

# East Quabbin LAND TRUST



## *Conservation effort in Petersham underway!*

The East Quabbin Land Trust, in partnership with the Harvard Forest and Petersham Conservation Commission, has agreed to purchase an 87-acre parcel on North Main Street in Petersham.

The woods sweep down hill to the west with Nelson Brook, a primary cold-water stream, running along near the southerly boundary. Recent harvesting has created an opening along the upper plateau that provides spectacular westerly views of the largely protected woods of the region including the Quabbin Reservoir. The land is strategically positioned between Harvard Forest property and a tract of Petersham State Forest. In addition, the conservation of this land promotes the town's Open Space Plan, which identifies the northern area of town as a conservation priority.

This land was owned and managed by Ernie Gould, long-time Forest Economist and Assistant Director at the Harvard Forest, during the 1960's, 70's and 80's. In 1984, Mr. Gould wrote in his booklet Managing a Small Wood Lot:

*“One of the popular myths about private landowners like me is that we butcher our woods and mistreat them more often than any other group of landowners. I doubt we do, however, because so many owners I've met are like me in wanting to take care of our woodlots..... [we] have a high regard for a wide array of values, including outdoor recreation, observing wildlife, hunting, relief from the work-a-day life, gains from rising land values, aesthetics, a source of fuel wood, and a host of other satisfactions that are generally not tracked over the counter.”*



The ultimate goal is to establish the Gould Woodland Center for Conservation at the Harvard Forest, where demonstrations of sustainable management techniques along with interpretive trails, publications and other displays will inform visitors about woodland conservation and change. A trail network highlighting interesting areas of the Gould property will provide connections to other conservation land in the Tom Swamp Valley and also further the regional goal of establishing a trail network from Phillipston to Quabbin.

How can we make this vision a reality? There are several steps in this process. The East Quabbin Land Trust and current owners have signed a Purchase and Sales Agreement to allow the purchase in January 2008. In the interim, the Petersham Conservation Commission plans to apply for a state grant to buy the development rights, or Conservation Restriction. With grant funds and private donations, the Conservation Commission will buy the Conservation Restriction by next summer. At that point, Harvard Forest will purchase the restricted land and establish the Gould Woodland Center for Conservation.

Because the state grant requires a partial match from other sources, financial support from individuals and foundations will be necessary to complete these steps. The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership recently awarded \$3,000 towards transaction expenses. If you want to help or have any questions, please contact Cynthia Henshaw at (413) 477-8229 or [chenshaw@eqlt.org](mailto:chenshaw@eqlt.org).

## *Message from the Executive Director*



There is no doubt we live in a beautiful part of the country. However, many of the broader economic forces are literally changing our landscape. Dairy farmers are struggling to pay bills with low milk prices and high fuel costs, landowners cannot afford to pass their land onto their children without tremendous tax implications, and staggering medical bills force families to sell land to stay out of bankruptcy. In Mass. over 40 acres of farms and forests are converted to housing or other uses each day. The communities of the east Quabbin have all experienced this, some more than others.

I live in Templeton, which straddles Rte. 2. In the past three years, three major subdivisions have added 200 housing units and two more are in the planning review stage. This growth places increased demands on the school system and municipal services. The school budget has increased at a rate greater than the revenue received from increased residential taxes. The town must choose between reduced services or Proposition 2-1/2 overrides. Templeton is clearly not alone in this regard.

On the other hand, land that forever remains as agricultural fields, woods and wetlands is a net tax benefit, even if enrolled in the reduced state tax assessment programs (Chapter 61, 61A or 61B). Certainly those lands do not send kids to school, demand paved roads and rarely need fire or police protection. Working with interested landowners in maintaining open spaces makes good tax sense, but also open land provides places to hike, deepens our connection to nature, and generates revenue for the owner.

This year, the East Quabbin Land Trust embarked on a long-term strategic planning process, one that will define our vision and set out an ambitious action plan for the coming five years. John Goodrich, a planning and organizational consultant, is guiding the board through these steps. We are grateful to John for volunteering his tremendous wealth of knowledge and experience with the land trust. A second full-day planning session for the board is scheduled for September where the conversation will focus on the critical issues facing the organization and how our vision for the region will guide future efforts. In the meantime, each committee, whether focused on specific land conservation initiatives, the finances or active land stewardship, is evaluating how their work advances future conservation. We look forward to sharing the strategic plan once finalized.

