



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

NEWS  
**Fall/Winter  
2021**

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

# Why Protect Wetlands?



**Gorge Après  
Gorge is Back!**

**Meet Gaby  
Immerman, HLT  
Board Member**

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

# Why Protect Wetlands?

*Paul Wetzel, HLT Board Member*

*This year brought record-breaking rainfall to Massachusetts, with flooding that destroyed crops and damaged roads. Climate change will bring more-frequent extreme weather events like the ones last summer. Fortunately, conserved wetlands helped reduce the flooding that occurred during the heavy rains. In this article, HLT Board member Paul Wetzel examines the many benefits that wetlands provide to both humans and to the whole ecosystem.*



*Searching for egg masses in a Hilltown vernal pool*

In exploring landscapes in The Hilltowns and beyond, one can always find low areas where water accumulates. Wetlands form in the transition zones between land and shallow water less than 2 meters deep. Since water collects in many places, wetlands take different forms: muddy mountain meadows, low freshwater marshes, and the banks of valley streams to name a few.

Despite their name, wetlands are not always wet. In fact, a fluctuating water level is one of the key characteristics of a wetland and all wetland plants and animals are adapted quite well to fluctuating water levels. Wetland water levels may fluctuate seasonally or even daily—like in tidal marshes.

In Western Massachusetts, we have vernal pools—small forested wetlands usually without outlets—which are wet from the fall to the early summer but dry out during the hottest summer months. With this seasonal water fluctuation, vernal pools provide a place for woodland amphibians to lay eggs that metamorphose into adults. If vernal pools were wet all year they might support fish, one of the predators of amphibian eggs and tadpoles.

## **Wetlands act like giant sponges across the landscape, storing water during large rain events**

Wetlands provide many benefits or ecosystem services for people as well. The benefits provided often depend on where a wetland is located. For example, many marshes and riparian (river-adjacent) wetlands act like giant sponges across the landscape, storing water during large rain events. This storage capacity reduces the peak water flow levels in streams and rivers which in turn reduces flooding of

towns and cities built along waterways.

The extent of biological connections in time and space for a single wetland should not be underestimated. A marsh wetland in one of HLT's conserved lands could be a resting place for songbirds migrating from South America or a breeding pool for frogs and salamanders living in the surrounding woods. Many insects will be attracted to the variety of habitats a wetland offers, in turn attracting other animals that feed on insects. For all these reasons wetlands are often biodiversity hotspots. This intersection of species provide aesthetic and recreational benefits for people, just one more service wetlands give us!

Wetlands are dynamic ecosystems that are found throughout the landscape. They provide a variety of benefits from water storage to recreational opportunities. The conserved lands of HLT contain many wetlands. Don't pass them by—there is no better place to be!

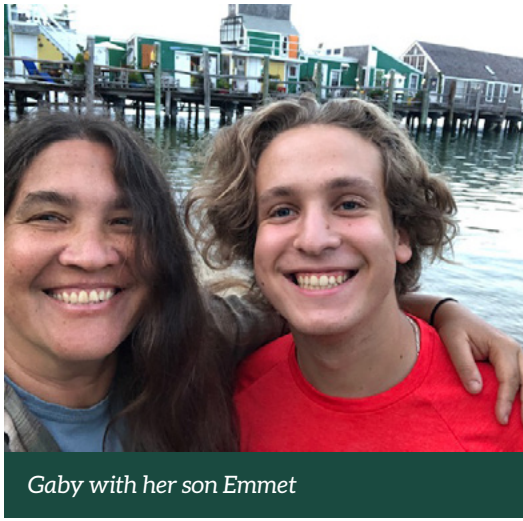
**Read the full versions of these articles and more at:  
[HilltownLandTrust.org/announcements](https://www.hilltownlandtrust.org/announcements)**

# Welcome New Board Member Gaby Immerman!

This fall, Hilltown Land Trust welcomed two new members of our Board of Directors, Gaby Immerman and Michael Madole. Learn more about Gaby below and stay tuned to our website and e-news for a profile of Michael coming soon!

**What made you interested in joining Hilltown Land Trust's Board? What excites you about this work?**

By day I am the "professor of herbology" at Smith College, but nights and weekends I turn into a total citizen planner nerd! I am really jazzed by thinking about open space, maps, wayfinding, and, especially, increasing access to land for communities that have been structurally disenfranchised or stripped of their rightful connections to it.



Gaby with her son Emmet

**How long have you lived in The Hilltowns? Where did you grow up?**

I grew up in the suburbs outside of New York City, spent my 20s living in Brooklyn, and then moved to Cummington in 1999. I've been a Haydenvillian since 2010.

**What is your favorite outdoor space in The Hilltowns?**

I'm devoted to the Mill River and give another big chunk of my big citizen planner energy to the Mill River Greenway Initiative, which envisions a shared-use path following the course of the river from

Northampton to Williamsburg. Certain viewsheds in the Hilltowns, like Route 112 coming up through Ashfield or 143 across Worthington, get me every time. We are so blessed to live in this beautiful, spirit-sustaining part of the world.

## The Gorge Après Gorge is Back!

**Sunday, November 28, 9:30am**

We are excited to announce the Gorge après Gorge 5k trail race and family fun walk is back in person after last year's virtual event! Experience the gorgeous splendor of the East Branch trail along the Westfield River on November 28th at the Chesterfield Gorge. This unique annual event happens every Sunday after Thanksgiving in Chesterfield, with unique top finisher awards and great raffle prizes.



