

## WLC NOT TOLD OF TREE CUTTING

Every December, many of us stop and take stock of our good fortunes and what we hope will happen or want to change in the coming year. The Woodstock Land Conservancy (WLC) is deeply grateful to the community for continuing to support our work to protect special landscapes and bring people closer to nature. And without you, it would not have been possible to achieve a key milestone of 2009: the signing of a conservation easement protecting the beauty and natural qualities of the Comeau property.

Events of the last few weeks at Comeau do not diminish this accomplishment. If anything, what has transpired strengthens WLC's wish that the spirit of collaboration that brought us and the Town Board together to finalize the easement in mid-November will guide our partnership to uphold it as we move forward.

Unfortunately, WLC was not told about the plans for the tree-cutting (in preparation for an access road) at the Upper Comeau, and found out about it only after the fact. Following close analysis of the easement, WLC and its legal counsel have concluded that in failing to notify us or provide documentation of plans and time to review them, the Town Board in fact violated the terms of the easement. We also believe that the Town may have neglected its obligations under the easement to minimize damage to the environment when conducting activities on the property.

WLC has notified the Town Board about this complex situation and looks forward to working together to take steps to address it. We hope that in the New Year, such problems will not arise, but that the care of the Comeau property will instead be guided by consistent and open communication between the Town Board and WLC.

This will be particularly important as the Town works to develop and adopt a Comeau Stewardship Plan, necessary so that proposed projects are conceived and carried out with the care and protections that the property deserves, the deed of conservation easement specifies, and the community is counting on. As partners in a legally binding agreement designed to last "in perpetuity," who have been charged with the public trust, WLC and the Town Board should expect and do no less - now and for many years to come.

*Kevin Smith, President and John Winter, Executive Director  
Woodstock Land Conservancy*