



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



The first big snowstorm this year held off until just after the 15th annual Gorge après Gorge 5k trail race and walk! Pictured are the winners of the run with their handmade hat prizes. Thank you to everyone who participated and volunteered; you helped make this year's event a success!

Historic Dam Trail Protected

**Meet our 2019-20
TerraCorps
Members!**

**Creating a Local
Conservation
Network**



Landowners Bethany Ouimet, Lorraine Barrack, and William Ouimet with Sally Loomis at the trailhead.



Historic image of the dam ruins. Photo courtesy of Williamsburg Historical Society.

Historic Dam Trail Protected

Last spring, Hilltown Land Trust protected the popular Historic Dam Trail in Williamsburg! This 1.5-mile wooded trail ends at the ruins of the dam whose breach on May 16, 1874 caused the Mill River Flood disaster.

HLT conserved the trail as part of the Voluntary Public Access Program, which seeks to create more publicly-accessible areas on privately-held land.

This trail was established in 2016 by Williamsburg Woodland Trails (WWT), but had no formal protection until now. The easement, held by HLT, protects this trail for public recreation for the next 10 years.

Trailside signs installed by the WWT tell the story of the building and breaching of the dam, and of the disaster that followed, claiming 139 lives and destroying many buildings in the towns and villages along the Mill River. The informative signs allow visitors to take a self-guided history walk as

they enjoy the woodland trail. A small parking area is located at the trailhead on the east side of Ashfield Road, just south of Judd Lane.

HLT conserved the trail with a trail easement as part of the Voluntary Public Access Program, an initiative which seeks to create more publicly-accessible areas on privately-held land. We were very excited to work with our partners Franklin Land Trust and the WWT as well as landowners Bethany and Will Ouimet, Lorraine Barrack, and the Northampton Water Department to protect this historic trail for public enjoyment.

To learn more about the trail and view a map, please visit our website. If you visit the trail, or any of our properties, we would love to hear about your experience! Please send an email to katie@hilltownlandtrust.org.

**More news and events online at
HilltownLandTrust.org**

Meet our 2019-20 TerraCorps Members!

Every year Hilltown Land Trust welcomes two TerraCorps-AmeriCorps members who serve with us from September through July. They perform crucial work for our organization: monitoring conservation lands, working with volunteers, organizing public events, and so much more.

This year we are happy to welcome Tessa Dowling and Allie Foster. Read about them here, and meet them in person at an upcoming HLT event or volunteer opportunity!

How did you first become interested in the environment and land conservation?

Tessa: I grew up in Westhampton and attended preschool at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton. My parents love the outdoors and took our family on canoe trips. I believe both experiences inspired my desire to study biology at Bard College as an undergraduate.

Allie: Growing up in the suburbs in the Midwest, I didn't have much of a connection to the natural world. It wasn't until I moved to Massachusetts to attend Hampshire College that my interests shifted to environmental education. This was thanks to many passionate professors and fellow peers.

Why did you want to be a TerraCorps service member?

Tessa: I became familiar with land trusts while interning with The Trustees, creating a photo catalog of wildflowers on Mt. Tom. I loved the mission and wanted to increase my experience in the field. I am particularly interested in landscape-scale conservation and look forward to learning more!

Allie: While at Hampshire, I began working with Eagle Eye Institute, providing high school students from Holyoke with experiences in the outdoors. I found that I loved sharing my passion for the environment with others. With HLT, I feel there are endless possibilities for new engagement opportunities. I am particularly excited about reaching groups we haven't done a lot of work with before such as youth and families.

What would you like to do after you leave HLT?

Tessa: I want to continue working in conservation. I would like to contribute to efforts to address climate change, while protecting the area I grew up in and love.

Allie: There are so many ways to engage audiences with the outdoors and the environment and I plan to continue to build my expertise in those areas.



Tessa (left) and Allie (right) at the Gorge après Gorge, photo by Christian Lagier



Volunteers make your local land trust stronger!

Hilltown Land Trust survives and thrives thanks to the efforts of many volunteers. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer with Hilltown Land Trust, please contact us at 413-628-4485 x4 or by using our contact form at hilltownlandtrust.org/get-involved/volunteer-with-hlt

