



WILDLANDS
T R U S T



Tips for Recruiting and Retaining a Strong Stewardship Volunteer Corps

Owen Grey, Stewardship Manager, Wildlands Trust

Kelly Barber, Director of Land Stewardship, Barnstable Land Trust



Who Are We?

- Regional Land Trust based in Plymouth, MA.
- Active in 60 towns from Rhode Island to Boston
- 12 full-time staff, 5 part-time staff
- Four departments - Stewardship, Land Protection, Outreach, GIS.

Wildlands Trust | Regional Coverage Map



- Fee Properties
- ▲ Conservation Restrictions

Protected Fee Parcels

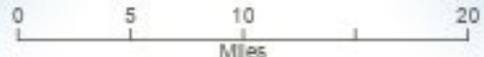
Wetlands = 995 Acres
Lakes and Ponds = 189 Acres
Deciduous Forest = 1,316 Acres
Evergreen Forest = 1,660 Acres
Shoreline = 27 Miles
Total Fee Area Protected = 4,710 Acres

Conservation Restrictions

Wetlands = 553 Acres
Lakes and Ponds = 113 Acres
Deciduous Forest = 1,035 Acres
Evergreen Forest = 1,465 Acres
Shoreline = 17 Miles
Total CR Area Protected = 4,628 Acres

Total Acres Protected = 9,338 Acres

Plymouth, MA



How it Started



How its Going

- 3 full time Stewardship Staff
- 4 stewardship committee members
- Stewardship Volunteer Coordinator organizes and leads volunteer programs. Other Stewardship staff supports.
- Structured assortment of volunteer programs.



Volunteer Programming

Adopt a Preserve

VolunTuesday

Hike Leader Program

Stewardship Committee

“Specialists”

Outing clubs/corporate groups

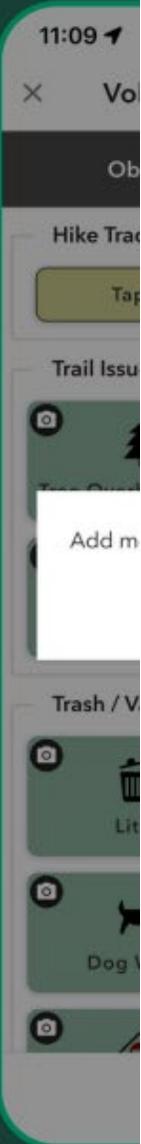
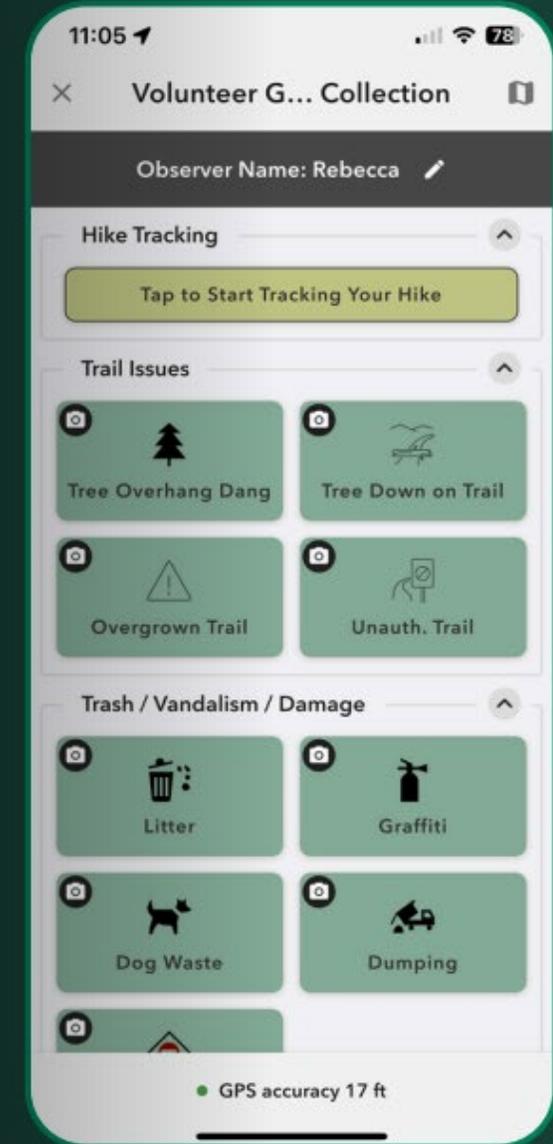
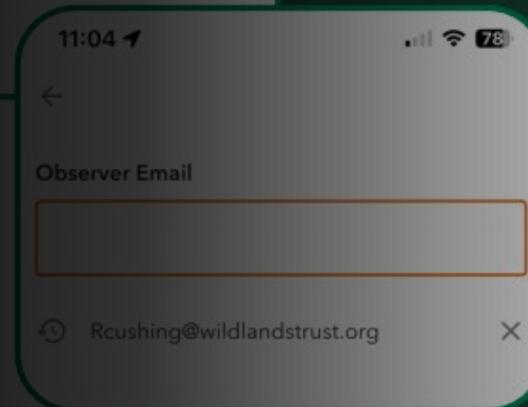
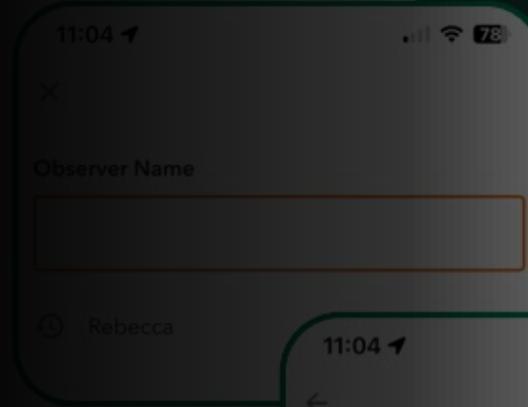
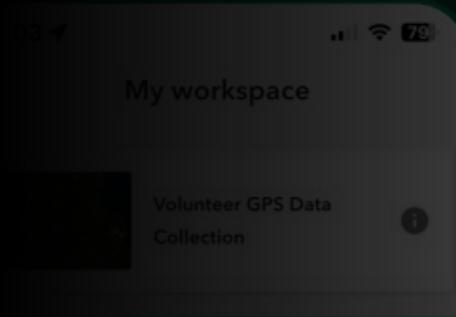
Scouts

