



Pascommuck *post*

Spring 2024

Pascommuck's Trails

In 1983, before it even formally existed, Pascommuck protected 4-1/2 acres off East Street which became Old Pascommuck Conservation Area. With this purchase, we became an early pioneer in non-profit land conservation. In fact, Terry Blunt, who helped Pascommuck while working at Connecticut River Watershed Council, was fresh off a stint carrying out the national Nature Conservancy's first ever land protection projects.

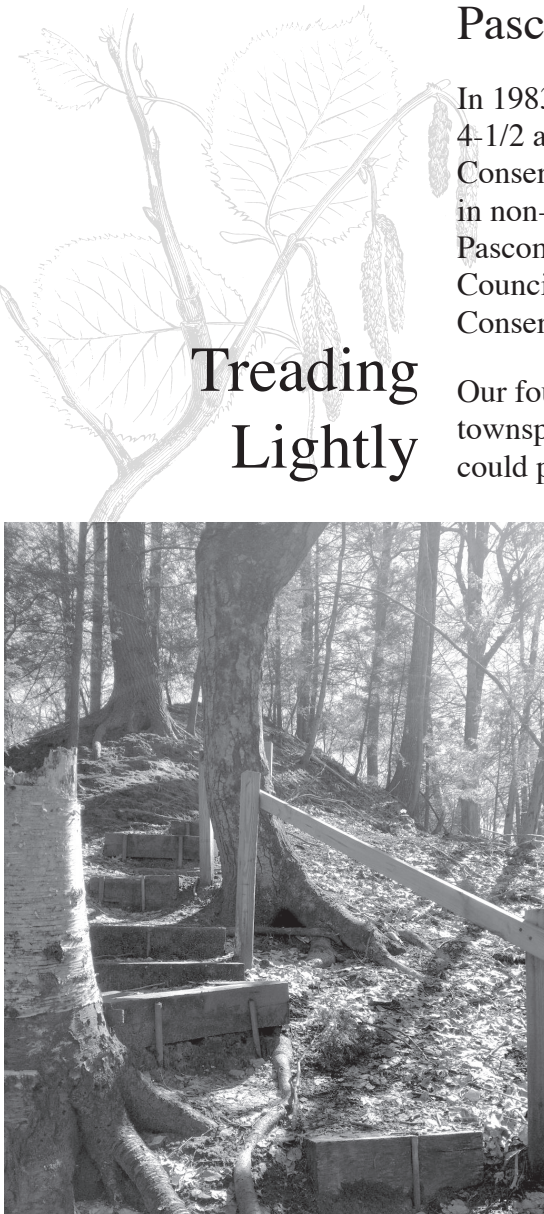
Treading Lightly

Our founders wanted to make the most of the new holding to invite townspeople into nature, and to promote the idea that land trusts could preserve Easthampton's special places. They built an extensive trail network along the Manhan and up and down the adjacent hills. Board members Bill Carroll and Bob Pinkos created a brochure about the natural features along the 'E. Florence Smith Nature Trail' (honoring the donor who helped purchase the land).

Back then, the corridor which became the Manhan Rail Trail was only recently abandoned by the railroad. Earth Day was a mere decade old. Several of Easthampton's mills had closed only a short while before.

Over the decades since, at Old Pascommuck, the land trust fenced out a dirt bike rider carving up the hillside along the rail line, replaced steps and bog bridges as they decayed, Eagle Scout Nicholas Aubrey built a staircase, the Manhan reclaimed some river bank, and the Rail Trail vision finally came to fruition.

During this time, Easthampton also experienced sprawl, with farms and woods in the Plains and along East Street lost to subdivisions and large houses. The remaining habitat for wildlife, birds, and plants became ever scarcer and ever more important. Knowledge has increased, too, about the negative impacts, not just of suburban development but also of seemingly benign intrusions into natural areas such as foot-trails.



