NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

In Touch with The Last Green Valley

THE last green valley™

FALL/WINTER 2017 MEMBER MAGAZINE

THE WOODLANDS CONSERVATION ISSUE


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In Touch

Fall/ /Winter 2017

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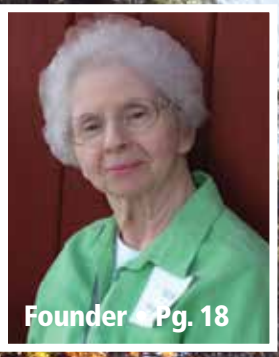
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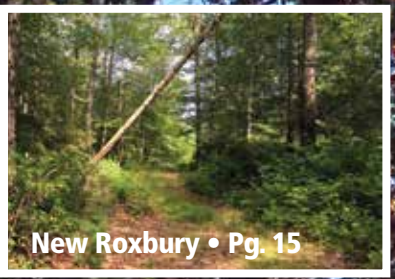
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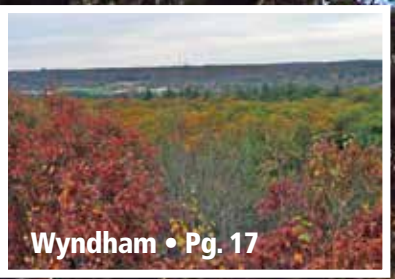
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Message from the Chairman

Green by day and dark by night, The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor is uniquely rural in the coastal sprawl between Boston and Washington, D.C.

Our forests and fields produce food for our tables, wood products for our homes and bring thousands of visitors each year to hunt, fish, hike, or simply enjoy our rural landscape. Our forests provide clean water and clean air at a fraction of the cost that would be necessary for treatment plants, and large contiguous forest blocks provide safe haven for wildlife that is increasingly under pressure.

Yet, for all these benefits, will The Last Green Valley still be green in 20 years? Can we develop what needs to be developed, while also conserving what needs to be conserved? Will private landowners, who own the vast majority of woodlands in southern New England, steward their properties wisely? A recently-updated vision for New England, "Wildlands and Woodlands, Farmlands and Communities," attempts to answer those questions, and is well-worth reading as a guidepost for The Last Green Valley. You can find it here www.wildlandsandwoodlands.org/vision/vision-new-england, and I encourage you to take a look.

One of the key take-aways is that New England has a strong, local land trust tradition and our partner land trusts profiled in this magazine provide exceptional examples. Yet Wildlands and Woodlands acknowledges that all too often we work alone, instead of finding strength in numbers. Our job is to reach across boundaries, seek out non-traditional partners, encourage collaboration, and build enduring regional conservation partnerships to ensure The Last Green Valley remains green by day and dark by night.

William Jobbagy, Chairman
Board of Directors

LEADING for Woodlands

If land conservation has a modern-day epicenter, partners working in The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor could make a case for claiming the title.

Consider that The Last Green Valley is the center of a 1.49 million-acre forest that is the last unfragmented, green connection between southern and northern New England. Then consider that the forest, known as the Southern New England Heritage Forest, is surrounded by major urban areas.

"We're at a critical time," said Ed Hood, coordinator of the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership and director of the Opacum Land Trust. "If you look at the urban areas from Boston to Providence to Springfield and Hartford you can see turnpikes all transecting the map and the sprawl from these urban areas spreading further and further into the rural areas. If this kind of development picks up, it really fragments our forest blocks."

Instead of standing by and hoping fragmentation of the Southern New England Heritage Forest does not occur, TLGV has partnered with organizations from Massachusetts and Rhode Island dedicated to conserving as much of the forest as possible. The effort is a critical piece in a larger conservation effort throughout New England and an ambitious effort to bring regional conservation partnerships to a new level.

Bill Labich, senior conservationist for the Highstead Foundation in Redding Connecticut, said he witnessed the birth of the Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership and believes it's an exciting evolution in conservation efforts. In many ways, he is responsible for its existence. Labich, whose background includes forestry and planning, has taken the concept of regional conservation partnerships and run with it, helping them form and succeed. RCPs, as they are known, bring together land trust and conservation organizations, many of which act locally, into partnerships that plan together and feed off of one another's successes, building momentum for larger and larger efforts. Often, those collaborative efforts put the RCP's in a better position to win state and federal funding.

Kevin Case, the Northeast director for The Land Trust Alliance, a national organization dedicated to helping conservation organizations do what they do best, said Labich has been the RCP's greatest champion, and Case is working with him to bring the concept further south to the Chesapeake area of Maryland.

MassConn, Labich said, is the poster child for how an RCP can start from scratch with little staff hours and still build momentum. Hood said MassConn is now leveraging its coalition of more than 25 partners to get much needed funding for its organizations. It recently received a $100,000 grant from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust Donated Land and Easement Program to help land trusts with the expenses associated with conservation efforts.

"With an RCP, land trusts can share each other's experience and learn from one another," Hood said. "A lot of our organizations are all volunteer and they don't have time to apply for grants. But working together we leverage our abilities."

THE WAY

Conservation

Labich said he believes it was a meeting of the RCP's where TLGV's executive director, Lois Bruinooge, saw the potential of a Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership. That partnership is critical to a much larger mission of fulfilling a vision to conserve 70 percent of New England's Forest in 50 years, Labich said. Known as Wildlands and Woodlands, the vision began in 2010 with a report from the Harvard Forest and has evolved into a partnership between Harvard Forest and Highstead to keep the vision alive, updated and building momentum. Labich said fulfilling the vision is not just a nice idea, it's critical for the future.

"If you look globally, this is important," Labich said. "New England is one of the most forested places in the country and it is one of the most populated places in the country. These forests are really important for the country and the world. If we care about clean air and clean water, it's really important that we succeed."

Forests, Labich said, are the planet's filters. In the simplest terms, forests catch rainwater and filter and clean it before it becomes drinking water for rural and urban areas, they provide habitat for creatures large and small to help keep the ecosystem balanced, and they pull carbon out of the air and put oxygen back.

The federal government believes the project is important, too, and has granted the Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership with $6.1 million to fund protection efforts over the next five years. Bruinooge said much of the funding will go directly to landowners for bird habitat assessments and forest management plans, good forest management practices, and permanent woodland protection using conservation easements.

Bruinooge said between 70 and 80 percent of the forestland in The Last Green Valley is privately owned, meaning there are no guarantees The Last Green Valley will remain green. Additional data puts even more urgency to the issue. According to the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative, which is a collaboration between the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Center for Nonprofit Strategies, there are 11,000 woodland owners with 10 acres or more in Connecticut, where most of The Last Green Valley lies. The average landowner age is 64.9 years old, and 19 percent plan to sell their land in the next five years. While almost 80 percent of them want to keep their land intact, those same landowners are also concerned about their property taxes. And only 19 percent of them seek any advice regarding their land.

