

# Guide to Financial Resources For Land Conservation in the Highlands Region

By Wendy Sweetser and Charlie Wyman

## Introduction

Many of us have had the experience: we hear from a friend that a favorite farm is for sale, or prominent hilltop parcel, or a property that helps define the character of our town center. If we're lucky, we get a little notice and learn from the owners that they are thinking of selling but can wait six months or a year before putting the property on the market. If nothing is done, the likely end result is a new row of house lots.

There are alternatives: alternatives that keep some or all of the land open, perhaps in active farming or forestry, maybe with public access, and in either public, non-profit or private hands. When a landowner needs to sell and receive something akin to fair market value in return, one key ingredient of a successful conservation effort is **money**.

The purpose of this guide is to provide town boards, land trusts, and interested citizens with a guide to finding money for conservation. There are a surprisingly large number of sources, and the amount devoted to conservation statewide, though inadequate to the need, is still substantial – more than \$27 million a year. There's not enough money to save every parcel, nor should there be – our communities need land for housing, economic development and new town facilities. But to preserve our communities' quality of life, some parcels should not be built on, but conserved for their scenic, recreational, or ecological value. Providing you with a guide for finding money for conservation is the purpose of this guide.

Please note what this guide is not: a how-to for saving land. There are a number of good sources for this information already, including a booklet, [Land Conservation Options: A guide for Massachusetts Landowners](#), published by the Trustees of Reservations and the Essex County Greenbelt Association. For additional information, contact the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions ([MACC](#)), the [Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition](#) and the [Land Trust Alliance](#).

Please note that many of these grant programs are funded by the state and federal governments; their funding is very dependent on the health of the economy. As such, it is very important to check with the respective agencies and organizations for the most up to date information.

## *A Word About the Organization of this Guide*

This guide organizes the many potential sources of financial assistance for conservation into six categories:

### **I. State Grant Programs**

Public programs that provide cash grants to municipalities (mostly) and non-profits for the acquisition and protection of conservation properties.

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### *Mixing and Matching*

Properties that can be protected by a single source of financing are increasingly rare. More and more, land protection requires partnerships. The challenge for conservationists is to work flexibly and creatively with a variety of parties, bringing the strengths of each to bear on a particular conservation challenge that is beyond the means of any single group.

For instance, state Self-Help funds have sometimes been matched, not solely by municipal funds, but in part or entirely by private donations. Land trusts have sometimes purchased a property and then sold a conservation restriction to the town, with Self-Help assistance, to share the expense of protecting the property. Towns frequently collaborate with the state's APR Program to purchase development rights on farmland, and land trusts often play a key middleman role. The list of such examples could go on for pages; the key to success is finding both the right combination of parties, for each of whom the project meets their needs or objectives, and one or more individuals with the time, energy and determination to coordinate the parties and make the project happen.

## **I. State Grant Programs**

### **I.1 Commonwealth Capital Fund**

A new mechanism for organizing state capital funding, the Commonwealth Capital Fund (CCF) contains ten state grant programs, including the major sources of land conservation and acquisition funds listed in this guide. To access programs within the CCF, municipalities must submit an annual application to the Office of Commonwealth Development. Each municipality that applies will receive a score based on how well the municipality has promoted smart growth objectives such as the production of affordable housing, the protection of farms, forests, and water supplies, and the adoption of current zoning practices.

To access grant programs within the CCF, communities must submit applications to each individual program in addition to the CCF application. The CCF score will represent 20% of an application's total score for individual programs. At this time (December 2004), initial scores are still being tallied, and it isn't yet clear to what extent the score will influence small towns' ability to access these important sources of state funds. What is clear is that towns of all sizes will have to apply through CCF in order to have any chance of accessing these funds.

For more information, visit the [Commonwealth Capital website](#) or contact:

Massachusetts Office of Commonwealth Development  
100 Cambridge St, 10<sup>th</sup> floor  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 626-1154

### **I.1 Self- Help and Urban Self-Help Programs, Division of Conservation Services, Mass. Executive Office of Environmental Affairs**

#### **A. Self-Help Program**

The Self-Help program was established in 1961 to help municipal conservation commissions acquire land for natural resource and passive outdoor recreation purposes. Lands acquired may include wildlife habitat, trails, unique natural, historic or cultural resources, water resources, forest, and farmland. Access to the property by the general public is required.

The program provides partial reimbursement for the acquisition of land or partial interests (such as a conservation restriction), and associated acquisition costs such as appraisal reports and closing costs. The reimbursement level varies from 52% to 70%, depending on the community's statewide rank of equalized valuation per capita (a proxy for town "wealth"). Municipalities are the only eligible applicants, and they must have an Open Space and Recreation Plan that has been produced within the past five years and approved by the Division (or be well into the process of creating

one). The project must have approval from Town Meeting, though the vote need not come before the application deadline. The application, including professional appraisal(s), is due October 1 and decisions are announced in the fall, though in recent years the Program has announced special or “rolling” grant rounds at other times of the year. For Fiscal year 2005, the Self-Help program received \$6.4 million, up from \$4 million the previous year. For more information, visit the [Massachusetts Self-Help Program web page](#). This program requires an application to the Commonwealth Capital Fund.

### B. Urban Self-Help Program

Communities with populations under 35,000 are also eligible for the Urban Self-Help Program as a “small-town” or “regional” applicant. Only projects that are to be developed for suitable outdoor recreation purposes, whether active or passive in nature, will be considered for Urban Self-Help funding. Grants are available for the acquisition of land, and the construction, restoration, or rehabilitation of land for park and outdoor recreation purposes such as swimming pools, zoos, athletic play fields, playgrounds and game courts. For designation as a regional applicant, projects must meet certain criteria for the number of parking spaces, and the number and size of facilities. It is recommended that potential applicants initiate discussions with the Division of Conservation Services (DCS) early in a project’s conception to determine eligibility. The Urban Self Help Program received \$3.5 million for FY 2005, and \$2 million in FY 2004.

