



# Trail Markers

Weston Forest and Trail Association

*Dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of open space in Weston*

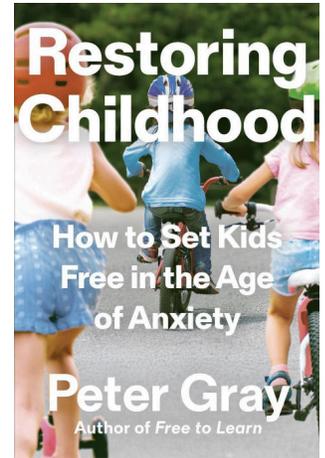
[WestonForestTrail.org](http://WestonForestTrail.org)

## WFTA Annual Meeting — Sunday, May 3, 2026, 4 PM

Join us for our 70th Annual Meeting and a special presentation by **Dr. Peter Gray** on “*Restoring Childhood: Why Playing Freely Outdoors Matters.*” The meeting will be held at the Scout House on School Street. More information is available at [WestonForestTrail.org](http://WestonForestTrail.org).

Based on his research into the evolutionary roots of human development, Dr. Gray will share insights into the vital necessity of free, self-directed play and the wonders awaiting our children when they step away from structured activities and into the wild. During decades of studying the natural ways children learn, he has asked the question: how do we acquire the “human skills” of agency, courage, and resilience?

His answer: Children and adults learn best by playing freely with others. Through such play, we learn how to initiate and direct our own activities, solve our own problems, and negotiate with peers. Outdoor play is especially beneficial, and there are no better playgrounds for these “risky adventures” than woods, streams, and ponds.



We are learning that a lack of independent activity is taking a heavy toll on the next generation, which leads to another question: What can adults in Weston do to encourage and enable kids to play — really play — in our town’s beautiful natural settings? Gray will explore that question, too, summarizing research that shows how unleashing the instinct to play makes children happier, more self-reliant, and better students for life.

**Dr. Peter Gray** is a research professor at Boston College whose work focuses on the value of play and children’s natural ways of learning. He is the author of the critically acclaimed book *Free to Learn*, which has been translated into 18 languages. His new book, *Restoring Childhood*, is due to be published in September. As he often writes, “Nature is the environment in which we were designed to learn.”

Weston Forest and Trail Association has been looking after Weston’s trails and open spaces since 1955. We are grateful for the legacy of fields and forests left to us by previous generations of generous land stewards. Please continue this legacy by [joining us today \(WestonForestTrail.org\)](http://WestonForestTrail.org) to ensure that this gift of natural spaces endures for those who will follow us on Weston’s trails.



## Get Involved!

Are you interested in helping out with trail maintenance? There are several ways you can contribute. One is to join WFTA and the Weston Conservation Department on the third Saturday of every month for Stewardship Saturdays. No experience necessary. Another is to “adopt a trail” in your neighborhood.

Other volunteer opportunities include: co-leading trail walks, drafting articles for our website and social media channels, organizing activities for families, and helping to organize talks and events.

Contact us at [WestonForestTrail@gmail.com](mailto:WestonForestTrail@gmail.com) to find out more about how you can help maintain Weston’s 100 miles of trails and 2000 acres of conservation land.

## Land Stewardship

WFTA and the Weston Conservation Commission (WCC) implemented a comprehensive land management system (Landscape) in 2025. The Landscape system holds information on our conservation properties, easements, trails, conservation restrictions, and other land assets. The successful implementation of Landscape and our fully digitized legal records have been a major step forward for WFTA and WCC’s ability to effectively manage our properties.

WFTA also participated in the Open Space and Recreation Planning exercise (OSRP) managed by the Town last year. The OSRP provided WFTA with excellent guidance on Weston residents’ priorities for new trails, trail maintenance, and amenities like benches and picnic tables at trailheads. In addition, WFTA completed monitoring exercises for its six Conservation Restrictions (CRs) in 2025. One of the CRs had violations which are being remediated by the homeowner, while the other five were violation-free.

Trails are our means of accessing conservation land. They provide needed respite in our crowded lives. Unfortunately, trails also seem to be magnets for falling trees. A good guess is that a dead tree (and sometimes a live one) falls across a trail in town, on average, once a day, 365 days a year. However, with luck, when you walk, ski, or bike along Weston’s 100 miles of trails, you seldom come across a blocked trail – because someone has cleared it before you got there. Often this is the work of the red-vested, all-volunteer Chainsaw Brigade. In addition, on the third Saturday of each month, a group of volunteers meets at a different location in Weston to build new trails, repair old ones, construct boardwalks, or pull invasives.

Summer is the time of fastest plant growth, which means the trails want to merge back into the surrounding woods. In 2025 we hired three college students, Finch, Will and Dan. During the sticky summer months they raked, mowed, cut, and pulled. To do all of this, WFTA works hand-in-work-glove with Weston’s Conservation Department. Together, and [supported by your membership](#), we make sure that our beautiful, and restorative, conservation land is accessible to all.



