



From the President Call to Action

November 2000
Volume 2, Issue 2

Inside this Issue

- 1 Letter from the President
- 2 Walking BCT's First Acquisition
- 2 CISCO Update
- 2 Protecting Watersheds
- 2 Local Biodiversity
- 2 Biodiversity Program
- 3 Wildlife Tracking
- 3 Conservation Restrictions
- 4 Volunteer Opportunities

The Boxborough Conservation Trust is a non-profit, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) corporation with mailing address at 462 Hill Road, Boxborough, MA, 01719, Telephone: (978) 264-0113 ; Web address: www.bctrust.org

This Newsletter is an infrequent publication of the Boxborough Conservation Trust, Boxborough, Massachusetts

The recent sale of four house lots of 2-3 acres each for a total of \$900,000 highlights the sharp escalation in real estate prices in Boxborough. With Cisco expanding in town, the end is nowhere in sight. Thus, the question of how to preserve the rural character and beauty of Boxborough becomes ever more urgent. The Boxborough Conservation Trust was organized to help preserve and protect Boxborough's open land, but you may wonder what this young organization with limited funds can do. The answer is that the Trust can do quite a lot provided that it has the dedicated interest and support of the townspeople.

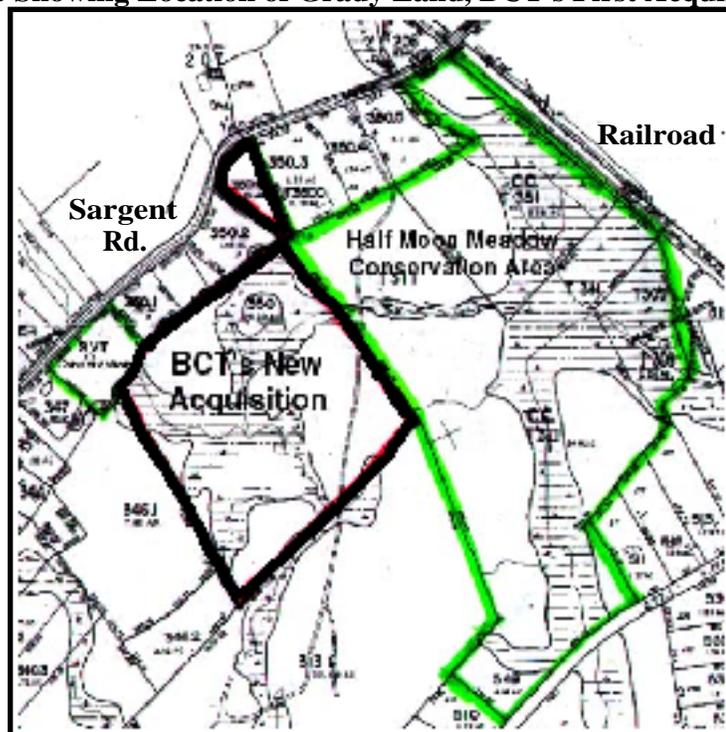
A prime example is the Grady property of close to 20 acres off of Sargent Rd. which the Trust recently bought (**see the map below**), partly with money we have raised and partly with borrowed funds. The abutters and neighbors were determined to preserve this beautiful piece of land with its stately pines and oak trees adjoining Half-Moon Meadow conservation land. It was their commitment which made it possible for the Trust to complete its first purchase.

There are numerous other parcels in town that presently may be inaccessible but that could some day be developed in response to soaring prices for building lots. The Trust hopes to acquire conservation restrictions on such land, enabling the owner to continue to use the land but precluding development. Advantages to the landowner typically include reductions in assessed and market values, affording lower real estate and estate tax liabilities.

Buying development rights and/or land obviously requires money, and the Trust faces other substantial expenses for surveys, insurance, legal fees, etc. The opportunities for preserving and protecting Boxborough's remaining open land are great, but time is short. We need all the help we can get, so please spread the word to your friends and neighbors to join the Boxborough Conservation Trust and give it all possible support.

- Frank Coolidge

Map Showing Location of Grady Land, BCT's First Acquisition



Walking BCT's First Acquisition (See story, page 2)

First Land Acquisition: A Walk in the Woods

by Ruth Zimmerman

On October 14th, approximately thirty Boxborough residents, BCT members, neighbors and three dogs gathered to walk the Trust's first land purchase, a 20-acre parcel off Sargent Road. This land abuts Boxborough's 40-acre Half Moon Meadow Conservation Area as well as a small piece of land owned by the Sudbury Valley Trustees.

Everyone met on Sargent Road, by the Half Moon Meadow sign. Trust members Frank Coolidge and David Koonce outlined the boundaries of our new land on a large map, and then David led the group through the Half Moon Meadow Conservation Area to the BCT land. David has extensive knowledge of this property, as well as much of the land in Boxborough. As he led us on our walk, he pointed out many unique and unusual features of the land: the towering white pines, the locations of vernal pools, a stand of eastern hemlocks, and a mature oak swamp. He spoke of the habitat and the animals the area supports. It was a wonderful afternoon.



