

Two More Conservation Initiatives Completed!!

Critical Link Conserved in Petersham

When we first visited the St. Mary and St Scholastica communities in 2007, the residents had never considered conserving their land. The members of the St. Mary Monastery and the St. Scholastica Priory, who share this land, have been living a simple, contemplative life surrounded by the beauty of their 190 acres of field and forest in northern Petersham since 1985. The Benedictine traditions of the communities place great value on the solitude, quiet and peace of this natural setting with its abundant plant and animal life—values shared by those hoping to conserve the property.

For the Town of Petersham and the East Quabbin Land Trust, this wooded property is a critical link that will enhance recreation and wildlife corridors in Petersham. “This is the last link needed to connect the biologically rich Tom Swamp area through mature forests to the tower lookout at Prospect Hill and other parcels owned by Harvard Forest,” said Bob Clark, Chair of the Conservation Commission and Open Space and Recreation Committee.

Motivated by their love for this place—so conducive to finding the loving God who created all of this beauty—the St. Mary and St. Scholastica communities began working with the East Quabbin Land Trust to craft a conservation restriction to protect their property from future development. Signed in June of this year, the conservation restriction partners the Town of Petersham with the two Benedictine communities in permanently protecting 155 acres of the property. The sale of the conservation restriction will provide the St. Mary and St. Scholastica communities with much-needed support for continuing their monastic way of life. The East Quabbin Land Trust will assist the Town of Petersham with future monitoring of the property.

“Psalm 148 is part of the prayer sung every morning by our community and reflects the attitude of Benedictine monks and nuns towards their monastery property.” Said Sister Mary Frances Wynn. “All creation praises God. Created things reveal the beauty and goodness of their Creator; they are entrusted to us by God to preserve and reverence. In a very real sense Benedictines don’t “own” their land, they are stewards: custodians and guardians of the household of God.”

The property gently slopes to the west from North Main Street, perfect for walking trails through the woodland. Near the road are several wetland areas, and intermittent brooks take water from snow melt or heavy rains down towards Nelson

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Wildlife habitat and conservation meet on the Dougal Range

The Dougal Range is a land conservation focus area of the East Quabbin Land Trust for lots of reasons. The unique ecology of the area, with vernal pools, diverse woods and talus slopes, is a key factor. One of the most direct benefits we receive from this large block of relatively continuous woods is a wonderful spot to go bird watching, especially for birds that like deep woods like the wood thrush. But other birds use the area too. At the base of the eastern slope of Dougal Hill itself you can find about five acres that was recently cleared of trees to make way for shrubby growth.

Linda and Rod Leehy cleared the area along both sides of Danforth Brook in order to improve the food and cover available for birds and animals that use shrubby areas during the year. As the shrubs grow they play host to all kinds of insects and rodents that in turn attract birds, reptiles and larger mammals. Linda and Rod are also making an effort to remove the non-native plant species that had invaded their property, like multiflora rose, honeysuckle and bittersweet. This will favor the return of native shrubs to the clearing.

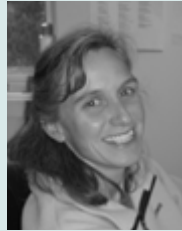


Bluebird boxes in the Leehy's newly cleared field.

The commitment of the Leehys to promote good wildlife habitat goes beyond hours of work cutting brush and controlling invasive plants. Linda and Rod protected 40 acres of their property with a conservation restriction. In June the East Quabbin Land Trust purchased a conservation restriction on the 40 acres that eliminates future use of the land to build, mine, dump or

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MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director



This newsletter gives you a great sense of many activities that the Board, volunteers and staff at the East Quabbin Land Trust accomplished over the past months; working with more landowners to conserve their properties and planning for stewardship of our newest land holding, including the items we found in the barn (see photo below)!

We also spent considerable time thinking about the future of the East Quabbin Land Trust. The enclosed membership survey is a first critical step in hearing from you about what are the priorities of our supporters. Please take a few moments to send us your thoughts and suggestions to help us make the next five years even better. Your suggestions will be reported in a future edition of the newsletter and incorporated into our strategic planning.

