

## **Sibleyville Land Owners Establish Wildlife Habitat to Increase Reserve**

Private land owners in the Sibleyville Farm Estates neighborhood are working with the Mendon Foundation to establish their land as wildlife habitat in cooperation with the Foundation's nature preserve objectives for that area.

Last year, 45 acres bordering the Sibleyville Farm Estates was donated to the Mendon Foundation (see Winter 2000 edition of newsletter). The donation consisted of two unique features: a geologically significant glacial drumlin and creek-bottom land adjacent to Honeoye Creek. The land is situated at Plains Rd. and Hwy. 15-A in Mendon.

The creek-bottom portion of the land donation is actually a small section of a larger field comprising about 35 acres. This field is bordered on two sides by Honeoye Creek and is adjacent to the "Big Bend" area of the creek associated with the historic Totiakton Seneca Village. Nine individual homeowners in the Sibleyville Farm Estates own over 30 of the 35 acres of the field area.

Through the Mendon Foundation, the private landowners whose land borders the donated land, now known as the Sibleyville Nature Reserve, met with George Bracaglia of Pheasants Forever. George and Paul Corbett, a private land owner representing landowners interests, developed a plan to plant the field with warm season grasses, with the project's primary focus being for songbirds and pheasant.

George placed Paul in contact with the NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service under the USDA. The DEC donated the seed and the NRCS provided the funding to prepare and plant the field. The NRCS also provided a cost-sharing arrangement for ongoing maintenance, and Pheasants Forever will also assist with maintenance.

In exchange for funding the project, the landowners agreed to preserve and maintain the field as a wildlife

habitat for 10 years.

The field was planted in mid-June with a mixture of switchgrass, big bluestem, indiagrass and gamagrass. It will take about two years to determine if the planting was successful.

Paul reports that the landowners are very pleased with the project and proud to be a part of establishing a wildlife habitat.

## **Nature Reserve to Allow Bow Hunting**

The committee of residents and Mendon Foundation members managing the Sibleyville Nature Reserve have decided to allow a limited number of bow hunters to hunting during deer season.

The Sibleyville Nature Reserve Committee agreed to start with 5 deer permits this season, and monitor how much they are used. If use is light, the number can be increased later in the season.

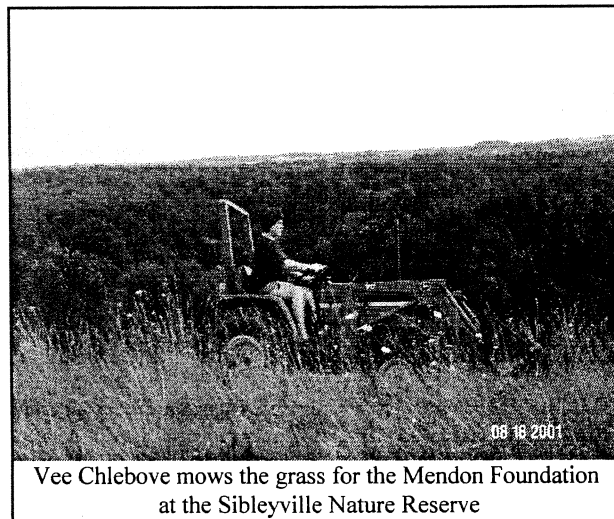
Mark Kowalski presented the Posting Committee's recommendations, which are to have signs made up with the name of the reserve, and wording as to what activities are allowed. About 50-60 signs are needed; they'll be backed with plywood and mounted on steel posts. The signs will be white with

green lettering on aluminum. John Hauber recommended that they not be put on trees since the trees will grow, and push the signs off. From the three vendors that quoted the job, the committee found that Signaroma, in Henrietta, had the best price, charging a \$50 setup fee and then \$8.50 for each sign. The metal posts cost \$3 each. Two sheets of 4 x 8 plywood cost \$15 each.

Posting of the Nature Reserve should be in place by October 15, the start of deer season.

No motorized vehicles will be permitted on the Reserve except for farm equipment.

