



An affiliate of The Trustees of Reservations

- ASHFIELD CHESTER CHESTERFIELD CONWAY CUMMINGTON
- GOSHEN HUNTINGTON MIDDLEFIELD PLAINFIELD
- WESTHAMPTON WILLIAMSBURG WINDSOR WORTHINGTON

Recent and Upcoming Events

Racing on snowshoes, logging with oxen, girls in science, wildflowers and more! Over the past few months, HLT has sponsored or co-sponsored a variety of public events that provided the opportunity to learn about sustainable forestry, encourage children to explore the outdoors, navigate in the woods, and discover spring wildflowers.



In February, an intrepid group of racers braved frigid temperatures to participate in Snowshoe Shenanigans, a 1-kilometer snowshoe race and winter celebration at Notchview Reservation in Windsor. In March, forester Tom Jenkins led a sustainable forestry demonstration with his two draft oxen (see *HLT and Low Impact Forestry*). In April, HLT brought author Jeannine Atkins to the Williamsburg Library to talk about her book *Girls Who Looked Under Rocks*. Participants then explored the outdoors at the Trustees' Petticoat Hill Reservation. HLT also partnered with Kestrel Land Trust to offer volunteer land steward training to learn how to use GPS units and document changes to land that HLT protects. At the Trustees' Bullitt Reservation, raptor and owl rehabilitator Tom Ricardi came with live birds to talk about caring for these wild animals. In May, HLT celebrated spring with a guided wildflower hike at the Trustees' Chapel Brook Reservation and then headed to the southern reaches of our service area to lead a workshop on starting a small-scale vegetable garden at the Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center's community garden on May 17th.

There is more fun and celebration to come as HLT heads into summer. On June 14th, HLT members, donors and partners will celebrate our recent accreditation by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission at the Bullitt Reservation in Ashfield. On July 12th, we are planning a

trail work day at HLT's Bradley property in Williamsburg. Stay up to date with upcoming events by visiting www.hilltown-land-trust.org/events or emailing ContactUs@hilltown-land-trust.org



JOIN US

Ask a friend or two or three to join us, too. Better yet, give them the gift of a membership to The Hilltown Land Trust.

Hilltown Land Trust • 332 Bullitt Road • Ashfield, MA 01330

- \$35 per year
- \$50 per year
- \$100 per year
- \$250 per year
- \$500 per year
- \$ _____ (other) per year

Name _____

Address _____

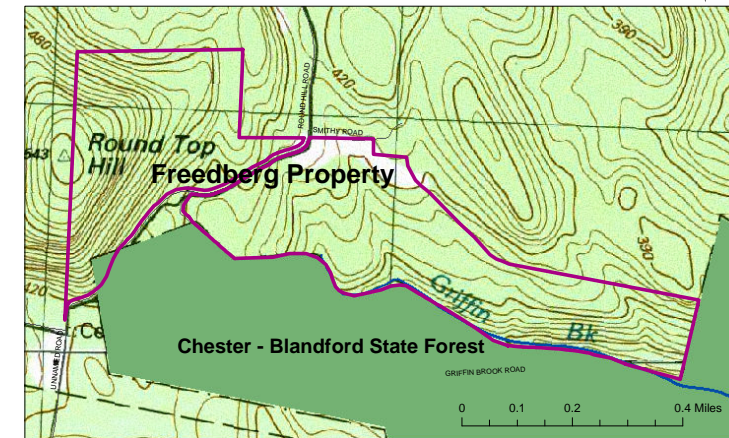
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Dutchman's Britches
photo by Nicole Rhodes

HLT Protects 125 Acre Property in Chester

Climbing to the top of Round Hill in Chester offers wonderful, seasonal views of the surrounding Berkshires, Mount Tom and the Holyoke Range. The summit and northern and eastern slopes of



with nearly a mile of the cascading Griffin Brook, will soon be permanently protected thanks to the generosity of landowners Sarah and William Freedberg. On a recent visit to the property, the HLT team found the area teeming with spring wildflowers.

"For the past seventeen years we have greatly enjoyed observing the plants and animals of this spot through the changing seasons. Our wish is now to preserve this land in its natural state for all," Sarah and William Freedberg commented.