Pascommuck's Board has followed this research, with a growing desire to make the acres we protect count, to improve the ecological health of our conservation areas, and to reduce the negative impact of our trails. In some cases this means choosing NOT to build trails through sensitive portions of new acquisitions (like wetland habitat at Old Trolley Line).

And when the time came this spring to renovate decaying infrastructure at Old Pascommuck -- kept alive only with valiant efforts by our contractor Kevin Mulligan -- we decided after long deliberation to close a problematic and difficult to maintain steep trail with many 'crib steps', crossing several wet areas over bog bridges. Removing these structures will return this small but important piece of critical floodplain habitat back to the Wood Ducks, newts, and spring wildflowers who need it most.

But, don't worry -- to maintain the opportunity for humans, too, to take an enjoyable stroll through Old Pascommuck, we've improved an informal path connecting the Rail Trail to the remaining trail, creating a half-mile loop using a short section of the bike path. We hope creatures, both wild and human, will enjoy these improvements.

Gerrit Stover

Trail Maintenance



New PCT Policy: No Dogs Allowed

Since its founding, The Pascommuck Conservation Trust has striven to connect people with nature through land protection, trail development and maintenance, programs, and other activities in Easthampton. Conservation areas like Edward J. Dwyer, Old Pascommuck, Brickyard Brook/Mutter's Field, and Broad Brook Meadows provide opportunities to witness and experience the renewing pleasures of spring birdsong, abundant wildflowers, rilling brooks, and chipmunk antics - right in our own neighborhoods. They have immense value as a refuge for people's emotional and physical health and for supporting the community's biodiversity.

Over the past few years, the Board has recognized a growing tension as more people use Pascommuck's trails as regular dog walking routes. The prevalence of domestic dogs on the trail system at several Pascommuck conservation areas has led to conflicts between dog owners and other trail users, and contributes to the degradation of these areas' ecological function. Some of the harms associated with dogs are obvious, like direct aggressive/fatal interactions with small wildlife or randomly distributed trailside piles of feces. Others are subtle, including the increased stress to birds and other animals who react to dogs as their natural predator, which interferes with many animals' use of their habitat.

Our mission includes the protection of the Manhan River and the many small streams and brooks on our property. Increased disease transmission and bacterial loading in these adjacent waterbodies, as well as alterations in vegetation structure and composition and reductions in breeding bird diversity and abundance are all associated with the presence of domestic dogs. While many wildlife species may in time somewhat habituate to the presence of people, even regular exposure does not cause them to habituate to dogs. The presence of domestic dogs, therefore, runs counter to Pascommuck's intentions for areas designated to protect and conserve wildlife, water resources, and soils.

PCT's Board grappled with various perspectives and potential approaches to resolving these conflicts, but ultimately resolved that the clearest policy, with the greatest benefit for wildlife, water quality, soil health, and many trail users, was to prohibit dogs across all of its conservation areas. This policy extends a prohibition on dogs that was already in place at Pascommuck's Pomeroy Meadows and Old Trolley Line Conservation Areas. This new policy is intended to go into effect immediately, though trailhead signage and other communications will be needed to translate the policy into practice. PCT members can do their part by adhering to this policy, and exploring DCR or other areas where dogs are allowed.

Here are some links to articles that discuss some of these topics:

