

# NORTH QUABBIN

Regional Landscape Partnership

## A Message from the NQRLP

Hello everyone,

While we are disappointed that we were unable to have our June meeting in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are really excited to still be able to share important information with you via this newsletter!

In the next few pages, you'll find an update from the coordinators of the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, as well as many updates from our partners, including links to important resources and information!

Please read and enjoy, and let us know if you have any questions or feedback for us!

Best,

Valerie & Sarah

## Resources

[Citizen Science Webinar Recordings](#)

[Land Conservation in MA Videos](#)

[NCLT Landowner Webinar Recordings](#)

[NQRLP Website](#)

[Parks Rx Webinar](#)

[MassLand Webinar Materials](#)

[Land Trust Alliance Webinars](#)

*Reach out to a partner Land Trust if you are interested in a webinar!*

# NQRLP Updates

## Conservation-Based Estate Planning Outreach Initiative

The MA Working Forest Initiative funds this program, which has become our primary outreach mechanism. These grant deliverables are the mainstay of our workplan each year.

### **Looking Back: FY20 Outcomes**

This was our 11<sup>th</sup> year partnering with UMass Amherst to help landowners make critical decisions about their land. This year, we had additional resources to support those working with landowners on the local level, including Open Space Committees and land trusts. Our Partnership funded:

- North County Land Trust, Hilltown Land Trust, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, and Kestrel Land Trust to collectively reach over 225 landowners and dozens of community volunteers.
- East Quabbin Land Trust to develop a video series for landowners (in collaboration with MA DCR, Janet Morrison, and North County Land Trust) and a virtual Forest Bathing workshop for women landowners.
- Town of Bolton, Sudbury Valley Trustees, Kestrel Land Trust, and Hilltown Land Trust to implement “Neighborhood Outreach” grant activities
- Creation of a new [Protecting Your Legacy](#) publication for

landowners and its distribution to 3,000 landowners across the Commonwealth

- A successful virtual Open Space Conference

This type of outreach and relationship-building is generally best done in person, but the COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed remarkable creativity from all of our partners, resulting in excellent new outreach strategies and tools. THANK YOU!

### **Looking Ahead: FY21 Goals**

We have high hopes for the coming year! Please let us know if you have ideas for utilizing this funding or would like to be involved. In the coming year, we hope to:

- Develop landowner outreach ‘Tool Kits’ for Regional Conservation Partnerships (like ours!) across the state
- Continue outreach to open space committees, including through the 2021 Open Space Conference
- Continue the “Neighborhood Outreach” grant program
- Create webinars for landowners

We will also be supporting UMass Amherst’s efforts to organize:

- Regional land trust gatherings with MassLand
- Webinars for women landowners
- Mailing *Protecting Your Legacy* to every MA land trust with the invitation to add their logo as a sticker on the front cover and utilize in outreach.

# NQRLP Updates

## 2020 MA Open Space Conference

The 2020 MA Open Space Conference was transitioned to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We hosted six free webinars over the course of six weeks, and are happy to say the event was a resounding success! We had 529 registrants and 330 people attend at least one webinar. Special thanks goes to the TerraCorps Planning Team which helped to make this event possible. You can access the conference website [here](#), which has links to all the recordings.

## NQRLP Website Update

The NQRLP website is getting a makeover! Valerie has spent the past few weeks updating the website and bringing it a bit more into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While the updates won't be too major, we hope that it will improve user experience and allow us to better communicate with all of you! We will be sending out an announcement once the site is completed and published, so stay tuned. If you would like anything added to the website, please email Valerie at [cedrone@mountgrace.org](mailto:cedrone@mountgrace.org).

## A Message From Valerie

As my TerraCorps service year comes to a close, I want to thank all of you for being so welcoming and excited to have me on board. Being



a part of the NQRLP has been one of the best experiences of this past year for me, and it has been wonderful getting to know all of you! Please feel free to stay in touch with me at [valcedrone@gmail.com](mailto:valcedrone@gmail.com)!

