



Pascommuck *post*

Summer 2006

We Can Save Echodale Farm

With your help



Over the past several months, Echodale Farm (PCT's current and most ambitious ever land protection project) has been in the news. In case you missed it, or just can't seem to get enough about protecting open space in Easthampton, here are some things you should know:

- **165 acre** Echodale Farm, cited as a top priority by both Pascommuck and the City, in Easthampton's updated (2005) Open Space and Recreation Plan, is on Park Hill Road (off Oliver St.) and is **the largest working farm in Easthampton. 86 acres are cropland.** The remainder is woodland, wetlands, meadows and stream corridor (along Bassett Brook, a tributary of the Manhan River) habitat. Approximately 75% of the property is located within a state-designated Core Habitat Area. The diversity of habitats here supports a wide variety of plant and wildlife species, including some that are of conservation concern.
- The protection of Echodale Farm will create a block of 400 acres of contiguous protected land, adding to a network of more than 600 acres of protected land, a significant habitat corridor spanning Easthampton and Northampton.





- We are working in partnership with the City of Easthampton and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to permanently protect the property from development and retain it as farmland and open space. We anticipate that a portion of the property will provide much needed public access, for active and passive recreational opportunities.
- Over 100 housing units were proposed to be built here, before we got involved.
- The goal of the project is to ensure that this wonderful land will be protected in perpetuity. Funding will be sought from the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program to protect the high-quality cropland, and a portion of the woodlands and wetlands will be protected as conservation land held by the City.
- The land acquisition and associated project costs total \$3.15 million! But if you think that's awfully expensive, think again. The addition of those new housing units would demand an increase in city services like police/fire, schools, road maintenance, water/sewer, etc. Over time, those continuing costs would surely exceed the one-time cost of protecting the property. Oh, there's also the increase in cars/traffic. Get the picture?

preservation

Over the past decade, Pascommuck has played a vital role in the protection of two other Park Hill properties - the Sena and Micka orchards. We've all seen the impact of development pressures on Easthampton. The loss of farmland along East St. is but one example. Echodale Farm is a critical link in the protection of open space in this special part of the City. When we called on you for support in the past, you responded.

Now, Pascommuck, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land, is gearing up for a campaign to raise \$300,000 from individuals, businesses, and foundations before the end of 2006, to support the protection of this critical property.

With your support, we can make it happen!
You *can* make a difference!

Please contact Marty Klein, to discuss how you can contribute to this truly important effort.
Phone - 529-9594 or email - forager7@yahoo.com

Conserving Easthampton *Protecting Ourselves*

As volunteers on Pascommuck's Board, we spend much of our time working to protect open space in town—clearly, we consider this activity as more than a pastime. We, along with many of the city's decision-makers, sense the urgency behind our work. Fundamentally, every piece of land protected is another investment in the long-term sustainability of Easthampton, for without the benefits protected lands provide, this city would be no place to live. When understood this way, conservation is not some outlandish liberal plot. Rather, it is truly conservative: it seeks to maintain the quality and character of our city for our children and ourselves.

The Echodale Farm on Park Hill is a prime example of the benefits of conservation, which is why the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the City, and PCT have joined efforts to protect it. On May 20, PCT and TPL hosted a walking tour of the farm, which some two-dozen people attended. The walk illuminated many of the values of this property, including its diversity of wildlife habitats, agricultural productivity, historic importance, and rural aesthetic quality.

While all of these attributes are worthy of attention, I will focus here on the wildlife values. (Suffice to say, for now, that essays could be written on any of the other attributes, too.) What good comes of protecting habitat for bobolinks and bears, and every other creature native to Easthampton? Functional wildlife habitat—that is, an area that provides the resources and conditions that allow wildlife species to survive and reproduce—can be a scarce commodity even in western Massachusetts, and it is continually threatened by development pressure. But the ability of our fields, forests, and waters to provide functional habitat for a full suite of species is critical.

