

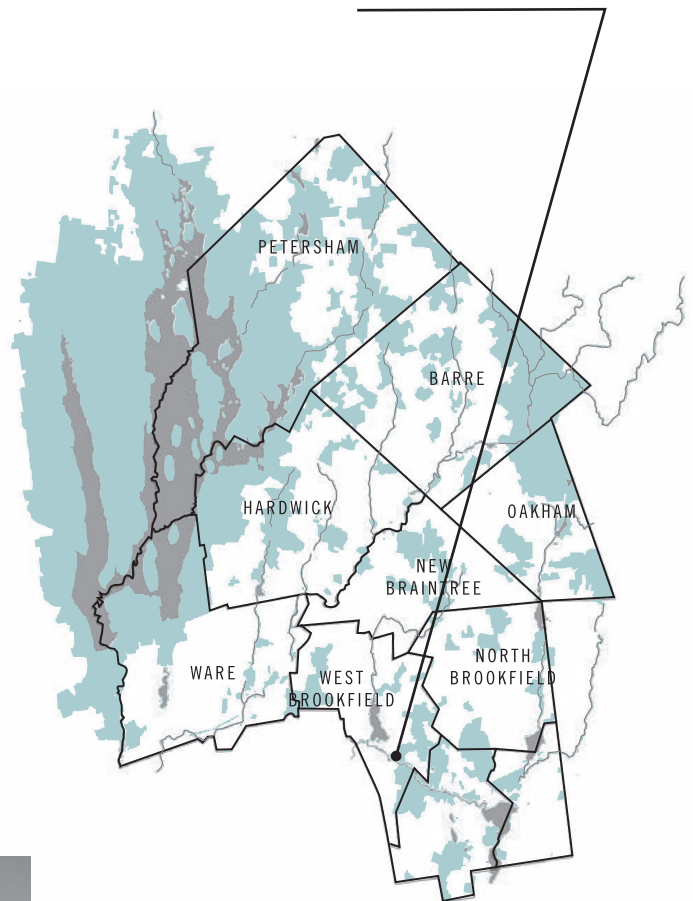
Critical Wetland Habitat in West Brookfield Conserved

The East Quabbin Land Trust acted quickly to protect an important piece of wildlife habitat along the Quaboag River in West Brookfield. The 51 acre parcel with nearly 2,000 feet of frontage along the river contains significant wildlife habitat along an important part of the river.

“Over half of the property is a forested wetland and the rest of the land slopes to the river,” said Stan White, President of the land trust. “Further development of the property would have impacted the wetlands by increasing the amount of polluted runoff and disruption of wildlife use on the land.”

The land is dominated by mixed hardwoods with scattered white pine and hemlock trees. The woods run straight to the river with pockets of grassy cattail marsh and shrub swamps.

The property abuts the 1,445-acre Quaboag Wildlife Management Area. “EQLT stepped up at a time of need to quickly close on an important piece of wildlife habitat that may have otherwise been lost to further development” said Cynthia Henshaw. “Sometimes you need a local private organization like EQLT that has the resources to move efficiently to protect a threatened piece of wildlife habitat or farmland.”



River Frontage looking westerly from central part of West Brookfield Property.

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game were negotiating with the landowner to purchase the land when the property was foreclosed on. The bank was eager to sell the land to the highest bidder. Due to the state’s fiscal situation it could not purchase the land directly and so asked the East Quabbin Land Trust to purchase the land. The land will be transferred to the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game this summer or early fall.

This is the first property the East Quabbin Land Trust has acquired in West Brookfield, though the land trust holds two conservation restrictions in town. “We are working with several more landowners in West Brookfield to meet their conservation and financial goals,” said Cynthia Henshaw. “In the coming years we expect to play an active role in conserving the farms and woods of the town.” ■

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director



Just a few weeks ago I had the privilege of attending the 20th Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference. This meeting is the annual statewide conference for volunteers and professionals interested in expanding knowledge and improving practices to make our land trusts more effective in meeting our mission. It is a great day to get inspired; through new ideas in workshops and meeting others from across the state just as committed to conservation of their communities. Governor Patrick was the Keynote Speaker, and among other conservation topics he announced that the East Quabbin Land Trust, along with ten other land trusts, was awarded a Conservation Partnership grant for the purchase of a conservation restriction on a critical piece of the Dougal Range (there will be more details in the next newsletter when the effort is completed!).

