

NEW! WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ESTABLISHED

Just before year-end the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was officially created. The new West Brookfield WMA encompasses 320 acres along Mill Brook and Whortleberry Hill whose conservation was facilitated by the East Quabbin Land Trust. You can see the land by driving along Wickaboag Valley Road between Shea and Tyler Roads. The land will be managed by the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and will provide a fantastic resource for people to enjoy hunting, fishing, bird watching, hiking, and other non-motorized outdoor recreation. The property was part of the McRevey Family Trust holdings.

“We are thrilled with this new conservation area that protects so many important natural resources and is open to public passive recreation”, stated Martha Klassanos, EQLT Board President. “It was definitely worth the time and effort to put the many pieces of this complex transaction together.”

The McRevey family property is very large and provides diverse habitats of managed hayfields, wet meadows, old orchards, mature upland forests, and brushy field habitats. Many wildlife species including white-tailed deer, turkey, black bear, otter, mink, black ducks, mallards, Virginia rail, mallard, song birds and diverse insects, amphibians and small mammals all use the land. Additionally, this land contains a full 1.3 meandering miles of the Mill Brook, hosting sedge meadows dominated by cattail and rush. Conservation of the McRevey property will sustain the coldwater fishery that hosts a native population of eastern brook trout and protect the water quality of this primary tributary to Lake Wickaboag. Pollution intolerant invertebrates, such as cad-flies, are found throughout Mill Brook demonstrating high water quality.

“Permanent conservation of the McRevey family property could not have happened without the hard, dedicated work of the East Quabbin Land Trust. Their leadership, commitment, and expertise was the difference that made

the Commonwealth’s acquisition of this property possible,” stated Brandon Kibbe, Land Agent for Worcester County. “Of course, no conservation project would be possible if it weren’t for the landowners who work with the land trusts and state agencies to keep their properties open. Our agencies’ gratitude extends to the McRevey family for their commitment to conservation.”

The East Quabbin Land Trust became aware of the land after detailed discussions with town officials, who were concerned about future development and what that would mean for additional sedimentation and pollution to Lake Wickaboag. In addition, the Old Baypath Indian Trail crosses the property using the footprint of the Madden Road extension. The Historical Society wants to rebuild this historical trail as it winds from New Braintree, south through West Brookfield to Warren.

Connections were made and conversations began with the Trustees to search for a conservation strategy that would meet their financial and land use goals. The great news is that we were successful!!

There is a ten-acre piece adjacent to Madden Road that the McRevey Family Trust has temporarily retained to conduct a gravel operation. Specific best management practices are incorporated into the agreement to ensure that the land is reclaimed such that vegetation can re-grow quickly on the site. The gravel pit area will be incorporated into the West Brookfield WMA within eight years or less.

A guided tour of the West Brookfield WMA is scheduled for Saturday, April 21st beginning at 9am. Bring your family, neighbors and friends to visit the newest conservation area in West Brookfield. The walk will be lead by representatives of the East Quabbin Land Trust and Department of Fish and Game. For more information contact Cynthia Henshaw at chenshaw@eqlt.org or 413-477-8229. ■



MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



As we make the transition into a new year it's important to reflect on recent accomplishments and plan for new or expanded activities in the coming months. We have exciting news to share on both fronts!

Just at year-end the East Quabbin Land Trust successfully completed our largest single conservation effort to date with the conservation of over 300 acres along the Mill Brook valley establishing the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area (there are more details in the cover story). We also accepted a conservation restriction on 19 acres in Petersham that was made possible by the new state land conservation tax credit program! We look forward to working with other families to make their land conservation dreams come true.

Also exciting for the organization was the hiring of Caren Caljouw as part-time Stewardship Coordinator!! Caren has been totally immersed in learning more about the land trust properties and getting to know our expansive core of volunteers that assist with all kinds of stewardship tasks. Caren's core skill set as botanist is advancing the depth of our management planning and stewardship activities.

Planning for 2012 is underway with a few new twists to keep an eye out for. We hope you join us during any of these or other activities throughout the year!

- We started the year off with a walk at the rail trail followed by a potluck lunch. Over forty people participated and we saw others on the trail; the weather was beautiful for a walk. This might just become a New Year's tradition.
- On Saturday April 21st we are co-hosting a walk at the new West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area with representatives from Mass. Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife.
- Training for individuals interested in becoming a Preserve Steward will be held this spring to assist the land trust in stewardship and monitoring activities at each of our ten preserves.
- A book discussion of "The Nature Principle" by Richard Louv is planned for early summer.
- This fall will be the official opening of the Mass Central Rail Trail in Hardwick and New Braintree, including dedication ceremony and fun run to encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the trail.

