

1988 ANNUAL REPORT
FRIENDS OF RATTLESNAKE GUTTER TRUST

1988 was the first full year for the Friends of Rattlesnake Gutter Trust. It has been a year of beginnings. With our By-laws and organizational work under control, we took explorative actions in many directions, to get a sense of where we wanted to go and how to get there. We solicited information from and made ourselves known to other conservation groups, contacted landowners of property along the Gutter, worked with the Leverett Conservation Commission toward the purchase of the keystone parcel of land now on the market, and began a major fund drive toward that purchase.

The trustees have made contacts with the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Dept. of Environmental Management, Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, Trustees of Reservations, Franklin Land Trust, Kestrel Trust. Most of these have involved direct meetings with these groups and with several we have hiked the Gutter. Much useful information, encouragement and in at least one case, the promise of financial aid has resulted.

We have defined our areas of interest and the priorities of these areas as follows:

- 1) Rattlesnake Gutter area
 - a. The Gutter proper, (between the stone bridge on the west end and Whitney Rd. on the east end)
 - b. Whitney Rd. to Millyard Rd.
 - c. M&M trail, Brushy Mt. cellar holes and stone structures
 - d. Extensions of Rattlesnake Gutter Road to Moores Corner on the east and to Montague Rd. on the west.
- 2) Leverett Pond area
- 3) Shutesbury Road area
- 4) Dudleyville Road area
- 5) Jackson Hill area

Letters were sent to all owners of land along the Gutter proper, conveying our interest, outlining various forms of preservation and requesting a right of first refusal. Trustees also met with several landowners individually. Another meeting resulted in negotiations now under way between town counsel and W D Cowles Inc. exploring possibilities of preserving Gutter Road frontage and historic areas on Brushy Mountain.

The most exciting development, however, is the opportunity we have to buy the land of Joseph Koski and Peter Benben, which straddles Rattlesnake Gutter Road and includes the most spectacular part of the Gutter itself. This is the keystone of the entire corridor, both in scenic and geological terms. If this parcel were to be developed, it would be virtually pointless to try to preserve the rest.

To assist the Conservation Commission in acquiring this land, we have started a fund drive with a goal of \$30,000. To date, we are about a third of the way toward that goal. Contributions have ranged from a high of \$5,000 to \$1 memberships from school children. Memorial donations and contributions were given by friends and families of the following:

Beverly Flowers

Robert McNeal

Stanley Dunbar

Eleanor Kamys

Roland S. Grubb

Life memberships and T-shirt sales have brought in nearly \$3,000. Much initial work has been completed in our Can Refunds at the dump, where we have been assisted by fifth graders. We hope that this effort will help extend the life of the dump, as well as being profitable.

Communication with our membership has been through the Newsletter. We have also had tables at both the annual Town Meeting and the Harvest Festival. Donations and life memberships have been acknowledged, if at times belatedly. Your patience while we work out practical ways to communicate is appreciated.

An April Gutter Walk led by geologist John Reid was a forerunner of membership activities which we hope to expand on during the coming year. We invite suggestions and leadership from the membership in the kinds of activities that would be of interest.

The coming year promises to be an equally busy, exciting and important period for our growing Trust.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette Gibavic, Secretary