



Sudbury Valley Trustees

Volunteer Handbook

Welcome to SVT!

Thank you for volunteering! To achieve its mission, SVT relies on the efforts of volunteers in our offices, at our events, and on our properties and trails. The SVT staff values your contributions as a volunteer, and we appreciate your gift of time and energy.

About SVT

SVT is a member-supported, nonprofit land trust and conservation organization that works in a 36-community region between Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts. We have an active, community-based 16-member Board of Directors, 11 staff members, 2 AmeriCorps/MassLIFT members, and over 200 volunteers. In 2013, SVT was accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

Our Mission

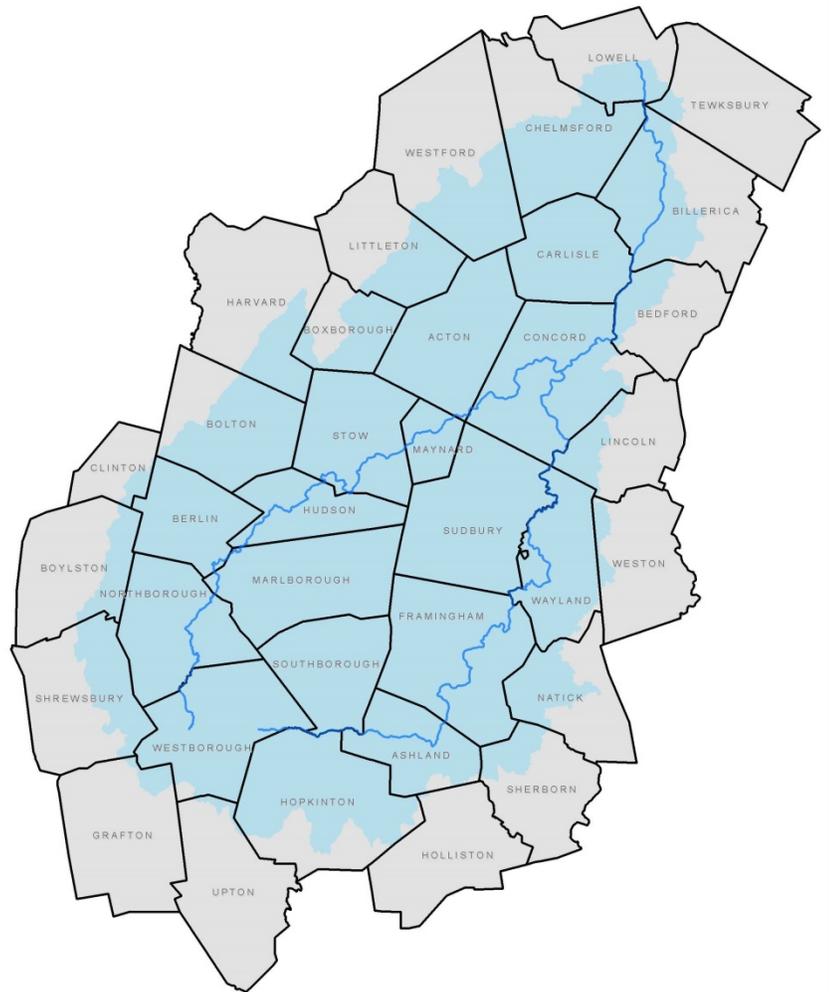
SVT is a regional land trust that conserves land and protects wildlife habitat in the Concord, Assabet, and Sudbury river basin for the benefit of present and future generations.

Our History

SVT was formed in 1953 as a handful of citizens from Wayland became concerned that a development boom threatened to change the rural nature of the region. The organization was formally created on September 28 of that year, when seven men from Wayland--Allen Morgan, George Lewis, Allen Benjamin, Henry Parker, Bill Ryder, Dick Stackpole, and Roger Stokey--met to endorse an Agreement of Association, adopted a set of by-laws, set a governing Board of Directors, and began what has been a lasting endeavor in land conservation.

In its first ten years, without a headquarters or a professional staff, the group acquired 32 properties totaling 525 acres, many along the marshes of the Sudbury River. Among our early successes were the acquisition of Upper Mill Brook and Hamlen Woods in Wayland in 1957. We soon welcomed opportunities to acquire properties in northwest Framingham (Fay Fields in 1959 and Baiting Brook Welch in 1960).

