

The Ridgeline

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Meet TRLC's New Executive Director Kathy Blachowski



We're excited to introduce Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy's new executive director, Kathy Blachowski.

Kathy joined TRLC in December, bringing a lifelong connection to the natural world that has shaped a career devoted to conservation.

Kathy holds a degree in environmental science from Muhlenberg College, and has wide-ranging experience in management, communications, research, and science. Her work has included roles with the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, the Genesee Land Trust, Connecticut

Audubon Society, and other organizations, giving her deep insight into land conservation, habitat protection, and community engagement.

Kathy lives in East Hampton with her husband and 14-year-old twin daughters. Originally from Portland, she developed an early love of the natural world instilled by her parents.

She was initially drawn to veterinary medicine, but eventually realized her

deeper interest lay in protecting habitats that support wildlife. She's also cultivated extensive experience in protecting agricultural lands.

"Growing up on land that I enjoy and seeing it sold to development left a lasting impression," she says.

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"It inspired me to dedicate myself to protecting land for future generations to enjoy, creating corridors for wildlife to move freely, and helping support healthy ecosystems."

Drawing on her conservation background and communications experience, Kathy approaches her work with curiosity, collaboration, and a focus on connecting people, projects, and communities. Her

Why Hire an Executive Director?

Since forming in 2023, TRLC has been powered by dedicated volunteers. Their time, energy, and commitment have built the strong foundation we enjoy today. So why do we need an executive director?

Our volunteers actively shape priorities, lead initiatives, engage the community, and carry out the core work of the organization. But as TRLC has grown, so has its work—beyond what volunteers alone can realistically manage.

Our new executive director's mission is to support and strengthen that work by making sure our vision unfolds according to plan. She oversees day-to-day operations, coordinates efforts across committees, tracks projects, supports volunteers, and ensures communications flow smoothly.

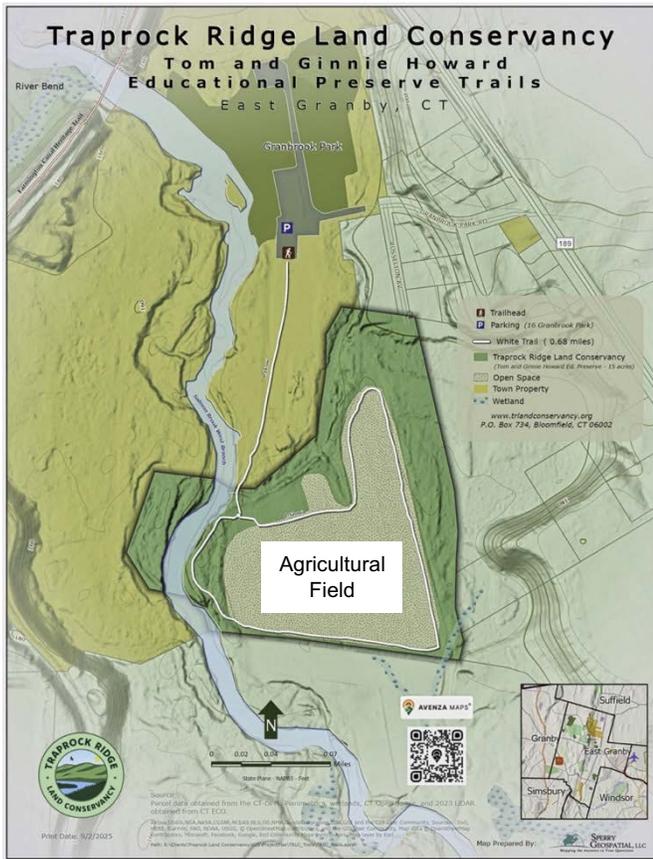
Land development moves quickly. Conservation can't afford to move slowly. Having an executive director helps keep TRLC organized and effective—so together we can protect land for generations to come.

expertise, passion, and leadership will help TRLC deepen its impact.

Looking ahead, Kathy's vision centers on thoughtful growth, proactive land protection, strong community partnerships, and expanding membership—all in the service of preserving, one parcel at a time, the landscapes that define our region.

From Seeds to Sunflowers:

Michaud Family Farm Comes to Howard Preserve



This spring, farming will return to the Tom and Ginnie Howard Educational Preserve in East Granby.

The 7-acre agricultural field, part of the 15-acre preserve, was previously leased to Nourish My Soul, an organic farming program for youth. When that program ended, the land was left unplanted—until a new stewardship opportunity emerged.

The Michaud family of North Granby will be stewarding the field for the 2026 growing period.