**For more information and to register, visit:**

**[hilltownlandtrust.org/gorge-apres-gorge](http://hilltownlandtrust.org/gorge-apres-gorge)**

# Meet Sarah and Audrey!

This September, Hilltown Land Trust welcomed Sarah Welch as our new Community Engagement Coordinator and welcomed back Audrey Boraski as Land Stewardship Coordinator. As TerraCorps-AmeriCorps members, they will be serving at HLT through the end of July. Get to know them here and join us for an upcoming event or volunteer work day to meet them in person!

## What were you doing before you came to HLT?

Audrey: This is my second service term as HLT's LSC! I knew a second year would provide a more complete and well-rounded experience. Prior to my first year, I was attending Antioch University full time with Sarah.

Sarah: I have been working on my MS in the Environmental Education program at Antioch University while leading nature-based youth programs with families and at nature centers like Mass Audubon Arcadia.



Audrey and Sarah at the Bullitt Reservation

## What are you most looking forward to about this service year?

A: I'm looking forward to building on projects that I started last year. I also want to systematize processes to help our small nonprofit be more efficient.

S: I'm looking forward to working with a broader range of age groups, meeting community members, and learning how educational programs can support conservation goals.

## What is something you learned at Antioch that you're using at HLT?

A: Leadership for Change, Community Ecology, and GIS. Specifically, I appreciate the practical aspects, systems thinking incorporated into all of them, and especially the fun field visits.

S: At Antioch, I strengthened my internal compass on social justice issues in the environmental field. I also deepened my ecology knowledge and relationships with people and place.

## What animal do you think you are most like and why?

A: I'm most like a rabbit. I'm the most active in the morning, love vegetables, and running around.

S: I'm most like an American Marten. We both spend a lot of time in the trees, have strong habitat preferences, and love mountain ash berries.

**"I'm looking forward to working with a broader range of age groups, meeting community members, and learning how educational programs can support conservation goals."**

— Sarah Welch

## Volunteers make your local land trust stronger!

If you are interested in volunteering with HLT, email [contactus@hilltownlandtrust.org](mailto:contactus@hilltownlandtrust.org), or call (413) 628-4485, ext. 5



Doug Fraser in his woods

## A Legacy of Education

Doug Fraser has dedicated his life to helping people gain a deeper understanding of the natural world. After 38 years spent teaching ecology at Siena College, he hasn't let retirement keep him from his passion for education.

Doug maintains his 110-acre property in Chesterfield as a field laboratory and space for public recreation and education. He works with students and instructors at nearby colleges to use his land for field trips and research projects. Students have used Doug's land to study the habitat needs of red-backed salamanders and populations of tree species under threat from invasive insects.

It is only natural that Doug wants his land to continue to be used for education even after he is gone. He plans to donate his property to Hilltown Land Trust in his will, with the understanding that local colleges can continue to use it for education and research, and that it will continue to be available for public recreation.

With his planned gift to Hilltown Land Trust, Doug's legacy of teaching about the natural world will continue for generations to come.

**With his planned gift to Hilltown Land Trust, Doug's legacy of teaching about the natural world will continue for generations to come.**

**To learn more about the ways you can leave a green legacy for The Hilltowns, visit:**

**[hilltownlandtrust.org/get-involved/green-legacy-circle](https://hilltownlandtrust.org/get-involved/green-legacy-circle)**

**or contact Katie Carr: [katie@hilltownlandtrust.org](mailto:katie@hilltownlandtrust.org) • (413) 628-4485, ext. 5**

### Hilltown Land Trust Board of Directors & Staff

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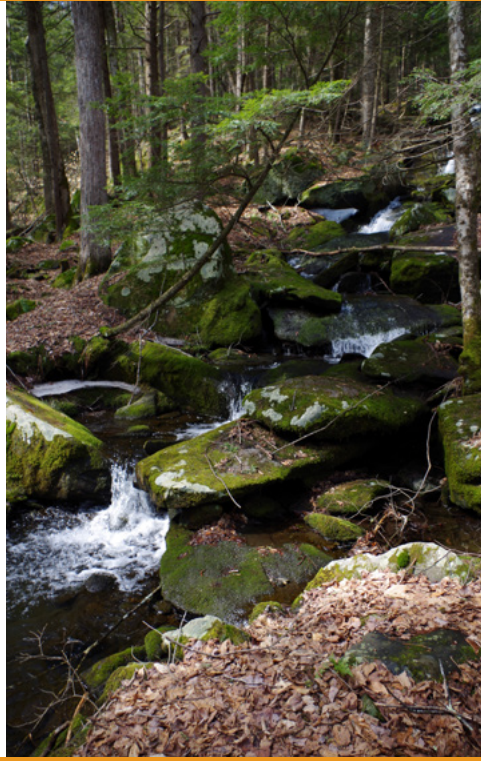
Sally Loomis, *Executive Director*

Katie Carr, *Engagement Manager*

## We recently installed a new kiosk at The Waterfall Trail in Cummington!

This kiosk will help visitors find and navigate the trail more easily. Huge thanks to our previous TerraCorps members who helped create the map and sign, to our volunteers who created and helped install the kiosk, and to the amazing landowners who allow the public to hike on their conserved land.

**Visit our website for directions and a trail map!**



**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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