



# *Pascommuck post*

*Spring 2007*

## *A Mission Truly Accomplished*



When the campaign to save Echodale Farm commenced in early 2006, I must confess that I had some doubts whether this project could attain anywhere close to the \$300,000 needed to protect the property, thus allowing this agricultural gem to continue as Easthampton's largest working farm. Indeed, at that time the concept of "Mission Accomplished" seemed more like "Mission Improbable" to me. Ah, but that was before the saints came marching in, so to speak, and slowly, steadily, miracles tall and small began to occur.

We realized immediately that we would need two things: a professional organization to coordinate the campaign, and an aggressive fund raising committee. Fortunately for us, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national non-profit conservation group, specializing in helping communities protect open space by negotiating land purchases and securing funding, public and private, to conserve important land previously had been requested to aid the cause by Mayor Michael Tautznik and our own Gerrit Stover. With significant private funds already committed to the project, and confidence that the project was a

# preservation success

good fit for state funding programs, TPL agreed to partner with PCT to raise the balance of the needed private funds locally.

Likewise, a fund raising committee was quickly formed, consisting of Board members Marty Klein (Chair) Shirley Smith (Treasurer, who often took on many other duties as needed), Bill Burgart, Roger Anderson, Sue Walz and Doug Wheat. Ann Hallstein, Dr. Michael Posner, and Rick Pierik also volunteered their expertise – we now had the leadership and team to take us all the way! Committee members went through training/pep talk meetings, compiled a list of prospective donors, and then started to make contacts. Over 500 donors from Easthampton and the surrounding area would eventually come forth to help us accomplish our ambitious goal!

Special events also played an important role in getting the word out. An art show of local artists at the Nashawannuck Gallery (compliments of Mai Stoddard, with refreshments compliments of Big E's), Marty Klein's tours of the farm and his radio/TV appearances (Mr. Personality): an Art Drive sponsored by Eastmont Custom Framing (compliments of Jean-Pierre Pasche): a campaign close out party at the Apollo Grill (courtesy of Casey Douglas of the Apollo) all contributed to our success. Posters and fliers were circulated and a banner displayed around town.

As the Echodale campaign winds down and final closure takes place, I personally wish to thank everyone who donated their time and/or treasures to this remarkably successful endeavor- the many Foundation Grants received, which gave us the added boost in our early fund raising; so many local businesses, various institutions and schools, a local bank, and of course the contributions of so many private individuals, near and far made this a success. Let's not forget the Trust for Public Land, especially Project Manager Katherine Cooper and fund raising Consultant Jen Patrick- without them, we would not have made it. It was their words of encouragement, week after week, that kept us all on track!

Our sincere appreciation also goes to the CPA committee and the City Council for approving up to \$650,000. towards Echodale, and to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts APR program, our terrific fund raising committee, and the scores of artists who created their masterpieces for this project. This was truly a community supported effort!

Now, if you'll excuse this Doubting Thomas, I'll be off to my "Power of Positive Thinking" seminar....

*John Bator, President*



# Pascommuck Conservation Trust

## Annual Meeting

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The Pascommuck Conservation Trust (PCT) held its annual meeting to a large audience at Lathrop Communities in Easthampton on February 20. The theme for our twenty-fifth anniversary meeting was “Why We Care”. The keynote presentation of the night by three PCT stalwarts, John Bator, Tom Lautzenheiser, and Marty Klein, illustrated this theme beautifully with words and pictures.

John presented a certificate of appreciation from Mayor Tautznik of Easthampton to Bill Burgart for twenty-five years of devoted service to the environment and to the Pascommuck Conservation Trust. Bill and the mayor are both founding members of this organization. John read the text of the certificate and Bill gave a gracious and humorous acceptance speech in return.

Marty gave a brief summary and status of the Echodale project. John thanked him for leading this highly successful fund raising campaign. Thanks to this difficult and time-consuming effort a large and beautiful orchard in Easthampton will be protected as farmland forever.

