



Little Compton Landscapes

Newsletter of The Sakonnet Preservation Association

January 2006

A Record Number of Conservation Easements Protect Over 19 Acres of Fields, Shoreline, Wetlands and Habitat



Thanks to the awareness and generosity of seven Little Compton landowners, the Sakonnet Preservation Association (SPA) protected almost 20 acres in 2005, acquiring conservation easements on six new properties. These donations bring the total number of acres of land preserved by SPA to over 330 acres.

Easements on two adjacent parcels on the east side of West Main Road were given by John V. Kean and the 526 West Main Trust. They include open fields, wooded land and wetlands that provide natural habitats for a variety of animal and plant species native to Little Compton. One parcel of 1.03 acres offering a view easement bound by stonewalls is visible from West Main Road. The other parcel of 2.85 acres

includes scenic views across open fields as well as trees and a variety of wildflowers.

A conservation easement on 1.83 acres of field, brushy wetland habitat and a cobble shoreline was donated by Adelaide Vander Salm. Bound by the Sakonnet River (a tidal estuary) to the west, the easement abuts land already protected by SPA. This land provides a natural habitat for a variety of birds, including the Northern Harrier, included on Rhode Island's list of endangered species. "The parcel is highly scenic and characteristic of local landscapes," commented the biologist who assessed the conservation value of the property for SPA.

An abutting easement of 1.83 acres donated by Joseph F. Sherer III and Catherine R. Sherer increases both the scenic views and the wetland habitat described above. A 3.5 acre easement given by the Sherers in 2003 brings the total number of acreage of adjacent protected parcels on the site to over 7 acres. The Vander Salm and Sherer easements ensure that this large area of scenic shoreline, stonewalls and fields sloping up from the river will remain undisturbed.

Peter R. and Anne W. Ransom gave a conservation easement on over 10 acres on West Main Road to SPA. Their generous gift includes a varied topography of open fields, forested area, and

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Sakonnet Preservation Association

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Newsletter Editor

Jana Porter

Design

Karen Richmond

SPA

P. O. Box 945
Little Compton, RI 02837
Phone/Fax: 401. 635. 8800
Office: 7 South of Commons

SPA 'Makes the Leap' to Paid Staff

For the first time in its thirty-three year existence, the Sakonnet Preservation Association is about to change from an all-volunteer land trust to one with paid professional staff. The Board of SPA voted unanimously at its November meeting to establish a part-time paid Executive Director position. This decision resulted from the growing realization by the Board that SPA must become more strategically directed and less reactive in its primary mission of protecting land to preserve the rural character of Little Compton. Continuing in an all-volunteer mode would become increasingly difficult given growing land use pressures in the town.

The SPA Board's decision is characteristic of the evolution of local land trusts generally, so much so that the national Land Trust Alliance calls this phenomenon "making the leap." Land trusts in the "leap" stage begin to move from parcel-by-parcel land protection, based on random opportunities that arise, to strategic land protection focused on key resources like watersheds and treasured views. The latter direction is one in which SPA hopes to move over the next two to three years, in cooperation with other land preservation groups focused on Little Compton.

The person selected to be the first Executive Director of SPA will meet regularly with the Executive Committee and the Board to delineate the relative responsibilities of staff and volunteer officers and committee chairs for the various support functions related to land protection, stewardship and public education. The Executive Director will also assist with fundraising and membership expansion. This new part-time position is authorized for a three-year period at which point it will be evaluated to determine whether it should be continued, expanded or modified.

Applications for the new position were due at SPA by December 31 with interviews completed by the search committee for selected finalists by mid February. The full SPA Board will interview the first choice finalist chosen by the search committee and decide whether to hire that person or to consider other finalists. It is hoped that a new Executive Director will be able to begin work in the early spring.

Gerry Billings

RHODE ISLAND LAND TRUST COUNCIL

Rhode Island Rivers Council
RI Association of Conservation Commissions
present the

Land & Water Conservation Summit

... working together to protect our communities

Saturday, March 11, 2006 8:15 am – 4:30 pm

URI Memorial Union, Kingston Campus
Participate in a variety of land protection workshops.

For more information/registration contact:
Rupert Friday, RI Land Trust Council, 331-7110 ext.39
email: rfriday@tnc.org

Registration \$35 before Feb. 17, after: \$40



Photos depict views of several recently acquired conservation easements.

Easements...

continued from cover



wetland habitat: The land is home to a variety of wildlife, including the yellow-rumped warbler and the pickerel frog. The Ransoms' gift ensures that this scenic property, visible from the road to passers-by, will continue to contribute to the rural character of our town.

A conservation easement on over 2 acres of property on the north side of Sakonnet Point Road was donated by William F. Truscott. The land includes open field, wetlands and a small pond, all providing habitat for plant and animal species native to Little Compton, as well as a view of undeveloped land from Sakonnet Point Rd.

The decisions of these generous donors to place conservation easements on their land will benefit both the residents of and visitors to Little Compton. In addition to ensuring that these acres will remain undeveloped, their gifts help to protect the plant and animal species in the town as well as its water table. It is important to note that the easement properties are still owned by the landowner and are not open to the public. The Sakonnet Preservation Association is extremely appreciative of these donors' generosity and the benefits it provides to future generations.

Jana Porter

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Heather Steers, President, SPA

The year 2005 was an exceptional one for the Sakonnet Preservation Association. SPA has protected a record number of properties through conservation easements donated by generous residents. The Association has also partnered with other groups to conserve the P.T. Marvel Preserve adjoining South Shore Beach and to increase community awareness of the pressures on our landscape and the options available to them for land conservation.

