

Views *from* Mount Grace

Volume 16, No. 3 • Fall 2005

C O N S E R V I N G T H E L O C A L L A N D S C A P E™



PHOTO BY NINI MELVIN

Fiske Pond Conservation Area, Wendell



Serving:
Ashburnham
Athol
Barre
Bernardston
Erving
Gardner
Gill
Greenfield
Hardwick
Hubbardston
Leyden
Montague
New Salem
Northfield
Orange
Petersham
Phillipston
Royalston
Templeton
Warwick
Wendell
Westminster
Winchendon

Community Rallies to Protect Fiske Pond Citizens Organize *in* Wendell

BY PAM KIMBALL — SMITH

A partnership of individuals and organizations has successfully protected a much-loved recreational and ecological treasure. The 125-acre Fiske Pond Conservation Area has been created to protect a diverse mosaic of ecosystems in Wendell, Massachusetts. After five years and incredible effort and commitment by many individual residents of Wendell, the Town of Wendell, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, Valley Land Fund, Chickadees Retreat, Inc., Bear Mountain Preservation Association, state agencies and many private donors, the Town of Wendell now owns the 10-acre pond and surrounding forests and wetlands. A conservation restriction is held by the state. The primary purpose of the conservation restriction is to maintain the ecological and scenic integrity of the Fiske Pond Conservation Area while allowing public access in the form of low-impact passive recreation. This includes swimming, hiking, cross-country skiing, bird watching, and nature study. *(continued on page 3)*

Inside This Issue

Saving a Favorite Place • Conserved Land For Sale • Northfield Project Update
News From Regional Partnership • Mount Grace Welcomes New Staff
Special Thanks • Lichen Walk • Upcoming 2005 Events

October 1st
Is Our 19th
Annual Meeting



Dear Friends,

That the only constant is change – is a truism that can always be found operating at Mount Grace. Recently, two foundations have taken notice of Mount Grace’s land protection successes and collaborative accomplishments. These organizations have made clear that they intend to support our work in a more substantial way over the next few years provided, of course, that we demonstrate results. And, (*this is where you come in*), provided that we continue to build broad public support.

Protecting and stewarding land is the focus of Mount Grace, but our goals can only be realized because of the people involved. As essential as the land we protect are the landowners who love their land; outdoor enthusiasts that simply love nature; stewards that work the land; people who understand the significance of ecological health and agricultural viability; and believers in making a contribution, personally and professionally, to the common good.

The tangible results of the efforts of conservation-minded people and organizations are highlighted in a recent report, *Western Massachusetts: Assessing the Opportunity* (visit our website to view). Stepping up to meet the remaining conservation needs in our region in more effective ways will now be possible. Mount Grace will continue to do its work together with our supporters and collaborators. I welcome your thoughts on changes we can implement to do more conservation and people we can invite to expand our foundation of membership support. Thank you for your support.

Very truly,

Leigh Youngblood
Executive Director

Views *from* Mount Grace

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust protects significant natural, agricultural and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in North Central and Western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy and future generations.

We welcome your articles, photographs, comments and suggestions. For information about becoming a member or to request a change of address, please contact our office at:

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

1461 Old Keene Road
Athol, MA 01331
978.248.2043 (tel)
978.248.2053 (fax)
landtrust@mountgrace.org (email)

Visit our web site at www.mountgrace.org.

Mount Grace Staff

Leigh Youngblood
Executive Director (P/T)

Dan Laroche
Director of Land Protection

Brenda Bhatti
Land Protection Specialist

Pam Kimball-Smith
Development Director

Alain Peteroy
Stewardship Coordinator (P/T)

Amanda Nims
Program Assistant

Elliott Hunnewell
Membership Coordinator (P/T)

