



THE WREN

December 2022



Mapping Our Protection Priorities

In recent years, SVT has accelerated the pace of our work so we can help conserve another 12,000 acres by the year 2050. We know we can't save every undeveloped parcel in our region; there simply isn't enough funding. We also recognize that well-planned development can be a key to a thriving community.

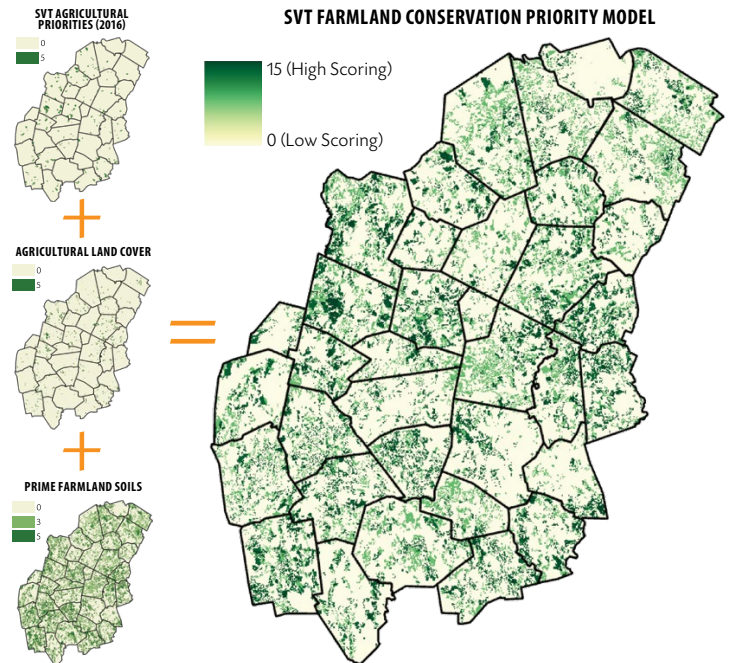
To help our many conservation partners decide where to invest their time and money, SVT and the Metrowest Conservation Alliance created a tool for identifying the lands that are the most essential to conserve. These lands filter air and water, buffer against the effects of climate change, support local agriculture, provide wildlife habitat, and offer places for people to recreate. Because the tool can identify priority lands that cross town borders, it should also facilitate conservation partnerships.

Using data from numerous sources, we created four online maps, each of which focuses on a different theme:

- **Natural Services:** Areas that sequester carbon, mitigate heat islands, protect water quality, or protect against flooding from major storms.
- **Habitat for Biodiversity:** Areas that provide habitat for native wildlife and can accommodate wildlife movements that result from climate changes.
- **Community Conservation:** Lands we should protect to ensure that people in all parts of the region have access to recreational opportunities and natural services.
- **Farmland:** Farmlands that provide fresh food to local markets.

We compiled more than 30 data layers that describe the physical, biological, hydrographic, and human-influenced features of the region. The more benefits an undeveloped area provides for one of the themes, the darker its color on the map. A user can also zoom in on a parcel to learn more about its characteristics.

The tool should prove useful for addressing many conservation-planning questions. A city where residents need easier access to green spaces can seek to protect lands that link to



To map our priorities, we "stacked" data layers in a Geographic Information System (GIS). We gave each beneficial characteristic a score from 0 to 5, with 5 being the best quality and 0 indicating an absence of that quality. The resulting map shows where the highest values coincide.

nearby conserved properties—which might be located in an adjacent town. Or local officials could identify those lands that do the best job of filtering drinking water and providing flood protection—and then steer development efforts to other parts of town where they make more sense.

At SVT, we are excited to use these maps to refine our land protection priorities. We'll also use them to work with our partners to identify new conservation projects, especially ones that cross municipal boundaries.

You can see the tool for yourself at www.svtweb.org/storymap. Pages 4–5 of this newsletter illustrate recent SVT projects that scored highly with the maps.

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SVT is committed to being an equitable and inclusive organization that works in partnership with the full diversity of people in the region to ensure everyone feels welcome to enjoy local natural areas and participate in the efforts to care for these lands.

