



## Conserving Another Piece of West Brookfield

By Cynthia Henshaw

Over the years, after walking the woods, caring for farm animals, building trails, and watching wildlife, it's possible to get a sense about the rhythm of the land. As you slow down, the small things come into focus. The value of having access to the land and open space deepens. So it is with Christine St. Cyr and Christopher Sweeney, who view themselves as stewards of their 90 acres, caring for it now and wanting to see their efforts last beyond their time.

Christine and Chris donated a conservation restriction on their fields and woods this year. The conservation restriction encourages them to manage the land sustainably -- whether that's promoting high-quality trees for wood products or wildlife, controlling invasive plants and insects, or maintaining the farm pond for future uses. Selling off house lots or building another home on their homestead is no longer permitted.

The land is part of a growing network of permanently conserved lands in the northern part of West Brookfield. Though the parcel doesn't directly touch, it is situated between the West Brookfield Wildlife Management Area, another EQLT-held conservation restriction property, and protected farmland, helping to close the gap. The wetlands flow into Lamberton Brook, and eventually enter the Quaboag River just south of Lake Wickaboag. Many parts of the woods are covered in young pines and oaks and birches which seeded into the areas opened up when the larger trees were harvested about five years ago. These young saplings are growing rapidly to capture as much sunlight and carbon as possible.

Christine and Chris participated in the Conservation Land Tax Credit program. Because their land was enrolled in the program, they are eligible to receive a tax credit reimbursement based on the

level of their donation. The Conservation Land Tax Credit program makes it possible to conserve more land across the state because many landowners cannot afford to make an outright donation.

For Christine and Chris, they are pleased with the outcome because they know that future owners will benefit greatly by having a chance to raise animals, grow trees and walk peacefully on the land. Christine and Chris add, "we are very pleased to be able to conserve and protect this property we have loved for nearly 35 years. We are thankful to the EQLT and Cynthia Henshaw for guiding us through the process and also so very grateful for the West Brookfield town committees and citizens who came to support our application. Our belief is that preserving open spaces in our town is just as important as encouraging thoughtful development and we hope that future generations can benefit from further conservation efforts." ■



*St. Cyr - Sweeney property in West Brookfield*

## MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

*Cynthia Henshaw*



Conserving a piece of land doesn't happen overnight. Certainly months, and often years of conversations, research and evaluation are needed before successfully conserving the land. This is especially true when towns are conservation partners.

It's important to take the time so that residents understand the process and value the ultimate outcome - a piece of land that will remain as fields, woods and wetlands into the future. We work in permanent land conservation, once the documents are recorded, the land will largely look the way it does today. Maybe different crops are growing in the fields and new trees have grown to replace harvested trees. But wildlife still roams and water still flows.

There is great value in conserving land, even if we can't quantify all of those values in dollars and cents. Hard numbers are visible with annual property tax payments. The Chapter 61 programs - whether forest, agriculture or open space designations - mean that private landowners commit to keeping their lands in those current uses for a 10-year period, and in return get to pay lower property tax. These programs are good for towns too. After all, a piece of woods doesn't add pressure to the town's municipal services in the way that housing does. Even

with lower property tax revenue, study after study has shown that tax payments on our woods and fields provide more than they demand from municipal services like fire, police and schools. It's the reverse for residential development. But of course, we want people to live in our communities and that's where finding a balance is critical.

The East Quabbin Land Trust recognizes the importance of keeping a high quality of life in our communities. We carefully evaluate the conservation values of each potential conservation project and work with community members on those that rise to the top. One effort that is currently in this evaluation process might ultimately be a "limited development" conservation effort. This is where a small portion of the property is designated for residential development and the bulk of the land is conserved. A benefit of this strategy is to allow housing where it makes sense, providing the town future property tax revenue, and preserving the most important areas for long-term stewardship and public access. The East Quabbin Land Trust is undertaking its first limited development conservation project, expanding our tool box for conservation. We will keep you posted as the evaluation and negotiations progress. ■

## 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.

**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  
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# Rebecca Fay:

## Artist, Gallery Owner, Friend to the Land Trust

By Judith Jones

I sat down one Wednesday in December with Rebecca Fay, owner and artist, at her gallery, West Brookfield Art & Frame (formerly Worcester Art & Frame) at 10 East Main Street in West Brookfield. Our conversation was far ranging, talking about place and community, art and nature, and music, and why all these topics tie together when you choose your priorities and why land conservation is an underlying theme.

