

## Affiliation in Action



Hilltown Land Trust is pleased to welcome Joanna Ballantine as The Trustees of Reservation’s new Director of the West Region and HLT’s partner in the hilltowns. Below, Joanna explains in her own words what the affiliation between the two organizations means to her:

*“Close to 4 years ago visionaries at Hilltown Land Trust and The Trustees of Reservations imagined an affiliation between the two well-positioned organizations. Today, this affiliation is a classic*

*example of when one plus one equals three. Together, we are better able to achieve the strategic plan objectives of The Trustees in a vital region of western Massachusetts with the dedicated and talented shared staff and volunteers of The Trustees and Hilltown Land Trust.*

*When I reflect on our shared vision of protecting iconic and critical landscapes and how urgent this work is in today’s fast paced development oriented climate, I commend those who came before us for their vision and action. Together, we are protecting land in the hilltowns proactively; giving landowners the confidence to know that we are a robust affiliation with focus, expertise and skills. The Trustees believe now is the time to excite more people to engage in our work by creative programming and outreach that positively affects the daily lives of citizens throughout the Commonwealth. Through our affiliation with HLT, we are able to do this in an area of our region that is beautiful and critical to protect and enjoy.”*

Hilltown Land Trust benefits from the affiliation with The Trustees in several ways. The Trustees Conservation Restriction stewardship team helped train HLT’s new AmeriCorps Land Steward through several joint site visits to properties in the hilltowns and HLT uses The Trustees GIS mapping system to access a vast amount of data on the conservation values of properties in the region. Trustees staff also help HLT with a variety of administrative functions from accounting to fundraising to graphic design. In return, HLT’s Executive Director also serves as a Community Conservation Coordinator for The Trustees and conducts land protection projects for both organizations.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Investment in Nature Provides a Fourfold Return In Mass

The Trust for Public Land recently conducted research that quantifies and summarizes the significant economic benefits to Massachusetts communities resulting from public investments in open space, natural areas, working lands, parks, and public pools. In recent decades the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has passed three comprehensive Environmental Bond Bills (1996, 2002, 2008) that have been the engine for the state’s investment in parks and land and water conservation. As a result of these bond measures, from 1998 to 2011 Massachusetts conserved 131,000 acres of parks, natural areas and working lands, helping to support the tourism, outdoor recreation, agriculture, forestry and commercial fishing industries.

Analyzing the economic value of the natural goods and services provided by the land conserved from 1998 to 2011, the Trust for Public Land found that for every state dollar invested in land conservation, four dollars in economic benefits were created in the Massachusetts economy. In addition, grant programs funded by the environmental bonds leveraged an additional \$118 million dollars in funding from other sources including federal and local government and private sources.

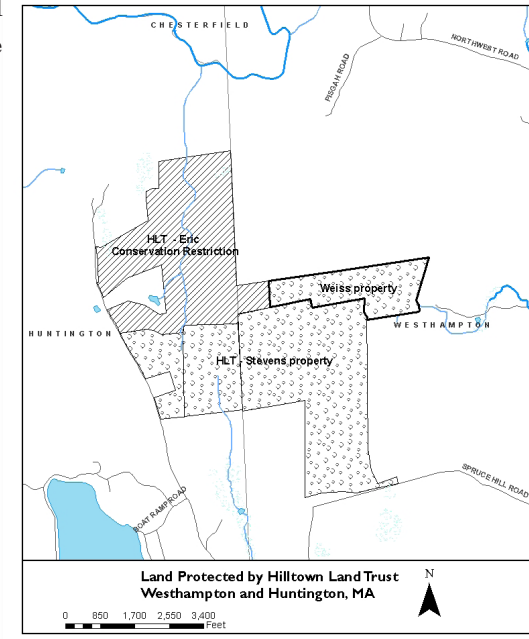
“These results showed conservation is an excellent investment and they are consistent with a dozen similar studies we have conducted across the nation in the past four years” said Jessica Sargent, senior economist with The Trust for Public Land and author of the report. “Over and over again, from Maine to Arizona, we see that spending on conservation protects jobs and shows a good return on investment.”

