

Franklin Land Trust

Conserving Farms, Fields & Forests Since 1987

FALL 2024

**D2R2
2024**
p. 8

THE FOUR PILLARS

*A Hills to Valley Success Story
From Spring Ephemerals to Winter Wonders
Welcome Our New Board Members*



FRANKLIN LAND TRUST

5 Mechanic Street
PO Box 450
Shelburne Falls, MA 01370
(413) 625-9151
FranklinLandTrust.org

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members and Supporters,

The Franklin Land Trust has now conserved over 35,500 acres. This is two and a half times the size of Manhattan, or equivalent to the land owned by the national park service in Acadia National Park.

This year, our team completed several significant conservation projects adding 702 acres to our total conserved. We acquired a 147-acre former dairy farm turned golf course in Ashfield, enhancing connectivity on over 1,000 acres of protected lands. We also conserved Kenburn Orchards in Shelburne, ensuring it remains viable farmland and managed forestland, and protected 47 acres of the “Old Dean Farm” on Patten Hill, which features farm soils and a sugar bush.

Additionally, we collaborated with Historic Deerfield to conserve 48 acres, and conserved 166 acres of prime farm soils on Antonellis Farm, totaling 214 acres of ecologically and historically valuable land in the North Meadows of Deerfield.

But our successes this year aren’t limited to the amount of land we conserved. We also made strides as an organization, finalizing an updated Strategic Plan as well as a five-year Conservation Priorities Plan that reflects an evolving vision and the growing needs of our community.

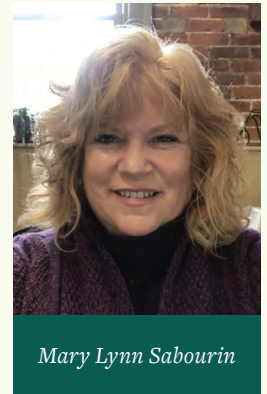
We have identified critical areas for conservation, focusing on conserving water resources and agricultural land, enhancing forest resilience, and safeguarding open spaces vital for recreation and biodiversity. These priorities align with our mission to protect the natural resources of our region while addressing contemporary challenges.

As we approach our 38th anniversary and draw ever closer to our 40th, we remain deeply grateful for the unwavering support of our donors, the dedication of our incredible staff, and the leadership of our board.

Your generosity and commitment are the heart of our success and the driving force behind our vision for the future.

With warmest regards,

Mary Lynn Sabourin



Mary Lynn Sabourin

Four Pillars Four Projects

A Hills to Valley Success Story

BY SEBASTIAN LAMONTAGNE

For the past 37 years, the Franklin Land Trust has been steadfast in its mission to conserve the natural and agricultural heritage of our region.

“From a small gathering of volunteers in the 1980’s, the Franklin Land Trust has evolved into a strong organization of professionals dedicated to the idea that this beautiful landscape shall never be bulldozed into another land of strip malls and crowded suburbs. Having conserved almost 36,000 acres, a number that keeps growing, FLT supporters and staff have proved that an environmentally sound approach can stand the test of time,” says Tom Luck, longtime Franklin Land Trust supporter and board member.

“I keep thinking of the old slogan, ‘Think globally and act locally,’ as exemplifying what this organization is all about. We can’t fix all the world’s problems, but we can be one of the hundreds of thousands of groups that are working to heal the earth and conserve the beauty and natural systems that sustain us both physically and emotionally.”

The root of our success has been the Franklin Land Trust’s pragmatic approach to conservation, anchored by our Four Pillars: agriculture, water, wildlife, and history. These pillars represent the land values we look for when considering potential conservation projects, and codify our commitment to conserve working farmlands and woodlands, safeguard water resources, maintain wildlife corridors, and protect the historic rural character of our area.

The “big four” projects highlighted in this newsletter, all acquired or conserved between November 2023 and June 2024, were made possible by the support of our donors and a generous anonymous foundation grant. These projects embody each of the main themes of our conservation work, with some addressing multiple of the four pillars at the same time.

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Edge Hill Conservation Area



Inaugural trail race at Edge Hill

In November 2023 the Franklin Land Trust (FLT) successfully acquired the Edge Hill Golf Course in Ashfield, adding approximately 147 acres of conservation land to its fee stewardship portfolio. The property, originally purchased in 1893 by Nellie Graves Wheeler, has a rich history as a dairy farm and more recently, as a golf course.

