

MOUNT GRACE LAND CONSERVATION TRUST
ANNUAL REPORT 2022



This year has been an extraordinary reinvigoration of Mount Grace. Working amidst the dust and chaos of the energy efficient renovations of our beloved 1780s Skyfields, we completed 18 separate land protection projects!

Mount Grace launched a new remote monitoring program increasing our efficiency while also providing a wealth of information on how climate impacts our lands. And we created a new Climate and Land Justice Coordinator position to integrate climate and land justice into every aspect of our work.

Most recently, we received the 2022 Land Trust Alliance Excellence Award. The Land Trust Alliance recognizes Mount Grace's remarkable capacity to achieve landscape scale conservation; our embracing of new technologies; and our commitment to community conservation, particularly our deepening partnership with the Nipmuc(k).

Conservation is not just about the land, it is also about people, relationships, and trust. It is about the profound gratitude we feel for nature's benefits; the fresh air, clean water, the quiet moments of harmony, the food we eat.

Conservation is a promise to the next generations and a thank you to our predecessors. Thank you for your support of Mount Grace and for keeping our forests forest and our farms farming!

Warmly,



Max Feldman
President



Emma G. Ellsworth
Executive Director


The Land Forever campaign

Land is protected primarily through passion. Family by family, community by community, project by project, conservation is done by people who have deep personal connections to the land.

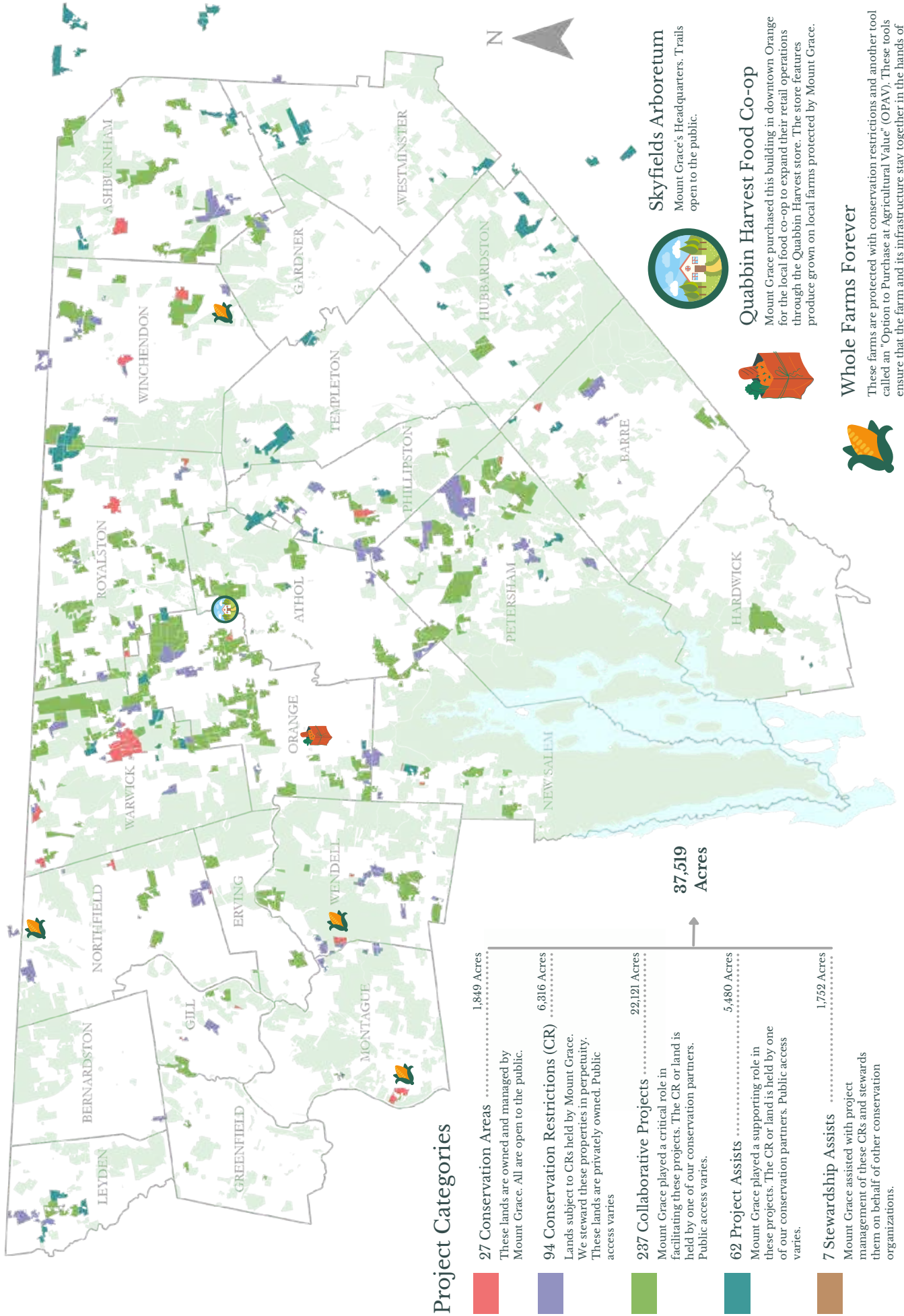
It is increasingly essential that we act on our passion for farms, forests, clean air, and water.