In 1981 the organization opened its first staffed office, and began to expand its reach beyond Sudbury, Wayland, and Framingham, conserving new land and recruiting additional members throughout the region. Another landmark for the organization came in 1988, when SVT proposed that the Sudbury, Concord and Assabet Rivers receive a Scenic Rivers System designation. After a lengthy process of studies and town meeting votes, it was signed into law in 1999, further protecting the rivers and providing substantial funds for their upkeep, one of the original goals of the organization. In 2004 SVT moved to its current headquarters at Wolbach farm.



Our Work

SVT cares for some of this region's most important forests, wetlands, and grasslands—natural areas that support wildlife habitat, working farms, and recreational trails. As of 2015, SVT cares for more than 4300 acres on 85 reservations and 66 Conservation Restrictions and maintains a 55-mile trail network.

We work in three major areas to fulfill our mission:

1. **Land Protection.** Through collaboration with individual landowners, local land trusts, and our municipal, state, and federal partners, SVT employs a number of strategies to permanently protect land from development.
2. **Stewardship.** We actively manage the parcels we protect, ensuring that the values that originally inspired protection are cared for in perpetuity. Stewardship tasks include invasive species control, habitat restoration and management, trail maintenance, and boundary monitoring.
3. **People and Programs.** SVT recognizes that we must engage people to care and act for natural areas, and we rely on the support of more than 2900 members to help us fulfill our mission. We also provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn more about our region's open spaces and wildlife and to enjoy the land through low-impact recreational opportunities such as hiking and paddling.

Land Protection

SVT's land-protection staff partners with landowners, other land trusts, town governments, and state and federal agencies to conserve open space. We place a priority on protecting wildlife habitat on large, contiguous parcels of land.

We protect land in three general ways:

1. *By acquiring and owning a property.* In some cases, a landowner will donate land to us; in others, we raise funds to purchase a property. Once we own the land, we are responsible for its long-term care and management.
2. *By helping a government entity or another nonprofit conservation organization acquire a piece of property;* that entity is then responsible for managing the land. With our experience in managing land-protection projects, we are able to offer advice about structuring the land protection deal, completing paperwork, and writing the contracts that govern such acquisitions.
3. *By holding a conservation restriction (CR) on a property.* A CR is a legal agreement entered into between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization, such as SVT, or a government entity. CRs allow individuals or families to retain ownership of their land while placing limitations on development and certain uses for themselves and future owners.

Because of the technical and legal expertise required for this work, our land-protection staff rarely requires the assistance of volunteers.

Stewardship

SVT's stewardship staff is responsible for managing and overseeing the properties we own (called "reservations") and the CRs we hold. With only two full-time staff members aided by one MassLIFT AmeriCorps member, our stewardship staff relies on dozens of volunteers to help us manage over 80 reservations.

The stewardship staff prepares a baseline documentation report that describes the conservation values and condition of each property. The staff also marks boundaries to prevent encroachment from development and conducts monitoring visits to ensure the conservation values are upheld.

For each reservation, the stewardship staff develops a management plan that includes an inventory of natural resources, a strategy for invasive species control, and possibly a plan for restoring native wildlife habitat. The management plan also covers the creation and maintenance of trails, the building and maintenance of bridges and boardwalks, and the trimming of vegetation—tasks that benefit greatly from volunteer help.

Stewardship Volunteers

The stewardship staff handles the legal protocols of monitoring our CRs, but they welcome and depend upon the assistance of volunteers in managing our reservations.

Volunteers who want to make an occasional or short-term commitment can participate on "work days," when we put together a team of volunteers to address routine maintenance. In the springtime, volunteers also monitor the bluebird boxes and vernal pools on our reservations for signs of activity.

We also have opportunities for volunteers willing to make a longer-term commitment. For example, volunteer Preserve Stewards serve as our eyes and ears at our reservations, where they cut back brush from trails, remove trash and debris, maintain trail signs, and take note of vandalism or illegal activity. Most Property Stewards volunteer 2 to 10 hours per month, year-round.