The core mission of more land conservation is also on the agenda. Currently we are assisting landowners in Barre, Hardwick, Petersham, and North Brookfield in designing and implementing land conservation strategies. Since the amount of state financial assistance is decreasing because of the current economic outlook, our ability to advance land conservation in the East Quabbin region will be reduced. But our hope is that more landowners will take advantage of the new state land conservation tax credit to maintain the pace of conservation. We all benefit from clean air and water, open areas for recreation and scenic beauty, and diverse wildlife habitats when land is conserved.

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

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Visit our website at www.eqlt.org

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REMEMBERING RAY BUELOW : Eulogy by Chris Buelow

EQLT has recently lost a great supporter with the passing of lifelong Hardwick resident Ray Buelow. In memorial to his great love of Hardwick and his embodiment of EQLT's mission, the following tribute is being reprinted with permission from Chris and Sharyn Buelow.

One of my favorite lines from Thoreau's writings is a seemingly simple statement. In Walden Thoreau wrote, "I have traveled a good deal in Concord." Over the years I've always gone back to this line, as to me it reminds us of the universe that exists in our own back yards. Of the lifetime of knowledge that's there for us close to home, in the layers and intricacies of everyday details, if we choose to seek it. Occasionally, in the months leading up to my father's death I would find myself thinking about his eulogy and inevitably become frustrated at my futility. Eventually I took comfort in the conclusion that it's impossible to properly eulogize the living. It meant that he was still alive and still available to us – still experiencing and growing within the life that he held.

The world around his house on the morning of his passing was completely still and extremely cold. A deep black sky punctuated by a universe of stars was above us, and a blanket of frost covered the rooftops and lawns of Hardwick Center. The sun eventually did rise that morning, and as I drove from his house, through the center of town, past what we now call the Patrill Hollow Preserve, and looked east across the valley to the 20-acre lot on Upper Church Street, it became difficult for me to separate the idea of my father from the actual landscape. And then I had to smile. I realized that he had traveled a good deal in Hardwick.

In fact, I can think of no one who better exemplified the spirit of this statement than he. He was born to the house in which he chose to spend his final days, and with the exception of time away for his military service, he spent nearly every night of his life in this house. What he called, and we still call Pine Island, was the landscape in which he grew up. The land and its features imprinted within him as an extension of his own family. He would still refer to the Big Rock, a large boulder at the barway of the Pine Island pastures that his mother would set as the limit for his early childhood travels in the 1950s. We can still visit that rock today. The story of his mother and Irene Kelly gathering up their children during November's Full Beaver Moon, walking them down to the open-grown hickory in the upper pastures, and collecting hickory nuts by the silvery moonlight is so familiar an image to me that it has become my own memory. But then again, he brought me down to the same tree for the same activity under the Beaver Moons of my childhood. And that tree is still there and still vigorous, and I intend to do the same with Vladia.

He would talk in great detail of the Guernsey Dell, at

the time run by his uncle Chet, visible from his backyard as a child across Pine Island. He would talk about the world famous bulls in the bullpen, of his mother driving the milk delivery truck, and even of the occasional whip-poor-will calling from the margins of the pastures. There was swimming at Robinson's Pond, the annual cutting of a wild Christmas tree in the Great Swamp off Jackson Road with his Uncle Jack, fly fishing for native brook trout in Danforth Brook, ice-skating on Mixer's Pond, and camping as a Boy Scout on the banks of Muddy Brook. And on and on; an entire catalogue of episodes written from little more than a square mile of land.

And this never really changed. While he did love to take day trips around the Connecticut River Valley with my mom, he was primarily content with walking the pastures of Hardwick and the woods of the Quabbin. And when in Hardwick, he could still often be found within that square mile of land around his house. As an adult, the Moose Brook Valley became his Big Rock to the east, and Raccoon Hill his Big Rock to the north. There was a time when I would actually find this mildly aggravating. The Berkshires were so close and so spectacular, and I knew he would love exploring the rugged hills of northern Franklin County. He so often spoke with romanticism for the great expanses of the North American West, but he seldom, if ever, actually made an attempt to see any of these places.

But then I realized that I was trying to see his world through the filter of my perspective. And in fact, the reality was that all along he had been the embodiment of a philosophy that I admired. Not only was he traveling a good deal in Hardwick, but he was also living very deliberately within its boundaries. Soapstone Hill was his Greylock, and he knew it better than anyone. The 20-acre lot was his Great Plains; Winimusset his Gettysburg; Moose Brook his Appalachia; Indianhead Rock his El Capitan. In the past decade he expanded a little to include Mandell Hill. I think that he really connected with the idea of restoring an iconic landscape within his realm, and he embraced this vision in his own quiet way.

