

The Northern Rivers Land Trust Newsletter

No. 1

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NRLT incorporated, will begin operations in Feb. '07

On December 21, 2006, the Northern Rivers Land Trust's provisional steering committee filed Articles of Incorporation with Vermont's Secretary of State. We are now officially in business, but require the inaugural membership meeting on February 18 to adopt by-laws and elect trustees before we can apply for tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service.

Steering committee members are Paul Cillo (Hardwick), Judy Davis (Craftsbury), Clive Gray (Greensboro), Jill Lindenmeyr (Elmore), Zarina O'Hagin (Walden), Peter Peltz (Woodbury), and Steve Young (Wolcott). We hope to see additional towns represented in the Board of Trustees to be elected on February 18.

NRLT membership meeting Sunday, Feb. 18 in Hardwick

The NRLT steering committee invites believers in conservation in our region to an inaugural membership meeting on *Sunday, February 18, at 7:00 p.m.* in *St. John The Baptist Church on West Church Street, Hardwick*. The meeting, to be moderated by Paul Cillo, will begin with a welcome from the provisional steering committee and Tracy Zschau, Northeast Kingdom director of the Vermont Land Trust (VLT).

Next we will hear keynote remarks by our invited speaker, Jeanie McIntyre (see next column), to be followed by open discussion. A concluding business session will adopt by-laws and elect a Board of Trustees. Refreshments will be served.

Draft by-laws have been prepared by the steering committee in consultation with the VLT and residents of our region. Copies may be obtained by calling or emailing Clive Gray, 533-7723, cliveg@wirelessvt.net

UVLT president Jeanie McIntyre to address NRLT's inaugural meeting

Jeanie McIntyre, president of the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT), will be the keynote speaker at NRLT's inaugural meeting on February 18. Jeanie will give us pointers about launching a regional land trust and trace the UVLT's evolution since its founding in 1986.

The UVLT, based in Hanover, NH, and serving 40 Connecticut Valley towns in Vermont and New Hampshire, has conserved over 300 parcels of land totaling 28,000 acres. The UVLT employs 11 full-time staff and had revenues of \$1.76 million in fiscal 2006. In that year it received over a thousand donations from individuals, as well as support from 35 foundations and organizations and 26 businesses.

Volunteers play a major role in the UVLT. Among other contributions, in fiscal 2006 they accounted for 130 of the trust's annual stewardship visits to its 300+ conserved parcels.



[Paul Cillo and Mark McGrath view Cillo's field on Bridgman Hill Road, expected to be NRLT's first project. See page 2]

About the Northern Rivers Land Trust

The NRLT will function as a partnership of people working together to ensure that, as Vermont changes, rural land in our region is not lost to development forever. We will help farm families conserve productive agricultural land for future generations, preserving not only our heritage but also our economic future.

We will protect forestland that supports a healthy wood products industry and sustains habitat critical for black bear, songbirds, deer, and other wildlife. We will help to permanently protect irreplaceable fields, woods, and shoreline essential for recreation and scenic enjoyment. All this will be done while recognizing the need for town planning that allocates portions of the landscape to residential and commercial uses.

Conserving your land

Using legal tools called “conservation easements” or “grants of development rights,” the NRLT will help landowners to voluntarily limit development while keeping the land open for forestry, farming, and recreation.

Conserved property remains in private ownership with the peace of mind that it is protected now and forever. The landowner decides whether to allow public access.

Tax deduction

Easement donations qualify as charitable contributions for federal income and estate tax purposes, but do not necessarily reduce property taxes. In August 2006 President Bush signed new tax legislation allowing donors of conservation easements during 2006-07 to deduct the appraised value up to 50% of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), which can be spread over 15 years.

Financing the NRLT

We will work with landowners who love their land and want to see it conserved. The NRLT will buy, or accept gifts of, development rights. We may share projects with the Vermont Land Trust, which receives funding from The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Freeman Foundation, and private donors. But mainly we will rely on funds raised from residents and friends of the towns we serve.

We will talk regularly with potential conservators, and incur expenses for appraisals, surveys, purchase of easements, and monitoring. You can help by sending us your tax-deductible contribution. Up to our acquisition of charitable (Section 501(c)3) status with

the IRS, the Greensboro Land Trust has agreed to act as our fiscal agent.

Until further notice checks should be made out to “**Greensboro Land Trust - NRLT earmark**” and sent to **GLT, PO Box 135, Greensboro, VT 05841**. The NRLT treasurer will acknowledge your donation. Feel free to call any steering committee member, or Trustee elected at the February 18 meeting, with questions.

NRLT’s first projects

The Northern Rivers Land Trust’s first projects are expected to be conservation easements on two scenic fields along Bridgman Hill Road in Hardwick.

Firstly, Paul Cillo has offered to donate an easement on an 18-acre parcel that he recently acquired on the road’s eastern side (see photo on Page 1).

Secondly, in 1997 the Greensboro Land Trust purchased an easement on Andrew Meyer’s 21-acre hayfield on the road’s west side, also in Hardwick. The GLT accepted the easement on the understanding that a local landowners’ association would eventually take it over. The NRLT is now stepping into that role, and the GLT has agreed to transfer the easement once the NRLT is up and running.

Previous land trust activity in the NRLT’s region

As of January 2007 the Vermont Land Trust, founded in 1977, holds conservation easements on or has otherwise helped to conserve 54 separate properties, totaling 8,191 acres, in the seven towns whose residents founded the Northern Rivers Land Trust (Craftsbury, Elmore, Greensboro, Hardwick, Walden, Wolcott and Woodbury.)

In the only one of our towns with its own land trust, Greensboro, the VLT holds easements on 16 properties totaling 1,808 acres, while the Greensboro Land Trust holds 13 easements totaling 900 acres.

The land trust movement in Vermont and the U.S.A.

As of end-2005, America’s 1,667 local and state land trusts had conserved 11.9 million acres, an area twice the size of New Hampshire. Vermont, no. 43 in total area among the 50 states, ranked 7th in area of land conserved by its 35 land trusts. [Data from Land Trust Alliance’s National Land Trust Census.]

As of January 2007, The Vermont Land Trust, now in its 30th year, has conserved close to 1,500 properties totaling 464,000 acres. Over 600 of the properties are working farms.