

## Making Waves: Expanding EQLT Preserves in 2024

One of the central premises of biodiversity conservation is that larger natural areas will have more species than in smaller areas. Land size matters. Intuitively that makes sense and research confirms the principle. That's a main reason why adding permanent protection to lands adjacent to existing conservation land is a high priority.

This year there are three land conservation donations happening in Hardwick that do just that! We are grateful to the generous landowners for making these donations and the Conservation Land Tax Credit program for providing a financial incentive for land conservation.

**Moose Brook Preserve**, on Brook Road, is growing by 22 acres thanks to Jerry and Liz Reilly. The original Preserve was also donated by the Reillys in 1999, which protected 100 acres of rich mesic (moist) woods. The land runs uphill to Ridge Road, fairly steeply in many sections, and has several boulder fields and intermittent streams. Currently, there are nearly three miles of walking and mountain biking trails that circumnavigate the Preserve, travelling past large erratic boulders, stone walls, a foundation and many beautiful trees. The Moose Brook Preserve is a great place to go forest bathing, deep in the woods on a gravel road with very little traffic.

Two other parcels were added over the years, and

### **High-bush blueberry budding out at Upper Danforth Preserve**



with the latest addition the Moose Brook Preserve becomes 147 acres. These 22-acres are mostly white pine woods with mixed hardwoods on rolling hills and sits adjacent to a privately-owned conservation restriction property. With this conservation donation the entire west side of Brook Road is permanently protected from development from the bridge crossing Moose Brook to the Ridge Road intersection.

**Patrill Hollow Preserve**, on Hardwick, Lucas and Czesky Roads, is growing by 90 acres. The original 136-acres was donated by Hans and Ginna Thoma in 2006. The Preserve includes several features that continue onto the additional acreage, including the unnamed stream that bisects the parcels and a dense hemlock stand at the high point of the Preserve. Otherwise, the woods are mixed hardwoods and white pine. Many trees have big crowns, indicative of growing out in open pastures before the current forest regrew.

Currently there are three miles of hiking and mountain biking trails. The vernal pool on the northern end of the Preserve is a critical habitat for salamanders and spring peepers. We've discovered another vernal pool and several ledge areas on the newly donated parcel which warrant more wildlife study before adding recreational trails in the area to minimize disruption. We are appreciative of Brett Russ's willingness to step forward and work with EQLT to pre-acquire the parcel three years ago when the land went on the market. To cover the original purchase price a 7-acre building lot was sold and payment from the Conservation Land Tax Credit program will reimburse the remaining purchase expenses.

**Night Pasture**, on North Road is getting an additional 56 acres of conservation land which will be known as Upper Danforth Preserve, thanks to Lucinda Childs and Eric Vollheim. This Preserve protects over 1,200 feet of Danforth Brook, which is a cold-water fisheries stream. These streams are important for many fish species, such as trout, sculpin and sucker. As our climate warms it's important to keep these brook corridors intact and shaded so the fish, insects and birds continue to have suitable habitat for feeding and breeding.

The Preserve also includes a significant area of deep marsh (think open water and cattails) and wooded swamp. The uplands are mixed hardwoods with white pines. Plus, the occasional stone wall provides evidence of past land-use as pasture. We aren't expecting to construct walking trails in the near future, but know that the wildlife will continue to enjoy these woods and wetlands on a daily basis. ■

## MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

*Cynthia Henshaw*



Thirty years of doing any one thing is a sign of dedication, tenacity, and persistence. That’s exactly what the East Quabbin Land Trust brings to land conservation and caring for the land in our region. Of course, having fun and making a difference in the process is like icing on the conservation cake. This year we are celebrating 30 years since the land trust’s founding. There’s been a lot of hard work, laughter and learning since 1994. We look forward to another 30 years and more!

At our recent Dinner & Silent Auction we also got to celebrate the many volunteers that make land conservation and caring possible. Volunteers bring their skills and knowledge. We’re grateful to each and every one who is part of the EQLT team.

We recognized a few volunteers who went above and beyond in the last year. First, was Francis (Bud) Pratt. Bud freely shares his carpentry skills which means he’s built kiosks, replaced our office floor and now is tackling the complete replacement of the Ellison Memorial Birding Platform at Mandell Hill in Hardwick. It’s a big job and we’re grateful that he chooses to share his skills and enthusiasm with us.

Second, was Mark Mattson. He can fix most anything – which helps keep our tractor going – builds boardwalks, brush-hogs fields, cuts up trees and clears trail. Those timber benches and accessible picnic tables along the Mass Central Rail Trail are Mark’s doing. When in town, Mark’s always ready to tackle a difficult project!

