



NEWSLETTER

Winter 2016

Truro Conservation Trust, P.O. Box 327, North Truro, MA 02652
www.TruroConservationTrust.org

Significant Collaborative Project

We are embarking on a long-term project to purchase two contiguous lots, totaling 10.18 acres, known as the Rogers property at 25 Pond Road in North Truro village (see the map). This is a joint project with a committee of enthusiastic friends and neighbors town-wide. The property is the last large privately-owned open space in North Truro, the last remaining "twine field" on the Outer Cape, and an important wildlife habitat right in the middle of historic North Truro village and across Pond Road from Pilgrim Park. A "twine field" is a historically significant property previously used by fisherman to dry, repair, and tar their nets.

The property is under a Purchase & Sale agreement held by a developer with the intent of creating a sub-division of nine 3-4 bedroom homes. The sub-division plan is currently in front of the Planning Board for consideration. Your Trust is negotiating with the developer to purchase the open space for conservation in perpetuity. The developer is asking \$1.5M for the property and has agreed to delay development until January of 2018 in order for us to raise the funds for the purchase. He has stated that conservation should be the goal for this property.

The Trust has offered to match public donations, up to \$500,000, for the purchase of the lots. The friends and neighbors of the project have started a capital campaign and already, in the last several weeks, have raised more than \$70,000. Mary Ann Larkin, the

enthusiastic spokesperson for the friends and neighbors, said that "We who love Truro and open space need to work as a team with the Truro Conservation Trust to save this Truro treasure on Pond Road for conservation and prevent its development."

Over the next year, the collaboration of your Trust with the friends and neighbors committee will conduct a capital campaign and sponsor events to raise the funds needed for this purchase. The Trust has applied for a grant from the Town's Community Preservation Committee and will apply for other appropriate State grants over the next year. We will keep you informed of our joint progress and will have a more detailed report in our next newsletter.





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Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Your Trustees spend most of every year acquiring new land for conservation, protecting property owners' land with Conservation Restrictions, and performing stewardship responsibilities on the 114 parcels and 342 acres of Truro land currently under our conservation management. We also do the stewardship responsibility for Town-owned conservation land under an agreement with the Board of Selectmen.

This time of year, however, we need to focus on raising the necessary funds to enable us to accomplish our mission of protecting the rural character of Truro through land conservation. Through various activities, I talk with people from other Cape Cod communities. When we talk of where we live, there is awe expressed by others that I live in beautiful Truro. Every one of them admits to visiting Truro several times a year when they need to commune with nature, walk our trails and beaches, drive our pastoral roads, take photos to hang in their homes, and just relax in our natural environment. Such a place doesn't exist by accident. Your Trustees are proud to be a part of that success, but we can't do it without your support.

So, please, do two things for us: consider a contribution that can make a difference towards our continuing success and, as reported in the enclosed article on tax benefits, consider a donation of land for conservation or the implementation of a Conservation Restriction. If we all do our part, Truro will remain the beautiful Town that it is today and we can all enjoy it together.

We thank those of you who continue to support us every year and those of you who are new supporters!

Fred Gaechter,
Chairman
On the Behalf of Your Board of Trustees

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Herring River Restoration Project

The Herring River water has become increasingly polluted since 1909 when a dike was built across the river's mouth at Chequessett Neck in the hope of controlling the mosquito population. Unfortunately, the effects of impeding the tidal flow were "immediate and devastating" according to a Friends of Herring River (FHR) fact sheet.



Photo 1 Lower Herring River

"Blocked tidal flow caused toxic water quality and fish kills from acidic leaching, closure of downstream shellfish beds, sinking of the marsh by up to four feet and the loss of one of the largest nurseries for commercial and recreational fisheries in the Gulf of Maine." And the mosquitos thrived in the quieter waters.

The Herring River Restoration Project hopes to reverse much of this damage by replacing the old dike with a new bridge and returning the natural tidal flow to the river. Allowing the area to "flush" twice a day will, according to a FHR fact sheet, allow "oxygen-rich seawater to again sustain aquatic life in the river... Drained peat will again become saturated with water, re-establishing anaerobic conditions and reversing the chemical change that led to sulfide release as sulfuric acid." Improved water quality is expected to allow increased access to spawning and nursery habitat for

migratory fish. It will gradually change the vegetation of the Herring River flood plain from existing trees and shrubs and invasive non-native plants back to salt marsh grasses. The expectation is that the fecal coliform bacteria which poisons the water will be stressed by restored salinity and diluted by restored tides, and will decrease greatly in concentration, allowing the re-opening of shellfish beds both above and below Chequessett Neck Road.

Lisbeth Chapman, a member of Friends of Herring River who lives next to the old salt marsh told TCT that all the necessary state and federal approval studies have been completed—the project is very close to moving forward. Asked what she would hope to see when the restoration begins, Beth said "I have known the Herring River estuary all my life and I have lived beside it for the last 16 years. I dream of seeing the trees and brush disappear and the beautiful marsh grass waving in the wind again."

A relatively small portion of the 1,100-acre project reportedly lies within the boundaries of Truro and the impact on Truro properties is still under study by the project managers. If you want to know more about the project, the Friends of Herring River Restoration website (herringriver.org) has a film recounting the history of the Herring River, its problems since the dam was built and the hopes for the future.

Cape Cod: Hot Spot for State Land Conservation Tax Credits

According to the 2015 records of the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services, more landowners on Cape Cod have received state tax credits for donating or selling at bargain their land or conservation restrictions than in any other county in the state. Almost 300 acres on the Cape were preserved using the tax credit in the 5-year

period (2011-15). All 15 of the Cape's towns had at least one project completed except Mashpee. (One pending in Mashpee in 2016.) A statewide tally of completed projects through September 2016 shows almost \$10 million has been awarded to Massachusetts landowners.

The Conservation Land Tax Credit program (301CMR 14.00) was adopted by the legislature in 2009 and implemented in 2011. Amended in 2012, it provides a refundable tax credit to Massachusetts landowners with "conservation-worthy" natural land. Landowners need not live in the state or pay taxes here. If the land is eligible, the landowner is eligible. Landowners can claim half of the donated value up to \$75,000. They receive a refund check or elimination of their state income tax for that year or both. Gifts of land, conservation restrictions and bargain sales of property are all eligible transactions. The conveyance must be made to a non-profit conservation organization (land trust) or town or state environmental agency. The landowner must have clear title and support the tax credit claim with an appraisal.



Photo 2 An Illinois landowner received a Massachusetts tax credit for preserving this meadow in Truro.

An example: Landowner donates an eligible forest parcel worth \$180,000. She would receive the maximum \$75,000 from the State. The \$180,000 gift could also provide her with \$45,000 to \$60,000 in saved federal taxes (over multiple years), if she is in average tax brackets. If she sold it for development instead, she would have broker's fees and capital gains taxes to pay. The net difference between the two outcomes might not be great in dollars—and the land would be preserved!

For more information or a free, private consultation, contact us by email: trustees@truroconservationtrust.org or contact The Compact's Executive Director Mark H. Robinson at 508-694-7415 or mark@thecompact.net. He can also help you with the eligibility application form and partnering with your local land trust on the Cape or elsewhere in Massachusetts.

SPOTLIGHT ON TCT PROPERTIES

	Upland	Wetland	Total
Fee Simple Landholdings	142.86	148.72	291.58
Conservation Restrictions	42.27	19.57	61.84
TOTAL LAND PRESERVED	185.13	168.29	353.42
	Upland	Wetland	TOTAL
	ACREAGE		