

SEVEN ACRE PRESERVE

By Cynthia Henshaw

On this overcast mid-summer day, the tiger swallow alights on the red clover, hungry, ready to slurp the rich nectar. That fuel is essential for the next stage in her life cycle -- laying eggs for the next generation. The tiger swallow, along with other insects and birds, are finding food and refuge in this field that once grew cow corn.

Thanks to the generosity of Charles Wilder and Kathryn Casey, this seven-acre field is now permanently protected from development. This was the last piece of his family's farm; the Wilder's came to Petersham in the first wave of European settlers to the region. The field is on North Main Street, one among a series of open fields providing a patchwork backdrop for travelers heading between Route 2 and the Petersham Common, and is directly across from The Quabbin Retreat (a.k.a. Sisters of the Assumption).

The Petersham Conservation Commission holds the conservation restriction – the right and responsibility to assure that the land remains undeveloped; to stay as an agricultural field or reverts to woods, if the land can't be maintained to grow food. It's a partnership with the

East Quabbin Land Trust because the organization purchased the restricted land from the Wilder-Casey family.

The soils are Marlow fine sandy loams, great vegetable and fruit soils. Not too stony and the land gently slopes away from the road. Right now there is a



need to increase organic matter in the soil. Not only will increasing the organic layer provide more nutrients for any crops, but is a benefit because more water can be held in the soil which helps reduce adverse effects of summer drought. Think of it as mulching the entire field. This process began back in 2016 when the field was reseeded to a pasture mix of grasses. Since then, the field was cut once or twice a year, leaving all the organics on the field, thanks to the extraordinary help of Tyson Neukirch. Starting next year, we will test the soil nutrient levels annually.

A long-term goal is to build enough nutrients and organic matter that a vegetable and fruit operation can be viable. Rotating animals – cows, chickens, sheep and goats – across the field is possible too, but on-site water will be needed to make that a successful farming strategy. So maybe a well, greenhouse or farm stand will become part of the Seven Acre Preserve infrastructure in the future. More immediately, we've begun the job of clearing the brush from the stone wall, providing a scenic vista for travelers. This winter we will have our first brush burning day.

Conservation funding came from the Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit program and The 1772 Foundation, in addition to the Wilder-Casey family donation. The 50% tax credit was a critical piece. The Wilder-Casey family agreed to donate significant value through this process, but needed some financial return to meet their goals. Each conservation transaction has costs, including legal fees and staff time. Grant funds from The 1772 Foundation made permanent conservation of this land possible. ■



Tyson Neukirch inspecting the soil at the Seven Acre Preserve, the dark color is evidence of carbon-rich soils

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



The start of a new year brings great expectations and new opportunities, and 2019 is no exception. Especially since September 14th is the official anniversary of the incorporation of the East Quabbin Land Trust, formerly known as the Hardwick Area Conservation Trust.

What kinds of things can you expect during our 25th Anniversary year?

First, continue conserving land. Any day now the Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grants will be announced, and we are hopeful that conservation of 77 acres in Barre is among the list of approved conservation efforts. We expect that those parcels will be added to our Prince River Preserve. Also, the Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit continues to be an important funding source, allowing landowners to donate their land or a conservation restriction and claim a state tax credit. We are assisting a number of landowners through this complex process. More details can be shared later, once the properties are conserved.

Second, continue caring for the land. With over 1,000 acres of property entrusted to our care, there's lots to do keeping trails open, encouraging farming to thrive, improving forest health and biodiversity. At Henry's Grove in Hubbardston, a timber sale is in the final planning stages. We're hopeful that the cold weather keeps the ground frozen long enough to complete the harvest, otherwise, it maybe next winter. Besides the weather, wood markets and busy schedules may delay when the cutting can happen.

Third, continue engaging people of all ages and abilities. Building an accessible loop trail and finishing 1/2 mile of the Mass Central Rail Trail at the Frohloff Farm in Ware will begin this spring. Having this facility will be great for people and families with mobility challenges, whether that means using a wheelchair or stroller, or difficulty walking longer distances.

