



LAND TRUST NEWS

Volume 9, No. 1 February 2007

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March 4, 2007, 7:30 PM
Church of the Good Shepherd
Guest Speaker:
Henry David Thoreau

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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 12, 2007

To all ACT Members and Friends

It has been a very busy year for the Trust. After completing our purchase of the Whitcomb land on Heath Hen Meadow Brook, we immediately began work on our next project: securing a permanent conservation easement on the Kingman property in East Acton.

Bill and Nancy Kingman, long time Acton residents, members and former officers of ACT have graciously granted ACT this easement, which will ensure that their beautiful property remains open in perpetuity. We celebrated this latest effort to preserve Acton's rural heritage, with a walk of the property and a champagne toast. The walk was in January, but we were in shirtsleeves! (Truly a day to remember!)

The Kingmans represent the best in our townspeople, with a high regard for what they have had and what they can pass on to others, and working with ACT to create this easement is the highest expression of that concern. We and all of the people of Acton are most grateful.

ACT has also initiated a proposal to the Community Preservation Committee to acquire a key parcel in the center of Acton that would add to one of Acton's most cherished conservation areas. We are proud of our role in helping bring this transaction forward and hope that it will make it through April Town Meeting to become the first such acquisition since Acton adopted the CPA.

Because of these and many ongoing land preservation activities, ACT has begun fundraising for various projects. We hope that when you receive our appeals you will be able to support the preservation of open space in our beautiful Town.

Sincerely,

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 purchase land for conservation purposes. We also provide education to landowners about various options for preservation. ACT is one of more than 130 such organizations 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 or by e-mailing Susan Mitchell-Hardt at mitchell-hardt@comcast.net

LAND TRUST HAPPENINGS IN ACTON

KINGMAN FAMILY DONATES PERMANENT CONSERVATION EASEMENT ON EAST ACTON HORSE FARM

Bill and Nancy Kingman have signed a conservation restriction protecting approximately 6.4 acres of open meadows of their farm at 65 Esterbrook Road.

Long-term protection of these lands is important because it will permit maintenance of crucial wildlife habitat, wetlands and other important ecosystems such as stream habitat. The stream feeds into the Nashoba Brook basin, a wildlife corridor that is critical habitat for many of the common forest species, both mammal and bird, which should be preserved whenever possible. These natural lands also serve as a vegetative watershed for tributaries connecting to Nashoba Brook, thus providing natural flood control and groundwater recharge as well as a relatively natural habitat for various additional species of flora and fauna.

Their property includes a meadow next to the road, providing the public with a rare open scenic vista. Esterbrook Road is designated as a scenic road by the Town of Acton's Scenic Road By-law and is also listed among those characterized as distinctive or notable on the State's Scenic Landscape Inventory. Preserving this beautiful scenery for the enjoyment of the public will yield additional public benefit.

It is a further conservation benefit that this property is historically important and its protection will be a permanent reminder of the area's former historic rural and cultural character, which was once primarily dedicated to agricultural pursuits. These lands are part of what remains of the original 220 acre Billings estate, dating back to the early 1700's, one of the first subdivisions in the area outlying Concord that ultimately became Acton. The property is currently incorporated in the Billings-Esterbrook lands



**BILL AND NANCY KINGMAN BEING TOASTED AFTER A WARM
JANUARY WALK OF THEIR NEWLY PROTECTED PROPERTY.**

mentioned in the Agricultural Use listing in the Town of Acton's Historic Landscape Inventory.

The Kingmans, as long time supporters of the Acton Conservation Trust, have felt for some time that they wanted to protect their land so that future generations can continue to experience the rural lifestyle that they enjoy. We know they would be delighted if their generous gift of this conservation easement inspires others to do the same.



Kingman Horse Pasture

ACT PROPOSES OPEN SPACE PURCHASE WITH CPA FUNDS

Early last year, ACT began working with the Groener family to develop a plan to sell a major portion of their land to the Town of Acton. This would add directly to existing conservation land in the center of town, and keep open a critical link to other open space. Our intention was to submit this project as an open-space proposal to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). However, since the CPA requires that the Town hold title to land purchased with CPA funds, ACT turned the project over to the Town Manager, while continuing to monitor the progress of the proposal.

As a result of our efforts and those of the Town Manager, the Acton Open Space Committee has submitted a proposal to the Community Preservation Committee for purchase of this land. The CPC will recommend to Town Meeting that Community Preservation Funds be dedicated to the purchase of an approximately 12.1 acre parcel of undeveloped land abutting the

Nagog Hill Conservation Area. This proposal will be part of the larger CPC warrant article for April 9, 2007 Town Meeting

The parcel consists of approximately 8 acres of oak and maple upland forest, and 4 acres of red maple forested wetlands. It lies within areas designated as prime protection lands on the Natural Heritage and Habitat, the Biodiversity and Living Waters, and the SVT Priorities maps prepared by the Sudbury Valley Trustees. It is similarly located within a prime biodiversity area identified in the 2000 Biodiversity Protection and Stewardship Plan prepared by Francis Clark under the direction of the Massachusetts Riverways Program. The parcel will become part of the Nagog Hill Conservation Area and be accessible for passive recreation from the existing trail system.

