

2020 Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference Workshop Descriptions

Session 1 (8:45 - 10:10 am)

1A. Implementing Natural Solutions to Climate Change

Moderator: Jennifer Shakun, New England Forestry Foundation

Panelists: Lisa Hayden, New England Forestry Foundation / Julie Richburg, The Trustees / Tom Lautzenheiser, Mass Audubon

This workshop will offer an overview of the ways land trusts can integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation across their work from land management and restoration to outreach. A panel will present examples of actions from three organizations, the Trustees of Reservations, New England Forestry Foundation and Mass Audubon. The panelists will share experiences, best practices, and tools for overcoming common obstacles in taking up the climate challenge. We will focus on the unique role the land conservation community can play in addressing climate change through tangible carbon reduction and adaptation strategies and as a trusted voice on environmental issues. Participants will be encouraged to think about what climate actions and solutions may work for them and to consider where there are opportunities to build on their strengths as an organization.

1B. Communicating the Climate Adaptation Work of Land Trusts

Erik Eckl, Words That Work / Melissa Ocana, UMass Extension

Land conservation is an essential climate adaptation strategy that is often overlooked in climate planning and action. But, many land trusts are already actively engaged in climate change actions. To advance this work, the conservation community can build our capacity to communicate the role of land trusts in responding to climate change. In this two-part workshop, we will share the results of collaborations with the Land Trust Alliance and the Open Space Institute on how land trusts can best integrate climate change into their outreach. We aim to 1) provide recommendations for land trusts to incorporate climate communication into their work and 2) inspire land trusts by illustrating the breadth of adaptation work being undertaken and communicated through real examples from peers.

1C. Fee Stewardship Roundtable

Moderator: Evan Marshall, Mass Audubon

Panelists: Brian Colleran, Ecological Land Management / David Rimmer, Essex County Greenbelt Association

This workshop identifies methods and best practices for fee stewardship monitoring, implementation of technology that is accessible for any size organization, and how to prepare for and deal with encroachments. We will address how to monitor and inventory land on a regular basis so that any new encroachment or issue is rapidly identified and resolved, how to make an organization more flexible and efficient through simple technological steps, and how to work towards resolving an encroachment without it turning into an expensive and time consuming project. There will be a significant Q/A or discussion portion during this roundtable.

1D. White Tailed Deer and the Future of Our Forests

Jeff Collins, Mass Audubon / David Stainbrook, MassWildlife / Laura Mattei, Sudbury Valley Trustees

White-tailed deer populations are above or approaching ecological carrying capacity throughout large parts of Massachusetts. Their intensive and selective browsing pressure can dramatically alter forest understory habitat, threaten rare plants, favor the spread of invasive plants, and lead to cascading negative impacts throughout the entire ecosystem. Perhaps of greatest concern, they suppress the growth of saplings that would become the next generation of our forests. David will provide some background on how deer populations are managed and the factors that lead to high deer densities. David will also cover methods used to assess the level of impacts on the habitat by deer and estimate deer density. Jeff will share background on Mass Audubon's efforts to estimate deer density, assess browse damage, and work with hunters to manage white-tailed deer on several of Mass Audubon's properties. Laura will discuss the same efforts being conducted on properties owned and/or managed by the Sudbury Valley Trustees.

1E. Resilient Lands: Nature's Value in a Changing Climate

Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon / Bob O'Connor, MA EEA / Bob Wilber, Mass Audubon

Land conservation plays an important role in climate mitigation and resilience for people and nature. This workshop will present the latest status and trends in land use, from Mass Audubon's 6th edition Losing Ground report, along with an overview of the Resilient Lands Initiative to develop and implement a new Statewide Land Conservation Plan. This process involves a diversity of stakeholders for eight key "land values" including habitat, forest and farms, urban open space and public health, outdoor recreation, water supply and watersheds, economic stability and protection from climate impacts. Conserved land reduces impacts such as heat islands, flooding and water supply threats while connecting habitats, helping farmland be more resilient and diverse, and improving forest resilience. Information on ecosystem services will be provided, and we will gather input and ideas from the workshop participants for the Resilient Lands Initiative.

