
Workshop Descriptions

The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program

Wednesday, April 8th 12:00 PM to 1:15 PM

Speakers: Julianne Busa, Erik Mas, Andrew Smith

The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program is a great way to help your town prepare for the impacts of climate change. Whether you have just started the MVP process or you are right in the middle of it, this workshop will provide you with the information necessary to navigate the program. A MVP coordinator will provide answers to technical questions about the program, and representatives from Fuss & O'Neill, a civil and environmental engineering firm, will present case studies from other towns in Massachusetts who have successfully received funding from the MVP program.

Creating Open Space Committees and Keeping Them Alive

Tuesday, April 14th 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM

Speakers: Lorraine DeSouza, Rick Gardner, Sally Loomis, Anna Wilkins

Do you want to create an Open Space Committee in your town, or bring back an Open Space Committee that has dissolved? Is your committee wondering what to do now that you've completed your Open Space and Recreation Plan? Join members of Open Space Committees from small to medium-sized towns as they share their experiences with creating Open Space Committees and keeping up momentum in their committees after the plan is finished. From organizing walks, working with other municipal boards, and engaging with the community, there are so many great things Open Space Committees can do! This workshop will have a small Q&A Zoom meeting session after the webinar to give you the opportunity to engage in a discussion with the speakers. This post-webinar Q&A session is limited to 25 people, so register early!

Land Protection Basics: How a Community Can Protect Land

Wednesday, April 15th 12:00 PM to 1:15 PM

Speakers: Sandra Grund, James McCarthy, Keith Ross

Is your committee or town interested in learning how they can protect land? This session will discuss how to assess a parcel for potential programs and funding sources that could be applied to parcel acquisition. Learning to identify multiple funding source options and organizations interested in conserving natural resources benefits both buyers and sellers to help achieve each party's monetary objectives associated with the transfer of those lands. Examples of parcel acquisitions using multiple funding sources will be discussed by co-presenters from the Norcross Hill project in Templeton and the Carver Orchard project in Stow.

Stewarding Town Land

Wednesday, April 22nd 12:00 PM to 1:15 PM

Speakers: Michael Downey, Lincoln Fish, Kurt Habel, Priscilla Ryder, Cassie Tragert

If your committee or town owns land and you are not sure where to begin in terms of management and stewardship, this session is for you! Speakers from municipalities across Massachusetts will discuss their experiences managing town land, including timber harvesting, wildlife habitat improvement, and prescribed burning. Speakers will explain how they engaged their community in these projects and the funding sources they used. Michael Downey, the Forest Stewardship Program Service Forester, will discuss the program and options for funding sources for these projects.

Navigating the Community Preservation Act

Wednesday, April 29th 12:00 PM to 1:15 PM

Speakers: Jassy Bratko, Mackenzie Greer, Joanne McGee

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a great funding source for towns and can lead to innovative and collaborative projects. Speakers in this session will discuss helpful strategies to start CPA in your town, ways to increase public support for CPA and CPA projects, and examples of open space projects that were funded by CPA. Learn from a former Community Preservation Coalition chair about what makes a good application. Hear about a funded open space project, start to finish, and consider how historical and housing CPA projects can build public sentiment and move open space projects forward.

Outreach to Landowners in Your Community

Wednesday, May 6th 12:00 PM to 1:15 PM

Speakers: Sarah Fortune, Lisa Hayden, Rebecca Longvall

Reaching out to landowners in your community is crucial to creating relationships and continuing to protect the land we all love. Speakers will discuss how to begin your work reaching out to landowners and how to scale up those projects to reach more landowners and work towards sustained outreach. Learn about unique ways to get in contact with landowners, events and workshops you can create to engage landowners, and lessons learned from those who have done it.

Meet The Speakers

The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program

Julianne Busa is a Senior Environmental Scientist and Certified Senior Ecologist in the Water and Natural Resources Group at Fuss & O'Neill. She has over 10 years of experience in the areas of global biodiversity and forest conservation, sustainability, soil science, and ecological modelling. Julie works extensively with municipal clients, focusing on climate resiliency, stormwater and watershed management and MS4 compliance, and stream and wetland restoration projects. Prior to joining Fuss & O'Neill, she served as President of the Society for Conservation Biology's Working Group for Ecological Economics and Sustainability Science and taught on the environmental studies faculties of multiple colleges. Julie also sits on the Easthampton Conservation Commission.

Erik Mas is a Vice President and senior manager in Fuss & O'Neill's Water and Natural Resources Business Line. He is a licensed Professional Engineer in Massachusetts and has 25 years of experience in watershed management, water resources planning, and climate resilience. Erik works with communities on a variety of climate resilience planning and engineering projects funded through the State's MVP grant program.