## Thank You to Valerie

Valerie was a rock star this year. From the outset, she had an ambitious service plan rooted almost entirely in organizing face-to-face outreach. When COVID-19 blew up this plan, she navigated the new circumstances with grace, good humor, and superb organizational skills. She quickly led her team in transitioning the conference to a weekly webinar series that ultimately smashed all previous attendance goals. Her creativity, positivity, grit, and commitment not only rescued, but actually enhanced, her line up of spring outreach activities. She was unflappable. I will miss her and all she brought to our Partnership this year. THANK YOU Valerie, and good luck in your next chapter!

# Partner Updates

## Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions

### **MACC Fall Conference Week 2020 – Save The Dates! Oct. 17th-24th, 2020**

This year's conference will be held completely online; we'll offer a number of 60-minute workshops as well as several Units of our Fundamentals Certificate Training Program. Please submit proposals for virtual workshops on useful topics for conservation commissioners and land conservation experts [here](#). The deadline for proposals is July 13th, 2020. We hope to hear from you and please help us spread the word!

### **MACC's Training Programs**

MACC is converting training classes from in-person programs to virtual programs during the pandemic. Several training opportunities focus on land management and open space protection. Check out the [event calendar](#) for up-to-date program listings.

### **Conducting Conservation Business While Staying Safe**

COVID-19 creates a difficult time for dealing with and understanding legal deadlines, appeals, and issuing permits under the Wetlands Protection Act. MACC and MassDEP have been participating in weekly

“COVID-19 and ConComs” meetings with the Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals (MSMCP). The goal is to help commissions implement the procedures for conducting virtual public meetings, and to understand passed legislation and emergency orders during the COVID-19 pandemic. MACC issued a summary of legislation and orders affecting wetlands permitting and appeals, which can be found [here](#). MassDEP has also issued [guidance](#) and an [FAQ document](#) for conservation commissioners, permit applicants, and the public.

Want to get in contact with MACC?  
Email [michele.girard@maccweb.org](mailto:michele.girard@maccweb.org)!

## Ed Hood, Opacum Land Trust & MassConn

The MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership is helping to implement an initiative called the Southern New England Heritage Forest Regional Conservation Partnership Project (SNEHF RCPP). For more information, please see the [outreach letter](#).

Want to get in contact with Ed?  
Email [ehood@opacumlt.org](mailto:ehood@opacumlt.org)!

# Partner Updates

## Kestrel Land Trust

The Forever Farmland Initiative (FFI) submitted nine example farm projects to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to push forward on the creation of locally important soils on a town-by-town basis. This would expand Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) eligibility for farms with more rocky, sloped, or patchy farmland. It was well received by the state, and FFI is waiting for next steps.

Want to get in contact with KLT?  
Email [mark@kestreltrust.org](mailto:mark@kestreltrust.org)!

## Greenfield Conservation Commission

Cassie Tragert, Greenfield's Conservation Agent, has been using the time when she is not allowed in her normal office to focus on updating maps of the city's conservation lands. The hope is to create GIS maps of all trails on their properties and create updated maps with a uniform key system so that recreators can more easily navigate them. The city also plans to inventory any necessary maintenance, areas to improve, and potential future projects.

The last tie into this is updating the Conservation Commission's online presence, hopefully with a social media aspect either separately as just the ConCom or by joining forces with an existing department's social media (such as the Recreation Department). This is all still in the map data collection phase and may be a bit lofty, but the hope is to get the maps done this summer and then fill the slower permitting requests in the winter to have time to use it for outreach.

Want to get in contact with Cassie?  
Email [cassie.tragert@greenfield-ma.gov](mailto:cassie.tragert@greenfield-ma.gov)!

## Dave Small, Athol Bird & Nature Club

Dave has been working with Mount Grace to create Citizen Science webinars! These webinars have been incredibly successful and focus on topics like dragonflies and butterfly watching! The recordings are available and can be found [here](#). For more information on the Athol Bird and Nature Club, please visit [atholbirdclub.org](http://atholbirdclub.org).