<b>Eligible Applicants:</b>	Municipalities
<b>Purpose:</b>	Land and conservation restriction purchases
<b>Size of Grant:</b>	Up to \$250,000
<b>Match Required:</b>	52-70% depending on community
<b>Deadline and Funding Cycle:</b>	Application Due: October 1 Awards Announced: Late fall Occasional grant awards at other times
	<b>Requires CCF Application</b>

**For more information, contact:**

Jennifer Soper  
Division of Conservation Services  
251 Causeway Street, 9th Floor  
Boston Massachusetts 02114  
(617) 626-1015  
Email: [jennifer.soper@state.ma.us](mailto:jennifer.soper@state.ma.us)

**Or visit: [Division of Conservation Services](#)**

**1.2 Land and Water Conservation Fund, Division of Conservation Services, Mass. Executive Office of Environmental Affairs**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal grant program administered by the state Division of Conservation Services. Up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development and renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas is provided to municipalities, special districts and state agencies. Public access to the project site is required.

Funding depends on Congressional appropriations. For each of Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005, the Land and Water Conservation Fund was allocated \$2 million for projects in Massachusetts.

The application deadline is October 1, and applications received earlier can be processed on a rolling basis. Awards are announced in the late fall. Grants are awarded on a reimbursement basis.

<b>Eligible Applicants:</b>	Municipalities and state agencies
<b>Purpose:</b>	Natural resource protection
<b>Size of Grant:</b>	Varies
<b>Match Required:</b>	50%
<b>Deadline and Funding Cycle:</b>	Application Due: October 1 Awards Announced: Late fall
	<b>Requires CCF Application</b>

**For more information, contact:**

Jennifer Soper  
Division of Conservation Services  
251 Causeway Street, 9th Floor  
Boston Massachusetts 02114  
(617) 626-1015  
Email: [jennifer.soper@state.ma.us](mailto:jennifer.soper@state.ma.us)

**Or visit: Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Fund**

### **1.3 Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grants, Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides grant awards of \$1,000 to \$5,000 to support innovative projects that advance the creation and promotion of greenway and trail networks throughout Massachusetts. DCR defines greenways as corridors of land and water that protect and link a wide variety of natural, cultural and recreational resources. DCR will also consider requests of up to \$10,000 for multi-town greenway and trail projects. These additional funds are intended to encourage linkages across town boundaries and foster partnerships among neighboring communities. Non-profit organizations, municipalities, public education institutions, and regional planning agencies are eligible to receive grant funds.

The Grant Program supports feasible greenway projects that produce tangible results, enjoy broad-based community support, and will serve as models for other greenway and trail initiatives. Projects eligible for funding include greenway and trails planning, mapping and resource assessment, greenway-related public education and outreach, and greenway and trail management, maintenance, and expansion. The 2002 grant program emphasized projects that promote linkages and create corridors, highlight river greenways, and involve and educate community members. The grant application consists of a detailed project description, evidence of community support, and a budget. The application may be downloaded from the program's web site.

In the past, the Greenway Grant Program distributed approximately \$100,000 each year. However, in the past two years, funding was cut to \$87,000 in FY 2001 and \$57,000 in FY 2002.

<b>Eligible Applicants:</b>	Non-profits, municipalities, regional planning agencies, educational institutions
<b>Purpose:</b>	Creation, protection, and promotion of greenways and trails
<b>Size of Grant:</b>	\$1,000 to \$5,000; up to \$10,000 for multi-town projects
<b>Match Required:</b>	None
<b>Deadlines and Funding Cycle:</b>	Application Due: January Awards Announced: February Funds Expended: September

**For more information, contact:**

Jennifer Howard  
Director, Greenways Program Director  
DCR, Office of Natural Resources  
136 Damon Road  
Northampton, MA 01060  
(413) 586-8706 X18  
Email: [jennifer.howard@state.ma.us](mailto:jennifer.howard@state.ma.us)

**Or visit:** [Greenways Program](#)

## **I.4 Recreational Trails Program, Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation**

The Recreational Trails program, an element of the "Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (TEA-21), provides funding support for a variety of trail development and trail maintenance projects. Non-profit organizations, state and regional government agencies, and municipalities are eligible for grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000. Requests for amounts greater than \$50,000 will be considered for larger projects with statewide or regional significance. For the past two years, the total funds for the Recreational Trails Program have ranged between \$200,000 and \$500,000. The program is administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on a reimbursement basis. At least 20% of the total project cost must be from other sources, however a "soft match" in the form of materials, labor, and in-kind services is permitted.

Potential projects include the expansion, enhancement, or protection of existing trails and the acquisition of land or easements to create or link trails or open space. Projects are given priority if they clearly demonstrate the need for the project, create, expand or enhance trails, particularly multi-use trails, and create partnerships among trail users, organizations, and agencies. The program legislation requires that 30% of program funds be reserved for projects related to motorized trail use, 30% for non-motorized projects, and the remaining 40% are discretionary. The Recreational Trails program also requires that projects be primarily recreation rather than transportation-oriented, and will give priority to projects creating or facilitating physical, on-the-ground trail improvements which protect or enhance the site's natural and cultural resource values.

The application requires a detailed project description, evidence of community support, and a project budget. More information and application materials can be found on the DCR website.

