

FARMING IS A WAY OF LIFE!

Here's a piece of great news! Another local farm will remain an active farm, thanks to a conservation restriction recently purchased by the East Quabbin Land Trust in partnership with the Town of Petersham. Carrots, potatoes, lettuce greens and beets are just a few of the crops growing in the rich soil at Landworks Farm on East Street in Petersham, three miles from the center of town. David Lockesmith, owner of Landworks Farm, along with his colleagues Kathleen Geary and Chris Hinckley are doing all the back breaking work to create nutritious and wholesome vegetables to share with the rest of us.

About the farm David says "Farming, and I believe many farmers out there will agree, is a way of life and not just a job. The smell of fresh cut hay, seedlings popping from the dark soil, the first gasp of air from a new born calf, or sitting around the woodstove on a winter's day thinking about the next growing season. Is there anything better than that?" His passions for the growing and nurturing life are clearly evident in his words and deeds at Landworks Farm. Be sure to seek out his booth at the Petersham Farmer's Market on Friday afternoons on the common.



Potatoes, onions and greens growing at Landworks Farm!



The East Quabbin Land Trust was interested in protecting Landworks Farm for many reasons. Not only because the seven-acre area supports a local family living close to the land that sustains us all, but because other animals such as the Harris' Checkerspot butterfly claim the land as "home" too. The farm fields and neighboring meadow areas provide critical spaces for wildlife to feed, rest and breed. The fact that Landworks Farm is next to other conservation areas is a bonus, expanding the corridor of land that will remain active and vibrant into the future.

Bob Clark, Chair of the Petersham Conservation Commission commented: "A few years ago, the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) in cooperation with the Petersham Conservation Commission conducted a Landscape Inventory. The Petersham Reconnaissance Report

identifies the "Eastern Agricultural Area" which includes the Landworks Farm as a "Priority Heritage Landscape". The sentiment of Townspeople at the public meetings overwhelmingly supported the preservation of our agricultural landscapes. In addition, protected agricultural land provides valuable habitat for a number of species and is part of a ring of permanently protected land with trail systems that may some day interconnect to circumnavigate the town. The Conservation Commission is very pleased with this conservation restriction as it meets the aspirations of the people of Petersham and the goals of town government."

Funding for purchase of the conservation restriction came from many generous individuals and grants from the Massachusetts Conservation Partnership Program, the Town of Petersham Fund at the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the 1772 Foundation. "We are deeply grateful to everyone that supported this conservation initiative," stated Terry Briggs, EQLT's President. "This was a positive outcome for the entire community and all involved."

MESSAGE FROM THE
Executive Director



Cynthia Henshaw

Summer is often a time when schedules loosen up and things slow down. Not so much around the Land Trust for a variety of reasons.

First, in mid-July grants are due to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for land conservation initiatives. State funding is a critical piece for many of our conservation efforts and this year we are involved in several exciting opportunities. The lands in question build on existing conservation areas, include prime agricultural soils, preserve historic sites, include rare species habitat, expand trail networks and allow more public recreational access, and conserve public drinking water supply. We are thrilled to be assisting many families move forward with their land conservation goals.

Second, now is a great time to get out and meet our neighbors at Farmer's Markets and fairs around the region. Be sure to come find us at the Hardwick Farmer's Market (July 15), Hardwick Community Fair (August 17 and 18), New Braintree Country Fair (September 15) and Oaktober Fest in Oakham (October 6). There may be others too! Our youth activity this summer is tie dying EQLT t-shirts. For just \$10 kids can go home with a one-of-a-kind shirt and support the Land Trust at the same time!

Third, the plants are growing and animals are back. Now is a great time to get out and continue cataloging the changes to our Preserves and conservation restriction areas. A small crew of volunteers was trained in bird monitoring techniques earlier this spring. At Mandell Hill there are two separate kestrel families successfully fledging young and four breeding pairs of bobolinks. The trails at Mandell Hill, Frohloff Farm, Patrill Hollow Preserve, Moose Brook Preserve and the Mass Central Rail Trail are ready for you and your family to take a walk. Please go exploring!

