

A Bench by the Road

In May, the Walden Woods Project, partnering with the Toni Morrison Society, placed a “Bench by the Road” honoring Brister Freeman along Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill, a self-guided interpretive trail. Brister’s Hill is at the intersection of Route 2 and Walden Street in Concord. It had been slated for the development of a large office complex until the Walden Woods Project acquired it for permanent conservation, public enjoyment and education.

The interpretive trail presents Thoreau through a variety of lenses, among them social reform. Henry David Thoreau was a passionate abolitionist, and paid tribute in *Walden* to Brister Freeman, the second Black landowner in Concord and former slave who, after fighting in the American Revolutionary war, helped cultivate land upon the site known as Brister’s Hill in Walden Woods. Thoreau celebrated Freeman’s legacy in *Walden*, declaring that “grow still the apple trees which Brister planted and tended; large old trees now, but their fruit still wild.” Brister Freeman’s apple orchard is a tangible example of the fortitude, ingenuity, and love of the land held by Freeman and the other formerly enslaved men and women of Concord who found refuge in and made an enduring contribution to Walden Woods.



Members of the Toni Morrison Society, Save Our Heritage, The Thoreau Society, and the Drinking Gourd Project help DCR Commissioner, Ed Lambert, and WWP Executive Director, Kathi Anderson, unveil the Bench by the Road at Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill.

The Bench by the Road Project was launched by the Toni Morrison Society in honor of Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison. At the dedication ceremony, we welcomed a large group of visitors, including members of the Toni Morrison Society, Drinking Gourd Project, Save Our Heritage, The Thoreau Society and the Commissioner of the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation. We hope that you will take the opportunity to visit Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill and spend a few moments to reflect on the history of this site while sitting on the bench by the road.

Learn more about Thoreau’s Path on Brister’s Hill at [walden.org/Explore/Walden\\_Woods\\_Ecosystem/Brister’s\\_Hill](http://walden.org/Explore/Walden_Woods_Ecosystem/Brister’s_Hill)

WWP Collaborates with UMass Lowell

In the summer of 2010, as part of the University of Massachusetts Lowell College Success Program for incoming freshmen from Lawrence High School, UMass Lowell professor, Tom Hersey, worked with the Thoreau Institute library curator in developing an interdisciplinary writing program, modeled on Henry David Thoreau’s method. These first-generation students thrived in this environment, and they have since flourished as members and leaders of the UML community. Taking what was learned from that experience, collaboration has continued on several other projects of this sort, including dual-enrollment, blended online writing courses for Lawrence and Haverhill High School students, making use of cutting-edge technology and mobile learning opportunities to explore ideas of perennial concern addressed in Thoreau’s *Walden*.

Hersey states, “Perhaps the greatest benefit of this approach has been the manner in which it has allowed all of my students to rehearse for their upcoming college careers, while simultaneously performing on an impressively high level academically.” We look forward to continuing this great work!



Adieu, Susan!

At the end of the summer, the Walden Woods Project bade farewell to Susan Frey, who served as our Director of Education for seven years. Susan put her energy into developing a global educational program for high school students called World Wide Waldens, and also led our efforts to provide professional development for teachers interested in Thoreau and connecting students to their own special places; their own Waldens. We wish her well as she pursues new career opportunities.

Notes from

Walden Woods

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WALDEN WOODS PROJECT & THE THOREAU INSTITUTE

2013

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“In the woods, we return to reason and faith.”  
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Bear Garden Hill Improvements

Last year, the community of Concord was saddened by the loss of a young man who was a great lover of the outdoors and of Henry Thoreau’s Walden Woods. Erik Jenkinson was a star athlete in Concord but made time in his life for enjoying Bear Garden Hill and the many natural wonders of Walden Woods. After Erik’s death, an anonymous donation was made in his honor to the Walden Woods Project to support improvements on Bear Garden Hill for passive recreation. We are working on new trails and interpretive material for the site. We plan to conduct a handicap assessment of trails on the property and we are putting significant effort into invasive species control on the site. We hope that people will visit Bear Garden Hill on Sudbury Road (just south of Route 2) and see the new trail kiosk built and installed this fall by Eagle Scout candidate Matthew Schomaker. We are grateful to those who have contributed to support improvements at Bear Garden Hill in Erik’s name.

