

A Grant Application to the Fields Pond Foundation Inc.:

Improvements to Enhance Public Accessibility and Environmental Preservation of East Leverett Meadow, Leverett, Massachusetts

I. Introduction

East Leverett Meadow is a 30-acre property that consists of approximately 22 acres of grassland and 8 acres of shrub and forb border. The property was acquired by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, a non-profit land trust based in Leverett, Massachusetts, in 1997, at a time when development of the property was imminent. The property is known regionally as a rich migratory bird habitat. Since 1997, the Trust has made major efforts to enhance wildlife habitat on the property and to responsibly encourage public access to the area. In this proposal we ask for funding to construct a parking area and signs, to begin construction of an interpretive trail, and to purchase a gate to eliminate motor vehicle incursions on the property.

II. History, Mission, and Accomplishments of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust

The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, founded in 1988, is an all-volunteer, incorporated land trust. It is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization led by 15 Trustees. The Trust has approximately 500 members, mostly residents of the Town of Leverett, but many from surrounding towns as well. It is funded primarily through membership dues and a variety of local fundraising efforts. The main focus of this organization is the protection of open space and ecologically important areas within the Town of Leverett, Massachusetts and neighboring towns. The Trust recognizes the pressure of increasing population and associated development in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts and is dedicated to preserving the outstanding variety of animals, plants and scenic beauty in the area. The Trust seeks to promote the environmental, educational, and historical welfare of these land resources by acquiring rights to land, developing measures to support and preserve the land, and educating the public regarding the use, appreciation, and conservation of our local resources.

Successful land transactions carried out or assisted by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust include:

- 1990: Acquisition of 40 acres of Rattlesnake Gutter, a canyon carved by outflow from glacial Lake Hitchcock approximately 14,000 years ago. This canyon is a geologic and scenic treasure.
- 1991: Obtaining a conservation easement on a 140-acre parcel of Laurel Hill, a forested upland partially targeted for residential development.
- 1992: Acquisition of the 38-acre Long Hill Natural Area, a woodland with scenic views of the center of the town of Leverett, including Leverett Pond.
- 1993: Acquisition of East Leverett Meadow, a property consisting of 22 acres of grassland, 1 acre of wetland, and 7 acres of fringing shrub land. The Meadow, an outstanding migratory songbird and butterfly habitat, and an important aquifer, was under immediate threat of residential development when it was acquired. Enhancement of East Leverett Meadow is the object of the present proposal.

- 1994: Acquisition by donation of the Scheffey Conservation Area, 16 acres of woodland abutting Roaring Brook, beginning at the eastern border of the Town of Leverett.
- 1995: Acquisition of the Roaring Brook Conservation Area, a 52-acre forested upland habitat bisected by a brook, and providing a key connection between the Scheffey Conservation Area and East Leverett Meadow.
- 1996: Acquisition of the Marvell Family Conservation Area, 20 acres of mixed evergreen and hardwood forest bordering Rattlesnake Gutter, the original acquisition of the Trust.

The Trust is working to develop a conservation corridor along the Doolittle Brook and Roaring Brook tributaries (Figure 1) and is currently developing a trail system along Doolittle Brook, in conjunction with the Leverett Elementary School, as a part of the Outdoor Classroom Program. This trail system will ultimately connect the Leverett Elementary School with the elementary school in the neighboring town of Shutesbury. The Trust has also sponsored public meetings and presentations on conservation and land preservation topics, created the Leverett Outdoor Classroom, a five-acre woodland and stream plain adjacent to the Leverett Elementary School, and worked with landowners to assist them in preserving the natural heritage of their properties through the use of conservation restrictions.

