



# ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST

# LAND TRUST NEWS

Volume 8, No. 1 February 2006

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### **ACT Annual Meeting**

April 2, 2006, 7:30 PM

Acton Town Hall

SVT's Ron McAdow presents  
"The Camera in the Woods"

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tion Volunteers  
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## Acton Conservation Trust

**A NON-PROFIT LAND  
TRUST**

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Acton Conservation Trust  
P.O. Box 658  
Acton, 01720

February 26, 2005

To all ACT Members and Friends

I can't believe I have been President for eight years since the Trust was reconstituted to focus on land preservation. Progress has been slow but steady as it can take years to put together even the most modest land acquisition.

We have been diligently pursuing our mission of working with Acton landowners to help preserve open space in a manner consistent with their plans. Our tools include conservation restrictions (CRs), agricultural restrictions and purchase for perpetual conservation purposes.

In 2001 ACT acquired a CR on the Donald Land adjacent to the Acton Arboretum and in 2004 ACT became the back up CR holder to the Acton Water District on the Wagner land off Lawsbrook Rd. on the Acton/Concord town line. We hope to have other CRs to report on in the coming year.

I am also delighted to announce that ACT has signed a purchase and sale agreement on a 16-acre parcel in South Acton from the Whitcomb family. We owe a debt of thanks to Peter Whitcomb whose family has held this parcel for generations for agreeing to sell it to ACT for conservation land. ACT looks forward to leading some winter walks/cross country ski tours on this beautiful enhancement to the Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Area.

Sincerely

Susan Mitchell-Hardt  
President

The Acton Conservation Trust is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that can hold conservation restrictions, accept gifts of land, accept tax-deductible gifts to be used for open space preservation and that can purchase land for conservation purposes. We also provide education to landowners about various options for preservation. ACT is one of more than 130 such Land Trusts in Massachusetts, and is a member of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition and the National Land Trust Alliance. More information is available at [ActonConservationTrust.org](http://ActonConservationTrust.org), or by e-mail to Susan Mitchell-Hardt at [mitchell-hardt@comcast.net](mailto:mitchell-hardt@comcast.net)

# LAND TRUST HAPPENINGS IN ACTON

## ACT PURCHASES THE WHITCOMB LAND

The Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) recently purchased a 16-acre parcel from the Whitcomb Family Trust near the Stow/Acton border. This acquisition is part of a larger effort to preserve the undeveloped land between the Flagg Hill Conservation Area of Stow and the Heath Hen Meadow Brook conservation area of Acton.

This region in Acton and Stow is cited in the Sudbury/Assabet/Concord Watershed Biodiversity Protection and Stewardship Plan written by Frances H. Clark in 2000 as "one of the largest red maple swamps and stream systems in the watershed with only two road crossings and over 3 miles of relatively unfragmented streams with low density residential development". The land in this region is held by a variety of private and public landowners.

ACT looks forward to continued work with landowners and organizational partners in extending the protection for this region. Future possibilities include a wintertime extension to the Heath Hen trail system, and in the longer term, a series of boardwalks to allow a trail system to connect Stow and Acton conservation lands.

We owe a debt of thanks to Peter Whitcomb whose family has held this parcel for generations for agreeing to sell it to ACT for conservation land.

## RON McADOW TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING

All ACT Members, their guests, and others are invited to join us for an entertaining program and slide show, to be held immediately following the brief business portion of the meeting.

Ron McAdow, Executive Director of Sudbury Valley Trustees, local naturalist and author will discuss