Building a new trail



Chainsaw training



Summer crew



3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Trailblazer Party



“Trimming the Tavern” at the Golden Ball



Winter Solstice Dawn Hike atop Cat Rock

## Walks, Talks, and Community Connection

In 2025 WFTA continued to prioritize programs to foster community. Our calendar was filled with opportunities for education and exploration. Our 70-year tradition of monthly guided walks on the first Sunday of the month continued to thrive, leading explorers through diverse locales including the historic Case Estates, Hubbard Forest, and the Sears Estate. For those who enjoy the quiet beauty of dawn, our Winter Solstice Dawn Hike to the top of Cat Rock provided a reflective start to the season’s shortest day.

Last year at our 69th Annual Meeting in May, we were privileged to host Francie Von Mertens, a Weston native, whose presentation “*In the Midst of Nature*” offered attendees an intimate perspective on the wildlife habitats sharing our local landscape. Our signature Trailblazer Party in September drew hundreds of neighbors for an evening of multi-generational celebration, while our new “New Resident Walk” at College Pond provided a warm welcome to those just beginning their journey on Weston’s trails. We further expanded our reach by participating in the WeSTAR Potluck, where we introduced new neighbors to meaningful volunteer opportunities within our organization. Junior Ranger programs included making arts and crafts while enjoying a screening of *Brambletown* at the Public Library. WFTA also took part in Celebrate Weston’s spring gathering on the Town Green and Land Sake’s Earth Day Celebration. To close the year, along with our Winter Solstice hike, WFTA made its debut at the Golden Ball Tavern’s “Trimming the Tavern” event in December. Our holiday display, inspired by “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening,” served as a festive tribute to the serene winter landscapes we work to protect. Our hope is to continue to grow our educational and social programs, so please [reach out](#) with any ideas.

This year also marked a milestone in our organizational history as Joel Angiolillo transitioned from President to Past President and Eli Mather began as President. We are deeply grateful to Joel for his years of dedicated service and vision, and we look forward to building upon that legacy as we continue to steward Weston’s 2,000 acres of conservation land for generations to come.

## 2025 Treasurer's Report

INCOME		EXPENSES		DONATIONS	
Donations	\$141,042	Trail Maintenance	\$10,312	Naturalist (\$35)	45
Miscellaneous	\$2,211	Office Expense & Admin	\$13,814	Explorer (\$70)	28
		Legal, Insurance & Accounting	\$13,032	Guardian (\$100)	168
		Stewardship	\$12,041	Steward (\$250)	54
		Outreach	\$15,405	Trailblazer (\$500)	31
		Miscellaneous	\$5,152	George Bates Society (\$1000+)	28
				Other	27
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$143,253</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$69,756</b>	<b>TOTAL DONATIONS</b>	<b>381</b>

The Board of Trustees continues to be very appreciative of the generous financial support of the WFTA community. In 2025, we received just over \$141,000 in donations, and our total income exceeded our total expenses by approximately \$70,000.

Our largest expenditure in 2025 was for outreach, which was elevated compared to 2024. Consistent with one of the purposes of the WFTA, which is to “promote the development of walking and riding trails...for the use and enjoyment of members of the [WFTA] and residents of Weston,” we felt it important to prioritize awareness of the 100+ miles of trails. Office expense and admin was our second-largest expense, elevated from 2024 as we moved our donor record-keeping from an Excel spreadsheet to a user-friendly software. Legal, insurance, and accounting expense for 2025 was also elevated from the prior year, primarily due to legal expense relating to documenting easements. Stewardship expenses for 2025 included the costs involved with digitizing our real property records, and trail maintenance expenses included part-time summer help.

Funds that are not needed for day-to-day operations are held in an investment account that we call the George Bates Fund, in honor of George Bates, a long-time trustee of the WFTA. The George Bates Fund can be used to cover unexpected large expenditures, such as the purchase of land for conservation. The 2025 Financial Report is available at [WestonForestTrail.org](http://WestonForestTrail.org).

## Board of Trustees

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\*Past President

## Weston Forest and Trail Association, Inc. – Annual Membership Dues

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Select a membership level:     \$35 Naturalist             \$250 Steward             Other \_\_\_\_\_

\$70 Explorer                 \$500 Trailblazer

\$100 Guardian               \$1000 George Bates Society

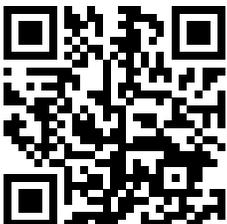
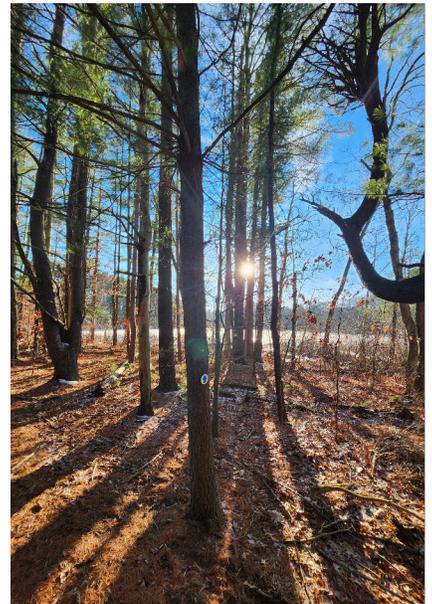
## Find yourself in Nature





Weston Forest and Trail Association, Inc.  
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### Visit Us!

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or follow us on [Facebook @westonforesttrail](https://www.facebook.com/westonforesttrail)  
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We love hearing from you and hope you'll join us!