The Committee is looking into planting bushes on the slope and planting a tree barrier from Plains Road to the creek. There are plans to create walking/cross country ski trails and in the future there will be access to the creek for fishing.



Vee Chlebove mows the grass for the Mendon Foundation at the Sibleyville Nature Reserve

***The Mendon Foundation Newsletter***

**The Mendon Foundation** is a completely volunteer organization which exists with the generous support of its members, volunteers and contributors. Our newsletter is published three times each year. You may contact us with ideas and suggestions for our newsletter, requests for advertising and suggestions, or membership information. Our mailing address is:

**The Mendon Foundation, P.O. Box 231  
Mendon, N.Y. 14506-0231**

**Board of Directors:**

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★**MENDON FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT**★

*The Mendon Foundation is a non-profit corporation established to:*

**PRESERVE**, protect and enhance the scenic, natural, recreational and structural resources in the town of Mendon and directly adjacent properties.

**MAINTAIN** a responsible stewardship of assets and properties held or controlled by the corporation.

**ESTABLISH** and promote local environmental education on issues pertinent to the preservation of natural resources in the town of Mendon.

As we succeed in these objectives, we enhance property values for all Mendon property owners. The Foundation is supported by membership fees, grants and other contributions. Donations to the Mendon Foundation are tax deductible. Proceeds are used to cover easement acquisitions, monitoring and communications. All labor is volunteer.

**The Mendon Foundation Membership Form**

- I would like to become a member
- I would like to volunteer on / my interests are in:
  - Lehigh Valley Trail Committee
  - Trail Park Committee
  - Mendon Community Park Playground Committee
  - Mendon Hamlet Committee
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  - Marketing Committee (advertising for newsletter)
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The committee also wants to create a community compost pile on the site and provide benches and/or picnic tables around the Reserve area.

**Did You Know...**

According to the Land Trust Alliance, the nation's local and regional, private, nonprofit land trusts have conserved more than 6.4 million acres of open space as of Dec. 31, 2000, a 241% increase over the acreage protected as of 1990. To date, the Mendon Foundation has 90 acres as part of its land trust inventory and has worked with one homeowner to establish a 13 acre permanent conservation easement for a wood duck preserve in Mendon.

**No Vacation for Mendon Station Park Planners**

The Mendon Station Park Committee has continued its rigorous schedule of weekly 8 a.m. meetings, completing the design of park facilities, securing cost estimates, and preparing funding applications for the planned park.

For those of you not familiar with the project, the Mendon Station Park will be located in the hamlet next to the Lehigh Valley Trail behind the Foggy Bottom.

The Mendon Station Park Committee is working on two funding programs, that when combined with the Mendon Foundation's contribution, would provide virtually all of the funds needed for the park's development. These programs are the TEA-21 Transportation Enhancement Program and the Parks Development Program of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

A three-dimensional diorama has been made of the park and the adjoining properties. The diorama has been most helpful as we meet with various groups and individuals, seeking community input. After incorporating several park design improvements, the diorama was placed on public display at the Mendon days celebration in August, where the Foundation received a very enthusiastic reaction from the many who viewed it.

There have been some changes from the original concept. For instance, rather than a pond, there will be a grassy area which can be used for concert seating in the summer and skating in the winter. The Foundation is also looking into purchasing a small railroad train for children to play on.

The Mendon Foundation has received many letters of support and encouragement for the park plan from leaders such as Congressman Rom Reynolds, Senator James Alesi, Assemblyman Joe Errigo. Also supportive are the Mendon Town Board, the Mendon Square Office Park Assn. and several equestrian groups.

Tom Reynolds referred to the park plan as "a linking center piece of recreation and local history." He went on to say that "the proposed project has the potential to serve as a catalyst for an educational, recreational and tourist

center. It is my contention that the proposed expansion plan signifies an advancement for which New York State would be proud."

If you would like to see what all the excitement is about, the Mendon Foundation will hold a public meeting on Oct. 11 at 7 p.m. in the Mendon Fire Hall. Mendon Foundation members will discuss the park, highlighting its many features. There will be plenty of time for questions and the 3-D diorama will be on display. We also anticipate that a member of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy of Washington, D.C will be at the meeting to share knowledge of the impact of trail development on adjoining communities.