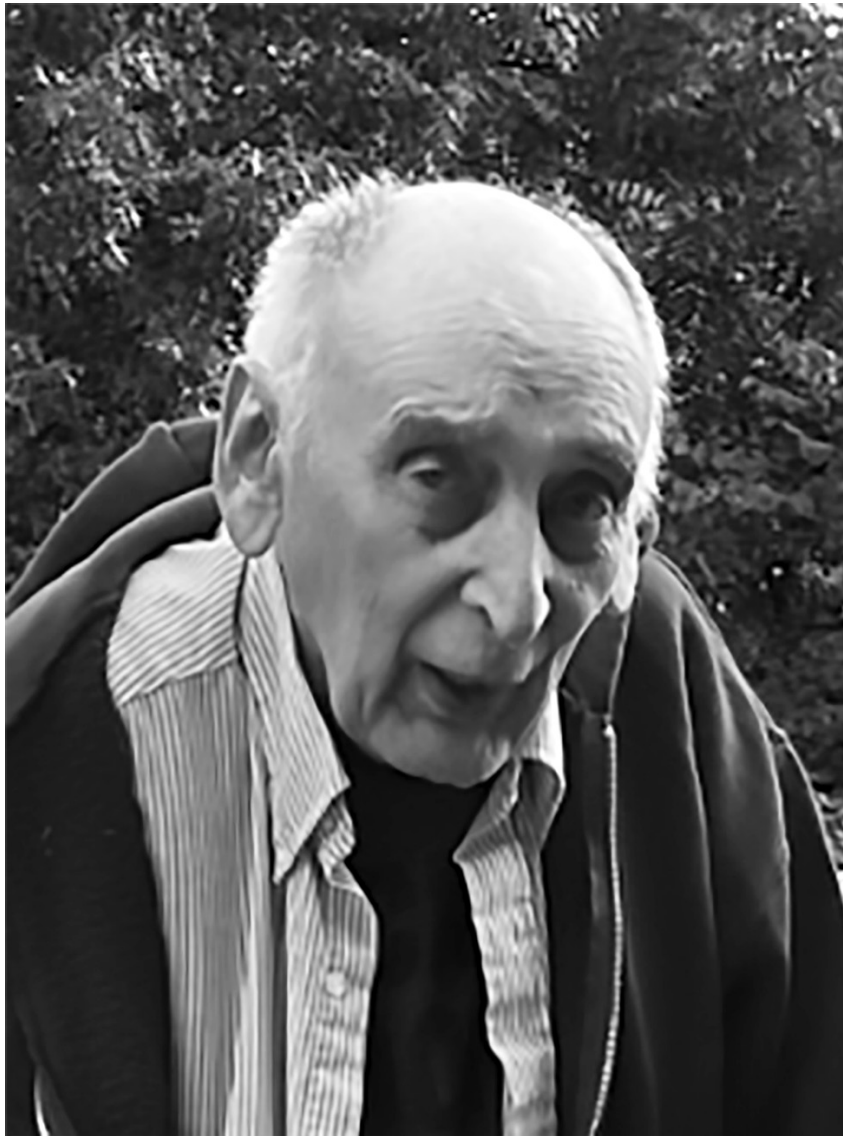
<https://www.protectnatureto.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Impacts-of-dogs-on-wildlife-10-Aug-16.pdf>

<https://mountainjournal.org/we-love-dogs-but-they-are-wreaking-havoc-on-wildlife>.

Tom Lautzenheiser, Board Member

Bill Burgart

Bill Burgart is the longest-serving member of PCT's board, which he helped found over 40 years ago. Bill recently spoke with fellow board member, Mary Lou Dodge, of his early years, traveling across the US and countries in Africa and Asia to learn what the land looked like and to understand what was happening that changed it. He climbed many mountains, most memorably Mount Kilimanjaro in Kenya. He hiked through harsh countryside in Bangladesh to explore the effects of heavy migration on that country's nature. Then he came home to Easthampton and helped start PCT. "I wanted to be part of something, to give back love and compassion to this world."



In his over 40 years of work on the PCT Board, perhaps Bill's most impressive achievement was using his passion for land preservation to help save 27 acres of rich, fertile farmland and woodland on East street from developers. This led to the purchase and creation of Ol' Turtle Farm (now Mountainview Farm), Easthampton's very own CSA. Working with neighbors, the Trustees of Reservations, and other PCT Board members, Bill was instrumental in raising funds toward an APR (Agricultural Preservation Restriction). As part of the agreement, PCT was allowed to build a network of nature trails which remain under PCT stewardship to this day. Americorps volunteers built many of these trails and bridges, while camping in Bill's backyard and benefiting greatly from his hospitality.

