

Please Show Your Annual Support for Land Protection



Every fall, The Kestrel Trust runs an annual fund drive. Last year, the Trust's supporters helped us raise more than \$25,000. This funding is used as seed money to initiate new land protection projects and to support our lean general operating budget. Thanks to a growing list of residents who support Kestrel's efforts, each year we have been able to raise several thousand more than the year before. This year our goal is to raise \$30,000.

We are raising our sights because, quite frankly, we need as much money as we can find to get the job done. Nobody is making any more land. And acre by acre, day by day, the Pioneer Valley is losing precious open space.

If you are alarmed when you see a new house crop up out of an old farm, or a grove of trees cut down for a sprawling subdivision, now is the time to do something about it, before it is too late. With your support The Kestrel Trust can become a more proactive land trust—by working collaboratively with landowners before they feel pressured to sell their land for development. So please consider giving as generously as you can in

2004. If each one of our 300 most active members pledges just \$100 (less than 30 cents/day for the year), we can reach our goal. Thank you!

YES, I will support Kestrel's 2004 Annual Fund Drive!

___\$100 ___\$250 ___\$500 other ___

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

THANK YOU!



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Founded in 1970, The Kestrel Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit land trust dedicated to the conservation of forests, farms, fields, and wetlands in the Pioneer Valley of western Massachusetts, from the Mount Holyoke Range to Mt. Toby, and from the Connecticut River to the Quabbin Reservoir.

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Valley Views

The newsletter of
The Kestrel Trust
Fall 2004



The Great Meadow

—Protecting Hadley's Historic Farmland for the Future

Farming in the Connecticut River Valley is practically legendary. The rich alluvial soils here provided abundant crops to colonial Americans, and to Native Americans long before that. Today this area has become a stronghold for the organic and community-supported agriculture movements nation-wide. Local farms also provide precious open space that is a valued part of our quality of life. Paradoxically, it is this agrarian landscape which also attracts an increasing number of people who want to live and work here, putting Valley farms under greater development pressures than ever before.

One agricultural area in this region stands out, not only for its prime agricultural values, but also for its historic roots, dating back to this country's earliest colonial settlements. Located on the bank of the Connecticut River in Hadley, the "Great Meadow" was the town's very first agricultural field. Today, most residents cherish these expansive fields for their sweet corn, proximity to the river and sweeping views of the surrounding hills and mountains. Few may be aware that this area is also a nationally valuable historic landscape. In fact, the Great Meadow may be the *only* surviving example in New England of an "open field" or "common field" that retains its original pattern of long, narrow, separately owned lots.

The fact that this historic area has been farmed continuously for more than 350 years is a testimony to the good stewardship of the landowners and farmers who tend to the land. However, the future of Great Meadow may be in jeopardy. For the first time, some of this land is being valued more for its development potential than for farming. The Kestrel Trust is concerned that



The Great Meadow. Photo by Peggy Hepler.

if any one parcel is developed in this area, all the other parcels will be impacted, greatly harming the meadow's agricultural, scenic, wildlife, and historic values. To secure a sustainable future for this

historic farmland, The Kestrel Trust has initiated a cooperative venture to work with landowners, government agencies, and other land trusts to sustain the Great Meadow for farming forever.

Historical Importance: The Great Meadow is a rare example of a seventeenth century "open field" that has kept its original arrangement of slender, unfenced, elongated parcels. Allotted to individual proprietors in the original distribution of land in Hadley in 1661, the Meadow is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the historic town center of Hadley, Massachusetts. It lies adjacent to the Hadley Common, a spacious green on West Street surrounded with historic houses, and the burying ground, also laid out in 1661. This type of nucleated village with clustered houselots and outlying fields was typical of Seventeenth Century New England. This arrangement was also not only a familiar pattern brought from England, but one that served the settler's defensive needs and helped build the tightly knit communities they valued. By the eighteenth century new settlements were composed of dispersed farmsteads and fields in single ownership, a pattern familiar in the present New England landscape. Though other fields laid out by villages in the seventeenth century remain in agricultural use in Massachusetts, they are now reconfigured into large blocks of land farmed by one or a few owners. Hadley's Great Meadow is remarkable because the original pattern of slender lots is still visible in stripes of different plantings and the lots remain in the possession of many owners. Even across the Atlantic, this field archetype, dating back to medieval times, is exceedingly rare in Britain today. That such a field should still exist in the "New World" is a notable example of cultural endurance.