After the business portion of the meeting concluded, John presented a beautiful slide show featuring a general overview of PCT properties and highlighting Brickyard Brook and Echodale in more depth.

Tom followed with an aerial view of the Trust properties and the city. He emphasized areas of concern for future preservation efforts and asked the question; “Where do we go from here?”

Marty rounded out the evening with a photo show entitled “Why I Care” which featured many professional quality photographs of Easthampton and beyond.

The program was a resounding success and showed that the Trust need not go to outside sources to present an informative and entertaining presentation. Many of John and Marty’s photographs elicited audible reaction from the audience and Tom’s aerial views elicited many comments and questions from the crowd.



# Early Spring Impressions at Old Pascommuck Conservation Area

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On the afternoon of March 30, 2007, barely into the spring, I take a late afternoon walk along the Manhan River on our Old Pascommuck/ Florence E Smith trail (directions below). Like many of our properties, this is an under-appreciated and beautiful place to experience nature, a few minutes from your home.

We're fortunate in Easthampton to have a fascinating type of habitat – the floodplain forest, which, like many others, has become increasingly scarce, largely owing to development. Much of the Manhan River flowing through the City, emptying into the CT River Oxbow, is flanked by this feature.

What makes it so special? The forest and the various plants that thrive here must be able to survive being periodically flooded (with no oxygen in the soil) when water levels rise (like now or following heavy rains). Trees such as the sycamore, silver maple, cottonwood, willow, box elder, and a few others have successfully adapted to such stresses. So have ostrich, cinnamon and other ferns, horsetails, red osier dogwoods, poison ivy and several other plants that colonize the forest

floor. This forest buffers and filters the floodwaters. In its absence, the floods would extend out much further into the landscape.

Our trail is easy to follow. It's mostly high and dry, paralleling the river. I like to walk off the trail sometimes, to get closer to the water. See the less seen. This time of year, and late fall through winter are the best times to do that, as the poison ivy hasn't leafed out yet. Influenced by the spring flood levels on the CT River, the Manhan has now spread out, so it's more like a big lake, gently flowing into the surrounding lands. Water, water everywhere! I stand at its edge. The ground here is littered with dead leaves and the remains of last year's plants, in addition to all manner of flotsam and jetsam deposited by the receding waters. I can hear Rte. 91 off to my right. Once the trees leaf out, they'll act as a muffler against this intrusion. Noise and water filters. Trees! Cool!

A tufted titmouse announces its presence, repeating the mating call that returned to its throat a few short weeks ago. I see deer, coyote and raccoon tracks in the mud amidst the dead leaves. Red silver maple flowers are just beginning to open overhead in contrast to the bare branches they grace. There's a small spider in front of me, trying to span distant branches with a silken line. First web of the year, little one?

I walk over to an impressive (10 foot circumference?) sycamore at the edge of the water. At its base is a large hole, a welcome refuge for raccoons and others. In the mud nearby, I see tracks where a beaver has exited the water. I continue on and see several trees at and above the floodplain that have been partially chewed by the beavers. They favor black birches here. Perhaps it's the wintergreen-flavored sap. Freshens their breath, I spose. Nothing like oak breath when you greet the wife and kids in the lodge. Ugh!

It's serene and sublime here. No spectacular views, but much to experience. I liken this time of year to the first trimester of a pregnancy. Much is happening, growing, moving...unseen for now. Very soon, all this will change and spring in all its glories, will dominate the landscape. In another couple of weeks, the ferns' fiddleheads will burst forth along with the rest of the greenery and this largely grey and brown scene will be transformed. I urge you to visit this special place.

To get here, park on East St. by the Old Pascommuck signs and follow the trail down, under the bridge spanning the bike path. Or, from the bike path, park your bike at our rack where there's a sign for our trail. Visit our website, if you'd like a trail map.