III. Trustees and Advisors of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust

Trustees:

Glen Ayers, Co-chair of Trust, Hydrologist, Member of Leverett Board of Health
 Margaret Sanders, Co-chair of Trust, Artist
 Kathryn Addelson, Emeritus Trustee, Professor
 Roberta Bannister, Treasurer of Trust, Printer
 Annette Gibavic, Secretary of Trust, Educator–Retired
 David Field, Emeritus Trustee, Retired
 Joan Godsey, Educator
 Matthew Kelty, Forestry Professor
 Gordon King, Emeritus Trustee, Landscape Architect–Retired
 Stephen Schmidt, Photographer
 Evelyn Schuyler, Retired
 Sheila Seaman, Geology Professor
 Albert Shane, Professor, Retired
 Susan Sheldon, Landscape Architect
 Brooke Thomas, Anthropology Professor
 Alison Whitlock, Herpetologist
 Steve Weiss, Editor
 Mary Alice Wilson, President of Hampshire Bird Club, Educator–Retired

Advisors to the Trust on the Preservation of Wildlife Habitat of East Leverett Meadow:

Harvey Allen, bird expert, Amherst, Massachusetts
Thomas Arny, Naturalist and Professor of Physics, University of Massachusetts
Dottie Case, butterfly expert, Sunderland, Massachusetts
John Green, US Forest Service (retired)
William Healy, wildlife biologist, former trustee
Andrea Jones, grassland bird expert, Massachusetts Audubon Society
Geoff LeBaron, Christmas Bird Count Director, National Audubon Society
William McComb, Department Chair, Natural Resources Conservation, University of
Massachusetts
William Rivers, state forester
Steve DeStefano, wildlife biologist
Peter Westover, Director of Conservation Commission of Amherst, Massachusetts
Brayton F. Wilson, Professor, Dept of Natural Resources Conservation, University of
Massachusetts (retired)

IV. Financial Statement, Annual Report, IRS Form 990, Tax Exemption Letter

Attached as Appendices I-IV.333

V. Description of the Proposed Project

General goals, specific objectives, anticipated benefits for environment, organization, local residents, broader population

The overall purpose of this project is to enhance the ability of the public to gain access to East Leverett Meadow while making as little impact as possible on the flora and fauna of the meadow. East Leverett Meadow is the largest grassland in the town of Leverett. Grassland is a relatively unusual habitat in Massachusetts, where mixed pine and hardwood forest is the typical culmination of vegetative succession. East Leverett Meadow attracts a wide variety of wildlife. The shrub and forb-rich borders of the meadow provide nesting sites for birds and small mammals in the spring, berries and fruit to support migratory bird populations in the summer and fall, and shelter and food in the winter. The grassland supports a rich population of small mammals and reptiles, as well as bobolinks, which nest on the ground until early to mid-July. One of the tributaries of Doolittle Brook was dammed by beavers in the spring of 2000, creating a small beaver pond and associated wetland, which attract water birds including herons, mallards and wood ducks, as well as a healthy frog and salamander population.

The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust acquired East Leverett Meadow in September, 1997 following an intense effort among local property owners, other non-profit conservation organizations, and members of the town to raise funds for the purchase. The flat, scenic property was slated to become a 10-lot housing development. Ultimately adequate funds were raised for its purchase and ownership by the Trust. Maintenance of the meadow has been carried out both with a contract with a local farmer who cuts the grass of the meadow for hay, and by members of the Trust, who have removed over 100 old tires on the property, invasive plant species, and white pine and red maple trees encroaching on the shrubby bird habitats of the meadow borders. The goals of the Trust (described in detail below) have now turned toward providing access to the meadow for the public, and establishing a trail around the meadow.

The Trust recognizes the fragility of the meadow and border ecosystems, and wishes to provide access to the meadow for public enjoyment and education, while carefully preserving it from harmful effects of human use. To this end, upon gaining ownership of the meadow, the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust launched a four-phase management effort aimed at habitat preservation and enhancement, public access, and education. The four phases of the project are described the following paragraphs.

Phase I: We began by cleaning up existing refuse in the meadow (the tires described above), establishing a contract with a farmer to mow the meadow to maintain it as a grassland, and removing invasive plants (specifically buckthorn) and non-invasive, but shade producing species that were encroaching on the shrubby migratory bird edge habitat. Non-invasive species removed from shrubby areas included white pine and red maple trees (although some individuals of each remain to maintain vegetative diversity).

