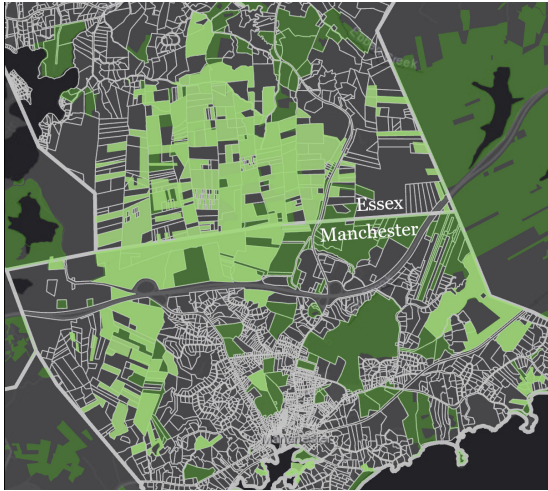




MANCHESTER ESSEX CONSERVATION TRUST

PERMANENTLY PRESERVING NATURAL BEAUTY, WILDLIFE HABITAT AND RESOURCES

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE 2023



The conservation efforts started literally out of the pockets of our founders, but grew with community support. The light green represents land we own or protect today, and the dark green is land conserved by others.

How we've grown!

From a trio of friends, to a Board of Trustees and staff; from a few acres, to nearly 1600 acres. We've grown a lot in 60 years, but the most important growth is immeasurable; it's in the smiles of the people who come to these woods for recreation, for peace and wellness, it's in the miles of trails for hiking, biking and appreciation of nature, and the connections with nature formed by children. It's in the gallons of water slowed for absorption in the wetlands, and the carbon sequestered in the trees, roots, soils and bogs; it's in the cooler shade provided by the forest. It's in the traditions of wildlife studies on land recognized for its great diversity by The Nature Conservancy, recording data on 25 vernal pools this spring, and protecting the habitat for rare species. Even on a drive by the woods and wetlands- the stunning greenery and endless possibilities of the conserved land enrich this place we call home. Thank you to supporters that make this all possible.

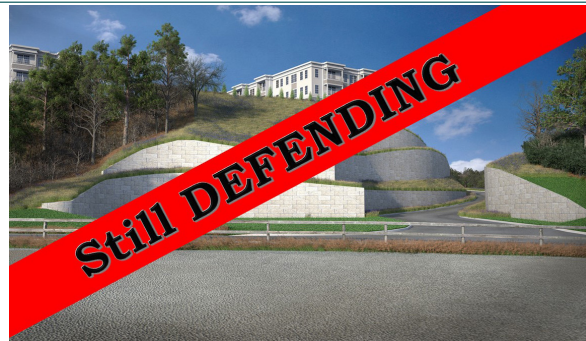
Come Explore 60 Places

To celebrate MECT's history and impact, our board of trustees has compiled a list of 60 Places for 60 Years – a collection of favorite places that tell the story of our towns from colonial beginnings, the first Manchester conserved parcels that seeded the Wilderness Conservation Area (WCA) and our contributions to the conservation and defense of Powder House Hill to our northern reaches in Essex.

Some of the 60 Places highlight areas that MECT conserves through ownership, conservation restrictions, or in partnership with other organizations. And some of the spaces are not yet conserved – though they are very valuable to our



60 Places, continues on page 3



MARK YOUR CALENDERS!

November 8 at 10:00 am.

The defense of Shingle Place Hill continues. Off School Street in Manchester, next to thousands of acres of conservation land, a large development has been denied by the zoning board of appeals. The decision is being appealed, and we are coordinating the defense of this land and decision with the town of Manchester. The state Housing Appeals Committee will have a site visit on November 8 at 10 am. We'd like YOU to show up for the land - Lets show the state how many people care, and how important this area is to all of us. Go to www.mect.org/whats-happening for details.

A Word From Our President

I've spent most of my life on the North Shore.

My mother, a 3rd generation horsewoman, was training both riders and their horses in those days, and competing at high levels in both three-day eventing and dressage. Alongside these serious activities, I had a fairly magical childhood of barns, horses, tractors, and open space. In particular, I loved the bridle paths that connected these areas. They formed a web of trails that got us out of the indoor and outdoor arenas and into the woods and fields beyond our farm. As a child, every ride down one of these paths felt like an adventure.

"This energized group of volunteers and professionals was the perfect complement to combine my love of hiking and mountain biking, with my trail stewardship and land protection efforts. I am proud to serve as MECT President." Matt Plum

During a six year stint in Colorado, I started mountain biking, hiking and skiing. I brought my passions with me when I moved back to the North Shore, and to my delight I discovered that old friends from the area had started cycling in the woods as well. Mountain biking opened new worlds to me, novice as I was, and gave me a way to explore miles of trails, offering a different lens to the experience of being out in the rocky, rugged, wooded terrain of our corner of Cape Ann.

