



Little Compton Landscapes

Newsletter of The Sakonnet Preservation Association

Winter 2008

SPA Attends the Land Trust Alliance Rally 2007 in Colorado

This October, Sheila Mackintosh and I, Heather Steers, traveled to Denver, Colorado to attend the annual Land Trust Alliance Rally, the largest land conservation conference in the country. Several nearby Rhode Island land trusts also sent representatives that made for great comradery on our free evenings.

The Land Trust Alliance offers vital assistance to conservation organizations throughout the world. LTA states: "This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Land Trust Alliance, and the remarkable success of citizen-led conservation. The land trusts that formed the Alliance believed that by sharing policy, information and training, they could strengthen the local work of land trusts everywhere. The result has been a vibrant, national movement of 1,700 organizations which has now conserved over 37 million acres."

For three action-packed days, we were energized and inspired by seminars, workshops, plenary speeches and networking, just as the Land Trust Alliance had promised.

SPA Board members have been attending Rally for the past seven years to further their knowledge of LTA's Land Trust Standards and Practices designed to guide all land conservation organizations. Sheila, SPA's Land Protection Committee chair, attended a day-long seminar that presented an overview of the ethical, legal and practical issues associated with completing land conservation projects, while I, as Stewardship Committee chair, was instructed in a seminar on how to improve the SPA's easement stewardship program to meet the requirements of Land Trust Standards and Practices. The following two days we attended nine workshops on other aspects of land protection and stewardship, including conservation easement baseline documentation and fundraising.



Sheila Mackintosh and Heather Steers of the SPA with representatives from the Tiverton Land Trust, Aquidneck Land Trust and Rhode Island Land Trust Council at the Land Trust Alliance Rally

Throughout these sessions the instructors welcomed discussions that provided additional information and feedback. Rally speakers, especially Colorado's Senator Ken Salazar, provided inspiration to all attendees and we returned loaded with enthusiasm and material to help us improve how SPA protects and stewards its properties. — *Heather Steers*

Memorial Donations

The SPA would like to express its gratitude to those who designate it as a beneficiary for memorial donations. Bill Buffum spent every summer of his 84-year-long-life in Little Compton. After his death, his daughter Phoebe wrote, he "loved the landscape and seascape of Little Compton and was extremely interested in its preservation. His wife, sons and daughters all felt the best remembrance of Bill Buffum was a donation to SPA." The results, she added, "have been both comforting and inspiring." The family of Dudley L. Millikin Jr. also chose to name SPA as a recipient of donations. If this is something that you would like to know more about, please contact the office at 635-8800 for more information.



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SPA Annual Meeting 2007

The SPA Annual Meeting was held at the Stone House on July 11. President Larry Anderson welcomed members and guests, especially those attending from The Nature Conservancy, the Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust and the Tiverton Land Trust. On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Jana Porter submitted the slate of SPA officers for 2007-08: Abigail Brooks, President, Heather Steers, Vice President, Bob Wolter, Treasurer, and Sarah Whitehead, Secretary. The slate of Directors included Ron Bogle, Chris Burns, Rosemary Colt, John Farr, Nan Haffenreffer, Steve Horowitz, Peter Lozier, Sheila Mackintosh, Richard Ross, Jack Selvaggio, Suzie Shaw and Terry Tierney. A motion was approved and passed to appoint the slate as presented. Incoming President Abigail Brooks recognized retiring Board Members Gail Thacher, Piper Hawes, Jana Porter and Larry Anderson. Larry then thanked major donors and adjourned the business portion of the meeting at 7:20.

Abigail Brooks introduced the speaker, Keith Lang, Executive Director of the Champlin Foundations, who spoke to the group about the challenges facing land conservation efforts in Rhode Island, where it is sometimes difficult to convince residents that preservation is



Keith Lang addresses challenges of land conservation

not an "elitist" issue. He spoke about Block Island's ultimately successful campaign to create a trail system crossing both conserved and unprotected properties. Land conservation on the island has increased the value of land, but residents recognize the importance of preservation to their tourist economy and to the quality of island life. In closing, he stated that education is the key to ensuring that future generations will understand the value of conserving space as he did, driving down to Little Compton on a beautiful summer afternoon. — Rosemary Colt

Letter From The President

I was invited to speak at *Cooking for Conservation* this past July, an event that took place on a remarkable evening at the Sakonnet Vineyards. Its purpose was to showcase and celebrate the work of four land conservation organizations working on the ground in Little Compton — Sakonnet Preservation Association, The Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust, The Audubon Society of RI, and The Nature Conservancy. Each organization submitted a list of donors, volunteers and Board members to invite as honorees for their contribution to the conservation successes that have accumulated here.

