



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

NEWS
**Spring/Summer
2022**

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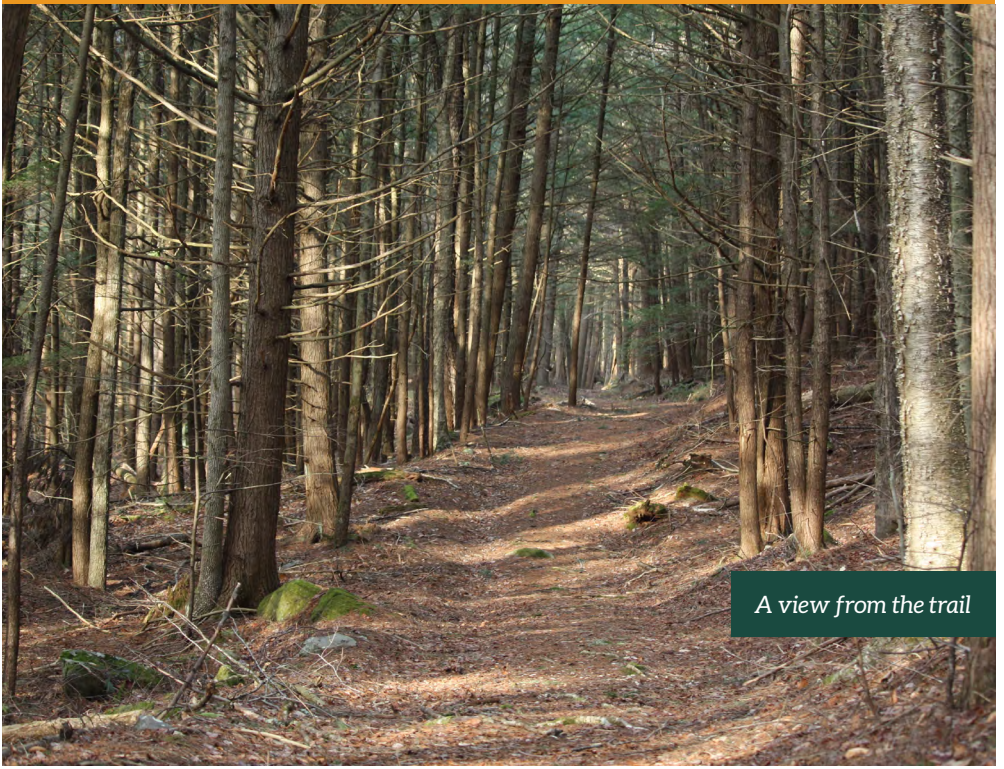
New Trails Open in Worthington!



**The Meaning
of Community**

**Meet Michael
Madole, HLT
Board Member**

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A view from the trail

New Trails Open in Worthington!

Three miles of out-and-back hiking trails in Worthington are now open to the public on Hilltown Land Trust's Conwell property. The trails traverse 70 acres of forestland along Route 112, and go by a small pond and the top of Eagle Nest Ridge.

The parking area is on adjacent MassWildlife land and will also serve as parking for those accessing the Hiram H. Fox Wildlife Management Area.

In addition to sharing a parking area, we are partnering with MassWildlife to purchase a property to the north that will allow us to expand our trails and will connect parcels of forest land to provide larger corridors for wildlife.

Our volunteers and neighbors were crucial in getting these trails open to the public.

A wildlife tracking study conducted by The Nature Conservancy determined that the Conwell property is an active wildlife crossing for mink, red fox, and other species moving between the Jackson Brook area to the east and the MassWildlife's Hiram H. Fox Wildlife Management Area to the west.

The land was donated to the land trust in 2017 by former owners Cynthia and Peter Cook. Volunteers helped

create a trail spur that connects the existing trail system on the land to the new parking lot.

Our volunteers and neighbors were crucial in getting these trails open to the public. From constructing and installing the kiosk, to building and blazing the trails, to helping hang signs to orient visitors, they helped make this a place where people can enjoy going for a hike.

Visit our website to download a map, get directions, and learn more about the property or about volunteering.



Rock outcrop on the Conwell property



Rus with his dog, Percy

The Meaning of Community

By Rus Peotter, HLT Board President

At Hilltown Land Trust we've been thinking and talking a lot about "community" lately. These conversations have grown out of our work to clarify and strengthen our Values Statement with a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Of the words and values we've discussed, Community is at the top of the list. At first blush, the idea seems simple: our service area includes 13 rural towns in all four counties of Western Massachusetts. But using municipal boundaries to define "community" comes up short.

