



P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road,
Hardwick, MA 01037

FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER

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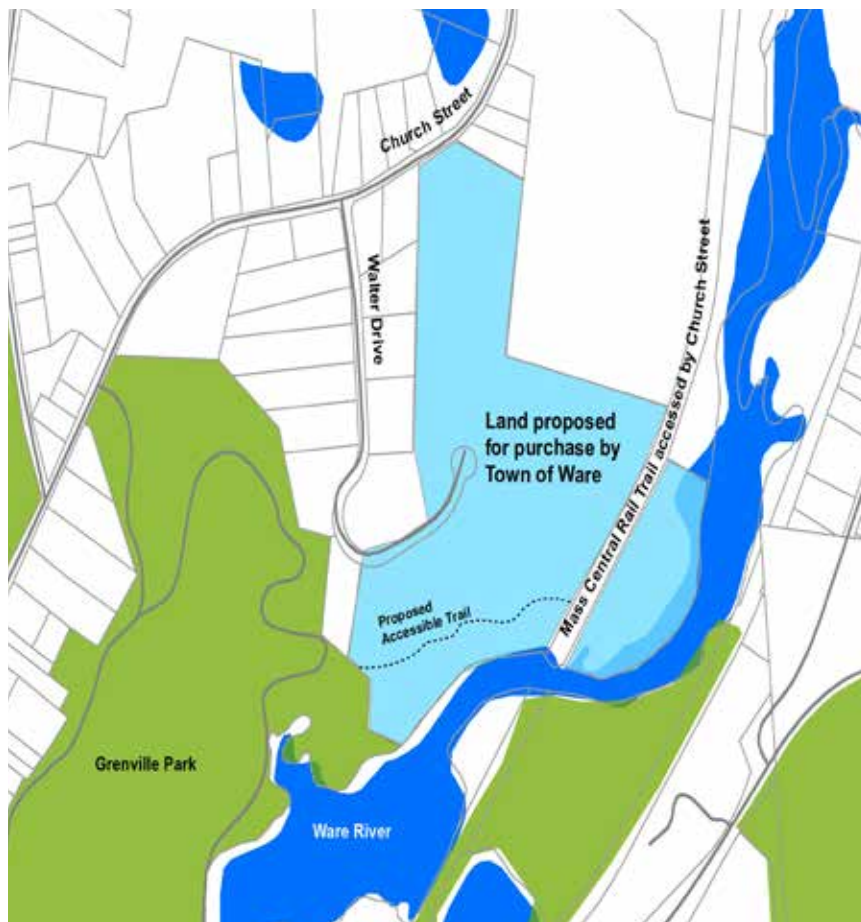
Conservation along the Ware River

The Town of Ware is poised to purchase 39-acres of woods and water frontage along the Ware River as an addition to its Grenville Park located on Church Street near the center of town. This new land will be under the care of the Conservation Commission and managed collaboratively with the Parks Department. This is exciting news for many reasons!

The land sits between Grenville Park and the Mass Central Rail Trail section off Church Street. In fact, there's already an informal walking trail that connects the two conservation areas. The trail meanders near the river, providing scenic views and at least one good fishing spot. Travelers need to duck under rhododendron branches that escaped their original plantings and wind around several boulders along the 1700-foot trail. Currently you hop over the seasonal stream that flows from the wetlands further up the hill.

There's a nice mix of white pines, red oaks and other hardwoods blanketing the rolling slopes of the property. Pretty much all this land is identified as Priority Habitat for Rare Species. Insects, plants and animals, including wood turtles, are likely to rely on the land during their breeding season or for finding food. Keeping the woods and wetlands intact is a critical goal for this conservation effort.

The Town of Ware applied for, and received, a Massachusetts L.A.N.D. grant (Local Acquisition for Natural Diversity). This grant covers up to 70% of the town's cost



in purchasing the property. The East Quabbin Land Trust facilitated the landowner negotiations, grant application, and is seeking additional foundation funding to fill the 30% cost gap. "We know this is a critical corridor for wildlife and walkers," stated Judith Jones, EQLT board president.

