



Pascommuck post

Fall 2023

In March, 2023, John Bator, our President for 23 years, stepped down. John will continue to share his wisdom, skills, experience, and the sense of humor we all appreciate as the Vice President of PCT. He continues to be the point person for creating and maintaining our trails; he is always the last person at any work party to depart, with chainsaw in hand. His many years of hard work, leadership and dedication has significantly furthered our mission of protecting land in Easthampton, and we are grateful beyond words for his work and his vision.

I have served as the Vice President of PCT for nine years, and I'm honored to be elected as the new President. I would like to share a bit about what this organization means to me personally and update you a little on what we've been up to.

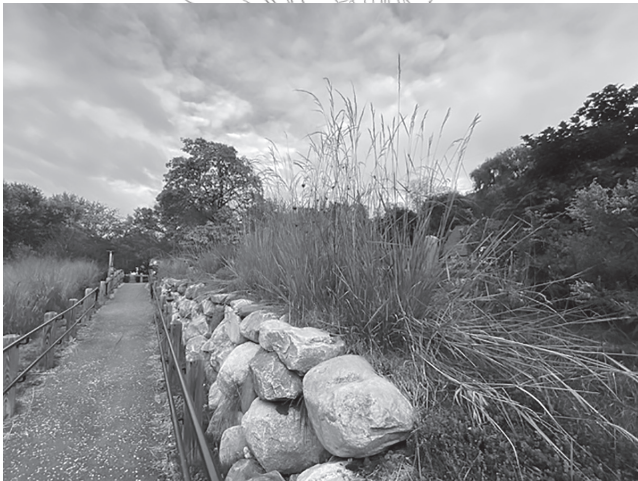
Legacy of Open Space

I cherish the open spaces you, our membership, have helped PCT conserve for all to enjoy. PCT is unique in that we serve a small city that is rich with natural resources, and I'm proud to say we've helped save over 200 acres of natural beauty, much along the Manhan River. For generations to come, the PCT properties will be open for anyone to find a calm space, a place of solace. I feel so strongly that preserving open space contributes to the well-being of every living thing, the plants, the animals, the climate... It continuously inspires me.

PCT's work

I would love to see everyone in Easthampton become familiar with PCT and our properties! There are so many ways to be involved and support the mission - our trail maintenance work parties,

at the plant sale, by contributing to our general fund, serving on the Board or a committee - there's a place for everyone. Being a part of PCT is so inspiring - we cannot create more land, so we need to care for the land we have. It's our passion for the land and community that moves us forward - we hope you will join us!



Katie Hereld

President's Report

40th Anniversary

In 2022, we humbly received a gift of land from the Ramsey family, a beautiful 10+ acre parcel on the Manhan river, adjacent to our very first property acquired 40 years ago, Old Pascommuck. We have other acquisitions in the works, and are always interested in talking to folks about protecting their land.

Trail Maintenance

We have been very busy with Trail maintenance – a typical state of affairs for a conservation group. Just a few of the tasks we’ve tackled so far this year with the help of our main conservation manager Kevin Mulligan:

Tree work at Dwyers, Brickyard Brook, John Bator Park, Old Pascommuck, Old Trolley Line, Mutter Field and Pomeroy Meadow. Yes, lots of trees down!

Rebuilt two bridges and two stairways at Brickyard Brook

Repaired concrete steps at Bator Park

Re-stained benches and tables at Mutters Field

Built up the downhill side of the trail at Pomeroy Meadow where a large tree fell and redirected the trail around the root ball

Work crew at Old Trolley Line cut back brush along the trail

Cleaned up the trail at Mutter Field

Installed new signs at Old Pascommuck, with plans for John Bator Park and others

Getting the Word Out - Board members have set up tables at Cultural Chaos, River Valley Coop, and at many of the City’s stores and meeting places, chatting with people who have enjoyed our properties and some (believe it or not) who have yet to find our trails.

Plant Sales – Our spring and fall plant sales and raffles are our main fundraiser. Come to our next one for great deals on plants! Mark your 2024 calendars - Spring Plant Sale - May 18th rain date May 25th and the Fall Plant Sale - Sept. 28th rain date Oct 5th. Both held in the parking lot of 50 Payson Avenue.

We thank you so much for your continued support of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust.

