

SMALL FARM DREAM? Affordable Property for Sale!

By Cynthia Henshaw

At the end of June nearly 120 acres of woods and fields and wetlands in Hardwick was conserved after a year-long process of negotiations and paperwork. A portion of the woods was sold to the Commonwealth for inclusion in the Muddy Brook Wildlife Management Area. The bulk of the land is ready for the next chapter as a productive small farm. Maybe it's just right for you or someone you know?



The land is well-suited for diversified farm enterprises. The possibilities are endless, including vegetables, berries or orchard crops, goats and chickens, shitake mushrooms and cordwood. You could build a farm-stand and have a Pick-Your-Own operation or take your products to farmers' markets. Currently the 10 acres of fields are hayed by a local dairy farmer. Certainly an arrangement could be made to continue the haying while you build up your own farm business for the first three to five years.

The 1-1/2 story Cape sits along the dead-end road with a southerly facing sunroom overlooking one of the fields. Several big maples in the front yard give afternoon shade and a hammock location for after-work relaxation or family picnics. The house includes three bedrooms, one bath (plus a half-bath in the basement), laundry and sunroom. A new furnace and oil tank were recently installed and the septic system replaced. A

perimeter survey has been completed, and the boundary corners are marked with stone walls or iron pins.

The farm includes a 4-bay tractor shed with an attached work space. The 25' x 30' metal garage has an open floor-plan. Originally it was used as a farm machine shop, but could easily be converted for animal shelter, vegetable processing, or vehicle storage. Both buildings are near the house for easy work-flow.

Elwell Brook runs along the western property and another wetland drains the center of the property. There is a network of woods trails that were used for firewood harvesting and recreational trails. The woods include white pine, red and white oaks, shagbark hickory, red and sugar maples, yellow and black birch among other tree species.

The farm is protected with a conservation restriction, held by the East Quabbin Land Trust and the Town of Hardwick Conservation Commission that promotes active agricultural use of the farm, forest management, protection of water quality and wildlife habitat. The conservation restriction allows public access to the wooded portion of the property. The Mass. Conservation Partnership grant program partially paid for conservation of this farm.

We are seeking an individual or family wanting to purchase this farm. Buyer will be expected to actively maintain the farmland using sustainable agricultural practices that promote the long-term improvement of the land.

For more information, please contact Cynthia at chenshaw@EQLT.org. ■



MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



June 30th is the end of the state’s fiscal year, a hard deadline for any state grant or direct acquisition project to be completed. This year the East Quabbin Land Trust was involved in three transactions at the end of the fiscal year. The great news is that all three happened!

Two years ago we purchased the Gaudreau Farm on West Road in New Braintree. The main goals were to 1) conserve as much of the farmland as possible and 2) find a conservation buyer for the house, barn, outbuildings, and remaining land. The second goal was accomplished when Ray Waugh purchased the house and land west of the road a year and a half ago. Now, the remaining 101 acres is permanently protected with an Agricultural Preservation Restriction held by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. That land includes beautiful agricultural soils that stretch over 2,000 feet along West Road and down the slope towards Winimusset Brook. Ray will continue to cut the hay and work that land into his agricultural business planning. Also, Ray graciously allowed two kestrel boxes to be installed in the field, which is excellent kestrel habitat.

During June, conservation of nearly 120 acres of fields, woods and wetlands on Carlson Road in Hardwick occurred in two separate transactions. The property sits upslope of the Muddy Brook Wildlife Management Area (WMA). In early June, the Department of Fish and Game purchased 35 acres of woods to gain better access to the steep western slopes of the WMA and expand the ability to manage the oak-hickory forest to meet broader wildlife habitat goals for the region.

Another 83 acres on Carlson Road was protected when a conservation restriction was recorded at the end of the month. This land is highlighted as the cover article in this newsletter edition, as we are seeking a farmer or farm family interested in owning and managing the property. It’s a great opportunity for those new-to-farming or those wanting to supplement their off-farm income with fresh vegetables, meats, nuts or berries grown on their own land. A Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grant partially covered the cost of conserving the property.

Landowners throughout the East Quabbin region continue to express their desire to conserve their lands, and the East Quabbin Land Trust is actively engaged conserving more land in Barre, Hardwick, New Braintree, Petersham, and West Brookfield. We will share the good news when these properties and others are conserved in the coming years. ■

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 farms, woods 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 and adaptable 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 us at:

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

Visit our website at www.EQLT.org
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CELEBRATING WITH MICK HUPPERT



On Saturday, July 1st, we gathered on the Petersham Common to celebrate with Mick Huppert. Mick is a long-time board member of the East Quabbin Land Trust, providing invaluable insights, asking tough questions and thinking strategically about our role and actions. Mick's positive energy and enthusiasm makes real change in our communities.

