



LAND TRUST NEWS

Volume 21, No. 1 March 2019

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ACT Annual Meeting

3:00 PM, March 17, 2019
Acton Town Hall
Room 204

Guest Speaker:

Mike Callahan

All About Beavers

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Support Articles for Agriculture in Acton

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Be Sure to Visit ACT's Website:

www.actonconservationtrust.org



or



Acton Conservation Trust

A Non-Profit Land Trust

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Susan Mitchell-Hardt
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Acton Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 658
Acton, MA 01720

Did you remember to renew your membership for 2019?

To the many who have already done so, thanks for renewing your support. For those who have yet to renew, please use the form on page seven of this newsletter to keep your membership active.

March, 2019

Dear Friends and Acton Conservation Trust Members:

Helping to permanently preserve open space is, without a doubt, one of the most satisfying of pursuits. Having been involved with numerous projects over the past two decades (preserving some 235 acres so far), I can attest to the excitement, fulfillment and just plain fun aspects of the process. These include working with landowners to find preservation opportunities, gaining support for the resulting projects, bringing these to completion, and then having the joy of visiting and exploring the properties on a regular basis, knowing the preservation is permanent.

Here is a sample of what we do.

- Outreach to landowners
- Marketing campaigns prior to Town Meeting where preservation articles are presented
- Convene educational events including land walks, talks by naturalists, and special sessions to explore conservation options with landowners.
- Hold volunteer days to improve and maintain conserved properties
- Document land conditions and conduct annual monitoring of all protected land
- Fundraise for land acquisition projects
- Work with other local land trusts and the Sudbury Valley Trustees on all of the above!

We are fired up to spearhead more land protection projects this year and, in the future, and we would love to see more of our members get involved in our activities and in our leadership. Although we are an NGO, we work independently from the Town, and we have developed a very effective (and I would say enviable) "preservation ecosystem" that comprises not only Town boards and committees, but our sister organizations in this region.

If you want to be part of land protection history in Acton, please consider greater involvement either through our activities or leadership. We are actively seeking candidates for our Board of Trustees, and if you are interested, please contact either one of our Search Committee members, Joe Cooney or Dave Hardt, and of course, myself.

Sincerely,

Susan Mitchell-Hardt

The Acton Conservation Trust is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that can hold permanent conservation easements, 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. We work in concert with the Town of Acton and other local conservation organizations to maximize the amount of protected property. ACT is one of more than 140 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 emailing info@actonconservationtrust.org

Grassy Pond West: History and Trails

Significant Native American Stone Structures Identified.

Last year we reported on the successful campaign to purchase an ~ 11-acre parcel at 161 Newtown Road, now dubbed "Grassy Pond West". This included a Town Meeting vote to use Community Preservation funds along with private funds generously donated to ACT as part of the "Campaign for Grassy Pond". The new parcel is contiguous to the Grassy Pond Conservation Land and was the last private parcel with frontage on Grassy Pond. With frontage on Newtown Road it also adds a new access and trail opportunity (see the article below).

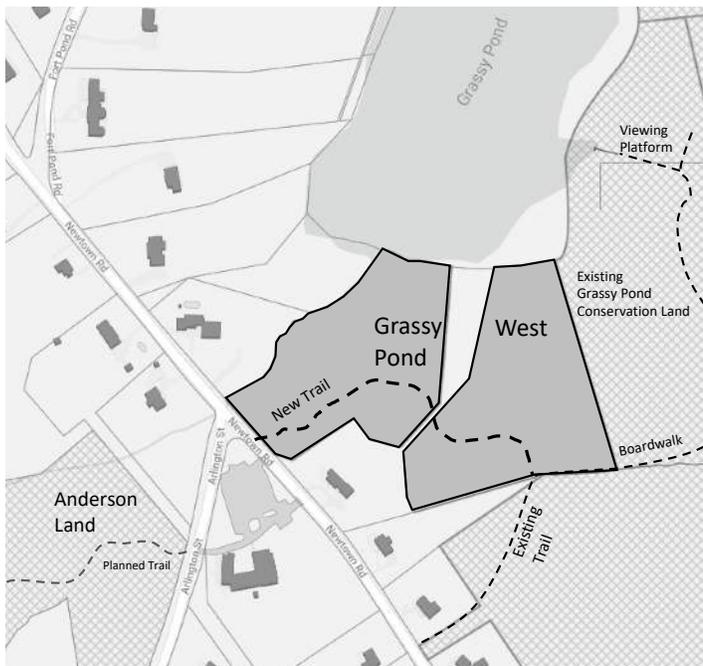
Aside from the preservation of a significant habitat and stunning white pine shoreline, Grassy Pond West is populated with fifty plus ancient Native American ceremonial structures, known as 'rock piles' or cairns. As yet, mapping is incomplete, but most structures cluster along the property's northerly border close to the wetlands by Grassy Pond Brook. Structural types include small stone piles with a 'built' appearance and a circular base, as well as 'portals' (into the underworld) having a tiny post and beam structure. No typical burial mounds, or turtle effigies have been identified.

