Grafton Land Trust, Inc.
Hunting Policy

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Grafton Land Trust, Inc.
Hunting Policy

Effective Date:

This policy is effective on August 16, 2012 and remains in effect until otherwise updated, replaced or rescinded by the Board of Directors of the Grafton Land Trust (GLT).

Purpose:

The purpose of this hunting policy is to describe the rules and regulations that apply to GLT hunting permit holders who are engaged in hunting activities on GLT properties in order to ensure that all hunting activities are carried out in a manner that protects public safety and the natural and man-made characteristics of GLT properties.

Statement of Support:

The GLT recognizes hunting as one of many viable recreational uses of GLT properties. Hunting is a state-sanctioned activity, which, when conducted within the confines of the applicable laws and regulations set forth by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, serves to balance wildlife populations, provide sustenance and maintain a connection between people, the land and our renewable wildlife resources. The GLT also recognizes the need to maintain open lines of communication between its membership, hunting permit holders, abutting landowners and the public-at-large with regard to all aspects of its hunting program. The continuance of the GLT hunting program is wholly dependent upon the collective efforts of all parties in ensuring safe hunting activities on GLT properties.

Mission:

The GLT is a private, member-supported, nonprofit organization that preserves, maintains, and advocates for open space in Grafton, and promotes environmental education and stewardship.

Organizational Activities:

The GLT engages in and promotes the following activities.

- Acquire and maintain open space in the town of Grafton.
- Inform landowners of conservation options for their properties.
- Advocate for open space in all appropriate forums.

- Work in partnership with town officials and others on conservation projects.
- Create and maintain trails on select properties for public use.
- Host programs and events for public education and enjoyment
- Grant funds to local educators to assist in nature education.
- Participate in local and regional planning efforts for open space.
- Accept and hold conservation restrictions on private and public properties.

General Property Use Rules:

The following is a list of general property use rules that apply to all visitors using GLT properties.

- Carry out everything you bring in.
- Dogs must be under control at all times; remove waste.
- Hunting only with written permit.
- Camping and fires only with written permit.
- No motorized vehicles.
- Do not make new trails; report any trail damage to GLT.
- No cutting or removal of trees of other plants.
- No disposal of trash or yard waste.

Properties:

The GLT owns or manages conservation restrictions (CR) on over 800 acres of land in the Town of Grafton, Massachusetts. GLT hunting permit holders may hunt on land parcels owned by the GLT provided such land parcels fall within the limitations outlined by Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife Regulations; such regulations outline the distance one must be from a "dwelling in use" and/or a "public way" when discharging a firearm. GLT hunting permit holders do not necessarily have permission to hunt on lands for which the GLT manages a CR.

Qualified CRs are voluntary legal agreements entered into between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization, such as the GLT, or government entity. CRs allow individuals or families to retain ownership or their land, while placing limitations on development and certain uses for themselves and future owners. Restricted property may be bought and sold, but the CR remains with the land; it is recorded with the Registry of Deeds and is binding on both the present and future owners of that property. Because the ownership of properties for which the GLT manages a CR remains with the property owner, GLT hunting permit holders must receive permission from the applicable property owner to hunt on CR properties.

Property Maps:

Maps of GLT properties can be found at http://www.graftonland.org. In addition to maps of properties owned by the GLT, maps of properties for which the GLT

manages a conservation restriction (CR), Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife) properties, and properties owned by the Town of Grafton (TOG) can also be found here. Hunting access rules for CR properties is outlined above in the section titled "Properties". Hunters should seek guidance from MassWildlife at (508) 389-6300 regarding hunting on MassWildlife properties. Questions concerning town-owned properties should be directed to the TOG at (508) 839-5335.

Scope of Permission:

The GLT hunting permit authorizes the permit holder to trespass on GLT properties for the purpose of hunting any legal game in accordance with U.S. Fish & Wildlife and Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife laws and regulations, and Massachusetts Gun laws. All GLT hunting permit holders must carry their GLT hunting permit on their person while engaged in hunting activities on GLT properties. Upon request, GLT hunting permit holders must show their GLT hunting permit to authorized representatives of the GLT. Per Massachusetts General Laws, hunting is **NOT** allowed on Sundays.