Steve Broderick, a retired forester with the University of Connecticut Extension Center and a founder of the Eastern Connecticut Forest Landowners Association, said the stresses on landowners and land conservation have actually grown since the start of his career in the 1970s, when the oil crisis was driving people into the forest with chainsaws to get wood to fuel their new wood stoves.

"There are actually less resources today then there were then," Broderick said. In the 1970s Connecticut had a service forester in each of the state's eight counties. Today there are two,

and Broderick said either could retire at any moment. "Given the pressures on the state budget, I doubt either would be replaced," Broderick said. "They were there to educate and advise landowners, and now that doesn't really exist."

There is more than anecdotal evidence for the lack of government support for woodlands protection. Highstead and Harvard Forest released a report called "Public Conservation Funding in New England," which examined spending trends from 2004 to 2014. Spending in both Connecticut and Massachusetts fluctuates wildly from year to year, but the overall conservation funding trend is down in both states as it is throughout New England. In Connecticut, state funding averaged $2.81 per resident, per year, while federal funding was 84 cents per resident, per year. Massachusetts averaged $4.55 of state funding per resident, per year and $1.15 of federal funding per resident, per year.

The pressures of reduced funding and evolving attitudes have forced land trust organizations to evolve, Case said. RCPs are one step in the evolution, but another step is changing the message, as well, Case said. Land trust organizations are learning to communicate the need for conservation by helping people see how the effort directly impacts their quality of life. Open space is not just about keeping the forests completely intact, it's about making them usable, Case said.

Chris Pryor, director of forest stewardship for the New England Forestry Foundation, said one of its major efforts is to show the importance of working forests. In 2016, NEFF won a $149,875 grant to analyze the potential for manufacturing engineered wood products in New England and matched that grant with more than $94,000 of its own funding. The analysis revealed there is market potential within New England to establish at least one mill to manufacture cross-laminated timber construction materials, a type of engineered wood product that can be used in large scale construction.

"We feel well-managed lands are going to essentially be a carbon sink, pulling carbon out of the air," Pryor said. "Putting high-quality long-lived wood products out on the market not only helps preserve those lands, it replaces other building materials with much larger carbon footprints, such as concrete and steel."

Labich said the initial Wildlands and Woodlands report showed that after 200 years of forest growth, New England is once again losing its forests to development. The scope of the vision requires a variety of approaches and a multitude of participants if it's going to come to fruition.

"It's such an audacious vision there's room for everyone in it," Labich said.

Case said he believes ambitious plans such as Wildlands and Woodlands and the Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership's new $6.1 million grant have occurred because New England has been at conservation the longest. The concept started here and many land trusts have been around at least 30 years, with more than a few celebrating 50-plus years of conservation. For example, NEFF has been conserving lands throughout New England for more than 70 years. The organizations are well-developed and some have professional staffing, Case said. Many have worked or are working with the Land Trust Alliance to achieve or maintain accreditation, which offers donors an assurance of high standards of stewardship and organizational planning.

"New England is very unique," Case said. "You have some of the largest and oldest land conservation organizations in the country, but you also have many, many small local land trusts. Only California has more land trusts than Massachusetts and Connecticut. They are No. 2 and 3. These are grass roots organizations that understand their communities and the needs of the community."

In truth, The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor not only sits at the epicenter of modern land conservation efforts, it — and all of New England — have always been at the epicenter of land conservation in the United States.

Sidney Van Zandt, a founder of the Groton Open Space Association and its current Vice President, began her conservation fight in 1967 with an effort to save Haley Farm, which is now a Connecticut State Park. The battle, which also became an effort to protect Bluff Point, was featured in a July 1970 "Life Magazine" feature article.

"Back then you had people saying, 'we've got so much green why are you worrying about it?'" Van Zandt said. "And suddenly that green hillside is going to turn into something they may not want. You have to be willing to fight for it and to educate people."

Conservation had to start locally, Van Zandt said. "No one knew the words conservation or ecology then," Van Zandt said. "You just start by getting out and going to meetings and meeting with people and meeting with more people, and finally you get to the point where you have a group of people who believe in what you're doing. That's how it all started."

Land Trust partners in The Last Green Valley that are featured in this issue:

Avalonia Land Conservancy

Dudley Conservation Land Trust

Eastern CT Forest Landowners Association/Wolf Den Land Trust

Groton Open Space Association

Joshua's Trust

New England Forestry Foundation

The New Roxbury Land Trust

Opacum Land Trust

Wyndham Land Trust

BY THE NUMBERS

15
The percentage of land protected around the world.

19
The percentage of woodland owners in the Southern New England Heritage Forest who plan to sell their land within the next five years.

43
The number of Regional Conservation Partnerships in New England.

65
The average age of woodland owners in the Southern New England Heritage Forest.

76
The percentage of forest cover in the Southern New England Heritage Forest.

89.1
The percentage of undeveloped land in Scotland, CT, the town in the heritage corridor with the highest percentage of open space. Webster has the lowest at 45.8 percent.

2023
The year Connecticut has proposed to meet its goal of conserving 21 percent of its total acreage. Wildlands and Woodlands anticipates the state will not meet its goal.

2060
The year by which the Wildlands and Woodlands vision for land conservation calls for conserving 70 percent of New England's Forests.

18,000
The number of landowners in Connecticut with 10 or more acres.

24,000
The number of acres per year in New England lost to development since 1985, according to Wildlands and Woodlands.

707,000
The total number of acres in The Last Green Valley.

