

HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.

NEWSLETTER



Volume XXXII Winter

December, 2009

A Word from the President *David Goldman*

Here it is almost the Christmas/Holiday season already and where has 2009 gone. As you read this, Thanksgiving with friends and family has been celebrated and from all of us at the Trust, we hope that you had a wonderful time with them. One of the many things I like to do after a Thanksgiving meal is to take a walk in one of the Trusts many properties to both enjoy the crisp fall air and to work off some of the great meal that was enjoyed.

This newsletter features an article written by one of our directors, Brian Garrett. It speaks to the wonders of enjoying a glorious sunset at the Zettek Overlook that is located on Overlook Road in the Hopkinton Highlands subdivision, off Saddle Hill Road. This location provides some great views on a clear day and if you are so inclined it provides a fantastic place to view the night sky. It is located just past 52 Greenwood Road, so please come and enjoy this location.

COMING SOON TO AN INTERNET WEBSITE NEAR YOU. The Hopkinton Area Land Trust is in the process of developing a new website that will provide you will all manner of information about our operations. The Trust will be posting trail maps, newsletters, on-going projects, videos and much more. It will also provide information about what the Trust does, such as land protection, stewardship of conservation lands, scholarship, and our work with potential eagle scouts and gold award girl scouts. Along with the new website the Trust will have a new Logo that better represents our identity of land protection and conservation.

As always, I must come to you with hat in hand, and plead for your support. We all suffering from the tough economic times, but if you think about it, the Trusts' open spaces in town provides some very real benefits to each of you. First, it provides open space land that is always open to you and your family for your fun and enjoyment (free of any charges). Second, by maintaining the open spaces, the Trust is helping to preserve and increase the value of your property in Hopkinton. With close to 700 acres of open space land in Trust ownership or under Conservation Restriction, **the Trust provides for the preservation of that rural character that we all say we want in Hopkinton. So please help support the Trust so that we can continue to provide this value to you, the residents. And remember, this is the end of the year and most of us are planning our "End-of-Year Donations".** Finally, let me wish each and every one of you a happy holiday season and a happy and healthy New Year. Thanks for the time you spent reading my letter and please enjoy the holiday season.

Very truly: *David Goldman*, President

PO BOX 56, WOODVILLE MA 01784

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Overlooking Fall Foliage in Hopkinton By Brian Garrett

I head for my car as the sun dips behind the tree line on a crisp autumn afternoon in Hopkinton. Minutes later I'm rounding the bend with the sun shining bright on the horizon. Welcome to a little known gem of a spot here in Hopkinton - the Zettek overlook.

The Zettek overlook is one of two great Hopkinton Area Land Trust properties in the Hopkinton Highlands II development off of Saddle Hill Road. The first is the Sands trail which is accessed from a gravel parking area just after you turn into the development onto Greenwood road. The Sands trail is a brisk walk over hilly terrain looking down into a deep ravine. A side trail to the right takes you to the top of saddle hill where Mount Wachusett can be seen on a clear day. While the Sands trail is one of my favorites here in Hopkinton, today I'm racing the sun as I continue on Greenwood drive towards the Zettek overlook.

The Zettek overlook is located a mile ahead on a promontory just past 52 Greenwood Drive. A few short steps to the top and the view to the West is spectacular. The brilliant reds and oranges of the fall foliage are lit up as the sun dips below the horizon. Warmed by the sun, I'm reminded of the beauty of this, and all of the great properties that HALT has protected over the years. Soothed by a deep breath of crisp fall air, I reminded of how HALT has worked with this, and other neighborhood associations, to protect and maintain open space in Hopkinton.

The Hopkinton Highlands II neighborhood association is a shining example of how HALT and property owners can work together. The association maintains the open space at the entrance of the development and here at the Zettek overlook. I'm pleased to report that they've done a great job. The split rail fence, steps and benches look natural as they blend into the native trees and shrubs. Together, we've ensured that open space remains accessible and natural. As a result, the open space has increased the value of this valuable asset for the property owners in the subdivision—and all of us who live here in Hopkinton.



As the air starts to chill and the sun dips below the horizon, I'm reminded of my last visit to the overlook on a late summer evening. The neighborhood association planted butterfly bushes along the top of the ridge in front of the split rail fence. Watching monarch butterflies feed on the bright purple flowers as the fading sun casts a red shadow on the horizon is a memory I'll cherish forever.

If you haven't visited the Zettek overlook, drop by for a visit around sunset. If you haven't walked one of the many great trails here in Hopkinton lately, make the time and be thankful that we live in a town where the beauty of nature surrounds us. Last but not least, if you've been considering a tax deductible donation to HALT this year, we thank you for your support.

Massachusetts Conservation Summary

From the beaches of Cape Cod on the Atlantic Ocean to the Berkshire Hills in the west, Massachusetts has a remarkably rich biological legacy for a small and highly populated state.

Rare Species and Characteristic Habitats

In the east, the glacial moraines and outwash plains of Cape Cod and southeastern Massachusetts are home to hundreds of Coastal Plain Ponds and thousands of acres of pitch pine/scrub oak woodlands, two globally rare natural communities. The rolling hills of central Massachusetts contain the "accidental wilderness" of the man-made Quabbin Reservoir and the tens of thousands of adjacent upland acres that protect this drinking-water supply for the Boston area.

