

Views *from* Mount Grace

Volume 16, No. 1 • Late Winter 2005

C O N S E R V I N G T H E L O C A L L A N D S C A P E™



PHOTO BY JULIA RABIN

Dan tapping maple trees in Northfield

Dan Leahy— Steward *of* the Land Trust

BY SUSAN LASCALA

You know the saying: "If you need to get something done, ask a busy person to do it." Combine a deliberate, can-do attitude with a passion for the natural world and a commitment to save and protect that world, and you have Dan Leahy.

Mount Grace wove its way into the fabric of Dan's life. He served as chairman of the Land Committee through most of his tenure at Mount Grace, and also as board president for two years. Over his eight years on the board, he spent nearly as much time talking about land projects in the evening as he did during the day. In his career with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Dan acquired thousands of acres of land from Maine to Virginia. As a volunteer he used the same skills to guide Mount Grace in its local efforts to protect land.

(continued on page 3)



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\$3.7 Million Budgeted • See Page 4





Dear Friends,

Each of us who supports the work of Mount Grace lost a great friend in January upon the death of John M. Woolsey, Jr. (1916 to 2005). John's quiet presence and skillful ways influenced the best aspects of Mount Grace from its earliest days. His legal expertise combined with extensive knowledge of the North Quabbin landscape gathered over a lifetime meant that he brought great wisdom and perspective to conservation issues. He knew well the small back roads, towns, watersheds and wildlife. His love of the land and his old-fashioned sensibility benefited scores of land conservation projects for more than half a century.

John always delighted in finding a fellow conservationist, and was notably respectful of divergent viewpoints in seeking to achieve mutually desirable goals. For John Woolsey liked results. His clear focus and persistent efforts from behind the scenes made things happen at many conservation organizations across Massachusetts. No sooner were we announcing the completion of one important land deal than his mind and energy had moved on to the next. John's fair-mindedness, steady hand, and generosity will ever be missed by all of us at Mount Grace.

Perhaps the best tribute we can pay to this man who preferred to stay far from the limelight is for Mount Grace to carry on its just-do-it, no-frills land protection. We will continue to actively pursue our mission, operate with great respect for landowners, and make good use of all available tools, just as he did. Together with your support and involvement we can carry on the work which meant so much to him.

Very truly,

Leigh Youngblood
Executive Director

Views *from* Mount Grace

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust protects significant natural, agricultural and scenic areas and encourages land stewardship in North Central and Western Massachusetts for the benefit of the environment, the economy and future generations.

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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978.248.2053 (fax)
landtrust@mountgrace.org (email)

Visit our web site at www.mountgrace.org.

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Views from Mount Grace **Editor**

Susan LaScala

Views from Mount Grace **Design and Layout**

Annette Ermini and Michael Ruocco

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When Dan speaks of individual projects during his tenure at Mount Grace he sounds like a parent talking about his children - he loves each of them in its own way. The one that makes him glow, though, is the Tully Initiative.

What Dan loves about Mount Grace is that it is "every person's land trust." He and his wife Julia have even named Mount Grace as a beneficiary in their will.

"We can't shine too much light on that project," Dan said. He is still awed at Leigh's ability to visualize the far-reaching possibilities of that initiative. While Dan is thoughtful and deliberate in his decision-making, Leigh was all about action. "Leigh did a masterful job," Dan said. Because of his work with the USFWS, Dan could appreciate the scale of the Tully project. "All the stars were aligned," he says. "The political will, the money, the timing...they were all there." That a grassroots organization like Mount Grace could complete 90 projects in two years was "truly amazing."

Last September, Dan stepped down from the board of Mount Grace. Now he gets to spend more time in the places he has taken such pains to protect. He and his wife, Julia—who is happy to see more of her husband—live in a round, cordwood masonry house in Wendell. Dan and Julia are conscious of the rhythms in nature, sugaring with their friends in the spring, picking strawberries in June, enjoying the fruits of the local harvest in late summer. In the fall, Dan takes to the woods, hunting game birds and deer. "There is so much I haven't had time to do," he says. Some days he puts on his hiking boots, packs up his topographical map and a

lunch, and takes off for the day, sure there will be something new and interesting to see. With hundreds of thousands of acres under protection due to the efforts of Dan and his colleagues and fellow volunteers, Dan has earned the right to spend some time away from his desk, walking the places he's protected.