*Marty Klein*

*signs of spring*





# Spring Plant Sale Soon

## PCT UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars! The Pascommuck Conservation Trust will be celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year with a diverse slate of upcoming events. Here's a partial listing available at press time.

- **On May 5 come to our spring plant sale** for some of the best bargains you will find anywhere, from 8:00 AM to noon. This event is held every year at Big E's parking lot on Union Street. It draws many people who know from past experience that they can find unusual plants at bargain basement prices. Different plants at low prices with proceeds to benefit open space in Easthampton, a win-win for everyone involved!
- We will hold a **nature walk** at the Old Pascommuck property on East Street on Sunday, May 20 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM. This beautiful property has well maintained nature trails that abut the Manhan River and the bike trail. Our experienced and knowledgeable naturalists will guide you through a tour of some of the hidden treasures of Easthampton that few people ever experience.
- In late spring we will be dedicating and renaming the former Terrace View Conservation Area in loving honor of our long time Treasurer, Edward Dwyer, who passed away last year. The Edward Dwyer Conservation Area will undergo a major facelift this spring courtesy of the Boy Scouts of America. Come for a guided tour of our new and refurbished nature trails in this secluded section of Easthampton. Exact details of date and time will be publicized soon.
- Join us at the High School on **September 22 for our annual plant sale** at the Easthampton Fall Festival. This will be a one-day event this year instead of two, so plan to come early for the best plant bargains.

The  
Edward Dwyer  
Conservation  
Area

recognition

# Pomeroy Meadows Conservation Area

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The air is full of the twittering of birds as we lock the car. Spring has sprung and the smell of new beginnings fills our senses with anticipation. Each walk is an adventure; you never know what you may see, hear or discover. My father, always up for adventure, has agreed to come with me this morning. He brings his fishing pole and worms since I had told him we'd be walking along the Manhan River. As we traipse down to the river, the birds scold us for disturbing their peaceful morning. Sparrows, nuthatches and chickadees, too numerous to count are busy in the tall grasses and invasive roses. We reach the river and note that it's a bit cloudy from spring sediment washing downstream. It still is beautiful though. Standing next to my Dad as he tosses his line in, I can remember being in this moment so many time in years past. There is something so relaxing about watching the river swirl by, listening and watching...for nothing...and everything.

We see that the beavers have been very busy; they don't get to relax as we do, I guess. A partridge is startled from the undergrowth by us, and we are happy to have seen it. The path along the river is not as worn as it was on my previous trip here, but it's still visible. We follow the gentle curves of the trail as it follows the water. There are so many beaver trails and signs, but no dam in sight. We find either a young beaver skull or a muskrat skull and are amazed by the length of the teeth. My Dad pockets them to show my Mom later on.

When a large branch breaks on the other side of the river, we watch with anticipation for something to appear. We are hoping for a deer or a moose, but it's only a large hawk that rises and soars over us. I envy his ease of transport as I keep getting snagged by rose thorns. Our next spotting is a red-winged blackbird; it flies from the edge of the river back to the tall grasses area. This is a great place to birdwatch. I hope to return with binoculars and a bird book. Dad has given up on catching a fish- none are biting today. As we



retrace our steps to head back, a kingfisher chatters by us overhead. This is the bird's domain and we are lucky to have shared it with them for a short time.

*Dawn Ackley*

# After Echodale: Identifying Conservation Priorities in Easthampton

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After a significant effort, it is natural to rest, and to reflect on the lessons learned. This time, far from being slothful, is a time of gathering new energy and focus for the next engagement. Thus, on the heels of the success of the Echodale Farm conservation campaign, PCT is reviewing the options for future land protection projects in Easthampton.