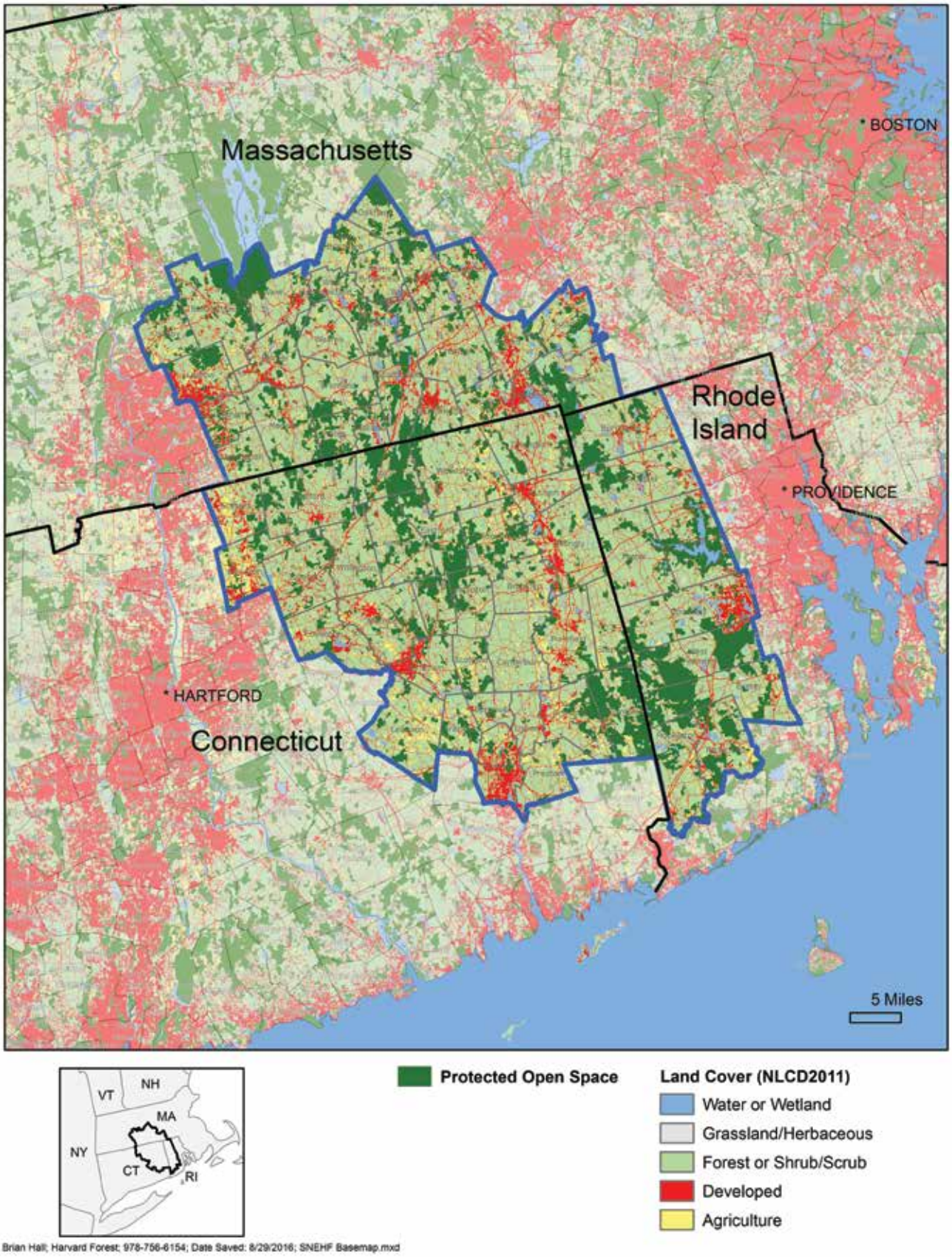
542,940
The total acres of undeveloped land in The Last Green Valley. That accounts for 76.8 percent.

20.8
MILLION
The dollars Massachusetts spent in 2014 on state level conservation.

143
MILLION
The total federal and state dollars Connecticut spent on conservation from 2004 to 2014.

411
MILLION
The total federal and state dollars Massachusetts spent on conservation from 2004 to 2014

Sources: Wildlands and Woodlands, The Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership, TLGV, TELE



The Southern New England Heritage Forest is the focus of The Last Green Valley's newest and largest project – a $12.2 million effort to ensure an unfragmented, green connection between southern and northern New England. The region is a critical greenbelt for many birds and other species of wildlife.

CONSERVING OUR WOODLAND HOME

The Southern New England Heritage Forest

TLGV has successfully partnered with 19 organizations to bring $6.1 million in new federal dollars to the region for healthy woods and forest land conservation. TLGV, MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership/Opacum Land Trust, and Northern Rhode Island Conservation District will act as the lead partners in a five-year, tri-state effort to protect the Southern New England Heritage Forest. "We're very excited about this partnership and the potential it has for land conservation," said Lois Bruinooge, executive director of TLGV.

The funding was awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service after a very competitive process, and underscores the importance of our southern New England forests to not only the region, but the nation.

The Southern New England Heritage Forest is a unique1.49 million-acre unfragmented forest corridor stretching along the Connecticut and Rhode Island border north to the Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts. Bounded on the east and west by more heavily urbanized areas with more than one million nearby residents, the forest has 76 percent forest cover and offers one of the last viable wildlife corridors from southern to northern New England. The heritage forest is the larger green oasis cradling The Last Green Valley as the last undeveloped region in the coastal sprawl from Boston to Washington, D.C.

Many forest blocks in the region are greater than 1,000 acres, with some greater than 3,000 acres clustered along the borders of the three states. The heritage forest is also the southern end of a much larger forested corridor that stretches from close to the Atlantic coast to the Canadian border. The heritage forest was recognized as one of only four priority landscapes by the New England Governors' Conference Commission on Land Conservation in 2010.

Also joining the effort , and providing $6.1 million in matching contributions to the project, are: Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Providence Water, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Hull Forest Products, Thames River Basin Partnership, New England Forestry Foundation, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, Norcross Wildlife Foundation, Rhode Island Division of Forest Management, Rhode Island Woodland Partnership, Harvard Forest, Yale Sustaining Family Forests Institute, Audubon Connecticut, Mass Audubon, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

healthy woods
$12.2 million
forest land
conservation

Growing Bigger and Better with Age

AVALONIA LAND CONSERVANCY

After 50 years, Avalonia Land Conservancy has gotten its second wind. With new leadership and accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance, the organization has about 2,000 acres of land it's working on protecting to add to the 3,500 acres already conserved.

"Right now we're not afraid of thinking big," said Sue Sutherland, a member of the board of directors and the leader of Avalonia's acquisitions team.

Over its 50-year existence, Avalonia has, in fact, become big. It is the largest land trust in southeastern Connecticut with about 90 properties from Stonington north to Griswold. While much of the land already protected by the organization is just south of The Last Green Valley, Sutherland said there are properties the organization is working to acquire that are in the heritage corridor.

One recent acquisition is a 409-acre tract stretching from Griswold into Preston and North Stonington that the Nature Conservancy attempted to protect 10 years ago. The property abuts 54 acres Avalonia already owns. There is also about 200 acres in Preston's Broad Brook region that Avalonia has set its sights on. Another property that is now under agreement is 68 acres along Patchaug Pond where Avalonia already owns an island.

Sutherland said these properties have somewhat fallen in the organization's lap. Landowners have come to Avalonia seeking help to conserve the land. However, the properties have ranked high once Avalonia evaluated them.

Sutherland said the organization has used a matrix for the last 10 years and gives each parcel it considers acquiring a score in five categories. The first three categories — land resources, water resources and habitat — carry equal weight. The fourth category is whether the land connects to a greenway or a blueway. The final category carries the least weight but in some ways can be the most critical. "It's' the wow factor," Sutherland said. "We find it's very important when it comes to fundraising and often it can be an indicator of the other four categories."

Sutherland said she believes this wave of land acquisitions the organization is undertaking could be due to its accreditation. The accreditation is proof Avalonia is going about its business in the proper manner and the lands it protects will be protected well into the future. But, Sutherland said new leadership was the catalyst for the accreditation and rejuvenated Avalonia to the point of being capable of considering these new acquisitions.

