

Spring 2018

LANDKEEPERS REPORT

You have preserved farms, helped kids get outside, and are building the first leg of the High Road!

INSIDE

Beloved orchard and nursery preserved—forever!

Library in the Wilderness

Be a Volunteer Landkeeper

Mountain laurel in bloom on the Burbank Trail.

Photo by Lynne Harding.

LANDKEEPERS REPORT

Spring 2018

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THE LANDKEEPERS

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Judy and Dennis Mareb gave new BNRC President Jenny Hansell a tour of their beloved Windy Hill Farm just as the apple trees were bursting into bloom. The story of how Judy and Dennis—and you—preserved the land for agriculture in perpetuity is inside this issue.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Take a Breath, Go Outside!

As I write this, I'm nearing the end of my third month in the President's seat at BNRC. Snowflakes are still falling but I have it on good authority that spring is just about here, and by the time you read this, the lady's slippers will be blooming and the first robin's eggs will have hatched.

In my first months here, I've tried to get out on our properties to learn firsthand what you already know: these lands you've worked so hard to protect are vital to all of us.

I've walked Parson's Marsh, where you are helping us build our first accessible trail. I've met with our partners and colleagues at Mass Audubon, with whom we're building the first major section of the High Road. I've climbed the Hoosac Range and snowshoed into Thomas & Palmer, where we've been eliminating invasive species to open up the trails.

I've also been reading up on what I already knew intuitively: getting

outside in the woods is good for us. The forest relieves stress, anxiety and depression, it builds confidence and good health.

Our new Library in the Wilderness program, in partnership with the Berkshire Athenaeum, is one new way we can help people explore the outdoors.

I have so much admiration for the passion and commitment of our incredible staff, our dedicated board, and you, our supporters, many of whom have volunteered, donated, and enjoyed these spectacular properties for the better part of 50 years.

Let's work together to find and protect these extraordinary treasures, and make them accessible so we can all go outside, take a walk, listen to the birds, and breathe the fresh air of the Berkshires.

See you on the trails!

— Jenny Hansell
President



Imagine walking from the center of Lenox to the top of Lenox Mountain and then all the way to Pittsfield. The first section of the High Road is under way at Yokun Ridge, thanks to you. Photo by Mass Audubon.

FIRST LEG OF THE HIGH ROAD UNDER WAY

Yokun Ridge connects mountaintop to town

When former BNRC President Tad Ames first envisioned the High Road, he sought to knit together the Berkshires' rich natural scenery, outdoor experiences and world-class cultural institutions. This great system of trails will bring you out into the forest or through sweeping farmland, and then back into town where you can have a meal and spend the night.

But where to focus the High Road effort first? BNRC looked to Yokun Ridge in Lenox, where our conservation efforts began fifty years ago. The trails are well used but don't fully connect and it's easy to get lost.

To knit together the pieces along this beautiful ridgeline, we found willing and enthusiastic partners. Together with the Town of Lenox and Mass Audubon—and with your help—work has begun to link existing wood roads, trails and beaten paths to create a 7-mile through-trail.

Our expert trail-builders will improve the path to accommodate

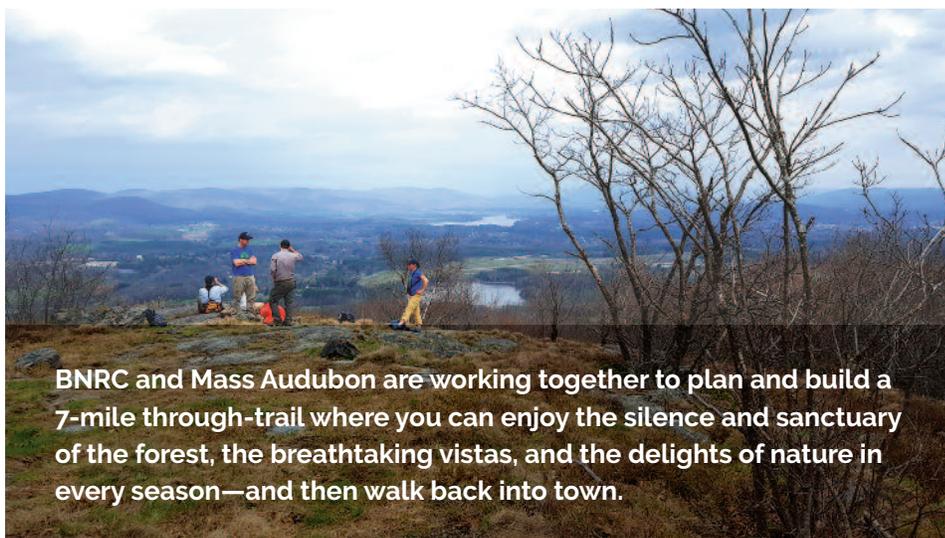
more foot traffic while protecting sensitive habitat. Ample signage will ensure the traveler doesn't go astray.