These mountain biking experiences also connected me to a tight knit group of folks who care deeply about these woods and the trails they contain. The camaraderie, sense of fun and adventure, and a dash of rebelliousness that local riders embodied immediately drew me to them and helped forge lifelong bonds. Even the "save the date" card for my wedding featured a photo of my wife and I riding mountain bikes!

Through a local cycling club, we built and maintained a multi-use trail that is still popular today. Later, I began organizing trails projects coordinated with a local land trust and Beverly Open Space. In the mid 1990's the club created an early trail steward program in the same area. Sadly, I began to see the creeping tide of development

putting pressure on open space. I began to get involved in efforts to preserve the lands and trails I had grown to love.

At the same time, the incredible vision begun by MECT's founders was being carried forward. The trust has carefully assembled in excess of 1500 acres of permanently protected woodlands and open space. I joined MECT as a trustee in 2018, and I am proud to serve as the current president. This energized group of volunteers and professionals was the perfect complement to combine my love of hiking and mountain biking with my trail stewardship and land protection efforts, I believe that these protected

and undeveloped parcels under MECT, the town conservation commissions, and other land trusts play an enormous role in defining the character of these extraordinary communities and our quality of life. We have so much work to do!

Best,



Matt Plum, President



Continuing our legacy of cleaning up the environment, we led a joint effort between the Town of Manchester, Cape Ann Trail Stewards and Manchester Essex Conservation Trust, removing over 40 bags of trash from the town owned land in Manchester's Western Woods this spring.

communities. We gratefully acknowledge the Native people on whose ancestral lands we gather, live, work and hike. We have not singled out specific places that may be sacred to the Native communities as we strive to deepen our understanding of their sense of belonging to ancestral homelands. Get started exploring and learning more about these special places at mect.org/60Places. Using the Google Maps or AllTrails links on your phone will guide you along our trails.



#44 Eastern White Pine – This magnificent tree clocks in with a circumference of over 118 inches and dbh (diameter at breast height) is about 38 inches. The scientific estimate of the age of this tree is 155 years, emerging from the pine nut back in the 1860s. Visit this tree in the Western Woods of Manchester.

#17 & #18 Essex River Headwaters. Few people probably realize where the Essex River originates. The source or origin of a river is often called the headwater. The Essex River starts in two different swamps, south of Rocky Hill Road and west of the Old Manchester Essex Road. These two short tributaries come together just before flowing under

Andrews St. This is the area of the northwesternmost headwaters. Protecting the sources of the river water helps to maintain water quality and quantity. The wetlands also help mitigate damage from powerful storms and floods. Wetlands function as natural sponges that trap and slowly release surface water, rain, snowmelt, groundwater, and flood waters. Locate the headwater with the help of our 60 Places google maps.

#11 Lichen are noticeable on many glacial rocks and ledge formations within the Wilderness Conservation Area. A lichen is a composite organism that arises from algae or cyanobacteria living among filaments of multiple fungi species in a mutualistic relationship. Lichens are common along the Prospect Ledge Trail, north of the Cedar Swamp Trail. Lichen grows very slowly. Rock tripe is the common name for a family of lichen species that look long and leafy like dark lettuce, as seen on this ledge, and the individual organisms may be over 100 years old. This Lichen Ledge runs from 20 to 40 feet in height and about 200 feet long.



Many species of lichen grow on ledge in Essex at the Wilderness Conservation Area. Explore all of the 60 Places for 60 Years at starting at: www.mect.org/60Places

A Few Words from People who Enjoy the Land

"The woods in the care of MECT hold a special place in my heart, and even after spending years exploring, I am still able to stumble on new and beautiful places."

Steve Lantner, Essex
MECT Stewardship Committee



"A place of retreat, growth, learning — and occasional peaceful naps — for generations."

Paul Trimby and little Gabe, Essex



"The woodlands are a piece of 'sanity' to me. In a world of stresses at work, home, politically and environmentally, I find the MECT woods my salvation."

Rick Silverman, Essex

"The Western Woods are my special place where I can reconnect to the natural world. From deer bedding down in the snow to the fisher clinging to an oak and the skreeling of the red-shouldered hawk, I can run hard and fast while watching nature's theatre play out."

Todd Callaghan, Beverly
MECT Western Woods Trail Steward



"It became clear during Covid how important our woodlands are. People took to the trails for peace, solace and exercise. Walks with my dog Reggie were my daily highlight."