The board has increased from eight members to 15, ensuring more people willing to do the work of the organization, which also employs two part-time people. Dennis Main also became president of the Board of Directors and gave the organization a renewed direction, Sutherland said. "Dennis really led the accreditation process," Sutherland said. "He knew the process inside and out, but he's also very involved in acquisitions, and to have someone who cannot only be supportive, but actively in engaged in both is great for the organization."

Avalonia Land Conservancy is the largest land trust in southeastern Connecticut with about 3,500 acres preserved on more than 90 properties.
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Connecting Greenways for Wildlife and People

THE DUDLEY CONSERVATION LAND TRUST

Protecting land from development is only one aspect of land conservation. The Dudley Conservation Land Trust has 12 parcels of land it has conserved, totaling almost 350 acres. One of those parcels, Wieloch Woods, is untouched forest, but not quite the prime habitat one might expect.

"It's land that really hasn't been touched in many, many years," said Paul Wieloch, president of the organization. "It's all big trees with high canopies. There is no understory growth. There is limited wildlife because there is no place for them to hide. The birds are all way up in the top of the canopy."

With a $1,400 grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the National Resource Conservation Service, the land trust is working with a forester to remedy the situation. Wieloch, who with his brother donated about 10 percent of the land now known as Wieloch Woods, (the other 90 percent came from cousins), said the project will allow wildlife to take better advantage of the preserved land. "We know from working with the forester if they take poplar, for example, that will be good for the return of grouse because they like to feed on the poplar saplings that will have a chance to grow in the place of the mature trees."

The Dudley Conservation Land Trust has its roots as an educational agency and a facilitator for establishing agricultural preservation restrictions. From 1990 to 2000, it protected about 1,600 farmland acres through the program. After an inactive period, the organization was revived in 2004 to address conservation needs.

Dudley Conservation Land Trust has 12 properties organized into 8 conserved areas with all but one in Dudley. A single property is in Oxford.
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"We were just pretty much trying to save any land that we could," Wieloch said. "Now our focus is on greenway creation. We're concentrating on land that abuts land that we already have.

Since 2005, the organization has acquired 12 parcels of land in Dudley and Oxford. The greenway approach has allowed the organization to concentrate those 12 parcels into eight distinct, preserved areas. The organization has more than 150 members and is run by an all-volunteer, nine-member board of directors.

The members are critical because they help the organization steward the land it has acquired.

"We want people to use the property," Wieloch said. "We think you conserve land so it can be enjoyed and used."

The organization is currently working with a donor to protect another parcel that abuts Wieloch Woods. Wieloch Woods is one side of Tufts Hill, and the new property would protect the other side of the road. "Plus, it's a nice little drive down Tufts Hill," Wieloch said. "It only makes sense to try and preserve it."

Education at its Core

THE EASTERN CT FOREST LANDOWNER'S ASSOCIATION/WOLF DEN LAND TRUST

The Eastern Connecticut Forest Landowner's Association and its conservation arm, the Wolf Den Land Trust, are like no other organization in the heritage corridor.

Created by forest landowners for forest landowners, the organization aims to educate, and every one of its 14 properties is a working classroom. "We were an education resource and we wanted to be able to say to landowners 'do what we do' not just 'do what we say'," said Steve Broderick the current secretary of the organization and a founder. "If we had forest land, we could prove that a properly planned and executed good forest management plan could show how a landowner could at least break even or even earn an income off their forest land. That remains our goal today."

ECFLA began in 1978 as a resource organization to address the significant loss of forest land occurring thanks to the nation's oil crisis. Broderick got his job as a forester at the University of Connecticut Extension Center because of the need to educate landowners about how to best utilize their timber without ruining their forests.

ECFLA shifted from being an education-only organization to a land trust in 1984 when the Wolf Den Land Trust was formed to put the association's education efforts into practice. The first property, the Shoemaker Forest in Scotland, was donated by member Dave Shoemaker and became the first land trust property in Connecticut to have an approved Forest Stewardship Plan written for it under the federal Stewardship Incentive Program.

The Eastern Connecticut Forest Landowners Association/Wolf Den Land Trust owns 14 properties totaling 685.2 acres plus three properties where it holds conservation easements on 200 acres.
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That property set the tone for all the land that came after; every single property has a management plan. "A lot of the properties have been donated in memory of someone," Broderick said. "What we try to do with our properties is develop a profile of the owner, or of the person it was donated in memory of, and manage it as they would."

The 102-acre Cloutier property is an example of the practice at its best, he said. George Cloutier was a forester and managed the property himself for more than 60 years. "We worked with his wife and developed a management plan that ensures the property will be managed in perpetuity as George would have managed it," Broderick said.

Once a profile is developed, a forester is brought in to create a management plan to honor the donors wishes, Broderick said. "No two pieces of land are alike," Broderick said. "The goals of the landowner dictate the development of the management plan. If the intention is to create diverse wildlife habitat that is a different plan than say creating a plan to have a steady stream of firewood coming from the property."

2017 National Land Trust Excellence Award Winner

GROTON OPEN SPACE ASSOCIATION

For 50 years the Groton Open Space Association has been working to conserve lands. It is not only one of Connecticut's original land conservation organizations, it's unique working relationship with the state has resulted in the preservation of some of the most iconic state parks — Haley Farm State Park and Bluff Point State Park. The organization has just added the Candlewood Hill Wildlife Refuge to its list of properties it has persuaded Connecticut to preserve.

"Almost everything we've preserved has come with a battle," said Sidney Van Zandt, one of the association's founders, it's first president and current vice president. "We just stick with it and make sure our concerns are addressed."

GOSA, as it's known, got its start as an effort to save Haley Farm from development into a duplex complex. Van Zandt said it became clear very quickly during the effort that saving Haley Farm from development would only be the start. Plans to develop neighboring Bluff Point into any number of projects were threatening what was the last significant open space on the Connecticut coastline. The plans included: a four-lane highway from Interstate 95 down to the bluff, which would meet a bridge connecting to Fisher Island and then Long Island; a 400-boat marina; underground oil storage; and an industrial park.

"It was all going on at the same time," Van Zandt said. "There was a lot of pressure to develop these lands and a lot of effort to save them."

Joan Smith, president of GOSA, said the organization still assists the state with stewardship of both properties and 50 years later has also helped the state preserve another property, Candlewood Hill Wildlife Refuge. The property is adjacent to GOSA's existing Candlewood Ridge property, and like Haley Farm, the organization will take an active role in maintaining it. The property was important, Smith said, because it helps GOSA extend a north-south greenway and it also includes a rare pitch pine forest of about 44 acres. The site is believed to be the last pitch pine forest of any significant size in the state.

Not all of the organization's efforts, however, are about acquiring land. GOSA often gets involved in Groton government, advocating for and against certain developments, and has worked with developers to improve their plans.

