

dcr

Massachusetts



The newsletter for
owners of land protected
by Watershed
Preservation
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Watershed Currents

Love, Land, and Legacy

Opportunity awaits in Land Trusts, Conservation
Commissions and Open Space Committees

You may have combined these three L's – love, land, and legacy – when explaining why you own wild and quiet acres beyond a lawn and garden. The “beyond” places under your stewardship nurture souls while providing biological diversity, forestry opportunities, innumerable benefits to wildlife, and clean air and water.

Did you know that three-fourths of Massachusetts forestland, some 2.12 million acres, is privately owned in tracts ranging from a handful to hundreds of acres? Just 31,600 landowners hold deeds to forested tracks greater than 10 acres in size, which combine into an aggregated area of 1.88 million acres. Most of the state's viable working woodlands belong to just .5 percent of the Commonwealth's six million residents.

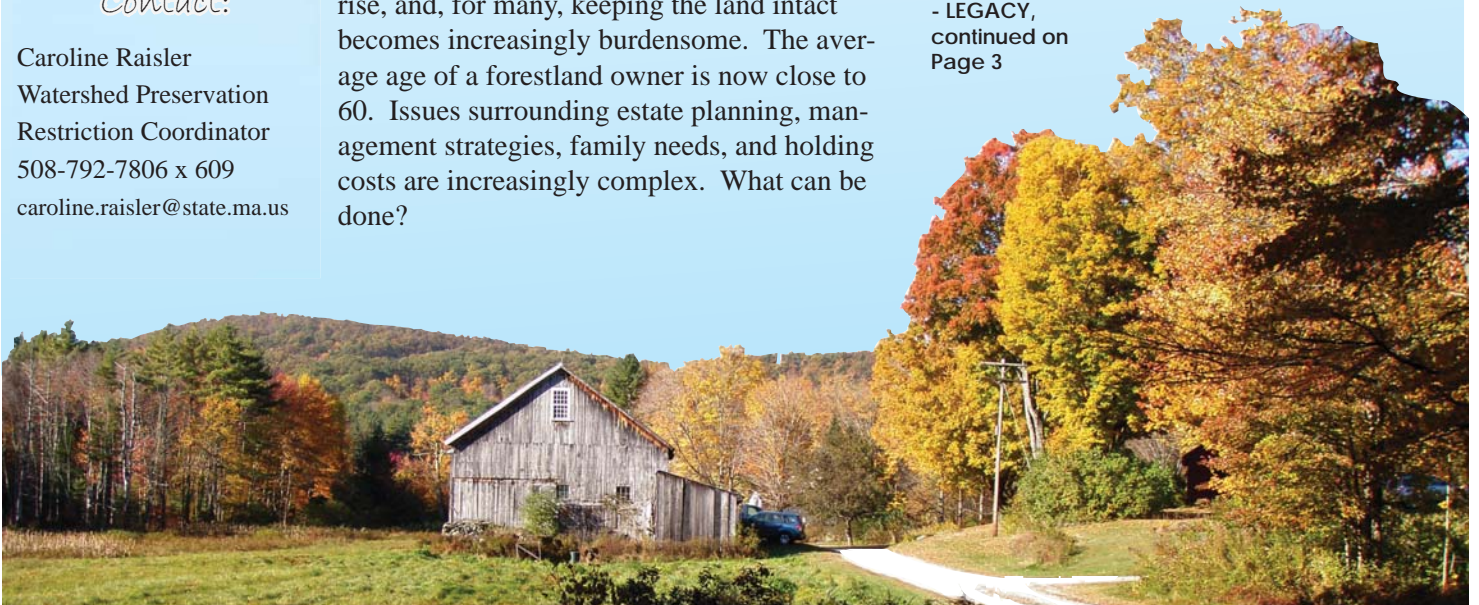
You play a critical role as part of this tiny minority that is responsible for the well being of vast swaths of productive forested landscape, as well as the irreplaceable amenities that landscape affords our society. Borrowing Winston Churchill's praise for RAF pilots, you too can be lauded, “Never have so many owed so much to so few.”

