



# OPACUM LAND TRUST



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Winter Newsletter 2007

## *Running Pine Woods*

Brimfield, Massachusetts

A Conservation Restriction held by Opacum Land Trust

In October, Opacum Land Trust launched the Running Pine Woods project, fundraising towards a \$5,000 goal with a deadline of December 31, 2006. One week ahead of schedule, we met our goal through the generosity of two anonymous donors. This money is being used to fund an endowment associated with the conservation restriction donated by John Worrell & Linda Ammons on their 17.1 acre property, Running Pine Woods, on Route 19 in Brimfield.

This voluntary conservation agreement between Mr. Worrell, Ms. Ammons and the Opacum Land Trust is a testament to how landowners can tailor an agreement to meet their needs, the needs of future landowners, and at the same time protect the property. This conservation restriction, or CR, allows agricultural and horticultural activities, such as cultivation, mowing and grazing of existing fields and meadows, animal husbandry, composting of organic materials, selective pruning and cutting of trees, removal of invasive species, and trails. For those of us who drive down Route 19 into Wales, this land

will remain forever in the landscape as it is today.

Though invisible to the naked eye, this conservation restriction is permanent and will become more prominent as the years pass. With properties nearby being developed for housing and other uses, Running Pine Woods will remain an open green space, a key parcel linking together two arms of the Brimfield State Forest. This property will never be developed. It will preserve wildlife habitat, freshwater resources and keep migration corridors open.

*Thank You*  
Opacum reached  
its fundraising  
goal one week  
ahead of schedule!

In 2006, Congress passed legislation that allows landowners to donate or bargain sell conservation restrictions on their property and benefit with a tax deduction of up to 50% of their adjusted gross income for 15 years, but it's only valid for 2007. This recent legislation is meant to benefit the landowner who may be land rich with a modest income. If you are interested in learning what your conservation options are for your property, contact Opacum at 508-347-9144 or visit our website, [www.opacumlt.org](http://www.opacumlt.org)



Realizing the importance of clearly marking conservation boundaries, **John Worrell & Linda Ammons** recently assisted with sign installation on their property, **Running Pine Woods**. The property is delineated with our metal Opacum signs, thus future owners and neighbors will know where the conservation boundary lies. This will help in our stewardship duties, as volunteers who monitor the conservation restriction will be able to easily follow the perimeter. It will also help to prevent accidental encroachments or other violations of the CR. In the real world, these things do occur and this is why Opacum fundraised for an endowment fund, which is invested for the purpose of defending the property should the need arise. It's all part of being a good land steward.

Opacum Land Trust has been working for 7 years in south-central Massachusetts to preserve forests, freshwater resources, wildlife habitat and open spaces that provide a place for people to reconnect with nature. To date we have protected 498 acres, working as volunteers with support from our membership, donors and generous charitable foundations. As we continue to build upon these successes, we thank you all for your unwavering support, and wish you all a very happy and prosperous 2007!

## TAKING THE NEXT STEP

Two-thousand and six was another successful year for Opacum Land Trust, thanks to the relentless spirit of our volunteers and members, with two conservation projects wrapped up by year-end.

The 116-acre Claire Birtz Wildlife Sanctuary, including Morse Pond, became a reality with the help of our generous donors and our partners, the Trustees of the Claire Birtz Estate and the Town of Southbridge. Passersby traveling Route 169 might see Morse Pond and think, unknowingly, "Someday, that forested hillside will have waterfront homes on it." That's what *could have happened*. I'm happy to say that it will always be as you see it today. Ms. Birtz left a legacy. The Trustees of her estate have honored her: This property speaks to her faithful support of wildlife & conservation.

Running Pine Woods in Brimfield, featured on the cover of this newsletter, is a Conservation Restriction donated to Opacum by John Worrell & Linda Ammons. This parcel closes the loop and stitches the Brimfield State Forest together. We successfully raised the endowment in only three months to defend this easement should the need arise. These funds will go into our investment fund for legal defense, monitoring and stewardship. From here forward, as you drive south on Route 19 in Brimfield toward Wales Center, the 370' of road frontage will remain open pasture; as housing pops up around it, this property will be the green jewel tucked away in perpetuity.

Opacum can not take all the credit for these projects. Without our loyal membership, generous donors, and foundation support we would not exist. For both of these successes, we thank Schott Healthcare, Southbridge Savings Bank, Savers Bank, Southbridge Credit Union, United Lens, Sterling Engineering Co., Inc., Wildvine Studios, The New Roxbury Land Trust, Wyndham County Land Trust, Dudley Conservation Land Trust, Laboratory Optical Co., WalMart Foundation, Southbridge Garden Club, Wildbird Crossing, Ron & Stacy Petro, individuals space will not permit me to list, anonymous donors (some which capped our fundraising goal and helped us to meet deadline) plus several foundations including one that wishes to remain anonymous which granted \$10,000.