Smith said in addition to focusing its efforts to create greenways, the organization is making strides to ensure the habitat on the land makes ecological sense. GOSA is now part of the New England Cottontail Project to help ensure young forest is maintained for the rabbits. The organization is also dealing with a group of beavers at its Avery Farm property and has installed a beaver deceiver, a pipe meant to trick the beavers into ignoring water flow so they do not build a dam that would disrupt habitat. "We keep score with the beavers, like a baseball game" Smith said. "Right now we're up by one, but that could change at any moment."

Groton Open Space Association, founded in 1967, owns four properties and worked with the state to preserve three more, totaling 1,742 acres.
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Finding Strength in Diversity

JOSHUA'S TRUST

When you've been around as long as Joshua's Trust has and are as far reaching, there comes a time when it's important to step back and assess what's next. As the land trust with the most holdings in The Last Green Valley, Joshua's Trust is doing just that, focusing on a strategic plan and assessing with a greater level of detail what it already has conserved with its 70 properties.

"When you're more than 50 years in it's important to look at your record of accomplishments," said Mike Hveem, executive director of the land trust. "We're in a strategic planning phase and asking ourselves, 'is there a focus we should consider moving forward?'"

Since its founding in 1966, Joshua's Trust has conserved 4,500 acres of land. It owns 2,500 of those acres outright and the rest is in conservation easements. The 70 properties are very diverse and include two sites of historic significance, a few properties that are inaccessible to visitors, such as the Windham Atlantic White Cedar Bog, and many lands where passive recreation is welcome. Even the organization's formal name — Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust — speaks to its diversity.

That diversity among properties is driving a major project for the land trust, a mapping effort with the help of the University of Connecticut. Hveem said as an accredited organization with the Land Trust Alliance, the board of directors realized that renewing its accreditation was a monumental act, in part because some of the detailed mapping now underway was sorely needed. The project is likely to last several years.

Hveem said the diversity of the land trust's holdings is also indicative of the strong leadership of the organization. "We've got so many different types of property because we've been at it longer than most, and we've been driven by the priorities of strong leaders who have directed the organization over time."

While Joshua's Trust is taking this moment to plan, it is not resting on its laurels. The organization's headquarters at Atwood Farm has been turned into a museum of 19th Century farm practices. Donated by Isabella Atwood in 2012, it features a historic barn with the original blacksmith's forge and farm implements. The museum's features also include a smoke house, ice house, pig sty and a weaver's cottage that was the museum's first display. Hveem said the organization will be holding events throughout the year, but like most of the properties, it's available for visits any time, including the orchard.

"Sometimes people who know the orchard is here come to pick apples in the fall," Hveem said.

The property has also become somewhat of a laboratory for botanists from UConn interested in the historic plantings.

The organization is also considering how best to continue the conservation and historic importance of the Gurleyville Gristmill. Hveem said the organization is also working to ensure all of its properties have proper signage so the public realizes the conserved lands are meant for public use and enjoyment.

The variety of projects and sheer size of the organization require many volunteers. Hveem estimates Joshua's Trust has about 250 of them. "A strength of the organization from day one has been its ability to attract volunteers," Hveem said. "We have an open door through which many people have come and wanted to participate."

Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust is northeast Connecticut's largest conservation organization. The organization was founded in 1966 and has conserved about 4,500 acres in more than 70 tracts.

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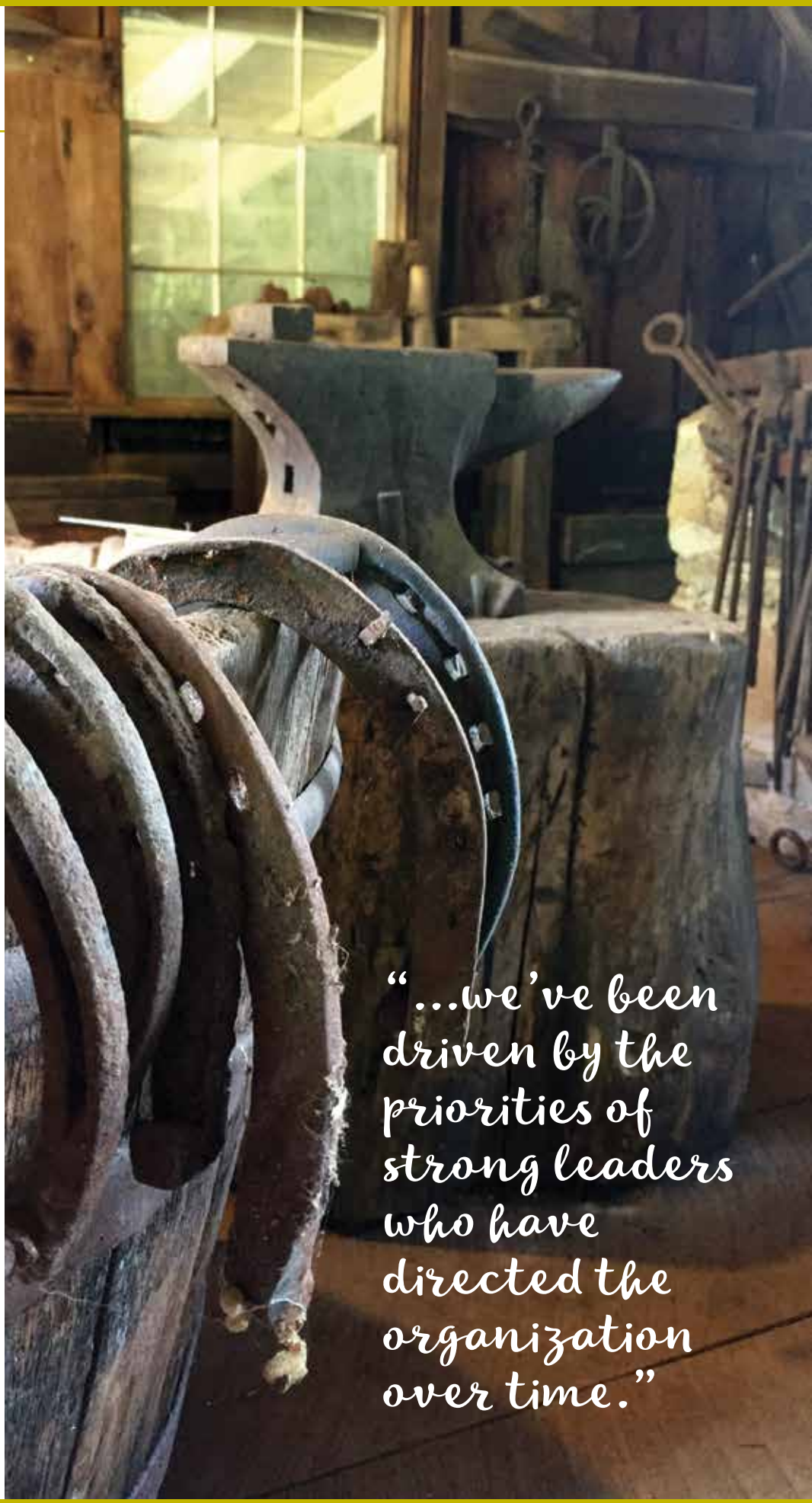

"...we've been driven by the priorities of strong leaders who have directed the organization over time."

