



# Dudley Conservation Land Trust Newsletter

## Autumn 2014



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### A Message from the President – Paul Wieloch

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014 I was happy to be voted in as the 2<sup>nd</sup> President by the DCLT Board of Directors. Following in Sandy Peterson’s footsteps will be difficult, as she has held herself and the organization to such high standards. I would like to tell you a little bit about myself and why I accepted the position of president of DCLT.

My love for the land goes back to my grandparents, who were dairy farmers in Dudley and Thompson, CT and stewards of their property. I live on the same land that they farmed.

My parents were also good stewards of the land. My dad was an avid outdoorsman and a prolific gardener. Because of the good gardening practices of my parents, we as a family were provided with garden vegetables throughout the year. Some of my fondest memories are times spent with my dad hunting, fishing and gardening.

As a young man, I enjoyed a walk in the woods surrounding myself with the quiet and the peacefulness of nature where I could explore and learn about the fauna and flora around me.

I graduated from The Stockbridge School of Agriculture and spent 30 years working as a supervisor in the Landscape Construction field. I was also on the Dudley Conservation Commission for seven years. I founded the Dudley Farmers’ Market which just completed its 5<sup>th</sup> year.

As President of DCLT, I would like to continue to preserve the rural character of the town. When circumstances allow, I would like to work to re-establish agricultural opportunities in the area. I hope there will be times when our organization will be able to partner with local government for the benefit of all. My hope is that DCLT’s mission will be heard by young and old. I hope you will help me to increase our membership and participate in the organization, so all may come and enjoy the beautiful sanctuaries we have to offer the public.

### Stepping Down - Sandy Peterson

As I step down from my duties as president, I think back on these past ten years and on all of you who came together and succeeded in preserving these treasured lands...Tufts Branch Wildlife Sanctuary, Keekamoochaug Sanctuary, Slater Woods, Hiland Park, Keith Sanctuary, Morse and Bateman lands, and Leovich Landing ... protected lands offering fields, forests, streams, ponds, filled with a variety of animals, birds, trees, and flowers, lands protected for hiking, nature study, and peace of mind. And then I think of how easily and quickly these treasures could have been lost to development. So, I thank you all for your dedication, hard work, and vision. I believe that those who follow will work with the same fortitude to carry out our mission. I welcome Paul Wieloch, as the new president and am confident that the success of the land trust will continue under his leadership.

### Upcoming Events:

#### December 16, 2014

General Meeting – open to all with Tim Carroll, new Dudley farmer, as guest speaker, 6:30 PM at The Black Tavern, 138 Center Rd, Dudley.

#### January 3, 2015

Welcome in the New Year with a walk through Tufts Branch Wildlife Sanctuary & enjoy the winter landscape. 3-4 PM. Meet at Sanctuary parking lot across from 26 Healy Road.

#### Just a reminder

If you have not done so, please send us your email address at [dcltrust@aol.com](mailto:dcltrust@aol.com), to be kept updated on upcoming events. For those who do not have email, we will contact you either by phone or regular mail. Thank you.

#### In Memory

This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Ann Tierney Kulisa who loved the beauty of the natural world and found some good in every person.



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## Why The Dudley Conservation Land Trust Is So Important

Let's face it, land conservationists are not all that common. What drives us? Why do we do what we do? For many readers I will be stating the obvious, but for some others this explanation may be instructive.

It may be helpful to start by considering what would happen if all unprotected land was developed. That's called "total build out", and can be observed in many towns in eastern Massachusetts. Left unchecked, it is conceivable that in many areas all available land would be developed. We, in the land conservation movement, believe that would be unfortunate. The reasons we, in land conservation, want to preserve some land in its natural state are many and varied, but some of the more common ones are: preservation of wildlife habitat, protection of natural resources, appreciation of the aesthetic value of the natural world, and protection of a certain quality of life that is only possible with the availability of natural open space. Most people, even if they are not avowed land conservationists, share some or most of these concerns, yet there is no local government entity responsible for overseeing and ensuring a balance between development and open space.

Theoretically, and in some communities, conservation commissions take a more active roll in procuring open space, but I suspect our situation in Dudley is more typical. The Conservation Commission, being a volunteer board charged with wetlands protection and permitting for development, devotes little time or effort to this aspect of their purview.

The Planning Board too gives some consideration to these matters, but protection of open space has not been a priority for this board for some time. While an Open Space Residential Development bylaw is in place, my observations have been that when the letter of the bylaw is applied, little quality open space is left for community use. To be fair, the Conservation Commission and Planning Board have been supportive of some of our projects, but generally speaking, these town boards, that might have a role to play in assuring some open space is preserved, have demonstrated a clear bias in favor of development, at the expense of natural places.

On a state level, the Department of Fish and Game is active in purchasing property for public use. Typically they pursue large tracts that are contiguous to their existing properties, which would have precluded Dudley. Fortunately, as a result of DCLT initiating the Slater Woods project, Fish and Game partnered with us and holds the conservation restriction on that property.

