

New Federal Laws Give Increased Tax Benefits

Generous landowners who donate voluntary conservation agreements, also known as conservation restrictions, to the East Quabbin Land Trust are inspired by many things: they love the East Quabbin Region, they feel connected to their land, and they wish to leave a legacy for future generations. This inspiration is at the heart of our work to permanently protect valuable natural resources. For our donors, donating a conservation restriction is a major financial decision, and the federal income tax deduction that comes with a donation helps make restrictions possible for landowners in our community.

State Income Tax Credit for Massachusetts Landowners

The historic Environmental Bond Bill was signed in Massachusetts on August 14, 2008. The Bond will provide \$1.68 billion in capital funds for vital state environmental programs over the next five years including a record \$336 million for land acquisition!

In addition to \$50 million a year for land protection programs, the bond includes a **new state income tax credit for landowners** who voluntarily gift qualifying land to a municipality, the state or a non profit organization such as the East Quabbin Land Trust (effective January 2010). The tax incentive program, which the Governor sent back to the Legislature with a \$2 million per year cap, needs legislative approval which will be sought in the informal session of the legislature now under way. The incentive is a great complement to the capital funds provided by the Environmental Bond, and will enhance and expand the state's ability to preserve natural areas. All donated lands must be permanently protected.

The Act grants a state income credit based on 50% of the appraised fair market value of the land. The credit is worth up to \$50,000 to landowners who donate natural areas to the state or a nonprofit conservation organization. For example, if donated property is valued at \$40,000, the landowner receives a \$20,000 credit towards his/her state income tax. The credit cannot exceed one's annual tax liability; however, it may be carried forward for ten consecutive years. In this example, the donor could receive a \$2,000 credit toward his/her state income tax each year for the next ten years.

Congress recently passed a law extending for two years the tax benefits of protecting private land for many landowners (which had expired at the end of 2007). The legislation improves the tax incentive for conservation restrictions by allowing conservation easement donors to:

- *Deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);*
- *Deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching or forestry; and*
- *Continue to take deductions for as long as 16 years (up from 6 years).*

What do these numbers mean? As an example, under the prior law, an agricultural landowner earning \$50,000 a year who donated a conservation restriction worth \$1 million could take a total of no more than \$90,000 in tax deductions. Under the new law, that landowner can take as much as \$800,000 in tax deductions – still less than the full value of their donation, but a significant increase.



Walking Stick investigating the EQLT headquarters window.

Each day we are touched by the generous and inspired landowners who work with us. The new law will make it easier for others in our community to build on their love of the land and permanently protect the East Quabbin Region.

To learn more about these new developments, visit: www.eqlt.org or www.LandTrustAlliance.org.

MESSAGE FROM THE Executive Director

Cynthia Henshaw



The core of our mission is to conserve the working landscapes within the East Quabbin region to ensure that a sustainable local economy can thrive into the future. Ensuring a healthy and productive land base is essential to that vision.

When I first arrived at the East Quabbin Land Trust, I was amazed at how many local businesses were connected to the land. There is a wealth of wood related businesses that run the spectrum of working with live trees to creating products from the wood. The number of local farms is equally impressive and three of our communities support thriving Farmers' Markets. Not to mention the tremendous number of local artists who gather inspiration or materials from the local landscapes of the East Quabbin region.

One of the East Quabbin Land Trust's greatest challenges is to determine where to spend our time, energy and financial resources to best protect the working landscapes of our communities. That is to identify focus areas where we work proactively with landowners to explain their conservation options and find land conservation solutions. Through past issues of the newsletter you read about the Dougal Range in Ware and Hardwick. This 2,000+ acre area has tremendous natural resources and provides wonderful recreational opportunities. Other landscapes that are focus areas include the Moose Brook Valley in Barre and Hardwick, the northern section of Petersham including the Gould woodlot, and the many active farmlands in our region.

The list of focus areas is dynamic. Currently the Board is considering the Whortleberry Hill/Ragged Hill area of West Brookfield and New Braintree as a new focus area for proactive landowner communications. In addition, the EQLT land committee will review the recently drafted Oakham Open Space and Recreation Plan to consider identifying one or more specific landscapes in Oakham as a designated focus area. As new focus areas are identified, communications and land conservation initiatives continue in existing priority areas.