1F. Prioritizing Your Landscape Through the Prism of Climate Resilience

Abby Hardy-Moss, Essex Greenbelt Association / David Heacock, Essex County Greenbelt Association

In 2019, Greenbelt completed a prioritization that evaluated every parcel five acres or larger in Essex County on its conservation value. We completed six different analyses, which looked at agriculture, habitat, drinking water, flood prevention, natural resilience, and urban cooling value. The last three of these analysis modules were completed specifically to integrate climate change into our conservation planning. In this session, we will outline the data and methods we used and will discuss the results. We'll also cover funding, implementation of the results, and how we are leveraging the work to expand our partnerships and outreach. Attendees will receive documentation detailing the methods and background for each analysis module and will preview interactive tools we've created to visualize the work.

1G. Tips on Drafting Conservation Restrictions in MA: From IRS to EEA

John Gioia, MA EEA / Stephen J Small, Law Office of Stephen J. Small, Esq., P.C.

In this workshop, the presenters will go over the latest version of the EEA Model Conservation Restriction. John Gioia, Conservation Restriction Reviewer for EEA, will pay particular attention to some of the most important current issues and problem areas EEA sees in CR drafts that come to EEA. He will also discuss some possible changes to the EEA Model CR that are in the works, and will offer common-sense advice on how to make the EEA review process as smooth as possible. Stephen Small will offer thoughts from the perspective of the IRS. He will comment on some of the MA provisions in light of IRS requirements and highlight some of the provisions in conservation restrictions that have recently given the IRS and the courts some heartburn (including the now wide-ranging "proceeds" clause rules.) Mr. Small will also address amendment provisions in CRs, and will discuss a short list of other "current development" matters.

1H. Building a Major Donor Program

Mary Lynn Sabourin, CFRE, Franklin Land Trust

If you would like to build a major donor program but don't know where to begin, then this Beginner workshop is for you. Using your current donor list, learn the basic steps for connecting your organization to individuals with the capacity to make a significant gift. This workshop will show you how even small nonprofits can accomplish major gift fundraising.

1i. Record Keeping for Conservation Success

Kevin Case, Land Trust Alliance / Leslie Reed-Evans, Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation / David McGowan, Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation / Robb Johnson, Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition

Record keeping isn't the sexiest work in conservation, but it's absolutely necessary for lasting protection of our natural lands. This workshop, geared to small and all-volunteer land trusts, will offer guidance on proper record keeping. In 2019, MassLand and the Land Trust Alliance began working with six MA land trusts on a record keeping initiative. In addition to having existing records organized and digitized, land trust staff and board received hands-on training on implementing good record management practices moving forward. In this workshop, land trust staff who went through the process will share their experiences and lessons learned. The consultant who worked with these land trusts will share her expertise and advice for small land trusts beginning to improve their record keeping, and staff from the Alliance will offer perspective on why this work is critical to protecting land in perpetuity and to creating strong, resilient land trusts.

1J. New Models For Community Engagement Through Outdoor Programs

Mackenzie Greer, Berkshire Natural Areas Network and Roots Rising / Mariah Auman, Berkshire Natural Areas Network

In 2018, Berkshire Natural Resources Council launched a free "nature backpack" lending program through local libraries as a means to reduce barriers to getting outside. This program seeded a brand-new initiative to connect the members of our community recovering from or affected by all types of addiction by offering accessible and healthy activity options outdoors. Based in central Berkshire County, Roots Rising's mission is to empower youth and build community through food and farming, specifically through its farm and market crews. Their vision to lift up teens as community change-makers and strengthen the local food system, is accomplished, in part through service and connection to local farms and farmland. Both Berkshire County based programs seek to better connect people to the land who need it most. This session will address identification of barriers, program development, and lessons learned.

