



Grow Your Land Trust's Membership: *Lessons Learned by HCT*
Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT), P.O. Box 101, South Harwich, MA 02661
Ph: 508-432-3997, E-mail: hct@cape.com, www.HarwichConservationTrust.org

In the spirit of land trust collaboration, the Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) offers its experiences below regarding the growth of membership support. Annual membership donations are often the lifeblood of a land trust, funding diverse needs that can range from land acquisition due diligence to stewardship to ongoing outreach efforts. We all know that growing the membership of our land trusts is important for sustaining and advancing land conservation efforts. Below is a list of questions that have helped HCT evaluate its membership program. After each question is an answer reflecting lessons learned by HCT.

HCT continues to work on its membership program by learning from like-minded conservation organizations. Hopefully, the information herein can help others evaluate and enhance membership efforts. Following this information is a review of HCT's 2006 outreach mailings designed to increase membership. The most important part of the membership process is thanking those that have given.

- 1) How is membership defined (e.g. annual donation at certain level, volunteer, anyone and everyone who likes the land trust)?
 - For many years, HCT continued to send newsletters (2-4/yr) to anyone who donated any amount at any time. Over time, newsletter costs can add up if not offset by consistent renewals. HCT now has suggested giving levels (e.g. \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250, \$1,000 and up).
- 2) Are there membership benefits and are those benefits attached to a donation amount (e.g. \$25 supporter receives semi-annual newsletter, \$100 associate receives newsletters and hat, etc.)?
 - In 2006, HCT began to mail out a semi-annual newsletter (spring and fall) to every paid member in 2006 and a fall annual appeal to all supporters since 2002.
- 3) IMPORTANT: How is membership tracked (e.g. Access database, Excel, FileMaker Pro)?
 - IMPORTANT: Membership information organization is critical for enabling a land trust to identify, track, update, and increase support. Therefore, selecting a database is critical. After researching options, HCT chose FileMakerPro 7 for \$150 and paid a consultant to customize for HCT's purposes as well as tutor a volunteer HCT Trustee on how to operate the program. The trustee also entered in all available data from past years.
- 4) Can your database program and person generate queries and reports (e.g. how many members in 2005 v. 2006, how many over \$100, how many attended the last five fundraisers, how many memorial donations in 2006 and for whom)?
 - FileMakerPro is useful for generating reports which can then guide future outreach efforts including capital campaigns for land purchases.
- 5) IMPORTANT: Who is tracking membership (e.g. volunteer, administrative staff)?
 - IMPORTANT: The key is to have a dedicated person who is both familiar with your database program and is willing to solve problems when they arise.
- 6) Who is processing deposits, thank-you notes, other correspondence?
 - One HCT Trustee enters info. into the database, totals membership amounts and prepares a deposit slip. A second trustee is HCT's bookkeeper and records the total amount in a Quickbooks bookkeeping program, then deposits funds in the HCT operating account.

Grow Your Land Trust's Membership: Lessons Learned by HCT
Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT), P.O. Box 101, South Harwich, MA 02661
Ph: 508-432-3997, E-mail: hct@cape.com, www.HarwichConservationTrust.org

- 7) When or how often is membership data updated (e.g. rolling basis, monthly)?
 - HCT's dedicated database trustee typically updates information weekly.

- 8) When or how often are membership renewal mailings (e.g. rolling basis, monthly, annually)?
 - To streamline membership renewal practices, HCT will mail out a renewal letter in May, July and September.

- 9) Where is membership recorded and is there a regular back-up copy elsewhere?
 - HCT's membership information is stored on the trustee's home computer and a back-up copy (renewed quarterly or as needed) is stored in the HCT office.

- 10) What is the relationship between membership income and operating expenses (i.e. how much of the land trust's operating expenses are covered by membership v. grants v. annual appeal v. other revenue)?
 - Approximately 55% of expenses are covered by membership revenue, 22% by other donations, 20% by three fundraisers and 3% by grants and other miscellaneous income.

- 11) How effective were past membership outreach approaches (e.g. direct mail like a townwide brochure mailing, guided walks, newspaper ads, events)?
 - As of November 30, 2006, all outreach efforts combined (e.g. spring townwide mailing of self-contained color brochure with walk schedule and remittance envelope, monthly membership invitations to new homeowners, walks, press, events, etc.) added 142 new members since 2005. HCT has two part-time staff (each 3 days/week), dedicated volunteer trustees, and a growing volunteer program to shepherd these outreach efforts. All-volunteer land trusts are also successfully growing their memberships. The big lesson is that the combination of the different types of outreach efforts (e.g. direct mail, walks, talks, etc.) has led to HCT's 51% growth in membership for 2006.

Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) Outreach Mailings - 2006

SAMPLES in HCT OUTREACH BINDER - Revised December 8, 2006

1) THANK YOU *to 2006 renewed HCT members* (btw June 14-24)

- #10 envelope with newsletter
- car window decal
- event schedule
- signed thank you

GOALS: thank you, retain members/income, recruit volunteers

ONGOING: signed postcard thank-you's to donors, thank you letters signed by staff and Trustees to businesses or where applicable and timely

2) VOLUNTEER LAND STEWARD INVITATION *to all abutters within 300 feet of HCT fee simple holdings* (btw June 14-24)

- #10 envelope with cover letter and copy of HCT newsletter volunteer article on reverse
- 2-sided volunteer interest survey
- #9 reply envelope
- copy of membership remittance form
- event schedule

(this mailing doubles as invitation to contribute membership donation)

GOALS: volunteer recruitment, increase memberships/income

****ITEMS 1 & 2 COMPLETED JUNE 22nd****

RESOURCES: 8 volunteers; 2.5hrs each + Katie (volunteer college intern) & staff

3) MOORING/BOATSLIP OWNERS *to all mooring permit/boatslip owners in Harwich* (btw July 15-31)

- #10 envelope with cover letter about HCT's *Save Land-Save Water Initiative*
- HCT color brochure
- Remittance env (S on lower right front corner)
- event schedule

GOALS: increase memberships/income

4) MEMBER RENEWAL REMINDER *to all non-renewed 2005 members* (btw July 15-31)

- #10 envelope with "Membership Renewal" stamped on front
- cover letter
- HCT color brochure
- 2006 event schedule
- Remittance envelope (R5 on lower right front corner)

GOALS: retain memberships/income

****ITEMS 3-4 COMPLETED JULY 26th****

RESOURCES: 3 volunteers; 2.5hrs each + Katie (volunteer college intern) & staff

Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) Outreach Mailings - 2006

SAMPLES in HCT OUTREACH BINDER - Revised December 8, 2006

5) LAND DONATION INVITATION *to owners of land > 3 acres classified "unbuildable"*
(443 pieces, btw Aug 10-25 [nonprofit rate])

- #10 envelope with cover letter
- HCT color brochure
- Fall 2006 event schedule
- Remittance envelope

GOALS: Educate specific landowners about potential tax benefits of donating land to HCT

6) NEW HOMEOWNER MEMBERSHIP INVITATION *to all "new" homeowners in Harwich May-July* (100 pieces, btw Aug 10-25 [nonprofit rate])

- #10 envelope with cover letter
- HCT color brochure
- Fall 2006 event schedule
- Remittance envelope (H on lower right front corner)

GOALS: increase memberships/income

7) MEMBER RENEWAL REMINDER *to 2003 donors*

(557 pieces, btw Aug 10-25 [1st class])

- #10 envelope with "Membership Renewal" stamped on front
- cover letter
- HCT color brochure
- Fall 2006 event schedule
- Remittance envelope (R3 on lower right front corner)

GOALS: maintain memberships/income

8) 2nd RENEWAL REMINDER *to 2004-05 members*

(308 pieces, btw Aug 10-25 [1st class])

- #10 envelope with "Membership Renewal" stamped on front
- cover letter
- Fall 2006 event schedule
- Remittance envelope (R5 on lower right front corner)

GOALS: retain memberships/income

****ITEM 5-8 - COMPLETED AUG 21-28****

RESOURCES: 6 volunteers, ~2.2hrs each + Katie (volunteer college intern), total =1496 pieces

9) HCT Oct. 22nd ANNUAL MEETING invite to paid members

(btw Sept 15-30 [nonprofit])

- Postcard invitation with date, time, location
- Also, Oct. 6&7 walks, and Oct. 9th golf tournament

GOALS: Publicize annual meeting, comply with HCT Declaration of Trust

Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) Outreach Mailings - 2006

SAMPLES in HCT OUTREACH BINDER - Revised December 8, 2006

****ITEM 9 – COMPLETED SEPT. 27****

RESOURCES: 2 volunteers; 1.5hrs each + staff

10) NEW HOMEOWNER (AUGUST) MEMBERSHIP INVITATION

(29 pieces, btw Sept 30-Oct 6 [first class])

