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# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUR LAND: WHERE TO START?

**A VIRTUAL WORKSHOP FOR  
LANDOWNERS**

Thursday, February 26, 2026

6:30 – 8 p.m.



Welcome!

Glad you could join us this evening!

# Planning for the Future of Your Land

An Introduction to Land Conservation and Estate Planning



Are you a Landowner with an interest in better management and conservation of your family lands but don't know where to start? Join our Zoom webinar series!

Webinars are free to attend. Registration required

Thursday  
February 26  
6:30-8 PM

### Where to Start?

Setting goals for your land: conservation and/or stewardship. Problems for heirs if you don't plan, and how to start family conversations.

Thursday  
March 26  
6:30-8 PM

### What You Can Do Right Now

Saving on property taxes, and available funding programs. How working with a forester can benefit you and your land.

Thursday  
April 23  
6:30-8 PM

### Conservation-based Estate Planning

What makes your land special? Mechanics of a conservation transaction: finding the right legal tool and land trust partner.

Please register by emailing [Cassidy@tlgv.org](mailto:Cassidy@tlgv.org)

Thank you to our co-sponsors:



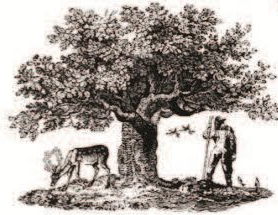
Companion Series to the brochure:

*“Your Family Land – Legacy or Memory?”*

<https://thelastgreenvalley.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/FamilyLand2022Final2web.pdf>



# Thank you to our co-sponsors:





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# AGENDA

- **Welcome & Webinar Overview – Lois Bruinooge, Ex. Dir., The Last Green Valley**
  - **Setting Goals – Common Landowner Interests – Lisa Hayden, Outreach Dir., New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF)**
  - **Identifying Priorities - Some Questions to Consider**
  - **Sharing Landowner Stories**
    - **Lynn Stoddard & Chris Kueffner of Storrs, CT**
    - **Laura & Scott Moorehead, Putnam, CT**
    - **Lisa Hayden, Sturbridge, MA & Putnam, CT**
  - **Family Communication – Pitfalls of Not Planning**
    - **Q&A & Discussion**
    - **Resources – Wrap-up**
-