One workshop of particular interest to me was called Diversity Matters. The emphasis is to understand what diversity means for the organization and why having volunteers, staff and supporters from a broad spectrum of the community are essential. Land conservation does benefit everyone within the community; by providing clean air and water, support of local farming and forestry professions, and outdoor recreation opportunities. The workshop re-emphasized for me that the East Quabbin Land Trust needs to continue working throughout our eight town region to conserve critical lands in all communities to benefit our diverse population. Other topics also included equity and inclusion. An important question was posed: Do we value, respect and effectively engage our current supporters? Only you can tell us the answer to that. Please keep an eye out for a membership survey to help answer that question.

In the afternoon I participated in a session on Nontraditional Funding Sources for Land Conservation. The essence of the presentation from all three speakers is to look deeply at the possible partners to help conserve land. The first speaker described their successful efforts in partnering with several hunting and fishing groups along the Massachusetts southeast coast. The second speaker detailed a strategy to fund decentralized waste water treatment that promoted more intensive development complimented by conservation of the groundwater recharge areas. The third speaker discussed the establishment of a green cemetery on conservation land to provide ongoing revenues for stewardship. Each speaker brought tremendous insight and creativity to the land conservation discussion. As the East Quabbin Land Trust continues to work with interested landowners on conservation of their lands we will explore the alternatives for funding the conservation and long-term stewardship.

Several other East Quabbin Land Trust volunteers and members attended the Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference, including Rod and Linda Leehy. They too were inspired and learned new things, you can read about their experience on page 6 in this newsletter. I encourage you to attend the 21st Conference when it comes around in March 2011. ■

Cynthia Henshaw

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 trust, to become a member, or request a change of address, please contact our office at:

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 413.477.8229 (tel & fax)
 email: eqlt@comcast.net

Visit our website at www.eqlt.org

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A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Lady: An Interview with Ann Hicks

by Chuk Kittredge

We kept moving the time forward, but Ann and I still hadn't had an interview. We kept passing like ships in the night, and the boss was getting antsy. So when the phone rang at 6:48 a.m. that Thursday, I tottered from bed, fired up a pot of coffee, stubbed my toe on the office door, and, ashen-faced, went looking for a pencil.

Ann Hicks has been involved with land trusts since she was a little girl. When she was six, her father and his colleagues started a land trust: ACRES – the first land trust in Indiana. They're celebrating their fiftieth anniversary this year.

EQLT: So Ann, how did you find your way to North Brookfield?

AH: I was living on Maui with my husband after college, this would have been in the late 70's and early 80's. We were there for five years – just having fun, really. I worked four hours a day as a law librarian, and for the other four I painted.

EQLT: I am unspeakably jealous.

AH: It's a great way to spend your twenties. Anyway, my husband's uncle lives in West Brookfield, and offered him a job. We moved here – well, twenty-five years ago.

EQLT: Now, are you a professional artist?

AH: Define professional artist.

EQLT: Um, like do you get paid?

AH(hedging): Well, what I turn out is of professional quality...

EQLT: Right, so you're a starving artist.

AH:(laughs)

EQLT: Tell me about some of your work.

AH: About a year and a half ago, I did a triptych of the Rock House Reservation, as part of a fundraiser for the Trustees of Reservations. I took commissions from twenty people – each person paid a small sum to commission an animal or plant native to the area, which I added to the painting. It's installed in the West Brookfield library.

EQLT: That's great. How did you get involved with North Brookfield's conservation commission?

AH: It all started when North Brookfield was writing their master plan; I helped author the Open Space plan. I was on various committees as a part of the master plan, but then a great need came up for a member on the town conservation commission.

AH: I'd like to put in a plug here for the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions. We couldn't get the job done without MACC. I've done the training to get my conservation certification through them.

EQLT: How did this lead to being involved with the EQLT?

AH: A couple years ago, there was a drive to get 50 new members. My friend asked whether I'd like to join – I'd been meaning to do it for years! – so I joined right away. Almost immediately I asked whether the EQLT knew about a piece of land I'd come across as part of the Open Space plan.



Ann Hicks.

AH: Cynthia is so incredible – she just responded right away. A similar situation arose soon after, and when I got in touch with Cynthia, she responded again.

EQLT: And that led to what are you working on now?

AH: Yes, The project's still in the beginning stages.

EQLT: Could you tell us a little about it?

AH: It involves a parcel of land that we hope will be an extension of the town forest – it's just under thirty acres. We organized an ad-hoc committee to work to buy the land for the town; it's very grassroots. The only reason we have the courage to undertake such a project is because EQLT is helping us. This is something that hasn't been attempted in our town before, and to have the guidance and experience of the great folks at EQLT will be essential as we feel our way forward on this.

