

Nashoba Conservation Trust Fall 2021 News

Conservation Corner

Ken Hartlage

One of my great pleasures living in Pepperell is walking our wonderful conservation lands and meeting fellow outdoor enthusiasts. Be it walkers, cyclists, or equestrians, there is always a friendly “hello” and, not infrequently, a story to share. In fact, just a few weeks ago, I had a long conversation with a fellow walker who owns about ten acres, largely forested, which he manages primarily for wildlife and recreation. He described how he selectively cut dense tree stands to improve species diversity, and did his best to keep invasive plants at bay; how much he enjoyed just walking through the land, and the simple pleasure of watching and listening. He told me the land had been in his family for generations and, with understandable pride, that he was maintaining that legacy.

The townspeople own the vast majority of land in Pepperell, and most of it is unprotected. If we are serious about protecting biodiversity, protecting our drinking water supply, and protecting our community from climate change impacts, we all need to be good land stewards, just like the gentleman I met on my walk. But I got to wondering how many other landowners shared his stewardship ethos. And for those who do not, or are not even sure what that means, how do we reach them?

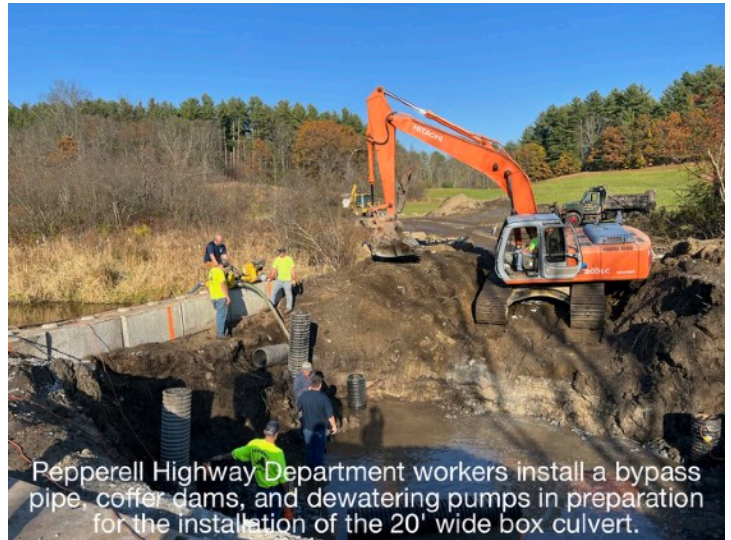


It occurred to me that sharing more stewardship stories, like the one here, can serve as examples to others. To that end, we’d love to hear what you are doing and share that with our community. Do you have a native plant garden? Are you “leaving the leaves” in place? Do you compost? Please email us your stewardship story, big or small, to contact@nashobatrust.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sucker Brook Continuity Restoration Project

Paula Terrasi

How is river restoration helping Pepperell and other communities address resiliency as we continue to face impacts from climate change? There are more than 3,000 aging dams in the Commonwealth and undersized (and often failing) culverts of all sizes, shapes, and materials under many of our roadways. Undersized culverts and dams often have negative impacts on our rivers and streams as they create artificial habitats caused by impounded waters at the upstream side of these structures. When dams and culverts were originally constructed, the impounded areas contained trees, which provided important shade for our rivers and streams. Overtime, most of the tree species present in the impounded areas died, leading to additional sun exposure and increased water temperatures within streams that provide coldwater habitats such as the Nissitissit River and Gulf, Sucker, Mine, Reedy Meadow, and Unkety Brooks. Impounded areas contain warmer water temperatures that lead to reduced levels of dissolved oxygen and the dams and/or culverts that created them prevent important sediment movement and create barriers that often impact fish and other wildlife movement.



Pepperell Highway Department workers install a bypass pipe, coffer dams, and dewatering pumps in preparation for the installation of the 20' wide box culvert.

Working with partners from the MA Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), the Squan-a-Tissit Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU), and Nashoba Conservation Trust (NCT), in 2018 the Town of Pepperell began to evaluate the possible removal of the stone dam and replacement of the undersized culvert at the Keyes Parker Conservation Area and the replacement of the failing culvert at Heald Street, all on Sucker Brook. After extensive field data collection, engineering and design, and permitting, construction began in Fall of 2021 to remove the stone dam and work is currently underway to replace the culvert on the dirt access road to the Keyes Parker Conservation Area. Funding and technical assistance were provided by DER, together with funding from the Squan-a-Tissit Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program. The Town of Pepperell's Highway staff are performing the work at the Keyes Parker Conservation Area and dedicating many hours of in-kind time as part of the town's commitment to the project. Volunteers from the Squan-a-Tissit Chapter of Trout Unlimited and DER worked many weekends to prepare for construction. The culvert replacements at the Keyes Parker Conservation Area and Heald Street were designed to meet MA Stream Crossing Standards, which consider future climate change impacts and address fish and wildlife passage. The removal of these manmade barriers will improve water quality, restore connectivity within the brook and connect populations of fish and other aquatic wildlife, eliminate a public safety issue by replacing a failing culvert on Heald Street, and eliminate flooding of adjacent roadways and agricultural lands. Building community resiliency can be accomplished in every action undertaken by the town.