Phase II: We are now creating a database of flora, fauna, and habitats in the meadow. Inventories of bird, butterfly, and shrub species are well underway. Forms have been made available to visitors to the meadow on which they can record the presence and location of any type of animal life and/or plant life, and this information is entered into our growing database. Steve DeStefano (a mammalian wildlife biologist), Alison Whitlock (a herpetologist), and Karen Searcy (a herbaceous plant botanist) will do non-destructive surveys of mammals, reptiles, and herbaceous plants during the upcoming season. We expect that the database will aid us in habitat enhancement and that it will provide information to local residents, area naturalists, and educators.

Phase III: The third phase of the project, begun with the construction of the bridge in spring, 2000, and continuing through this spring and summer, involves providing public access to the meadow, and education about the grassland and shrub habitats. Many of the items for which funding is requested in this proposal are part of this phase of the project. These include

construction of a parking area, kiosk, and observation platform, purchase of signs for a perimeter trail, printing of a brochure, and purchase of benches.

Phase IV: The fourth phase of the project focuses on habitat enhancement. Dr. Brayton Wilson, an expert on shrubs and trees, has completed a survey of shrubs and trees present on the 8 acres of land that fringes the grassland. Within the next few months we will submit a proposal to the Sweet Water Trust for funding to support the planting of mature specimens of a mixture of native shrubs chosen to provide pollen, nectar, berries, fruit, and/or shelter for a variety of species of animals. We are further examining the possibility of reseeding parts of the grassland portion of the meadow in warm season grasses, which are reputed to provide a greater diversity of grass height, texture, thickness, and seeds, hence supporting a greater variety of faunal species. Eight bluebird houses have been erected (in pairs) as part of phase IV, and the meadow is under consideration as part of the national bluebird trail.

Several parts of phases I-III have already been completed, as described above. This proposal requests funding to complete the unfinished goals of phases I-III. These goals include: 1) construction of the parking area (Figure 2) to provide access to the meadow via a footbridge constructed by an Americorp crew in spring, 2000; 2) purchase of a steel panel gate to prohibit vehicular access through an existing entrance to the meadow; 3) purchase of signs for an interpretive trail around the perimeter of the grassland (Figure 2); 4) production of a brochure that will provide information about the meadow for visitors; 5) construction of an all-weather kiosk and signboard to be placed at the edge of the parking area; 6) construction of an observation platform and two benches.

Last spring the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust submitted a successful proposal to the Americorp Program that funded a week-long visit by an Americorp team that built a footbridge across Roaring Brook (Figure 2) and improved a trail leading to the bridge from a clearing on Cushman Road. The final steps in making this bridge the permanent access to the meadow are installing a parking area in the clearing and installing signs to direct the public to the bridge. At present, there is one access way into the meadow. This access is a road that traverses private property on the northeast corner of the meadow and permits the entrance of motor vehicles into the meadow. Because 1) recreational use of all-terrain vehicles in the meadow is not consistent with the goal of preservation of ground-nesting birds (which, according to the National Audubon Society and the National Wildlife Federation are the most imperiled group of birds in the United States at this time) and 2) because the owners of the private access are weary of motor vehicles using it to enter the meadow, we would like to erect a locked gate at this entrance to the meadow. An interpretive trail approximately 1.3 km in length will be constructed around the perimeter of the meadow during spring and summer, 2001. The trail will circumscribe the meadow and will enhance appreciation of the diversity of plant and animal life while discouraging foot traffic

across the grassland in which birds nest. Funding is requested for signs associated with the trail. Funding is also requested for printing of a brochure containing a map of the meadow and describing the biology, botany, geology, ecology, and historical details of the meadow. Experts in each of these fields have been enlisted to write the pertinent parts of the brochure, which would be available at the entrance to the meadow. The kiosk planned for the parking area will be a simple signboard on posts with a slight overhang. It will provide a place for posting notices about natural events in the meadow, and place to dispense brochures and collect contributions toward maintenance of the meadow. Finally, we would like to construct a low (approximately 1 meter high) observation platform near the northern end of the bridge (Figure 2) to provide an overview of the meadow for visitors as they enter the meadow and locate themselves on the map provided in the brochure. We would further like to place two benches along the perimeter trail to provide resting places for visitors. One proposed location is on a rise near the site of the foundation of an 19th century distillery on the border of the meadow. This proposal to the Fields Pond Foundation is a request for funding for these efforts to provide public educational and low-to-no-impact recreational access to East Leverett Meadow.