One reason wildlife species are important to this area is because their presence in a large measure reflects our human quality of life. To use one local example, bald eagles once faced extinction, and it was rare to see one in the continental United States. Now, due to protection and restoration efforts, these birds are common enough that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in the process of removing them from the endangered species list. Bald eagles can today be seen soaring over Mt. Tom, the Connecticut River, and the Oxbow. Few people who have seen a local bald eagle regret the effort that it has taken to restore this bird's population in the Connecticut River valley. Yet it was a cultural choice—the banning of DDT—that gave bald eagles a chance to make a comeback in the wild. And it was a smart choice for people as well: DDT is a probable carcinogen, a known endocrine disrupter, and causes reproductive and developmental harm in humans—it is nothing that should be spread haphazardly in the environment.

The bald eagles, turtles, insects, beavers, and other wildlife species that are citizens of Easthampton are here because we have made choices that allow them to survive. These same choices—protecting our surface and aquifer water quality, preserving forests and other open space, planning residential and commercial developments, and limiting our use of agricultural or industrial chemicals, for examples—allow us to live healthy, productive lives, too. If we make decisions that cause our local wildlife to die out, I believe those decisions will also cause our neighbors and us to suffer.

Tom Lautzenheiser



Spring Plant Sale Success

A little seed is planted in our minds in February.....Let's set a date! Spring is coming! We try to pick a date as close to Earth Day as possible, but with a bit warmer weather (hopefully!). We make plans and watch as they start to come to fruition, digging and potting, labeling, pricing, publicity, and finally transportation of plants and setting up the tent. This day, May 6th, was a bright sunny morning. Our hopes were high that this sale would be a good one and that the long hours of preparation would be rewarded. The big red tent in the parking lot at Big E's Foods cheerfully announced our presence to the public as we started setting up. Business was booming as usual, right from the very beginning.

The Annual Spring Plant sale is a much anticipated event by local gardeners who eagerly arrive an hour or so early to see what we have to offer. They know that our plants, trees and shrubs are all locally grown so they will do well in their own gardens, and the prices can't be beat! We had several very generous and hard working volunteers and board members digging, potting, and pricing donated perennials from their gardens. The perennials, trees, and shrubs, were all whisked off to new homes, as were the many stepping stones which were fashioned by Jack Superson, Mike's brother.

We raffled off a great wheelbarrow full of garden goodies, made and donated by Sue Bishop, which also included several items donated by Manchester's. This was won by Cheryl Messier of Easthampton. There was a Silent Auction of two beautiful wooden garden Obelisks, which were made and donated by Mike Superson of Big E's. A high bidder from Florence won both of these items.

Several information sheets were available about our newest project-Echodale Farm, which is located on Park Hill Road in Easthampton. Pascommuck Conservation Trust and the Trust for Public Land are working together to save this beautiful parcel from development. We are preserving much of this land for agricultural use and nature trails for public, passive enjoyment.

At the end of our plant sale, we realized that this was once again a GREAT SUCCESS. The few remaining plants were packed up and brought back to John Bator's house for safe-keeping. Another Spring Plant Sale had come and gone... Almost time to start planning for our next event- The Fall Festival! Hope to see you all there!

Our most sincere thanks to everyone who contributed, in any way, to make this sale so successful. We appreciate each and every one of you.

Dawn Ackley

Annual Award

Jeff Tenerowicz, a high school senior has been chosen the winner of the

Edward J. Dwyer Memorial Award of \$100.00 from PCT for his continuing interest in conservation.

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Annual Meeting

The Pascommuck Conservation Trust Annual Meeting attracted a large crowd to the Mt. Tom meeting room at the Lathrop Communities. Approximately one hundred people attended the event on February 21 at 7:00 pm. The attendees participated in the annual business meeting and were then rewarded by a fabulous presentation by a renowned local professor, geologist and lecturer, Rich Little. The Trust has a history of presenting some of the area's most knowledgeable and fascinating speakers in order to entice people to attend the annual meeting. This time was no exception and the strategy succeeded admirably.

