

Future Projects

- Additional trails and designated camping areas, Improved vehicle access
- Open air pavilion
- Developing the site as an educational resource for all area schools and community groups
- Increased recreation/picnic area
- Improved access for fishing and canoe and kayak launching
- Creation of revenue through the exploration of potable water sources and timber management

“This is one of the most beautiful properties that I’ve ever been on.”

--State Archeologist Nick Bellantoni



See What Mukluk Has to Offer!

- Exceptional salmon and trout fishing on a trophy salmon river
- Scenic vistas from Ayer’s mountain to the casinos of Preston
- Miles of wooded trails
- An incredible variety of birds and wildlife, including bobcat, beaver, wood ducks, deer, wild turkeys, raptors, finches; native wildflowers
- Stone walls, old foundations, and archaeological treasures
- Cascading waterfalls
- Serenity and tranquility



The Mukluk Preserve

owned by the citizens of the Town of Sprague, Connecticut and open to everyone who enjoys the outdoors

There exist within our wonderful country, tracts of land so special, so unique, so indispensable to our human spirit that they shouldn’t be asked to justify their existence by producing revenue; they justify their existence by simply being what they are: *beautiful*. The Mukluk Property is just such a place. Pay it a visit. . . we’ll lead the way.

Local and Regional Partners and Resources

To learn more about conservation and open space resources in the area, as well as specific information regarding Mukluk activities and cleanup issues, please visit the following sites:

- Trout Unlimited: www.nutmegtu.org
- Quinebaug Valley Shetucket Heritage Corridor: www.thelastgreenvalley.org/
- The Environmental Review Team” www.ctert.org
- Mukluk Informational and Photo Repository: www.ctsprague.org
- The Connecticut Fisherman: www.ctfisherman.com
- Phytoremediation information: <http://clu-in.org/download/citizens/citphyto.pdf>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phytoremediation>

Directions

From Route 207 (in Franklin) onto Holton Road. Approximately 1.1 miles on Holton Road, bear right through the steel gate onto the dirt road (marked Mukluk Skeet Club). The access gate is locked at sunset. The preserve boundary is approximately .7 mile down the dirt road; bear right at the fork. Parking is up the hill by the cabin.

The Mukluk Preserve is located off of Holton Road and Rt. 207 in Sprague, CT. For more information please call or write the Sprague Conservation Commission, c/o the Town offices
1 Main Street, P.O. Box 677
Baltic, CT 06330.
Tel. 860.822.3000.
www.ctsprague.org
email: support@ctsprague.org

Welcome!

The 270-acre Mukluk Preserve is a special place; it lies within the heart of a 3,500 acre “roadless” tract of land known as the Last Green Valley. At night, when viewed from satellites or aircraft, this area, about half the size of the Grand Canyon, appears distinctively dark amid the urban and suburban glow of the Boston to Washington Corridor. The Preserve is characterized by deep evergreen forests, waterfalls and high ledges which on a clear day can provide views as far south as the Town of Ledyard. Mukluk provides habitat and refuge for an array of wildlife, including bald eagles currently nesting on the opposite side of the Shetucket River.

The uninterrupted beauty of this river valley is a source of pride as well as a resource for our community. We host a variety of visitors to our area yearly who take advantage of the scenery, wildlife, exceptional fishing, boating and outdoor activities, and community personality that only a small town can offer.

Our purchase of the 270-acre **Mukluk Preserve** in 2005 marked for us a milestone in community planning and open space preservation. What this property can offer to the residents of Eastern Connecticut is a wide variety of passive recreational activities, educational opportunities for our children and a better understanding of our unique cultural heritage. We welcome you to come explore, along with us, this truly amazing corner of Connecticut.

Cathy Osten *Don Boushee*
First Selectman Chair, SCC

A Little History . . .

The Mukluk Preserve was first settled in the early 1700's by Ebenezer Wood, but there is evidence of pre-colonial activity on the property as well. It was divided into farms and woodlots and in 1757 a highway ran through its center, from Route 207 near Franklin Elementary School to a bridge on the Shetucket River known as “Waldo's Bridge”. For a period of time this stagecoach road provided the most direct route from Norwich to Scotland. Foundations of homesteads and the stage tavern still exist, as well as an ice pond and bridge abutments where the Shetucket was crossed. The Mukluk Property passed through several families before ending

History, cont'd.

up in the hands of Amasa and William Sprague in 1858. It remained in the ownership of various manufacturing entities (including the Baltic Water Co., Ponemah Mills, and The Baltic Mills, until 1963 when it was sold to the Mukluk Sportsmen's Club, who gave it its name. During the past 150 years its forests have regenerated, the highway was discontinued and the wildlife has returned. Its use as a shooting preserve protected it from other forms of development, but created a concentration of lead shot in a 16-acre area where a skeet range was located.

Sprague, although an economically disadvantaged community, understood the value of preserving this resource and voted in 2004 to purchase the property with town funds. We subsequently received a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant for \$500,000 to offset the costs of purchase, and a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields grant to begin cleaning the lead shot from the skeet area. For the first time in the property's history, it was open to the public to use and enjoy . . . and the Conservation Commission set to work to address all the issues necessary in making this property accessible, home to a wide variety of activities, and safe for all outdoor enthusiasts.

Making Mukluk Safe

The Mukluk Preserve is one of the first properties of its kind in the state to undertake the challenge of lead cleanup, called remediation. We are working with the Connecticut DEP to continue to delineate the contaminated area and protect it from the public, while we remove the lead pellets and other debris. Currently this area is marked by yellow and orange fence with advisory signs; when visiting please obey them and stay out of these areas. We are also working with the University of Connecticut's Department of Plant Science on a pilot project in one corner of the contaminated area that is testing the efficacy of lead removal from the soil by several types of plants including mustard and willow. Called *phytoremediation*, this is a long-term process that could prove to be a most effective method of removing lead without removing all soil and vegetation from the area.

The Conservation Commission's Activities in Mukluk

Since 2005 the Sprague Conservation Commission has supervised, undertaken and/or completed the following activities on the property:

- Development of preliminary regulations and uses, including designation of overnight camping spots for scouting
- Completion of Phase I-III Environmental Analyses indicating the extent of contamination and cleanup costs
- Cleanup of skeet range area to the extent that an additional 2-acre field is available to the public
- Marking of property boundaries with SCC tags
- A mile long trail expansion along the river including the construction of two footbridges, as part of an Eagle Scout project
- Clearing and marking of major trails and creation of trail map
- Acquisition of a hiking easement from an adjacent property owner that expands the property's walkable area into a convenient “loop” and provides access to beautiful vistas
- Hosting walks during the Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor's Walking Weekends
- Organized hikes and mountain bike rides
- Letterboxing activities
- Commissioning of an Environmental Review Team (ERT) Report. The team, consisting of experts around the state, provided detailed inventory and analysis of the property from a geological, hydrological, wildlife, botanical and forestry perspective
- Commissioning of a Forest Management Plan by Connwood, Inc. of Rockfall, CT through a grant from DEP's Forestry department to review revenue possibilities for the town.