Mount Grace Board of Directors

Richard French, <i>President</i>	Gill
Mary Williamson, <i>Vice President</i>	Warwick
Mick Huppert, <i>Treasurer</i>	Petersham
Allen Young, <i>Clerk</i>	Royalston
Diane Beers	Orange
Ron Cloutier	New Salem
Sue Cloutier	New Salem
Barbara Corey	Petersham
Clifford Hatch	Gill
Bonnie House	Phillipston
Anne Marie Kittredge	Shutesbury
Micky McKinley	Montague
Dave Small	Athol
Robert Wetmore	Barre

Views from Mount Grace Editor
Susan LaScala

Views from Mount Grace Design and Layout
Michael Ruocco

© 2005 Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

The Fiske Pond Conservation Area helps complete a protected corridor of land between the Wendell State Forest and the Quabbin Reservoir, and builds upon a larger greenway from the Quabbin Reservoir north into New Hampshire.

The extraordinary range of ecosystems on the property includes a meadow, climax northern hardwood upland forests, cranberry bogs, blueberry heaths, a shrub swamp, a hemlock swamp, streams, and an unusual spruce bog. According

to a study by University of Massachusetts Biology Professor Paul Godfrey, the Fiske Pond area is typical of a coastal sand plain pond and contains species found on both the Atlantic Coastal Plain and the Midwest Prairies. Godfrey says there is an "incredible mixture of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, including bladderworts and sundews,

sedges, orchids, quillwort, yellow-eyed grass and aquatic shrubs."

We would like to thank the many contributors to the project including the following: the Massachusetts Department of Conservation Resources, Town of Wendell, Friends of Fiske Pond, Dar Williams, Snowden Environmental Trust, Living Springs Foundation, Fieldstone Foundation, William P. Wharton Trust, Massachusetts Audubon Society, many individual donors, and the residents of Wendell who volunteered countless hours to complete the project.



PHOTO BY NINI MELVIN

Fiske Pond is comprised of diverse ecosystems

HOW ONE TOWN SAVED A FAVORITE PLACE

In July 2004, Mount Grace approached the Wendell Open Space Committee with an exciting prospect: to protect the Fiske Pond property. The owners of the property, Chickadees Retreat, Inc., offered to sell the land to the Town for \$400,000 if the Town agreed to place it into permanent protection.

Leigh Youngblood, Executive Director of Mount Grace, informed the Wendell Open Space Committee about the Self-Help program, a municipal conservation land acquisition program through the MA Division of Conservation Services (DCS) that offers a matching grant of up to 70% of the cost of land acquisition for qualifying projects. Volunteer members of the Wendell Open Space Committee traveled to Boston with Youngblood to learn more about the program. The Wendell Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission worked together to apply for a DCS Self-Help grant in August 2004 with the help of Mount Grace, the Planning Board, Selectboard, other town boards, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and many letters of support.

After a series of meetings of the Open Space Committee and countless hours of effort on behalf of dedicated Town volunteers, the Town voted in September 2004 to expend \$400,000 to purchase the land. Wendell Town Meeting appropriated \$123,000 of town funds toward the purchase. Then, by an almost two-thirds margin, the citizens of Wendell voted by ballot in January 2005 to place the conservation restriction on the property. A short time later, the Town learned that it had received \$280,000 in matching funds from DCS. Wendell acquired the Fiske Pond property in April 2005 and granted a conservation restriction to the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Through the hard work of citizens, volunteer boards, state agencies, Mount Grace, and Chickadees Retreat, Inc., Fiske Pond is now protected. Private contributions established a stewardship fund to help with management costs. A grass-roots citizens group, Friends of Fiske, is working with the Town to help keep the land in pristine condition so the greater Wendell community may enjoy the land and its beauty for generations to come.

Conserved Land For Sale

What about growing Shiitakes instead *of* houses?

B Y B R E N D A B H A T T I

There are many economically viable options for properties besides creating subdivisions, and it is possible to forego development and still reap sustainable economic benefits from the land.

The Conservation Buyer Program is a program of Mount Grace to maintain an active list of potential buyers looking for conservation properties within our 23-town region. We seek to match landowners who want to sell or conserve their land with conservation buyers, those who want to own protected land. Conservation buyers purchase conservation land for multiple reasons, including farming, forestry, home-steading, passive woodland recreation, ecotourism, wildlife habitat, or simply for inner peace.