Conserving this land will help protect water quality, wildlife habitat and important forest resources. The property is adjacent to Chester – Blandford State Forest and connected to thousands of acres of protected land, thus expanding a large block of wild land important for wildlife and water quality. The property includes the scenic Griffin Brook, which starts on the slopes of Round Hill and cascades through a small gorge on the way to Sanderson Brook and the West Branch of the Westfield River, a federally designated Wild and Scenic River. Round Hill is the highest point in Hampden County and can be accessed via a trail through the Freedberg land which will remain open to the public as long as the conserved property is respected.



Hilltown Land Trust is grateful to the Freedbergs for their generous donation and commitment to land conservation. This project will mark HLT's 32nd Conservation Restriction and 3,900 acres of land conserved since HLT's founding in 1986.

Top of Round Hill

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Hilltown Land Trust Earns National Distinction

By Marie Burkart, Board President

HLT began 2015 with excellent news: our seven year path to national accreditation was successful. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission announced in December that HLT was one of 17 land trusts to achieve first-time or renewed accreditation. Of the approximately 1700 land trusts across the United States, only 301 have received this distinction since the program began in 2008. Only 14 of the 140 Massachusetts-based land trusts have become accredited.

Each accredited land trust must meet extensive documentation requirements and undergo a comprehensive review by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission as part of its accreditation application. Simply going through the application process can strengthen land trusts as they use the Land Trust Standards and Practices as a guide to fine tune their policies and streamline their operations.

In announcing the news, Tammara Van Ryn, executive director of the Commission said “Accreditation is the highest national mark of distinction a land trust can achieve and must be renewed every five years. I congratulate these 17 land trusts and celebrate not only their newest achievement but all they have done and will continue to do for their communities.”

HLT began its quest for accreditation in earnest in 2008 as part of an assessment of its long term viability as an organization. Founded in 1986 by a small group of volunteers, by 2008 the organization held 22 conservation restrictions covering approximately 2100 acres and owned four properties, adding an additional 600 acres of conserved land. But by 2008 it was clear that an all volunteer model could no longer effectively grow its conservation mission as well as manage its current properties. As we looked around for merger partners and began a capital campaign to fund paid staff, HLT also looked at accreditation as a way to assure partners, donors and itself that its past focus on the quality of the projects undertaken, its transaction documentation and the subsequent stewardship was on the mark. Confirmation came seven years later when HLT was accredited without any requirements to change, modify or improve any of our current practices. That surprised us as we are always trying to better our practices and the way we do our land conservation work. But it also pleased us, as we understand that unconditional first-time accreditation is a remarkable outcome.

Many HLT board members and volunteers assisted the accreditation process over the years. Well deserved thanks go out to Katy Eiseman, HLT’s accreditation consultant, board members Suzy Kulik and Carol Klyman who served on HLT’s Accreditation Committee and Sally Loomis, HLT’s executive director who managed to keep HLT’s day to day business moving smoothly while the organization went through this rigorous process.

But no one person saw the value of the process and guided it to its successful completion more than Wil Hastings, HLT’s past board president. Without Wil’s commitment to the value of the process and the importance that accreditation held for assuring the public of HLT’s commitment to conservation, we would not be proudly displaying the LTA Accreditation seal today. According to Wil:

When I first saw the 2004 version of Standards and Practices issued by the Land Trust Alliance, I knew that land trusts were in for a shock. The message was, “brothers and sisters, it is time to get in line and crease your trousers”.

At the time, Hilltown Land Trust had been trying to adopt (and adapt) land conservation’s “best practices.” But this document meant that our

continued next column



Volunteer Spotlight: Tom Quinn

By Nicole Rhodes, Land Steward

Hilltown Land Trust is responsible for monitoring and stewarding over 3,300 acres of land, and relies heavily on knowledgeable and experienced volunteers. Monitoring protected lands involves hiking off-trail while observing and documenting change in relation to the conservation values that HLT is protecting. Flipping through monitoring reports over the past several years, one name that shows up frequently is Tom Quinn, a dedicated volunteer steward who has monitored each of the 36 properties that HLT has protected.