I am particularly excited whenever a piece of property is conserved because the legacy that those actions make for future generations is tremendous. ■

GRANTS AWARDED...

North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership

The North Quabbin Regional Landscape 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.

The East Quabbin Land Trust is among those benefiting from the grant program. We were awarded two grants in July. One for \$2,000 to help preserve a 68-acre parcel bordering the Old Reservoir in Barre (below). The other is \$3,000 for appraisals of woodlots owned by the St. Mary's and St. Scholastica religious orders in Petersham.



These projects are moving forward toward conservation with the help of the funds from the Partnership. ■

EQLT BOARD & STAFF

- Terry Briggs.....HARDWICK
- Chris Buelow.....GILBERTVILLE, Clerk
- Judith Jones.....NEW BRAINTREE
- Martha Klassanos.....WARE, Vice President
- Jerry ReillyHARDWICK, Treasurer
- Ginny RichBARRE
- Rick Romano.....HARDWICK
- Jeff SchaafWHEELWRIGHT
- Stan WhiteHARDWICK, President
- Magi Ziff.....NEW BRAINTREE
- Marion Cooper.....Staff
- Cynthia Henshaw.....Executive Director

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
 Cynthia Henshaw, Executive Director
 P.O. Box 5, 120 Ridge Road • Hardwick, MA 01037
 TEL: (413)477-8229 • EMAIL: eqlt@comcast.net
 or visit our website www.eqlt.org

VOLUNTEER PROFILE... A Life of Amazing Freedom

The Terry Briggs Story, by Charles Kittredge

As usual, I'm two days past deadline when I finally get Terry on the phone. This time it was his son's strep throat, my inability to correctly dial the 413 area code, a late-night legal briefing, the confluence of a surly table saw and a warped framing square, two spent differential bearings, one state vehicle inspection sticker of dubious legality, and a mild case of scurvy that got in the way. At least that's what I'm telling Cynthia.

Terry is 64 years old, 6'4", graying, possessed of a beard and a scholarly demeanor. The grandson of dairy farmers, he was raised in upstate New York – Cambridge, to be exact; he got his bachelor's at Columbia and his law degree at Boston College. Here's an interesting and possibly little known fact about him. At one time he was, he reports, just about as fluent in Chinese as he is in English. He put this skill to good use, or not, working for the National Security Agency in the period just before the Vietnam war began to heat up. Later, he worked in state government in Massachusetts and Washington before becoming owner of a country store in Bridgton, Maine – "catering to the summer people." It was during that time that he went to law school, graduating in 1994 when he was 50 years old. He and his wife, Sarah, moved to Hardwick in 2003 just before their twins were born. The Briggses love Hardwick because it is such a great place to live and raise their children.

EQLT: So Terry, tell me about work.

Terry: Well, I'm a lawyer in Worcester, with Bowditch & Dewey.

EQLT: Any relation to Dewey, Cheatham, and Howe?

TB (sneezes): Sorry, what was that?

EQLT: Nothing, nothing. Anyhow, how come you're still working when you're at, like, retirement age?

TB: Well, I have 5-year old twins, that's one reason. Also, though, my people work. My uncle was a lawyer in my home town and he practiced until he was 89. It seems to me that people who keep working have more engagement with the world and are happier. I guess I'll find out.

EQLT: Hmm. What kind of law is it that you practice?

TB: I deal with employment agreements: stock options and the sort of benefits you get with an executive job.

EQLT: I guess that explains the disclaimer in your email – the promulgated opinion that I can't avoid tax-penalties for my fiduciary or elected recipient IRA penal code thing.

TB (chuckles): Oh, that. Yeah, somebody might say you have given them legal advice because you sent them an email.

EQLT: Oh. Hm. So anyways, what do you do for the land trust?

TB: As a member of the board, I help with policy matters, help raise money – that sort of thing. I helped out with the personnel policy, too; I forget - I may have drafted the by-laws early on.

EQLT: So, how'd you get involved with the land trust?

TB: You meet people – we joined – and someone suggested to the land trust that I might be interested in a board position,



East Quabbin Land Trust board member Terry Briggs

Marion Cooper or Rick Romano I think. It's an honor to serve the board, and it's been a joy working with Cynthia – we're so lucky to have her. She takes charge without ruffling feathers.

