



Department of Conservation
and Recreation

Spring 2025

Conservation Connections

DCR Land Protection Program News

Dear Friends,

Welcome to spring! After a snowy winter, it is nice to see the wildflowers in the grasslands (see pg.3) blooming and teaming with pollinators (see article below).

The Land Protection Program is also actively growing!

On the CR Stewardship team, we added 2 new Seasonal Conservation Restriction Monitors for the winter 2024-2025 season. They are both back again for the summer season!

Nicolas Pietroniro comes from a recent background of municipal wetlands work where he gained familiarity with monitoring, identifying, and resolving conservation issues. He has also spent several years working first as an intern and then as a consultant for the Wild and Scenic Westfield River Committee, where he spent much of his time monitoring streams and invasive plant populations. With a deep passion for reading the landscape, and identifying any plants he comes across, he is greatly enjoying the opportunity to monitor diverse landscapes and talking with the landowners who protect them.

Elise Brown previously worked for a land trust as a stewardship assistant, so she is familiar with monitoring practices and is excited to explore more of Massachusetts. She is passionate about conservation and will empathize with you about any invasive plants growing on your property.
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The newsletter for owners of land protected by a Conservation Restriction (CR) held by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

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Pollinator Habitat

When you see the words “pollinator habitat,” a variety of things may come to mind: a flower garden, a farm field, or maybe a local plant nursery. Pollinator habitat can take many forms across the landscape, but they all have a few characteristics in common. Any area that provides food (typically in the form of nectar and pollen from flowers), nesting locations, or other resources for flower visiting insects can be considered pollinator habitat. Flower visiting insects include bees, moths, butterflies, and even wasps and beetles (yes, they pollinate too!). With this description in mind, our landscape becomes a mosaic of different pollinator habitats.

The wide range of habitat types in MA, from coastal wetlands and dunes, riparian areas and wet meadows, successional fields, deciduous and coniferous forests (both young and old), and even disturbed areas like roadsides and suburban yards, provide resources for many pollinator species.
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Oil bee on fringed loosestrife

Pollinator Habitat Cont...



Yellow Banded Bumble Bee, threatened in

Forests are often our most overlooked areas in terms of pollinator habitat, simply because much of the activity happens in the treetops! Oak trees alone can support over 500 species of moths and butterflies by acting as a host plant for caterpillars. Many solitary bees rely entirely on flowering trees in the early spring.

The other major resources needed by pollinators are nesting sites and host plants, or simply, a place to live and rear the next generation. Nesting sites can take the form of loose soil for burrowing bees like early spring cellophane bees (photo on pg. 4), the pithy stems of plants for solitary small mason bees, crevices in trees or branches for colony building wasps or any nook and cranny that a pollinator can fit or dig into. Butterflies and moths more often rely on the presence of "host plants," or plants that they have evolved to lay eggs on and consume as caterpillars. Monarchs, a well-known and appreciated butterfly, rely entirely on the presence of milkweed species on which to lay their eggs (photo below).

You can support pollinators on your property using a variety of management methods that create and enhance pollinator habitat. Leaving snags and fallen trees in your woods creates more nesting areas. Management methods that encourage a diversity of herbaceous plants, and tree and shrub species and ages will increase the diversity of pollinator species on your land. Many pollinator species have rich and complex evolutionary histories with different plant species, and their presence is dependent on those plants being on the landscape. Management decisions such as removing invasive plants species, less frequent mowing, leaving leaves, and reducing the use of fertilizer and pesticide on your land, all greatly benefit pollinator species! Check out the links below to learn more about how to help pollinator species on your land.

[Pollinator-Friendly Plants Website](#)

[Growing Wild Massachusetts Website](#)

As always, please check your CR language to ensure planned activities are allowed.

LPP News Cont...

On the acquisition side, we added a new Land Protection Specialist to work in the Berkshires. David McGowan rejoins DCR after spending 5 years working as the Executive Director at the Williamstown Rural Lands, a local land trust. David previously worked at Mass Audubon, The MA Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and DCR. His diverse knowledge and experience related to land acquisition and management, grant writing, leadership, and developing strong partnerships are well suited for his focus area in the Berkshires. David enjoys pursuing outdoor activities including canoeing, camping, gardening, bird watching, hiking, and biking.