Volunteer Boundary Monitors work in groups of two or three to locate and mark boundaries of SVT reservations. Boundary Monitors generally have experience reading maps and using a compass, and they must be willing to bushwhack through rough terrain. Typically, Boundary Monitors make a commitment to volunteer for a full year.

SVT also offers a Youth Conservation Steward Program, which allows youths, whether individually or part of a group, to learn new skills while contributing to the improvement and maintenance of our reservations. Participants may help with invasive plant control, develop an interpretive trail map, or replace or build a bridge on a trail. They often learn about topics such as wildlife behavior, invasive species management, and the principles of conservation.

People and Programs

As a nonprofit organization, SVT relies on the contributions of its members to be successful. Benefits for members include discounts or free admission to SVT programs, a subscription to the SVT newsletter *The Wren*, invitations to members-only events such as the annual Ice Cream Social, and the opportunity to aid SVT's mission: helping to preserve and maintain open space in our communities.

Membership activities are managed by our two Membership and Development staff members who are responsible for organizing fundraising activities such as the annual benefit dinner, for planning our annual Trail-a-Thon to celebrate National Trails' Day, and for coordinating our annual Pumpkin Patch event for families with young children.

In addition, SVT sponsors outings and educational activities to build membership and maintain our relationship with the communities of our region. We offer an extensive slate of hiking, cycling, paddling,

and snowshoeing outings that combine exercise with informal outdoor education. Our staff members also make formal educational presentations about natural history and local wildlife to community groups and to the general public.

Membership & Outreach Volunteers

Because of the expansive nature of our outreach program, there are many opportunities for volunteers to assist with membership and development activities.

Outside the office, volunteers represent SVT at community events like farmers' markets and fairs, make natural history or wildlife presentations to local clubs and societies, and lead hiking, paddling, or cycling events on our properties. These opportunities are intermittent and generally require only a few hours of a volunteer's time.

We also seek volunteers for the committees that organize our annual Benefit Fundraiser, Trail-a-Thon, and Pumpkin Patch events. Committee members help plan activities for these events, solicit donations from vendors, recruit participants, and assist with event promotion. These opportunities typically require attendance at three or four meetings and 10 hours of work.

Inside the office, volunteers help the Membership & Outreach staff with mailings, data entry, event planning, and numerous other tasks that are essential for SVT's success. Most office volunteers work a regular schedule of 2 to 4 hours per week. We also maintain a list of "on call" volunteers who assist us with the preparation of large mailings once or twice a year.

Volunteering at SVT

Before you begin volunteering at SVT, we will ask you to fill out and sign two forms:

- a release form in which you (or your parent/ guardian if under age 18) acknowledge the risks associated with the work you will be doing, and
- a confidentiality agreement in which you agree not to divulge certain types of information you learn during your volunteer assignment.

On your first day, you will meet with the SVT staff member who will supervise your work. The staff member will help you establish your schedule, will describe the tasks you'll be working on, and will provide the training you need.

Your Schedule

We are grateful for the time you donate to SVT, and we understand that this is not a "job"—you are not obligated to work during specific hours each week. We do need to schedule your time, though, to ensure you have the tools and resources you need for a task and to ensure projects are completed on time.

If you are unable to volunteer as scheduled or would like to change your schedule, please notify your supervisor.

Logging Your Time

SVT must track the number of hours that volunteers work for us. Some grant applications require this information, and we also need to assess how much effort goes into each project.

Office volunteers sign a log sheet each time they volunteer. Property Stewards log into a web page to document their work. Other volunteers send an e-mail to their supervisor. Your supervisor will work out the best way for you to log your hours.

Your Responsibilities

All Volunteers: SVT's Volunteer Release Form needs to be signed **annually**. This is to ensure that your emergency contact information and medical conditions are updated in our database. SVT will request submission of a Release Form around the end of the fiscal year. Also, we ask that you sign SVT's Confidentiality Agreement as a promise to treat specific information as confidential without proper authorization.

These forms will be offered by your supervisor at the beginning of your volunteer service and can also be found on our website.