VI. How This Proposal is Consistent with the Foundation's Significant Objectives

A major priority of the Foundation, according to proposal guidelines, is trailmaking and other enhancement of public access to conservation lands, rivers, coastlines, and other natural resources, as well as enhancing educational programs and publications regarding natural areas. These goals are precisely the goals of this proposal. The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust wants to install a parking area and signs that will invite the public to visit East Leverett Meadow. Once in the meadow, the interpretive trail will provide educational information on land preservation, native tree, shrub, grass, and animal species, and enhancement of private land as wildlife habitat. Trustees Steve Weiss, Mary Alice Wilson, and Sheila Seaman form the subcommittee that works on the maintenance of East Leverett Meadow. As a group, we have put great effort into establishing a strong network of expert advisors on many aspects of preservation of this land (please see list of advisors). Our contact with these advisors is frequent and lively. We expect that the interpretive trail will not be a superficial effort, but rather will incorporate the wealth of knowledge that all of these people bring to this project.

VII. Evidence that the Funds will be Used to Address an Important Need that would Otherwise be Unmet

We feel that making East Leverett Meadow accessible by foot to the public is of utmost importance both for the future of the Meadow and for the future of land preservation efforts in the town of Leverett. As the situation stands now, the access to the meadow provided by the

footbridge built by the Americorp crew is not obvious, and no parking area exists near the access. To use the bridge, people need to park their cars on the shoulder of a busy and narrow road. Without modest signage, most people have no way of knowing that the access exists. The only other access (which we propose to gate) has no parking area, traverses private property, and invites inappropriate vehicular traffic detrimental to the meadow. The variety of habitats represented in the meadow offer an unparalleled educational opportunity in Leverett, but we do not now have the resources to provide information to the people who use the meadow now, or who will use it in the future. Many citizens of the town who contributed considerable amounts of money toward the purchase of the meadow have inquired about how they can access it. There is a clear need for a different entryway to the meadow, allowing foot traffic only. The Trust has invested significant funds in the Meadow. It contributed \$10,000 toward the purchase of the meadow (purchase price \$89,000). Proposals were written and funded for materials to build the foot bridge across Roaring Brook, and to hire the Americorp team that built the bridge. At this point, the Trust recently purchased the Marvel property, a 20-acre woodland. This project has seriously depleted our funds. We wish to pursue the access goals outlined here at the beginning of the upcoming season to alleviate the problems described above. We will be able to do this only with outside funding.

VIII. Project Budget, Description and Summary of Other Sources of Funding, Indication of Plans for Ongoing Funding.

Project Budget

1) Steel panel gate	\$200.00
2) 6" x 6"x 60" poles to anchor gate	50.00
3) Excavation of 275 yd ² material to make a half circle parking area, 4" gravel topping, 2 aprons of blacktop	3610.00
4) Parking area signs (6 signs, on posts and installed)	830.00
5) Interpretive trail signs (10 signs, on posts and installed)	1380.00
6) Printing of brochure	300.00
7) Kiosk and signboard	300.00
8) Observation platform and benches	1000.00
Total amount requested:	\$7670.00

Other Sources of Funding

The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust has no other sources of funding at present.

Plans for Ongoing Funding

Maintenance and trail upkeep will be the task of trustees and of interested local volunteers. During the first three years of ownership of the meadow by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, this sort of volunteerism has worked very well. We have had approximately ten work days in the meadow, attended by groups of five to ten people. To fund upkeep of the meadow in the future, we will actively encourage members of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, and other interested citizens of Leverett, to make contributions directly to the meadow maintenance fund. We expect the parking area and the signs to be maintenance-free for at least a decade, but will seek contributions to pay a local farmer to mow the trail three times per summer season.