Third, was Phillip Warbasse. An architect by profession, Phil has taken ideas and suggestions from many people and designed a ramp system for The Country Store building in Petersham. That’s not an easy feat with site constraints and differing aesthetic opinions. We’re close to having a plan approved by the Historic District Commission as the first step in the approval process.

The work of EQLT is buoyed by Phil, Mark and Bud, along with the hundreds of other volunteers that make a difference in their communities through conservation every day. With hearts full of gratitude, we say ‘thank you’! ■

## THE EAST QUABBIN LAND TRUST

fosters a meaningful relationship with the natural world by conserving, connecting with and caring for the farmlands, woodlands and waters in the East Quabbin 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  
 Hardwick, MA 01037-0005  
 413-477-8229  
 Email: Office@EQLT.org

**Visit our website at [www.EQLT.org](http://www.EQLT.org)  
 or “Like” us on Facebook!**

## BOARD & STAFF

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# Art and Conservation: 20th Anniversary Gala Welcome from Rebecca Fay

*Rebecca Fay is an artist, EQLT Events team member and owner of the West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery*

Hello and welcome to the East Quabbin Land Trust's 20th Dinner and Silent Auction fundraiser. Thank you for joining us tonight!

Not only do we gather here to raise funds for land conservation, but 2024 is also the 30th anniversary of the East Quabbin Land Trust!

Together, we have conserved over 6,000 acres, created 22 miles of walking trails, engaged in outdoor youth programming, and cared for more than 1,600 acres of fields, woods and wetlands.

While I could (and maybe should) list the names of those who work tirelessly for this organization both in the office and on the land, it's a long list. I'd rather we all join in a big round of applause for them, including each and every single supporter here tonight!

I got involved with the Trust in early 2019 thanks to Judith Jones and Jody Kablack, who I now count as good friends. Before I knew it, I ended up on the events committee.

As I mingled through my first dinner auction, I saw quite a few of my clients and several fellow artists. It quickly became apparent that many folks interested in land conservation were the same people interested in the arts! I realized the land trust and I were selling the same thing – breathtaking imagery, that as humans, we feel in our bones and need in our hearts. Landscape paintings

bring the outdoors in. They're like windows we add to our homes that are able to bring our imaginations somewhere else. The beauty of nature evokes a feeling of peace and positivity in us, even with all of the uncertainty in the world we face today. It's able to convey a feeling of contentment that somehow lets our problems drift away for a while.

What is that worth??

Throughout history, art has served as a reflection of, and response to environmental and social change. In our case, it can inspire people to understand how important land conservation is.

I'd like to thank the board and its "Pollinators" (See what I did there? Pollinators is our theme for tonight!) for recognizing how artists can be an integral part in conservation. The salvage art sculptures and mural along the rail trail, the "Making Waves" map featuring the work of several local artists, and the original art on the invitation to this evening's event, are examples of their commitment to utilizing the arts to bring forth the Trust's message. So "Thank you!" I hope the trend grows and becomes a permanent practice and partnership. ■



*Rebecca Fay (right) making waves with Beth Thompson at the 30th Anniversary Gala Dinner on April 20, 2024*

*Native Pollinators: Honey Bee, Metallic Sweet Bee, and Bumble Bee. Original watercolor with gold leaf by Rebecca Fay*



## \$50,000 Matching Challenge Announced

Dave and Karen Davis announced a dollar-for-dollar fundraising challenge during the Gala Dinner. "Last year the enthusiasts who saw the value of preserving farms and land met the \$40,000 challenge. So this year we thought we'd up the ante a bit, and **we are issuing a \$50,000 fundraising challenge.** Supporting the local farmers is vital to keeping our open space that we all enjoy, along with promoting climate stability, and making fresh, local produce available to all of us."

Please consider doubling your dollars by returning a check in the enclosed envelope as part of the \$50,000 matching challenge drive. ■

# 20th Dinner and Silent Auction is a Success

Over 175 supporters gathered on April 20, 2024 at The Center at Eagle Hill to break bread together and celebrate **30 years of land conservation in the East Quabbin region**. The Davises generously issued a \$50,000 matching challenge grant, which was enthusiastically received and immediately responded to, raising \$34,000 in one evening. Help complete the fundraising challenge by making a gift to EQLT now where every dollar is doubled!