Other exciting news is that the East Quabbin Land Trust received award notification from the Massachusetts Land Trust Acceleration Program, which is a two-year \$15,000 grant to assist land trusts in preparation for national Accreditation. The Open Space Institute, the Trustees of Reservations and the Land Trust Alliance are administering the program. The grant funds can help us complete projects that often get delayed because of funding or timing constraints, such as marking the boundaries to all our properties. A component of the grant is that the East Quabbin Land Trust will apply for Accreditation at the end of the process. The Acceleration Program is a great way to focus time and energy to complete national Accreditation. ■

Cynthia Henshaw



Wayne Carini, host of Chasing Classic Cars on Discovery HD Theater, is removing a 1964 Saab from the Frohloff Farm barn. It's extraction will air this fall. Photo by Jonathan Slavid

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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 email: eqlt@comcast.net

Visit our website at www.eqlt.org

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Bob Clark: Protector of the Natural Landscape

by Chuk Kittredge

EQLT: Bob, thanks for taking the time to chat with me.

Bob Clark: My pleasure.

EQLT: You, sir, have a pretty impressive bio - Cynthia tells me you've been doing this since before I was even born.

BC: (*chuckles*) From the time I was little, I spent a lot of time in the forest. I've always been interested in environmental protection and protecting natural landscapes. I got involved with the Trustees of Reservations in the early 70's, and remain active with them and have served on a number of their committees; they're the first land protection organization I became involved with. I've also been a member of the Nature Conservancy. When Mount Grace began, I became involved with them.

EQLT: And you're the chair of the conservation commission and open space committee.

BC: Yes, I've been a member of the Petersham Conservation Commission since the late 60's or early 70's - I've been with them since Ernie Gould was the chair. We worked with the East Quabbin Land Trust to get a State grant to protect the Gould Woodlot

- 80 acres across from the Harvard Forest - there was a subdivision planned for it, originally.

EQLT: And now the CR project at the Church of St. Mary and St. Scholastica is in the final stages, no?

BC: As soon as the check clears, we will submit for state reimbursement funds - it should be happening within the month. The church project protects 155 acres adjacent to the Gould Woodlot. One of our long-range plans is to circumnavigate the town of Petersham through an integrated trail system. Between these two most recent projects, we are coming very close to making that happen.

EQLT: Congratulations. That is quite a feat. I take it that Cynthia and the East Quabbin Land Trust helped out here and there?

BC: Cynthia is remarkable and has a wonderful way of getting people involved - she just made it easy for us. It would have been much more difficult had we not had her help and

she was indispensable in raising the private funds needed for the full cost of the CRs.

EQLT: Now, you've been an advocate of environmental education for kids, too, right?

BC: I've always been a very strong advocate of environmental education. About 30 years ago, we (the Petersham Conservation Commission) began an environmental education program at the Petersham Center School, for K-6 students. It is still going strong. I've been working with John O'Keefe of Harvard Forest for nine years now conducting annual field trips to the Harvard Pond with 5th and 6th-graders where we interpret the effect of cultural history on the natural history of the area. Environmental education for young people gives them a perspective they wouldn't have otherwise had and creates generations of environmentally responsible citizens.

EQLT: Any feedback on working with the EQLT?

BC: I have very high regard for the East Quabbin Land Trust. It has a very impressive record for being such a small organization. I find it quite remarkable - it's pretty impressive. The EQLT is also preserving a lot of farmland,