VIII. Plans for Evaluating the Project and Reporting the Results to the Foundation

We will consider this project partially successful if the new gate, parking area, signs, and trail are all installed by Fall, 2001. The other criterion of success is whether members of the public visit East Leverett Meadow and come away from their visit inspired to preserve whatever wild habitat they own, or to allow part of their property to take a step toward becoming native habitat. We will measure the second criterion by placing a comment box at the entrance to the meadow, by talking with visitors about their experiences in the Meadow, and by maintaining a sign-in book. If the Fields Pond Foundation funds our proposal, we will file a report on the progress of the project, including photographs of gate, parking area, and interpretive trail, and a sampling of public comments, one year from the funding date.

Fields Ponds Reports: 2007 and 2011 (Field and Archive Notebooks have all attachments)

2007

Progress Report to the Fields Pond Foundation, Inc.

1. Progress Report
2. Expense Report
3. Acquisition and Management of the East Leverett Meadow (Report prepared for a 10th Anniversary Celebration, September 2007)
4. Photographs from the meadow
5. Bird, Butterfly, Critter, Herbaceous and Woody Plant Surveys
6. 2006 Bobolink Survey
7. ELM brochure
8. Map of protected land in Leverett

Progress Report to the Fields Pond Foundation, Inc.

In February 2002, the Fields Pond Foundation, Inc. gave a grant of \$3,000 for “improvements to enhance accessibility and environmental preservation of the East Leverett Meadow, Leverett, Massachusetts.” The grant was received and is administered by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust (RGT), the owner of the meadow.

In September 2007 we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the East Leverett Meadow (ELM). As part of that celebration, we have prepared this report to the Fields Pond Foundation. We thank you for your continuing support.

We have had four goals for the meadow.

1. To understand present use of meadow and edges by plants/animals through multi-year inventories.

Volunteers have provided us with uncountable hours of environmental management advice and have conducted bird, butterfly, mammal and plant surveys. (Copies of the survey summaries are attached.) Our volunteer management consultants all recommended that we ask an outside consultant to conduct an annual Bobolink breeding bird survey both because of the difficulty of surveying that species accurately and because it was a key species in our goal of managing the meadow to enhance habitat while responsibly encouraging public access. (The Bobolink surveys have been funded by Fields Pond Foundation, a copy of the 2006 survey is attached.)

2. To maintain and/or enhance habitat for plants/animals using the on-going surveys.

meadow goal: manage for a diversity grassland birds, butterflies, turtles, mammals, grasses-sedges. Volunteers created and maintain a trail around the edge of the meadow so breeding critters are not disturbed. A USDA WHIP grant has paid for late-summer mowing (cut too late to be of value as hay) and for liming.

edge habitat goal (habitats include field pine, old orchard, beaver pond, and hedge rows - again managed for diversity). ELM has hosted annual work parties to try to keep invasive species under control. The WHIP grant has paid for selective brush hogging.

3. Goal: encourage use/enjoyment by public

parking lot: one load of gravel was purchased (Fields Pond Foundation); additional gravel, bark chips, and winter plowing were contributed by the town's highway department.

signs: 2 near entrances, 1 at parking lot (Fields Pond Foundation)

bridge: built by Americorps

trail: maintained by volunteers

benches: built by volunteers, materials Fields Pond Foundation

kiosk: to be built by volunteers, some materials already donated

(the metal gate originally needed because of late-night partying was never ordered because, under RGT management, partying stopped.)

activities: As part of their 7-8 public programs/year, RGT plans at least one event every year at the meadow: celebrating spring woodcock and peepers; bird walks; work parties; 10-year celebration.

written materials: ELM flier updated regularly (attached), report prepared for 10th anniversary celebration (attached). The fall and spring program schedule is sent to RGT members and included in the town newsletter.

use by other organizations: colleges (3 university course projects so far), schools (one elementary and one home-schooling project), nature centers and bird clubs (at least three organized bird walks), photographers, and geocachers.

