



Steering Committee Minutes
Friday December 10, 2021 10:00 AM – 12:15 PM
via Zoom

Participants: On record at Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (MLTC)

Hand-outs:

- Agenda (emailed)
- Minutes of September 17, 2021 Steering Committee Meeting (On MLTC's member's website)
- Robb Johnson, Exec. Dir.: Staff Report (Attachment A as PDF)
- Jen Plowden: LTA Update (Attachment B as PDF)
- Ashley Davies: Mass Farmland (Attachment C as PDF)
- MLTC Policy Update (Robb Johnson emailed)

1. **Call to Order:** At 10:01 AM Katherine "Kathy" Orlando, Steering Committee Chair, called the meeting to order, and reviewed the meeting's zoom procedural process.
 - a. Kathy welcomed everyone and each participant provided their name, title, organization, and location.
 - b. Buzz Constable moved and Rita Grossman seconded the motion to accept the SC Minutes of September 17, 2021 available to members at <http://massland.org/steering-committee>). Hearing no discussion Kathy called the vote. **VOTE:** Unanimous.
 - c. Next meetings: Fridays March 11, 2022 (virtual) is the MLTC Annual Meeting and election for the board of directors; and June 10th, 2022 (location TBD)
2. **Call for nominees for MLTC Board of Trustees.** Kathy asked that anyone who has recommendations for the board of directors, please send the name and recommendation to Kathy Orlando.
3. **Staff Reports - Robb Johnson, Executive Director (See Attachment A / PDF)**
 - a. Program updates
 - i. Robb reiterated the request for board nominations to Kathy Orlando.
 - ii. Stronger Together Learning Collaboratives including:
 1. Leadership Succession Planning. MLTC will discount the LTA registration fee. See MLTC's E-News next week.
 2. Boot Camp for Land Trust Board Members. See eNews next week.
 3. Trail Safety networking call being planned after recent incident at Middlesex Fells Reservation. See eNews next week.
 - iii. Land Trust/State Agency Retreat. A successful, hybrid event enjoyed by all.
 - iv. Mass Land Conservation Conference (MLCC) from Thursday March 24th ending on Saturday March 26th. Combination of zoom presentations and live field outings. Registration coming in January. To provide MLCC suggestions, inquiries or ideas on a workshop (very late to add a workshop) contact Robb immediately as planning will be completed very soon. Robb thanked all the MLCC sponsors and there is still time to be a sponsor. Top-level sponsors will have a MLCC webinar option via zoom to replace live booth option.
 - b. Strategic Planning. MLTC is currently working on its five year strategic plan and Robb summarized each component of the process which is being driven by the Strategic Planning Committee and will involve the Board and Steering Committee. If you were not able to participate in one of the focus groups or surveys, please contact Robb ASAP to provide your input.
4. **Land Trust Alliance (LTA) updates - Jen Plowden, New England Program Manager (Attachment B)**
 - a. A virtual series on Succession Planning will be on Jan. 26–Feb. 9. As noted, MLTC will be promoting this collaborative session. See MLTC's E-News.

- b. LTA is forming a virtual peer group network for new executive directors in the eastern U.S. Contact Jen if interested.
- c. Thirty new webinars are being planned for next year. See Attachment for details.
- d. New aid for conservation easements drafting and stewardship on easements should be available in January.
- e. Jen gave a Conservation Defense trends update noting:
 - i. With increased use of open space during the pandemic, public trail access and abutter disputes have increased.
 - ii. Land division disputes also are increasing as more urbanites are moving to more rural areas. As we start to see the first of the natural disaster migration out of cities, trusts may need to increase their stewardship work accordingly. See Attachment for more details.
- f. Jen also noted the effort to quantify land trust's conservation successes via its latest Census (results of which were released this week) and asked that land trusts who have listing on LTA's website should review their data on the membership page on LTA's website <https://www.findalandtrust.org>. Jen encouraged all LTs to check their website links and provide any updates to LTA. She also shared the LTA's job board: <https://www.landtrustalliance.org/list/land-trust-job-board>
- g. Robb said that he will be meeting with LTA staff on Dec. 13th to discuss opportunities to improve the consistency between LTA's and MLTC's reporting of data about Massachusetts land trusts.