Protecting the Heart of a Beautiful, Thriving New England

THE NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION

As the oldest land conservation organization in The Last Green Valley, The New England Forestry Foundation also has the widest perspective.

Founded in 1944, New England Forestry Foundation has grown and evolved in its 73 years, but at its core, it is still the same organization. "We're still doing the work NEFF has done for 73 years," said Chris Pryor, director of forest stewardship. "We're still trying to protect land for future generations."

With community forests located throughout New England, NEFF owns and manages about 27,000 acres of woodlands. Most of it is open to the public free of charge, some with developed trail systems and other lands left wild. Pryor said even if there is not a developed trails system, the foundation hopes its lands will be used responsibly and enjoyed by the public. "You don't always need a trail system to enjoy a property," Pryor said.

NEFF has its roots in the Massachusetts Forest and Parks Association, founded in 1897. Harris A. Reynolds, an officer in the Association from 1911 until his death in 1953, believed more needed to be done to protect New England's forests. He and his colleagues formed the foundation in 1944 to augment the Cooperative Farm Forestry Act of 1937, which provided a limited number of service foresters in each state. NEFF offered a complete set of services to forest owners applying the latest scientific forestry principals.

NEFF still actively manages many of its lands and has been involved in a number of innovative projects, including one to prove cross-laminated timber is a viable building material that can replace concrete and steel in tall buildings and that southern New England can support a mill for its manufacture.

NEFF still relies on the latest scientific forestry practices. Tools such as GIS mapping are used to better analyze forest ownership patterns and land characteristics. And while the foundation is constantly analyzing its own management techniques, it is also looking to the research being done elsewhere. Climate change, for example, informs much of the foundation's work.

"Climate change is the ever-present cloud hanging over everything you do," Pryor said. "It comes into play in all the work we are doing whether it's developing our future land management plans or considering climate change adaptation techniques. We feel working family forests are going to be a big part of the solution as we move forward."

As part of its outreach, NEFF will continue in 2018 to offer private landowners of 30 or more acres free visits from a licensed forester who can suggest site-level practices to promote resilience for long-term forest health.

The New England Forestry Foundation was founded in 1944 and has conserved about 27,000 acres throughout New England. It has three community forests in The Last Green Valley.

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Adapting to Change with Ecotones

THE NEW ROXBURY LAND TRUST

The New Roxbury Land Trust is one of the newest land trusts in The Last Green Valley, but with 18 years under its belt, it has lands critical to the well-being of the entire region.

Jorie Hunken, a naturalist and board member for the trust, said she sees the potential for the lands to be ecotones — areas where vegetation from two different communities comes together. In this case, species traditionally acclimated to more southern climates and those native to southern New England. "We need these habitats to buffer," said Hunken, who is a former staff naturalist for the New England Wild Flower Society. "We need lands where the northern species are hanging on but the southern species can succeed too."

The New Roxbury Land Trust formed in 1999 and works to conserve lands in the towns of Woodstock, Eastford, Pomfret, Putnam, Thompson and Union. President Valerie Ietto said the land trust formed in part to help transform the image of land trusts. "I think the reasons why we formed don't exist any longer because the reputation and image of land trusts have changed," Ietto said. "We wanted people to understand protecting land was not something elite or for the benefit of certain properties. It was about protecting land, wildlife and those green corridors that nature needs."

Hunken estimates there are about 100 members — small enough to have great camaraderie and large enough to get work done. Their close-knit work ethic was integral in its latest acquisition, Manchester Field and Woods in Union.

Ietto said it was a long project, but much more effort for the family, who had been working for years before The New Roxbury Land Trust got involved to protect the 84-acre tract. "The credit goes to the family," Ietto said. "There are not many families where the person who originated the conservation passes away and the family is willing to stick with the process that lasts so many years. They were so committed it made us work harder to make it happen."

Ietto said the property is special because it's part of a huge forested block that connects to state lands, Yale Forest and more. It's also land Hunken has identified as potentially important for ecotone study. "We want to strategically plant a southern growing species of oak to study over a very long time how they do," Hunken said. "Especially since some of our northern oaks, like the big Red Oak, seem to be struggling. I'm told they might be in trouble and that means a lot of things to a lot of species. Hunters are concerned about acorn production, which is so important to the deer."

One of the properties is naturally an ecotone, Hunken said. The Pole Bridge Road parcel is a 17-acre cedar swamp. It's largely inaccessible, although a right of way does exist. The swamp is one of those rare pieces of land that has been largely untouched by human hands and Hunken is unsure what it may hold. But, the characteristics are there for an ecotone and some special species. "The white cedar swamp is a whole different situation," Hunken said. "It's never been cultivated. It's impossible. If there has been any harvesting it's just taking the cedar out which grows right back. I've seen really different mosses and that tells me there's the potential for it to be a habitat for rare orchids and rare asters."

Hunken gives tours of New Roxbury lands that are accessible to the public. Getting people out there and having them understand what they are seeing is critical to helping conserve the land, she said. "It goes beyond naming something," Hunken said. "I want to get a movie going in people's heads, like one of those wonderful Disney movies where years of growth happen over the course of a few moments. If they can see it, they can imagine it, it's more meaningful."

The New Roxbury Land Trust was formed in 1999 to preserve and enhance the rural character of the northeastern Connecticut towns of Woodstock, Eastford, Pomfret, Putnam, Thompson and Union. The Trust has preserved more than 305 acres.
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A Conservation Leader in South-Central Massachusetts

OPACUM LAND TRUST

One of the new kids on the block has become an integral part of land conservation in Southern New England. In its 17 years of operation, Opacum Land Trust has managed to protect more than 1,700 acres in the 13 towns of south-central Massachusetts.

"We're in a very heavily-forested area of The Last Green Valley," said Ed Hood, director of Opacum Land Trust. "We have a lot of agriculture, but we also have a heavily wooded and natural ecosystem."

Opacum — named after the marbled salamander, a species of special concern that was found on its first conserved property, First Acres Swamp — started as an all-volunteer organization and protected 1,000 acres by 2014 when it hired Hood. Since then, they have added another 788 acres and have more than 1,000 acres of projects they are working on. "We're in a growth mode right now," Hood said.

The organization has also become the coordinating land trust for the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership, a coalition of more than 25 organizations working to protect forestland in Massachusetts and Connecticut. Hood uses a portion of his work week to coordinate the regional conservation partnership.

