



March 30, 2011

Dear Friend of Land Conservation,

We want you to be among the first to hear the news—The Kestrel Trust and Valley Land Fund are merging!

The combined organization will operate under a new name: Kestrel Land Trust. Valley Land Fund will become Kestrel's land acquisition fund. We will be serving a 19-town region surrounding Amherst, Northampton and Holyoke, but remain focused on our core mission of conservation in several areas:

- The Connecticut River and its tributaries;
- Prime river valley farmland;
- Scenic lands and wildlife habitat connecting to Mt Tom, Mt Holyoke Range, and Mt Toby;
- Woodlands, farmland, and wildlands in the Quabbin and Hilltown areas.

Our new service area doubles Kestrel's current 9-town region while placing some of Valley Land Fund's former area in the care of other land trusts. (See map on the reverse side.)

***Why Are The Kestrel Trust and Valley Land Fund Merging?***

Kestrel and Valley Land Fund are old friends and have been collaborating on land conservation projects for 25 years. Together we have a total of 65 years' experience in the field; collectively we have protected more than 14,000 acres of land in the Valley. Both organizations feel an urgency to better meet the increasing demand for land conservation. Merging will allow us to accelerate the pace of land conservation, focus our strategic priorities, expand our professional capacity, promote efficiency, and retain the expertise found on both boards of directors.

This spring we are developing a Strategic Plan to guide the work of the new Trust over the next five years. As a long-time supporter, we hope you will share your thoughts about how we can better help conserve the land that makes the Valley such a special place. We will be contacting you as this strategic plan takes shape to solicit your feedback.

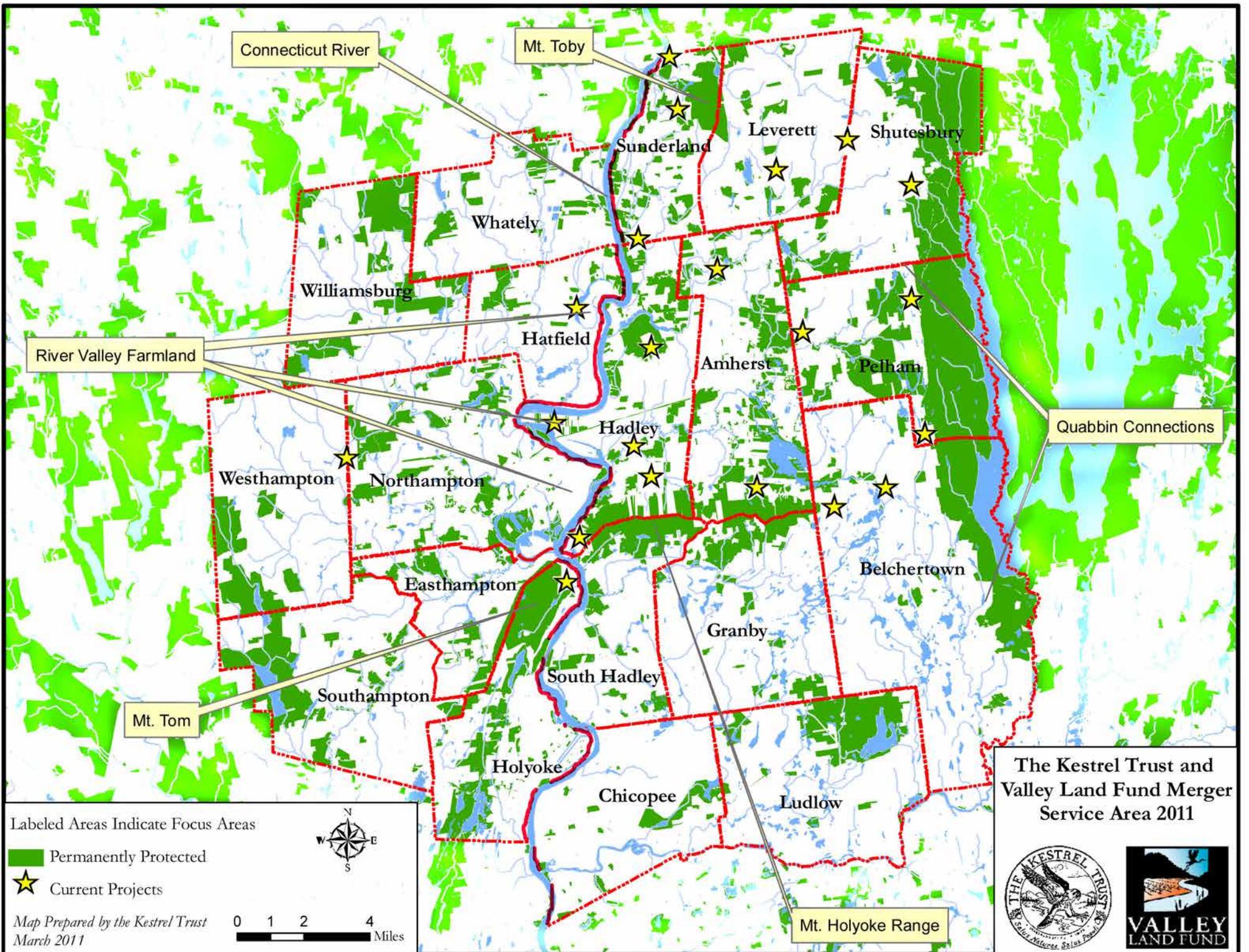
If you have questions in the meantime, please contact me at 413-549-1097 or [kristin@kestreltrust.org](mailto:kristin@kestreltrust.org). You may also contact Robert A. Jonas, Valley Land Fund board member and donor to both organizations, who will serve on the Kestrel Land Trust's Board of Trustees. He can be reached at 413-588-1418 or [info@valleylandfund.org](mailto:info@valleylandfund.org).

