

Franklin Land Trust

Conserving Farms, Fields & Forests Since 1987

SPRING 2026

Watersheds and Connected Landscapes

*Along The Fall River
The Work of a Lifetime
Saving A Place For Solitude*



FRANKLIN LAND TRUST

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Barbara Miller, *Ashfield*
President

Thomas Luck, *Leyden*
Vice President

Jaap Molenaar, *Deerfield*
Treasurer

Lloyd Crawford, *Hawley*
Clerk

Nina Coler, *Ashfield*

Brian Donahue, *Gill*

Steve Howland, *Charlemont*

Thomas McCrumm, *Ashfield*

Nicolas Miller, *Charlemont*

Alex Parker, *Dover*

Bill Pastuszek, *Colrain*

Cindy Skelly, *Buckland*

STAFF

Mary Lynn Sabourin
Executive Director

Alain Peteroy
Deputy Director

Emily Boss
*Community Conservation
Program Manager*

William Sloan Anderson
Director of Stewardship

Linda Alvord
Administrative Assistant

Marlene Hebert
Finance Administrator

Sebastian LaMontagne
*Development & Communications
Coordinator*

Alex Wahlstrom
Land Steward

Amelia Bergquist
Land Steward

Liam Cregan
Land Protection Specialist

Becca Smith
Membership & Events Coordinator

ON THE COVER:
SANDHILL CRANES
PHOTO BY CHERYL A. PATTERSON

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Land conservation faces mounting challenges at a critical moment. Over the past year, federal support including expert guidance, resource allocation, information sharing, and funding, has been eliminated even as environmental pressures continue to intensify.

But conservation is a grassroots effort, powered by people like you. It was your campaigns and tireless advocacy that won federal support in the first place. And it will be won again.

In the meantime, you are keeping organizations like ours alive despite the nationwide efforts to end environmental work. This past Giving Tuesday was our most successful ever, raising over \$125,000. Donors spoke up loud and clear in favor of conservation. But it is vital that we make this upcoming Give Back to the Land Day on April 7th another record breaker in order for us to weather this moment.

Longtime donor Cheryl Patterson is matching every dollar up to \$10,000 in memory of her beloved wife, Lorraine Hart.

Lorraine passed away in September of 2024 from a rare and aggressive form of cancer. For many years, she and Cheryl championed open space conservation and wildlife protection—work that meant a great deal to them.

Please join Cheryl in giving to the Franklin Land Trust. Let your love for the land become a part of the legacy you leave behind.

The Franklin Land Trust has not been discouraged or intimidated by the scale of the challenges we face. This past year, we did some of our best work to date. You can read about some of that work in this newsletter.

Give Back to the Land Day is April 7th—but you don't need to wait. You can give early, starting today. If we can raise \$50,000, we'll break all previous Give Back to the Land Day records.

With warmest regards,

Mary Lynn Sabourin

Give Back
TO THE LAND

Don't wait to make your Give Back to the Land Day donation!

Your early donations will be matched dollar for dollar by Cheryl Patterson, in memory of her late wife Lorraine Hart.

Donations can be made using the enclosed form, or online at:
franklinlandtrust.org/donate



Mary Lynn Sabourin





Watersheds and Connected Landscapes

BY WILL SLOAN-ANDERSON

MANY OF OUR READERS WILL RECOGNIZE THE FLT region map that identifies the parcels we have helped conserve over the years. Lime green parcels scattered over our towns. Often, we discuss the importance of coalescing these parcels together, creating important blocks and corridors of conserved land as a way of measuring success. This is important because large unfragmented areas of conserved land across the landscape ensure critical wildlife habitat and working agriculture and forests.