At fall town meeting, Ware residents will be asked to approve the purchase. With their confirmation, the land transaction will be completed before June 30, 2025.

In the meantime, planning to create an accessible trail linking Grenville Park and the Mass Central Rail Trail is underway. The goal is to create a ten-foot-wide trail with a flat, firm surface suitable for wheelchairs and strollers. Likely it will be twenty-five or fifty feet further upslope from the Ware River to minimize the impacts to the river and nearby wetlands, though the exact layout is still to be determined.

If you want to support this conservation effort or get involved with the trail work, please contact Cynthia at chenshaw@EQLT.org.



MESSAGE FROM THE
Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



Throughout the historic country store’s 180 years in Petersham, community members and area visitors have enjoyed great food, groceries, gifts and a place to gather. Over time subtle adjustments to the exterior happened, such as the butcher’s shop addition, the metal fire escape for the second-floor egress, and more recently solar panels on the roof.

After a year of design and review, the installation of an accessible walkway at the front of the store building will begin in spring 2025.

The project involves re-paving and re-grading the parking area. The request for MassDOT approval was submitted and is pending their review. Construction is expected to begin with warmer weather. We look forward to announcing full accessibility of the main Country Store building next year.

“Ramp Up” is the fundraising campaign to raise \$20,000 to fund the new accessway construction. Costs include architectural design, materials and contractor costs.

Please consider supporting this effort. Your designated gift before year-end ensures that the walkway can be completed! ■



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:

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Hardwick, MA 01037-0005
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Welcoming Amy Trevvett: AmeriCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator

In September, we welcomed Amy Trevvett as our new AmeriCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator for the 2024-2025 service year. Amy comes to us via TerraCorps – an AmeriCorps program that places members in 11-month service terms across a network of land-based community nonprofits in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Amy joined the TerraCorps program after more than 20 years in corporate communications and investor relations for the pharmaceutical and biotech industries. Originally from rural upstate New York, she grew up exploring her family's woodland property and the surrounding Adirondack foothills. Her appreciation for the natural world and all that it offers has only grown with time, particularly as the effects of climate change have become more pronounced – a key motivator in Amy's decision to jump from the corporate world to land conservation.

"As a Barre resident, I am thrilled to be able to serve and have a direct impact in my local community," Amy noted. "EQLT's volunteers and stewards, led by Cynthia, have had a phenomenal impact on ensuring important wildlife habitats, agricultural lands, and properties of cultural and ecological significance

in our region are protected. As a TerraCorps member, my role over the next nine-plus months will be to take on projects and educational efforts that are helpful in furthering EQLT's mission, but which might otherwise be placed on the back-burner due to competing priorities. At the same time, I am learning so much, and I get to spend more time outside than ever before – a true win-win!"

Amy's principal projects during her service term will include:

- Wildlife Habitat Improvements -- improving wildlife and/or pollinator habitats at one or more preserves;
- Preserve Accessibility and Experience -- improving preserve accessibility and visitor experience for at least five preserves; and
- Stewardship Educational Series -- a series of educational nature- and stewardship-based "walks and talks" to benefit Preserve Stewards and the broader community.

Amy's capacity-building projects will offer many ways to get involved with EQLT and our communities. Be on the lookout for more information over the coming months, and feel free to stop by EQLT's office to introduce yourself! ■



Contact Amy at atrevvett@EQLT.org if you want to help collect wildflower seeds to expand pollinator plantings throughout the region next spring.