To accomplish this, Mount Grace has launched *The Land Forever*: a \$3.5 million campaign to support the land and enable Mount Grace to meet our conservation and stewardship responsibilities over the next 35 years. We've raised more than \$3,230,000 of our \$3.5 million goal, help us to reach the finish line this fall and secure funding for the next generation of land conservation and stewardship.

We ask you to join us to ensure the protection, enjoyment, and health of our region. Your campaign gift may be unrestricted or targeted to support one of three campaign priorities: supporting our ongoing work through a strategic endowment fund; adding meeting and event space at Skyfields Arboretum by building an accessible, energy efficient barn; and establishing the Leigh Youngblood Conservation Opportunity Fund, a revolving fund that will enable Mount Grace to respond quickly to potential projects.



The Richardson Overlook in Northfield exemplifies the conservation and stewardship threats, needs, and goals that The Land Forever campaign promises to address. © Paul Rezendes



Skyfields Arboretum
Mount Grace's Headquarters. Trails open to the public.



Quabbin Harvest Food Co-op
Mount Grace purchased this building in downtown Orange for the local food co-op to expand their retail operations through the Quabbin Harvest store. The store features produce grown on local farms protected by Mount Grace.



Whole Farms Forever
These farms are protected with conservation restrictions and another tool called an "Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value" (OPAV). These tools ensure that the farm and its infrastructure stay together in the hands of farmers and are designed to make the whole farm more affordable for the next generation of farmers.

Conservation Report

Mount Grace directly conserved 553 acres across ten projects this year and assisted with the conservation of an additional nine projects and 485 acres of projects managed by partners.

Smith, Barre, 90 acres

Ruth Smith and her sister Karen Clark generously donated a conservation restriction (CR) on their family's beloved Barre property to ensure that it would forever remain available for wildlife habitat, forestry, carbon sequestration, and food production.

Tully Lake Viewshed, Athol, 187 acres

For 20 years, organizations and individuals have been working tirelessly to protect this hillside property, which is a prominent portion of the viewshed for anyone visiting Tully Lake. This year, we were thrilled to fulfill the conservation vision for this special piece of the North Quabbin by purchasing the land from Paul and Jill Vento and then selling it to the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation. This property is now part of the Lawton State Forest, which Mount Grace helped to create in 1986 in our first official project.

Burnshirt River Uplands, Barre, 40 acres

Nancy Gionet sold her family's wooded property near the Burnshirt River to Mount Grace because she wanted to know it would always be available for wildlife. For the first time, Mount Grace utilized the In-Lieu Fee Program, administered by the Department of Fish and Game using permit fees collected by the Army Corps of Engineers, to purchase this property.

