

Visit our website! www.bctrust.org

The BCTrust updates its website on a regular basis. Take a look!
You'll find:

- Updated information about events
- Trail maps to print before you hike
- Information about the state income tax credit of up to \$50,000
- Links to other conservation websites
- PDF versions of past issues of *Common Ground*



Printed on Partially Recycled Paper

Do you have questions or
comments about this issue of
Common Ground?

Feel free to email the editor at
lskorczeski@bctrust.org.



“Edible Wild Plants and Mushrooms in and around Boxborough” with Russ Cohen

Join expert forager and author of *Wild Plants I Have Known... and Eaten* for a 60-minute talk that will cover over 40 of the tastiest species the region has to offer.

Russ will present information on identification tips, edible portion(s), season(s) of availability and preparation methods for each species, along with general guidelines for safe and environmentally responsible foraging. Handouts and foraged goodies for people to taste will be provided.

Time and location to be announced soon at
www.bctrust.org.



Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land

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01719

650 Massachusetts Avenue
Boxborough, MA 01719



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Common Ground

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Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land

Wetlands: Wasteland or Working Land?

By Bradford Gray

Recently a landowner in a neighboring town was overheard to lament that several acres of wetlands on his property were simply “wasteland,” that they were “useless,” and not good for anything (by which he probably meant development). Unfortunately, this view that wetlands are nothing more than breeding grounds for mosquitoes, better drained and filled to create land for more “useful” purposes, was prevalent until the early 1960s, when Massachusetts became the first state to pass legislation protecting the state’s wetlands. By this time, however, more than half of the original wetlands in the contiguous 48 states had been drained and converted to other uses.

Although approximately 100 million acres of wetlands remain, they continue to decline at a rate of about 60,000 acres annually. According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, almost one-third of Massachusetts’s wetlands have been destroyed since colonial times, and approximately 1,200 acres were lost or altered during the period from 1991 to 2005, leaving a total of about 48,000 acres in the state today.

In Boxborough we may have done better (so far), but with the ongoing development of the town’s remaining open spaces and our total dependence on private wells for clean drinking water, it is absolutely critical that we recognize the important role that wetlands play in



The wetlands at Boxborough’s Applewood Village. Approximately 16% of Boxborough’s total land area consists of wetlands

maintaining our water resources and aquifers, as well as an overall healthy natural environment—both for us and for the wildlife that surrounds us. By conserving and restoring wetlands, we act as stewards of the land, entrusted to preserve wetland ecosystems both for our own benefit and for the benefit of future generations.

The ecological and socioeconomic values that wetlands provide are manifold. The main benefits bestowed by Boxborough’s hard-working marshes, swamps, bogs, and ponds include:

water pollution removal and control; groundwater storage; flood prevention; and fish and wildlife habitat.

Water pollution removal and control

Wetlands act as natural water filters, purifying the quality of our drinking water and protecting the vulnerable aquifers our wells depend on. Serving as natural sinks, wetlands filter and break down dissolved solids, nutrients, and pollutants and convert them into inactive substances

(continued on next page)

Wetlands

(continued from front page)

that settle to the wetland floor. They also trap heavy metals, fertilizer residue composed of nitrogen and phosphorus, and other toxic chemicals attached to sediments in surface water and runoff

protects downstream property owners from flood damage. Since an acre of wetland can store up to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater, and approximately 16% of Boxborough's total land area of

occurred would have been unimaginably greater.