1K. Increasing Community Support for Conservation

Jill Dixon, Sasaki Associates, Inc / Alex Chuman, Aquidneck Land Trust

Looking for ways to increase community engagement and donor support for conservation in your community? This session will cover strategies for increasing community interest in conservation, ranging from outreach programs and partnerships to a deep-dive on the benefits of completing a development impact study. Topics covered will include: techniques for quantifying impacts of development and connecting it to community concerns like clean water, climate change/sea level rise, agriculture, and viewsheds; visualizing development impacts; and how to connect land use policy/planning to conservation goals and increase community support for Smart Growth development patterns. The session will draw from the experience of the Aquidneck Land Trust and their efforts to make conservation a community priority on Aquidneck Island, with a focus on sharing lessons learned from a recently completed development impact study which explored two potential futures for the island: Trends Continue vs. Plan and Protect.

1L. Addressing Climate Change with Agriculture in Your Open Space

Guy Steucek, Farmer & Journalist / Joyce Meader, The Livestock Institute

Farming can be an excellent way to manage open space, but can also lead to environmental degradation. This presentation will address how a land trust can work with farmers to maintain a property, generate income, produce wholesome products, observe governmental statutes, and abate climate change. A variety of agricultural options are open for land trusts, each with costs and benefits with regard to climate change.

Vegetable cultivation can meet human nutrition needs and abate climate change through carbon sequestration. Grasslands make a significant contribution to food security through providing part of the feed requirements of ruminants used for meat and milk production. Grasslands are considered to have the potential to play a key role in greenhouse gas mitigation, particularly in terms of global carbon storage and further carbon sequestration. Grazing land management and pasture improvement can contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions and enhanced sinks in grazing lands.

The presenters will also discuss how agricultural objectives can be written into leases and conservation restrictions.

Session 2 (12:45 - 2:10 pm)

2A. Land Trusts and the Massachusetts Vulnerability Preparedness Program

Christa Collins, Sudbury Valley Trustees / Sara Burns, The Nature Conservancy / Hillary King, MA EEA MVP Program / Jessica Dietrich, The Nature Conservancy

The state is encouraging municipalities to include nature-based solutions in their Municipal Vulnerability Plans. This includes land protection, so what does that mean for land trusts? We'll provide an overview of the MVP process, discuss nature based solutions – including a review of new planning maps to visualize natural hazards and nature based solutions opportunities, and suggest how land trusts can work with their municipal partners to plan and implement green solutions to climate change.

2B. Responding To Coastal Change

Moderator: Tom O'Shea, The Trustees; Panelists: Greg Berman, Woods Hole Sea Grant & Cape Cod Cooperative Extension; Other Panelists TBA

The goal of this round table session is to generate a conversation among participants about community actions to respond to coastal change. Questions will be solicited through the registration process and can be put forward in the session. Topics are likely to include: types of impacts and vulnerabilities, community actions and adaptations to address and prepare for climate and coastal change.

2C. Fields, Meadows & Grasslands: Oh MY!

Lauren Mattei, Sudbury Valley Trustees / Fredrick (Bud) C. Sechler, Jr., Native Plant Trust / Caleb Garone, The Trustees

This presentation will provide an overview of field management including how to evaluate a site and set goals, mowing and invasive plant management techniques, planting and seeding. All types and sizes of fields, wet meadows and grasslands will be addressed. The workshop will use five case studies to illustrate techniques and challenges followed by ample time for questions and conversation.

2D. Conservation Land Tax Credit Program

Tom Anderson, MA EEA

Participants of this workshop will learn about the process for landowners to receive a Massachusetts Conservation Land Tax Credit. They will also hear about the latest changes and updates to the program.

2E. New England Landscape Futures Explorer: A Planning & Communications Tool

Lucy Lee, Harvard Forest

The New England Landscape Futures (NELF) Explorer is a map-based land-use planning and conservation tool that uses land-use and climate scenarios to visualize and explore the impacts of possible future trajectories. This session will introduce the NELF Explorer and highlight applications relevant for conservationists including: fundraising with donors, assessing development vulnerability, comparing impacts of different development and conservation patterns, and engaging with landowners and decision-makers in conversations about land-use & climate change, forest ecosystem services, and resilience.