Hastings Pond Neighborhood Project (Warwick, 16 acres) Delfausse (5.7 acres) and Renna (10.3 acres)

Kristy and Joe Delfausse and Sandy and Suzanne Renna each generously donated CRs to Mount Grace on their abutting properties, connecting Mount Grace's largest Conservation Area (Arthur Iversen) to the shores of the scenic Hastings Pond. Collectively, these projects protected more than 860 feet—nearly 20%—of the pond's shoreline.

Greater Gales Brook Conservation Project (705 acres)

Mount Grace was the lead organizer of this landscape-scale project and directly managed four projects (220 acres) and supported the Town of Warwick, Mass Audubon, the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the MA Department of Fish and Game in the permanent protection of the Littlewood, Manring, Channel Z Seismometry, Inc., Woodburn, Fryn, and Tandy properties, which collectively represent an additional 485 acres.

Spackman-Selednik, Warwick, 14.2 acres

Mount Grace acquired this scenic property along Hastings Heights Road as its newest agricultural property. Chase Hill Farm will continue to steward the 8.5 acres of fields on the property, which features more than 930 feet of road frontage that would otherwise have been developable.

Butterworth Ridge Nominee Trust, Warwick, 27.6 acres

The members of Butterworth Ridge Nominee Trust have worked diligently to protect this property since they purchased it in 2003. The wooded property, which abuts the Warwick State Forest and a special section of the 22-mile Tully Trail, was a lovely addition to the Greater Gales initiative, and is a testament to the patience and commitment of the Trust members.

Eriksson, Warwick, 137.9 acres

Barb Eriksson and her husband Frank raise sheep and other livestock on their Blue Rock Farm off Athol Road. By placing a CR on the property, Barb and Frank have ensured that future generations will also be able to raise animals, grow food, harvest wood, and live off of this beautiful property.

Berman-Alkins, Warwick, 40.3 acres

Alan Berman and Betsy Alkins have protected their quiet corner of Warwick near the Orange town line with a CR that will enable them to continue homesteading and taking care of their woods. Their property abuts the newly created Warwick Town Forest on Beech Hill Road.

Mount Grace's **Landscape Conservation Program** is the guardian of a rich mosaic of natural lands. We act quickly and strategically to safeguard our rural heritage and bolster our region's legacy of land conservation. Working with partners, we save the landscapes that our natural and human communities need to thrive. Together, we stitch these ecologically significant and locally important places into one connected and resilient landscape.

In 2022, Mount Grace successfully finished the collaborative **Greater Gales Brook Conservation Project**—a \$1.456M initiative catalyzed by a \$589,350 Massachusetts Landscape Partnership Program grant. We conserved 705 acres across 13 closings in a 9.5-month contract window. Mount Grace coordinated the collaborative effort that included Mass Audubon, MA Department of Fish and Game, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Towns of Warwick and Royalston. We now have two new properties to steward. The Butterworth Ridge Conservation Area abuts the storied Tully Trail, and the Hastings Heights Conservation Area features open fields that will continue to be stewarded by Chase Hill Farm. We also have two new conservation restrictions, one protecting a homestead abutting our largest, flagship Conservation Area (Arthur Iversen in Warwick) and the other protecting a 140-acre working sheep farm. This initiative was organized during the onset of COVID-19, but partners were still able to successfully reach out to landowners and assemble a compelling landscape-scale project that balances new public access opportunities with climate resilience and the important of working farms and woodlands. The successful completion of this initiative is a testament to Mount Grace's decades-long investment in building trust and relationships with partners and landowners.

We also completed the decades long effort to conserve a significant portion of **the viewshed of Tully Lake** by purchasing the 187-acre property from the Vento family. Under previous ownerships, this property was proposed for large-scale commercial solar and a large subdivision. Thanks to the dedication of neighbors over the last 30 years to see this beautiful view protected.