<b>Eligible Applicants:</b>	Non-profits, municipalities, state and regional agencies
<b>Purpose:</b>	Recreational trail development and maintenance
<b>Size of Grant:</b>	\$2,000 to \$50,000
<b>Match Required:</b>	20%
<b>Deadlines and Funding Cycle:</b>	Application Due: April Awards Announced: Fall Funds Expended: December of the following year

**For more information, contact:**

Jennifer Howard  
Director, Greenways Program Director  
DCR, Office of Natural Resources  
136 Damon Road  
Northampton, MA 01060  
(413) 586-8706 X18  
Email: [jennifer.howard@state.ma.us](mailto:jennifer.howard@state.ma.us)

**Or visit:** [Recreational Trails Program Grant Overview](#)

### **1.5 Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program, Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation**

The Massachusetts Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program is a state-funded competitive grant program established in 1997 to support the preservation of public historic landscapes. Only municipalities may apply for funds, and preference will be given to projects that involve a partnership with a friends group or citizens advisory committee. In addition, the property must be listed, or eligible for listing, on the State or National Register of Historic Places. Prospective projects include inventory and planning, construction, preservation maintenance, and public education and stewardship.

DCR will award up to \$50,000 per year per project for Planning and Inventory and Education and Stewardship projects, and up to \$100,000 per year for Construction and Preservation Maintenance projects. Municipalities with projects requiring greater funding are eligible to apply for a multi-year phased grant. The Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program is a reimbursement program. The municipality is required to provide a cash match between 30% and 48% of the total project cost, based on the municipality's equalized valuation per capita decile rank among all Massachusetts municipalities as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Required application materials consist of a narrative project description, demonstration that the proposed project meets the program criteria, schedule, and budget. Landscapes should have a demonstrated cultural or historical significance, and those listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places are given preference. Other evaluation criteria include compatibility with the site's historic character, potential threats to the landscape, demonstrated community support and investment, and long-term preservation maintenance. Application workshops are offered by DCR at various locations throughout the state in the spring. More information and application materials can be found at [Historic Landscape Preservation Initiative](#).

The Historic Landscape Preservation Program was not funded in 2003 and 2004, but the program may be revived in coming years. Be sure to contact the program manager at an early stage to ascertain the program's funding status.

<b>Eligible Applicants:</b>	Municipalities with properties listed or eligible for the State or National Register of Historic Places
<b>Purpose:</b>	Preservation of public historic landscapes
<b>Size of Grant:</b>	Up to \$50,000 for planning and inventory; \$100,000 for construction
<b>Required Match:</b>	30% to 48%
<b>Deadlines and Funding Cycle:</b>	Application Due: May Awards Announced: August Funds Expended: June 30

**For more information, contact:**  
Joanna Doherty, Program Manager  
Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600-700  
Boston, MA 02114-2104  
(617) 626-1390  
Email: [joanna.doherty@state.ma.us](mailto:joanna.doherty@state.ma.us)  
**Or visit:** [Historic Landscape Preservation Initiative](#)

## **I.6 Aquifer Land Acquisition Program, Mass. Department of Environmental Protection**

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) manages the Aquifer Land Acquisition Program to help municipalities safeguard public water supplies. Grants are made to cities, towns and districts for the acquisition of lands and easements to protect and conserve groundwater aquifers and recharge areas, surface water supplies and watershed areas, and lands adjacent to public water supplies for protection of water that is determined to be of potential or existing use for water supply purposes. Land associated with either surface or groundwater drinking water supplies is eligible for this program. Land acquisitions for water supply protection purposes include outright purchases, conservation restrictions, land donations, and interests in land taken by eminent domain.

Projects that provide the greatest degree of water supply resource protection and are consistent with the local land management or source protection plans developed by the municipality or public water supplier will be given high priority. To apply, the applicant must complete a Draft Statement of Need that details the current state of the land, how the parcel will protect the water source, and how the acquisition meets the goals of a master plan, open space plan, or Source Protection Plan. The grantee must also provide 20% of the total project cost in cash, in-kind, or other asset to finance or reimburse the cost of the acquisition. The DEP will select respondents of the Draft Statement of Need to submit a completed Final Statement of Need, which serves as the final step in the application process.

<b>Eligible Applicants:</b>	Municipalities and Water Districts
<b>Purpose:</b>	Protection of aquifers, recharge areas, surface water supplies, and watersheds
<b>Size of Grants:</b>	Varies
<b>Match Required:</b>	20%
<b>Deadlines and Funding Cycle:</b>	Application Due: January Awards Announced: February Funds Expended: June

**For more information, contact:**

Joseph McNealy, Director of Program Development  
Department of Environmental Protection  
One Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 556-1068  
Email: [joseph.mcnealy@state.ma.us](mailto:joseph.mcnealy@state.ma.us)

**Or visit:** [DEP Municipal Services](#)

## **2. State and Federal Acquisition Programs**

Three state agencies in the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs are active in protecting land in the Highlands region: the Department of Agricultural Resources, which purchases restrictions (known as Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, or APRs) prohibiting development of farmland, the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Fish and Game, both of which acquire land for conservation purposes. Each program has its own particular criteria and procedures, and it behooves proponents of acquisition by one or more of these agencies to understand the agency's criteria and procedures.

### **2.1 Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources**

The APR Program provides an alternative to development for farmers and other owners of prime agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmers the difference between the fair market value and the agricultural value of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which prohibits any use of the property that will impair its agricultural viability.

To be eligible, farms must be at least five acres in size and have been devoted to active agricultural production for the past two years. Land is evaluated for its suitability and productivity based on soil classification, physical features and location, as well as for the degree of threat to the continuation of agriculture on the land, including such circumstances as the owner's death, retirement, financial difficulties, or development pressure.

The program requires an application, followed by a staff evaluation, preliminary committee approval, appraisal and negotiation, and final committee approval. In recent years the program has been oversubscribed, with more qualified applications awaiting funding than available funds. However the program has funded worthy projects on roughly a first-come, first-served basis, giving applicants some confidence that, once approved, they simply need to be patient as their project advances in the queue. Land trusts may provide interim financing when a landowner cannot afford to wait.