Fourth, the Board is also hard at work planning for the future, asking questions like 'What will the region look like in 25 years?' and 'What's the role of the Land Trust in making that future happen?'. Lots of ideas and issues come up in these discussions. I find the most challenging issues to be the pieces we can't control, like tax policy, climate change, public investment in land conservation and stewardship, and how to plan for the unexpected? We see a vibrant and dynamic East Quabbin region in 25 years, and an area of Massachusetts that values the land and water, plants and animals, and our connections to each other. We are interested in knowing what you think about the next 25 years. Please contact me at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org to share your thoughts.

THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST
works to foster the sustainable use of
our natural and historic resources for
the benefit of all generations through
the conservation and stewardship of
the farmlands, woodlands and waters
in our region of Massachusetts.

As a non-profit organization the East Quabbin Land Trust envisions a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

We welcome your thoughts, articles, and photographs on events in our area. For more information about the land trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact our office at:

East Quabbin Land Trust
120 Ridge Road, PO Box 5
Hardwick, MA 01037-0005
413-477-8229 (tel & fax)
email: eqlt@comcast.net

Visit our website at www.eqlt.org

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CHRIS BUELOW : How Landscape and Habitat Patterns Tell a Story

By Judith Jones

Chris Buelow is an avid naturalist. He is also a Restoration Ecologist, expert birder, volunteer and former board member of the East Quabbin Land Trust. Chris grew up in Hardwick Center. His father, Ray Buelow, loved his local landscape and showed Chris its wonders starting at an early age. Chris, his wife Jenna, and daughter Vladia invited me to their house in Gilbertville to talk about his passions.

"Growing up," he says, "I was in the woods all the time exploring. Conservation wasn't something that I thought about. I just wanted to be outside." He went to college in Unity, Maine to study Wildlife Biology, took a lot of ecology courses and started to develop the skills to read the landscape, appreciate patterns and recognize how things in the natural world fit together. Skills that are now key to his work as a Restoration Ecologist with the MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The mission of Natural Heritage – a unit within the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife – is to preserve the biodiversity of Massachusetts and to protect rare and endangered species.



Chris Buelow with his daughter Vladia

Chris' job is to look at the landscape level—how birds, plants and invertebrates interact with each other and with the landscapes that support them. "Everywhere I go," he says, "I see patterns." Much of his work involves exploration and identification. He develops and executes management plans for rare species and special natural communities.

Chris surprised me by saying that many rare species in Massachusetts are *disturbance-dependent*, that is, in order to persist they require some level of disturbance on the landscape. He said that prior to colonization, such things as fire and seasonal flooding from undammed rivers provided regular landscape disturbance. In turn, suites of highly specialized species evolved to exploit the niches left behind by these different types of disturbance. "Most people picture the pre-colonial landscape of Massachusetts as one continuous block of primeval forest", Chris says, "but in reality it was a mosaic of habitats shaped by fire, flooding and wind and ice storms, as well as large blocks of that primeval forest". In modern times we have done a good job in suppressing fire and controlling spring floods. However, by greatly reducing the occurrence of those events, the special niches they create have also become greatly reduced, and the highly specialized species that rely upon them are often lost.

"When I look at a landscape", Chris says, "the first thing I do is try to determine why it supports the species that it does. And then I try to figure out what it looked like 50, 100 and 500 years ago." When a landscape is still supporting a rare species, the key is to understand exactly

what habitat features are critical to that species. "I almost never approach rare species habitat management with just that single species in mind. I believe that by approaching restoration on an ecosystem level, even the rarest and most specialized species will thrive." Sometimes this management takes place in the form of prescribed fire; other times it takes place in the form of targeted tree felling or even logging to mimic the structural effects of fire. "When the disturbance is removed from the landscape, I often become the disturbance", he says in reference to rare species management in fire-adapted ecosystems.

But, just as these specialized species evolved to adapt to ephemeral habitats, they also find ways to persist in less than optimal situations. "Everything," Chris says, "is habitat." He said that gravel pits are refuge for specialized plants and hotspots for invertebrates such as bees and tiger beetles. Powerlines and regenerating logging operations are now the primary habitat for many early successional birds, and old cemeteries often harbor the last remaining local populations of rare plants. "Everything counts. I often think of Nannyberry that I planted in the yard. It's the only Nannyberry within 1/2 mile of the house, but two years later a moth showed up at the porchlight whose larvae only feed upon the leaves of Nannyberry. It found that one plant".