Station Loop Ramble

Over 75 runners of all ages joined in the fun along the Mass Central Rail Trail—raising money to support the trail maintenance and enjoying a gorgeous fall morning outdoors together. Thank you to Farmer Matt, Gagne’s Garage, Hardwick Farmer Co-Op, It’s Wine O’Clock,

Mexicali, Ragged Hill Orchard, Sneakerama, and Stillman’s Farm for donating prizes. To see race times go to eqlt.org/station-loop-ramble/. We encourage everyone to join us **next year on Sunday, October 19, 2025** for the 14th annual Station Loop Ramble. ■



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Improving the Trails at Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve - Eagle Scout Ethan Salvadore

By Donald Root

Back on May 31, 1660, a grant was made allowing the establishment of the Quaboag Plantation for 20 families, including fur trader John Pynchon. An outlying building of this plantation was the grist mill of John Pynchon, which was situated on Sucker Brook, near the northern extremity of Wickaboag Pond in West Brookfield, MA, where many can still see the remains of the dam and the foundation for the millhouse. The route of the Old Bay Path Indian Trail crosses the Pynchon's Grist Mill parcel. In 2013 the East Quabbin Land Trust purchased this 75-acre parcel of land and named it the Pynchon's Grist Mill Preserve while continuing to manage the property for everyone to hike, bird-watch and enjoy.

As with any woodland property, the Preserve requires constant upkeep. Trail stewards Chris Kiraly-Thomas, Merlon Bassett, and Dave Mazzaresse of West Brookfield have been vigilant in this effort with help from local volunteers. One of these volunteers is Ethan Salvadore of New Braintree. He has been actively involved with EQLT over the years on projects such as replacing bridge floor boards on the Pony Truss Bridge, clearing trails, building benches, planting flowers, and helping with the Station Loop Ramble Road Race.

Ethan is a Senior at Quabbin Regional High School and has been a member of Scouts BSA Troop 144 in Oakham since the sixth grade and with the Cub Scouts starting in first grade. As a Boy Scout he has been awarded over 31 badges ranging from Camping, to Citizenship in the Nation, to Robotics, and Wilderness Survival. Ethan's interests include fishing, hiking, running, soccer and track.

After discussing with Trail Steward Chris about helping to improve parts of the trail network at Pynchon, Ethan decided to focus his Eagle Scout badge project on helping to achieve some of these much needed improvements. He gathered some fellow scouts (Owen O'Donnell, Paul Lucifer, Steve Labarre, Tyler Giancaterino, Alan Aremburg and Kevin Tucker) and other friends and implemented a phased approach of his project. The first phase of this project consisted of clearing a new trail to finish the loop on the Yellow Trail using loppers, clippers

and chainsaws.

The second phase of Ethan's project proved to require a bit more labor as they worked to make a very steep section of the Blue Trail more accessible. There were some old railroad timber ties left over from a recent tie replacement of the old railroad truss bridge over the Ware River on another EQLT property, the Mass Central Rail Trail. Ethan's team cut the older ties into 3' and 4' sections and then covered them with a copper stain.



Ethan Salvadore with Christine Kiraly-Thomas, Pynchon's Trail Steward

Ethan and his crew then had to extensively dig into the hillside using shovels, rakes, and grub hoes to create level terraces for layering these cut ties. They then used spikes, a chainsaw and a tamper tool to position and lay over 40 of the large stained ties into these terraces resulting in 26 steps which help to make navigating up and down this slope much easier for trail hikers of all ages.

Trail Steward Chris commented: "I couldn't have been more excited when Ethan chose the improvements at Pynchon's Grist Mill for his Eagle Scout project. I personally know Ethan's work ethic and his ingenuity when tackling projects. Ethan far exceeded my expectations for the stairs and clearing. Prior to constructing the stairs, Ethan sent me 3-D drawings and explanations on

how he planned to approach both tasks, the clearing of the Yellow Trail and the construction of the steps. The outcome is a gift to the West Brookfield community and to any of those who pass by and hike Pynchon."

Ethan is currently looking at colleges including UMASS Amherst, WPI, and Rensselaer where he would like to major in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Business followed by gaining a Masters in Mechanical Engineering. As for Ethan's other interests, he intends to continue spending a lot of time outdoors, fishing and running, and maybe one day hiking all of the New Hampshire 48 peaks which measure over 4,000 feet.