Rebecca grew up on a 35-acre farm in Paxton that abuts the Pine Hill Reservoir. Her father was in real estate and the family had purchased an historic house that her parents restored and her mother ran as a bed and breakfast. Rebecca says she was “raised in the woods” free to explore the mill sites on the tributary that fed the reservoir. She went to art school in Boston, and from her teenage years, on, worked at framing art. She is a multimedia artist working in “rocks, clocks and watercolors.”

When her daughter, Addie (now a singer), was small, Rebecca worked in her father’s real estate business and then eased out of real estate and returned to art by buying a house in Brookfield and opening her first gallery: The Best Little Frame Shop in Brookfield. That business has grown to be her gallery and framing studio in West Brookfield. She promotes the art of many talented local artists: painters, potters, fiber artists, jewelry makers, papermakers, printmakers and more.

“The gallery is a unique model,” says Rebecca, “in that the artists take home 100% of their sales after paying an annual fee that amounts to \$33.00 a month – about the cost of a pub meal and a beer. The norm for an art gallery is to take at least 50% of the sale. At West Brookfield Art & Frame, the gallery is guaranteed some help with rent, and the artists who take an active part in promoting the gallery and their work end up doing very well. I’m always looking at ways of approaching art and business creatively so that I can keep doing what I love to do and help others to do the same.”

Rebecca, her partner, Rob, and their son Wyatt, now live in West Brookfield on a hilltop comprising 55 acres, much of it wooded and perfect for exploration! Her lifelong experiences have made her very appreciative of access to local land open to wildlife, beautiful landscapes, farming and recreation.

Rebecca got involved with the land trust after coming to one of our annual dinner fundraisers at Eagle Hill. She came that night to support our cause, but was surprised to find that she already knew lots of the people there. They were neighbors, customers of hers, and friends from other venues that she didn’t realize shared this common concern for local land conservation. As she and I talked we tried to identify the commonalities of our organizations and why they draw like-minded people together. Our conclusion was that what brings us together as a community is the appreciation of, and exposure to, beauty, art, nature, recreation and conservation. Her business and our organization provide gathering places for like minds to meet and share this appreciation and promote its benefits.

The West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery sponsored a show in November of all the winners of the EQLT’s summer photo contest and held a gallery opening for our artists and members. Rebecca generously donated a portion of all the proceeds of her framing orders through the entire month to the EQLT. A friend indeed!

Says she, “Our area is so fortunate to have an organization like the EQLT standing as guardian for our beautiful vistas, wildlife, and teaching future generations how to care for it. Their efforts are truly immeasurable.”

We are exploring ideas for future collaboration; Rebecca has ideas for our next photo contest and there will be more gallery openings in our future. Stop by her gallery, or “Like” her gallery’s page on Facebook, you’ll be glad you did! ■



*Rebecca Fay, owner of  
West Brookfield Art & Frame  
at 10 East Main Street in West Brookfield.*

*“Our area is so fortunate to have an organization like the EQLT standing as guardian for our beautiful vistas, wildlife, and teaching future generations how to care for it.”*

*-Rebecca Fay*

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# Video Contest Announced

By Sophie Andrews

We've seen that folks are out taking videos and photos at our preserves. Our video contest submissions will showcase them to inspire others to document their own adventures and the beauty of the outdoors. We're asking for submissions of short videos (up to 3 minutes) embracing winter themes.

Poetry provides great inspiration for making short videos. One cold night Cynthia and I sat at our usual spots in the office, looking out on the now early night the season brings, and talked about poetry. Cynthia asked what defines a poem, and I tried my best to describe it: poetry is a lyrical, often symbolic or metaphorical, narrative that aims to capture a mood, setting, or feeling.