### The Wildlife Trails Education Project aka

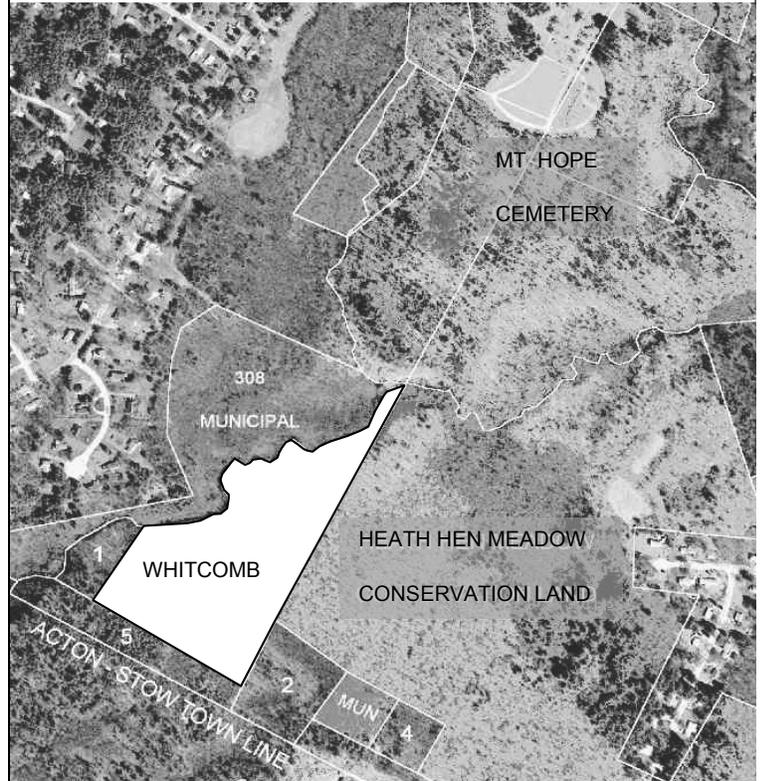
### "The Camera in the Woods"

Want to learn more about the secret lives of your wild neighbors? Ron photographs bobcat, fisher, and coyote when they think we aren't watching. Children should be encouraged to attend. Ron's remarkable photos may encourage you to set up a candid camera in the woods too! Please join us and bring a friend!

Acton Town Hall, Main Street  
7:30 PM  
Sunday, April 2, 2006  
(Refreshments served)

## REVIEW OF OPEN SPACE IN ACTON

Currently, about 13.8% or 1,802 acres of Acton's almost 13,000 acres are permanently protected as open space. Unprotected municipal or state-owned lands account for approximately 9% of the Town's open space. In Acton, the only protected lands are conservation lands and those parcels with conversation restrictions. These properties account for 1,583 acres (12% of the town). To put this in perspective – at present about a third of Acton's acreage provides us with open space of significant conservation and/or recreation value and only 37% of that space is legally protected. (Page 59 of Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2002-2007.)



### Whitcomb Parcel on the Acton- Stow Line

The Open Space and Recreation Plan prioritizes parcel in Acton for preservation. Unfortunately, the following entries on that list have now become or are in the process of development:

- The 16 acre Diducca farmland on Rt. 2A is a major mall.
- The 133 acre Palmer land on Rt. 2A is an 18 hole golf course and country club.
- The 234 acre Robbins Mill Pond Land off Carlisle Road is in the process of becoming a 90 unit Planned Conservation Residential Community. However, 129 acres will become permanent protected open space.
- 36 acres comprising some 7 prioritized parcels in N. Acton are slated to become the approx 300+ unit "Woodlands at Laurel Hills" 40B apartment complex.
- The Morrison Farm Property was purchased by the Town of Acton in 1997 as General Municipal property rather than protected as Conservation Land.

## OF SPECIAL CONCERN: THE 163-ACRE W.R. GRACE LAND IN SOUTH ACTON.

This large parcel in South Acton is being discussed for a number of uses in the future. ACT plans to draw it to the attention of the Board of Selectmen, Open Space Committee, Economic Development Committee, Acton Citizens for Environmental Safety and the Conservation Commission that this parcel has received high marks from the authors of the Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan for its recreation potential, environment, and character.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE SUGGESTED FOR THE MORRISON FARM

The Town bought the Morrison Farm, one of the few remaining tracts of farmland, in 1997. It is a 32-acre property on Concord Road between Woodlawn Cemetery and Ice House Pond. This beautiful property with fields and woods that borders Ice House Pond, was most recently a horse farm, and its agrarian roots go back to the beginning of Acton's colonial history. The property consists of a farmhouse, barn, fields and forests. A year ago, after Betty Morrison moved out of the farmhouse, the Morrison Farm Reuse Committee was formed by the Selectmen to consider how the land will be used. A longstanding request for additional playing fields was on the table from the beginning, but the committee



is open to all ideas presented.