Come by and check out the new improvements at the Pynchon Grist Mill Preserve which is located off 165 Wickaboag Valley Road in West Brookfield. There is a kiosk with a trail map. The trail begins on the other side of the road over the bridge from the parking area and to the left on a right-of-way. Look for the diamond-shaped blue blazes on the trees. ■

Seasons of Change

By Paula Ouimette

The following is an excerpt from the September 5, 2024 Ware River News

Change is a constant thing – from the weather to our way of life – but it also brings new uses to once forgotten parts of our landscape that played an important part in developing the region.

With over 100 miles of a historic rail corridor being utilized for the Mass Central Rail Trail, Holden artist Margaret McCandless recently started a mural on one of the newer segments of the trail, which starts in Gilbertville near New Furnace Landing, and spans to a scenic lookout at Ware River Park on Lower Road.

McCandless is transforming a fence at the Gilbertville trailhead, using this blank canvas as an opportunity to celebrate the town, its history, and its natural beauty. The fence was installed through a Mass Trails grant received by the town.

“The decades have shown that land conservation strengthens a town’s economy,” McCandless said. “My nature and history murals are a way I can help children grow up appreciating preservation.”

Prior to starting the Gilbertville mural, McCandless worked with the East Quabbin Land Trust to create a mural on the Church Street section of trail in Ware. She has also painted murals on two tunnels along the trail in Rutland, one at the comfort station at Tully Lake Campground and another at the Tidepool Bookshop.

Even with her education rooted deeply in science, McCandless has always had a passion for art, enjoying painting and coloring as a child, and even making her own coloring books filled with original designs. “I studied art in college for one year, then switched to biology and chemistry,” she said.

McCandless also has a strong background in education, having worked as a teacher at the Bancroft School in Worcester when her own children were younger. Through her work in the school’s theater department, McCandless made sure to teach her students to be self-confident, show kindness to others and to see what they can create.

By combining all of these skills, McCandless began painting murals that embrace the science of the natural world, the history of the community, while also adding playful bits of learning with each brush stroke.

This mural looks at Hardwick’s history through the lens of the four seasons, starting with spring and moving to winter as you travel along the trail.

In spring, an arrowhead-shaped painting portrays life before European settlers arrived on Nipmuc land. Shifting into summer, the painting morphs into a shape of a cow and highlights the town’s farming period of the 1830s.

Fall brings the rise of industry, shaped after the iconic Gilbert Manufacturing Company’s brick mill that



still stands today. This painting features other aspects of the landscape that still make up the fabric of the village, including the Stone Church Cultural Center and the Ware-Hardwick Covered Bridge. It has trains, giving a nod to the once vibrant transportation which laid the pathway for the Mass Central Rail Trail.

The winter season looks at the town as it is today, drawing its inspiration from the recently restored gazebo at New Furnace Landing. McCandless said the mural is filled with depictions of native wildlife and plants, helping people of all ages learn more about their community.

Adding art to the Mass Central Rail Trail “encourages people to keep looking forward as they explore,” McCandless said. “It also keeps children visually interested. It’s easier for parents to say ‘let’s walk as far as the salamander.’”

The Gilbertville section of trail, including Ware River Park and the newly restored gazebo at New Furnace Landing, were part of multiyear project led by members of the town’s Conservation Commission, East Quabbin Land Trust, and many volunteers. The project also included two launch points for paddlers along the river’s Blue Trail.

Conservation Commission member Rebecca Bottomley joined McCandless in working on the mural. “You just look at this and you’re going to smile,” Bottomley said of the mural.

As a resident walked by the mural on his way to work, both McCandless and Bottomley invited him to pick up a paintbrush, and make his own mark on the project, which he gladly did. More recently, members of the Hardwick Youth Center painted nature scenes and wildlife on shingles and are incorporated into the mural.

Access to the Mass Central Rail Trail is located on Route 32 in Gilbertville, across from the Hardwick House of Pizza and parking is available near the gazebo at New Furnace Landing.

This program is funded in part by a grant from the Hardwick-New Braintree Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. ■



Caring for the Land that Sustains Us

P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road
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INSIDE:

**Conservation on the Ware River
13th annual Station Loop Ramble**



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