Opacum just completed the purchase of Dingley Dell, a 76-acre forest adjacent to Brimfield State Park. The organization must raise another $86,000 to prepare the property before it can be opened to the public, Hood said. Once complete, the property will offer a new access point to Brimfield State Park. It also features three significant points of interest: a natural spring known and used by locals for generations, a small waterfall and a massive boulder at least 25-feet high. The property is an exciting acquisition, and it is indicative of Opacum's approach to land conservation. "How we maintain a healthy forest is by encouraging active use of the forest," Hood said. "If we encourage use and practice sustainable management we're making the forests economically viable."

Opacum Land Trust was founded in 2000 and has conserved 1,788 acres in 13 towns of south-central Massachusetts, including The Last Green Valley towns of Southbridge, Sturbridge, Charlton, East Brookfield, Brimfield, and Holland.
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Dingley Dell sits in a prominent place in Brimfield and is in the center of Opacum's service area. Hood said the property will not only be an important link in the effort to conserve forestland throughout New England, but it will also bring awareness to Opacum. "We're trying to build our brand, build our identity," Hood said. "We want people to know about us and use our lands."

Part of that branding effort means teaming up with other organizations. Dingley Dell has been a partnership with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and a committee of Brimfield residents is helping Opacum raise the additional funding needed. "Like most organizations we don't have a check book we can just open every time we identify a property," Hood said. "Working with other groups is important for us."

Reaching New Heights

WYNDHAM LAND TRUST

Bull Hill, straddling Woodstock and Thompson, has found its protector. The Wyndham Land Trust acquired its largest single parcel of land this spring, a 254-acre parcel along the ridge. Andy Rzeznikiewicz, land manager for Wyndham Land Trust, said when a member of the organization saw the parcel was up for sale, touted as prime development land, the board decided it needed to take a look at the property for itself.

"We walked the ridge and when you get up there you just say 'wow'," Rzeznikiewicz said. "We knew we had to find a way to protect it. Anyone who's seen what happens when you put condominiums at the top of a ridge like that would understand that's not something you want. We pulled it together and fought our way through the process. It's a very compelling piece of property."

Soon after completing the Bull Hill purchase, the organization also completed the acquisition of 68 acres around Bungee Lake and has also added another 20 acres on Bull Hill.

Since its formation in 1975, Wyndham Land Trust has acquired more than 50 properties in northeastern Connecticut, protected 2,271 acres and has conservation easements or restrictions on another 700 acres.

Bull Hill represents a new level of planning and a focused direction for the land trust. The organization is currently working on acquiring another 191 acres on the hill, said Rzeznikiewicz, and is actively trying to engage other landowners on the hill. "It's part of a 3,000-acre contiguous forest," Rzeznikiewicz said. "You don't find that much contiguous forest land very often."

Wyndham Land Trust was founded in 1975 and has acquired more than 50 properties in northeastern Connecticut. It has protected 2,271 acres and has conservation easements or restrictions on another 700 acres.
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And, it's pristine forest too. On all his hikes of the property, he has yet to see poison ivy or any of the invasives common to the area, such as bittersweet. There are also no stone walls, indicating it has always been forest. But the forest is not virgin land either. "A lot of the parcels were wood lots for people for generations," Rzeznikiewicz said. "There are horse trails and hiking trails and it's been used, but it's always been forest."

Wyndham Land Trust intends to make Bull Hill the centerpiece of all its acquisitions and has plans for trails. But not all the organization's properties are acquired with public access in mind. Rzeznikiewicz said often it's more about protecting the land first and then determining whether public access is possible.

The push to save Bull Hill also comes at a time when the organization is working towards its accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance."Accreditation allows us to give our donors a level of confidence that we're doing things the right way, and we're a sustainable organization," Rzeznikiewicz said. "If a donor wants to give us a property they can be assured that we'll be here far into the future to protect that land.

Marge Hoskin

TLGV Founder and Member Extraordinaire

Marge Hoskin has literally seen every stage of the national heritage corridor's life.

Hoskin was one of the first volunteers to sign up to form a new committee to explore the idea of designating the Quiet Corner as a heritage corridor in 1988. She was chairman of the committee when the designation as the Quinebaug & Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor, only the fourth such designation in the country, was won. And, she was chairman when the organization hired its first executive director, Charlene Perkins-Cutler.

"We started as a grass roots organization," Hoskin said. "Through the years there have been many changes."

What has not changed is Marge's love for the region and her commitment to the organization now known as The Last Green Valley. Marge believes one of the reasons she cares so much for the region she grew up in is because she left it for 20 years as a naval officer.

"I was actually quite surprised. The area I had known as a child was a beautiful area," Hoskin said. "When you're young, you're eager to get out of town and see the rest of the world. I saw quite a bit of it actually. But to come back and have an appreciation for the historical and natural resources, I was actually surprised by what I found."

To help promote the region and build momentum for the heritage corridor designation, the first-ever Walking Weekend was created and shaped by Marge and her fellow volunteers. It was not long after the heritage corridor was formed that the organization decided to hire Perkins-Cutler. Hoskin remembers using a room in the offices of the now-defunct tourism district in Putnam and showing Perkins-Cutler her desk and her phone. "That's all she had," Hoskin said. "She had to create an office."

Funding to support the office and the staff has always been a concern, Hoskin said. Over the years concerns about whether the federal government would support the heritage corridors and at what level have grown and dissipated, depending on the administration and the political climate. The current administration proposed defunding all heritage corridors.

"We've been through this before," Hoskin said. "I find the people that work for The Last Green Valley — the people who are paid to work and all the volunteers — are people who need our financial support. It's more important than ever for people who love The Last Green Valley to support it financially."

Arguably, Marge's almost three decades of volunteering for the heritage corridor amount to many thousands of dollars of time. But,

"It's more important than ever for people who love The Last Green Valley to support it financially."

that has never stopped her from also putting her money into the organization as well. In recent years, as her ability to volunteer has decreased, she has donated at higher levels.

"When you put your hard work and your heart into an organization you want to see it do well," Hoskin said. "You want to see the organization you helped grow continue on."

John Kochinskas

A TLGV Volunteer Giving Back to the Community

"I enjoy the outdoors and I like doing anything that's outside so it seemed like a good fit. It's important for people to volunteer in their communities."

John Kochinskas always has a little bit of The Last Green Valley with him.

For the last few years he has been volunteering for the organization, becoming an ambassador for its events, programs and volunteer opportunities. When you meet John there's a good chance the conversation might turn to the outdoors, and if it does, he almost always has a brochure or pamphlet from TLGV handy to pass out.

"I usually have a few pamphlets in my truck at all times," Kochinskas said. "You never know when you're going through a town and might need to restock them, so it's good to keep them with you. When I start talking to people about The Last Green Valley, I give them a pamphlet."