4. Goal: Make ELM a benefit to RGT, not a drain on resources (finances/energy)

volunteers: By far the greatest resource for achieving the goals of the meadow has been volunteers from the RGT Board, within the Leverett community, and the larger environmental/education community.

funding:

mowing and liming: USDA WHIP

public accessibility and environmental preservation: Fields Pond Foundation

publicity for events, administrative costs: RGT general funds

helping achieve RGT goal of expanding conserved area:

ELM has served as a model for other land trusts, but is also helping us develop a larger contiguous area of protected lands in East Leverett. (See map of protected land in Leverett.)

Plans for the future: This year will end our second five-year plan for the meadow. While the next 5-year plan is not yet complete, it will include continuing work on all four, interdependent, goals. Our next step, now that the 10-year celebration has taken place, is to meet with our volunteers to

get their advice on ways to achieve our four goals.

Gwyn Mitchell, Sheila Seaman, Mary Alice Wilson
ELM Management Committee
October 16, 2007



The East Leverett Meadow: Owned and Managed by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust

Final Report to the Fields Pond Foundation, Inc.

1. Narrative
2. Expense Summary
3. Sample map and brochure of the East Leverett Meadow
4. Kestrel box pictures
5. Bobolink Survey 2011
6. Map of the proposed East Leverett Trail Network

Final Report to the Fields Pond Foundation, Inc.

Background

Since its founding in 1988, the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust (RGT) has served the Leverett, Massachusetts community by preserving land (9 owned properties, 9 Conservation Restrictions), helping the community identify and preserve land (5 properties purchased with CPA funding), offering programs for adults and children, partnering with students and faculty to study habitat and land management questions, and disseminating information about good land management practices.

RGT purchased the 30-acre East Leverett Meadow in 1997 to protect it from imminent development and to enhance the wildlife habitat, especially for the nesting bobolinks. For the past 13 years we have monitored bird species year-round and collected some data on butterflies, mammals and reptiles.

The Grant

In February 2002, the Fields Pond Foundation, Inc. awarded RGT a grant of \$3,000 for “improvements to enhance accessibility and environmental preservation of the East Leverett Meadow, Leverett, Massachusetts.” We have used that funding to:

1. Create a comfortable environment for visitors:

improve the parking lot;

place signs that are both welcoming and informative;

build 3 benches along the edge of the meadow trail to invite visitors to take time to observe the various habitats and seasons;

prepare maps and informational brochures especially for the use of special interest groups: college classes in wildlife and habitat management and ecology, birding and butterfly groups, community groups (sample map and brochure attached);

host a community reception at a home at the edge of the meadow to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the meadow’s acquisition;

organize annual work parties, including one which erected a kestrel box in the middle of the meadow. Kestrel pairs visit each year, but have not yet nested (pictures attached). Bluebird/tree swallow nest boxes were erected a number of years ago and are maintained by volunteers.

2. Understand how to manage the meadow to accommodate the needs of bobolinks and other wildlife while keeping the maintenance costs of the meadow reasonable.

Each year we have asked a wildlife biologist to conduct a formal survey of the bobolink population during the nesting season. This survey was originally done by Aaron Eilers. Since 2003 it has been conducted annually by Molly Hale. (A sample report from 2011 is attached to this report.) Copies of all reports are, of course, available from RGT. These reports have helped us evaluate and revise our maintenance plan.

They have also helped us understand what additional help we needed – and demonstrated to the community and potential funding agencies that we were committed to practicing good management techniques. It was because of these reports that we received assistance from the Franklin Conservation District (USDA) for Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project (WHIP, 2002) and the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife for help re-seeding the western half of the meadow (LIP, 2009). Copies of these reports have also been used by college/university students studying meadow management.