In the field: Because you may encounter members of the public on our trails, we will provide you with a name badge that identifies you as a representative of SVT. Please wear this whenever you are working on our reservations.

Please be mindful of the property management resources we have provided to you on our website. This includes:

- SVT's Power Tool Use Policy
- Information about borrowing tools
- Basic Trail Maintenance

If in doubt, feel free to contact Stewardship staff at any time.

In the office: When you arrive, please sign in using the form in the volunteer space. Most likely, you will report to the Director of Membership for your volunteer assignment. It's possible, however, that another staff person will have a project for you that will have been conveyed to the Director of Membership. If you have any questions about your assignment, feel free to speak with either the staff person in charge or the Director of Membership.

Since Wolbach Farm is open to the public during normal business hours, please familiarize yourself with some of the basics around the office. It's very likely one of the staff will handle questions from visitors, but there may be an occasion where you will find yourself speaking to a visitor. In such an instance, having a basic understanding of the office, such as where we keep maps and books, for example, will prove helpful. Of course, you are always welcome to seek out a staff person for further assistance.

Changing Your Assignment and Providing Feedback

If you would like to change assignments or explore a new volunteer opportunity, consult the appropriate department staff and your current supervisor.

Do you have feedback on a project, discrepancy with a supervisor, or suggested improvements to our volunteer program? Please fill out our Volunteer Feedback form! This can be submitted on our website (svtweb.org/volunteer) or filled out in the volunteer space at Wolbach Farm. This form can be anonymous.

SVT Staff

Contact the SVT staff at:

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Executive Director

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Administration

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Debbie Pullen, *Development Assistant*, ext. 123
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2015-16 MassLIFT AmeriCorps Members

Alicia Coleman, *Regional Conservation Coordinator*, ext. 138.
acoleman@svtweb.org

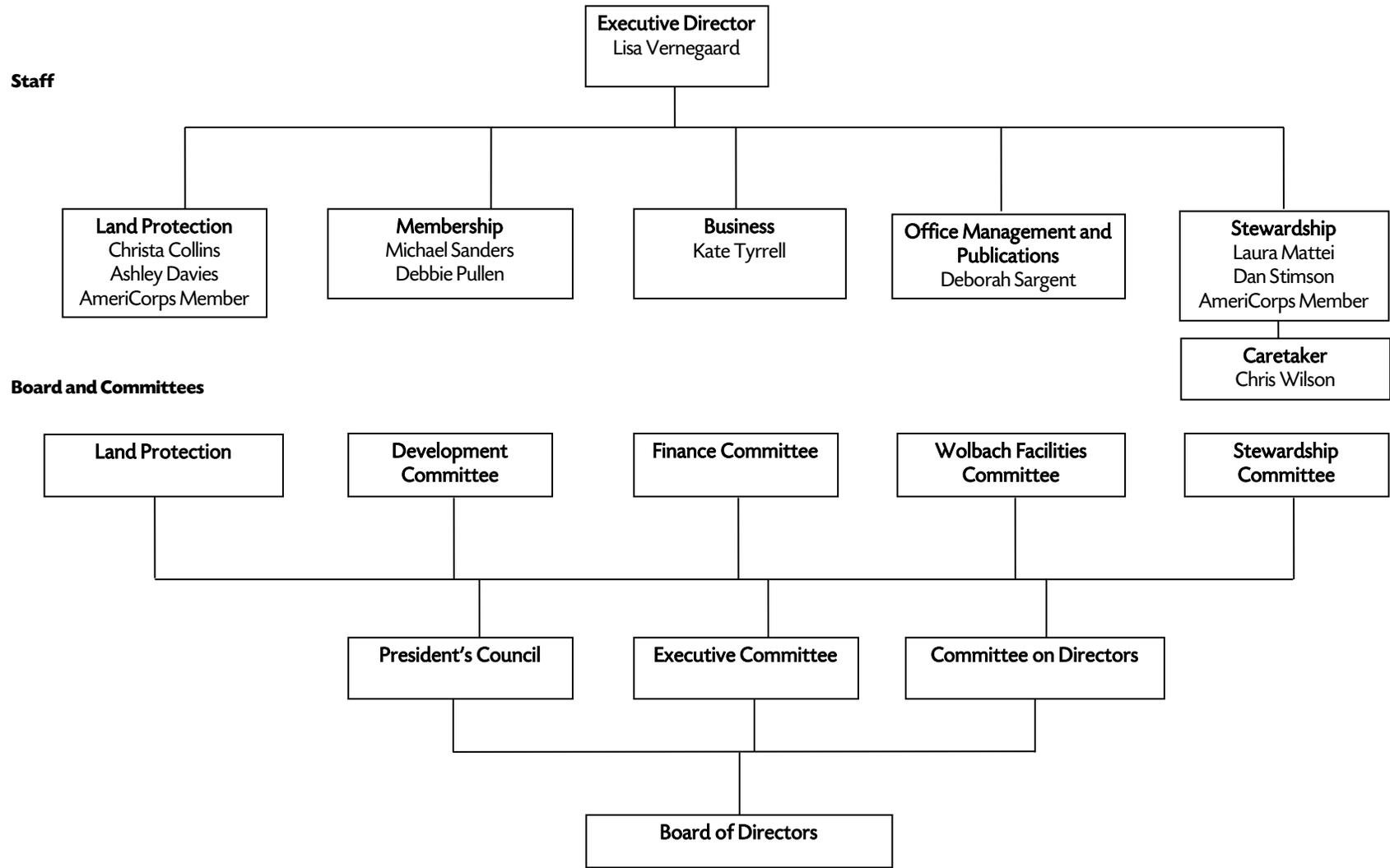
Jesse Koyen, *Land Stewardship Coordinator*,
ext. 135. jkoyen@svtweb.org

