

*From the Director
Wayne Klockner*

From Vision to Action: Massachusetts Forests

I have new reason to hope that 2005 will mark the beginning of an inspired new approach to protecting the forests of Massachusetts. Our Commonwealth is rich in people and organizations with commitment to this end. The Nature Conservancy is honored to be in such good company. We now have a rare opportunity to work together at a greater scale than ever before – with the potential to realize lasting forest conservation on a regional scale here in southern New England.

With the publication of *Wildlands and Woodlands, A Vision for the Forests of Massachusetts* earlier this year, David Foster and his colleagues from Harvard Forest propose a strategy for forest conservation that could be a rallying point for us all. The report proposes “large forest reserves in which natural processes dominate and human impact is minimized (Wildlands), embedded within expansive forestland that is protected from development but is actively managed in an ecologically sustainable manner (Woodlands).” The researchers argue that we have an unparalleled opportunity to conserve much of the state’s forests after more than a century of recovery from the extensive land clearing of the 1800s.

Wildlands and Woodlands received a lot of well-deserved attention from many quarters. The ripple effect may still be growing. Ted Smith of the Kendall Foundation was intrigued by the possibilities and hosted a meeting in July of several conservation and forestry organizations and the Harvard Forest team to think about how this ambitious vision for the future of our forests could be realized. While much work remains to be done, I am very encouraged by what has begun: a commitment to work together to achieve such an inspirational conservation vision, one that includes both ecological reserves around the most sensitive areas and extensive

areas of managed forest that provide a wealth of benefits to the citizens of the Commonwealth in the form of drinking water, timber products, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

Thanks to so many of you, The Conservancy has an excellent track record of protecting forested lands. We are nearing our 15,000 acre goal in the Berkshire Taconic landscape and are newly established in Becket to launch a conservation initiative on the Westfield River, a major tributary of the Connecticut River, and the mostly wooded lands through which the river runs. We are already working closely with the Commonwealth to designate thousands of acres of ecological forest reserves as part of the Commonwealth’s sustainable forestry certification of all state forestlands. We are refining a program to stop the importation and spread of the pests and pathogens that devastate our trees even as I write to you now. We live in a special time for forest conservation in Massachusetts. The scientific analysis that led us to these globally important large forests right here in Massachusetts is now being used as a basis for collaborative protection effort by the state and many partners. That’s real conservation leverage. And we hope that the groundwork that we have laid in conservation planning and action will have lasting effect on forest health and protection across the Commonwealth. These are the beginnings of a realization of the comprehensive forest conservation vision highlighted in *Wildlands and Woodlands*.

The scale of the current opportunity to protect Massachusetts forests and preserve the rural character of these landscapes is enormous. No one organization can act alone and accomplish what we may yet accomplish together. I’ll be attending a follow-up meeting hosted again by the Kendall Foundation to advance a collaboration with their groups to craft a work plan that can maintain and improve the fabric of our forested landscape and way of life.

I look forward to sharing developments with you as we move forward together.



Friends in the Field: Meg Sheehan



Meg Sheehan’s conservation ethic was instilled at a young age. Growing up, she enjoyed spending time on Plymouth Beach, hiking in the woods, and swimming in Plymouth’s crystal clear sandy bottomed ponds.

“I’ve always loved hiking, canoeing and being outdoors,” said Sheehan. “My mother’s family came to Plymouth from Northern Italy to join the Italian community that grew up around the Cordage Rope Factory. They knew immediately that Plymouth was a special place and built a cottage on Powderhorn Pond as a weekend escape. Like many families in Plymouth, we still find respite and refuge at the pond where we have all spent time together over generations.”

Sheehan’s interest in nature stayed with her. She studied environmental law at Boston College, and in 1992 she and her family set up the Sheehan Family Foundation. The Foundation strives to help environmental groups working in Southeastern Massachusetts. This includes funding land acquisitions and staff, as well as collaboration among the groups in the region. The Foundation made the initial grant establishing the Nature Conservancy’s Plymouth Pinelands Program office in 2001.

“When The Nature Conservancy came to Plymouth, its science based approach bolstered the efforts of the groups working in the area and helped us to focus on the most important land protection projects,” said Sheehan. “We became more aware of the ecological significance of the Plymouth landscape – we learned that many of the plants and animals in our backyard were truly globally rare. The Conservancy brought scientific expertise and tied local conservation to a bigger global picture.”

More recently, the Foundation awarded a total of \$250,000 in grants to ten different environmental groups and a regional planning agency to support work in the Taunton River Watershed, recently named an aquatic freshwater priority by The Nature Conservancy. The Taunton River has also been nominated for federal Wild and Scenic designation.

“We continue to face many challenges in the effort to protect natural resources in the region, and working together these groups can enhance their effectiveness.” Meg added.