



**MASSACHUSETTS SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE**



\*\*\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\*\*\*

**ANNUAL GATHERING WILL BRING TOGETHER MORE THAN 500 CONSERVATION LEADERS FROM AROUND THE U.S. IN MASSACHUSETTS**

**Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference**

**to highlight the economic benefits of land conservation with theme:**

**“What Is a Green Future Worth? From Rural Landscapes to City Parks”**

**What:** 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference

**Where:** Worcester Technical High School, Worcester, MA

**When:** Saturday, March 23, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

February 28, 2013 - The largest statewide land conservation conference in the country, co-convened by The Trustees of Reservations (The Trustees) and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition (MLTC), will take place in Worcester on March 23, 2013. This year’s conference, titled “What Is a Green Future Worth? From Rural Landscapes to City Parks,” is expected to draw more than 500 people from across Massachusetts as well as other New England states for more than 35 workshops and panel discussions on a wide range of land conservation and urban greening topics. The keynote speaker will be journalist and historian Catherine Tumber, the author of *Small, Gritty, and Green: The Promise of America’s Smaller Industrial Cities in a Low-Carbon World*. Tumber will be introduced by Fitchburg Mayor Lisa Wong. Tickets are limited, as the conference sells out quickly. For registration information, please visit [www.MassConservation.org](http://www.MassConservation.org)

In addition to The Trustees and MLTC, conference co-sponsors include Groundwork USA, Land Trust Alliance, Mass Audubon, Mass Smart Growth Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, and the Trust for Public Land. This year’s conference sponsorship reflects the growing diversity and strength of the land conservation movement, which in recent years has broadened to include a number of urban

organizations alongside traditional land protection groups. Conference attendees will include staff and volunteers from local land trusts, community groups, federal, state and local government agencies, students, and philanthropists.

“Healthy environments, outdoor recreational opportunities and connections to nature should be available to everyone in Massachusetts, regardless of where they live,” says Richard K. Sullivan Jr., Massachusetts Secretary for Energy and Environmental Affairs. “We’re pleased that this conference is bringing together an unprecedented coalition to focus on these issues. The work that these organizations do every day, in partnership with federal, state, and local government, is vitally important to the health and well-being of our communities.”

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs provides support for land conservation work through grants, loans, and technical assistance programs, including the Conservation Partnership, Landscape Partnership, LAND and PARC Grant Programs. Since 2007, the Patrick-Murray Administration has conserved more than 100,000 acres of land throughout the Commonwealth. Under this unprecedented effort, more than 16,000 acres in 10 habitat reserves have been preserved, and more than 150 parks have been created or restored.

Reflecting on the historic evolution of the land conservation movement, Barbara Erickson, President of The Trustees of Reservations, says “The Trustees’ roots are Charles Eliot’s original vision of preserving unique and beautiful places for the public to enjoy. He understood that green spaces, no matter how small, offered a unique opportunity for rest and rejuvenation in a rapidly urbanizing region. Today, we continue to honor and celebrate Eliot’s legacy as we work to increase our impact statewide and promote land conservation and accessibility to open space for the benefit of everyone in Massachusetts.”

Charles Knox, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition says, “We’re delighted to see the growing interest in land conservation from so many diverse communities, organizations, and people. MLTC represents more than 130 member land trusts across Massachusetts, and together we are a powerful voice for land conservation and protection. This conference, with dozens of workshops on a host of topics, is part of our ongoing commitment to supporting our members and providing meaningful opportunities to learn and network with one another.”

While the benefits of protecting our forests, farms and river corridors are well appreciated, green investment pays many other dividends. Equally important for the health and sustainability of our communities is the greening of our cities through urban parks, trails, community gardens, and “complete streets” that include sidewalks, bike paths, and trees.

Across the region, land conservation and green infrastructure contribute to more livable neighborhoods, better public health, more vibrant local economies, cleaner air and water, and opportunities for access to fresh, local food. Recognizing these connections, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has recently made significant investments in green infrastructure through the newly created MassWorks program. In

2012 alone, the Commonwealth awarded \$38 million in MassWorks funding for 26 projects across the state, including a Complete Streets project in Hull, redevelopment of the Heritage State Park in North Adams, and pedestrian/ streetscape improvements in Chelsea, Easthampton, Fall River, Haverhill, Milton, Plymouth, and Taunton.

“Investing in innovation and infrastructure is vital to the future of our Commonwealth and a proven path to creating new housing and economic opportunities for everyone,” says Greg Bialecki, the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development. “By investing in the walkable downtown locations that are becoming more popular with families and businesses through pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, parks and green space, we can continue to create these kinds of walkable, urban environments.”

Echoing this theme, the conference keynote speaker will be Catherine Tumber, the author of *Small, Gritty, and Green: The Promise of America’s Smaller Industrial Cities in a Low-Carbon World*. Tumber, a journalist and historian, is a Visiting Scholar at Northeastern University’s School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs and a Fellow with the Gateway Cities Innovation Institute, Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. She wrote *Small, Gritty, and Green*, her second book, while a Research Affiliate in the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning’s Community Innovators Lab.

“Massachusetts has tremendous assets already in place to help build a sustainable future,” Tumber says. “In particular, our Gateway cities are uniquely poised to become new regional centers for the production and distribution of food, energy, and other essential goods and services. These cities have an impressive legacy of industrial infrastructure, including canals, railroad rights-of-way, mill sites, and riverfront land, that can be re-purposed to support quality of life and contribute to economic development.”

The March conference will offer more than 35 workshops and panel discussions on a wide range of land conservation and urban greening topics, providing practical guidance, showcasing successful projects, and offering opportunities to talk with practitioners and policy makers. This year’s conference will also feature presentations by emerging environmental leaders, including a group of high school students who will discuss their efforts to unite urban and rural communities through agriculture and food production.

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