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Just west of the Quabbin Reservoir, the Connecticut River flows south through the fertile agricultural valley left behind when Pleistocene-era Lake Hitchcock drained. The striking basalt ridges of Mt. Tom and the Holyoke Range rise a thousand feet above the middle of this flat valley, having resisted both the grinding glaciers and the erosive Connecticut River. These hard rock ridges support many rare plants on their circumneutral talus slopes and rock cliffs.

Farthest west, the Housatonic River meanders back and forth across the calcium-rich valley floor amongst the Berkshires hills. Calcareous fens and black ash/red maple/tamarack calcareous seepage swamps are but two of the small, yet highly significant, natural communities in this river valley, which supports numerous rare plants and animals found nowhere else in Massachusetts.

This diversity of ecosystems and geologic features in Massachusetts supports some 1,500 native vascular plant species, 400 native vertebrates, and uncounted thousands of invertebrate species, as well as more than 100 described natural communities. The water-willow stem-borer, a moth of southeastern Massachusetts, is found nowhere else on Earth. The beautiful Plymouth gentian enchants visitors to coastal plain ponds every summer when its large pink flowers dot the pond shorelines. Bald eagles and peregrine falcons, once extirpated as breeding birds from the state, now fledge from twenty or so nests every year. Even more strikingly, the wild turkey, hunted to extirpation in Massachusetts by the 1850s, is now a common inhabitant in much of the state.

Public and Private Conservation Efforts

Massachusetts residents have long valued and protected their state's landscape. About 20 percent of the state is protected from future development, in areas ranging from the 7,000-acre Blue Hills State Reservation in greater Boston, to the 450-acre High Ledges Sanctuary of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, overlooking the Deerfield River in western Massachusetts. The first land trust in the nation, The Trustees of Reservations, was founded in 1891 in Massachusetts, and is still a major force in land protection in the state today. In fact, one of Massachusetts' strengths is the lively and

cooperative network of conservation organizations and agencies all working to protect the landscape of the Commonwealth. These range from the major state agencies—the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife—to state-wide nonprofits (The Trustees of Reservations, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and others) to the more than one hundred local and regional land trusts across Massachusetts, as well as the federal Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service.

Threats

Despite this network of committed conservation partners, the biodiversity of Massachusetts is facing significant threats. Suburban sprawl, particularly within an hour's drive of Boston and on Cape Cod and the Islands, is consuming and impacting some 78 acres a day of the natural landscape. Suppression of natural processes, especially fire, is threatening exceptional natural communities such as pitch pine/scrub oak woodlands with succession to closed-canopy, less diverse forests. Demand for drinking water is causing the Ipswich River to run dry in some summers and disturbing the natural groundwater regime supporting rare plants on the shores of coastal plain ponds. Exotic invasive plants are not only springing up in disturbed areas, but are spreading into intact rich mesic forests and hickory-hop hornbeam woodlands.

Massachusetts' Future

These threats and challenges have sharpened awareness in Massachusetts for the need to pinpoint and prioritize the most important unprotected landscapes. Numerous organizations and individuals are identifying conservation targets and sounding calls to action throughout the commonwealth. These initiatives, coupled with the continued support and cooperation of its citizens, will ensure the preservation of Massachusetts' biodiversity for generations to come.

From www.landscape.org

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Take A Hike

By Brian Garrett

I've been noticing more and more people when I go for a hike on trails here in Hopkinton. That's great news in the short term, but I'm concerned about the future of trails and open space over the long term. Research indicates that a decline in hiking and backpacking is impacting the funding of conservation groups like the Hopkinton Area Land Trust.

A recently published paper in the PLoS One journal examined the impact of nature experience on the willingness to support conservation. Patricia Zaradic, Oliver Pergams and Peter Kareiva [http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0007367 - aff3](http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0007367-aff3) found that the time spent backpacking and hiking correlates with a willingness to fund one of four well known conservation groups, including the Sierra Club. The typical backpacker donates \$200 to \$300 per year after a lag of 11 or 12 years. Surprisingly, the more time someone spends fishing or sightseeing in natural areas, the less likely they are to support these particular conservation causes. The key message here is that the future of conservation funding depends on whether or not we—and our children—can find the time and space for a nice long hike.

The message is simple. Take a hike. Bring the kids. Bring the dog. Invite your neighbors and friends. The more we appreciate the abundance of nature here in our backyards, the more likely we are to care about preserving and protecting open space. More people on the trails leads to safer and better maintained trails. Well maintained open space in our neighborhood increase property values and reduces our tax burden. More open space preserves habitat for local wildlife, for us, and for our children. Research indicates that we can increase the future funding of conservation efforts with one simple step – take a nice long hike.

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. ~ Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac.

Receive HALT Newsletter Electronically

If you want to receive our newsletter electronically or be kept informed of special events sponsored by the Trust, please send an email to: HALT@hoplandtrust.org

You can take an important step for your community: Offer your leadership, political support, and charitable gifts to a land trust. Better yet, consider donating a conservation easement on your land. It is an investment in the future that offers attractive tax benefits and the satisfaction that the land you love will be protected forever.

APPLICATION AS a FRIEND OF HALT

Individual Friend	\$15 _____
Senior Friend	\$10 _____
Family Friend	\$25 _____
Associate Friend	\$50 _____
Supporting Friend	\$100 _____
Sustaining Friend	\$300 _____
Corporate Friend	\$500+ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

All contributions to HALT are deducible for income tax purposes.

Make checks payable to:

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