AH: There's a fascinating story behind the land – it was originally owned by one of the town fathers, who started Quabaug Spring Water Company there. They used to bottle and sell mineral water in the late 1800's. Later, when the Quabbin Reservoir was formed, a family from Prescott bought the land and actively farmed it. People in town still remember seeing them harvest their hay with scythes. Today, a local farmer still hays it.

EQLT: With a scythe?

AH (drily): Err, no.

EQLT: Ann, we'll have to wrap this up. Do you have any final words of wisdom?

AH: I haven't done anything special – all the things I've done are just something that any nature lover would do. You just keep doing the little things that come along. In the end, I hope it will be a reasonable contribution.

EQLT: Thank you, Ann.

AH: Thank you. ■

9th Annual Dinner and Auction

The Ninth Annual Dinner and Silent Auction held Saturday April 3rd at The Cultural Center at Eagle Hill to benefit the East Quabbin Land Trust was a tremendous success. Over 165 people attended. Great fun was had by all and we honored long-time Board Member Magi Ziff for her commitment to the East Quabbin Land Trust and conservation of the fields and woods of our region.



Long-time board member Magi Ziff holding court.



Bob Andrews, Donna Lotuff, Carol Andrews and Genevieve Stillman.



RIGHT: EQLT supporters looking over some of the many donated auction items.



'Thank You'

to the following who helped make the dinner and auction such a success:

- Doug Anderson
- Sharon Buelow
- Wendy Bolognesi
- Terry Briggs
- Marion Cooper
- Nancy Grimes
- Sean Hunley
- Judith Jones
- Ned Kelly
- Aline and Charlie LeMaitre
- PJ McDonald and Eagle Hill
- Cindy and Glenn Mitchell
- Ed and Sue Reed of Reeds Catering and their staff
- Rich Romano
- Danial Salvucci
- Tom Schofield
- Ginna Thoma
- Elizabeth Thompson
- Harry Webb
- Evan White
- Stan White

Leave a Legacy

We welcome the opportunity to talk confidentially about your interest in a philanthropic bequest to the East Quabbin Land Trust. For further information please contact: Cynthia Henshaw, Executive Director at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.

Tremendous Success!

The auction raised over \$9,200. Financial contributions from the silent auction go directly to support the programs of the East Quabbin Land Trust. The donations from the businesses and individuals listed below contributed to a very successful evening of fundraising. Please support these businesses and our underwriters, Country Corners Storage & Realty LLC, Fivestar Services, and The Cultural Center at Eagle Hill.



Neil Anders
 Doug Anderson and Daniel Salvucci
 Bob and Carol Andrews
 Aubuchon Hardware, Ware
 Joanne Bastien
 Bemis Farms Nursery
 Jason Benoit
 Wendy Bolognesi
 Susannah Boxenbaum
 Terry and Sarah Briggs
 Brookfield Orchards
 Gail Bruce
 Chris Buelow
 Marion and Tremaine Cooper
 Corey Fitzgerald Photography
 Country Corner Storage and Realty - Glen Wojick
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 Beverly Duda
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 Nancy Grimes
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 Hardwick Sugar Shack - The Raskett Family
 Hartman's Herb Farm
 Ed Hood and Nan Wolverton
 Hunt Road Berry Farm & Forest
 Mick and Louise Huppert
 Elizabeth Hyder
 Judith and Tim Jones
 June's Bake Shop - June Glidden
 Tom Kellner
 Dedie King
 Martha and Brian Klassanos
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Doria Steedman
 Genevieve and Glenn Stillman
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 Hans and Ginna Thoma
 Tidepool Press
 Linda and Jon Tomasi
 Phil Truesdell
 Katie Tyler
 Harry Webb
 Stan and Abbie White
 White Spruce Farms - Susan Rainville
 Diana and David Wood
 Kim and Luke Wright
 Magi and Howard Ziff

The Quaboag River through Time

by Chris Buelow

Though relatively short at roughly 25-miles in length, the Quaboag River is one of the most interesting and important waterways in Massachusetts. Originating from the springs below Quacumquasit Pond, the Quaboag flows west, slowly at first as it winds its way through the plains of Brookfield, but quickly gains current and turbulence as it passes through the Quaboag Narrows in West Warren on its way to form the Chicopee River at its merge with the Ware and Swift Rivers.