One of the ideas under consideration is that of using part of the 16-acre open field portion of the land as a Community Organic Farm. This is meant to be small-scale community farming that brings together farming and community involvement to create a vibrant local resource. Ultimately the committee will come to a consensus as it develops a comprehensive Morrison Farm Master Plan. The Plan will be brought to the Selectmen for approval, and if approved will be presented and voted on at April Town Meeting.

The Land Stewardship Committee invited Lynda Simkins, the long time director of one of the oldest and best-known small scale community farms in Mass., to speak about her farm. The Natick Community Organic Farm (NCOF) is a non-profit, diversified, working organic farm located on twenty-two acres of town land in suburban Natick, Mass. The Town of Natick acquired the land (farmed continuously since the 1700's) in 1974 for possible future school department needs. A farming program for teens was begun in 1976 with the production of maple syrup and the restoration of the gardens and animal shelters. The Farm's mission is to provide productive open space, food for the public and hands-on education for all ages.

## WE STILL HAVE FARMS IN ACTON??

Did you know that there are some 16 horse farms in Acton?

S. Acton: 2 horse farms  
W. Acton: 1 horse farm  
NW Acton: 2 horse farms  
E. Acton: 10 horse farms  
N. Acton: 1 horse farm.

Did you know that there are some 9 farms (agriculture/horticulture) in Acton?

S. Acton: 3 properties totaling 106 acres  
W. Acton: 2 properties totaling 25 acres  
NW Acton: 1 property totaling 9 acres  
E. Acton: 2 properties totaling 53 acres  
N. Acton: 1 property totaling 11 acres

These properties are in Chapter 61A, which is a tax classification providing for a reduction in taxes for those properties 5 acres or larger that are in agriculture or horticulture. In the event of a proposed sale or development that would remove the land from the program, the Town of Acton has a 120 day right of first refusal option to match the buyer's *bona fide* offer. If it elects to make the purchase, no conveyance tax or rollback tax is due.

## CAROL HOLLEY CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

Linda McElroy and Bob Guba were both recognized at ACT's 2005 Annual Meeting as the co-recipients of the 2005 Carol Holley Conservation Volunteers of the Year award, for their tremendous ongoing contributions to twin causes of conservation and land preservation in Acton.

Mrs. McElroy was recognized for having founded the Acton Land Stewardship Committee 10 years ago, and for helping to establish many of the principles and policies that still guide it today. Mr. Guba was the land steward for the Nagog Hill Conservation area and, as projects coordinator for the land stewards, he has been planning, overseeing and pitching in to do countless engineering projects involving boardwalks, kiosks, signs, parking lots, etc. Their dedication to Acton's conservation lands have benefited all of us!

Be sure to come to our 2006 Annual Meeting on April 2nd to find out who is the recipient of ACT's 2006 Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer of the Year award.

## GOODBYES

ACT is very proud to have had Andy Magee on our board for almost four years and even prouder that he has been elected to Acton's Board of Selectmen on Dec. 6, 2005. As a result, Andy is reluctantly leaving the ACT Board to pursue his goals of preserving the quality of life in Acton on a broader scale. The ACT Board looks forward to working with him to preserve open space in Acton through his new role as Selectmen.

ACT reluctantly accepts Karen O'Neill's resignation from the ACT Board. Karen has served since 1998 when together she and Susan refocused ACT's efforts on land preservation. Karen juggled her full time job as Director of Natural History Travel at Mass Audubon Society, her role as a mother and wife, and long-term commitment to land preservation in Acton. The good news is that she will continue her work on ACT's Land Protection Committee.

ACT also reluctantly accepts the resignation of long time Treasurer and Board member, Morene Bodner to enable her to devote more time and energy to her very successful company's expansion. Morene was also a Board member of ACT since 1998. As well as serving as CFO for her family-owned business, Carlisle and Company, she manages her horse farm, Lythrum Farm and will remain active in land preservation efforts in Acton.

## HELLOS

ACT is pleased to welcome two new Board members, and to announce the return of Carol Holley to our Board of Trustees after a two year hiatus.

