

In Celebration of Forty Years of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust

A message from Trust President John Bator

Forty years in the business of preserving valuable open space and conservation education: quite an amazing accomplishment for a small land trust relying nearly 100% on volunteers! And, come to think of it, I've been with PCT for nearly all of that time, beginning in the early 1980s. Details are dim, but somehow, I found myself volunteering to help a small group of founding members put the final touches on a new trail system at Old Pascommuck Conservation Area off East Street – the Trust's very first acquisition. Following a modest trail-opening ceremony, it was full speed ahead for this fledgling group of 'tree huggers,' with hardly a lull in between.

By the mid-1980s, the Trust was actively involved in the campaign to save the Nashawannuck Pond from eutrophication (excess growth of algae and aqueous plants) and sediment buildup, which had been reaching a critical stage. The Trust pontoon boat tours, spearheaded by Michael Tautznik, did much to inform the public regarding the deteriorating condition of this popular body of water in the center of town. Aside from this special project, we also were busy with activities such as spring and fall plant sales, craft and art shows, Fall Festival displays, a pond study program for certain grammar school classes, work parties to maintain our properties, annual meetings with great guest

speakers, guided nature walks on our trails, land acquisitions... and the list goes on.

We look back on these past four decades with a sense of pride, knowing we now own sixteen properties, and have partnered with the city and various land trusts to preserve not only these, but numerous other natural and agricultural parcels along the way. Yes, it's been a long, hard haul, but the stakes are high, and well worth the effort to wrest valuable threatened land-scapes from the jaws of overdevelopment.

I've had the privilege of serving as Trust president for 23 years, and in that time I've witnessed many changes, have taken part in scores

of conservation projects/fundraisers, and watched in amazement as PCT has grown into the prominent local land trust it is today.

Here's to the next four decades of continuing growth and success in preserving our natural heritage!



John Bator
President
Pascommuck Cons. Trust



*President John Bator and friends at the
40th anniversary event in July, 2022*

Pascommuck Conservation Trust

Forty Year Timeline: 1982 to 2022

1982

A temporary Board of Directors begins organizing the Trust, with the stated mission of saving open and historical land in Easthampton for the use of flora, fauna, and humans; providing conservation education; and supporting other local land trusts. The group applies for tax-exempt status, and elects its first official Board: **David Kennedy** (President), **Thomas Conner** (Treasurer), **Charles Conner** (Clerk), **William Carroll**, **Michael Tautznick**, **Frank Galat**, **John Moriarty**, **Paul Kuzeja**, and **William Burgart**. By the end of the year, the Board adopts the corporate By-laws.

1985

PCT enters a float in Easthampton's Bicentennial parade and wins the grand prize!



The Trust is very active with property acquisitions, including the **Borowski Parcel** (3.8 acres), the **Dwyer Parcel** (Dwyer Family Conservation Area) (1 acre), the **Tichy Parcel** (2 acres), the 'Town Parcel' or 'Forty Acre Parcel' (now the **Ed Dwyer Conservation Area**) (40 acres), and the **Stefania Drondoski Parcel** (4 acres). Once the Dwyer Cons. Area was under PCT management, the Trust undertook a massive cleanup of the area involving several industrial dumpsters and hauling out an abandoned car.

1988

Ed Dwyer is elected President.

1983

PCT holds its first Annual Meeting and sends out its first newsletter to the membership. **Mike Tautznick** leads a Pond Tour during Easthampton's Fall Festival.

PCT acquires its first Trust property, **Old Pascommuck Conservation Area**, with help from **Terry Blunt** of the Connecticut River Watershed Council.



1984

Bob Pinkos is the 2nd President of PCT. The Trust opens the **E. Florence Smith self-guided Nature Trail** at Old Pascommuck.

1986

William Carroll is the next PCT President.

During the 1980s, PCT sponsored annual pontoon boat tours on Nashawanuck Pond to raise civic awareness of the plight of the dying pond due to severe eutrophication.



1989

Ken Larsen takes over as President.

B-G Mechanical donates the land for **John Bator Park**. The parcel requires complete renovation, designed by **Bill Canon** and supervised by **John Bator**, to become the lovely spot it is today. The Trust names the Park for the man who would later be its longest-term President, in recognition of all his hard work – which continues to this day!



1992

The **Gawle** family sets aside 44 acres as part of the Crown Meadow subdivision approval. Four parcels, including two under an Agricultural Preservation Restriction, are transferred to PCT. Part of this land will become the **White Brook Plains Conservation Area**.

