



**Hilltown  
Land Trust**  
AN AFFILIATE OF THE TRUSTEES

NEWS  
**Fall/Winter  
2020**

DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE  
**WORKING LANDS, NATIVE HABITATS, AND RURAL BEAUTY**  
OF THE HILLTOWNS SINCE 1986

# What land should we protect?



**Try Forest  
Bathing!**

**Meet Our  
TerraCorps  
Members**

[www.HilltownLandTrust.org](http://www.HilltownLandTrust.org) Find us on social media!

# What land should we protect?

By Sally Loomis, HLT Executive Director

Before I worked for a land trust, I assumed that any land an owner was willing to donate for conservation ought to be protected. Why wouldn't we want to conserve as much land as possible?

When I started my first job in land conservation, I quickly realized how complex this issue is. Every potential project requires an extensive evaluation that considers the conservation values of the property, the time commitment, financial investment, and the needs of the local community—including in housing and development.

So how does Hilltown Land Trust decide what projects to take on?

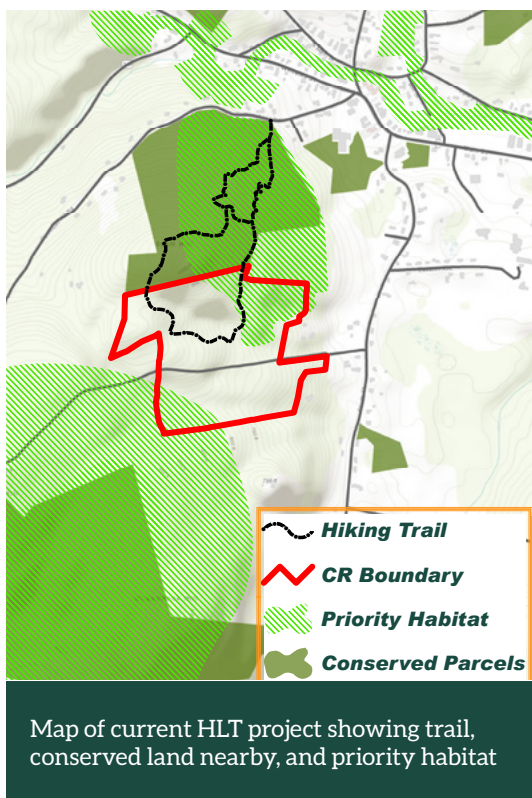
Our evaluation process begins with a conversation with the current landowner to determine goals and expectations, such as whether they wish to gift or sell the property or a Conservation Restriction (CR) and what their timeframe is.

After the initial conversation, HLT evaluates the site using mapping data and conducts an initial site visit, where we gather information about the ecology of the land and any ways the property is currently being used.

Using these data, our staff, Board, and committee members evaluate the project, while considering HLT's mission and goals. For HLT, factors such as wildlife habitat (especially for rare or endangered species), public recreation opportunities, proximity to other protected land, climate change resiliency, the size of the parcel, and threat from development all weigh heavily in the decision to move forward.

**A successful project meets the goals and needs of the land owner, HLT, the species living on the land, and the broader community.**

A successful project meets the goals and needs of the land owner, HLT, the species living on the land, and the broader community. By considering these factors at each step along the way, HLT aims to make each project a benefit to all!







Nadine practicing forest bathing

# Want to Decrease Stress and Boost Your Immune System? Try Forest Bathing!

By Nadine Mazzola, Certified Forest Therapy Guide

It is difficult to explain forest bathing in words alone. It is experiential and sensory. It is feeling, with all of one's abilities, and leaving oneself open to the world around you. It is thoroughly immersing oneself in nature using all five senses.

Inspired by the Japanese practice of *Shinrin-yoku*, forest bathing has its roots in Shinto and Buddhist practices. During the 1980s forest bathing surfaced in Japan as a pivotal part of preventive health care, healing, and treating stress.

Research has demonstrated that spending time under the forest canopy decreases stress, anxiety, depression and rumination, and increases heart rate variability, concentration, memory, and creativity. It also boosts the immune system and naturally activates the nervous system's relaxation response.

So how does forest bathing differ from a hike in the woods? Well, when we take a walk or hike in the woods, the primary focus is often exercise or reaching a certain vista—enjoyable and beneficial, but very different from forest bathing's "the destination is here, not there" focus. It can encourage a freedom and effortlessness that invites us to notice our surroundings and welcome any pleasure, playfulness, or curiosity that is alive inside us.

## Interested in trying forest bathing for yourself?

Read the full article by Nadine and view the recording of the webinar from last summer on our website, including a step-by-step guide to setting off on your first forest bathing experience.