NEW ENGLAND  
**FORESTRY**  
FOUNDATION

## Conserving and Sustainably Managing Forests for Future Generations

**1944**

Year Founded

**1.2 Million**

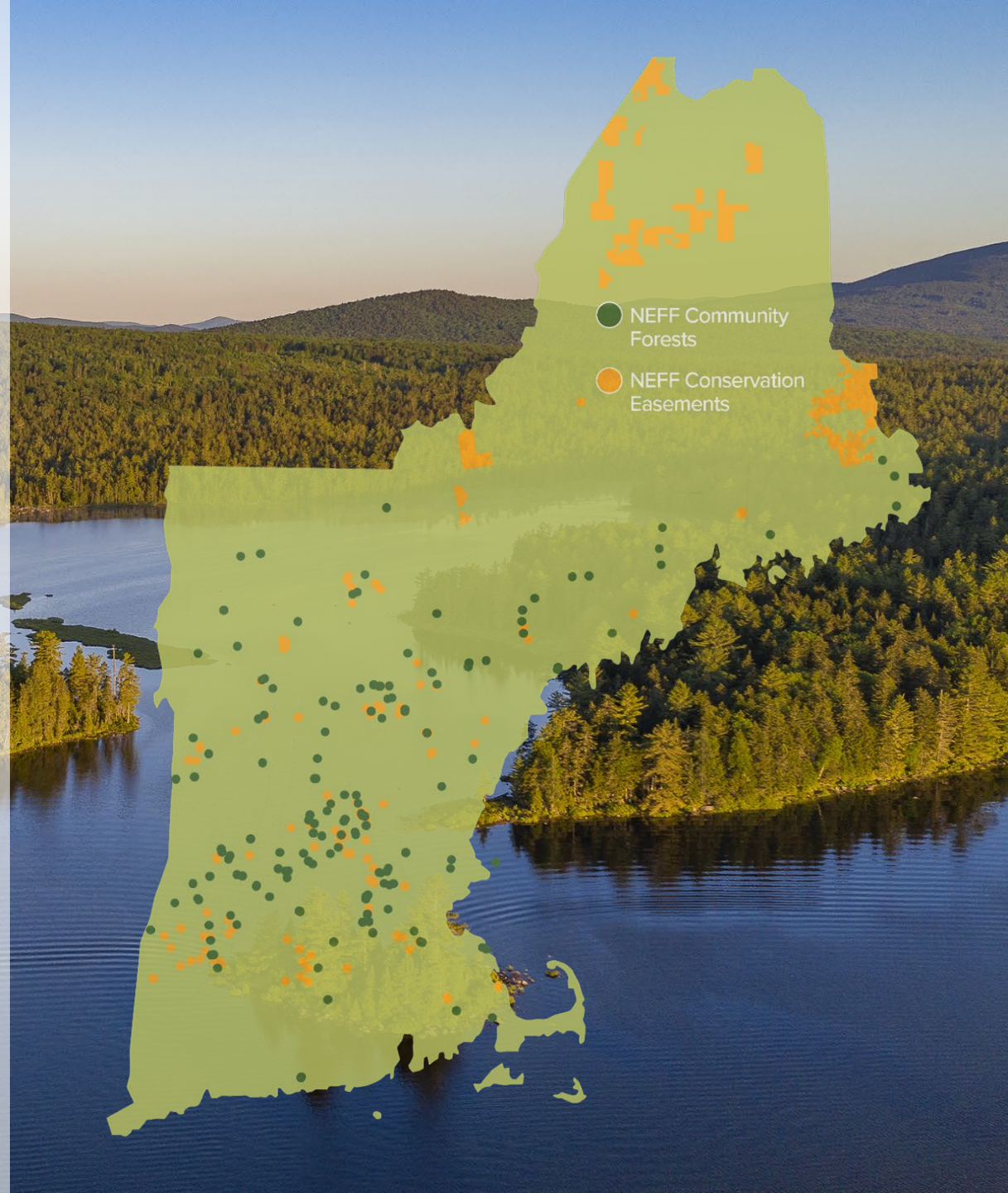
Acres Protected

**National Impact:**

Sixth largest land trust in the U.S.

**Specialties:**

- Working Forest Conservation
- Exemplary Forest Management
- Climate Change Mitigation



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The way to get started  
is to quit talking and  
begin doing.

- Walt Disney

But sometimes thinking and planning  
first can help you 'do' better!