Welcome to Hart Millett who has agreed to fill the very big shoes of Morene Bodner in the role of Treasurer. He comes armed with knowledge of QuickBooks and accounting procedures in general. Hart also served on the Acton Economic Development Committee and the Planning Board for six years and is a member of the Outdoor Lighting Education Committee.

ACT is also pleased to welcome Sue Kennedy and her experience as a political consultant, a data base manager, and other areas that will be of assistance in our mission. Sue is a former member of the East Acton Village Planning Committee and is involved in several other local organizations whose concerns are shared by ACT.

Finally, ACT welcomes Carol Holley back to the board, a position she knows well as she served as a clerk and board member for many years. Carol took a hiatus from the ACT Board to get her Masters in Library Science, which she uses in her new job as Library Media Specialist and Technology Teacher for the Willow Hill School in Sudbury. She served on the Town's East Acton Village Planning Committee.

# ACT BUSINESS

## **NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS**

Please note that the Annual Meeting of Members of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), a Massachusetts non-profit corporation, will be held on Sunday, April 2, 2006, at 7:30 PM at Acton Town Hall, Main Street (Route 27), Acton Center. During the "business portion" of the meeting, Members will be asked to:

- Consider and approve proposed Amended and Restated Bylaws for the Corporation (which will be mailed separately to all Members in good standing prior to the Annual Meeting).
- Elect Carol Holley, Sue Kennedy and Hart Millett to new terms on, and re-elect Nan Millett and Jim Snyder-Grant to, ACT's Board of Trustees, each to serve in accordance with ACT's Bylaws.
- Re-elect Joan Cirillo as Clerk and elect Hart Millett as Treasurer of ACT, each to serve until the 2007 Annual Meeting and as otherwise in accordance with ACT's Bylaws.
- Hear and comment on the Treasurer's Report and committee reports of 2005 activities, and to act upon such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

## **HELP FINANCE ACT**

Our membership dues help us fulfill our mission, but we can do much more. With your help, we can act faster to preserve critical parcels of land, and work with landowners to help them explore ways of preserving open space, while meeting their own personal and financial goals.

### **Gifts of Stock**

Gifts of stock, particularly long term appreciated stock, can benefit you in two ways. First, by donating it to ACT, you can avoid responsibility for capital gains taxes on the increase in value in the stock since you acquired it. Second, you can obtain a tax deduction for the full fair market value of the stock at the time it is donated. However, deductions may apply to deductions and tax benefits, so talk it over with your financial or tax advisors. Then, if you would like to proceed, please contact Hart Millett, ACT's Treasurer, at Hart.Millett@verizon.net.

### **Put ACT in Your Will**

Using your estate to preserve open space is a wonderful legacy and considerable long-term tax savings can be realized by making a deferred gift to ACT. Once the value of an estate exceeds \$650,000, the federal estate tax frequently takes 37% to 55% of the value of one's estate at the time of death, so it pays to do some advanced planning. Please discuss this option with your estate planner.

### **Corporate Matching Gift Programs**

Many employers have a grant program where they match all or a portion of an employee's gift to a charity. If you make a donation to ACT, please be sure to check with your employer to see if you can get it matched.

### **Sign up for FYI: Meetings of Interest**

One of the best tools for preserving open space is staying informed about the issues that threaten it.

If you would like to be on our email list, Contact Susan Mitchell-Hardt@comcast.net.

## **JOIN AN ACT COMMITTEE**

Members are needed on the following committees. All of these committees directly or indirectly contribute to ACT's fundamental goals of protecting and preserving natural areas and open space.

### Public Outreach & Membership Committee:

This group helps us recruit new members and to bring lapsed members back into the fold. They research relevant topics and help write articles for members and the town at large, as well as help to produce ACT's newsletter. They also help us organize membership meetings, membership renewal mailings and organize membership events.

### Technology:

This group helps keep our website and email lists up and running, and helps facilitate document sharing.

### Land Protection:

Members of this Committee get training in conservation restrictions, easements and other open space preservation tools. They meet with landowners to discuss the many ways they can preserve their land as open space for generations to come, and the financial benefits such landowners can enjoy in connection with their generosity. Members also draft CRs and manage the land stewardship of CRs by walking those properties to ensure they are being used or left alone as originally planned.