### Mendon Foundation Adopts Standards Of the Land Trust Alliance

The Mendon Foundation Board voted July 18, 2001 to become a member of, and adopt the standards and practices of the Land Trust Alliance, which the Board believes are essential for the operation of a sound, effective and sustainable land conservation program.

As the national umbrella organization of land trusts, the Land Trust Alliance works for public policies that support land trusts' efforts and promote their land conservation goals. The LTA has the following principles and beliefs, which will also serve the Mendon Foundation in its endeavors:

**Maintaining open land is good public policy:  
open space helps everyone.**

Open space enhances our quality of life. People of all beliefs and means value open spaces for recreation, education, and aesthetic and spiritual enrichment.

Open space protects our health and welfare. Green space is essential for recharging our aquifers, preventing pollution of surface and ground waters, filtering sediments, limiting air pollution, and maintaining wildlife habitat and other natural systems whose benefits to health and medicine are just beginning to be understood.

Open space preserves our heritage. When we maintain open land, we sustain the magnificent forests, prairies, mountains, deserts, rivers, lakes, beaches, farmland and community commons that have uniquely shaped the character of our country and its people.

Open space makes economic sense. Open space is good for business. Study after study shows that communities with protected open space enjoy greater economic vitality than communities that fail to provide the productive resource lands, parks, and natural places that make possible economic activity in such industries as agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

Open space helps state and local governments work efficiently. When agricultural land near a city is developed, government must pay for more than the substantial initial costs of roads, sewers, schools and other infrastructure. The long-term demands of sprawling development on government resources can be exceedingly costly. For example, new roads and longer commutes degrade water, air and habitat quality, which

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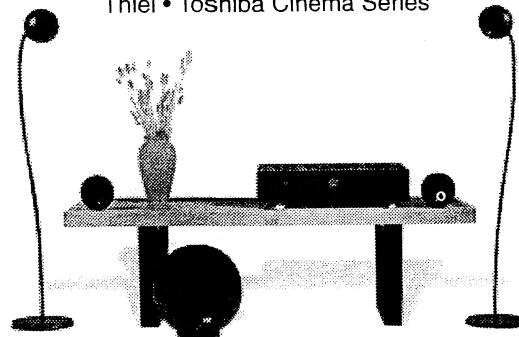
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the government must restore at great expense. Preserving open space means that government services will be better focused, tax dollars will be saved, and vital productive resources will be saved for the future.

### **Good public policy fosters voluntary land conservation.**

Public incentives for conservation of private lands are essential. The vast majority of the nation's open land is in private ownership. While many owners of conservation land would like to keep their land in open space, few can afford to do so by philanthropy alone. Incentives such as income and estate tax benefits, technical assistance grants, matching grants, and programs to purchase partial land interests can encourage private land protection without public ownership or management, reducing cost to the public treasury of ensuring that valuable open space resources are protected.

Permanent conservation is the best public investment. Public investment in perpetual conservation measures are the best for the land, the landowner, and the taxpayer. It rewards landowners for long-term conservation vision while achieving cost-effective conservation goals. Modest expenditures for short-term measures can address appropriately short-term issues. But investment in enduring conservation means that tomorrow's tax dollars can be used for other public purposes, rather than to solve today's problems all over again at likely higher cost.

Public land ownership and management must complement private conservation. While land trusts focus primarily on privately-owned open space, some lands clearly need to be in public ownership in order for the public and the nation to fully benefit from their natural and recreational resources. Publicly-owned parks, wildlife preserves, and forest lands are sound long-term public investments, ensuring the availability of resources for future generations and complementing the conservation of privately-owned lands.

### **Public and private interests in land can and should be balanced.**

Public policies should balance open space and land development. Federal policies that encourage open space protection on private lands are no less critical to the public good than are incentives for land development. Yet through infrastructure subsidies, direct financing, and many other programs, government has tipped the scales against private land conservation and in favor of private land development. That imbalance must be corrected through sound incentives for land conservation and careful analysis of the equity and real costs, both financial and environmental, of subsidizing development.