Hardwick is a special place – we all know that. It's in the land and in the people and in the history. And as I get older, I find increasingly that these three pillars are intertwined: land, people and history. To the point that they actually cannot be separated. When I think of my father, I think of hickory trees and stone walls. And when I think of places like the 20-acre Lot and Deer Park, I think of my father. It's all become one and the same. He found his universe within the bounds of this town, built a full and beautiful life within it, and traveled a good deal through his kingdom, positively touching the lives of all of his neighbors. ■



Ray Buelow with his wife Sharyn and granddaughter Vladia at Mandell Hill

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GARDEN HAPPENINGS

By Kelly Wheeler

This spring, at the Frohloff Farm in Ware, KidStop's after school program will be engaged in hands-on gardening projects to enhance their knowledge of growing healthy food and have a lot of fun in the process. The Frohloff Farm Youth Garden will be funded in part by a Ware Cultural Council Grant that will make it possible to purchase gardening tools, seeds and other materials.

Youth projects planned at the Frohloff Farm include a Native Three-Sisters Cultural Garden that utilizes a companion planting of corn, beans and squash. These crops are mutually-beneficial to each other providing for the needs of their neighbors; the corn grows tall serving as a trellis for the beans; the beans fix nitrogen from the air which is often a limiting nutrient for corn; the squash spreads quickly suppressing weeds that would otherwise out-compete the beans. A neighboring section of the garden will be a pizza garden. This garden will be planted with pizza toppings like green peppers, basil, tomatoes, garlic, and oregano. The ingredients for pizza can be grown in a pizza pie shape adding to the overall theme of the space. This effort is a great way of breaking down the components of the children's favorite food to expand their understanding of all the hard work that goes into making a pizza. We'll have a homemade pizza party at harvest time.

Also, the children will be planting gardens on several EQLT properties to encourage native pollinators, such as native bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects by restoring their habitat. Many native pollinators are experiencing a rapid decline in population due to many factors, such as loss of habitat, pollution, Colony Collapse Disorder, and the overuse of pesticides in agriculture. Plants in the pollinator gardens are carefully chosen to provide nectar all season long and excellent larval food sources supporting native pollinators throughout their life cycle. The Pollinator Gardens the children plant will be 100% organic and sustainably managed without using harmful pesticides that would be detrimental to the insect community. By participating in this project, children will learn that the majority of the food we eat is pollinated by native species. Most importantly, without bees, we wouldn't have pizza!

The children participating in this project will be doing their community a great service. Not only will they be preserving the agricultural heritage of Ware, and protecting pollinators by creating new habitat, but they will be donating the majority of the food grown in their garden to the local Senior Center and food pantry. This will bring multiple generations together to enjoy the benefit of healthy, local food!

During the cold winter months, the children will start

seedlings indoors, learn about composting by making worm composting bins, and create cookbooks from family recipes to be shared with the local Senior Center. The Hardwick Elementary School will also be participating in garden projects coordinated by the EQLT beginning with some winter activities. The first project will be an indoor herb garden in the cafeteria to demonstrate seed starting. These herbs will be on display for the children to touch and smell providing sensory integration as they learn. In the spring, the children will be involved in starting a school garden. The garden will act as an educational laboratory where the children will learn the value of local food and healthy eating. The teachers can use the garden as a resource to teach math and science skills along with many other subjects. Children can calculate the amount of seed required to plant a specific square footage of bed space at a certain seed spacing, learn about

ratios when mixing up fertilizers, and learn about area and perimeter when designing the garden layout. Science classes can learn about chemistry while reading soil tests and applying the proper amendments. Biology students can learn the complex mechanism of decomposition while studying composting and learn the intricacies of the soil food web by looking at soil under microscopes. The garden's educational capacities don't have to end with math and science; it could be used in art and English classes as well as a place for nature drawing or journal writing. History classes could utilize the garden by planting crops that were common during the historical period they are studying. Examples include the Three-Sisters Native American planting or a colonial garden with plants most often grown by early colonists such as indigo, lemon balm, comfrey, squash and beans. The garden will be a beautiful addition to the school's campus and a real benefit to the students and faculty who participate.

The possibility of youth gardening activities doesn't have to end there. If you know of or facilitate a youth group such as Boy or Girl Scouts, 4-H, or an after-school group, etc, that would benefit from projects like the ones described here, please feel free to contact me, Kelly Wheeler, Service Learning Coordinator at servicelearning@eqlt.org. I would love to help coordinate a project that would meet the needs of your group and benefit our communities.



STORM DAMAGE AND TREE HEALTH

The October 29-30th snow storm damaged many trees; ripping out limbs, splitting them in half and even bending over whole trees. The various land trust properties along the region's valley bottoms were not immune to this damage. Now the question is What to do about it? Because we want to be good stewards of the 800+ acres of land trust properties. We've heard from many of you also wondering what, if anything, to do.