We talked about why Chris first became involved with the Land Trust. "Before the Land Trust, I was worried about the places I loved. The Land Trust has created an outlet to shape the future of these places." In his view, "The Land Trust is becoming what the Grange was 50 years ago. We're thinking about important rural issues in terms of community."

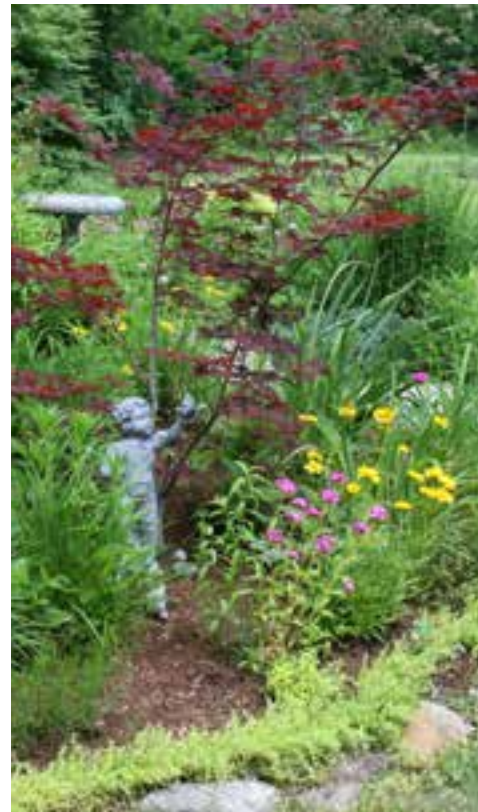
"You can understand a lot about a landscape by observing the plants and animals it supports," he says. He spoke again of how he got started matching the pieces of the puzzle that is his beloved natural world. "I was in college and one of my professor's posted a sign-up for a 'bird-a-thon'. I felt bad because no one signed up, so I put my name down. I didn't know anything about birds. I borrowed a field guide from a friend, chose a spot and waited. At one point I caught a glimpse of a small brown bird with a point of yellow on either side of its bill. I had to go through the entire book page by page to find it was a White-throated Sparrow. But from that I was hooked: I realized that if you could recognize the patterns, you could figure it out. Ultimately, that's what ecology is. It was a turning point for me", he said. For Chris, it was a lesson that set him on his pattern-seeking career path.

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BEAUTY IN BARRE: *A Benefit Garden and Farm Tour*



Thanks EQLT! The 2012 Garden Tour “Beauty in Barre” was a wonderful event on a gorgeous day. As always, the gardens and properties were amazing examples of the natural beauty of the east Quabbin region and of why EQLT works so tirelessly to conserve this special landscape. We were “wowed” not only by the gardens at each stop, but by the hospitality and warmth of our hosts. We can’t wait for next year! -- Sarah M.



Sincere Thank You to our 2012 Garden Hosts:

Mary and Jim Beschta

Look ‘N’ Good Landscaping, Bill & Luann Marley

Charles and Gillian Peckham

Steve and Susan Clark

Judy Lane and Mark Mattson

Great Rock Alpaca, Jack & Kate Lathrop

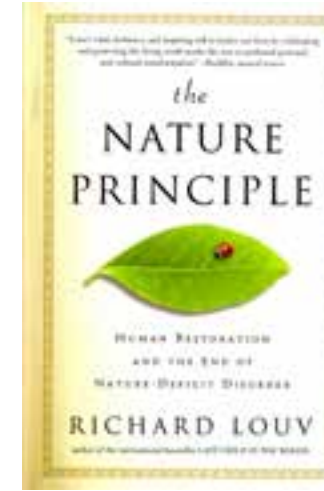
Tom Reed

Patricia and Jim Jewell

Stoney Hill Farm, Bill & Anna Robinson/Betsy Johnson

BOOK DISCUSSION: *The Nature Principle*

Written by Richard Louv



The overwhelming sense of those participating in the book discussion of *The Nature Principle* by Richard Louv was a reaffirmation that being outdoors is a vital part of our lives. Most of us experience that firsthand every day and had pivotal memories from childhood. The book gave TONS of specific research studies, interviews and documentation to confirm our experiences.