They're starting small, planting pumpkins and sunflowers on about three acres as they get to know the site. They chose these crops with the land in mind. The area is prone to seasonal flooding, and both pumpkins and sunflowers can tolerate wet conditions and are relatively low maintenance.

harvesting, and care. Her daughter-in-law, Kristin, focuses on flowers and floral design, and her

As part of the arrangement, the Michauds will also maintain the walking paths around the field.

The Michauds bring practical farming experience to the preserve. Since 2022, they've operated the Michaud Family Farm, a 16-acre farm in nearby North Granby where they grow vegetables, flowers, and eggs for local sale.

Maria Michaud takes the lead in the field, doing much of the planting,

two sons, Brian and Justin, help with fieldwork and equipment.

"There's no better feeling than being in the middle of your fields, on beautiful land, looking out over the beautiful flowers and picking them to sell," Maria says. "I always have my two dogs with me. My dogs and my flowers. It's pretty peaceful."

That hands-on connection to the land shapes the family's approach to farming. Sustainability is central to their work. They avoid chemical pesticides, using natural alternatives instead, and are moving toward organic practices.

The Michaud's first year at Howard Preserve will be a learning opportunity. In the future, they may explore additional plantings and community-oriented activities.

Visitors are welcome to walk the trails that border the field and experience the changes throughout the growing season. As this is a working farm, please keep pets on leash and leave crops undisturbed to help support the livelihood of our hardworking farmers.



The Michaud Family, from bottom right to left: Maria, Brian Sr., daughter-in-law Kristen, granddaughter Melanie, son Brian Jr., son Justin, daughter Renee

Being a Good Wildlife Neighbor

The Secret Life of Hollow Trees

We often prize tidy lawns and neatly trimmed trees. Dead and hollow trees, also known as snag or cavity trees, can seem unsightly and unsafe. But did you know they play a crucial role in supporting wildlife?

These trees can still be alive and structurally sound if their outer shell is thick—and they aren't empty. In fact, they teem with life, especially in winter:

- Raccoons curl up in dry inner chambers to stay warm.
- Squirrels stash nuts and seeds in hidden cavities.
- Owls take shelter from wind and winter storms inside cozy hollows.
- Beetles, moths, spiders, and other small insects spend the winter in the tree's protected layers.
- Moisture pockets create a micro-habitat for microbes and fungi.

If a dead or hollow tree isn't a safety risk, let it stand. For wildlife, it can make the difference between sustenance and starvation.



Contributor Spotlight

Dave Mogul: Finding Community on the Trail

Dave Mogul feels right at home on the trail. A West Hartford resident and avid hiker since his Boy Scout days, he began looking for volunteer opportunities connected to hiking when he retired in 2025 from his lifelong career as an actuary.

He discovered TRLC, now serves on the Education Committee, and is one of the volunteers shaping our new hiking club.

The idea for a hiking club grew from Dave's first few hikes with TRLC, when he saw the value of offering something regular and welcoming.

The club officially kicked off on January 10, 2026, with a 3-mile hike at Penwood State Park. Monthly hikes will follow, including the next

outing at Northwest Park in Windsor on February 14.

All hiking locations are selected with accessibility and

parking in mind, and trail difficulty is carefully evaluated so participants know what to expect.

Dave is scheduled to lead all hikes for the first few months. Additional leaders are welcome and encouraged.

“What I hope for on the hikes I lead is a chance to hike with others, get out in nature, share what we know, and have a fun and safe time.”



For Dave, leading hikes is about creating opportunities—especially for people who might not venture out on their own. Sharing something he's always loved and seeing others enjoy it too makes the experience meaningful.



Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy

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OUR MISSION: *To protect open space and promote public appreciation of the natural environment across the region.*



Scene from a winter workshop on making holiday trees out of Asian Bittersweet

Winter Calendar

Traprock Ridge Hiking Club

February 14, 10 a.m.

Northwest Park
145 Lang Road, Windsor

Future hikes: March 11, April 8

Annual Speer Preserve Hike

February 15, 9:30 a.m.

Alternate Date: February 22

Speer Preserve
At the end of Juniper Road
Bloomfield

For more details and the latest TRLC events, or to register for the Bobolinks and Warblers Nature Lecture, visit trlandconservancy.org.

Nature Lecture: Bobolinks and Warblers

March 4, 6:30 p.m.

Online via Zoom

Registration required

New for 2026



Traprock Ridge
Hiking Club



Everyone is welcome to join the new TRLC Hiking Club. We'll be hosting monthly hikes in partnership with the Simsbury Land Trust Hiking Club. This is a fun opportunity to gather outdoors and explore even more of our region's protected lands.

Meet you on the trail!