

# YOUR VALLEY

CONSERVE | CARE | CONNECT

FALL-WINTER 2019



**KESTREL  
LAND TRUST**

*WHAT'S INSIDE: Local Forests Are a Natural Climate Solution  
Immigrants' Dreams Take Root on Conserved Farmland  
Bringing the Robert Frost Trail Into the Future*



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## Finding Hope at Home on the Land

AS THE HEADLINES ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE grow more urgent, I am thinking about where we can really make a difference. If we're not acting at a national or even a global scale, are our efforts worth it? It may seem insignificant to focus on the place we live, but I believe that acting here at home is the most hopeful thing we can do.



**The Valley is our home.** It's where you feel connected to family and friends, but also to abundant forests, productive farms, beautiful trails, and all other forms of life that share this special place. Land conservation starts at home because this is the place we know best and love most. Conservation ensures that family forests and farms will continue providing clean air, water, food, and places to connect with nature.

And while it may feel as if little is being done to prevent climate catastrophe, don't despair—**something is in fact being done.** Together, people like you are working with land trusts like Kestrel and their communities to protect the natural fabric of our homelands. We're protecting forests to sequester carbon emissions, which can mitigate climate change. We're conserving farms to sustain local food systems and ensure food security. We're protecting wetlands to create resiliency to more frequent flooding and powerful storms.

What if each of us focused some of our efforts on conserving and caring for the place where we live? We can't afford to wait for our national leaders to protect the planet we call home—and we're *not* waiting. **With your support, we're at work fighting the impacts of climate change every day.** Land trusts in every state across the country are conserving land at home—where we all have the power to make a real difference.

Kristin DeBoer, *Executive Director*



Robert Frost was one of the most celebrated writers of modern American poetry. He was the author of numerous poetry collections, including *New Hampshire*, published in 1923. Born in San Francisco in 1874, he lived and taught for many years in Amherst, as well as Vermont. He died in Boston in 1963.

### FROM THE HEART OF THE VALLEY

## Fire & Ice by Robert Frost

*Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To know that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.*

*First printed in Harper's Magazine,  
December 1920*

## Community Helps Weather A Storm at Red Fire Farm

THE FIRST DAY OF AUGUST WAS AS PERFECT AS SUMMER days get: Sunny and warm with little humidity, just right for the Farm-to-Table Harvest Dinner at **Red Fire Farm** in Granby.

But just two days before, the scene was anything but perfect at Red Fire's farm site in Montague. During a thunderstorm, a powerful microburst plowed across the farmland, ruining



Sarah and Ryan Voiland shared the story of their farm—and its challenges—at our Farm-to-Table Dinner in August with CISA.

tomato and pepper crops still heavy with fruit, knocking trees down across farm roads, and ripping apart protective crop tunnels.

Despite the damage and the significant cleanup effort underway, farm owners Sarah and Ryan Voiland

graciously hosted the field-side dinner at their main farm, catered by **Wheelhouse** using Red Fire produce.

Kestrel and **Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)** partnered on this special event to celebrate farmers and the land that sustains us all. Our organizations share twin goals



### CONNECT

of supporting local farms and preserving the farmland that's the foundation of the Valley's local food system.

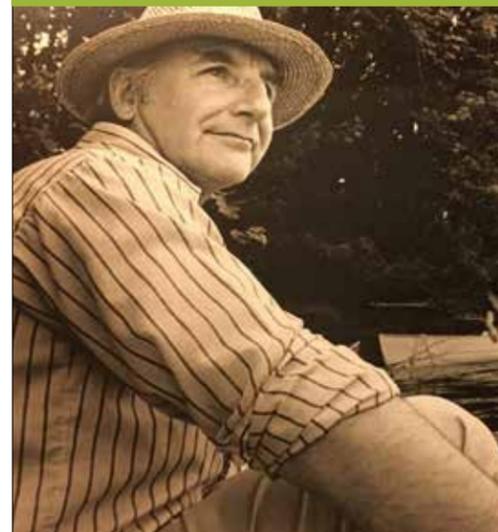
Ryan and Sarah are CISA Local Hero members, and they have partnered with Kestrel in the past and again in 2018 to protect the land they farm in Granby. As dinner guests heard from the Voilands about their farm—and the recent storm damage—they were moved to help. Generous donations were made on the spot that evening, a sign of just how dedicated our community is to the land and its stewards.

### How You Can Help Red Fire Farm

If you'd like to help, visit [redfirefarm.com](http://redfirefarm.com) and click on "Donate to the Microburst Cleanup."

## Fighting for the Earth: A Legacy

*In July of this year, the Valley lost Robie Hubley—a champion for the land and the environment—who served on Kestrel's Board in years past. The following tribute was written by Judith Eiseman, Kestrel Advisor and former Board Trustee.*



WHO WAS ROBIE HUBLEY? HE WAS a teacher, scientist, lobbyist, political analyst, mentor and an activist who envisioned solutions, then figured out who should be on the team to get things done. The attitude he brought to every environmental fight was that living should be fun and full of laughter, music, wonder and hard work on things that really mattered.