Warmest regards,

*Cynthia Henshaw*

## *On the Land...*

The East Quabbin Land Trust recently received three pieces of property in Hardwick. In an effort to learn more about the land, Forest Stewardship Plans were finished with the help of consulting forester, Roger Plourde. The plans integrate EQLT's values of working landscapes, opportunities for recreation and learning, and supporting diverse areas for wildlife. This integration results in a list of recommended actions to take.

There is good reason to cut some of the trees on all three pieces especially ones that have bad shape or other habitat types are desirable. By doing this carefully, the wildlife can benefit and remaining trees have more room to grow. One important consideration is the amount of invasive plants found on the land. Multiflora rose, Japanese barberry, burning bush and honeysuckle (among other invasive species) need to be controlled – either through cutting or herbicide treatments. Any future work will carefully reflect on the ramifications of all these considerations.

Please contact Cynthia at (413) 477-8229 if you want more information about our plans or to know more about the Forest Stewardship Program.

*Put your volunteer hours to good use!*

If you have any time, whether one hour or many, and want to help at the various EQLT properties, please give Cynthia a call at (413) 477-8229. Opportunities abound to clear trails, cut brush, maintain old homestead sites, paint and take pictures.

## Volunteer Profile—Interview with Phil Hubbard and Iva Kazda

Phil Hubbard and Iva Kazda moved to Barre two years ago, Phil from Philadelphia by way of Salem, MA. Iva's trip was a little longer; from the Czech Republic by way of Norway by way of Canada by way of Arlington. Phil's background is with the public and non-profit sectors, most recently the Billerica Housing Authority. Before that, he developed public housing for the state and implemented community development projects, putting to use his master's in public affairs.

Iva has two master's degrees in health and nutrition, and, following her career as a dentist, is currently working on a research project with the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. She comes from a long line – 4 or 5 generations – of Czech foresters. "I'm happiest," she tells me, "when I'm in the woods, or poking in the garden."

Phil and Iva enjoy hiking, cross-country skiing, and staying active in various community ventures. Phil acts with the Barre Players and is an associate member of the Barre Planning Board, and he and Iva have done a great deal of trail work, predominantly at the Moose Brook conservation site. They live in a nicely restored white cape – Phil's day job for the past year - in the center of Barre, across from the Listening Center. Their backyard is spacious and well-tended: flowers, a thriving garden, a neat lawn and a rhubarb patch.



The local skate board hoodlums haven't come around this year to loiter and make jumps from scavenged bench parts. Iva thinks they're growing up.

**EQLT:** Phil, Cynthia tells me that you've been working on the baseline documentation for the four CR's that

EQLT is responsible for. Could you tell me more about that?

**Phil:** Well, the land trust has entered into an agreement with the landowners – they get a tax deduction and preserve the land. We get a map of the land and walk it, take photographs to make sure that it's not being encroached upon; that there is no construction going on.

**EQLT:** So, that's like being an insurance fraud investigator. Or something.

**Phil** (*wrinkling brow*): Y-yes. In a very, very loose sense, maybe.

**EQLT:** How did you two get involved with the land trust?

**Phil:** I originally had an interest in the Trustees of Reservations. When we moved out here, we wanted to get involved – we wanted to preserve the scenic beauty of the area. I considered the Mt. Grace Land Trust, but East Quabbin was closer and smaller, and more accessible, I thought.

**Iva:** We wanted to get involved, to help as much as we could. Phil's been more involved, but for both of us, it's in our blood. Mine is somewhere between green and blue – blue from the blueberries.

**EQLT** (*chuckling*): That's good. I'm gonna use that. Personally, what gets you fired up about the land trust?

**Phil:** I'm a do-gooder. (*smiles*) Well, I guess I have progressive values. I like all the land: the Trustees of Reservations land, the farm land and the forests. I just want to help preserve the rural character of the area.

