

HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.

NEWSLETTER



Volume XXX, Summer

June, 2009

A Word from the President David Goldman

I open my letter to you today with great sadness. One of our beloved supporters, friend, director and writer of short stories, Betty Fitzpatrick, passed away this past March after a long fight with cancer. Betty may be best remembered for the folksy short stories that have appeared in this newsletter over the past 14 years. In fact the Trust has collected 25 of these stories and is planning to publish them in pamphlet form as a collected work. Betty was a well known conservationist, who led many well publicized fights to control over development in her beloved Hopkinton, culminating in a town bylaw change that won victory by special ballot (though this was overturned by the State). She was a founding member of the Trust and worked tirelessly helping to acquire open space parcels from developers, designing trail and land use plans, and writing for the newsletter. She became frequently quoted in newspapers as other towns sought to control development and growth. Betty will be sorely missed by the Trust and by the town that she loved so much.

As I write these words, summer is fast approaching. Now is the time to get outside and enjoy the gifts of nature that are so abundant in Hopkinton. The Trust, along with the Friends of Whitehall (FoW) have become the recipient of a Conservation Restriction on the Whitehall property, now renamed the Whitehall Conservation Area. We are diligently preparing the required baseline documentation on the property. However, we invite all of you to share the natural wealth of this property, by walking its' trails and enjoying it's pleasant surroundings. There is parking for 4 or 5 cars at the Wood Street entrance just prior to Fruit Street on the left (heading west on Wood). The Trust and the FoW will be providing signage (via an Eagle Scout project) and the signs will point the way for the trails.

In addition, the Trust has received a very generous gift, from Toll Brothers, of approximately 70 acres of land in Hopkinton Highlands II/Eagle Farms located in the Saddle Hill area, at Overlook Road (off Greenwood Road). The Conservation Restriction for this property has been given to the Friends of Whitehall as well. The Trust plans to prepare trails in this project in the very near future, again with the help of the scouts.

As always, I must come to you with hat in hand, and plead for your support. We all know that economic times are tough, but if you think about it, the Trusts' open space in town provides some very real benefits to each of you. First, it provides open space land that is always open to you and your family for your fun and enjoyment (free of any charges). Second, by maintaining the open space, the Trust is helping to preserve and increase the value of your property in Hopkinton. With close to 700 acres of open space land in Trust ownership or under Conservation restriction, the Trust provides for the preservation of that rural character that we all say we want in Hopkinton. So please help support the Trust so that we can continue to provide this value to you the residents. Thanks for the time you spent reading my letter and please enjoy the summer season.

Very truly: *David Goldman*, President

PO BOX 56, WOODVILLE MA 01784

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2009 HALT Scholarship Program

For several years HALT has offered scholarships to graduating seniors interested in studying environmental sciences and/or conservation of land and natural resources. This year we are pleased to award our scholarship to Keith Love.

Keith was accepted through the early decision process to Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He plans to major in Environmental Studies with an emphasis on biology. He presented an extensive resume of interests and activities including internships with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, Woods Hole, MA, and the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program at the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. He also assisted other researchers in surveying properties for endangered species and in spade foot toad research as well as migratory bird survey research. For several years he has also pursued independent study in natural history, focusing on herpetology. Along with his resume, he submitted a poster on "Turtles of Massachusetts" published by the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife exhibiting six of his wildlife photographs.

The Board of Directors was so impressed with both Keith's scholarship and credentials that we voted to give him an additional one-time grant award as Outstanding Scholar 2009. This grant is in recognition of the importance of Keith's work with vernal pools and their inhabitants. We wish Keith much success in his college studies and future career path.

Hopkinton Center Trail

Join us on Sunday, September 13 at 2PM for the opening of the Hopkinton Center Trail, a one-and-a-half mile long trail running from Rt. 135 to Chamberlain St. The trail opening will take place across from Hopkinton Lumber on Main Street. The trail follows an old railroad line built in 1863 and removed by 1950. Although all remnants of the rail line are long gone, there is a certain aura about walking the old rail line where you can almost here the rusty wheels grate against the rails.

For orientation purposes, one end of the Hopkinton Center Trail is located about one-quarter mile west of the town

center on Rt. 135, across the street from the Hopkinton Lumber store. Starting from there, follow the trail across three bridges and you will arrive at the Loop Road behind Hopkinton High School with athletic field #8 being on your left. Turn right onto the Loop Road, across the bridge and head straight into the parking lot (lot K). At that point turn right again toward the athletic fields (#12 and #13) and as you come to the fields turn left (fields will be on your right) and follow the path over to Chamberlain St.

The trail is well covered with hardwood, high canopy trees, mostly red maples in the wet areas and old field species in the drier lands. Limited white pine and hemlock occur in isolated areas. The overall character is varied and scenic with both open and closed views.

Come join us and members of the Hopkinton Trails Club.

Land Trust Alliance Census Summary

Each year America loses two million acres of farms, forests and open spaces. Pristine landscapes are converted to shopping malls, subdivisions and highways. In the process, more than 100,000 acres of wetlands are destroyed, degrading water quality and contributing to flooding. Americans love their land and yearn to take charge of growth in their hometowns while at the same time respecting the rights of landowners. In this context, *voluntary* conservation by private land trusts is succeeding on a scale never before seen.

