



# Landscapes

News and Notes From Valley Land Fund

## Year in Review

### President's Letter

It is with great pleasure that I write my first letter as president of Valley Land Fund. The legacy that I and the Board have inherited is quite humbling.

In 21 years of service, Valley Land Fund (VLF) has preserved over 9,000 acres in the Connecticut River Valley. VLF owes its success to its many contributors, its tireless volunteers, and its numerous partners. Past board members, including Pete Westover, Terry Blunt, Gerrit Stover, Jocelyn Forbush, Mark Noonan, Laurie Sanders, and Rich Hubbard, have each helped develop the unique culture of conservation which so infuses our area.

The current Board of VLF has some big boots to fill, but we welcome the challenge! Land preservation has never been more crucial to our Valley. Forests and agricultural fields are being devoured by development, wildlife habitat is becoming fragmented, and our wetlands struggle to function. As in the past 21 years, VLF has an important role to play. We invite you to support our work, and to help us preserve the special places of the Connecticut River Valley for future generations.

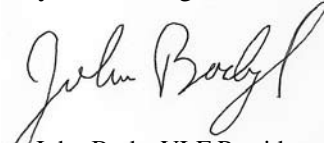
  
John Body, VLF President



photo by Pete Westover

Active farms and upland forests are two kinds of land that VLF works to protect.

The Connecticut River Valley boasts some of the Commonwealth's most important natural and historic resources. Open expanses of fertile farmland, lush river corridors, vital wildlife habitat, and mature upland forests make this region one of the most ecologically and culturally significant in the eastern United States.

Valley Land Fund (VLF) is unique because it works to protect each of these diverse landscapes, in more than 40 communities across Western Massachusetts. This year VLF has worked extensively with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW) to protect grassland bird habitat in Hadley. After a strenuous clean-up by volunteers from Mercy House, VLF, and staff from USFW,



Volunteers help VLF clean up new conservation land.

we transferred land in the Northampton Meadows to USFW, significantly increasing the Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuge. We also helped the Kestrel Trust protect a forested watershed in Belchertown and worked with a local farmer to preserve an agricultural parcel in Sunderland.

In addition to protecting land, VLF acts as a regional resource, assisting community based organizations, state and local governments, land trusts, and private landowners in conservation efforts. This year, VLF helped launch the Nonotuck Land Fund (NLF), a new land preservation organization in Northampton. In its first year, NLF protected 55 acres of the Clapp farm in Chesterfield. Valley Land Fund was a partner in that project.

Valley Land Fund has made several organizational changes in 2007 as well. We have a new logo, designed by Nancy Haver, which represents our four focus areas (forest, farmland, wetlands, and wildlife habitat). We also have a new web site at [www.valleylandfund.org](http://www.valleylandfund.org) offering information on land projects, landowner resources, and news about community events. We are immensely grateful to Robert Jonas for underwriting the entire new site design.

With more than 20 years experience to build upon, VLF is eagerly looking ahead to the next twenty. We are local people with local commitments facing local challenges head-on, and we invite you to join us.

# Protecting the special places of the Connecticut River Valley since 1986

## FOREST



Our forests, whether back yard parcels or vast hillside tracts, offer unique opportunities for recreation and are home to innumerable species. We track the seasons by the hue of leaves and the buds on branches, we wander the groves with our families

and we rely on the deep roots that anchor our soil. Valley Land Fund assisted the Kestrel Trust in preserving 65 acres in Belchertown which was slated for a large housing development. The newly christened Scarborough Brook Conservation Area is part of the aquifer feeding the Belchertown water supply. The parcel abuts an even larger block of protected land in that area.

## HABITAT



Working with a variety of partners, Valley Land Fund has helped protect numerous landscapes that are home to the area's wildlife. Valley Land Fund partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to expand grassland bird habitat. South of the Hadley Malls

on Maple Street, the frenetic energy of the malls gives way to open farmland and green fields. Valley Land Fund acted quickly to acquire land at the junction of Moody Bridge Road and South Maple Street, and now that key parcel provides permanent protection for grasslands birds, as well as other animals traveling between the Holyoke Range and the Fort River corridor.



VLF protects a broad range of landscapes, including this island in the CT River.



A VLF board member surveys farmland to be protected.



VLF helped conserve this pond in the Northampton Meadows.

## FARMLAND



Valley Land Fund is committed to conserving the land and the culture of the Connecticut River Valley. We recently sold 45 acres of protected farmland along the Connecticut River to a local farmer. By securing an Agricultural Preservation Restriction

(APR) on the land, VLF assured that the property will remain in active agricultural use permanently. This sale will allow a farmer who has proven to be a great land steward to make productive use of some of the most fertile land in the Pioneer Valley, thereby protecting the land while supporting the local economy.

## WETLANDS



The Connecticut River defines our region. However, just as important as the river are the vast wetlands that line its banks and spread throughout the area. Valley Land Fund has partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect 197 acres of the

Northampton Meadows. This project adds significant land on the banks of the Connecticut River to the Silvio O. Conte Wildlife Refuge. The land has two ponds connected to the Connecticut River, with the old Mill River lying on its southern boundary. This incredible riparian habitat is used extensively by migrating waterfowl, nesting birds, and other wildlife.