**Iva:** I think this a truly beautiful area out here. It is still somewhat unspoiled.

**EQLT:** It certainly is. Tell me: in what direction do you see the EQLT heading?

**Phil:** I think it is in many ways grassroots: it's nice going to a meeting and seeing people that I've seen in the community. I see the land trust, under Cynthia, growing as an organization, being able to do more because of the paid staff. It took a leap of faith to get the resources, but now [EQLT] is taking on more projects and doing more. It may be that we'll be taken more seriously, now, [with grant applications] because she has the title.

**EQLT:** Thanks so much for that. We're running out of space now, so do you have any last thoughts?

**Phil:** It's a great organization and I think we should be proud to have Cynthia.

**Iva:** We're happy to be a part of it. The garden show they put together was very enjoyable.

—Chuk Kittredge

## *Don Kroodsma's "A Singing Life of Birds"*

A major highlight of the East Quabbin Bird Club's 2007 events schedule was an afternoon spent with acclaimed author and bird expert Don Kroodsma. Dr. Kroodsma, professor emeritus at UMASS and author of "A Singing Life of Birds", spent over two fascinating hours with nearly 100 local friends of the East Quabbin Land Trust discussing birds, bird song and his research. Through slides, audio recordings, and his captivating presence, Don showed us a world of detail and meaning within the songs of our local species.

The following weekend the East Quabbin Bird Club made a visit to Winimuset WMA in New Braintree and the impact of the presentation was felt almost immediately. Despite seeing such birds as Upland Sandpiper, Northern Harrier, Osprey and Bald Eagle, the group spent as much time lost in the detail and pattern of the sounds of our common Song Sparrow. As one Bird Club member said, "the presentation has opened an entirely new world".

A very special thank to Don for sharing research and enthusiasm and to Eagle Hill School for hosting the event on campus.

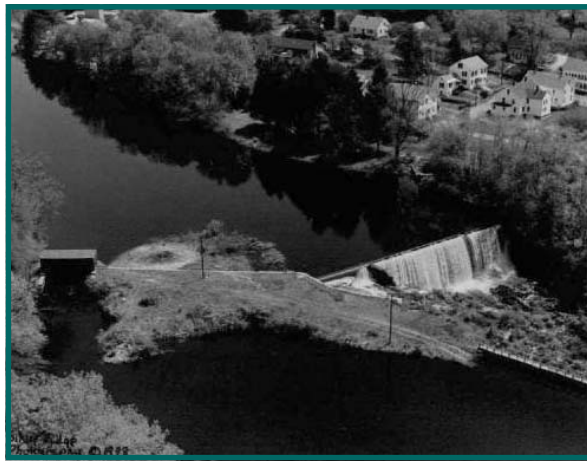
All East Quabbin Bird Club events are free and open to the public. Visit our web-site at [www.eastquabbinbirdclub.com](http://www.eastquabbinbirdclub.com).



## History and Present State of Hydro Power in New England

By David Wright, founder of Ware River Power, with Lucas Wright

Britain's loss of the colonies in 1776 had a minimal effect on the British economy. The new nation remained the source of raw goods for England's factories. Factories in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were simply groups of craftsmen, under one roof making product for the owner using the same methods they would use at home. Most hand wrought hardware found in early American homes was forged in British factories. By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, England's factories had undergone a profound change. The use of leather belts to transmit power from water wheels had allowed the development of high speed, mass production machinery. The factory building became a machine powered by a river and its management became hierarchical. So began the bureaucratic system (which works well in manufacture, but which seems to wreck havoc when applied to the operation of government).



Power generating station on Ware River at former Ware Industries upper mill dam. Total capacity is 1.4 mega watt hours.

The War of 1812 was not fought about the conscription of US sailors. It was fought about the theft of England's technology. If America could convert its cotton and wool into textiles, the British economy would surely suffer. It became an act of treason to reveal technological information and the British spared no effort in hunting down anyone who did so. Entrepreneurs managed to bring British technology to America in spite of these efforts. Sam Slater escaped from England with an astounding understanding of textile machinery. He recreated that machinery from memory without drawings and by the 1820s had dotted the Blackstone River with textile mills. At the same time, an operator named Kirk Boott was using stolen British technology to develop the Merrimack River in Lowell, also known as the birthplace of the industrial revolution or Spindle City. The early mills were originally run on breast (water) wheels, but by the 1840s, most had changed to turbines. In 1848, a Lowell engineer named Francis designed the turbine bearing his name. Francis turbines developed efficiencies in excess of 90% & are still the industry standard.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the invention of electricity made another profound change in industry. Factories no longer had to be close to power sources. Both water and

