



MASSACHUSETTS  
LAND TRUST  
COALITION

## 2025 Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference

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### Workshop Descriptions

as of Jan. 17

[Schedule](#) Jump to: [9:30 a.m. workshops](#) / [11:05 a.m. workshops](#) / [2:25 p.m. workshops](#)

### **Sponsor Talks (pre-conference)**

Various dates TBD, via Zoom

- ❖ **UMass Amherst / MassWoods** | Tuesday, March 4, noon - 1 p.m.  
Beyond the “Illusion of Preservation”  
*Paul Catanzaro*
  
- ❖ **The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts** | Tuesday, March 11, noon - 1 p.m.  
Freshwater Resilience: Adding Rivers and Streams into Your Land Conservation  
*Mark Anderson, Barbara Charry, Arlene Olivero*
  
- ❖ **Mass Audubon** | Wednesday, March 12, noon - 1 p.m.  
Discussion of Mass Audubon’s 30x30 Catalyst Fund with Current and Potential Partners  
*David Santomenna*
  
- ❖ **EOEEA** | Tuesday, March 18, noon - 1 p.m.  
Developing Biodiversity Conservation Goals for the Commonwealth  
*Jennifer Ryan, Eve Schlüter*

Executive Order No. 618, signed by Governor Healey, calls for the Department of Fish & Game to develop nation-leading biodiversity conservation goals for 2030, 2040, and 2050. DFG Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Ryan and Mass Wildlife Deputy Director Dr. Eve Schlüter will present on progress, next steps, and key priorities for a whole-of-government approach to biodiversity conservation. The presentation will highlight the crucial role of local land trusts and conservation partners in the success of this initiative with time for discussion on how we can come together to achieve the goals.

## **Friday, March 21**

UMass Amherst Campus Center, Amherst MA (Live, In-person)

*Note: General = for all audiences; it does **not** mean "basic".*

### **8:30 - 9:30 a.m. Registration, light breakfast, networking, visit exhibits, Newcomers' drop-in**

8:30 - 9:20 a.m. Newcomers' drop-in (more about [Early Career Conservation Network](#))

### **9:30 - 10:45 a.m. 8 Concurrent Workshops**

❖ **A Blueprint for Better Boards: Three Strategies for Board Recruitment** **General**

*Jen Plowden, Karen Grey*

Board recruitment is essential for the sustainability of any organization. In this session, we'll cover effective strategies to build the board you need, including identifying gaps on your board, drafting clear roles and expectations for new board members, and establishing an onboarding process. This workshop will introduce these critical concepts and provide practical tools you can bring home.

❖ **Managing Forests for Climate** **Intermediate**

*Josh Rapp, Hayden Stebbins, and Alison Wright-Hunter*

Forests provide many benefits, including their ability to help mitigate climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it for decades or centuries. However, their ability to do so is undermined by the impacts of climate change. Thoughtful forest management can help forests adapt to climate change, leading to better carbon outcomes over time while supporting many of the other values and benefits forests provide. Through a series of case studies we will show how climate-smart practices that support biodiversity, carbon storage and/or forest resilience can be implemented. The session will highlight funding sources currently available for land trusts, woodland owners and municipalities, with a focus on New England Forestry Foundation's Grow Resilience in Oak Hickory Forests (GROH) and Massachusetts DCR's Climate Stewardship Incentive Program (C-SIP).

❖ **Saving the Farm: a Case Study for Successfully Using Ch. 61 to Preserve Land From Development** **General**

*Dennis Murphy, Scott McFadden*

In a nearly three year odyssey, Wildlands Trust and the Town of Middleborough succeeded in preserving a two hundred acre farm along a mile long stretch of the Nemasket River. I represented WLT in that endeavor, which involved the Town assigning the right of first refusal to purchase part of the farm, a critical legal maneuver that caused the original buyer/developer to terminate its P&S with the seller. Together we managed to negotiate the Chapter 61A process, secure funding from various sources (APR, MVP, CPA, private foundation, etc.), and somehow keep the deal from going awry. It closed last summer and a new farmer now owns it. The aim of this workshop would be to share lessons learned from this case study in the hope it may help other MLTC member organizations be better prepared to deal with Chapter land opportunities for preservation.

❖ **Programming & Partnership: Serving Under-Represented Communities** General

*Emily Biggs, Anissa Nieve*

Does your land trust want to hold nature-based youth programming but are not sure where to start? This workshop will share strategies for engaging youth at different age groups and will highlight the importance of partnerships with social service organizations. Presenters will include a TerraCorps Youth Education Coordinator serving at Kestrel Land Trust and the Assistant Director of Youth Programs at Girls Inc. Come hear about ways to collaborate with youth-serving organizations and serve marginalized youth communities. Following the presentation will be a Q&A moderated by the Kestrel Land Trust Community Engagement Manager. This workshop is open to all; you do not need to be education staff to understand or benefit from the topics.