To read the full report, go to The Trust for Public Land website at: [www.tpl.org/massachusetts](http://www.tpl.org/massachusetts)

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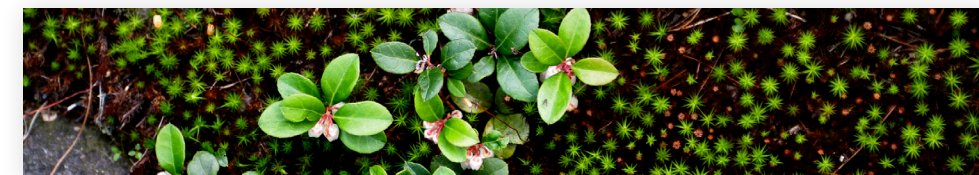
## HLT Newest Acquisition to Create 717 Contiguous Acres of Protected Land

In 2003, Nancy Weiss, then a local surgeon and board member of both the Massachusetts Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, purchased 82 acres of forest land in Westhampton with the intention of leaving it to HLT in her will. Now a resident of Virginia, Dr. Weiss realized last spring that she wanted to make the gift during her lifetime. HLT is excited by the prospect of adding her 82 acres to our largest conservation area along the Westhampton – Huntington town line. HLT currently owns the 379 acre Stevens property and holds a Conservation Restriction on an adjacent 256 acres. The Weiss land is nestled between these two properties and will create a 717 acre swath of land protected by HLT. Other nearby protected lands include the White Reservoir Watershed, Hiram Fox Wildlife Management Area and Knightville Dam and Recreation Area.



The entire property is considered “Core Habitat” by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program as part of their Biomap II classification. Recognizing the importance of this land for wildlife, it will be left “forever wild” with no forest harvesting or public recreation trails. Those activities have ample space on HLT’s Stevens property and other adjacent lands and now the plants and animals will have a space of their own.

This property has qualified for the Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit Program, and the Town of Westhampton Conservation Commission plans to hold a Conservation Restriction on the 82 acres that will be donated to HLT. HLT is delighted to be working in partnership with the Town of Westhampton on this project and more land protection efforts in the future. The project is expected to be completed by early next year.



Eric Weber, Wintergreen





## HLT Welcomes Its Second Americorps Volunteer

In September, HLT welcomed our newest AmeriCorps volunteer, Hannah Chamberlain, to the position of Land Stewardship Coordinator. This is the second year that HLT has participated in the Massachusetts Land Initiative for Tomorrow Program (MassLIFT), a statewide AmeriCorps program coordinated by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, funded in part by a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service and supported by the Massachusetts Service Alliance. As Land Stewardship Coordinator, Hannah is organizing the monitoring of HLT's protected lands and helping to manage the properties HLT owns. In addition, she will focus on engaging and training volunteers.

Hannah is a life long resident of Massachusetts, growing up in the beautiful Berkshire town of Ashley Falls. She is recent graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst majoring in environmental science and Spanish. While at UMass, Hannah worked for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for two summers, developing and presenting outreach programs about invasive insects that target native trees and are often carried by unsuspecting campers who bring non local firewood with them to their camp sites. Hannah's second summer with TNC involved monitoring properties and working in the LEAF Program which exposes inner city students to conservation work. This past summer Hannah worked at the Berkshire Botanical Gardens' Farm Camp for kids where for five weeks eighteen children grew their own food, interacted with farm animals, and learned how to spin and dye yarn with natural dyes.

Hannah attributes her interest in land conservation to early explorations in the outdoors with her father who is a volunteer at The Trustees of Reservations' Bartholomew's Cobble property. She recalls her excitement and wonder while exploring the rocks and caves and streams on the site. Later, after graduating from high school, Hannah spent a year in Argentina in a small rural province in the northeastern part of the country. The semitropical land there had been denuded of its trees leaving the area impoverished and barren. Hannah says the experience gave her a renewed interest in protecting land and working to raise people's awareness of its value and fragility. She returned home knowing that she wanted to focus on her own homeland, believing that each culture has to develop its own values around the land and its preservation.

During her year with HLT, Hannah is looking forward to getting to know the communities HLT serves and developing the next generation of residents interested in preserving the beauty of the land around them.

## GRAND DESIGNS

One of Hilltown Land Trust's original incorporators and co-founders, Eric Weber has served the organization in many capacities over the past 27 years. That level of commitment and concern for protecting the natural landscape of the Hilltowns was fed by Eric's childhood in a unique natural community and discovering a love for art and design in high school.