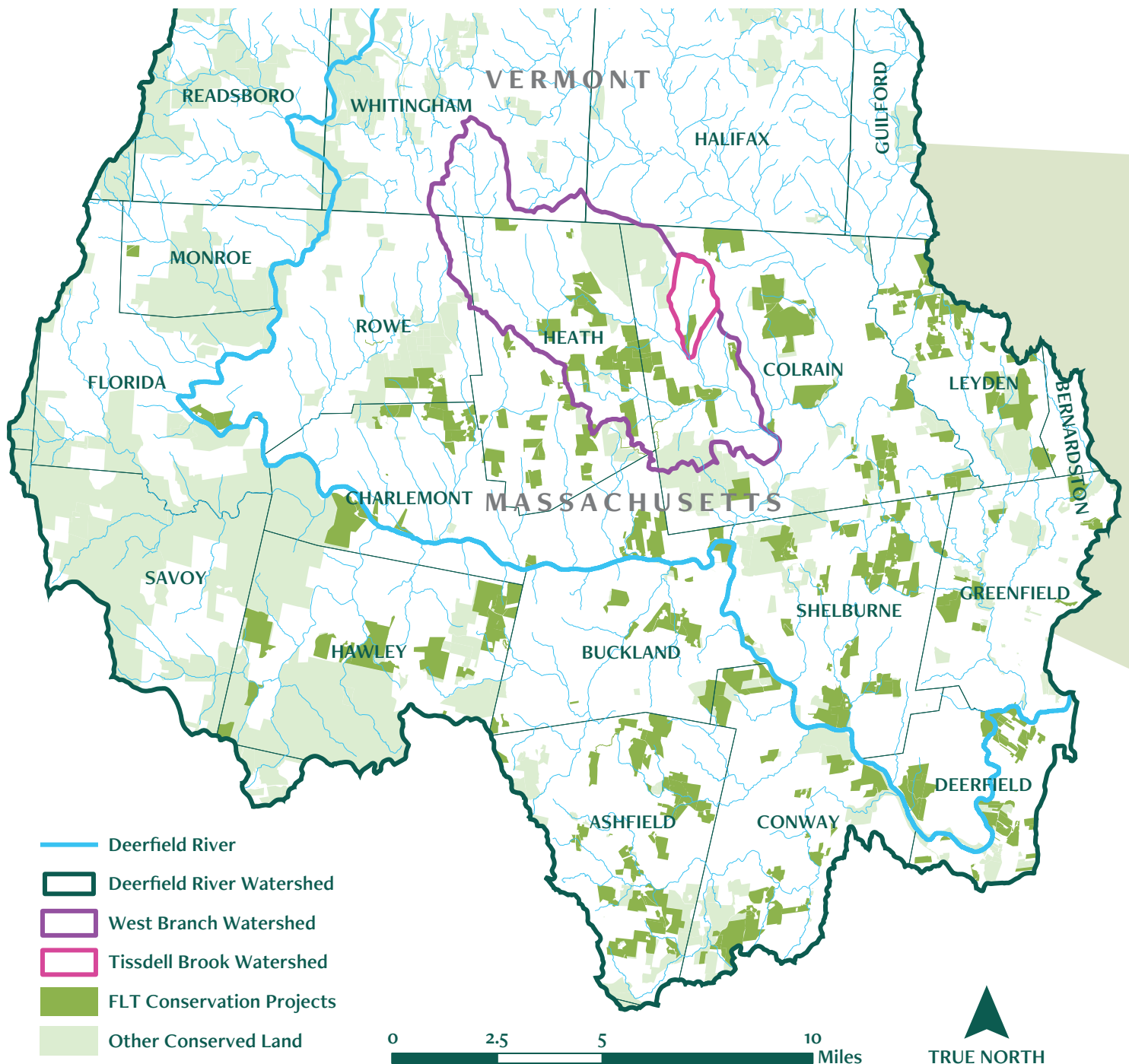
Another perspective of how to look at our work is to think about a conserved parcel's relationship to water. The maps on the next page show our conserved parcels in relationship to watersheds of different sizes. A watershed is a defined area, or catchment, of surface water that drains into a common outlet. The largest map is the Deerfield watershed, outlined in dark green. Next, is the West Branch watershed, outlined in purple, and within that is the catchment area surrounding the smaller Tissdell Brook.

Looking at our work with this perspective makes for a subtle difference in analysis. Waterways cross the landscape

without consideration of arbitrary State, Municipal or private parcel boundaries. They are moving downstream and coalescing into ever larger brooks and rivers, on their way to the ocean. With this perspective we can see where we have had opportunities to impact healthy streams through conservation along some of these waterways such as the West Branch. FLT and its partner Trout Unlimited have done management and studies on the West Branch within our Crowningshield Conservation Area, to enhance function and habitat within this important cold-water resource. We have expanded outward to doing some of this work on the conserved property shown in the Tissdell Brook watershed. It is this expansion outward from our conservation area to a privately conserved parcel that is the essence of our Lands for HOPE initiative. This work that happens on private land, within the smaller capillaries of the larger arteries of the watershed, can have profound implications on the larger watershed. It is this perspective that shows that conservation of cold-water resources, their function, and the creation of a more resilient watershed, is also a measure of a successful conservation outcome.