The new route isn't open yet, as there's much work to be done this summer. But soon you'll be able to journey from downtown Pittsfield into the village of Lenox by foot. Along the way you'll get to experience a wide range of lovely and wild

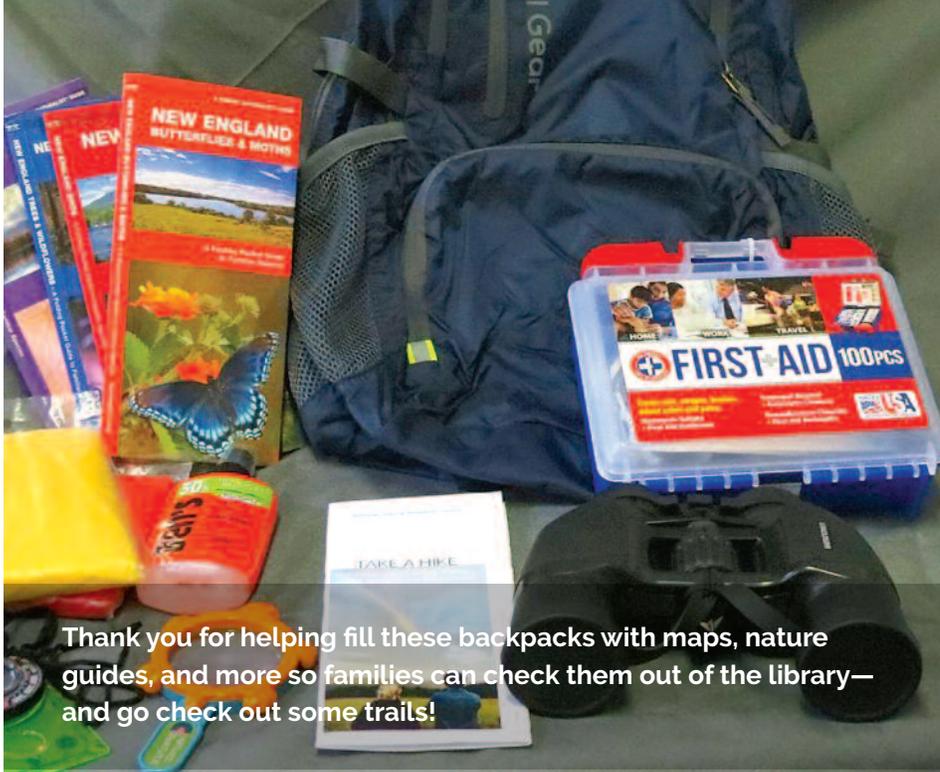
landscapes—from a mountaintop with a view, to the calm cool of an old hemlock grove.

As you travel, depending on season, you might see evidence of deer, bobcat or even bear, and see or hear dozens of species of birds.

We'll keep you posted on progress, and we look forward to meeting you on the first leg of the High Road! 🗺️



BNRC and Mass Audubon are working together to plan and build a 7-mile through-trail where you can enjoy the silence and sanctuary of the forest, the breathtaking vistas, and the delights of nature in every season—and then walk back into town.



Thank you for helping fill these backpacks with maps, nature guides, and more so families can check them out of the library—and go check out some trails!



Volunteer workdays are not all hard work! Come join us!

WHAT WOULD GET YOU TO GO OUTSIDE? BNRC and Berkshire Athenaeum partner to create backpacks filled with great gear so anyone can go for a hike.

If you've never gone hiking or even for a walk in the woods, what would you need to give it a try? Maybe a guide to the birds and butterflies? Certainly a trail map would help, and some bug spray. What if you could check all that, and more, out from the library?

Berkshire Natural Resources Council, in partnership with the Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield's Public Library, is launching a program called "Library in the Wilderness." This program will provide community members with access to essential supplies to have a safe, fun, and educational outdoor experience.

The Library in the Wilderness program allows library cardholders to check out backpacks equipped with field guides, BNRC trail guides, a basic first aid kit, a compass, a magnifying glass, bug spray, and two ponchos—all underwritten by generous BNRC supporters—just as they would a library book. The backpacks will be available for a 1-week checkout and reservations are required.

In addition to health benefits, surrounding oneself with nature promotes a sense of belonging to—and caring for—the land and wildlife. This program provides the tools for families and individuals to be prepared for their own adventure in the natural world and to have fun!

For more information on how to contribute to outfit more backpacks, contact Mariah at mauman@bnrc.org, call 413-499-0596 or visit bnrc.org/upcoming-hikes. 🌲

BE A LANDKEEPER Volunteer on the trails!

The 2018 stewardship season has arrived. Join us as a Volunteer Landkeeper and help keep our trails beautiful and accessible to all.

