



THE GREEN VALLEY INSTITUTE 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

Our Last Green Valley is blessed with many things: a long, rich history still written in our towns and on the landscape; working farms and clean, beautiful rivers; large tracts of unbroken forests that remain full of wildlife. *The Green Valley Institute* (GVI) was created to help document, plan for and protect these priceless resources as our region grows. Our goals:

- To improve the knowledge base from which land use and natural resource decisions are made,
- To build local capacity to protect and manage natural resources as our region grows.

GVI is a formal outreach partnership among The Last Green Valley (TLGV) a National Heritage Corridor, the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the University of Massachusetts Extension, and The Nature Conservancy Connecticut Chapter. Its programs are made possible through active partnerships with many other organizations, and the active involvement of the TLGV's Natural Resources and Agriculture (NRA) Committee.

We believe that land use and natural resource planning and management are primarily *local* activities. As a result, our programs specifically target three local audiences: private landowners, municipal leaders and land use commissioners, and contractors, realtors and others who convert open space to other uses. GVI works to ensure that these groups have the knowledge and resources they need to make good decisions as they plan for the future.



Natchaug River in Chaplin
aerial photos courtesy of G.L. Sweetnam



Greywall Farm, Lebanon

GVI has been privileged to receive formal recognition on several fronts, including:

- 2009: Selected as a finalists for the University of Connecticut Provost's Awards of Excellence in Public Engagement.
- 2009: Invited to present *Lessons Learned: GVI & Borderlands Projects* at the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals conference in San Diego
- 2008: Invited to present *Tools for Building Sustainable Communities*, highlighting GVI's experiences promoting good land use decision-making in TLGV, at the 2008 National Conference of the American Planning Association
- 2007: Partnership Award from the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council for working on conservation and development issues in the region and for the Greenway/Blueway project
- 2006: Farmland Preservation Pathfinder Education Leader Award from the CT Board of Trustees of the Eastern States Exposition
- 2005: National Public Education Award, American Planning Association
"An informed leadership is absolutely essential to understanding the complexities of the cause-and-effect relationships of land use and decision making. GVI's program is a model for all of us."
- Carol Rhea, AICP – 2005 Award Judge
- 2005: GVI was selected as the only Extension Education program in the 12 northeast states to be featured at the annual conference of State Extension Directors, Experiment Station Directors and Land Grant Agricultural College Deans
- 2004: The Frederick Law Olmstead Award from the Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architecture
- 2003: The Public Program Award from the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association
- 2003: The Connecticut Greenways Council's Outstanding Volunteer Program Award
- 2002: The Northeast Cooperative Extension System Directors' Award of Excellence for "extending the knowledge of the nation's land grant system to address contemporary issues"

This report summarizes The Green Valley Institute's activities and accomplishments for twelve months ending September 30th of 2009. We welcome your ideas, suggestions and advice. If you would like to contact us,

call (860) 774-9600, drop a line to

The Green Valley Institute
c/o Windham County Extension Office
139 Wolf Den Road
Brooklyn, CT 06234-1729
or reach us on-line at www.GreenValleyInstitute.org

The 2009 PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND IMPACTS INCLUDE:

- Forty-eight Green Valley Institute (GVI) short courses, workshops and training sessions were taught to 1,073 LGV community leaders, landowners and others. The great majority of these were held in TLGV town halls and other community buildings, bringing the information directly to our target audience in their own communities.
- GVI staff held numerous individual meetings with private landowners and interested citizens in 2009 as well as two Family Land Protection workshops with over 120 participants in attendance; these efforts contributed to at least 343 acres of additional land that is now in the process of, or has been permanently protected. These additional acres bring the total since 2001 of at least 8,685 acres of undeveloped land permanently protected from development, as a direct result of landowners attending programs and workshops or working directly with GVI staff to identify protection options.
- GVI continued its partnership with the Blackstone Heritage Corridor in a Heritage Landscape Survey with a total of 13 towns in the two corridors. In 2009, the three stage process was completed; each town received a final report detailing the process, descriptions of the most important heritage/historical landscapes identified in the town, and suggestions and proposals for next steps to be taken by each town to preserve and protect its most valuable historical and heritage landscapes.
- GVI, along with TNC and local stakeholders, led the Natchaug Basin Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Project conducting a series of four meetings to identify critical aquatic and terrestrial resources shared by the eight participating municipalities. Over 100 participants, including elected officials, conservation organizations, state and local agencies, the University of Connecticut, scientists and other stakeholders collaborated to develop regional strategies and measurable actions for the protection of high water quality for the plants, animals and people of the Natchaug Basin, the largest water supply watershed in Connecticut.
- To help the towns of Chaplin and Coventry prepare for updating their Plan of Conservation and Development, GVI conducted a series of visioning workshops for each town. GVI is also assisting Chaplin by coordinating the preparation of the Plan.
- As a result of the Coventry visioning sessions, the town is working with GVI staff in developing detailed design guidelines for commercial development along its major roadways. Once complete, the guidelines will be shared with other LGV communities.