The threat of imminent development often forces us to reactively protect land. Beyond threat, though, PCT considers many features as we try to optimize our conservation efforts, including the conservation targets an area contains or supports, its size and configuration, its location in the City, and its relationship to other conservation lands. Echodale Farm is exemplary in all of these respects: the conservation targets it contains includes farmland, rare species and other wildlife habitat, grass and shrublands, and wetlands and streams; it is a large parcel adjacent to existing conserved land; and its protection ensures that a link in the wildlife corridor between the Manhan River and Northampton, via Bassett Brook, is maintained. Looking at these and other features throughout the City, PCT has created a list of protection priorities. Broadly, these priorities include:

- **Protecting the Manhan River and its tributaries**

The Manhan River and its tributaries are the surfacewater expression of the Barnes Aquifer, the only source of drinking water for Easthampton. Incompatible development along the river and tributary streams could destroy this irreplaceable resource, as well as contribute to flooding and impair one of the City's most important wildlife habitats.

- **Protecting remaining large, undeveloped blocks, using existing protected land as cores where possible**

Few opportunities for preserving large remnants of Easthampton's natural forest cover remain in town, yet they exist. Further, protecting land adjacent to existing conservation areas frequently offers more benefits than protecting an isolated parcel, such as by reducing edge effects.

- **Maintain or enhance connectivity between protected lands**

Even the largest conservation lands in Easthampton, the Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary and the Mt. Tom State Reservation, are not in themselves large enough to support many of our native wildlife species. It is critical that minimally developed corridors connect these and other conservation lands; these connections are particularly tenuous in a city developing as rapidly as Easthampton.





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- **Conserve prime farmland**

The conversion of prime agricultural soils to residential or other uses is a tremendous loss to Easthampton’s culture, heritage, and food economy/ecology. Development in these areas should be avoided, or minimized where unavoidable; consequently, development should be denser or should reuse previously developed areas where possible.

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a critical time for conservation in Massachusetts. Within a few years, many of the opportunities for meaningful conservation—efforts that truly protect resources, wildlife corridors, and intact ecosystems—will either have been taken, or will have been lost. This is the “closing window” of opportunity for land protection, as described by the Massachusetts Audubon Society. This closing window does not mean that conservation efforts will not continue into the future, but that the most significant decisions are being made today. PCT, and other land trusts like us, must target our conservation efforts to achieve the greatest results, rather than working to protect land on a reactionary basis.

This year is a particularly good time to be thinking strategically about land protection in Easthampton, as the City is in the process of updating its Master Plan. The Master Plan is the document that describes a vision for the community, and that makes considered recommendations for steering the City toward a healthy, vibrant future. The conservation of farmland and forest, and the maintenance of city parks and a safe public water supply are all important components of the Master Plan, among many others. PCT is participating in the Master Plan process in several ways, including by sharing our thoughts on conservation priorities, and, for two board members, by being members of Master Plan committees. It is imperative, as the Master Plan process continues, that citizens interested in preserving the quality of life we now enjoy also engage in this process, whether it be through attending meetings, writing letters to the newspaper, or another mode. By proactively identifying and protecting high conservation priority land now, we increase the prospect of Easthampton’s long-term vitality.

*Tom Lautzenheiser*

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## Brickyard Brook Conservation

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Brickyard Brook Conservation area consists of approximately 9 acres of woodland surrounding Mt. View Farm (formerly known as Ol' Turtle Farm). Brickyard Brook Conservation area can be accessed near 395 East Street or more easily from the end of Mt. Tom Avenue where there is on the street parking. In this conservation area there are marked trails with bridges crossing both Brickyard Brook and Mountain Brook. There are also bog bridges to protect the wetland areas. Along the trail there are two benches for relaxing and enjoying nature.

The round trip walk in this conservation area is about one (1) mile. This makes the trail especially popular with families with young children and senior citizens. In the winter people snowshoe and cross country ski here.



Brickyard Brook Conservation area is home to, or a corridor for, bear, deer, wild turkeys, raccoon, woodchucks, many variety of birds and after dark an occasional fox and coyote. It also has a vernal pool, and in the spring you might see many salamander there, if you look closely. The area boasts many different kinds of mushrooms, many ferns, some old and large trees, and unfortunately many invasive species, which require constant attention.