Dianne McLane, President



Trail Maintenance

Tasty Top Development Update

(The following reflects my views and not necessarily those of PCT)

For the past 10 months, a proposed 440,000 gross square feet (SF) development, “Sierra Vista Commons”, on 33 acres behind Starbucks, above the Manhan River (formerly Tasty Top), has been reviewed by Easthampton’s Planning Board and Conservation Commission. To date, no approvals have been granted for this massive and complex proposal. The fate of this land still hangs in the balance. At the October 17th Planning Board meeting, the Board indicated that they were inclined to approve the applicant’s request for waivers for reduced density in the Smart Growth district and their request for a bank building, in place of a second restaurant. As someone who has followed this project closely for the better part of a year, I fear that the City has neither the will nor the inclination to make this development significantly better than what has been proposed.

The plans call for 202 residential units, 35 affordable (the minimum required by zoning) in nine, 3 story, 30,000 SF buildings; 510 parking spaces; 60,000 SF of commercial space including a 220 seat restaurant, all on 12 acres of impervious surface with almost 4 acres of trees cut. This would generate 4,400 new vehicle trips/day plus 1,000 trips/day from Starbucks onto already congested Rte. 10. A proposed roundabout at the entrance to the development and Mountainview Street looks to be the preferred “solution.”

Presently, the project is undergoing comprehensive environmental reviews under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), to analyze its diverse impacts, including air and water quality, loss of farmland and habitats, wetlands, traffic, lighting, etc. to determine whether the applicant has applied all feasible means to avoid damage to the environment or, if not avoidable, to minimize and mitigate such damage to the maximum extent feasible. These reviews will go on for several months or longer.

In many ways this project is a throwback to times when there wasn’t a climate or biodiversity crisis and land was viewed as a commodity to be exploited. Easthamptonites and the State have repeatedly come out in favor of wise development, farmland/open space protection, climate resilient solutions, biodiversity. Yet, 25 acres of state listed prime farmland here will be developed. Buildings and pavement would cover over land near the Manhan, threatening the river’s ecosystems. Twelve acres of impervious surfaces will be created and macro and micro habitats will be destroyed. Several months ago, PCT presented alternative concepts to the City featuring a more compact development with land conservation and other eco-friendly components. To date, they have been ignored. This humongous development will impact us for decades to come. Will it be something we can be proud of or an insult to the land and the community?

Meanwhile, in complete contrast to Sierra Vista, Kestrel Land Trust is buying 54 acres along Main Street, where 90 environmentally friendly, affordable units are planned alongside 43 acres to be protected for farmland and habitat conservation. That, a project endorsed by the Mayor -- is smart growth!

What can you do? There will be many opportunities for public comment during the MEPA reviews and at Planning Board and Conservation Commission meetings (11/14 and 11/13). Express yourself! Speak to your friends and neighbors. Contact your City Councilors, the mayor and State politicians. Stay informed. The voice of the people has power.

Marty Klein

An Ode to Pitch Pine

If you've spent time on Cape Cod, you're familiar with pitch pine, which dominates the Cape's piney woods. But you might not know that pitch pine also occurs in scattered places throughout inland Massachusetts, on isolated dry ridgetops, and on sandy/gravelly soil areas. This last habitat characteristic is a feature of Easthampton's Plains neighborhood, where, once upon a time, pitch pine was likely an important species. This distinctive tree is always a delight to see around here, since its presence indicates that something different from the usual is going on—white pine is the standard, but pitch pine adds a little spice.

One reason we don't see a lot of pitch pine in this area is that the places where it grows well tend to be places where people build houses. As a result, remnant pitch pines in Easthampton are only here and there in yards, not in recognizable stands. (John Bator demonstrates his great taste in landscaping by having his house tucked in among several mature pitch pines.) This is a shame, because pitch pine has much to recommend it.

For many, pitch pine's distinctive appearance is a big part of its appeal: chunky bark with deep fissures; craggy branches tipped with bunches of deep green needles—they can look like bonsai grown to multi-story proportions. Outside of Cape Cod, though, pitch pine also has

the underdog's charm, since in the absence of disturbance (brush fires, logging, etc.), pitch pines usually succumb to competition, with white pines or hardwoods shading them out. And in some populations, pitch pine cones are serotinus, meaning they open on delay—in this case following a disturbance, to spread their seeds in fresh soil with reduced competition.

As wonderful as pitch pine is, like many of our tree species, it unfortunately faces climate change-related challenges. For one, southern pine beetle, a bark beetle native to the eastern US down to Central America, has been moving northward as seasonal temperatures warm. The beetle's favorite host species in this area is pitch pine, and this year was the first that multiple infestations were detected on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. State forest health officials and landowners are cooperating to address these infestations, but it's hard to be optimistic about pitch pine's chances to remain as a dominant tree on the Cape over the coming decades. It could be that the scattered inland populations become more important for the long-term conservation of the species in the region.



We're fortunate to still have pitch pine among us here in Easthampton, a mark of this place's post-glacial geology and history. So while traveling around town, don't forget to keep an eye out for pitch pine!