He prioritized and strategized to help protect our mountains, our rivers, water supply, historic sites and views. The history of environmental activism in the valley for the last 50 years would be incomplete without Robie's name and contributions. Along with his friends and colleagues—Alexandra Dawson, Terry Blunt, Lincoln Brower, and many others

in Amherst, the Valley, and around the state—he wrote laws, protected land, started projects, and promoted programs that continue to this day to keep our state and region environmentally healthy and vibrant.

Robie left a legacy of films, photos, legislation, and connections to people and places. He made a difference by bringing others along for the ride to talk, argue, study and make things happen. The genuine interest he had in what others could teach him, and the networking skills and habits of inquiry he developed, can be learned by others to make each of us more effective in putting all the pieces together to protect the environment.

*Read More About Robie*  
[kestreltrust.org/blog](http://kestreltrust.org/blog)



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## Saving Local Forests Is a Natural Solution to the Climate Crisis

If you were to step outside your door in the Pioneer Valley, and travel back in

time 500 years, you would emerge into a landscape of mature forests as far as the eye could see. Huge old trees share the land with middle aged and young trees, and dead trunks nourish the soil. Wildlife is abundant and the air and water are clean, thanks to the cycles of the forests.

Moving forward in time, you'd watch most of these forests fall as the colonists settled and cleared the land, for agriculture and wood products. In the last hundred years, you'd see many forests re-emerge as farming declined, only to be cut back again. Today our region is losing 65 acres of forest per day to development, according to a Harvard Forest report.

This loss isn't only a threat to wildlife, clean air and water, and recreation, but as science now shows, forest loss threatens our global climate as well.

The good news is that protecting our local forests could actually help save our planet. Trees capture and store carbon in roots, trunks, branches, and leaves. Conserving more forests globally could

capture roughly half of the carbon needed to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius or less, a 2017 study found.

### 1,000 Acres of Forest Saved in the Hilltowns

Large blocks of forest in our region are critical to this effort. That's why Kestrel partnered with Hilltown Land Trust, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, four towns, and seven willing landowners to conserve more than 1,000 acres in Westhampton, Williamsburg, Northampton, and Chesterfield. The lands lie within a 6,000-acre expanse of mostly undeveloped forest, one of the last such unbroken forests in Massachusetts, and conserving this land protects an important network of connected woodlands and wildlands. Being at the edge of the densely populated Pioneer Valley, however, this area faces increasing threats from development.

Of the 1,000 acres conserved, Kes-

trel now owns nearly 350 acres of forest in Westhampton and Williamsburg that was shown to be highly resilient to climate change. Here, forest stands can be found in every stage of succession along with grasslands, beaver meadows, and wetlands. And, with Brewer Brook running along the property's western border, the forest supports wildlife ranging from black bear to turtles.

There are thousands more acres of forests in the Brewer Brook area that could be protected for the benefit of wildlife, climate, and recreation. In Phase 2 of this effort, Kestrel will work with more landowners and organizational partners to conserve this critical resource.

*We are grateful to all the partners and funders who helped make Phase 1 of this project possible, especially the MA EEA Landscape Partnership Program, the Open Space Institute and the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation.*

### LISTEN: Greta Thunberg on Forests

**"Right now, we are ignoring natural climate solutions. We spend 1,000 times more on global fossil fuel subsidies than on nature-based solutions. So what should we do? It's simple. We need to protect, restore, and fund. You can be part of this. What you do counts."**

— Climate activist Greta Thunberg

**Learn More:** Keeping forests as forests is a powerful step we can take locally to help avoid climate breakdown. Read about the power of our forests to sequester and store carbon at [masswoods.org/caring-your-land/forest-carbon](https://masswoods.org/caring-your-land/forest-carbon)



## Immigrants' Dreams Take Root on Conserved Farmland

For much of human history, farming has been a way of life around the world.

It's never been easy work, and the challenges have only grown more complex in modern times. In the Valley, agriculture is embedded in our communities and in our landscape, but it's still difficult for new farmers to get started.

Getting access to good farmland is the biggest hurdle. This is especially true for immigrants coming from other countries seeking a new life. So, when Kestrel helped the City of Northampton protect an 8-acre farm field that straddles the town line with Hatfield as part of a larger Fitzgerald Lake/Broad Brook conservation project, an opportunity emerged.

The Pioneer Valley Workers Center (PVWC), whose mission is to build the collective power of workers and immigrants in our region, was looking for farmland to support a new cooperative farm to be run by families from Central America. The field now owned by Kestrel and the City of Northampton was offered to the PVWC as a pilot program with the hope of establishing a long-term agreement for farming the land.