Creating a Local Conservation Network

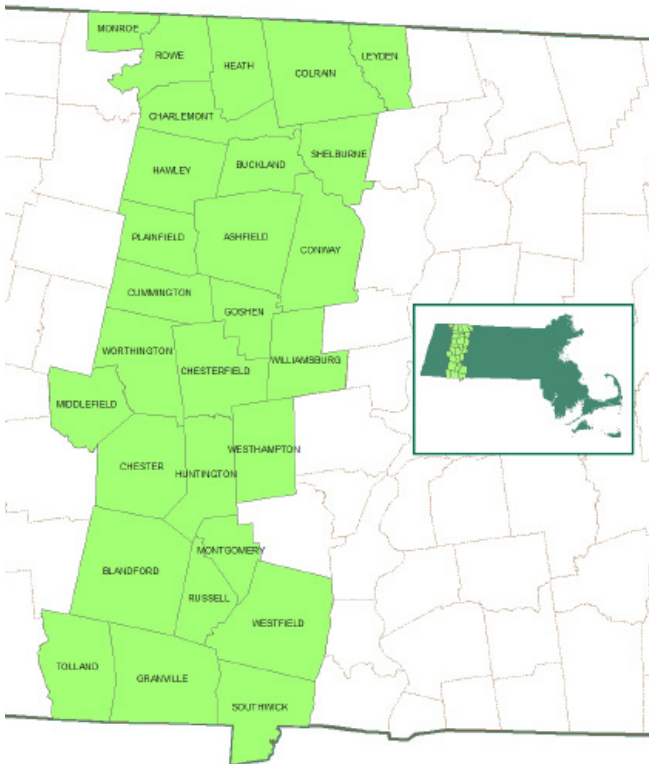
By HLT Executive Director Sally Loomis

In early September, Hilltown Land Trust's TerraCorps member Tessa joined me at a presentation about town open space and recreation plans in the region. Tessa noted the dissonance among plans and asked me, "do town Open Space Committees ever talk to each other?" Having worked with several Open Space Committees (OSCs) for years, including leading the committee in my hometown of Williamsburg, I responded "rarely, but that would be a great idea!"

Fortuitously, just a few days later HLT was asked to be involved in a statewide effort to provide training, networking opportunities, and support to town OSCs. I eagerly agreed that we should be part of this much-needed work.

Over the course of the next few months, HLT will organize three regional workshops in western Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties to allow town conservation leaders to meet each other, discuss shared challenges, and get to know the land conservation professionals working in their communities.

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Participants will learn about the land conservation process, the roles they can play in protecting and managing ecologically and recreationally valuable land, and what resources are available to small towns. This work will have the additional benefit of cultivating a network of land protection allies who can assist HLT and other conservation groups in pursuing important conservation efforts.

This effort is funded by the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Working Forests Initiative with support from UMass Extension Service and Mount Grace Land Trust.

The region HLT will be working with on this project

I am excited to have Tessa serving with us this year, as she has the interest, motivation, and skills to help build this network!

If you would like to learn more about this program and related upcoming events, please email tessa@hilltownlandtrust.org or call (413) 628-4485, ext 4.



Eric leading a hike for HLT at the Historic Dam Trail. Photo by Candace Hope

Volunteer Spotlight: Eric Weber

Thirty-three years ago, in 1986, Eric Weber, Lincoln Fish, and Denise Cormier met in Chesterfield to discuss protecting a nearby historic sugarbush. This meeting marked the formation of Hilltown Land Trust, and the beginning of our mission to protect and steward land in the Hilltowns.

HLT has grown and evolved since then, but two things have remained constant: our commitment to protecting wild and working lands in the Hilltowns and Eric Weber's guiding voice on our Board of Directors.

This past September, Eric retired from HLT's board. Current and past Board members, staff, friends, and family gathered at Denise's house to celebrate Eric and all he has done for our organization. People shared stories, including a humorous one about Lincoln Fish and Eric's slow-motion, accidental, vehicular introduction in a ditch on the side of an icy road.

During Eric's tenure, he helped HLT protect more than 40 properties totaling over 5,000 acres. Eric could likely draw you a detailed map noting key features of each of those properties.

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While we will greatly miss Eric's expertise and witty humor at our Board meetings, we are thrilled that he will remain on the Project Management Committee and continue to contribute his wisdom as we make decisions about future land conservation projects.

HLT relies on dedicated volunteers like Eric to guide organizational policies, help make decisions regarding which projects to take on, and ensure a property's conservation values are best protected. Thank you to Eric and everyone who volunteers with HLT!

Hilltown Land Trust Board of Directors & Staff

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Katie Carr, *Development & Communications Coordinator*



Goldenrod Field, Ashfield
Angela Sciotti Vincent

Angela Sciotti Vincent is a Hilltown artist who has painted a series of landscapes to promote an awareness and appreciation of land conservation. In addition to being a talented painter, Angela also volunteers with Hilltown Land Trust.

See more at www.dovehollow.gallery

If you are a visual artist, photographer, or writer whose work is inspired by the landscape of the Hilltowns and you are interested in having your work featured here, we want to hear from you!

Email katie@hilltownlandtrust.org or call (413) 628-4485, ext 5.

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