Want to get in contact with Dave?  
Email [dave@dhsmaill.net](mailto:dave@dhsmaill.net)!

# Partner Updates

## East Quabbin Land Trust

### **MassWildlife Habitat Management Grant Program: Grassland Habitat Restorations**

We've nearly completed our grassland habitat restoration projects at our Mandell Hill and Wendemuth Meadow preserves. Our goal is to enhance the grasses for nesting grassland birds, particularly bobolinks. We had lime and fertilizer applied to the fields and are awaiting herbicide spot-treatments for invasive knapweed in the fields. These measures will ensure that we have the optimal grasses for nesting birds. In addition, we're removing brush along the stone walls to increase field connectivity for the grassland birds.

### **National Volunteer Week Grant - Accessible Rail Trail Visitor Enhancements at 250 Church St., Ware**

We adjusted this project due to COVID-19. Rather than having a one-day event with all volunteers, we split up the tasks over a few weeks so family units and individuals could complete projects separately. There are now 3 new pollinator gardens, benches, interpretive signs, and mile markers along the half-mile long accessible trail.

We added 2 additional community engagement projects that families could complete at home using this funding. First, Cynthia and another volunteer put together over 100 bluebird house kits for families to build and install at their own homes. Second, we purchased 150 pollinator plants and distributed sets of 5 plants to over 30 families to plant in their gardens. This is part of a larger "pollinator pathway" project that we intend to follow up with in the fall by doing a seed swap.

### **Land Conservation in Massachusetts Videos**

Along with other NQRLP partners, there are now seven videos for landowners on YouTube as part of a playlist called "Land Conservation in Massachusetts". [Check them out!](#)

Want to get in contact with EQLT?  
Email [chenshaw@eqlt.org](mailto:chenshaw@eqlt.org)!

## Landowner Options for Conservation: Including the Forest Legacy Program

April 2020

Sponsored by:



Funded by:  
Mass. Dept. of Conservation –  
Working Forest Initiative



# Partner Updates

## **North County Land Trust**

### **Burdin CR – Part of Norcross Hill Conservation Project**

North County Land Trust partnered with Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and closed on the 17-acre Burdin CR in Templeton on June 12. This was part of the Norcross Hill Conservation Project that conserved over 500 acres of land in Templeton including the 465 acre Fernald Corporation land. This multi-partner joint project was funded by a Landscape Partnership Grant. MassWildlife led the project and worked to acquire the Fernald land. North County Land Trust is the primary grantee and Mount Grace is the secondary grantee on the Burdin CR and the Town of Templeton sold two separate parcels of land to DCR. Fields Pond Foundation, William Wharton Trust and Bafflin Foundation also helped fund the Burdin CR.

### **Big's Switchback Trail Day**

We are excited to say that we were able to cut an alternate route to our Big's Bushwhack trail at Crocker Conservation Area this spring. The alternate route, Big's Switchback, allows users to climb the hill from the Lower Loop trail on the Caldwell Street end of Crocker up to the Overlook Reservoir with much more gradual and meandering

switchbacks – a great choice for those looking to avoid a steep climb. We hope that this will increase foot traffic to the Lower Loop section of the conservation area encouraging usership from another section of the city from the main trailhead area at Flatrock Road and that trail users will be excited to have a new trail option at Crocker!

### **Dwelly Farm Conservation Area Management Plan**

Work began on a long-term management plan at Dwelly Farm to remove invasive plants, convert a pine grove into a pollinator meadow and plant native plants at the conservation area. The long-term goal is to make the conservation area a haven for native plants and animals and improve habitat for American Woodcock. The current trail system will allow visitors to enjoy this diverse conservation area and an educational nature trail is planned that will highlight the native plants. NCLT has contracted Land Stewardship, Inc. for a three-year period to remove Glossy Buckthorn and Japanese Knotweed with chemical stem and foliar applications. Anderson Logging and Lumber will clear the pine grove this summer and Lafferty...

