

# HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.

# NEWSLETTER



Volume XXXXI Winter

December 2014

## *A Word from the President*

*David Goldman*

These are exciting times in Hopkinton. The 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is coming ever closer next year and there will be big doings in town. However, to more serious issues, the 203 Pond Street definitive subdivision plan was approved in September. On November 12<sup>th</sup> the property owners presented a signed P&S to the Town initiating a 120 period where the town has the opportunity to activate a “Right-of-First-Refusal” under M.G.L. Ch. 61A. Prior to the P&S a group of organizations, HALT included, came together as the Whitehall Woods Alliance. HALT is supporting the effort and for the full story please take some time to read the next page of the newsletter.

The winter season, the holidays and the end of the year are fast approaching. The Trust would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every person and family in Hopkinton a **Happy and Healthy Holiday season.**

This year was very productive in our partnership with Boy Scout Troops 1 & 4. The Trust worked with the following Scouts from Troop 1, helping them to obtain their Eagle rank: Jake Krapf and Cameron Field. Still in project completion – Cyrus Freshman. The Trust worked with the following Scouts from Troop 4, helping them to obtain their Eagle rank: Ryan Trurano. Still in project completion Henry Vumbaca. Next year is shaping up to be as productive with 3 Scouts preparing their Eagle paper work for projects with the Trust. They are Matthew Paolucci, Trevor Perkins and Roderick Landreth. These projects are a win-win situation. The Trust gains trails and baseline documentation and the Scouts attain their Eagle rank. We applaud each and every young man for his efforts and his attainments.

Economic times are improving, but, the economic future is still an uncertain. The Trusts’ open space in town provides some very real benefits as you will see when you read on in the newsletter. By maintaining the open space, the Trust is helping to preserve and increase the value of your property in Hopkinton and maintain the rural character of the town. **We have closed on 1000 acres of open space land in the Trusts ownership or under Conservation Restrictions**, which provides for the preservation of that rural character we all want in Hopkinton. We are at the beginning of the holiday season and if you enjoy the use of the open space please remember to *help support the Trust, by becoming a member or by making a year end tax deductible donation*, so that we can continue to provide this value to you the residents. So have some fun, get outdoors and enjoy nature’s wonders. Find a geo-cache, take a walk in the Trusts properties, **welcome home**. For those that are members, look for a membership renewal letter in the mail soon after the receipt of this newsletter. **We need you help in our continuing efforts and support to preserve the open spaces.**

Respectfully: *David Goldman*, President

**PO BOX 56, WOODVILLE MA 01784**

# **HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.**

## **203 Pond Street Property - Help Save It**

The 40+ acre property at 203 Pond Street is the subject of a 12-lot Open Space Landscape Preservation Development permit, and it is expected that the owners will soon be notifying the Hopkinton Board of Selectmen that they have a signed purchase and sales agreement with a developer. Although this plan does include a set-aside of open space, many residents feel that there are compelling reasons to preserve the entire property, excepting the existing house. An effort is being led by several conservation groups to encourage the Town to purchase the property and protect it in its entirety.

Why spend money to purchase this property? Several Hopkinton planning documents have identified the parcel as the number one priority for the town to preserve. It is identified as a priority for preservation on the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Plan. It is unique in its critical location because it will form a link between Whitehall State Park and Upton State Forest. These two properties, once linked, will form a block of over 3,100 acres of conservation land extending as far as Grafton. Joining these properties together will create an extensive, protected corridor for recreation, wildlife and aquifer protection. The property itself is across from Lake Whitehall, and adjacent to the Miscoe, Warren, Whitehall Area of Critical Environmental Concern, serving as a buffer and providing supporting habitat.

A Mass Audubon study released in 2009 listed Hopkinton as #12 of the top twenty towns for growth in Massachusetts, and this did not take into account Legacy Farms and the Lumber Street project. Twelve homes on one site may seem like a relatively small impact relative to the size of these other current projects, but over time the impacts add up, both financially and in terms of quality of life for residents. While Hopkinton has done a tremendous job of preserving land using Community Preservation Funds in recent years, **the acres protected do not come close to offsetting the acres developed** in town, as the community comes closer and closer to full build out.

