

Bluefield Stream



Species Program. Our long range goals are to continue the clean up of past household dumping and the construction of a kiosk to provide natural history information about the area. We would like to restore and protect the existing turtle habitat on a sand bank that is being overgrown with white pines by applying for a Federal, NRCS – Wildlife and Habitat Improvement Program Grant (WHIP).

Presently this area encompasses about 300 acres between ACT, the Town, the State and Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust holdings. We are hoping to expand this critical habitat area by purchasing additional riverfront land soon. This habitat affords and deserves the highest level of protection available. If you are interested in helping us with this effort and working in this type of habitat please contact us to volunteer.

Our very first grant was from the DFG Riverways Small Grant Program and it went towards the purchase of this our first land purchase. Our first of four awards over the last nine years is being granted to Gary Howland by Joan Kimball of DFG.

Abundant wildlife, small and large mammals, birds, various flora and fauna readily inhabit this river corridor. Moose, bear, deer, otter, bobcat and waterfowl, among others, have been spotted here.

The exposed sand banks, remnants from the gravel operation used to create the Far Hills Association's subdivision, provide ideal habitat for turtle nesting. It abuts an endangered species habitat area, as identified by the Natural Heritage and Endangered



About Us

Updated 8/09

Meetings: 2nd Wed. of the Month
Location: 32 Main St Town Hall.
Ashburnham, MA

ACT

PO Box 354

Ashburnham, MA 01430

contact_act@ashburnhamconservationtrust.org

www.ashburnhamconservationtrust.org

978-827-6427



We are a 501c3 Non-Profit organization registered with the Internal Revenue Service. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. We were founded in 2000, with eleven volunteer Board members:

Gary Howland, Pres., Diane Wright, Treasurer., Keith Penniman, Clerk, Mary Gagnon, Volunteer Coordinator., Clare Deucher, Paul Somers, Lorraine DeSouza, Donald Lemay, Orlando Montalvo-Huhn, Leo Collette, Cec Snow and Sarah Haggerty.

Our mission: To protect the natural landscape, ecological diversity, and rural heritage of the area by conserving open space and fostering an understanding and appreciation of the environment. To protect, conserve, and preserve open space, including but not limited to, wetlands, river corridors, forests, scenic vistas, rare and endangered species habitat, green ways, trails, farm land, wildlife corridors, water resources, and working landscapes. To provide the community with environmental education for the purpose of promoting the protection, conservation, and preservation of open space. To promote and practice land stewardship. To advocate for conservation land-use planning. To work in conjunction with other land trusts, government agencies, watershed associations, educational institutions, and other similar organizations, as well as our local schools.



We'd be no where without partners and we are rich with them. Below is a partial list of those that we have to thank:

Executive Office of Energy and Environment
Department of Conservation and Recreation
Federal Forest Legacy Program
Land and Water Conservation Fund
Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust
Senator Stephen Brewer
Representative Robert Rice
Massachusetts Coalition of Land Trusts
Ashburnham Conservation Commission
Nashua River Watershed Association
The Ashburnham Conservation Commission
The Ashburnham Board of Selectmen
Land Trust Alliance
The Trustees of Reservations
General Electric, *through its Employee Match Program*
IBM, *through its Employee Match Program*
Tyco, *through its Employee Match Program*

All of our Members and Sponsors, too many to mention, but you know who you are, *Thank You.*

Acronyms:

DCR: Department of Conservation and Recreation
EEEA: Exec. Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
ACT: Ashburnham Conservation Trust
FFLP: Federal Forest Legacy Program
CR: Conservation Restriction
DFG: Department of Fish and Game (or DFW)
FSC: Fitchburg Sportsmens Club



Cheshire Pond



Sand Violet. We have installed fencing to protect it and filed with the Conservation Commission because we are planning to construct an observation deck overlooking the pond and the state protected land to the west.

To the southeast lies 390 acres of land belonging to Mass. Audubon which borders Lake Wampanoag in South Ashburnham. Along with our frequent partner, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust we share co-ownership of a Conservation Restriction with stewardship responsibilities. Our Cheshire Pond property abuts that block to the north.

This area is rich with high quality wetlands and could someday fall alongside the Rail Trail initiative for the old Cheshire line railway passage into Winchendon.

If you are interested in helping with this project please contact us and we will align you with board member Paul Somers who acquired the grant for this ambitious project.

