

## CONNECTING FORESTRY BY THE NUMBERS

By Jessica Cusworth and Haley Hewitt

Harry Webb, a member of the board of directors for the East Quabbin Land Trust since 2011, has first-hand experience with the unpleasant tax burdens associated with land ownership. Harry and his wife Michelle, bought their farmhouse, barn and ten acres from Michelle's parents in 1975. Seventeen years later, they were happy to inherit the remainder of the 200-acre property. The land is beautiful and diverse, featuring forest, pasture, hayfields, and wetlands. However, when they received the tax bill, what they saw dismayed them.

"It was sticker shock. The cost for the land was as much as we were paying for the house!" said Harry. A friend suggested he look into filing for Chapter 61. What followed was a fascinating decades-long foray into forest land management.

Chapter 61 is the Forest Tax Program, which offers preferential tax treatment to landowners who agree to manage their property for timber production, agriculture, or recreation. Any Massachusetts landowner with 10 or more contiguous acres of forestland and with a demonstrable commitment to improving the quality and quantity of timber on the land can qualify for the program. Landowners are required to complete a state-approved forest management plan, which describes the land's resources and outlines the landowner's goals for the property.

Since learning about the ecological and financial benefits of forest management, Harry has had seven selective harvests of his woods in the last 25 years. He takes great pride in the beautiful wildlife habitat he's fostered through carefully managing the land, and enjoys the tax breaks and timber profits he's earned as a result.

Harry has an important piece of advice for new applicants to the program: "The first step is to hire a forester, and it has to be someone you really trust." A forester is an expert in forest topics ranging from ecology to economics. They can guide landowners through

legal issues with their property and will handle the process of growing and harvesting of forest products.

Landowners will find that working with a forester simplifies land management and can even save them money. First, the forester will work with the landowner to create a forest management plan, which they will present to the state for approval. The forester will then help with

the complex process of selecting and selling timber. Research from Mississippi State University and North Carolina State University has shown that the average landowner can make about 56 - 78% more money in a timber sale when relying on the expertise of a forester, as compared to an independent sale. Many foresters have established relationships with reputable loggers, which ensures that landowners are getting the best quality of work for the best price.

### Benefits of Forest Management

A healthy forest. With well-managed trees, the whole forest ecology benefits. Diverse wildlife, water quality, scenic beauty and sustainable woodlands are protected and fostered. "It's like weeding the garden," Harry explains. "Harvesting some trees enhances the quality of the remaining trees."

Connection to your forested property. Harry and Michelle enjoy caring for their land and reaping the rewards of this stewardship. Harry also learned to include in the loggers' contracts that 25 cords of firewood be delivered to his doorstep.

And, of course, money. Timber sale revenue is completely up to the landowner. Harry recommends that all landowners reinvest some of their profits into equipment, or to improve access to the land, to further their stewardship efforts.

### Costs of Forest Management

Forester Fees. The major expense of a well-managed forest will be hiring the forester. Fees can be based on a percentage of timber sale revenue, volume of timber



## MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

*Cynthia Henshaw*



Building connections between people and with the land is a fundamental part of what the East Quabbin Land Trust is all about. Running the 7<sup>th</sup> Station Loop Ramble did just that. The 15-member event committee met throughout the summer and fall, planning the details and getting to know one another during our working dinners. The runners and walkers experienced our beautiful area, all while staying fit. Numerous times that Sunday morning, I heard runners comment on how scenic the course is, running along the rail trail, past fields and through the woods. The Station Loop Ramble is a terrific example where multiple levels of connections are made and strengthened. We encourage you to be part of the next Station Loop Ramble on Sunday, October 13, 2019 as a participant or a volunteer.

Next year is our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary! A milestone for the organization and planning is underway. One recent suggestion is to host a monthly potluck, giving individuals and families the opportunity to connect in a fun, casual way, and meet more neighbors. Building connections and community, strengthens our ability to conserve more land and steward our existing properties.

Other ideas are two events incorporating the Farm-to-Table format. One is an opportunity to get out on farmland sharing an elegant five-course meal in the height of the growing season. A second, more casual event maybe a farm tour, including several East Quabbin Land Trust preserves and nearby farms. This is a chance to connect to the working landscape across our region.