The Greater Gales Brook Conservation Project was a collaborative effort of private landowners, Mount Grace, Mass Audubon, Massachusetts (MA) DCR, MA Department of Fish and Game, and the Towns of Warwick and Royalston. It was supported by the MA Landscape Partnership Program, the Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund, the Bafflin Foundation, the Quabbin to Cardigan Regional Partnership, the William P. Wharton Trust, an anonymous foundation, and many generous donors.

The **North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership**—an informal network of landowners, land trusts, planning agencies, academic institutions, and public agencies—is our primary mechanism for implementing our vision for landscape-scale conservation. Collaboration is the most powerful tool for achieving our mission.

We partnered with UMass-Amherst to organize a robust suite of programming this year, thanks to funding from the Massachusetts Working Forest Initiative administered by the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation. For the second year in a row, **we ran a six-part monthly webinar series for landowners about conservation-based estate planning.** These webinars, which drew 259 people collectively owning more than 20,000 acres, seem to be a particularly useful tool for reaching families who are spread out geographically. Several families attended with cross-generational participation, tuning in from different time zones (and in one case, different continents!), to learn how they might conserve their family's land. Zoom presents challenges, but the silver linings are undeniable.

Julia Fitzpatrick, our TerraCorps member, lent her time and talent to coordinating the seventh and best-attended **statewide Open Space Conference**; a set of wildly popular **mapping trainings for volunteer conservationists** like those serving on municipal boards; and a two-day **chainsaw safety training designed specifically for—and taught by—women.** All of these programs were free, and those with limited spots filled within hours. This was a new experience for us, and we interpret this to mean that our outreach programs are relevant, useful, and necessary.

In recognition of the power of local networks to inspire community conservation, we also awarded small grants to East Quabbin Land Trust, the Kingston Conservation Commission, the Westminster Open Space Committee, and the Bolton Conservation Commission through our Neighborhood Outreach grant. Collectively, they reached more than 600 of their land-owning friends and neighbors.



Chainsaw safety training, designed for and taught by women.

■ Sarah Wells

The **Community Conservation Program** partners with community members, organizations, and municipalities to prioritize and conserve lands that benefit the health and well-being of our region's people and their natural environment. We work to empower communities to enjoy and steward their natural resources and strengthen their connections to the natural world.

This year we completed two community projects that will greatly expand recreational access in our region. In Northfield, Mount Grace concluded a **successful community fundraising campaign by acquiring the stunning Richardson Overlook** property from Barbara and Sam Richardson. We are deeply grateful for their enthusiastic and dedicated stewardship of the land and for entrusting Mount Grace with the property's next chapter. A popular regional destination, the property features a gentle hike to the summit which rewards visitors with sweeping views of Mount Grace, the Tully region, and on to Mount Monadnock in the distance. The view is one of the highlights of the New England Trail, whose hikers can also take the opportunity to camp overnight in the Richardson-Zlogar cabin (maintained by the Appalachian Mountain Club) before continuing on their journey from Connecticut to New Hampshire. Numerous side trails weave their way around the property to a second western-facing overlook.



Autumn splendor at Richardson Overlook. Photo by Susan Fitzgerald

In Montague, the children of **Dr. Allen Ross**, Daniel Ross and Mount Grace's Executive Director Emma Ellsworth, continued to work with Mount Grace to donate their **beloved two acres along the Connecticut River** to Mount Grace. Used by the Ross family for many years as a canoe launch, paddlers will be able to put in on one of the most tranquil and picturesque stretches of the Connecticut River. We are now working on plans for improving the existing trail **and adding steps down to the riverbank to make the canoe launch an outstanding accessible recreational destination.**

We have also begun work **examining the process of solar siting in our region**, compiling a list of open space sites that are most susceptible to commercial-scale solar installations. This work will guide our land conservation goals and inform discussions related to this new kind of development.

■ Aaron Nelson

The **Climate and Land Justice Program** works to integrate climate change and land justice into all aspects of the work that Mount Grace does: conservation, stewardship, and outreach.