2006 had an unexpected and nice surprise for me personally, as Opacum's Vice President, Jennifer Ohop, nominated me for an international environmental award from the Yves Rocher Foundation. What a truly great day it was to receive the letter that I had won a trip to Paris, France where I could compete with other "Women of the Earth" to win an award and monetary prize. So I grabbed Jen and we flew to Paris! (ed. note: thanks Carol for taking me to Paris!) We saw and tasted as much as we could for two days, then I attended the ceremonies for the remaining two days, bringing home second prize for the United States and a \$5,000 check toward the Birtz Sanctuary fundraiser, which was matched 1:1 by the Birtz Trustees. Looking back, it seems to have all been a fantastic dream! (ed. Note: Carol did not recall ever having left the country when recently asked where the furthest place away from home she had been. So, yes, she thinks it was a dream. I was there, it was real!)

As I look to 2007, I'm hoping there will be a positive transformation for Opacum, one that marks its growth into the regional land trust it should be; a conservation organization that has the capacity to participate in acquisitions of large parcels and contribute to projects with larger land trusts, state agencies and municipalities. What is holding Opacum back? Simply, it's because we lack paid staff. As an all-volunteer group, it's difficult to tackle large, more complex projects—we volunteers must work, run our lives, rest and eat! Land conservation runs on the time given to it. With paid staff, we would have that time.

At the end of 2005, I wrote in the "Hopeful Holiday Edition" a message that Opacum's editor, Jen Ohop, titled "The Early Bird Gets the Worm". It summarized Opacum's wish list and reasons for needing to grow outside the realm of volunteering. Opacum has proven itself six times over, with almost 500 acres permanently preserved as a volunteer organization; think what we could do with paid staff. As we move forward, we hope our supporters will stick with us through this next phase of growth. We just can't thank you all enough, and we will most certainly continue with our endeavors!

- Carol Childress, Executive Director

### Did You Know?

If you are age 70 1/2 or older, you can make direct contributions from your individual retirement account to a charitable organization of your choice— up to \$100,000 for the year 2007. The charitable contribution can satisfy your IRA's required minimum distribution and will be excluded from your federal taxable income. Consult your plan administrator or tax advisor for more information about this Pension Provision Act of 2006.

Family farmers and other moderate-income landowners can now obtain a significant tax benefit for making the charitable donation of a conservation easement. The new law raises the deduction a landowner can take for donating a conservation easement from 30% of their income in any year to 50%, allows qualifying farmers to deduct up to 100% of their income, and extends the carry-forward period for a donor to take tax deductions for a voluntary conservation easement from 5 years, to 15 years. *This only applies to easements donated in 2006 and 2007.* For more information, Please contact Carol Childress at 508 347-9144.

You are cordially invited to attend



# The Annual Meeting of the Opacum Land Trust



to be held on

Thursday, March 29, 2007  
7:00 - 9:00pm

In the Upper Auditorium (2nd Level)  
at the  
**Hitchcock Free Academy**  
Main Street (Route 20), Brimfield, Mass.

Join Opacum Land Trust members, directors, friends, colleagues, and volunteers this evening to celebrate our growth and successes of the last seven years.

Tonight's Guest: Michael Tougias, local author, photographer & naturalist  
presents

## Quiet Places: Rambles Through Hidden Massachusetts

Naturalist, photographer, and author Michael Tougias will give a lecture and slide presentation featuring lesser-known natural and historic places of Massachusetts. Fascinating anecdotes, historical facts, and wildlife encounters are woven into the presentation. This visual ramble starts on Cape Cod and heads westward first along the North and South Shores, then into Cen-

Autographed copies of the author's work will be sold after the presentation. Tougias is the author and co-author of several books including *Until I Have No Country* (A novel of King Philip's War), *King Philip's War: The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict*. Some of his other titles include *River Days: Exploring the Connecticut River From Source to Sea*, his award-winning book, *There's A Porcupine In My Outhouse! (Misadventures of a Mountain Man Wannabe)*.

*Ten Hours Until Dawn: The True Story of Heroism and Tragedy Aboard the Can Do* is Tougias' latest book and is a Boston Globe Bestseller and recipient of the American Library Association "Editors Choice" award. More about the author can be found at [www.michaeltougias.com](http://www.michaeltougias.com)

**Admission is free of charge. Refreshments courtesy of Opacum.**

**Please RSVP by March 21**  
call 508-347-9144 or e-mail [opacumlt@charter.net](mailto:opacumlt@charter.net)

For directions to the Hitchcock Free Academy, please visit their website: [www.hitchcockacademy.org](http://www.hitchcockacademy.org)

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Visit [www.opacumlt.org](http://www.opacumlt.org) or call 508-347-9144 for more information about Opacum events.

