


THE BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST



Year-end appeal, first draft.
Click on yellow boxes to
expand comments.




(today's date)

Dear {addressee informal},

Hoo hoo hoo-hoo was the call that went out slowly, rhythmically through the woods. *I* was the visitor at dusk within Sowams Woods; the great horned owl was at home. Unseen, he checked me out from a limb high in the oak canopy overlooking the vernal pool. Woodland sounds of the day had stilled as the last light shone through the lingering autumn leaves in their many hues of red, brown, and gold. His repeated call seemed insistently directed towards me. *Hoo hoo hoo-hoo. Who are you? Who are you to be here now when it is my time to roam the woods? Who are you; do I know you?* The darkness settled in at the woods as I retraced the trail covered in white pine needles and dried oak leaves just moments before a flashlight would have been needed to find my way in a woods the owl knew so well. 

Now it is my turn to reach out to you, taking liberties with the owl's evening call: you you you-you,  thank you for supporting the Barrington Land Conservation Trust each year. Thank you for protecting the land at Sowams Woods for the owls. Will you please support us once again this year? Have you had the chance to visit the woods with your family this year? Will you join us for an owl walk on a winter's night? 


Your annual appeal donation to the Land Trust protects land and water for wildlife and people.

For thirty years, the Trust has protected parcels large and small throughout our community. The Trust has worked steadily to encourage land conservation by the town. Most properties donated to or purchased by us would not have been protected otherwise. By seeing the value in these small parcels of land, the Trust has assembled a patchwork of natural open spaces, in all parts of our town, that together are of greater value than their separate sum. These properties would probably not have met the acquisition criteria of some land trusts: not large enough, too close to development, not in a completely natural condition. But you know that these lands make all the difference in our community by providing quiet spaces for you and your family to enjoy the outdoors and for your children and grandchildren to learn in small, every day ways about nature just the way you once did. A difference that adds to your quality of life in Barrington. 

Saving the land is just the beginning; ongoing protection requires an investment in stewardship.

Our community was one of the first in Rhode Island to found a nonprofit land trust. In the early days, when there was still much undeveloped land, the goal was to move quickly to save as much land as possible. But acquisition is just the beginning of a trust's ongoing stewardship responsibilities. Your support enables our volunteers to attend to the many pressing needs of our land. From property surveys for boundaries, wetlands and forests to management activities such as the removal of phragmites at coastal properties or the native plants for a restoration project, we rely on your financial support. New properties require an extensive initial stewardship investment. Even property insurance, costing nearly \$1000 each year, is required to allow our properties to remain accessible at no charge to you.

Invasive plants and animals exact a costly toll on our native lands.

I worked with our friends and neighbors on a project this past year in the struggle to reclaim land around a small creek. This neighborhood refuge is a beloved quiet space - a natural spot for a child's imagination and adventures. Invasive plants such as Oriental bittersweet,  multi-flora rose, burning bush euonymus, Japanese barberry, English ivy and other species have muscled their way into the woods. Ornamental plants brought to our shores a century ago for their colorful flowers, fruit or foliage have been spread beyond our suburban

yards and into every place a bird can drop a seed or berry. Usually the trouble begins at the woodland edges, but wherever these plants spring up, we need to be ready to defend our native plants against these invaders.

Otherwise trees are strangled with bittersweet and ivy. Impenetrable, smothering thickets bearing thorns quickly overtake forest shrubs and wildflowers.

Our all-volunteer non-profit land trust is a great value for your donation dollars!

Our volunteers are people just like you - people you probably know: neighbors giving their time on a weekend morning, Beyond Our Walls Great Day of Service volunteers helping on Columbus Day, future Eagle Scouts leading their first stewardship project and some of our long-time stewards faithfully checking properties even when they can only be reached by boat. As a volunteer-run nonprofit organization, the time donated by our volunteers is priceless. If you have volunteered for our Trust, let me take this opportunity to thank you again for your service!

Your stewardship gift is needed this year for our natural open spaces in Barrington.

Our volunteers mean that every dollar can be used towards stewardship work that really must be done by a professional. When invasive beetles cause the premature death of a large tree near a trail or a home, it really does take a professional arborist to safely remove a hazard. Wherever possible the Trust applies for grants to fund large projects such as our coastal restoration work at Little Mussachuck Creek and Allin's Cove. Even when we are successful in receiving thousands of dollars of stewardship funding to benefit our community, we must still provide funds towards the matching requirements from 15 to 25% of the total grant.

Year-end giving is simple and you can review us online.

You can make an online donation via Network for Good by visiting our website: www.blct.org, which includes links to reviews of our nonprofit by GuideStar.

Sometimes it really is easy being 'green'.