This year **we developed a climate action plan** that will enable us to center climate change in our upcoming strategic planning. The plan identifies how climate change is interwoven into all aspects of Mount Grace. We **measured our carbon footprint** of our organization and identified ways to reduce our carbon footprint through **energy efficient renovations** of our 18th century farmhouse office and **using remote monitoring** (satellite imagery). In addition to reducing the driving we do for annual monitoring of our conservation restrictions, the remote monitoring imagery will allow us to monitor for landscape level ecological changes and free up stewardship time to respond to the impacts of climate change.



Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines, Jr and Daishuan RedDeer Garate demonstrate how to process a deer hide using traditional methods at the Nipmuc Cultural Celebration held on the Petersham/Nichewaung common on May 21, 2022. Photo by: Rocio Lalanda.

We have begun to **develop a relationship with the Nipmuc Tribe**. Through this relationship we created a Cultural Respect and Use Agreement on our Huppert Conservation Area. The types of reserved rights included in this agreement to the Nipmuc Tribe include the right to harvest medicinal plants and traditional food and to hold ceremonies. We will be writing agreements for other conservation areas and creating a toolkit for other organizations to share land with Indigenous groups. We partnered with the Nipmuc Cultural Preservation, Inc. and PARC to hold a **Nipmuc Cultural Celebration that celebrated Nipmuc people in Petersham**. We are working to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK, pronounced tech) into the management of our lands through hiring Nipmuc Cultural Steward, Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines, Jr. to complete Cultural Inventories, which allow us to steward our land using a "two lens" approach which merges the "high-tech" with the "TEK" to create a more comprehensive way of caring for the land. Finally, we have been working with Carmen Mouzon of **The Farm School**, to analyze and change the historical policies and practices that have perpetuated the exclusion of land ownership for Black, Indigenous, and all People of Color in our region.

■ Jenn Albertaine

The **Stewardship Program** manages Mount Grace properties and monitors our conservation restrictions. With the help of an array of partners, including environmental contractors, Nipmuc tribal members, and volunteers, we steward a mosaic of wildlife habitats and cultivated lands from mountain sides to farms, from wetlands to working forests. We encourage science-based, sustainable land management as well as outdoor recreation.



Creating and opening the new trail at Whitney Memorial Forest

The work we do to steward the land takes a variety of forms. There are the physical steps we took this year monitoring properties and walking the **newly built trail at Whitney Memorial Forest in Winchendon** on Earth Day. There are the determined steps that showed we are in it for

the long haul, as we pushed back knotweed and other invasive plants, and encourage native plants to thrive. We stepped back in time as we researched the history of our farmhouse headquarters at Skyfields Arboretum. And we stepped into the future by **incorporating satellite imagery** into our annual property monitoring, exploring how technology can bring a new efficiency to our work and deeper understanding of climactic impacts.

This past year our TerraCorps Land Stewardship Coordinator Will Durkin successfully wrote a grant to the Hollis Declan Leverett Memorial Fund for **invasive species control** at Eagle Reserve in Royalston, and an **innovative slash wall** at Song Memorial Forest in Warwick. A slash wall is made of limbs and treetops, the remains of logging, to surround a clearing and protect regenerating hardwood saplings from deer browsing.

There are also volunteers who stepped up. Some who held a hammer, rake, or saw and helped our trails stay accessible. Others who offered tools, time, and expertise, improving projects as a whole and brightening each task. It is time well spent to remember we are never walking alone.

■ Tessa Dowling

The **Community Engagement Program** strives to connect the people of our region and beyond with our work and with the land. Through events, media, and youth education programs, we engage and expand our community in learning about, caring for, and protecting the land.

Our TerraCorps member Amanda Carotenuto completed the **Dexter Park Learning Loop**, a half-mile loop trail on the grounds of the Dexter Park and Fisher Hill schools in Orange. **Interpretive signage** at the trail was created entirely by Dexter Park students and describes local flora and fauna. Amanda also collaborated on the creation of **two pop-up storybook trails** at Wendell's Sugarbush Farm and at Cutthroat Brook Tree Farm in Athol, Petersham, and Phillipston.

