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## **Grants to jump-start conservation projects** **North Quabbin land partnership**

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ATHOL— The money is only a small portion of what is needed for each project, but grants given by the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership yesterday will help jump-start projects in communities throughout northern Massachusetts.

Jay Rasku, coordinator of the partnership, said yesterday that the grants, totaling \$32,000, is the most given in the three years the money has been offered by the partnership. He said the seed money is not intended to be all that is needed to accomplish a project, but rather to help pay the cost of land appraisals, transaction costs or other needs.

He said the partnership was founded in 1998 to create a collaborative approach to land conservation in 26 communities in the North Quabbin region. The collaboration includes 25 public and private agencies. It has been giving the small grants for three years as a way of encouraging conservation projects.

“Unlike other areas of the state, we still have an opportunity to preserve the rural landscape,” he said.

If all goes as planned, the grants of between \$1,000 and \$4,000 will help conserve about 4,000 acres of farmland and woodland.

**Among those benefiting from the grant program is the East Quabbin Land Trust of Hardwick. Cynthia Henshaw, executive director of the land trust, said her organization received two grants, one for \$2,000 to help preserve a 68-acre parcel bordering the Old Barre Reservoir in Barre. The other is \$3,000 for appraisals of woodlots owned by the St. Mary’s and St. Scholastica religious orders in Petersham.**

The Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in Athol also received two grants. The first, according to Mount Grace representative Paul Daniello, is for the West Hill project which will protect the hillsides around New Salem Town Common. Mr. Daniello said the \$3,000 grant would pay transaction costs and other project expenses. The second, according to Pamela Kimball-Smith, land protection coordinator for Mount Grace Land Trust, is for protection of the 71-acre Gale Hilltop Farm in North Orange.

David Outman of the Trustees of Reservations said his organization received \$4,000 toward preservation of the Signature Farm, one of the last and the largest operating dairy farm in Orange.

Other grants given include two to the North County Land Trust totaling \$4,000. One is \$1,000 for appraisals of land along the Mid-State Trail. The other is \$3,000 for appraisals of land along Bailey and Wilder Brooks in Gardner.

“The appraisals will allow them to apply for other grants for the project,” Mr. Rasku said.

The partnership also provided \$3,000 to help conserve 88 acres near Thousand Acre Swamp in Phillipston. The land is near the Red Apple Farm. Bill Rose of Athol said the land is also adjacent to Bearsden Conservation Area in Athol.

The Kestrel Trust in Amherst also received a total of \$6,000. Kristin DeBoer, executive director of the trust, said \$2,000 will be used to help preserve Well-Away Farm in Pelham, one of that town’s original homesteads and among its last farms, and \$4,000 will go to preserve about 3,000 acres of forested land in Western Massachusetts.

The Franklin Land Trust will also receive \$3,000 to help preserve the Remillard Farm in Gill.