

D A R I E N



LAND TRUST

FALL 2008

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

DEAR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS,

This Annual Report marks the end of an extraordinary year for the Darien Land Trust—a year of successes and of challenges, of rededication to our historical mission and of expanding that mission into new territory.

Among the successes...our **membership** is 500 strong and, in an uncertain economic climate, we received an unprecedented level of support for our 2008-2009 Annual Campaign. (Thank you!) These funds support all of our stewardship: every time we mow a field, fix a fence, remove invasive plant species or have tree work done, it is Annual Fund dollars that enable us to properly care for an ever growing portfolio (187 acres at this writing) of properties. I would be remiss not to take this opportunity to thank our **stewardship** co-chairs Chris Filmer and Den Frelinghuysen for managing this enormous task, always with energy and enthusiasm.

Among the challenges...we have spent countless hours over the past year fundraising for the acquisition of Waterbury Field on Hollow Tree Ridge Road. Thanks are due to our Waterbury Field Committee, led by Terrie Wood and Charlie Goodyear, for their commitment to saving this beautiful piece of Darien's early history. As I write, we are very close to our goal but ask each of you to consider a gift to the campaign before our December 1 deadline to ensure its success.

As we have throughout our 50 years, we continue to add properties through gifts as well as acquisition. Most recently 2 acres on Hollow Tree Ridge Road (and another 5 acres under conservation easement at the same location) were given to us by the Fords. Our **land review** committee

welcomes every opportunity to speak with members of the community about lands they own (or simply love) and would like to see preserved forever.

Historically we have always made the stewardship of these properties a priority, but this year the Darien Land Trust began new initiatives dedicated to **habitat restoration** on our Valley Forge and Nearwater properties. These efforts place us at the vanguard of best practice among land trusts, going beyond simple maintenance of lands to rehabilitation of vital ecosystems. We are considering other projects of this nature and beginning to learn the "art" of grant application to fund these important efforts.

Better **communications** about our efforts and activities to the broader community has also been an area of focus this year. Thanks are due to Mary Rooney, Margot Hand and Denise Sellhausen for improvements to the website (www.darienlandtrust.org) and for this Annual Report.

I hope that we will see all our members at this year's Annual Meeting, November 9th at Wee Burn Country Club, when we will discuss these projects (and others) in greater detail. We will also honor four retiring trustees—Ed Clarke, Dee Goodnow, Dot Kelly and Lynne Brooks—and elect new trustees from the community to our Board. The talent and time given by these dedicated volunteers is as valuable as the lands they work to protect: priceless.

All the best,

Handwritten signature of Kaye Rabin.

Kaye Rabin, President