



# **North County Land Trust**

**2015-2016  
YEAR IN REVIEW**



Richelle Brown, Carrie Novak, Jassy Bratko, Alan Rousseau, Don Ostrowski , Lucy Crocker Abisalih  
Missing: Clay Hobart and Jackie Leger

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### **North County Land Trust**

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

For the North County Land Trust, FY2016 brought change. With our mission in mind, the directors revisited our governance and organizational models. The process underway is prompting research and reflection that will guide us strategically in the coming years. The most notable shift in our work this past year has been our increased effort around property stewardship and community outreach. For over 20 years we have facilitated the conservation of hundreds of acres of ecologically valuable property in our region. We have partnered with peer organizations to accomplish much and thoughtful conservation continues in North Central Massachusetts. We remain ready and eager to assist private landowners and municipalities with their estate and land planning needs.

The board believes strongly that our mission does not end with the conservation of a property but also must provide a greater service to the public. We are focusing on educating people about the value and benefits of land conservation and expanding our outreach to those who, up to now, may not have engaged with or understood the benefits of conservation. We want to develop programs for a diverse audience that will encourage an appreciation for nature and an understanding of the active role we humans play in sustaining our natural resources.

We are reviewing our financial model, as well. Dedicated funds exist to cover stewardship expenses at many of our active properties, and thanks to a robust series of nature walks and guided hikes, we are seeing our base of support grow. We continue to seek support from environmentally focused foundations to help fund our programs from community outreach initiatives to forestry plans. We carry no debt and we are especially pleased to announce that we have established an Endowment Fund about which you can read more in the back of this report.

We are always looking for ways to increase our operational revenue stream to keep our staff strong and do more for our communities. As we assess the need and sources of support, we are as dedicated as ever to forwarding our founders' vision, actively conserving and stewarding special properties, and remaining agile in response to the economic and cultural climate that needs our input on behalf of the environment.

Finally, a few people have moved on from NCLT over the past year. We would like to thank our founding executive director, Janet Morrison, whose work and wisdom over many years established NCLT as an important contributor to the conservation community in North Central Massachusetts. Directors Paul DeMeo and Laila Michaud, and staff member Ryan DeMeo have also served NCLT for 10, 8 and 4½ years, respectively. All of these friends have given the best of themselves to advance NCLT. We are grateful for their commitment and their legacy. The Land Trust and our communities are better for their efforts.

It takes a great team to make our organization successful. Thank you to all of you who generously donate your time, money, and expertise toward ensuring the success of the Land Trust.

Alan Rousseau, President  
Lucy Crocker Abisalih, Interim Executive Director

## Our New Property



**Peabody Conservation Area** – Family-owned since 1787, this 22-acre woodlot is a tribute to the hard work, integrity, and love of the land that Reg and Helen Peabody embodied. In 2015, Bill Millington and Jan Storm donated 22 acres of wooded land in Lunenburg and named it after Bill's ancestors, the Peabody family, who had owned that parcel as part of a larger swath of land. In the late 1800s, Bill's grandfather, Reg Peabody, purchased 40 acres of original family land. He planted an orchard and created a working livestock farm on half the property and carefully managed the 20 acres of woodlot that is now the Peabody Conservation Area. Generations later, when Bill and his brother inherited the last of the property, they sold the old homestead, and Bill worked with NCLT to conserve the woodlot in honor of the generations of Peabodys who had toiled and lovingly cared for the land.

NCLT is honored to own and steward this property, mindful of the Peabody family history. As Bill reminded us, Reg and Helen "had a closeness to the natural world and a deep appreciation for its beauty that is rare today". NCLT looks forward to creating a place that reflects our commitment to the donor, the land and the legacy—a place, as Bill states "for quiet and contemplation; a place where individuals or small groups of people can walk and just be present with the natural world."