I was inspired to write a poem based on my appreciation for nature that grew from my experience with my grandfather doing an activity called 'popping rocks.' We would head down to the lake near their home in country to find nice little pebbles to pop into the ice of the lake. This is what inspired me to be curious about what nature can show us. 'Rock popping' was a simple but enjoyable gesture and one that we could do together, and anyone could do, too. Stay tuned for more videos headed your way!

We're thrilled to see what winter-themed moods, feelings, and imagery you capture in your videos. Get video clips of your favorite EQLT preserves, trails, or spots. ■

## To enter for the video contest, please note the guidelines:

- You can submit as many videos as you'd like
- Videos can be up to 3 minutes long
- Filming at EQLT preserves recommended
- Winter poetry theme recommended
- If you choose to include a poem, please have it read aloud in your video or put in text somewhere, with the title and author (you are welcome to write your own too).
- iMovie or VideoPad Video Editor are helpful video editing tools for creating your project
- Email finished videos to [youtheducation@eqlt.org](mailto:youtheducation@eqlt.org) as an mp4 or upload to [www.vimeo.com](http://www.vimeo.com)

# See What Sophie Has Been Up To



*Sophie and three homeschooling families make natural journals for their Wednesday Woods Walks. Later this winter they will write a picture-book about conservation.*



*Kids from the Hardwick Youth Center with one of the directors, Laurie, at Mandell Hill. They learned about 'sit-spots,' owls, fungi, trail-heads, and trail markers.*



*The natural ornament creation project was a blast at the Hardwick Youth Center. The kids used sticks, holly berry, and pine branches.*

# With Great Property Comes Great Responsibility: Property Monitoring 101

By Jess Cusworth

Tablet? Check. Bug spray? Check. Waterproof shoes? Check. Mental preparedness to have ticks crawling out of your hair for the rest of the day? Maybe...With that, we're off to monitor our conservation land! As a land trust, our primary mission is land conservation. The East Quabbin Land Trust holds conservation restrictions (CR's) on or owns over 2,200 acres of land. A CR is a legal agreement between a landowner (the grantor) and a conservation organization or public agency (the grantee or holder) that protects a property's conservation values in perpetuity. Fee ownership of the land means that the land trust owns it outright.

However, our conservation work isn't done once we own a property or hold the CR. One of the responsibilities of land or CR ownership is the annual monitoring of each of our 42 fee-owned and CR properties.

## Why is it Important to Monitor Land?

Annual monitoring ensures that the terms of the CR or our own conservation goals on fee-owned land are being upheld.

It's important to check that landowners, abutting neighbors, and other actors aren't taking part in prohibited activities such as building, mining, or dumping on the land. Annual monitoring also allows the land trust to build relationships with landowners, and enables documentation of changes to land over time.

## How is Monitoring Done?

Before the 2019 monitoring season, East Quabbin Land Trust staff and volunteers would walk each property in the fall with pen, paper, map, and GPS unit in hand. We would take GPS points, photos, notes, fill out the monitoring form, and then match up all of this information into one cohesive report back at the office. But it's 2020, and is there anything that can't be done on our phones?

This monitoring season, we started using Landscape Conservation Software, which allows us to do our monitoring through an app on our phones or tablets in an all-in-one system. We simply head out to the property with our phones or tablet, push a button to create a GPS track of our route, and

take pictures and type notes along the way. We can type in the answers to our monitoring forms as we go. Just like that, we're done!

You're always in for an adventure when monitoring property. You're likely to get some exciting stories from landowners about the wildlife they've seen on their land, or if you're lucky you'll see it first-hand on your visit! You may get the low-down about drama with abutting neighbors (think trash dumping and boundary disputes). New experiences abound, like this year when I got to monitor an inaccessible portion of one of our CR properties using the landowner's drone (it was too cool!).

## 3 Monitoring Questions We Ask:

- Are there any invasive plants?
- Are there any natural or man-made alterations to the land?
- Does the landowner have questions or need help?