Unfortunately last year, Mick was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia and his treatment plan

recently shifted to hospice care to provide a better quality of life for the coming months.

With over 100 people in attendance we were able to share with Mick our tremendous appreciation for his critical insights and commitment. The Board unveiled a bench that sits in front of The Country Store building "Dedicated to Mick Huppert for his service to the Country Store, the People of Petersham and the World. Donated in 2017 by the East Quabbin Land Trust" ■

A Message from Mick...

"Wow," I exclaimed to Louise as we pulled up to the Country Store on Saturday morning to discuss land protection work I had done and its impact on community development. "Why are there SO many people?"

Folks stopped by to offer their best wishes for my health and to express gratitude for my contributions to improve land acquisition and protection, including agricultural land conservation that increases access by new farmers. People also stopped by because they had worked with me over the years on public and community health in central Massachusetts.

My words to the group focused on the importance of working with small communities like Petersham to inventory agricultural soils and historical farmsteads and assist in the transfer of these farms to young farmers considering moving to the area.

Remember that we all continue to grow by building on the shoulders of those passing from farmlands who now wish to pass on their legacy. Moreover, the farm itself, while a key input to rejuvenation, is not the only ingredient. Boosters such as the Grange, land trusts, young farmer groups, and local agricultural commissions are the glue that brings and keeps people together. I was so happy and grateful to recognize the new farmers in our midst. Like topsoil, they are new

layers, enriching this community and connecting to the land in a real way. Make sure that new farmers meet and stay connected to each other. Encourage relationships with other human services and workforce development programs. Gathering places like a country store, coop or other entrepreneurs become bridges for product expansion.

So, what a wonderful time to be alive and talking with our neighbors, reminiscing about past work, such as the preservation of the Country Store, and encouraging those attending to continue their generous support of actions by local land trusts and farmland preservers and boosters. A good day to be on the common in Petersham. Thank you all so much. ■



Mick Huppert with Louise and their daughters Caitie and Annie.

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL DINNER AND SILENT AUCTION - April 29, 2017

Thank you to everyone who made this year's fundraising gala event a huge success, including Judith Jones and Nancy Grimes for organizing the event, Ed and Sue Reed for the excellent meal, and Robinson's Farm for donating cheese.

This year we had a \$20,000 challenge grant encouraging attendees to make additional contributions to the East Quabbin Land Trust, to be matched one for one. Thanks to our generous supporters we raised over \$27,000 in additional gifts. The silent auction raised over \$6,000.

We are grateful to all who support the East Quabbin Land Trust.



Please support our corporate sponsors and thank them for underwriting the Land Trust dinner!

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PICK-YOUR-OWN: Locally the Choice is Easy

By Weronika Zawora

After I moved to North Brookfield almost five years ago, I was astounded by the vast amount and variety of food being produced so close to Worcester. From maple syrup, blueberries and garlic to livestock, eggs, asparagus and apples, local producers are harvesting fresh, specialty foods around us every day. I quickly realized an important privilege I enjoyed eludes many people living in other parts of the state: the ability to truly see where, how and who was harvesting my food. Two years ago, I decided to leave my job at the Telegram & Gazette newspaper in order to enroll as a full-time student at Clark University and pursue a degree in Global Environmental Studies. As I learned more about the current global food system, the urgency to produce and promote more of the food already being grown locally and sustainably became more apparent with each class I completed.

Clark encouraged me to pursue an off-campus internship, and as a frequent visitor to North Brookfield's beautiful Wendemuth Meadow Preserve, I contacted Cynthia Henshaw, who graciously gave me the opportunity to work under her supervision. I was curious to see how land conservation is approached in such a beautiful and undeveloped part of the region and together, we wanted to see how to most effectively merge what I had learned over my course assignments and the kind of practical work every-day food producers are doing season after season in this region of Worcester County. After contacting approximately ten local growers, Walter Derrick of Derrick Farms in Oakham and Louise Woodard and David Nydam of Brookfield Orchards in North Brookfield graciously agreed to answer some of my most pressing questions.

Mr. Derrick walked Cynthia and me across the six acres, out of the 46 he owns, planted with thousands of blueberry bushes and pointed to the few dozen peach trees he was adding to the farm this year, while scaling back the hundred or so raspberry bushes he has kept going. Walter has been tending this land for the last forty-six years, buying his in-law's property after serving in the Armed Forces and then retiring in his mid-forties. Walter's graciousness and knowledge led to a video interview we filmed at the farm over one sunny spring afternoon that became one of the highlights of my time at the university. Check out the interview video at <https://vimeo.com/218723907> or as the May 23rd blog post at EQLT.org.