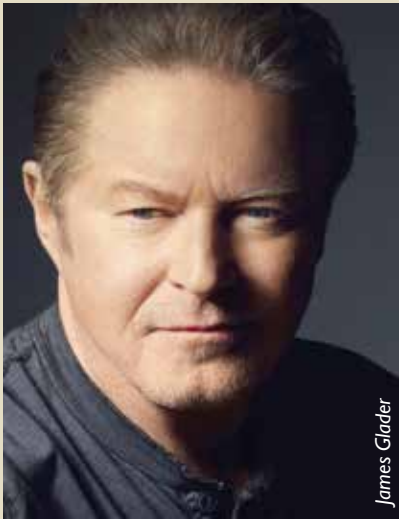


Matt Burne

Chideo Supports Walden Woods

The Walden Woods Project is one of the charities featured on a new, dynamic, social media platform called Chideo (Charity + Video). It was created to change the way hard-working not-for-profit organizations raise money by combining cutting-edge technology, the spirit of giving and the power of entertainment. This groundbreaking “donate-to-watch” video platform enables celebrities, industry and thought-leaders to raise money for their selected charities by offering exclusive content to fans and followers who may, in turn, pose questions of their own, rally support and donate to watch exclusive Chideo content. Chideo launched in Beta on August 19 in support of World Humanitarian Day, with expected full rollout of the platform before year-end.

Check out the Walden Woods Project link on Chideo: <http://www.chideo.com/charity/38> and the link to the Don Henley (pictured at right) Chideo page: <http://www.chideo.com/personality/19> and please make a donation to the Walden Woods Project!



James Glader

Affordable Housing Success

In 1990, the Walden Woods Project protected Bear Garden Hill, where 139 condominium units, some of which were to be affordable housing, had been proposed. At that time, the WWP pledged to find an alternative site for affordable housing. On February 15, 2013, state and local officials joined representatives from the WWP and Concord Housing Development Corporation (CHDC) to announce the transfer of a 12-acre parcel of state land in West Concord to the CHDC, free of charge, for the development of affordable housing, to be known as Junction Village. The land conveyance concluded a long-term effort by the Walden Woods Project to identify and secure a site in Concord for affordable housing.

From the Concord Journal, 2/21/13:

“For two decades, the Walden Woods Project... has worked collaboratively with State Rep. Cory Atkins, Concord town officials, the CHDC and the DOC.... The 12 acres of land is located behind MCI-Concord and abuts the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the Assabet River.”

“Mike Malouf, former member of the CHDC [hailed] the importance of perseverance throughout the entire process to get the land. He thanked Walden Woods and all the stakeholders for making it possible.”

From Boston Globe West, 2/21/13:

“... the Walden Woods Project has fulfilled its commitment by paving the way for construction of new (affordable housing) units in town. State and local officials joined representatives from (the WWP) to celebrate the end of a long process to not only identify viable land but acquire it.”