A lesser known accomplishment was Bill's long standing project of engaging citizens to collect cans and bottles from our roadways.



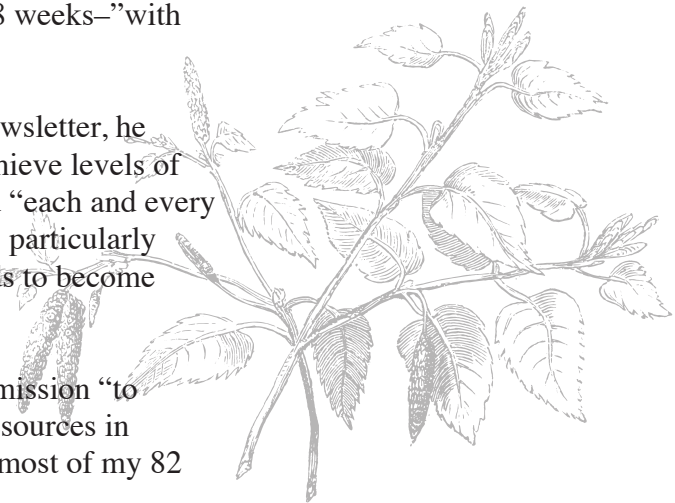
acknowledgement

Bill could often be seen around town riding his bike with a sack of containers he had just picked up. This resulted in a cleaner city, and after many years of diligent recycling, Bill raised over \$5000 for PCT's land preservation.

Bill told us he loves the feeling of being outdoors with the wind in his hair; he has walked thousands of miles through New England in recent years, and for his 60th birthday, he biked and camped across the US with a group of cyclists from San Diego to St. Augustine in 8 weeks—"with pretty strong headwinds most of the way."

In his first "President's Message" in the Winter 1993 newsletter, he urged the PCT membership to "help to maintain and achieve levels of activities and accomplishments of the past..." He asked "each and every one of you to find a new member." That message seems particularly relevant to us today as we ask you to reach out to friends to become members and support PCT.

Bill continues to inspire us as a fine example of PCT's mission "to preserve and protect important land and other natural resources in Easthampton for the public benefit." As Bill says, "For most of my 82 years, I was just trying to protect the land."



President's Report

Welcome to Spring!

Our **Annual Meeting** was held on March 27th, 2024 at Cityspace in Easthampton. The Treasurer's Report and Clerk's Report were presented and accepted. Board members up for reelection were voted in: Mary Lou Dodge, Tom Lautzenheiser, and Rachel Telushkin. Board members Katie Hereld and Bri Grant were also voted in. Alan Clark was nominated as a new Board member. Appreciation was expressed for our Clerk, Dawn Ackley, who is stepping down this summer. Discussion was held of various committee activities and an open discussion was held on the topic of people's experiences with dog walking on PCT properties. After the business part of the meeting, Marty Klein gave a fascinating talk and slide show, "Wild Mushrooms Through the Seasons." The entire meeting and Marty's presentation can be seen at Easthampton Media (easthamptonmedia.org).

The PCT Land Conservation Committee has been working with local land owners on new land acquisitions, some we've been working on for quite a while, and others are fairly new to us. All are related to our mission of protecting the Manhan River and the streams, woods, and open spaces of Easthampton's unique ecosystem.

The PCT Fundraising Committee has been meeting regularly and we have come up with some exciting new ideas for raising money and increasing membership, including a "Sip and Draw" event at Valley Art Supplies, Yoga in the Woods, more social media presence, and a special new membership drive in June.

