

Supporting Local Farms



Together, protecting forever
the land we love

Newsletter

FALL/WINTER 2023



Supporting the Monadnock Region's Local Farms

7.3 acres of farmland conserved in Walpole

Farming in the Monadnock region is an essential and difficult job. Essential, because these hardworking small farmers provide the locally grown food that is available in our stores, restaurants, and farm stands. Difficult, because fertile farmland—already scarce in the area—is rapidly disappearing to development, profit margins are thin, and extreme weather can threaten fields and harvests. Conservation can help small farmers by ensuring that farmland remains affordable and farmer-owned, and by providing a financial lifeline through the purchase of a conservation easement.

Pete's Stand in Walpole is an iconic and beloved local business. Owned and operated by John and Teresa Janiszyn (John's family has operated the stand for three generations; Pete was his grandfather), Pete's Stand sells locally grown vegetables from their roadside stand on Route 12. This hasn't been an easy year for the Janiszyns, or any local farmer. Over the summer, extreme rains flooded their fields, destroying crops and endangering their livelihood. Even worse, many neighbors' fields that John's family farmed for generations are no longer available to them—they're now under box stores and parking lots.



In October of this year, aided by an outpouring of community support for the project, the Conservancy finalized the purchase of a conservation easement on 7.3 acres of land owned and farmed by the Janiszyn's for Pete's Stand. By purchasing this conservation easement, the Conservancy and the Janiszyn's are ensuring that this property will remain farmland, and not disappear to development. Thank you to everyone who donated to this project and made this possible.



What's more essential?

Protecting our most precious resource in the Monadnock region

If you like to read our newsletters, you know that we are always mentioning water on the land we conserve. What's more essential than the water we – and our locally grown fruits and vegetables – drink? From wetlands that filter pollutants and absorb floods, to aquifers – natural ground water storage basins – we are committed to protecting water resources for current and future generations of Monadnock region residents.

The Conservancy has helped conserve thousands of acres of water-rich land in the Monadnock region, but, while that is cause for celebration, the situation elsewhere is more dire. According to a recent investigation by the New York Times, large swaths of the country are near, if not already in, a water crisis.

Crops are already suffering in the Midwest as aquifers – those vital deep deposits of sand and gravel that store water – are used faster than nature can replenish them. In California, Utah, and Texas, so much water is being pulled from the ground so quickly that roads are beginning to crack and buckle.

It is our hope that, with careful stewardship of our water resources, and with support for land conservation, we can keep this region's water supplies clean and abundant for years to come. For our part, we will continue to work with landowners to conserve water resources and the beautiful landscapes they sit on or beneath. We hope you will continue to support this work, and, when you pass a stream or look out across a lake, you will know that some things can be forever.



Wait, what IS a Conservation Easement??

Land conservation demands the skills of many experts and specialists, and the Monadnock Conservancy team is chock full of them. Nearly every project calls upon expertise in forestry, ecology, law, appraising, and land surveying. This is probably a good thing for an organization that protects land forever, but our constant immersion in technical jargon can get in the way of effectively explaining our work to the rest of the world. So, we thought we'd break out of our bubble and take a moment to define the terms we use.

The most common question we receive is: What is a conservation easement? Let's start with the second part – an easement. In the simplest terms, an easement is an agreement (in the form of a property deed) that gives the owner of one property rights to another's property. Easements are very common. Your property might benefit from an easement to draw water from a well on your neighbor's land, for example, or you might have the right to route your driveway over a corner of your neighbor's property by virtue of a right-of-way easement. Highway agencies often hold easements to access a few feet of private roadside property for maintenance or drainage purposes. Granting an easement is a voluntary act, but, once granted, it can only be extinguished by mutual agreement or court action.

A conservation easement is similar: a landowner (Grantor) grants rights to another party (Grantee), usually a land trust like the Monadnock Conservancy or a government agency. There's a big difference, however. Rather than receiving rights to undertake uses of the Grantor's land, the Grantee receives the obligation to ensure no one exercises those rights ever again, even the property owner. Rights commonly extinguished by conservation easements include subdivision, residential uses, mining, or commercial activities (excluding farming and forestry). The land remains privately owned, however, and the landowner retains most usage



rights, including the rights to sell the land, mortgage it, pass it to heirs, and more. The key is that, once granted, a conservation easement is virtually irrevocable and "runs with the land" across all future owners. Landowners may freely donate a conservation easement, or, because the excluded rights have value, they may sell it to a willing land trust or government agency.

Each conservation easement is different and tailored to the unique characteristics of the property and wishes of the owner. Some landowners want their land to remain wild and unmanaged, while others retain the right to harvest and sell timber. Some are willing to grant public access, while others prioritize natural values that do not involve human visitation. At the Conservancy, we typically design conservation easements that allow for some forestry and farming, like the 7.3 acres farmed by Pete's Stand in Walpole.

When a landowner decides to grant a conservation easement, we first put the project through a selection process to determine whether it's a property we want to be bound to forever. As much as we'd like to, we can't conserve every property offered to us. Some, for example, might be too small to justify the commitment, and some might be better suited to a land trust with a different mission focus. If the project makes the cut, we then work with the landowner to discuss, negotiate, and draft the conservation easement deed, which is the document that spells out the various rights and restrictions. We also plan the boundaries of the protected area. Any residences or developed areas will be left outside the easement's boundaries, and additional acreage may be excluded to accommodate future development needs. Lawyers, land surveyors, and appraisers are often engaged throughout the process.

