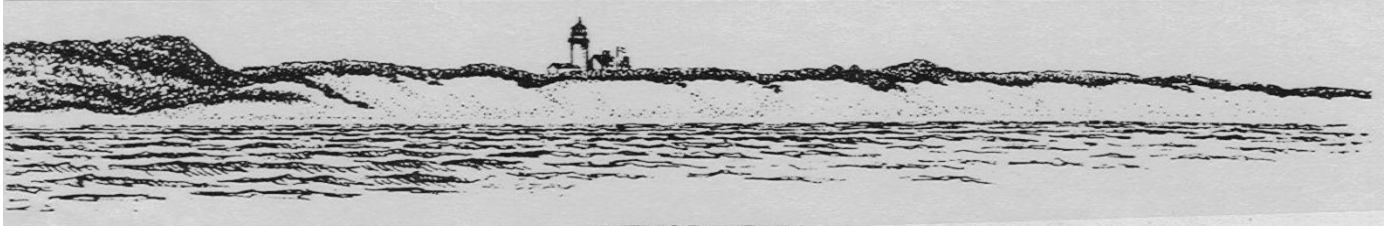


TRURO CONSERVATION TRUST



Volume 7 No. 1

NEWSLETTER

June 1, 2007

LAND STEWARDSHIP

New Land for the Trust-- and a New Level of Protection

By mid-May, spring had finally come into its modest bloom at the coastal heathland overlooking Cape Cod Bay at the end of Great Hollow. The low shrubs and weedy wildflowers were thrusting out new tips of reddish and golden green amidst the heath and heather.

Such coastal heathland is a rapidly disappearing habitat. Limited largely to the Cape between Eastham and Truro, it is being pushed aside by the growth of trees and landscaped development. But now, thanks to the generosity of several Truro landowners, those nearly two acres of heathland, including an important viewshed and portions of the former Old Colony rail bed, have been acquired by the Truro Conservation Trust (TCT) and ensured protection from development in perpetuity.



In December the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts (Compact) served as agent to ensure preservation of a .92 acre parcel of land owned by Jill and Tom Delbanco, who sold a conservation restriction on their property to the Compact at less than fair market value. That purchase was reimbursed by gifts to the Compact by neighbors. In January the Delbancos gave fee title to the Trust, which holds nearly an acre of adjoining land previously given by the Delbancos in 2003.

Expanding Protection

This winter brought more to the TCT than this precious patch of heathland, however. It brought a new level of protection to all the Trust's lands, thanks to a larger initiative designed to ensure that the Trust's 72 properties and nearly 300 acres remain undeveloped and unspoiled.

The protection initiative addressed a specific issue common to all Massachusetts Land Trusts. Under Commonwealth law, Conservation Trusts may sell Trust-owned land if the Trust deems it to be in its interest and if the proceeds of the sale will be re-invested in land conservation.

The past and current Boards of Trustees of the TCT had made it clear that such sales would not be considered. However, there was no guarantee that future Boards would take such a strong position.

The solution lay in a partnership with the Compact. The TCT Board had long felt that selling any of its land would betray the faith given to it by those who donated their land or who contributed to the purchase of land. So we worked together to develop a legally sound strategy that would create an ironclad guarantee of protection in perpetuity.

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In April, the TCT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Compact that establishes the Compact in an oversight role, and codifies that role with amendments to the deeds of all TCT-owned properties, whereby the Compact can legally prevent the sale of these properties for any purpose. The Compact will monitor TCT land ownership and take appropriate legal actions, sanctioned by the State Attorney General's office, to prevent any such sales. In May, the deeds were so amended, the \$10,000 fee (from generous contributors) was paid to the Compact for implementation of their oversight role, and TCT-owned properties are now protected for conservation in perpetuity. There are two properties excluded from this protection because the contributors of the lots deeded that a "higher" use, if identified, should be considered by the Trust.

The oversight by the Compact is only with regard to the sale of the properties. The properties are still owned and controlled by the TCT as before. The TCT remains responsible for land management, protection, and conservation of all its properties.

"The agreement with the Compact is one of the most significant actions the Trust has taken in its 25 year history," Trustee Fred Gaechter explains. "It ensures that TCT-owned land will be kept in an open and natural condition exclusively for conservation purposes forever."

Management Stewardship

The Trust continues to move forward with its land management work, too, through our new Stewardship Program, launched last fall. Within the next six months we should have completed evaluation visits by a team of Trust Board members to each of the Trust's properties. Has anything of concern occurred to the property? Are there blocked trails? Erosion? Encroachment by neighbors? Litter? If so, the team will develop and implement a mitigation plan to solve the problem. Properties will also be studied to determine if any additional passive public use, e.g., trails, benches, view points, might be appropriate.