The APR Program is currently receiving funding from the federal Farm Bill to supplement state funds. As a result, applicants must comply with federal criteria, which are described in the 5-page document [Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program](#) (PDF Format).

Moreover, municipalities in which applying farms are located must apply to the Commonwealth Capital Fund described above.

**Eligible Applicants:** Farm owners with parcels over 5 acres that have been devoted to agriculture for at least the past two years.

**Priorities:** High quality farmland threatened by non-agricultural uses.  
**Requires CCF Application**

**For more information, contact:**

Ron Hall  
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources  
Bureau of Land Use  
251 Causeway St., Suite 500  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 626-1704  
Email: [Ronald Hall](mailto:Ronald.Hall@agr.state.ma.us)

**Or visit:** [Agricultural Protection Restriction Program](#)

## **2.2 Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation is charged with the care and oversight of the natural resources of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. One of the methods by which DCR acts as a steward for the state's natural resources is through the direct acquisition of land and property interests. Even though Massachusetts ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in land area among the states, it boasts the 6<sup>th</sup> largest state forest and park system in the country.

Using the 1997-2002 Land Acquisition Strategy as a guide, the Department's land protection team works to identify, evaluate, acquire and protect the vast array of natural and cultural resources found in the Commonwealth. In addition to meeting the goals and criteria of the Land Acquisition Strategy, a prospective parcel is evaluated for its degree of public access to unique natural, cultural and recreational resources. The statewide or regional significance of a property, as indicated by appropriate designations such as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern or Natural Heritage and Endangered Species identified habitat, is also considered. Land acquisition projects that receive a high amount of local and community support, are located near or accessible to urban populations, and provide linkages with existing protected property are given higher priority. The municipality's score on the Commonwealth Capital Fund will be taken into account.

**Eligible Applicants:** Private landowners

**Priorities:** Significant natural, historic, and recreational resources

**For more information, contact:**

Irene Del Bono, Director of Land Acquisition and Protection  
DCR Land Acquisition and Protection Program  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 626-1315  
Email: Irene Del Bono

**Or visit:** [Land Acquisition and Protection Program](#)

### **2.3 Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game (MassWildlife)**

Through the Department of Fish and Game (formerly known as the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife) MassWildlife holds and manages a diverse system of wildlife management areas and sanctuaries designed to ensure the survival, health and viability of native wildlife communities. MassWildlife currently oversees 100,000 acres of Wildlife Management Areas that are open to the public for many kinds of passive outdoor activities, including hiking, fishing, and hunting.

The DFG land protection program generally works with an annual land acquisition budget of approximately 4-5 million dollars, including federal and state funds, which is used to purchase both land in fee and less frequently, conservation restrictions. Major goals of the DFG land protection program are to acquire land in order to protect and perpetuate ecosystems that contain significant fish and wildlife resources, to conserve the biological diversity of the state, and to provide public access to these properties for hunting, fishing and other outdoor pursuits. To help achieve this goal, the agency has established a Lands Committee that is responsible for identifying, reviewing, and prioritizing all potential acquisitions. The municipality's Commonwealth Capital Fund score is an additional criteria that the Committee must consider. The MassWildlife Program also advises other conservation groups on important sites to protect, and provides input to towns on their open space plans.

**Eligible Applicants:** Private landowners

**Priorities:** High quality riparian, palustrine, and estuarine habitats, and outstanding natural communities that either connect or link large blocks of natural land.

**For more information, contact:**

For Leyden, Shelburne, Colrain, Conway,  
Williamsburg, and Westhampton:  
Ralph Taylor, District Wildlife Manager  
Connecticut Valley Wildlife District  
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
East Street  
Belchertown, MA 01007  
(413) 323-7632

For all other Highland towns:  
Tom Keefe, District Manager  
Western Wildlife District  
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
400 Hubbard Avenue  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
(413) 447-9789

**Or visit:** [Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife](#)

## **2.4 Forest Legacy Program**

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a federal program working in partnership with the state Department of Conservation and Recreation to protect environmentally sensitive forestlands. Through the Forest Legacy Program, the U.S. Forest Service purchases conservation easements on threatened forestlands. Participation in the program is limited to private forest landowners. The federal government may fund up to 75% of project costs, with at least 25% coming from private, state or local sources. Eligible parcels of land must be located in Forest Legacy Areas. In the Highlands, the Berkshire Plateau Forest Legacy Area includes portions of the towns of Ashfield, Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Conway, Cummington, Goshen, Hinsdale, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Peru, Russell, Washington, Williamsburg, and Windsor. To qualify, landowners are required to prepare a multiple resource management plan as part of the conservation easement acquisition.

Funding for the Forest Legacy Program is contingent on appropriations from Congress, and has risen steadily since 2000. For its work in Forest Legacy Areas across the country, the Program received between \$60 million and \$70 million annually since 2001.

**Eligible Applicants:** Private landowners

**Priorities:** Environmentally important forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

**For more information, contact:**

Mike Fleming  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
180 Beaman St.  
Boylston, MA 01583  
(508) 792-7423 x502  
mike.fleming@state.ma.us

Rob Warren  
The Nature Conservancy  
205 Portland St.  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 227-7017  
rwarren@tnc.org

**Or visit:** [Forest Legacy Program](#)

## **2.5 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

### **Division of Bird Habitat Conservation Small Grants Program**

The purpose of the 1989 North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) is to promote long-term conservation of North American wetland ecosystems, and the waterfowl and other migratory birds, fish and wildlife that depend upon such habitat. The goal of the Small Grants program is the acquisition, creation, enhancement and restoration of wetlands and wetland-associated uplands. Projects must request funds no greater than \$50,000 and must receive an equal amount of match funding from non-federal sources.