EQLT: Damn straight. Now, what would you like to see the land trust doing in five years, or ten or fifty?

TB: Ideally, we'll continue to be able to grow, and the land trust will do an even better job of spreading the message. Not just conservation, either – rather an active preservation of landscapes. I'd like to see ways to have – if possible – more farms. If this economic upheaval continues, it may make the farms economically viable. I remember as a boy, in the winter people didn't eat oranges from Chile. All the food you ate was organic, and the diet was so healthy.

EQLT: You don't worry that the EQLT might work itself out of a job, so to speak?

TB: You're never at the end of your potential. We're never going to get all the spots conserved. One can imagine that the land trust might one day have a more formal educational role.

EQLT: This seems like the right place for all of those things, and for raising a family, too.

TB: Hardwick is a great place to raise kids. It's safe here, and it's healthy. I loved being in the woods as a kid, and I hope my kids will love that as much as my wife and I do. Whatever they do, I expect them to be home every year for the Hardwick Fair. During the warm months you can find out whole family on the Common every Sunday at the Farmers' Market. These are things that will be enriched by the success of the Land Trust.

EQLT: It gets better every year. Thanks, Terry.

TB: Thank you.

MOVING FORWARD...

by Cynthia Henshaw

This is the third in a series of four discussions of the East Quabbin Land Trusts' goals and strategies for moving forward to meet our mission and reach our vision for the region; specifically describing our strategies to conserve the best farmland, woodland and waters in the East Quabbin region.

GOAL #3 : Manage EQLT's resources and assets in an efficient and responsible way to maximize the input from volunteers, staff and financial capital.

The phrase "efficient and responsible" is a critical concept for the East Quabbin Land Trust. As a small organization it is essential that all our actions be as efficient as possible. That means clear communications and actions targeted for the greatest impact. We are responsible to everyone involved to conduct business ethically, whether they are a member, landowner or volunteer. Quarterly newsletters are an excellent example of being efficient and responsible by providing timely information about organizational activities and involving our supporters and volunteers. There is always room for improvement, but we strive to be efficient and responsible in all aspects of meeting our mission.

Volunteers Are Valued!

A solid base of volunteer energy and enthusiasm is essential to the East Quabbin Land Trust's work. A tremendous variety of specific tasks are accomplished by those serving on the Board or a Committee or in support of periodic projects. One of the most critical ways that our volunteers sustain our community is by being an informed advocate for land conservation and stewardship. An encouraging conversation at the post office or across the picket fence is integral to sharing the positive results of land conservation for the families and larger community involved in a local initiative.

Assuring a rewarding experience for volunteers is key to our successes and there are many reasons why to volunteer. For instance, getting to know others supportive of conservation or actually able to see a change in the landscape because of personal efforts. We firmly believe that providing ongoing educational opportunities is very important for volunteers. The annual Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference is a high quality learning and networking opportunity not to be missed. Last year, the EQLT paid for three volunteers to attend. Please let us know if you'd like to go this year.

Stewarding Our Resources

Most often when a land trust uses the term stewardship it refers to how a property is being managed. Stewardship of our financial resources is critical to our ability to do land stewardship and all the other activities. The finance committee and Board thoroughly review changes in the operating funds and investments. In addition, a full audit for fiscal year 2007 was completed.

Our Vision

The East Quabbin Land Trust envisions a regional community that continues to care for its natural environment and supports a sustainable local economy, ensuring a high quality of life for generations to come.

Our Mission

The East Quabbin Land Trust works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources for the benefit of all generations through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters in our region of Massachusetts.

Goal 1: Conserve the lands that represent the best farmlands, woodlands, and waters in the East Quabbin region.

Goal 2: Manage all EQLT owned land and CR stewardship responsibilities effectively to manage natural resources, promote biodiversity and educate visitors.

Goal 3: Manage EQLT's resources and assets in an efficient and responsible way to maximize the input from volunteers, staff and financial capital.

Goal 4: Expand support for the EQLT through effective communications and solicitations to our membership, community members and others interested in the east Quabbin region.

FIELD NOTES...

Beef and Birds: Mandell Hill Featured on WFCR

On Monday morning, September 15th, 2008 the East Quabbin Land Trust's Mandell Hill property was featured on the local NPR station, WFCR. It was very exciting to hear Laurie Sanders's Field Notes as it highlighted the land stewardship practices at Mandell Hill, specifically the combination of agriculture and ecological values!