This acquisition is part of a broader ongoing effort to protect the headwaters of the Bear River region and its cold-water fisheries. FLT now stewards conservation restrictions on over 1,000 acres in the Bear River Region and is well on its way to meeting this goal.

Edge Hill Conservation Area, which could have been divided into 17 house lots, will instead be restored to grassland, shrubland, riparian and wetland habitat, filling several important ecological niches and enhancing biodiversity.

Continued on next page

Larry & Susan Flaccus Conservation Restriction



View of blueberry fields at Kenburn Orchards

In March 2024, Kenburn Orchards, a historic 151-acre farm in Shelburne, Massachusetts, was permanently protected through a conservation restriction facilitated by the Franklin Land Trust. Owned by Susan and Larry Flaccus, the farm has been in Susan's family since 1924 when her grandfather, Kenyon Yale Taylor, purchased it and transformed it from a dairy farm into a thriving apple orchard.

"That was the time that the older varieties of apples were in vogue" explains Susan "the Macintosh and Delicious. My grandfather was considered quite avant-garde when he planted Golden Delicious and a few Cortlands."

The Flaccus family has always cared deeply about the land and its conservation, and Susan and Larry generously sold a conservation restriction on their land for a price lower than the appraised value.

"My father, loved this land more than life itself really. I'm the only child and so I was to inherit the land, and the only thing he asked of me was that I not let it be developed" says Susan, "It was so important to my father and to Larry, who is the chair of the Open Space Committee in Shelburne. And really important to me because my soul is here."

Over the years, Susan and Larry have diversified the farm and today Kenburn Orchards operates as a pick-your-own blueberry operation and a Christmas tree farm, while the remaining acreage is managed for forestry and wildlife habitat. The property, located along the picturesque Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway, boasts 14 acres of prime farmland soils and 100 acres of prime forestry soils. It is home to abundant wildlife, including deer, bear, and numerous bird species.

The conservation of Kenburn Orchards was made possible by a grant from an anonymous foundation, which also supported the Franklin Land Trust's acquisition of the Edge Hill Conservation Area and the rest of the "big

four" projects.

"If you're coming up into Shelburne, this is really the first open piece of land on the Mohawk trail up here" says Larry, adding "Conservation is so important because you can always make more money, and you can always build more, but you can never make more land. When it's gone, it's gone."

Historic Deerfield Farmland Conservation Restriction



Forested wetlands along Mill Village Road

When the colonists established Deerfield, they laid out 43 house lots along Main Street, each accompanied by a corresponding thin strip of farmland. These narrow strips allowed farmers to work their land without the challenging task of frequently turning their oxen. Remarkably, these strips are still visible on property maps today.

"That 17th-century imprint of land is still there," says John Davis, CEO and President of Historic Deerfield.

In early May 2024, the Franklin Land Trust accepted a donated conservation restriction on 47.9 acres in the North Meadows, from Historic Deerfield. This initiative aimed to conserve four agricultural parcels, totaling 34.8 acres, which are currently leased to local farmers for vegetable, corn, and hay production. Additionally, another 13.2 acres of forested wetlands with historical significance were also conserved along Mill Village Road south of Historic Deerfield.

"Preservation is what is the core of our mission as an institution and that includes architecture, it includes land and it includes our collection of our antiques; it's in our DNA," says Davis. "Ensuring that modern buildings cannot ever be built on these areas and the view remains open and uncluttered is really important."

The parcels, gifted to Historic Deerfield through various bequests, are part of the Scenic Landscape Inventory and are visible along the scenic Route 5/10 corridor. These lands, rich in prime farm soils, contribute significantly to the North Meadows agricultural output

and historical landscape. The conservation restriction ensures that modern buildings cannot be built on these areas, preserving the open and uncluttered view.

The North Meadows has a storied history, having been home to Indigenous people, English colonists, and generations of farmers. The area also witnessed a battle during the Feb. 29, 1704 attack on Deerfield.

Historic Deerfield has voiced their commitment to maintaining agricultural production on these lands, which continue to look much as they did in the 17th and 18th centuries.

