

## Housatonic Valley Association

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### **HVA Receives Capacity Grant to Help Protect Vast Wildlife Corridor**

The John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, a supporting fund of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, Inc., has awarded the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) a \$30,000 Habitat, Land, and Environmental Protection Grant for its Follow the Forest conservation initiative. The grant will allow HVA and its conservation partners in Northwest Connecticut and beyond to redouble their efforts to protect one of the most significant wildlife habitat corridors in the eastern United States.

“We are deeply grateful to The John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold for its continued support for our Follow the Forest effort”, said HVA’s Executive Director Lynn Werner. “We cannot afford to falter or lose momentum while the science tells us we need to do more.”

“The response to our Follow the Forest initiative from communities across the watershed has been heartening, and achieving its conservation vision of a protected, connected landscape has truly become a shared goal for many of our land trust partners,” agreed HVA’s Senior Land Protection Manager Julia Rogers. “It’s a simple idea – that all species and habitats need to move, and that the key to surviving the climate crisis for many of these species depends on how we understand our role in enabling that movement to happen.”

“Follow the Forest is our very own Yellowstone to Yukon, and it has the same Continental-scale importance for wildlife,” said HVA’s Director of Regional Land Conservation Tim Abbott. Follow the Forest identifies a forested wildlife corridor that connects the lower Hudson Valley to the Litchfield Hills and the Berkshires, Abbott said, and then continues to the Green Mountains, the Adirondacks, and Canada. This biologically diverse landscape supports scores of rare and threatened wildlife species, anchored by a network of forested uplands and the places in between, such as riverbanks, fields and even culverts and bridges where wildlife need to pass in safety.

Such animals include small and mid-sized mammals, interior nesting migratory songbirds, and wide-ranging species like the young male moose that wandered over fifty miles during a five-day period last September between Woodbury Connecticut and Peekskill New York, Abbott said. HVA was able to document the route taken by that moose through social media, an example of how Follow the Forest integrates community science with the latest predictive modeling.

The John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation grant will enable HVA to expand its land trust and community engagement program to protect the top priority forest habitats and wildlife linkages in our region. HVA's Land Protection team, together with its land trust and state agency partners, will work together with willing landowners to protect the places that are vital to maintaining this wildlife corridor, and take full advantage of available sources of land protection funding.

HVA presents on Follow the Forest at various events throughout the year. The next presentation will be held virtually on January 11, 2023, as a part of Columbia Land Conservancy and Berkshire-Taconic Regional Conservation Partnership's Nature at Home series. Interested parties can register here: [www.clctrust.org/events](http://www.clctrust.org/events).

### **About HVA**

As the conservation organization dedicated to the entire 2,000 square-mile tristate Housatonic Watershed, HVA acts to protect the natural character and environmental health of the valley from the Berkshires to Long Island Sound for this and future generations. HVA works in three ways to establish climate-ready conditions across the region by 2040: **Follow the Forest** to conserve a 50,000-acre woodland and wildlife climate corridor for wildlife habitat, clean water, and carbon and temperature moderation; **Clean, Cold and Connected** to restore and protect 500 miles of rivers and streams and drinking water sources; and **Education and Equitable Representation** to engage the watershed's diverse people and communities in equitable participation in and access to a clean, healthy, and climate-ready Housatonic Watershed. Learn more at [www.hvatoday.org](http://www.hvatoday.org) and [www.followtheforest.org](http://www.followtheforest.org).

### **About The John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation**

The John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation was created for the purpose of protecting and improving the welfare of animals of all kinds with a focus on cats and dogs, the promotion of veterinary programs, and the protection of wildlife, including endangered species, flora and fauna. In 2012, The John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation Trustees elected to become a supporting organization of the Community Foundation. (860) 626-1245. Learn more at <https://www.northwestcf.org/wiederhold-foundation>