Go 'green' and allow us to share up to the minute opportunities with you. To receive invitations for outings and volunteering, simply include your email address as you make your donation.

The great horned owl at Sowams Woods is counting on you.

Please send in your gift today.

If you would like to join us for an owl walk this January, be sure to check 'owl walk'. Group size will be limited on each walk to best enjoy the winter woods, but we will offer enough evenings for everyone to participate in this experience. You can reach us with any questions via email from our website: info@blct.org.

I urge you to send in as generous a year-end stewardship donation as you can. Thank you! (see last yr's signoff)

Sincerely,

Jan Reitsma
President

P.S. A limited time opportunity to match your stewardship gift directly to the Barrington Land Conservation Trust with stewardship funds for work throughout Rhode Island - please read the insert to our appeal.

Your donation will be matched dollar-to-dollar by an anonymous donor to the Rhode Island Foundation towards statewide stewardship initiatives sponsored by the Rhode Island Stewardship Collaborative whose partners include some of our favorite environmental partners such as the Rhode Island Land Trust Council, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, The Nature Conservancy and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey.

(Should give someone to call or email with questions for BLCT and RIF?)

Catch the wave!

Gift to local stewardship now...
And it will be matched for stewardship
throughout the Ocean State!

Overall comments on first draft: Generally, a good letter that needs more tightening and use of the structure that's in there under the details.

Good content and writing, but work to use shorter words, sentences and paragraphs.

I like the subheads, but you could use fewer at the end and most could be stated more briefly.

This letter should be mainly about one thing, with all the elements connected logically. I think this could be a great letter about the owl in Sowams Wood, and how donors can protect it in the future.

There is a good potential connection from story to offer here, but it's not coming through yet. You're challenged by the owl at the beginning and you offer an owl walk at the end, but you don't sell the walk or connect it to your opening.



THE BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST





{today's date}

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The owls at Sowams Woods are thriving in their home today because you cared enough to protect it for them... and for all of us. I hope you can join us there this winter for an owl-walk and hear one first-hand. Perhaps you will hear him saying *you-you you: Thank YOU for protecting these lands!*

And thank you for protecting land and water all over the town of Barrington for wildlife and and for people! For thirty years, the Trust has directly protected parcels large and small. The Trust has also worked successfully to encourage land conservation by the town. Most of these properties  had not have been protected otherwise. By seeing the value in these lands, we have assembled a patchwork of natural open spaces, all across our town, that together, are of greater value than their separate pieces. You know that these lands make all the difference in our community by providing quiet spaces for you and your family to enjoy the outdoors and for your children and grandchildren to learn in small, every day ways about nature just as you once did. **But we must count on your support again this year.** 

Many people work to steward our lands: people you probably know: neighbors giving their time on a weekend morning, Beyond Our Walls Great Day of Service volunteers helping on Columbus Day, future Eagle Scouts leading their first stewardship project and some of our long-time stewards faithfully checking properties even when they can only be reached by boat. **As a volunteer-run nonprofit organization, the time donated by our volunteers is priceless. If you have volunteered for our Trust, let me take this opportunity to thank you again for your service!**

Invasive plants and animals exact a surprising toll on our native lands. **One of the projects for our volunteers this past year was the struggle to reclaim land from invasive plants surrounding a small creek.** This neighborhood refuge is a beloved quiet space - a natural spot for a child's imagination and adventures. Invasive plants such as Oriental bittersweet, multi-flora rose, burning bush euonymus, Japanese barberry, English ivy and other species have muscled their way into the woods. Ornamental plants brought to our shores a century ago for their colorful flowers, fruit or foliage have been spread beyond our suburban yards and into every place a bird can drop a seed or berry.

But saving the land is just the beginning: ongoing protection requires an investment in stewardship. In the early days, our goal was simple - act quickly to protect as much land as possible. New properties require a sizable initial stewardship investment and long held properties demand our care. **90% of our stewardship work is done by volunteers, but this year we will need funds to:**

- Hire arborists to safely fell trees killed prematurely by invasive beetles
- Survey several properties and mark boundaries, and identify plants and wildlife
- Purchase native plants for restoration
- Buy property insurance so that our lands can remain accessible to you
- Treat invasive plants like phragmites and Japanese knotweed



The great horned owl at Sowams Woods is counting on you! I urge you to send in as generous a year-end stewardship donation as you can. Please use the enclosed envelope to return your gift by mail. You may also give securely via our website: www.blct.org which also highlights our many properties and programs.