Cheshire Pond came to us as a donation from a developer subsequent to several homes had been built nearby. This 10 acre parcel encompasses most of Cheshire Pond which is one of only two naturally occurring water bodies in town. Abutting Cheshire Pond to the west is additional protected land. Rich in wildlife it supports more than one member of the protected species list. Like the Bluefield Stream property, it too bears scars of past gravel operations. Last year (2008) we began a restoration project to protect a state listed plant, the



Mount Hunger



Quieter than Mount Watatic it presents a panoramic view back towards Mount Watatic the “Jewel in the Crown” of more than 4,000 acres of open space that are the heart of Ashburnham. The owners are to be commended for their efforts to maintain the view by suspending themselves over the cliff face to cut back obstructing foliage.

It was once the location of another defunct ski area known as the Hidden Valley Ski Area which operated during the 1970's until around 1980. A housing development overtook the actual ski area. Unlike Mount Watatic, which was spared from fate, the area is but a fond and distant memory to ski enthusiasts who claimed it to be one of the better areas to ski.

Help prevent the development of what remains some of the best hiking along the Midstate Trail.

Let's not repeat the past. Donations to this project are vital now to help offset what is anticipated from the state. A little will go a long way at *this time* to finally protect these views forever.

Perhaps the best view in town can be found gazing out over Stodgemoor Pond, north towards Mount Watatic and beyond in to NH – from the top of Mount Hunger. This vantage point lies at about the mid point of the Midstate Trail in its travel through Ashburnham. Anyone who has hiked the trail knows this to be true.

We have an opportunity unlike any before to protect this location forever. Time is of the essence to save this signature view of Ashburnham for there is none other like it in town.



Mount Watatic



you can see nearly the whole of the Southern Monadnock Plateau Project area.

It has been eight years since the six owner partnership (DCR, DFW, the towns of Ashby and Ashburnham, Ashby Land Trust and Ashburnham Conservation Trust) put this extraordinary area officially in to public hands. Through the expertise and hard work of Andy Bachman from DCR and the Mount Watatic Management Committee, the Recreation and Management Plan (RMP) is available on the web.

In 2008 an additional 100 acres were purchased directly across from the mountain on the south side of Route 119 near where the old utility line trail runs up to the lower peak to the summit and of course *ACT assisted the state with this effort as well.*

The trails were hard hit from the December 2008 ice storm. For more information visit: www.loe.org:80/shows/segments.htm?programID=09-P13-00004&segmentID=3.

Visit the mountain to see why it meant so much to protect it. There is parking on Route 119 with well marked trails. Look for ACT guided hikes this Fall.



This monument on the summit is one of two that mark the determination of countless people, over many years, to protect one of the Commonwealth's last bald top mountains from development. Steadfast dedication prevented the installation of a communications tower for the support of radio fleets and a proposed housing.

For years it has been a favorite destination for tourists from around the world. From the peak of Mount Watatic on a clear day you can see the skyline of Boston, Mt. Greylock and Mt. Monadnock. In fact



Upper Naukeag



There will be no loss in taxes to the Town as the land has been and will remaining in Chapter 61 for forestry.

As head waters to the Millers River the protection of this area has a positive impact to many communities downstream. This can be said of most of our projects because Ashburnham is at the headwaters of three major watersheds.

Just on the other side of the causeway is one of the Lower Naukeag Lake feeds with a direct connection to the private swimming area known as the Naukeag Club.

From this vantage point one can catch glimpses of loon, ducks, otters and an occasional jumping fish. It is a peaceful view in to the heart of our largest contiguous block of open space with all the benefits afforded by it. *You should be proud to be a part of it.*

Upper Naukeag Lake water supply protection expansion was accomplished by the purchase of a Conservation Restriction on 100 acres on Lake and Packard Hill Roads early in 2009. Ashburnham Conservation Trust worked with the landowner and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to complete the deal. The bulk of the property was permanently protected after reserving one building lot on Packard Hill Road. The remaining land will continue to be managed as working forest.





Bush Hill Town Forest



The funds came from a Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant, the Federal Forest Legacy Program and the Self-Help Program, ACT and a very generous private donor.

The terms of the Self-Help Grant required the Town to borrow \$450,000 and wait for reimbursement. In order to prevent cost to the tax payers ACT paid the interest — \$20,000.

In 2005 a Federal Forest Legacy Grant added 220± acres in Winchendon/Ashburnham. In 2006 the Rindge, NH Con Com preserved 200 abutting acres.