Named from an Algonquian term meaning “beyond the pond”, likely referring to Quaboag Pond, the Quaboag River was a central focus for the Quaboag Indians; one of the three local tribes of Central Massachusetts. The Nipmuck and the Nashaway were the other two Central Tribes, and these three were collectively known as the Nipnet, or “Fresh Water People”. The Quaboag Tribe in particular inhabited an area that covered present day New Braintree, Barre Plains, Warren, the Brookfields, Brimfield and Sturbridge. The Quaboag River and Winimusset Meadows in New Braintree (translated as “the good fishing place”) were central features of this territory, as well the Nipmuck Trail, which provided key access to the Connecticut River. The fertile plains of the Quaboag and Ware Rivers in particular provided rich farming soils for the tribes, while the faster runs and tributaries provided steady fishing opportunities.

Just as the waters of the Quaboag River sustained the Quaboag Tribe for centuries – references suggest farming here as early as 300 AD – the river and its associated plains were also attractive



Sunset on the Quaboag.

to European settlers. In 1660 the Quaboag Plantation was settled by a small group of Essex County families. The Plantation, based atop Foster Hill, lived in relative harmony with the Quaboag Tribe for several years in what would seem a near idyllic setting of great fields rolling down the rich slopes of the Hill and stretching into the Quaboag basin as the homesteads overlooked the meandering Quaboag River far below. Unfortunately, however, tensions steadily rose between the settlers and the Quaboag Tribe based in their village at the south end of Wickaboag Pond, until the Tribe laid siege upon Foster Hill (then known as Pritchard Hill for a founding settler) in 1675, burning the Plantation in the midst of King Phillips War.

While Quaboag Plantation was abandoned for a period following the seizure, the establishment of the Plantation, along with King Phillips War in general, marked a dramatic shift in land use throughout New England as European influence quickly grew dominant and Native culture became increasingly marginalized. The 18th and 19th Centuries in the Quaboag Valley witnessed the apex of pre-mechanized farming, while the Quaboag River itself fueled the local peak of the Industrial Revolution through the mid-20th Century as dams and mills grew to define the towns Warren and Palmer.

While all of these human occupancies and uses have come and gone, it is the River that has remained constant. Today the Quaboag River flows relatively quiet again, and the majority of human interaction with the River involves canoes and kayaks. In fact, in the relatively short 10-mile stretch from Quaboag Pond to the Quaboag Narrows of West Warren, a paddler can witness one of the most impressive natural areas in the entire Commonwealth.

The modern highlight of the Quaboag River is Quaboag Wildlife Management Area (WMA), one of the largest riparian emergent marsh systems in all of Massachusetts and considered the most important site in all of southern New England for the endangered American bittern. Over three contiguous miles of this deep marsh



A GREAT DAY AT THE CONFERENCE!

This was our second time attending the Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference. It is an opportunity to (1) Reflect on past successes, (2) Understand current challenges, and (3) Learn strategies and processes that pertain to continued success in land conservation, as well as the ecological and societal benefits of such.

As a state, Massachusetts has the oldest, largest, and most active land trust community of any State in the country. The Commonwealth has produced systems, processes, regulations, and results that lead the nation and become the model to follow pertaining to land conservation. We also learned that the current administration has protected more land in its first three years than any other administration in the history of the Commonwealth.

It was with pride and great enthusiasm to sit amongst land trust members from all across the State, and share in the experience.

Rod & Linda Leehy

The New England Connected Farm: Professor Thomas C. Hubka to Speak in West Brookfield

The East Quabbin Land Trust, Old Sturbridge Village, and the West Brookfield Historical Commission are excited to welcome Dr. Thomas Hubka, Professor of Architecture at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and author of the book, Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn to speak at the West Brookfield Town Hall on Tuesday, July 13th at 7:00 pm.

Thomas C. Hubka is a Professor in the Department of Architecture at the School of Architecture, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Through almost forty years of scholarship and teaching he has attempted to link the practice and teaching of architecture to historical and cultural context.

Professor Hubka has published widely on topics of popular, vernacular architecture including theoretical works and detailed studies of common buildings such as New England farms, bungalows, ranch houses, and workers' cottages. His overall scholarly work has been recognized by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

through the receipt of the 2007 Graduate School/UWM Foundation Research Award. Recently he has received the 2009-2010 Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) Distinguished Professor Award.



Hubka has written a standard work of New England farm/architectural history: *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England* (The University Press of New England) for which he received the Abbott Lowell Cummings Award in 1984 for the best book in American vernacular architecture.