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Fostering New Collaborations

Lisa Vernegaard, Executive Director

In 2018, we set an audacious goal: By 2050, SVT and our partners would conserve 12,000 more acres of land—1.5 times the amount SVT had helped to conserve in the 65 years since our founding. We resolved to help local land trusts, municipalities, and other allies build their capacity to pursue our shared goals. We knew that our expertise and experience combined with their community connections would make an unbeatable combination.

It turns out that collaboration not only increases our impact, it also makes terrific financial sense. We've recently calculated that our investment in partnering enabled us to achieve a greater than 5-to-1 return on land protection investments over the past 10 years. That's a return on investment that any financial planner would envy, right?

Now, we're excited that our new regional mapping tool (see pages 4–5) will foster additional collaborations. Developed in partnership with the Metrowest Conservation Alliance, the online tool helps users pinpoint the lands that best support a local need (such as easier access to green space) so they can decide where an investment in land protection will have the greatest impact. And since healthy lands don't conform to town boundaries, the maps will highlight areas where SVT can work with several municipalities and land trusts to protect the expansive natural areas we all rely on.

I'm certain that our new mapping tool will help SVT and our partners accelerate the important work of conservation, and I'm equally certain that we would not be able to do this work without your support. Thank You!

P.S. You can try the tool for yourself to get an inside look at conservation—and to predict where SVT will be focusing our efforts to reach that 12,000-acre goal! www.svtweb.org/storymap



NATURE SIGHTINGS

Annual Bird Count. In December, the landscape gets a bit grayer, but there are still splashes of color to be seen in nature. This image, captured by Nancy Wright in Westborough, shows the bright winter plumage of the eastern bluebird and the house finch. These species, and many others who stay with us through our cold winter, will be counted by hardy birders at the upcoming Concord Christmas Bird Count on January 1. For information on how to participate in the count, which covers parts of 18 towns, visit www.concordcbc.org.

Berlin's Horseshoe Pond Is Conserved!

On November 8, the Town of Berlin took ownership of this beautiful 100-acre property on the northeast corner of Mount Pisgah. The Horseshoe Pond land—which spans a meadow, a vernal pool, and a forest—sits in an environmentally important area that supports critical wetlands and an extensive wildlife corridor.

SVT and the Town of Berlin had wanted to conserve this land for decades, and we were thrilled to achieve our goal. Horseshoe Pond was the largest remaining piece of unprotected land on Mount Pisgah, and it has long been popular with hikers who cross it to access the Mount Pisgah network.

Thank you to everyone who supported this conservation effort. Town voters twice approved the use of Community Preservation Act funds for the purchase, private foundations awarded grant funding, and SVT conducted a crowdfunding campaign. Final funding came from the Commonwealth through an \$874,268 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant.

SVT purchased the land in September as the interim owner to give the Town time to secure the MVP grant



Tom Sullivan

and reimburse us. Now that the Town owns the land, SVT will hold a conservation restriction on it to ensure that its ecological values remain permanently protected.

We celebrated the initial protection in September with an “open house” at the property. Naturalists were on hand to answer questions in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and many families enjoyed a nature scavenger hunt at this beautiful conservation area.

We encourage you to visit the delightful Horseshoe Pond conservation land for yourself. Trail maps and directions are available on our website in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. www.svtweb.org/pisgah

Scout Finishes Bridge in Hopkinton



Ashwath Sridhar has completed his Eagle Scout project at SVT's Whitehall Woods in Hopkinton. Ash worked with New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) and Bay State Trail Riders Association (BSTRA) to design and build a boardwalk to allow bikers and equestrians to cross a wet section of trail.

The trail at this SVT reservation loops through the forest and links to many more miles of trails in Upton State Forest. Thank you to Ash, NEMBA, BSTRA, and the volunteers who Ash recruited to build the bridge.

