



# LAND TRUST NEWS

Preserving Open Lands In Our Towns

Winter 2014



Casey's Hill January 2014

photo credit: John Koier

## Jericho Underhill Land Trust Newsletter Winter 2014

Winter brings us brittle cold days, bright blue skies and sparkling sunshine. Snow softens the contours of the land and gives us sliding, skiing, and more outdoor fun. Ice glistens bright; clean and clear. How fortunate we all are to live in this magical, frozen wonderland. The Jericho Underhill Land Trust is pleased to have permanently conserved some of these very special places for winter enjoyment. We look forward to an exciting new year of accomplishments in 2014.



We're on the web: [www.jult.org](http://www.jult.org)

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# BEAVER IN WINTER

By John Schroeder

Many of us know from our experience and observations that beaver are doing well in Vermont. In fact, they are doing very well. The population is healthy and increasing throughout their range, so it may be surprising to learn that as recently as 1850 they were considered to be completely absent from the state - a result of overhunting and trapping. Reintroduced in the 1920's, the population has grown along with a reduction of predators and the regrowth of forests.

We have many thriving beaver colonies in northern Vermont, one of which is located on Moose Pond in the Wolfrun Natural Area, an approximately 400 acre natural parcel, acquired, conserved and managed by JULT. And although the spring, summer and fall seasons seem to be ideal for beaver and their ponds, how do they make it through the long winter?

A beaver family may consist of an adult couple, plus yearlings (born the previous year in late May or early June) and kits of the year, born this year. Before the next kits arrive in May, room for them will need to be made. This happens when the yearlings leave (or are forced to leave) in late winter, to find their own mates and suitable territory.



Beaver lodge - Moose Pond



Beaver lodge – Unnamed pond - Jeffersonville

But during most of the winter, they will all live together in the lodge. Since beaver do not hibernate, they will need to have a food supply to last the season. Because they are not agile on land (or ice and snow) it would be convenient if they could minimize the time needed traveling outside of their lodge. They are in fact able to do this in a very clever way. The lodge is built with only underwater entrances enabling them to enter and exit without needing to maneuver on land or on the ice and snow. They have engineered their dam-made-pond to be deep enough so that it will not freeze from top to bottom during the cold spells. This means they will have room to swim under the ice all winter. Because ice forms beginning at the surface, the new ice and a thin layer of air beneath it, help to insulate the deeper water from intense cold, keeping the lower water open. The pond only needs to be about 30" deep to be safe from freezing completely through.

So now the beaver have a secure lodge, entrances to it from under water and all of this in a pond that is deep enough to ensure there will be open water to swim in. But what about the food? Well, for a busy period prior to freeze-up the beaver have been storing their winter food supply at the bottom of the pond! They have been dragging branches to the pond bottom and holding them there with mud and stones. Before long the branches become water logged and settle to the bottom.

With the food cache just a short underwater swim from the lodge entrance, the beaver will be able to spend all winter either in the lodge or underwater. Protected from the outside weather and protected from the vulnerability they would face on land or ice, the beaver family is now ready to go through the winter in comfort and safety.



## ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

By Rand Wentworth

President, Land Trust Alliance

From "Smart Investment Tip:  
Buy Land" Exchange, Spring 2003

"Communities that conserve land make an investment in future economic development. Companies frequently relocate where their top talent wants to live, and that is most often in places of natural beauty. When land is protected, the adjacent land often increases in value, with homes selling for 10–20 percent more than comparable homes without access to parks. Frederick Law Olmsted first demonstrated this principle in the late 1800's when he documented that Central Park caused \$5.4 million in additional annual tax revenues, quickly repaying the \$14 million cost of the park. American consumers seem to have grasped this simple economic principle: A survey by the National Association of Homebuilders concluded that new homebuyers value trails and natural areas above any other amenity. Saving land from development is often the best way to reduce government spending and avoid increases in property taxes. Many jurisdictions believe that they will make money from the property taxes on new subdivisions, ignoring the true cost of schools, roads, police, water, and storm water management. Studies show that it costs between \$1.04 and \$2 for every dollar of tax revenue to provide services to a typical subdivision, so current taxpayers end up subsidizing outsiders who bring increased traffic, crowded schools, and the loss of the community's individual culture. It is also cheaper to protect clean water at its source than to build expensive water treatment facilities. New York City, for example, saved \$5 billion in construction costs by purchasing conservation lands around its reservoirs in the Catskill Mountains."

**MEMBERS  
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The Jericho Underhill Land Trust is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting important land within our two towns. Our conservation work depends on membership support. Please become a member, or renew, today. Thank you!



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## Help protect our future landscape...TODAY

**Please note:** All JULT memberships now run on a calendar year from January 1st to December 31st.

**Please sign me up for:**

- Conservator** membership \$500
- Steward** membership \$100
- Sponsor** membership \$50
- Family** membership \$35
- Individual** membership \$25
- Student/Senior** membership \$10
- Lifetime** membership \$1,000  
*(Beat inflation and avoid renewal notices!)*

**Other considerations:**

- My employer's matching gift is enclosed.
- Please **do not** send me a "thank-you" gift.
- I wish to remain anonymous.

**Please contact me regarding:**

- Conservation options for my land
- Making a gift of stock
- Including JULT in my will
- Other planned giving opportunities
- Volunteer opportunities:
  - \_\_\_ Fundraising/Events
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  - \_\_\_ Trails/Land Stewardship

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