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## Kestrel Land Trust Is Awarded National Accreditation

A rigorous application process confirms that the land trust meets standards of excellence.

The land that sustains all human, wildlife, and plant communities is an irreplaceable resource, here in our Valley and around the world. For that reason, the process of permanently conserving land requires public trust, organizational integrity, and strict legal



**The accreditation seal recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust, and ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.**

compliance. To ensure that nonprofit land trusts across the country meet these standards, the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission was formed in 2006 as an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance to build and recognize strong land trusts, foster public confidence in land conservation, and help ensure the long-term protection of land.

After an extensive evaluation of its practices, policies, and accomplishments, Kestrel Land Trust is pleased to announce that it has been awarded accreditation by the Accreditation Commission. This means that the organization is meeting national standards for excellence in all aspects of its operations—from conducting land deals, to keeping records and managing finances, to stewarding the land it has conserved, and more.

### Trust, Integrity and Dedication Recognized by Accreditation

Kestrel's Executive Director, Kristin DeBoer, sees accreditation as a significant milestone. "Kestrel's accredited status is a symbol of our commitment to permanently conserving

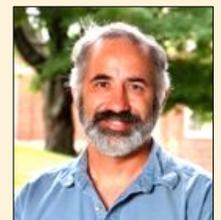
wildlands, woodlands, and farmland throughout the Valley," she said. "While Kestrel has more than 40 years' experience with successful conservation efforts, we are an even stronger organization today having gone through the rigorous accreditation program."

Over the past 10 years, Kestrel has grown significantly, taking on staff and dramatically increasing the amount of land it was able to protect. In 2011, after the merger with Valley Land Fund, Kestrel's service area expanded to the 19 towns surrounding Amherst and Northampton. The accreditation process required an in-depth organizational assessment, which helped Kestrel chart a sustainable path for this growth, establish sound policies, and improve its organizational systems.

"We are proud to be recognized for our hard work, dedication, and the trust that we have earned from the communities we serve," said Kari Blood, Outreach Specialist, who coordinated Kestrel's accreditation application over the past year and a half. Becoming accredited is a significant achievement that will ensure Kestrel Land Trust will remain an organization of high integrity and effectiveness far into the future, when new generations have assumed responsibility for conserving the Valley we love.

### Scott Jackson, Kestrel Board Trustee, Named TNC Conservationist of the Year

Kestrel congratulates Scott Jackson, one of our newest Trustees, for being named 2013 Conservationist of the Year by The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts.



The award recognizes his efforts in conserving the Commonwealth's lands and waters through protection and restoration of river connectivity, development of effective wildlife crossings along roadways, and spearheading a landscape-scale connectivity assessment. Jackson is an associate professor of environmental conservation at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Chair of the Whately Conservation Commission.

## State Grants Advance Wildland, Watershed, & Farmland Projects

Kestrel is pleased to report that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has again granted critical funding for conservation efforts in the Valley. Kestrel sought grants for five projects in four of our towns—Hatfield, South Hadley, Amherst, and Belchertown—to protect watersheds, floodplain forests, wildlife habitats, and farmland.

- **Amherst:** \$105,665 LAND (Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) grant to preserve 19 acres of farmland and wetland along the Fort River for a community garden and trail.

- **Belchertown:** \$133,650 LAND grant to add 90 acres to the Jabish Brook Conservation Area, more than doubling the size of the town's most popular area. The new parcel of wooded land will be open for passive recreation, hunting, and fishing.

- **Hatfield:** \$27,500 Conservation Partnership grant to expand the Terry A. Blunt Watershed and Conservation Area. The 20-acre parcel includes woods and a small peak of Chestnut Mountain. The addition will honor the late conservationist and former member of Valley Land Fund, Terry Blunt.

- **South Hadley:** \$30,500 Conservation Partnership grant to preserve the Bachelor Brook Floodplain, which is one of the most important floodplain forests along the Connecticut River. North American Wetlands Conservation Act funds are being sought to match the grant. Kestrel also received a \$7,500 grant towards the costs of acquiring a conservation restriction on a 46-acre parcel near South Hadley's Stony Brook Conservation Area. The CR is being donated by the landowner.