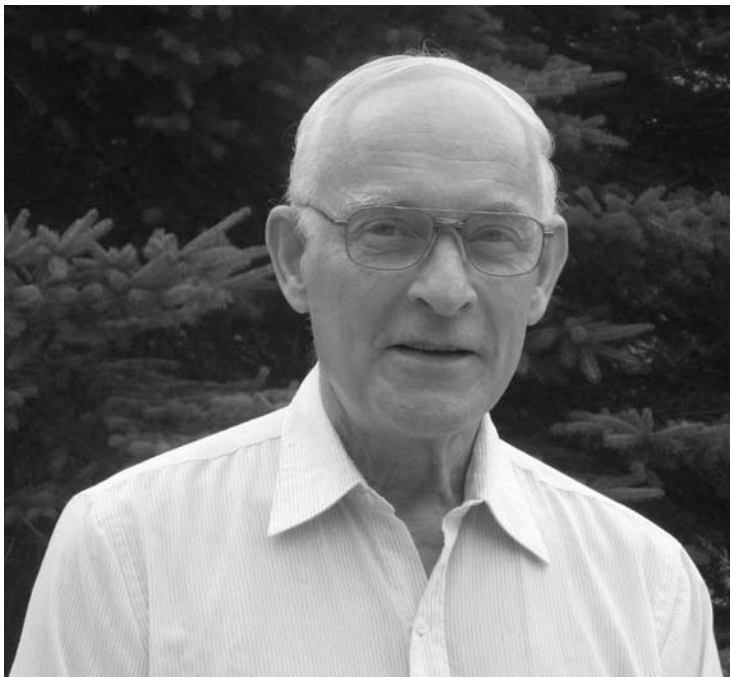
which is one of the most important things we can do - particularly in Petersham, where there isn't a great deal of farmland left. I think that in the future, having local produce will be even more important than it is today.

EQLT: I'm with you on that, Bob. Finally, any thoughts on the future?

BC: I think it's very important to contribute generously to the EQLT and to seek greater community involvement in support of such a worthwhile cause. We need to be extra generous in these times of need. I say this for the East Quabbin Land Trust, but for all conservation organizations.

EQLT: Bob, that about does it. Thanks again for your time.

BC: Thank you.



Bob Clark

Habitat Management Plan Developed for the Frohloff Farm

by Chris Buelow

The East Quabbin Land Trust's recent purchase of the Frohloff Farm on Church Street in Ware is exciting for many reasons. By preserving this farm and its associated lands, the Trust has ensured that this key farmland will remain agriculturally productive, that important scenic and recreational elements will continue along the Ware River and adjacent Rail Trail, and that key habitats for numerous suites of wildlife are protected and linked with other critical tracts from the Ware River up through the Dougal Range.

In terms of wildlife, the Frohloff Farm offers a diverse and important array of species and habitats, as well as exciting opportunities for the management of several rare and declining species and natural communities. To that end, one of the first tasks taken on by EQLT following the purchase of the Farm was the completion of a Wildlife Habitat and Management Needs Assessment for the property.

THE HABITATS

There are three major types of habitats on the Frohloff Farm; Riparian/Floodplain Forest, Pastureland, and Upland Forest. Within these three major habitat-types are several sub-sets of Natural Communities (predictable, specialized vegetative expressions of soil, water and climate conditions), these various components fit together in a wonderful mosaic that flow from one to another, both within the confines of the property's borders, as well as into the surrounding landscape, such as the recently protected Lincoln Farm that abuts the Frohloff Farm to the north.

The property's Riparian/Floodplain Forest occurs in a narrow band along the Ware River. Red maple, American Elm, black cherry are prevalent. The understory is fairly sparse with wildflower such as trout lily, tall meadow rue, spotted touch-me-not, small-flowered crowfoot, wood anemone, great Angelica and wild geranium. In time, the canopy will rise and an intermittent sub-story will form of winterberry, alder and dogwood, and the ground cover of herbaceous wildflowers will proliferate.

Several subcomponents occur within the Floodplain Forest, including a very interesting mucky oxbow, a bay of the river that forms a dense shrub marsh, at least two vernal pools, and though relatively small, one of the best examples of Pitch Pine Barrens in the immediate Ware River area.