Our calendar of events is full, with monthly pot-lucks and activities, walking the eastern shore of the Quabbin Reservoir, exploring during the Farms Forever Tour, and sharing local food at a Farm-to-Table anniversary celebration. Those are extra events. We will still have monthly stewardship work-days, the Wee Weekly Wander, Annual Dinner and Silent Auction, and Station Loop Ramble. We welcome you to be an active part of the team as we plan and carry out these diverse activities that make a difference in our communities. Contact me at chenshaw@EQLT.org if you'd like more information. ■

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:

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

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DO WHAT YOU LOVE

By Jessica Cusworth

It was the end of my first week serving at the East Quabbin Land Trust. I was at a volunteer workday where we were removing part of the stone wall at the EQLT office to make way for a driveway. One group of volunteers pushed the stones into the front scoop of the tractor and drove the stones to a dumping area across the yard. It was up to one older gentleman and myself to use pure man and woman power to carefully stack the stones on top of each other. These were no small stones we were dealing with here—it took real muscle to maneuver these slabs. While I was sweating bullets and trying not to throw out my back, I noticed the older gentleman I was working with didn't seem particularly phased by this exhausting task. This was my first introduction to Harrison Achilles.

Whenever someone at the office mentions Harrison, the response from everyone listening is always the same: we smile, tilt our heads to the side, and say, "Oh, Harrison," with utter admiration. While some retirees choose to spend their time relaxing, Harrison remains a self-proclaimed workaholic. During his five years of volunteering with EQLT, Harrison has become the backbone of our volunteer base and our Stewardship Committee. He's one of those people who knows

how to do just about everything and genuinely loves working hard. He has left his mark on nearly all of the land trust's preserves, through building bird boxes, patiently mowing acres upon acres of land, clearing off stone walls, and building signs for our trails. We can always count on him to tackle any stewardship activity,

to give advice about construction projects, and to always show up with a smile.

In my journey pursuing a career in environmental conservation, Harrison is someone who I'll certainly never forget. I am continuously inspired by his passion for land stewardship, his immense knowledge of the land and community, and his kindness towards those around him. His love for the land and its creatures is appar-

ent in everything he does. His determination to do the hard work that's necessary to keep our preserves beautiful and functional provides such a service to our whole community. If I can approach my work with as much heart and enthusiasm as Harrison does, I will be successful anywhere that life takes me. ■



Harrison with Don Rich at the receiving end of the stone transfer.



Harrison posing with the custom rack he made to hold fence posts in the new garage.



Jessica and Harrison in the Coxhall Kitchen Garden after cutting the vegetation in the rocky half of the historic stone walled enclosure.

2018 Annual Donor List

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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THE WEE WEEKLY WANDER

By Haley Hewitt

I came to the East Quabbin Land Trust at the beginning of September. In a new position in a new town at the start of a tentative career change, I felt like a collection of “-less”es: I was aimless, clueless, and directionless. Feeling so lost, I brainstormed with my supervisor for a project to get started on. I wanted to get to know the area and the local people, and Cynthia wanted more visibility of the EQLT properties.



Wee Weekly Wander participants looking out from the Chris Ellison Birding Platform at Mandell Hill

We settled upon weekly walks for kids at Mandell Hill, the closest East Quabbin Land Trust property to the office. Mandell Hill also happens to be home to a few dozen cows, six llamas, woods, a birding platform with a clear view to Mt. Wachusett, a collection of old farm building foundations, and broad grassland fields with seasonally nesting bobolinks. I made and

distributed flyers, called every phone number I could get my hands on, and sent out a press release. I decided to call it the Wee Weekly Wander. And so our walks began.

Right away, I got a response from two families of homeschooled children. Over the weeks to come, word spread and more children joined our jolly jaunt. Their ages range from five to 13 years old, and it's usually a group of seven to 12 children with their parents. I got to know their names, and learned about their lives. Penny, our youngest regular, pouts the whole time but rushes home to brag to her sisters about what she saw on our walk. Connor, one of the older boys, loves birds while his sister Rosie prefers snakes. Clara, only five years old, speaks with an insight and clarity that would be remarkable in a 20-year-old. And each week, we notice something new, something changed, at Mandell Hill.