## Valley Gives Day 2013 Brings Great Generosity

The second annual Valley Gives Day on 12/12/13 was an exciting and inspiring celebration of giving for Kestrel Land Trust and for more than 350 other nonprofits throughout the region. A total of \$2,012,089 was raised through 20,640 online gifts contributed by 11,436 donors, more than double the totals from last year.



Nearly 250 people in our Valley and beyond came together to raise \$27,555 in 24 hours for Kestrel's land conservation work. We met and surpassed \$25,000 in challenge grants put forward by Kestrel donors. Early in the day, the collective generosity put Kestrel in the top three small non-profits for most money raised, and kept us there until midnight—earning us a **\$5,000 Valley Gives prize!**

Thank you to all who participated for your commitment to land conservation, and for

trusting Kestrel to conserve the Valley you love.

*Valley Gives is organized by the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts to increase public awareness of regional nonprofits and enhance their fundraising capacity. For detailed results, visit [valleygives.razoo.com](http://valleygives.razoo.com).*



Kestrel staff and Advisory Council on 12/12/13.

## Volunteer Land Stewards Complete Important Work for 2013

Trekking into terrain sometimes familiar, sometimes unfamiliar, Kestrel's corps of Volunteer Property Monitors hiked, climbed, and bushwhacked wielding maps, compasses, GPS units, and smartphones to assist with a critical task: monitoring conserved lands. Volunteers filled out more than 60 official Kestrel monitoring forms this year, successfully completing Kestrel's site visits to more than 2,000 acres of conserved land.

An important part of Kestrel's annual stewardship activities, monitoring visits ensure that properties protected by Kestrel through Conservation Restriction or fee ownership retain their natural values. With its monitoring responsibilities on the rise, Kestrel reached out to the community for help. In March of 2013, 22 volunteers signed on as Property Monitors, participated in training workshops, and headed outdoors. Ultimately, a team of 36 volunteers accomplished more than 85% of Kestrel's annual monitoring visits.

"This group of volunteers has made a great success of Kestrel's monitoring program," said Chris Volonte, Stewardship Manager. "Having our annual visits completed on deadline this year is especially impressive given that Kestrel's monitoring responsibilities have increased by more than one-third since 2012. As a non-profit organization, Kestrel relies on community support, so our Volunteer Property Monitors make a huge impact by contributing their time and energy to stewardship efforts."

**Are you interested in helping out on the land? Visit [kestreltrust.org](http://kestreltrust.org) and click on the Get Involved tab. Volunteer training workshops will be held in spring 2014. For more information, please contact Chris Volonte at 413-549-1097 or [chris@kestreltrust.org](mailto:chris@kestreltrust.org).**

# Kestrel Receives \$350,000 Gift From an Anonymous Donor

The gift inspires an ambitious plan to protect remaining threatened lands on the Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom Ranges.

Earlier in 2013, Kestrel Land Trust received a charitable donation of \$350,000—the largest single gift from a private individual in its 43-year history.

The donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, was inspired by Kestrel's growth over the past several years to become the Valley's primary regional land trust. "I have tremendous confidence in Kestrel Land Trust's ability to lead land conservation efforts in this beautiful region," said the donor. "The bucolic landscape of farmland, mountains, and streams can make it appear that the Valley has already been saved, but there is still so much more to do."

The majority of the gift will be used to conserve land on the Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom Ranges, which Kestrel has been working to conserve since it's founding in 1970. About 10,000 acres of this 16,000-acre natural area has been conserved, including 7,340 acres of state parkland. The steep slopes of the Ranges create a number of forest types, including birch-beech-hemlock on the north side and oak-hickory on the south. Over 30 miles of trails make for a nature-lover's paradise, and provide plenty of opportunity for hiking, walking, viewing vistas, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and hunting.

## Still Much to Be Done

Yet, even after more than 40 years of preservation efforts, the Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom Ranges remain under threat of development.

Six thousand acres of private land is still at risk from building and unsustainable resource use. If the majority of the land on these mountains is not fully protected, this defining landscape of the Connecticut River Valley along with its vital economic, ecological, scenic, educational, historical, and recreational values will be diminished.

