Many generations back, farming was a way of life for almost everyone. As times changed, fewer families were able to make a living on the land, and today it’s the rare farm family that’s still making it work. Barstow’s Longview Farm, run by brothers David and Steven Barstow and their children, is one of those exceptions. Since 1806, seven generations of Barstows have raised cows on this dairy farm on Route 47 in the scenic and historic hamlet of Hockanum in Hadley.

It’s hard work filled with challenges: The family had to sustain a living during the many rollercoaster years of the fluctuating dairy market. Then in 2008, the Barstow family made a move to stabilize the future of their farm by opening a dairy store and bakery in front of the farm with a view of the river. Earlier this year, the Barstows installed an Anaerobic Digester—only the second in the state—which breaks down manure and food waste into fertilizer and energy, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A Deep Commitment to the Land

Now the family has agreed to sell an Agricultural Preservation Restriction, which extinguishes development rights from the land to preserve these 123 acres of farmland forever. Funds from the sale of the APR will be reinvested back into the farm to support their production of local dairy products.

“Our decision to protect this farmland, as well as open up the farm store, reflects the family’s deep commitment to the land and to enhance the community’s awareness of the importance of farming and the importance of all people being stewards to the land,” the brothers said.

Ben Wright, Kestrel’s Land Conservation Specialist, said, “APR projects take a lot of patience and trust. We are thrilled to be able to help this family protect their legacy for future generations and keep their farm active.” This project is also part of Kestrel’s broader Mount Holyoke Range Landscape Partnership Project, and will leverage protection of more land on the Range.

The total cost to conserve this farm is $660,000. Most of that will come from public funds, including the MA Department of Agricultural Resources, MA Department of Transportation Scenic Byways Program, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A bridge loan for the acquisition of the APR will be facilitated by The Conservation Fund and Franklin Land Trust.

“The farm is our common bond that makes our family relationship just that much stronger. Our community runs 7 Barstow generations deep and that’s something you can’t find just anywhere.”

– Denise Barstow

You Can Help Save This Farm!

Your donation will ensure that Barstow’s Longview Farm will be “Forever Farmland.”

Donate online at kestreltrust.org.
A Committed Board Volunteer Steps Down After 30 Years of Service

After nearly 30 years of dedicated service on Kestrel’s Board of Trustees, James Scott has retired his Kestrel badge. Jim has been a faithful leader of Kestrel over the years, serving as Treasurer, Chair, Vice Chair, a member of the Stewardship Committee, and keeper of Kestrel’s organizational history.

Jim is a retired Amherst High School Chemistry and Physics teacher, former Amherst Conservation Commission Chair, and Treasurer of the Amherst Cultural Council. He was the liaison from the Conservation Commission to the Board of the Hitchcock Center for the Environment. Jim is active in the Five College Learning In Retirement organization.

Board Chair Robert Jonas said, “Jim has been an inspiration to many conservationists in the Pioneer Valley. He has been a leader at Kestrel, and has cultivated caring citizens by educating them about the precious natural resources we share. Year after year he has joined with others to get out onto the land and has shared in stewarding our landscapes of farms, forests, watersheds, and wildlife habitats.”

All of us at Kestrel are deeply grateful for Jim’s many contributions over the decades and we wish him well in the years ahead. Thank you, Jim!

5K for Farmland & Farmers’ Market Festival 2014: In Your Words

“I really love the laid back, community feel of this race. It was my first 5K and will always be my favorite!”

“Thanks for giving us some wonderful memories of our daughter’s first road race! It was a great event!”

“This race has a special place in my heart: I will surely keep going as long as I am able.”

Lake Warner Dam Update

In October of this year, an estimated timeline for repair of the historic dam on North Hadley Pond (aka Lake Warner) was released. Construction was expected to begin in July 2015.

However, on November 21, we learned that the $125,000 in state funding for the restoration of the dam was vetoed along with all municipal earmarks across the Commonwealth. This is very disappointing news, but a search is now underway for alternative funding sources to fill this gap.

If the state funding is not reinstated, the Friends of Lake Warner and Kestrel will work together to raise the necessary funds from the people who love this lake and want to restore the dam.

