

Wetlands replication takes shape along rail trail

By Paula Ouimette

Editor

pouimette@turely.com

WARE – The East Quabbin Land Trust and a crew of volunteers worked to replicate wetlands along the Church Street section of the Mass Central Rail Trail recently, adding native plants after removing an overgrowth of

invasive varieties.

East Quabbin Land Trust's Program Coordinator Jess Cusworth said the planting effort took over a dozen volunteers about three hours to complete.

"We had over 600 native wetland plants to plant, including Highbush Blueberry, Silky

Please see **WETLANDS**, page 5



Volunteers work to plant 600 native wetland plant varieties around the pond behind Frohloff Farm. *Turley Publications Photo by Paula Ouimette*

WETLANDS from page 1

Dogwood, Northern Arrowhead, and several grasses and sedges," she said.

Cusworth said prior to the excavation, the area was full of invasive glossy buckthorn and multiflora rose.

Wetlands are an important part of our environment, Cusworth said, providing flood protection, water quality improvement, and erosion control.

"Wetlands absorb heavy rainfall and act as natural filters to remove pollutants and sediments from surface water, and they provide valuable habitat for plants and animals. Plus, they are a beautiful

and interesting part of our natural landscape," she said.

The wetlands replication site can be found by taking a short trail leading to the pond off the rail trail. A picnic table is set up so visitors can enjoy the pristine views of Frohloff Farm and the Ware River. Cusworth said it is a prime location for bird watching and enjoying the chorus of bullfrogs.

"Since wetlands are so important for our ecosystem, Massachusetts has laws in place to protect them," Cusworth said, explaining the need for the replication.

"There are areas of wetlands on or near the old railroad bed where the 2+ miles of new rail trail

is being built, so we've rerouted the trail where we can. But since there's no way to avoid the wetlands in most other areas along the trail, we are altering them," she said.

Cusworth said under Massachusetts' law, when wetlands are filled in, a similar acreage size of wetlands needs to be created in another location.

"Working closely with Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and an experienced soil scientist, we chose to do the wetland replication for the rail trail construction adjacent to the existing farm pond at Frohloff Farm," she said.