John started volunteering for TLGV about three years ago. He had been a regular participant at Walktober events for several years when he met Marcy Dawley, a TLGV Ranger and former staff member. The meeting was serendipitous. Kochinskas was retiring from the National Guard and looking for opportunities to volunteer. He began helping Dawley out on Acorn Adventures and as a volunteer Ranger, he joined Chief Ranger Bill Reid on some events. "I enjoy the outdoors and I like doing anything that's outside so it seemed like a good fit," Kochinskas said.

Over the years John has also become an ambassador, making sure TLGV's information sites are kept stocked with brochures and pamphlets, and he also teaches a first aid class to other volunteer Rangers.

Kochinskas, who was born in Thompson and grew up in Dudley, now lives in East Thompson with his wife, Tuesdie, and daughters, Jenna, 17, and Kaylin, 13. He volunteers for the East Thompson Fire Department, is a member of the Thompson Trails Committee and has become a trail steward for Wyndham Land Trust. He works for the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services, training staff at a detention center to work with juveniles who have committed serious crimes.

The Last Green Valley serves multiple purposes in his life, Kochinskas said. Being outside is a wonderful stress reliever from the pressures of work, TLGV offers many opportunities for family outings that are usually free, and he is serving the community through his volunteering.

"I wish I had started volunteering when I was younger," Kochinskas said. "It's important for people to volunteer in their communities and with The Last Green Valley I've gotten to know parts of the Quiet Corner south of Thompson that I wasn't really as familiar with."

BUSINESS PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Welcome to the
Henrietta House Bed and Breakfast

Henrietta House Bed and Breakfast mixes American history with modern Asian influences and sustainable living to create a truly unique experience for visitors. Marian Matthews' travels around the world as an educator led her to the northeastern corner of Connecticut, where she came to earn her Ph.D. at UConn. Matthews bought her historic home in Ashford in 1985, and while she ran it as a B&B for a few years early on, it has only been two years since the home became the Henrietta House Bed and Breakfast as it now exists.

"I love to have guests," Matthews said. "I truly enjoy the experience of meeting people, sharing a meal with them and getting to know them." Matthews moved away for more than a decade, but retained ownership of the home with the intention of coming back to it once more. She retired in 2013 and set about updating the home to reopen the B&B business.

Henrietta House was built in 1722 with an addition put on in 1740. Much of the home is original, from the Rumford fireplace in the dining room to the wide board floors with handmade nails. What is not original has been painstakingly chosen to ensure the home, erected by the Byles family, retains its original character. The massive central chimney still holds a nook created to hide runaway slaves and, while it has not been proven yet, historical records seem to indicate the home was a stop on the underground railroad, Matthews said.

There are three guest rooms — all named after members of the original Byles family. The Josiah Room and the Abigail Room are individual rooms which both have access to the same bathroom. The bathrooms are where Matthews chose to ignore history, and they have been accommodated with modern amenities. The third room, the Henrietta Suite, has its own full bathroom, skylights and sliding doors to a back deck, which is also a direct entrance for guests.

All three rooms are appointed with the kind of furniture you would expect in a historic Connecticut home. However, the accents are all Asian. Matthews lived and worked in Japan and the Philippines and traveled throughout Asia. Wall decorations, sculptures and textiles from the far-off continent decorate every room. The pieces, however, are not mere decorations; they are part of Matthews' history, and there is a story accompanying each one.

Guests at Henrietta House Bed and Breakfast are treated to a large breakfast every morning. Matthews says a typical breakfast includes her superb waffles, homemade granola and yogurt made from the goats Matthews keeps on the property, sausage made from pork raised on the property, fresh fruit, some of it grown on the property or sourced from local farms, fruit syrups, fruit jams and maple syrup, also all local, coffee and tea. Or breakfast could include omelets made with the eggs from Matthews' chickens or biscuits and gravy, a throwback to her childhood in Texas.

Matthews usually sits and eats with her guests. "A meal is a wonderful way to get to know people," she said. It's also an indication of Matthew's hospitality style.

Dotted around the B&B are materials from The Last Green Valley. Matthews makes sure her guests understand the rural nature of the community is its greatest asset, and it also offers a myriad of recreation opportunities. Matthews said she supports TLGV because it's helping to ensure her chosen home retains the qualities that attracted her to the region in the first place. "I've lived all over the world," Matthews said. "There is no where on Earth I would rather live than here."

The Last Green Valley Looks to THE FUTURE

To ensure more financial stability and predictability, The Last Green Valley has created endowments with local community foundations in both Connecticut and Massachusetts. The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation each hold agency funds for TLGV.

"The funds create a lot of certainty for donors," said Lois Bruinooge, executive director of TLGV. "Community foundations offer a much better return on investment and they're in the business of doing good."

Community foundations are tax-exempt, publicly supported, non-profit organizations devoted to improving the communities they serve in perpetuity by harnessing the donations of charitably-minded individuals, families, businesses and nonprofits. Community foundations are allowed by law to treat all the funds under their care as part of a single corporation, which provides administrative and investment advantages over private foundations.

"By definition we are about forever," said Alison Woods, vice president and chief development officer of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. "Donors like the fact there is another partner who is going to administer the fund and steward it. That affiliation raises the comfort level of many donors."

Both the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation administer hundreds of funds and have portfolios in the hundreds of millions of dollars. For non-profits that create agency funds with a community foundation, it means the opportunity to harness expertise and investment power they do not have on their own.

"We have an endowment of almost $150 million," said Kelly Stimson, director of donor services for the Greater Worcester Community Foundation. "There are not too many organizations that have a portfolio of our size and that allows us to do things a non-profit on its own cannot do. They also don't have the staff or the time to manage funds the way we do."

With so much uncertainty in federal, state, and municipal budgets, TLGV's fundraising efforts have become even more critical to the sustainability of the national heritage corridor.

Woods said by having a fund with a community foundation, TLGV has exposed itself to more philanthropists who may care about the organization's mission, but not know of the organization. "When a donor comes to us they sometimes want us to help them determine where to put their donation," Woods said. "We can steer them toward a fund or multiple funds they might not have been aware of."

The Last Green Valley's funds were started with $50,000 and with the help of generous donors they have already doubled, Bruinooge said. Ideally, TLGV will be able to build up the funds and eventually draw only on the interest. "Our federal dollars are never guaranteed and often come late," Bruinooge said. "This is a way to bring more stability and predictability, and we are grateful to all of the donors who have already contributed to our future."

THE last green valley™

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Reasons to give

- Charitable giving has been proven to reduce stress, provide a sense of contentment and increase a donor's satisfaction with his or her own life.
- Giving to a local non-profit ensures the donation will benefit the local community.
- Monetary donations often lead to volunteerism, which has also been linked to improvements in overall health.
- Businesses that engage in charitable giving often have better moral among employees.
- Donating to non-profit organizations has a tax benefit.

Sources: Consumer Reports, The University of Missouri, Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University