Working in partnership with willing landowners, the state Dept. of Conservation & Recreation, the seven towns where the mountains are located, and the National Park Service, Kestrel's plan for the Range will include:

- preserving the Connecticut River Valley's most scenic viewshed;
- protecting core wildlife habitat that will be resilient to climate change;
- guaranteeing public recreational opportunities for hiking, biking, wildlife observation, and bird watching; and
- conserving adjacent farmland and woodlands to promote connectivity between the Range and other protected lands.

The anonymous donor said, "I hope my gift will inspire other residents and philanthropists to make local land conservation a priority by investing in



Read more about the Mount Holyoke Range protection project and how you can be a part of it at [www.kestrreltrust.org](http://www.kestrreltrust.org).

Kestrel." In fact, a few weeks after the major gift was publicly announced, another local resident pledged an additional \$25,000 toward this ambitious plan.

These major gifts—and many others given through Valley Gives and our annual fund drive—will enable Kestrel to expand our ability to work proactively on complex land conservation projects. Every dollar donated will be leveraged at least 10 times with public funds for land conservation. This generosity will accelerate our progress toward protecting the Mount Holyoke and Mount Tom Ranges for generations to come.

**In 2014, our goal is to conserve 1,000 acres on the Mount Holyoke Range. We will keep you updated on how you can help as this project moves forward.**



## A Valley Vista Comes to Life at Wildwood

Children at the Wildwood Elementary School in Amherst now enjoy a Valley vista as they eat their lunches. Parents saw the need for an update to the school's interior, and were inspired by Kestrel Land

Trust's logo. The mural artist, Sophie Theroux, also painted several other spaces throughout the school with inspirational scenes.



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## Upcoming Events

-  **January 1, New Year's Day, Noon to 2 p.m.** Outings in Sawmill Hills in Florence (strenuous hike) **OR** Wentworth Farm Conservation Area in Amherst (easy walk). Visit [kestreltrust.org](http://kestreltrust.org) for details on both. Register by email: [office@kestreltrust.org](mailto:office@kestreltrust.org).
-  **Saturday, February 1, 10 a.m. – Noon.** Learn about winter wildlife tracking at Marble Brook in Northampton with a local naturalist. Register by email: [office@kestreltrust.org](mailto:office@kestreltrust.org).
-  **Sunday, February 23:** Special live birds of prey presentation by licensed raptor rehabilitator Julie Collier. Details to come at [kestreltrust.org](http://kestreltrust.org).

### Conserve the Valley You Love

## Enjoy the Benefits of Generosity With Your Year-End Gift!

The end of the year is almost here: Take advantage of the charitable tax-deduction for 2013 by making a gift by December 31! To make it easy, you'll find a detailed "Giving Guide" at [kestreltrust.org](http://kestreltrust.org) on our "Donate" page. Here are a few highlights:

- **Double your impact!** Many companies will match, dollar for dollar, charitable gifts made by their employees to non-profit organizations. Check with your human resources department to learn if your employer provides a corporate match and to request that your gift to Kestrel Land Trust be matched.
- **Give from your IRA: (This opportunity expires on December 31, 2013!)** Instead of taking all or a portion of your required minimum distribution from your IRA (increasing your taxable income), the law currently allows individuals aged 70 ½ or older to donate up to \$100,000 directly to qualified non-profits. To arrange a gift from your IRA to Kestrel Land Trust, contact your financial advisor or financial institution.

Visit our website for more details and other year-end giving opportunities that can reduce your taxable income for 2013!

**YES! I want to help Kestrel Land Trust protect wildlands, woodlands, and farmlands in the Valley I love.**

Here is my gift of:      \$50      \$100      \$250      other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
OR DONATE ONLINE: [www.kestreltrust.org/donate.php](http://www.kestreltrust.org/donate.php)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for supporting land conservation in the Valley!*

More than 500 runners, walkers, and shoppers came out for our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual 5K for Farmland & Farmers' Market Festival in October.



Photo by John Body