ACT worked on the management and forestry plans and assumed the monitoring responsibilities. Included in this project are 25 acres of a historic Shaker Settlement that was donated by a private citizen.

The trail system, upgraded and maintained by Cushing students and scouting groups is in need of pruning. It's a great way to support us and free up our time for more preservation projects. One of which will add another 100 acres bringing the total of the area to over 1000 acres of prime, mostly upland, habitat.

The Bush Hill Town Forest was purchased in 2004 by the Ashburnham Conservation Commission. The 450± acres are owned by the town under the terms of Article 97 conditions. In addition it carries a second level of protection secured by a Conservation Restriction that is held by the Commonwealth of Mass (DCR).

This project took well over two years with a lot of time invested by the Town-Conservation Commission, the State and the Ashburnham Conservation Trust.



Fitchburg Sportsmen's Club



This expanse of undisturbed habitat extends from the southern shore of Upper Naukeag Lake all the way to the New Hampshire border, and hopefully some day beyond into the foothills of NH's White Mountains and the Pack Monadnock Region.

The biodiversity afforded by this contiguous block of wetlands types of swamps, bogs, small lakes, streams, ponds, upland hills, fields and mountain peaks is a richness blessing we should never take for granted.

It will forever facilitate the movement of large game and other wildlife where breeding can occur apart from developed areas and roadway threats.

ACT's Pres. Gary Howland received an award from FSC for his efforts to assist them with this project. He is seen below with Rep. Robert Rice and FSC Pres. Phil Madonia. The Club has been an exemplary steward of this land for many years. It is one of the oldest sportsmen's club in the country and they are to be commended for their foresight and vision. They deserve your support and appreciation.

A dream come true for members of ACT, among others such as the DFW and DCR, this most valued land along the Route 119 corridor between NH and MA was recently protected when the state purchased a Conservation Restriction on nearly all of 900 acres.

Certain exclusion areas were retained by FSC to insure the club activities but the protection of the bulk of the land increased the habitat value and protected area to more than 4000 acres of non-fragmented forest, fields and wetlands.





This ongoing multi-phase project is focused on the Southern Monadnock Plateau and general region pictured above. It has been funded primarily with Federal Forest Legacy monies in support of maintaining our working forestry lands. Many of the properties fall along the 92 mile Midstate Trail, which stretches between Rhode Island and New Hampshire where it joins with the Wapack Trail. This well traveled trail reaches its peak at the top of Mount Watatic, a destination spot for many people both from within our region as well as from outside of it.

So Monadnock Plateau



Throughout the year visitor cars can be seen parked along both sides of Route 119 near the Mount Watatic parking lot.

In 2009 we continued work with the State, the Ashburnham Conservation Commission, the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, The Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and the Nashua River Watershed Assoc. to complete the protection of the *Phase One* properties. At the same time we're preparing for the *Phase Two* properties. Three of these *Phase One* projects are on the Midstate Trail.

ACT is assisting with due diligence tasks including paying and finding funding to pay for appraisals, stewardship and or forestry plans as well as committing to monitoring these Conservation Restrictions.

As part of the match requirements ACT has offered Conservation Restrictions on our own holdings. We are soliciting bargain sales and have already secured the promise of two Conservation Restrictions on 125 acres abutting the Bush Hill Town Forest to be applied to this project as match.





In December of 2007 ACT received the donation of a Conservation Restriction (CR) on the historic 44 acre Hood family property located on Packard Hill Road. The property is part of a 1,100 acre block of Contiguous Natural Lands.

These large tracts of land provide the habitat that support a broad array of species and reduce isolation of plant and animal populations. The eastern half of the property lies within an area mapped as a Surface Water Supply Protection Area. The protection of this property helps to insure water quality by reducing

Packard Hill



the threat of pollution and a maintaining groundwater recharge to the reservoir. In addition it increases the probability of being able to protect abutting parcels that fall within the water supply district area.

For example soon after this action was completed an abutting property of 100 +/- acres extending from one end of Packard Hill Road and spanning both sides of Lake Road along Upper Naukeag Lake was protected for the same reasons.