So we have established that little local governmental energy or resources are directed to land conservation. So should we conclude that the government doesn't support it or think it is important? Hardly! Let me point out some of the very strong and positive assistance we receive from the state and federal government. Recognizing the importance

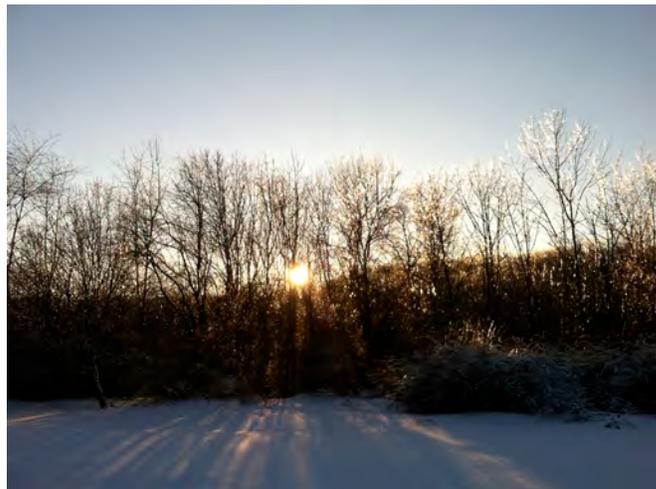
of land conservation for the health of society, the state and federal government have established a number of mechanisms to encourage and promote conservation work. Most fundamentally is our legal corporate 501c3 status as a private non-profit charitable organization. As such, like non-profit schools, churches and humanitarian charitable organizations, we are exempt from paying taxes. This is crucial, for as a non-profit, we exist on a bare bones budget, supported primarily by fundraising, membership fees, donations, and grants. State grants in particular have been vital to our projects, in some cases providing one half of the funding. State and federal tax incentives also help encourage land conservation. On the state level, there are tax credits available for people who donate parcels with approved conservation value to conservation organizations like us. On a federal level, contributions to legitimate conservation organizations are eligible for tax-deductions as charitable contributions.

These laws, grants, advantages and incentives provide strong support for land conservation by organizations like the Dudley Conservation Land Trust. We, the DCLT, are the tool that the government enables to do this work. The responsibility is ours. The work is rewarding and essential.

I recently saw a CNN report on countries with the happiest people. Denmark was determined to be number one. There is a high value placed on open space in Denmark, with Copenhagen having a law requiring that all residents have access to a park within a fifteen minute walk from their home.

My personal idea of the appropriate balance between developed land and open space might be tilted in favor of open space, but that is not the point. If you believe there should be a balance at all, then the DCLT is worthy of your support, because no other entity is looking out for those interests in this area. When lands are developed, they will never be natural open spaces again. They are lost forever. Without land conservationists doing our work, it is possible that eventually all remaining unprotected lands will be developed. That is why the DCLT is so important.

Submitted by Mark Smith, Steward of the Tufts Branch Valley Wildlife Sanctuary



Winter scene at knoll at Tufts Branch Wildlife Sanctuary

## “Unfinished Business”

This past year has been a quiet year for the DCLT. While we've had our successes (the membership campaign comes to mind) and people are enjoying our sanctuaries, the DCLT did not acquire any land in 2014. Why is this so? I think the main reason is that the economy is improving and landowners no longer feel a need to sell their property to raise cash. On the positive side, there are still many people who want to conserve their land, and are just waiting for the right time. Presently, the DCLT is having conversations with three different landowners totaling 500+ acres and it is hoped that at least one of these transactions will be completed in 2015. In land conservation, as in life, there is always “unfinished business.” However, as long as we work together, the DCLT can continue to be an organization that makes Dudley a better place for all of us.

Keith Kirkland, Treasurer of the DCLT

### Great News for Landowners Wishing to Protect their Land

This past August, the Massachusetts Legislature increased the conservation land tax credit from a \$50,000 to a \$75,000 maximum for landowners who put their land into conservation and the land meets the program's criteria for conservation value. The landowner is entitled to up to 50% of the appraised value of the land. If the landowner is unable to utilize the entire tax credit in one year, the landowner will receive a check from the state for the balance of the credit in that year.

Many landowners have taken advantage of this program and have been very satisfied knowing that the land will be protected in perpetuity, while also receiving a generous tax credit. Land Trusts throughout Massachusetts have been instrumental in facilitating this program. The Dudley Conservation Land Trust is currently working with two landowners to assist them in appreciating this tax credit.

For anyone interested in learning more about this Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit, go to [www.Mass.gov](http://www.Mass.gov) or call me, Sandy Peterson, at 508-949-2468.