Sucker Brook Continuity Restoration Project *continued*

Paula Terrasi

Come visit the Keyes Parker Conservation Area to watch the transformation taking place within the stream and upland areas after the dam removal and culvert replacement. Site restoration will begin next Spring and volunteers are always needed. If you would like to add your name to the list of volunteers to help with future efforts, please email Paula at: lakelover207@yahoo.com



Jeff Smith Trail Hike

Linn Clark

On a blustery Halloween eve day, Linn Clark led a hardy group on the annual Jeff Smith Trail hike co-sponsored by Nissitissit River Land Trust and Nashoba Conservation Trust. In 7.2 miles, this remarkable interstate trail - all on conservation land - exemplifies the protection of our local water resources and the preservation of wildlife corridors. Along the way, the JST follows several tributaries and crosses the Nissitissit River.

This year we started at the Gulf Brook tributary headwaters on Jewett Street following Blood Brook Ravine to Heald Pond. We then walked through Pepperell Springs and into the Gulf Brook Conservation Area. We completed the walk at the old Bill Henry Shattuck mill site at the Day Woods property on Lawrence Street - a total of about 3 miles.



At any time of the year, I find hiking different sections of the Jeff Smith Trail a delightful way to appreciate each part, and they can be done easily as out and back treks. For more trail information check out the trail guides on nashobatrust.org/trail-guide/html and beaverbrook.org.



L to R: April Babbitt, Gary Ruprect, Gerry Kemske, Anna Birch, Linn Clark, Pete Smith, Floyd Kemski

New Pepperell Trail Guide

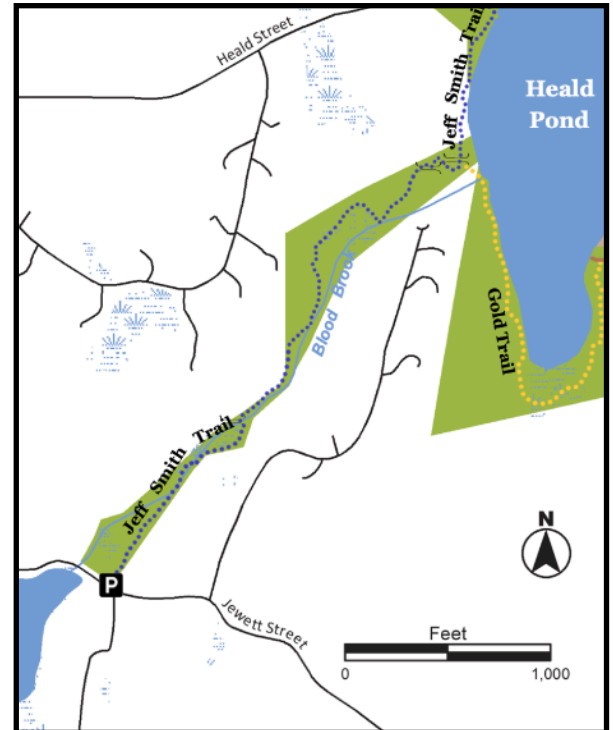
Ken Hartlage

We're pleased to announce a new version of the Pepperell Trail Guide is available featuring two new maps: Blood Brook Ravine and the Jeff Smith Trail.

Twenty-five years ago, the Pepperell Conservation Commission acquired a slender parcel of land stretching from Dirt Jewett St. to Heald Pond. Known today as Blood Brook Ravine, the acquisition of this 10.26 acre property was another successful step in a decades-long effort to protect Heald Pond. Although only just over a mile out and back, Blood Brook Ravine packs a lot into its small space. Following a short walk through a mixed hardwood and hemlock forest from the trailhead at Dirt Jewett St., visitors soon find themselves walking along a fault line and staring up at a massive rockface – a sight like no other in Pepperell. The trail soon reenters the forest, treating visitors to a wonderful view of Heald Pond. You can trek on from there alongside Heald Pond or turn back to the trailhead.

Blood Brook Ravine is also the starting point of the Jeff Smith Trail, which stretches 7.2 miles (one way) to Beaver Brook Association land in New Hampshire. Named in honor of local farmer and conservationist, Jeff Smith, the trail covers properties Jeff helped conserve, or are owned by organizations with which Jeff was affiliated. The Trail Guide provides an overview of the entire route and where to find detailed maps of individual trail segments.

The new Pepperell Trail Guide is available on the NCT and Town of Pepperell web sites, and by year end will be available for a free download from the Apple Books store.



NCT Board of Directors

President: Ken Hartlage
Vice President: Paula Terrasi
Secretary: Cindy Kuhn
Treasurer: Patty Franklin

Directors

April Babbit
Sue Bleiweiss
Linn Clark
Mark Camp
Rob Rand
Russ Schott
Siri Stromsted
Michael Veit

Support NCT with your donations

The NCT offers the following levels of membership:

Individual - \$35
Family - \$50
Sponsor - \$100
Patron - \$250
Benefactor - \$1000

All memberships include subscription to the NCT Quarterly Newsletter. Visit the website at nashobatrust.org to donate or mail your check to:

Nashoba Conservation Trust
PO Box 188
Pepperell, MA 01463