Simply defined "stewardship" is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. Stewardship as it applies to our natural world finds its roots in the centuries of work that stewards of households, farms, and ships performed – taking care of the day to day management of resources, places, and activities under their control.

How does this apply to our woods and properties after the snow storm?

First, we've cleared the walking trails and parking areas of downed trees and branches, reaching as high as possible to eliminate branches that will fall in the near future. Essentially, we've been focusing on safety concerns and removing obvious hazards for property users.

In the spring we will assess the extent of tree damage by looking into the canopy to determine the amount of leaves each damaged tree produced. Tree health and survival is closely tied to the amount of live crown, essentially the proportion of branches at the top of the tree that produce leaves. The more leaves, the more food a tree can generate to stay strong and healthy.

- If less than 50% of the live crown is damaged, then the trees will have a high probability of survival. Growth maybe slowed because of fewer leaves, but the tree should readily recover.
- Trees with live crown damage between 50% and 75% require monitoring. The trees lost a significant amount of their branches, but many will survive with likely internal infections and growth reduction.
- The loss of more than 75% of the live crown is likely to kill the tree within a year or two, species dependent. These trees could be valuable for wildlife as places to nest and feed, so consider the overall characteristics of your woods before immediately removing a severely damaged tree.



The question of whether or not to remove damaged trees also hinges on where the tree is located and its other values. An ornamental tree that had a beautiful shape that's lost some branches might be a candidate for removal even though the tree itself would survive. Alternatively, a tree in the woods that's lost several major branches 25 feet in the air could easily be left to continue growing and be removed at the next timber harvest.

Another piece to factor into your tree removal decision is that many oaks, maples and pitch pine can produce branches from the tree trunk, called epicormic branching. These new branches mean more leaves, increasing their ability to recuperate from storm damage. White pine and hemlock do not produce epicormic branches. Storm damage to most conifers results in longer recuperation periods. A professional forester or arborist can provide guidance and advice about specific trees.

Initial inspection of land trust properties shows that there was damage, but not so wide spread or significant enough to alter our expected stewardship practices. We are grateful to the many volunteers who cleared brush and trees to make our preserves safe and accessible for visitors. We anticipate a timber harvest at the Hyde woodlot in Ware and Moose Brook Preserve in Hardwick within the next five years. Many trees damaged during the October storm will be removed at that point and we will be sure to retain some large diameter decayed snags to benefit a diverse array of wildlife.

Volunteer Preserve Stewards Needed

EQLT needs your help to manage and monitor our conserved lands. Volunteer stewards are the eyes and ears of the organization and contribute to all aspects of EQLT's work. If you are interested in adopting a preserve and helping with management and monitoring projects on the land, please join us for a series of stewardship training workshops and meet our dedicated crew of volunteer stewards. The first training session offered in March will focus on property maintenance and defense of boundaries. Learn the basics of navigating with GPS and compass, interpreting survey maps and aerials, posting boundaries, conducting trail assessments, and more. If you would like to contribute to EQLT in this important way, please contact Caren Caljouw, our stewardship coordinator, at ccaljouw@eqlt.org or call the office at 413 477-8229.



WEST BROOKFIELD WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

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UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY...

Saturday, January 21, 9:00 AM

Brush Burning at Moose Brook Preserve, on Brook Road one mile from Prouty Road intersection, Hardwick – The October storm broke lots of branches, and the trails are cleared thanks to all the great help during the December workday! Now we'll focus on the parking area. Hope you can join us for all or part of the day.

FEBRUARY...

Saturday, February 4, 6:00 PM

Full Moon Snowshoe Hike and Bonfire at Frohloff Farm, 221 Church Street, Ware – The October snow storm left plenty of brush on the ground. It's been piled up and is ready to burn during this full moon winter event. Assuming there's snow, we'll take a trek down to the bluff over the Ware River and soak in the winter night sounds and smells along the way. A roaring bonfire, including hot dogs, s'mores and hot cocoa will be waiting for trekkers and available for those that would rather stay on the warm side. Bring the whole family and explore the Frohloff Farm under moonlight.

Saturday, February 18, 5:00 PM

Eleventh Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, at the Cultural Center and Eagle Hill, Hardwick – Come join us for a festive dinner and silent auction at the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill with a buffet catered by Reed's Catering of New Braintree and bread from Rose 32. Tickets are \$55 per person. Tables are set for eight or ten people and you can reserve your tickets by responding to the invitation mailing or at www.eqlt.org. Please respond by February 10th.

MARCH...

Saturday, March 31, 2:00 to 4:00 PM

Preserve Steward Training, meet at EQLT offices, 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick – Join with other volunteers to learn about being a Preserve Steward participating in the care and maintenance of our preserves. Learn to navigate with a GPS and compass, read maps, post and monitor boundaries and help with other land management activities.