### Strengthening Communities Together

The six members of this new worker coop are primarily families from Mexico and El Salvador. With support from PVWC and All Farmers—an affiliate of CISA—their goal is not only to grow crops for their families, but to establish a farm business that operates collectively and makes decisions democratically. Despite the fact that all of the members work 6 days a week at other jobs, their first harvest this year was a great success.

The Cooperative produced over 1,000 lbs of local produce, selling some at the nearby River Valley Coop and sharing more with their communities, proving this is fertile ground for hopes and dreams to take root in a new community.

Gabriella della Croce, a Lead Organizer with the PVWC, said, "We are tremendously grateful to Kestrel and the City of Northampton for their commitment to making land accessible to low-wage workers. Many of our members were subsistence farmers in their home countries, and bring decades of agricultural experience to their jobs on farms here." Some of these farmers are already very familiar with local soils, having worked at other area farms.



Members of the new cooperative farm in Hatfield & Northampton planted their first crops this year, and sold their produce at local stores.

Mark Wamsley, Conservation & Stewardship Manager at Kestrel Land Trust, said "Conserving local farmland is inherently about helping people and communities nourish themselves while reducing our collective impact on the planet. Some of these families



came from areas of the world where droughts related to climate change have severely undermined local agriculture."

A drought has decimated crops in Central America's "dry corridor" along the Pacific Coast, impacting small-scale farmers. Droughts and other extreme weather events may continue to drive higher levels of migration from this and other regions of the world.

Fortunately, this small community of immigrants are finding a new home here in the Valley. Patti, one of the farm coop members, spoke with excitement about her long-term vision for the farm. "On this land we want to grow our own crops for our community. This will be land for us as Latinos, who come from other places." She laughs as she watches her young son run around the open field and adds, **"This will also be an opportunity to teach our children to love the Earth. So that they can see how food is grown and how from tiny seeds, something big can grow."**

*"We are grateful to Kestrel and the City for their commitment to making land accessible to our members—many of whom were subsistence farmers in their home countries."*

## Preparing Our Trails for the Future



The Robert Frost Trail (RFT), named in honor of the poet and long-time Amherst college professor, was designed for serious wandering.

It was conceived in 1982 by Pete Westover, then Director of Conservation for the Town of Amherst. While many short trails existed then, Pete envisioned a long-distance trail winding from Wendell State Forest to the Mount Holyoke Range. Over the years, with the participation of private and public landowners and the help of Kestrel Trust volunteers, the 47-mile trail became a reality.

Passing through 11 towns, the RFT has become a well-known fixture connecting people and places in our region, and it is one of the five longest trails in Massachusetts. However, time has taken its toll on this beloved route—and so has a changing climate. Downed trees,

water run-off, and wetter conditions impair many sections of the trail. To address these problems, Kestrel and the Town of Amherst were recently awarded a Recreational Trails Program grant of \$50,000 to restore the RFT and prepare it for the challenges of the next 50 years.

### A New Normal for Trails

Pete recently counted 80 trees down along the northern third of the trail. “We’re getting a lot of blow-down. That’s going to be the new rule now: bigger, more frequent storms and a lot of trees down on the trail.” Standing dead trees need attention too, before they create a hazard for hikers.

Trail erosion from storm run-off and standing water in places that used to be dry is also an increasing challenge. “Heavy use on wet ground by people or bikes or

horses can cause permanent problems. As a trail gets wet, people walk outside that area and then gradually the trail widens,” Pete said. After that, storm run-off may take over and turn the trail into a stream, necessitating major re-routing.

Flood events are causing big problems, as well, according to Dave Ziomek, Amherst Assistant Town Manager & Director of Conservation & Development. “We’ve lost bridges like the one at Amethyst Brook Conservation Area, which was sheared off by flooding and ice. A 50-foot bridge like that is expensive to replace. Is it worth it? Will it get broken again? These are questions we need to answer.”

### Funding Is Critical

The labor and materials needed to restore and maintain trails in a changing climate have created a new reality: Towns and organizations need to focus more funding on this aspect of land stewardship. “I’m so glad Kestrel has taken the initiative to find funds to update and maintain this trail,” Pete said.

Work to upgrade the RFT will begin in 2020, and will be taken in stages, beginning with sections on public land and permanently protected private land. Planned improvements include bridge upgrades, storm damage cleanup, hazard tree removal, rerouting wet or eroded trails, and updating wayfinding features such as signs and trail blazing. Additional funding will be needed to keep the project moving forward, preserving enjoyment of the RFT for generations of Valley residents to come.

## The Robert Frost Trail Needs You!

The RFT’s 47 miles of trails offer a wonderful range of outdoor experiences in a variety of settings. Those miles of trail also require a lot of care. The RFT can benefit greatly from the collective stewardship of the communities who enjoy it.