Some years ago, Michael Humphries purchased a 15-acre parcel in Warwick. A previous owner had partnered with Mount Grace to protect it from development with a Conservation Restriction (CR). Michael's intention was to build a cabin or tent platform, cut cordwood to fuel his wood needs (including his custom-design wood studio in Warwick), and someday harvest saw logs. He since has learned it is possible to grow and sell "specialty forestry products" (SFP's), including shiitake mushrooms*, low bush blueberries, other fruits, nuts, maple syrup and herbs.



The Michael Humphries story is one of a successful Conservation Buyer partnership: the property will remain protected for future generations, and can continue to produce income for future owners. Though Michael's intention was to hold onto the property, he is now seeking a buyer in order to fuel his kid's college fund (rather than his woodstoves). He is offering the 15-acre protected property for \$14,500. As Michael says, it includes "great access, a little bog, a nice rock

ridge, medium-sized growth of soft and hardwoods, with possibility of cordwood and potential for saw logs." And don't forget the shiitakes!

For more information on Mount Grace's Conservation Buyer program or the Humphries property, please contact Brenda Bhatti, Land Protection Specialist, by phone at (978)248-2043 or email at landtrust@mountgrace.org.

**For more information about growing shiitakes and other SFPs, check out:*

www.naturalresources.umd.edu/Pages/Shiitake.htm
and www.masswoodlands.coop.

Project Update: Brush Mountain, Northfield

Dan Laroche

Mount Grace was assigned a Chapter 61B right of first refusal from the Town of Northfield and pre-acquired a 46-acre property along the ridge of Brush Mountain on Gulf Road. A heavily traveled section of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail runs through this property and contains a scenic vista and rare black gum trees.

The property contains the cellar hole of the home of Calvin T. Swan, a respected African-American carpenter and sawmill owner who died in 1875. Mount



PHOTO BY PAM KIMBALL-SMITH

Grace is partnering with the Town and working with Northfield Open Space Committee member Joanne McGee to put together an application for a state Self-Help grant to pay for a portion of the land acquisition costs.

Innovations in Forestland Protection

A Report from *the* North Quabbin

B Y D A N L A R O C H E

The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership is an informal coalition of conservation groups and agencies whose mission is "to identify, protect, and enhance strategic ecological, cultural, and historic open space within the rural landscape of the North Quabbin Region."

On a beautiful May evening at the Harvard Forest Museum the Partnership gathered for a presentation and a captivating exchange of related initiatives on the topic of forest reserves. Forest reserves are designated forested areas where the ecology and natural processes are allowed to control the landscape with minimal human intervention.

Bob O'Connor, Director of Land and Forest Policy for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) and Andy Finton, Director of Conservation Science for the Massachusetts Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) spoke about EOEA's innovative proposal to dedicate 10% of state owned forestland as part of a forest reserve system in Massachusetts. This initiative was a result of the recommendations made by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) during the state's green certification process for 499,000 acres of forests under the control and direction of EOEA. TNC partnered with the state on this project and provided the scientific research that identified eight large forest block areas containing unique ecological characteristics, the backbone of the state forest reserves. Each forest reserve selected has the potential to reach a goal of 15,000 acres in size of both public and private protected lands in order for the reserve to withstand any catastrophic disturbances like wildfires, hurricanes or tornadoes. Under this proposal, actively managed forested lands would surround and buffer these designated forest reserves.