ACT hopes to facilitate many more such proposals and encourage all our members to help identify potential parcels.

We urge you to attend April Town Meeting to support this important purchase of open space with CPA funds.

FUNDING OUR WORK:

THE ANNUAL APPEAL

As our efforts to preserve land in Acton continue to bear fruit, the funding needs of our activities continue to grow as well. These funds enable us to purchase land and related rights, facilitate donation of conservation easements and otherwise participate in land preservation transactions when good opportunities present themselves. Until now, our only means of support has been annual dues and gifts from generous members. This year, we have launched an annual appeal to our members for donations beyond the membership dues to help build our treasury.

In our first such appeal, we have raised some \$6,000 and we thank all those ACT members who donated so generously in an effort to protect more land in Acton. For those we have not heard from... it's not too late!

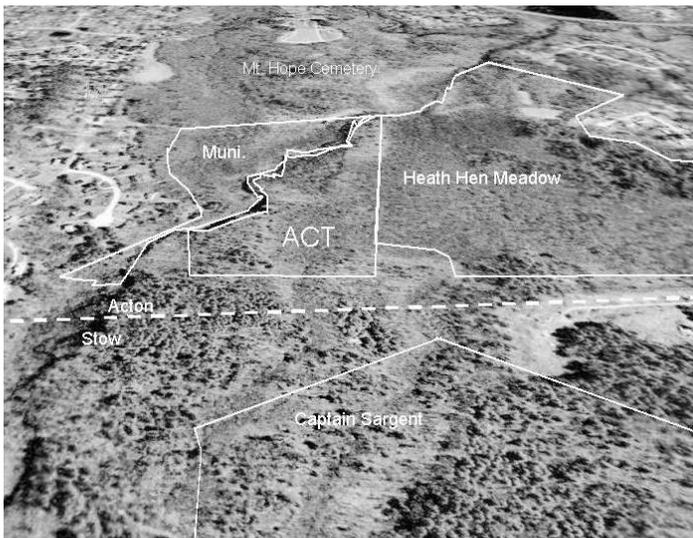
THE CAMPAIGN TO PRESERVE HEATH HEN MEADOW BROOK

Last fall ACT sent a targeted mailing to fundraise from those 300 residences closest to the HHM Area where in Feb. '06 ACT purchased the 16 acre Whitcomb land. The opportunity is the following: Acton is at a crossroads in preservation of open space. Right now we have long-time landowners willing to sell or preserve their cherished open space. Surprisingly, this does not require vast amounts of money, but it does require fast action. That is what the Acton Conservation Trust, as an independent land trust, can do.

The Goal is to achieve permanent conservation restrictions on lands in Acton near Heath Hen Meadow Brook. We are seeking to fund:

- Outright Purchase for Conservation
- Landowner Assistance in Obtaining Permanent Conservation Restrictions,
- Expenses for Preparing Community Preservation Funding Proposals.

ACT set a challenge to raise \$30,000 to preserve over 60 Acres of Open Space. Our initial mailing to the 300 closest residents to HHM resulted in donations of over \$3000 and many new members. As a result, we plan to expand the campaign.



**AERIAL VIEW OF THE HEATH HEN MEADOW BROOK AREA.
WE HOPE TO PROVIDE CONNECTIONS WITH EXISTING
CONSERVATION LANDS IN ACTON AND STOW.
("ACT" IS THE RECENTLY PURCHASED WHITCOMB PARCEL)**



NEW CONSERVATION TAX BENEFITS FOR LANDOWNERS

This Fall ACT wrote to all landowners of parcels prioritized for protection in the Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan to announce the recently passed legislation that offers new land conservation tax benefits for landowners, especially farmers. ACT also encouraged landowners to contact ACT to seek creative ways (such as Conservation Easements) to permanently protect valuable open space in Acton. As a result, we were contacted by a number of landowners with whom ACT is now actively engaged in discussion.

To learn more about the exciting new tax benefits currently restricted to easements donated in 2006-07, including bargain sales, please visit www.lta.org or www.actonconservationtrust.org.

PRESERVING FARMS IN ACTON: AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS

Working farms represent some of our most cherished open spaces in Massachusetts, and as reported in our last newsletter, ("We Still Have Farms in Acton?") Acton has 9 working farms and 16 horse farms. To help keep these farms open and operating a special type of conservation easement, the agricultural preservation restriction or APR was created by the Legislature.

Authorized by Chapter 780 of the Acts of 1977, an APR is a legal restriction prohibiting non-agricultural use or development of a parcel in order to preserve the land for agricultural purposes. To date, the State has authorized some \$126 million for the purchase of APRs by the Department of Food and Agriculture. Owners of productive agricultural land may also donate APRs to the Department or to land trusts (such as ACT) subject to approval of the municipality and the Commissioner of Food and Agriculture.