Funding priority will be given to new grant applicants with new partners for projects that ensure long-term conservation benefits. The application should describe the project in detail, include letters of support from the community, and list the species that will directly benefit. A detailed list of priority bird species and application materials is available at: Division of Bird Habitat Conservation U.S. Small Grants. The funding goal of the Small Grants Program for 2003 is between \$1 and \$2 million nationwide. Applications are accepted at any time, but for the 2003 grant round, are due by November.

**Eligible Applicants:** Individuals, non-profits, or municipalities

**Priorities:** Wetland ecosystems

**For more information contact:**

Andrew Milliken

Division of Bird Habitat Conservation

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

300 Westgate Center Drive

Hadley, MA 01035

(413) 253- 8269

**Or visit:** Division of Bird Habitat Conservation U.S. Small Grants

## **3. Municipal Programs**

### **3.1 Community Preservation Act**

The state's Community Preservation Act (CPA), enacted in 2000, authorizes towns to impose a property tax surcharge of up to 3% to fund certain open space, recreation, historic preservation and affordable housing activities, including land acquisition. The moneys are deposited in a Community Preservation Fund; expenditures from the Fund are recommended by a Community Preservation Committee and must be authorized by Town Meeting. Ten percent of each year's revenues must be devoted to open space, historic preservation and affordable housing (each); the remaining 70% may be spent on any combination of these purposes and recreation. Locally raised funds are matched up to 100% (based on a three-step calculation) by state moneys generated through fees levied at county Registries of Deeds.

The law and attendant regulations describe in detail the process for local adoption of the CPA, which requires a town-wide vote following adoption by Town Meeting or an initiative petition. Extensive information about the CPA, its advantages and disadvantages, and procedures for adoption and implementation area available from EOEa, the Community Preservation Coalition, and the Trust for Public Land.

The CPA is a powerful tool providing a dedicated revenue stream for conservation. As of December 2004, 75 communities statewide have adopted the CPA, more than was widely predicted when the CPA was proposed. Of the towns in the Highlands, only Conway has adopted the CPA. West of the Connecticut River, the CPA has been adopted in Hadley, Agawam, Easthampton, Southampton, Stockbridge, Westfield, and Williamstown.

**For more information, contact:**

Priscilla Geigis  
251 Causeway Street, 9th Floor  
Boston Massachusetts 02114  
(617) 626-1000  
Email: Priscilla Geigis

**Or visit:** [The Community Preservation Coalition: Community Preservation Act.](#)

### **3.2 Other Dedicated Revenue Streams**

State law requires that most town revenues be deposited in the town's general fund, available for specific use only through Town Meeting appropriation. Towns may, however, deviate from this requirement by seeking passage of a Home Rule Petition in the state legislature. Several towns have used Home Rule Petitions to create dedicated revenue streams for open space protection.

Various revenue sources can be used. Examples from around the state include Chapter 61-61A-61B rollback taxes (Ipswich), a percentage of the hotel/motel tax

(Waltham, Franklin, Quincy), and revenues from town-owned land (forestry revenues in Monson, cell tower revenues in Ipswich).

In practice, the revenues are directed to a special account established for this purpose and available for appropriation by Town Meeting.

### **3.3 Conservation Fund**

The state law authorizing the establishment of conservation commissions, General Laws Chapter 40, section 8C, also authorizes Town Meeting to create a special fund, known as the Conservation Fund, which the Commission may use without further authorization to purchase land and interests in land and to undertake appraisals, surveys and other expenses related to land acquisition. Few towns have a sufficiently large Fund to pay for land purchases, and in most towns there is an expectation that any significant purchase will go before Town Meeting in any case. But the Fund can be a useful source of cash for such things as appraisals and other expenses of a Self-Help application, or for the local match requested by the state for Agricultural Preservation Restrictions. Money in the Fund remains there until used or removed by Town Meeting.

A number of conservation commissions have developed the practice of requesting modest annual appropriations by Town Meeting to their Conservation Fund so that funds are on hand for such expenses, which often cannot wait for an Annual Town Meeting appropriation. Gifts for conservation purposes may also be deposited in the Fund.

**For more information:** See the [Environmental Handbook for Massachusetts Conservation Commissioners](#), published by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC), or contact:  
MACC Western Outreach Office  
2 West Street  
Hadley, MA 01035

**Or visit:** [Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions \(MACC\)](#)

### **3.4 Town Meeting Appropriations**

Any significant town financial commitment to a conservation project – whether it’s a land purchase, purchase of a conservation restriction, or co-purchase of an Agricultural Preservation Restriction, will require a Town Meeting appropriation.

Laying the groundwork for the vote is essential. Key committees in town (Selectmen, Finance, Planning, Conservation) need to be educated and their endorsement sought. Beyond that, public outreach is critical: talk to neighbors, hold an open house at the property, distribute a fact sheet or Q-and-A. If your community doesn’t have a track record of conservation purchases, the first one should ideally be especially compelling.

A town Open Space and Recreation Plan can be helpful in several ways. Ideally, the Plan will list the purchase as a priority for the Town, and its identification in the Plan will demonstrate that you're doing your homework and the purchase is not a random target of opportunity. The Plan also, of course, qualifies the Town for certain state grant programs that could help with the acquisition. Last but not least, the process of creating an Open Space and Recreation Plan can help develop a town consensus on open space protection and make individual acquisitions that much easier.

#### **4. Land Trust Partners**

Land Trusts are private, non-profit organizations which, as all or part of their missions, actively work to conserve land by undertaking or assisting direct land transactions – primarily the purchase or acceptance of donations of land or conservation easements.

