

# A Poem

## When the Winter Finally

When the winter finally delivers  
that stuff we've been waiting for,  
hour after hour drifting  
from its pewter sky -

and the horses, even the white ones,  
look dirty against it -

and the stalks of dead flowers  
stand above it like ragged watchmen -

and the empty garden chairs  
settle into down pillows -

and the wooden fences  
lean from wind and ruin -

we,  
at last,  
celebrate bleakness.

~Antonia Lake

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## THE HILLTOWN LAND TRUST MISSION STATEMENT:

- To conserve active farmland and other 'working' properties;
- To save native plant and wildlife habitats;
- To protect watersheds;
- To preserve the scenic and rural character of the Hilltowns.

*The Hilltown Land Trust recognizes that our towns must balance their need to create new housing and jobs with their need to preserve critical natural resources and their rural character. We're committed to being an important participant in this endeavor.*

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# NEWS

CHESTERFIELD, CUMMINGTON, GOSHEN, HUNTINGTON, MIDDLEFIELD, PLAINFIELD, WESTHAMPTON, WILLIAMSBURG, AND WORTHINGTON

## Walking a Conservation Woodlot: HLT's Fall Event

Despite more than occasional showers, a hearty group of Hilltown Land Trust (HLT) members and their friends spent a Sunday afternoon in late September walking the Stevens property and learning about eco-forestry from Lincoln Fish. A special added attraction was a demonstration of low-impact logging by Kip Porter and his team of draft horses.

In 2004, Frank Stevens gave the the HLT the 267-acre parcel, which is located on the northwest corner of Westhampton along the Huntington town line. According to Lincoln, a consulting forester and founding member of the trust, the property is a tremendous resource on many fronts. Abutting it are the Holyoke Watershed as well as several other wooded parcels that are protected

by Conservation Restrictions—all of which create several thousand acres of undeveloped land. Being part of this huge corridor, along with its abundant food sources and natural shelters, makes the Stevens property a great wildlife habitat.

On the other hand, a web of old logging trails that wind through the forest, over perennial streams, and past a sea of glacially deposited boulders create myriad recreational opportunities.

Equally important is the land's potential as a woodlot that will produce a steady source of income for future HLT projects. As Lincoln pointed out during the walk, the Stevens property is an excellent site for the HLT's first eco-forestry project not only because of its several large and dense stands of hardwoods, but

also because of the high quality of that wood.

Eco-forestry is based on a set of environmentally friendly principals. Logging is done not just to produce lumber and money. Instead, as Lincoln explained it, "In eco- or green forestry, you have a number of different objectives that you're trying to accomplish." At the Stevens property, these objectives include, among others, harvesting timber, creating wildlife habitat, enhancing recreational activities, and protecting watersheds.

In keeping its commitment to eco-forestry, the HLT hired Kip Porter, of Worthington, to log the property with his Belgium draft horses. Although slower than using a massive Timberjack skidder and other heavy equipment, logging with horses is clearly quieter and much easier on the landscape.

As part of his demonstration on Sunday, Kip hitched up his team—Jack, a 14-year-old red roan, and Rocky, an 8-year-old chestnut—to show off some of the techniques he uses in his work. After hoisting two more logs onto a fairly high pile with a series of impressive backing up and pulling maneuvers as well as voice commands, he drove Jack and Rocky into the woods to drag



Kip Porter and his Belgium draft horses demonstrate logging techniques.

*Continued* ►

# H • I • L • L • T • O • W • N

## Woodlot Walk, continued:

out another log.

While Kip wrapped a log with a chain that was attached to a forecart pulled by Jack and Rocky, the horses remained attentive. Usually the team can pull out two logs at a time. However, despite their size—which is between 1,500 and 1,800 pounds apiece—Kip emphasized, “I always have to try to figure out how much they can handle and drop a chain if the load is too much.” When asked, the two horses moved off with Kip riding behind them, reins in hand. As they made their way toward the clearing and pile, the only signs of their presence were hoof prints and a slight furrow left by the log being dragged.

Lincoln estimated that Kip will eventually cut about two truckloads of logs and a couple truckloads of firewood from this section of the property and hopefully net about a thousand dollars for the HLT.

All logs harvested from the property will be milled and sold through the Massachusetts Woodlands Cooperative (MWC), which the HLT joined last year. The MWC is a group of private landowners that practices sustainable forestry which, for example, protects working forest landscapes, reverses the practice of high-grading timber, and supports the local economy by making sure the wood is used in the area. Belonging to the MWC also allows the lumber to be green certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, which guarantees that the product came from an environmentally friendly environment. ♦

## Our Board of Directors Is Growing

The Hilltown Land Trust welcomes several new members to its Board of Directors. **Jim Molyneux**, of Worthington, is a well-known realtor in the hilltowns, and **Jesse Robertson-Dubois**, of Cummington, is a field representative for the American Farmland Trust. **Wendy Sweetser** is the Executive Director of the Highland Communities Initiative. **Susan McIntosh** was a long-time chair of the Huntington Planning Board, and **Waino Tuominen** was one of the original directors of the HLT. Both Susan and Waino live in Huntington.