He is currently working on a book about the development of American housing and domesticity in dwellings such as workers' cottages, bungalows, and duplexes: *From Have Nots to Haves: How the Working Class Became Middle Class in Housing, 1880-1930*. ■

The Quaboag River

Continued from previous page

habitat lines the Quaboag, and an early morning paddle south from Route 148 during May and June will often have the still air reverberating with the booming calls of bitterns that have become quite rare elsewhere in the state. And although the size of the habitat is here is important, what really makes the marshes of Quaboag WMA special is their quality. The plant community here is a diverse mix of cattails, sedges and even bog elements, while the periphery of the marsh is still a wild interface with surrounding forests. Studies have shown an inverse relation with the presence of marshbirds to the presence of development around a marsh, and it is no surprise that the Quaboag still supports impressive numbers of American bitterns, along with five other rare species of marshbirds, while so many other marshes in central and eastern Massachusetts have lost their marshbirds to the disturbance, pollution and general degradation brought on by marsh-side sprawl.

Below Quaboag WMA is the lesser-known gem of the Quaboag River; the Quaboag Narrows in West Warren. Here the River is deflected south by dramatic topography as it is constricted between Fox Hill and Devils Peak along Route 67. This long stretch of the Quaboag features relatively steep drops in elevation and powerful rapids during high water, and is also home to a suite of rare invertebrates such as highly specialized dragonflies and fresh water mussels that have adapted to these turbulent conditions. The



A konkapot on the Quaboag.

Narrows also offers some of the best terrestrial opportunities for exploration in Central Massachusetts, featuring the vast, rugged landscapes of Devils Peak, Fox Hill and Colonels Mountain. These dramatic summits, along with their associated unnamed peaks, cover several thousand acres of wild ledges and fire adapted forests that support a wide variety of rare plants and animals found few places elsewhere in the region.

A main theme that repeats itself through the human history of the Quaboag River is that what has generally attracted people to the River is the river in its natural state. From the early reliance of the Quaboag Tribe on fishing and planting, to the availability of open fields for more modern farmers, up to the present revival of the Quaboag as a recreation and conservation focus, we see that the Quaboag best serves us as a natural and healthy ecosystem. Only the Industrial era with its dams and riverside mills has deviated from this trend, and in the end, this use was relatively short-lived and perhaps unsustainable in its incongruity with the River. Instead, we now return to the Quaboag for its wild recourses, and we focus upon those areas that we have protected. The Quaboag WMA, owned and managed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (F&W), is now the modern draw of the Quaboag River. Conservation is an ongoing effort – people have been utilizing the Quaboag Valley for at least 1,700 years – and to that end the East Quabbin Land Trust has just facilitated the purchase of a 70-acre parcel on the southwest side of the Quaboag marshes to be added to the Quaboag WMA. This purchase will protect a key stretch of these marshes, hopefully ensuring that the unforgettable calls of American bitterns will be stirring the morning air for generations to come. ■



Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

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EQLT News | INSIDE...



History of the Quaboag River

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UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY...

Sunday, May 16, 1:00 PM & 4:30 PM

1:00 pm Walk at the Lincoln Farm – Join us for a guided walk of the fields and woods of the Lincoln farm. Meet at the farm located on Old Stage Coach Road in Ware. For more information, contact Cynthia at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.

4:30 pm Annual Meeting of the Membership / Potluck – Celebrate the work of the East Quabbin Land Trust. Bring a dish to share and catch up with conservation enthusiasts! At the meeting we will elect board members and review progress on the strategic plan.

JUNE...

Saturday, June 12, 7:00 PM at the Lincoln Homestead in Ware

“East Quabbin Concert for the Land” – Sarah Stockwell-Arthen with Susan Lincoln opening on the harp. Sarah Stockwell-Arthen sings songs with a deep connection to the Earth, the heart and the spirit. This evening will celebrate the land, local food, the rural way of life and the resilience of strong community. “Powerful, often stunning...her voice is a gift.” – Boston Rock Magazine. Join us for a summer evening concert at the Lincoln Homestead, 13 Old Stage Coach Road in Ware. Cost: \$5-10 sliding scale (or what you can, and children in a quiet mood are welcome.) For more info: www.sarahstockwell.com, or call 413-967-6932, (Lincoln home)

JULY...

Tuesday, July 13, 7:00 PM AT THE GREAT HALL IN THE WEST BROOKFIELD TOWN HALL

Thomas Hubka presents the New England Connected Farm – Sponsored by EQLT, Old Sturbridge Village, and the West Brookfield Historical Commission. See article on page 7 for more information.

Thursday, July 22, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Edible Plant Walk – Lead by Russ Cohen, author of *Wild Plants I have known...and eaten*, in North Brookfield. Pre-registration is required and space is limited to 25 people. Hurry space fills up quickly. Rain or shine. For more information, contact Cynthia at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.

SATURDAY WORK DAYS... Join us at 9am on the first Saturdays of the month and volunteer to help with the maintenance of EQLT properties. Please contact the office at 413-477-8229 to confirm which location will be the work site for each Saturday.