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# CARING FOR YOUR WOODS

BOOKLET SERIES FOR WOODLAND OWNERS

*Produced by MA Department of Conservation & Recreation & Partners*

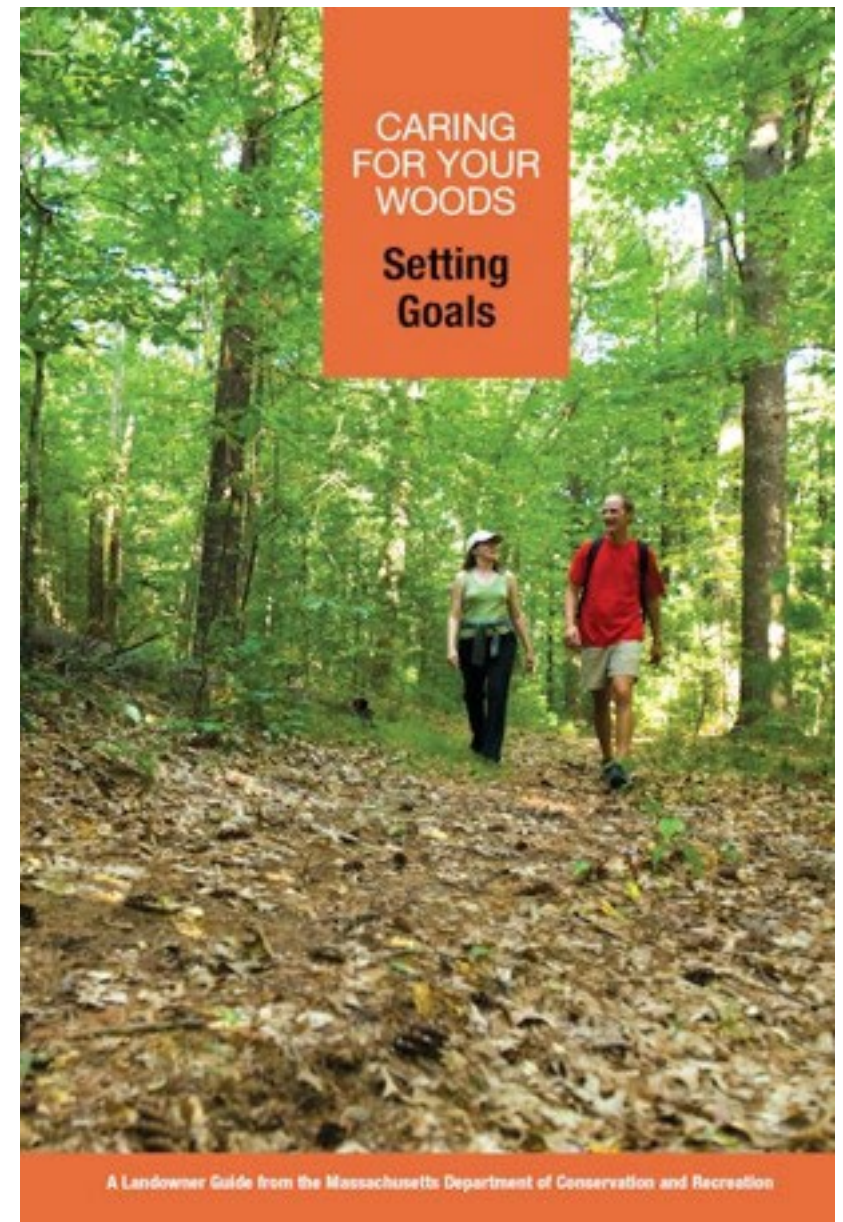


[A Starting Point:](http://www.masswoodlands.org/media/1304/a-starting-point-reduced.pdf)

<http://www.masswoodlands.org/media/1304/a-starting-point-reduced.pdf>

**Setting Goals:**

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/caring-for-your-woods-setting-goals/download>



# Common Private Landowner Interests

## Outdoor Recreationist



# Common Landowner Interests

## Wildlife Steward

- Stewardship goals and actions to support wildlife species & habitat
- Bird watching
- Cameras to see what critters share your land along wildlife corridors
- Supporting native plants & tree species important to food chains



Photo by Desiree Narango



# Common Landowner Interests

## Nature's Ally

- Protect water quality
- Remove or eradicate invasive plants & vines
- Climate stewardship:
  - Adaptation or promoting resilience
  - Mitigation or managing for carbon in trees and/or products



# Common Landowner Interests

## Working Woodlands

- Enhance quality and/or quantity of forest products
- Produce income from timber, wood products, or other products from the woods (maple syrup, food)
- Agroforestry
- Harvest firewood for personal use





## MANY WAYS TO CARE FOR YOUR LAND

- Cutting or harvesting some trees can be a good thing...for certain wildlife – and for the trees that remain
- Other practices can promote forest health & resilience (managing invasives, stream crossings, etc.)

## TIMBER MAY BE AN ASSET

Revenue from a harvest could become part of your long-range estate planning – can sometimes help to keep land in the family or out of development

# Lower Your Property Taxes - “Current use”

State policy provides a lower tax rate for undeveloped land rather than charging as a building lot - Recognizes public benefits of open space, forest, farms



- Average 75% reduction in property taxes

## CT: PA 490

- Apply between Sept. 1 – Oct. 31; forester report for 25 or more acres for forest category
- After recent increase, state now held 2025 farm land use value steady

[https://portal.ct.gov/doag/agency-press-release-results-page/2026/january/clarifying-information-on-pa-490-recommended-land-use-values?language=en\\_US](https://portal.ct.gov/doag/agency-press-release-results-page/2026/january/clarifying-information-on-pa-490-recommended-land-use-values?language=en_US)