## What is a Conservation Restriction?

A Conservation Restriction is a legal agreement that allows you to protect your land from development forever. NCLT can assist you in placing a conservation restriction (CR) on your property. The specific restriction wording varies with each agreement, but the overarching commitment both parties make is to prevent development of the land. If NCLT holds the CR, we monitor the land annually to ensure that the CR is followed. Often times placing a CR on land will result in tax savings for the donor.



## Conserving Your Land

There are many strategies available to land owners that allow you to conserve land and realize tax advantages. We hope you will think of us as a resource and partner in these circumstances. All inquiries are kept confidential. It is advisable to discuss with your lawyer or accountant which conservation options are best suited to your goals. Below are a few examples.

**Donate Land:** Land can be donated outright to NCLT. We will work with you to determine the most beneficial way to structure that transaction.

**Donate a Conservation Restriction on Land:** You continue to own the land and NCLT holds the conservation restriction, protecting it from development while allowing you to continue to use it for recreation, farming, forestry, and similar activities.

**Conservation Restrictions before selling your Land:** If you need to sell your land but don't want to see it developed, we can help with implementing a CR.

**Bequest:** A donation of land or a conservation restriction through your will is another way to ensure that your land is permanently protected while reducing your estate tax burden.

**Reserved Life Estate:** Some landowners donate their land while reserving the right to occupy and use it during their lifetime. Upon the death of the landowner, full ownership of the land automatically transfers to North County Land Trust.



Please contact: Jassy Bratko  
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### **Crocker Conservation Area, Fitchburg, 127 Acres**

Open and forested land with many trails open for public use, our beautiful property is less than a half a mile from Fitchburg's upper common. It is the urban edge of a landscape of over 2,500 acres of protected watershed land owned by the city Fitchburg and Mass Audubon's Flat Rock Sanctuary. Trail use at CCA: hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Pets welcome.



### **Dwelly Farm Conservation Area, Templeton, 68 Acres**

Trails run through fields and woodland. This is a former dairy farm donated by bequest of David Dwelly. It is our plan to continue some agricultural use of the property. Trail use: hiking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Pets welcome.

### **Rome Conservation Area, Gardner, 175 Acres**

Primarily forested land, located in Gardner and donated by the Rome family in 2004. It connects to over 2,400 acres of land and trails owned by the City of Gardner. Trail use includes: hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Pets welcome.



### **Underwood Road Conservation Area, Hubbardston, 65 Acres**

A lovely forested property donated by the Robinson family in 2011. You will find a peaceful 1.5 mile trail loop. Trail use includes hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and snowshoeing. Pets welcome.

### **Zins Conservation Area, Princeton, 6 Acres**

Primarily a wooded land with a short trail donated by the Hudson family in 2014. We hope to partner with the city of Fitchburg and private land owners to access the Bickford Pond Trail System. Trail use includes hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and snowshoeing. Pets welcome.



With permission, camping, hunting, geocaching, and group use are allowed on some of our properties. Please contact us for more information. 978-466-3900

## Day of Caring 2016

Thank you to the United Way of North Central Massachusetts for organizing another successful Day of Caring. We hosted 45 volunteers from local businesses who spent a beautiful day at Crocker Conservation Area clearing trails. The weather was perfect; the High Meadow Farm's organic burgers were delicious; and the chance to be outside on a perfect September day was appreciated by all.



## What's Happening!



### SUMMER WALKING SERIES

This summer we offered a weekly summer walking series up at Crocker Conservation Area. The well-attended walks were led by Desiree Hamelin, our former Americorps MassLIFT member. The walkers learned about the history and beauty of the area. We learned that CCA is one of the best kept secrets in Fitchburg—many nearby locals discovered it for the first time. We plan to make the weekly walks a year-round event.



Desiree Hamelin



### YOUNG NATURALISTS

Laurie Nehring led our popular Owl Prowls and offered events that were geared toward young naturalists. We are excited to expand our nature walks to reach a broader audience of families who can't easily access our properties. Our goal is to help them enjoy the restorative effect of natural places.