Once the easement deed is signed, our Easement Stewardship team takes over. Their job is to monitor the property at least annually to ensure that the terms of the conservation easement are being upheld, and, if they aren't, to take any steps needed to resolve the situation, including legal action. Fortunately, the vast majority of our relationships with owners of land on which we hold conservation easements are seen as constructive partnerships for the good of the land and community.

We hope this helps explain the finer points of an indispensable conservation tool. The most important thing about conservation easements is that, without monitoring and attention, they are just pieces of paper. Your support brings them to life and ensures they withstand the test of time. Thank you.

A Welcome Announcement

Iconic land will be conserved in Temple

We love big tracts of land, but sometimes smaller properties are just as important to a community and its character. This is true of Pete's Stand in Walpole, and it is true of five acres in the center of Temple known by locals as School House Meadow, or the Triangle. The Conservancy is currently working with town officials to conserve this town-owned parcel that serves as a scenic gateway to Temple's village. For generations, School House Meadow has welcomed residents and visitors alike.

In addition to its aesthetic value, this parcel also boasts important natural resources, especially water. A drinking water well on the property taps a groundwater aquifer—a deep layer of sand and gravel that holds water—and serves several nearby village buildings, including the town hall, post office, church, and library. The land is also located next to or near hundreds of acres of other conserved land to the northwest and east.

Community support for protecting Temple's School House Meadow forever is strong, and residents voted at the March 2023 town meeting to place a conservation easement on this iconic space. We thank all Temple residents and officials for trusting the Conservancy to be their partner in conserving the property. The next time you drive into Temple village, we hope the scenic rural character welcomes you as warmly as the town welcomed our involvement.



Walking for Health and Community

In addition to our climate, water, and wildlife, conservation benefits our entire community by providing spaces for outdoor recreation. Exercise in nature improves mental and physical health, and it deepens our connection to the land. That's why the Monadnock Conservancy is committed to helping everyone access the benefits of time outdoors. One way we do this is through our Cheshire Walkers program – a weekly, guided walking series for seniors or anyone who might prefer a slower pace. Originally managed by the Cheshire Medical Center, we took over the program in 2022, offering weekly outings through the spring and fall.

The fall season of the Cheshire Walkers was a smashing success! We led ten guided outings, taking our intrepid walkers to enjoy a comfortable pace and lots of socializing in beautiful places across the region. Some of the walks were led by staff naturalists, and participants had the opportunity to learn about the natural world. We are now working to create additional programs for other groups. Stay tuned in 2024 for the spring season of the Cheshire Walkers and other guided offerings.



Rally for Land!

The Conservancy attends the Land Trust Alliance's annual conference

Every year, the **Land Trust Alliance** – an umbrella organization that advocates for land conservation at the highest levels of government – brings together land conservation organizations from across the country



for Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference. This September, Rally was in Portland, Oregon, and four Conservancy staff members were in attendance.

Rally is important to our work for many reasons. It offers workshops presenting the latest developments in the field, such as new legal requirements, new funding sources, deep dives into communications, tools to improve accessibility and inclusion, and much more. The content delivered at Rally ensures our team stays on the cutting edge.

The conference is also a great opportunity to meet, learn from, and be inspired by others in the land conservation community. On our Facebook and Instagram pages, you can find a video we made of just a handful of the incredible people we met, all working to conserve land in their communities. By networking with our peers from around the country, we are reminded that, although conservation happens at the local level, it is a national movement. Thank you to the Land Trust Alliance for hosting Rally, and to all our brilliant colleagues for sharing our passion for the land.

Trailblazers Forge a Path Forward

Donors who give a monthly or quarterly donation help sustain the Conservancy's momentum. These supporters, affectionately called "Monadnock Trailblazers," provide a reliable, ongoing stream of income, ensuring there are always funds available to advance critical land conservation projects.

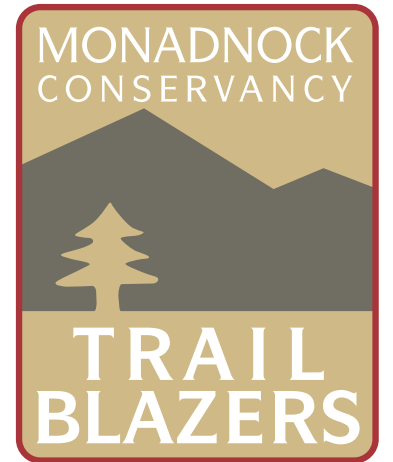
We are so grateful to the 63 households across the region (and beyond!) who have become Trailblazers. You can join them by making a monthly or quarterly gift of as little as \$5, and you'll be surprised how fast that impact adds up. It's easy to start: just visit MonadnockConservancy.org/donate or contact Lindsay Tafas, development director, at Lindsay@MonadnockConservancy.org or 603-357-0600, ext. 113. Recurring gifts can be established through a direct debit from your bank account, credit card, or debit card.

Thank you to our current Monadnock Trailblazers for their ongoing and vital support!

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Thank You

The Monadnock Conservancy now oversees **more than 23,000 acres** of permanently conserved forests, wetlands, and farms. It is our duty and privilege to be the stewards of this land, but we could not do it without the support of donors. Your donations help ensure we have the staff, tools, and expertise to seize conservation opportunities when they arise. Whether you care about the local economy, clean water, wildlife habitat, or beautiful views, the Conservancy works to ensure that these resources are here for you and for future generations.



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