Wednesday, January 31 at 7:00pm

*Everything*  
you ever wanted to know  
about Opacum Land Trust  
(but were afraid to ask!)

Southbridge Savings Bank Community Room  
Hobbs Brook Branch  
200 Charlton Rd. (Rt. 20, across from the NE Truck Stop)  
Sturbridge, MA

Join Opacum Land Trust for a Powerpoint presentation about who we are, the 498 acres we own and steward, and the "whys" of conservation in any community. Pick up brochures for our properties that include trail maps - come learn about us, and perhaps even find your niche in the world of volunteering for a good cause. Refreshments will be served.

Friday, February 2 at 6:30pm

**FULL MOON  
SNOWSHOE\* HIKE**

At the NEW Claire Birtz Wildlife Sanctuary  
Southbridge, MA

If the groundhog misses the forecasting shadow  
at the break of day

Will a full moon show us the season's way?  
or in the burrow should we stay?

A natural celebration  
of Groundhog Day!



Registration required, space is limited. RSVP to [info@opacumlt.org](mailto:info@opacumlt.org) or call 508-347-9144

*\*If there's no snow, we'll hike anyway!*

**REMEMBER, THURSDAY, MARCH 29 IS OLT'S ANNUAL MEETING!**

Saturday March 24

17th Mass. Land Conservation Conference  
visit [www.massland.org](http://www.massland.org) for more information

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Thursday, April 26 at 7:00pm

*Spring Flowers to Know & Grow*

Hitchcock Free Academy  
Route 20, Brimfield, MA

A slide presentation with Leslie Duthie, Horticulturalist at the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary. Leslie will show us some of the beautiful, native wildflowers that can be added to your home garden. Many of these plants will be available at our:

**SEVENTH PERENNIAL  
OPACUM LAND TRUST PLANT SALE**

Sunday, May 20 8:00am—Noon  
Southbridge Town Common

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**Nature Lovers Art Auction**  
In July, we are planning on having an art auction, with all proceeds benefiting the work of Opacum. If you are interested in donating an item for the auction or volunteering for the event, please contact Carol at 508-347-9144 or e-mail: [opacumlt@charter.net](mailto:opacumlt@charter.net)

**Congratulations Monson- CPA at 3%!**

At November's election, folks living in Monson voted to pass CPA - the Community Preservation Act . CPA enables cities and towns within the Commonwealth to acquire and preserve open space and historical sites, as well as create affordable housing. This is done by a community voting to adopt CPA, choosing a surcharge of 1 -3% onto their property taxes. Monson voted for 3%, with a few exemptions - for example, the first \$100,000 of the property value is exempt. Funds generated are then matched by the state, and the towns get to decide which projects to pursue. Sturbridge used their CPA fund to purchase 845 acres of open land from Old Sturbridge village. CPA is a way to make ends meet within our towns. Congratulations, Monson, you have shown that you care about your town and are willing to invest in its future, and we at Opacum Land Trust look forward to working with you.



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*North Brookfield*

*West Brookfield*

*Brookfield*

*Warren*

What do these 13 towns have in common?  
 Opacum Land Trust! The thirteen towns whose names are floating on this page are the communities in which Opacum works.

*East Brookfield*

*Palmer*

*Brimfield*

*Charlton*

*Sturbridge*

*Wales*

*Holland*

*Monson*

*Southbridge*

**We welcome Opacum's newest paws member, Bubba Ojerholm.**



According to his human, "Bubba loves to ride on his "toon" on Lake Lashaway when not enjoying a walk in the woods. This is a great idea, walks are more fun with a dog!"

Make your best friend's day, and get them a Paws Membership! Visit [www.opacumlt.org](http://www.opacumlt.org) and click "Support Opacum Land Trust".

Paws memberships are \$30.00, and rewards a dog and his or her human for supporting local conservation efforts. We ALL love a walk in the woods, some of us just can't wag our tails to prove it.

Gift Memberships are available for people, too!



Opacum Land Trust, Inc. is an all-volunteer group whose mission is to protect and preserve the natural and cultural history of South-Central Massachusetts for the benefit of present and future generations. OLT is a public charity recognized by the IRS. All donations are fully tax deductible. Annual membership dues start at \$25. For more information about OLT, land conservation options, or how you can become involved, call (508) 347-9144 or visit [www.opacumlt.org](http://www.opacumlt.org)

**Thank you for your continued support!**