

# SLC NEWS

Special Edition for the Suffield Community

Spring / Summer 2021

## Preservation for the Next Generation



*Top: Blossoms in the overgrown orchard; Above: A vernal pool in the late afternoon – both at the John and Madeline McClean Outdoor Education Preserve.*

*Photos ©Ariel Gagnolati*

The Suffield Land Conservancy (SLC) was founded 40 years ago to acquire and preserve a 45-acre piece of land above Sunrise Park that included a portion of the Metacomet Trail. Since that first transaction, the SLC gradually and selectively acquired nearly 700 acres on 32 properties that reflect the biodiversity of our town. All of our lands are open to the public and low impact usage is encouraged. Many parcels have hiking trails, and others are simply there to be explored. Our aim is to inform the community about our natural surroundings and the important role that nature plays in the health of our planet.

This desire to educate and encourage access to our natural surroundings led us to acquire 23 acres on Sheldon Street across from Suffield High School. This major project will give students a natural resource that is literally right outside their door. In the attached articles, you will see all the exciting educational opportunities this property will provide our students and the residents of Suffield. Please help us make this project a success.

The SLC was started with a simple mission: to preserve Suffield's natural environment and biodiversity. We have had tremendous success due to the generosity of landowners who donate property, donors who provide funding, and volunteers who give their time to keep these properties accessible. All of these people appreciate the importance of preserving our precious natural resources, and we want to help educate the next generation to carry on this mission.

For More: [www.SuffieldLandConservancy.org](http://www.SuffieldLandConservancy.org)



## Our Vision

The SLC is excited to present the John and Madeline McClean Outdoor Education Preserve to the Suffield community, named for the parents of the generous donors. SLC designed the Education Preserve to serve as an outdoor learning lab for all students of the Suffield Public School (SPS) system, to increase the wonder and appreciation for nature and foster stewardship for our environment. To reach this goal, SPS teachers and community members will construct several locations for students to become citizen scientists, using standardized protocols to investigate, record and report on various topics within the property. The program of study within the property will utilize local, state and national experts on several topics, ranging from plant



Photo: ©Melanie Ruth Photography

identification, invasive identification, mediation and removal, to wetland delineation and study. Data loggers will be employed at three sites within the Education Preserve and three sites on school property to research micro-climatic changes between the two locations. This data will be shared with the community (world) via the Internet. Since the data collected will use standardized protocols, it could be used for local, state and national research.

The aim of the Education Preserve is not just to look at environmental science, but to teach the history of our town by researching the impacts of the environment of the Suffield community. The Education Preserve is home to several different ecosystems, including a fallow pear and apple orchard. Students will study how fruit trees and vines are maintained. The students could recondition the orchard to yield fruit and produce jams and other food products after harvest.



The Education Preserve sits on 23.22 acres, situated across the street from Suffield High School on Sheldon Street, West Suffield. The conceptual plan, on the left, shows the approximate locations of some of the structures that will be located on the property. The Education Preserve will house two Adirondack-style shelters, a storage shed, a composting toilet, a raised observation platform and two observation/work decks. The Education Preserve will have a trail (dotted pink line) that will span the perimeter of the property. Students may create other trails leading to areas of interest and study. Access to the property will be via a pedestrian crosswalk from SHS.

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At the Education Preserve, students can pursue artistic opportunities, with learning sites set up for the purpose of painting and sketching. The land presents an opportunity for students to record native fauna via trail cameras and microphones, to capture daytime and nocturnal visitors. Students will use the media to compile a view of the wild residents of the property.

The Preserve will be open to the general public for nature walks and guided historical walks. The property presents a wonderful opportunity for guest speakers to conduct lectures on specific historical functions the land provided—from water resources, wood (lumber and fuel) and food (crops, hunting and fishing).

The Education Preserve is a living, ever-changing laboratory. It is structured to be flexible and meet arising opportunities. We plan to ensure that the Education Preserve is open to all students within SPS. To capture the interest of our community’s youngest students, teachers are developing mini-lessons on: micro-invertebrates; owl pellets; identification of animal footprints, plants, trees, birds and amphibians; vernal pool study; air and water quality; weather, and soil studies.

As of this writing, the SLC has received **\$80,000** in donations and grants toward our goal of **\$215,000** to make the Education Preserve a sustainable endeavor. The SLC expresses its sincere gratitude for the generous gifts from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Mrs. James Sage Coburn Fund, the J. Gladwin Cannon Trust, Suffield Garden Club, and several donors who wish to remain anonymous.

To help you consider your donation, we have enclosed a list of items and their associated costs for the Education Preserve. It is not an exhaustive list, however, it will give an idea of the breadth of the programs that will be offered. For a more inclusive list updated periodically, please visit our website at:

[www.SuffieldLandConservancy.org](http://www.SuffieldLandConservancy.org)

*You may also contact our President Chris Childs at 860-519-4536*

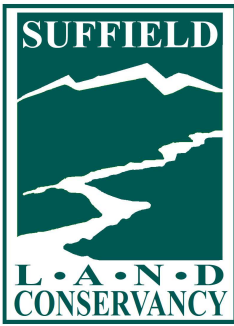
*The Preserve is home to creatures like the Pileated Woodpecker, with evidence of its carpentry skills scattered about.*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Physical structures, including: Adirondack shelters, gravel roadway, high observation platform, two low observation platforms, solar composting toilet, storage shed	<b>\$60,500</b>
Restoration tools, including: identification, delineation and mitigation of invasive plants, trail upkeep and maintenance, and minor construction	<b>\$1,500</b>
Macro Invertebrate research equipment	<b>\$1,700</b>
Soil testing research equipment , e.g. groundwater pollution testing equipment	<b>\$3,400</b>
Data Recording/Mapping Software (GIS)	<b>\$8,000</b>
Art Supplies	<b>\$8,000</b>
Student Mini-Lesson Materials & Equipment	<b>\$8,100</b>
Miscellaneous Items/Personal Gear, including: gloves, rain ponchos, work boots, rubber boots, etc.	<b>\$3,600</b>
Field Data Loggers	<b>\$2,500</b>
Water testing research equipment with variety of probes, sensors, and support equipment	<b>\$22,000</b>
Forestry research equipment	<b>\$9,000</b>
Remote sensing and supporting infrastructure	<b>\$16,000</b>

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**SUFFIELD LAND CONSERVANCY**

**P.O. Box 421**

**Suffield, CT 06078**

*Suffield Land Conservancy –Preserving Suffield’s Natural Environment*



The Suffield Land Conservancy has partnered with Suffield Public Schools to create an exciting new opportunity to enrich our children: The John and Madeline McClean Outdoor Education Preserve, on Sheldon Street across from Suffield High School.

*SHS Students at the Outdoor Education Preserve this spring. Photo © Melanie Ruth Photography*

**Learn more inside about the Preserve and how you can help realize our vision to create a world-class, interdisciplinary outdoor learning space.**