## MA: Chapter 61

- Oct. 1 application due to Town Assessor
- Eligible if own 10 or more contiguous acres in active forest management (forester report); Owners of at least 5 acres: Ch. 61A for agriculture; Ch. 61B for open space, recreation

# Is Conservation on your list of priorities?

...Your land could be part of natural climate solutions





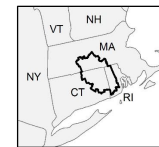
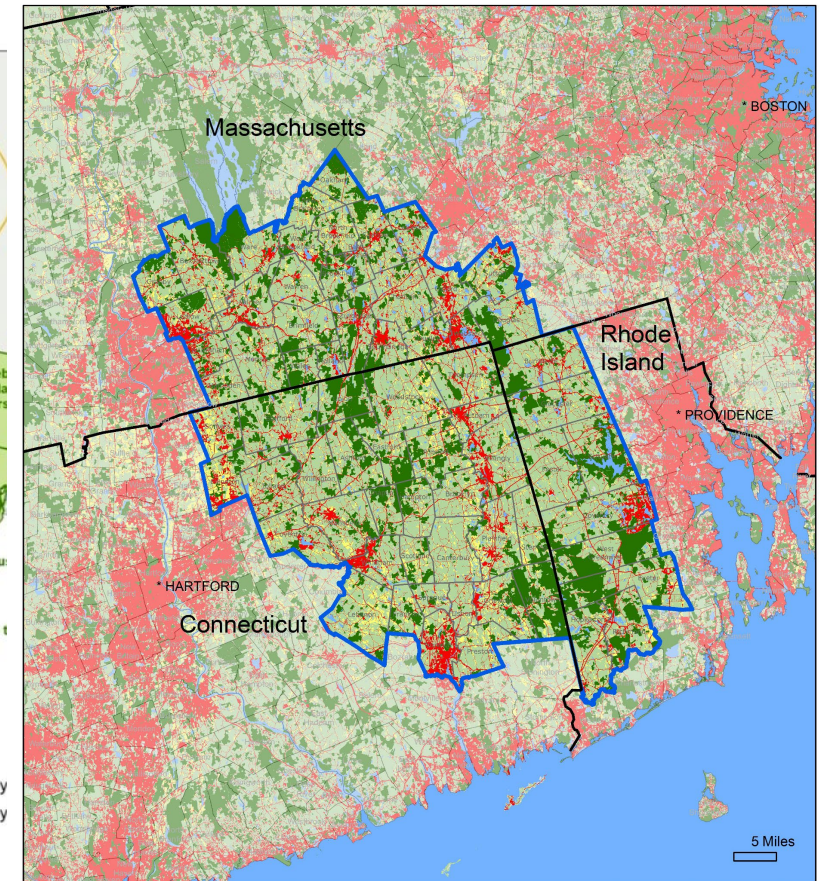
## Wildlands & Woodlands Vision for New England

- Goal: 30 million acres by 2060 or 70% of New England.
- Regional partnerships scaling up conservation

**215,000 private New England woodland owners of 10+ acres will decide the future of our forests**



MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership



Brian Hall: Harvard Forest; 978-756-6154; Date Saved: 8/29/2016; SNEHF Basemap.mxd

<span style="color: green;">■</span> Protected Open Space	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Water or Wetland
<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Grassland/Herbaceous	<span style="color: grey;">■</span> Forest or Shrub/Scrub
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Developed	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Agriculture

Southern New England  
Heritage Forest

# Love your land as it is?

## Who will own it after you?

- Talking to family members about their priorities
- Being proactive about planning for your land as part of your estate plan
- Are there habitats or special natural features valued by land trusts?
- Emerging option: Supporting Indigenous groups to gain access to lands for cultural use



# What makes a good conservation project?

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Important habitat for wildlife, or a specific rare habitat type (listed species, watersheds)

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Connections to protected land for wildlife movement corridors

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Scenic landscape or community open space for trails/passive recreation

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Rural character important to protect from development

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Finding a land trust partner that cares about your land's special attributes – permanent protection or monitoring of Conservation Restrictions (CRs in MA)

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## Now – a few questions...

