



LAND TRUST NEWS

Volume 24, No. 1 March 2022

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6:30 PM, March 13, 2022
Town Hall / Zoom

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Be Sure to Visit ACT's New Website:
www.actonconservationtrust.org



or



Acton Conservation Trust

March 2022

A Non-Profit Land Trust

Board of Trustees

- Susan Mitchell-Hardt
President
- Joe Cooney
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- Hart Millett
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- David Hardt
Clerk
- Carol Dombrowski
Jody Harris

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

Did you remember to renew your membership for 2022?

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 5 of this newsletter to keep your membership active.

Dear Friends and Acton Conservation Trust Members:

This past year was hugely eventful one. Protecting Stonefield Farm was a land protection goal since 2005 when the South Acton Village Plan called it out. We are grateful to our land protection heroes, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), Open Space Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Select Board, the Natural Resources Department, the Agricultural Commission, Town Meeting voters, donors and most of all the Simeone family of Stonefield Farm. And finally, our gratitude to the new kid on the block, Boston Area Gleaners, the largest gleaning operation in the Northeast, for making Acton their home and making permanent protection possible!

In Spring 2020 we learned Boston Area Gleaners (BAG), based in Waltham, was interested in buying the farm. BAG is a non-profit dedicated to hunger relief by harvesting surplus crops for underserved communities. Through a combination of fundraising and grants and with help from ACT and SVT, and the Community Preservation Act fund, BAG made a strong case for buying the farm and selling a perpetual Agricultural Preservation Restriction to the Town. Open Space Committee Chair, Andy Magee, made the case to Acton Town Meeting on June 21 and the article passed overwhelmingly.

It was also exciting that ACT and SVT launched a successful joint campaign to raise the funds necessary to help BAG buy the farm; and subsequently to sell to the Town, at a discount, a perpetual Agricultural Preservation Restriction on 51.5 acres of farmland and forest. We exceeded our campaign goal of jointly raising \$50,000! We're also excited that people from towns having access to the ARRT will eventually be able to enjoy trail linkage from the Assabet River Rail Trail to the farm volunteer headquarters where they may box produce for food pantries, learn about the farm and its history, and enjoy the treasures of nature.

As always – stay tuned. There are many more projects in the pipeline. Your continued support of ACT and our efforts to protect land for conservation, agriculture, climate resilience, and rural character make all this possible.

Sincerely yours,

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 150 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

A Great Success: Stonefield Farm Preserved

Boston Area Gleaners Come to Acton

On July 30, the Boston Area Gleaners (BAG)* completed the purchase of Stonefield Farm. At the same time, they granted a perpetual Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) to the Town of Acton and Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), which means that the land will be permanently protected from development. This project had many moving parts, and our thanks go to the people of Acton, who strongly supported this project, including voting to help purchase the APR from Community Preservation funds and of course to the Simeone family for their willingness to make this all happen. Stonefield Farm is now BAG's headquarters, from which they will continue to provide fresh produce for Massachusetts families in need. (In FY 2020 they delivered more than 6.6 million pounds.) At the same time, 51.5 acres of important farmland and wildlife habitat has been protected for current and future generations.

The Campaign for Stonefield

To help offset some of the purchase price, in June 2021, ACT teamed with SVT to launch a private fundraising campaign with a goal of \$50,000. Although this campaign lasted less than two months, we were able to meet our goal, which helped BAG complete their purchase and permanently protect this farm. This amount came from more than 120 donors and included a \$10,000 donation from ACT's land acquisition fund. In addition to these private donations, ACT received a \$15,000 grant from the Fields Pond Foundation.

What is an APR?

Unlike our previous projects, where the land is protected by a permanent conservation restriction (CR), this land is protected in perpetuity by an agricultural preservation restriction (APR). While similar to a CR an APR permits agricultural uses while prohibiting any further development. In addition, the Commonwealth has programs to ensure the land remains in agriculture in perpetuity. This is the first APR in Acton and will be held by the recently formed Acton Agricultural Commission and by SVT. We hope to have many more!