steam power could run generators miles away. Factories no longer needed to be multi storied buildings on rivers. In 1936, Congress regulated utilities and gave them large incentives to build the infrastructure necessary to provide electricity to the nation. By the end of WWII, with cheap fossil fuels available, utilities seeking the economy of scale tried to centralize power production by giving disincentives to private local generation. Demand (standby) charges were instituted which made it more costly to generate power than to buy it. Huge Fairbanks Morse internal combustion engines, Skinner steam engines and Francis turbines shut down. Within 10 years of WWII most of the country's independent power production had ceased.

Estimates are that 4-7% of New England's power could be obtained from existing (decommissioned) hydro facilities. To rehabilitate and operate these independent hydro facilities is the primary goal of Ware River Power, Inc. since its inception in 1980. The Company owns and operates 5 dams on the Ware and French rivers in Barre, Ware and Webster Mass. with a total capacity of over 2 megawatts. That is enough electricity to run 2,000 houses. Since 1980, Ware River Power acting as general contractor has rehabbed 18 complete hydro sites and more upgrading of operating sites. The Company was operated by David Wright, its president and founder, from 1980 through 1999, when his son Lucas took over.

The ecosystems around most of our existing small dams have been in place for a century or more. Removal of these dams means the destruction of large areas of wetlands and wildlife habitat. The soundness of their construction has been proven. They have survived the major floods of our time, 1936, '38 and '55. We need to encourage the rehabilitation of the hydro potential of these dams. Without an income stream, owners find it difficult to provide proper maintenance or add proper fish passage. The price of hydro electric energy is depressed in this state because Massachusetts does not consider hydro a renewable power source. We must encourage our legislators to rectify this.

Water flows have remained consistent over the years. We now know what ecological harm comes from changing pond levels to meet power demands. Almost all small hydroelectric sites are now "run of the river" operations. Water flows were probably better in 1885 when Massachusetts was only 15% forested than in 1985 when the state was 85% woodland. The jury is out on just what effect global warming will have on precipitation here. It is abundantly clear that our hydro electric potential is an important component in ending our senseless waste of resources and contamination of this planet.

## *Gift Received—New Fund Established*

The East Quabbin Land Trust received a \$50,000 gift from Judith Jones to establish a Revolving Loan Fund. The Revolving Loan Fund is designed for the board to loan money for specific priority conservation initiatives where a state agency or conservation buyer will subsequently purchase the property or development rights. Once EQLT transfers the property interests to the new owner, the money can be loaned out to assist the next landowner conserve their farm or woods.

One of the critical roles that the East Quabbin Land Trust plays when helping landowners meet their conservation goals is to buy their land or development rights in anticipation of transferring those interests to another conservation entity. The conservation of the 260-acre Lubelczyk farm is one example. The Mass Dept. of Fish and Game (DFG) wanted to expand their Racoon Hill Wildlife Mangement Area to include the Lubelczyk land, but couldn't act quickly enough to make that happen. The East Quabbin Land Trust borrowed the money and bought the land. Later, the land was sold to DFG and the loan repaid.

The East Quabbin Land Trust is engaging other supporters and foundations to expand the Revolving Loan Fund to \$500,000 over the next five years. At that level, the East Quabbin Land Trust can act quickly and decisively to purchase properties or the development rights from landowners interested in conservation. If you are interested in supporting the growth of the Revolving Loan Fund or have any questions please contact Cynthia Henshaw at (413) 477-8229 or [chenshaw@eqlt.org](mailto:chenshaw@eqlt.org).

## *Ware River Rail Trail Purchased— Revolving Loan Fund in Action*

On June 22<sup>nd</sup> the East Quabbin Land Trust purchased the 3.2-mile section of the Ware River Rail Trail in Hardwick and New Braintree from the Central Highlands Conservancy, LLC.