The conservation of land in small communities across America is a local story that rarely garners national attention. Yet the combined impact of 1,667 private land trusts operating in every state of the nation is growing significantly, bringing the benefits of clean water, wildlife, parks, urban gardens, family farms, woods and rivers to millions of Americans. From ranchers of wide open spaces in the West, to urban gardeners in dense cities, to kids exploring wetlands, to armchair travelers who enjoy scenic vistas, Americans all have something in common: their love for the outdoors is being protected for future generations.

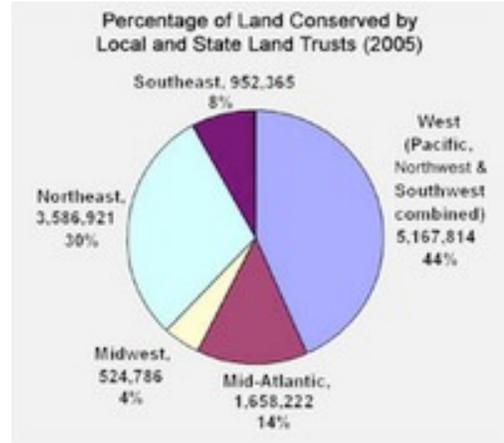
This is being done through a special type of private, nonprofit organization called a land trust, whose mission is typically to preserve a certain type of land that is important to the character and soul of each community.

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Little known just two decades ago, land trusts are now one of the fastest-growing and most successful conservation movements in American history. This new report traces the progress of this largely volunteer movement, with data collected through year-end 2005.

For several decades, the Land Trust Alliance has been tracking national trends in private land conservation, with each five-year report showing dramatically more land protected than ever before. All records were broken with the release of the Alliance's 2005 National Land Trust Census. Some of the most important findings of the report include:

- **Total acres conserved** by local, state and national land trusts **increased 54% to 37 million acres in just the past five years.** This is an area 16 ½ times the size of Yellowstone National Park.
- **The pace of conservation by local and state land trusts more than tripled between successive five-year periods.**
- **The number of land trusts grew to 1,667, a 32% increase over five years.**
- **The West is the fastest-growing area, for both acres conserved and new land trusts.**
- **Acres conserved by local and state land trusts doubled.** 11.9 million acres were conserved by these groups through 2005—an area twice the size of the state of New Hampshire. This is an increase of 5.8 million acres since 2000. See graph.
- **The states with the highest total acres conserved are** California, Maine, Colorado, Montana, Virginia, New York, Vermont, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.
- **The highest number of land trusts is found in California** (198), followed by Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York, and Maine. The preponderance of land trusts in the Northeast reflects the birth of land trusts there more than 100 years ago.



From www.landtrustalliance.org

Tax Credit for Land Conservation

On January 14, 2009, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the “Land Conservation Incentives Act”, establishing a Massachusetts state income tax credit for landowners who donate qualifying conservation land to a municipality, the Commonwealth or certain private nonprofit corporations organized for the purpose of land conservation.

Under the initiative, which goes into effect in the year 2011, the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs will determine whether properties proposed for donation meet public interest standards for natural resource protection. Eligible lands include those that protect drinking water supplies, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, and those that boost the tourism, agricultural and forest product industries. The incentive further requires that:

- Gifts of land must be permanently protected
- Tax credit is valued at 50% of the appraised fair market value of the land

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- Tax credit is limited to \$50,000 per gift
- Tax credit cannot exceed the donor's annual state income tax liability, but may be carried forward for 10 consecutive years
- The state tax credit can also be taken when a federal tax credit is taken for the same donation of land

This act provides taxpayers with a real economic incentive for land stewardship and conservation effort.

A Silver Lining for Massachusetts: Land Conservation Thrives in Economic Recession

by Dan Burgess

A recent report published by the Massachusetts Audubon Society found that there may be some good that has come out of the recent economic crisis: for the first time in at least two decades, the Commonwealth is preserving more land than is being developed.

This report, titled *Losing Ground*, shows that land development has slowed to 22 acres of land being developed a day, down from 40 acres a day in 2003. This report only analyzes data up until 2005, but it is obvious that the recent economic conditions will only add to a further decline.

Slowed conditions in the housing market will have a significant impact as residential land development makes up almost 87% of 'land use change'. While this slouch in expansion will be economically difficult for many, it will also serve to provide an important opportunity for the Commonwealth and the city of Boston to catch it's collective breath and to take a closer look at our land development strategy.

In a recent interview with WBUR radio host Bob Oakes, Jack Clarke, Director of Public Policy at the Massachusetts Audubon Society, stated:

“Roughly speaking, there's five million acres in Massachusetts. One million has been protected, one million has been developed and the rest is up for grabs. And it's up to us as a Commonwealth to be more strategic in how we develop land and how we save land.”

From www.bostongreenscene.net

You can take an important step for your community: Offer your leadership, political support, and charitable gifts to a land trust. Better yet, consider donating a conservation easement on your land. It is an investment in the future that offers attractive tax benefits and the satisfaction that the land you love will be protected forever.

APPLICATION AS A FRIEND OF HALT

Individual Friend \$15 _____

Senior Friend \$10 _____

Family Friend \$25 _____

Associate Friend \$50 _____

Supporting Friend \$100 _____

Sustaining Friend \$300 _____

Corporate Friend \$500+ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Would you like to volunteer your time or services HALT?

All contributions to HALT are deductible for income tax purposes.

Make checks payable to:

HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST, Inc.

Mail to:

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