Properties Excluded from the GLT Hunting Policy:

- G. Knowlton Preserve
- Potter Hill Meadows
- Rita Martin Preserve

These GLT properties were acquired with funding assistance provided by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife) and therefore a GLT hunting permit is **NOT** required to hunt on these properties.

Hunting Permit Period:

Hunting permits are valid from July 1st through June 30th of the following year. For example, a 2012-2013 hunting season permit is valid from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. Issuing permits in this manner enables a permit holder to hunt fall, winter and spring hunting seasons with the same permit, thereby reducing the administrative burden on both the GLT and the permit holder.

Hunting License Requirements:

All GLT hunting permit applicants must have a valid Massachusetts hunting license or sporting license issued in the calendar year for which they are applying for a GLT hunting permit. The applicant's MassFishHunt Customer Identification Number or hunting or sporting license number must be submitted with their application.

A GLT hunting permit applicant does not need to submit a copy of his or her hunter education course certificate to the GLT. Proof of course completion for those courses deemed mandatory by the State of Massachusetts is typically required when a hunter purchases his or her hunting or sporting license.

To locate a hunter education course near you contact the MassWildlife at (508) 389-6300.

See Appendix 1 for information regarding hunter education courses offered in Massachusetts.

Safety:

All GLT hunting permit holders are to exercise caution while hunting on GLT properties. All GLT properties are open to the public for passive recreational activities, which include, but are not limited to, walking, dog walking, hiking, trail running, mountain biking, horseback riding and hunting.

Prior to the opening of hunting season each fall, we notify our membership regarding the beginning and ending dates of hunting season, to include the dates for shotgun deer season. We also recommend that all persons using our properties during hunting season wear "hunter orange", "blaze orange" or other brightly colored clothing. In addition, we recommend the wear of "hunter orange" or "blaze orange" vests on companion animals such as dogs and horses. However, because our properties are open to the public 365 days a year, GLT hunting permit holders should not expect that all persons and companion animals using GLT properties during hunting season will comply with this safety guidance. GLT hunting permit holders must be sure of their target and what lies beyond it before discharging a firearm or muzzleloader or releasing an arrow.

Firearm Discharge Considerations:

Per state law, it is unlawful to discharge a firearm within 500 feet of a dwelling in use or within 150 feet of a public way. However, due to the close proximity of dwellings in use, public ways and related private property to some GLT properties, we strongly encourage all GLT hunting permit holders to take special care when discharging firearms when the angle or trajectory of fire could result in bullets and shot impacting unintended targets at the end of a bullet or shot trajectory. It is extremely important to ensure that GLT hunting permit holders not only follow the state law mentioned above, but that they also take special care to be sure of their target and what lies beyond it.

Ammunition Restrictions:

Because our properties are open and used for passive recreation 365 days a year, for safety reasons, the use of shotgun buckshot is strictly prohibited.

Scouting:

Scouting is the process of familiarizing oneself with a piece of property one intends to hunt. Although land can be scouted from a distance using paper maps or electronic maps, the most effective way to scout a property is to walk the property on foot. The GLT strongly encourages all hunters to familiarize themselves with the GLT properties they intend to hunt prior to hunting season. Doing so will ensure the hunter is familiar with the natural and man-made characteristics of our properties, to include the proximity of GLT properties to abutting public and private property, to include land, dwellings in use and public ways. Having a complete picture of the landscape one intends to hunt will best prepare him/her to make sound decisions regarding where they will be hunting, the direction or directions in which they intend to discharge their firearms or release their arrows, and the locations of man-made features such as trails, picnic areas, dwellings in use and public ways; all of which will affect one's ability to hunt GLT properties in a safe manner.

Use of Treestands:

Hunting from an elevated platform expands a hunter's view of the surrounding terrain, results in the downward trajectory of a released arrow or discharged bullet or shot pellet, and aids in hunter scent control.

General Treestand Rules

- The use of ladder treestands, hanging treestands, and climbing treestands is authorized on GLT properties.

- The construction and use of permanent treestands is prohibited on GLT properties.

- Treestands must be placed a minimum of 100 feet away from any man-made hiking trail.

- GLT hunting permit holders are not authorized to cut any live trees, tree limbs, or ground cover for the purpose of clearing shooting lanes on the ground or in a tree or during the placement of any authorized type of treestand.