The benefits of conserving land stretch beyond our service area, and people who visit HLT properties often come from places well beyond those 13 towns. HLT's partners, donors, volunteers, and supporters are from all over. Ecosystems don't stop at a town line, and neither should our definition of community.

While our Board and staff are still discussing exactly how to define "community," we agree on key concepts. We acknowledge that we are responsible to those in our service area. And we believe in the importance and value of seeking input and welcoming diverse opinions from people both local and farther away.

We also agree that communities gather because people know that by working together, they can be more effective at achieving their goals. And at HLT we believe that "community" needs to be inclusive, embracing various identities and opinions.

So, whether you are birding on the trails at the Stevens Property in Huntington and Westhampton, exploring Locke's Loop Trail in Williamsburg, or participating in our Vernal Pool Plunge, you may be part of several different communities. We want you to know that both you and your communities are valued by HLT.

"Ecosystems don't stop at a town line, and neither should our definition of community."

— Rus Peotter

Read the full versions of these articles and more at:
HilltownLandTrust.org/announcements

Get to Know Michael!

Michael Madole joined the Board of Hilltown Land Trust this past fall, after many years as a volunteer and having served as our AmeriCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator seven years ago. Learn more about Michael below and read the full interview on our website!

How long have you lived in the Hilltowns and what brought you here?

I grew up in Texas and would come to Western MA as a kid to visit family and always really liked it here. I have lived in the Hilltowns for almost 10 years, and my wife Sydney and I moved to our place in Plainfield in 2020. We live here with our newborn son Arthur, horse Hazel, and goat Abby.

What do you like about living in Plainfield?

I love everything about living here! I love how quiet it is. I love our neighbors. I love that our boy gets to grow up running around by Mill Brook and the state forest. I love how close we are to our basic necessities, like Cummington Supply, The Creamery, and Ashfield Hardware.

I love that! Being close to basic necessities is not something you generally hear people say about life in the Hilltowns.

Well, I grew up in the middle of nowhere, where it took at least half an hour to get to any kind of store, so being eight minutes away from a small grocery store is a luxury!

How do you spend your time when you aren't volunteering with HLT?

My main paid gig is for a company called Dendroyka who makes Landscape, a conservation software platform used by land trusts across the U.S. and in Canada. It's a dream job (aside from being in the woods all day)!



Michael and Hazel



Michael admiring a fir tree

I have a horse that I log with as Hilltown Horse Logging. I don't spend all my free time logging, but aside from daddy duty, I spend most of my spare time with Hazel and keeping up the farm.

What would you say is your favorite part of volunteering with HLT?

The people! I like spending time with the Board and the staff and the AmeriCorps members. It feels like a community and I want to contribute to that community.

I have been [in the Hilltowns] for ten years, and when I run into people, it's very likely that I met them through HLT. I really like that.

Volunteers make your local land trust stronger!

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



Margaret Waggoner in her woods

History and Legacy

Margaret Waggoner was a Renaissance woman, with a passion for many topics including history, poetry, physics, and the natural world. A retired physics professor and Dean of Smith College, Margaret lived in Goshen for 20 years, and worked actively to preserve the town's history as Chair of the Historical Commission and President of the Williams-Boltwood House Trust.

Margaret cared deeply for wildlife and knew she wanted to conserve her land, which includes extensive wetlands and sensitive wildlife habitat. She was in the process of doing so with Hilltown Land Trust when she passed away in September of 2021. Because she knew it might not be completed in her lifetime, she included language in her will to ensure the land would be conserved.

In addition to wildlife habitat, Margaret valued the peace she found through quiet contemplation in her woods and wanted others to experience the same on her trails. Thanks to her generous gift, people and wildlife will be able to enjoy her land in perpetuity.



Margaret Waggoner

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

hilltownlandtrust.org/get-involved/green-legacy-circle

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

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Give Back TO THE LAND

Support HLT on Earth Day!

On Friday April 22nd, take a moment to give back to the land that gives so much to all of us. Join together with your friends, neighbors, and other nature supporters for Give Back to the Land Day this Earth Day! This online giving day raises funds for seven land trusts across Western and Central Massachusetts in their mission to conserve land for wildlife, people, and the environment.

Visit www.givebacktotheland.org to learn more and please support Hilltown Land Trust with a gift on 04/22/22!

Have you visited one of our trails lately?

We want to hear about your experience! Send us an email:

ContactUs@HilltownLandTrust.org



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