Marblehead Conservancy

Newsletter Vol. 22 No. 1
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MARBLEHEAD CONSERVANCY, INC.

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Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting: Wednesday, April 3, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. The Marblehead Conservancy invites all members, friends, and others to its Annual Meeting in the Abbot Public Library, 3 Brook Road in Marblehead. Light refreshments will be provided.

Barbara Warren. Executive Director of Salem Sound Coastwatch

A brief business meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m.

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President's Message

A year ago our first newsletter of 2023 spoke of hope that the months then ahead would be good for plant growth, putting the damaging summer droughts of 2022 behind. That hope was fulfilled as the Trails Committee Report in this issue attests. Of course the rewarding balance of sun and rain that appeared also boosted the growth of alien invasives, so containing them continues as part of our trail work.

We are not complaining. Another good growth year in 2024 would be just fine!

We thank members and donors: individuals, families, businesses, and other nonprofits for their support as we look forward to a blooming 2024.

Bob French, President

Marblehead Conservancy Mission Statement

To protect, acquire, and enhance Marblehead's natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of the community and the generations to follow.

Annual Meeting - from page 1

will be followed by our guest speaker, Barbara Warren of Salem Sound Coastwatch addressing "***What Happens on the Land Affects Salem Sound***".

Barbara is is the Executive Director for Salem Sound Coastwatch, a regional non-profit that works to improve and protect the environmental quality of Salem Sound and its watershed. In addition, Barbara serves as the Lower North Shore Regional Coordinator for the Massachusetts Bay National Estuary Partnership. Barbara has a M.S. in Environmental Science from Antioch New England and a M.A. in Education from Lesley University.

As a certified Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Provider, Barbara focuses much of her work on climate change awareness and coastal resilience projects, working with Salem, Manchester, Marblehead, Beverly, and Peabody. She has been working with the Town of Marblehead since 2018 on climate adaptation planning.

Dates to Save

Earth Day/Arbor Day Celebration: Saturday, May 4, 2024, 9:00 a.m. to noon. Plans are being developed for the continuing expansion of native flower, shrub, and tree plantings at Lead Mills. Scout Troops will be helping. Details will be announced later. To receive updates via email, register for our mailing list at www.marbleheadconservancy.org.

Farmers Market opens: Saturday, June 1, 2024. Be sure to visit the booth with Marblehead Conservancy and Town Recycling Committee displays.

Membership Report

It is our members and donors who provide the moral and financial support enabling the Conservancy to pursue its mission. Without such support the Conservancy couldn't continue. Membership dues are our primary source of financial support, providing the major share of our annual operating revenue.

During the Covid pandemic we experienced a surge in both membership numbers and revenue from dues, reaching records in 2021, likely because of increased interest in and use of the Town's always open conservation areas. As the pandemic receded into the background during 2022, the number of members declined about 8% to 406, still well above pre-Covid levels. Notably, 2022's revenue from membership dues was almost $43,000, close to 2021's record level.

2023 brought decreases in both revenue and memberships. In trying to understand these annual ups and downs, we can only surmise that the decreases were due to concerns about the economy and some personal belt-tightening. Marblehead's conservation areas continue to receive attention and care from a great crew of volunteers.

	2023	2022	2021
Members	386	406	441
Membership dues	$40,533	$42,908	$43,160

Annual membership dues are on a calendar year basis and thus 2024 membership is now open. To renew your membership, or to become a new member, please use the form enclosed with this newsletter, or go online to our website

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(marbleheadconservancy.org) and click *Join Us!* Early remittance is appreciated - and saves us from future reminder mailings.

As always, we sincerely thank Conservancy members for their continued support and generosity.

- *Nina Robertson, Membership*

Treasurer's Report

Total operating revenues for 2023 were $44,757. Operating expenses of $47,965 resulted in an operating deficit of $3,208. A previously banked operating surplus easily absorbed this shortfall. Revenue from our primary income source, membership dues, was $40,533, about $2,400 less than last year (see Membership Report). Sales of books and logo products ticked up from $1K to $2.5K mostly due to renewed interest in the "Discovering Marblehead" book. Interest income increased from $150 to $675 while contributions were down from $8.9K to $.9K; this category notoriously fluctuates from year to year.

The Endowment Fund portfolio ended the year at $425,240, up 17% while Operating Funds are $80,666, down 4%.