The PCT Property Maintenance Committee has been busy dealing with the extensive erosion caused by an unusually rainy winter. (2023 had the 5th wettest July and December on record, and 2024 had the 5th wettest January with 9.24 inches of precipitation!) Our trail monitors are doing a great job of keeping everyone alert to damage to the trails and bridges/culverts and Kevin Mulligan, our Property Specialist, has been doing tree work, whacking, repairs, and preparing the properties for group work activities.

The bluebirds have Michael to thank for installing new bird boxes at Mutter's Field and Pomeroy Meadow. We are also undertaking a revision of the trail at Old Pascommuck, thanks to Gerrit's help.



Tasty Top Update

The proposed multimillion-dollar retail and housing development, Sierra Vista Commons, at the former Tasty Top site, was approved by the Easthampton Planning Board in November without any restrictions. The project will mean 6-8 years of construction activity on Route 10 as well as having ecological impact on the fragile Manhan riverbanks and valuable farmland on the site.

We submitted letters and maps to our Representatives, the Easthampton Planning Department and the Easthampton Conservation Commission as well as having a PCT Board presence at their meetings to express our concerns and offer alternative design ideas that still support business and affordable housing. Unfortunately, no substantive changes were made to reduce the project's environmental footprint from the original design. We will continue to monitor the development and keep you informed of any updates.

The PCT Board needs you!

Become a Board Member, become our new Clerk!!

Join our 40+ year old organization full of delightful folks who all love nature and Easthampton. Our loyal and long serving Clerk, Dawn Ackley, is movin' on... and we are in need of a replacement. Duties include recording the notes of the meetings and emailing them to the Board a week before our next meeting. (We meet on the second Tuesday of the month.) Please get in touch with us if you think you would like to join us. We would ask that you attend a couple of meetings to get a feel for it, and of course, have a love of nature - however you express it.

New signage

This summer, look for new signage at our trailheads with downloadable trail maps and links to our website.

Our membership hovers around 350 dedicated folks - and this year, our goal is to bring our membership number to 500. You can help tremendously by encouraging folks who use our trails or who care about conservation to join us. Membership starts at only \$10 and it's a perfect birthday, "just for fun" or "you should know about these folks!" gift.

Hope to see you at the Plant Sale on May 18th (rain date May 25th), the Cultural Chaos Festival in June and out on the trails!



New Board Members!

Bri Grant

I recently joined the Board of Directors both because I love nature and because I want to give back to my new community. I moved to Easthampton a year and a half ago with my husband and two cats and have loved exploring all the beautiful outdoor spaces in western Massachusetts. I am originally from New York and often visit the Adirondacks to hike, swim in lakes and look for waterfalls.

I am passionate about supporting nonprofits and have volunteered and worked for nonprofits throughout my career. Currently, I work as a writer for an animal welfare organization. The Brickyard Brook Conservation Area has become one of my favorite spots to walk during my lunch breaks. I love the mission of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust and am excited to expand our communications and fundraising efforts.

Katie Hereld

Katie Hereld grew up enjoying the woods (think playing in the dirt) in the many public lands in Connecticut. As an adult, she spent 30 years as a performing artist, both as a concert soloist and as a professional storyteller. In 1990 Katie got a “real job” (please quote her mother) as a Registered Nurse making “real money” (please quote Katie). She currently works part time as a Nurse Case Manager.

When Katie moved to Easthampton six years ago, she discovered her house is near one of PCT’s properties. She volunteered to be on the PCT board this year because she is committed to giving back to the organization that has provided her so many local places to continue to play in the dirt...