This vast forest base, however, is eroding as suburban sprawl expands, values and taxes rise, and, for many, keeping the land intact becomes increasingly burdensome. The average age of a forestland owner is now close to 60. Issues surrounding estate planning, management strategies, family needs, and holding costs are increasingly complex. What can be done?

Fortunately, landowners have choices, like you have already made, to protect land from changes that do not resonate with their preservation ethic. Massachusetts is one of the most progressive, and successful, states in helping individuals and families achieve their land protection goals. This article is a reminder that there is a full suite of options that can be tailored to accommodate each individual's circumstances. Perhaps you are interested in preserving more land, or you know someone who is considering these options. Highly qualified land professionals in all levels of government and private non-profit organizations are ready to help.

Finding the right fit depends on personal and family goals for the land, preservation organizations active in the area, criteria for protection projects, partnering opportunities, and significant landscape attributes such as rare

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Meet the Staff

Caroline Raisler, WPR coordinator

Caroline Raisler joined DCR's Division of Water Supply Protection in 2009 as the Watershed Preservation Restriction Coordinator. You'll see Caroline when she comes to your property for regular monitoring visits, and she is also the person to call if you have a question about your WPR. She enjoys having a job in which she gets to walk in the woods and meet interesting people.

Prior to this position, Caroline was attending graduate school, earning a Masters in Environmental Management from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Prior to graduate school, she worked for The Nature Conservancy in Maryland, monitoring restrictions and managing nature preserves.

Caroline lives in Northampton and works out of both DCR's West Boylston and Belchertown offices. When she's not walking in the woods for work, she can often be found walking in the woods for fun with her dog Maddy. She recently had the opportunity to test first-hand the skunk spray removal recipe on Page 4 when Maddy got sprayed by a skunk in the middle of the night. It took a few baths, but the recipe worked!



Caroline at work monitoring a WPR (left). Caroline and Maddy at home (below).



Landowner Profile

Henry Cramer produces wildlife documentary on his WPR



Henry Cramer, one of DCR's WPR landowners, moved to New Salem in the 1970s so that he and his family could enjoy living in the country. They eventually had a need to get some equity out of the property but wanted the land to stay undeveloped. That led them to sell a WPR on the property in 1996. He said that he thought of it as a "win-win-win" solution.

Over the time Henry's lived in New Salem, he has enjoyed watching the wildlife on his property increase in number and diversity. He designed his property for optimal wildlife viewing, clearing several narrow, long views from his kitchen window out across the WPR, so he can see wildlife

moving around the property while he eats at his kitchen table. He now sees many more turkeys, great blue herons, bears, coyotes and moose than in the early years.

Five years ago, his enjoyment watching the wildlife from his window led him to buy a video camera and begin recording the activity. He invested in better equipment when he realized he was recording some unique sights. Henry has now produced, with the help of his son, David Cramer, a documentary, *Wild Things of New Salem*, that shows a year in the life of the wildlife on his protected property. Scenes from this engaging movie include beavers stockpiling brush for winter, a fox looking for food under the snow, and a young bear playing with (and destroying) the railing on the Cramers' footbridge. He recently showed the movie at New Salem's "Old Home Day" annual celebration, where it was well-received.

- Caroline Raisler

These two images are from the video documentary, *Wild Things of New Salem*. The documentary was filmed by Henry Cramer on his WPR.



Love, Land and, Legacy - From Page 1

or important habitat, water resources, scenic vistas, trail systems, exemplary forest stands etc. Space limits a full discussion of all options; the following organizations and agencies provide resources to help landowners achieve their conservation objectives.

Land Trusts – Most towns are served by non-profit local or regional land trusts. These groups provide expertise in land preservation efforts. Look up nearby groups on the MA Land Trust Coalition website at www.massland.org.

Town Hall – Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee members are versed in land protection measures or can help owners in their conservation decisions. Some towns have funding for land protection initiatives. On-line resources include www.maccweb.org.