2F. Making the Statehouse Work For You

Emily Myron, The Nature Conservancy / Gabby Queenan, Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Visits from constituents to legislators is a crucial strategy for advancing our conservation agenda. This session will empower land trusts to engage in the legislative process. Participants will learn about the life of a bill, the best opportunities to influence the process, and strategies and tactics to influence legislators to achieve public funding and policy goals. Finally, there will be an interactive session in which participants will learn and practice crafting local stories into a compelling message.

2G. Conservation Restriction Enforcement Roundtable

Moderator: Buzz Constable, Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, Panelists: Rob Warren, The Trustees / Richard Hubbard, Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition

Stewardship enforcement issues range from inadvertent to intentional, minor to catastrophic, informally resolved to appellate litigation, with resolutions ranging from compromise to restoration to mitigation to financial damages. A panel of seasoned professionals will provide a brief overview of preparation for and procedures within CR and fee enforcement, including illustrations and the evolving case law. The roundtable format will allow attendees to summarize problems which have been faced, with discussion about alternative resolutions which may be most appropriate and various techniques to achieve them.

2H. Engaging the Next Generation

Tom Mullin, Unity College / Marianne Jorgenson, Academics for Land Protection in New England (ALPINE) / Alivia Acosta, Appalachian Trail Conservancy Stewardship Council

Conservation organizations are led by dedicated, generous and engaged individuals who are often over the age of 40 (and older). The lack of a voice at the table by different generations is notable and serves as a barrier for the long term sustainability of many organizations. Numerous national and regional organizations have initiated "next generation" advisory councils to provide that essential voice at the table. This session will explore some of the more viable programs to date, share some case studies of innovative projects and provide the nuts and bolts of how to go about creating one for your organization.

2i. Building Engagement with Social Media and Email Campaigns

Michael Tobin, Wellesley Conservation Council / Hillary Truslow, Mass Audubon

The Wellesley Conservation Council (45+ acres protected) and Mass Audubon (38,000+ acres protected) have each learned to use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, email software (including free MailChimp), local blogs, newspapers, and postal mail to get the word out, build name recognition, engagement, volunteerism, and ultimately raise more donations. We can't call them "best practices," but we think we've each developed some good practices from both a small and large land trust perspective that we'll share with you. From promoting events to driving engagement to donations and annual memberships, we will walk you through how we're doing it with straight forward real life examples. Is it time for you to improve your social media strategy and drop Excel for a more robust mail list system? We'll leave time for questions and discussion on lessons learned from the audience.

2J. Community Conservation: What's it Take to Be Relevant?

Kevin Case, Land Trust Alliance

Land trusts are one of the best-kept secrets going. To ensure effectiveness and longevity, as well as foster healthy and vibrant communities, they are recognizing they must become more relevant and create deeper relationships in the places where they work. Community conservation seeks to make our land conservation work relevant, inclusive, authentic, and responsive to the needs of our communities. This workshop explores the what and why of community conservation, using real work examples, mini case studies from land trusts doing this work, and offering a set of steps that can help any land trust adopt community conservation as a working philosophy. We'll introduce the Community Conservation Assessment Tool which is being piloted with six land trusts in the Northeast and has been used by land trusts in the West as well. We will have take-away lessons and tools that can start the process for land trusts of any size.

2K. Nature & Mindfulness: Practical Tools for Engagement

Janet Milkman, Barnstable Land Trust / Becky Cushing, Mass Audubon / Micah Mortali, Kripalu School of Mindful Outdoor Leadership

Mass Audubon's Berkshire Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health has developed a series of Nature and Mindfulness programs that explore the intersection of mindfulness practices with an appreciation and understanding of the natural world. This unique approach to outdoor skills through the lens of mindful, meditative observation opens the door to an entirely new way of viewing nature and its inhabitants in any landscape. Join Mass Audubon Berkshire Sanctuaries Director Becky Cushing, Director of the Kripalu School for Mindful Outdoor Leadership, Micah Mortali and Janet Milkman, Executive Director of the Barnstable Land Trust to learn practical tools for integrating mindfulness into education and outreach programs. This program will be held outdoors (except in steady rain), so please wear appropriate clothing.