Community Stewardship projects with municipal volunteer groups.



Adopt a Preserve

- 334 reports in 2025
 - 408 hours spent monitoring trails.
-
- Volunteer “adopts” a WT preserve.
 - Volunteer is expected to submit at least one monitoring report per month.
 - Reporting trail conditions, wildlife sightings, any issues.
 - New QuickCapture monitoring form allows volunteers to track their monitoring visit using GPS and photo points.



VolunTuesday

- 31 work days in 2025
- 325 attendees
- 975 hours

- 10am-1pm every Tuesday.
- Registration optional- doesn't feel like commitment
- Great way to complete large projects faster.



How we Recruit

Tabling

Drop in projects/events

Social media

Word of mouth

***Random encounters



Training

- Start with In person one on one training – serves to both train and get to know the new volunteer.
- Variety of training opportunities at Stewardship Training Center – WFA, chainsaw training, carpentry, trail building and maintenance, etc.
- On the job training in stewardship tasks.
- Lop & Learn



Other Volunteer Opportunities

- Other conservation or service focused groups
- Specialized volunteers
- Municipal committees or groups





IN 2025, OUR VOLUNTEERS DEDICATED 1,570+ HOURS... AN ESTIMATED VALUE OF \$55,000+!



Volunteer Workdays: 31
Registrations: 325
Hours: 975



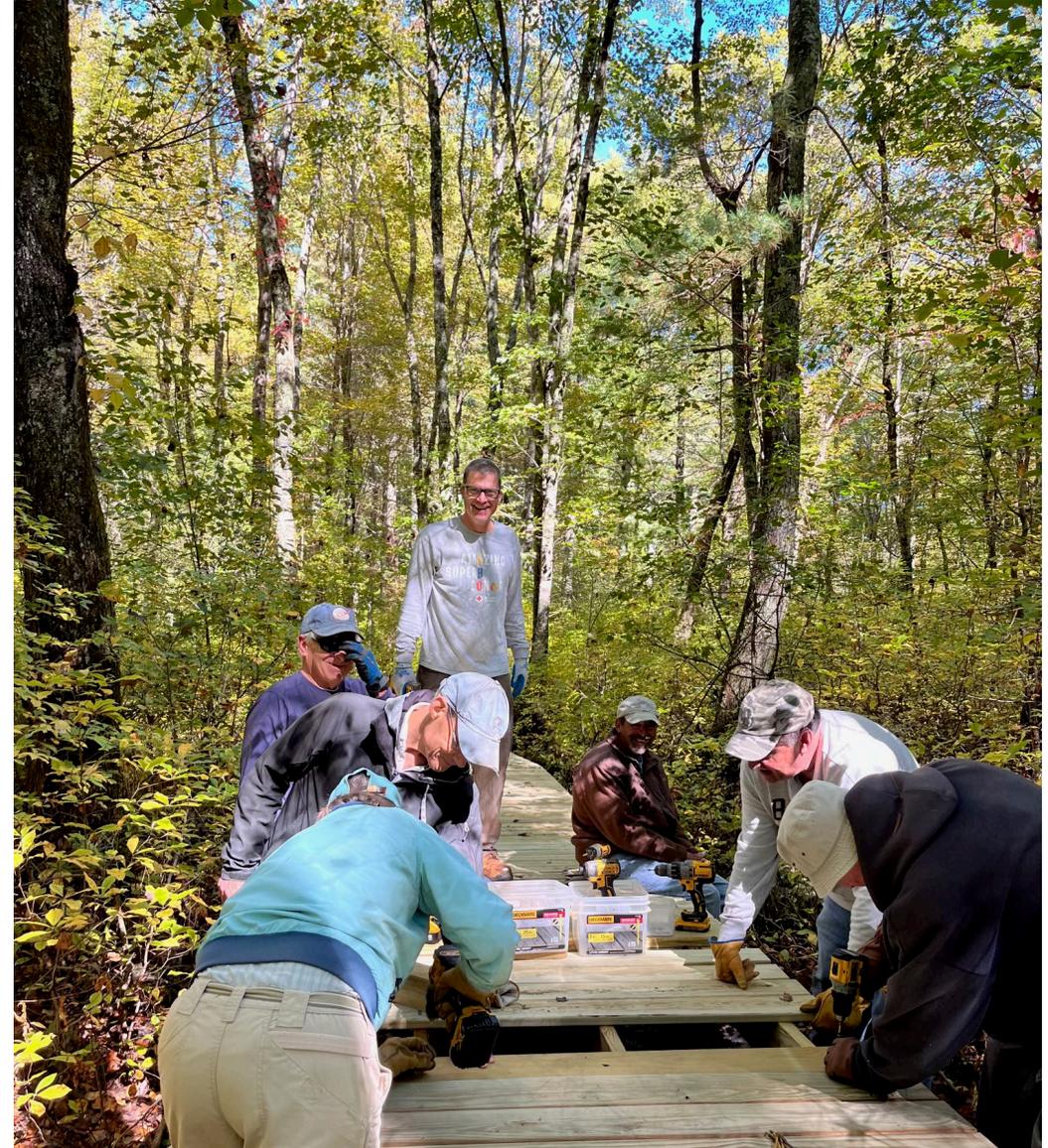
AAP Reports: 31
Reports: 334
Hours: 408

Guided Hikes: 40
Attendees: 500+
Hours: 170+



Lessons Learned

- If you feed them, they will come!
- You can never be too organized. Volunteers appreciate well planned projects.
- Let the volunteer tell you when something is too much for them.
- Mix up offerings to avoid burnout.
- It is always important to hear folks out, but don't be afraid to say no.