FLT Conserved Parcels Within Nested Watersheds

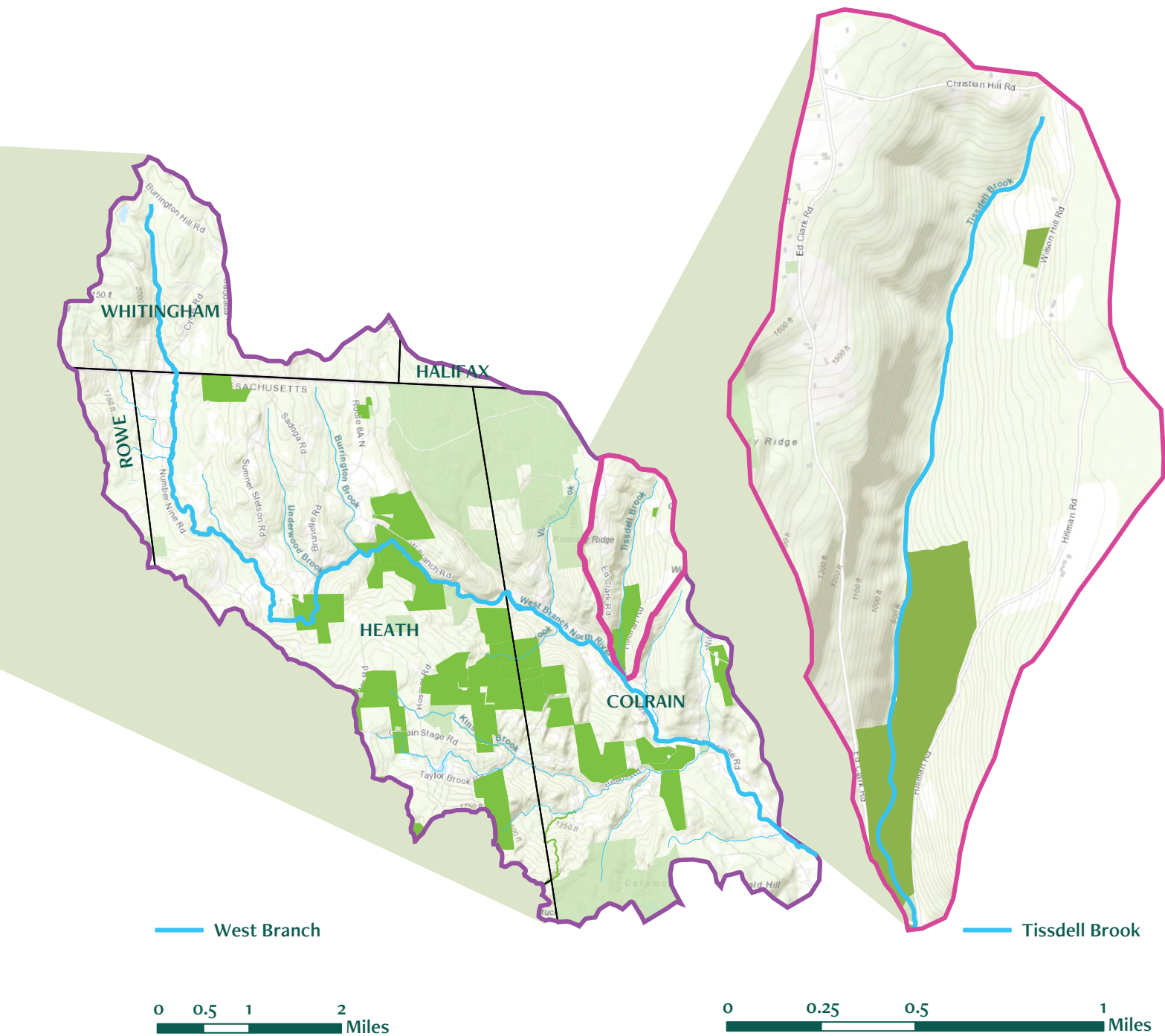
DEERFIELD RIVER WATERSHED



The maps below show a portion of our conserved parcels in relationship to watersheds of different sizes. A watershed is a defined area, or catchment, of surface water that drains into a common outlet. The largest map is the Deerfield watershed, outlined in dark green. Next, is the West Branch watershed, outlined in purple, and within that is the catchment area surrounding the smaller Tissdell Brook.