❖ **Your Invasive Plant Management Questions Answered: Strategies and Tactics for LTs of All Sizes** Intermediate

*Tom Lautzenheiser, John Sangermano, Jane Maloney*

Invasive plant populations frequently jeopardize the ecological values conservation lands are intended to protect. This panel convenes representatives from all-volunteer, regional, and statewide land trusts to share philosophies, concepts, strategies, and techniques for engaging with this challenge. Bring your invasive management questions, as there will be plenty of time allotted for Q&A.

❖ **Natural Climate Solutions in Massachusetts: How Landowners Are Using Wetlands, Farms, and Forests to Fight Climate Change** General

*Laura Marx, Sebastian Gutwein, Sara Grady*

Nature-based solutions involve using nature to solve a problem. How are land trusts and landowners working with nature in Massachusetts to solve the biggest challenge our planet faces – climate change? In this workshop, with something for the beginner and expert practitioner alike, we'll discuss why natural climate solutions are a critical part of fighting climate change. You'll learn how much they can do but also why we can't tree-plant our way out of the climate crisis, what types of actions have the biggest potential impact in Massachusetts and what funding sources support natural climate solutions, and hear case studies from coastal wetlands, farmlands, and forests.

❖ **Centering Reciprocity: Land Trust & Indigenous Community Relationships (Part 1)** General

*Pam Ellis, Kimberly Toney, Andre Strongbearheart Gaines, Jr., and Jennifer Albertine*

**Note:** This two-part workshop encompasses two conference sessions. *Participants are encouraged to attend both.*

For the past several years, three Nipmuc community members have collaborated with Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in central Massachusetts to inform and indigenize land stewardship strategies in the spirit of place-based healing and cultural revitalization. This workshop will highlight the challenges, successes and outcomes of this kind of collaborative work and strategies for moving in solidarity with individual Tribal members, Tribes and Tribal or Indigenous nonprofits. Participants will learn about Nipmuc history, Aboriginal rights and their centrality to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, and best practices for supporting Native community partnerships, including several case studies.

❖ **Alternatives to Conservation Restrictions** Advanced

*Elizabeth Wroblecka, Mark Robinson*

Fee land acquisitions funded through the Community Preservation Act, Land Bank, or various state grant programs generally require a Conservation Restriction (CR) as an overlay on land ownership by a land trust, so called "double-layering of protection". For projects where a CR is not required, not necessary, or not possible, other legal mechanisms offer a degree of protection that both the landowner and your land trust may find acceptable, and that can be implemented without the lengthy state CR review process. Presenters will share examples of CR alternatives to increase the pace of land conservation to meet climate resilience goals. Topics addressed, with their potential benefits and limitations, will include deed restrictions, charitable trusts, private Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, life estates, and the land trust holding fee land interest in accordance with their charitable purpose.

[<to top>](#)

**11:05 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.      8 Concurrent Workshops**

❖ **Centering Reciprocity: Land Trust & Indigenous Community Relationships (Part 2)**

General

*Pam Ellis, Kimberly Toney, Andre Strongbearheart Gaines, Jr., and Jennifer Albertine*

**Note:** This two-part workshop encompasses two conference sessions. *Participants are encouraged to attend both.*

For the past several years, three Nipmuc community members have collaborated with Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in central Massachusetts to inform and indigenize land stewardship strategies in the spirit of place-based healing and cultural revitalization. This workshop will highlight the challenges, successes and outcomes of this kind of collaborative work and strategies for moving in solidarity with individual Tribal members, Tribes and Tribal or Indigenous nonprofits. Participants will learn about Nipmuc history, Aboriginal rights and their centrality to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, and best practices for supporting Native community partnerships, including several case studies.

❖ **DCS Open Space and Recreation Grant Programs: An Overview** General

*Vanessa Farny, Melissa Cryan*

Workshop will provide a brief overview of DCS grant programs focused on land protection and/or recreation [Drinking Water Supply Protection, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities, Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity, Conservation Partnership, Landscape Partnership, Assistance for Small Communities].