- GLT hunting permit holders using treestands should always check their treestands to ensure they are in good working condition.

- GLT hunting permit holders using treestands should never carry hunting equipment while climbing. Instead, the hunter uses a haul line to raise and lower equipment once the treestand platform is reached, and he/she has

secured him or her self to the tree with a treestand safety strap or body harness.

Safety Straps or Body Harnesses

All hunters using treestands while hunting on GLT properties are strongly encouraged to wear a treestand safety strap or body harness. Treestand safety straps or body harnesses secure the hunter to the tree. In the event the hunter's treestand fails, the safety strap or body harness can protect the hunter from serious injury or death that could result from falling out of a tree.

Treestand Identification

GLT hunting permit holders hunting from ladder treestands or hanging treestands on GLT properties must affix their full name to their treestand in a manner that allows authorized representatives of the GLT to read this information without climbing into the treestand. Inscribing the hunter's full name on a piece of paper, enclosing it in a waterproof bag (i.e. Ziploc bag) and securing it to a climbing step or ladder step that is low to the ground is an acceptable method of treestand identification.

Period of Allowable Use

GLT hunting permit holders may place ladder treestands and hanging treestands on GLT properties no earlier than two weeks prior to the start of the Massachusetts whitetail deer hunting season and must remove ladder treestands and hanging treestands from GLT properties no later than two weeks after the close of the Massachusetts whitetail deer hunting season. Climbing treestands are authorized on GLT properties throughout the Massachusetts hunting season, so long as they are carried in and carried out of the woods for each day of hunting.

The GLT may remove non-compliant treestands and those treestands left on its properties outside of the permitted timeframe.

See Appendix 2 for a description of each type of treestand mentioned above.

Use of Hunting Blinds:

Hunting on the ground from a concealed location can enhance a hunter's ability to hide from approaching game and can aid in hunter scent control. The GLT recognizes the following types of hunting blinds, which are commonly used by hunters to provide additional ground concealment.

Commercially Purchased or Handmade Blinds

These hunting blinds are designed to reduce the chance of detection and often serve as an alternative to treestands. They are portable and are usually carried in and out of the woods for each day of hunting. The material used to construct these types of hunting blinds is typically made from a camouflage pattern chosen to match the local environment. A well-designed hunting blind can be virtually undetectable to game and people. For this reason, GLT hunting permit holders using hunting blinds on GLT properties during the Massachusetts shotgun and primitive firearms seasons for whitetail deer must affix a sufficient amount of hunter orange material to their hunting blind to ensure that other hunters can see their blind from all directions. The use of commercially purchased or handmade hunting blinds is authorized on GLT properties.

Field Expedient Blinds

These hunting blinds are made from local materials. Typically, they are constructed near or beside a tree that has fallen to the forest floor. Such trees are often referred to as "blow downs" or "dead fall". The construction and use of field expedient ground blinds, so long as no live trees, tree limbs or ground cover are cut to construct such blinds, is authorized. GLT hunting permit holders using field expedient ground blinds on GLT properties during the Massachusetts shotgun and primitive firearms seasons for whitetail deer must affix a sufficient amount of hunter orange material to their blind to ensure that other hunters can see their blind from all directions.

Use of Platform Blinds or Box Stands:

Although not widely used in this region of the country, GLT recognizes that some hunters may desire to use freestanding platform blinds, often referred to as box stands. Such blinds create a concealed, raised platform without the use of trees to support the platform. Due to the inherently permanent nature of platform blinds or box stands, they are not authorized on GLT properties.

Cleaning Game:

No game animal taken by a GLT hunting permit holder on a GLT property shall be field dressed, gutted, cleaned or otherwise processed for human consumption within 150 feet of a GLT man-made trail, GLT parking area, or an intermittent or permanent stream or other natural body of water such as a lake, pond or vernal pool.

Disposition of Game Carcasses:

The carcasses or hides of game animals taken on GLT properties or non-GLT properties may not be disposed of on GLT properties.

Huntable Acreage:

Acreage that is considered huntable with firearms is acreage that lies at least 500 feet from a dwelling in use or 150 feet from a public way. However, there are several GLT properties that have huntable acreage, but are better suited for archery hunting than hunting with a firearm. GLT hunting permit holders who properly scout the GLT properties they intend to hunt prior to the hunting season will be better equipped to make these determinations.