We need your help now more than ever: Donate online at friendsoflakewarner.org or kestreltrust.org, or mail to Kestrel Land Trust, P.O. Box 1016, Amherst, MA 01004 or to Friends of Lake Warner, PO Box 11, Hadley, MA, 01035.
A Nature Experience Where No One Is Left Behind

The new Conte Refuge Fort River trail welcomes explorers of all abilities.

It’s easy for many of us to take for granted the act of getting out into nature for a stroll: to see migrating birds in the spring, to smell the fallen leaves on the ground in autumn, to hear the gurgle of a stream. For those with mobility issues or other physical challenges, the opportunity to experience these things is much more limited, even in our Valley with its abundant conservation areas.

Fortunately, this is changing. In October, a new fully accessible trail officially opened at the Fort River Division of the Conte Wildlife Refuge in Hadley, off of Moody Bridge Road. This 1.2-mile trail includes wooden boardwalks and packed gravel surfaces with a raised border on either side. While it’s designed for wheelchairs and the visually impaired, the trail is also perfect for families with young children, as well as bird watchers, and nature lovers of all kinds.

Rich Habitats & Opportunities

The path brings you through a variety of meadows, forests, and riverside ecosystems full of rich wildlife habitat. The trail also includes 7 overlooks in different habitats, including one with a stunning view of the Mt. Holyoke Range. The new trail was developed by the US Fish & Wildlife Service on land that Kestrel Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land conserved in 2009 and 2010 as an addition to the Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge.

Kari Blood, Kestrel’s Outreach Specialist is excited for the opportunities this universal trail offers for reaching new people of all abilities and ages. “I’m looking forward to bringing people out to this amazingly rich and beautiful natural area who may never have had a chance to experience nature this way. Everyone deserves the opportunity to be closer to the natural world.”

How Did the Oxen Help the Toad?

The Eastern Spadefoot Toad is a little creature with a pretty big problem. It spends most of its life underground, emerging only one or two rainy nights per year to breed. However, the pool type it needs—shallow, sandy, and temporary—is disappearing from our region. In response, Kestrel’s Stewardship staff and volunteers are working with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program (NHESP), UMass Amherst, and other partners to create new breeding pools in Sunderland and Hadley on land that Kestrel has permanently conserved.

And that’s where the oxen come in. The most workable site for a new breeding pool at the Sunderland property required some tree clearing, so Kestrel’s Trustee, Tom Jenkins, brought in his oxen to carefully drag out the trees instead of using heavy equipment. This reduces the amount of compaction and disturbance of the soil in the toads’ sensitive habitat, and on the adjacent working farmland.

Afterwards, a shallow pool was excavated under the guidance of Jacob Kubel, Conservation Scientist with NHESP. Jake is pleased with the collaborative effort Kestrel has initiated: “We hope this project will serve as an example of how partnerships between landowners, conservation organizations, and wildlife managers can protect rare species in ways that are compatible with existing uses of the land.”
Upcoming Outings

Visit kestreltrust.org for details each month.
Register by email: office@kestreltrust.org.

- Thursday, January 1, 2015, Noon – 2 pm. Annual New Year’s Day outings! Wentworth Farm in Amherst guided by wildlife biologist Dave King OR explore the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area guided by John Body and Dave Herships. Both walks are free.

- Sunday, February 8, 10 am – Noon. Winter wildlife tracking at Marble Brook in Northampton with naturalist John Body.

- March, Date TBA, 1 – 3 pm. Michael Wotjch brings you up close and personal to the trees he knows so well, Teawaddle Hill Farm trails in Leverett.

Conserve the Valley You Love

Your Gift Means So Much

When you make your gift list this month, here are some ways to increase the impact of your charitable giving:

- **Give appreciated securities:** In light of the stock market’s record highs in 2014, consider donating appreciated securities.

- **Double your gift:** Find out if your employer matches charitable gifts to non-profit organizations.

For details about these and other giving opportunities that can reduce your 2014 taxable income, consult our “Giving Guide” at kestreltrust.org/donate.php.

Bring Your Voice to Kestrel’s Board of Trustees

Kestrel Land Trust’s Nominating Committee has opened a search to fill a vacancy on our Board of Trustees. Professionals of all ages and specialties are invited to apply.

To learn more about serving on the Board, or to nominate someone, email info@kestreltrust.org. Applicants should send a letter of interest and current résumé to the above email or to Attn: Kristin DeBoer, PO Box 1016, Amherst, MA 01004.