Land trusts can assist with land protection projects in several ways:

- The land trust itself may be willing and able to purchase the property. As charities, land trusts rarely have funds readily available to invest in land purchases – they usually must fundraise the purchase price, though as an interim measure they may borrow if the property must be purchased before fundraising is complete. Trusts frequently must make difficult decisions about what projects they can pursue, and those decisions are often guided by their assessment of not only the land's conservation value but also financial realities and fundraising prospects.
- The land trust may be willing to help by providing a loan, or purchasing the land or APR and holding it until a public agency can purchase it (what is known in the trade as “pre-acquisition”), or in some other way facilitating the property's protection without acquiring a long-term property interest or stewardship responsibility. Because of their limited funds, land trusts are rarely willing to acquire a property for conveyance to another entity without firm assurances that the entity will buy out the trust within a reasonable period of time.
- The land trust may be a useful source of advice to parties interested in the land's protection.

Two land trust service organizations offer a considerable amount of useful information about land conservation at their web sites and through publications: The Land Trust Alliance and the (Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition).

## **National, Multi-State and Statewide Organizations**

### **4.1 The Trustees of Reservations**

The Trustees of Reservations works throughout Massachusetts to preserve properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value for public use and enjoyment. Over 90 reservations totaling more than 23,300 acres of land are owned and managed by the Trustees, and more than 13,000 additional acres are protected through perpetual conservation restrictions on over 200 parcels of private land. The Trustees also frequently collaborates with other groups and government agencies that share its mission in land conservation, including acquisition of land and restrictions on behalf of state agencies when the latter cannot act quickly enough, for later transfer to the state.

**Priorities:** Land adjacent to existing reservations, and properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value that lend themselves to public use.

**For more information, contact:**

The Trustees of Reservations  
193 High Street  
Holyoke, MA 01040  
(413) 532-1631

**Or visit:** [The Trustees of Reservations](#)

## **4.2 The Nature Conservancy**

The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest private, non-profit conservation organization, with a membership of more than 1 million. The Conservancy's mission is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The Nature Conservancy determines the highest-priority places through a strategic, science-based planning process, called Conservation by Design, which identifies landscapes and seascapes that, if conserved, promise to ensure biodiversity over the long term.

In concert with their members and conservation partners, the Massachusetts Chapter of the Nature Conservancy has protected more than 17,000 acres of critical natural lands in Massachusetts. As part of its Last Great Places campaign, the Chapter has targeted the large unbroken forests of central and western Massachusetts through its "Forest Initiative", with an initial focus on the Westfield River basin. More specific information on the Westfield River Watershed program is available at

Places We Protect: Westfield River Watershed.

**Priorities:** Land that protects the biodiversity of plants, animals, and natural communities

**For more information, contact:**

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Nature Conservancy  
205 Portland Street, Suite 400  
Boston, Massachusetts 02114  
(617) 227-7017  
Email: [mmail@tnc.org](mailto:mmail@tnc.org)

**Or visit:** The Nature Conservancy

## **4.3 The Trust for Public Land**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national non-profit conservation organization that works to protect land for public enjoyment. TPL believes that connecting people to land through parks, recreation areas, working lands and natural open spaces is key to livable communities and a healthy environment.

Working from 54 locations nationwide, including Boston, TPL's experts in law, finance, real estate, fundraising, government, and public relations work to help citizens and government agencies identify lands they wish to see protected and then help them accomplish their land saving-goals. Since its founding in 1972, TPL has helped to protect more than 1.4 million acres of land, including forests, farms, playgrounds, and community gardens for future generations.

The Trust for Public Land began working with Massachusetts in 1985, and has protected nearly 9,000 acres across the state. In addition, TPL has taken an active role in promoting the Community Preservation Act, which provides funds for land conservation, affordable housing, and historic preservation. TPL advocated for the passage of the Act in 2000 and is now a leading member of the Community Preservation Coalition to help municipalities implement the Act locally.

**Priorities:** Land suitable for a high degree of public access and enjoyment

**For information, contact:**

New England Regional Office  
The Trust for Public Land  
33 Union St., 4th Floor  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 367-6200

**Or visit:** [The Trust for Public Land](#)

Clem Clay  
CT River Program Director  
The Trust for Public Land  
1 Short Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

**For more information regarding TPL and the CPA, contact:**

Christopher Saccardi  
The Trust for Public Land  
33 Union Street, 4th Floor  
Boston, MA 02108  
(617) 367-8998

#### **4.4 Massachusetts Audubon Society**

Massachusetts Audubon Society is the largest conservation organization in New England, concentrating its efforts on protecting the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. Mass Audubon protects more than 29,000 acres of conservation land, conducts educational programs for 250,000 children and adults annually, and advocates for sound environmental policies at the local, state, and federal levels. Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. The Society is supported by its 54,000 members in Massachusetts and is independent of National Audubon Society.

**Priorities:** Land that supports rare birds and wildlife

**For more information, contact:**

208 South Great Road  
Lincoln, MA 01773  
(800) AUDUBON

**Or visit:** [Massachusetts Audubon Society](#)

#### **4.5 New England Forestry Foundation**

The New England Forestry Foundation is a non-profit organization that works to permanently protect New England's forests through gifts and acquisitions of land and to conserve a working landscape that supports New England's ecological diversity, economic welfare, and quality of life. NEFF has an active land conservation program to assist landowners achieve both conservation and economic goals.

Today, NEFF owns 120 forests covering over 21,000 acres, which serve as outdoor classrooms for demonstrating sustainable forest management techniques. The forests provide an important source of income to support the NEFF's work, and are used as education sites in a variety of cooperative agreements with local and regional conservation organizations. NEFF holds 82 conservation easements on 780,000 acres of forest across New England.