2L. Forest Carbon: A Natural Solution for Climate Change

Paul Catanzaro, UMASS Amherst

Forests provide a critical natural solution to reduce the effects of climate change. There is a growing debate about the most appropriate strategy to maximize this benefit. This debate is being fueled, in part, by misinformation about forest carbon sequestration and storage and has led to confusion among landowners about the best strategy to achieve their goals. Ultimately, we need landscapes with both active and passive approaches to maintain the many benefits forests provide, including carbon sequestration and storage. The intent of this presentation is to help land trusts and landowners make informed decisions about their land by providing a better understanding of the role carbon plays within forests, the impacts of two land-use options on forest carbon – forest conversion and forest management, and the trade-offs of these decisions. The presentation will also provide specific carbon-informed forest management strategies to help maintain carbon storage if an active approach is taken. The session will also include the opportunity for discussion to ensure participants have the chance to ask their questions and hear the perspectives of other landowners and land trusts.

Session 3 (2:30 - 3:55 pm)

3A. Protecting Salt Marsh Migration and Future Coastline from Development

Tom O'Shea, The Trustees / Rob Warren, The Trustees

This workshop will present an array of natural and nature-based interventions for coastal resilience and the community partnerships that are making these happen.

3B. Solar PV Siting & Land Use: State Incentive Programs and Local Zoning Bylaws

Zara Dowling, New Salem Conservation Commission and Energy Committee / Kristen Sykes, Appalachian Mountain Club and Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition

This presentation will briefly cover solar PV development to date in Massachusetts under the SREC and SMART solar incentive programs, the basic structure of the SMART program, and potential improvements to better protect lands of conservation importance. The presentation will then cover how municipal zoning bylaws can be updated to better interact with state solar regulations, and further municipal conservation goals.

3C. Sustainable Trails: Preserving Our Pathways to Nature

Jonas Bruggeman, TerraCorps and Mass Audubon / Bill Giezentanner, Consultant and Wellesley Conservation Council / Dick O'Brien, Conservation Works, LLC

From rough slough to tough duff. This workshop will cover the basics of sustainable trail design, permitting, building and maintenance. Take a virtual walk with us through Mass Audubon Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary's learning, successes and challenges with its changing trails. Climate change and increasing human use will have a continued impact on our trails and we will need to prepare for it.

3D. Broadening Support for Land Conservation Through Economic Messaging

Jennifer Plowden, The Trust for Public Land / Paige Dolci, Mass Audubon

In this workshop, attendees are introduced to the process of using economics to advance land conservation outcomes. This includes an overview of economic benefits and an interactive discussion to help attendees identify their target audiences, the most effective economic talking points for engaging those groups, and practical tips for using this information to develop allies, foster relationships with nontraditional advocates, and leverage partnerships. We will highlight local examples of research, outreach materials, and media engagement. The session includes an interactive activity that will enable attendees to take the lessons learned back to their communities and persuasively use economic information immediately.

3E. Uniting for the Future of Farmland

Mark Wamsley, Kestrel Land Trust / Jessica Whritenour, The 300 Committee Land Trust / Karen Schwalbe, Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership

It's a verdant time for farmland conservation in Massachusetts! Successful efforts to protect farmland continue to crop up, while several new or improved sources of conservation funding may bear fruit in the near future. This workshop will explore how land trust involvement in municipal outreach, guidance, and project development often plays a critical role in farmland conservation projects, and how new thinking in the APR, ALE, RCPP, and MVP programs may help even more farms become eligible for conservation funding in the face of a changing world.

3F. Attorneys Panel: Contemporary Issues & Solutions

Moderator: Buzz Constable, Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition

Panelists: Irene del Bono, Attorney / Stephen J. Small, Law Office of Stephen J. Small, Esq. P.C.