Pitch Pine Barrens are fire adapted natural communities that typically occur on the poor, sandy soils of glacial outwash. Because of their extremely dry nature, barrens communities are prone to regular fire events. With harsh growing conditions and regular fires to contend with, barrens have evolved to support a suite of slow-growing, drought-resistant, fire-adapted plant species such as pitch pine, scrub oak, lowbush blueberry and warm season grasses. A healthy barrens community is the key habitat of such species as the whip-poor-will. However, with the relatively recent advent of widespread fire suppression, the fire events are mostly



Along the edge of the Ware River.

gone from our barrens, and without the regular disturbance, fast growing generalist species like white pine quickly overtop the barrens specialists, shading and crowding them, until the barren is lost to another generic white pine stand. Barrens communities were once common elements of our central Massachusetts river valleys, and as these communities faded out due to a lack fire, so have gone their flagship denizen, the whip-poor-will. These several acres of pitch pine barren on the banks of the Ware River are potentially the most important ecological feature of the property.

The Pasturelands cover the majority of the property on the south side of Church Street. Though much of the area is closing in, patches of shrubs and open grass remain, providing habitat for a trove of early successional dependant birds, such as indigo bunting, eastern towhee, blue-winged warbler, common yellowthroat, chestnut-sided warbler, American woodcock and gray catbird, just to name a few. This suite of birds is one of the fastest declining groups in North America, but has found refuge in the red cedar, dogwood, viburnum and shadbush that grows densely in the shrubby margins of these pastures.

Continued on page 7

Your Input is Needed!

We need your help to be successful. Please assist us by taking this short survey about our programs. It is completely anonymous. We want to hear what you like, what you don't, and how we can be more effective in promoting land conservation and stewardship in the East Quabbin region. Results of the survey will be summarized in a future quarterly newsletter. Please answer the questions and return the survey in the enclosed envelop. Thank you in advance for providing us with your perspective.

1. I have been a member of the East Quabbin Land Trust for:

- 0-2 years
- 2-4 years
- 4-8 years
- 8-16 years

2. I live in: My family land is in:

- | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|
| Barre | _____ | _____ |
| Hardwick | _____ | _____ |
| New Braintree | _____ | _____ |
| North Brookfield | _____ | _____ |
| Oakham | _____ | _____ |
| Petersham | _____ | _____ |
| Ware | _____ | _____ |
| West Brookfield | _____ | _____ |

3. I am involved in the following ways in my community:

(check all that apply)

- Con. Com. Member
- Rod and Gun Club
- Planning Board
- Church
- Open Space Comm.
- Musical group
- School PTA or sports coach

Other: _____

4. The way I get most of my information about the programs and activities of the East Quabbin Land Trust is through:

(check all that apply)

- Quarterly newsletters
- Semi-annual solicitations
- Email announcements
- Website
- Newspaper articles
- Conversations with other members
- Facebook

Other: _____

5. I am a member of the East Quabbin Land Trust because of:

(check all that apply):

- Educational programs offered
- Conservation of the land is so important to preserving our quality of life
- Opportunity to make a difference in community
- Meet others interested in the outdoors and conservation
- Future of our community for the next generation

Other: _____

6. My preferences to access more information about the East Quabbin Land Trust are:

	Preferred Method	Useful Method
Not helpful to me	_____	_____
Quarterly newsletters	_____	_____
Semi-annual solicitations	_____	_____
Email announcements	_____	_____
Website	_____	_____
Newspaper articles	_____	_____
Conversations with other members	_____	_____
FaceBook	_____	_____

Other: _____

7. The East Quabbin Land Trust has a number of volunteer opportunities. Have you participated as a volunteer?

	I have:	I want to:
Property stewardship work days	_____	_____
Contacting neighbors to discuss conservation	_____	_____
Event planning and organizing	_____	_____
Member of a sub-committee	_____	_____
Mailing parties	_____	_____
Gardening	_____	_____
Office work	_____	_____
Mentoring	_____	_____
Participation at a fair booth	_____	_____
Fundraising or grant writing	_____	_____