“We will continue to lease out our acreage to local farmers,” Davis added. “That’s what we’ve always done and the conservation restriction allows us to continue doing that, and in fact, it encourages us to.”

Antonellis Farm Conservation Restriction



FLT Stewardship Staff with Mike Antonellis and Joe Smith

Mike Antonellis spent his childhood on the Ciesluk Farm, learning from his grandfather Frank Ciesluk, who established the farm in Deerfield in the early 1900s and dedicated his life to farming the land. After his grandfather’s passing in 2016, Mike purchased the family farm in 2018-19 to uphold the family’s farming tradition.

Mike describes this land as very special and “not like anywhere else I’ve farmed.”

Now called Antonellis Farm, the 166-acre property along the Deerfield River in the North Meadows is part of the fertile Deerfield River Valley. Mike’s sister, Jennifer Antonellis, manages the Ciesluk Farm Stand, where their grandfather once sold sweet corn and other produce. Together, Mike and Jennifer continue their grandfather’s legacy, operating the farmstand and growing and selling corn, vegetables, and pumpkins, both retail and wholesale. Mike also manages additional farmland for nationwide hay sales. The meadowlands of Deerfield, shaped by the river’s energy, harbor over a mile of waterfront habitat, including oxbows and marshes—a biodiversity hotspot. Recognizing

its unique value, Michael Antonellis chose to conserve his farm.

In June 2024, Mike sold a conservation restriction on 166 acres to the FLT, funded by private donors and an anonymous grant.

“It was wonderful to work with the next generation of farmers in the valley” says Alain Peteroy, Director of Land Conservation at Franklin Land Trust. “I look forward to buying some of the Antonellis farm’s sweet corn!”

“Every acre of valuable farm soils that Franklin Land Trust can be part of protecting is one more acre where food can be grown for our neighbors and friends, and that is very gratifying” Peteroy adds.

Thank you

“Franklin Land Trust has blossomed from a nascent organization that campaigned to conserve one parcel in Ashfield 37 years ago to a vibrant non-profit that owns and manages 20 conservation areas comprising 1,300 acres, and holds 166 CRs and APRs totaling 10,600 acres” says Barbara Miller, FLT’s Board President.

“Funding for projects progressed from selling pumpkins at the Ashfield Fall Festival to building community of about 1000 dedicated supporters, whose donations have made it possible for FLT to employ 9 full-time staff and purchase a building to call home.”

The big four are all worthy of being called signature projects, and all were conserved within a year.

“The past year was a banner year for conservation” says Miller. “Because of the generous donations from members, we were able to attract a foundation that provided the remaining funds to close on four critical conservation projects. These include conserving Kenburn Orchards in Shelburne – a hilltown blueberry farm, The Antonellis farm in Deerfield – prime farm soil with a long-standing agricultural legacy, several parcels owned by Historic Deerfield, and the purchase of Edge Hill Golf Course in Ashfield, now Edge Hill Conservation Area. We are excited to watch the transformation of this property from a managed golf course to a diverse habitat for wildlife and vegetation.”

We here at FLT are continually amazed by what can be accomplished through your collective actions. Over the past 37 years you have transformed the vision of the Franklin Land Trust’s founders into a reality, and the scale of our recent conservation efforts demonstrates how far that enthusiasm has brought us as a community.

“The Board and Staff at FLT thank you for your support of our work. This work truly would not be possible without you!” says Miller.



Hale's Gavel for FLT

For nearly twenty years the Franklin Land Trust (FLT) held annual art auctions as a fundraiser in support of their conservation work and to celebrate the wonderful art of the many talented artists in Franklin County. A committee of artists came together and created a stunning art gallery for a day, an event that brought our artist and land conservation community together with both a silent and live auction.

Local renowned artist and FLT supporter, Hale Johnson, and his wife Lorraine were very involved with this event. To everyone's delight, Hale even served as live auctioneer. One year Hale surprised us with a special item– a gavel made of wood from his property mounted on a plaque that included a miniature painting of a barn. Last year, Liz Kidder, who had worked with Hale on the auctions, saw this gavel come up for sale at a local auction house. She successfully bid on the gavel and decided that it really belonged hanging on display in the office of the FLT Executive Director.

Be sure to stay tuned for our upcoming art auction and sale in 2025! This event will carry forward the spirit of our previous art auctions.

