



Can you identify this local waterfall?
It was springtime!

HILLTOWN LAND TRUST
BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- Katharine Baker
413-586-0215
- Jennifer @ Lincoln Fish
413-268-3288
- Wil Hastings
413-584-4957
- Mary A. Koncel
413-238-4221
- Susan McIntosh
413-667-8893
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413-268-3160
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413-667-3439



NEWS

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A Little Help from Our Friends

If one small group of thoughtful people can change the world, what can two or more do, working together? Over the years, partnerships between Hilltown Land Trust and like-minded groups that share our landscape and goals have bolstered our efforts to protect land.

From identifying threatened properties to reaching out to landowners and navigating the purchase of land or conservation restrictions, we have welcomed assistance in tackling the many responsibilities that go along with our mission. Given the harsh realities of today's economy, sticking together for a common cause now makes more sense than ever. HLT's symbiotic relationship with the Highland Communities Initiative and its parent organization, The Trustees of Reservations, offers a good example of how different organizations can strengthen one another's work.

The Highland Communities Initiative (HCI) is a multi-faceted program that has been working for the past ten years to protect the rural character and quality of life in 38 local towns that include the Hilltowns region. Although HCI does not conduct land protection itself, many of its outreach efforts focus on spreading information about conservation options to towns and

landowners. HCI offers several publications and events about land management and conservation, and provides opportunities for landowners to glean advice and recommendations from regional experts and other nearby landowners. An upcoming event for landowners features private consultations with a conservation specialist and an attorney, which serves to identify and funnel good land protection projects to area land trusts like HLT. In fact, more than one landowner we're currently working with benefitted from one of these HCI consultations last winter. HCI and UMass Extension also organized a Neighbor Conservation Network in the hilltowns that is sharing and spreading information about land conservation through people's social network of friends and neighbors.

HLT President Wil Hastings noted that "Almost ten years ago, HCI was born out of the vision of one man, Stephen Plehn, then a Worthington Selectman, and the willingness of The Trustees of Reservations to give life to this innovative way of bolstering traditional conservation efforts in the rural communities of our area."

The Trustees of Reservations are a statewide land trust and conservation

organization with roots in this area dating back over 100 years, to the preservation of its Petticoat Hill reservation in Williamsburg in 1905. Other nearby "special places" protected by The Trustees include the Chesterfield Gorge, Glendale Falls, Chapel Brook, the Bryant Homestead and Notchview reservations.

Not long ago, HLT worked with The Trustees to protect a 66-acre Potash Brook property on Nash Hill Road in Williamsburg, a project initiated by a group of dedicated neighbors who pooled their resources and talents for

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Look for a future HLT outing to explore Potash Brook



PO Box 251
Chesterfield, MA 01012

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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The Future of the Highlands: It's in Your Hands



AS A PROGRAM OF THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS, the grant-funded Highland Community Initiative seeks to work with neighbors and volunteers to enhance the quality of life and the rural character in the Highlands Region—the 38 towns that lie between the Housatonic and the Connecticut River valleys and the borders of Connecticut and Vermont.

HCI connects people and provides them with the information and the support they need to keep their natural and cultural communities from

succumbing to over development. Through publications and gatherings, HCI provides to municipal boards, land trusts, community leaders, and others concerned about the future of the Highlands the information and the tools they need to be effective advocates. In this spirit, HCI held its 5th Regional Conference in September of this year.

“Surround yourself with positive people,” recommended WFCR’s Laurie Sanders in her familiar radio voice. The conference’s keynote speaker was sharing a piece of practical wisdom about how to get difficult, important things done in this world. Her words broadcast out to an appreciative conference audience full of positive people ready to share the wisdom and inspiration.

Well known as the host of the radio program *Field Notes*, Laurie also has a deep love of libraries and her town of Westhampton. When the opportunity arose to provide a new, handicapped accessible home for the town library while also saving a historic parsonage and preserving land for a town common, she and a group of like-minded citizens set out on what became a four-year journey. Full of heartbreaking setbacks, inspiring

triumphs and compelling creativity, the journey ultimately made a permanent impact on her town. In a town of 1,700 people, they were able to raise the unthinkable amount of \$650,000, which was matched by a state grant. The new library will open in June 2010.

Thus inspired, the 130 conference participants spread throughout the historic buildings of a rainy but beautiful Ashfield to network and share ideas in a series of workshops spotlighting new thoughts and creative examples of individuals working to protect and strengthen the rural character and community of our region.

The workshops offered covered: community garden projects; businesses that have also helped build community; projects connecting schools with farms and



locally grown food; local projects to promote sustainable living and reduce home energy use; reclaiming and maintaining historic town commons; state grants available to towns for land protection, park development and historic preservation; better development bylaws; tracking wildlife; protecting our night sky; getting to rural broadband. The presenters were inspiring examples of what can be accomplished. Find out more about HCI at www.thetrustees.org/hci/. ♦



A Little Help from our Friends, continued from page 1:

a conservation restriction The land itself boasts diverse wildlife habitats including a perennial stream, mixed upland forests, and a vernal pool supporting two rare amphibians. The Trustees were able to offer guidance, coordination, resources, and leverage to help bring the project to completion. That initial project has since spurred

the protection of another 185 acres in the surrounding landscape—together a remarkable achievement that would not have begun without that group of landowners and would have been difficult for HLT to accomplish without The Trustees’ help. Creativity, cooperation, consultation, community effort: that is our mantra. ♦

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One Step at a Time Down Glendale Falls

One Step at a Time Down Glendale Falls needs step sponsors and strong arms!

The Trustees of Reservations and the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Committee are joining forces with community members like you to build stairs and a woodland trail for the purpose of restoring and exploring this beautiful hidden Hilltown treasure. Glendale Falls is one of the highest waterfalls in Massachusetts, but the decent on foot is daunting and those who do brave the walk are unwittingly causing erosion.

Our first workday in November was a great success. The 23 steps sponsored thus far were begun with great enthusiasm by more than 27 volunteers who came to help that day. There are 40 more steps to go and two stone staircases to design and build.

To become a \$10 sponsor of a rustic step, and/or to put your name on the list for upcoming workday parties, please use the



response form below. With your help we can all descend "One Step at a Time."

*Meredyth Babcock,
Wild & Scenic Committee*

Help us collect history and memories of Glendale Falls or of other favorite spots along the Westfield River. Do you have a story or a memory you'd like to share with us?



One Step at a time down Glendale Falls Middlefield MA.

Exploring and restoring our Trustees of Reservations treasure

Please send check or money order to **WRWA Westfield River Wild & Scenic**
PO Box 397, Huntington, MA 01050

I would like to Sponsor a step! Name _____

Address _____

Phone# _____ Email _____

Number of steps _____ \$10 each Total enclosed _____

Please alert me about, trainings, events, work days and other Wild and Scenic projects.

Westfield River Wild & Scenic Stream Team and Project Volunteer Coordinator
<http://www.westfieldriverwildscenic.org/index.html>

