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Valley Views

The Newsletter of
 The Kestrel Trust
 Summer 2008



Amherst • Belchertown • Granby • Hadley • Leverett • Pelham • Shutesbury • South Hadley • Sunderland

Protect the Places You Love!

The Kestrel Trust is dedicated to preserving the heart of the Valley—the farms, forests, and fields that define our landscape and contribute to our quality of life. As a small organization with a big responsibility, we count on you for help. Make a donation to Kestrel to help us initiate conservation projects, leverage major public funding and grants for land acquisition, and run our lean organization. Thank you!

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

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[OR DONATE ONLINE AT WWW.KESTRELTRUST.ORG!](http://WWW.KESTRELTRUST.ORG!)

To contact us, write or call:

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Visit our office, 233 North Pleasant St., #30
 in the Carriage Shops in downtown Amherst.

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A Common Celebration: 500+ Acres Conserved this Summer!

At a recent press event, a woman stopped her car to ask what was going on. “This field has just been protected,” I overhead another explain. “Oh geez, more land conserved...whoop-de-doo!” As she sped away, I thought perhaps that is just how commonplace conservation has become in the Valley. Now that is news!

This summer, more than 270 acres of farmland were conserved in Hadley alone. In addition, two other major million dollar deals were completed that will add to town, state and national sanctuaries and greenways (described inside). In Belchertown, 57 acres were protected for the last piece of Topping Farm. In Pelham, Kestrel purchased 70 acres of land adjacent to a large block of town conservation land. It is easy to write the headlines. But there is no escaping that every acre conserved takes hours of effort and thousands of dollars.

As Alexandra Dawson, chair of the Hadley Conservation Commission pointed out: “None of the projects in Hadley would have happened without the TLC of the APR committee, the enduring support of the CC, and the overwhelming approval of town meeting after town meeting.”

It also takes the patience and dedication of landowners to stick with the process and the paperwork to ensure permanent protection of their land. Stan Miastkowski, the owner of a 60-acre family farm at the base of the Range on Chmura Road was motivated by his strong memories of his land as a child:

Stan recalls: “working with my grandfather in the fields on asparagus, potatoes, onions, tobacco, and hay; riding on the massive backs of work horses; hand-milking cows on cold winter mornings (with the barn cats waiting for their fresh, warm, cream-topped share); and hundreds of long walks with my dogs through the woods and fields. The people and the animals are all long gone, but their memories will remain in the legacy of the land.”

Finally, it takes donations from generous Kestrel supporters to help us catalyze these conservation deals. Kestrel helped raise or contribute more than \$200,000 this summer, which leveraged the public investment. Thank you for making conservation a common reason to celebrate. May there be many more acres to come!



Save the Date

for a **Barn and Garden Party**
 at the **Hepler Homestead**
 in **Pelham**
Sunday, September 28; 4-7pm

- Enjoy seasonal appetizers and local wine.
- Meet other Kestrel supporters and conservation enthusiasts.
- Tour this 40 acre property, which was recently protected with a conservation restriction.
- Learn about Kestrel's latest initiative to conserve another 60 acre homestead in Pelham, the Well Away Farm.

We hope to see you there!



Kestrel Orchestrates a \$1.2 Million Deal to Protect 100 Acres in North Hadley

On June 30, 2008, a partnership of eight private and public conservation agencies came together to purchase and protect 100 acres in six parcels of land in North Hadley for \$1,205,000. As a result, these lands will continue to preserve the character, health, economies and recreation of Hadley and surrounding communities now and for future generations. Kestrel coordinated the complicated deal which protected the following parcels:

- **Connecticut Riverlands: 24 acres** of woodlands fronting on the Connecticut River. This land on River Drive will be owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation to become part of the Connecticut River Greenway State Park.
- **Lake Warner: 5.7 acres** of shoreline will be owned by The Kestrel Trust and protected through a conservation restriction held by The Town of Hadley's Conservation Commission.
- **Farmland: 34 acres** of active agricultural land on the corner of River Drive and Huntington Road. The Trustees of Reservations preacquired the land with the help of a bridge loan from the Open Space Institute, and will hold it until the farmland can be protected through a state Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) and resold to a farmer.
- **Woodland: 24 acres** of woodlands along Stockwell Road. This parcel will be owned privately and permanently protected by a conservation restriction through Kestrel.
- **Fields: 13.5 acres** of backland off Huntington Road. This will add to an existing assemblage of contiguous protected woodlands and fields owned by The Kestrel Trust and other private landowners.

The conservation partners included Kestrel, The Trustees of Reservations, the Commonwealth's Departments of Conservation and Recreation and Agricultural Resources, the Town of Hadley and the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum. "All of the partners spent countless hours over the last two years figuring out the details of this extremely



Carolyn Hayes spoke about the Scott family's motivation to do a conservation sale. Kristin DeBoer, Kestrel's Executive Director and Dick Evans, attorney for TTOR stand to listen.

complicated agreement," said Kristin DeBoer, Executive Director. "Every acre was worth the effort!"