Welcome to Samantha Corbin

Samantha Corbin is SVT's new Conservation Coordinator, a nine-month position that runs until June 2023. A graduate of Framingham State University, Sam will provide support to the regional Native Pollinator Task Force, assist efforts to create accessible trails on SVT properties, and produce our monthly Nature Sightings e-newsletter. Welcome, Sam!



Land Protection Successes

Boxborough's Campbell Land property is protected! Located along Sargent and Littlefield Roads, these 21 acres protect local water resources and create a connection between nearby conservation areas.

SVT has purchased the property and will hold it until the Town can reimburse us and take ownership. In addition, the Boxborough Conservation Trust raised over \$200,000 to help offset the Town's costs. SVT was delighted to assist with this effort, and we'll eventually hold a conservation restriction on the land.

The Town of Upton has purchased the 92-acre Mechanic Street Property that includes a vernal pool and several intermittent streams. The Town purchased the land with Community Preservation Act funds, a contribution from SVT, and over \$150,000 that a local group collected through a community crowdfunding campaign. SVT will hold a conservation restriction on the property, and we'll work with the Town to create trails and manage the land.

Conservation in the SuAsCo

SVT and the Metrowest Conservation Alliance have developed a web-based tool to help communities around the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers decide how best to spend their conservation dollars. Users can “drill down” into four online maps to see how a given parcel scores on a specific conservation concern.

One conservationist who expects to use the tool is Priscilla Ryder, Conservation Agent for the City of Marlborough. “I foresee the City using the tool to finalize the priorities for our

Open Space and Recreation Plan,” she said. “We can visualize which parcels have a higher priority both ecologically and for habitat diversity. The tool also will help us visualize the needs for our Hazard Mitigation and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plans so we can identify areas where ‘nature-based’ solutions are required for climate change mitigation.”

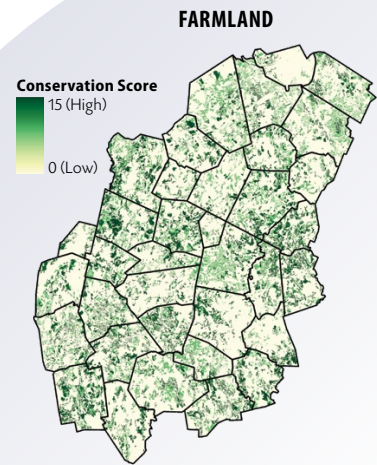
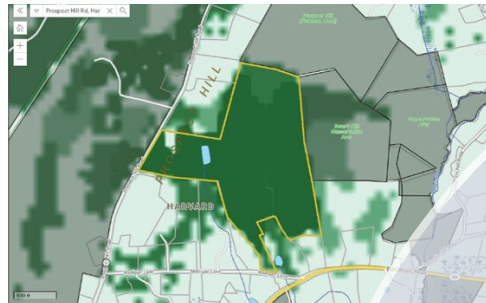
These pages show how recent SVT projects scored in the online tool. You can try the tool for yourself in our story map, “Conservation in the SuAsCo,” at www.svtweb.org/storymap.

Farmland

- Existing Farmland Identified Through Local Knowledge and Land Cover Analysis
- Designated Prime Farmland Soils

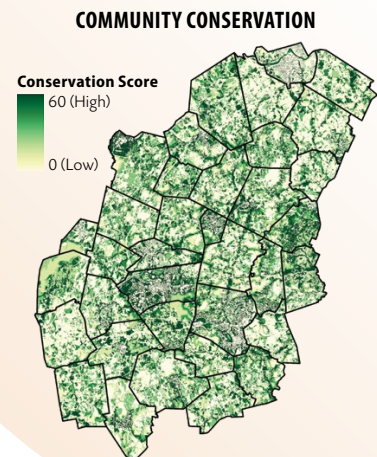
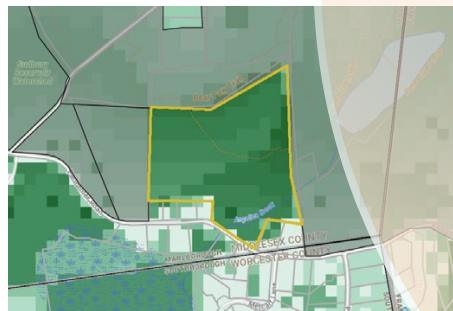
In the Farmland map, we identify priorities for agricultural preservation. The map identifies existing or potential agricultural lands, especially those with Prime Farmland soils, so it’s no

surprise to see **Prospect Hill Community Orchard in Harvard** highlighted. The site of an ongoing effort to permanently protect 70 acres of farmland with an agricultural preservation restriction, the orchard will forever be able to produce healthy, local food.