* www.bostonareagleaners.org



The (Very Brief) History of Stonefield... and ACT

1684 -1929 – 2007 - 2021

The history of farming at Stonefield goes back to the earliest days of Acton and even before as part of Concord's Iron Work Farm, which dates from 1684. (Though unconfirmed, there is also some evidence of Native American farming in the years before the arrival of English settlers.) The Simeone family purchased the current farm in 1929, and raised chickens, grew apples and other produce, and the latter continues to this day. In our major role of working with landowners to meet their goals of long-term land preservation, ACT began discussions with the Simeone family in 2007, learning about their long-term plans and discussing various ways to keep the land preserved and in agriculture. As is often the case, we partnered with the Sudbury Valley Trustees, who also had a strong interest in seeing Stonefield preserved. Eventually, our entire preservation ecosystem was engaged, including the Open Space Committee, the Select Board, Natural Resources Department and the Community Preservation Committee. In those intervening years there were many ideas, and several potential farming deals that rose and fell, until BAG emerged as the ideal partner. This was yet another lesson in the value of persistence and optimism when seeking perpetual protection of our cherished land. Once again it paid off, thanks in great measure to the consistent support of the ACT membership.

ACT Service Days

Attacking Invasives at the Donald and Wright Hill CRs

ACT Volunteers were back at it this year reclaiming our native lands from the dreaded invasives, in this case primarily bittersweet and honeysuckle. We returned to the Donald Conservation Restriction (CR) at the Arboretum on April 18th and Wright Hill CR on October 3rd to continue removal of these aggressive invaders. Thanks to all the energetic volunteers who

helped to restore the natural vegetation to these wonderful locations and to ACT Trustee Jody Harris for organizing these wonderful events. Also, thanks to Andrew Chen, an AB Senior who created a guide to hand out to volunteers showing images of common invasive species and some additional information about them.



Jody Harris gives instructions to our volunteers at Wright Hill



Jody and Bettina Abe giving guidance at the Arboretum



Celebrating another bittersweet uprooting.



Team pulling of honeysuckle



Stacking the honeysuckle after the pull.

A Brief History of ACT, Part 2 The Impact of the Community Preservation Act

Picking up from Part 1 our last newsletter, Acton had just adopted the Community Preservation Act. It was 2006, and there had been very little land preservation over the prior decade. Now with a fund dedicated to open space acquisition, it became far easier to work with landowners knowing there was a regular path for funding. With this new source of funding ACT began working with the Groener family, who were in the process of selling their property on Partridge Hollow. They agreed to sell the rear 12 acres of their lot, which abuts the Nagog Conservation Land, to the Town and this became the first CPA funded land purchase and the first to have a CR held by ACT. This form of protection is perpetual and considered far stronger than typical Town-owned land and with so-called Chapter 97 protection. (The latter can be removed with a Town Meeting vote ratified by the Legislature.)

More importantly, the process set up for this purchase has since been repeated 8 times (and counting). This includes the

Caouette-Simeone farmland, the Gaebel Land by Great Hill, the Anderson Land on Arlington Street, the Wright Hill Conservation land, Grassy Pond West on Newtown Road, the Central Street addition to Heath Hen Meadow Conservation land, and most recently the Piper Lane addition to Great Hill and the Stonefield Farm APR described earlier. (You can see details of all these projects on our website under "Land Conservation/Recent Projects".

What has resulted from this process is a "preservation ecosystem" that may be unique in the Commonwealth. Rather than acting independently, as is the case in many towns, ACT works hand in glove with the Acton Open Space Committee, the Community Preservation Committee, the Land Stewards, and Natural Resources Department, to initiate projects, and follow them through to completion. Consistent with our mission, ACT has been proactive in identifying and contacting landowners who might be interested in preserving their open land.

Acton Conservation Trust Business

2021 In Review

January 31 - Winter Wildlife Tracking Walk, Nashoba Brook Conservation Land led by Wildlife Tracker, Paul Wanta

March 14 - ACT Annual Meeting; Held by Zoom, Bee Whisperer, Ken Warchol, spoke on "The Role of the Honeybee in Our Environment"

March 19 & 20 - Massachusetts and Rhode Island Land Conservation Conference. Several board members attended online

March/April - Monitored the following: Groener CR, Caouette-Simeone CR, Kingman CR, and Donald CR

April 14 - Woodcock Walk at Rolling Meadows in Boxborough, led by Al Sgroi.

