

Views *from* Mount Grace



FALL 2024
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The view from the top of Hawes Hill, overlooking newly protected land. Photo credit: Dave Rothstein, Mass Audubon

Barre Neighbors Celebrate Completion of Hawes Hill Project

BY SARAH WELLS

As the final documents for the Hawes Hill Conservation Corridor Project were being recorded at the Registry of Deeds, Pete Baker at Insight Meditation Society (IMS) had an idea. He wanted to gather the folks closest to the initiative to celebrate the neighborhood's decision to conserve its woods, fields, and streams. A few weeks later, an intrepid group climbed a four-foot-tall set of wobbly plastic stairs to load the "Cool Bus" at the Stone Cow Brewery. With farmer Phil Stevens of Carter & Stevens Farm as driver and tour guide, we bumped and rolled along dirt roads to check out a few of the eight properties that together, we had recently protected.

We passed the reclaimed farm fields on Washburn Road, where the Carter & Stevens Farm is now growing vegetables that are processed and eaten by patrons of the Brewery. We walked along the shore of Gaston Pond with new friends at the Insight Meditation Society. We spooked a deer munching grass on Jim and Ben Engel's land on Hawes Hill Road. Back at the Brewery, we toasted Kate Buttolph, an original architect of the project at Mass Audubon who passed away in September, and we shared our gratitude for Margo Petracone and the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies (BCBS), both of whom also chose to protect land in this project.

While we wrap up the final fundraising push for this roughly \$3M initiative, it's hard to overstate the theme of connectivity. More than 800 acres in this one neighborhood are now conserved, and they sit within a much larger corridor of conserved land, extending from the Quabbin Reservoir to the Rutland Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, to the Prince River Wildlife Management Area. When we stitch together patches of protected land, it's good for wildlife and people. This type of landscape-scale work relies on community

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Dear Friends,



As I write to you, siding sourced from local pine is being attached to the walls of our new conservation barn, the addition being completed at Skyfields. The new space will hold additional offices as well as meeting and even event space! We look forward to showing off the variety of locally sourced wood used in its construction, as well as the building's exciting, energy-efficient features with a big party in the coming months!

We have a lot to celebrate these days. We have just completed two significant projects, one of our smallest and one of our largest! Working in partnership with community and conservation organizations in Barre, MA, we protected almost 1,000 acres of working and natural landscapes. In Royalston, we protected less than a half-acre by partnering with the town to take the first steps to ensure that the site of the beloved Pete & Henry's restaurant be transformed into a town park. Both these amazing projects exemplify that conservation is at its strongest when it's driven by community and friends finding common purpose.

The urgency of the conservation work we do is escalating in the face of increasing development pressures. Our little corner of North Central Massachusetts and the Connecticut River Valley

is identified as containing over 100,000 priority acres for conservation. To meet our statewide conservation and biodiversity goals, we must conserve as much of this land as we can. Stay tuned, because Mount Grace is gearing up to meet this moment. Over the coming months, we'll be growing our staff, and I hope you all get the chance to meet our new team members in stewardship, conservation and outreach! It would not be possible for us to step to the plate and grow without your support. You make protecting the fields and forests of our neighborhoods possible!

Thank you,

Emma

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.

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

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A Revitalizing Conservation Project in South Royalston

BY AARON NELSON

What was once home to a popular eatery called Pete & Henry's Restaurant is now a vacant lot.

In 2018, the restaurant – located in the heart of South Royalston – tragically burned down in a fire. Two concrete pads atop a now vacant lot are all that remain of this beloved community gathering spot. But that's about to change.

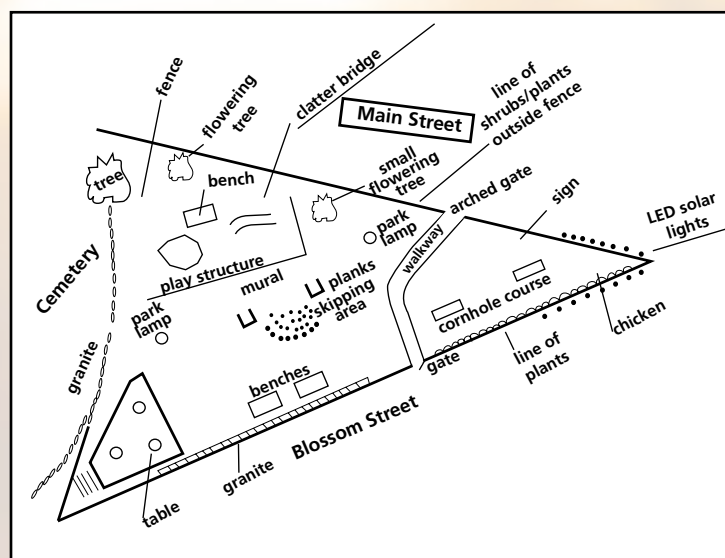
Thanks to the tireless work of the Royalston South Village Revitalization Committee (RSVR) and the Town of Royalston,

the site is now being transformed into a beautiful pocket park, one that is permanently protected by a Mount Grace Conservation Restriction (CR).