The land was originally owned by Frank Scott, who died in 1935. In the following decades, the property passed on to his children and their children, until today when 14 living heirs agreed to the sale and protection of the land.

Alexandra Dawson, Chair of Hadley's Conservation Commission said: "I'm just amazed that the pieces of this puzzle finally came together and that this estate is finally settled. The Town should breathe a sigh of collective relief that these 100 acres of our town will not be developed."

Jennifer Howard of DCR said, "DCR has been working for years to conserve land along the river, and specifically the Mt. Warner landscape. Today we will celebrate another terrific collaboration with The Kestrel Trust, The Trustees of Reservations, Department of Agricultural Resources, and the Town of Hadley."

Lee Alexander, Community Conservation Specialist with The Trustees of Reservations, shared, "We were just thrilled to lend a hand with a project that protects such an amazing cross section of North Hadley: farmland, riverfront, woodlands and lakeshore. It would not have been possible without the combined effort of many partners working hard and working together. We hope this project will inspire more communities to create similar partnerships to preserve the natural and cultural character of their towns."

Susan Lisk, Executive Director of Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum said: "These parcels, are, for the most part, contiguous with the 100 acres of open space around Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum. The museum is so pleased to see the rural fabric of our community remain as it has been for generations."

"OSI is pleased to have helped Trustees and Kestrel protect this important parcel," said Peter Howell, Open Space Institute's executive vice president. "Its protection builds on significant other work in the Connecticut River Valley."

A celebration was held on July 22 at the porch of the Porter Phelps Huntington Museum. The event was well attended by North Hadley residents, the Scott family, contributors, and representatives from each partnership. Tours of the land followed briefly before another exciting Hadley thunderstorm struck!



Terry Blunt and Jennifer Howard speak about DCR's purchase of the riverland for the state park.

82 Acres Added to Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and The Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national non-profit conservation organization, announced in June that 82 acres on Moody Bridge Road in Hadley have been acquired and will be managed as part of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

The property contains several thousand feet of frontage along the Fort River (the longest free-flowing tributary of the Connecticut River in Massachusetts), open fields and other important habitat for fish, federally endangered dwarf wedgemussels and other rare species. These include the bridle shiner dragonfly and several species of state-protected turtles. The parcel supports significant populations of grassland birds. It comprises one of the most scenic areas in the Pioneer Valley, and is entirely within the recharge zone for the Town of Hadley's new public drinking water source, the Callahan Well.

The Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge protects prime fish and wildlife habitat in the Connecticut River watershed in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut. This property lies within a focus area of the refuge known as the Fort River Division.

The support of U.S. Senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry and U.S. Representative Richard Neal, and especially the leadership of U.S. Representative John Olver, a member of the Interior Appropria-



Conte Celebration Honorees: USFWS Regional Director Marvin Moriarty, Congressman Olver, Congressman Neal, farmer Gordon Smith at the podium, and Craig MacDonnell of Trust for Public Land.

tions Subcommittee, helped to secure nearly \$2 million in funding for the acquisition from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

At the press conference, Congressman John Olver said he was very pleased to secure funding for the Conte Wildlife Refuge. "In light of current development pressures in the Connecticut River watershed, it is increasingly important that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have the resources to preserve the most critically sensitive ecosystems within the Connecticut River Valley."

Other speakers included Congressman Richard Neal, State Representative John Scibak, USFWS Regional Director Marvin Moriarty, Andrew French, USFWS project leader for the Conte refuge, Hadley Selectman Gerry Devine, Craig MacDonnell and Clem Clay of Trust for Public Land, Gordon Smith, Wayne Goulet, and John Devine, the landowners who sold the land for conservation, and Kristin DeBoer, Kestrel's Executive Director.

This acquisition for Conte is part of a private-public conservation partnership to protect a mosaic of grasslands and agricultural lands between the Fort River and the Mt. Holyoke Range. More than 120 acres of agricultural lands were also recently protected in this area over summer with the help of Kestrel and Valley Land Fund. In the coming year, Kestrel will be collaborating with the Trust for Public Land and other land trusts to secure additional parcels for Conte, as well as with the Department of Agricultural Resources to protect more farm fields here.

Other Projects Completed this Summer:

- 26 acres of agricultural land in the Great Meadow
- 121 acres of agricultural land between the Fort River and Mt. Holyoke Range
- 70 Acres of woodland purchased in Pelham
- 57 Acre Topping Farm protected in Belchertown



Bike Tour of "At-risk Farmland"

The Kestrel Trust's Board Chair, Judy Eiseman led a bike tour through Hadley Farmland as part of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's efforts to support National Bike Commute Week in May.