The meeting opened with a review of the Treasurer's Report by Shirley Smith and the Clerk's report by Steve Donnelly. This was followed by President John Bator's always entertaining review of the accomplishments of last year and our goals for next year. The Trust has been very active in land protection and property maintenance over the years, and the list of accomplishments and the attendant list of things to do seem to grow exponentially.

The following Board Members were elected/reelected by acclamation: Amy Cahill, Tom Lautzenheiser, Lydia Omasta, Shirley Smith, Sue Walz, Doug Wheat.

Changes to the PCT bylaws were proposed to conform to modern standards and practices within the land trust community. The proposed changes were outlined at the meeting, and a written copy was available for review. The amended bylaws were passed unanimously.

John Bator presented a gift of appreciation from the Board of Directors to Peter Ogulewicz for all of the work he has done for the Trust over the years. The gift was a plaque with some beautiful pictures of PCT protected land and a moving inscription. John also publicly thanked Gerrit Stover for his continued contributions to the Trust since his retirement from the Board.

Marty Klein gave a brief and effective presentation explaining our new fundraising drive for the preservation of Echodale Farm. Marty featured a number of slides and photographs that imparted a great visual enhancement to his presentation. This will be our major fundraising endeavor in 2006. We are partnering with the Trust for Public Land to raise \$300,000.00 to save this important farmland and wild-life habitat. Read more about this important initiative in this issue.

Our feature presentation was "Fantastic Landscapes/Connections" by Richard Little, retired professor of Geology from Greenfield Community College. We discovered how scenic landscapes from Hawaii, Alaska, the Canadian Rockies, and the Western United States relate to the geologic history of the Connecticut Valley. The connections surprised and amazed the audience, as many natural wonders are present at Mt. Tom and the Pioneer Valley. Many a day trip will be inspired from this presentation. This was another successful event for the Pascommuck Conservation Trust in a long history of entertaining and thereby educating the public in the values of preservation of our natural heritage.

Steve Donnelly

New Age Alternatives to Old World Politics

Clearly, the way we've dealt with land issues in the past has resulted in a hodgepodge of ill-planned, rampant development. This simply won't be acceptable for the future. Perhaps it's time to remove our rose-colored glasses, get our heads out of the sand, and come up with some innovative plans for restructuring land management on all levels. After all, our earth is a finite place, and if we don't change our outlook soon, we will surely run out of room and resources. Thus, culling from what we know works at present, and introducing some promising new options, let's strive to become better stewards of the earth- finally.

One major concern is our regard for land in the first place. Rather than thinking of it as a mere commodity, we must think of it as a sacred natural resource to be treated with respect and dealt with wisely. In the beginning of history, it's inconceivable to assume that any supernatural entity in their right mind would have entrusted humanity with the responsibility of land ownership. Most likely early man just adopted the principal of "staking claim". When Alley Oop needed a dwelling, he just clubbed Golley Gooley over the head, and took over his cave. Well, things haven't changed much since then – Alley is now a developer, and big bucks are used as leverage instead of a club.

A cutting-edge group of thinkers/doers based in Great Barrington, the E.F. Schumacher Society, offers a unique approach to land ownership – community land trusts. This concept works well in large cities or small towns. Boston's Dudley Street neighborhood, for example, has been transformed from a deteriorating section into a distinct urban village. All land ownership is held by a carefully selected land trust which involves neighborhood members in the process of planning the use of that land. Residents purchase homes while leasing the land on a long-term basis. Structures have a cap on resale prices, thus remaining affordable to future residents. People own their structures, while long-term leasing enables the community to own land and plan for incorporating agriculture, gardens, open space, parks, recreation, and much more. With community- owned land, large unplanned, unrestricted development is reduced, replaced by village-style neighborhoods.

Implementing a truly holistic master plan is a must for each community, and acts as a strong guideline for nearly every aspect of community life. Combining the best of the old and new, it would include revised zoning laws, transfer of development rights, open space/greenbelts, agriculture, community gardens, recreation, historic preservation, low income housing, promotion of small business instead of strip malls/big box stores, and encourage participation in the Community Preservation Act. Hopefully, the proposed Community Planning Act will eventually kick in; if executed properly, it would revive the state's archaic, outdated zoning laws, which have been responsible for an overabundance of strip development, congestion, and destruction of open space and wetlands.