Laurie Sanders spoke about visiting the Mandell Hill Farm in Hardwick which was like stepping back in time; the stillness, the breathtaking view, old stone walls, foundations, and fences.

East Quabbin Land Trust board member, Chris Buelow, elaborated on the recent clearing projects which have helped create habitat for a variety of grassland birds, including bobolinks, meadowlarks, and savannah sparrow which are in trouble here in New England. Open fields have grown up into forests or been developed into house lots, and in the fields that still exist, the birds face the risk of haying activities, which does not give them enough time to finish raising their young.

Local farmer Ridge Shinn's grass-fed beef cattle graze the lands on Mandell Hill. His management practices include pasturing his cattle in the fields on the property that have good forage for cows, but are too small for grassland birds to use. Then, once the nesting season is over, he moves his cattle on to these bigger fields—fields that are 10 acres or more in size.

Chris Buelow noted "One of our major intentions of this property is also to work as a model for the community. To show how working profitable agriculture can be compatible with sustainable ecology, especially with grassland birds. A lot of these farmers who were very skeptical of what we were doing back in 2003 and 2004 and who said they couldn't work with a lease like this, are now approaching Ridge and approaching us, and saying you know I've been watching what you guys are doing and we're starting to see how this could work."

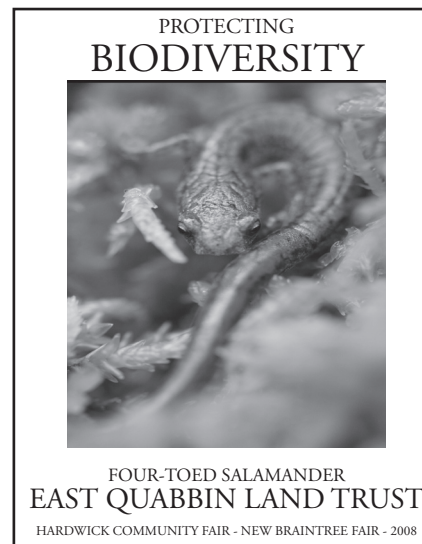
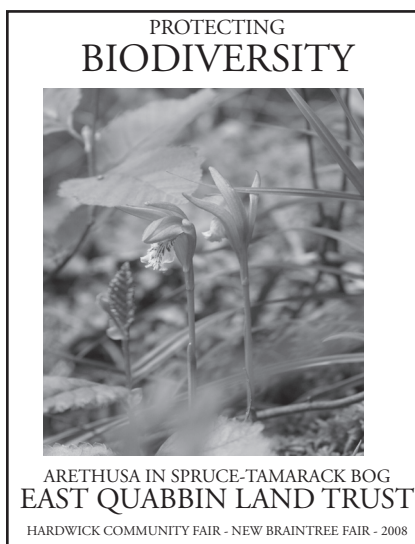
If you would like to hear the entire interview you can go to http://www.wfcr.org/field_notes/index.html. ■

HARDWICK FAIR...

246TH year a huge success

Congratulations to Ken Holmes of Orange, Massachusetts for winning the free half cord of wood auctioned off at the Hardwick Fair in August. A special thank you to Brian and Martha Klassanos, and John and Cynthia Henshaw for donating the wood.

The rain Friday evening kept the dunk tank from opening, but the sun came out on Saturday and everyone, young and old, enjoyed dunking their friends and being dunked. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the booth and the dunk tank. ■



EQLT Email Newsletter

The East Quabbin Land Trust will be offering an email version of the newsletter beginning January 2009.

If you no longer wish to receive the paper copy, please send us an email with the subject: NEWSLETTER to eqlt@comcast.net and we will take you off our hard copy list, and add you to our email list.

Thanks for helping us save our resources and still get the message out!

MORSS INTERNSHIP...

Betty and Harry Morss were strong believers in higher education and land conservation. The Board of Directors initiated the Morss Internship at the five-year anniversary of the gift of the Morss property to honor their commitment to both education and conservation. A Morss Intern is a high school junior or senior interested in pursuing advanced education in natural resources. Morss Interns focus largely on land stewardship issues, including trail design and construction, Conservation Restriction monitoring, and general stewardship tasks. The Board was pleased to have Rachel Metterville serve as the 2008 Morss Intern as wishes her well as she pursues her education at Quinsigimond Community College this fall.

