



Pascommuck post

Fall 2004

The Pascommuck Conservation Trust Needs You!

Interested in protecting the environment? Concerned about land and wildlife protection, sprawl, and clean water? Ever wanted to get involved with environmental issues but have limited time or don't know how? Then the Pascommuck Conservation Trust is your answer. We offer you the chance to "Think globally and act locally" within your own timeframe, abilities, and interests.

The Pascommuck Conservation Trust is in need of volunteers of every skill level and ability for whatever time and energy you are willing to commit. We are an entirely volunteer organization, and truly appreciate all help that people can give. Perhaps you enjoy working outside in nature. Or meeting and talking to new people. Or writing about the environment and your community. Or you have a particular skill you enjoy using in art, woodworking, computers, finance, etc. We welcome you.

We are seeking volunteers on a number of different levels. The PCT is recruiting new Board of Director members who are willing to commit to one meeting a month along with other responsibilities commensurate with their skills and their personal level of dedication. Board members vote on issues such as property acquisition, property maintenance, fundraising, etc. For anyone with financial skills and interests we are also in need of a new Treasurer due to the retirement of Ed Dwyer, a dedicated and valuable asset to the organization (see related article).

There are a number of PCT "Special Project Volunteers" who are involved on a less time consuming but equally vital role within the organization. These non-voting members volunteer for projects they enjoy within a timeframe that fits in their own personal schedule. Their tasks range from property clean up to sign making to writing thank you notes and anything in between.

So if you would like to help your community and the environment and you have some time to spare please consider volunteering for the Trust. You will find it a rewarding experience available right in "your own backyard". For more information please contact us at the address listed in this newsletter. You'll be glad you did.

Stephen Donnelly



A KAYAK'S VIEW OF THE MANHAN RIVER



The Trust has always been interested in preserving a greenbelt of natural habitat along the boundaries of the Manhan River. When Gerrit Stover, super conservationist/active Trust member, organized a kayak trip along a section of this stream, I reckoned this would be an excellent opportunity to get to know Mr. Manhan more intimately. Though I don't own one of these midget canoes, and have never sailed one before, with five minutes of practice maneuvers in a borrowed craft, I took to the water like a little ducky out on his first swim.

Alas, six of us brave fools started out just below the dam off Northampton Street (Rt.10) in town, destination the Northampton boat launch off Rt.5 – an approximate shoreline distance of 4.2 miles. Two characteristics of this section of the river soon were apparent: depth can vary from a few inches to over six feet, and the number of tree blow downs clogging the river is astonishing. Every five minutes I'd be jumping into the water and portaging or dragging my vessel through or around these obstructions. Gerrit, though, was like a water snake, handily slithering through most barriers so deftly that he hardly ever had to depart his ship.

Leaving the large pool below the dam, agricultural fields were visible to our left, while on the right lay the vast acreage of woods and swamp behind Pleasant Street. Our 40 acre parcel, The Manhan River Conservation Area, comprises much of this section, starting from the Notre Dame Church and ending in the vicinity of the Lovefield Street bridge. Many good fishing and swimming holes can be found at various spots along the way.

Once past the Lovefield Street bridge, the overflow from the Lower Mill Pond (originally Broad Brook) converges with the Manhan. This is one of the deepest parts of the river, and teems with schools of fish. Signs of beaver abound. Soon we were paddling parallel to East Street, eventually arriving at the Fort Hill Road bridge. Looking toward East Street, the neglected meadow now owned by the Tri-County School was in view; to the left was the Burt farm parcel which the Trust helped to save from development, the section of marsh known as "Clapp's Swamp", Arcadia Nature Center, and River Road with its cottages, summer camps and the Rod and Gun Club property.