❖ **Chittick Elementary's Community Schoolyard: An Example of How GIS and Urban Climate Solutions Support EJ Communities** General

*Jodi Valenta, Margaret Owens, Taj Schottland*

This session will highlight how Trust for Public Land (TPL), Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD), and the Barr Foundation are working to create greener, more resilient, and equitable communities in the Boston region. Many EJ neighborhoods in Boston lack access to high-quality parks and open space and are disproportionately impacted by the effects of climate change. This workshop will shed light on how GIS mapping tools were used to guide

land acquisition that transferred property from one public agency to another to increase climate resiliency and provide access to the outdoors. Presenters will highlight a variety of decision support tools and funding opportunities that practitioners can use to advance their own strategic climate and equity-focused land conservation efforts. The recently opened Chittick Elementary Community Schoolyard will be utilized as an example.

❖ **Follow the Forest: Using Community Science to Inform Conservation Action** General

*Isabel Bronson, Julia Rogers*

Follow the Forest ([followtheforest.org](http://followtheforest.org)) is a shared vision that integrates predictive modeling with local knowledge inspiring conservation action and philanthropy. Our northeast regional approach to enhancing climate resilience is readily practical, strategic, scalable, and actionable in protecting the places we love. Our work supports and advances that of local conservation organizations and regional conservation partnerships such as the Staying Connected Initiative, Berkshire-Taconic Regional Conservation Partnership, and Northern Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership. In this session, we will discuss the Follow the Initiative's impact, focusing on our community science tool that galvanizes local support and drives conservation action.

❖ **Troubleshooting Land Negotiations** Intermediate

*Rob Warren, David Santomenna*

Bring your negotiation challenges for collective troubleshooting! The presenters will provide an overview of negotiation basics, common deal obstacles, and a framework for responding. Most of the session however will be time for participants to get input from the presenters and other participants on your difficult negotiations. Distrustful landowner? Dueling appraisals? Feuding family members? We will discuss whatever challenges you are facing.

❖ **Riparian Restoration in High-Priority Sites Across the Commonwealth** General

*Naomi Valentine, Hilary Domino, Lori Johnson*

SWCA and the EEA are working together to identify high-priority sites for riparian restoration across the Commonwealth. The project team is identifying sites by evaluating where under-vegetated riparian zones overlap with key high-priority ecological and social criteria. The project includes GIS analyses, property owner outreach, on-site evaluation, planning and permitting, the creation and implementation of restoration plans, and operations and maintenance planning and support. The goal is to increase resilience to climate change through the improvement of the quality, form, and function of our riverine and riparian habitats across both rural and urban landscapes. All restoration is being implemented through nature-based solutions and encourages conservation. We will further discuss our methodology, goals, funding sources, and the level of support available to any interested parties (small or large) with viable project sites.

❖ **Gatherings to Galas: Raise Awareness, Friends and Money with Events** General

*Jenny Hansell*

What kind of fundraising event is best for your Land Trust? From "friend-raising" cocktail parties to lavish galas, each kind of event has its place and purpose. Learn how to evaluate your goals and needs, understand your capacity (and the opportunity cost) for planning an event, set the right goals, and make sure that the work you and your team puts into planning the event is worth the results. You'll leave the workshop with a draft of an event plan that includes logistics, a budget, a program, and the beginnings of your planning team.

❖ **Landscape Software Users Roundtable** anyone with Landscape experience

*Nancy Cowan, Tom Dodd, Olivia Lukacic, Michael Madole*

Many land trusts in Massachusetts have started using Landscape software to manage and monitor holdings as well as track potential acquisition projects. In this session, participants will describe how they are using Landscape and problem solve issues with the group. Those not currently using Landscape are welcome to sit in and listen.

**12:20 – 2:10 p.m.** **Lunch / Exhibits / Plenary /  
Award Presentation / Networking**

Rooms have been reserved for lunchtime **networking around the following interests:**

*Development staff (Room 168) | Small-Staffed Land Trusts (Room 174) | All Volunteer Land Trusts (Room 165) | Stewardship (Room 163) | Early Conservation Career Network (Room 162) | Land Protection (TBD)*

**2:25 – 3:40 p.m.** **7 Concurrent Workshops**

❖ **Designing and Operating Accessible Nature Trails** General

*Lucille (Lucy) Gertz, Liz Stetson, Stephen Hutchinson*

Mass Audubon has been designing and operating award-winning, nationally-recognized All Persons Trails (APTs) since 2007. We currently operate 18 APTs, with a goal of reaching 25 within the next two years. Our statewide team develops fund-raising materials, works with trail designers and contractors, goes through the permitting requirements, oversees construction, designs and installs signage, multi-use seating, and navigational supports, and creates a self-guided interpretive tour in multiple formats with input from expert-users. There is ongoing maintenance needed to keep APTs in good condition. Our team will share what we have learned in planning, operating, and maintaining APTs at our various locations that include sites with staffed nature centers and sites without any buildings or staff.