The benefits of the Stewardship Program should grow exponentially through the visits that follow our first round of evaluations. Each visit will result in an update of baseline documentation, with new information on habitat changes and current situation photographs. That material, in turn, will expand our library of environmental data, giving us better tools to understand and respond to long-term changes in the environment we strive to protect.

PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP

Collaborative Projects Fill the Winter and Spring of '06-07

For the 14 fourth grade boys and girls of the Truro Central School, the June field trip to Poor's Hill will be the culmination of several months of work, combining an art project on drawing from nature with a science curriculum that explores local history, topography, geology, and botany. Sponsored jointly by the Truro Conservation Trust and the Truro Education Enrichment Alliance (TEEA), the afternoon's adventure will be led by 4th grade science teacher, Mary Hutchings, art teacher Kim Posse, and TCT Trustees Howard Irwin, the dean of Truro's botanists, and Brenda Boleyn, Chair of Truro's Open Space Committee.

The idea for the field trip began last fall, as TCT trustees discussed different ways to bring the conservation message to the students at Truro Central School. Working with Posse, the Trust provided individual drawing portfolios and pencils for a program on close observation of nature. Posse, in turn, combined her drawing program with the natural sciences curriculum developed by 4th grade teacher Mary Hutchings, a master science instructor. Then the TEEA agreed to sponsor the actual expense of the bus to take the students to Poor's Hill to complete their work.



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Such collaborative projects defined much of the Trust's work this past winter and spring. In an era of limited budgets and expanding needs, project-based alliances like the school field trip have let the Trust continue to expand its reach, impact, and effectiveness.

The Truro students will arrive at the base of Poor's Hill in the early afternoon, two hours before high tide, sketch books and pencils in hand. They'll have the afternoon to spend looking at, and drawing, the shells and plants that capture their eye, exploring one of Truro's most celebrated pieces of conservation land with their teachers. While the focus will be on close observation and drawing of the native plants, Brenda hopes to talk about salt marshes and conservation practices, too, and to include a lesson how to identify, and thwart, the ticks that abound throughout the town.

Curious about what the students might find? You can see the results for yourself: the best of each student's drawings will be on display in the gallery at Castle Hill the night of the Trust's 25th birthday party, August 17. (See following article)

Poor's Hill itself remains the best example of the power of partnerships. Purchased jointly by the Town of Truro and the Trust, protected jointly by the Trust and the town's open space committee, and as of a rainy day this spring it has been graced with a public walking trail developed in collaboration with the young volunteers of AmeriCorps.

In early spring the Trust again joined with the TEEA, along with the Town's Energy Committee and the Truro Democratic Party, to sponsor an evening program built around a free showing of Al Gore's Oscar-winning documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth." Along with the movie, the program featured TCT trustee and Truro Selectman Curtis Hartman discussing the town's new initiative to lower Truro's carbon footprint and presentations on projects about solar house design and improved recycling by students at the Truro Central School.

The Trust's ongoing collaboration with the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc moved forward over the winter season, too. Working with the Compact, we reviewed the Standards and Practices developed by the National Land Trust Alliance to evaluate our business procedures, focusing on our work in land conservation and stewardship and in nonprofit administration. We compiled a comprehensive atlas and individual notebooks for our 72 properties for land management purposes -- then assigned various trustees to visit each one and report where action may need to be taken.

No collaboration is more important to the Trust than the one we share with our many members. Over the winter we worked to strengthen that connection as well. Thanks to the technical and design expertise of Trustee Joel Searcy, the TCT website went online in February at www.truroconservationtrust.org. Come pay us a visit: learn the latest on Trust activities, explore land use and conservation options, contact trustees with a question or an observation, or visit a photo gallery of featured Trust properties.

Save the Date:

Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Conservation

What better way to celebrate the Trust's 25 years of
accomplishment than with a birthday party?

Join your friends and neighbors for a gala gathering

Friday, August 17th at the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill.

Hosted by Honorary Celebration Chair Sebastian Junger, the party will launch the Trust's new Land Stewardship Fund. A good time is guaranteed, with live music from Willie and the Po' Boys, food and drink from local hot spots, and a showing of the art created by the Truro Central School's "Drawing From Nature" program, sponsored by the Trust.

Details to follow as they become available

TAX STRATEGY

Expanded Value for Conservation Restrictions Set To Expire

Time is running out for taxpayers who want to preserve their land under the new regulations governing Conservation Restrictions (CR). Revision of the tax laws in April of 2006 gave private landowners dramatically enhanced incentives for donating permanent Conservation Restrictions on their property. But the tax program is a short-term trial, and landowners must complete their CR before the end of 2007 in order to qualify

Interest in CRs has been high among Truro landowners, including those both inside and outside of the National Seashore, according to Mark Robinson, Executive Director of Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc. "The new CR rules offer a bigger tax break each year and extend the length of time to enjoy it," Robinson explained. "Previously, CR donors could only deduct a maximum of 30 percent of their income each year for six years to use up the deduction, measured as the difference between the value of the land with and without the restriction. That meant many taxpayers left part of their benefit on the table.