Community Conservation

- Smaller Minimally Disturbed Natural Areas
- Environmental Justice Areas
- Access Points to Regional Trail Links and Areas Connecting Them
- Access Points to Existing Preserved Lands
- Areas In and Around the Severe Summer Heat
- Protection of Water Quality
- Protection of Flood Storage Capacity



In the Community Conservation map, we sought to identify lands that provide access to quiet, green, and cool open spaces that are crucial for our mental and physical health. We will use this map to identify areas where SVT’s land protection efforts can serve wider and more diverse audiences.

A recent success that scores well is the **O'Donnell Property**, which is located within an Environmental Justice Area in the **City of Marlborough**. Trails on the property provide additional access to the greater Callahan State Park trails, and they also create more connections to the regional Bay Circuit Trail. Plus, this land also protects an Outstanding Resource Waters Area that helps mitigate flood risks in downstream neighborhoods.



Louis Calisi



Dany Pelletier

Natural Services

- Carbon Storage
- Connecting Core Habitats for Biodiversity
- Protection of Water Quality
- Protection of Flood Storage Capacity

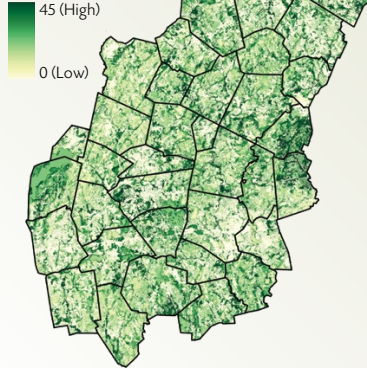
In the Natural Services map, we highlight lands that help make the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we live on both safer and healthier. Protecting such lands reduces the need for expensive engineered systems that provide these services.



A recently conserved property that scores well in this map is **Browns' Woods in Littleton**. Located just upstream from Long Pond, the streams and wetlands in Browns' Woods can store potential floodwaters during extreme storms.

NATURAL SERVICES

Conservation Score



Compared to other forests in our region, the forests here also score very well in their ability to filter the air and absorb carbon dioxide. This improves air quality and reduces greenhouse gases—and helps mitigate the effects of climate change.

Habitat for Biodiversity

- Significant Blocks of Habitat
- Areas of Uninterrupted Interior Forest
- Priority Natural Communities
- Under-Represented Natural Communities
- Rare and Endangered Species Habitat
- Migration Corridors
- Climate Resiliency

The Habitat for Biodiversity map gives strong scores to large blocks of undeveloped land that provides quality habitat for a variety of wildlife.

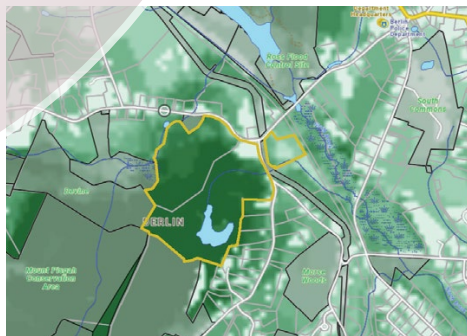
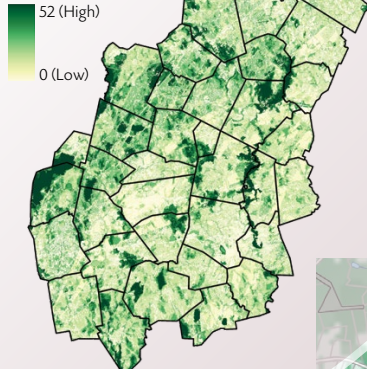
We knew we would find the recently protected **Horseshoe Pond parcels in Berlin** highlighted here.