Other: _____

8. I am interested in programs for me and my family related to:

	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested
Wildlife or large mammals	_____	_____	_____
Birds	_____	_____	_____
Energy conservation	_____	_____	_____
Forest management	_____	_____	_____
Family land planning	_____	_____	_____
Land conservation techniques	_____	_____	_____
Invasive species management	_____	_____	_____
Conservation advocacy	_____	_____	_____
Role of Municipal boards in conservation	_____	_____	_____

Other: _____

...Membership survey continued from previous page

9. The East Quabbin Land Trust has a variety of items for sale.

	I have purchased	I would purchase
T-shirt	_____	_____
Hat	_____	_____
Calendar	_____	_____
Poster	_____	_____
Vest	_____	_____
Walking stick	_____	_____
Travel mug	_____	_____
Other:	_____	

10. The East Quabbin Land Trust has participated in various community events:

	I stopped by the table	This is a good venue
Barre Farmers Market	_____	_____
Hardwick Community Fair	_____	_____
Hardwick Farmers Market	_____	_____
New Braintree Town Fair	_____	_____
Asparagus Festival	_____	_____
Petersham Old Home Day	_____	_____
Other:	_____	

11. Of the six principle East Quabbin Land Trust properties, I:

	Visit regularly	Visit Occasionally	Never visited	Don't know where it is
Mandell Hill	_____	_____	_____	_____
Moose Brook Preserve	_____	_____	_____	_____
Patrill Hollow Preserve	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hyde woodlot	_____	_____	_____	_____
Deer Park Preserve	_____	_____	_____	_____
Frohloff Farm	_____	_____	_____	_____

12. What additional property information is most helpful to encourage your visit to East Quabbin Land Trust properties?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important
On-site trail maps	_____	_____	_____	_____
Property brochures	_____	_____	_____	_____
Maps printable from website	_____	_____	_____	_____
Guided tours	_____	_____	_____	_____
Short trail loops	_____	_____	_____	_____
Larger trail networks	_____	_____	_____	_____
Property work days	_____	_____	_____	_____
Children or family activities	_____	_____	_____	_____

13. What is your level of satisfaction with EQLT?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Responsiveness to inquiries	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Land stewardship practices	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Priorities of land conservation	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Educational programs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Website	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Membership events	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Newsletters	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fundraising letters	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Work with municipal governments	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

14. In what ways could the East Quabbin Land Trust be more helpful to you?

15. The East Quabbin Land Trust should contact the follow individual(s) to discuss land conservation options. Please provide the best available contact information. Will you participate in the initial conversation?

16. The East Quabbin Land Trust should contact the follow individual(s) that may be interested in joining EQLT. Please provide their mailing address.

Thank you for your responses!

Management *continued from page 4*

Three main management priorities are identified for the Frohloff Farm: invasive species control, mutually beneficial wildlife/farming practices in the Pasturelands, and the restoration and maintenance of the barrens community.

Invasive species control is a major undertaking on the Frohloff Farm. Glossy buckthorn is the main offender in the lower sections of the property, especially in the Floodplain Forest. In the Upland Forest, Japanese bearberry has taken over good sections of the understory, and throughout, other species, such as burning bush, Asiatic bittersweet, honeysuckle, autumn olive and garlic mustard are taking hold. Left unchecked, these non-native species will continue to transform these communities until they are unrecognizable, ecologically sterile and of little agricultural value. EQLT has successfully dealt

with invasive species on other properties by using a combination of selective herbicides and targeted grazing. Grazing will surely be useful in the Pasturelands, and through the availability of various grant sources, it is hoped that funds can be secured to employ licensed herbicide applicators to address the invasive situation on other sections of the property.

Beyond invasive control in the Pasturelands, a main mission on the Frohloff Farm is to model agricultural practices that are mutually beneficial to both wildlife and the farmer. EQLT has found that grazing can be a key component of this mission, as shown by the relationship between EQLT and Ridge



Some pasture at the Frohloff Farm.