Prime Agricultural Land: The expansive farming field in the Great Meadow is bordered on three sides by the Connecticut River. Alluvial soil created by deposits from the river has made this land extremely fertile. A variety of local produce is grown here, including sweet corn, tomatoes, asparagus, berries, potatoes, squash and onions. Because this area is divided into many different 4-10 acre parcels, many farmers and landowners have a stake here. Unfortunately, the high price that developers are paying for flat, treeless land is forcing some landowners to consider selling off their land for development.

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Conservation Funding Challenges

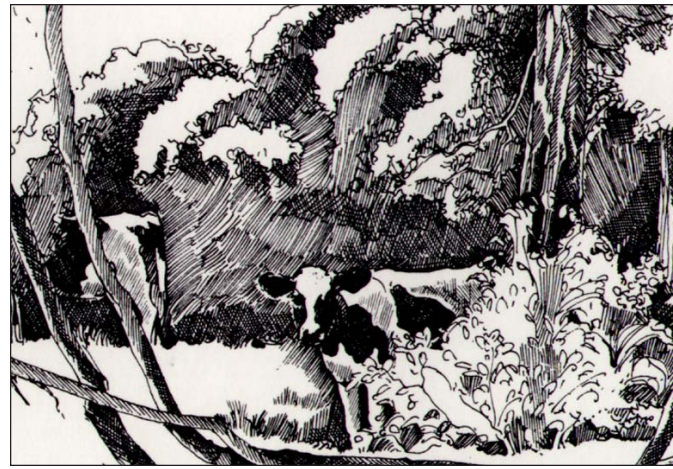
This summer, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts announced their new guidelines for applying for state funding to support land conservation and environmental protection. A point system has been established to challenge municipalities to institute certain measures that encourage “sustainable development,” including:

- promoting compact development and planning for livable communities
- expanding affordable housing opportunities
- reutilizing brownfields and abandoned buildings
- advancing sound water policy and preserving working natural landscapes

The more points a town can score in each of these categories, the more competitive each town will be in securing funding for land conservation programs, such as the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR).

Although this point system may encourage more environmentally sound development in the long run, the land trust community is concerned that this new procedure may make it more difficult for towns to secure the funding they desperately need right now to conserve open space. The point system is an outgrowth of the Romney Administration’s controversial move to consolidate the housing, transportation and environmental agencies into a new Office for Commonwealth Development. And the Administration has drastically decreased overall funding for conservation, from an average of \$53 million per year in previous administrations to only \$18 million during its first year. In Fiscal Year 2005, the Administration recently announced it will spend up to \$35 million on land conservation, due to the large outpouring of citizen support.

To make the best of this evolving situation, The Kestrel Trust will be working with conservation commissions of several towns in our region to help them navigate the new scoring system, and we will continue to work actively with the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, the Western Massachusetts Land Trusts, and the Commonwealth Conservation Council to call on the state to increase funding for land conservation.



Hess Farm Conserved

On June 29, 2004 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts completed its purchase of the development rights to the 160 acre farm owned by Fred and Linda Hess on Northeast Street in Amherst for \$1,092,000. The state appropriated \$877,500, the town of Amherst voted to apply \$192,500 from its Community Preservation Act Funds toward the project, and the Valley Land Fund led a final fundraising push to raise the last \$22,000 needed to acquire the agricultural preservation restriction (APR) on this beautiful and productive farmland. The Kestrel Trust contributed more than \$6,000 to the project with the help of some key donors. Thank you!

Meadow also provides the possibility of public access for fishing.