In early June, the East Quabbin Land Trust was awarded a \$50,000 Recreational Trails Grant from the Mass Dept. Conservation and Recreation for purchase of the rail trail. This reimbursement grant was the final step in fundraising necessary to buy the former railroad corridor that was part of the Mass Central Railroad running from Boston to Northampton. Various sections of the corridor are already open for passive recreation, including the Norwottuck Rail Trail in Northampton, Hadley and Amherst, sections of the Wachusett Greenway in Holden and Rutland, and farther east towards Boston.

The Board used funds from the Revolving Loan Fund to purchase the Ware River Rail Trail. Once the grant is awarded, those dollars will become available for the next conservation opportunity. Because the fund is designed to “revolve”, each dollar invested in the Revolving Loan Fund compounds the conservation opportunities over time within the east Quabbin region.

## *Future of Conservation Tax Incentives Uncertain*

Last year Congress passed the Pension Reform Act that greatly expanded the income tax benefits of donating a conservation restriction to a qualified charitable organization. These benefits are scheduled to expire on December 31, 2007. The conservation community is working diligently to have the tax benefits expanded, but the future is uncertain.

The new law raises the deduction a landowner can take for donating a conservation restriction from 30% of their adjusted gross income to 50% and increases the “rollover” or number of years a donor can use the excess deduction from 5 to 15 years. These changes mean that landowners with modest annual incomes can greatly benefit from these new deduction allowances AND see their beloved lands remain open and working beyond their lifetimes.

If you or someone you know is considering taking advantage of these tax benefits, please contact Cynthia Henshaw at (413) 477-8229 as soon as possible. Completing this type of transaction takes several months. So don't delay!

## *Board & Staff*

Terry Briggs—Hardwick  
Chris Buelow—Gilbertville  
Elizabeth Coe—Petersham  
Judith Jones—New Braintree, V.P.  
Martha Klassanos—Ware, Clerk  
Jerry Reilly—Hardwick, Treasurer  
Rick Romano—Hardwick  
Jeff Schaaf—Wheelwright  
Stan White—Hardwick, President  
Magi Ziff—New Braintree  
Marion Cooper, Staff  
Cynthia Henshaw, Exec. Director

*Fabulous Benefit Garden Tour! (despite the Saturday rain)*



*Sincere thanks to our 2007 Garden Hosts —*

*Kips Christmas Tree Farm  
Peg and Dave Thompson  
Doug Anderson*

*Deb Morrison  
Mary Jones  
Cindy Lagomarsino*

*Deb Houston and Lee McLaughlin  
Kay and Don Boothman  
Bruce Lockhart*

## East Quabbin Land Trust News

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"Conserving the land, preserving our character."

### *Our Mission :*

The East Quabbin Land Trust exists to conserve the natural, historical, agricultural, and recreational character of our region. To this end we gather resources, educate, and develop and implement land-protection strategies.

Rural Route

Petersham, MA 01366

## *EQLT Upcoming Events:*

### *Edible Plant Walk with Russ Cohen, Tuesday, July 24, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.*

Join renown naturalist and wild foods enthusiast, Russ Cohen, for an evening walk along the banks of the Muddy Brook and slopes of the Dougal Range in Ware in search of mushrooms and wild edible plants. Wear appropriate boots, clothing and bring water and bug spray for this off trail hike. Meet at Willow Tree Nursery, 25 Hardwick Pond Road, Ware. Contact EQLT for directions.

### *Hardwick Community Fair, Friday and Saturday, August 17 & 18*

Stop by the EQLT booth to see many photographs of our region's working farms, throw a few balls at the water dunk tank, or enjoy a tabouleh wrap...along with all the other wonderful activities at the Fair.

### *Fall Family Dinner and Dance, Saturday, September 29, 6 p.m.*

The entire family is encouraged to participate in a scrumptious dinner and lively dance hosted at Camp Putnam in New Braintree. Dress is casual with appropriate shoes for dancing. Tickets are \$30, children under 12 are \$15. Call 508-867-6679 for tickets or more information.

### *Hold these dates for other fall events:*

Conservation Successes with the Friends of Harvard Forest on Saturday, October 13 at 1:30 p.m.

Clearing the Indian Rock Trail at the Stelmokas Farm in Barre on Saturday, October 20.

Benefit Game of Texas Hold'em at the New Braintree Town Hall on Saturday, November 3. Tickets are \$35, doors open at 7pm with play beginning at 7:30pm. Call 508-867-6679 for tickets or more information.