Planting Trees for Community Health

Opacum to lead a $548,000 project to plant 2,000 trees in Southbridge and Ware

Through its “Greening the Gateway Cities” initiative, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is planting thousands of trees in low income urban communities which are often also the most tree-less parts of the state. Recognizing Opacum’s high-impact work over the last several years, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental affairs approached Opacum and its neighbor East Quabbin Land Trust to apply to the U.S. Forest Service for a $252,000 grant to fund this work in Southbridge and Ware. The Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation is providing 2,000 trees valued at $280,000. Along with matching resources from other partners the total project cost for this effort is valued at $548,000.

Opacum Executive Director Ed Hood will be coordinating this three-year project overall, while focusing his efforts on Southbridge, with East Quabbin Land Trust focusing on Ware. This project brings the natural, cost-effective benefits of trees to the people who need them most, and it will be guided by local steering committees who will help decide where trees will be planted.

Research consistently demonstrates that increasing tree cover in urban areas helps to decrease cooling costs for nearby residences and businesses; improves air quality by reducing the amount of particulate matter in the air; lessens the damaging environmental impacts of storm water run-off and improves the sense of well-being and overall physical and mental health of nearby residents.
from the Executive Director

Hard Work and Patience...

Dear Members and Friends,

Next year, 2020, will mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of Opacum Land Trust by a group of hard-working volunteers, several of whom remain as dedicated directors of Opacum. I am pleased to tell you that in advance of that anniversary, Opacum officially reached the milestone of 2,000 acres under its care with the recording of a conservation easement on 11.5 acres in Charlton that Richard Kisten donated to Opacum, which abuts the 125 acres he previously protected with us.

I am also pleased to tell you that the driving force behind Opacum Land Trust’s founding, Carol Childress, is in the process of donating 3.5 acres of critical habitat land adjacent to our Opacum Woods preserve to be protected permanently by the Land Trust – thank you, Carol!

For more than half of my five years serving Opacum I have been working on Opacum Land Trust’s two most ambitious land conservation projects, the Holland Community Forest in the town of Holland, MA, and the Mashapaug Woods and Waters Project in Union, CT. These two projects, totaling approximately 286 acres of land protecting the headwaters of the Quinebaug River are entering their final phases, though as with many complicated projects they have taken longer to complete than initially expected – but hard work along with patience will pay-off with the permanent protection of these two beautiful properties.

In September, on behalf of the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership, I submitted an application to the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy program to permanently protect 1,011 acres of land on eight different parcels of land in the towns of Dudley, Southbridge, Sturbridge, Holland, Brimfield, Palmer and Hampden. If successful this will be a multi-year project to complete – but as I said before, hard work and patience....!

All of this work relies on the members, donors, sponsors and volunteers who support Opacum Land Trust – people like you who want to maintain a balance of natural land and open space in our home region. Thank you for your support and please consider making a donation to Opacum this fall – you make our work possible.

Ed Hood
Executive Director
Our 2019 Fall for Opacum Dinner

It was great to see many of you at our Fall for Opacum Dinner on September 18th. Through the generosity of our sponsors, including our lead sponsor Jeff Burdick of Edward Jones, our many donors that evening and those of you who donated or won our silent auction items, we raised $13,803 and had a fun time doing it – thank you! We had 133 guests, delicious food from Table 3 Restaurant Group and a great program from Dr. Curtiss Hoffman about New England’s mysterious stone structures.

Thank you to our sponsors for your continuing support!

- Jeff Burdick, Edward Jones
- Amy Gerrish and Marita Tasse, RE/MAX Professional Associates
- Alan & Betsy Peppel
- Peter & Kate Pappas

Executive Director Ed Hood with Anne Lowell and Steven Lowell, president of Monson Savings Bank (Opacum supporters), and Opacum Director Mark Conners.

The evening’s speaker, Dr. Curtiss Hoffman (at the head of the table) with guests.

Member Jim Newland, Opacum Director Scott Gerrish and member and land donor Beau Schneider (The Cedric & Martha Cross Memorial Sanctuary, Monson).

Opacum Directors Marita Tasse and Jennifer Morrison-Dominguez and volunteer Benjamin Hood greeted guests arriving for the dinner.
Help Opacum Complete the Holland Community Forest Project:

Over the last three years Opacum Land Trust has been working with the Town of Holland to purchase 170 acres of land adjacent to the center of town, with 153 acres to become the permanently protected “Holland Community Forest” and 17 acres for town use.

With the help of $417,384 in grant funding that Opacum helped secure, the town is now finalizing the purchase of this property. Opacum will hold a permanent conservation easement on the land and work with the town as a partner to care for and manage it.

The cost to Opacum for its efforts on this project is just under $60,000 and we need your help to raise these funds over the next several months. Please consider donating to Opacum’s Fall Campaign to help us complete this project and to support the ongoing conservation work of your local land trust.

Donations can be made online by going to www.Opacuml.org or by returning the enclosed donation card.
DINGLEY DELL ACCESS

This summer and fall the planned public parking area for Dingley Dell: The Clayton and Margaret Thomas Nature Preserve was constructed, at no charge, by David Poirier of R.J. Poirier Contractors, Inc. of Brimfield. Funds provided by donors will cover the cost for materials used and for a new kiosk and future trail improvements that are being added to the property.

An official ribbon cutting and unveiling of the new kiosk to be held next Spring– keep an eye out for the date in an upcoming mailing!

Until then, there are two short trails built and open to the Public: one to the glacial boulder approx. 1/8 mile long, and a trail to the waterfall, approx. 1/4 mile long. Get out and enjoy them in the gorgeous fall weather!

A view of the completed parking lot at Dingley Dell built by R.J. Poirier Contractors.

DINGLEY DELL TRAILS ARE IN PROGRESS

Thank you to our volunteer trail building crew, some of whom are pictured here, Rich Prager, Ginny Berns and Sue DeBruin, led by Opacum directors Howie Fife, Glenn Colburn, Scott Gerrish and Chris DeBruin (not pictured), who completed two trails at Dingley Dell – one to the glacial boulder and one to the waterfall.
**Volunteers in Action!**

Thank you to Esau Bernstein of Brimfield Boy Scout Troop 7 for the completion of a new foot bridge over a small wet area on the Opacum Woods Trail.

As part of his Eagle Scout Service Project Esau raised the necessary funds (donated by The Publick House) and materials (donated by Keith LaMountain) for the project. He applied to the Sturbridge Conservation Commission for permission for the bridge and marshaled a crew of volunteers to complete construction.

Great job and thank you, Esau!

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**Save the Date for Tour Opacum!**

**July 12th, 2020**

Our 4th annual bike ride for land conservation has something for everyone! Bike routes from 2 to 100 miles; wine, beer, live music, kids’ activities, games for all ages - with the beautiful Brimfield Winery as our home base.

Registration will open soon, check out www.TourOpacum.org for updates.

Thank you to our sponsors, riders, donors and event volunteers who made Tour Opacum 2019 such a success! We had a blast and can’t wait to make next year even better!

Thank you to our generous event sponsors who made it all possible: Southbridge Credit Union, Rapscallion Brewery, Brimfield Winery and Southbridge Bicycles.