Marblehead Conservancy, Inc.
Summary Financial Report

Statement of Operations
January 1 - December 31, 2023

Operating Income	
Membership Dues	$40,533
Contributions	893
Sales (books, shirts, etc)	2,656
Transfer - Restricted Funds	0
Interest, Dividends, Other	675
Total Operating Revenue	$44,757
Operating Expenses	
Trails Projects (incl. wildflowers)	$25,614
Office and Administration	8,092
Education & Professional	1423
Insurance	5,465
Miscellaneous	3,951
Total Operating Expense	$47,965
Operating Surplus(Deficit)	$(3,208)

Statement of Condition
December 31, 2023

Operating (unrestricted) Assets	
Operating Funds	$ 77,312
Liabilities	0
Net Operating Assets	$77,312
Restricted Assets:	
Trails Endowment	$ 425,240
Harbor Glade Grant	7,379
Total Restricted Assets	$ 432,619
Total Net Assets	$ 509,931

The Endowment Fund is primarily (71%) invested in equity index funds and 29% in bonds and money market funds. All of our operating funds are in cash or cash equivalents. The Conservancy continues to be in sound financial condition.

- *Don Morgan, Treasurer*

Trails Committee Report

The Trails Committee continues to meet monthly to plan and prioritize projects. Trail Crews continued to go out twice weekly, logging 2,150 hours last year. Activities varied throughout the year, covering nine open space areas and a large roster of needs. In addition to ninety five regular Trail Crew missions, our special projects included: two Boy Scout Eagle Projects, spring and fall site work with Tower School students, a spraying of some very hardy weeds at the Lead Mills, regrading about 600 feet of the Forest River trail from Old Salem Road by Bartlett & Steadman to correct for erosion, and supporting the Marblehead High School freshman day of service.

Our primary tasks are mowing and trimming five miles of trails through the growing season, planting seedlings in the spring and fall, resolving erosion problems, removing invasives, weeding and planting wildflowers at the Lead Mills area.

Our two sponsored Eagle Projects were:

Tristan Kindle – removed knotweed roots and planted twelve native shrubs over a 3000 sq. ft. site at Ware Pond,

Clive Connolly – rebuilt 25% of our first (2005) Ware Pond Boardwalk.

Other tasks and projects from 2023:

- Removed 51 old tires and 7 bags of trash from Robinson Farm,
- Removed branches and trash from Babbling Brook to improve its flow,
- Spread 70 cubic yards of wood chips in nearly all Town conservation areas, protecting the trails while removing 96 bags of trash and planting 96 young shrubs and trees,
- Cut invasives in all nine of the areas we maintain,
- Trimmed trails (at the ground, along the sides, and overhead) on all 5 miles of trails,
- Shoveled snow to clear entrances of all areas,
- Applied preservative and maintained all 15 existing boardwalks, some 800 feet,
- Added a new trail entrance map dispenser to our thirteen existing ones.

We give thanks to a corps of volunteers who have distributed over 14,000 maps at trail entrances since 2014. Map boxes now have QR codes which point users to digital copies of our maps.

Map Box Volunteers: Amanda French and family, Rick Cuzner, Susan Gundy Riordan, Don and Polly Tritschler, Don Forte, Michele and John Bonner, and Steve Butterworth.

We held our annual Earth Day-Arbor Day recognition at the Lead Mills, with a program designed by Maureen Ashley and the Wildflower Committee. Children planted 300 sq. ft. of native wildflower plugs while Maureen made birdhouse kits from wine corks for visitors to assemble and place in their yards. In addition, we spread about 10 cubic yards of wood chips on trails at the sites. 2023 activity at the Lead Mills through the growing season was dominated by trimming and cutting weeds in the fields along with weeding the berm and shrub areas. Thanks to the Rubin and Haliotis families for allowing use of their nearby water supplies.

We held a *Thank You* luncheon for our 2023 trail work volunteers at the Arts Association.

Trails Committee: Maureen Ashley, Kathy Breslin, Steven Butterworth, Donald Forte, Robert French, Jody Howard, Richard Marcy (Vice Chair), David Krathwohl, Joan McDuff (Honorary), Donald Morgan (Chair), Douglas Perkins (Forest Ranger), Jiri Rodovsky, Richard Thibedeau

Wildflower committee: Kathy Breslin, Jody Howard, Kathy Krathwohl, Mary Krull, Donald Morgan, Heidi Rubin, Nina Robertson

- *Don Morgan, Trails Committee Chair*

Sign of the Past- from page 5

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee will present nominees for Conservancy Trustees and Officers to be voted on by Members at the Annual Meeting.

Nominees for the Board of Trustees are incumbents: Maureen Ashley, Kathy Breslin, James Caplan, Donald Forte, Robert French, Jody Howard, David Krathwohl, Donald Morgan, Nina Robertson, and Donald Tritschler. Officer nominees are Robert French for President, Donald Morgan for Secretary and Treasurer.

The maximum number of Trustees for the next year is proposed to be eleven, one more than the list of nominees. This will allow the addition of one Trustee during the year as circumstances may warrant.