"Now, through the end of 2007, completed CRs will allow donors to deduct 50 percent of their income each year for 16 years. The extra 10 years should help to use up all or most of the deduction. "

The other benefits of a conservation restriction remain unchanged. Although donors relinquish negotiated development rights, they keep ownership and title to the land, along with privacy rights and management control. They can sell it at will or give it to heirs. Donors win lower property taxes and lower estate taxes at the same time, and help protect Cape Cod's natural resources, wildlife, and wild beauty.

The TCT is not offering tax advice. Please consult your accountant or attorney to determine potential suitability for your individual financial situation. To learn more about how a CR might work for you contact Mark Robinson directly, by email at compact@cape.com or phone at 508-362-2565, or visit the TCT website, www.truroconservationtrust.org .

The Truro Conservation Trust.

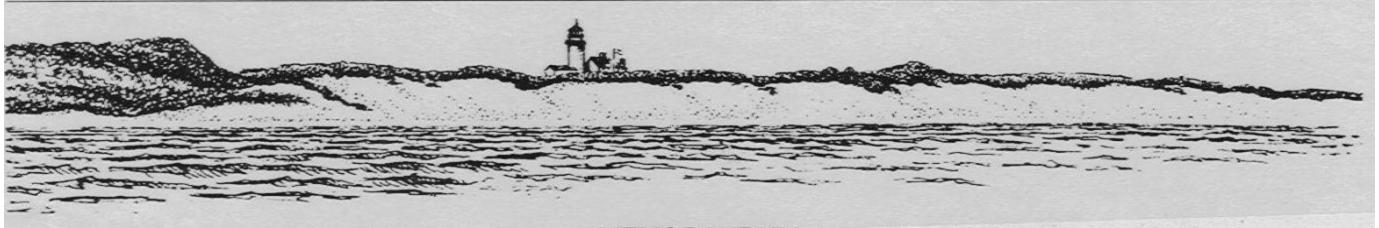
Preserving Truro for Generations to Come

The trustees:

John Marksbury, chair,
Brenda Boleyn, vice-chair,
Fred Gaechter, treasurer,
Robert Bednarek, Betsey Brown, Carol Green,
Curtis Hartman, Howard Irwin, Joel Searcy.

To learn more about the work and workings of the TCT,
visit at our website, www.truroconservationtrust.org.
Or contact us by phone, at 508-487-1190.

THE TRURO CONSERVATION TRUST



A Letter from the Chair

Dear Fellow Member of the Trust,

The Truro Conservation Trust is guardian for a significant number of upland properties with acreage and features that make them not only valuable as open space but also suitable for walking trails and restful spots to take in the views. Many serve as habitat for a variety of endangered species of plants and animals. One even protects an old Indian burial ground.

These are special properties, which pique your wonder of nature and invite you to explore. With care for their fragile features, they are highly suitable for passive recreation. We wish to devote the time and resources to make them better known to you and enjoyed.

Toward this end, we intend to develop management plans where none currently exist for our largest holdings, with an eye to the things that will best manage their resources and encourage access, such as mowing, tree removal on heathlands, clearing trails, and providing signs and benches. Then we will set about the business of implementing these plans.

The success of the Trust has demonstrated clearly that guardianship of the lands under our protection is a significant priority. Every one of our 72 properties must be inspected annually. In addition, we hold five conservation restrictions (these protect land still privately owned, but the Trust imposes conditions on their use for the protection of habitat and other values, banning any future development), which too require annual inspection. Occasionally, the Trust must act to enforce its responsibilities for protection of the land. All of this will require expenditures over and above what we normally receive from our generous donors.

To conclude our special 25th birthday year we will make land management the focus of a rousing celebration this summer. The celebration will take place on August 17. Proceeds will be used to establish a Land Stewardship Fund that will create a ready source of funds to achieve our goals. This Fund will position the Trust for a robust future where we will continue to acquire new properties but also make certain all holdings remain properly protected and maintained.

When your invitation to our Birthday Party arrives, we hope you will respond by purchasing tickets, becoming a sponsor, or if you cannot attend, sending a gift earmarked to our new Land Stewardship Fund. By supporting this new Fund you will be a special guardian of what we have been so fortunate to acquire.

We look forward to seeing you on August 17, if not sooner. Until then, best wishes for a pleasant summer in the Cape's most rural community and thank you for your support.

Yours,

John C. Marksbury
Chair