Tom came to the Pioneer Valley as a student at UMass-Amherst and lived in a rented farmhouse in Southamptton. There he and his housemates learned about gardening and “putting food by”. They built a greenhouse and sold winter organic produce and then purchased a farm in Worthington in 1973. It was there in Worthington that Tom and his wife, Barbara came to deeply appreciate the special gifts of the Hilltowns. Their good neighbor, the “legendary” Wil Hastings connected Tom to HLT. Although Tom is now living in Easthampton where he is an active and beloved volunteer for multiple non-profits, he has maintained a commitment to HLT; “I thoroughly enjoy volunteering for HLT.”

Tom is in his element while walking through the woods and searching for stone walls and old fencing that typically mark a property’s boundaries. Though focused on the mission of the visit, he knows when to stop for a moment and say “wow” when discovering a heron rookery, or a gorgeous waterfall--the things that inspire us to protect land. Between his busy volunteering schedules, Tom also finds time to recreate on land that he has helped protect and the trails he helps maintain. If you see him hiking or biking on a trail, be sure to thank him! HLT is lucky to have Tom as a part of our volunteer stewardship team, and grateful for all the energy he brings to our mission of conservation.



Accreditation (cont'd)

national leaders were on a new track of getting serious about doing our work in the right ways. From 2005 on, we tried to bring our own practices closer to the 2004 national model except where we felt that political pressures had overwhelmed practical prescriptions.

Then in 2009 came our welcome affiliation with The Trustees of Reservations, who were the Massachusetts vanguard for the national Standards and Practices program. The Trustees wanted us to join in, as they had, and we agreed to do so. Not painless but surely useful, adding discipline and consistency to our daily work.”

Hilltown Land Trust Board of Directors

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Eric Weber, *Vice President* – Williamsburg

Carol Klyman, *Treasurer* – Westhampton

Sandy Papush, *Secretary* – Goshen

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The Trustees of Reservations

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Low Impact Forestry and Hilltown Land Trust

By Michael Madole, HLT volunteer, with input from Tom Jenkins

On March 7th Hilltown Land Trust hosted an oxen logging demonstration on our Jackson Swamp property in Worthington. A combination of factors, including the size of the Jackson Swamp parcel, the quality of standing timber, and unsuitability for trail development, led to HLT deciding to use the property for sustainable timber harvesting. We decided to invite members of the public to witness how forestry could be practiced in a sustainable and environmentally conscious way. The demonstration was put on by Tom Jenkins; a licensed forester, resident of Westhampton, 9th generation oxen driver, and practitioner of low impact forestry.

Low impact forestry is the practice of managing timber in a way that maximizes ecological diversity and minimizes ecological impact and ‘collateral damage’. This means improving the quality of the standing timber by being ultra-selective each step of the way. While horses and oxen are perfect for this ‘surgical’ removal of standing timber from the forest to the landing, a qualified machine operator can be just as effective. Having a forester who is aware of the capabilities of these methods is equally vital -- often, large trees marked for removal will be surrounded by other trees marked for removal because the forester is not aware that the single large tree can be successfully removed without destroying the surrounding foliage.

In many situations landowners sacrifice short-term windfall profits in favor of long-term investments and a detailed cutting plan, which takes place over decades. Initially the cuts will focus on low quality timber or cordwood in order to improve the quality of the standing timber. Over time, the overall quality of each successive harvest is improved, until the landowner is able to harvest high value timber at low ecological cost. Because this takes place over decades, having a long term plan set out by a knowledgeable forester is absolutely essential. Says Tom Jenkins: “The product a lot of loggers produce is the logs on the landing, with low impact forestry the product we are producing is the residual stand.” This necessity of thinking long term is also what makes land trusts like HLT the perfect platform for implementing low impact forestry methods and educating the public about its benefits.

While making low impact forestry the norm is undoubtedly an uphill struggle, Tom is optimistic about the outlook of the industry: “I think increasingly forest landowners see their forest for more than its monetary value as timber and hence more people will choose low impact forestry. I looked at a job where a woman’s forester told her in order to conduct a selective harvest on her property, an ancient road would have to be widened to allow for the passage of a skidder. She hiked that old cart road daily and couldn’t bear the thought of cutting all the trees off both sides of it. I told her I could skid logs on that road without ever touching a single one of those trees. Her reaction was priceless. To her the value of those trees lining her old road was far greater than the value of the pine trees to be thinned.”

Judging by the 50+ people who hiked through the snow to witness the HLT demonstration, low impact forestry is gaining interest as a viable option for landowners looking to manage their woodlots.



Rock and Star waiting patiently