❖ **Farmland Protection: Tools, Funding Sources, and Success Stories** General

*Kathleen Doherty, John Chester, Nick Pitel*

Massachusetts is losing farmland faster than we can save it, but your land trust can be part of the solution. This workshop will showcase tools and programs available for farmland protection and will highlight success stories from two regional land trusts. Come to learn, stay to feel inspired! Topics will include: unique considerations and best practices for farmland protection; ins and outs of funding programs; innovative tools for farmland protection; and case studies from Buzzards Bay Coalition and Berkshire Natural Resources Council. This presentation will feature a special focus on Private APR, a powerful yet underutilized tool that allows more flexibility than a "traditional" APR or CR. Take-home resources will be provided, and after the workshop, your land trust can sign up to receive individual assistance with your thorniest farmland protection questions.

❖ **Litigation Toolbox: Lessons Learned from Sudbury Valley Trustees v. Iron Horse Equestrian** General

*Michael Campinell, Kristin O'Brien, Lauren Karam*

In 2024 through *Sudbury Valley Trustees v. Iron Horse Equestrian, et al.*, the Massachusetts Land Court handed down a significant win for conservation restriction interpretation and enforcement, requiring the complete removal of an impermissible structure and the restoration of damaged resource areas and wetlands protected by the conservation restriction. In light of this decision, this presentation will discuss the history of the case, lessons learned, and how it will influence future conservation restriction litigation. We'll also provide an overview of how to assess the strength of your case and prepare for potential litigation, and what to expect. You'll walk away with a basic litigation lessons toolbox that can help your organization enforce your conservation restriction and continue to protect Massachusetts' natural resources and open land.

❖ **Community Stewardship: Building Capacity Through F(r)ee for Service Programs** Intermediate

*Janet Milkman, Karen Grey*

As more open space is protected, it is important to implement proper care for these lands and, when appropriate, establish access for safe public use and enjoyment. However, many small land trusts and towns lack the capacity to steward their conservation lands, often resulting in situations where communities never fully benefit from investments made in open space protection. This workshop provides two examples of land trusts, one larger, one small, that have grown their capacity to provide land stewardship services to peer organizations, including towns, state agencies and conservation organizations. Wildlands Trust will share their experience building capacity to serve towns and other land holding organizations throughout the southeast region of the State. Barnstable Land Trust will discuss its new fee-for-service and "free for service" programs, based on the Wildlands model. Benefits include: building stewardship capacity efficiently for the regional conservation community, building relationships with new partners, staff expansion and retention, among others.

❖ **DEIAB: How to Get Started, How to Plan for It, What's Worked, What Hasn't** General

*Jenny Hansell, Emma Ellsworth*

Land Trusts across Massachusetts and the country have been grappling with how to address Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access and Belonging since the summer of 2020, many for much longer than that. DEI (or DEIAB) can mean many things: many of us have tried some or all of these: educating ourselves about bias and systemic racism; developing programming aimed at diverse communities; translating materials in Spanish or other languages; recruiting more diverse staff and board members; changing internal policies and practices, and a host of other strategies around shifting organizational culture. Hear from two land trusts who have immersed themselves in DEI at every level - where they started, what they tried, what's worked and not worked, where they are now, and what they have planned going forward.

❖ **Cooper Hill Conservation Project: Achieving Landscape Scale Conservation through Alliance Building and Shared Resources** General

*Marianne Iarossi, Kathy Orlando, Jay Rosa*

The Cooper Hill Conservation Project will protect over 1,000 acres in the Towns of Sheffield, MA and Salisbury, CT. Pulling partners together from eight conservation organizations in MA

and CT, the Cooper Hill Conservation Alliance quickly formed to work with the farmers who farmed a large portion of this land for over two decades. The trust and collaboration between all the partners makes this complex project possible. From private and public Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, to fee acquisitions and Conservation Restrictions - this project involves multiple conservation tools. Come hear from three of the partners (the MA Department of Agricultural Resources, Sheffield Land Trust, and The Trustees) about how partnerships and varied funding resources enabled the project to come together, and learn of the most recent closings.

❖ **Habit to Habitat: Transforming Landscapes to Resilient Ecosystems, from Conception to Maintenance** **General**

*Evan Abramson, Jason Steiding*

Landscape Designer and Planner Evan Abramson, Principal of Landscape Interactions, will present a series of case studies from project sites across Massachusetts, guiding audience members step by step through the process of transforming sites into biodiverse habitat to support threatened pollinator species. Jason Steiding will discuss the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe's collaboration with Landscape Interactions on their green infrastructure project Biodiversity in the First Light, where a series of mugwort-infested stormwater basins were converted into habitat for at-risk native pollinators in Cape Cod, featuring plants of cultural significance to the Tribe.

[<to top>](#)