David Foster, Director of the Harvard Forest spoke on their latest publication *Wildlands and Woodlands, A Vision for the Forests of Massachusetts*. A copy of the report is available at <http://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/wandw>. This proposal calls for seizing the unique opportunity that Massachusetts has with its abundance of maturing forests by adding 2.5 million acres to the existing 1 million acres of permanently protected land. To put this proposal into perspective, Massachusetts has a total land area of approximately 5 million acres with approximately 1 million acres already developed and 1 million acres that are permanently protected. This vision expands on the state's forest reserve proposal and includes dedicating 250,000 acres of mostly public owned protected land as wildland reserves, which would be between 5,000 and 50,000 acres in size of "unmanaged" lands. These wildlands would be embedded within a network of 2.25 million acres of permanently protected woodlands, lands that would be managed in a sustainable manner under the guidance of locally controlled woodlands councils.

Recognizing that both proposals address the balance of managed and unmanaged forests, the general conclusion of the night was that forest reserves need to become a reality in Massachusetts and the EOEA proposal is a tremendous step in the right direction. The Partnership also discussed ways to assist the more ambitious wildlands and woodlands vision for Massachusetts.

Grants Received

F **Fieldstone Foundation**—\$5,000 for the Quabbin Corridor Forest Legacy Project.

M **Moccasin Brook Fund**—\$5,000 for General Operating Support of our land protection work.

Y **Youth for Community Improvement**—\$4,000 for Prospect Hill Project awarded through the Greater Worcester Community Foundation.

N **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – 2005 Wildlife Habitat**

Incentives Program (WHIP)—\$3,017 for field-mowing, removal of invasive species, and small tree-clearing within the Skyfields Arboretum every three years until 2013. A portion of this grant has a 25% match requirement.

Special Thanks *from* Mount Grace *to*:

Cliff Hatch for the donation of part of the Upinngil strawberry-picking proceeds to support our Land Protection Program.

Christine Long for the creation of a shade garden at the Mount Grace Headquarters.

Celt Grant for the donation of a filing cabinet.

Dick French and **Celt Grant** for volunteering many hours of carpentry skills for Skyfields Headquarters repairs.

Antioch student **Susannah Herron** for volunteering to monitor two conservation restrictions in Winchendon as part of a school project.

Paul Doscher, George Dresser and **Rick Vande Poll** for their presentations at Mount Grace events.

Board member **Allen Young** and member **Clare Green** for leading a fun and informative hike to Devil's Washbowl at Mount Grace's Arthur Iverson Conservation Area.



Board President Dick French and dedicated member Celt Grant before and after renovations



PHOTOS BY AMANDA NIMS

Mount Grace Welcomes *new* Staff

B **Brenda Bhatti** has joined Mount Grace as Land Protection Specialist. She will be working with Dan Laroche, our Director of Land Protection. Brenda comes to Mount Grace with over twelve years of experience dealing with land use and ecological issues throughout New England. For the past eight years she has been a professional consultant involved with large land use projects, primarily in Massachusetts. Brenda obtained her B.S. in Zoology/Wildlife Biology from Ohio University, and her M.S. in Environmental Biology from Antioch New England Graduate School in Keene, NH.

Brenda's experience includes conducting natural resource inventories, performing due diligence investigations, preparing forest and habitat management plans, strategizing on legislation that affects land protection efforts, and assisting with master planning efforts. She has served on her local conservation commission for the last four years and currently acts as co-chair. Brenda also serves as the Town of Jaffrey (NH) representative to the Monadnock Conservancy. She is a member of the MA Association of Wetland Scientists, The Wildlife Society, and the Piscataquog Watershed Association. She is also on the Board of Directors for the NH Association of Natural Resource Scientists. Brenda is a certified tree steward and coverts cooperator.



Lichen Or Not, Here We Come!

B Y A L A I N P E T E R O Y

With a steady mist falling from the young, green leaves we gathered on April 23rd for Dr. Rick Van de Poll's lichen foray into Mount Grace's Arthur Iversen Conservation Area (AICA) in Warwick. Pre-black fly season, the damp weather felt just right for learning our lichens.

After a brief classroom introduction from the back of Rick's truck, complete with an array of lichen guides, fresh picked samples and hand lenses to share, over two dozen people followed Rick into the woods. We walked the trail on the west side of the conservation area down to the Hodge Brook wetland and up into the deeper woods towards Devil's Washbowl. Botanizing is slow work, whether one is looking for lilies, lycopodia, or lichens.