Tom Lautzenheiser, Senior Conservation Ecologist,

Markham Nathan Grant

PCT was honored to receive a generous grant from the Markham Nathan Fund for Social Justice to further dialogue around engaging with local Native American groups and to establish a scholarship fund for Native American youth. It also includes an award to a community leader who helps remove barriers for people of color to access the natural world. After much discussion on the committee and board level, the board approved the following letter to be sent to the Daily Hampshire Gazette, in support of the Nipmuc's desire to establish an agricultural community on the Lampson Brook Farm in Belchertown. Here is the text of the letter from 7/14/23:

We are a small land trust in Easthampton that has operated for more than 40 years, protecting important land and other natural resources in the city for the public benefit.

The land we all live on in western Massachusetts was originally inhabited by the Nipmuc and other native people who sustainably managed the eastern woodlands for thousands of years. We support the efforts of the Nipmuc to reestablish a community and a connection to the land on Lampson Brook Farm in Belchertown. Their proposal for an agrihood — farming and community care-taking of the land — reflects our values of healing, preserving, and making the land accessible and enjoyable for the whole community.

Bill S2972 has granted the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) automatic ownership of a portion of the land without cost, and we support the Nipmuc to have ownership of the land they are applying for without cost as well. The Nipmuc have suffered the dispossession of their land and other forms of oppression for centuries. Rematriation is a step towards healing from the past and offers some reparations for the injustices committed by European colonizers and governmental policies.

At the Pascommuck Conservation Trust, we are always looking for creative ways to conserve and protect land for the greater good, and it often involves not taking over the land ourselves, but working with others who have similar goals. We strongly urge the Board of Lampson Brook Farm, DCAMM, and our neighbors on this traditionally Indigenous land to return this piece of uninhabited land to the descendants of its original caretakers, and we offer our support and land conservation experience in any way possible to encourage this transition.

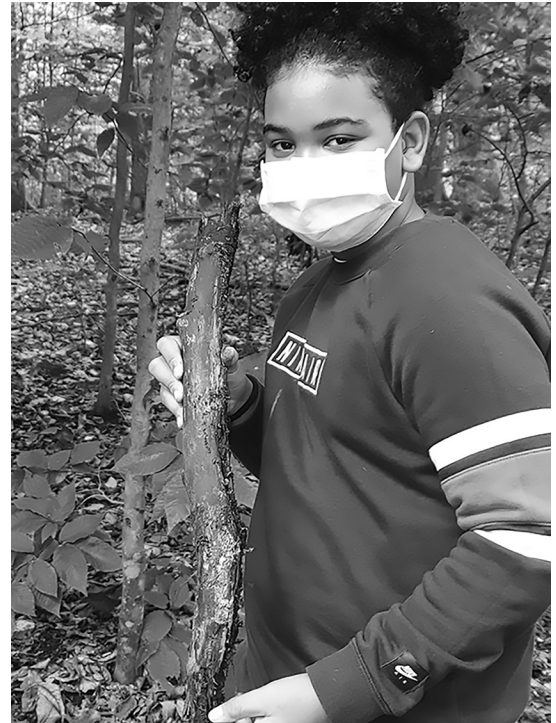
Jane Andresen, Mary Lou Dodge, and Rachel Telushkin

We are always looking for folks who are interested in joining us on the committee or Board to continue these goals. Please contact: rtelushkinpct@gmail.com

For information about the Markham Nathan Foundation,

visit: <https://markhamnathanfund.org/>

For a great list of DEI resources, visit: <https://www.amc-wma.org/dei-resources.cgi>



Standing Up (or Sitting) for Land Conservation

Pascommuck holds and stewards many special places in trust for wildlife, plants, and for you. But those places would be lost -- or inaccessible or unwelcoming -- if not for the generosity of some special people.

Several of our conservation areas (White Brook Plains, Broad Brook Meadows, Hannum Brook) were created because the City required developers to dedicate a portion of their site to open space. But others exist because other property owners cared enough about their land to donate it to Pascommuck. They wanted to ensure that the animals and plants, the streams and woods and wetlands that they love would remain unspoiled, or they wanted to ensure the public could visit the quiet refuges they were fortunate to enjoy.

In the past three years, the land trust has been offered two tracts, fairly modest in size but great in ecological importance. In our 40th anniversary year, the Ramsey family donated rich floodplain land at the confluence of the Manhan River and the Oxbow, where they grew up fishing and hunting. Another family is currently working with Pascommuck to protect their riverfront land off Main Street, a maze of wetlands woven around the Manhan's meanders -- identified by the state as critical river and floodplain habitat for rare species. Further back in our history, Board Member Sue Walz was kind enough to provide a protective easement, along with the trail access over her land which makes Brickyard Brook Conservation Area our most-visited property.