Walking the New Parcel

The Trust is very excited about this first land purchase. We are in the process of designing a sign to mark its location and hope you will visit and walk its trail. We anticipate that it is the first of many acquisitions, whether by purchase, gift, or conservation restriction.

The Watershed Initiative

"Greenways = a system of protected open space that connects a variety of protected lands with nearby conservation areas or natural resources like rivers and streams."

The Greenways Plan for the SuAsCo Watershed, developed by the Sudbury Valley Trustees, proposes greenways to link many parks, wildlife refuges, and protected lands of the watershed of the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers. The report compiles revealing facts about Boxborough, one of the 36 watershed towns. For example, our population density was under 50 persons per sq. mile in 1940, rising to 480 persons per sq. mile in 2000. (Density increased by 49% in just the past ten years.) A rural community is defined as one with no more than 500 persons per square mile.

The time to act is now if we wish to preserve open space in Boxborough. Of the 105,375 acres identified at public workshops for greenways, 16% are unprotected open space. In the past 4-1/2 years, nearly 16,000 acres were developed for homes in the watershed.

Several areas of Boxborough were highlighted as significant potential greenways. A greenways system would connect the Delaney Pond Complex to the Assabet River. Proposed greenways include areas surrounding or leading to the Heath Hen Meadow Brook, Fort Pond Brook and Inches Brook. Providing overland connections between these habitat areas is critical for the survival of wildlife and the healthy diversity of the landscape.

"Saving Biodiversity in the SuAsCo Watershed"

with Frances Clark

January 11, 7:30pm at Town Hall

BCT will sponsor a slide program by Frances Clark, local botanist and natural resource planner. The slide program will show which species and natural communities need to be protected locally, and how people can become involved. Clark is the author of a Biodiversity Protection and Stewardship Plan laying out what citizens can do to save Biodiversity in the region. All are invited and there is no charge.

Local Biodiversity

"Biodiversity = the diversity of native species, their habitats and natural communities in a particular area = the biological integrity of natural ecosystems"

The SuAsCo Biodiversity Protection and Stewardship Plan, by Frances Clark, evaluates the biodiversity of our region, providing a valuable tool for prioritizing land acquisition and determining habitat stewardship. Delaney, Heath Hen Meadow Brook, and the Rt. 2 Heron Rookery stand out as important biodiversity sites. Wolf Swamp is considered as an important connector between Delaney and Heath Hen Meadow Brook.

But the reality is that much of Boxborough was passed over in the report due to the lack of large tracts of protected lands. Only one of our conservation areas protects over 100 acres. Wolf Swamp at 229 acres seems large, but its integrity has been undisturbed because an additional 150 acres west of the swamp remains in a natural state. Now Wolf Swamp's vitality is threatened with a massive expansion of Cisco into this oak upland. Fifteen conservation areas are under 20 acres, seven are in the range of 23 to 40 acres, and one is 70 acres. This collection of small parcels is often called "fragmentation"

Please join the BCT and work with your community to preserve more open space, while the opportunities still exist.

- Barbara Warren

Cisco Development Update

Construction has begun and continues to progress on Cisco System's, Inc. research and development office park at the end of Swanson Road. Approximately half of the planned 1.6 mile long sub-division roadway that will eventually connect Swanson Road to Littleton County Road in Harvard has already been completed. Construction has begun on the project's first two office buildings, with occupancy scheduled for November, 2002. Building permit applications have just been filed with the Building Inspector for three more buildings. At final build-out, there will be a total of 900,000 square feet of office space spread out over a "campus" of seven buildings housing somewhere between 2,700 and 3,300 employees. Ninety-nine (99) acres of the site's 320 acres will

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

remain forever undeveloped in the form of a conservation restriction held by the Boxborough Conservation Commission for the purpose of protecting habitat for rare wildlife. Ten (10) more acres are subject to a conservation restriction that permits playing fields, while an additional forty-five (45) acres are conserved via restrictive covenants pursuant to Boxborough's Open Space Commercial Development By-Law. In all, 154 acres in the office park will be permanently preserved as open space. Many thanks to Boxborough Town Planner Alicia Altieri for providing BCT with this Cisco update.

- David Koonce

BCT WORK DAY!

TRAIL-BUSTERS NEEDED!

Come on out, you ornery varmints! We'll Be Clearin' Some Conservation Trails, and makin' 'em suitable for human use.

WHEN: DECEMBER 2, 2000 @10am.

WHERE: Meet at the Town Hall.

Bring work gloves, buck saws, clippers, choppers, etc.