5. State Agency Updates –Kurt Gaertner, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Policy (EEA)

- a. *Staffing updates.*
 - i. Kurt welcomed Vanessa Farny Forest & Land Program Manager of DCS
 - ii. Candidates for Bob O'Connor's position are being processed.
 - iii. Dept. of Fish and Game: Looking for an Ecological Restoration Grants Manager and a conveyance attorney to replace Dane Crook who will be retiring.
 - iv. Dept. of Conservation Resources (DCR): Jim Comeau recently retired and his land agent position will need to be filled. Jim French, the Division of Water Supply Protection's Watershed Preservation Restriction Program's Land Acquisition Coordinator retired and his position will need to be filled
 - v. DCS CR reviewer position most recently occupied by John Gioia. This position has been posted and goal to fill as soon as possible.
- b. *Year-end CR review process.* Kurt acknowledged that this is a busy time for CR reviews and he noted that John Gioia worked diligently to assure everything was up to date before his departure. Kurt said that they are working diligently to ensure all CRs needed to be completed by year's end are done. Kurt also thanked Tom Anderson for assisting in the process and assured that CRs are the current priority.
- c. *Grants.* (Barbara Chrenko noted that grants are also posted in MLTC E-News with links.)
 - i. Working how to develop policies and procedures for ARPA bill implementation. Noted that land protection will be included as a consideration for resiliency protection, clean energy and climate plans.
 - ii. Melissa Cryan, Grant Programs Supervisor, Division of Conservation Services provided this update.
 - 1. The Land and Water Grant has been posted and workshops are done. Application deadline is Monday, January 24th at 3:00 pm.
 - 2. Drinking Water Grant and Conservation Partnership Grants should be posted very soon.
 - 3. Looking for input on local recreation needs.
- d. *MDAR update.* Ashley Davies, APR Acquisition Planner - Eastern, MA and Conservation & Technical Assistance provided this update.
 - i. The APR spending cap increase was approved at the November meeting of the Agricultural Lands Preservation Committee (ALPC).

1. Previous per acre cap: \$10,000/acre; Previous over cap allowance (for extraordinary resources): up to \$20,000/acre
 2. New per acre cap: \$17,000/acre; New over cap allowance (for extraordinary resources): up to \$34,000/acre
- ii. Statewide Farmland Action Plan. This project is progressing. A group of Subject Matter Experts has been assembled, including two land trust representatives, and the expert group will have their first meeting on December 20th.
 - iii. A summary sheet of the Farmland Action Plan project is attached. (See Attachment C)
- e. The Special Commission to study the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) was summarized by Buzz Constable who served on the committee. Their report documents the need for additional DCR revenue and emphasizes the importance of partnerships and collaborations. Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper should be posting DCR's response soon.
 - f. Barbara Chrenko reminded all that MLTC has a job board: <https://massland.org/resources/conservation-job-board>
 - g. Kristin Sykes requested volunteers who represent diverse communities for trails and open space recommendations.
 - h. Kathy encouraged everyone to check the chat for links.
6. **Featured Discussion: BioMap 3 – Eve Schluter, PhD, (Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program/NHESP), Andy Finton (The Nature Conservancy/TNC) and James DeNormandie (Under Department of Fish and Wildlife/DFW contract from LandVest).** Progress update on BioMap3, a ten year update of BioMap 2.
- a. Eve Schluter provided a preview of BioMap3 work done in collaboration with TNC with anticipated completion this summer.
 - i. Goal: build on legacy of BioMap2 to plan and conserve on the landscape scale to achieve resiliency with climate change while capturing regional and local data by state and *municipality*.
 - ii. Improvements to aquatic core components mapping that will include undeveloped areas and dams.
 - iii. Habitat Management and Restoration with a focus on active management to be included. Staff currently developing a resource clearinghouse for tools on nature based solutions.
 - b. Andy Finton summarized:
 - i. The options for climate resiliency by microclimate diversity, connectivity and geophysical settings with the goal of identifying land on the landscape level that provides resilient options for plants and animals to migrate and adapt while recognizing that data and process has to incorporate municipal governance as that's where most decisions are made.
 - c. Q & A
 - i. How were the local priorities selected and was there a process to vet selections? Eve summarized the process including species, resiliency and aquatic level work done to date noting that not all local communities had the resources to provide data. Andy noted that much of the data was locally collected combined with the BioMap data base sources and modeling. Ground-truthing also done with aerial photographing. James shared images of mapping method for going from regional to local level. Data was rescaled from statewide to local level to identify most important areas of intact habitats. Requested everyone's input on providing feedback on the local landscapes. Will not be able to incorporate everything but focus on the most important land and vernal pools locally. Concern expressed about providing a layer to obscure endangered/threatened species information to prevent disturbance and this will be done.
 - ii. With regard to Environmental Justice (EJ) communities does BioMap3 look at impervious surfaces, tree cover and open space? Not all of this can be incorporated, but there will be great improvements in understanding the environmentally valuable areas in EJ communities.
 - iii. Will BioMap 3 capture how much of BioMap2 was conserved or developed? This data will be captured for conservation, but not necessarily for development.