In Easthampton, as elsewhere, many long-time owners of important agricultural, forest, and riverfront land are at an age when their treasured property may soon be in other hands. It's a time to consider their options: Leave it to children who may not have the interest or resources to keep it? Sell it for development? Or delay making decisions and just hope for the best? These recent donations point to another choice -- start a conversation with a land trust, the City, or with state conservation agencies. While an outright gift of course frees up our funds to protect and steward other

land, there is a range of options available for those who can't afford





conservation

to give away outright what may be their largest asset. Also, owners of property without conservation value can donate it to Pascommuck to sell to generate income to protect other land.

Another way to support PCT was created last year and has been very successful. To commemorate Pascommuck's 40th anniversary in 2022, we set up a stewardship endowment with opportunities to donate and commission a tribute bench. To date, six of the ten locations have been claimed, raising almost \$10,000 to generate income for conservation area maintenance.

Gerrit Stover



Tribute Page

We occasionally are mentioned as a place to make donations in memory of a family member who has passed on – and we cannot begin to tell you how special it is to be so honored. It's a beautiful way for us to know some of the many people who cherished and remember our friends. As a very small and all volunteer land trust, each donation has a tremendous impact on our ability to fulfill our mission. All donations are tax deductible.

In the past few years, we have received donations in memory of the following people. May their memories be a blessing and may they rest in peace.

*Gaye Crowe David Poulin Joan Novak Bill Carroll
Bob Conner Priscilla Pike Aline MacDonald Nell Kirschner
Nancy Strouse Annette Perry Norma Landry Peter Brooks
Joyce August*



Pascommuck Conservation Trust Scholarship Award

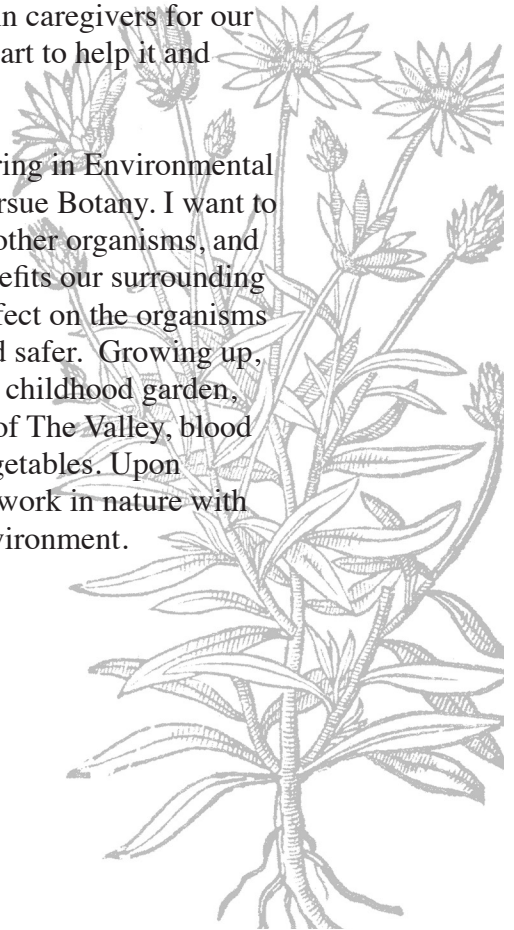
Winner of the 2023 PCT scholarship: **Emma Pelletier**

We are thrilled to award Emma Pelletier a scholarship for \$250 to further her studies in Environmental Science. She was recently interviewed by the Daily Hampshire Gazette and described her project to help clean up the Nashawannuck Pond:

“To the naked eye, the pond appears very clean until you look down into it,” said Emma Pelletier, a senior at Easthampton High School and a member of the National Honor Society. “You see a lot of trash, a lot of plastic, a lot of garbage. so a team of us students are going to be cleaning up the trash on Earth Day.” Pelletier, the chairperson of the Green For Us initiative, said the idea behind the trash cleanup day is the first of what she hopes will become several efforts to make the earth a greener place.

“If we want to keep having a planet and having healthy, natural resources, we need to care for it as we are the main caregivers for our environment,” she said. “We just need to do our part to help it and continue to keep it living.”