Alan Clark

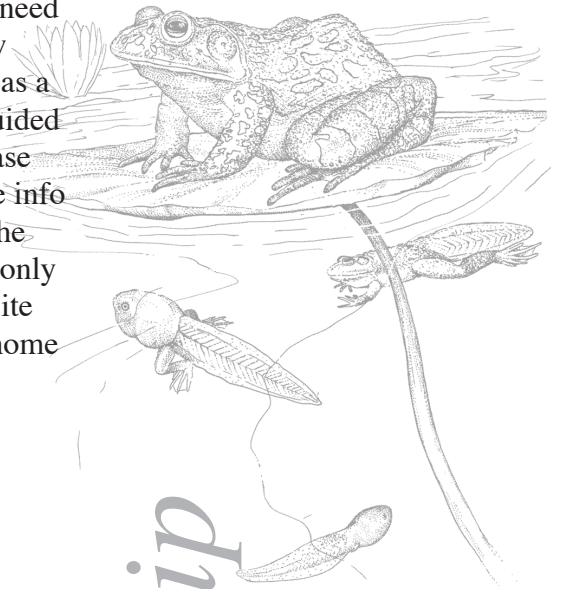
Last year, I retired from my position as an ecologist at Fordham University in New York City. At Fordham, my primary research focus was on penguin breeding ecology, conservation biology, and how birds and bats navigate urban landscapes. In addition, I taught Conservation Law & Policy at Fordham’s law school. After my retirement, I moved to Easthampton. I fell in love with this area because I had sung in a chorus with several local musicians and because my daughter graduated from Mt. Holyoke College.

Prior to my time as a professor at Fordham, I spent several years as a land conservation lawyer in Seattle. I worked primarily with land trusts – helping them acquire and protect land of high conservation value. I am passionate about wildlife conservation and the critical role native plants/habitat play. In addition to a PhD and JD, I have an MS in Natural Resource Policy and undergraduate degrees in Music Education and Religious Studies. My goal in joining the PCT board is to help continue the excellent work that PCT has already undertaken and to ensure that Easthampton is a high-quality habitat for both humans and non-human biodiversity.



New Member Drive

In the spirit of Spring, we are asking for members to help us keep PCT vibrant and energized. We have a cadre of wonderful volunteers who help keep the trails open, showing up for work parties and lots of other behind the scenes activities. In fact, we have many loyal members who have been with the Trust for decades. We try to get the word out about the Trust with new trail maps and a social media presence - but we need you to do one simple thing. Find someone to join the Trust as a new member. These new members will receive the past two newsletters as a special thank you, and will get notifications of our plant sale and guided walks. We have some exciting events planned for this year. So, please consider gifting a friend or relative a membership, or pass along the info to someone who might benefit from knowing about the Trust, and the properties we maintain for the public benefit. Membership starts at only \$10. Use the membership form in this newsletter, or go to our website at pctland.org and click on the donate button on the bottom of our home page. Thank you!



Fowler Toad at Dwyer Conservation

new membership

Spring Events



Spring Plant Sale

May 18 8:00 AM-12PM, Rain date May 25

Plant sale prep of repotting, organizing, tagging and pricing plants has begun! We are getting ready for our biggest fundraiser of the year, the PCT Plant sale. If you have visited any of our plant sales in the past, then you know that the prices are unbeatable. If you are donating plants, please bring them starting at 8AM.

We will again be holding the PCT raffle, with popular gift baskets and other prizes. Thanks to Terry Perrea, Sue Bishop, and Don McQuillan for the wonderful prizes. Thanks to Sue and Ed for coordinating and staffing the entire operation!

Spring Walk at Dwyer Conservation Area off Terrace View St.

May 5 10:30 AM-12PM

Our two amazing naturalists, Tom Lautzenheiser and Marty Klein, will lead a walk pointing out spring wildflowers, birds and other natural features. *Not to be missed!!*

The Board of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust voted to change our fiscal year from calendar year to year ending 6/30. The main purpose of this was to better coordinate with the town for the filing of the 3ABC, (property tax abatement for non profits), and to enable a quicker turn-around of our taxes during a less busy time of the year. You can see our 990's for 2022 and 2021 on our website, www.pctland.org

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

Alan Clark

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) | <input type="checkbox"/> Gift (\$10) |

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



Pascommuck Conservation Trust

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pctland.org

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Marty Klein