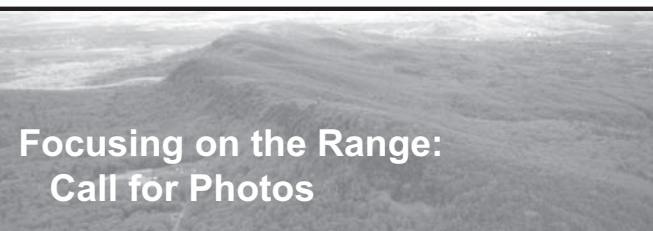
The Kestrel Trust’s first step toward protection of this area involved purchasing a 5.7-acre parcel of open agricultural land on Cemetery Road in Hadley for a total project cost of \$115,000. This farm was slated for immediate development as a flag-lot subdivision. Realizing that losing this farm could have triggered a domino effect of development sales, Kestrel decided to take the risk of obtaining loans to secure the property for farming. To help finance this acquisition, a local organic farmer has made a commitment to purchase the rights to farm the property and the Trust anticipates that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will eventually appropriate funds to acquire an APR. However, since the development value of this land is so high, there is still a gap of about \$30,000 that we must raise by February 15, 2005, to pay back our loans. So far, we have raised approximately \$20,000 from private and public donors. That leaves \$10,000 to go in this first phase of fundraising.

Once we have raised enough funding to secure the first parcel of land, The Kestrel Trust will be able to pursue other opportunities to conserve land in the Great Meadow. This means identifying landowners who are willing to partner with us, and raising funds from public and private sources. Toward this end, the Trust has contacted all 35 landowners in the Great Meadow, and held an informational gathering in Hadley. We have also begun to appeal to regional foundations and local donors to raise enough seed money to purchase options and rights of first refusals on key parcels, to do appraisals of the land, and to help Hadley meet the local funding match required by the APR program. We sincerely appreciate the support that many Kestrel members have already given to this project. Now we need your help to appeal to the wider community for their financial support as well. Thank you.

Great Meadow continued...

The local farming community, however, which is increasingly losing arable land to sprawl, is eager to keep land in cultivation. By preserving the Great Meadow with a series of agricultural preservation restrictions (APR), we can help sustain productive farmland at an affordable price.

Scenic Views and Recreation: Standing in the Great Meadow, one feels far from traffic and congestion. With sweeping views of the Mount Holyoke Range to the south, the foothills of the Berkshires to the west, and the Connecticut River to the north, many residents enjoy this area just for the scenic views. Whether one is walking on the dike that partly borders the Meadow, looking across it from the Norwottuck Rail Trail, or driving through it on Cemetery Road, passersby are sure to be uplifted by the views and serene rural surroundings. Cradled by the Connecticut River, the edge of the Great



Focusing on the Range: Call for Photos

The Kestrel Trust is pleased to announce *Focusing on the Range*—a community photo exhibit where adults and children, amateurs and professionals, alike are invited to submit photos of, to and from the Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom Ranges at any season, any time, anywhere. Find the mountains in old favorite places or new ones. Let us see your favorite views—the sights that amaze, concern or captivate you.

Any photo with a connection to the Range will be exhibited at the Summit House on Mount Holyoke in Hadley from May to August 2005. There will be a special category for submissions from children K-12. Winners will be decided in May 2005, when cash and other prizes will be awarded at an opening reception. **Multiple entries encouraged!**

Focusing on the Range is organized by The Kestrel Trust in conjunction with WGBY-TV, Connecticut Valley Summit, Friends of the Mt. Holyoke Range, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and The Trustees of Reservations. Financial support is provided by local businesses.

For more information see kestreltrust.org or call 413-695-3468.

Kestrel’s New Membership Program

Thank you for becoming a Kestrel Trust member. Whether you have been supporting the Trust’s land protection efforts for years, or just joined recently—all of you are “new members” of the Trust. Although the Trust has always relied on the generous contributions of area residents to provide funding to protect land, until this year the Trust has not had a formal membership program. Now as a “member” you will receive more information about our land protection efforts (like this periodic newsletter and other land alerts), and be given more opportunities to become involved with the community of people who make up the Trust (through periodic special receptions, field trips, and presentations). As part of this membership program, we have also launched a drive to recruit new members. Our goal is to double Kestrel’s membership in the next two years.