# Meet Our 2024 Business Partners

*Our Business Partners play an important role in helping the East Quabbin Land Trust continue to Care for the Land that Sustains Us! Thank you for making this Journey Together!*



## GOLD



## SILVER



## BRONZE



West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery



**We are grateful to the many businesses and individuals who donated auction items, which raised an additional \$8,000!**

Agronomy Farm Vineyard  
Autumn Morning Apiary  
Bolognesi Massage  
Garrett Wade  
Louise Garwood Landscape Designs  
Golden Goose Geoponics Farm  
Hanover Theatre & Conservatory  
Hardwick Farmers Coop Exchange  
Hardwick Sugar Shack

Ioamai Integrated Therapies  
Mace Chasm Farm  
Many Hands Organic Farm  
Palmer Motorsports  
Petersham Sanitary  
Ragged Hill Cider  
Emily Slezak Fine Gardening  
Still Life Farm  
Stillman's Farms  
The Center at Eagle Hill  
The Centered Place  
Walker Farm at Whortleberry Hill

West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery  
Worcester Art Museum  
  
Harrison Achilles  
Wendy and Aurelio Bolognesi  
Steve Brewer  
Lisa Brinkman  
Claudia Broschart  
Gail Bruce  
Rebecca Fay  
Nancy Grimes

Neil Halin  
Ann and Jeff Hicks  
Elisabeth Hyder  
Judith Jones  
Jody Kablack  
Susan Lincoln  
Hilary and Stephen Loring  
Jerry and Liz Reilly  
Donalyn Schofield  
Mike Stoll  
Eric Vollheim  
Frank White  
Stan and Abbie White

# Small Grants = Big Difference: More Funding Awarded

It's clear that providing small grants to our local farmers is having a big impact, and not just in the equipment or soil amendments that were applied. Small businesses of all types are challenged to remain viable. The weather challenges of 2023 added to the "normal" stress level of farmers. These relatively small amounts of funding increased efficiency and improved practices that benefit us all.

This year thirteen farms requested over \$70,000 in project funding. We are pleased to share that ten farms were awarded grants in support of their efforts to grow healthy foods.

- **Golden Goose Geoponics**, Ware - \$3,250. Funding to purchase a mobile grain bin that can be driven to a rotational pasture location. The bin carries enough food for multiple days, reducing labor and eliminating multiple tractor trips that compact the field soils. It's also bear-proof, making it possible to leave outside the electric fencing.
- **Sunset Valley Farm**, New Braintree - \$1,000. Excessive rain and limitations on rotating the grass-fed beef between pastures left bare spots in need of reseeding. These funds will be used to rent a no-till seeder to improve pasture conditions in 2024.
- **Front Yard Farm**, Ware - \$3,600. Wood chips and compost are important inputs for the regenerative practices at Front Yard Farm. Grant funds will support the purchase of a woodchipper so more chips can be produced from brush and twigs from the Farm. Plus the chipper can shred crop residue which decreased the amount of time to create usable compost for their permanent raised beds.
- **Rock Harvest Farm**, New Braintree - \$4,270. Funds support the purchase of a flail mower and power harrow implement attachments for a BCS tractor. These tools will make cover cropping to improve the soil health by increasing fertility, enhanced soil moisture retention, preventing erosion, compaction and nutrient runoff.
- **Yengo Farm**, Ware - \$3,500. A tractor is an essential tool on any farm with lots of potential uses. These grant funds will support the purchase of a used tractor with bucket to improve efficiency and expand the acreage being planted for fresh vegetables.

***"The funds for the 2023 micro-grant were incredibly helpful in allowing us to build a movable livestock containment pen with shelter. We built a 10x10 shed on skids for mobile housing as well as reinforced fence paneling that will allow us to quickly and easily move livestock onto a concentrated area. Thank you for helping us on our farming journey."***

***– Rachael & Luke McGarr,  
Golden Goose Geoponics Farm***

- **Noel's Farm**, North Brookfield and Petersham - \$3,500. These funds will improve productivity by paying a contractor to pick rocks (especially the largest ones) in this newly reclaimed hayfield. In addition compost will be added and cover crop seed purchased for overwinter growth to protect soil erosion, increase carbon storage and fertility.
- **Tending Tomorrow Farm**, Barre - \$2,880. The funds will purchase silage tarps and drip irrigation to convert retired hay fields into vegetable production with minimal tillage and water use. Cover cropping and mulching will manage soil fertility and weeds in the vegetable beds.
- **Mailer's Landing Family Farm**, North Brookfield - \$500. This multi-generational family farm seeks to homestead and barter while using regenerative practices. Grant funds are targeted to purchase native fruit trees which provide decades of food once fully established.