Located next to hundreds of acres of protected land in the Mount Pisgah Conservation Area, Horseshoe Pond hosts a variety of habitats on a varied topography. It scores well for its resiliency to climate change and for providing movement corridors for wildlife, both for now and for the future when species are projected to move due to climate change.



HABITAT FOR BIODIVERSITY

Conservation Score





...A Conservation Career

In early October, Christa Collins retired from SVT after 20 years, the last 15 of which she served as Director of Land Protection. A well-respected member of the Massachusetts conservation community, Christa helped to protect more than 3,100 acres across 88 properties during her time at SVT.



She was integral to the conservation of some of the region's most well-known landscapes, including the 218-acre Mainstone Farm in Wayland, the 300-acre Nobscot Scout Reservation in Sudbury, the 90-acre Sweetwilliam Farm and Whitney Conservation Area in Upton, and most recently, the 100-acre Horseshoe Pond on Mount Pisgah in Berlin. Christa also worked steadfastly for several years on the effort to conserve Prospect Hill Community Orchard in Harvard, a project that should reach its conclusion next year.

SVT and the entire region remain indebted to Christa for the positive impact she has had on our natural areas and agricultural lands. Fortunately for all of us, she will continue to play a role in regional conservation as a board member for the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

"To a person, everyone I've spoken with has said what a pleasure it was to work with Christa," said Executive Director Lisa Vernegaard. "Her knowledge, dedication, and persistence, along with a great sense of humor, combined to make her a respected and successful partner in conservation projects throughout the region. Her impact will be felt for decades to come, as future generations will be able to explore the same beautiful natural areas that we enjoy today."

Christa joined SVT's Land Protection staff in 2002 with a master's in landscape architecture from the University of Michigan and a strong passion for land conservation. She was also a good teacher who helped to train others in the important work of land protection. Thanks to the groundwork Christa laid and to her mentorship of Meredith Houghton, SVT's Land Protection Specialist, our conservation work will continue at a strong pace far into the future.

SVT Honors Conservationists

During our Annual Meeting on October 6, SVT presented our Annual Conservation Awards to volunteers, municipal officials, and local scouts who have played a pivotal role in the protection of the region's important open spaces:

Morgan Volunteer of the Year: **Neela de Zoysa** of Sudbury, Program Leader and Member of SVT's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee

Steward of the Land: **Shelley Trucksis** of Wayland, Preserve Steward at Hamlen Woods and Mainstone Farm

Lewis Conservation Award: **Bill Taylor**, Chair of the Upton Open Space Committee

Distinguished Public Service: **Carolyn MacDonald**, Chair of the Berlin Conservation Commission

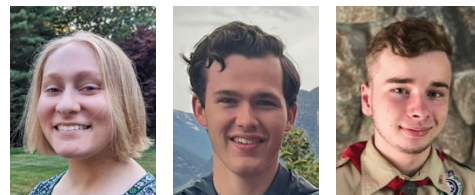
Youth Stewards: Girl Scout **Kristen Bestavros** of Wayland and Boy Scouts **Thomas Creavin** of Wayland and **Walker Fryling** of Sudbury

Thank you to these valued conservationists and to all those who help protect and care for natural areas!

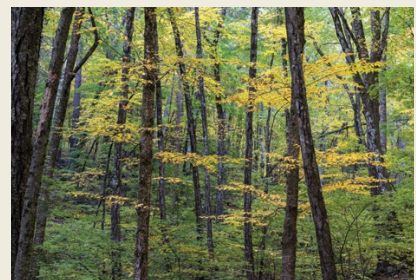


Above, left to right: Neela de Zoysa, Shelley Trucksis, Bill Taylor, Carolyn MacDonald.

Below, left to right: Kristen Bestavros, Thomas Creavin, Walker Fryling.