Do you have a favorite section of the RFT? **Consider starting a volunteer group dedicated to maintaining a selected trail section.** If you’re interested, contact Chris Volonte, Conservation & Stewardship Manager, at [chris@kestreltrust.org](mailto:chris@kestreltrust.org).

**See you on the trail!**



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

# What the Valley Means to Us

Emily Marsters and Peter Morse are both physicians and have two young children. They moved to the Valley in 2013 and soon became members of Kestrel.

**How does your family like to spend time outdoors?**  
We enjoy hiking, mountain biking, skiing, and exploring the woods and rivers around us.

**What do you love about the Pioneer Valley?**

We love the variety and potential for outdoor experiences in all seasons, the numerous farms and wonderful local produce, the proximity of rural and more urban areas, the overall progressive attitude about people and the environment.

**Share a memorable place Kestrel has helped to protect that you have enjoyed.**

Amethyst Brook Conservation Area has been a magical place to take our children and our dog. We have spent endless days hiking, wading, breaking ice, taking in the views from Mount Orient, watching how the seasons change the brook, and so much more.

**When you introduce someone to the Valley for the first time, where do you take them?**

We go hiking on the Mount Holyoke Range or walking on trails close to our home.



Peter, Emily, Wesley (age 5), Nathan (age 2)

**What about Kestrel Land Trust’s mission resonates with your personal values?**

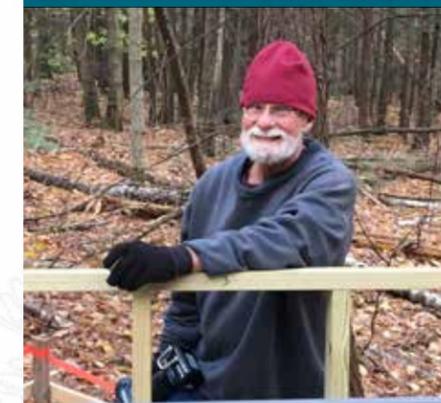
For us, land and environmental stewardship is of great importance, as is preserving natural spaces for our children.

**Complete this sentence: “We give to Kestrel Land Trust every year because...”**

Kestrel has protected many of the beautiful areas where we spend our time as a family!

## VOLUNTEER VOICES

### Raymond Fontaine



Ray is a retired professor & department chair of Graphic Arts Technology at Springfield Technical Community College. He lives in Westhampton.

I GREW UP IN CHICOPEE, AND WHEN I was a little kid, I played in the miles of forests near my house. But development became relentless. By the time I had graduated from high school, those forests were all gone. This was painful to see, and helped me appreciate the value of the natural areas in the Valley.

Two years ago, I heard about Kestrel Land Trust’s new public conservation area in my town of Westhampton and I was motivated to volunteer. My first workday was a cold November morning when 25 volunteers showed up to transform the Greenberg Family Conservation Area into a wonderful assemblage of trails.

**We were all ages and from different**

**backgrounds working together, and the sense of community with a collective goal was intoxicating.**

This place is like a wonderful park just a short walk from my house. It’s a peaceful respite that helps me recharge my spiritual batteries.

I volunteer because I believe in the importance of Kestrel’s work to maintain our region as a wonderful place to live, by protecting the open spaces and forests from being swallowed up by development. **I also enjoy the sense of a personal mission, as well as the camaraderie and good karma of working with others for a common goal of protecting what we love.**

**Join the Land & Trail Crew!** [kestreltrust.org/give/volunteer](http://kestreltrust.org/give/volunteer)  
Become a volunteer to care for our conserved lands and public trails!



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**Save the Date!**

*"Come to the Woods"  
Da Camera Singers will  
present a benefit concert  
for Kestrel Land Trust*

Friday, January 17, 2020 at 8 pm  
Buckley Recital Hall, Amherst College



They want to know  
what you're doing  
to fight climate  
change.

*Do you have an  
answer?*

*Here in the Valley,  
you do.*

With Kestrel Land Trust, you are  
part of the natural solution.

**Join us. For them. For the land.**



See the entire image  
on the front cover!

COVER ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

**Robert Masla**

*Hope*, OIL PAINTING

*For 15 years, I have spent my winters painting and teaching at my Studios South on Mexico's Pacific Coast. However, the New England Landscape is embedded in me on a cellular level, having painted it for nearly 40 years. This image is inspired from the view behind my Studios North and home in Ashfield. My landscape painting (often done en plein air) is based on recognizing the "Sacred" aspect of nature—the "oneness" that we are a part of, not separate from, Nature. I paint to experience my connection to Nature—the awe, beauty, and unique vantage of the finite within the infinite—and to share that vision with the viewer.*

View Robert Masla's artwork at R. Michelson Galleries in Northampton or at MaslaFineArt.com.