Intrigued? Join our team and we'll train you how to monitor conservation land! Contact Jess at [JCusworth@EQLT.org](mailto:JCusworth@EQLT.org) for more info. ■

# Sustain Conservation: Become an EQLT Sustainer Today!

By Rich Cavanaugh

*"Supporting EQLT is important to me! Giving monthly as an EQLT Sustainer is a Win/Win. For me, I'm set up at a monthly amount that I can sustain, and it's an easy way to give more than I could in one lump sum. For EQLT, it helps provide some steady monthly income." - Wendy Bolognesi, Hardwick, MA*

Monthly contributions from EQLT Sustainers support strong programs as we launch into the next quarter century.

Sustainers schedule convenient and easily-budgeted make automatic gifts to the East Quabbin Land Trust through credit card transactions or automatic bank payments (also known as an EFTs). To set up credit card payments, simply go online to [www.eqlt.org](http://www.eqlt.org) and hit the Donate button. To set up EFTs, simply contact your bank. Donations made through EFTs go further for programming, because credit card fees do not apply. Plus, you'll never worry about updating expired or compromised cards. With automatic renewals, there are no more renewal notices or wondering if you've missed an annual gift. And you can cancel the payments at any time.

Gifts of just \$10 per month amount to \$120 by year's end. Payments of \$42 a month or more entitle an individual to become a member of EQLT's Leadership Circle. Members of the Leadership Circle enjoy unique experiences to get outdoors, to gain detailed insights about existing plans, and to share ideas about conservation in our region.

If you would like any additional information on EQLT's Sustainer program, please feel free to call (413) 477-8229 or send an email to [rcavanaugh@eqlt.org](mailto:rcavanaugh@eqlt.org). But please remember, a gift at any level and by any means is meaningful, deeply appreciated, and contributes significantly towards what the East Quabbin Land Trust can do in our region.

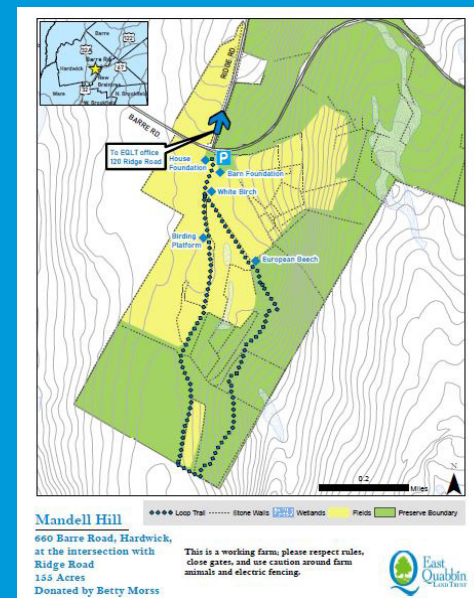
Please become a Sustainer today! ■

## Looking for trail maps?

Check out our newly redesigned website!

[www.EQLT.org](http://www.EQLT.org)

Maps are found on the "Preserves" page.





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## INSIDE: CONSERVING ANOTHER PIECE OF WEST BROOKFIELD



WINTER 2020 | VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 1

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## UPCOMING EVENTS...

### Quarterly Potluck - "Chasing Ice" Film Screening

**Sunday, January 26th, 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM | 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick**

Bring your favorite sweet or savory dish to share. Come meet other members of all ages as we share good food and learn about melting glaciers from the award-winning documentary "Chasing Ice".



### Patrill Hollow Wildlife Tracking Hike

**Wednesday, February 19th, 1:00 PM | 1015 Hardwick Road, Hardwick**

Looking to get outside during the school February break? Join EQLT staff and volunteers for a guided wildlife tracking hike through our extensive trail system at Patrill Hollow Preserve. All ages welcome!

### Quarterly Potluck - Bird Photography Presentation by Peter Christoph

**Sunday, March 15th, 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM | 120 Ridge Road, Hardwick**

Bring your favorite sweet or savory dish to share. Come meet other members of all ages as we share good food and enjoy a presentation about bird photography from wildlife photographer, speaker, and author Peter Christoph.

### Nineteenth Annual Silent Dinner and Auction

**Saturday, April 25th 5:30 PM | Eagle Hill, 242 Old Petersham Road, Hardwick**

This exciting event is held each year at the Cultural Center at Eagle Hill and is the land trust's biggest fundraiser. The evening includes a festive dinner featuring local cuisine, eclectic auction items, music, and lots of fun!