After King Philip's War (1676), a resettlement of displaced Indians was established away from Acton center at what became known as the "New Town", hence Newtown Road. The location of these structures, at the edge of Grassy Pond wetlands, is consistent with tribal peoples' tendency to locate their ceremonial precincts close to water. While the significance of these structures may not be understood by non-Indians, the diversity of types at this site is similar to other assemblages within the town and surrounding areas.

ACT (along with the Littleton Conservation Trust and the Friends of Pine Hawk) co-sponsored a talk by Doug Harris, Deputy Narragansett Indian Tribal Preservation Officer: "Let the Landscape Speak: The Importance and Meaning of the Tribal Ceremonial Stone Landscape". Doug makes these presentations to increase knowledge about these structures, their value to tribal groups today, and to encourage cooperation between towns and Native American peoples for their preservation. This knowledge makes the preservation of Grassy Pond West all the more satisfying.



Doug Harris at the Discovery Museum April 4, 2018



Land Stewards Create New Trail on Grassy Pond West

As part of the campaign to preserve Grassy Pond West, we noted that its frontage on Newtown Road would not only permit easier access to the larger Grassy Pond area and potentially more parking, it also would provide connectivity to the Anderson land, permanently preserved in 2014, on the other side of Newtown Road. (For details on Anderson see Land Trust News 2014). The Acton Land Stewards. (<http://www.actontrails.org/>) have laid out a new trail traversing our new parcel extending from the existing boardwalk at Grassy Pond to an exit on Newtown Road just across from the Anderson Land. Once completed, these trails will realize the vision of an unbroken path from the Bulette Conservation Land on the west to the Nagog Conservation Land on the east. The intervening land has a remarkable diversity of terrain, including mixed hardwood forest and eskers; wetlands, ponds and running streams; re-forested uplands and open meadows. Not only is this area a delight to those who live nearby and enjoy it frequently, it is a favorite of many naturalists in the region.

ACT Community Service Day: Restoring a Meadow to its Former Glory

ACT Trustee Linda McElroy organized our inaugural ACT Community Service Day on October 21. A group of 4 Cub Scouts, 1 Boy Scout and 12 adults spent a cool autumn morning clearing brush and accumulated debris from a local pasture. The privately-owned land is protected by a conservation restriction held by ACT that will keep it open in perpetuity.

The group felt the joy of seeing a beautiful field restored. We removed large stands of bittersweet, some accumulated brush along the edges and...

- 23 tires (once used for horse jumps)
- 12 cinder blocks (ditto)
- 2 55 gallon drums (ditto)
- 4 wood utility wire spools (ditto)
- and a large unidentified farm implement.

Watch for more Community Service Days in 2019.



The After – A clear vista



Some of our "Yield"



Our Volunteers

ACT President Among Inaugural Francis Faulkner Volunteer Awardees

We are delighted that our President Susan Mitchell-Hardt was presented one of the Inaugural Colonel Francis Faulkner, Sr. Award for Exemplary Volunteer Service. The selections were made by the Acton Board of Selectmen, and along with Susan, Bob Evans, Bob Guba, Bill Klauer and Joe Will were also recognized. In his remarks at the May 11, 2018 ceremony, Selectmen Peter Berry commented: "Colonel Faulkner was a long time Selectman, long time Town Clerk, and in his spare time managed to march a company off to Concord for the Concord Fight when Samuel Prescott rode up to the Faulkner House in South Acton."



"Well, we don't have Colonel Faulkner anymore, but fortunately we have Susan Mitchell-Hardt who also has waged some wars to obtain as much open space in Town as we can to provide our citizens with the enjoyment of the outdoors."

"... It's my privilege to recognize all the efforts Susan has done to make our Town a better place to live."

Please Support two Agriculture Related Articles at Town Meeting

At Spring Town Meeting (April 1, 2019) two articles of great interest to ACT will be presented. One would establish an Agricultural Commission and the other would approve a Right to Farm Bylaw in Acton. Acton is one of the few towns in our area not to have such a Commission and Bylaw, and a concerted effort by Bettina Abe to form a consensus has led to these proposals.

The Commission and Bylaw would:

- Serve as a local voice advocating for farmers, farm businesses and farm interests
- Provide visibility for farming
- Work with other town boards on issues facing the town that affect agriculture
- Help resolve farm related problems or conflicts
- Protect farmland and natural resources.

The ACT Board has voted unanimously to support these articles, and we urge you to attend Town Meeting and vote "Yes". Details can be found at www.acton-ma.gov once the meeting warrant is finalized.

