



Please join us April 1 (No joke!) for a MassConn Regional Conservation Partnership All-Partners Meeting & Kickoff Event to celebrate the next phase of outreach work in the MassConn Woods!

Dear Colleagues and Partners,

Greetings! We hope that you are safely enjoying the changeable wintry weather we are experiencing!

We are pleased to announce that the **MassConn Regional Conservation Partnership** and the **North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership**, in conjunction with the **New England Forestry Foundation** and the **American Forest Foundation**, have received **two major grants totaling \$467,700 to undertake landowner outreach and education in a wide region stretching from northeastern Connecticut to the New Hampshire border. Investment will total \$946,000** by numerous organizations through these grant projects. Working with partners, including the **Norcross Wildlife Foundation**, the **Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs**, the **Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (Service Forestry Division)**, the **Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions**, **University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension**, **U.S. Forest Service**, **Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science**, **Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust** and **Opacum Land Trust**, we are ramping up our efforts to educate landowners about forestry practices to maintain healthy, productive and climate adaptable woodlands.

In the MassConn region this work is building on the **Woodland Ambassador** program undertaken in 2013 and 2014 and the long-term landowner outreach initiative guided by New England Forestry Foundation and American Forest Foundation. **These grants are providing the opportunity for a new, more closely coordinated landowner outreach effort at the regional scale.**

Please save the date for Friday, April 1, for a MassConn All-Partners' meeting to learn more about the projects and other partnership updates, followed by a public celebration. Join us at the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary for a working lunch at noon and meeting until 2:30 p.m. The meeting is co-hosted by New England Forestry Foundation, MassConn Regional Conservation Partnership and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation. Please RSVP by Mon. March 28 by responding to lhayden@newenglandforestry.org.

Following the MassConn All-Partners' meeting, please plan to stay at Norcross for **a public Kick-off Celebration from 3 – 5 p.m. on April 1**, to announce and learn more about these recent, significant investments in the MassConn region. The public and media will be invited for cake,

refreshments and information on how MassConn landowners can benefit from free visits this spring and summer with certified & trained foresters, and access to other conservation and stewardship resources.

Current Highlights of our Regional Conservation Partnership:

A New Look and a new landowner friendly website for MassConn

With funding and technical support from the **American Forest Foundation**, The MassConn Regional Conservation Partnership has a new, refreshed logo, seen at the top of this newsletter. After seeking input from landowners, **the Steering Committee chose the new logo and name “MassConn Woods”** to more clearly represent the geographic identity of the Partnership and emphasize our mission of supporting sustainable forestry.

In early spring of this year, **MassConn, in partnership with AFF and the New England Forestry Foundation, will be launching a new website** to go live March 1, (MyMassConnWoods.org) geared towards the needs and interests of landowners in the 38-town region. It will be a source for event schedules and information being created by the new Partnership grant projects and resources for landowners created by AFF, NEFF and other MassConn partners.

Strategic Conservation Mapping

Over the last year, the MassConn Steering Committee has been developing a strategic conservation map of the MassConn region utilizing new and improved conservation data layers, and with the ability to evaluate individual parcels and groups of parcels. This \$30,000 project is being funded by the **Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust** as part of their Regional Conservation Partnership Innovation Grant Fund, and by the **Norcross Wildlife Foundation**. A Geographic Information System (GIS) tool is being developed by Brian Hall, a Forest Ecology Research Assistant at Harvard Forest and expert GIS developer, and which, when completed, will be shared with MassConn partners to assist with their local conservation efforts. The Partnership as a whole will use this GIS mapping tool to help secure regional-level funding for acquisition that can be shared among partners to advance and increase the pace of conservation and to help ensure that we are focusing on the most high-priority land for conservation.

“Creating a Peer Landowner Network”

The MassConn Regional Conservation Partnership, in collaboration with the **North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership**, has been **awarded \$217,700 in funding from the United States Forest Service, through its State and Private Forestry Landscape Scale Restoration Program, for a \$444,700 public outreach and education program**, in a region stretching from the Connecticut to the New Hampshire state lines. Working with multiple partners, including the **Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and Opacum Land Trust**, this project will create a cohesive and sustainable network of trained peer leaders who will enhance forest stewardship, engage with private forest landowners, and design a multi-landowner, climate change resilient forest conservation project in the MassConn and North Quabbin regions.

The project is slated to commence early this spring, and a preliminary event was held in January, 2016. MassConn’s **Americorps/MassLIFT** Regional Conservation Coordinator, Sarah Brodeur, worked with

Department of Conservation and Recreation Service Foresters Doug Hutcheson and Kate Marquis to host a Chapter 61 / Current Use information program for landowners. The event was a great success, drawing 29 landowners to learn about their eligibility for this program and other options for their land including conservation. Information about forestry and foresters was also provided, and contacts developed to continue outreach and support with these landowners.

