



BWLT NEWS

Protecting The Land You Love

January, 2026



A Sneak Peek At 2026

Events, Projects and Opportunities

Planning is underway for another productive year of protecting, preserving and celebrating the farms, fields and forests you love!

With continued community support, we will move forward with much-needed renovations to the Town Line Farm dairy barn. With the south end now complete, our focus will shift to the middle section, as well as the exterior of the centrally located milk room and office area. At the newly established Peardon Preserve, we will assess the condition of the historic post and beam barn, where a new roof is anticipated to be necessary.

We are also thrilled to be part of the community garden being installed this spring at the Hilltop Senior Center. There, we will grow fresh produce for the Town's Food Pantry. This locally grown, nutritious food will be a new and much-needed offering, and we are proud to do our part to support those facing food insecurity in our community.

Guided Hikes & Challenges

The New Year will begin with a hike and our Winter Hiking Challenge. See details below and join us! Throughout the year, we'll offer additional guided hikes, along with new trail maps for the Tappen Brook Trails Preserve and Town Line Farm Preserve.



Addressing Invasive Plants



Several of our preserves are affected by invasive species that harm native flora and fauna, and many residents face the same challenge in their own yards. In April, we will offer a public workshop led by an expert to learn how to address invasives and expand native plantings. We hope this will be the first of many steps toward managing and reducing this challenging issue.

Helping The Bluebirds

This spring, we will partner with the Shepaug Agriscience Academy to install bluebird houses at the Jim Allen Farm Preserve. This preserve provides ideal habitat for bluebirds, which favor open fields bordered by wooded edges.



We have a variety of events and activities planned for winter and spring and are especially pleased to participate in the Burnham Library Centennial by offering a program titled ***Bridgewater: A Century Ago***. In partnership with the Bridgewater Historical Society, this program will provide a unique step back in time. Details are below.

A new **Wine Tasting** event will debut in March, and our popular **Spring Patio Party** will return—a fun, social way to welcome the season. In April, HRRRA will join us for the **Annual Town Cleanup**, and our biggest fundraiser of the year, **Give Local**, is scheduled for April 21–22. In honor of Earth Day, we will treat the Burnham School students to a **puppetry performance** by the Sova Theatre called "Marvelous Metamorphoses."

In June, the Roxbury Land Trust will partner with us for our second **Farm Crawl**, featuring new and interesting farms to explore, and our **Party Under the Dome** will be back as well.

Honoring The History Of Our Land

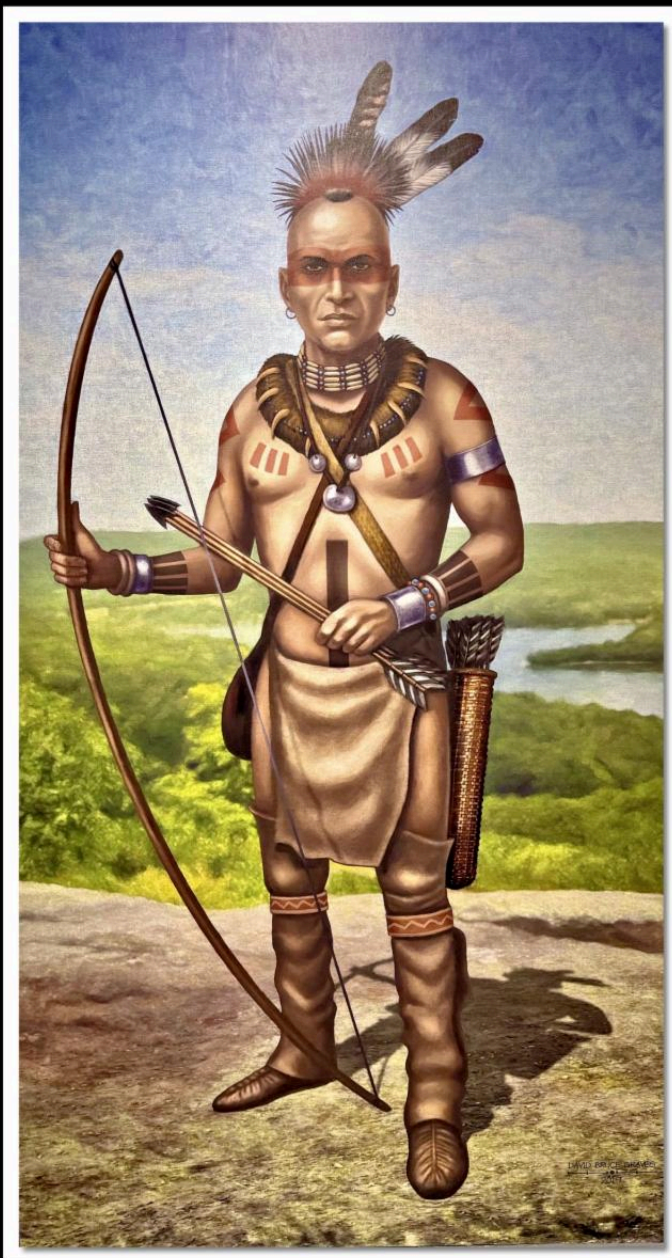
Chief Waramaug Monument Progresses

The effort to resurrect a monument in honor of Chief Waramaug at Lovers Leap State Park is gaining momentum.