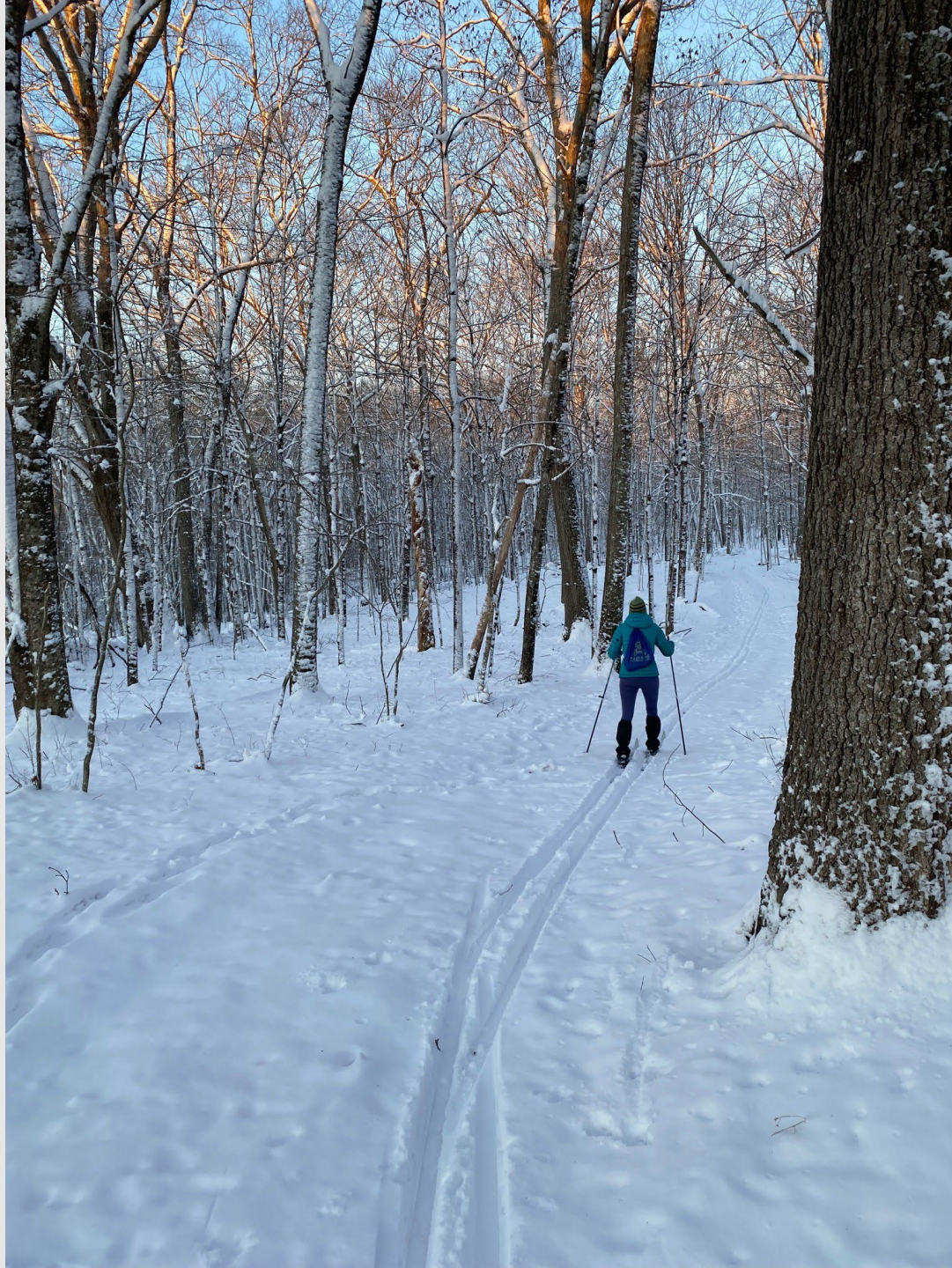
- *How do you spend time on your land?*
- *Do you have a favorite place on your property? Where is it & why do you love it?*
- *What do you want your land to look like in 5 years? ... How about in 30 years?*



# Sharing Landowner Stories

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Lynn Stoddard &  
Chris Kueffner,  
Storrs, CT