Combined with the newly enacted rules on tax benefits from conservation easements discussed above, it is a propitious time to consider permanent protection of these ever more rare properties.

It Pays to Save From the Trust for Public Land "Land & People Spring '06"

Six reasons why land conservation makes good economic sense:

- Parks and open space often increase the value of nearby properties, resulting in higher property tax revenue.
- Parks and open space attract businesses and trained employees in search of a high quality of life.
- Parks and open space attract tourists and boost recreation spending.
- Parks and open space reduce obesity and health care costs by supporting exercise and recreation.
- Working lands, such as farms and forests, usually contribute more money to a community than the cost of the services they require.
- Conserved open space helps safeguard drinking water, clean the air, and prevent flooding – services provided much more expensively by other means.

For more information on the economic benefits of parks and open space, go to www.tpl.org/benefits.

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 March 4, at 7:30 PM at the Church of the Good Shepard, 164 Newtown Road, Acton. During the "business portion" of the meeting, Members will be asked to:

- Re-elect the entire current Board of Trustees, each to serve until the 2008 Annual Meeting and as otherwise provided in ACT's Bylaws.
- Elect David Hardt as Clerk and Hart Millett as Treasurer of ACT, each to serve until the 2008 Annual Meeting in accordance with ACT's Bylaws.
- Consider and approve proposed Restated Articles of Organization, which will be mailed separately to members of record as of 2/16/07
- Hear and comment on the Treasurer's Report and committee reports of 2006 activities, and to act upon such other business as may properly come before the meeting.



HENRY D. THOREAU TO SPEAK AT ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST ANNUAL MEETING

All ACT Members, their guests, and others are invited to join us for a night with Mr. Thoreau (aka Richard Smith of the Concord Museum), who will comment on his observations while walking through Acton and will read from "Walking". He will answer questions in character and then break character to answer additional questions. Please join us and bring a friend!

Church of the Good Shepherd
164 Newtown Road
7:30 PM
Sunday, March 4, 2007
(Refreshments served)

Acton Conservation Trust 2006 Financial Statements

Statement of Income and Expenses

	Jan - Dec 06
Income	
Membership Dues	5,005.00
Donations	11,470.24
Interest Income	964.18
Total Income	17,439.42
Expenses	
Operating Expenses	
Mailings and Supplies	1,284.69
Acton Clean-up Day	242.60
Organization Memberships	355.00
Insurance	1,644.00
Total Operating Expenses	3,526.29
Land Acquisition Expenses	
Title Insurance & Assoc. Fees	1,054.20
Total Land Acquisition Expenses	1,054.20
Total Expense	4,580.49
Net Income	12,858.93

Balance Sheet

	Dec 31, 06
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	49,840.61
Land	19,776.56
TOTAL ASSETS	69,617.17
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Equity	
General Fund Balance	15,907.93
Retained Earnings	40,850.31
Net Income	12,858.93
Total Equity	69,617.17
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	69,617.17



A WINTER WALK ON THE WHITCOMB LAND

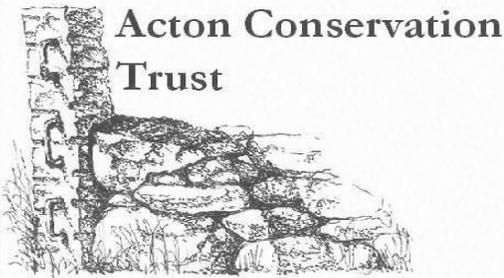
On a cold but dry Saturday January 27th, a group of ACT members and Acton Land Stewards trekked into the Whitcomb Land in South Acton. The route began in Stow, starting with a private trail easement and into the southern portion of the Whitcomb property. We found a number of trees felled by the local beaver population and later on saw the magnificent dam they have built across the brook. The Whitcomb land was open and easily traversed, and then the more intrepid members of the group continued on where dry land ended and only ice remained. They found their way to a number of small islands in the area before returning to join the rest of the group for hot chocolate and snacks. It was a brief but inspiring visit to one of the treasures hiding in our backyards.



IN MEMORY OF RICH MILLER- FORMER ACT OFFICER AND LONG TIME ACTIVIST

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Rich Miller on January 30, 2007 at the age of 79. A long time member and leader of the Acton Conservation Trust, his passion for protecting land in Acton will be greatly missed. We are proud to continue the work he began with ACT, and hope he serves as a model for more townspeople to be involved in our work.

The family has requested that any memorial contributions be made either to the Church of the Good Shepherd or to the Acton Conservation Trust. ACT wishes to thank the family for including us in their thoughts.



Acton Conservation Trust

2007 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 2007), please join us!
- ▶ If you are already a Member for 2007, 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 2007) 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





Acton Conservation Trust
PO Box 658
Acton, MA 01720