I am excited about the merger and the positive effect it will have on our work to protect the natural areas that matter so much to all of us. I look forward to your continued support!

Sincerely,

Kristin DeBoer, Executive Director

For more information visit [kestreltrust.org](http://kestreltrust.org) OR [valleylandfund.org](http://valleylandfund.org)  
PO Box 1016 • Amherst • MA • 01004 • 413-549-1097



Labeled Areas Indicate Focus Areas

- Permanently Protected
- Current Projects

Map Prepared by the Kestrel Trust  
March 2011



**The Kestrel Trust and  
Valley Land Fund Merger  
Service Area 2011**



## **THE MERGER OF THE KESTREL TRUST AND VALLEY LAND FUND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Why Are The Kestrel Trust and Valley Land Fund Merging?** Merging will allow us to better meet the challenges of land protection in the Valley over the next decade. Kestrel and Valley Land Fund have been collaborating on land conservation projects for 25 years and have a total of 65 years' experience in the field; collectively we have protected more than 14,000 acres of wildlife habitat, woodlands, prime farmland and scenic vistas in the Pioneer Valley—working on essentially the same mission. Following a year-long conversation, Kestrel and VLF concluded that our mutual trust and strong working relationships put us in a solid position to proceed with a merger to achieve our common objective: to save more land!

**How Will Merging Make a Difference?** Merging will allow us to accelerate the pace of land conservation in the most rapidly developing and changing areas in the Valley by focusing our strategic priorities; expanding our professional capacity; capturing the talents of both boards; and promoting organizational efficiency. Although VLF will no longer be a presence in some areas, we are confident that other land trusts will be able to work effectively in areas previously covered by VLF.

**What Will the New Name Be?** We will operate as Kestrel Land Trust. Valley Land Fund will serve as the organization's dedicated land acquisition fund.