A few more minutes of paddling and we were sailing by the Trust's "Old Pascommuck Conservation Area" off East Street. River Road ends at the shoreline to the left, but a bridge existed years ago, connecting it to Old County Road on the opposite shore. Now Old County Road is part of a path running through our property from the river, crossing beneath the Manhan Rail Trail bridge, then exiting to East Street. At least part of this old road is privately owned

We were at last in the home stretch, where the Manhan closely parallels the Oxbow on the left. Not far to the right, we could catch glimpses of the Rail Trail, East Street, and the Northern section of the Mt. Tom range. This portion supports a diverse variety of wildlife, flora and boaters. As the Manhan merges with the Oxbow, the waters open up into an impressive inland estuary. In the shallows to the right we observed a formidable stand of pickerel weed and wild rice, and in the background the Rt.91 overpass on East Street and the Mt. Holyoke Summit House. In retrospect, what we had seen on this over five hour expedition was an eyeful: blue herons, several varieties of waterfowl, sandpipers, kingfishers, mussels and their linear footprints on the river bottom, an otter slide along one of the banks, button bush, gigantic sycamores and silver maples, and the list goes on!

Besides discovery and adventure, we came away with something even more profound. I think we all realized how important greenbelts along streams are for preserving a wide range of fauna and flora, while offering great recreational/educational opportunities for the human species as well. Equally important, as Gerrit pointed out, in a city like Easthampton, with its heavy population in relation to its land mass, here exists another world, one more laid back and peaceful- a haven of raw natural beauty to which one can still retreat. I'll sail to that!

John Bator





FALL FESTIVAL, 2004

The Easthampton Fall Festival was held on Sept 25th and 26th on two very beautiful fall days at Easthampton High School. The Pascommuck Conservation Trust had its usual booth under the tent so that we could sell plants, tee shirts and raffle tickets, as well as provide maps of our properties and membership brochures for those people interested in knowing more about our work.

The sale was a financial success due largely to repeat customers who recognized the quality and reasonable prices of our trees, shrubs and perennials. John Bator, Trust President, who has a wealth of knowledge about all types of plants, was present both days to offer expert tips on planting and growing.

Preparation for this sale required a great deal of hard work by a very small group of dedicated volunteers and members. Most of the plants were donated by PCT members, friends and supporters, with many potting parties being held at John's house in preparation for this sale. A total of 6 pickup trucks were loaded for delivery on Friday evening prior to the sale, and only two trucks were required to bring the leftovers on the return trip, offering further proof of success.

We owe a special thank you to Stella Wiernasz, our senior Trust member, for her tireless efforts in selling raffle tickets on both Saturday and Sunday. Stella made our raffle a huge success.

Pascommuck Conservation Trust is able to continue its important conservation work because of the dedicated members and volunteers who donated their time and energy so willingly to this fundraiser. A sincere thank you to all who participated and helped to make this fundraiser such a success.

Sue Walz, Vice President

Winners of the raffle
were as follows:

Large Basket made
& donated by Sue Bishop
Terri Perrea

Hand knit scarf
by Valerie McQuillan
Joe Yarra

Curves Gift Bag
donated by
Stella Wiernasz
Marcelle Morrissi

Tea Basket w/mugs
donated by
Stella Wiernasz
Julie Ethier





My husband's and my involvement with the Pascommuck Conservation Trust blossomed slowly. Our first experience was several years ago at their Spring Plant Sale. The variety and number of houseplants, perennials, bushes and trees were phenomenal and the prices were so reasonable! From then on, every spring we anxiously waited for that sale to start our planting. Then we discovered them at the Fall Festival! We were now almost able to pronounce their name and were beginning to realize that the faces were becoming familiar and the ready answers to our endless planting questions were something we relied upon. So we collected and studied their written materials about their land acquisitions. When we saw their successes documented in the Gazette, we began to see that there was a lot more to this organization than just plant sales. We became members and sent in some financial support.

This past spring (at the plant sale, of course), when we heard there were openings on the Board, we decided to attend a meeting. We've been hooked ever since. The members range in age and occupation and all share a profound love for and dedication to the natural world. We've already learned so much about the inner workings of Easthampton, the importance of the Manhan River corridor, land acquisition, local flora and fauna identification, money management, land maintenance and local recreational opportunities. And to top it all off, this is a truly kind, concerned and fun loving group of people.