Dan remains committed to Mount Grace. What he loves about Mount Grace is that it is "every person's land trust." He and Julia have even named Mount Grace as a beneficiary in their will. Though Dan is no longer on the board, he has made lifelong friends and connections to the greater community as a part of this organization. Mount Grace is grateful to Dan Leahy for all he has done, and fortunate to have his friendship in perpetuity. ■

To learn more about sugaring in our region, go to:
<http://www.massmaple.org>

LOCAL LANDSCAPE APPEAL UPDATE by Leigh Youngblood

In the previous issue of Views from Mount Grace I wrote about the Local Landscape Appeal, Mount Grace's fundraising effort designed to support a new Director of Land Protection position. Mount Grace members, old and new, have responded with larger average gifts and one substantial multi-year pledge, totaling \$161,000 for this fiscal year. With continued effort we should meet our overall goal of \$200,000 by this May.

The Local Landscape Appeal is a philanthropic action plan comprised of several interdependent elements including our recent end of the year letter, events, a network of volunteers, membership expansion, foundation support, increased individual contributions, and planned bequests. Carrying out the action steps for each of these elements requires the joint effort of staff, board members, and other volunteers working together as members of the Local Landscape Appeal Committee.

Mount Grace is committed to having two staff dedicated to land projects in order to address our current backlog and to evaluate the constant stream of potential projects and imminent threats to important lands - as long as it can be supported financially. Land protection, not fundraising, is the mission and strength of Mount Grace. We are relying on a coordinated alignment of our track record (19,000 acres protected since 1986); guidance from a fundraising consultant; and the participation of a cadre of volunteer supporters to help us meet the conservation needs of the community.

Collectively, we must succeed. The momentum of Mount Grace's work is a reflection of the region's relatively intact landscape; landowners who are looking for ways to keep their land as fields and forests; and supporters that recognize the importance and vulnerability of unprotected open space. This web of relationships is what can hold our future together. Please let us know how you can help. ■

Forest Legacy Application Ranked Nation's Third *in* Priority!

B Y A M A N D A N I M S

Great news! Mount Grace is pleased to announce that the Quabbin Corridor Connection (QCC) Forest Legacy Project has been ranked third in the nation for funding!

As reported in our last newsletter, the QCC is a landscape-scale conservation effort in the towns of Petersham, Athol, Barre and Phillipston. The objective of the project is to protect 2,100 acres owned by 20 landowners, with a total project cost of \$4.8 million dollars. The completed project will result in the connection of a 9-mile corridor totaling 80,000 conserved acres.

Mount Grace is proud to continue our tradition of landscape-scale land protection efforts at the Federal level. This project follows in the tradition of the Tully Initiative which protected 9,100 acres through 104 land protection deals totaling \$9 million dollars.

After many months of preparation, we learned this fall that QCC was ranked the # 1 Forest Legacy project for the entire state of Massachusetts. The proposal was then sent to Washington DC, along with a total of 84 other potential Forest Legacy projects from around the United States, with an overall value of \$219 million dollars.

As part of the President's 2006 budget, the list was narrowed so that \$80 million dollars will be divided among 48 projects. Being ranked as one of the top three proposals in the United States not only points to the significance of the project, but also to the ability of Mount Grace to continue to protect land when state funding sources have been sharply reduced.

According to Mike Fleming, Planner for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the QCC Project is the first ever multi-owner landscape protection project of Forest Legacy. QCC Project funds still need to be voted on by the U. S. House and Senate before going to the President for final approval of the FY2006 budget. If passed, the QCC Project would be the largest Forest Legacy Project funded in Massachusetts and would increase the total acres protected under the program by almost 40 percent.

The Federal funding will provide 75% of the total project's cost of 4.8 million dollars. The remaining money will come from a combination of contributions from a state agency, generous landowners in the form of bargain sales, and foundation and private contributions.