Our new board members bring a wealth of expertise and experience that will benefit the Hilltown Land Trust and the land it seeks to preserve and protect. We look forward to working with them! ♦

## New Website for Landowners

Landowners in the Westfield and Deerfield watersheds might want to check out a new website—MassACORN at <http://massacorn.net>. Designed and managed by Jennifer Fish and sponsored by UMass, the site includes local information on our woods, landscape and natural resource communities, interactive mapping, forums to pose questions to professionals or other landowners, monthly highlights of local folks or organizations, and a poetry selection.

Jennifer, a director of the HLT, is pursuing a master’s degree in forestry at UMass, Amherst, and the website is part of her master’s project. She envisions the site as an outreach tool that will reach a wider and more varied audience than traditional methods such as workshops.

Approximately 80% of Western Massachusetts is forested, with a majority of that land being privately owned, and we all depend upon the ecosystem services, such as clean water and wildlife habitats, that this land provides. Therefore, the cumulative decisions made by the thousands of landowners in this region ultimately affect the health and sustainability of the ecosystem. Jennifer believes the website will enhance land stewardship by providing landowners with new ways to think about how their land fits into the community and connecting them with the larger conservation network. ♦



Lincoln Fish explains eco-forestry methods to HLT members and friends in September.

# U • P • D • A • T • E • S

## New—but Brief—Incentive for Conservation Restrictions

As of August 2006, a new federal law has important economic implications for landowners who donate Conservation Restrictions (CRs) to land trusts or public agencies. The law allows a higher federal tax deduction for the gift—until the end of 2007.

One way to protect land from development is for the owner to donate the rights to develop the land (or part of it) to a land trust. The trust holds those rights—in perpetuity—and the owner holds the land as before, without the right to build on it or to sell building lots. A deed with the signed agreement with the land trust is recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

That donation has a value—sometimes a large value—that can then reduce the owner's federal income taxes over a period of years. In the past, an owner could

have up to six years to deduct the full appraised value of their gift, at a rate of 30% off their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) each year. However, sometimes the value is so high, especially with soaring real estate prices, that six years is not enough to deduct the full value. For a brief time only, this new law allows landowners to deduct 50% off their AGI each year, and over a period of 16 years! Donations of CRs of qualifying farms can deduct 100%.

This law will expire on December 31, 2007 unless a new law extends it. If anyone has been considering putting a CR on their land, this might be the time to do it. CRs take months to complete, and they must be completed by the sunset date. After that, the older law will be in force. ♦

*Shirley Winer*

## Calendar

### Bear Behavior and Habitat in the Highlands

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 7 P.M.  
CHESTERFIELD SENIOR CENTER  
*Free and open to all!*  
*Sponsored by the Highland Communities Initiative.*  
[Snow date: February 22]

Bear populations are on the rise in the Highlands. Join HCI, John Foster of the New England Naturalist Training Center, and the Hilltown Land Trust for a fascinating slide show presentation to learn about the lifecycle and behavior of bears, why their future is connected to our local landscape, and what you can do to help protect their habitat.

### The Hilltown Land Trust (First Annual???) Poetry Reading

SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 3-5 P.M.  
WORTHINGTON HISTORICAL SOC.  
*Freewill donation benefits HLT.*

To celebrate Daylight Savings Time, St. Patrick's Day, and Spring, we invite you to an afternoon of poetry with Stephen Philbrick, Antonia Lake, Patty Kimura, and Colin Harrington, Mary-Beth O'Shea and Annie Boutelle. Vincent Dowling will officiate. Refreshments, of course, will be plentiful.

### HLT Wildflower & Pond Walk

Coming this Spring.  
More details soon...

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Online

[masswoods.net/future\\_land](http://masswoods.net/future_land)  
[lta.org/publicpolicy/factsheet\\_tax\\_planning.htm](http://lta.org/publicpolicy/factsheet_tax_planning.htm)

#### Offline

The Hilltown Land Trust *Wil Hastings (413-585-4957)*  
The Nature Conservancy *Bill Toomey (413-354-7780)*  
Winding River Land Conservancy *Mark Noonan (413-562-1396)*  
The Franklin Land Trust *Richard Hubbard (413-625-9151)*

## JOIN US

IF YOU SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE HILLTOWN LAND TRUST, ASK A FRIEND OR TWO OR THREE TO JOIN US. OR, BETTER YET, GIVE THEM THE GIFT OF A MEMBERSHIP TO THE HILLTOWN LAND TRUST.

HILLTOWN LAND TRUST  
P.O. BOX 251, CHESTERFIELD, MA 01012  
THANK YOU!

- \$35 PER YEAR  
(OUR BASIC "LAND LOVER")
- \$50 PER YEAR
- \$100 PER YEAR
- \$500 PER YEAR
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (OTHER) PER YEAR