If you are looking to share your love of nature and/or to protect the natural habitat in the community of Easthampton, then this is the group for you!

On Becoming Involved with the Pascommuck Conservation Trust

Molly Goodwin & Roger Anderson

PCT'S Conservation Award

*The following is a letter
from a student from
Easthampton High who
received the Pascommuck
Conservation Award this past
school year. We found it very
interesting and hope that
you will also.*

recognition

"My name is Levi Tiffany. I have lived in Easthampton all my life. I have been a Boy Scout since I was 11 years old. Being involved in scouting, I have been involved in a lot of community service over the years. Our Troop 205 has participated annually in the Town Clean Up Day, painted the iron fence around Nashawannuck Pond, worked with the Helping Hand Society delivering May Day baskets, and collected food for the Community Center.

In 2002 I worked with the City of Easthampton to meet some of the requirements for a grant to replace a culvert between Rubber Thread Pond and Nashawannuck Pond. A consulting firm was hired by the City of Easthampton to evaluate the watershed of Rubber Thread Pond. They found that the condition was very poor. The surface was covered in aquatic vegetation, trash was abundant throughout the pond and large amounts of sediment were coming from the storm drain outfalls. The evaluators felt that a new culvert would improve the pond's water flow and prevent stagnation. Part of the grant required public education and clean up of trash in the pond. I chose to do my Eagle Project on the clean up of debris from Rubber Thread Pond and public education. I supervised the stenciling "DUMP NO WASTE DRAINS TO PONDS" of 76 storm drains in the area of Rubber Thread Pond, distribution of 264 informational leaflets on environmental issues directly relating to the pond and removal of 15 bags of trash, 3 tires and various other trash from the pond. I earned my Eagle badge on October 29, 2002.

I played ice hockey for Easthampton High School for 3 years as goalie and was awarded the 7th Player award 2 years. I also play league roller hockey regularly. My other hobbies include fishing, hiking, kayaking, camping, and mountain biking.

I have delivered newspapers, worked as a lifeguard, food service, general yard laborer, done farm work pitching hay, and currently work full time driving forklift.

I plan on attending Baran Institute of Technology in October, majoring in Automotive Technology."

Levi Tiffany

In Remembrance of Paula S. Hutton

Paula Hutton, who had recently become a Board Member of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust, passed away on June 7, 2004, after putting up a valiant fight against cancer for over a year. She was 34 years old, and leaves her husband Andrew and her daughter Jessica.

Paula was a very conservation-minded person who worked tirelessly at her job as Realty Specialist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Hadley for many years, with primary responsibilities in the National Wildlife Refuge System; which system contains over 500 refuges scattered throughout the United States. Her duties required travel within a 13 state region and she earned the respect of the refuge managers as well as her fellow workers because of her endearing attitude and dedication to her job. Some of her major projects resulted in many thousands of acres coming into the Wildlife Refuge System, and she was very proud of this work. It is our understanding that one of the refuges she helped to create is to have a sign at the entrance, honoring her for making that site a reality.

You might wonder how Paula could find the time, with her very busy schedule and her illness, to become a Board Member and try to help the Trust solve several of our more pressing issues, but that is exactly what she did. She never let anything get in the way of something she really believed in and wanted to do. She offered her expertise to help us with several projects before illness finally forced her to stop attending meetings.

We share the sadness that her family and Wildlife Service feel at her passing. Rest well, Paula.

PCT Board of Directors



Treasurer Retires

Edward Dwyer, Board Member of the Pascommuck Conservation Trust and long time Treasurer, recently retired due to ill health. Even after leaving full time service on the Board, Ed attended nearly every one of our meetings, providing monthly information as our finances either rose or fell.

Ed's dedication to conservation and to Easthampton has been impressive and inspiring. As one of the earliest board members, his involvement began long before most of the current board members joined. Our testimony to his work is based on the foundation he and the other pioneers laid for the Trust over many years of hard work. He was President of the Trust for a period of time before taking on the job of Treasurer.