Andrew Smith is a long-time resident of the Connecticut River Valley, where he lives with his wife and three energetic children. Serving as the Greater Connecticut River Valley Regional Coordinator for the MVP program is the natural continuation of a career that has allowed him to work on matters of climate adaptation and climate mitigation during his tenure as the City of Holyoke's first Director of Conservation and Sustainability. Throughout the arc of Andrew's career - whether working on permitting, urban forestry, climate-driven migration or land acquisition - the role a municipality can play in making our Commonwealth more resilient in the face of climate change has served as the organizing principle of his work. He received a M.R.P. from the University of Massachusetts with a focus on Environmental Planning. Andrew's office is located at the MassDEP Western Regional Office in Springfield.

Creating Open Space Committees and Keeping Them Alive

Lorraine DeSouza is a 22 year resident of Ashburnham, who has served 10 years on the Conservation Commission, 10 years on the Board of Directors of the Ashburnham Conservation Trust and was a former board member of North County Land Trust and the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions. Lorraine is currently a small business owner and the Chairperson for the Ashburnham Open Space and Recreation Committee.

Rick Gardner is Chair of the Princeton Open Space Committee and is a Trustee on the Princeton Land Trust. He is a member of the Princeton Trail Stewards and volunteers at Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary and on the Midstate Trail. Rick is retired from 43 years in IT management with Saint Gobain and Nypro corporations. Rick lives in Princeton with his wife Sara and enjoyed hiking, golf, and tennis.

Sally Loomis is the Chair of the Williamsburg Open Space Committee and the Executive Director of Hilltown Land Trust. Sally has over 20 years of experience in the environmental field, and her work at Hilltown Land Trust involves conducting land protection projects, outreach and stewardship activities, leading fundraising efforts, and more. As Chair of the Williamsburg Open Space Committee, Sally has written multiple Open Space and Recreation Plans and it is important to her to keep the Williamsburg Open Space Committee engaged and meeting regularly beyond the writing of these plans.

Anna Wilkins is Executive Director of North County Land Trust, a regional conservation organization serving north central Massachusetts, headquartered in Leominster. She has a background in Wildlands Ecology and Management from Sterling College, VT and has over a decade of professional experience in land conservation in Massachusetts. She served on the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord River Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) steering committee, and has led the "People for Pollinators" initiative in Lincoln, MA. She currently serves on the Open Space and Recreation Committee in her hometown of Ashburnham, MA, and sits on the steering committee for the Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition.

Land Protection Basics: How a Community Can Protect Land

Sandra Grund is a strategic planner, conservationist, and communications specialist. She holds a Master in Environmental Management with a focus on conservation from the University of New South Wales in Australia. Her experience includes international and national environmental research, planning, analysis and project management for NGO, academic, federal, state, local, and tribal government agencies. Focus areas include natural resources conservation, ecosystem management, climate resilience/adaptation, land use planning, and sustainability issues. She is a certified MVP provider, member of the Stow Conservation Commission, has volunteered on land trust committees (e.g., Stow Conservation Trust, North County Land Trust), and is in the process of becoming certified as a wildlife rehabilitator.

James McCarthy, Central Wildlife District Land Acquisition Agent for the Massachusetts Dept. of Fish and Game, works to achieve the agency's habitat and land protection goals across Worcester County. Prior to taking his position with the Commonwealth in 2013, James was the Administrator/Land Manager for the Dennis Conservation Land Trust, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving open spaces in the small town of Dennis on Cape Cod. James graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 2008 with a B.S. in wildlife conservation.

Keith Ross is a Senior Advisor with LandVest, a broad-based real estate company, working on conservation advisory services to private landowners, non-profit conservation organizations, public agencies, and charitable foundations specializing in conservation transactions, successfully completed the largest purchased forest land conservation easement in North America, the Pingree Forest Partnership on 762,192 acres in Maine, is a founder of the North East Wilderness Trust and the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. He has a BS in Forestry from UMass (1977) and a Masters in Environmental law from Vermont Law School (1985), holds MA professional foresters license # 211, and is a licensed Mass, NY and CT real estate Broker, and a member of the Mass State Forester Licensing Board, Board Chair for the Trustees of the Conway School of Landscape Design and lives in Warwick, Mass serving on the Board of Assessors, Open Space Committee and the Town Forest Committee.

Stewarding Town Land

Michael Downey is a Service Forester and Forest Stewardship Program Coordinator for the Massachusetts Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry (DCR). Michael works with landowners and municipalities throughout the commonwealth to sustainably manage their woods. Before returning to Massachusetts in 2005, Michael previously worked as a Service Forester for the Kentucky Division of Forestry. Michael holds a BS in Forestry from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a BA in History from Westfield State College.