New directions

Protecting Wood Turtles

In April 2010, UMass herpetologists visiting the meadow at our request found 3 wood turtles sunning along the bank of Roaring Brook. Managing effectively for this long-lived species (MESA:SC) required more information about how the turtles used the 24-acre meadow and the adjacent steams and woodlands. We are grateful to RGT and the Norcross Foundation for funding transponders and student time for the 2010 pilot project and to Dr. Liz Willey, UMass, who lead this work.

Based on their data and discussions with a number of wood turtle researchers and with the RGT Board, we have decided to delay meadow mowing until late fall when the turtles will have left the mowed area. And we will continue to monitor the impact this new schedule on both plant and animal communities.

East Leverett Trail Network

The first task when RGT purchased the meadow was to provide public access across Roaring Brook. The bridge built by Americorps has served the community well – even surviving the Hurricane Irene deluge. We then developed a circular trail around the meadow which is mowed during growing season so that visitors can experience the meadow without damaging nesting areas. RGT pays for the trail mowing each year.

It was not until the fall of 2010 that we began the next step of linking our trail to a larger trail network. In November 2010, RGT and the Leverett Conservation Commission prepared a proposal to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for an East Leverett Trail Network. The grant was awarded this summer. The network will link already-existing trails at the 4-H Forest and the East Leverett Meadow with new trails on town-owned and privately-owned properties (map attached). With help from the grant and community volunteers, the first section of the network will be completed this fall. Leverett Elementary School students will be developing the informational materials that will be available in print and on the RGT website. A photo contest will be conducted this fall and winter with the winners displayed at the Leverett Library in March. The Historical Society will conduct interviews and prepare DVDs of residents' memories of this geographic area. A proposal is being prepared to the Arts Council for poetry-writing project with the poems displayed on scrolls along the trails. The possibilities for the network expands daily.

RGT Website

RGT recently launched a website (www.rattlesnakeguttertrust.org) which includes a section on each of the 9 RGT properties and a section for the Leverett Trails Committee (co-sponsored by RGT and the Conservation Commission) which manages the East Leverett Trail Network. A section on ways to conserve property will be posted in the next few weeks. As with the trail network, the website's potential for communication and participation is endless.

Clearly these new directions would not have been possible without the support of the Fields Pond Foundation: it encouraged us to think creatively. The possibilities are, indeed, endless.

Fields Pond Foundation, Inc.			
	\$3,000 grant to "Enhance Accessibility and Environmental Preservation of the East Leverett Meadow (ELM), Leverett, Massachusetts"		
	grant to land owner: Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, beginning February 2002		
date reported to RGT Board	description	amount	subtotal
12/4/2002	Bobolink Survey, Aaron Eilers	\$100	
7/16/2003	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$100	
8/26/2003	Gravel for parking lot	\$40	
9/20/2003 and 4/28/2004	2 large signs at both ELM entrances	\$513	
9/14/2004	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$200	
9/7/2005	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$200	
10/18/2005	materials for 3 meadow-side benches	\$129	
9/19/2006	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$200	
1/8/2008	metal sign for parking lot	\$100	
1/8/2008	rental table/chairs, cake 10th anniversary.	\$154	
1/8/2008	duplication of maps, histories 10th anniversary	\$49	
As of October 16, 2007 (Progress Report sent to Fields Pond Foundation)			\$1,785
7/27/2007	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$200	
7/18/2008	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$200	
7/28/2009	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$250	
10/1/2009	Kestrel Box, erected 10/8/09	\$82	
6/15/2010	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$250	
7/27/2011	Bobolink Survey, Molly Hale	\$250	
As of September 30, 2011			\$1,232
Total			\$3,017



October 8, 2008. As part of annual ELM Workday, volunteers lift a very heavy American Kestrel Box into its hole in the East Leverett Meadow



April 19, 2009. Julie Collier, Wingmasters, (and RGT Board member) releases a rehabilitated American Kestrel at the East Leverett Meadow.



And, every year, a volunteer cleans the box hoping that next year the American Kestrels, who begin the nesting process each year, will take up summer residence.