**Priorities:** Working forest landscapes with significant forest resources

**For more information, contact:**

1 East Maine St.  
Orange, MA 01364  
(978) 544-1526

**Or visit:** [New England Forestry Foundation](#)

## **Regional Land Trusts**

### **4.6 Berkshire Natural Resources Council**

Berkshire Natural Resources Council is a land conservation and environmental advocacy group working throughout the Berkshires in Massachusetts to preserve threatened lands. The Council places special emphasis on protecting Berkshire's "working landscape" - the great farms, forests, streams and mountains that define the region's distinct character and provide multiple economic, recreational and scenic benefits to the public.

Since its founding in 1967, the Resources Council has worked closely with hundreds of Berkshire landowners to help them meet their preservation and planning goals. The Council today owns and manages 5,966 acres and protects an additional 5,666 acres through the use of conservation restrictions.

**Priorities:** Threatened working landscapes in Berkshire County

**For more information, contact:**

Tad Ames, Executive Director  
20 Bank Row  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
(413) 499-0596

**Or visit:** [Berkshire Natural Resources Council](#)

### **4.7 Hilltown Land Trust**

Established in 1986, the Hilltown Land Trust is a local, all-volunteer, non-profit land conservation organization dedicated to preserving the distinctive landscapes and natural resources of the western Hampshire County hilltowns. Through education and cooperative work with residents, town officials, and other conservation organizations, HLT has protected or assisted in protecting about 2000 acres within the towns of Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington.

**For more information, contact:**

Wil Hastings, President  
45 Ward Ave  
Northampton, MA 01060-2863  
(413) 586-6363  
Email: [Wil Hastings](mailto:Wil.Hastings@hilltownlandtrust.org)

**Or visit:** [Hilltown Land Trust](#)

#### **4.8 Franklin Land Trust**

The Franklin Land Trust is a small, non-profit conservation organization devoted to preserving the landscape of Franklin County and the rural county it embodies. It works with farmers and other landowners to develop strategies to protect the land against unwanted development. The Trust purchases land and conservation restrictions throughout western Franklin County.

**For more information, contact:**

Rich Hubbard  
PO Box 216  
Ashfield, MA 01330-0216  
(413) 628-4696

**Or visit:** [Franklin Land Trust](#)

#### **4.9 Winding River Land Conservancy**

The mission of the Winding River Land Conservancy is to preserve, conserve, and protect the natural diversity and character of Westfield and surrounding communities for present and future generations. Founded in 1998, The Winding River Land Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of open space. In order to support and maintain a viable farming community in the greater Westfield area, the Winding River Land Conservancy also collaborates with the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program.

**For more information, contact:**

Mark Noonan  
PO Box 1836  
Westfield, MA 01086-1836  
(413) 562-1386  
Email: [Mark Noonan](mailto:Mark.Noonan@windingriverlandconservancy.org)

#### **4.10 Valley Land Fund**

Founded in 1986, the Valley Land Fund (VLF) has worked in 32 Hampshire, Franklin, and Hampden County towns to protect over 6000 acres of the special places of the Connecticut River Valley, including working farmland and forests, rare wildlife and plant habitat, river and trail corridors, land adjacent to existing state and town conservation areas, and reservoir watersheds and aquifer areas.

Although VLF does hold properties and conservation restrictions, it concentrates on another important mission. The essence of VLF's charter is to act as a regional land protection resource and facilitator, assisting local trusts, ad hoc groups, local and state governments, and private landowners. VLF provides technical, financial, and legal support to towns and formal or informal local groups. They also provide state agencies with interim funding and acquisition assistance, and give conservation advice to landowners.

**For more information, contact:**

Valley Land Fund  
P.O. Box 522  
Hadley, Massachusetts 01035  
(413) 256-4045  
Email: [Valley Land Fund](#)

**Or visit:** [Valley Land Fund](#)

#### **Local Land Trusts**

A few towns in the Highlands have land trusts based in, and focused on, that single town. These trusts can be sources of financial and/or technical assistance in protecting land and should be one of the first stops for any resident interested in land protection. They are:

##### **4.11 Becket Land Trust**

Kenneth Smith, President  
HC 63 Box 95  
Lee, MA 01238  
Email: [Becket Land Trust](#)

##### **4.12 Monterey Preservation Land Trust**

Jonathan Sylbert, President  
P.O. Box 403  
Monterey, MA 01245  
(413) 528- 8832

##### **4.13 New Marlborough Land Preservation Trust**

Dick Stebbins, President  
PO Box 275  
Southfield, MA 01259-0275  
Email: [New Marlborough Land Preservation Trust](#)

## **5. Foundations**

### **5.1 Private Grant-Making Foundations**

Private grant-making foundations pursue their missions through distribution of grants to non-profit organizations, public agencies and others for specific mission-related purposes. There are thousands of such foundations in the United States, but also many thousands of potential recipients, and competition for grants is often fierce. Foundations focus their support both geographically and programmatically, and unfortunately only a relatively small number support land conservation.

Foundations also vary widely in process and personality. Some have professional staff, some not; some have a detailed application process, some are more informal; some have a rigorous, objective decision-making system, others less so. With many it helps, to some degree, to have a personal connection – to know or have direct contact with a board member who can plead your case when decisions are made.

The private foundations listed below are a sampling of the organizations that have supported projects in the Highlands region in the past or may be willing to work there in the future. Their resources, missions, and application requirements vary considerably, but nearly all require grant recipients to be 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations. Most of the application procedures include a narrative statement that details how support for the project will be sustained, how it will be evaluated, and the community members involved. Many foundations maintain websites, and some offer applications online as well.