In Memoriam

Longtime ACT Trustee **Brewster Conant** passed away on March 18, 2018 at the age of 89. He served on the ACT Board continuously from 1990 to 2018. In addition, he served on the Conservation Commission, the Cemetery Commission, Acton Arboretum, Garden Club, Acton Historical Society, Acton Water District Finance Committee, and donated land to the Acton Water District for the Conant well. We'll never replace Brewster and his impact on Acton and ACT, but his legacy will remain strong. Also, many thanks to those who made donations to ACT to honor Brewster

Dave Cochrane passed away November 11, 2018 at 74. ACT was privileged to have had Dave serve on the Board from 2008-2014. He also served as ACT Vice President; and simultaneously served as Vice Chair of the Land Stewardship Committee and Vice President of the Acton Historical Society. We will always remember how he championed the intertown trail connection between Acton and Stow in the Heath Hen Meadow Brook area, which led to the acquisition of the Whitcomb and Dunn lands. We are thankful for all he did for ACT and Acton.

Acton Conservation Trust Business

2018 in Review

It was another very active year for the Trust and here are some of the highlights in chronological order:

Jan 28: 11th Annual Walk of ACT's Whitcomb Land on the Acton Stow border

Mar 18: ACT Trustee Brewster Conant passed away at 89. He served on the ACT Board continuously from 1990 to 2018.

Mar 18: ACT Annual Meeting - State Senator Jamie Eldridge received the Holley Conservation Volunteer Award and some 50 people enjoyed Tom Ricardi's presentation on and of Raptors

Mar 26 Trustee Joe Cooney attended the Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference in Worcester for a full day of workshops on all aspects of land conservation. The Keynote speaker was Rand Wentworth, Louis Bacon Senior Fellow in Environmental Leadership at Harvard University and President Emeritus of the Land Trust Alliance.

Apr 2: Acton Town Meeting: ACT supported the CPA Slate including Open Space Set-Aside proposed appropriation of \$500,000 – passed successfully.

Apr 4: "Let the Landscape Speak – the importance and meaning of the indigenous ceremonial stone landscape", a talk by Doug Harris, co-sponsored by ACT along with the Littleton Conservation Trust, and Friends of Pine Hawk, and with grants were provided by Littleton Local Cultural Council.

Apr 10: Annual Monitoring of Wright Hill and Groener Land Conservation Restrictions (CRs). Thanks to ACT member and trail steward Jim Salem for Wright Hill and member Mike Luongo for Groener.

Apr 12: Monitoring of the Donald Land by the Arboretum. The team included Bettina Abe and Fran Portante (representing the Town, the owner of the land), Mary Donald, Sandra Mika, Dave Hardt and Susan Mitchell-Hardt.

Apr 19: Monitoring of the Gaebel CR by Great Hill. The CR team included Bettina, Fran, Dave, Susan and Gerry Gaebel.

Apr 26: CR Monitoring of the Caouette-Simeone Farmland in South Acton. This team comprised Fran, Bettina, Kristin O'Brien (representing SVT – co-holder of the CR with ACT), Joe Holmes, Paul Simeone, Susan and Dave.

Apr 26: Kingman CR monitoring on Esterbrook Road. ACT trustee Joe Cooney along with Susan and Dave comprised the team.

May 6: Birding and Nature Walk at Wetherbee Conservation Land with birder, Al Sgroi - attended by 35 beginner birders.

Oct 4: Grassy Pond West (159 & 165 Newtown Road) Conservation Restriction was recorded.

Oct 14: Birding and Nature Walk of Stoneymeade Conservation Land.

Oct 21: ACT Community Service Day at Kingman CR.

Nov 11: Dave Cochrane, long time board member and community activist passed away at 74. He served on the ACT Board from 2008 to 2014, 4 years as Vice President.

Nov 15: ACT participated in a Public Forum to advocate for the establishment of an Agricultural Commission and Right to Farm Bylaw in Acton.

Holley Conservation Volunteer of the Year

The ACT Board voted unanimously to present the 2019 Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer award to Joe Holmes. The award is given each year to the person who best exemplifies the late Carol Holley's shining example for getting involved in one's community to protect the environment. Joe has been an outstanding steward of open space in Acton, always ready and able to clear a trail, remove invasive species, monitor wildlife (and human!) activity, and organize workdays to get others involved. Joe is a longstanding member of the Land Stewardship Committee and is currently serving as Chair of this vital and vibrant group. His enthusiasm, dedication, leadership in organizing effective group efforts and personal love of the outdoors embody the spirit of this award.