Eric grew up in Mountain Lakes, NJ, an early planned community. Built between 1911 and 1928, the town was designed around manmade lakes to maximize open space and provide ample recreational opportunities. When the Great Depression stopped the development, the town purchased the vacant parcels, increasing the public spaces available to residents. Over the years, as Eric watched the surrounding communities fill with shopping malls, corporate headquarters and apartment complexes, his appreciation for thoughtful design took hold. He says he is the only person he knows who can go back to his hometown and have it look virtually the same as it did 50 years ago.

Eric's experience with the New England landscape began when he spent eight summers at a camp near Hanover N.H. At the same time he began to discover a love of art, taking art classes all thorough high school and later attending Amherst College where he graduated with a degree in Fine Arts. After a graduate program at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, NY, Eric moved to Montague, MA where he took up woodworking.

In 1976, Eric enrolled in the Conway School of Landscape Design to study landscape architecture and planning. Upon graduating, he went to work as property manager for the Western Mass Girl Scout Council maintaining nine Girl Scout camps. Within a few years, he was back at the Conway School as an instructor while simultaneously working as a project designer for Conway Design Associates. Eric found himself drawn to the idea of impacting a larger canvas, working on town and regional scale projects. A project for the Town of Buckland won him awards from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects and the American Planning Association. Eric found great satisfaction when several of his recommendations to preserve the character of the Clesson Valley were adopted by the town.

In 1978, Eric moved to Williamsburg and set out to learn everything he could about his new hometown. Soon he was serving on Williamsburg's Planning Board, Open Space Committee, the Meekins Library Building Committee and Historical Society. Eric became an expert on the breaking of the Mill River dam in 1874 that destroyed parts of Williamsburg and Northampton and took 139 lives – the largest industrial disaster of the time.

Few would say that an accidental meeting in a ditch off an icy road was fortuitous, but for HLT it was. For that is how Eric met fellow Williamsburg resident Lincoln Fish. A friendship developed and soon the two were working with landowners in Chesterfield to save a beautiful sugarbush that was for sale. The Krug Sugarbush became the impetus for creating Hilltown Land Trust. Involving the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management in buying the property made HLT's name in the community and soon brought new projects into its fold.

Looking back over the years and many projects, Eric says his favorite was protecting the Jackson Swamp area in Chesterfield and Worthington: a complicated project involving



multiple land owners and done in conjunction with The Nature Conservancy. Learning how to balance the differing objectives of numerous landowners and learning the nitty-gritty of developing conservation restrictions from the staff at The Nature Conservancy was a very creative and satisfying process for him.

For the future, Eric looks forward to the completion of the HLT's accreditation process with the Land Trust Alliance as not only making HLT stronger but freeing up time to tackle the next group of conservation projects. Eric has long been a strong voice for training the next generation of land conservation volunteers, people who can take over from Eric and Lincoln in finding and promoting new projects along with HLT's Executive Director. He is working with HLT's board president on a training program to be rolled out in the fall of 2014 to teach the basics of crafting conservation restrictions to HLT board members.

It's clear that the love of art, design and exceptional places in which to reside have served Eric, HLT and the hilltowns well..

## Come Join Us on the Land; Snowshoe Shenigans and More

One of the wonderful things about living in the western Massachusetts hilltowns is enjoying the diverse beauty of all four seasons. Another joy is the many opportunities to get outside and enjoy our beautiful protected lands. This coming year, HLT will organize a series of events including monthly hikes on land protected by HLT, educational programs, and activities co-sponsored with other conservation groups. We are planning events for families, outings geared to hardy souls looking for a good workout as well as gentler activities. A monthly calendar will announce the events with more detailed information on our website [www.hilltown-land-trust.org](http://www.hilltown-land-trust.org).



*Recent hike October 20 on the Bradley property in Williamsburg attracted 25 people of many ages.*

HLT is particularly excited about the launch of our first ever snowshoe event to be held in February at The Trustees of Reservations Bullitt Reservation in Ashfield. If you have been looking for a venue to show off your snowshoeing prowess or would just like to enjoy a beautiful winter landscape from atop your snowshoes please join us. Details TBA.



*Landowners Alice Williams and Grace Kingsbury admire their new sign.*

*Over 70 people helped HLT celebrate the completion of our 29th conservation restriction at the Damon-Hunter Conservation Area, on Indian Hollow Road in Chesterfield. Well wishers included the landowners and several generations of their family, HLT members, neighbors and Chesterfield residents. HLT unveiled its new CR sign, a family member recounted 150 years of the family farming and residing on the land. Good food and beautiful autumn views were enjoyed by all.*