Community Engagement staff helped launch several simultaneous campaigns encouraging the public to visit and enjoy our newest conservation projects. This included a public paddle on the Connecticut River at the site of our planned **Ross Conservation Area canoe launch** and a whole series of events around the **Richardson Overlook in Northfield**, including community hikes to the property and a successful launch **party at The Brewery at Four Star Farms** in Northfield to celebrate the release of *Richardson Overlook New England IPA*. The seasonal IPA was brewed to benefit the project and Mount Grace looks forward to more ale-related partnerships like this in the future.

The east of the Mount Grace region saw the grand opening of the new **Whitney Memorial Forest Trail on Benjamin Hill**—a ¾-mile walking trail accessible on foot from Winchendon's downtown. Winchendon was also the site of our **nature backpacks collaboration**—a project led by TerraCorps members Meira Downie and Amanda Carotenuto—which allows families to check out backpacks with maps of Mount Grace trails, wildlife ID kits, binoculars, tracking guides, and host of materials designed to encourage kids to get out into the local landscape and learn.

As this report went to press, Mount Grace welcomed Jessica Bryant, who will helm the Community Engagement Program this year. She is looking forward to meeting you all at our upcoming events this year!

■ David Kotker



Dexter Park third and fourth graders with Amanda Carotenuto at the grand opening of the Dexter Park Learning Loop.

Our Farm Conservation Program

undertakes innovative projects that help sustain our local economy, increase community access to healthy local food, and build Massachusetts' food self-reliance by protecting farms for future generations.

This year, we finished two farm projects, including our newest **agricultural conservation area** in Warwick, which will continue to be used by Chase Hill Farm. A highlight of our farm viability promotion efforts has been the **successful transfer of Sunset View Farm**. Chuck and Livvy Tarleton, who protected the Winchendon farm in 2020, were able to transition the whole farm to the Watson family at an agricultural price. This breakthrough encourages the use of innovative Whole Farm Forever conservation tools like the option to purchase at agricultural value (OPAV) to protect not just farmland, but also the associated farm infrastructure, and ensure the land remains in the hands of farmers.

Beyond sheer land protection, we also work to encourage sustainable land management practices and strengthen local agricultural activity. We organized a successful **Pasture Management Workshop Series**, where close to 60 people (mostly farmers), from thirteen different towns, learned about soil fertility and sustainable grazing management practices. To inform and inspire future land conservation professionals, we also **shared our farm conservation and viability experiences with students at Vermont Law School**.



Pasture Management Workshop, taught by Dr. Masoud Hashemi (UMass) and hosted by Don Flye.

Other ways we have supported our farmers this year **include assisting local farmers market committees**, writing letters of support for local farmers and farmers' markets to help them apply for grants, and celebrating the **8th anniversary of our collaboration with Quabbin Harvest Food Coop**. Since Mount Grace purchased the building to enable the Coop to relocate, their community-owned grocery store has significantly expanded their retail operations. Throughout COVID-19, Quabbin Harvest has proven to be a key source of local food as well as an essential market for many small local farmers and food businesses.

■ Rocio Lalanda

Ways of Giving to Mount Grace

Thanks to all our supporters for partnering with Mount Grace to protect our farms, forests, water, and wildlife. Without your support, the conservation of our community resources would not be possible! Some creative ways that you can support our conservation and stewardship work include:

