

The East Quabbin Land Trust Successfully working to protect the Dougal Range

The Dougal Range stretches from Hardwick Center to downtown Ware, including more than 2,000 contiguous acres of upland forest: this is extremely unusual for unprotected land in Massachusetts. The Dougal Range provides an unbroken link to three ecologically important watersheds in our area: the Muddy Brook, Danforth Brook, and Ware River Watersheds. Fragmenting the Dougal Range would result in the local ecological isolation of these watersheds. This significance put the Dougal range on the priority list by the board of the East Quabbin Land Trust as an area for conservation. "The Dougal Range is a focus of the land trust because of the special ecology of the area." stated Stan White, EQLT President. "It's pretty rare to find such a large forested region this close to metropolitan areas."

The East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) is pleased to announce that the first piece of the Dougal Range Conservation Initiative has been completed. EQLT has acquired a significant parcel on the Dougal Range, the bulk of Ted & Jantje Baker's property.

Edwin F. (Ted) and Jantje S. Baker owned a 57-acre parcel including a log home on Turkey Street in Hardwick directly across from the Music Camp. A small portion, about 4 acres is in Ware, including the driveway access to the home. This parcel is within the core Dougal Range focus area and abuts the Gilbertville Water District lands (315 acres). Conservation of the back land and a trail right of way will provide recreational access to the Dougal Range. "I love the land and had hoped to move there someday. Since that's not possible, I'm really happy that the East Quabbin Land Trust was able to buy the property and it will remain open for hiking, hunting and other outdoor activities," said Ted Baker. This purchase was made possible by grants received from Fields Pond Foundation, The Greater Worcester Community Foundation, and the Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grant program.

The Dougal Range is one of many special places in our region. Its slopes, supporting the cycle of first sustenance hunting, then fueling the Village's mills, to supporting extensive grazing and now once again functioning in a natural state, has driven the history of the area and has shaped not only the towns below, but the people who live in these towns. The Range continues to link the communities of Hardwick, Gilbertville and Ware not in just a figurative way, but also in a very real and physical way. The Dougal Range is the epitome of a proper balance between functioning communities and a functioning ecosystem. With the diverse abutting watersheds and the suite of rare species it supports, the Dougal Range has already become a focus in a variety of studies. The University of Massachusetts is conducting a study of one of the rare species present on the west slope of the Range, and the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Program has designated a majority of the Range as supporting Natural Landscape in its Bio-Map Project.

Join EQLT for a Mother's Day Walk on Sunday, May 11th to explore the newly protected Baker parcel. The walk will begin on the steep west slope of the Baker parcel on Turkey Street, across from the old music camp, and end at the dramatic ledges of the Water District overlooking the village of Gilbertville below and the greater Ware River Valley beyond. The walk will encounter some rough terrain, so wear sturdy walking or hiking shoes and dress appropriately.

For more information about EQLT, the upcoming walk, or how you can become a supporter contact Cynthia Henshaw at 413-477-8229, email eglt@comcast.net, or check out our website at www.eglt.org.