Protection of this property provides the residents of Hopkinton with the benefits nature provides – such as clean air and clean water – while reducing the long-term financial burden of providing services to additional residents in the outer reaches of the Town. A dollar invested now in open space will have immeasurable returns in the future. In addition, a valuable recreational

resource is expanded and enhanced, providing needed parking and access along Pond Street. Not only do residents benefit from this recreation amenity, but visitors from all over the state can enjoy the area, which currently accommodates many types of recreational uses.

The group leading the effort to see this property fully protected is called the Whitehall Woods Alliance, and is made up of the Friends of Whitehall, Hopkinton Area Land Trust, Friends of Upton State Forest, Bay State Trail Riders Association, New England Mountain Bike Association and Sudbury Valley Trustees. Recognizing that the full burden of cost must not fall entirely on the Town's shoulders for this acquisition, the group has in just a few weeks received pledges totaling \$55,000 towards a fundraising goal of \$150,000. Other anticipated funding sources include at least \$150,000 from the Division of Conservation and Recreation and Community Preservation Funds. In addition, the Alliance recommends that the Town apply for a Local Areas for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant from the state, because this property is likely to rank very high on the grant scoring system.

The landowners have indicated that they would prefer to remain in their existing home on the property for several years rather than to have the property developed; if purchased by the Town, the value of that house on a minimum-sized lot (estimated at \$400,000-\$450,000), would come out of the overall price of the land. That price will either be determined by appraisal or by a negotiated P&S between the landowners and a developer. The value of back-taxes owed under Chapter 61 as well as the affordable housing penalty imposed on the proposed development (estimated at \$60,000 and \$140,000, respectively) would also be backed out of the price.

**You can help by writing to letters of support to the Hopkinton Board of Selectmen and the Community Preservation Committee, urging them to put this to town vote in May 2015 or at a special town meeting.**

## **HALT Land Stewardship Program**

Land Stewards play a vital role in helping HALT care for over 1,000 acres of property. Twice a year, HALT Land Stewards visit assigned properties and report findings. HALT Land Stewards collect information relating to

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public access, property line encroachment, natural resources and habitat conditions, and property uses and

maintenance needs. We use the information for reference in deciding best management practices. HALT is still in need of volunteers. Please contact either Jeff Furber via Email at [MFurber@aol.com](mailto:MFurber@aol.com) or Dave Goldman at [goldmand@mindspring.com](mailto:goldmand@mindspring.com) for more information.

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## **Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit**

In 2009, Governor Deval Patrick signed the “Land Conservation Incentives Act” establishing a Massachusetts state income tax credit for land owners who donate qualifying conservation land to a municipality, the Commonwealth or Land Trust. The MA Conservation Land Tax Credit program provides substantial tax benefit to Massachusetts taxpayers which can reduce income and estate taxes, The Benefits to qualifying taxpayers under the ACT are as follows:

- Gifts of land may be made by deed or conservation restriction, as long as they are permanently protected;
- Tax credit is valued at 50% of the appraised fair market value of the gift;
- Tax credit is limited to \$50,000 per gift;
- Tax credit cannot exceed the donor’s annual state income tax liability; however, it may be carried forward for 10 consecutive years; and
- The tax credit is a Massachusetts tax credit that may be taken despite of any charitable deductions claimed on the taxpayer’s federal income tax return for the same qualified donations of certified lands.

The Act provides taxpayers with a real economic incentive for land stewardship and conservation efforts. The tax credit will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. If you are interested in learning more about the program, please contact HALT at 508-435-6578. HALT has experience in 2014 obtaining such a tax credit for the donation of 6.6 acres of land by the Austin Powder

Company. The land was combined with the Deneen property in the Lake Maspenock area and is protected by a Conservation Restriction.

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## **Deneen – Scarlata Property**

One of the newest parcels obtained by HALT is the Deneen –Scarlata property adjacent to Lake Maspenock. Although this property is only 5.53 acres, it allows Hopkinton residents access to large amount of open space in Upton on Peppercorn Hill.