Forests for Fish Workshop

BY EMILY BOSS

Working with Trout Unlimited and the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, Franklin Land Trust hosted a workshop on fisheries habitat on small coldwater streams in Colrain, MA, and debuted a resource toolkit called: “Forests for Fish”. Hosted by local land steward, Jud DeCew, twenty-four local residents and interested community members learned about stream ecology and riparian channel management.

A work crew of Trout Unlimited staff demonstrated the habitat restoration practice of instream wood loading on Tissdell Brook. Done with all needed permits in hand, large trees were cut and placed in the stream at carefully chosen sites. These trees will help create deep pools to keep fish cool in hot summers, encourage floodplain reconnection and increase diversity of habitat for brook trout and other native coldwater fish in the reach.

For more information about fisheries habitat restoration and the Forests for Fish Toolkit, please visit masswoodlandsinstitute.org.

This workshop and the toolkit have been funded in part by Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture and Canaan Valley Institute through a grant awarded by the US Forest Service.

Forests for Fish Workshop, Sept 14th 2024



Nature Explorers Series

From Spring Ephemerals to Winter Wonders

BY AMELIA BERGQUIST

Over the past year, FLT's Nature Explorers Series has brought the community closer to the wonders of our local ecosystems. Led by Cesi Marseglia, a passionate naturalist and educator, this series provided participants with a unique opportunity to delve into the intricate relationships within our environment. Cesi, who has studied New England ecology at Hampshire College and has nearly a decade of experience working with native plants, has a genuine love for sharing his knowledge of the natural world.

Cesi's journey with the Franklin Land Trust began with his desire to connect people with nature in meaningful ways. His enthusiasm for the wild world was evident in each event, from the Spring Ephemerals Walk, where attendees marveled at the rare West Virginia White butterfly and the delicate toothwort flowers, to the Forest Awakens event, Cesi's personal favorite, which revealed the lively world of salamanders and wood frogs in vernal pools.

Despite occasional rain, the series drew dedicated nature enthusiasts who, as Cesi put it, often "knew the land better than I did!" These interactions enriched not only the participants' understanding but also Cesi's own appreciation for the region's history and ecology. Many attendees, including families with children, left with a renewed sense of wonder, often exclaiming, "I won't look at plants the same way!" and telling Cesi they'd be back for the next one.



Looking ahead, Cesi is excited for the upcoming "Winter Adaptations" event, known for its "wow factor" as participants learn to track wildlife in the snow. Reflecting on the series, Cesi shared, "Seeing the interconnectedness of all the parts of a healthy forest ecosystem amazes people." This sentiment captures the heart of the Nature Explorers Series—a celebration of nature's complexity and beauty, one that hopes to foster a deeper appreciation for the environment in all who attend.

Neither Migration Nor Hibernation: The Winter Adaptations of Animals Who Stick it Out

SAT, NOV 23 | 10:00-11:30am | Plainfield | Free

From the enchanting to the disgusting, and from the innovative to the just plain weird, animals who stay active throughout the winter have evolved myriad ways to cope with the cold. Join Cesi Marseglia at Guyette Farm in Plainfield on November 23rd. Guyette Farm is on the corner of Gloyd Rd. and Old South St. Learn about the ingenious, species-specific adaptations of animals who are awake through the long winter months. Maybe you will come away with some adaptations of your own!