April 18 - Service Day at Arboretum/Donald CR – Honeysuckle removal

May 2 - Spring Nature Walk of Heath Hen Meadow Brook Conservation Land starting at Mt. Hope Cemetery, led by Boot Boutwell

May 27 - ACT Trustee Dave Hardt made a presentation about ACT to the ABRHS AP Environmental Science class thanks to student volunteer Andrew Chen and Mr. Romano and Mrs. Young

June - ACT and SVT launch "The Campaign for Stonefield Farm" to bridge the gap between the APR price and Acton's discounted purchase price

June 13, 17, 19 & 21 - ACT organized walks at Stonefield Farm to introduce folks to the property

June 21 - Acton Annual Town Meeting voted overwhelmingly to purchase an Agricultural Preservation Restriction from Boston Area Gleaners for Stonefield Farm, assuring its permanent protection as agricultural land

June 30 - Fields Pond Grant Award for \$15,000 was approved for the purpose of land acquisition at Stonefield for conservation and creating trails

July 9 - Walk of Stonefield Farm to encourage potential donors

August 26 - ACT Treasurer, Hart Millett, presented two checks to Usha Thakrar, Executive Director of Boston Area Gleaners. A \$38,080 check was from ACT's fundraising campaign for Stonefield Farm; the second check, for \$15,000, was thanks to the Fields Pond Foundation for approving ACT's grant application

September 19 - ACT's 1st Family Woodland Story Walk – an ACTivity for young kids at Pratt's Brook Conservation Land, led by Jody Harris

October 3 - ACT Service Day at Wright Hill Conservation land focusing on bittersweet vine removal

October/November - Monitored the following CR's: Grassy Pond West CR, 176 Central Street CR; Gaebel CR and Wright Hill CR

October 16 - Held a ceremony at Camp Acton for the presentation of the Carol Holley Conservation award to Land Steward Bruce Rachman

November 7 - Fall Nature Walk at Guggins Brook, led by storyteller and naturalist, Boot Boutwell

Holley Conservation Volunteer of the Year

The ACT Board voted unanimously to present the 2022 Carol Holley Conservation Volunteer award to Sue Whitcomb. The award is given each year to the person who best exemplifies Carol's shining example of community involvement in protecting the environment.

Sue has been gardening since she was 5 years old and after working at several commercial gardens started her own horticultural business. But it is her extraordinary work with the Acton Arboretum and the Garden Club that moved the Board to this selection.

"I can think of no other person in Acton who deserves this honor more than Sue Whitcomb! She is so passionate about the Acton Arboretum and has worked tirelessly to enrich and beautify it with her hard work and amazing knowledge". - Maura Sharp, President Acton Garden Club

Among her many contributions she has designed the Herb Garden, selected plants for the Wildflower Garden, led the planning and care of the Butterfly Garden, designed the Daylily Collection and the beautiful Rock Garden, and played a key role in the China Trail Garden.



Notice of 2022 Annual Meeting of Members

Please note that the 2022 Annual Meeting of members of the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT), a Massachusetts non-profit corporation, will be held on Sunday, March 13 at 6:30 PM at the Acton Town Hall and on Zoom We will convene the brief business portion of the meeting, where members will be asked to:

- Vote to re-elect Joe Cooney, David Hardt, Susan Mitchell-Hardt Jody Harris, Carol Dombrowski and Hart Millett and to elect Leona Burgess and Joanne Bisetta as Trustees, each to serve until the 2023 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 2023 Annual Meeting.
- Hear and comment on the Treasurer's Report and committee reports of 2021 activities, and to act upon such other business as may come before the meeting.

2020-2021 Financial Statements	FY 2020	FY 2021
Statement of Income and Expenses		
INCOME		
Dues & Donations	\$26,175	\$27,421
Campaign Donations	\$40,769	\$28,080
Fields Pond Foundation Grant		\$15,000
Interest Income	\$6	\$1
Miscellaneous Income	\$0	\$0
TOTAL INCOME	\$66,950	\$70,502
EXPENSES		
Operating Expenses		
Software Licenses	\$421	\$0
Mass Mailing	\$2,650	\$1,079
Grants	\$0	\$0
Misc. Fees	\$355	\$240
Services	\$1,775	\$2,160
Organization Memberships	\$675	\$250
Insurance	\$1,720	\$2,507
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$2,728	\$2,439
Total Operating Expenses	\$10,324	\$8,675
Other Expenses		
Misc. Fees	\$35	\$2,081
Land Acquisition Expense *	\$61,800	\$53,080
Legal Services	\$0	\$245
Total Other Expenses	\$61,835	\$55,406
	\$72,159	\$64,081
NET INCOME	-\$5,209	\$6,421
Balance Sheet		
ASSETS		
Checking/Savings/Investment**	\$316,968	\$341,036
Land	\$19,777	\$19,777
TOTAL ASSETS	\$336,744	\$360,813
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Liabilities	0	0
Equity	\$336,744	\$360,813
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$336,744	\$360,813
* FY 2021 Includes ACT Gift of \$10,000 for Stonefield Farm		
** Includes funding for CR stewardship		



ACTON
CONSERVATION
TRUST

2022 Membership & Renewal Application

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

- If you are not yet a Member of ACT (or have not yet renewed your membership for 2022), please join us!
- If you are already a Member for 2022, please pass this newsletter on to a friend who might be interested.