We reaffirmed our own belief that being outdoors as a child helped define our sense of self, space, texture and time. Climbing trees gave us confidence and rolling down grassy hills taught how to get dizzy! We learned to pay attention to the changes in light to know when a storm is coming or it’s time to head in for dinner. *The Nature Principle* expanded our understanding that as adults we can, and should, continue to develop our senses. The more time spent outdoors the better.

The Land Trust office sits on Ridge Road with a fabulous view over the Ware River valley. Literally everyone comments on the view and setting when they first visit. Personally, I spend lots of time looking out the windows watching the mist burn off the Ware River, or the turkey vultures gliding in circles as they catch the thermals, or the bobcat slowly rise over the ledge heading towards the field. In *The Nature Principle*, Louv notes that “Employees who sit next to windows are more productive and exhibit consistently fewer symptoms of “sick building syndrome” than other workers” pg 184. For me that provides more justification for my times of “day dreaming”.

During the discussion it was explained in greater detail about the right brain/left brain differences and why my day dreaming is okay. Whew!! The right side of our brains is the creative and pleasurable side that can take pieces and put together a whole picture. Artists (and there were two of them in the room) predominantly use their right side in their work. The left side is more detailed, verbal, mathematical and logical. Most of my work fits into this category, but sometimes there is a strong need to let my mind relax and work at different levels of consciousness. Looking out the window or stepping outside to smell, feel and see the land allows my brain to use both sides, resulting in a better outcome than might otherwise result.

Readers are introduced to the concept of Vitamin N – for Nature. Louv describes new research that supports the concept of nature therapy in controlling pain and negative stress. That’s beyond the obvious benefits of reducing

obesity.

The discussion was guided to stimulate ideas for what the Land Trust can do to expand engagement with nature and encourage ways to get enough Vitamin N. Here are some of the ideas presented that EQLT can do to encourage more Vitamin N (in no particular order):

- Develop an orienteering course at a preserve,
- Create a wildlife blind,
- Watch a meteor shower,
- Take a night hike,
- Provide activities for youth groups to be outdoors,
- Host family hikes,
- Teach fishing,
- Create a construction playground, with a pile of dirt or sand, shovels and toy bulldozers,
- Develop a series of “Least Wanted” posters and workshops on invasive plants to share,
- Connect with school Outing Clubs,
- Establish an area for fairy house building, and
- Place more geocaches.

What would you like to see added to the list? Please share your ideas and let’s make the best ones happen!

One other piece that we all agreed on... whatever gets planned or done, always make sure to have fun while you’re together and outdoors.

--Discussion review by Cynthia Henshaw

Chris Buelow Interview continued from page 3...

So that was the start: Birds. From there he went on to invertebrates: moths, dragonflies and tiger beetles. The rare moths, he told me, are rare because the larvae (caterpillars) are often very host specific, meaning that each species will only feed on one or two species of plant – and often an unusual plant at that. A fascinating example is the Orange Swallow Moth whose larvae will only feed upon False Foxglove; a plant of ridgetop glades that is parasitic on the roots of oak and relies on fire to eliminate understory competition, remove the litter layer to allow its seeds to germinate, and promote oak regeneration.

“The moth will only lay its eggs on the False Foxglove and can find the plant by smell from more than a mile away”, says Chris, “If you find the plant, 70% of the time you’ll find the moth; even on small, isolated patches. But the key to sustaining the moth is sustaining the Foxglove, which means allowing fire that will perpetuate open ridgetop oak glades.”

We came back to talking about the Land Trust and why he enjoys volunteering. “The Land Trust is there for us to express our vision of how we see this community and this land. It’s a great opportunity for us (Chris and his wife Jenna) to influence the landscape of a place like Mandell Hill, for example. To be able to shape an important property that is part of our history and Hardwick’s history. It’s really gratifying to see your ideas become part of the pattern.”

WHAT IS PERMACULTURE?

By Kelly Wheeler

Permaculture was developed in the 1970's by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren at the University of Tasmania in Australia. Mollison, a native Tasmanian, grew up hunting, fishing and farming for a living. As the years went on, he noticed many parts of the natural systems he depended upon were disappearing. Fisheries and forest were being over harvested and began to collapse. The conventional methods used to produce food were depleting soil, causing erosion, and exhausting non-renewable resources. With the help of Holmgren, Mollison created a model for developing sustainable agriculture systems based on the polycultures observed in nature. "Permaculture is the conscious design of cultivated ecosystems which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape, people and appropriate technologies, providing shelter, energy and other needs in a sustainable way. Permaculture is a philosophy and an approach to land use which works with natural rhythms and patterns, weaving together the elements of microclimate, annual and perennial plants, animals, water and soil management, and human needs into intricately connected and productive communities. (Bill Mollison)"

There are three ethics used to guide permaculture design: Care of the Earth, Care for People, and Sharing the Excess (whether it be food, time, resources, etc.). Cooperation, not competition is the key to success. To further direct the design process, 12 Permaculture principles were developed as a checklist to help ensure the goals of the design are met.