This landscape-scale conservation effort is the result of a partnership between the private landowners, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, Harvard Forest, Massachusetts Audubon Society, and the USDA Forest Service. The Forest Legacy Program is a federal program originally initiated by President Clinton designed to encourage the protection of privately-owned, managed forest lands by working in partnership with local and state agencies, private landowners and landtrusts.

The number one project proposal is in Hawaii, followed by a project in Tennessee. ■

To learn more about the Forest Legacy Program go to the DCR/Bureau of Forestry/Forest Legacy program web page at: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/other/index.htm> or the USDA Forest Service at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp.shtml>



PHOTO BY MARY WOOLSEY

In Memoriam
John M. Woolsey, Jr.
 April 22, 1916 - January 8, 2005
Conservation Leader
 Mount Grace Board of Directors
 1991 - 1994

Mount Grace supporter Dr. Harry Goldman of Cambridge died last December of cancer at age 48. Dr. Goldman purchased a lake-side cottage with a view of Tully Mountain, and fell in love with the region. He gave up his neurology practice in the Boston area to work full-time in Gardner and Athol. He sponsored a newsletter, helped to fund the Hockanum Road and Crossroads Farm projects in Warwick and the Tully Meadow project in Orange, and also donated a computer and printer for our office. We are grateful to his widow, Mary Canning Goldman, for designating Mount Grace as recipient of memorial donations.



PHOTO BY CHUCK GOLDMAN

100% Cost Sharing for Forestry Plans

BY PAM KIMBALL-SMITH

The Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program is offering to reimburse up to 100% of the cost of preparing a Forest Stewardship Plan. A plan will address such questions as: "How can I attract more wildlife or birds? Can I do something to enhance biodiversity? What's the value of the timber or can I improve growing conditions?" Landowners with of 10 acres or more with 7 acres or more of forest in the specified towns who do not already have some type of management plan or conservation restriction in place for their property are eligible to receive up to 100% cost-sharing to help pay for plan development. The cost-sharing that you are eligible to receive is determined by the acreage you own. The rates for Forest Stewardship Plan cost share are: up to 100% or \$700 for 10-36 acres, \$700 + \$11.00/acre for 37-636 acres, and \$6,600 for 637-1,000 acres, whichever is less. If you have a conservation restriction on your land you may be able to be reimbursed up to 50%. MA towns are also eligible for cost share on parcels over 25 acres if they are willing to record a permanent conservation restriction that encourages the implementation of the forest stewardship plan. For more information, a list of consulting foresters, or an application, please visit <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/service/steward.htm>; or call Steve Anderson, Program Coordinator at 413-256-1201. Plans must be completed by May 13, 2005 to be eligible. ■

Eligible Towns: Ashburnham, Athol, Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Northfield, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Templeton, Warwick, Wendell, and Winchendon.

Grants Received

William Wharton Foundation—\$7,000 for the Fiske Pond Project in Wendell in support of our land protection work.

GFA Federal Credit Union—Business contribution for the Local Landscape Appeal.

Athol Daily News—Donation of advertising space.

"O Beautiful Gaia"—\$7,000 for the Local Landscape Appeal was recently received from this International Women's Chorus from the U.S. and Canada. Great thanks go out to Chris



"Love Songs To Earth"
Available on CD

Loughlin, the Atlantic New England representative, and Mount Grace members Carol Harley and Beka Hoffman who recommended Mount Grace as one of two recipients for their support. Their CD's can be purchased at: www.gis.net/~surtsey/mcdade/gaia-index.html.



Skyfields Arboretum; Mount Grace headquarters

PHOTO BY PAM KIMBALL-SMITH

Special Thanks *from* Mount Grace *to*:

A very generous anonymous donor who has donated \$70,000 to the Local Landscape Appeal in support of the Mount Grace land protection positions! During the next two years this donation amount will be reduced by 1/3 each year, meaning that other contributions are needed to match this gift. Please contact us to discuss a matching contribution.

Board member Allen Young who selected Mount Grace to be the recipient of a \$500 donation when he was recently awarded the 2004 Writer and Society Award by the UMASS English Department.

Allen Ross who designated Mount Grace to receive \$1,250 from the annual Saw Mill River Race in Montague.