Public land is capital to be preserved, not squandered. Publicly owned open lands and resources are valuable national assets that should never be divested lightly, and then only if careful analysis shows that they contain little value as public conservation or recreational land. If such lands are sold or traded, the proceeds should be reinvested in conservation of land and resources, either

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directly or through a dedicated fund that yields continuing income streams devoted to land conservation. Ultimately, it is our duty to be good stewards of this inherited capital so that it can benefit future generations.

Respect for property rights is essential to land conservation. Private owners are the backbone of the land trust movement. It is they who decide what they want to do with their land. Land trusts typically work with landowners who choose, voluntarily, to protect their land rather than develop it, and exercise that right by dedicating their land to conservation for the public benefit.

#### **Land trusts make strong conservation partners.**

Public policy aimed at stewardship of private lands should include a clear role for land trusts. Because all land is part of a larger ecosystem, watershed or habitat, lasting conservation requires cooperation among landowners, businesses, local, state, or federal agencies, and citizens. Nonprofit community-based land trusts have proven success in forging these partnerships, as well as assisting with such tasks as managing publicly owned land and monitoring and helping to enforce conservation easements. Moreover, when land trusts want to protect a natural area, create a park, or establish a greenway, they work directly with landowners to craft mutually agreeable, flexible, fair strategies for long-term conservation -- often at greatly reduced public cost. The proven methods, experience, and skill of land trusts should be fully encouraged and used in carrying out land conservation programs.

#### **New Law Expands Conservation Incentives**

The tax bill signed into law by President Bush in June expands a conservation tax incentive. Section 551 of the law removes the geographic limits from IRC 2031(c), the American Farm and Ranch Protection Act. Now, a conservation easement donor is eligible for an additional exclusion from estate tax of up to \$500,000, beyond the exclusion of the value of the easement itself - regardless of where the land is situated. Previously, the exclusion was limited to land within 25 miles of a metropolitan statistical area, a national park, or a federal wilderness area. The new law is of greatest benefit to those who inherit valuable land during the next nine years, when estate taxes will continue. Those individuals can use 2031(c) to make a post-mortem election to donate a conservation easement, which could save them considerable estate taxes.

How does the law work? Consider the Big Dairy Farm, a fictional working farm, but a true-to-life financial example. The family patriarch bought the 500-acre farm for just \$50 per acre nearly 45 years ago, when land was cheap. Today, it is worth \$1.7 million. Mrs. Landowner was left a widow several years ago. The farm comprises nearly her whole estate. She and her husband accumulated just \$175,000 in other assets, so her estate is worth \$1,875,000. The combined state and federal estate taxes would be at least \$500,000 - more than the surviving Landowner children could pay. Yet, they want

to see the farm remain as open space after their mother dies. The solution may would be the donation of a conservation easement to the Mendon Foundation. An easement, which limits the amount and type of development that can take place on land, can be tailored to a landowner's desires. The easement may, for example, permit construction of just two more large-lot homes but protect the land from the possibility of a developer constructing cookie-cutter subdivision homes. As a result, Mrs. Landowner may reduce the land's market value to \$900,000, down from its current \$1.7 million value. Her estate, including \$175,000 in other assets, would then be worth \$1,075,000. Total estate taxes could be approximately \$156,000 rather than \$500,000-plus without the conservation easement.

#### **Wood Duck Preserve Update**

Tim Pryor and Ellen Smith, who have signed a conservation agreement in perpetuity with the federal government for a wood duck conservation project on 13 acres that they own on Pittsford Mendon Center Rd., report that the plan is moving forward.

The federal government plans on constructing 10 small ponds, also known as "pot-holes," around old drainage ditches that run through the property. The land was once celery and onion fields. Trees now grow around the drainage ditches. The site is bordered by an upland wooded area that has oak, beech, maple, willow, poplar and hickory trees.