Summer Intern Rachel Metterville in her own words:



Morss summer intern Rachel Metterville

My name is Rachel Metterville, and I graduated from Quabbin this year, and am now a freshman at Quinsigamond Community College, and hope to pursue a career in environmental studies. I have

always loved the outdoors, and the animals that live in it, especially amphibians. My love for the environment lead me to joining the Envirothon at Quabbin. When we won the bronze this year, my coach, teacher, and good friend, Mrs. Bottomley landed me the internship at the East Quabbin Land Trust.

Working at the land trust has been quite an experience. I have been clearing trails, raking ferns, marking trails, and keeping the headquarters looking good. At Moose Brook I placed a geocache that will soon be ready. It has been good fun, beside the occasional bug bite, and poison ivy. Cynthia and I also, with the help of many volunteers, have gotten a nice walkway through the stone wall at Patrill Hollow, cleared the bridge at the New Braintree rail trail, and many other things.

Working with Cynthia, I have met many nice and interesting people that share the same enthusiasm as I do about the environment; she also fine-tuned my skills with the compass which will come in handy. I want to thank everyone, especially Cynthia, for making my experience at the land trust a fun and exciting one. ■

OAKHAM...

Open Space & Recreation Planning

The Town of Oakham recently updated their Open Space and Recreation Plan and submitted a draft for review by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. With a Plan in place the Town becomes eligible for state land conservation and recreation grants for projects that meet Plan goals. Many communities use state funds to protect critical parcels for open space, water supply protection, recreational fields and other municipal purposes.

The East Quabbin Land Trust facilitated completion of the Open Space and Recreation Plan by attending meetings, providing technical support and preparing the required maps. "Supporting the Planning process was very beneficial for the EQLT because we learned more about the critical resources in Oakham and I met many individuals concerned about the Oakham landscape," said Cynthia Henshaw. "With the plan completed, our land committee can work with open space advocates to address the priority needs with Oakham."

There are several unique natural communities, a high-yield aquifer, and wildlife and recreational corridors that are target areas for conservation. In the coming years, the East Quabbin Land Trust will work with officials and residents of Oakham to conserve significant properties. ■



Leave a Legacy!

We welcome the opportunity to talk with you personally and confidentially about your interest in a philanthropic bequest to the East Quabbin Land Trust.

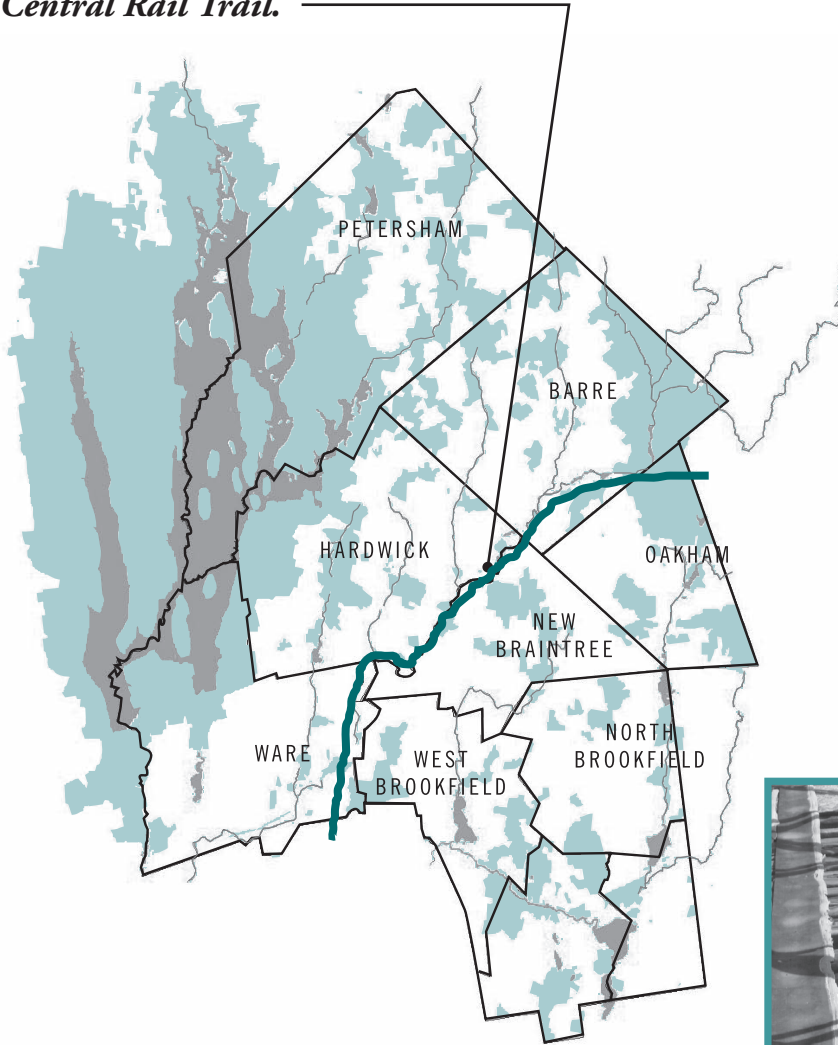
You can remember EQLT in your will or living trust, or name EQLT as a beneficiary of your IRA, qualified retirement plan or a life insurance policy. Let us welcome you into EQLT's legacy circle.