Brian Boom, Elizabeth Farnsworth, John O'Keefe and Paul Wanta for leading hikes for Mount Grace.

The Woolsey and Goldman families for designating Mount Grace as the recipient of memorial gifts in memory of John Woolsey and Harry Goldman.

Dick French and Walt Davidson for shingling work and general carpentry assistance.

Bonnie House and Mike Ruocco for assistance with the newsletter.

MOUNT GRACE WELCOMES

Dan Laroche of Greenfield
New Director of Land Protection
see profile next issue

Winter Botany Walk *at* Fox Valley

BY ALAIN PETEROY

The study of winter's flora and fauna is for hardy souls who refuse to wait for spring's soft breezes and green leaves to satisfy their botanical curiosity. On the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., ten kindred souls gathered at Mount Grace's 103-acre Fox Valley Conservation Area located in Philipston, MA. Dr. John O'Keefe, past board member of Mount Grace and Director of the Fisher Museum at Harvard Forest, volunteered to lead an early morning walk. John introduced the group to the art and science of identifying trees and shrubs in winter. He focused on bark patterns and colors, bud shapes, and leaf scars. He assured us that looking for fallen leaves under the snow beneath the tree as a way to help identify it was not "cheating," but simply another method of confirming the specimen's identity.



PHOTO BY ALAIN PETEROY

John O'Keefe gives hints on tree identification to a group of intrepid hikers.

To the surprise of all, John demonstrated that the identity of black birch and, to a lesser extent, yellow birch, can be confirmed by a delightful wintergreen taste and smell. One can nibble on the tender, young stems of the trees to release the wintergreen oils. In contrast, the stems of the black cherry, a species often confused with black birch when young, has a pungent, unpleasant odor when crushed. This characteristic certainly confirms its' identity. Our next assignment: identify and purchase boots that will keep feet warm on a slow, botanical walk thru the winter woods. ■

Upcoming Spring 2005 Events

Quabbin to Cardigan
Paul Doscher of the
NH Forest Society
 Hosted by Celt Grant
 75A Butterworth Rd.
 Royalston, MA
Thursday, March 24th
6 pm to 8 pm

Learn about a public/private partnership to protect the Monadnock Highlands of MA and NH. Slide presentation. Refreshments and discussion to follow. Please contact Mount Grace to reserve your space.

Conservation Workshop
 Mount Watchusett
 Community College
Saturday, April 23rd
10 am to 1 pm

Join us to learn about conservation tax benefits, land conservation options and estate planning with local tax attorney George Dresser. Co-Sponsored by UMASS Extension Service, Mount Grace, Ashby Land Trust, Ashburnham Conservation Trust and North County Land Trust.

Lichen Walk
With Dr. R. Vande Poll
Saturday, April 23rd
9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Join noted Mycologist and Ecologist Dr Rick Van de Poll, on a Lichen walk thru the diverse habitat at AICA. Space is limited, pre-registration required. Bring your hand lens and wear waterproof boots. Contact Mount Grace to register.

Build a New Trail!
Arthur Iversen
Conservation Area (AICA)
Saturday, May 21st
9:30 am - 11:30 am

Join Mount Grace staff & volunteers to help build a new trail linking existing AICA trails to the future Crossroads Farm trail corridor. Bring gloves, water and bug spray. We need your help.



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Please join Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. Thanks to our members, Mount Grace is one of the most active land conservation organizations in Massachusetts, saving 19,000 acres in the local region.

Name _____

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Telephone _____(home) _____(work) _____(email)

MEMBERSHIP FORM—Please check all which apply:

_____ I would like to renew / start my membership with a tax-deductible contribution of:

_____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ \$1,000 _____ other

_____ I would like to pledge \$_____ per month to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust.

_____ I would like more information on how to protect a piece of land that is special to me.

_____ I would like to include Mount Grace in my will or as part of my estate. Please send me more information.

_____ I am interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities at Mount Grace.

_____ Please do not use my name in your lists of contributors.

_____ Please do not share my name with other organizations.

Please forward to Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, 1461 Old Keene Road, Athol, MA 01331-9689. Thank you!