Local residents and groups have expressed strong support for the project, including Chuck Kilson, Vice Chairman of the Schaghticoke Tribal Nation. The New Milford Town Council voted unanimously at its September 8th meeting to pursue the initiative. New Milford Mayor Pete Bass has been instrumental in leading the local effort, while State Representative Patrick Callahan and Senator Stephen Harding, are taking the lead on securing state approvals. They have met with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), the agency overseeing Connecticut's state parks. DEEP is currently working with Connecticut tribal leaders through the Native American Heritage Advisory Council, as approval from Indigenous peoples in the region is essential.

Chief Waramaug, who died in 1722, was said to have been buried on a hillside above the "Great Falls" (now known as Lovers Leap), overlooking the homeland of his people. His grave was once marked by a large stone surrounded by smaller rocks placed there by passing Native Americans, following tradition. In the early 1900s, when a castle and lodge were constructed in the area, the original monument was destroyed and the stones were reportedly used in the foundation and hearth of the new buildings.

CHIEF WARAMAUG



An artistic interpretation of what Chief Waramaug may have looked like by David Graves in 2019. This image is on display at the Gunn Memorial Museum in Washington.

" ...The undisputed leader during colonial times was the great chief or Sachem Waramaug who, until his death in 1722, negotiated and compromised with European settlers in the hope of protecting his people and their indigenous culture."

Thank you to the Gunn Memorial Museum for lending the image.

Welcome Alison Birks

Alison Birks has joined the staff of the Bridgewater Land Trust as our new part-time Administrator & Outreach Coordinator replacing Bridget McCarthy.

Alison has been a resident of Bridgewater for twelve years, and an active member and volunteer for the BWLT for just as long. She brings her background as a professional educator, health and wellness professional, entrepreneur, and writer. She has marketing and sales experience, as well as skills in team building and leadership. She has served on the board of various not-for-profit organizations in the wellness sector, and has served in higher education as a member of the COSC Academic Council, chair of the Health Sciences committee, and team leader for the Health Sciences and Environmental Studies department. With professional training in botany and ecology, Alison understands the nuances of land stewardship, while her extensive experience as an instructor for institutions like Charter Oak State College, The Institute of Sustainable Nutrition and The Herbal Academy has honed her ability to inspire diverse audiences.

Alison is dedicated to expanding BWLT's reach through innovative educational partnerships and local farm advocacy. Whether she is leading a trail hike or sharing her love of the natural world, Alison's goal is to ensure that Bridgewater's natural beauty remains a living, breathing legacy for future generations.



Alison Birks (left) with Bridget McCarthy

With Deep Gratitude

2025 Volunteers

Our volunteers are essential to our success. Each person contributes unique talents that strengthen our work and our community.

Thank you

2025 Volunteers

Ted Alt
Lisa Antel
Chris Amorossi
Walt Barlow
Scott Benjamin
Ed Bennett
Alison Birks
Becky Bottari
Katherine Burke
Helaina Buzzeo
Lyra Buzzeo
Kevin Cady
Matt Cariani
Mark Carlson
Kathy Creighton
Tarryn Crossley
Jamie Curren
Robert Dewar
Connor Dillon
Joe Dolen
Christian Feuer
Cynthia Feuer
Bob Flanagan
Lanie Flanagan
Ed Franklin
John Galligan Jr.
Sharon Gawe

Wendie Grabel
Leslie Granger
Henry Gsell
Emily Guinta
Kevin Hobbs
Monsie Hobbs
Miranda Hora
Jeff Jones
Rich Kaplon
Erik Landegren
Mike Macko
Philippa Malkin
Louise Marble
Russell Marcus
Jo Mayer

Billy New
Mae Orkisz
Tom Orkisz
Tyler Petrucci
Freddy Perlman
Jeannette Purdy
Curtis Read
Dan Readyoff
Jean Robinson
Carole Sansone
Ron Seger
Andrew Smith
Alisha Strother
Bill Stuart Jr.
Bill Stuart Sr
Will Stuart
Kelly Sullivan
Sebastien Thiebault
Celine Thiebault
Aster Thiebault
Paloma Thiebault
Peg Toledo
Mike Tuz
Julie Wachtel
Paula West
Victoria Zandonella
Lee Anne Zarger



FIELD NOTES

New Preserve Sign

Thanks to a grant from Firstlight we have a new sign at our Tappen Brook Preserve. The handsome sign was made by Bridgewater resident and artist Walter Von Egidy. Near the sign is a new pull off parking area at the corner of Tappen Rd. and Hemlock Rd. Our trails are open everyday from dawn to dusk.



