

CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS

By Cynthia Henshaw

People are curious about how land trusts work and land is conserved, why some properties are protected and others aren't, and mostly, how does the money 'thing' work. Those are all great questions. In this article I'll use a recently completed conservation effort in New Braintree to discuss the whys and hows, with a specific emphasis on dollars in and dollars out. The actual transactions took about 2-1/2 years to complete, but talks with the landowner began years before that.

Keep in mind that each conservation effort is unique, but there are some over-arching principles to keep in mind. 1) The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has made a significant financial commitment to promote land conservation over the past two decades. The dollars come in the form of direct purchases, grants, or tax credits. 2) Usually, local financial support is a requirement, and that's where your gifts to the East Quabbin Land Trust are essential for successful land conservation.

The former Gaudreau farm on West Road in New Braintree is a beautiful farm. The rolling hay fields are nourished by rich soils and roll downslope to Winimusset Brook. The Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) wants to protect high quality soils – 'prime agricultural soils' in conservation lingo – so that we have the ability to grow food into the future. Sixty acres of the 100 acres on the east side of West Road are classified as 'prime or statewide important soils', the soils that Mass DAR invests in by purchasing an Agricultural Preservation Restriction or APR.

When the Gaudreau brothers agreed to sell the farm, they needed to sell the whole farm. Not just the part that MassDAR could conserve. To help conserve the 100 acres, the East Quabbin Land Trust agreed to buy the whole farm with the goal of finding a buyer for the house, barns, and land.

The East Quabbin Land Trust commissioned

an independent appraisal to determine two values. The first is the 'fair market value' or the price that an independent purchaser would pay to buy the whole farm, as it is. The second value is what someone would pay after the Agricultural Preservation Restriction is put in place. The values determined in the appraisal are based on actual sales of other similar types of properties. The appraisal cost us \$3,200.



The hay field along West Road in New Braintree now protected with an Agricultural Preservation Restriction.

The purchase price for the whole farm was \$742,000. That's a lot of money for us. We used funds from our revolving loan fund and farm protection fund, but more was needed. The line of credit at North Brookfield Savings Bank was tapped to cover the rest, but that added \$5,000 in interest

expense to the overall project cost.

Since we bought the whole farm, including the house, there were expenses beyond a typical land purchase and resale. For instance, a home inspection was done, fire alarms were checked, lawn mowed and grounds cleaned. Plus, the cost to keep the electricity on and oil for heat. Those expenses totaled nearly \$2,700. Property taxes were paid; \$3,600 for the time we owned the property, and a perimeter survey of the 100 acres was part of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction requirements costing \$8,600, as our 1/2 of the total cost.

There were actually four separate transactions needed to complete conservation of the 100 acres: purchase the whole farm, sell the house and 53 acres west of West Road, sell the 100 acres east of West Road, and sell the Agricultural Preservation Restriction. A lot of legal work was needed at each step; negotiating and preparing legal documents. The total legal bill to the East Quabbin Land Trust was just over \$8,000.

The last piece of expenses to the East Quabbin Land Trust is staff time – the work that it takes to actually conserve a piece of property. Much of that is a lot of fun, like building a relationship with the landowner and seeking a farmer interested in purchasing the land. But

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



Accomplishing lasting change within our communities takes the concerted effort of many people. The contributions of young adults, whether through internships, class exercises, or Americorps projects, is an important piece of advancing our mission to conserve the land and preserve our heritage.

This fall, Jonah Bachand completed an internship where he monitored ten of our Preserves. Jonah walked the trails, took photographs of the Preserves and completed the written reports required each year. This internship was part of Jonah’s senior year course of study at Palmer High School, and afforded him the chance to be outdoors while practicing work skills. It was a huge help to have Jonah tackle these annual monitoring responsibilities.

Steps are underway to finish the ½ mile of Mass Central Rail Trail on the Frohloff Farm in Ware; we are requesting grant funds from the Recreational Trails Program to build it. The plan is to include an accessible trail so that visitors with mobility challenges can access the river bank, to enjoy the sights and sounds that the Ware River has to offer. Ashley Dziejma is a senior at Worcester State University with experience running summer camps and an interest in engaging people of all ages in the natural environment. This spring, Ashley is going to take those passions and develop an educational plan for interpreting the Frohloff Farm to the visiting public. It’ll be exciting what she comes up with.

