



The Friends of Valley Falls, Inc. Newsletter

www.friendsofvalleyfalls.org

Volume XXVI I Number II

FALL 2018

ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1:00 PM

"Protecting the State Land You Love"

Speaker: Amy Blaymore Paterson, Executive Director, Connecticut Land Conservation Council

Think about the state parks you enjoy with your friends and family. Hammonasset? Harkness? Shenipsit State Forest? Are they protected forever as open space – or could they slip through our fingers with the quiet passage of a last minute bill in the State legislature?

This nearly happened to 17 acres of beautiful state-owned open space on the Connecticut River in Haddam, CT, in 2012. And the threat continues every year when the State Legislature considers conveyance bills. Since the 2012 Haddam event, Connecticut's environmental community has focused on legislative actions to protect these special places.

One of the people who has been actively working on legislative protections for state lands is Vernon's own **Amy Blaymore Paterson**. We are very



Amy Blaymore Paterson

pleased – and proud – to welcome her as the **key-note speaker** for our annual meeting.

Before taking on her current role with the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Amy worked tirelessly preserving some of our beautiful places here in Vernon, including a 100-acre addition to Valley Falls Park, known as Rambling Ridge. Since that time, she has received numerous state awards for her work on land preservation, including the prestigious "Women Inspiring Conservation in Connecticut" award from Lt. Governor, Nancy Wyman. AND - we are proud to note - she was also a past president of the Friends!

Come join Amy in an interactive conversation about our state's open space treasures, and what you can do to help protect them! You'll be glad you did! ☕

THE BELDING WILDFLOWER FIELD

by Jane Seymour, Wildlife Biologist, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Editor's Note: One of the treasures in the Valley Falls area is the state-owned Belding Wildflower Field on Bread & Milk Road. The field is a part of the 270-acre Belding Wildlife Management Area, and is managed by Jane Seymour.

The wildflowers in the field are wild bergamot, common milkweed, swamp milkweed, ox-eye sunflower, robin's plantain, daisy fleabane, dogbane, purple coneflower, goldenrod and New England aster. Along the edge grows wild blackberry and black raspberry, chokeberry, and arrowwood viburnum. Some were planted and some grew wild.

Different plants bloom throughout the season so there is a continuous source of nectar for butterflies, bees and other pollinators. Native grasses are also important to some pollinators. We planted - Indian grass, Canada wild rye and Virginia wild rye.

Most of these plants are native to Connecticut, but some are nearby natives. Native plants are important because
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WHAT'S NEW AT THE FARM

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Farmhouse Kitchen Renovation

At long last the kitchen renovation has been completed in the front apartment of the house. Farmhouse style elements were

incorporated into the renovation, with a farmhouse sink, old beadboard found in the shed, and open shelving using worn planking and iron brackets. We thank the tenants, **Barbara and Tom Duva**, for their patience during the long installation.



Renovated Farmhouse Kitchen - photo by Karin James

Old houses are full of surprises! We also thank **Schneiders Kitchen and Bath** for their quality work and helpful cooperation in carrying out the farmhouse vision for the room.

Heritage Center Update

We continue to work with architect **Bob**

Hurd and museum consultants **Musevue 360** on the project. Construction for minor changes that need to be done to meet ADA requirements will take place in early spring. We look

forward to a mid-2019 opening.



Consultants Donna Baron, Jennifer Eifrig and architect Bob Hurd discuss plans - photo by Ann Letendre

A new bathroom has been installed on the ground floor of the Red Barn.

The bathroom will provide facilities for both events at the barn and for visitors to the future Heritage Center.



New Bathroom in the Red Barn! - photo by Karin James

Lightning Strike Update

Last April, lightning struck one of the two Norway spruce next to the ice house. The tree was quickly removed, and we then began to solicit bids for repairing the ice house and woodshed. After lengthy review of quotes, the Friends chose **ORC, LLC** of Ellington to do the repair work. The cost of damages tallied approximately \$20,000, and fortunately will be covered by our insurance. The work is expected to be completed in October. In the meantime we are exploring the installation of lightning rods on the stable. ☹

VALLEY FALLS DAM RECONSTRUCTION – PATIENCE REQUIRED!

by Dave Smith, Vernon Town Engineer

Editor's Note: The dam at Valley Falls Park will be undergoing some extensive work. Vernon Town Engineer, Dave Smith, is leading the project. Dave provided us with this detailed description of what to expect.

There will be a number of changes at Valley Falls Dam starting very shortly. The Town hired professional engineer Karl Acimovic of Coventry, to design the required modifications to the dam to meet certain safety requirements mandated by the CT Dept of Energy and Environmental Protection. This design was completed last year, approved this spring, and to accommodate the recreation departments program, will commence on August 27th.

The project has been put out to bid and Schumack Construction of Clinton CT will be doing these repairs. The Project should be substantially completed by early winter. The contract value is approximately \$635,000, 2/3 of which is funded by a grant from the CT DEEP. The remaining funds are local monies.

The emergency spillway will be expanded in order to pass the 100 year design without overtopping the actual dam crest. In the event that this does happen in a more intense storm, the downstream face of the

dam will be protected with Rip-rap. The existing stonework will remain and some minor repairs to that will be included. A railing system will be installed at the top of the dam to prevent someone from falling onto the downstream face and spillways.



Dam reconstruction - photo by Karin James

Three matching pedestrian bridges will span the channel, old spillway and new spillway. An area to provide shoreline access for people with disabilities who want to fish will also be provided. All this work has been detailed to provide a compromise between strictly utilitarian solutions to meet the current standards of Dam Safety and preserving the historic aesthetic of the old structure.

The trail that spans the dam will be diverted around the pond and signs to that effect will be placed at key points to aid hikers. The water level will also be drawn down to facilitate this work for a short time. During construction the work area will not be open to the public and we hope that people will be understanding of this necessity. 🌍

OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER – WELCOME!

The Friends are pleased to announce the addition of Maryann Levesque to our Board of Directors. Maryann and her husband Ron came to Vernon in 1981. Ron is a familiar face to many folks in Vernon, since he has worked for the Vernon Public Works Department since that time. In 2001, they moved to Bolton Road, close to our beautiful Valley Falls area. Maryann and Ron have 4 grown children and 3 grandsons. Maryann says that she is happy to serve on a board of individuals that care about the Valley Falls area and realize how lucky we are to have it. 🌍



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they are best suited for our native bees and butterflies. Butterfly and moth caterpillars also depend on native plants for food. For example, monarch caterpillars can only feed on milkweed.

The meadow has a wide variety of butterflies, native bees, moths, beetles, dragonflies and other interesting insects. The wildflower meadow is also home to many birds that feed on the insects. Red-winged blackbirds, blue-winged warblers, song sparrows and common yellowthroats make their nests right on the ground in the meadow. Others, like tree swallows, bluebirds and house wrens nest in the nestboxes there, and Baltimore orioles, rose-breasted grosbeaks, yellow warblers, catbirds and goldfinch make their nests at the edge.

There is a constant battle to control non-native invasive plants like Asiatic bittersweet, multiflora rose, mugwort and Morrow's honeysuckle.

For more information, see www.ct.gov/deep/belding and select or scroll down to Native Landscaping. 

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, September 30, 1:00 pm

300 Valley Falls Road

Agenda –

- *Annual Business Meeting*
- *Beekeeper's Report*
- *Speaker, Amy Blaymore Paterson*
- *Refreshments*

Park at the Red Barn; if area is full,
park in Valley Falls Park