The State – The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Department of Agriculture (DAR), and the Division of Fish and Game (DFG) all have land programs that are generally well budgeted from a variety of funding sources. State grant programs, some garnering matching federal funds, are often an option in accomplish-



This lithograph from the *American Land Forum* (Vol. 5 No. 4, Fall 1985) illustrates the article, "What To Do About Grandfather's Place", an early discussion on the beauty and heritage, as well as the responsibilities, that comes with being a land conservator.

ing preservation objectives. A description of Commonwealth land protection programs can be found at www.mass.gov/eoeea.

State and federal tax incentives for donating conservation interests in land have never been more attractive. Both the private and public sectors are encouraging landowners, even those who already have conservation restrictions in their portfolio, to consider gifts and bargain sales of land or restrictions to conservation entities. No matter the potential choices, it is wise to consult with an attorney or CPA with land protection expertise.

It can seem overwhelming figuring out the best approach to conserving land and deciding who to consult. Fortunately, an easy way to begin is by getting on the phone or computer, as it is a great way to meet like-minded folks. Since you have already taken steps to protect your land, DCR encourages you to be an ambassador for helping others to follow a similar path, as your experiences and accomplishments provide us all with an invaluable land legacy.

-Jim French

Landowner outreach workshops offer assistance

Many WPR landowners have been attending educational events put on by the Nashua River Watershed Association (which covers the Wachusett Watershed) and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (which covers the Quabbin and Ware River Watersheds). These two organizations received a grant from the USDA Forest Service to put on three workshops for owners of privately protected land.

The first workshops in the spring of 2010 went over the basics of what it means to have a CR or WPR on your property. About ten WPR holders attended one or the other of these workshops, along with many landowners whose CRs are held by other state agencies or non-profits. The feedback was positive, but many landowners indicated that they wanted to see what other landowners were doing to manage their land. Both organizations obliged this summer, having landowners lead tours of their properties and make presentations on how they got grants to

do forest management activities. Once again, about ten WPR landowners attended. Each organization will hold one more event, in spring or summer of 2012; the focus of these last workshops will depend on participant feedback. Look for more details at the beginning of next year.

- Caroline Raisler



Landowners meet and take a guided educational forest tour in July of this year.

Wildlife on Your Land

The Striped Skunk

The striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*) is common in Massachusetts, and is often seen (or smelled) dead along roads and highways. The striped skunk is easily recognized. It has a black body, a narrow white stripe up the middle of its forehead, and a broad white area on its nape, which typically divides into a V around its shoulders. The two white lines may continue to the tail, which is bushy and may have a white tip. The amount of white varies in each individual and gives each skunk a unique “fingerprint” that can be used to identify specific animals.

Skunks are primarily nocturnal and begin their day shortly after sunset. They are omnivorous and will eat insects, berries, grubs, eggs, and carrion. In addition, they will also eat human garbage, bird seed, pet food, and compost. Skunks can be found in mixed woods, brushy areas, and semi-open

country. Suburban neighborhoods are ideal for skunks because they provide a mixture of habitats and abundant sources of food.

In early May, pregnant female skunks will excavate a ground den or burrow under a building, rock pile or boulder. Five to six young are typically born and will begin following their mother in late June or July, trailing behind her single file. Skunks do not hibernate and will be active during winter when temperatures are at or above freezing.

Avoiding conflicts:

- Never feed skunks.
- Feed pets inside and lock pet doors at night.
- Store garbage indoors until collection day.
- Compost in containers that keep skunks out while allowing for ventilation.

In case of a skunk encounter:

- If eyes get irritated, flush them liberally with cold water.
- Wash all other parts of the body with mildly acidic substances such as carboloc soap, tomato juice, diluted vinegar, or the following home remedy: 34 oz. of 3% hydrogen peroxide solution, 3 oz. of baking soda and .15 oz. of liquid soap.
- Always mix the solution in a large, open container. Use the entire mixture while it is still bubbling. Wearing rubber gloves, apply the solution, work it into lather, and leave it on for 30 minutes.
- After washing, follow with a long hot shower. You may have to repeat the process two or three times.

See MassWildlife’s website, www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/wildlife/living/living_with_skunks.htm, for more information on the striped skunk in Massachusetts.

- Dan Clark



A foraging striped skunk seen in the best possible position: facing forward and tail down!

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