The most visible transformation being brought about by young adults is the garage construction at our headquarters at 120 Ridge Road in Hardwick. Thanks to the carpentry students at Pathfinder Vocational Technical High School the first floor walls are up. The intention is to complete the 2-½ bay garage by the end of the school year in June. Our stewardship volunteers are eager to have dedicated space for their construction projects, storage and maintenance.

Many young adults are choosing to make a difference and have a local impact. We are grateful to Jonah, Ashley and the Pathfinder students for their efforts. **With your financial support more young adults will make meaningful contributions to our communities.** Thank you in advance for being part of the challenge to raise enough funds for a second Americorps member through the Terracorps program for 2018 - 19 session.

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 local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

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)
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NEW TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

By Lisa Cohen

One year ago - in January of 2017 - Neil and I purchased a home in Gilbertville. This is not interesting or noteworthy on its own: people buy and sell homes all the time. What makes it significant for us is the purchase of Rod and Linda Leehy's home and property turned us from homeowners into landowners and active stewards of land for the first time.

Our primary home (for now) is in a suburb just outside of Boston. Our lot is more easily measured in square feet than acres. Each of my direct neighbors is a literal stone's throw away. While we have the occasional coyote sighting, the wildlife is primarily squirrels, chipmunks, and birds, with a smattering of raccoons and woodchucks. Mostly, it means keeping your trash cans well-secured and not much more.

We have lived in suburbia for the past 25 years and I have always seen it as an uneasy compromise between city and rural living, with the disadvantages of both and the advantages of neither. But circumstances dictated we live within thirty minutes of Boston.

With our children grown, we started to have the conversation about what would come next in our lives. I'm a writer. My work happens wherever my laptop is. Neil is still tied to his job at Tufts, where he is a physician and not quite ready to retire, but we also knew the time to plan was now. The problem was, Neil is more of a "country mouse" and I'm more of a "city mouse." It seemed finding a place where we could both have what we needed - him, a quiet refuge from the world where he could have an extensive garden and a place to play with his beloved cars, me, art and culture and community - was going to be impossible.

Then we got an email from Kim and Rich from Chestnut Farm (we are long time meat CSA members). They were selling a property in the Brookfields that had been in Rich's family and it seemed like providence was directing us to look more closely into Central Massachusetts. Where we found all of what we were looking for and more. And while we didn't end up buying that property, our consideration of it led us to the Leehys and their incredible parcel of 54 acres, including a good chunk of that as conservation land, in Gilbertville.

So, as we look back at our first anniversary of buying what we now call Star Field Farm, I can say that it's been a joy watching the progress of the seasons across the woods, fields, and wetlands.

This is the first time we've been in a place where the natural world is front and center instead of backdrop. The woods around us don't really care about us. They permit us to transit through and live beside them, but

they were here before we were and will be here long after us. There is something comforting in that reminder of our impermanence.

I am learning that it takes a certain kind of patience to live in the woods; the patience to listen and observe. Some days we are rewarded for that patience. We have seen red efts and all manner of frogs and toads. A gorgeous red fox flowed across the driveway one night as I was pulling in. And we have been serenaded many nights by the yips and howls of a coyote pack.

Every day here brings a new discovery, from the ferns in early spring to the bounty of peaches in midsummer, from the dance of fireflies at dusk to fungus on downed trees in the snow. And the incredible dark night sky full of stars, for which we've named our homestead.

The pace of our lives is also changed. There is a mindfulness to simple chores like stocking the house with wood for the wood stoves. The morning ritual of stoking the fire takes on a meditative quality, somehow. The days seem to lengthen when we can pay attention to the moments. And even mundane tasks take on a kind of joy.

It may sound like I'm romanticizing the whole rural life - a kind of carpet-bagging where suburban folks play country manor on the weekends and secretly mock the locals.

That's not who we are.

We chose this place because we wanted to live in an active farming community. We wanted to own land and become good stewards of it. We wanted to become part of the town and both support it and be supported by it.

I certainly don't want to turn back the clock and have to survive through subsistence farming on an isolated homestead (I'm a big fan of supplemental electric heat, hot running water, and the internet!), but I do know that living in this more stripped-down way is a balm to my spirit.

Will I also feel this way when full winter hits and I have to crawl out of a warm bed to stoke the woodstoves? Will there come a time when I resent the demands of the physical work in keeping the land clear of invasives and maintaining the property?

Based on our experiences over the past twelve months, and our desire to move here full time within the next few years, I think not.