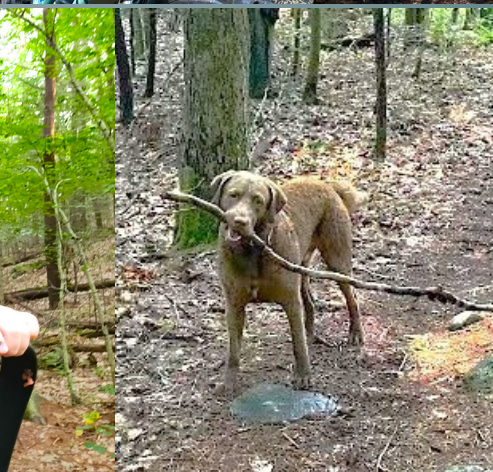
Marion Hall, Manchester
and Reggie





"I have been using MECT's trails since I took up mountain biking over 20 years ago. These old cart paths provide me with a way into the woods where Nature nourishes my body and soul."

Dave Comb and his buddies, Manchester



"I moved to Essex and acquired a Chesapeake Bay retriever puppy after life as a gym rat and inveterate indoors man. Now 'Otis' and I are out on these beautiful trails every single day of the year, where the woods have become our health club and our sanctuary."

David Lubbeck and Otis, Essex



"Just a mile from my house I can enter the forest where I feel worlds away. Hiking in the Western Woods allows me to completely clear my mind, or use the quiet and solitude to mull something over. I always come out feeling better than when I went in!"

Jessica Lamothe, Manchester
MECT Western Woods Trail Steward



"I enter the woods and feel an immediate energy transformation, like a river that slows and spreads into an open meadow, and I begin to hear and smell things differently."

Anita Brewer-Siljeholm, Manchester

Fall Hike Series

Join us for our fall hike series that celebrates the lands we have conserved over 60 years and the beauty of our communities. We have short and leisurely hikes, as well as long-hauls planned, and one hike especially geared towards families with children. Two leading experts will teach us about some of the extraordinary life in our woods: mosses, liverworts, and lichen. We'll also be dedicating our boardwalk to honor our founders on our 60th Anniversary.

Please register in advance to help us with planning! You will receive the meet-up details at registration.

www.mect.org/SaveTheDate

Sunday, Oct 1	10 am to 2 pm	From Essex to Beverly (5 miles) with Jeff Cochand MECT Trustee
Saturday, Oct 7	2 pm to 4 pm	From the Atlantic White Cedars to the Cathedral Pines with MECT Trustees
Sunday, Oct 15	10 am to Noon	Fall Colors - Meander through Manchester with Tom Henderson Manchester Tree Warden
Sunday, Oct 22	10 am to Noon	Mosses and Liverworts with Sue Williams, bryologist and author of the "Ecological Guide to the Mosses and Common Liverworts of the Northeast"
Sunday, Oct 29	2 pm	Founders Boardwalk Ribbon Cutting
Sunday, Oct 29	2:15 pm to 4 pm	From MECT's first conservation efforts to our most recent acquisitions with Jeff Cochand MECT Trustee
Saturday, Nov 4	2 pm to 4 pm	Family Hike and Intro to Orienteering with Colin Kilpatrick and Troop 3 Scouts
Saturday, Nov 11	10 am to Noon	Lichen Learning with Elizabeth Kneiper, curator of the New England Botanical Society Cryptogamic Herbarium at Harvard

Celebrating with Helen Bethell

This past April we were joined by Helen Bethell, MECT's first Executive Director, for a little 60th anniversary celebration in the office. Where she regaled us with tales of the original team: she described Frances "Quitsey" Burnett researching the history of deeds in records kept before there were computers, "Before there were pencils even, we're talking from 1710 and 1711"; Al Creighton was soliciting donations, especially of land - and as she says, "money wasn't the issue, his heart was in it"; she spoke of Gid Loring's financial savy, her own life and family, and how she became part of Manchester Essex Conservation Trust.



Helen's background is in International Relations, and she began her career in New York. When she and her husband relocated to Manchester and she was running their home, she felt the absence of a professional life. She

joined the Conservation Commission in 1978 and then learned about the trusts's need for logistics support. Helen became our first Executive Director in 1982, further catalyzing the efforts of the founders and helping to create a database of families and deeds that is still used today. "It isn't just deeds, it's families. These lots were created in 1710 -11...the whole land was divided up... they created this grid that is really more of a [she mimes slants and curves]...Essex was part of the colony Ipswich, and we had to look at the deeds and determine 'well, who owns it now?'" Division of the original parcels tells the story of families as they grew, merged through marriage, or lost loved ones and even how some passed land to the women in their families specifically to give them voting rights. "It was real detective work." MECT only had 3 trustees when she joined; the hard work of just four people are the foundation on which we stand.