WEST BRANCH WATERSHED

TISSDELL BROOK WATERSHED





Along The Fall River

BY SEBASTIAN LAMONTAGNE

THIS PAST NOVEMBER THE FRANKLIN LAND TRUST secured permanent conservation of the Stotz Family's property in Gill and Greenfield, through a Conservation Restriction (CR). The family donated a CR covering more than 88 acres of forestland, which safeguards over 6,000 feet of riverbank along the Fall River. This cold-water fishery begins in Guilford, Vermont, and travels through the hills of Colrain, Massachusetts, before flowing into the Connecticut River just downstream from the Great Falls dam in Turner's Falls.

For Princy Stotz, the decision to conserve is the result of a long-held promise. "My husband Doug and I always shared a wish that our land be conserved forever and never developed," she says.

As the Fall River passes through the Stotz Family's property, it winds through a steep, rocky ravine that remains remarkably intact, despite intensive industrial use during the 19th century in what was known as "Factory Hollow." Doug Stotz grew up nearby in Riverside, Gill, and spent much of his childhood exploring the area. Princy recalls him sharing stories of those days, including run-ins with the property's former owner: "Doug played in and around Factory Hollow as a kid and told stories about the owner then, Burt Reed, shooting a shotgun full of rock salt at him and his friends to shoo them away."

The Stotz family eventually purchased the property. "Burt Reed's widow, Alice, sold the place to his daughter, Rachel Wood and her husband Don. And we were

fortunate enough to buy it from the Woods in 1986. They were moving to a condo which was too small for their two German Shepherds, so we took them as part of the deal! We used to joke that we really liked the dogs so we bought the place so we could have them.”

Princy and her husband Doug spent three decades there together before Doug’s passing in 2016. “Doug and I enjoyed 30 wonderful years here together,” she says. “And I’ve been fortunate enough to be able to continue living here well into my eighties, with the help of my sons Mark and Doug.”

A dam along the river—another remnant of this industrial past—was removed in 2014 by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, following years of collaboration with the Stotz family and state partners. Its removal restored river connectivity and increased the potential for anadromous fish such as eels, sea lamprey, and shad to return and use the river as spawning habitat. “In 2012, a dam on the Fall River on the property was removed as a result of us working with both the state and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,” Princy notes. “That was an important moment for us.”

Life along the river has been a constant source of joy and grounding. “Every day of the 40 years I’ve spent here has been a blessing,” Princy reflects. “The river has a life and moods of its own and is a constant calming presence—save the occasional passing hurricane or dam break.” Wildlife, too, is ever-present. “We’ve had bald eagles nest in a dead tree here, and have a bear constantly trying to raid our bird feeders.”

The conserved land lies near Peskeompskut, a fishing and agricultural village that was a seasonal home to the Pocumtuck people and their neighbors for thousands of years, and the site of a massacre of Native Americans during King Philip’s War. Today, these 88 acres remain part of a living landscape shaped by human relationships stretching back millennia.

After Doug’s death, Princy began taking concrete steps to ensure their shared vision would endure. “I discussed these wishes with my son Doug, who was familiar with Conservation Restrictions,” she explains. “He connected me with the Franklin Land Trust. While it took several years, they helped us navigate the process and reach my—and my husband’s—objectives.”

Looking ahead, Princy sees this conservation effort as part of something larger. “This land is actually part of a wonderful conserved corridor on both sides of the Fall River in Gill and Greenfield,” she says. “The Fall River earns its name by dropping about 125 feet over these three miles. I’m thrilled my family’s land will be playing such

an important role in conserving this priceless resource forever.” She adds, “At the same time, I’m pleased my children and grandchildren will be able to continue enjoying this legacy.”

Franklin Land Trust has been honored to work with the Stotz Family and grateful for their enduring commitment to conserving an ecologically rich and historically significant landscape. ■



Edge Hill Trail Race 2026

The Edge Hill Race will take place this June 13th. Runners have the option of 50k, 30k or 10k routes over a mix of single track trails and dirt roads. This race is in partnership with Beast Coast Trail Running, and will start/finish at Edge Hill Conservation Area, which is a former golf course that Franklin Land Trust (FLT) purchased in the fall of 2023. We want to give special thanks to Ashfield Trails for making this run possible!

Register online at:
franklinlandtrust.org/events



The Work of a Lifetime

BY SEBASTIAN LAMONTAGNE

ON DECEMBER 19, 2025, FRANKLIN LAND TRUST finalized a conservation restriction on a 19-acre forested property owned by Richard French and Emily Samuels along Mountain Road in Gill. The protection of this south-facing woodlot marks another milestone in a conservation legacy spanning more than three decades and over a dozen properties across Gill and Northfield.