1995

PCT purchases land abutting the Manhan River near the Calvary Baptist Church, with the help of the Southampton Conservation Commission. This parcel becomes the initial **Pomeroy Meadows Conservation Area** behind the Big Y.



1987

The Trust holds its first **Plant Sale** fundraiser – now a well-established event in Easthampton – with seedlings from the Hampshire Conservation District obtained by Trust treasurer **Mike Tautznik**.



1993

The Trust undertakes a second major cleanup of the **Ed Dwyer Conservation Area** along the Manhan River, and makes plans for a fence to be installed.

1994

John Bator, Town Planner **Stuart Beckley**, and two UMass grad students give a presentation on land conservation. The Trust contacts 200 property owners about possible land donations.

1996

Bill Burgart is the next Trust President. The **Joyce Brown Gazebo** is installed at **John Bator Park**.



1997



PCT acquires the Hannum Meadows parcel (off of Oliver Street) from the **Perkins** family, which becomes the **Hannum Brook Conservation Area**.

2000

Susanna Walz donates a trail easement and conservation restriction to PCT, to make the **Brickyard Brook Conservation Area** accessible to the Mount Tom Ave. neighborhood.

The Commonwealth and the City of Northampton purchase the Micka Farm Agricultural Protection Restriction (APR) from the Valley Land Fund, adding to the Sena Orchard APR for a total of 179 acres of Park Hill farmland protected.

PCT helps save the 10 acre **Sparko** parcel on Lovefield Street, which becomes the **Old Trolley Line Conservation Area**.



An AmeriCorps crew completes the **Brickyard Brook Nature Trail**.

PCT Board Member **Steve Donnelly** helps organize Easthampton citizens to approve the Community Preservation Act.

1998

Barbara Craig becomes the PCT's first woman President.

1999

PCT mobilizes the Easthampton community to urge the City to help protect the 124 acre Sena Orchard on Park Hill under an Agricultural Protection Restriction.

John Bator takes on the Presidency — and will retain the position to the present day!

PCT works to protect the Torrey and Morgan farms on East Street. Led by Trustees of Reservations **Charlie Wyman** with support from PCT, the City exercises its Chapter 61B Right of First Refusal to buy the land. **Eileen Driescher** and **Toni Atmore** buy 17 acres of neighboring farmland to establish Ol' Turtle Farm (later Mountain View Farm). As part of the deal, PCT receives 9.22 acres to create the **Brickyard Brook Conservation Area**.



2001

PCT supports Valley Land Fund and Winding River Land Conservancy in protecting Pond Farm on Clapp Street. The Pond property is pre-acquired for protection and eventual re-sale to the **Pomeroy** family farm, ultimately becoming the Pomeroy Farm APR.

At the urging of **Stella Weirnasz**, PCT offers its first annual scholarship, awarded to Easthampton High School graduates.

2001

John Bator Park becomes home to the Angel Monument, added by Compassionate Friends. PCT holds an unveiling ceremony to help Valley Land Fund raise money toward protecting the **Schmidt** property along Broad Brook in Southampton.



PCT assists in negotiations with the **Burt** family to place an APR on 30 acres of farmland at the corner of Fort Hill Road and Clapp Street. Valley Land Fund and Mass Audubon provide the financing to buy the APR.

2003

The Board updates its By-laws and discusses a new committee-based structure, including a Land Protection Committee, and prepares lists of Trust tasks.

Stella Wiernasz solicits donations to PCT in honor of her 80th birthday!

2005

PCT prepares a map identifying crucial areas to preserve and presents it to the City's Community Preservation Committee.

Planning begins for protection of Echodale Farm on Park Hill. PCT commits to raising and contributing \$100,000 toward this goal.

2002

Valley Land Fund completes acquisition of the 130 acre **Prajzner/Schmidt** property on Broad Brook in Southampton, now owned and protected by the Dept. of Fish and Game as the **Southampton Wildlife Management Area**.

PCT holds its 20th Anniversary celebration at Nashawannuck Gallery (owned by **Mai Stoddard**, a longtime supporter). **Valerie McQuillan**, a local artist and also a longtime supporter, donated a painting as a fundraiser.

PCT and the Trustees of Reservations install a boulder at the edge of **Brickyard Brook** with a plaque recognizing memorial gifts for protection of the conservation area and Ol' Turtle Farm. PCT board members **Sue Walz** and **Bill Burgart** found the stone, got it moved and ready for the plaque, and raised over \$80,000 in donations.



2004

PCT holds its first Annual Planning Meeting.