- iv. Robb asked if today's slides could be shared with attendees and others who couldn't make it? Eve responded that the slides wouldn't be shared at this time due to their preliminary nature.
- v. Daniel Leahy asked if the anticipated roll out will be this summer for communities who are doing their OSRP updates and when will it be available to MAPPR. Anticipate end of FY year which is June 30th for data roll out. NHESP fully appreciates the local time deadlines needing to be accommodated.

7. Policy Update & MLTC Policy Committee Update – Linda Orel (The Trustees), Kristen Sykes (AMC) (Update Emailed)

- a. Linda and Kristen reviewed the Policy Update and indicated that more funding will become available through federal legislation and to start thinking about this now. In regards to State policy updates:
 - i. ARPA funds:
 - 1. Must be spent by 2026. The state legislature appropriated \$4 billion (including a portion of federal ARPA funds plus a significant balance in the rainy day fund) -- pending Governor Baker's signature on 12/13. Linda thanked everyone who played a role in legislative successes, including funds allocated to the following green priorities:
 - 2. The \$25M for tree planting was 5M over requested, a resilience success, as trees can help with net zero by 2025.
 - 3. For land conservation and park creation, \$100M was requested but only \$15M was funded. Language includes authorization to increase the maximum award (at EEA's discretion) on Conservation Partnership Grants (which Land Trusts are eligible for) from \$85,000 to \$400,000.
 - 4. Regarding the \$7.5M for community college "green" job training, there was language to prioritize EJ communities but not sure how this will be implemented.
 - ii. S.1986/H.2960, *An Act increasing the conservation land tax credit* (Sens. Tarr and Hinds; Reps. Jones and Pignatelli) Hearing next week and everyone encouraged to reach out with written testimony ASAP See Action Email from Emily Myron for more information. Linda emphasized expressing gratitude in addition to actions and support needed to legislators and to include the name and number of the CLTC bill as noted in the Policy Update. Options to sign letters of support through MLTC, TNC and as individuals. See Action Email from Emily.
 - iii. S.556/H.937, *An Act providing for the public health by establishing an ecologically based mosquito management program in the Commonwealth* (Sen. Hinds; Rep. Gouveia). There's a hearing next week and this would require a state wide approach. TNC is writing in support of legislation. Contact Linda if interested in supporting.
- b. Kristin summarized the Federal legislative updates noting the \$1.2 billion infrastructure bill signed into law and the next version of the Farm Bill. Many opportunities to become engaged in these initiatives, including joining an LTA working group on the Farm Bill.
- c. Bernie noted in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act there is money available to work on culvert restoration. It's a competitive grants program and will be done on equity basis with focus on the state's 350 wildlife crossings. See TNC website for information. Emily will share a document with Robb providing a comprehensive overview of green spending items included in the infrastructure bill.
- d. CJ Lammers indicated that the Conway School of Landscape Design is willing to assist.

8. Committee and Working Group Updates

- a. *Valuing Nature's Services (Christa Collins, Sudbury Valley Trustees)*: Christa working to finalize an RFP and will go with Jessica Sargent (Primose Research, LLC). Working Group is meeting next Friday and a Highstead representative will be joining the meeting. Buzz thanked all.
- b. *Amicus Committee (Buzz)*: No update.
- c. *Young Land Professionals (YLP)*: Stephen O'Grady (Orleans Conservation Trust). Stephen could not attend. For updates see: <https://massland.org/programs/young-land-professionals>

d. *Agriculture Committee*: Kathy Orlando (Sheffield Land Trust). No additional updates to those already provided by Ashley Davies.

9. **Announcements:** Rita Grossman who is also a member of the Association of Massachusetts Bird Clubs announced their interest in exploring options for leveraging the birding community in conservation efforts for habitat, specifically birding habitat based on the experience of Wildlands Trust working with their local birding community. Please reach out to Rita if interested in learning more or if you have any related experiences or suggestions. Email posted in chat.

12:15 Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Gibes Grossman, clerk