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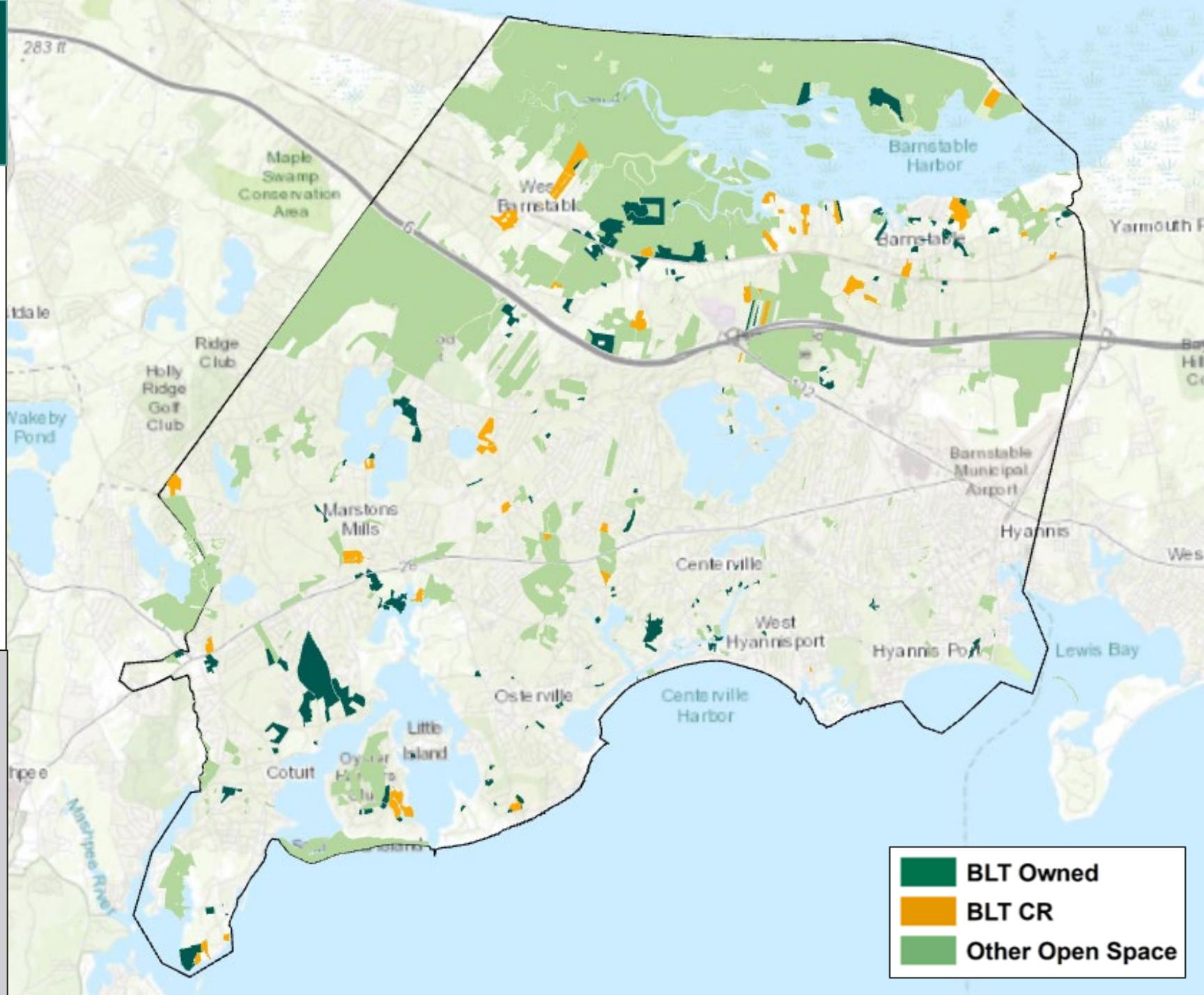
Kelly Barber, Director of Land Stewardship, Barnstable Land Trust



Barnstable Land Trust

**Steward 1,250+ acres in
Town of Barnstable**

- 129 Fee-owned = 850 ac
- 49 CRs = 400 ac



Stewardship Structure

Personnel

- Two FT Staff (as of Oct. 2024)
- Land Stewardship Committee
- Volunteers
 - Group Projects
 - Property Caretakers
 - Specialists
 - Independent and/or Support Teams

Program Nourishment

- Quarterly Updates & Trainings
- Annual regular trainings
- Social Gatherings
- Annual Stewardship Potluck



	2017	2020	2022	2025
# Annual Projects	~6	43	80	88
# BLT Project Sites	~6	13	21	21
# Active Volunteers	~10	19	53	68