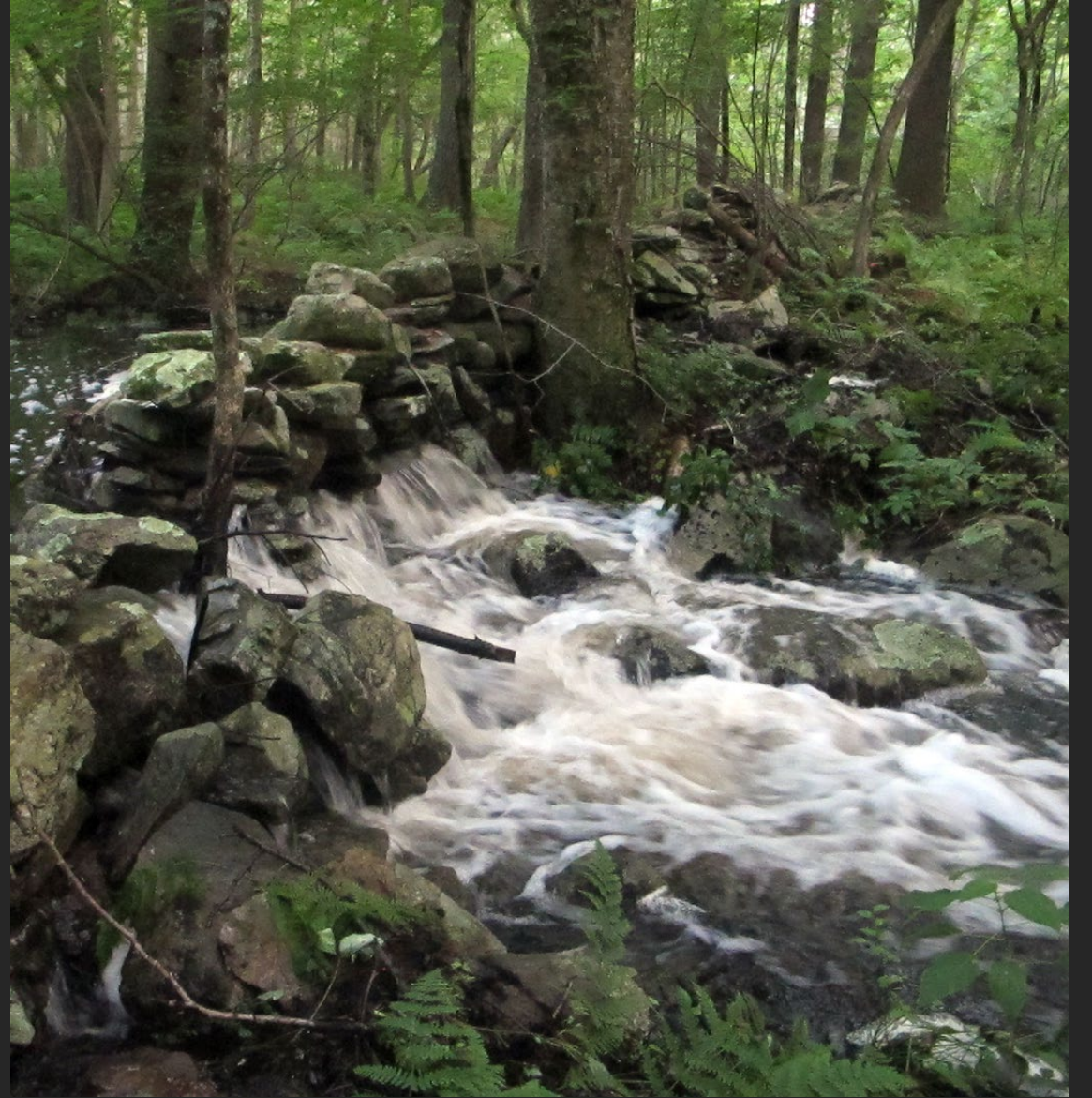


# Sharing Landowner Stories

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The Mooreheads,  
Putnam, CT