As a final step in the quest for a more sensible approach to land management, stricter, uniform wetland laws need to be implemented, and enforced in all cases. State and local regulations often coordinate poorly, and townships can differ considerably in their treatment of wetlands/waterways. Ideally, enough distance from development should be allowed to insure undisturbed greenbelts along streams, while wetlands are to be routinely off limits, period! Hopefully the city's revitalized "Master Plan" will address these issues.

John R. Bator, President- PCT

A Profile of PCT Vice President, Sue Walz

Sue has been on the Board of Directors of the PCT since 1998. She is currently the Vice President, and is a member of the Fundraising Committee which will soon begin a campaign to raise \$300,000.00 to preserve Echodale Farm, on Park Hill Rd.

Sue is a life long resident of Easthampton and taught kindergarten at both Maple and Center schools for 34 years, retiring in 2003. Sue estimates that she taught over 1,200 of Easthampton's kindergarten children. Part of Sue's devotion to the Trust comes from her desire to see the children of Easthampton grow up in a community that retains open space, scenic beauty and access to the natural world. Many of Sue's fondest memories of her own childhood are of playing in the woods, looking for wildflowers and mushrooms, and of walking on Mt. Tom.

Because of her interest in the environment, she was given a lifetime membership in the PCT. Sue had always admired the work that the PCT did and was a supportive rather than an active member; contributing to the Plant & Bake Sale each year, and attending an occasional PCT event. In 1997, however, this all changed. The land which is now Ol' Turtle Farm was threatened by development. This land is literally in Sue's backyard. She does not apologize for the concept of "not in my backyard" because the entire world is someone's backyard. Sue feels very strongly that everyone needs a connection to nature and open space in their neighborhood and community. Land is often preserved because a committed group of people value a particular parcel of land. Through her work with the neighbors, the PCT and the Trustees of Reservations, Sue experienced what miracles a committed, determined, hardworking, small group of people can accomplish over time.

At this time, Sue was pleased to be asked to become a member of the Board of Directors of PCT. At her first meeting Sue says that she immediately felt a connection to the other Board Members. She also likes that the Board is a diverse group of people in many ways- varying levels of expertise, occupations, ages, etc., with all sharing a concern for the environment, the preservation of open space, the aquifer, and the quality of life in Easthampton.

By being a Board Member, in Sue's words, "I have learned so much about environmental issues and land preservation. The work that I do for the Trust feels valuable and valued. I feel so positive about my various contributions to the PCT. I highly recommend to anyone interested in protecting the environment, that they seriously consider volunteering or become a board member of this very worthwhile organization."

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Board

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in memoriam

Ed Dwyer, one time President, and more recently Treasurer of our Trust for many years, passed away April 19, 2006. He fought a valiant battle against a brain tumor for nearly two years and we are all greatly saddened by his passing. Ed was our dear and true friend in so many ways.

Ed was a man of many talents, though he would be the last one to mention any of them. He worked very hard to protect not only our historical heritage but also our natural resources. His newspaper columns in the Daily Hampshire Gazette were a shining example of his dedication to provide others with the information on how our town was formed and a general overview of life at that time. He spent countless hours researching all information and could speak of it from the “top of his head,” such was his desire to pass this knowledge on to the public.

Upon hearing about Ed’s passing, one of our former board members had this comment to make about Ed. “Ed was always a kind and gentle man in my dealings with him. He provided me with much assistance as I volunteered on several boards in town. I truly believe that Easthampton has lost its greatest historian of our current time. I don’t know how his shoes will be filled”.

Ed gave just such dedication to the Trust also. He was always there to offer a helping hand at any PCT project, and to give assistance wherever needed. When I think of Ed Dwyer, these words come to mind immediately, “He gave of himself always, quietly and without fanfare”.

The Trust is rededicating our parcel off Terrace View to Edward J. Dwyer, to honor his memory.