Careful research is essential and can make a significant difference in the ability to secure funding. It is important to research each foundation's grant making philosophy, program interests and criteria, as well as their application process and timetable. There are several organizations that provide assistance with this type of research, namely the Associated Grant Makers of Massachusetts, the Foundation Center, the Western Massachusetts Funding Resource Center, and the Environmental Grantmakers Association. The Western Massachusetts Funding Resource Center operates a library in Springfield where access to electronic research tools, reference books, and periodicals is available. Additionally, the Internet is an increasingly powerful tool to gather more information about potential funds. Websites like [GrantSmart.Org](#) and [GuideStar](#) offer data and resources for and about nonprofit organizations, while general search engines like [Google](#) are an effective tool for broad data searches.

A very useful resource has been published by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences with an extensive list of grants and foundations. Though it is oriented towards grants that are appropriate to southeastern Massachusetts, many would apply to the Highlands as well. Download the publication at:

[Conserving Open Space Part 1 \(PDF\)](#)

[Conserving Open Space Part 2 \(PDF\)](#)

[Conserving Open Space Part 3 \(PDF\)](#)

Or contact the Manomet Center at P.O. Box 1770, Manomet, MA 02345.

**[Associated Grant Makers of Massachusetts](#)**

55 Court Street, Suite 520, Boston, MA 02108, (617) 426-2606

**[The Foundation Center](#)**

79 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003, (212) 620-4230

**[Environmental Grantmakers Association](#)**

437 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022, (212) 812-4260

**[The Western Massachusetts Funding Research Center](#)**

65 Elliot Street, P.O. Box 1730, Springfield, MA 01101, (413) 452-0615

**[GrantSmart.Org](#)**

**[GuideStar](#)**

**[Google](#)**

**Foundations**

**Biber Foundation**

Exchange Place, Room 2200, Boston, MA 02109, (617) 570-1130.

**Cricket Foundation**

Exchange Place, Room 2200, Boston, MA 02109, (617) 570-1130.

**[Ellis L. Phillips Foundation](#)**

233 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02116, (617) 424-7607.

**[Fields Pond Foundation](#)**

Five Turner Street, Box 540667, Waltham, MA 02454, (781) 899-9990

Email: [Fields Pond Foundation](#)

**[Frank Stanley Beveridge Foundation](#)**

301 Yamato Road, Suite 1130, Boca Raton, FL 33431, (800) 600-3723

**Greater Berkshire Foundation**

The Popcorner, PO Box 1308, Pittsfield, MA 01202.

**High Meadow Foundation**

c/o Country Curtains, Inc., Main St., Stockbridge, MA 01262, (413) 298-5565.

**Fund for the Environment**

The Boston Foundation, One Boston Place, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, MA 02108, (617) 723-7415

**[Irene and George Davis Foundation](#)**

1 Monarch Place, Suite 1450, Springfield, MA 01144, (413) 734-8336

Email: [Davis Foundation](#)

**[Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust](#)**

60 State Street, Boston, MA 02109, (617) 557-9775

**Lawson Valentine Foundation**

1000 Farmington Avenue, #105A, West Hartford, CT 06107, (860) 570-0728.

**Massachusetts Environmental Trust**

100 Cambridge St. Ste 1060, Boston, MA 02114, (617) 626-1045, (617) 626-1059

Email: [Robbin Peach](#)

**Norcross Wildlife Foundation**

(For equipment purchases and a zero interest loan program)

250 West 88th St. #806, New York, NY 10024 (860) 429-5709; (860) 429-4958

**Sweet Water Trust**

77 Central Street, 5th floor, Boston, MA 02109, (617) 482 5998

404 LeGeyt Road, Sheffield, MA 01257, (413) 229-0202

**Xeric Foundation**

PMB 214, 351 Pleasant Street, Northampton, MA 01060, (413) 585-0671

Email: [Xeric Foundation](#)

**5.2 Community Foundations**

Community foundations are a collection of charitable funds that are focused on a specific geographic region, established by various donors, then pooled and invested together so that the income provides a steady resource for the community. A community foundation is both permanent and flexible. Many charitable funds are set up to address one issue; but others are set up to focus on an entire community or region. Community foundations can also be a great source of advice and referrals to grantseekers.

**Council on Foundations**

1828 L St NW, Washington D.C. 20036, (202) 466-6512

For Berkshire County:

**Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation**

271 Main Street–Suite 3, Great Barrington, MA 01230, (800) 969-2823

For Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden Counties:

**The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts**

Tower Square, Suite 2300, 1500 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01115, (413) 732-2858

## **6. Individuals**

Individuals are often key financial partners in conservation acquisitions in one or more ways:

1) The seller as donor. Sellers who share the conservation sentiments of the project's proponents are sometimes willing and able to sell the property at a discount from its fair market value (known as a "bargain sale"). Always ask. A bargain sale not only reduces the amount to be raised elsewhere but also may make the project more appealing to other donors, who are pleased to know the sellers are "doing their part." Bargain sales may have tax advantages to the sellers that reduce the sting of the lower purchase price.

2) Contributors. Individual donors are the backbone of many a conservation project, and sometimes play a role in town acquisitions by reducing the amount to be raised by the tax levy. The local share of a Self-Help project is sometimes partially or wholly raised through private donations, for instance. The recipient can be the Town or a non-profit land trust.

3) Conservation buyers. A land trust may advertise properties to conservation-minded buyers when the trust cannot afford to own, or need not own, all or part of the property in order to achieve its conservation objectives. Because of the substantial amount of money conservation buyers may be able to bring to the table, they can be a significant part of the solution to a difficult financial challenge. One goal of such programs is to identify conservation-minded buyers willing to pay full price for a property in return for gaining the opportunity to acquire an already-protected property or to acquire and then protect one that is unprotected.

Conservation buyer listings are maintained by [The Trustees of Reservations](#) and [The Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition](#).

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