For Dick French, now 84, conservation has been the work of a lifetime. Growing up in Amherst, he spent childhood summers at what the family called the Clapp Farm in Gill, helping his uncle and aunt with haying and milking. Those early experiences, exploring the woods, hunting rabbits, cutting pencils out of cedar for his uncle, planted the seeds for what would become a decades-long commitment to land protection.

"I fell in love with the farm," French recalls. "When I was a kid, my uncle would be milking the cows by hand upstairs on wood. And then in 1950 the state required cows to be kept on cement. So, my uncle put a cement floor down in the cellar. And the cows were still milked upstairs, but all the manure would be scraped into a wooden gutter that led to the downstairs. And it would all go through a hole into manure carts we had waiting in the basement. It was pretty neat."

That connection to the land transformed into action when French and his family moved to Gill permanently in 1984. By the early 1990s, they had completed their first conservation restriction. But the vision extended far beyond a single parcel. Over the following years, French worked with multiple partners to conserve parcel after

parcel. As executor of the Clesson Blake and Ruth Cook Trusts, he also established a small fund now held by Franklin Land Trust dedicated to conservation efforts in Gill.

The recently conserved 19-acre parcel sits just north of another Mountain Road property that French and Samuels protected with Franklin Land Trust in 2019. Completely forested and supported by prime forest soils, the property had significant development potential with its road frontage, well-drained soils, and expansive views.

"He could have gotten several house lots out of it," notes Alain Peteroy, Deputy Director of Franklin Land Trust. Instead, the property will remain forested, managed under a Chapter 61 forestry plan that French and Samuels will continue to follow.

The ecological significance of the parcel extends beyond its forest soils. It lies within a BioMap3 Rare Species Core habitat, nested within a large landscape block that supports core habitats. The property is part of a substantial protected corridor just north of the Connecticut River's Barton Cove area, where multiple conserved parcels create connected habitat for rare species.

While the property is not posted, there are no formal public access trails. Dick French emphasizes that like much of the conserved land in Gill, recreational use remains available on an informal basis, reflecting the town's open character.

For French, the completion of this conservation restriction is about keeping promises made to family, maintaining the rural character of the town he loves, and ensuring that future generations can experience the kind of connection to land that shaped his own life.

"My hope is that this town remains a farm town," French says. Though he worries about development pressures from state mandates, his own work stands as a counterweight. The hundreds of acres he has permanently protected, promise that some places will remain as they were when a young man first fell in love with exploring woods and working the land.

With the main farm nearly complete and this latest Mountain Road parcel now protected, French's conservation legacy approaches its final chapter. What began with childhood summers and a promise to family has grown into one of the most significant private conservation efforts in the region. ■



The Granville Town Forest

BY SEBASTIAN LAMONTAGNE

IN DECEMBER OF 2025, FRANKLIN LAND Trust finalized a conservation restriction on 12.58 acres of forestland in Granville.

The conserved parcel, now part of Granville's town forest, was acquired by the town using Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding. As required when CPA funds are used for land acquisition, the property needed a conservation restriction to ensure its permanent protection.

"We were contacted through our agreement with Winding River Land Conservancy to help oversee projects that would come up in that region," explained Alain Peteroy, FLT's Deputy Director. "While a small project, the Granville project was an important one, as it added to the town forest."

The protected land features forest, wetlands, and tributaries to Trumble Brook, providing vital watershed protection and wildlife habitat. And the town forest has grown through community generosity. An adjacent landowner donated an additional 10 acres to the town.

"It's a very healthy woodlot with a small stream running through it," Peteroy noted. The conserved land will remain open to the public for trail walking and wildlife observation.

Saving A Place For Solitude

BY SEBASTIAN LAMONTAGNE

IN MONTAGUE, THE FRANKLIN LAND TRUST (FLT) finalized a donated conservation restriction on approximately 32 acres of farm and forest land along Old Sunderland Road, formerly part of the historic Craven Farm. The property includes active agricultural soils, managed forestland, and roughly 500 feet of Cranberry Pond Brook, a cold-water fisheries resource near its confluence with the Connecticut River. The land holds significant scenic value and lies within a landscape of extensively conserved farmland and forest.

The project was made possible through the generosity of landowner Elinor “Nell” Wright, whose personal connection to the land stretches back many years.