## BIRDING WITH NCLT

Clay Hobart, NCLT Director and Audubon Certified Birder, led bird walks for us this year in Templeton, Fitchburg, and Lancaster. Birding enthusiasts and beginners alike spotted warblers and other spring birds in the early hours of the morning. During our evening Owl Prowls, Clay was a great resource in helping us identify other evening birds and their calls.



Clay Hobart

## WINTER WALKS

The conservation industry is very collaborative. We often co-sponsor events with other conservation groups in our region. Pictured below is a Winter Walk we co-sponsored with the City of Gardner Conservation Commission.



## STUDENTS AND SCOUTS

Student volunteer Alec Jones, with assistance from his brother Ian, worked all summer long on our trails at Underwood Road Conservation Area in Hubbardston. The trail project fulfilled Alec's Senior Community Service Requirement.

NCLT often teams up with Boy Scout troops and hosts projects for aspiring Eagle Scouts such as Kameron Kamel from Gardner. Kameron built a new trail at Dwelly Farm Conservation Area.





## ANNUAL SUPPORT AND ENDOWMENT

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Volunteers,

I want to offer my sincere thanks for everything you do for the Land Trust. It is my absolute pleasure to work with you. I appreciate the opportunity to revisit the Fitchburg area where this all began and to connect with all of you and the remarkable natural resources here.

Our neighbors who have donated property to NCLT love the outdoors and want it conserved and enjoyed by all for many generations to come. I am grateful for their vision, their belief in NCLT, and their understanding that environmental health is our shared responsibility.

It is in the spirit of sustaining that common vision and on behalf of NCLT that I am proud to announce the establishment of The North County Land Trust Endowment Fund created with assistance from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts. Tax-deductible contributions to the endowment are invested for the long term, and a portion of the income from that investment is distributed annually to NCLT. The operational flexibility that an endowment gives an organization is significant, and we are already feeling its benefits.

On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to my wonderful sisters, Martha Crocker and Susanne Crocker Richey, for contributing the inaugural gifts to the endowment fund. Martha and Susie embody the vision and practice of environmental stewardship in which the founding Crocker family so steadfastly believed.

I am exceptionally grateful to all donors and volunteers for your continued support of NCLT. I hope you will contact me if you are interested in learning more about the endowment fund or if you would like to be more engaged with us in other new ways—on our trails, in our office, or with our planning. We want you involved!

With appreciation,  
Lucy



Susanne Richey and Martha Crocker

## Our Friends, Our Supporters, Our Volunteers Thank You!

Lucy and Tom Abisalih  
Eric Alitalo  
Mary-Louise Altobelli  
Neal Anderson  
Robert and Jeanne Antonucci  
Dr. Robert and Christina Babineau  
Ralph and Judith Baker  
Roni Beal  
Sharon Bernard  
Samuel R. Blair  
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Allan Foster

Alfred Gadway and Myra Chapman  
Gardner Fish and Gun Club  
Michele Girard  
Susan and Mark Goldstein  
Joan Gould  
James J. Hammond, Jr., DMD  
and Annie Wiley  
Carrie Harris  
John Henshaw  
The Henshaw Family  
High Meadow Farm  
Ashok Hingorany and  
Achla Madan  
Clayton Hobart and Amanda Graham  
Edwin Howard  
Home Depot - Leominster  
Leigh Catherine Hudson  
Dorcas H. Hurd  
Joyce and John Kemp  
Helen Kirby  
Barbara and David Krashes  
Diane Kruse  
Karen Landry  
Paula Lanson  
Annette and Norman LeBlanc  
Nicole and Jesse LeBlanc  
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Jackie Leger  
Ed Liptrap  
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Laila J. Michaud  
William Millington and  
Jan Storm  
Eva S. Moseley  
Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

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John J. Murphy, M.D.  
Carrie and Dan Novak  
Laurie and Jim Nehring  
North Medford Club  
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Heidi and Jason Sharron  
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Carolyn and S.C. Winslow  
Christine and Norman Wironen  
Henry Woolsey  
Marie and Malcolm Wright

**Protecting the farms, forests, and watersheds of  
North Central Massachusetts**



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