Hunting Permit Suspension, Revocation and Denial:

Violations of the GLT hunting policy may result in loss of a GLT hunting permit per direction of the GLT Board of Directors.

Hunting Accident Reporting:

In addition to the state-mandated requirement to report hunting accidents to the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and the appropriate law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the area in which the accident took place, all hunting accidents or hunting related injuries that occur on GLT properties must be reported to the GLT within 24 hours of the accident or injury.

Application Process:

To apply for a hunting permit, applicants must submit a GLT Hunting Permit Application. The application can be found at http://www.graftonland.org and in Appendix 3. Online applications are submitted electronically. Paper applications must be mailed to Grafton Land Trust, Attn: Hunting Permit Application, P.O. Box 114, Grafton, MA 01519. Please allow up to five business days for processing.

Harvest Information Program:

The GLT requests that all GLT hunting permit holders who successfully take game on GLT properties report their harvest information using the GLT Harvest Information Program form (see Appendix 4). The form can also be found on the GLT website, http://www.graftonland.org. Collecting this data will help us determine the effectiveness of our hunting program.

Membership:

Although GLT membership is not required to receive a GLT hunting permit, we strongly encourage all permit holders to consider joining our organization. Membership dues help ensure the availability of open space for a wide variety of recreational activities in the Town of Grafton.

Volunteer Opportunities:

Volunteering to assist the GLT's Land Use Committee is an excellent way to become familiar with our properties and to meet other hunters. Interested persons should contact the GLT's Volunteer Coordinator at info@graftonland.org or (508) 887-0065.

Contact Information:

Grafton Land Trust
Attn: Hunting Application
P.O. Box 114
Grafton, MA 01519
(508) 887-0065
hunting@graftonland.org
http://www.graftonland.org
http://www.facebook.com/GraftonLandTrust

Additional Resources:

The Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife Guide to Hunting, Freshwater Fishing and Trapping and the Migratory Game Bird Hunting Regulations can be found at http://www.masswildlife.org.

For Massachusetts Gun Laws, visit the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security at http://www.mass.gov/eopss.

Acknowledgements:

This policy was written by Troy M. Gipps, GLT Hunting Program Coordinator and member of the GLT Board of Directors.

Appendices:

Appendix 1, Massachusetts Hunter Education Courses
Appendix 2, Types of Treestands
Appendix 3, GLT Hunting Permit Application
Appendix 4, GLT Harvest Information Program Form
Appendix 5, GLT Hunting Permit (Sample)

Appendix 1
Massachusetts Hunter Education Courses

Basic Hunter Education Course

The Basic Hunter Education Course is mandatory for all first-time hunters or hunting license buyers in Massachusetts. By law, this course must be at least 12 hours in length but is typically 15-16 hours and is usually scheduled over five or six weekday evenings. Some courses are conducted on weekends while others are a combination of weeknights and a weekend day. The course instruction includes safe handling and storage of hunting arms and ammunition, hunting laws and ethics, wildlife identification, wildlife management, care and handling of game, basic survival skills and first aid.

Massachusetts also has the following advanced hunter education courses.

Bowhunter Education

Massachusetts offers the Bowhunter Education curriculum developed by the National Bowhunter Education Foundation. This course is accepted in other states and provinces that mandate the successful completion of a bowhunter education course. The Bowhunter Education course is not mandatory in Massachusetts. However, the GLT strongly advises all GLT hunting permit applicants who intend to bowhunt on GLT properties to take this course. Courses are a minimum of 8 hours of instruction and are designed for both the experienced and novice hunter. Most are one-day weekend day courses. Course topics include the selection of equipment, safety, ethics, bowhunting methods, and care and handling of game.

Treestand Safety Course

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Hunter Education Program has teamed up with “huntercourse.com” to offer tips and an opportunity to take a free, voluntary online treestand safety course on an external website. By reviewing this 15-minute interactive, narrated treestand safety course, a treestand owner or user will learn about the latest Treestand Manufacturers Association's safety standards and guidelines. The GLT strongly advises all GLT hunting permit applicants who intend to use a treestand while hunting on GLT properties to take this online course.