In earlier years, Ed was a willing helper at most of our major work sites such as Terrace View, Old Pascommuck, and John Bator Park. In fact, he was involved in the initial work at John Bator Park right through the completion of it.

Ed faithfully helped out at our functions, and was usually the first one to arrive at our plant and bake sale and at the Fall Festival, bringing not only the "money box" but usually taking the needed "startup" money from his own pocket, as yet another way of helping the Trust succeed. At the plant and bake sale this spring, it was Ed who, observed that we were shorthanded, pitched in and helped sell the loaves of bread, cookies, brownies, and pies without hesitation.

Some of you may know that Ed not only wrote articles of historical interest about Easthampton for the Daily Hampshire Gazette, but recently wrote a book about the history of Easthampton and graciously donated part of the proceeds from the sale to the Trust. This is just another example of the dedication he has given to the Trust for many years. Anyone who has read this book can appreciate yet another of Ed's talents.

We sincerely wish Ed a return to good health in the very near future.

PCT Board Members



Farewell to Marty

PCT Board Member Marty Klein is moving on to new opportunities in Rhode Island and unfortunately we are losing a valuable member of our Trust. He is one of our newer members of this non-profit organization, however in the 2-1/2 years he has been on the board, he accomplished many things, and helped us all to become better at what we do best, work to preserve open space in Easthampton.

Marty has been a proactive member of the Board, quickly seeing that something needed to be done and then going about figuring out the best approach. When we realized that we needed to raise \$30,000.00 to preserve the Burt/Clapp St. property, it was Marty who stepped up to the plate. He organized the fundraiser and made sure we had press coverage for our work so the townspeople would understand our need to save this parcel from future development and hopefully donate to our cause.

Most importantly, he became very proficient at grant writing, and out of 6 proposals sent out, 5 were accepted, thereby gaining much needed funds for this preservation work. Anyone who is familiar with grant writing will understand what a remarkable success rate this is.

Marty organized several fundraisers; one with Mr. Richard Little on the valley's geology; another brought Mr. Tom Riccardi, with his many "Birds of Prey" into our midst one evening at the Lathrop Community. Both of these programs were well received by the audience. He has co-led an ecology walk on one of our sites, joined many work parties at various locations, and has helped out as needed at our annual Plant & Bake Sale. No job has been either too big or too small for him to offer his assistance

This spring, he worked to put together a coalition of ten environmental organizations in the three county area who are concerned about the impact of unlawful ATV use on conservation lands. He further wrote and received a \$25,000 grant for that project for gates, signage education, etc. This grant will be shared by all the others who also participated, and hopefully will give some protection to our parcels in the future.

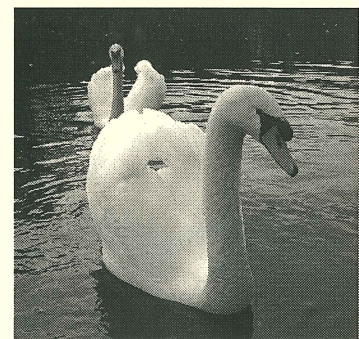
Most recently, Marty has written articles and editorials to the Daily Hampshire Gazette concerning land protection, land conservation issues, and smart growth issues with regard to the city of Easthampton. He also attended many meetings in order to explain the "smart growth" concept in more detail.

We shall miss Marty for many reasons, not the least of which will be his willingness to help our Trust grow and be successful in our mission, but also for his kind nature, and his dry sense of humor. As he would say of his work, "Tree hugging can be fun!". You will be a "tough act" to follow, Marty.

Shirley Smith

dedication

*Marty has also been a major contributor of beautiful photographic images to our newsletters. He has a wonderful Website where you can see his work:
www.pbase.com/martk/misc_images&page=all*



Property Profile: *Manhan River Conservation Area*



The Manhan River Conservation Area, also known as Terrace View, is a gem in PCT's property portfolio, and hides nestled on the low land below the houses along Pleasant Street. On October 2, a small group of Trust members and I met at the gate to the property, behind Burt Tractor and Equipment, Inc., to explore this land and ferret out some of its stories.