Leading conservation attorneys (both on the panel and those who customarily attend and contribute) will converse about cases, issues and best legal practices involving land conservation and operations of land trusts and conservation professionals. While IRS attacks on charitable contributions have dominated conservation law since the last conference, there have been several requests for further discussion about real estate law as it affects land protection, including easements, merger, title defects, etc. Depending on legal issues covered by other sessions, we will also include drafting matters, a checklist for closings, discussion of dealing with IRS issues, or other matters which may arise between now and the MLCC such as PILOTS, stormwater fees, etc. Consistent with past success for a largely "roundtable" type discussions involving experts in attendance, there will be ample opportunity for other issues that may be suggested by registrants or audience participants.

3G. Conservation Restriction Drafting: Legal & Stewardship Considerations

Paul Gagnon, Kestrel Land Trust / Deborah Eliason, Eliason Law Office, LLC

This workshop will address both legal and stewardship considerations when drafting conservation restrictions. Conservation restrictions designed from the perspective of land protection specialists and/or attorneys may satisfy a land trust or government's land protection goals and meet legal standards for recorded instruments, but prove to be problematic and expensive for stewardship staff to implement, both short term and into perpetuity. Enforceability—as-written vs. as practical, abutter behavior, public access, and changing dynamics in land use and land economics (some of them secondary to climate change)—all have an influence on the long term stewardship of conservation restrictions. The goal of this workshop will be to reduce stewardship overhead, fatigue, legal expenses, and negative public optics by encouraging better conservation restriction drafting and review practices. Examples will be provided and discussed. This workshop will also provide non-lawyers with the basics of drafting a legal document. Many times, land trust or municipal staff will draft an offer to purchase, a purchase and sale agreement or the first draft of a CR. If the document is reviewed by a lawyer, a lot of time is spent correcting the form of the document and checking and/or correcting the names of the parties, deed references, authorized signatories, etc. If these issues are addressed at the staff level, the legal review is expedited, and the cost of that review reduced. This workshop would identify common problem areas and point the participants to the tools that are available to them to make sure the information in the document is correct. It will also identify lesser known statutory requirements that must be followed in different types of transactions.

3H. Division of Conservation Services Grant Programs

Melissa Cryan, MA EEA / Nathaniel Thomas, MA EEA / Vanessa Johnson-Hall, Essex County Greenbelt Association

Participants will receive general information on a variety of grant programs offered by DCS for conservation and recreation projects from not only the grant administrators themselves, but also a past grant awardee. This will give a unique perspective from both sides of the process. Grants covered will include the LAND, PARC, LWCF, Drinking Water Supply Protection, Landscape Partnership, and Conservation Partnership programs.

3i. Local Land Trust Success Stories

Bob Wilber, Stow Conservation Trust

Representatives from three local land trusts will share their organizations' success stories.

3J. Building Climate Action Ambassadors Through Community Based Land Trusts

Alexandria Vecchio, Mass Audubon / Kris Scopinich, Mass Audubon / Kate Durkin, Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust

This workshop will focus on the role community-based land trusts play in moving the communities they serve to take meaningful action to address climate change. In particular, the workshop will provide examples of how Mass Audubon and the Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust are leading youth to serve as conservation stewards and address climate change in their schools and communities. We will offer different examples of programs that our organizations have developed to increase climate action and connect those programs with conservation behavior research and best practices for moving people to action on this important issue. Finally, we will share how land protection and enhanced ecological resilience through nature-based climate solutions can provide opportunities for learning and engagement at all ages.

3K. Approaching Forest Health Threats in a Changing Climate

Nicole Keleher, MA Department of Conservation & Recreation

The presentation will discuss the influence climate change has on forest pests and diseases. The multifaceted impacts of climate change will directly and indirectly threaten the health of Massachusetts forests. Topics covered will include the altered outbreak cycles of our current threats, susceptibility to new invaders, and the challenges of management and mitigation actions with changing conditions.