Wildlife habitat

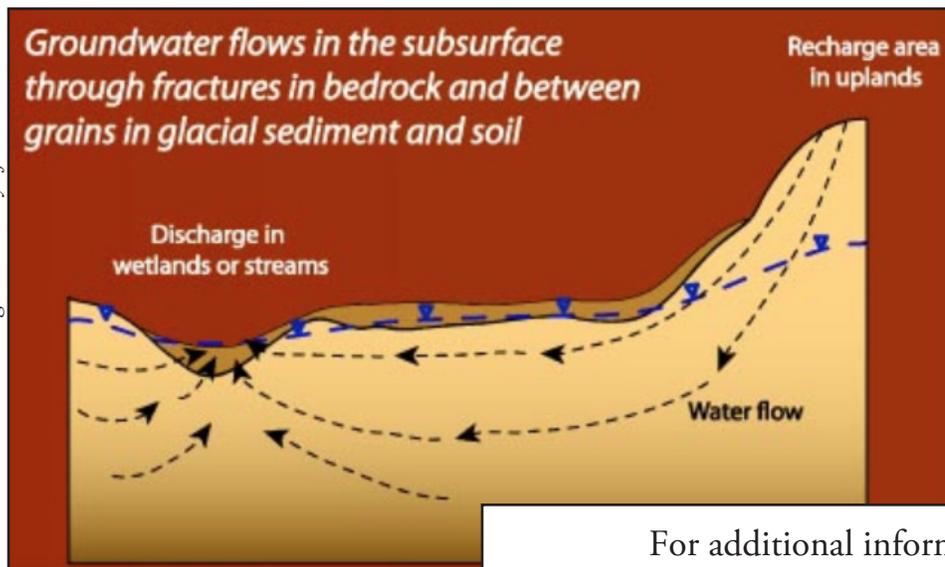
Wetlands provide essential breeding, nesting, feeding, and refuge habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish, and migratory and resident birds. It is estimated that nearly 35% of all threatened and endangered animal species in the United States are partially or entirely dependent on wetland habitats for survival. An additional 20% use or inhabit wetlands at some time in their life. Overall, the nation's wetlands are home to 31% of all plant species, and as many as one-half of all North American bird species nest or feed in wetlands. In

Massachusetts, nearly two-thirds of the 400 species of plants and animals listed as rare are absolutely dependent on wetlands at some stage in their life cycles.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has aptly described wetlands as an important part of our "common wealth." Although approximately 75% of Boxborough's

wetlands are found on private property, their functions and values serve the community as a whole. If we, and future generations, are to enjoy the benefits our wetlands provide, it is our common responsibility to protect them in perpetuity.

Diagram courtesy of Anne Gardulski



and remove them from the water. It has been estimated that wetlands may reduce nitrogen concentrations from floodwater runoff by up to 90% and phosphate concentrations by 50%. Overall, wetland vegetation typically traps 80-90% of the sediment from runoff.

Groundwater storage

Wetlands serve as giant hydrologic sponges, or temporary storage basins, retaining rainwater and snowmelt and slowly releasing the water during drier seasons.

Flood prevention

Because wetlands occur in low-lying areas where the groundwater table is close to the land surface, rainwater and snowmelt flow into them rather than onto roads or homeowners' property. The temporary storage and slow release of floodwater reduces flood peaks and

6,656 acres consists of wetlands (1,064 acres), the capacity of the town's wetlands to store floodwater is an astounding 1.6 billion gallons! The town has had experience with flooding in the past, but without our hard-working wetlands, the amount of flooding that could have

For additional information:

[Audubon Guide to Wetlands Protections](http://ar.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/wetlands_guide.pdf)
(http://ar.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/wetlands_guide.pdf)

[Digital Sportsman's Network](http://www.digitalsportsman.com)
(www.digitalsportsman.com)

[Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions](http://www.maccweb.org)
(www.maccweb.org)

[Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](http://www.mass.gov/dep)
(www.mass.gov/dep)

[National Audubon Society](http://www.audubon.org)
(www.audubon.org)

[United States Environmental Protection Agency](http://www.epa.gov)
(www.epa.gov)



Thanks to all of our 148 current members!



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* Charter Member (donated \$500
before first annual meeting in 1999)

Non-resident or corporate member



Preserving and Protecting Boxborough's Undeveloped Land

New Member Registration Form

The **Boxborough Conservation Trust** is actively seeking new members to join in the effort of preserving and protecting Boxborough's undeveloped land. Anyone may join. Regular (voting) members must be 18 years of age or older and must be residents of the Town of Boxborough. All others are honorary members. Membership is on an annual basis.

