

Sheffield Land Trust

*Protecting Sheffield's Natural, Scenic,
Agricultural and Rural Character*

2024 Annual Report



*View west across the Wiehl APR fields and floodplain forest to the
Housatonic River which is on the other side of the tree line.*

land that are incompatible with the conservation values of the property and the family's vision, restrictions that stay with the property on the deed through all future owners. Families that don't need to get cash for the full value of the land, so donate all or part of the value of the APR or CR, can often realize savings on income, capital gains or estate taxes.

SLT can also protect land by owning it. We keep our land on the tax rolls and enroll it in the relevant current-use program for forestry, agriculture or wildlife (Chapter 61, 61A or 61B). We can accept gifts of land to conserve, and gifts of non-conservation land or buildings to be sold to help fund the protection of other land. We can also purchase land to protect it. Projects can also combine multiple options when agricultural and ecological assessments indicate that a portion of the land could be kept as a building envelope for future generations. In those instances, the exact location is agreed to by everyone and surveyed. Donations of land can provide the same kind of tax benefits as with CRs and APRs.

The Land Protection Committee is also responsible for monitoring the land we own and the CRs we hold, to make sure that the conservation values and the terms of the CRs are being upheld. Volunteer monitors become familiar with a property, each year walking the area under protection and filing a report. (For APRs, the state monitors the land.) It also coordinates ongoing stewardship efforts to control invasive species. The Land Protection Committee meets on one Tuesday afternoon every other month.

The **Funding & Financial Management Committee** draws on its members' expertise and talents to monitor and help plan SLT's financial well-being, both long-term and day-to-day, and to organize and oversee fundraising for SLT's conservation projects, outreach and education work, and operations. The Funding & Financial Management Committee meets on one Friday afternoon every other month.

You, Our Members, Are Amazing!

Here's what you helped make possible in 2024-2025:

- Completing the 1st Agricultural Preservation Restriction (on 443 acres) and 1st Conservation Restriction (on 86 acres) for the Cooper Hill Conservation Project, while raising, in partnership with the Cooper Hill Conservation Alliance, over \$13 million from foundations, agencies and the community to protect the ultimate goal of 1,100 acres of farmland and wildlife habitat.
- Completing another Conservation Restriction in the Sheffield Egremont Corridor protected an additional 12 acres and the fundraising for an adjoining 57-acre Agricultural Preservation Restriction that will be closing this summer.
- Continuing the 5th year of the partnership with Greenagers and the Egremont Land Trust at Bow Wow Woods, where youth teams have transitioned old woods roads into 3 trail loops and build the 1 kiosk.
- Partnering with Greenagers on permitting to upgrade part of the trail at Ashley Falls Woods to be universally accessible including creating 2 new bridges - the 2nd year of this 2 year process; also maintaining the trails and fields and removing invasive species, thanks to our fantastic volunteers.
- Providing, in collaboration with the Sheffield Tree Project, over 650 trees and shrubs to area families through the Arbor Day Celebration tree and shrub giveaway; pruning 25 trees along public roads in the center of Sheffield and planting and mulching 3 new street trees along East Road.
- Increasing to 11 the number of families who have let us know that they have included us in their wills and other estate planning, becoming members of our Legacy Circle.

- The **Housatonic River Corridor** protects farmland and wildlife areas on both sides of the river. Since Sheffield was settled in the 1700s, farmers have prized the rich “bottom land” along the Housatonic River.

We are continuing to work with the **Wiehl** family on an APR on their land here on Hewins Street along the river where we have all gathered today, and are working with the **Agar-Hendrix** family to protect additional land on June Mountain. Other farms and properties in the Corridor that we have all helped families to protect through APRs include **Balsam Hill Farm**, the former **Cavalier** property (now part of Pine Island Farm), the **Corn Crib** (now **Whalen's** tree nursery), **Egerton Family Farm**, **Howden Farm**, **Larkin Dairy Farm**, **River Lea Farm** and **Wolfe Spring Farm**. That is in addition to a dozen conservation and deed restrictions and conservation ownerships—more than 2,100 acres altogether.

- The **Community Trail Network** includes the **Deborah Reich Trail** near the center of Sheffield, which runs from Salisbury Road to the Southern Berkshire Regional School District campus, and which is also available to be used as an outdoor classroom; and **Ashley Falls Woods**, whose network of trails are loops of varying lengths, is near the center of Ashley Falls off of Route 7A (Ashley Falls Road).

These are primarily forested properties, the trails themselves being rustic with the treadways left natural. Dogs are welcome so long as they are leashed. This complies with the Town of Sheffield's leash law because even the most well-behaved dog is a problem for other dogs or people with a fear of dogs. Both properties have a pack-in, pack-out policy, so please plan ahead.

We are continuing to make improvements to these recreational properties, including partnering with Greenagers to upgrade part of the trail at Ashley Falls Woods to be universally accessible, with two new bridges, to enable a larger portion of the community to be able to access and enjoy exploring the great outdoors. Tree identifications are the next project.