May 14 Woods Walk: In partnership with the **East Quabbin Land Trust**, MassConn and North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership are planning a Woods Walk with a landowner on a larger tract in Hardwick and Ware, on May 14th. More information on this program will follow.

Wildlife Conservation Society Grant to Fund Outreach to Improve Wildlife Habitat

The MassConn Woods landowner outreach initiative will enter a new phase with a \$250,000 grant from the **Wildlife Conservation Society** (WCS) Climate Adaptation Fund, made possible by the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**. The grant to **American Forest Foundation** will fund work with partners – the **New England Forestry Foundation** (NEFF), the **Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary**, the **MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership** (MassConn), and the **Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science** (NIACS) – which are committed to a total \$502,000 project for landowner outreach concerning climate-adapted forestry.

See the official news release: <https://www.forestfoundation.org/conservation-grant-press-release>

We will be continuing outreach to private and family landowners in the MassConn region offering free visits with circuit riding foresters who will help educate and support them in adopting management practices to create and maintain resilient forests for wildlife. Forestry and stream crossing practices that enhance forest health in light of anticipated climate impacts are being employed on stands managed by the Norcross sanctuary on the MA/CT border, and these will serve as demonstration sites to help inform outreach to landowners about practices applicable to their own woodlands.

Training Opportunities: The grant will fund special training workshops **by Maria Janowiak, Deputy Director of the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science**, for circuit riding foresters and land trust representatives who will be dispatched to meet with MassConn landowners. To learn more about a limited number of seats available in these trainings on **Wed., March 30, 5-8 pm** (for land trusts) and **Thursday, March 31, 8:30 am to 4 pm** (for foresters), **please contact Lisa Hayden at lhayden@newenglandforestry.org**.

Recap of 2015 Outreach

Through a previous U.S. Forest Service grant, NEFF and AFF completed a series of 3 direct mail campaigns over the past 18 months to landowners in a 10-town state border area of the MassConn RCP (Monson, Holland & Wales, MA, and Stafford, Union, Woodstock, Pomfret, Ashford, Eastford & Hampton, CT). The mailings were focused on owners of 10+ acres – segmented for different messages and offers. As of fall 2015, we reached all of these owners in those communities with at least one 3-touch post card mailing offering either information or a free visit.

Response to offers of information ranged from 10 to 14 percent. Wildlife message routinely performed well, though the legacy message seemed to resonate with larger-acreage landowners. In last fall's mailing, we targeted owners of 40+ acres with a visit offer, and those of smaller acreages with the offer of a free guide (The Place You Call Home: A Guide to Caring for Your Land).

We completed 17 visits by local land trusts and foresters in 2015 to owners representing 1,322 acres (with a short list still pending owners' convenience), in which owners received a parcel map, a personalized summary of Actions related to their goals, and other resources depending on their interest in conservation, forest management or estate planning.

Sustaining engagement with landowners through events and electronic newsletter: About 200 owners signed up to receive a twice a month e-newsletter "Tips for Landowners" in the MassConn Woods. We continue to work to help owners move along several stages of engagement, pursuing additional information about NRCS cost-share programs, forester visits to enroll in current use or develop a management plan, working with their local land trust to research conservation tools, or discussing estate planning goals in more detail.

Fall 2015 Landowner Events

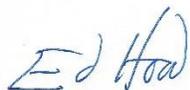
Stafford, CT Estate Planning Forum: In partnership with the Northern Connecticut Land Trust and the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership, AFF & NEFF hosted about 25 landowners at an estate planning forum at the Stafford Public Library on Sat., Oct. 24. A big thanks to **Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council**, for her presentation on conservation & estate planning tools for landowners, and to **Quentin Kessel from Joshua's Trust** for sharing his story from a landowner's perspective.

New Research around Legacy: Following the estate planning forum in Stafford, the partnership conducted a focus group with woodland owners about legacy planning. Ten participants shared their stories regarding planning for the future of their land. Learn about their barriers to planning and needs regarding this sensitive family topic in the **attached report**.

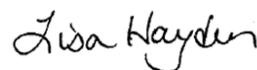
Accessing Conservation Funding event co-hosted with Quiet Corner Initiative: A panel discussion to explain federal and state cost-sharing programs for forest landowners was held **Sat. Nov. 14 at Union, CT Town Hall, co-hosted by Yale School of Forestry & Quiet Corner Initiative and NEFF, AFF, & MassConn**. About a dozen landowners attended, including those who had responded to mailings or e-news, and active neighbors of Yale-Meyers Forest who have worked with QCI on management plans.

We are very excited about all of the great conservation and forestry work happening in the MassConn and central New England region, made possible by our funders and the hard work of all of you. We look forward to sharing our updates and hearing yours. **Please RSVP by Mon. March 28, if you can join us for the All-Partners meeting and Kick-off celebration at Norcross on April 1.**

Sincerely,



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