Each group's representative spoke about the accomplishments of their organization. I was proud to relay my thoughts and feelings just eleven days after my election to the position of President of the Board. What follows are the words with which I tried to express how deeply moving and important I find the work of conservation in this town of ours and SPA's particular contribution to the effort.

"I like thinking of our organization as a seedbed for local conservation. After all, it was five forward thinking townspeople who understood back in the early '70's that preserving what makes Little Compton special for generations to come would take action. So they incorporated the first land trust in the state, on January 14, 1972, to be known as the Sakonnet Preservation Association.

Thirteen years later, four who had served as Board members and Presidents of our organization — David Borden, Stetson Eddy, Representative Paul Suttell and Senator Michael Forte — led the effort to create the Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust as a way to ensure a source of income for land preservation as development pressures increased. Little Compton became one of only two communities in the state to succeed in creating a real estate transfer tax for land preservation use.

Then, in 1998, another leader of our organization, Larry

Anderson, had the foresight to recognize that public education about land conservation is essential. As a writer himself, he was equipped to help us launch bi-annual newsletters. Coupled with an annual public spring education event, SPA began working to overcome misconceptions and lack of knowledge about land conservation within the community. Our membership grew exponentially.

One Spring Education event, under the leadership of another Board President Heather Steers, brought Scott Millar to Little Compton to introduce the concept of conservation development. The town is now preparing to explore possible conservation zoning ordinances that take the protection of important natural or scenic features of the landscape into consideration.

Outreach to the town's schoolchildren was launched and continues in earnest as a way to reach the next generation of land conservationists. And we are currently engaged in an effort to secure permanent conservation easements on the land that includes Watson Reservoir.

All of this has taken place while the organization has accumulated 352 acres of responsibility in the form of conservation easements or outright ownership of protected properties that require annual monitoring and managing. Through the

incredible generosity of its members, donors and hardworking volunteers, SPA reflects a tremendous will to try to maintain some of the essential qualities of this extraordinary place.

Few coastal areas in this country can claim to have had the foresight and the success maintaining some recognizable semblance of the beauty of a century or two ago that is a hallmark of our community. The cumulative efforts of all that we represent here — visionaries, organizations, donors and volunteers who have preceded and will follow us — will be laid down on this landscape for generations to come. Let us keep leading with innovation, by example, by being inclusive, far-sighted, generous and thoughtful in the exciting and challenging work of land conservation." — *Abigail Brooks, President, SPA*



SPA President, Abigail Brooks

Monitoring Workshop

Saturday, October 13th dawned chilly and clear as a bell. Sheila Mackintosh, Chair of our Land Protection Committee, Heather Steers, Chair of our Stewardship Committee and I had planned a walk and monitoring workshop for our Board members and volunteer monitors. We would walk the SPA's Duffield property off West Main Road up to and around The Nature Conservancy's Bumble Bee property. The weather could not have been more perfect, and The Nature Conservancy had granted us the permission we needed to visit Bumble Bee.

Monitoring properties is one of our organization's most important duties. When we receive a donation of a conservation easement or property, it is our responsibility to check the property annually to ensure its conservation value is being protected by its owner or to manage it appropriately if it belongs to our organization. On properties where SPA holds a conservation easement, our monitors invite the landowner to accompany them to walk the property boundaries and review the terms and conditions of the easement. Monitors record any natural or man-made changes that may have occurred on the property since the last annual visit. On the properties we own outright, monitors check to see that the management plan for that property is being implemented appropriately, which may include mowing, cleaning up debris, and controlling invasive plants, for example.



Admiring the view from Bumble Bee

We are blessed with an extraordinarily dedicated group of twenty-one monitors that includes current and former Board members and community volunteers. With increased tax deductions for the donation of conservation easements has come increased scrutiny by the IRS to ensure the organization holding the easement has the capacity to protect the terms of the agreement in perpetuity. So accepting conservation easements and property donations is a huge commitment and responsibility on our part, and we take it seriously.



Fred Bridge at work

Ten of us gathered on West Main Road and walked for the next hour-and-a-half, stopping at various points along the way to listen to Fred Bridge (who monitors the Duffield property) and Heather describe the kinds of things monitors should be looking for on a monitoring visit to a property.

Walking through the woods of Duffield up into the open fields of Bumble Bee was a reminder to all of us of the value of land protection in Little Compton. The beauty of these unspoiled places was enhanced by knowing our increasingly precious places of animal and bird habitat and watershed protection will remain for generations to come.