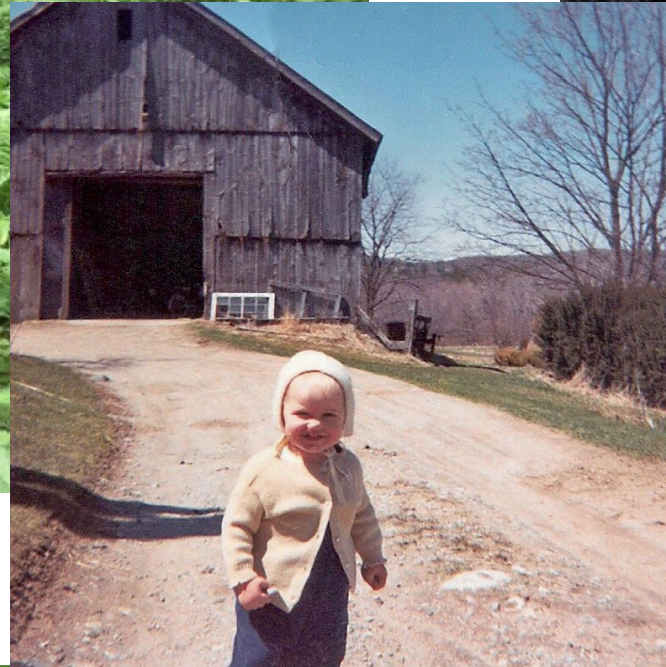
# Sharing Landowner Stories

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The Haydens,  
Putnam, CT



“The land goes to the 5 kids...”





# Some first steps

- Set aside time devoted to the project of reading & researching conservation options – winter is a good time!
- Think about and articulate your goals – what do you really want for the land?
- Understand title to your land: whose name is on the deed
- If you die without a will (intestate), state and Probate Court determine who inherits your assets; Be sure your estate plans include your land, perhaps your largest asset
- A will can be used to pass on your land if you are the sole owner (tenants in common can only give away their ownership share in a will); joint tenancy means surviving spouse inherits
- A legacy letter – describing the land & your hopes for it – can be attached to a will; a way for you to state your wishes in your own words so beneficiaries understand your intentions

[Using a Will to Pass on your land](#) - MassWoods.org

# Tips for Starting the Family Conversation...



- No one likes to think about death – procrastination is common – but if you start early, you’ll have more control over the outcome
- Talk about the future with children, other heirs and siblings; plant seeds of considering potential outcomes
- Who may want to live there or already shows an interest in actively caring for the land?
- Best not to get into heavy subjects on holidays, but plan another time on neutral ground for a family meeting — Once you make a plan, sharing it can avoid conflicts
- Don’t broach a big discussion about “Who wants to take over the farm?” before Thanksgiving dinner!

# Spending time on the land together

- Engaging the family in why you love this place - Creating family traditions & learning opportunities
- Encouraging kids & grandkids to have fun on the land – sledding, hiking, swimming
- American Forest Foundation (Tree Farm) encourage owners to walk their land at least once every season – check boundaries, observe nature & changes in the woods - make it a party!



# TAKING STEPS CAN EASE WORRY

Quotes from a Landowner Estate Planning focus group:

*“My goal is to keep the property open land - or at least get an easement for the property so that it won't be developed. And I haven't done very much except worry about that.”*

*“We'd like them to take a part in the joy that I get out [of the land], but they're so busy...*

*They don't really have the time or the interest that it takes to keep the property up.”*





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## SUMMARY

Take a minute to write down:

- What do you want to follow up on regarding your land and specific situation?
- Who might you want to talk with about your plans?
- Are there resources shared today you want to explore further?

Questions about your next steps?



# Land Planning Resources

- The Last Green Valley: Conservation Resources:  
<https://thelastgreenvalley.org/learn-protect/land-use/>
- MA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation:  
*A Starting Point; Setting Goals*  
<http://www.masswoodlands.org/media/1304/a-starting-point-reduced.pdf>
- MassWoods.org: “Learn your options”  
<https://masswoods.org/>
- MA Chapter 61  
<https://masswoods.org/landowner-programs/chapter-61-current-use-tax-programs>
- CT Public Act 490 – CT Farm Bureau  
<https://www.cfba.org/pa-490/>



**Mark Your  
Calendars!**

**Two More  
Events in  
This  
Series...**

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# THANK YOU

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