Besides, we have a tractor now. That makes it official. ■



Lisa Cohen and Neil Halin currently live in Newton, but are working hard to shift their lives to their new property and home in Gilbertville. Lisa is a poet, novelist, and ceramics artist. <http://www.ljcohen.net>

2017 Annual Donor List -- Our Team Members

Every gift is important to us and helps fulfill our mission together. We are only able to accomplish important conservation, stewardship and education efforts with your support. Thank you for your generosity! We apologize for any errors or omissions.

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We want to acknowledge donors to the garage construction project - whether through direct gifts or purchase of the 1,000 raffle tickets. Your financial support is essential to the building a new garage. Thank you!

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As an "Easterner" from Arlington, my summer trips to the East Quabbin area are always a particular treat. Over the last several years, I've visited a number of the EQLT properties. They are all very special and I'm delighted that EQLT is working to keep them that way. I'm particularly pleased with their recent acquisition of Henry's Grove in Hubbardston. It's their eastern-most property, which is nice for me. It has a great view of the east branch of the Ware River and I'm looking forward to EQLT making it more accessible.

-- Don Kalischer

ELECTRON TRANSFER

By Jane Taylor

I took a leap in spring of 2016 when I purchased and had installed a 30 panel solar array with the intention of eventually heating my home, charging an electric vehicle, and powering all my electric needs. The PV panels were certainly not the most expensive aspect of the project, so I added a few... well, two years on, I'm still heating primarily with wood, waiting for the effective and affordable home "battery wall" and a practical 4-wheel drive e-vehicle. My system is currently tied to the electric grid. I haven't paid an electric bill since the system went in.

Thanks to the Massachusetts programs requiring my electricity supplier to purchase the 'extra' kilowatt hours (kWh) I was producing, I had built up a healthy kWh credit with the supplier by summer 2017. The supplier assigns a dollar value to these kWh credits



which, by Massachusetts law, enables transferring a dollar amount of these credits to non-profit organizations. Of course I thought of the East Quabbin Land Trust and its office building which is heated with electricity.

I found the learning curve for dealing with the supplier on this matter a bit steep. Truly knowledgeable staff at the supplier do not interact with individual inquiries and not all customer service representatives are well-versed. The paperwork forms are set up for regular, monthly gifts of credits, but my intention was to make a one-time gift of the dollar value of these credits to EQLT. It took some persistence, and by this past fall, the transfer was accomplished. For 2017, I will be able to report a charitable contribution on my Federal tax return. A win/win for the land trust and me! ■

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But there's also a lot of meetings, paperwork, driving and coordination involved. The land trust invested hundreds of hours conserving this important farm, with over \$5,000 in staff time and expenses. If you're totaling up the expenses, it comes to \$778,000

Now you ask, where did all the money come from to cover all these expenses? Actually, from several places. As mentioned earlier, the Mass DAR did purchase the Agricultural Preservation Restriction, and they paid 90% of the restriction value, which came to \$247,600. We also received a \$50,000 grant from The 1772 Foundation in support of conserving the agricultural fields. During the year and a half of our ownership we leased the hay fields and raised \$6,000. The largest amount came from the new farmer when he

purchased the house and land on both sides of the road for \$463,000.

A careful reader will see that the expenses and income didn't work out evenly on this project. Fortunately, because of the successful capital campaign several years ago, our supporters committed money to conserve critical farms. Our board of directors used \$9,000 of those dollars to cover the hard costs, actual out-of-pocket expenses, associated with conservation of the former Gaudreau farm.

It's your annual support of the East Quabbin Land Trust that allows our staff to successfully work with landowners throughout our region to conserve their lands. Your gifts made this possible and we thank you for your generosity! ■

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

By Cynthia Henshaw

When the land trust gets into a win-win-win situation, then we know we're on the right track. And that's exactly what happens when Americorps members serve at the East Quabbin Land Trust. Do you remember reading about or participating in all the programs organized by Reshma, Shelby, Nate, Kelly or Sarah over the years? As Service Learning Coordinators (SLCs), they each took a turn creating programs aimed at getting young people outdoors, learning more about the world around them, and helping with hands-on projects in their own community.

Win #1: A college graduate or transitioning professional gets hands-on training and experience with volunteer management, event organizing, and meaningful land stewardship projects, all while having fun with other land trust supporters.