To renew or join please visit: actonconservationtrust.org

Name:

Address:

Or mail this form to:

Suggested levels of support :

Acton Conservation Trust ___ Individual \$25 ___ Protector \$250
P.O. Box 658 ___ Family \$50 ___ Supporter \$500
Acton, MA 01720 ___ Friend \$100 ___ Patron \$1,000

Phone:

Email:

Please make your check payable to
Acton Conservation Trust

___ Seniors \$15 ___ Other \$_____
& Students

Please contact me about how I can get more involved!

nl2022

ACTivities, 2021

January 31- Winter Wildlife Tracking Walk, Nashoba Brook Conservation Land, Led by Paul Wanta

Our now annual tracking walk with Paul Wanta was a great success. We saw deer, otter, coyote squirrel and mouse tracks. The mouse was clearly trying to evade the Coyote! Paul delighted us again with his dogged tracking and unceasing enthusiasm.



April 14 - Woodcock Walk at Rolling Meadows in Boxborough, led by Al Sgroi.

We traveled to Boxborough for late season viewing of the unique woodcock spring mating rite. (It seems all the woodcocks left Acton just before this date.) These crepuscular birds make a distinctive peenting or buzzing sound to attract a mate and then fly off to make a spectacular show before nose diving back to the ground.



May 2 - Spring Nature Walk of Heath Hen Meadow Brook Conservation Land led by Boot Boutwell

ACT members and friends enjoyed another enchanting outing with naturalist and storyteller Boot Boutwell. We learned about sitting rocks, skunk cabbage and the poetry of the woods.



November 9 - The Nature of Guggins Brook with Boot Boutwell



Boot graciously guided another group of ACT members and friends in the fascinating Guggins Brook area. Among other things we learned how to identify discrete years in a white pine's growth, and what "marcescent" means.

September 19- Family' Woodland Story Walk

ACT trustee Jody Harris organized the first Woodland Story Walk for families, featuring "The Busy Tree" by Jennifer Ward. We enjoyed a 1/2 mile loop hike at Pratt's Brook, found some big anthills, an awesome slug, saw woodpecker holes, collected acorns and leaves and used them in an art project. So much fun in the woods!



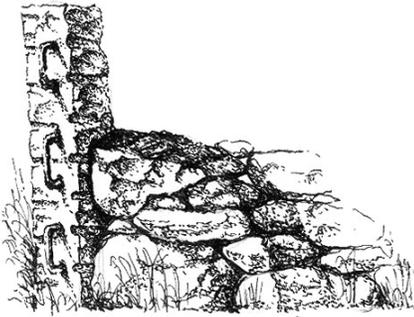
Stay tuned for more events like this in 2022.



Acton Conservation Trust
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Acton, MA 01720

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ACT Annual Meeting Guest Speaker:

Claudia Thompson

Founder of Grow Native

New Conservation Strategies for the 21st Century



Climate change and loss of biodiversity are the critical ecological challenges of our time. To address these crises, conservation efforts must become much broader and more inclusive than has been the norm, so that they engage virtually all citizens throughout our communities. Using her garden as a case study, Claudia will discuss valuable

lessons learned over several decades as she transformed her small Cambridge property into a landscape rich with habitat for birds, pollinators, and other wildlife. The growing native plant movement, with its focus on landscapes as ecological systems instead of gardens as adornments, is an essential component of 21st century conservation strategies.

Ms. Thompson founded Grow Native Massachusetts in 2010 and has been recognized nationally as a leader in the native plant movement. She has had an extensive career in the environmental sector, including past roles as Director of Education for the Appalachian Mountain Club, Director of Drumlin Farm for Mass Audubon, and serving for nine years on the board of the New England Wild Flower Society.

Save The Date
ACT Annual Meeting
Sunday, March 13, 2022
6:30 PM
Town Hall / Zoom

Please visit our website to register

www.actonconservationtrust.org

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