Notice of 2019 Annual Meeting of Members

Please note that the 2019 Annual Meeting of members of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), a Massachusetts non-profit corporation, will be held on Sunday, March 17 at 3:00 PM at the Acton Town Hall, Room 204. We will convene the brief business portion of the meeting, where members will be asked to:

- Vote to re-elect Joe Cooney, Lana Finn, David Hardt, Linda McElroy, Susan Mitchell-Hardt and Hart Millett as Trustees, each to serve until the 2020 Annual Meeting and as otherwise provided in ACT's Bylaws.
- Vote to re-elect David Hardt as Clerk, and re-elect Hart Millett as Treasurer of ACT, each to serve until the 2020 Annual Meeting.
- Hear and comment on the Treasurer's Report and committee reports of 2018 activities, and to act upon such other business as may come before the meeting.



2017-2018 Financial Statements	FY 2017	FY 2018
Statement of Income and Expenses		
INCOME		
ACT Membership Dues	\$14,790	\$21,280
Donations to ACT	\$2,662	\$4,204
Interest Income	\$38	\$47
Miscellaneous Income	\$12,847	\$8,615
TOTAL INCOME	\$30,337	\$34,146
EXPENSES		
Operating Expenses		
Software Licenses	\$0	\$451
Mass Mailing	\$2,640	\$2,312
Grants		\$1,000
Misc. Fees	\$453	\$562
Payroll	\$1,330	\$1,425
Organization Memberships	\$500	\$500
Insurance	\$4,099	\$973
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$752	\$880
Total Operating Expenses	\$9,774	\$8,103
Other Expenses		
Misc. Fees	\$1	
Land Acquisition (CRs, BDRs)	\$1,400	\$4,455
Legal Services	\$400	\$700
Total Other Expenses	\$1,801	\$5,155
	\$11,575	\$13,258
NET INCOME	\$18,762	\$20,888
Balance Sheet		
ASSETS		
Checking/Savings/Investment*	\$222,308	\$237,414
Land	\$19,777	\$19,777
TOTAL ASSETS	\$242,084	\$257,190
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Liabilities	\$0	\$0
Equity	\$242,084	\$257,190
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$242,084	\$257,190
* Includes funding for CR stewardship		



ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST

2019 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 easements, and provide stewardship of these lands. Your support also helps us stay current on Land Trust developments through key publications and workshops.

- If you are not yet a Member of ACT (or have not yet renewed your membership for 2019), please join us!
- If you are already a Member for 2019 please pass this newsletter on to a friend who might be interested!

To join please visit: actonconservationtrust.org

Suggested levels of support :

Or mail this form to: Acton Conservation Trust
P.O. Box 658
Acton, MA 01720

___ Individual \$25	___ Protector \$250
___ Family \$50	___ Supporter \$500
___ Friend \$100	___ Patron \$1,000
___ Seniors \$15	___ Other \$ _____
& Students	

Address:

Phone:

Email:

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

Please make your check payable to
Acton Conservation Trust

Your gift to ACT is tax-deductible

- Please contact me about how I can get more involved!
- Please send the ACT Newsletter Electronically in the future.

ACTivities, 2018

January 29 11th Annual Whitcomb Land Walk.

Despite mud, ice and flooded trails, 24 ACT members and friends made the annual trek along the Heath Hen Meadow Brook. We were rewarded with spectacular views of pastures, woods, beaver lodges and dams, and the soothing sounds of the brook in winter.



May 5 Spring Birding and Nature Walk of Wetherbee Conservation Land

A great day and a great turnout for our walk of the Wetherbee Conservation Land. Al Sgroi led a group of nearly 40 "over the meadow and through the woods" to enjoy many bird songs and a few sightings. What a perfect Spring morning!



October 14 Autumn Birding and Nature Walk of Stoneymeade Conservation Land

A great outing on a perfect Fall day. Thanks to Rita Grossman for helping us all understand birding basics and for helping us spot a number of mid-fall species. And thanks to the Palm Warbler who decided to show off its bee hunting skills right in front of us.



Acton Conservation Trust
PO Box 658
Acton, MA 01720

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ACT Annual Meeting
Guest Speaker:
Mike Callahan

President, Beaver Institute & Founder, Beaver Solutions LLC

All About Beavers



Beavers are abundant in Massachusetts and can be both beneficial and harmful to the environment. Mike Callahan founded the non-profit Beaver Institute, Inc. to better promote progressive beaver management across North America and Europe and has over 20 years of experience managing beaver-related problems.

He also founded *Beaver Solutions*, in Southamptn, Massachusetts that provides and installs flow devices to control flooding while maintaining habitat. (This includes

one on the Guggins Brook Conservation Land in Acton.)

Mike will describe his mission of increasing public appreciation of the beaver's critical role in creating wetland ecosystem and will share his insights about beaver behavior and biology. He will also discuss the latest in beaver management techniques, with examples of how flow control devices can be used to resolve beaver-human conflicts.

We look forward to learning all about his work at our Annual Meeting. See you there!

Save The Date
ACT Annual Meeting
Sunday, March 17, 2019
3:00 PM
Acton Town Hall

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