Brookfield Orchards will be celebrating its' 100 years of operation next year. David Nyland, as the fam-

ily's sixth-generation owner, opened up to me about the challenges and improvements he has seen in the last few decades. Both David and Louise Woodard, his mother-in-law and the fifth-generation member to inherit the orchard, criticized the recent changes in federal immigration policies, making them unable to re-hire the workers from Jamaica - a community which has been performing crucial work since the 1960s in orchards all



Walter Derrick with Weronika during video shoot.

over New England - trained men and women the Orchard has depended on for years. When I later asked if either has seen any noticeable difference in crop production since the recent changes in climate, Louise quickly answered that in all her years spent at her family's orchard, the later snowfall and temperature variance in the last few seasons has significantly dis-

rupted the apple trees' dormant cycle, confusing the plants as to when to rest and when to wake up with the warmer temperatures in the spring.

Although different in size and crop, both Walter and David agreed by far the most common misconception people hold about producing food, particularly a 'pick-your-own' operation, is how much time and labor is truly involved. Often, families visit the farm and jokingly comment how easy it must be to earn money while visitors pick the crop when in reality, someone has to be caring for that crop virtually all year before it is ready to be picked. Walter called tending to his land "the love of his life" but admits it's all-consuming and at times, frustrating. However, like David, Walter is impressed by the results since implementing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system, resulting in greatly lessening the need to use pesticides. On another upside, both producers have also noticed a sizeable increase during recent years in the public being particularly interested in seeking out locally-grown produce. For example, visitors to Derrick's Berry Farm pick virtually everything, signaling an increase in consumers' preference to become more engaged in their food choices.

Now that I have graduated from Clark University, the next step is seeking work that aligns with my personal ideals: humane conditions for all livestock, limiting the use of artificial pesticides, promoting better water usage and connecting local food producers to the bigger urban markets nearby. I would like to take the occasion to thank Cynthia Henshaw, not only for this opportunity over the last few months, but for the work she and East Quabbin Land Trust staff and volunteers do every day to promote land stewardship and conservation in this scenic and special part of the state. ■

MASS CENTRAL RAIL TRAIL UPDATE

During our annual inspection last fall, sections of decking timbers installed in 2009 showed signs of rotting. Repairs to the I-beam bridge decking were made over several weekends in May. Many thanks to Mark Mattson, Denis Ouimette, Becky Ikehara, John Wojdak, Dean Zuppio, Kane Hardaker and Cynthia Henshaw for their hard work and dedication to keeping the rail trail in Hardwick and New Braintree open! Also, we want to thank Howe's Lumber for donating the replacement decking timbers and preservative treatment for the lattice truss and pony truss bridge timbers. This fall we will be working to repair the trestle

bridge decking. Please get in touch if you can join us for this important project. ■



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SIXTH ANNUAL STATION LOOP RAMBLE

Save the Date: Sunday, October 8, 2017



All events begin and finish at the historic New Braintree train station site and incorporate part of the Mass Central Rail Trail.

There is something for everyone, including a Kid's One Mile, 5-Mile Classic, and a 5k Run/Walk. Share in the fun! Bring two NEW runners and received a Dunkin Donuts gift card!



Winners of the 2016 5-Mile Classic: Patrick Caron and Karla Steele



Winners of the 2016 5k Run/Walk: David Maher and Jennifer Hoche

East Quabbin LAND TRUST



Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

P.O. Box 5
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UPCOMING EVENTS...

AUGUST...

Friday and Saturday, August 19th and 20th

Hardwick Community Fair, The Common, Hardwick: The land trust booth and dunk tank will be at the Fair. Be sure to stop by when you're out enjoying all the agricultural and community fun, with animal and vegetable and art shows, tractor parade, frog jumping and kid's parade, chain saw contest and much more. Don't miss it!

SEPTEMBER...

Saturday, September 7th, 10 AM - 4 PM

New Braintree Country Fair, The Common, New Braintree: Be part of the fun on the Common where there will be free kid's games and activities (including the dunk tank), good food and other community activities. We hope to see you there.

Sunday, September 17th, 9 AM - 3 PM

Long-distance Hiking, Petersham: Join us for a 6-8 mile hike as we explore some wild areas in Petersham. Dress for the weather and bring snacks, lunch and water. Contact Cynthia for directions, 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@EQLT.org.

OCTOBER...

Tuesday, October 3rd, 5 PM - 8 PM

Woodland Ambassador Training, Harvard Forest, Petersham: As part of our collaborative work with the North Quabbin and MassConn Regional Partnerships, we are co-hosting a woodland landowner training to focus on New England's land use history by examining the Fisher Museum dioramas and discussing Lynda Mapes' new book *Witness Tree*. Contact Cynthia for more information at 413-477-8229 or chenshaw@EQLT.org.

Sunday, October 8th, 9:30 AM

Sixth Annual Station Loop Ramble: See the insert or EQLT.org for more information.