# Partner Updates

## North County Land Trust cntd.

...Enterprises will stump, grade and seed the new field this fall. NCLT has done extensive outreach to explain the project to Templeton residents and the general public. Special thanks go to MGLCT TerraCorps member, Valerie Cedrone, for help editing a video about the project. Thanks also to Cynthia Henshaw of EQLT for the loan of a video camera.

## **Landowner Webinars**

Through the Working Forests Initiative Landowner Outreach Grant program, North County Land Trust was able to offer 4 webinars for landowners this winter-spring season. Initially our plan was to offer 3 in person workshops geared towards estate planning for landowners in our region but plans pivoted in the midst of COVID-19. Instead of repeating the estate planning session we were able to branch out into other topics since the first [estate planning webinar](#) had been recorded and could be used as a resource later. We chose to offer an [introduction to agroforestry and silvopasture session](#), a [natural history and habitat management session](#), and an [introduction to invasive plants session](#), all of which were recorded and posted on our website with

many helpful resource links from our presenters. We were glad to have speakers from MA DCR, an estate planning attorney, MA Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, USDA, NCLT staff, and local landowners and practitioners at these webinars and received feedback from attendees that information was appreciated and will be helpful in making decisions about their land in the future. We hope that the programs we were able to offer this year will help North County Land Trust be a continued resource for landowners in our region and that we can continue to offer programming to landowners in the future that will assist them in making ecologically sound decisions for their land for years to come.

Want to get in contact with NCLT?  
Email  
[jbratko@northcountylandtrust.org!](mailto:jbratko@northcountylandtrust.org)

## Joelle Vautour, DCR Management Forester

The DCR State Lands Management Forestry Program hosted two virtual public meetings last week to present seven forest management projects. These meetings are a routine part of our public process and went well via Zoom.

Our program is moving forward...

# Partner Updates

## Joelle Vautour cntd.

...with our forest management projects as wood materials have rebounded after a bit of a downfall early on with the pandemic. We are continuing to maintain our boundary lines through in-house staff and contractors, and we are continuing our Continuous Forest Inventory research as in any field season.

Want to get in contact with Joelle?  
Email [joelle.vautour@gmail.com](mailto:joelle.vautour@gmail.com)!

## Jeff Legros, Gardner & Janet Morrison, Esq.

The City of Gardner, through their Conservation Commission, in cooperation with Janet H. Morrison, Esq., Land Conservation Consulting, and with funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) small grant program of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, has recently achieved additional protections along Bailey Brook, the City's only state-designated Coldwater Fish Resource Area. These recent efforts are part of the Gardner and Winchendon Wetlands Protection Project.

While the recent addition of a 20-acre Conservation Restriction and 1/2-acre parcel of land may seem modest, they are part of a larger effort to protect the entirety of the Bailey Brook riparian zone, wetlands

and their buffers, and considerable amounts of the forested landscape within this completely undeveloped (other than three road/stream crossings) stream corridor. Considerable BioMap landscape and core habitat exists within this now protected landscape.

In addition we, together with our partners, utilized a variety of grant funding opportunities, creative strategies, landowner donations, short-sales, and tax-incentives to make this a reality.

This project is a great example of a microcosm of the Regional Landscape Partnership approach implemented at the local level to meet a specific conservation target as part of a larger regional effort. It includes unique habitat protection, protection of un-fragmented forest and wetland landscapes, protection of wildlife corridors, and potential future north-south wildlife climate change refugia corridor, among other related conservation targets and goals.

To learn more, please click [here](#).

Want to get in contact with Jeff?  
Email [jlegros@gardner-ma.gov](mailto:jlegros@gardner-ma.gov)!

Want to get in contact with Janet?  
Email [janet-morrison@comcast.net](mailto:janet-morrison@comcast.net)!