Land conservation is a central part of the way we make connections. Currently there are four farms in various stages of active conservation. These properties include prime agricultural soils which are great for growing food that sustains us, and several are next to lands that are already conserved. Also, expanding our trail network literally connects us to new places. Next spring, we begin the physical work on an accessible trail loop at the Frohloff Farm that will allow visitors with limited physical abilities to safely access a beautiful overlook along the Ware River. We are excited by these opportunities to build connections throughout our communities. Please join us! If you'd like to help with the planning for any of these special events or programs, please contact me at [chenshaw@EQLT.org](mailto:chenshaw@EQLT.org). We welcome your participation. ■

## 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. 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

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Visit our website at [www.EQLT.org](http://www.EQLT.org)  
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# INTRODUCING OUR TERRACORPS MEMBERS:

## HALEY HEWITT: BUILDING CONNECTIONS

By Jess Cusworth

The East Quabbin Land Trust is pleased to introduce Haley Hewitt as this year's TerraCorps Youth Education Coordinator. A Massachusetts native, Haley grew up in Longmeadow. Having spent much of her childhood outdoors, she's developed a deep appreciation for nature. "We had a reservation near my parents' house and had a few acres backing the woods," Haley recalls. She remembers spending her days tromping through the woods and climbing trees. "I just really loved it."

While she's always enjoyed exploring nature, much of her life is entrenched in the world of harp-playing them, and teaching others how to play. Haley began playing the harp at eight years old and started giving lessons at 13. "I had a real knack for it," she explains. Haley went on to earn her degree in pedal harp performance from the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford in Connecticut, and continued her schooling at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, earning her Master's degree in Scottish Harp.

Haley has a successful career in teaching and performing harp. She works hard to strike a balance between performing, which required constant travel, and teaching, which she felt stifled her creativity. "I had this epiphany moment where I realized, I don't really like this very much!" she remembers.

Haley always enjoys learning about nature. "I'm really interested in the different elements of an ecosystem and how they interact," she explains. After seeking career advice from a wetland biologist friend, Haley attended a nearby conservation conference. She was fascinated by the lectures at the conference and learned about TerraCorps from current members who were there. After the conference, Haley went straight home and applied for the Youth Education Coordinator position at the East Quabbin Land Trust.

Having worked with children, Haley is thrilled for this service opportunity to combine her love for teaching with her passion for the outdoors. Haley will be building partnerships with local youth centers, schools, and community organizations to connect kids with the outdoors. Haley knows that the first step in her service year is to get kids outside. From there, she can accomplish her goal

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## JESSICA CUSWORTH: CONNECTING HER PASSIONS

By Haley Hewitt



Jess Cusworth and Haley Hewitt  
building trails in Petersham

East Quabbin Land Trust welcomed new TerraCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator Jess Cusworth in September. Jess is excited and ready to get her hands dirty and connect with the East Quabbin community helping EQLT with its land stewardship.

Down-to-earth with long wavy dark hair and a warm smile, Jess feels at home outside. She grew up hiking around the wilderness of New Jersey and New Hampshire on her extended family's properties. She loves the winter, when she can go skiing and on winter hikes without getting uncomfortably sweaty and bug-bitten.

With an abiding love of animals, she enrolled at Clark University in Worcester MA to study animal behavioral psychology. There she took a class in Arctic Systems Science. "I was interested in helping wildlife," Jess explains. But the course exposed her to more than wild animals. "The course covered the effects of climate change on the whole global system. How it changes everything, not just locally." She was fascinated by the science, and motivated by its importance and urgency. She changed majors, switching to Global Environmental Studies.

Upon graduation, she continued at Clark with a Masters in Environmental Science and Policy. Exposed through her studies to the realities of climate change, she thought to go the "policy route" of environmental science. "I wanted not just to look at the data, but also do something to change it." She held an internship lobbying for animal welfare policies, but found it wasn't right for her, despite being valuable and important work.

Then she participated in water quality testing at a polluted pond in Worcester. The team carried out a remediation project using plants that can filter out pollutants. Jess enjoyed the hands-on nature of the work. "I really liked working on the local level, pulling out the plants and getting in the water. That was a big part of my career building process."

Jess then signed up to TerraCorps for the opportunity to do more fieldwork. She looks forward to this year of service. "I can make a more direct impact on the community in which I'm working. It's something I think is really important." Jess will be building trails and guiding volunteers to help. Her first project is building

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# SEVENTH ANNUAL STATION LOOP RAMBLE

Sunday, October 14th was a great day for a run or walk, with cool temperatures and no rain. All the participants used a portion of the Mass Central Rail Trail in New Braintree and Hardwick as they started and finished at the site of the former New Braintree Trail Station. A hearty THANK YOU to all the volunteers that made this race possible, the sponsoring businesses and others that donated prizes, and to all who participated! We are already looking forward to October 13, 2019. Save the Date!