Our best wishes to you and your family for a safe and happy holiday season,

(insert sig)

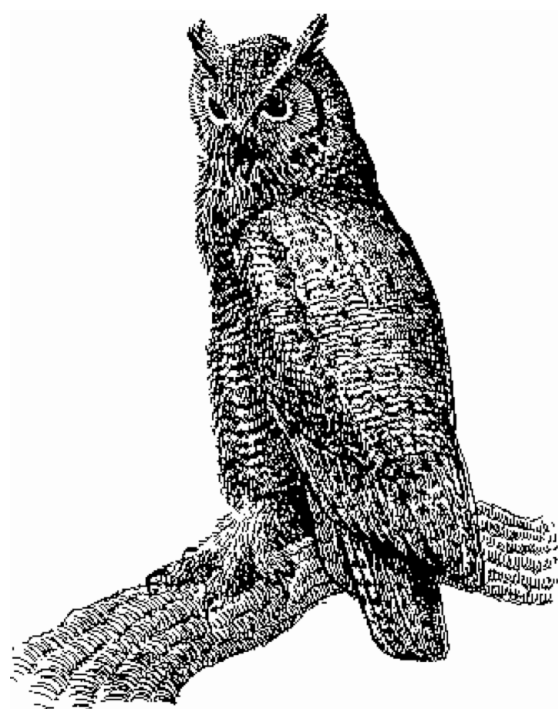
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P.P.P.S. Holiday Walk - Please accept the enclosed walk guide as our holiday gift to you. Try any or all of our suggested walks with your family and friends in the spirit of the season!



Overall comments on second draft: I really like this one! You have a real offer and sustained theme around the owls and walk, and you tell the readers what you need the money for. You work in local color and you say "thank you". (Could say it a couple more times, though.) You use the PS, PSS and PSSS (I salute you!) to expand the benefits and engage recipients in responding to your offer. Great letter, ready to go.


THE BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVATION TRUST
P.O. Box 324, Barrington, RI 02806



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{today's date}

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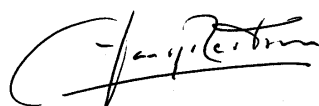
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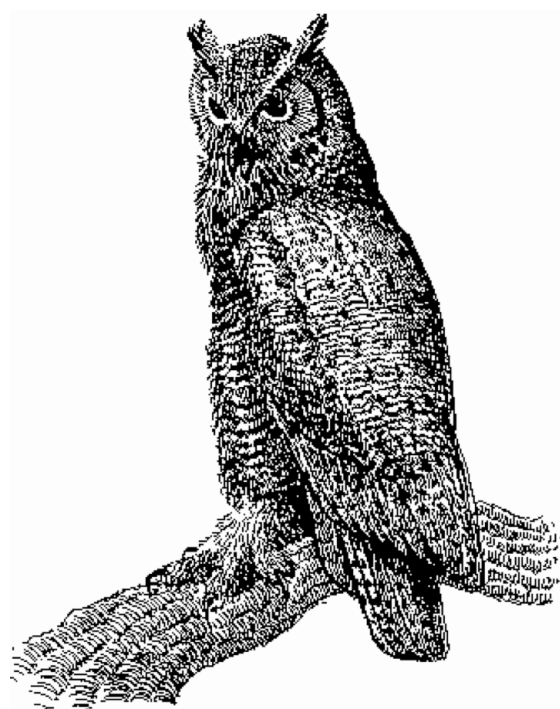
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Comments on 3rd draft.

This looks great and reads well. You really connect the owl to your ask and you spell out what the money will be used for. While there are still ways to make it better, this is a strong letter. I still think that those 3 paragraphs on page 1 could be made shorter, or broken up. Also, next time I would be more specific about the ask: "a contribution of \$X, \$Y, \$Z or more." Great work!



**Your Holiday Walk Guide
from the Barrington Land Conservation Trust**



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**Your Holiday Walk Guide
from the Barrington Land Conservation Trust**



7 Holiday Walks to Enjoy with Friends and Family

- **Rayner Refuge (#63)** - 100 Acre Cove views; grassland, oak forest & coastal trails.
- **St. Andrew's Farm (#69)** - Gentle rolling hills perfect for sledding or kite flying; explore a red maple swamp.
- **Little Mussachuck Creek (#2)** - Trail to sandy beach; shells, sunsets & birds to see.
- **Allin's Cove (#32)** - Stroll the beach; watch the tidal inlet.
- **Sowams Woods (#64)** - Explore trails bordering Echo Lake and vernal pools; look for great horned owls around dusk.
- **Tall Cedars (#31)** - A creek runs through this red maple swamp; for a longer walk, combine with St. Andrew's or Haines Park trails.
- **Andreozzi Nature Preserve (#7)** - Short creek-side trail with bridge overlooking the East Bay Bike Path.

Please check Properties on www.blct.org for details of location, parking, access points and trails.

Enjoy your visit!

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