The trail begins on the right side on an easement of 50 yards or so along a driveway extending south from Deneen Street. Continuing further down the driveway beyond the trailhead is private property and is not open to the public. The HALT property extends to the west of the driveway/easement and around the houses at the end of Deneen Street, and also extends east of the driveway entrance, which will be made accessible to the public later. This land was gifted to HALT by Jean Scarlata and family, who is a lifelong Hopkinton resident. According to Jean, her father John, was also born in Hopkinton, and helped develop Oakhurst Road around 1934, resulting in a series of summer cabins lining Lake Maspenock, many of which have been winterized. This was back when Hopkinton was a rural town that was rarely in the public eye, except for the Boston Marathon, and long before interstate Rt. 495 was built in the 1960s. Adjacent to the Deneen property is a 6.6 acre tract previously owned by Austin Powder Co, which has also donated the land to HALT, after having used it to store dynamite for many years.

After receiving approval from the Conservation Commission, this past fall, Henry Vumbaca, as an Eagle Scout Project in Scout Troop 4 (Scoutmaster Edwin Clark), built a bridge over an intermittent stream making it easier to hike the trails to the top of Peppercorn Hill when there is a lot of groundwater. After a few hundred yards, one leaves the HALT property, and traverses private property, owned by Paul T. Doherty and Angel M. Doherty Realty Trust, allowing some public access. Hikers should thank these landowners for the privilege of hiking up Peppercorn Hill in this direction. Continuing the ascent, after making a left turn, the trail eventually crosses onto a parcel (still in Hopkinton) owned by the Upton Conservation Commission. Heading further south, the trail goes into Upton proper. Soon one

# **HOPKINTON AREA LAND TRUST INC.**

reaches the summit of Peppercorn Hill, which stands out about 10 feet on the west side of the trail. Continuing further south, be on the lookout for a spur trail heading out to the west, which soon reaches an overlook point, where one can see for miles to the west. Although Peppercorn Hill (in Upton) is one of the highest places near Hopkinton, even in winter time, it is barely possible to glimpse Lake Maspenock to the east, while in summer, leaves occlude this view. Returning to the main trail, one may continue further south and descend to the Crockett Street trailhead in Upton.

According to history tab at the web site of the Lake Maspenock Preservation Association, Lake Maspenock, which was originally known as North Pond by some Milford residents, may have been first dammed in 1793 to provide reliable water for downstream mills. "The name Maspenock comes from the Nipmuc dialect of Eastern Algonquin, which means 'The Waters at the Base of the Great Hill', a direct reference to the steep rise of Peppercorn Hill."(<http://www.lmpa.org/about-lmpa/history/>). The dam was improved in 1833 or 1834, creating the lake in near its present form.

According to the Town of Upton Conservation web site, ([http://www.upton.ma.us/pages/UptonMA\\_BComm/conservation/townland/index](http://www.upton.ma.us/pages/UptonMA_BComm/conservation/townland/index)), "The Peppercorn Conservation Area is located on the east side of town near North Pond. The 283 acres area is largely forested with oaks, maple and pine. It features cold water streams, wetlands, vernal pools, scenic vistas, and stone walls. The western slope of Peppercorn Hill is a remarkable jumble of boulders deposited by glaciers more than 10 thousand years ago", the shape of which may be responsible for the name Peppercorn Hill. "A National Grid power line easement passes through the property and shrub habitat maintained by the easement provides excellent songbird and butterfly habitat. Trails can be accessed from Crockett Road and from Taft Street via the Snow Family Conservation Area."

Our livelihood is ultimately tied to the food we eat, water we drink and places where we recreate. That's why we have to promote responsibility and conservation when it comes to our natural resources.

Mark Udall, Senator for Colorado

**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.**

## **Become a Member of HALT**

Family	\$30 _____
Sentinel	\$50 _____
Centurion	\$100 _____
Steward	\$250 _____
Protector	\$500 _____
Conservator	\$1,000 _____
President's Circle	\$1,000+ _____

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

All contributions to HALT are deductible for income tax purposes.

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Hopkinton Area Land Trust, Inc.  
PO Box 56  
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508-435-6578

Or email: [info@hopkintonarealandtrust.org](mailto:info@hopkintonarealandtrust.org)

Choose your membership level now at:  
[www.hopkintonarealandtrust.org](http://www.hopkintonarealandtrust.org)



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