We had no particular aim on this walk, but kept our senses open to the morning and let our interests, and the path, take us where they would. Almost immediately upon starting down the trail, however, my eye caught on some of the ripe pods of pale jewelweed. These plants, like their cousin, spotted jewelweed (also called touch-me-nots), have a surprising, and fascinating, trait: ripe pods burst explosively with the gentlest touch, flinging their seeds several feet. Popping one as I walked by, I smiled...and was hooked. In a minute we all were searching for the biggest, ripest pods we could find, and scarcely touching them,--POP! Jewelweeds are dangerous, though, in a way, because we probably could have happily stayed there all morning, and I wanted to see what else we could find. With some reluctance I led the group on down the path.

Passing the broken bottles and television sets strewn by the side of the path (see Note, below), we soon came down to the Manhan River. To me, what's interesting here is that the Manhan has been winding over the land now protected by the Trust for over 10,000 years, carving down through sediments deposited at the bottom of the enormous Glacial Lake Hitchcock after the

abatement of the last glacier. Looking from the riverbank, upslope toward the houses along the road, we could see the terrace for which Terrace View—I suppose—got its name. The old riverbank was up there, above us by some tens of feet. Now, however, the river was below us, still patiently depositing and picking up sediment in and along its channel, as it has for millennia.

We kept following the path, and soon we were standing in a white pine forest, with some of the tallest pines I've seen in a while (and I've been looking!) many over 100 feet tall by my estimate. But as we continued on the path the pines ended abruptly, transitioning sharply to a forest of oaks and hickory. Here and there, patches of American beech, with their gray bark shining, stood out from the oaks. It was a fine Fall day to visit these woods, but I continued to think that, not that long ago, there hadn't been woods here at all. The way the pines stood together in an even-aged clump is typical of land that has been cleared, then reforested. Yet, to me, these did not seem to be twisty, gnarled pasture-pines; rather they looked like ship's masts. Were they planted, and tended? As always on these wanderings, more questions than answers.

All along the path, we saw glimpses of the river below. The clear water flowed rather swiftly, a couple of days after rain. I expected to see muskrats swimming, and hear beavers slapping their tails on the water, but we saw or heard neither. We did get a fine, close view of a great blue heron as it flew past, heading downstream. And many trees had beaver-chew scars on their bases, none looking very recent to me. But people built the most obvious "wildlife" sign: years ago, thrill-seeking, evidently fearless young dirt bikers built many jumps and ditches along the path. At their age, would I have dared to fly over these obstacles? Property issues notwithstanding, I'd like to think so. But even then, my enjoyment of places like Terrace View was more in rolling over logs and seeking natural things, than in blazing at speed to near certain injury. Still, these odd piles of sand offer a glimpse into a use of the property, helping to flesh out its story over time.

Where is it? The Manhan River Conservation Area is located off Terrace View, north from the intersection of Pleasant and Ferry Streets, and behind the Burt Tractor and Equipment, Inc. property. Parking is along the shoulder of Terrace View. Access the main trail through the passage in the fence, immediately left of the fence's gate.

Note: An important issue at Terrace View is the Trust's ongoing struggle to curtail illegal dumping on the property. From the ancient-looking bottles and other, more recent jetsam tumbling down the slope near the entrance, it appears that dumping at Terrace View has a long tradition—as many volunteers know too well from our frequent cleanup "parties" here. The Trust even was obliged to build a tall fence along our road frontage, to prevent litterbugs from depositing televisions, washers, and other large, broken household items, but fence seems to only have slowed down the litter problem. When you visit, please consider (safely!) picking up a few pieces of litter; together we can clean up this unfortunate situation.

Tom Lautzenheiser

Pascommuck Conservation Trust Board

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