1. Observe and interact: By taking time to engage with nature we can design solutions that suit our particular situation.
2. Catch and store energy: By developing systems that collect resources at peak abundance, we can use them in times of need.
3. Obtain a yield: Ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards as part of the work that you are doing.
4. Apply self-regulation and accept feedback.
5. Use and value renewable resources and services: Make the best use of nature's abundance to reduce our consumptive behavior and dependence on non-renewable resources.
6. Produce no waste: By valuing and making use of all the resources that are available, nothing is wasted.
7. Design from patterns to details: By stepping back, we can observe patterns in nature and society. These can form the backbone of our designs, with the details filled in as we go.
8. Integrate rather than segregate: By putting the right things in the right place, relationships develop between those things and they work together to support each other.
9. Use small and slow solutions: Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones, making better



use of local resources and producing more sustainable outcomes.

10. Use and value diversity: Diversity reduces vulnerability to a variety of threats and takes advantage of the unique nature of the environment in which it resides.
11. Use edges and value the marginal: The interface between different ecosystems is often the most valuable, diverse and productive elements in the system.
12. Creatively use and respond to change: We can have a positive impact on inevitable change by carefully observing, and then intervening at the right time.

Working with nature rather than against is the resounding theme in Permaculture, but how do we actually do it? The field of Permaculture is so broad; taking a Permaculture Design course is the best way to get the full scope. The design courses often include such topics as natural building, intensively planted organic gardening, edible forest gardens, rain water collection, sustainable energy systems, composting toilets, vermi-composting, aquaponics--and the list goes on. Permaculture enlists both traditional wisdom and cutting-edge green technology to produce sustainable environments for humans to thrive without depleting the Earth's resources for future generations. One of the most fundamental aspects of Permaculture is community as we cannot be autonomously self-sufficient. Engage in the communities in which you live to help guide the transition to more self-reliant, local economies.

Check out www.permies.com to learn more!

USING PRESCRIBED FIRE AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL

By Caren Caljouw

The East Quabbin Land Trust recently completed stewardship plans for our ten fee-owned properties to help guide resource management, public use, passive recreation, and educational opportunities on the land. In some cases, management consists of simply providing safe access for visitors, improving trails to allow a variety of recreation uses and protection of sensitive resources, or interpreting important landscape features to enhance visitor experiences. In other cases, management requires controlling and removing a particularly troublesome invasive plant, such as Japanese Barberry, prior to engaging in forestry operations. At Mandell Hill and Deer Park, we adopted a proactive management strategy to remove trees, shrubs, and invasives through a combination of selective tree harvesting, mowing, or herbiciding to restore grassland and shrubland for declining bird species such as the Bobolink, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, or Indigo Bunting. At Mandell Hill, grazing cattle help maintain the rich grasslands important to ground nesting birds, keep woody plants at bay, and preserve spectacular views of Mt. Wachusett, the Ware River Valley, and other scenic features on this 200 acre historic farm.

Through this recent planning process, we determined that several properties require habitat restoration and periodic vegetation management to enhance the area's ecological integrity. Prescribed fire is an especially effective management tool to restore woodland, meadow, and shrubland habitats and encourage native plant diversity. While most people associate fire with its destructive characteristics, extensive research shows that prescribed fire is an important land management tool - vital for the ecological function and perpetuation of many uncommon habitats and species.