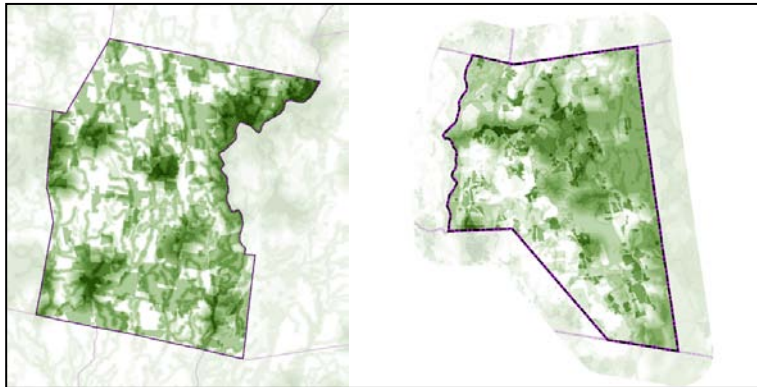
- GVI has been working with the town of Ashford in implementing the goals for the villages of Warrentville and West Ashford as outlined in Ashford's Plan of Conservation and Development.
- In 2005, GVI helped the French River Connection and the towns of Webster and Dudley envision a riverfront recapture of the French River that each town shares. In 2009 another piece has fallen into place with the leasing of a 2 acre parcel along the river in downtown Webster. GVI has developed a concept for a park that has enabled the French River Connection to receive \$30,000 from the Webster Redevelopment Authority for phase I of the French River Park development.
- GVI has worked with LGV to develop an agricultural sustainability plan for the Corridor.

- With funding from the Borderlands Project, GVI continues to work with the two project towns, Killingly CT and Exeter RI, to identify innovative approaches and regulations that will encourage new community growth and development in village centers and protect valuable farms and forestland. Phase I, Heart and Soul Visioning, included University of Connecticut Landscape Architect students and innovative public engagement techniques. Phase II will focus on researching innovative regulatory tools to implement the vision developed in Phase I and further refining this vision. Lessons learned from this project will benefit other LGV communities.



- GVI has assisted Eastford, one of only two towns in Connecticut without zoning regulations, with a workshop to help them understand the issue.
- TLGV towns are continuing to respond to GVI workshops on conservation subdivisions and alternative development techniques. Twelve TLGV towns now include Conservation or Open Space Subdivisions in their regulations, and two more are in the process.
- With funding from the US Forest Service, GVI has created a geographic information system (GIS) model which can be used to identify waterbodies suitable for the installation of dry hydrants for fire protection. These data will assist local fire companies and CT DEP fire control personnel with identification and certification of potential fire pond waterbodies in the Natchaug River Basin. The model can be used to generate data throughout The Last Green Valley and southern New England.
- GVI's GIS Center has worked with local land trusts including Joshua's Tract and Wolf Den Land Trust to map existing protected open space and identify potential land protection projects. Updated data and maps allow land trust volunteers to coordinate resource protection with municipalities and other organizations as well as provide valuable assistance for conservation monitoring.

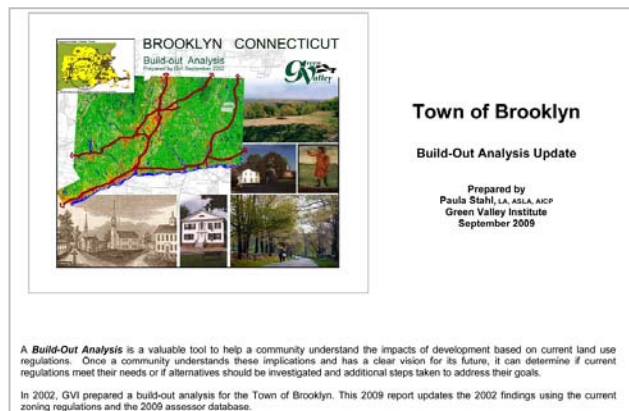
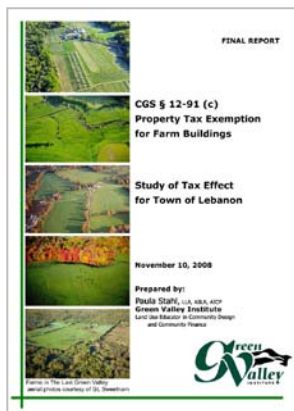
- GVI continues to work with TLGV towns in developing or updating their Natural and Cultural Resource Inventories. During 2009, 2 more towns received their first map set bring the total TLGV towns with a GVI map set to 21. GVI also has developed methodology to map co-occurring resources, another tool to help towns prioritize their resources and incorporate those goals into their Plans of Conservation and Development or Open Space Plans. GVI worked with 2 additional towns to develop their own co-occurring maps in 2009; to date 12 towns have this important tool.