**What Will the Mission Be?** The Mission will remain the same—to work with landowners, governmental agencies, citizen groups, and other organizations to protect land, including farmland, woodlands, wildlands, wildlife habitat, water resources, historic landscapes, rare and endangered species habitat, and scenic vistas in the heart of the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts.

**What Towns Will The Trust Serve?** The Trust's service area will radiate out from Northampton and Amherst, which includes land principally, *but not exclusively* in the communities of *Amherst, Belchertown, Chicopee, Hadley, Granby, Hatfield, Leverett, Ludlow, Northampton, Pelham, Shutesbury, Sunderland, South Hadley, Southampton, Whately, Easthampton, Holyoke, Westhampton, and Williamsburg*. The Trust will have the flexibility to act on exceptional conservation opportunities elsewhere in the Connecticut River Watershed of Massachusetts as capacity allows and opportunities arise.

**What Areas Will the Trust Focus on Within Those Towns?** The Trust will focus within its service area on the properties that define the ecological integrity and quality of life in the Valley, including:

- Prime farmland in the river valley;
- The Connecticut River and its tributaries;
- Scenic lands and wildlife habitat connecting to Mt Tom, Mt Holyoke Range, and Mt Toby;
- Woodlands, wildlands, and farmland in the Quabbin and Hilltown areas.

Projects in these focus areas will be selected based on natural resource values, unique threat or opportunity, landowner willingness and engagement, and funding availability.

**Will You Overlap and Work with Other Conservation Groups?** Fortunately, there are many public and private conservation groups in the Valley. Both Kestrel and VLF have a long history of good working relationships with all of the conservation groups in the Valley. The Trust will continue to work on strengthening these partnerships as well as those with municipal, regional, state, and federal public agencies, and local, regional and national land trusts and other allies in our region.

**How Will the Trust Build Capacity to Serve this Larger Territory?** The Trust is developing a 5-Year Strategic Plan to guide the conservation, operational, and fundraising work of the Trust. Within the year, we plan to hire a land protection specialist to increase our capacity to do more conservation projects. Over the next 5 years, we aim to increase the number of staff up to 5 full-time positions as projects demand and funding allows. We will also continue to work with experienced volunteers to assist with stewardship and other needs. Our dedicated conservation professionals will enable the Trust to complete more land conservation deals, steward and manage expanded conservation holdings, and build greater public support for conservation. Kristin DeBoer, Kestrel's part-time Executive Director, will increase to full-time status as the Executive Director of the Trust. Sally Loomis, Valley Land Fund's current Program Manager, will work on special programs. Christine Foudy will continue to work part-time as the Office Manager. The Trust will also continue to participate in the AmeriCorps MassLIFT Program by taking on two full-time service members, including a Land Steward, to monitor conservation properties, and a Regional Conservationist, who will assist with outreach to town Conservation and Agricultural Commissions.

**Who Will Be on the Board of Trustees?** Kestrel will maintain a board of 9 to 14 members with a broad spectrum of knowledge and experience. Kestrel has elected Robert Jonas and Dave Hershops from the VLF Board. Several board members from KT and VLF board have elected to join an Advisory Council and/or volunteer committees, to provide technical and detail-oriented support on land projects, or work on fundraising and stewardship projects.

**Where Will the Office Be?** The Trust will maintain its Amherst office, and meeting space in Northampton.

**How Can I Support Land Conservation After the Merger?** The aim of our merged organizations is to accelerate the pace of land conservation in the Valley. Your gift will give us a greater capacity to facilitate and catalyze future conservation deals. It will also help us to attract major public grants from local, state, and federal sources to complete land conservation projects. If you are able to increase your level of support in this year of our merger, we invite you to do so. We pledge to do our best to leverage every dollar donated—through matches and grants—to maximize the positive effect of your charitable contribution. If you wish to learn more about ways to give to Kestrel Land Trust that will have a sustaining impact for generations to come, please call Kristin DeBoer, Executive Director at 413-549-1097.