Although some forests may continue to mature and remain viable if left alone, the Pitch Pine and Oak Woodland found at Frohloff Farm depends on disturbance to preserve its ecology. This community, once locally widespread on droughty and nutrient poor soils associated with the Ware River Valley, has all but disappeared in this setting due to habitat conversion or lack of periodic disturbance. This community now occurs as remnant patches of Pitch Pine and Oak Woods with Scrub Oak, Low-Bush Blueberry, Black Huckleberry, Aster, Goldenrod and Little Bluestem in the understory. Historically these areas supported unusual and showy plants such as Wild Lupine, and in turn, possibly rare and unusual butterflies such as the Frosted Elfin. Wild Lupine is currently restricted to recently scraped or disturbed roadside habitats nearby. In the absence of fire,

White Pine quickly overtops and crowds out woodland plants and eliminates places for Pitch Pine, Oak, and Wild Lupine to germinate and grow. We are hopeful that species such as Wild Lupine may appear on site once prescribed fire is underway. Lupine seeds are known to survive for years under the soil surface and then germinate in great profusion after a passing fire.



Pitch Pine is a great example of a plant uniquely adapted to tolerate fire, weather and insect damage. It has a deep root system including a long tap root which helps trees tolerate strong winds and drought conditions. Its thick platey bark protects dormant buds which will sprout from the trunk and base of the tree. Even if all the needles in the crown are burned and most of the tree is top killed, it may resprout. Pitch Pine also produces cones when very young and may hold onto them for several years. A percentage of these cones are "serotinous", remaining closed until

the heat of a passing fire melts the sticky resin holding the scales together. The passing fire removes leaf litter and duff on the ground and creates an ideal bed of mineral soil for newly fallen seeds to germinate.

We also plan to use prescribed fire to maintain the open meadow and shrubland north of Barre Road, within the area known locally as Deer Park. With periodic fire, we will remove the thatch left from clearing operations, keep woody vegetation in check, and encourage native forbs and grasses such as New England Aster, Butterfly-Weed, and Little Bluestem. Burning will effectively control invasives such as Japanese Barberry. Bare soil areas between grasses and forbs will provide good nesting and foraging habitat for wildlife and increase ground level insects.

We are in the process of gathering information from the field and writing prescriptions to define the weather, fuel, and moisture conditions under which the fire will be allowed to safely burn to reach our management objectives. To execute a prescribed burn requires careful planning, coordination of resources, and specialized equipment. The success of this project will involve a number of partners including Mass Fish and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, the Massachusetts Bureau of Forest Fire Control, and the Hardwick and Ware Fire Departments. This is an exciting new project for EQLT and we are thankful to have the support of other agencies, organizations, and volunteers willing to contribute their time, effort, and resources toward the prescribed fire program.

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

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www.eqlt.org

EQLT News | INSIDE...



Farmland Conservation in Action

Landworks Farm, Petersham

SUMMER 2012 | VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 3

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UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST...

Sunday, August 12, starting at 10:00 PM

Perseid Meteor Shower Viewing, Mandell Hill, at Barre and Ridge Road intersection, Hardwick – Stay up late with your family and meet new friends to witness the annual wonder of the Perseid meteor shower. The Perseids are considered by many people to be the year's best shower, and often peak at 50 or more meteors per hour in a dark sky. Bring blankets, pillows, chairs, or whatever will keep you comfortable as you kick back and look up into the night sky. You can stay up as late as you dare!

Thursday, August 23, 6:30 to 8:00 PM

Family Movie Night - Dr. Seuss' The Lorax, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick – Bring the kids and come watch the modern twist on the classic tale of the Lorax who is a grumpy but charming creature who speaks for the trees, the Truffula Trees, and gives us all a lesson about the importance of environmental protection. BYOP (P for pillows). We'll perch on the sofas, rugs and chairs. Popcorn and juice boxes will be provided. The movie is rated PG for "brief mild language".

SEPTEMBER...

Saturday, September 8, 8:00 to 10:00 AM

Open House at Landworks Farm, 327 East Street, Petersham – Get out for an early morning stroll around the farm to see how the potatoes are growing and catch some butterflies in the meadow. Wear appropriate clothing. Light refreshments available.

OCTOBER...

Sunday, October 14, Starting gun at 10:00 AM

Station Loop Ramble 5-miler, starting at the intersection of Hardwick and West Roads, New Braintree – A hilly road and trail race with a flat fast finish on the Mass Central Rail Trail. Entry fee: \$20 for adults and \$10 for children age 13 and under if received before September 14, 2012. For full details and to register go to www.EQLT.org under the Events tab or contact Cynthia at chenshaw@eqlt.org or 413-477-8229.