Thank You Kevin

BWLT Board Member Kevin Cady has been instrumental in advising and assisting with the renovation of the Town Line dairy barn. Kevin, along with several local contractors, has worked diligently to preserve the barn's historic character and keep it as close to the original as possible.

UPCOMING/RECENT EVENTS

First Day Hike

Start Your New Year Off On The Right Foot

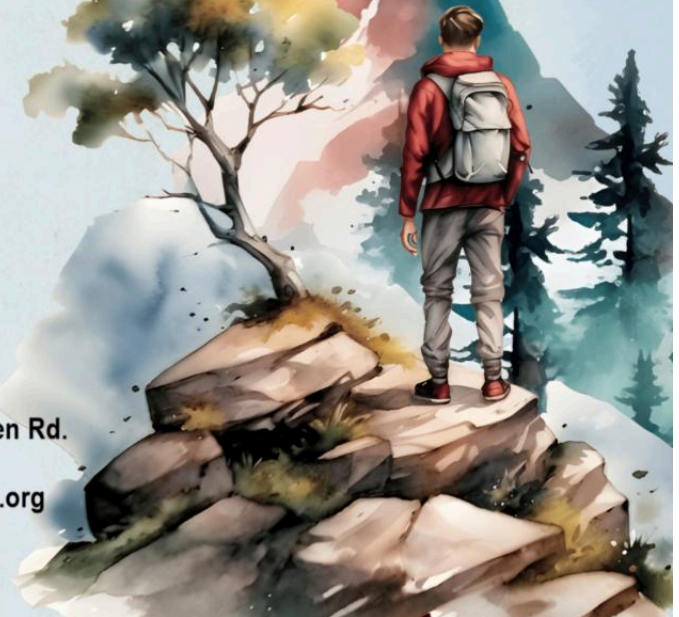
Join us at Tappen Brook Trails for a 2 hour adventure that includes the new white trail, town owned dirt roads and sections of the 5K Course.

First Day Hike

Join us for a 2 hour trek
through Tappen Brook Trails

**Thursday, January 1st
at 10:30 AM**

Start and end at Bridgewater Town Park
GPS: Lake Lillinonah Rd. S then right on Tappen Rd.
Bad weather/icy conditions cancels
Questions/RSVP: julie@bridgewaterlandtrust.org



Winter Hiking Challenge *January-March, 2026*

Stay motivated this winter—join our 2nd Annual Winter Hiking Challenge! Hit the trails whenever and wherever you like. Walk, hike, run, or snowshoe at your own pace. Track your miles on your own and check in at the end of each month to celebrate your progress.

All participants who complete 60 miles will earn a special treat, and there will be extra prizes for standout achievements along the way!

Sign up with Julie at julie@bridgewaterlandtrust.org



Winter Hiking Challenge

Hike 60 Miles

January 1st - March 31st, 2026

Average of 20 miles per month

Hike when
you want,
where you
want.
Prizes!



Sign up and get the details with:
julie@bridgewaterlandtrust.org

Bridgewater: A Century Ago

It's hard to imagine that just 100 years ago, Bridgewater was a town of narrow dirt roads, few automobiles, and mail delivered by horse and wood-shod sled. Tobacco farming was at its peak, dairy farms dotted the landscape, and the mighty Housatonic River flowed through town.

At the heart of the village, a library built of Mine Hill granite rose as a community landmark, followed a few years later by the Burnham School in 1929—both gifts of Clipper Ship Captain William D. Burnham.

JOIN US FOR A SPECIAL PRESENTATION
*In honor of the Burnham Library's
Centennial Celebration*

BRIDGEWATER A CENTURY AGO



AT 5:30 PM
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH
AT THE BURNHAM LIBRARY

SPONSORED BY THE BRIDGEWATER LAND TRUST
& THE BRIDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WINE & CHEESE RECEPTION FOLLOWS
RSVP: [JULIE@BRIDGEWATERLANDTRUST.ORG](mailto:julie@bridgewaterlandtrust.org)

Support Us

The Bridgewater Land Trust is a federally recognized 501(c) (3) charitable organization, and all your contributions are tax deductible.

[DONATE](#)

Stay Social

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