To recruit new members in 2004, we have:

- Sent a joint membership appeal to 5,000 area residents in partnership with The Trustees of Reservations, the oldest land trust in Massachusetts.
- Sponsored a new members hike in Mount Holyoke Range State Park led by board member and activist, Robie Hubley. We are also planning a Hawk Watch Hike for this fall. Watch for details.
- Appealed to all of you for the names of neighbors and friends who you think would like to become members. As a result, we sent membership invitations to more than 300 conservation-minded individuals in the Valley. Thanks for that contact information!
- Developed a new slide show about local land conservation that we would like to show to you and your friends. To host a KT presentation at your favorite club, church, neighborhood group, or for a group of friends, please call 413-695-3468.

If you have ideas about The Kestrel Trust’s new membership program, please share them with us. Thank you!

The People Behind the Trust



KT Trustees: Tom Quarles (founding member), Jim Scott, Robie Hubley, Kristin DeBoer, Dave Ziomek, Judy Eiseman, Sue Benoit, Alexandra Dawson, Steve Schmidt, Paul Beaulieu, Peg Hepler, Donna Motts (founding member).

Founded in 1970, The Kestrel Trust has become one of the leading land trusts in the Pioneer Valley. As a volunteer-led land trust, that has meant dozens of people have dedicated their time and energy to protect thousands of acres in the area. In April 2004, the Trust held a special reception at the Center for Renaissance Studies in Amherst (the former home of Kestrel founder, Janet Dakin) to honor the Trust’s founders and former trustees (see photo above). Today, the work of the Kestrel Trust is carried out by a dedicated board of directors and one part-time staff person, who are working together to expand the organization’s capacity to protect more land. Take a moment to meet the people behind the Trust.

Doug Albertson. Town Planner for Belchertown. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Executive Committee

Paul Beaulieu, Chair. Senior Environmental Scientist and manager of Tighe & Bond’s Wetland Services group. Served on the Granby Conservation Commission for ten years.

Susan Benoit. Volunteer field researcher for Friends of Mohawk Trail State Forest and Eastern Native Tree Society. Student-life administrator at UMass. Part-time researcher/writer/consultant.

LeeAnne Connolly. Conservation Administrator for Belchertown. Member, Mass Association of Wetland Scientists. Enrolled in the Advanced Certificate Training program with the Mass Association of Conservation Commissions.

Alexandra Dawson, Esq. Lawyer specializing in Planning and Environmental law. Current Chair of Hadley Conservation Commission. Legal Services Director for MACC. Environmental representative to the Massachusetts Highway Design Task Force.

Kristin DeBoer. Serves as a part-time development director for the Kestrel Trust. Former program director for RESTORE: The North Woods. Current volunteer coordinator for Valley Trackers, a local wildlife tracking group.

Judith S. Eiseman, Vice Chair. Consultant on environmental, land use planning, and citizen-action issues. Serves on the board of Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Executive Committee. Coordinator for CT Valley Summit. Western Massachusetts representative to the Commonwealth Conservation Council.

Margaret Hepler. Consultant to local historical commissions across the state to do historic resource surveys and National Register nominations, with a focus on historic New England landscapes.

Robie Hubley. Former legislative director, Massachusetts Audubon Society. Current selectman for Town of Amherst.

David King. Research wildlife biologist, US Forest Service. Adjunct faculty, Department of Natural Resources Conservation, UMass.

Jono Neiger: Ecological designer, consultant, and educator. Certified NOFA Organic Land Care Professional.

Stephen Schmidt, Treasurer. Administrative Assessor for the Town of Leverett. Former co-chair of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, a land trust serving the Town of Leverett.

James Scott, Secretary. Retired Chemistry teacher. Former Amherst Conservation Commission Chair and board member for the Hitchcock Center for the Environment. Active in “Five College Learning In Retirement.”

David Ziomek. Serves as the consulting land agent for The Kestrel Trust. Director of the Great Falls Discovery Center. Current president of Valley Land Fund. Former Director of the Hitchcock Center for the Environment.

A Special Thanks!

The Kestrel Trust greatly appreciates the donation from Whole Foods Market of 5% of their total sales on May 19th. Thank you for shopping!