Helen embodies the deep respect for families, their land, and their history that MECT champions to this day. She remains passionate about the MECT mission, and continues to inspire us today.

Helen Bethell, MECT's first Executive Director joined our staff for a celebration of MECT's accomplishments

Celebrating with George Smith

George Smith of Manchester has the distinction of being the longest continuous member of MECT, as well as serving as a trustee. He grew up in Manchester, but it wasn't until he was a Yale graduate of engineering and living in Connecticut that he realized how much love he carried for the region in his heart.



George Smith, MECT Trustee, exploring newly acquired land in the Western Woods of Manchester. George donated his own land to MECT in 2021 for permanent conservation. His protected land is in the vicinity of Laurel Notch and the Hemlock Glen of Manchester's Western Woods.

He decided to buy some land. "I wanted a lasting connection to Manchester, having roamed the woods of Manchester, West Gloucester, Hamilton and Wenham in my youth." Realtors told him there was a new organization called Manchester Essex Conservation Trust that could help. As it turned out, Frances "Quitsey" Burnett (one of our founders) was a dear family friend. George contacted her saying he wanted to buy a piece of land that MECT didn't want, something he could conserve and steward himself. Quitsey said, "I have just the spot for you!"

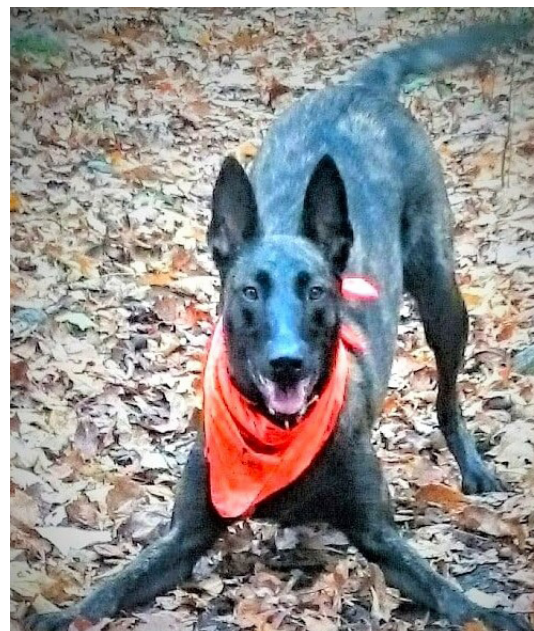
George was able to buy the land without knowing its acreage or boundaries for \$200, and in the process got to know Quitsey and the work she was doing a little more. Wanting to be a part of it, George would go out

Be Safe. Be Seen. Deer hunting season starts on October 2 in our area. Wear blaze orange in the woods and fields for safety. Hunting is not allowed in Massachusetts on Sundays.

into the woods every weekend with Quitsey for years, searching for boundary markers so that parcels could be properly marked, identified, and secured. "Quitsey was very strong," George said, "plowing through underbrush and hiking up hills." He continued to steward his own land and eventually bought more, defending it during a wildfire and replanting hundreds of trees, clearing brush from around them every few years. "The land was the love of my life until I met my wife; we planted trees out there together." Through working with MECT and working with Quitsey, he developed a deeper appreciation for the region, its history, and its legacy.

For George, being part of MECT kept his ties to the land strong, and while he continued to live in Connecticut, he maintained his membership annually and finally moved back to Manchester in 1995. Stewarding the land has been an important part of his life's work. "My father said 'You should be playing golf and tennis,'" George recalls, "and I said 'Oh I'll get to that, this is important to me.'"

We are so grateful to George for continuing his service to MECT and sharing so much of himself, along with the history, his knowledge of the land and communities, and his conservation and forestry perspective with the newer trustees and staff, and the public.





MANCHESTER ESSEX CONSERVATION TRUST

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[mect_yourconservationtrust](https://www.instagram.com/mect_yourconservationtrust)

Manchester Essex Conservation Trust

THE TIME IS NOW Now is the moment for MECT to accelerate acquisitions to keep ahead of the surge of change in land use. Now is the time to defend Shingle Place Hill.

MECT HAS IMPACT Sixty years of measured and consistent effort have resulted in the permanent protection of over 1500 acres of land in Manchester and Essex. No other organization cares more about your backyard than we do. Together we can protect and defend environmentally significant land before these parcels are irrevocably altered.

SINCE 1963, MECT has been protecting land, first in Manchester, then expanding into Essex. Other organizations and the towns have protected land in this area as well. Together, this tapestry of tiny protected parcels forms a vast wildlife habitat and green corridor for all to enjoy.

Learn more about our current acquisition and defense projects, recently completed projects and our goals at www.mect.org/SaveOurWoods