2006

Sue Walz and **Marty Klein** participate in the Open Space and Recreation portion of the City's new Master Plan.

2007

Jean-Pierre Pasche's fundraising art show at Elusie Gallery honors PCT as the recipient of their art contest proceeds. **Doris Madsen** won first prize.

2008

Two parcels of White Brook Plains farmland from the **Gawles** (from a 1992 sub-division) are sold to a farmer to produce food. The proceeds go to the City for land protection.

PCT and the Valley Land Fund lead the first Mass. CPA project to save a 14 acre East Street plot from large development, combining conservation and affordable housing.

2011

The Trust closes on the Paul Street addition to **Pomeroy Meadow Conservation Area** and signs the purchase/sale agreement to acquire the **Donais** property, which will become **Mutter's Field**.

2013

PCT dedicates new **Pomeroy Meadows** trails, naming the main trail for former City Planner **Stuart Beckley** who coordinated between the developer, landowner, and PCT to conserve the area.



2017

Discussions (begun in 2001) regarding the **Savoie** property on East Street gain focus, to give access to Mount Tom and the New England Scenic Trail from Easthampton.

The PCT Board signs on to the updated Land Trust Alliance "Standards and Practices," which include 12 principles of legal and ethical stewardship.

2010

Sue Walz starts her Mount Tom Calendar project as a PCT fundraiser. **Mai Stoddard** sells them at the Nashawannuck Gallery. The calendar project is still going strong!



PCT installs two granite benches honoring **Stella Wiernasz** at **John Bator Park** and at **Brickyard Brook Conservation Area**.

2016

The First **Easthampton Land Conservation Collaborative** meeting brings together PCT, Easthampton's City Planner, Kestrel Land Trust, and staff from Fish and Game and Mass. Audubon.

Grand Opening ceremony held at new **Mutter's Field** accessible trail property with **Alice Mutter** in attendance, along with Mayor **Karen Cadieux** and former Mayor **Mike Tautznik** (a founding PCT member).



Please visit www.pctland.org for more information about the Trust and our properties!

Timeline by John Bator & Molly Goodwin with help from many PCT members past & present; layout by Scott Tundermann

2018

The Board commits up to \$5,000 for an improved appraisal of the **Savoie** property, and then pledges \$50,000 towards its protection, in support of Kestrel Land Trust's and the City of Easthampton's effort to preserve it. In November, PCT receives a \$25,000 grant from the Frank Stanley Beveridge Foundation toward its pledge for the property (now under construction as **Mount Tom North Trailhead Park**).



PCT discusses the need for invasives management covering more conservation areas and adopts the Invasives Committee's usage policy.

The City obtains a trail access easement over the east end of the Park Street solar farm, enabling potential connection between Plain Street and the White Brook School, including use of a trail easement PCT owns over White Brook Plains protected farmland.

2020

The Board embarks on a project spearheaded by **Gerrit Stover** to raise funds for property stewardship by selling memorial and tribute benches to be located on our lands.



The Trust sends a letter to the City urging more effective regulations to address the negative impacts of solar development, particularly on wilderness and farm land.



PCT signs a license agreement with Mass Audubon allowing public access to **Old Trolley Line Conservation Area** along the right-of-way owned by Arcadia.

2019

PCT holds an opening ceremony and trail walk for new trails at **Old Trolley Line**.



The Board hires **Kevin Mulligan** as its official contractor for regular property maintenance.

PCT assists with preliminary design and public outreach process for three projects:

- * the **Mount Tom North Trailhead Park**,
- * the Conway School of Landscape Design student project to plan a trail from Plain Street to the new Mountain View school, and
- * the move by Kestrel Land Trust and the City to complete the long-delayed conservation restriction on open space at the Lathrop Community.

2020



During the pandemic, PCT keeps its trails open and experiences increased usage, requiring additional maintenance of trails and infrastructure — further challenged by a record number of trees coming down. The Board learns to do virtual meetings, then meets outdoors in the summer, finds some new locations, and ultimately goes virtual again in the fall/winter.

The Annual Meeting is held online, after PCT had to cancel it in 2020. Land stewardship continues on all the properties: as the pandemic wears on, the natural world continues to provide a much-needed solace for our friends and neighbors.

2021

2022

We return to an in-person Annual Meeting at the Blue Room in old City Hall, with a lovely presentation on raptors and other birds by **Tom Ricardi**.



PCT receives \$4,000 from the Markham Nathan Foundation to establish a scholarship for Native American youth and a community award for efforts to reduce barriers and connect people of color to nature.



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Return service requested