Conservation - What It Takes

One of the pillars of land conservation in the United States was John Muir - naturalist, writer, champion of Yosemite National Park, and much more. He grew up loving the wilder side of nature and spent years studying geology, plants, and native animals in the out of doors. He moved to Yosemite Valley in 1868 to immerse himself in the study of its wildlife.

For years, Muir wrote about the beauty of Yosemite and the need to preserve it. In 1889, he and other conservationists began a push to add Yosemite to the National Parks system as the third of our national parks, after Yellowstone and Sequoia. In October 1890, Yosemite was accepted as a National Park - but California kept control of it. In 1892, Muir worked with others to form the Sierra Club for the purpose of land conservation. It wasn't until 1906 that Yosemite became a true National Park thanks to the influence of Muir and like-minded volunteers, including the Sierra Club.

Like Muir's work, Marblehead's effort to preserve open spaces has taken time. Early efforts were led by private citizens who donated land to create the Goldthwait Reservation, the Audubon Sanctuary on the Neck, and Crowninshield Island. In 1964 Town government formed the Conservation Commission. Through citizens' support of land acquisitions, many conservation areas were then added to Marblehead's preserved natural open spaces.

As Muir found, conservation requires a lot of volunteers and people to donate time, energy, money, and land. Without their steady work and generosity, Marblehead would not now have natural open spaces available to all: for hiking, plant study, dog walking, and showing the kids some of the wonders of nature.

Think back on John Muir. Then think ahead to all of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Land conservation now and in the future will let them enjoy the beauties that Marblehead's natural open space can hold for them. As it was in Muir's time, it takes a whole group of interested people to add to and maintain the lands, woods, trails, and ponds for our present and future enjoyment.

- *Kathy Krathwohl*

A Sign of the Past

Conservation areas have been wrongly used for discarding unwanted items for many years, so much so that cleaning up these areas is an ongoing job. Occasionally something of some apparent value appears during a time of clean up.

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Near the end of summer in 2023 while working in the Lead Mills Conservation Area, a member of a Conservancy Trail Crew came across a badly damaged metal sign that had retained at least part of its message: " pure white lead Red Seal brand".

The sign has one edge bent ninety degrees, possibly for attaching to some structure, but that is only a guess. With so much missing from the sign, its connection to what is now a conservation area can only be made through company lineage.

A little searching revealed that the "Red Seal" name on the sign was the name for a commercial white lead product and part of advertising for "Dutch Boy" paint. Could that be a connection to the area where it was found?

A little more looking revealed that Dutch Boy paint entered the market in 1907, a new product for the National Lead Company (now NL Industries of Houston, Texas). That had to be the link as NL Industries was the company that took responsibility for cleaning up the former Lead Mill site of Marblehead and Salem. But why was this Texas-based company interested in Marblehead?

The history of NL Industries may be traced to 1891, when 25 lead mining and smelting operations, located around the country, having found themselves unable to compete alone with larger manufacturers, teamed up to form a general holding company called the National Lead Company. The new parent organization ensured that each member company's resources were efficiently employed while effectively eliminating competition between the affiliates. One of those 25 companies was Chadwick Mills of Boston, MA. Chadwick subsequently purchased the Forest River Lead Company, formerly Salem Lead Company, in 1894. The Forest River Lead Company was located on the plot of land we know today as the Lead Mills Conservation Area.

NL Industries, then, was the last surviving company with responsibility for producing a white lead product in Marblehead and Salem. That product would many years later be declared a hazardous material. As the last owner of record, NL Industries accepted responsibility for the area clean up.

- *Bob French*

Winter Color

White snow, grey clouds, black tree trunks, brown earth. Winter is not such a cheery season. The buds and flowers of spring are long gone. The leaves have fallen. The whole of outdoors is here. But if you are a careful observer, there's lots of color to be found, especially near the ground.

One of the showiest ground covers is bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*. Bearberry is one of the few hearty creeping ground covers that stays mostly green all year round, though during cold weather the leaves do take on a bronze-ish tint from extra sun exposure. Its stems grow horizontally, spreading out as much as 5 to 6 feet in length but the plant never gets much taller than 6 to 12 inches. It loves poor and sandy soil, sunny locations, doesn't mind the salt air, and spreads to make a large cheerful mat of

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Winter Color - from page 6

green leaves and red berries if given the chance. A lot of birds and winter animals will nibble on the berries but bears, where they live, love bearberries, not surprisingly given their name.

Then there is another showy green and red winter plant, checkerberry or *Gaultheria procumbens*. It is a shrub related to heather and heath, though it grows only 4 to 6 inches tall. It grows in part-to-full shade and prefers a mildly acid soil. It can also have a bronze-ish tinge to the leaves, again due to sun over-exposure. Its red berries are bird and animal magnets, like those of bearberry.