Sheffield Land Trust's Current Project Areas

In addition to our ongoing education and outreach work, our primary focus is on land conservation work in four landscape and recreational areas, as well as conserving farmland throughout Sheffield and Ashley Falls:

- The **Cooper Hill Conservation Project** will protect over 1,100 acres of farmland and wildlife areas in both Sheffield and adjoining Salisbury, CT. It is a collaborative project between the eight conservation organizations of the **Cooper Hill Conservation Alliance** working with the land owners and farmer. Each parcel is important for its own conservation values and for connecting thousands of acres of already-protected land in both Massachusetts and Connecticut—creating important ecological and agricultural corridors. Two parcels are already in conservation ownership, one property is now protected by an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) another by a Conservation Restriction (CR) and two others will be protected by CRs in the next couple of years.
- The **Sheffield-Egremont Agricultural, Ecological & Scenic Corridor** protects farmland and wildlife areas in a relatively unfragmented rural landscape. The heart of the Corridor is over 2,000 acres of land in southeast Egremont and northwest Sheffield, which connect to over 5,000 acres of already-protected land, that includes the Appalachian Trail, Mt. Everett and Jug End State Reserves, wildlife management areas, and other privately conserved land.

We are now in Phase 5 of this decades-long initiative, having most recently protected the **Barrett** and **Beattie** CRs, the latter in partnership with the Egremont Land Trust (ELT), and **Bow Wow Woods** with both ELT and Greenagers. We continue to work with the **Thomas** family on an APR and on a CR with the **Burns** family. Other farms and properties in the Corridor that we have all helped families to protect with APRs include the **Batacchi Farm**, **Bow Wow Farm**, the **Curtiss, Drucker/Pevzner** and **Macchi/Preston** family lands, **Maple Shade Farm**, and **Quarry Hill Farm**. That is in addition to over a dozen CRs and conservation ownerships.

**Volunteer with one of our working committees—
it's a great way to make new friends while making
a difference.**

The Sheffield Land Trust accomplishes its work through the efforts of our Board of Directors, committees and many other volunteers. We are local residents who contribute our time and skills to manage the organization with the help of our staff. Volunteers and staff work together through three standing committees to achieve our goals.

The **Outreach & Education Committee** does many things. It is responsible for the organization's press releases, ads, displays, brochures, and other literature. It produces newsletters and invitations and provides material for the organization's website. It organizes SLT's events—and its Food Committee is famous for serving up fabulous food at events and gatherings. The Outreach and Education Committee also works with the community and the schools on educating students and the public about Sheffield's natural world, its farms, and farming opportunities. The Committee meets on one Saturday morning every other month.

The **Land Protection Committee** works with families to conserve their land, mostly using two conservation tools, private Conservation Restrictions (CRs) and the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. APRs are a way that the state helps families get the value out of their land without having to sell it or to stop farming it. SLT raises the required local share of the value of the APR.

Both APRs and CRs are voluntary restrictions that a family places on its land to ensure that the family's vision for the land endures for the benefit of future generations. Both APRs and CRs restrict certain uses of the

The Sheffield Land Trust, Inc.
Statement of Financial Position
December 31, 2023

Assets

Current Assets:

Cash and equivalents	\$ 458,054
Membership receivables	2,741
Pledges receivable, net	47,598
Notes receivable	2,400
Grants receivable	--
Prepaid expenses	<u>6,429</u>
Total Current Assets	\$ 517,222

Board restricted cash	44,460
Pledges receivable, net of current portion	69,241
Notes receivable, net of current portion	132,917
Operating leased right-of-use assets	3,586
Property and equipment, net	1,886
Land	<u>2,299,307</u>
Total Assets	\$ 3,068,619

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities:

Accounts payable	\$ 3,220
Line of credit	--
Current portion of CR easement payable	20,000
Current portion of operating lease liabilities	3,589
Current portion of finance lease liabilities	<u>1,204</u>
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 28,013

CR easement payable, net of current portion	40,000
Deferred revenue	102,000
Operating lease liabilities, net of current portion	--
Finance lease liabilities, net of current portion	<u>207</u>
Total Liabilities	\$ 170,220

Net Assets:

Without donor restrictions	\$ 2,334,593
With donor restrictions	<u>563,806</u>

Total Net Assets **\$ 2,898,399**

Total Liabilities and Net Assets **\$ 3,068,619**

*Complete audited financial statements may be obtained
by contacting the SLT office.*

Board

President: Ron Yaple
Vice President: Jane Laning
Treasurer: Jack Bode
Secretary: Andrea Scott

Ann Barrett
Kerry Douglas
Carolyn Fulton
Sari Hoy
Robin Kriesberg
Susan Rothschild
Gail Schargel
Alicia Szendiuch
Sally Cook, Emeritus
Nancy Smith, Emeritus

Staff

Kathy Orlando, Executive Director, Land Protection
Bob Ronnow, Executive Director, Operations
Judy Magenis, Administrative Assistant

Sheffield Land Trust

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and follow us on Facebook!

*Dedicated to protecting the land essential to Sheffield's
natural, scenic, agricultural and rural character.
Since 1989, helping families protect almost
5,000 acres, including over a dozen farms.*

Please remember us when doing your estate planning!