- **Free Living Farm**, Petersham - \$4,000. The farm will purchase a mechanized vegetable and root barrel washer to speed up processing of the fresh produce. In addition, grant funds will support the purchase of materials to build a portable chicken shelter to allow chickens to rotate through the fields to improve soil fertility and increase chicken and egg health.

- **Juahkumbah Farm**, North Brookfield and Petersham - \$3,500. A rock bucket attachment will be purchased and used to complete rock-picking in his fields and others, plus purchase and spread of soil amendments of lime and compost to enhance productivity in this newly reclaimed hayfield. ■

***"The funds were used to acquire the precious compost which feeds our soils, however the overall effect of the grant was much greater. Your endowment was a timely vote of confidence in what I am doing and how I choose to farm. As a small farm, it can be difficult to secure funding, and your organization is filling those gaps that state and federal programs can miss. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you."***

***– Laura Davis, Rock Harvest Farm***

# Preserve Stewards: Making Waves on the Land

The East Quabbin Land Trust currently holds 1,700 acres of woods, fields, wetlands, and streams in 24 separate property groupings throughout nine towns in the East Quabbin region of Massachusetts. The lands are open to the public and many have miles of recreational trails. That's a lot of ground to cover, and we're fortunate to have dedicated volunteer Preserve Stewards to help. Additional volunteer Preserve Stewards are always welcome to help Care for the Land that Sustains Us.

Each Preserve requires different tasks, but in general, Preserve Stewards will:

- Visit their chosen Preserve regularly (~ every month),
- Submit monitoring report forms to document the condition of the Preserve,
- Coordinate activities with other Preserve Stewards monitoring the same Preserve,
- Clear the trail corridor with saws and pruners (optional and training provided),
- Notify staff of any disturbances that require further attention.

Preserve Stewards get to know their chosen Preserve very well over time. Often so well that Preserve Stewards frequently recommend specific projects to complete themselves or with a group of other volunteers. Some examples of Preserve Steward inspired projects include:

- installing wildflower gardens,
- picking up trash or debris,
- marking boundaries and trails,
- designing additional trails,
- brush-hogging fields,
- removing invasive plants,
- weed whacking along stone walls,
- cleaning out bluebird houses, and
- hosting a walk or educational activity.

**“Stewards are ambassadors to our surrounding communities, connecting EQLT properties to the users: hikers, bicyclers, horseback riders and others. We are on the trails keeping them accessible for all.” -- Christine Kiraly-Thomas**

**“Being a Preserve Steward means forming an intimate bond between you and that property.” -- Brenda Brownell**

Well, you probably get the picture. Each Preserve is different, and each Preserve Steward brings their unique skills and interests along during each visit. Preserve Stewards make a direct difference with their time. And another benefit is that they get to know other Preserve Stewards through regular volunteer events and projects.

To be a Preserve Steward, you need to be:

- Available to regularly visit your chosen EQLT Preserve, and
- Physically capable of hiking the trail systems and (ideally) pruning vegetation.

We can teach you plant identification, how to read a map and use the Landscape app for Preserve monitoring. We have tools to share if a Preserve Steward wants to tackle additional tasks.

Your time spent improving the health and condition of our Preserves is invaluable, and you may volunteer as often as your schedule allows. While Preserve Stewards have the flexibility of volunteering whenever it works for their schedule, we ask that volunteers visit their preserve approximately once a month, and when needed to trim vegetation on the trail and submit a preserve condition report.

If you'd like to become a Preserve Steward, please contact Cynthia at [chenshaw@EQLT.org](mailto:chenshaw@EQLT.org). We hope you join the team. ■

***Preserve Stewards: Building trails, transplanting wildflowers and making log crossings so you can enjoy the land.***





*Caring for the Land that Sustains Us*

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**INSIDE:**  
**Announcing East Quabbin Farm  
Micro Grants Awardees and  
30th Anniversary Dinner Photos**



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# Hills of East Quabbin Ride

## Coming Saturday, June 22, 2024

Pedal past the beautiful farms and deep woods of central Massachusetts. Take your choice of a 25-mile or 50-mile loop, both start and finish at Farmer Matt's, 860 West Brookfield Road, New Braintree. Other tour highlights include passing EQLT properties of Wendemuth Meadow (25 Bates Street, North Brookfield), Mandell Hill (660 Barre Road, Hardwick), Deer Park Preserve (Barre Road, Hardwick), Patrill Hollow Preserve (Hardwick Road, Hardwick), Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve (165 Wickaboag Valley Road, West Brookfield), and Eva's Woods (Ware Corner Road, Oakham).

Participate and support more farmland conservation!

**Registration is \$60**