## We appreciate donations from the following businesses for runner awards:

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2018 - 7<sup>th</sup> Annual

## Station Loop Ramble



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# CONNECT THROUGH THE LAND TRUST

By Richard Cavanaugh

The theme for this fall's fundraising appeal can be summed up with one word: connections. Much of the work that the East Quabbin Land Trust and its volunteers perform involves making connections – connecting land-owner's with the expertise and resources to steward the future of their properties, connecting the young and not-so-young to the wonders of the natural world, connecting people to outdoor activity for their health and enjoyment, connecting this region to a vibrant agricultural economy, connecting one another to form a community caring for the future of this region, and more.

An inspiration for featuring the importance of connections this fall, comes from the work of Suzanne Simard, professor of forest ecology at the University of British Columbia's Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences in Vancouver. Her recent scientific research revealed connections found in nature that were previously unknown.

Prof. Simard found that fir trees use the underground web of thread-like mycorrhizal fungi to trade nutrients with paper-bark birch trees over the course of the season. Through this "Wood-Wide-Web," individual trees loan one another sugars as needed. In the winter, when the birch trees no longer have their leaves, the firs provide them energy. In the summer, when the birch trees shade the firs, they return the favor. The benefits of this cooperative underground economy appear to be better over-all health, more total photosynthesis, and greater resilience in the face of disturbances in the forest.

New-found connections are also central to the work and writings of Robin Wall Kimmerer, Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, New York. As a child, she wondered why she often found goldenrod and purple asters growing together and why they looked so beautiful with one another. As an environmental biologist, she learned that the contrasting colors of yellow and violet make the other more vivid in

the human eye. More importantly however, bees also behold their beauty in a similar

way. The striking contrast when the goldenrod and asters grow together makes them a more attractive target in a meadow, receiving more pollinator visits than they would if growing separately.

Much like the cooperative network that helps keep the forest healthy and resilient or the complementary colors that encourage the goldenrod and asters to flourish together, EQLT supporters do the same for our region and our extraordinary landscape.

Financial support for the East Quabbin Land Trust takes many shapes:

## Individual Gifts and Sustained Giving

The financial backbone of the organization are the individuals and households who make gifts each year. A growing number of "Sustainers" make automatic monthly gifts to the East Quabbin Land Trust. Sustainers use their credit cards or automatic bank payments to set up a schedule of convenient and easily budgeted contributions. Sustainers play a critical role throughout the year by creating an ongoing revenue stream to fund the land trust's ongoing programs.

## Sponsorships

Along with individual supporters, the East Quabbin Land Trust partners with local businesses and organizations to showcase their work and highlight their support for conserving the land and preserving our heritage. Each year, sponsorship opportunities are available for the spring Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, and the fall Station Loop Ramble.

## Planned Giving

Planned giving can take many shapes to suit each donor's goals. Some examples include gifts from a Will or Living Trust, gifts from retirement accounts, a gift of real estate or a conservation restriction on land, or income from a charitable gift annuity.

If there are any particular ways you would like to support the East Quabbin Land Trust, such as a Sustainer, Sponsor, or as part of a planned gift, please feel free to contact us at (413) 477-8229 or [rcavanaugh@EQLT.org](mailto:rcavanaugh@EQLT.org).

Above all else, please know that, no matter the method, each gift makes a difference to the people and places in the East Quabbin communities. Thank you! ■



# FORESTRY BY THE NUMBERS *continued from page 1*

marked, by the hour, or by the acre. For example, the forester responsible for the timber sale at EQLT's parcel at Henry's Grove in Hubbardston was hired at \$9,000 for 94 acres. Of that total cost, roughly \$6,000 was for the tree marking, while the other \$3,000 was to oversee the work. When choosing a forester to work with, talk with your Mass. state Service Forester, to friends and neighbors, and ask foresters for references from satisfied clients.

Taxes on timber sales. If a landowner sells the timber cut from their forest, the sale will be taxed. Harry treats his timber sale income as a capital gain, so that the revenue from the sale is not considered ordinary income.