Visit [HilltownLandTrust.org/announcements](https://HilltownLandTrust.org/announcements)



Stay tuned to our website and social media for announcements about this year's virtual Gorge après Gorge 5k and family fun walk!

# Meet Our New TerraCorps Members!

Every year HLT welcomes two TerraCorps-AmeriCorps members who serve with us for 11 months. Get to know Audrey Boraski (Land Stewardship Coordinator) and Barry Matthews (Community Engagement Coordinator)!

## ***What were you doing before coming to HLT?***

**Audrey:** This past summer I worked for The Nature Conservancy in Great Barrington tracking turtles. I am also a third-year Conservation Biology graduate student at Antioch University, and grew up in Southampton.

**Barry:** Over the past few years I have split my time between Virginia and Western MA. I am a PhD candidate in American Studies at the College of William & Mary, working on a dissertation that examines how automobiles influenced Americans' relationship to National Parks and nature.

## ***What aspect of your new position are you most excited about?***

**Audrey:** I am excited about getting to know the land. With The Nature Conservancy I learned that there can be all sorts of surprises awaiting one deep in the woods!



Audrey Boraski

**Barry:** I am looking forward to helping HLT work with its existing audience and to reach new groups. This is an exciting time when more people than ever are looking for ways to engage with their community.

## ***What do you think will be the greatest challenges in the year ahead?***

**Audrey:** I agree with Barry that this is an incredible moment to be working with volunteers. My immediate challenge is to set up a system to respond to volunteer inquiries and coordinate training.

**Barry:** While increased interest in volunteering is the “upside” of having this position during a pandemic, figuring out how to safely create events that engage people is the biggest challenge. We hope to expand back into some in-person events to give people a break from their screens.



Barry Matthews

**Read the full versions of these articles  
and more on our website:  
[HilltownLandTrust.org/announcements](https://hilltownlandtrust.org/announcements)**

# Thank You Wil!

"Having grown up next to woodlands and frog ponds, I knew the value of a life surrounded by trees and wildlife. My adult life had kept me solely in cities, and I knew I was a total soon-to-happen wreck. So, in 1987, my wife and I moved to Worthington, and I returned to the world I had known as a child.

After moving to the Hilltowns, I became an active Board member and volunteer for Hilltown Land Trust. For 17 years with HLT I worked to protect the natural landscape around me.

When I retired from the Board, I wanted to continue my support of this land conservation work, so I designated HLT as a beneficiary of my IRA. Leaving a gift for HLT in my plans means I am helping to build a charitable, earth-supporting legacy on local ground and with local trees for the future. And I find that indescribably satisfactory!"

– Wil Hastings



Wil Hastings

## Donors like Wil, who include HLT in their plans, ensure a healthy future for the Hilltowns. Thank you Wil!

If you have made a gift to Hilltown Land Trust through your will or estate plan, even if you wish for the gift to remain anonymous, please let us know so we can thank you too! **Contact Katie Carr, our Development and Communications Coordinator: [katie@HilltownLandTrust.org](mailto:katie@HilltownLandTrust.org) / (413) 628-4485, ext. 5.**

## Public Comments Sought on Accreditation Renewal

Hilltown Land Trust is pleased to announce we are applying for renewal of accreditation. A public comment period is now open.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, invites public input on how HLT complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust.

***Please visit our website for full details about how to submit a comment***

Comments on our application will be most useful by **March 21st**.

### Hilltown Land Trust Board of Directors & Staff

Russell Peotter, *President* • Chesterfield  
Tad Weiss, *Treasurer* • Westhampton  
Suzanne Kulik, *Secretary* • Worthington  
Peter Jeswald • Conway  
Andrew Madden • Worthington

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Pat Morey • Goshen  
Paul Wetzel • Williamsburg  
Robert Warren, *Ex-Officio Director* • The  
Trustees Managing Director of Conservation

Sally Loomis, *Executive Director*

Katie Carr, *Development &  
Communications Coordinator*





“John and I enjoyed the Stevens property short loop hike this afternoon. I was charmed and enchanted by the large rock creatures. These crouching, standing, lounging, leering, outlook posting, bear sheltering rock creatures were fascinating. This trail is a must see for everyone’s children. The golden leaves covering the trail and filtered sunshine made the atmosphere magical”

– Pat K.

**Have you visited one of our trails lately?**  
We want to hear about your experience! Send us an email:  
[ContactUs@HilltownLandTrust.org](mailto:ContactUs@HilltownLandTrust.org)

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