Black Powder Education

This course includes a minimum of 10 hours of classroom instruction plus field work. Topics include the selection of hunting equipment, state laws, the safe handling of muzzleloaders and powder storage. Black Powder rifles, often called muzzleloaders, are typically used during the Massachusetts primitive firearms

season for whitetail deer. The GLT strongly advises all GLT hunting permit applicants who intend to use black powder rifles while hunting on GLT properties to take this course.

Appendix 2
Types of Treestands

The GLT recognizes the following types of treestands, which are commonly used by hunters to obtain an elevated hunting platform.

Ladder treestands

These treestands consist of a seat and standing platform and a ladder that allows the hunter to climb up into the treestand. The stability of ladder stands is very good because of the connection to the tree and support from the ground. Ladder stands are not typically considered to be portable due to their size and weight. These stands are usually left in the woods throughout the hunting season.

Hanging treestands

These treestands connect to the tree with chains or cables at the desired height. To get up into the tree hunters use ladders or sections of ladders secured to the tree, which are often called climbing sticks, or they use screw in steps that screw into the tree and allow hunters to climb up into the stand. These stands are often left in the woods throughout the hunting season.

Climbing treestands

These treestands consist of two parts. The bottom part is the standing platform and the top is the seat. There is normally a strap that connects the two parts. So if the bottom fails while a hunt is in the tree or while climbing, the platform does not fall all the way to the ground stranding the hunter in the tree. These stands can only be used on trees that have no limbs up to the height desired for hunting. The cutting of tree limbs while ascending a tree on GLT properties with a climbing tree stand is prohibited. These stands are typically not left in the woods throughout the hunting season. Instead, hunters carry them in and out of the woods for each day of hunting.

Appendix 3
GLT Hunting Permit Application

Hunting Permit Application

Mail this form to:

Grafton Land Trust
Attn: Hunting Application
P.O. Box 114, Grafton, MA 01519

The Grafton Land Trust, Inc. (GLT) allows hunting, ***with written permission only***, on many of their larger parcels provided they fall within the limitations outlined in Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife regulations and the Massachusetts Gun Law.

Name of Applicant _____

Mailing Address _____

City/Town _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Day Phone Number _____

Evening Phone Number _____

Email _____

Massachusetts Sporting or Hunting License Number or MassFishHunt Customer ID

_____ License Year _____

Are you a member of the GLT? Yes _____ No _____

A GLT hunting permit is **NOT** required to hunt on the following GLT properties: G. Knowlton Preserve, Potter Hill Meadows and Rita Martin Preserve. These properties were acquired with funding assistance provided by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife.

Because GLT properties are open and used for passive recreation 365 days a year, for safety reasons, the use of shotgun buckshot is strictly prohibited.

Appendix 4
GLT Harvest Information Program Form

Grafton Land Trust Harvest Information Program **20 ____ – 20 ____ Hunting Season**			
Date	Property Hunted	Game Species	# Harvested

Name: _____ Permit #: _____ Page ____ of ____

Mail to: Grafton Land Trust, Attn: Hunting Program, P.O. Box 114, Grafton, MA 01519

Appendix 5
GLT Hunting Permit (Sample)

Hunting Permit # 1213-0000

Grafton Land Trust 20_ _ - 20_ _ Hunting Permit

This permit is valid from July 1, 20_ _ through June 30, 20_ _

This letter authorizes **First MI Last** to trespass on Grafton Land Trust (GLT) properties* for the purpose of hunting any legal game in accordance with U.S. Fish & Wildlife and Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife laws and regulations, and Massachusetts Gun laws.

Please keep in mind, for safety reasons, that there may be other hunters and/or hikers on our properties during your hunt. For this reason, the use of shotgun buckshot is strictly prohibited.

This permit must be carried on your person while hunting on GLT properties and be presented, upon request, to any authorized representative of the GLT.

NOT VALID UNLESS SIGNED

_____

First MI Last
Hunting Program Coordinator
Member, Board of Directors

SAMPLE

* A GLT Hunting Permit is **not** required to hunt on the following properties: G. Knowlton Preserve, Potter Hill Meadows and the Rita Martin Preserve.

NOTE: This permit does not authorize you to trespass on any abutting private property.