Where We Started

- One Part-Time Land Stewardship Staff
- Land Stewardship Committee – group hangout
- Responsive Projects
- ~10 active volunteers

Where We Are Now

- Two Full Time Land Stewardship Staff
- Land Stewardship Committee – strategic, goal-oriented
- Proactive Projects - weekly
- ~70 active volunteers
- Planned/Ongoing Trainings
- Independent/Support Volunteer Teams
- Informative/Celebrative Get-Togethers
- Annual Stewardship Potluck

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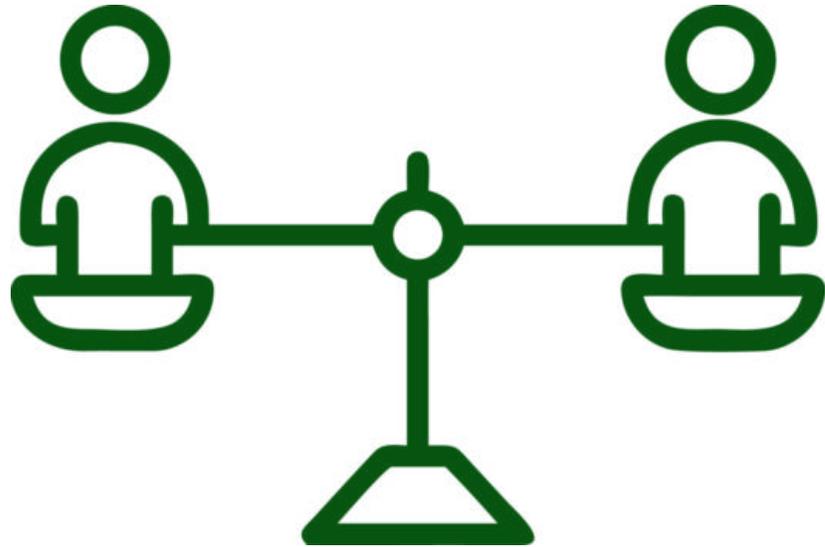
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Core Elements



Balance



Community

Resonating Lessons

- **Match Interests/Expertise with Needs**
- **Seek and Apply Feedback**
- **Keep Community at the Core**
- **Play the Long Game**
- **Say Thank You and Celebrate**





Match Interests/Expertise with Needs

- Recruitment – Menu of Options
- Independent/Support Volunteer Teams
- Land Stewardship Committee

Seek and Apply Feedback

Actively and Continuously

Results:

Group Project Growth

Increased Communications

Quarterly Update Meetups

Annual Trainings

Note: How you respond to the bad is just as, if not more, important than how you celebrate the good.

Ex. Yellow-Jacket Incident



Keep Community at the Core



Foster the People

Social Gatherings • Connection Opportunities • 'How Are You's



Play the Long Game

Rushing Derails

- Relationships take time
- Opportunities take time
- Growth takes time



Say Thank You
and Celebrate!

Thank yous should come in all sizes

Additional Tip: Build the Infrastructure to Support Growth



Full-Time
Land Stewardship
Coordinator
(2017)



Truck/Trailer
(2018)



Shed
(2018)

Stewardship
Garage at
Fuller Farm
(2022)

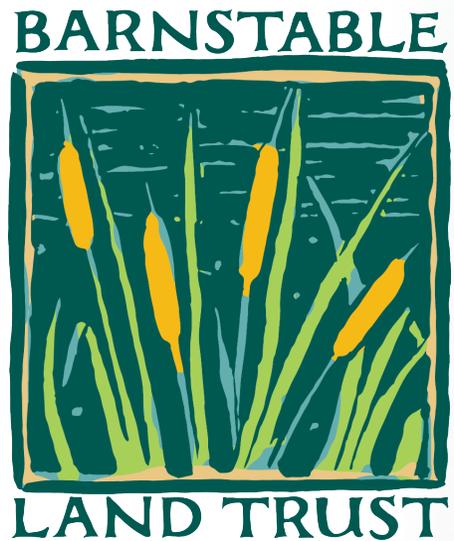




Set reasonable expectations.

Be kind to yourself along the journey.

Trust the process.



Thank You!

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