### Keeping Informed - Sandy Peterson

Today, the art of land conservation demands knowledge of a plethora of information. To this end, the Board of Directors has embarked on providing brief in-services on salient conservation topics at every board meeting. The first of these in-services addressed the meaning of “conservation value.” In the world of land conservation, it's not enough to say that a piece of property is “beautiful,” though our initial visceral response to any landscape is certainly important. When the DCLT evaluates any piece of land for protection, it uses a variety of objective factors to assess its conservation value. These factors include such things as the presence of rare or endangered plant or animal species, the location with respect to other protected and developed properties, the history of the property, potential water resources, feasibility of public access, potential for development, possible contamination, stewardship responsibilities, eligibility for grants, and so on. To assist in the evaluation of conservation value, the land trust has established a standard instrument of guidelines and criteria pertaining to these factors. In making the decision as to whether or not the land trust will pursue protecting a piece of land, board members must walk the land, and assess its conservation value by using this instrument, and give it a numerical value.

### ONLY IN DUDLEY . . . by Linda Brink

When I first moved to Dudley about 30 years ago, I was impressed by the quiet and rural views from my window. Now I could relax! Until the morning that I awoke to a herd of cows in my front yard, street and surrounding areas! Now, reread - a herd. This was not one or two stray cows! Well, I guessed that this must happen frequently since this was Dudley. And I wondered which farmer accidentally left his gate unlatched. What could I do to bring them back to their own pasture? I certainly was not going to go out there and flag them down. I didn't even know where they came from! So, I called the police. This must occur a lot so they would know what to do. Imagine my surprise when the police officer didn't know what to say or do either! My Dudley rural ideal was shattered! Wasn't this a common occurrence in this town? Eventually, the herd owner did come and round them up or maybe the cows decided to go back home at feeding or milking time. They were probably as puzzled over the situation as I was, since the two new homes (one was mine) had not been there a year ago. I guess the grass was greener on my side of the fence!

*Postscript: Thirty years ago there were 16 dairy farms in Dudley. Today there is only one, Walnut Lane Farm, owned and operated by the Koebke Family for over 100 years, who now offer raw milk, locally raised beef, honey, fresh eggs, and well-aged manure.*

### Welcome New Members!

Thanks to a grant from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, the DCLT launched a membership campaign this past year, increasing the membership by fifty-five members. We welcome all of you, thank you for your support, and hope to meet you at our upcoming General Meeting on December 16, 2014, 6:30 PM at The Black Tavern, 138 Center Road, Dudley, MA.

### On a Perfect Fall Day...

This past October, Keith Kirkland led a group walk through Slater Woods. We were hosting Joyce Harrington, one of the Slater Woods heirs who was instrumental in organizing the other heirs to protect this beautiful landscape. Joyce was visiting from Indiana and brought her cousin, Betsy, along on the hike. The high point was reaching Peter Pond, and enjoying a picnic lunch under a canopy of autumn foliage set against a clear blue sky. Lively conversation and laughter were enjoyed by all.



## Commissioner Watson Comes to Dudley - Sandy Peterson

On Oct 6, 2014, as a community outreach event, the land trust was honored to welcome Commissioner Gregory Watson of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, for a presentation on the future of farming locally and statewide. Commissioner Watson focused on the statewide burgeoning of the “farm to table” movement where food is locally grown and locally consumed. He spoke of the increase of small farms and community gardens throughout the state and the rise of farmers’ markets which sell locally grown products, especially in urban areas, and how this not only promotes the consumption of healthy foods but decreases the carbon footprint when foods are grown and consumed locally, thus eliminating the petroleum consumption from shipping long distances. The Commissioner also announced the upcoming opening of a year round public market in Boston that will offer a variety of the region’s finest local produce, dairy, meats, seafood, specialty foods, beverages, flowers and more and will be located on Blackstone Street near the Rose F. Kennedy Greenway. He also addressed the various means of connecting new farmers to available farmland. The “Matching Enterprise Grant for Agriculture” program assists new and beginning farm businesses with start-up or expansion costs, technical and business planning assistance, and financial assistance for equipment, infrastructure or other capital improvements. The “New England Small Farm Institute” also works to support beginning farmers throughout the Northeast, and the non-profit organization “Land for Good” helps connects farmers to farmland. Tim Carroll, a member of the audience, spoke up about how he, a relatively new farmer, has purchased a farm under the APR (agricultural preservation restriction) program here in Dudley, and his plans to revitalize the farm with livestock. (Of note, Tim will be our guest speaker at the next DCLT General Meeting on December 16<sup>th</sup> at the Black Tavern, 6:30 PM). The Commissioner was pleased to learn of the Dudley Farmers’ Market, and of the potential for agricultural growth in Dudley, given its large amount of APR land. The land trust was most grateful to the Commissioner for his inspiring presentation. We are also grateful to the Pearle Crawford Library staff for providing a place for this event.



Commissioner Gregory Watson  
Photo courtesy of “edibleberkshires.com”

### With Gratitude

The DCLT thanks Marcia Wagner for her years of service as a director.

The DCLT extends its gratitude to all those who honored Ann Tierney Kulisa with memorial donations.

The DCLT is most grateful to the Edwin Zajac Family for naming the land trust as recipient for donations in memory of Edwin.

The DCLT thanks the Wrubleski Family for honoring Gary with contributions in his memory.

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