Pre-register to attend: franklinlandtrust.org/events

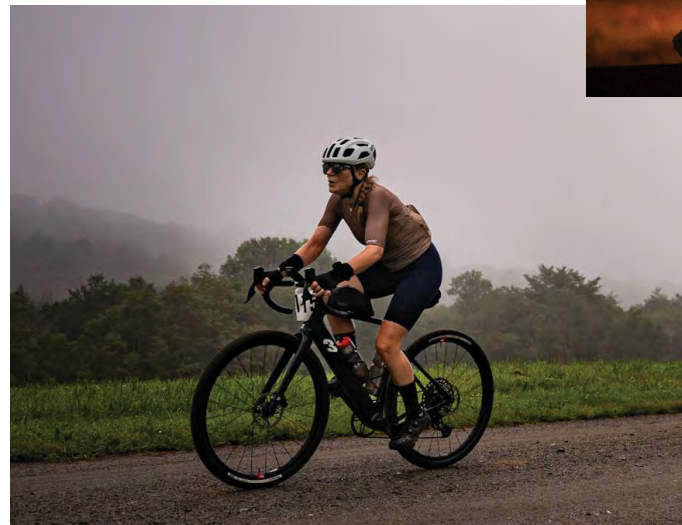


A Big Happy Reunion

Once again, the Deerfield Dirt-Road Randonnee (D2R2) has come and gone, marking another remarkable year filled with excitement, camaraderie, and memorable moments. D2R2 is our biggest fundraiser of the year and plays a crucial role in supporting the Franklin Land Trust's mission to conserve the scenic beauty and natural spaces of western Massachusetts. The proceeds from D2R2 represent 30% of our budget. This year's event welcomed over 1,450 riders from 28 states and 3 countries, all gathering to experience the beauty and challenge of western Massachusetts' gravel roads. "D2R2 is always a big, happy reunion of sorts with such a huge turnout of gravel cyclists from all over the northwest AND the world!" said one rider, echoing the event's spirit of connection and community.

The 2024 edition featured new additions that made the day extra special. From the bagpiper kicking off the 180k to the crowd-favorite Bear Bars at the checkpoints, Maple Valley Creamery's Ice Cream Truck, Mohawk Shawarma, Local Burger that rounded out a fantastic set of dinner offerings, the day was packed with unique touches.

Local food for D2R2 was provided by several farms: Savage Farms in Deerfield, managed by John G. "Jay" Savage, offered potatoes and rotational crops; Antonellis Farm, run by Mike Antonellis, supplied fresh sweet corn from its conserved farmland along the Deerfield River;



Atlas Farm, a certified organic farm by Gideon Porth, provided salad greens and tomatoes; and Sidehill Farm in Hawley, managed by Paul Lacinski and Amy Klippenstein, contributed organic grass-fed yogurt. All catering was performed by the wonderful Chesterfield General Store.

Additionally, Berkshire Brewing Company and Dirt Church Brewing provided this year's beer selection. Signs placed around the food tent offered background and context on the farms.

"Huge thanks to all of the staff & volunteers of D2R2 for such a great time and pulling off a huge party with great riding!" another participant shared.

"Had a great adventure at this year's D2R2," one rider reflected. Another commented, "Nothing like the bond of a long day of suffering on the bike with friends both new and old. Awesome to see so many people pushing themselves to new limits and finding out how tough they really are."



Already looking forward to riding D2R2 again in 2025!”

The event not only brings cyclists together but also plays a crucial role in supporting the Franklin Land Trust’s mission to conserve the beautiful landscapes of western Massachusetts. Every year, participants connect with the natural world that D2R2 helps protect, making the ride meaningful in more ways than one.

For some first-timers D2R2 becomes an instant annual tradition, like one excited participant who exclaimed in his review, “First D2R2 this year for me and I absolutely loved it. Can’t wait for next year!”

As the Franklin Land Trust gears up for the 20th anniversary of D2R2 in 2025, riders can look forward to a spectacular celebration of two decades of tradition, innovation, and community. We can’t wait to see everyone again next year!



D2R2 Goes Green(er)

The Franklin Land Trust was pleased to offer new and improved waste management during the D2R2 event on August 17. To make the process successful, FLT purchased cutlery made from plants like corn, bamboo, and sugarcane (www.worldcentric.com/journal/compostable-plastics). The caterer served food on compostable plates and cups, so the ONLY trash - waste that needed to go to the landfill or incinerator - were ketchup packets and creamers. Next year we can switch to a bottle and a jug. Instead of a full trash dumpster, we brought 30 bags of food waste, cardboard and paper to Martin’s Farm in Greenfield where, in 3-4 months, it is transformed into fertile soil (martinsfarmcompost.com).

Cyclists separated their returnable cans, so that the aluminum can be remade into new products, and earned \$85 for FLT.

Is composting and recycling worth the effort? Plastics made from fossil-fuels pollute the land, air, and water during extraction, production, incineration and landfilling. Toxic chemicals leach into our groundwater and are released in smokestacks. Using and composting sustainably made plant-based products returns nutrients back to the soil in an on-going cycle.

Volunteers make this work!