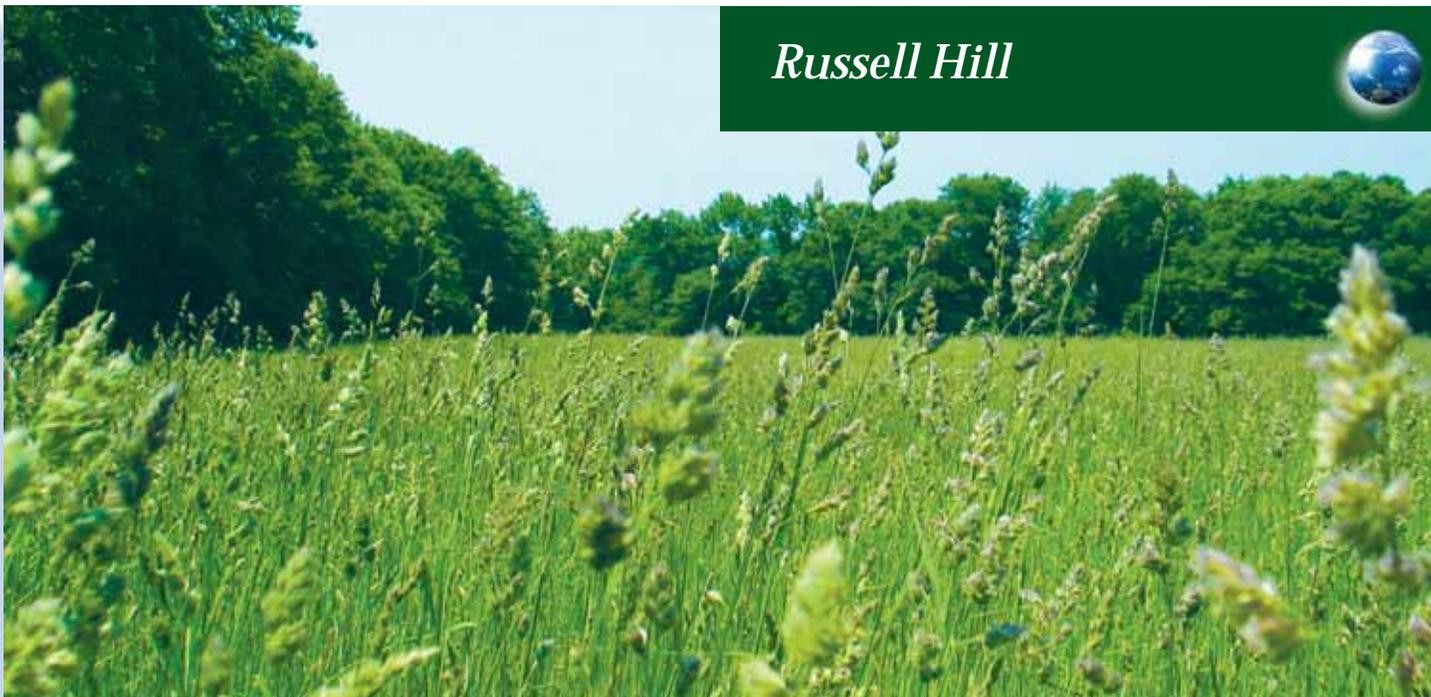
ACT felt it was important to preserve this land and the water supply because it will remain as a working forest while achieving water quality.

Negotiations resulted in the allowance of one home on Packard Hill Road and one on Lake Road.

ACT funded the appraisal and as usual we worked closely with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, who took the lead on the project. More detail can be found in the Upper Naukeag section of this booklet.



Russell Hill



Falling within the view of Mount Hunger, Mount Watatic, Bush Hill and Mount Wachusett, this parcel retains the characteristics it had when it was owned by the Adams family in the 1700's.

Located in northeast Ashburnham it comprises a large un-fragmented forestland. It is now owned by the Town of Ashburnham's Conservation Commission but it was protected through a partnership between ACT, the Town of Ashburnham, the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

There are several ephemeral streams that drain into the Brown Brook, a feeder stream to Phillips Brook, eventually connecting to the Nashua River.

Follow River Styx Road, off of Route 12, until it becomes Russell Hill Road. Watch the left side of the road for the sign at the end of Stagecoach Rd. You can't miss the beautiful and well maintained fields. There is a parking lot not too far up on Stagecoach Road.

There are no good trails except for logging operations cart roads, but those are still ankle twisters at this time. Volunteers to create trails are very much needed on this property to make it more available to the public.

Total acreage of this area is 205 acres and was funded by the National Park Service, EEEA Self-Help Program and a private donor. Interested in doing trail work? Call Lori Capone, the Conservation Agent, at the Town Hall.