoreline, damage by Superstorm Sandy on October 29 was significant for Fenwick.

Of particular concern to the Land Trust was the dune and marsh area received from the Estate of Katherine Hepburn where a 13 foot tidal surge pushed the dune inland so that sand and gravel created a dam blocking tidal flow of Crab Creek. The result was the tidal marsh area west of the newly created obstruction was converted into a freshwater swamp. Changes in the vastly altered ecosystem included raising the water level about two feet in the pond on the second hole of the golf course.

While Land Trust stewardship under conservation easement extends over most of the open space in the Lynde Point peninsula such as the marsh, golf course and grove, it owns the Hepburn parcel outright, so deciding how to address this damage was solely the obligation of the Land Trust. In addition to blocking Crab Creek, the storm also narrowed dramatically the margin between Crab Creek and Long Island Sound so that it was reasonable to expect a second storm, perhaps as early as this season, could open this gap and provide a direct flow of Crab Creek between South Cove and Long Island Sound, creating an island of what is now the eastern portion of Fenwick.

After considerable soul searching, the Land Trust Board decided to promptly bring in heavy equipment to remove the newly created dam in Crab Creek. We were able to obtain expedited permission from CT DEEP and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers which have jurisdiction on such matters. We questioned how to respond to the new reality of rising sea level, whether it was worthwhile to mitigate the damage by restoring the previous condition or adapt to the new circumstances by letting nature take its course. The earlier Land Trust project in 2008 of protecting the Hepburn dune through installation of large sand-filled "soxx" and planting dune grass held relatively well during Storm Irene in 2011 but was completely wiped out by Sandy.

Looking ahead, what is the Land Trust stewardship role, to preserve conditions as they now exist or adapt to a new reality? The Board determined to do what it can at this juncture to not only repair the beach but in doing so also restore the role of the dune to protect the salt marsh behind it, recognizing we may expect recurring destruction and the "hundred year storm" may become the "ten year storm".

Another aspect of the Board decision was, of course, the cost which was \$6,000. The Land Trust now spends more each year on such things as regular spraying and cutting phragmites than our income from member dues and various government grants, and we have knowingly drawn on our endowment created by substantial early gifts and the Marsh Madness celebration of 2003 which got the Land Trust launched. The dam removal was an unplanned extra expense. We cannot sustain expenditures such as this on a recurring basis although we believed we should do so on this occasion.

Your support and member dues are essential to the Land Trust in its ongoing annual work as well as special challenges delivered by such things as winter storms. If you have mailed your member dues for 2012 – 2013, we thank you. If not please do so this spring.

Stanford Brainerd
President

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Lynde Point Land Trust Annual Membership

2012 - 2013

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Lynde Point Land Trust
P.O. Box 126
Old Saybrook, CT 06475

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