CONCORD VOTES TO PROTECT WALDEN WOODS

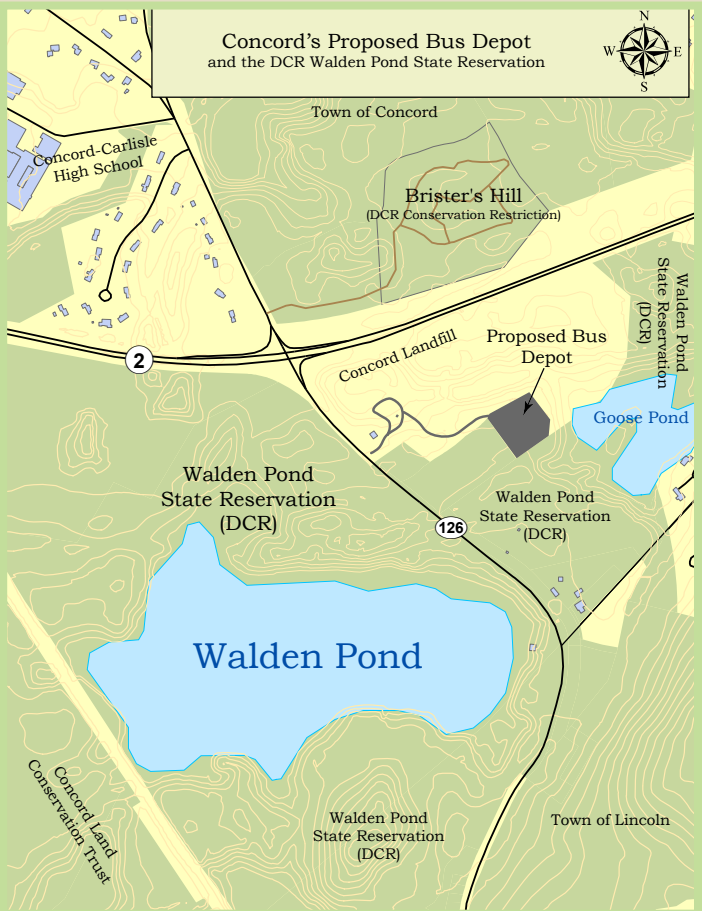
This past spring, the Walden Woods Project led a successful effort to protect a key parcel of municipal land at the border of the Walden Pond State Reservation. A school bus depot had been proposed for this site, just a short distance from Walden Pond in the Town of Concord, MA. The depot would have accommodated 36 buses and 46 cars, would have included the construction of two new buildings, storage for 5,000 gallons of fuel, a new access road, and would have required clearing and paving nearly two acres of mature forest on top of a steep grade overlooking the pristine Goose Pond in Walden Woods.

The site has a complicated history involving prior use as a landfill dating back to the 1950s. In 1994, the Walden Woods Project successfully advocated for the permanent closure of the landfill and donated funding to the Town of Concord for its restoration. Portions of the site were never developed to accept refuse, including the acreage proposed for the bus depot. The parcel has high conservation, recreation, wildlife and historic value.

Development of the proposed bus depot would have prevented the Walden Woods Project from bringing to fruition its longstanding conservation goals for the 35.4 acre municipal parcel. It is imperative to ensure that the landfill site, so close to the Walden Pond State Reservation and Walden Pond itself (a National Historic Landmark), is never redeveloped for purposes that are inconsistent with the international environmental and historic significance of Walden and all it represents.

The WWP has protected nearly 170 acres of land within the greater Walden Woods that is now preserved in perpetuity for public enjoyment, passive recreation and education. Among the land protected by the Walden Woods Project is Brister’s Hill, an 18 acre site directly across the Route 2 highway from the former Concord landfill. Brister’s Hill figures prominently in Thoreau’s literature and scientific research. In the late 1980s, it had been slated for the development of a large office building. Fortunately, the Walden Woods Project was able to acquire Brister’s Hill from the developers, thereby preventing the profound negative impacts to the historic and ecological integrity of Walden Woods that would have resulted from extensive commercial development. It has long been the Walden Woods Project’s goal to connect Brister’s Hill to the former landfill site and to Walden Pond via a pedestrian/wildlife overpass that would facilitate a safe crossing of the Route 2 highway. Without the permanent conservation of the landfill site, this will not be possible.

By an overwhelming majority, the voters of Concord, MA rejected the proposal to build the bus depot on the former landfill site at their town meeting in April 2013. This was an important victory for Walden Woods and for all who care deeply about preserving this internationally revered area for future generations. We thank the thousands of people from near and far who made this positive outcome a reality. However, our work is not done. We must continue our efforts to secure permanent conservation protection for this important site.



A school department proposal to develop a school bus terminal with fueling depot and administrative buildings would have greatly impacted Walden Pond State Reservation and Walden Woods.