I walked away from that gathering with an even greater sense of the importance of our work and awe for the generosity of so many townspeople who have chosen to protect their land from development for the benefit of all. Protecting our natural resources, particularly our surface water, helping keep our tax rate low by limiting development and conserving the scenic vistas that define the beauty of this place we love are gifts to all of us that come with conserved properties. As an Almy family member recently pointed out at a public meeting, you do it for the Town, not for the money. — *Abigail Brooks*

Public Information Event

We are pleased to have Ames Colt as the speaker at our annual Spring Public Information Event to be held at the Little Compton Community Center at 7 PM on April 3rd. Dr. Colt was appointed by the legislature in September 2006 to be the first Chair of the Rhode Island Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds



Dr. Ames Colt

Coordination Team. As he explains on the organization's website, the Team "fits the definition of a lively experiment in state government in that it seeks to harness the capabilities of our state agencies dedicated to environmental protection and economic development." With a doctorate in

coastal and environmental science from the University of Massachusetts, Colt was most recently the Associate Director of the Sea Grant Program at the University of Rhode Island. He has contributed to the practice of coastal and marine environmental science, coastal and ocean management planning and policy analysis in a variety of roles in academia, the public and private sectors. Last but not least, he has long-standing ties to Little Compton and an abiding interest in conserving its land and water resources. *Watch for more information.*

Cooking for Conservation

Sakonnet Vineyards was the site of an evening gathering on July 22, during which the SPA joined local organizations to express their appreciation to area residents for support of land conservation initiatives in the Sakonnet area. Nancy Verde Barr and Al Forno owners Johanne Killeen and George Germon added flavor to the event by sharing cooking tips and autographing their cookbooks.

Representatives from The Nature Conservancy, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and the Little Compton Agricultural



Heather and Mike Steers

Conservancy Trust joined with SPA in thanking those present for their commitment to land conservation (*see page 3*). Speakers noted that significant progress has been made protecting land in both Little Compton and Tiverton but added that continued diligence is needed.

In part, the success of these four groups is due to collaboration between them and partnerships among them; for example, the preservation of the Marvell property and of Bumble Bee Farm was the result of joint effort. — *Jana Porter & Rosemary Colt*



Sakonnet Preservation Association

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Sakonnet Preservation Association

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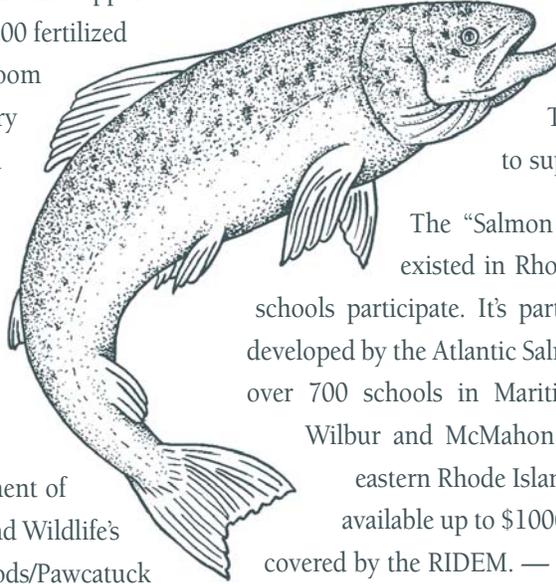
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Salmon in the Classroom

An exciting new science project will soon be underway in the 7th and 8th grades at Wilbur and McMahon Schools. Under the supervision of science teacher Aimee MacLean and the support of Principal Fran Blades, the students will raise 200 fertilized Atlantic salmon eggs to the fry stage in the classroom this winter. In May 2008 they will release the fry into the Woods/Pawcatuck River system in western Rhode Island. The egg-to-fry stage is when the highest mortality of Atlantic salmon occurs in the wild.

Salmon have been extinct in Rhode Island for over 200 years because of dams and pollution.

The project is part of the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish and Wildlife's program to restore Atlantic salmon to the Woods/Pawcatuck



River system. The salmon have been extinct in Rhode Island for over 200 years because of dams and pollution. Recently, some dams have been breached, fishways have been installed and pollution has been reduced. The Woods/Pawcatuck is now able to support the salmon.

The "Salmon in the Classroom" program has existed in Rhode Island for 5 years; to date, 31 schools participate. It's part of the "Fish Friends" program developed by the Atlantic Salmon Federation in 1992 involving over 700 schools in Maritime Canada and New England. Wilbur and McMahon, however, is the first school in eastern Rhode Island to take part. The SPA is making available up to \$1000 to help defray program costs not covered by the RIDEM. — Robert Wolter

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Our Mission
The Sakonnet Preservation Association, a non-profit land trust, is dedicated to preserving the rural character and natural resources of Little Compton for the lasting benefit of the Community.
For Information:
401.635.8800

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