Louis Calisi, a member of SVT's **Volunteer Photo Task Force**, captured this image at SVT's Smith Conservation Land in Littleton.



Interested in joining the Photo Task Force?
Visit www.svtweb.org/volunteer



Take a Hike: Mount Pisgah

The recently protected Horseshoe Pond (see page 2) offers a great access point to the protected lands in the Mount Pisgah Conservation Area in Berlin and Northborough. The conservation area features 12 miles of challenging trails that are popular with both hikers and mountain bikers.

Highlights include the Warren S. Oberg Overlook (which has views of the Prudential and Hancock towers in Boston) as well as the potential for viewing a variety of wildlife that make use of such a large block of open space.

It's a complex trail system, so be sure to download a trail map before you head out.

Directions and trail maps in English, Portuguese, and Spanish: www.svtweb.org/Pisgah



Webinars for a Winter's Day

When you're stuck inside on a cold, snowy winter's day, you can get a dose of nature by watching a recording of an SVT webinar. Share them with friends and family:

www.svtweb.org/webinars

- ♦ Journey of a Dyslexic Wildlife Photographer
- ♦ Wildlife in Winter
- ♦ Mountain Flora of China
- ♦ Magical Monarchs
- ♦ Sri Lanka: A Unique Journey Through Nature
- ♦ Lives of Beavers
- ♦ And more!



Jason George

Conservation Collaborations

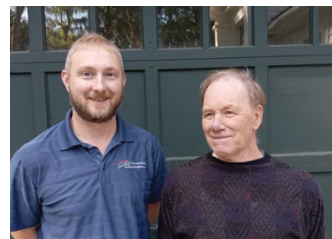
In September, volunteers from SVT, the **Harvard Conservation Trust**, and **Community Harvest Project** gathered at **Prospect Hill Community Orchard** in Harvard where they picked apples to be donated toward hunger relief. SVT and our partners are in the final stages of the project to protect this beautiful orchard with an agricultural preservation restriction.



Jothy Rosenberg (left) and **Terry Lockhart** were part of a volunteer crew that installed new sign posts and refreshed the signs at SVT's **Upper Mill Brook** property in Wayland. Carole Hohl and Kelsey Thompson also helped out on this sunny October day.



Kelsey Thompson



Thank you to **AccessPlus Communications**, which donated the materials to add WiFi access to our barn at **Wolbach Farm**. Company co-founder and SVT volunteer **Stephen Williamson** (right) worked with his nephew **Scott Hudson** (an AccessPlus employee) to install the equipment and get the WiFi up and running in time for our Annual Meeting on October 6.

Thank you to **AccessPlus Communications**, which donated the materials to add WiFi access to our barn at **Wolbach Farm**. Company co-founder and SVT volunteer **Stephen Williamson** (right) worked

Do You Have a Donor-Advised Fund?

A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a type of investment account that makes it easy for you to support the charitable organizations you care about—like SVT!

When you set up a DAF with a financial services company, the funds can be invested for tax free growth, and you can instruct the fund manager to make contributions to the IRS-qualified public charities of your choice.

With 2022 drawing to a close, please consider an end-of-year gift to SVT through your DAF. Thank you!


Please consult your tax advisor to learn about the benefits of using donor-advised funds for charitable giving.



Sudbury Valley Trustees

THE
WREN

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See page 1

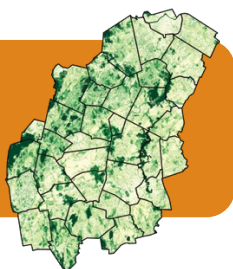


Photo by Nancy Wright

Thursday, February 16
7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

A virtual, live-streamed event

Our 2023 theme, *For the Love of Nature*, explores the human connection with the natural world and its powerful effect on our health and wellbeing.

The live-streamed, virtual event on February 16, 2023, will be hosted by radio personality David O'Leary and SVT's Executive Director Lisa Vernegaard.

Take part in this event! Share the news with friends and family who value the outdoors like you.

Get more details now:
www.svtweb.org/gala