There are several giving levels. Please indicate the level of your tax deductible contribution:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 30 Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 250 Patron | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 2500 Preservationist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 60 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 500 Sustaining | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 100 Associate | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000 Sponsor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ Other |

Name(s) _____
(please print)

Address _____ (street) (_____) _____ - _____
(telephone)

_____ (town) _____ (state) _____ (zip)

Date ____/____/____ e-mail _____

Please indicate how you would like your name(s) to appear in our membership listings, such as 'The Jones Family,' or 'John and Jane Jones,' or if you prefer, you can just say 'anonymous.'

Membership Listing: _____

Please make your check payable to **The Boxborough Conservation Trust**, and mail it with this form to:

**Treasurer
Boxborough Conservation Trust
1092 Hill Rd
Boxborough, MA 01719**

An acknowledgment of your tax-deductible contribution will be mailed to you. Please contact your employer to see if it may be willing to match your contribution.

Your comments and suggestions would be very much appreciated:

Thank you for your support! You can find BCTrust on the web at www.bctrust.org.

Letter from the President

By Rita Gibes Grossman

When filling containers of water in preparation for Hurricane Sandy and the Nor'easter, I was yet again feeling fortunate to live in a community with plentiful wetlands to handle the water, diminishing the risk of flooding. A recent conversation with a friend about the public's general lack of understanding about wetlands—one of Boxborough's greatest natural resources—led to the article in this newsletter. See the box for websites with additional information about wetlands.

Three years ago the BCTrust acquired a parcel measuring approximately 35 acres with frontage on Depot Road known as the Campbell Family Trust land. Your BCTrust is currently working with the

Boxborough Conservation Trust Board of Directors

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President

Ruth Zimmerman.....treasurer@bctrust.org
Treasurer

Anne Gardulski.....clerk@bctrust.org
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Common Ground is mailed to all Boxborough residents, free of charge.

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Laura Skorczeski, editor

Bradford Gray, consulting editor

Tammy MacFadyen, special projects

The Boxborough Conservation Trust is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are fully tax deductible.

Help preserve Boxborough's natural landscapes, wetlands, forests, and farmland by sending a tax deductible contribution to:



BCTrust
650 Massachusetts Avenue
Boxborough, MA 01719



Every tax deductible donation is greatly appreciated.

Learn more at: www.bctrust.org and contact us with any questions.

Sudbury Valley Trustees to permanently protect 70% of the land with a conservation restriction, a legal tool that assures that this portion of the land will never be developed and its conservation value will be preserved. Both organizations will co-hold the restriction and will be responsible for the due diligence on the property in perpetuity. The BCTrust will be selling the land to recover the acquisition costs, and the 30% of the parcel that is not covered by the restriction will be available for development. The Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan identified this parcel as high priority for preservation, and the Trust is pleased that at least 70% will be preserved.

Appreciation

We now have a local mailbox in Boxborough! On behalf of the board and members, thank you to Simon Bunyard for coordinating and to Kerry Daigle at the Boxborough Insurance Agency for

providing the real estate for our new mailbox at 650 Massachusetts Avenue.

Thank you to Margo Webber of the BCTrust and to Marc Sevigny and Peter Jackson of the Harvard Conservation Trust for monitoring the Panek land conservation restriction (CR) jointly held by both trusts. This 55-acre portion of the Patch Hill Conservation Area was acquired by the Town in 2002 for conservation through a generous bargain sale by Jon and Jesse Panek of Harvard. Although town-owned conservation land is at very low risk for future development, through the CR the development rights are permanently established and provide permanent protection for that land. It is monitored to assure there are no violations of the restriction such as dumping of debris or encroachment. We found no encroachments other than the overgrowth of invasive species at the trail head.