To help out next year, contact Linda Alvord:
lalvord@frankinlandtrust.org

Welcome our New Board Members

We are thrilled to have welcomed several new board members to the Franklin Land Trust this year. It has been a joy getting to know these wonderful individuals, and we are excited to introduce them to you!



Steve Howland

Steve is a University of Massachusetts graduate and spent many years teaching at Greenfield Community College. In 1990s he switched to computers and spent a lot of years in front of a screen. In retirement gets to spend his time outdoors, hiking, skiing and snowmobiling. He recently restored a 1820s farm house on 60 acres and maintains public access trails for hiking and cross country skiing on the property. He is also a fiddler and contra dance caller. He loves building community around music and the outdoors and is thrilled to part of the FLT team.



Cindy Skelly

Cindy is a bicultural leader in the social service non-profit world. She is committed to valuing diversity and contributing to an inclusive environment. Over the past fifteen years, she has worked with underserved, marginalized people and on a team of diverse colleagues. She believes nature should be accessible and open to all. Living in a small town, Cindy cherishes open spaces and finds an oasis in nature. It's the reason she calls this place home after living in a Texas city for half her life, and witnessing the rapid growth of urban sprawl. On any given day, you will find her outside, most likely cycling, hiking, paddling, or gardening.



Brian Donahue

Brian Donahue is Professor Emeritus of American Environmental Studies at Brandeis University. He has written books on suburban community farming, colonial agriculture, American agrarianism, and building houses from local forests. He is also co-author of several works on the future of New England conservation, farming, and forestry including *Wildlands and Woodlands*, *A New England Food Vision*, and *Beyond the Illusion of Preservation*. He helped found and run the community and educational farm and forest organization *Land's Sake* in Weston, MA in the 1980's; and with his wife Faith now co-owns and manages *Bascom Hollow Farm* in Gill, which produces beef cattle, pastured pigs, pumpkins, squash, and timber. He has served on many land trusts and town boards, including the *Gill Conservation Commission* and the *Massachusetts Woodlands Institute*.

Meet FLT's 2024 Interns



Amelia Bergquist

Amelia is currently finishing a degree in Natural Resources and Conservation at UMass Amherst. Drawn to the mission of conserving the landscapes of her home region, she joined the Franklin Land Trust as an intern in July. She has contributed her time to FLT's major fundraiser, D2R2, and to various other outreach projects through her passion for writing and design.

Beyond her work with the Land Trust, Amelia enjoys exploring the outdoors, whether it be hiking around New England or improving her novice climbing skills. When not on the trails or in school, she can be found cooking, spending time with her dogs, or working at a local pub in Amherst.



Erika Looman

Erika has called Shelburne, Massachusetts, home her entire life. After completing her undergraduate degree in Geology at St. Lawrence University, and inspired by a summer on Squam Lake and an independent study working with the St. Lawrence Land Trust, Erika returned home. She was thrilled to find an opportunity to expand her knowledge of non-profit land protection within her community. As an organizational intern, Erika has assisted in the preparing for D2R2 and has worked closely with the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute on their Forests for the Fish project.

Community Events

Register for upcoming events on our website
franklinlandtrust.org/events



Our Dynamic Forests

Fall 2024 | Time TBD | Plainfield | Free

Healthy forests are important for clean water, wildlife habitat, wood products, and providing climate benefits. Visit Franklin Land Trust's Guyette Farm to see how this 100 acre property provides diverse habitat, from thick young poplar stands to towering stately pines. Join us for a talk on the dynamic forest and a forest tour to learn how forest planning and management can build a resilient landscape.

Pre-registration required: franklinlandtrust.org/events



Franklin Land Trust
5 Mechanic Street
P.O. Box 450
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01370

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GIVING TUESDAY

DEC. 3

With your support, conserved land can provide locally sourced food, clean water, and fresh air. It can be a healthy home for wildlife, and a place of wonder and exploration for you. You can make a difference for the land, your family, and your future. #GivingTuesday is a global giving movement that helps our communities locally. On #GivingTuesday and all year round, your support for the conservation work of the Franklin Land Trust provides a tangible and critical benefit to the local landscape, for your family and for your community.

Visit franklinlandtrust.org/givingtuesday

Or send your contribution to: Franklin Land Trust,
P.O. Box 450, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