I am going into my first year of college and majoring in Environmental Science, Forestry and Agricultural Sciences to pursue Botany. I want to focus on how plants interact with each other and other organisms, and study how plants grow and how it affects and benefits our surrounding environments. I want people to have a positive effect on the organisms and for the earth to continue to grow healthier and safer. Growing up, I helped plant my school’s garden, along with my childhood garden, which was full of wildflowers, roses, tulips, Lily of The Valley, blood heart flowers and sunflowers, as well as many vegetables. Upon graduation, my goal is to be a Botanist. I want to work in nature with plants and study how they live and benefit the environment.



Volunteer Coordinator

We recently caught up with Molly Goodwin, who is our amazing volunteer Volunteer Coordinator. She organizes work parties for trail maintenance and sends out emails to our supporters. She previously was the coordinator of our fantastic group of trail monitors. Our newest board member, Katie, has recently taken on that role.

How long have you been on the Board?

Molly: I think it's been about 20 years for me. I like that many others have been there longer than me and we share a mutual love of open space and Easthampton and appreciate and respect each other. I love the volunteers, the people who appreciate the properties and our work, the value of what we do. I have learned so much about the history of Easthampton, how land preservation works, property monitoring, supporting nature, invasives, native plants, etc., and I've met so many great people over the years.

Working with the volunteers is very rewarding. We rely on them to get plants ready for our sales, they provide wonderful raffle items; we would not be able to get as much done on our properties and we would not be as aware of what was happening on our properties. As an all-volunteer organization, we rely on our members and volunteers for their enthusiasm and spirit and fresh energy, and appreciate so much their love of the land and the properties we maintain for the common good.

How many volunteers does PCT have?

There are about 150 people who I keep in touch with, including about 20-30 regular volunteers.

What does a trail monitor do?

A trail monitor walks the trail at least once or twice a month so that they become familiar with it and report any changes. If there is trash or a minor situation such as a small branch on the trail, they can take care of it. If they see something bigger such as a broken step or railing, a large branch or tree down, significant trash or damage, they contact Katie and John.

Tell me a little about the famous work parties!

The work parties are usually somewhat physical and very productive so I think that feels good to folks. John and Kevin set amazing examples and inspire folks. There's usually some good camaraderie, especially if cooperation is needed to get something done like carrying a bridge. Everyone is welcome to do as much or as little as they want. It feels as if everyone takes pride in their work and feels a sense of appreciation. They are tremendously helpful and trails or plants or whatever the task is are greatly transformed.

How long have some volunteers been involved? How do I get involved if new?

We have some volunteers who have been involved for two decades or more! But we always welcome new people. You can join via our membership form, our website: <https://www.pctland.org/about-us/contact-us/>, or by sending in a note to PCT PO BOX 806, Easthampton, MA 01027.

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Board

Officers

Dianne McLane, *President*
John Bator, *Vice President*
Rachel Telushkin *Treasurer*
Dawn Ackley, *Clerk*

Board Members

Fred Andresen
William Burgart
Michael Caron
Kala Champagne
Marylou Dodge
Molly Goodwin
Martin Klein
Tom Lautzenheiser
Scott Tunderman
Susanna Walz
Brianna Grant
Katie Hereld

Coordinator of Volunteers

Molly Goodwin

Land Preservation

Consultant

Gerrit Stover

Database Manager

Rachel Telushkin

Newsletter

Design & Layout

Beverly Wodicka

Webmaster

Michael Caron
pctland.org



PASCOMMUCK CONSERVATION TRUST, INC. MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 2023

PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

- Name _____
- Street _____
- Town/City _____
- State/Zip _____
- Phone _____
- Email _____

PLEASE CHECK YOUR DESIRED MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter (\$10) | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron (\$75) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$15) | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate (\$100) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$25) | <input type="checkbox"/> Steward (\$100) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor (\$50) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor (\$150) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member (\$1000) | |

MAKE AN ADDITIONAL DONATION FOR:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| Unrestricted | \$ _____ |
| Land Conservation | \$ _____ |
| In Memory/Honor of | \$ _____ |

PLEASE INDICATE VOLUNTEER INTERESTS

- Donate plants for plant sale
- Prepare plants for plant sale
- Setup/take down at plant sale
- Monitor a Trust area near me
- Grant Writing /Fundraising
- Land Conservation
(Landowner contacts, Planning, etc.)
- Trail/Property Maintenance
- Publicity/Media



***Pascommuck Conservation
Trust, Inc.***

*Preserving our past . . .
protecting our future*

THANK YOU!

MAIL THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHECK TO:

Pascommuck Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 806, Easthampton, Massachusetts 01027

Pascommuck is a 501 (3) (C) non-profit charitable organization. Your gift is tax deductible.



Pascommuck Conservation Trust

P.O. Box 806

Easthampton, MA 01027

pctland.org

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO.8
EASTHAMPTON, MA

Fresh Fern



Marty Klein