Soon after the fire, the town rallied to purchase the now vacant land to create a new park using Community Preservation Act funding, which requires a CR to be placed on the land. After the purchase, the Town reached out to Mount Grace, and we began working together to develop the CR.

“We hope to build a community park for the families and children of the area, which showcases the natural beauty of the region and particularly the Millers River,” says Lynne Kellner of the Park Committee – a subcommittee of the RSVR. With that vision in mind, Mount Grace staff has worked closely with the Town and the South Royalston Park Subcommittee on the language for the CR, ensuring that it reflects the site and includes the flexibility needed to build the park and allow it to evolve over time. As the CR was finalized, the Subcommittee worked to secure funding for the park, receiving a \$20,000 grant from the Bjurling Charitable Foundation.

With the CR complete and funding in place, construction is set to get underway this year. The park will include a “clatter bridge” children's play structure, flowering trees, a pavilion with benches and tables, and panels with hand-painted scenes of Royalston. Thanks to the Town and many persistent volunteers, this site will continue to be a community gathering place for generations to come.



A rendition of the park and its features

Hawes Hill Project > continued from page 1

connectivity, too. Without local deed holders, Select Boards, state agencies, land trusts and funders choosing to work together, these projects don't happen. The relationships we grow with each other directly impact our ability to conserve land at the most meaningful scale and pace.

We are grateful for Mass Audubon, the Division of Water Supply Protection of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the

Town of Barre, East Quabbin Land Trust, the Stevens, DuBois, Petracone, and Engel families, IMS, BCBS, the MA Landscape Partnership Program, the Bafflin Foundation, the Fields Pond Foundation, the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, and the many individual donors and supporters who powered this initiative.

Monomonac Hill Opens to the Public

BY DAVID KOTKER

Winchendon's Monomonac Hill Conservation Area had its grand opening this August. The 194-acre property is owned by North County Land Trust (NCLT) with a conservation restriction to be held by Mount Grace.

When several hundred acres on and around the hill came up for sale in 2021, NCLT was able to locate a private conservation buyer to purchase the land up front and resell it to conservation groups.

Once that first purchase was complete, the next step was to raise the funds, and find the partners to purchase the various parcels for public access. Mount Grace supported NCLT, first with a loan from the Leigh Youngblood Conservation Opportunity Fund, and then by joining a fundraising campaign to purchase the land on the hill.

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game bought an additional 54 acres across the Millers River from the hill, and added them to the Winchendon Springs Wildlife Management Area.

"For us, these two new conservation areas are the missing pieces in a landscape-sized puzzle," said Mount Grace Executive Director Emma Ellsworth. "Taken together, they are a bridge connecting the Marchmont conservation restriction and Murdock Farm to the thousand plus acres of land in this year's Winchendon Forest project. We've helped create a corridor of protected land that runs to New Hampshire."



Ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Monomonac trail grand opening

This project was supported by the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, the Bafflin Foundation, the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts, Fields Pond Foundation, and the Adelard and Valeda Roy Foundation, the Winchendon Springs Lake Association, the Monomonac Lake Property Owners Association, and many individuals in the community.

You can visit the new trails at 641 Lakeview Drive, Winchendon.

The State of our Trails

BY JESSIE FAGAN

Nothing is better than a visit to one of Mount Grace's conservation areas. Whether you are birding at Eagle Reserve or hiking through Arthur Iversen, there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. One of our goals at Mount Grace is to ensure visitors have a positive and safe experience while visiting our properties.

Last fall, our TerraCorps member, Jessie, began to inventory trail-related infrastructure across all of Mount Grace's conservation areas. The goal of the project was to assess the condition of our trails and prioritize areas for improvements. Over the course of several weeks, Jessie hiked each of our maintained trails and mapped where infrastructure was located. This included structures such as bridges, kiosks, and

Catalyzing Land Justice within the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership

BY JENN ALBERTINE &
JULIA FITZPATRICK

The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), a regional conservation partnership that Mount Grace fiscally sponsors, applied for and received a Catalyst Fund grant for a one-year project with the aim of building the capacity of our regional land trust partners to support and work with Tribal partners. The Catalyst Fund grant, which is offered through the Network for Landscape Conservation, aims to accelerate the pace of landscape conservation across the United States by making investments in Landscape Conservation Partnerships.

This grant was led in collaboration with the Nipmuc-led non-profit, No Loose Braids. All the NQRLP member land trusts participated: East Quabbin Land Trust, Franklin Land Trust, Kestrel Land Trust, North County Land Trust, and Opacum Land Trust. Hilltown Land Trust, which is based further west than our core geography, also participated as a continuation of their ongoing relationship with Mount Grace and No Loose Braids.

We held monthly meetings for the first half of the year to prepare peer land trusts to work in a respectful and reciprocal way with individual Tribal members, Tribes, and Tribal or Indigenous non-profits. This included woods walks intended to help build relationships between the land trust participants and No Loose Braids.