How much is my forest worth? The value of the timber on your land will vary based on the species, volume, and quality of the wood. A number of other less-predictable variables also contribute to the value: market demand, logging conditions on the site, and whether any additional work will be done during the harvest.



An important unit for timber sales is the volume measure used in the timber products industry: one thousand board feet (MBF). A board foot is a piece of wood measuring 1 foot x 1 foot x 1 inch. Trees are measured in MBF. For a sense of what 1 MBF looks like, three medium-sized (15-20" diameter at breast height) trees will yield around 1MBF.

The quarterly stumpage reports aggregate timber prices for various tree species. Landowners can get a sense of what their bids should be after reviewing the harvest tally and stumpage reports.

Over time, at the Webb's the accessibility of the forest and land for logging equipment has improved, which attracts higher bids from loggers. "The easier it is to get out, the less gas and time has to be used, the more attractive it is to companies," explains Harry. Furthermore, the logging paths are easy to clear and use as recreational trails.

With the help from his forester and through careful and patient stewardship, The Webb's land today has more volume and higher quality of timber than when they started 25 years ago. Their careful stewardship has created a beautiful backyard for wildlife, where they frequently see moose from their kitchen window, while earning them financial benefits through the Forest Tax Program and timber sales. All the while, their land is healthy and productive.

Interested in learning more about forest management? Please join Harry and other members of the East Quabbin Land Trust for a walk on his property on Saturday, November 10th from 2 - 4pm. Meet at 1451 Petersham Road in Hardwick to see the results of Harry's active stewardship. RSVP to Jess at [jcusworth@EQLT.org](mailto:jcusworth@EQLT.org) or (413) 477-8229. ■

*Haley ...continued from page 3* to get them engaged, excited and educated about nature. Haley's projects include guiding kids in creating a history book about Wendemuth Meadow, improving signage and trails at Pynchon's Grist Mill, and engagement programs throughout the year. She will also be leading the Wee Weekly Wander, where she will guide children of all ages through Mandell Hill each Wednesday at 1:00pm.

Haley enjoys crafting, especially building intricate bird houses, which she designs to perfectly replicate the actual homes of her friends and family. She still makes time to teach harp and play gigs, but is sure to leave herself downtime to read and spend time with her husband, Tim. The two love hiking together and strolling on the beach near their home.

Haley is thrilled to serve with the East Quabbin Land Trust, connecting kids with the outdoors. "It's exciting because it's hands on, and clearly beneficial to the community and environment." ■

*Jess ...continued from page 3* a trail with volunteers behind the Quabbin Retreat in Petersham. She'll also be gaining valuable experience with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a program for analyzing land data.

Jess also likes to flex her creative muscles. She dabbles in crafts such as whittling and mosaic tiling, and pursues a passion for photography. "My favorite thing to photograph is abandoned houses and farms. That's something I do with my mom when I'm in New Jersey. I love old decrepit things. I would take photographing an old falling apart house over a beautiful sunset any day!" Jess has already made use of her photography, supplying East Quabbin Land Trust with high-quality photos of its properties.

"I spent the last 5 years in school working at a computer, reading, researching and writing. It was great and I really enjoyed it. But I'm so excited to get outside, get my hands dirty, and do the physical work that's associated with land stewardship." ■

# East Quabbin LAND TRUST



*Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage*

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## CONNECT



FALL 2018 | VOLUME 15 | ISSUE 4

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## UPCOMING EVENTS...

**Saturday, November 10th, 2 PM - 4 PM**

Woods Walk at the Webb's, 1451 Petersham Road, Hardwick: Join with Harry Webb to see his woods and the results of 25 years of forest stewardship. Dress for the outdoors.

**Friday, December 7th**

Garage Opening Celebration at 4:30 PM & Annual Holiday Open House from 5 PM - 7 PM

120 Ridge Road, Hardwick: Join your friends and neighbors for good cheer at our holiday open house. Be part of this annual tradition and bring a sweet or savory dish to share.

**Monday, January 1st, Noon**

New Year's Day Ski or Hike, Mass Central Rail Trail at West Road, New Braintree: Start off the New Year with your family and friends exploring our local rail trail.

### SAVE THE DATE...

**Saturday, April 27th, 2019**

Eighteenth Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, at Eagle Hill School, Petersham Road, Hardwick: This is our signature fundraising event with a silent auction that benefits land conservation and stewardship in the East Quabbin region.