In getting to know these children, I have also gotten to know the Mandell Hill property to a degree and depth I haven't since I was myself a child. I now recall how I once knew each inch of the home I grew up in, and how I paid such close attention to the world I inhabited. While going out each week to walk with the children, I again take the time to inspect, to learn, and to explore. These days, even when I'm walking alone, I will stop to notice and examine my surroundings, much like I once did as a child.

My service term now has plenty of direction, I am feeling much less clueless, and each day I have a set of goals to aim for. And part of that, I'm sure, has to do with learning to stop and look around myself. ■



A RESOLUTION FOR 2019 - ONE HUNDRED NEW MEMBERS

By Richard Cavanaugh

We are fortunate to have many loyal supporters who donate their time, talent, and treasure to the organization and our mission. Many began making contributions twenty-five years ago at the organization's start, and thankfully, their commitment hasn't lessened. Just the opposite: We increased our conservation services and educational programming because of the diligence, loyalty, and perseverance of our supporters, that's you! Thank you.

As we celebrate our first 25 years of land conservation and prepare to make the next 25 years even better, we have a challenge to enlist 100 new members in 2019. By broadening our base of support, we encourage a new generation to get involved and continue the land conservation mission for generations to come.

Can you help? We ask that you reach out to family, friends and neighbors who aren't involved with the East Quabbin Land Trust, but who should be (check out pages 4 and 5 to see our 2018 donor list). This year we are offering a number of special events to celebrate our 25th Anniversary. Encourage your family, friends and neighbors to participate, and come yourself for:

- A tour of local farms featuring locally sourced food and entertainment,
- The grand opening of an Accessible Trail at the Frohloff Farm in Ware,
- An elegant farm to table dining experience,

- A series of walks along the east side of the Quabbin Reservoir, and
- Monthly pot-luck suppers for current and long-term supporters to welcome and get to know new donors.

Of course, there will also be the regular monthly work days, educational programs, and the Annual Dinner and Silent Auction in April. All present great ways to introduce others of all ages to the work that the land trust and its volunteers do.

We will track new members as individuals or families that contribute at least \$50, and haven't made a contribution in the past three years. To make this fun, we'll offer prizes to our existing donors who make referrals.

The East Quabbin Land Trust is a place where people of different ages, backgrounds, and experiences enjoy working together with a shared commitment to the future of this region's landscape and way of life. They also end up enjoying one another in the process.

With your help, welcoming 100 new members is a resolution that the East Quabbin Land Trust intends to keep in 2019. Together, let's share the fun by encouraging others to support the events and activities that make a difference in our common goals and aspirations for the East Quabbin region. ■

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SEVEN ACRE PRESERVE



WINTER 2019 | VOLUME 16 | ISSUE 1

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UPCOMING EVENTS...

FEBRUARY...

Sunday, February 10th, 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Monthly Potluck with Movie, meet at 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick: Bring your favorite dish to share, then watch Wall-E, a cosmic comedy adventure about a determined robot who discovers a new purpose in life after hundreds of lonely years. Rated: G

MARCH...

Sunday, March 10th, 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Monthly Potluck with Asian Long-horned Beetle talk, meet at 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick: Bring your favorite dish to share, then stay and learn more about the Asian Long-horned Beetle, the progress made eradicating the invasive insect from Worcester County and challenges ahead. Other invasive insects will also be discussed.

Saturday, March 23rd, ALL DAY

Mass Land Conservation Conference, Worcester Technical High School, Worcester: Meet land conservationists from across the state and region during the largest annual educational gathering in New England. This year's theme is "Enhancing Community through the Land" and Gina MacCarthy, former E.P.A. Administrator, is the keynote speaker. Fee and registration required.

APRIL...

Sunday, April 14th, 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Monthly Potluck with Andy Goldsworthy movie, meet at 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick: Bring your favorite dish to share, then stay and watch Rivers and Tides, a movie of the nature artist Andy Goldsworthy who makes temporary art installations using materials found in nature.

Saturday, April 27th, 5:30 PM - 9 PM

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