*For further information please contact:
Cynthia Henshaw, Executive Director at
413-477-8229 or chenshaw@eqlt.org.*

ON THE LAND...

Hardwick and New Braintree Rail Trail

This summer the East Quabbin Land Trust initiated a thorough investigation of the bridges along its 3.2-mile section of the Mass Central Rail Trail.



Please join us for the first in a series of workdays on Saturday, October 18th beginning at 9am meeting at the old New Braintree train station at the intersection of West Street and Hardwick Road. Please contact Cynthia Henshaw at chenshaw@eqlt.org or 413-477-8229 if you can attend. We especially want to hear from you if you have a special skill that you can share, even if October 18th does not work for you. Thank you very much!

Skilled Volunteers Needed!

“Most of the work to be done is maintenance”, said Bruce Peninno, the civil engineer inspecting the rail trail bridges this summer. “A skilled carpenter, mason and a handful of volunteers can make these repairs.”

Bruce was referring to the relatively modest repairs needed on the three bridges integral to the 2-mile section of the Mass Central Rail Trail owned by the East Quabbin Land Trust in New Braintree and Hardwick. Replacing some connecting members, bridge ties and embankment timbers is all par for the course with a 130-year-old railroad line. Plus, there is work preparing the trail bed by clearing more brush, removing ties and picking up loose spikes and other metal parts.

The lateral-truss bridge over the Ware River has spots that need more extensive repairs. Several timbers are scheduled for replacement and metal work is needed to shore up the corners. A grant to the Massachusetts Greenways and Trails Program will request assistance in making these repairs. ■



ABOVE: Bruce Peninno working on the lateral truss bridge.

Conserving the land, Preserving our heritage

P.O. Box 5
120 Ridge Road
Hardwick, MA 01037
Phone/Fax 413.477.8229
www.eqlt.org

EQLT News | INSIDE...



**Rail
Trail
Bridges**

FALL 2008 | VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 3

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 5
Hardwick, MA

Return Service Requested

POSTAL CUSTOMER
Hardwick, MA 01037

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER...

* Saturday, October 18th 9:00 AM

Rail Trail Work Day – Discover the rail trail in your backyard. Come join us to help clear the trail in the two mile section of the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail in New Braintree and Hardwick. Meet at the Old New Braintree train station at the intersection of Hardwick Road and West Road in New Braintree. Contact EQLT at 413-477-8229 for more details and directions.

* Sunday, October 25th 5:30 PM

Potluck at Mandell Hill – Please join us and enjoy an evening at beautiful Mandell Hill on Barre Road in Hardwick. Weather permitting there will be a bonfire and hay rides. We will provide drinks and s'mores. Bring a dish to share.

NOVEMBER...

* Saturday, November 15th 9:00 am

Clearing the Indian Rock Trail – Come join us to help with clearing of vista and burning brush, weather permitting, at the Stelmokas farm in Barre. Contact EQLT at 413-477-8229 for more details and directions.

** SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL DINNER & AUCTION, SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 2009 **

If you have an item you wish to donate to the auction, please contact the office at eqlt@comcast.net.