Board of Directors and Committee Structure

All members of the Board of Directors and the Committees generously volunteer their time and energy to further SVT's mission. Most of the Board members also serve on at least one committee. The committees

Board of Directors
Land Protection Committee
Stewardship Committee
Finance Committee
Development Committee
Membership & Outreach Committee (with subcommittees for events)
Wolbach Facilities Committee

Appendix I. Organizational Structure of Sudbury Valley Trustee



Sudbury Valley Trustees

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Agreement

I acknowledge that in the course of my volunteer activities I may have access to documents, data, or other information, some or all of which may be confidential whether or not labeled or identified as “confidential.” This includes any work completed within SVT’s offices on a company computer or within a database that holds personal contact information for members, volunteers, or donors, all of which is confidential. Any information regarding the amount of gifts and bequests of money, land, or Conservation Restrictions, and any negotiations regarding the transfer of land or Conservation Restrictions is confidential and should not be shared outside of SVT’s offices or with anyone other than SVT staff.

In addition, the known location of a rare or endangered species is confidential information.

Therefore, except as required by my activities, I shall not either during or after my association with the Sudbury Valley Trustees, directly or indirectly use, disseminate, or otherwise disclose any confidential information acquired in the course of my activities.

Name (print or type): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Sudbury Valley Trustees

Release Form

I hereby agree that I am going to participate in the volunteer program offered by Sudbury Valley Trustees and in consideration of being allowed to participate, agree that I alone will bear the risk of any personal injury or loss of personal belongings which occurs during or on account of my participation in the above outing, both for myself and for any minor children accompanying me.

I intend by this release and waiver to release Sudbury Valley Trustees as well as its officers and directors, both personally and in their representative capacities, from any claim for injury, damage, or loss, from any cause whatsoever, and I understand and acknowledge the significance and consequence of such specific intention to release all claims. I hereby assume full responsibility for any injuries, damages, or losses that I, or any minor children accompanying me, may sustain.

In case of an emergency, I understand every effort will be made to contact the person listed below. In the event they cannot be reached, I hereby give my permission to the physician selected by the adult leader in charge to administer emergency treatment, including hospitalization, anesthesia, surgery, or injections of medication.

By signing this, I authorize SVT to take my photo to use for publicity reasons. I agree that I am freely and voluntarily executing this release and waiver and that I have fully and completely read its contents.

Print Name & Signature

Date

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

ALLERGIES/ OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS

, *if under 18, please speak with SVT staff about a Youth Release form