Win #2: The East Quabbin Land Trust gets dedicated and focused help accomplishing mission-related projects, that otherwise could not be finished.

Win #3: Our communities see real change and engagement of our younger residents in the care of our lands, in ways that aren't replicated in our schools.

With your help, we can attract two Americorps members for the 2018-19 term.

1. Generous donors are challenging our supporters to raise \$10,000 to cover the cost of an Americorps member, and they will grant \$10,000 for a second member. That's a 1:1 match, which can double the number of projects completed over the eleven-month service period.

The freedom to design projects that both served the needs of my host organization, and enabled me target skills and capacities that I hoped to develop was hugely valuable to me. I had a project that required me to apply for grants, and negotiate development boundaries with the local conservation commission; I had a project that applied my GIS skills, and pushed me to develop broader competency; and I had a project that leveraged my creativity and demonstrated my artistic and design facilities. In the years following MassLift, the ability to point to those projects as applied examples of each skill, and talk through the central role I played in developing and executing each one, was invaluable for advancing my career and finding my passion within the environmental field. The work I did during MassLift Americorps, the skills I learned, the guidance I received, and the structure of the program itself were deeply beneficial for getting me where I am today.

--Nathan Grady, 2015-14 Americorps member

2. Spread the word among your family and friends, let them know that we are seeking Americorps members interested in educating young people and helping to care for the trails, woods and fields in central Massachusetts. Whether they are just out of school or transitioning between career stages, we want the best candidates to make a lasting change in our communities.

These Americorps positions are part of a larger program, now called TerraCorps (formerly called MassLIFT), where land trusts and urban food growing non-profits have Americorps volunteers assist by developing programs, supporting community boards, completing hands-on projects, and engaging a diverse audience in our mission-driven programs. These positions have partial funding through a federal Americorps grant, but the remaining funds come from participating organizations, like the East Quabbin Land Trust.

Make an impact in your community this year.

- Make a gift now and double your impact.
- Encourage interested and qualified friends and family to consider a position with the East Quabbin Land Trust through the TerraCorps program. ■

Serving as an AmeriCorps Service Learning Coordinator for the East Quabbin Land Trust was undoubtedly one of the best experiences I have ever had. Not only did I make friendships with community members that I still maintain, I was also able to see the physical manifestations of my efforts and those of the members before me. Participating in an AmeriCorps program takes passion and dedication because as you go through your service year you face many challenges that are inherent in the conservation field. That being said, I consider it one of the most rewarding and worthwhile experiences. I was able to engage young adults through their own diverse passions by showing them how they could apply their unique talents to the conservation field. I was able to watch children develop and grow a newfound respect and enjoyment with nature through my work with North Brookfield Youth Center's ETEAM Summer Camp and Hardwick Youth Center. Through my service year I gained new skills to add to my repertoire and honed previously acquired skills, I developed an understanding of the intricacies of relations between a community and a nonprofit organization, but the greatest thing about being a Service Learning Coordinator at EQLT was the ability to share my passion with others and see it take root in them as well.

--Reshma Patel, 2015-16 Americorps member



Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

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CONSERVATION BY THE NUMBERS



WINTER 2018 | VOLUME 15 | ISSUE 1

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UPCOMING EVENTS...

FEBRUARY...

Friday, February 16th or 23rd, date to be determined based on weather, 7:30 PM - 9 PM

Owl Prowl, meet at 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick: Bring the whole family as we explore Hardwick and Barre for owls. This is the time of year when owls start establishing nesting territory, and we will caravan to several “hot spot” locations to hear their hooting. RSVP is required, weather conditions affect owl behavior. Contact Cynthia at 413-477-8229 or chen-shaw@eqlt.org.

MARCH...

Thursday, March 1st, 6:30 PM - 8 PM

The News on Deer and Moose in Massachusetts, North Brookfield: Listen the Massachusetts Deer and Moose biologist share the latest information on life cycles, behavior and research of these fascinating ungulates that share the land. Light refreshments will be provided.

Thursday, March 15th, 6:30 PM - 8 PM

The Finances of a Timber Harvest, Senior Center, Barre: Join your fellow landowners to explore the finances of doing a timber sale from folks in the know - a local landowner and timber harvester. Bring your questions to this fascinating discussion. Light refreshments will be provided.

APRIL...

Saturday, April 28th, 5:30 PM - 9 PM

Seventeenth 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. Support conservation of our communities by donating an attic treasure, service or vacation that can be auctioned.