The habitat that the wood duck prefers is unique to most ducks. They prefer heavily forested wetlands that are high in tree species diversity. They nest in open cavities within the forests that surrounds the wetlands. They will also nest in artificial nesting boxes in deciduous woodlands in close proximity to rivers, wetlands or other suitable aquatic habitats used for brood-rearing.

#### **Wood Ducks Need Minimum 10 Acre Sites**

The 13 acre site that Tim and Ellen are donating was chosen because wood ducks need at least 10 acres of



A Wood Duck's scientific name *Aix sponsa* translates into "waterbird in bridal dress."

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wetland or other aquatic habitat in a contiguous unit, or in isolated parcels separated by no more than 100 feet of upland, in close proximity to nesting habitat to support brood rearing.

Food for young birds and adults differs dramatically. The early diet of ducklings consists largely of insects, aquatic invertebrates, small fish, and other high-protein animal material. After six weeks of age, the young switch to plant foods until their diet consists of approximately 90% vegetative material, primarily aquatic plants such as algae, watermeal, watershield, sago pondweed, and duckweed.

Adult wood ducks feed on a variety of nuts and fruits, aquatic plants and seeds, and aquatic insects and other invertebrates. Insects and aquatic invertebrates are particularly important food items of adult hens during egg laying in spring.

While acorns are the primary fall and winter foods, the seeds of bald cypress, hickory, sweet gum, buttonbush, arrow-arum, bur-reed, and wild rice are also common fall and winter foods.

While many of these food sources are available on the 13 acre parcel, additional plantings of wood duck food sources will be made to enhance the vegetation once the ponds are constructed.

According to the federal government, the largest threat to the future of the wood duck is the continued loss of habitat. By restoring these old celery and onion fields back into a functioning freshwater wetland, Tim and Ellen are assisting in the continued success of wood ducks.

If you are interested in land-use preservation issues, please contact the Mendon Foundation.



#### Thank-you Brian Kelly, Foggy Bottom Cafe

The Mendon Foundation would like to extend its sincerest gratitude to Brian Kelly, owner of the Foggy Bottom Cafe. Over the years, Brian has provided free office space to the Foundation. The Foundation now rents a small space to store all of its records. Pictured above are Todd Foss, Brian Kelly and Carl Foss.



## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Are you interested in maintaining the feeling of natural spaciousness that is Mendon today? Do you enjoy watching the wildlife in your open, wooded or wetland areas? Would you feel comfort in knowing that there is a plan and an organization to support preservation of the rural Mendon charm that attracted so many of its current residents? Could you use a tax deduction that a conservation easement or land donation would bring?

## LET US HEAR FROM YOU

By completing the form at the bottom of the second page of this newsletter, you will tell us of your support for the Mendon Foundation or that you have an interest in more information about us. Volunteer your time, talent or expertise. Join the Mendon Foundation today. Your membership fee is tax deductible.

## First Kids Stuff Sale A Great Success; Thank-you Becki Schirmer!

The Mendon Foundation wishes to express its profound gratitude to Becki Schirmer who organized the first Mendon Foundation Kids Stuff Sale to benefit the Mendon Community Park Playground. A round of applause also goes out to Canandaigua National Bank, which served as a drop-off point for donations and the Mendon Mall owners who donated space at the Mendon Mall for the one day sale. The sale generated \$715.41 to benefit the playground. The Foundation may consider changes for the next sale – for instance, having the sale



for two days instead of one day. Becki has put together a binder of suggestions to help us with the next sale. The Foundation is looking for a permanent coordinator for this specific fund-raising activity. If you would be willing to coordinate the next Kids Stuff Sale to benefit the Mendon Community Playground, please contact a board member of the Mendon Foundation (phone numbers are listed on page 2 of this newsletter).

The Foundation would also like to thank Rayno Niemi who has overseen maintenance of the playground for a number of years. Rayno reports that the structure has been power-washed, sanded and sealed. In addition, some of the rotted landscaping ties have been replaced. Thank-you Rayno for your dedication through-out the years.

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