- **Monthly Giving** – Set up a monthly gift in any amount on your credit or debit card.
- **Real Estate Gifts for Resale** – Contact our staff about donating any type of real estate property located anywhere, especially non-conservation properties, to Mount Grace for resale to benefit conservation.
- **Website Donations** – Visit mountgrace.org anytime you like to make a gift to support our work.
- **Business Giving** – Mount Grace offers businesses a wide range of sponsorship opportunities and partnerships. Contact us to learn about sponsorship benefits.
- **Workplace Giving** – If your employer offers matching gifts, simply include your company's matching gift form with your contribution. If your employer is a partner with Earthshare, a federation of environmental charities, you may designate an automatic deduction from each paycheck to Mount Grace.
- **IRA Charitable Rollovers** – If you are 70½ or older, you can use the IRA charitable rollover to donate up to \$100,000 per year to Mount Grace and avoid paying income taxes on the gift.
- **Planned Gifts and Bequests** – Please contact us if you are interested in learning about estate planning efforts that can benefit both your family and conservation. If you have put us in your will at any level, we truly appreciate it. Please let us know so we may thank you in your lifetime!

■ David Kotker

We welcome your participation in the Mount Grace Margaret Power Biggs Society.



The Margaret Power Biggs Society recognizes individuals, businesses, organizations, and foundations contributing at least \$1,000 annually to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

To learn more about how you can become part of the Margaret Power Biggs Society, contact Major Gifts and Grants Manager David Kotker at 978-541-1767 or kotker@mountgrace.org.

Grateful Thanks to Supporters of Mount Grace

Every contribution is special to us. Donors contributing to Mount Grace during the fiscal year (June 1, 2021 – May 31, 2022) are listed on these pages. We regret any unintentional omissions. Thank you to each and all.

The Margaret Power Biggs Society recognizes individuals, businesses, organizations, and foundations contributing at least \$1,000 annually to Mount Grace Land



Conservation Trust. The generosity of Society members gives Mount Grace the resources to conserve the local landscape in a sustained manner that supports the rural character of the region.

CONSERVATORS

(\$10,000 and above)

Anonymous (4)
Eleanor Alden and Tom Manning
Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund
Nancy Ames
The Bafflin Foundation
Tom Chalmers and Joan Meyer
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Grateful Thanks

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(\$100–\$249)

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MOUNT GRACE ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Preliminary Financial Summary

Year Ending May 31, 2022

REVENUES	FY2022 PRELIMINARY	FY2021 FINAL
Gifts & Memberships	\$ 571,864	\$540,930
Grants	\$ 351,584	\$216,080
Investment Income	\$ 19,698	\$ 51,524
In-kind	\$ 4,671	\$ 2,060
Other	\$ 0	\$ 0
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 947,817	\$ 850,767

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	FY2022 PRELIMINARY	FY2021 FINAL
Total Current Assets	\$ 2,763,661	\$2,372,370
Conservation Land & Restrictions	\$ 1,434,728	1,434,728
Buildings & Equipment	\$ 326,792	326,792
TOTAL	\$ 4,525,181	4,133,890
Total Current & Long-Term Liabilities	\$ 544,324	158,174
Total Net Assets & Retained Earnings	\$ 3,980,857	3,975,716
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$ 4,525,181	4,133,890

OPERATING EXPENSES	FY2022 PRELIMINARY	FY2021 FINAL
Landscape Conservation	\$ 117,003	\$116,338
Farm Conservation	\$ 122,094	\$109,559
Community Conservation	\$ 66,405	\$ 52,384
Land Stewardship	\$ 202,496	\$105,442
Engagement & Education	\$ 165,698	\$142,564
Administration	\$ 115,853	\$154,592
In-kind	\$ 4,671	\$ 2,060
Fundraising	\$ 120,330	\$131,890
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$ 914,550	\$814,627
	\$ 33,267	\$ 36,140



In fiscal year 2022, Mount Grace launched *The Land Forever* campaign. As of the end of Fiscal Year 2021, Mount Grace had raised \$3.24M in gifts, in-kind gifts, pledges, and intentions towards its \$3.5M campaign goal.

37,519 Acres Protected Since 1986

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

Our Mission: To benefit the environment, the economy, and future generations by protecting significant land and encouraging land stewardship.

We welcome your articles, photographs, comments, and suggestions. For information about becoming a member or to request a change of address, please contact our office at:

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

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Athol, MA 01331
978-248-2043 (tel)
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landtrust@mountgrace.org
Visit our web site at
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