- #10 envelope with cover letter
- HCT color brochure
- Fall 2006 event schedule
- Remittance envelope (H on lower right front corner)

GOALS: increase memberships/income

****ITEM 10 – COMPLETED OCT. 6****

RESOURCES: 29 pieces, 1 volunteer; 2hrs + staff

11) NEW HOMEOWNER (SEPTEMBER) MEMBERSHIP INVITATION

(24 pieces, btw Oct 11-20 [first class])

- #10 envelope with cover letter
- HCT color brochure
- HCT 2007 Walk Schedule
- Remittance envelope (H on lower right front corner)

GOALS: increase memberships, income

12) SHELLFISH PERMIT HOLDERS MEMBERSHIP INVITATION

(365 pieces, btw Nov. 1-3 [nonprofit rate])

- #10 envelope
- “Shellfishionado” cover letter
- HCT color brochure
- Remittance envelope (SP on lower right front corner)

GOALS: increase memberships, income

13) YEAR-END APPEAL/FALL NEWSLETTER to all 2006 HCT members and all donors/supporters since 2002 (1,859 pieces, HCT’s “Year in Pictures,” btw Nov 1-3 [1st class])

- Year-end gift form (3 in. x 8.5 in.) inside the Fall 2006 PHOTO color self-mailer newsletter WITH YEAR-END GIFT APPEAL NOTE ON FRONT AND BACK
- #9 remittance envelope
- 2007 Walk & Talk Schedule? CHECK WEIGHT to make sure does not go over first class stamp weight {NO, too heavy}
- MAKE SURE TO TAB SEAL NEWSLETTER (2 or 3 sides, ask USPS) {two tabs adequate}

GOALS: Share HCT’s 2006 story, increase memberships, maintain income

****ITEM 13 – COMPLETED NOV. 6****

RESOURCES: 1859 pieces, 12 volunteers, 3.5hrs each + staff

Harwich Conservation Trust (HCT) Outreach Mailings - 2006

SAMPLES in HCT OUTREACH BINDER - Revised December 8, 2006

14) YEAR-END APPEAL/FALL NEWSLETTER (HCT's "Year in Pictures") to all town committee members (**282** pieces, btw Nov. 1-8 [nonprofit rate]):

- Fall 2006 PHOTO color self-mailer newsletter (HCT's Year in Pictures")
- Remittance envelope (TC on lower right front corner)

GOALS: Share HCT's 2006 story, increase memberships, maintain income

****ITEMS 11, 12 and 14 – COMPLETED NOV. 8****

RESOURCES: 671 pieces, 4 volunteers, 3hrs each + staff

15) YEAR-END APPEAL/FALL NEWSLETTER (HCT's "Year in Pictures") to all town employees (**348** pieces, btw Nov. 17-20 [nonprofit rate]):

- Fall 2006 PHOTO color self-mailer newsletter (HCT's Year in Pictures")
- Remittance envelope (E on lower right front corner)

GOALS: Share HCT's 2006 story, increase memberships, maintain income

16) Conservation Restriction outreach mailing to owners of land > 3 acres, vacant or w/house (280 pieces, btw Nov. 17-Dec. 8 [first class])

- Cover letter with free workshop date, place, time
- Mark Robinson editorial from The Cape Codder newspaper
- Color, educational conservation restriction brochure from The Compact

GOALS: Educate specific landowners about conservation restriction workshop and new federal tax law change

****ITEM 15 – COMPLETED NOV. 20; ITEM 16 – COMPLETED DEC. 8****

RESOURCES: 348 pieces + CR mailing (280 pieces), 6 volunteers, 3hrs each + staff

17) Thank you to year-end donors (ONGOING [first class]):

- 2007 HCT Walk Schedule
- Pre-printed notecard or personal note signed by Exec. Dir.
- Winter 2007 event schedule

18) Personal thank you to memorial donors (ONGOING [first class]):

- HCT osprey or rare pink katydid notecard signed by Exec. Dir.

19) Season's Greetings postcard mailed to all HCT supporters since 2002 (btw Dec. 4-8 [nonprofit rate])

GOALS: a) year-end giving reminder, b) slide show schedule, c) walk schedule, d) thank you

****ITEM 19 – COMPLETED DEC. 8****

RESOURCES: 1,750 pieces, 2 volunteers, 3 hours each + staff