BCT Wildlife Tracking

Five BCT members went wildlife tracking one fine Saturday morning last winter. The snow conditions were great for tracking, an inch of light snow two nights before covering six inches of ice crusted snow. We began at the 17 acre Fisk Conservation Land. Before we had taken more than a couple of steps, we found very clear cottontail rabbit and squirrel tracks side by side making for a good comparison. Not long after entering the Fisk Land, we began seeing deer tracks and some old fisher tracks. When we found some recent deer browse on poison ivy, we decided to follow these tracks into the center of the woods where we came across fresher fisher tracks. We followed the fisher as he meandered his way from tree to tree.

Next we climbed over a stone wall and headed out onto an open meadow. The surface was pristine white except for four very distinct sets of tracks: fisher, cottontail rabbit, deer, and canine. We examined the canine more

closely. The track size was small; the stride was 11 to 13 inches, and the trail pattern was a straight alternating walk. Gray Fox. Crossing a hedgerow dividing two fields, we found a major cottontail highway with tracks going back and forth. The deer and fisher tracks continued out over the field to two tall cedars that were covered in berries where a mockingbird was feasting. We walked to the far side of the beaver pond into the tree covered hillside. This area is always rich with birds. Almost immediately we came among fresh fisher tracks. Within a short distance, we came to a kill site, a turkey, partially buried in the snow with only feathers popping out. There were fisher tracks everywhere and three feeding circles and scattered feathers. Besides the fisher(s), a gray fox had been here as well as a smaller weasel. A fresh fisher trail led us down the old cart path. Where the blackberries became thick, the cottontail tracks were plentiful. Looking closely at the blackberry canes, we found fresh incisor marks. The fisher veered off to the right up the side before reaching the road, but the deer crossed the road and headed down into Steele Farm and Picnic Trust municipal lands, pointing out to us the importance of wildlife corridors.

Even though five new homes will soon be built adjacent to the area we explored, the section of fields we crossed, the beaver pond, and the animal rich hillside will be preserved as Boxborough conservation land.

- Barbara Warren

What is a Conservation Restriction?

Buying land outright is not the only way to protect property from future development. A less expensive option is to purchase a conservation restriction (or conservation easement) on a piece of property. The Trustees of Reservations defines conservation restriction as "... a legal agreement between a landowner and a conservation organization that permanently or for a stated period limits specified uses and development of the property to protect its natural and scenic features. The document conveys to the conservation organization the right to monitor the property and enforce the terms of the agreement." A conservation restriction is recorded like a deed and is binding on future owners of the property.

There are many ways in which a conservation restriction can be drafted to benefit both a conservation organization and the property holder. Some restrictions prohibit future development, but others allow farming or timber harvesting. Because the property owner still holds title to the land, the conservation restriction is a much less expensive way for a conservation organization to ensure that land will be protected; because the land owner has limited his use of the property, tax valuations and tax burdens on the landowner are eased.

A well-crafted conservation restriction provides a flexible tool for meeting the needs of both land owners and conservation organizations.

- Mary Fuhrer

Wildlife Tracking Walk

If you are interested in joining BCTrust member Barbara Warren for a wildlife tracking walk once we get snow, please contact her by phone: 635-9428 or e-mail at bwarren@alum.wellesley.edu for the date, time and location.

BCT Needs You Now!

The next 12 months are a critical time for preservation of open space in Boxborough. If you have time to lend a hand with one of these activities, please call 264-0113 to help out.

- Education programs
- Fund-raising
- Trail maintenance
- Stewardship of conservation land
- Web site administration
- Identification of rare species

Join a Stewardship Team

The Boxborough Conservation Commission is establishing stewardship teams for municipal & conservation open space. BCT would like to be an active participant. If you are interested in joining, e-mail Barbara Warren, bwarren@alum.wellesley.edu, or speak with one of the BCT directors.

The Boxborough Conservation Trust Board of Directors

Frank Coolidge, President	264-0113	coolidge@world.std.com
Sam Fisk, Treasurer	263-4522	fiskcoe@aol.com
Jeff Fuhrer	263-3284	fuhrej@earthlink.net
Mary Fuhrer	263-3284	fuhrej@earthlink.net
Glynis Hamel	263-6456	ghamel@cs.wpi.edu
David Koonce	263-1052	dkoonce@progress.com
Dan MacPhail	263-7404	docdan@fiam.net
Bunny Morse	263-4514	bunnymorse@aol.com
Barbara Warren	635-9428	bwarren@alum.wellesley.edu
Ruth Zimmerman	263-3139	zimyard@aol.com

Call or e-mail any time with your questions or comments.

Privacy Policy

The BCTrust does not release information about members to third parties.

**If you have an e-mail address, please let us know.
E-mail is one of the most effective and efficient
ways of communicating among our membership.**

Had a Good Year?

Tax deductible year-end gifts to the BCT would be much appreciated and may be mailed to Sam Fisk, BCT Treasurer, 60 Barteau Lane, Boxborough, MA 01719. And be sure to give the green New Member Form to a friend interested in joining us, a great way to start the Millennium!!!!



462 Hill Road, Boxborough, MA 01719

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 156
Acton, MA 01720

Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land