GVI continues to work with TLGV communities to map their co-occurring resources. As you can see each map is unique for Canterbury (on the left) and Griswold (on the right) as each town established their own priorities for the analysis.



- GVI continued its successful seminar series in 2009 in partnership with Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council on tools and techniques to protect what we value as TLGV continues to develop. Topic's included Transfer of Development Rights: Making it Happen and Brownfield's Redevelopment.
- GVI staff prepared a Farm Building Tax Exemption Study for the town of Lebanon that provides the town with information to help them in determining the fiscal effect of supporting working farms by exempting certain farm buildings from local property taxes.



- To help the Town of Brooklyn prepare an update to their Plan of Conservation and Development, GVI staff conducted a second build-out analysis. A build-out analysis

projects the maximum development possible based on current zoning regulations. The first analysis, in 2002, showed that a significant population growth was possible in Brooklyn; subsequently the town revised the zoning regulations. This 2009 study clearly shows that the zoning revisions decreased the potential build-out.

- GVI was invited to present *Lessons Learned: GVI & Borderlands Projects* at the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals conference in San Diego.
- With funding from the Land Use Academy, another UConn CLEAR program, GVI staff has developed *Map Reading: A Manual for Commission Members*. Filled with a wealth of information and tips on site plan reading, this manual will be provided to Land Use Academy attendees. In addition, GVI staff taught Map Reading 101 to an additional 170 folks, many from TLGV, at Academy workshops across Connecticut
- GVI staff are finishing a comprehensive workbook designed to assist municipalities, land trusts and recreational organizations in planning for greenways and green infrastructure across town and state boundaries. It will be developed, printed and distributed throughout the QSHC. The "how-to" workbook will include information on greenways, green infrastructure, important natural and cultural resources and protected lands maps, as well as visioning tools for planning.
- GVI Presented three 2009 Green Neighbor Awards to TLGV communities and organizations who have work to keep the last green valley green:

To the Town of Brooklyn Conservation Commission for the valuable steps they have taken to protect Brooklyn's rural character and natural resources in many ways: establishing an Open Space Land Acquisition Fund, developing a Greenway Plan for protection of natural resources and recreational opportunities, and advising regulatory land use commissions to achieve a sustainable balance of growth and conservation in the Town of Brooklyn,

To Ken Parker for creating an army of French River stewards where none existed before; for co-founding an organization that has successfully improved water quality and river access; and for completely changing the public perception of the French River from a polluted backwater to a treasured resource in only four short years.

Jointly with TLGV, to Holly Drinkuth for her efforts above and beyond the call of duty to protect the water quality of the Natchaug River Watershed by obtaining a Connecticut State Greenways designation for the Natchaug River and its key tributaries, and for convening an in-depth conservation action planning process, bringing together diverse stakeholders from throughout the region to ensure continued protection of this precious resource.

THE GREEN VALLEY INSTITUTE PERSONNEL

Susan Westa, Co-Director and Associate Educator in Land Use and Natural Resources, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System (AICP Certified Planner).
Paula Stahl, Co-Director and Assistant Educator in Community Planning and Community Finance, (Licensed Landscape Architect, AICP Certified Planner)
Michael Altshul, GVI Geographic Information Systems Specialist, University of Connecticut Department of Natural Resources Management & Engineering.
Ruth Cutler, GVI Land Trust liaison and volunteer coordinator, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System (retired June 30, 2009).
Holly Drinkuth, GVI Land Conservation Coordinator and TNC Quinebaug Highlands Project Director
Robert Levite, Esq, Extension Natural Resources Educator, University of Massachusetts Extension.

PARTNERS

Partner organizations that made the Institute's 2009 programs possible include:

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust
Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions
Connecticut Audubon Society
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection
Connecticut Forest & Park Association
Dudley Land Trust
Eastern Connecticut Forest Landowners Association/Wolf Den Land Trust
Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development Area
Eastern Connecticut Soil & Water Conservation District
Joshua's Trust
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions
Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Department of Conservation and Recreation
Mid-State (MA) Trail Association
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments
Rhode Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy
Opacum Land Trust
Southeast Connecticut Council of Governments
University of Connecticut Center of Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) and Extension Geospatial Technologies Program
University of Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources Conservation
Washington County Regional Planning Council
Windham Region Council of Governments
Wyndham Land Trust

And in particular, the numerous municipal boards, commissions and staff from across the TLGV, and the dedicated members of the TLGV Board of Directors and Natural Resources & Agriculture Committee.