Shinn on our Mandell Hill property in Hardwick. At Mandell Hill, Ridge grazes his herd across the available pastures of the property for eight months out of the year, taking the cattle off of the main grassland from April through mid-July to allow the breeding of grassland birds on the property such as bobolink, eastern meadowlark and savannah sparrow. Timing and grazing intensity

are the keys to matching grazing cattle with breeding birds, and grazing should be a good match for the habitat and present suites of birds in the Pasturelands of the Frohloff Farm.

Finally, and in some ways most exciting, is the restoration of the barrens community along the Ware River. The main threat to this community is the establishment of generalist species such as white pine. EQLT plans on mimicking the effects of fire in the community to first restore, and ultimately maintain the structure and composition of a healthy

pitch pine barren. We will use chainsaws to remove all non-fire adapted species such as white pine, red maple and gray birch, which in turn will release to our target species of pitch pine, scrub oak, lowbush blueberry and little bluestem grass. The final structure of the community will be an open-canopy, savannah-like overstory of emergent pitch pine above a patchy shrub layer of scrub oak and high bush blueberry, and a ground cover that alternates between lowbush blueberry, little bluestem grass and even bare patches of sand, which supports a diverse and declining suite of specialized bees and tiger beetles, and provides critical nesting habitat for turtles. ■

Critical Link *continued from page 1*

Brook, just to the north of the property boundary. Maintaining clean water flow is critical to the health of Nelson Brook, a cold-water stream that supports native fish populations.

The East Quabbin Land Trust is pleased to be part of another conservation success. “This is a clear example of how a local land trust can be responsive to the communities it serves and advance land conservation”, stated Stan White, EQLT Board President. “The East Quabbin Land Trust recognized the great importance of this property and spearheaded the transaction negotiations and fundraising.”

Funding of this initiative was made possible, in part by donations from the Benedictine communities and their supporters, and by the generous support of over two dozen individuals, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, the Fields Pond Foundation, the William P. Wharton Trust, the George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund, the Landmarks Foundation, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity grant program. ■

Wildlife Habitat *continued from page 1*

pave. The Leehys will continue to steward their land for wildlife, recreation and let the forest begin its journey towards old growth habitat. In addition, the public is welcome to visit the property for passive recreation purposes. The Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grant program provided key funding for this conservation restriction acquisition.

“When we purchased our property back in 1987, it was motivated by nothing more than a desire for privacy, and to move closer to the Quabbin Reservoir,” said Rod and Linda Leehy. “Since that time we have gained a new understanding and appreciation of just how significant, connected and vital our land is as it relates to the bigger picture.”

Conservation of the Leehy property expands the network of protected lands on the Dougal Range. At this point five families have permanently protected over 450 acres. “These accomplishments are a testament to the commitment of landowners to the health and vitality of their lands beyond their lifetimes,” stated Cynthia Henshaw. “We all gain lasting benefits by their actions and look forward to assisting others interested in long-term conservation.” ■

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

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EQLT News | INSIDE...



*More
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UPCOMING EVENTS

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 – Mr. Hubka wrote *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn*, a standard work of New England farm and architectural history. Sponsored by EQLT, Old Sturbridge Village, and the West Brookfield Historical Commission. The program is free and open to the public.

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. Hurry because space fills up quickly. Rain or shine.

AUGUST...

Friday and Saturday, August 20 and 21

Hardwick Community Fair – Come join us at the Hardwick Community Fair. We welcome volunteers to sit at the booth to welcome Fair-goers and sell tee-shirts, posters, hats and more. The dunk tank will be in full swing again, so come dunk a friend or buy some EQLT merchandise and support conservation in our region.

SEPTEMBER...

Sunday, September 19, 5:00 to 6:30 PM at the Frohloff Farm

Public Open House – The public is invited to visit the Frohloff Farm to see recent changes to the pastures, the river frontage and the barn. After several workdays there will be significant changes to see, so come on down!

SATURDAY WORK DAYS... Join us at 9am on the first Saturdays of the month (except the workday will be held on September 11th because of the holiday) 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.

For more information about these or other activities, call Cynthia at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.