“I biked by this place fifteen years ago,” Nell recalls. “I remember the view without phone poles, the very old house with a *For Sale* sign, and Mount Toby on the other side.” She later bought the house in 2013, along with several acres, from a direct descendant of the original builder. “The land we’re conserving now—the 30 acres along the road—wasn’t for sale then.”

The opportunity came later, during a difficult personal moment. “The year my parents died, they left me an acre of land on the water on the Cape. I sold it for Cape prices and used that money to buy these 30 acres,” she explains. “I had been away helping my parents and missed the chance to buy the 60 or so acres directly across the street. That land has since become a farm.”

Nell also discovered an unexpected connection to her family: “The day I moved in, I walked around the block and took pictures,” she says. “My mom never came here, but when she saw the photos of the tobacco barn, she remembered helping with the tobacco harvest as a college student in the 1940s. They were ferried across the river from Deerfield.”

Although she describes her move to Montague as somewhat serendipitous—“I moved here rather randomly after a divorce”—the landscape itself resonates deeply. “The exposed granite along the river south of here really speaks to me,” she says. “It’s funny, because I was born in



Rhode Island, and those old flagstone walls still move me, too.”

When it comes to daily life on the conserved land, Nell values observation. “We’ve walked and snowshoed there occasionally, but I mostly prefer to watch from here,” she says. “The wildlife eventually pokes out. Bears, deer, coyotes, foxes, owls, snapping turtles, pileated woodpeckers.”

Her decision to conserve the land was driven by both personal and long-held values. “Protecting my view,” she admits plainly. “I like solitude, and I didn’t want rampant development of the fields, which are still being farmed.” She adds that she has long been an advocate for undeveloped land. “My first campaign was in high school, when a group of us convinced the town to buy 400 acres in the center of town. Now there’s a summer theater and a conservatory there, along with kettle holes, native beech trees, glacial erratics, runners and walkers.”

Nell has also worked locally to support thoughtful planning. “I’ve been involved in town projects to find the right places for housing and to make it affordable,” she says. “Montague has a great town planner.”

Looking ahead, Nell is candid. “I’m feeling pretty hopeless right now about our collective future, and I’m not sure my actions make much difference,” she reflects. “But if animals—and people who need to—can walk and breathe and sing in these woods, that’s a step.”

She adds simply, “I look forward to working with FLT.”



A New Home for D2R2

Beginning this year, D2R2 will be held at the Franklin County Fairgrounds on Wisdom Way in Greenfield, MA. (About 5 miles from our old Deerfield location.)

This will be D2R2's twenty-first year, making it the perfect time for a reinvention like this as we enter the ride's third decade.

Although the farm fields of Deerfield helped grow this ride and have been inseparable from its history, the move to the Franklin County Fairgrounds—also home to the Green River Festival—marks an exciting new chapter for D2R2 and brings many benefits for riders.

The Franklin County Fairgrounds is a beloved historic landmark, familiar to anyone who grew up in this area. In recent years, it has been lovingly restored, and we're confident D2R2 riders will fall in love with its rustic charm.

You can register to ride and find information about volunteering at d2r2.franklinlandtrust.org.

D2R2 riders receive a significant discount if they sign up to volunteer!

Upcoming Events

Our upcoming programs include a Spring Ephemerals Walk in April, an Earth Day Trash Cleanup, a Migratory Bird ID Walk in May, and an Invertebrates program at North Pond in Southwick this summer.

You can find full details and additional events on our online events calendar.

franklinlandtrust.org/events



Franklin Land Trust
5 Mechanic Street
P.O. Box 450
Shelburne Falls, MA
01370

NONPROFIT
PERMIT NO. 503
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GREENFIELD
MASSACHUSETTS

ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED

**Your support matters.
Thank YOU for making
a difference!**

Read More Online

Q FranklinLandTrust.org

f @ fltrust
t @flandtrust

Give Back TO THE LAND

April 7, 2026

Join us for our annual "Give Back to The Land Day" on April 7th! The event, which falls at the beginning of Earth Month, will be a 24-hour online giving day to raise funds for the work of the Franklin Land Trust, as well as for other local nonprofits, that all work to conserve the fields, forests, farms, and waterways in Massachusetts. Cheryl Patterson is matching online donations made before midnight on April 7th, in memory of her late wife Lorraine Hart.

Visit givebacktotheland.org

Or send your contribution to:

Franklin Land Trust, P.O. Box 450, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