### Fundraising Committee:

This group is responsible for such fundraising activities as researching and writing grants, helping to arrange specific funding for land projects and running fundraising events. They work with ACT Members to create opportunities for ACT development.

Targeted administrative help:  
On occasion, we need hands to help with stuffing envelopes, labeling our newsletters, etc. If you are available to do any of these things on a week's notice – let us know. Contact Susan Mitchell-Hardt (Mitchell-Hardt@comcast.net) to add your name to the list.

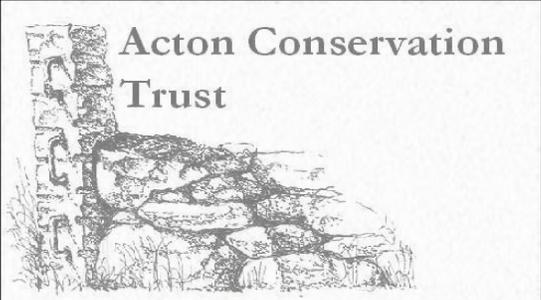


## **ACT ADOPTS LAND TRUST ALLIANCE'S STANDARDS AND PRACTICES**

ACT has become a member of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) of Washington D.C. The LTA promotes voluntary private land conservation to benefit communities and natural systems. They are a national convener, strategist and representative of 1500 land trusts around the country. They also serve as a clearinghouse of information about the land trust "industry" and legislative developments that can affect it, and as a conduit for more affordable insurance and other resources than would otherwise be available.

In connection with joining LTA, the ACT Board reviewed and adopted LTA's "Land Trust Standards and Practices." These Standards and Practices set forth guidelines for the responsible operation of a land trust and have thus far been adopted by more than 1000 land trusts nationwide.

To learn more about the Standards and Practices go to the LTA website. [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org)



**Acton Conservation Trust**

## 2006 Membership & Renewal Application

**Join the many other townspeople who support our efforts to preserve open space in Acton.**

*Among other uses, your donations help ACT pursue opportunities to acquire land and conservation restrictions; they help us stay current on Land Trust developments through key publications and workshops; and, most importantly, they can help us move quickly if properties suddenly become available and we want to protect them from development.*

- ▶ If you are not yet a Member of ACT (or have not yet renewed your membership for 2006), please join us!
- ▶ If you are already a Member for 2006, please pass this newsletter and form on to a friend who might be interested!

**Suggested levels of support \*:**

- \_\_\_ Individual \$20      \_\_\_ Protector \$250
- \_\_\_ Family \$50        \_\_\_ Supporter \$500
- \_\_\_ Friend \$100        \_\_\_ Patron \$1,000

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Your email address lets ACT keep you informed about news & local meetings related to conservation & open space preservation.*

\*Gift includes annual dues of \$20 per person (unless already paid for 2006) for the following person(s)  
*(each ACT Member must be a household resident 18+ years old);*  
**please PRINT Member Name(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me about how I can get more involved!

**Please make your check payable to "Acton Conservation Trust" and mail it with this form to:**

Acton Conservation Trust  
P.O. Box 658  
Acton, MA 01720

**Your gift to ACT is tax-deductible.**



If no dues are included, thank you for your **donation**  
**in the name of** \_\_\_\_\_

*An acknowledgement of your gift will be mailed to you.  
Gifts of \$50 or more will also be acknowledged with an ACT T-shirt (see below).*

**Your support of ACT at any level is a way for you to take an active role in saving open space in Acton.**



## **"Buy Land - they're not making it anymore"**

### **T-SHIRTS FOR SALE**

You can wear our shirts with pride and show your support of land conservation. They cost only \$10 and have Mark Twain's well known statement printed in green on a tan shirt.

(Thanks again to Tom Tidman for designing our wonderful logo.)

To order-call Susan Mitchell-Hardt at 978-369-9264 or send a check with your order to our PO Box.

Sizes L and XL only





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Joan Cirillo, Clerk	263-6473	cirilloj@comcast.net
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