We set the expectations in the grant that at least four land trusts would move on to initiate a project with No Loose Braids. We are happy to report that all six land trust partners have



The 2023-2024 NQRLP Catalyst Fund Cohort, coordinated by Mount Grace and the Nipmuc-led non-profit No Loose Braids, with staff and board members participating from East Quabbin Land Trust, Franklin Land Trust, Hilltown Land Trust, Kestrel Land Trust, North County Land Trust, and Opacum Land Trust.

initiated collaborations that include staff and board education, cultural inventories and co-management plans, and broader organizational planning to implement lessons learned.

All the grant collaborators want to continue to work together beyond the grant period. We will be sharing our experiences with the full NQRLP this fall, and we hope this catalyzes future collaboration and change within the Massachusetts conservation community to be more inclusive of Indigenous-led land stewardship.

interpretive signs. Along with logging their locations, Jessie also catalogued their condition and any repairs that needed to be made.

The results of Jessie's inventory have greatly assisted Mount Grace in prioritizing areas for repairs. Overall, most of Mount Grace's infrastructure is in good shape with 56% of structures being rated as good or excellent. One of the most surprising

finds was a bridge that has been completely overtaken by beavers at Arthur Iversen. With the survey now completed, we have a better picture of where to conduct stewardship workdays. We plan to use this information to enhance visitor experiences on our trails.

Margaret Power Biggs Society

Member Profile: Don Kalischer

BY DAVID KOTKER

What do Arthur Iversen Conservation Area, Sentinel Elm Farm, and Erving Town Forest have in common?

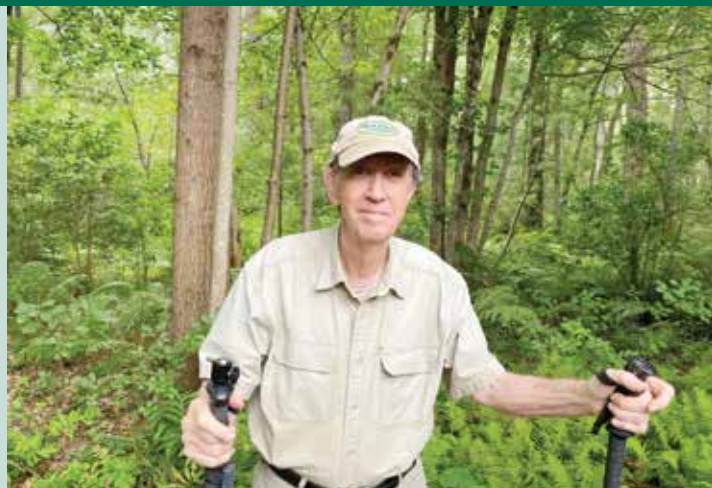
If you guessed Mount Grace protected them, you're not wrong, but did you know they were also all once on the 5th Massachusetts Turnpike?

Don Kalischer knew that one, because it was through researching turnpike history that he got to know Mount Grace.

After retiring from running Channel 38's mobile broadcasting unit covering outdoor sporting events, Don started hiking more. "I was walking along the old M&M Trail in Warwick one day," he recalls, "and my guidebook said: 'you are now on the old Massachusetts Fifth Turnpike,' which I'd never heard of, so I began to research it." Begun in 1799, the turnpike ran from the Jonas Kendall Tavern in Leominster to Greenfield with a northern spur connecting Athol to Northfield.

Don worked with local historical societies and the Massachusetts Archives to assemble the surveyors' references used to build the road, which he then transposed onto modern maps and followed by car and on foot. The project introduced him to many of the locals along the route, including Mount Grace.

"I really enjoyed walking the route," he says. "I remember the first time I crossed Hodge Brook in Iversen the road just disappeared, so I bushwacked until I found someone local. He turned out to



be the right guy. He took me to a 'trail' heading back towards the wetlands. You could see from how it was engineered and crowned at the center that this trail was the missing section of the 5th."

Asked why he supports Mount Grace, Don answers: "I guess you could call it selfish. I love walking, especially on old roads or trails. What Mount Grace does is so important to making sure those walks can still be enjoyed by all."

If you would like information about joining the Margaret Power Biggs Society, please contact David Kotker at 978-541-1767 or kotker@mountgrace.org.

See some of Don's work at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifth_Massachusetts_Turnpike

Fall 2024 Upcoming Events - Join Us!

Full Moon Hike to Richardson Overlook with Adventure East

Stratton Mountain, Northfield
Tuesday, September 17th,
5:30pm – 9:30pm

Pasture Management Workshop

5 Doe Valley Road, Petersham, MA
Saturday, September 21st,
1pm-3pm

Annual Meeting

Stone Cow Brewery
Sunday, October 20

Rich and Healthy: No-Till For Successful Farms

Seeds of Solidarity Farm and Education Center,
Orange MA
Sunday, October 27th,
10am – 5pm

Visit mountgrace.org/events to learn more about these and other events.

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East Quabbin Land Trust
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Barre Center for Buddhist Studies

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Grants Received

The Bafflin Foundation.....	\$50,000
Fields Pond Foundation	\$15,000
Land Trust Alliance & Open Space	
Institute Land & Climate Grant	\$15,000
Community Foundation of	
North Central Massachusetts.....	\$10,000
American Farmland Trust Soil	
Health Stewards Program.....	\$10,000

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