The Land Protection team is working hard to conserve land and CRs across the state. So far this fiscal year, we have acquired two new CRs and amended one CR to add acreage. The CRs are located in Georgetown, Gill, and West Newbury, and protect 110 acres. Two of these properties were protected in collaboration with Essex County Greenbelt Association. Land Protection staff are currently working with other landowners including Mass Audubon and Ashburnham Conservation Trust to protect several hundred acres of additional land before the end of the fiscal year. All of the CRs protect important natural areas and provide access to the public for passive recreation.

~ CR Stewardship Program Staff



Monarch on *A. syriaca* (by bri5024)

Grassland Management

Grasslands are, just as the name suggests, an ecosystem that is dominated by grasses, interspersed with other herbaceous plants. Historically, natural grasslands were found in MA where forests were disturbed by beaver impoundments, windstorms, or wildfires. Prior to European colonization, indigenous people used prescribed burns to maintain grasslands in some areas of MA. European settlers took advantage of these open grasslands and started building their farms on the fields and cleared forest to create more fields to grow crops and hay for livestock. With the rise of modernization and a decline of agriculture in MA, these unused fields often go unmanaged. Unmanaged grasslands in the northeast generally revert back to forest over time, but grasslands are vital habitat for many species. Grassland birds, some turtle species, and many insect pollinators all use open fields. As viable grasslands dwindle, grassland dependent species are more likely to become threatened.



Many DCR CR properties have open grassland areas, and though not required, landowners can manage these in various ways to continue to provide crucial habitat for grassland-dependent species. First, to have the most impact, it is generally preferable to know what species are already using the field or surrounding habitat and manage the grasslands for those species. A landowner could also manage the grasslands to attract certain species not currently present. Grassland characteristics including size, plant species, and abundance of broad-leaved plants will influence the wildlife species that will use a grassland. For example, Bobolinks typically choose meadows and hayfields that are at least 10 acres with some broad-leaved plants intermixed with the grasses.

Grassland management on CR properties is typically done by mowing, with the primary goal of keeping woody plants in check. Prescribed burning with an approved burn plan, is another tool that can be used in certain situations. Note that some CRs have special grassland management language. The following list includes various grassland management considerations for landowners:

- Ensure the type of mower can handle the vegetation in the field and is free of invasive seeds or plant material
- Consider mowing only a portion of the fields in a year to maintain some suitable habitat at all times
- Mow every 1-3 years
- Time mowing to minimize negative impacts on wildlife including birds and turtles (generally avoiding mowing between May and September)
- Mow in a pattern that allows wildlife to escape the mower. Start mowing from the center of the field and use either a back-and-forth approach or a large circular pattern.
- Consider timing mowing according to when certain plant species will be going to seed, depending on which species you want to encourage
- Conduct early detection and treatment of invasive non-native plants
- Incorporate native grasses (most traditional fields were seeded with non-native grasses)

Below are some recommended resources for more information on managing grasslands:

[DCR Grassland Management Website](#)

[Managing Grasslands, Shrublands, and Young Forest Habitats for Wildlife Website](#)

[Mass Audubon Grassland Bird Program Website](#)

[Mowing Advisory Guidelines in Rare Turtle Habitat Website](#)

Remember to check your CR language to make sure that any planned activities are permitted and please reach out with any questions!



Management Plan Guidelines

To help landowners develop management plans for their CR land, we have several different management plan guidelines available in PDF format. Developing a management plan is an opportunity to assess your goals and objectives for your property and can make management easier and more effective. Some CRs require management plans for certain activities or for all activities on a CR property, but even if it's not required, creating a management plan can still be beneficial.

If you would like to request a management plan guidelines document, please reach out to Stewardship staff and we'll be happy to send you one. The four guideline documents that we currently have available are:

General Management Plan Guidelines – for landowners planning to develop a management plan to guide all the management activities on their property.

Non-Native Species Control Plan Guidelines – for landowners planning to develop a management plan specifically for the control of invasive plants on their property.

Recreation Improvement Plan Guidelines – for landowners planning to develop a management plan specifically for recreational improvements, such as trails and boardwalks, on their property.

Habitat Management Plan Guidelines – for landowners planning to develop a management plan specifically for habitat management and restoration on their property.

Cellophane bee emerging from a burrow
Photo by bugsandbirds (iNaturalist)



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Conservation Connections is produced semi-annually for owners of land protected by a DCR-held Conservation Restriction.

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