Simply being in the woods is a joy, and sharing a rare species of lichen with the group is even sweeter. Common Lungwort, *Lobaria pulmonaria* grows on some of the very old oak trees at AICA. Rick explained that this species is known as an indicator of clean air and it generally grows on oaks over 150 years old. Rick estimated that the oaks at this site were at least 150 to 180 years old. Pictures were taken and then we left the *Lobaria* to grow in peace.

Rick showed us another interesting species, commonly known as Rinker Polypore, *Inonotus obliquus*, a species of mushroom. This species generally infests birch trees and grows into a large mass -- the interior, brown portion of which is boiled to make Chaga tea. Chaga tea is used to stimulate the immune system. No Chaga tea, but our group did enjoy some juice and cookies as the mist turned to rain.



Rick Van de Poll identifying a lichen.

PHOTO BY PAM KIMBALL-SMITH

Upcoming Fall 2005 Events

**North Quabbin
Garlic and Arts Festival**
Chestnut Hill Road
Orange, MA
September 17th and 18th
10am to 5pm

Come enjoy the agricultural, artistic and cultural bounty of the region! There will be fun for all ages with hayrides, music, crafts, food, art and cooking demonstrations and more. Stop by Mount Grace's booth! For more information, please visit www.garlicandarts.org

**Mount Grace's
19th Annual Meeting at
The Old Nims Farm**
Greenfield, MA
Saturday, October 1st
10am to 1pm

Mount Grace celebrates 19 years of protecting land in the region. Join us for our Annual Meeting and brunch from 10am to 1pm. Brunch will feature locally grown foods prepared by Chef Chris Pullin. Tickets are \$25 per person and can be purchased or reserved by September 26th. Please call to register.

**First-timers Hike up Mount Tully
with Allen Young**
Orange, MA
Sunday, November 6th
10:30am to 1:30pm

For those who have not yet hiked Mount Tully, and those who have, come join Allen Young on an adventurous exploration of this beautiful mountain, and take in views of Mount Monadnock and Mount Wachusett. Please call Mount Grace to register. Bring water, sturdy, comfortable shoes, and a picnic lunch. Space is limited to 25.



Non-profit Organization

U.S. Postage

PAID

Turners Falls, MA

Permit No. 183

1461 OLD KEENE ROAD • ATHOL, MA 01331-9689 • 978.248.2043 • WWW.MOUNTGRACE.ORG

**This issue of
Views from Mount Grace
is sponsored by:**

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Main Street Millwork, Inc.

Howard Mathison
47 Silvio O. Conte Drive
P.O. Box 253
Greenfield, MA 01302
Phone- (413) 773-5064
Fax- (413) 773-5065

**Michael Humphries
Woodworking, Inc.**

77 White Rd.
Warwick, MA 01378
Phone- (978) 544-2694

www.michaelhumphries.com

Save The Date!

Annual Meeting October 1st in Greenfield

M O U N T G R A C E L A N D T R U S T M E M B E R S H I P F O R M

Think Globally, Donate Locally!™

Please join Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. Thanks to our members, Mount Grace is one of the most active land conservation organizations in Massachusetts, saving 19,000 acres in the local region.

Name _____

Address _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (H) _____ (W) _____ (email) _____

MEMBERSHIP FORM—Please check all which apply:

_____ I would like to renew / start my membership with a tax-deductible contribution of:

_____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ \$1,000 _____ other

_____ I would like to pledge \$_____ per quarter to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

_____ I would like more information on how to protect a piece of land that is special to me.

_____ I would like to include Mount Grace in my will or as part of my estate. Please send me more information.

_____ I am interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities at Mount Grace.

_____ Please do not use my name in your lists of contributors.

_____ Please do not share my name with other organizations.

Please forward to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, 1461 Old Keene Road, Athol, MA 01331-9689. Thank you!

FALL 2005