Lincoln Fish has a Masters of Environmental Management from Duke University. He previously worked as an eighth grade science teacher for a few years in North Carolina, before becoming a consulting forester at Bay State Forestry Service, where he currently works today. Lincoln was also a founding member of Hilltown Land Trust and served on the Board of Directors from 1987 to 2013.

Kurt Habel lives in Reading where he has operated Kurt Habel Painting and Paperhanging and Family Farms Edible Landscaping for decades. A Reading Town Forest Committee member for six years, Kurt grew up fishing and playing in the Forest and spent much time there with the Boy Scouts working on many improvements including his own Eagle Scout project digging water holes for fire prevention. As a Town Forest Committee member, Kurt was involved from start to finish in a recent and ongoing forest improvement and thinning project conducted by the Town of Reading.

Priscilla Ryder has been the Conservation Officer for the City of Marlborough for 26 years. Priscilla holds a masters degree in Environmental Policy from Tufts University and a B.S. in Environmental Conservation from the University of New Hampshire. She manages almost 500 acres of conservation land, including 80 acres of land with pitch pine scrub oak forest complex. She manages many miles of trails on state forest, municipal watershed and recreation property as well, including the construction of a 26.2 mile marathon route trail in Marlborough which should be completed in 2020.

Cassie Tragert is the current Conservation Agent for both the Greenfield and Easthampton Conservation Commissions. A Natural Resource Conservation alumni of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, she has worked at the Federal, State, and now municipal level to help conserve our natural world. Cassie was born and raised in Massachusetts and is excited to work together to create and preserve the finite resource that is Open Space.

Navigating the Community Preservation Act

Jassy Bratko is the Director of Land Protection at North County Land Trust. She manages the land protection program for NCLT and supervises the stewardship for the over 600 acres of conservation land owned by the trust. She chaired the Hubbardston Open Space Committee for 19 years, overseeing two land protection projects and the subsequent stewardship of town conservation land. During her tenure on the Open Space Committee she led the successful campaign to adopt CPA and served for several years as the CPC Chair.

Mackenzie Greer is the Public Programs Director for the Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC), a land trust working throughout Berkshire County, the westernmost region of Massachusetts. She transitions projects from acquisition to the creation of public access. From her previous experience as a land use planner, Mackenzie works on long-range initiatives for the land trust, such as “The High Road” a vision to connect trails to town centers throughout the region. Mackenzie holds Masters of Arts in Landscape Architecture and in Regional Planning from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Joanne McGee is a member of the Open Space Committee and the Stewardship Advisory Committee in Northfield. She is also a volunteer for Mount Grace Land Trust's Land Committee and a member of the Board of Directors. Joanne served on the Selectboard in Northfield making her acutely aware of the dynamics of Town meeting. Joanne has participated in writing two Open Space and Recreation Plans, and is now working on Northfield's third!

Outreach to Landowners in Your Community

Sarah Fortune is an environmental advocate with 7 years of experience working to advance conservation and land protection in the municipal and non-profit sectors. Mrs. Fortune has held a variety of conservation-oriented jobs in this time, from serving with MassLIFT-AmeriCorps as Regional Conservation Coordinator for the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership to Conservation Agent for the City of Greenfield and to her current role as Conservation Assistant for the towns of Palmer and Brimfield. Mrs. Fortune's duties center on wildlife biology, water quality protection and public outreach. Mrs. Fortune holds a Bachelor's Degree in Natural Resources Conservation with a focus on Wildlife Biology and Conservation Ecology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Mrs. Fortune currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Chicopee 4 Rivers Watershed Council (C4R) and is an active member of the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC).

Lisa Hayden, Outreach Manager for New England Forestry Foundation, coordinates steward volunteers and an outreach program in the MassConn Woods of south central Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut. She has collaborated with numerous partners to build a program of sustained engagement with private landowners about conservation and sustainable forestry since 2014. Her recent grant-funded work focuses on developing communications about climate-informed forestry for land trusts and conservation partnerships. With a BA in Journalism from the University of Connecticut and an MA in Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning from Tufts University, Lisa is a former journalist with strategic messaging experience. A woodland owner herself, she is excited to be supporting landowners in her home area.

Rebecca Longvall is a Conservation Administrator with the Town of Bolton and actively works as a land use consultant. Over the past seven years, and after completing undergraduate and graduate degrees, she has worked for Cedar Lawn Tree, a subdivision of Bartlett Tree Experts, Worcester Tree Initiative, served on two conservation commissions and spends a significant amount of her time in the woods. Rebecca has spent her life and career loving the opportunity to get her hands dirty in the field all while providing outreach opportunities to encourage others to become immersed in their natural resources.