

Be a steward of the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage -- *This Place In Between!*

*Imagine every person on this land doing their part to keep our air and water clean, our forests and fields productive, and our wildlife healthy and strong. It can happen.
And there are many programs in place to help this vision become a reality.*

Interested in learning more about your forest or agricultural land?

Mass Woods

Contact: Paul Catanzaro, cat@umext.umass.edu

Website: <http://masswoods.net/>

MassWoods is a UMass sponsored website that provides information to landowners about all different aspects of their forest land. MassWoods serves as a gateway to landowners who are considering the future of their land or harvesting timber. MassWoods can also connect you with a Keystone Cooperator, a volunteer in your community who can help you find the resources you need.

Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program

Contact: Michael Downey, (978) 368-0126 x129

Website: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/conservation/forestry-and-fire-control/forest-stewardship-program.html>

The Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program through the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation helps forest landowners learn about their woodland and how to manage it. With the help of a licensed forester, you can create a forest management plan to meet your particular habitat, economic, aesthetic, and other goals.

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)

Contact: Amherst office, (413) 548-1900

Website: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/>

For anyone who wants to learn about agricultural practices, MDAR provides information through its four divisions. The goal of MDAR is to keep Massachusetts agriculture sustainable through proper pest removal services, livestock health and crop use.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Contact: Pittsfield office, (413) 443-1776 x3; Hadley office, (413) 585-1000 x3

Website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ma/home/>

NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with the people of Massachusetts to prevent erosion, improve water quality and promote sustainable agriculture and forestry. NRCS offers both technical assistance and cost-share programs for agricultural and forested land.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

Contact: Pittsfield Regional HQ office, (413) 442-8928

Website: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr>

DCR oversees 450,000 acres of state parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, dams, and parkways. DCR's mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. DCR also regulates timber harvests on private lands, and educates and assists forest landowners.

Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game (DFG)

Contact: Western Wildlife District office, Dalton, (413) 684-1646

Website: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/>

DFG oversees the protection of marine and freshwater fisheries, plant and animal communities, and natural ecosystems. Divisions underneath the DFG branch specifically focus on reaching the Division's goals of research, restoration, and habitat management.

Interested in protecting your land and the species on it?

Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition

Contact: (978) 443-2233

Website: <http://www.massland.org/>

The Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition is a volunteer based group of land trusts and a clearinghouse for information on your local land trust(s).

New England Forestry Foundation

Contact: info@newenglandforestry.org

Website: <http://www.newenglandforestry.org/resources/for-landowners/massachusetts-landowners>

New England Forestry Foundation helps to conserve forest land in Massachusetts and across New England through conservation easements, forestry education, and sustainable forest management.

Massachusetts Audubon

Contact: (781) 259-9500

Website: www.massaudubon.org

Audubon works with landowners to protect land, and provides forest bird habitat assessments and management recommendations for owners of forest land in select locations through its Foresters for the Birds program.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council

Contact: Narain Schroeder, (413) 499-0596

Website: <http://www.bnrc.net/>

BNRC works with landowners across the Berkshires to conserve land for public benefit and enjoyment.

Sheffield Land Trust

Contact: Kathy Orlando, (413) 229-0234

Website: <http://www.sheffieldland.org>

Sheffield Land Trust works with landowners in the town of Sheffield to protect the land essential to Sheffield's natural, scenic, agricultural, and rural character.

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Hilltown Land Trust (affiliate of The Trustees of Reservations)

Contact: Sally Loomis, (413) 628-4485, x2

Website: <http://www.hilltown-land-trust.org/>

Hilltown Land Trust serves 13 rural towns in western Massachusetts. Their mission is to maintain the area's working farms and forest as a vital part of Hilltown life, and to protect the area's ecological resources and scenic landscapes.

The Nature Conservancy

Contact: Great Barrington office, (413) 229-0232; Northampton office, (413)-584-2532

Website: <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/massachusetts/>

The Nature Conservancy works with willing landowners to protect important wildlife habitat, including corridors. TNC also partners with other land trusts and can help connect landowners to the most appropriate conservation org or state agency.

This list is merely a sampling of some of the programs and resources available locally, and is not intended to be comprehensive. *Please don't let not knowing who to call prevent you from picking up the phone!* If you are in Berkshire County and would like help finding the best resource, contact Berkshire Environmental Action Team at 413-230-7321. In the Hilltowns and surrounding areas, call MassWildlife at 413-684-1646. *Special thanks to Andrew Christopher for his help creating this brochure.*

The resources above can help you follow these general principles for stewarding your land as a wildlife corridor (from Appendix A in "Envisioning the Champlain Wildway", <http://www.thebeatnews.org/BeatTeam/connecting-for-wildlife/>):

- ❖ **Think like an animal.** To assess a landscape for its wildlife permeability potential, perhaps the most important step is to walk the property (and the neighbors' property, if they don't mind) with the eyes and instincts of your focal species. Where do you feel safe? Where can you hide when hunting or foraging, and where might your prey hide? Where can you go to access fruits and other edible plants (especially if you're a bear), and is there a way to get there without being spotted? Can you access water without leaving cover? This simple exercise can provide the basis for many good management ideas.
- ❖ **Chart your course(s).** Using a hand-drawn map or up-to-date aerial photograph, locate nearby patches of forest and trace (or travel) your way back to your property by way of tree, shrub or tall grass cover. What are the obstacles now, and what might be obstacles in the future? Is there just one option, or multiple travel paths if one gets cut off? Accessible mapping resources like Google Maps or Google Earth are helpful for looking at your property from an aerial view.
- ❖ **Emphasize connections.** The concept of "microcorridors" may be useful to the concerned landowner or land manager when assessing a property for its permeability potential. A microcorridor could be considered as any unfragmented block or strip of undeveloped land with year-round vegetation (not including lawns or active pasture). Focus planting projects where there are gaps in perennial vegetation, and encourage the expansion of existing blocks or lines of tree and shrub growth.
- ❖ **Cross the road.** Animals are known to cross roads at points that have secure cover on both sides. Encourage vegetation at safe crossings.
- ❖ **Use native plants.** Introducing non-native invasive plant species can have detrimental effects on native growth and habitat in any region. For planting projects, choose local nurseries growing native stock.
- ❖ **See the whole picture.** When possible, stretch vegetation patches across elevation gradients to allow for maximum seasonal and climate-based movement flexibility. Connect them to existing stream buffers, other patches, or forest. Promote vegetation that connects wetlands, agricultural fields, and lowland forest to higher elevation forest cover. For bear, focus especially on higher elevation beech and oak stands.
- ❖ **Participate in conservation programs and collaborations.** Find out if you're eligible for any agricultural/wildlife habitat incentive programs through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) or, if you're interested in permanently conserving ecologically-valuable areas, consult with a local land trust. Better yet, organize with neighboring landowners to discuss your objectives with regard to wildlife permeability. Cooperative management that transcends property boundaries is very valuable for this type of conservation.