One enjoyable feature of checkerberry is how it smells. Crush a few of the leaves and they smell like wintergreen. In fact, it is often called spring wintergreen, creeping wintergreen, Canada tea, or teaberry (yes, Teaberry gum was named after it, though there was no actual checkerberry extract in the gum, just the smell).

When you walk Marblehead's trails this winter, if the ground is not snow covered, try casting your eyes over the adjacent areas to discover these easily overlooked, but colorful ground covers. If you're a gardener, consider planting some cheery bearberry or checkerberry to liven up the next year's winter neighborhood. The birds will be happy, the animals will be happy, and your neighbors will be happy too.

- Kathy Krathwohl

Red Spruce in Marblehead?

In searching for native flora to replace alien invasives, the Conservancy came across this note in a "Report of the Trees and Shrubs Growing Naturally in the Forests of Massachusetts", published by The Commissioners on the Zoological and Botanical Survey of the State, Dutton and Wentworth, State Publishers, No. 31, Congress Street, 1846.

"The valuable properties of the wood of double spruce, are strength, lightness, elasticity and durability. As combining these in a higher degree than any other wood applicable to the purpose, it is used for the smaller spars of ships, for all, indeed, except the masts and bowsprits, in preference to any other, except the white or single spruce, and in toughness it is superior to that. It is also sometimes used, in place of oak, or mingled with it, in the upper part of the hull, and is found to outlast the oak, and to possess the requisite tenacity. A builder in New Bedford informed me that a ship over thirty years old had had, during the whole time, a mizzen-mast of spruce, which, when taken out, exhibited no marks of decay. Knees, also, of great durability, are made of the lower part of the trunk and a principal root of the spruce. It is much used for making ladders, and extensively employed in building, being suitable for the smaller timbers in the frame, and for shingles. For these purposes, much spruce timber is brought to Boston from the lower part of Maine, particularly of the variety called red, and in pieces seventy or eighty feet long." - p.83

As a coastal town with strong commitment to sea going vessels, we asked ourselves, "Did the red spruce ever grow in Marblehead?" The article shows that by 1846 spruce timber was being imported from Maine to the Boston area. But what about the two centuries before 1846, when settled land around Massachusetts Bay was being cleared with trees cut

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Red Spruce - from page 7

down for housing, heat, furniture, utensils, and more? Did spruce grow here then?

The truth is, we don't know. Still, trying to grow red spruce under coastal conditions seemed worthy of trial. An extensive search of seedling nurseries throughout New England and New York drew a blank. Eventually we found a few eighteen-inch tall seedlings in Pennsylvania and have planted three in the Robinson Farm seedling nursery. Time will tell whether they are suited to the area.

- *Bob French*

Access is a First Priority

The Marblehead Conservancy was founded in 2000 – 2001 largely based on a result of a town survey at a time when Marblehead was updating its Open Space and Recreation Plan. The survey revealed that residents were frustrated in their attempts to access town-owned conservation areas due to overgrowth and erosion of existing trails. As the Conservation Commission had no regular staff nor budget to deal with these issues, a group of interested persons volunteered for the task of trail improvement, getting permission from the Conservation Commission. Today, some twenty-four years later, a list of volunteers carrying out the work would show that the names have changed a bit, but the task remains. The built-up longevity suggests the work will continue.

It is generally true that trail walking in natural open spaces has its difficulties. Much of Marblehead overlays ledge, so local trail walking is frequently up and down hills with roots and stones embedded in the trails. It is also true that not everyone has the same physical navigating abilities. This is part of the access problem.

Ware Pond is the flattest of the town conservation areas, providing a good place to practice access improvement as part of area maintenance. In 2005, a Conservancy Trail Crew took on a task of upgrading the trails at Ware Pond to meet the stringent requirements of the American with Disabilities Act. The result has been rewarded with favorable comments from users - particularly the disabled and those with infants or small children. Over the years since, Eagle Scout projects have helped build and maintain Ware Pond boardwalks, all done with the intent of improving access to this wonderful natural open space.

Other town-owned conservation areas have terrains that are more rugged. Some trail remediations, such as the recent resurfacing of the Forest River entrance trail from Old Salem Road, require contracting heavy equipment instead using hand tools, in this case to fill in a deep erosion cut and to re-contour the surface for better drainage and easier walking.

Other changes are coming that will offer more opportunities for access improvement. Town remediation of the former railroad right of way for use by pedestrians and bicycles has begun. This right of way passes by four of the eight town-owned conservation areas: Lead Mills, Wyman Woods, Hawthorn Pond, and Ware Pond. Remediation of this right of way is expensive and will take time. However, when completed, it will give users nearly five miles of open, nearly flat path, contoured for drainage. Where it touches existing conservation areas opportunities exist for improving conservation area access, and that is what the Conservancy does.
The primary purpose of the Marblehead Conservancy, then, has not changed. Access to the conservation areas remains a first priority.