We've got a lot of land (over 10,000 acres) and trails (50 miles and growing); we depend on volunteers to keep them in great shape. Whether you'd enjoy painting trail blazes, taking photos, performing trail-checks, or helping with mailings, we've got opportunities for you.

Our volunteer workdays always include laughter, learning and knowing you've helped make sure the lands you love are thriving.

If you are interested in joining our team of volunteers, give us a call.



Tag your favorite photos with #landkeepers for all to enjoy.



We're also on Facebook: @berkshirelandkeepers.

Join us for the kick-off of the Library in the Wilderness program on Saturday, June 16 from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm at BNRC's Boulders Reserve in Dalton. We'll also be hosting the first of many workshops on local flora and fauna at the Berkshire Athenaeum to promote the program on Saturday, June 30, 2018.



Cody, Dennis and Judy Mareb's Airedale terrier, looks over their growing Christmas trees, one small part of the farm and nursery they have lovingly built by hand over the last 30 years. The land will stay in farming forever, thanks to their vision and your generosity.

WINDY HILL FARM PRESERVED FOREVER

One of Great Barrington's most beautiful views protected, thanks to you

The tidy rows of winterberry, blueberries and apple trees of Windy Hill Farm are a lovely sight along Route 7 in Great Barrington. Thanks to you, Windy Hill is preserved in perpetuity.

Last December, with your help, Dennis and Judy Mareb completed the sale of an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on Windy Hill Farm.

Dennis and Judy were just out of college in 1980 when they purchased an abandoned dairy farm that was being eyed for residential development. Inspired by the views, the Marebs had a different future in mind.

Six years later, Windy Hill opened to the public, with flowering hillsides and tree limbs sagging with fruit. The farm and garden center now employs 25-30 full- and part-time employees and is enjoyed by

thousands of visitors every year.

By selling an APR to the State, farmers preserve their land while retaining ownership and the right to farm. The Mass APR program com-

"We've been so lucky that we've been able to make a living on the land and support so many families who work with us and for us.

I'm really proud of that. It's been a real joy."

—Dennis Mareb

bines State and Federal funds with local donations to acquire the restrictions. To date, the Massachusetts APR program has permanently protected over 900 farms and more than 73,000 acres.

Part of the challenge of an APR is finding the money to purchase the development rights so the land can stay in farming forever, and you were there to help when the state's offer was below the appraised value.

The Town of Great Barrington, through its Community Preservation Committee, along with BNRC donors, made up much of the difference, and the Marebs left a hefty amount "on the table," essentially donating the rest. This generosity protects important jobs, prime agricultural soil, and beautiful scenery

at the entrance to Great Barrington.

This gorgeous farm wouldn't have been protected without an unwavering commitment from the Marebs, and without you. 



Jeff Lacatell and his son Shane came up with a creative fundraising idea: chipping their neighbors' Christmas trees to bring in donations for BNRC. Thank you, Jeff and Shane!

EVERY GIFT HAS A UNIQUE STORY

Father and son help their neighbors and raise money for BNRC

What keeps 50+ miles of trails and more than 20,000 acres of land open in Berkshire County, for all to explore and enjoy? You do. It is your love for the Berkshires, and your generosity, that protect this wonderful place to live, work in, and visit.

Last year, people in 31 states—and an active-duty service member in the Middle East—contributed to land conservation through BNRC.

Sometimes, a gift arrives with a story. Last December, Jeff Lacatell and his 8-year-old son Shane circulated a flyer in their Pittsfield neighborhood offering to collect discarded Christmas trees and run them through their wood chipper, in exchange for a \$5 contribution to BNRC.

"We chipped 22 trees and many neighbors donated more than \$5," Jeff said. "Shane also donated \$2 that he made shoveling snow at his grandparent's house. We are very thankful for our neighbors and the work BNRC does."

The resulting collective donation, product of a family lesson in community service, will benefit people and wildlife well beyond that neighborhood. And the donors got free mulch for their gardens!

Your gift has a story, too. It tells of your commitment to preserving unspoiled land in this special part of the world, for the benefit of all. It's a beautiful story. Thank you. 🌲

JUNE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Clam River Hike, Sandisfield

Up-close and personal with the Clam River.

Thursday, June 7, 2018 • 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

The Boulders Hike, Dalton/Pittsfield

Join us for the kick-off of the Library in the Wilderness Program!

Saturday, June 16, 2018 • 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Hollow Fields Sunset Hike, Richmond

Hike through the open fields under a painted sky.

Sunday, June 17, 2018 • 7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Housatonic Flats Birding Hike, Great Barrington

Join us for a stroll at this promising birding site.

Saturday, June 23, 2018 • 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Library in the Wilderness Workshop, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield's Public Library

Learn about local flora and fauna and find out how to check out a backpack fully equipped for an outdoor adventure.

Saturday, June 30, 2018 • 10:00 am – 12:00 pm