The Sakonnet Preservation Association's Annual Membership Meeting was held on July 7 at The Stone House Club in Little Compton. Attendance was strong and conversation lively at the cocktail and hors d'oeuvres hour that preceded the Business Meeting. Following a thank you to SPA's generous supporters, outgoing Board Members Larry Anderson, Letitia Carter and Lucy O'Connor were praised for their years of service and presented with etchings by Josie Richmond Arkins.

Following the election of Officers and Directors, the meeting was adjourned and guest speaker Lawrence Taft, Director of the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, was introduced. Larry's informative power point presentation highlighted the history of The Audubon Society of Rhode Island, current land preservation activities and the outstanding educational programs currently offered throughout the state.

The P.T. Marvell Preserve transaction was completed on October 17 with the recording in the Little Compton Town Clerk's office of the conservation easement jointly held by the Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and the Sakonnet Preservation Association.

Funds from the three donee organizations to The Nature Conservancy for their share of the purchase of the easement followed shortly thereafter. A generous anonymous donor, to whom SPA is very grateful, provided SPA's \$100,000 contribution. The management plan for the property provides for the creation of trails and a small parking area for use by



Fall Clean Up at the Pond

the public, which were cleared and mowed in December. Funds donated by the Little Compton Municipal Trust will provide for the purchase of materials for volunteers who will build two trail kiosks and begin repairs to the existing tower.

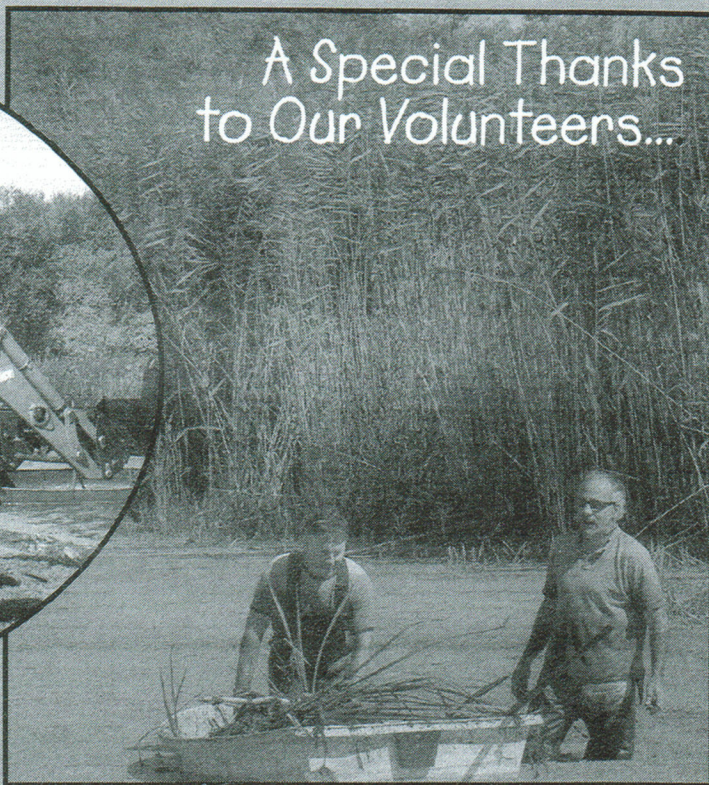
Several people have responded to the joint town-wide mailing sent by the Little Compton Land Trusts (see back cover), offering both donations and volunteer services. The three groups are working together to preserve valuable agricultural and conservation land for the benefit of present and future generations.

On the national front, after a year of careful study, a team of land trust representatives has made a set of recommendations on the accreditation of land trusts to the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). LTA has adopted these recommendations and approved the

A Special Thanks to Our Volunteers...



Thank You
A-1 Pizza for
our delicious
lunch!



Josie and Tom Arkins, Fred Bridge, Chris, Alli and
Jeff Brady, Tack Eddy, Adolf Haffenreffer,
Patrick Morgan, Bill, Karen, Parker and
Clara Richmond, Richard Ross,
Jack Selvaggio, Dabba and Doug Stearns.

creation of a voluntary accreditation and training program for land trusts. LTA states "Accreditation will provide independent verification of 42 practices from Land Trust Standards and Practices that indicate a land trust's ability to operate in an ethical, legal and technically sound matter and ensure the long term protection of land in the public interest." An independent accreditation commission, which will be named by LTA in February, will establish procedures for accreditation in 2006 and will test the procedures with an initial round of applications in 2007, fully beginning operations in 2008. LTA is developing a new, affordable curriculum to help land trusts achieve success in accreditation, the first course of which will be offered this spring.

Given the challenges ahead, the SPA Board voted this past fall to hire a part-time Executive

Director so that Board Members can be more proactive in conserving land in Little Compton. The thinking behind this exciting developmental step and the timetable for the appointment are described more fully on page 2 of this newsletter.

The year of 2005 culminated in an unprecedented number of acquisitions for SPA. Several generous land conservationist individuals and families donated six conservation easements. SPA thanks these individuals for their contributions to the preservation of Little Compton's landscape and identity.

As this newsletter goes to press, Annual Appeal donations are streaming in. It looks like a banner year for fundraising, as well! Thank you, supporters, for enabling SPA to protect and steward precious open space in Little Compton.

Outreach Committee Inspires Novice Naturalists

As part of SPA's Strategic Plan, the Public Information, Education, Advocacy and Outreach committee is exploring ways to provide conservation education for local school children. As a first step in that effort, SPA is purchasing well-respected nature books for the Wilbur & McMahon School, believing that encouraging children to appreciate their natural surroundings will help to ensure the future of land conservation.

Each SPA Newsletter will highlight one of over twenty books purchased so that parents, grandparents and friends can consider buying these books from a local bookstore or borrowing them from a local library. SPA will try to make each featured book available at the Partners Bookstore in Westport.

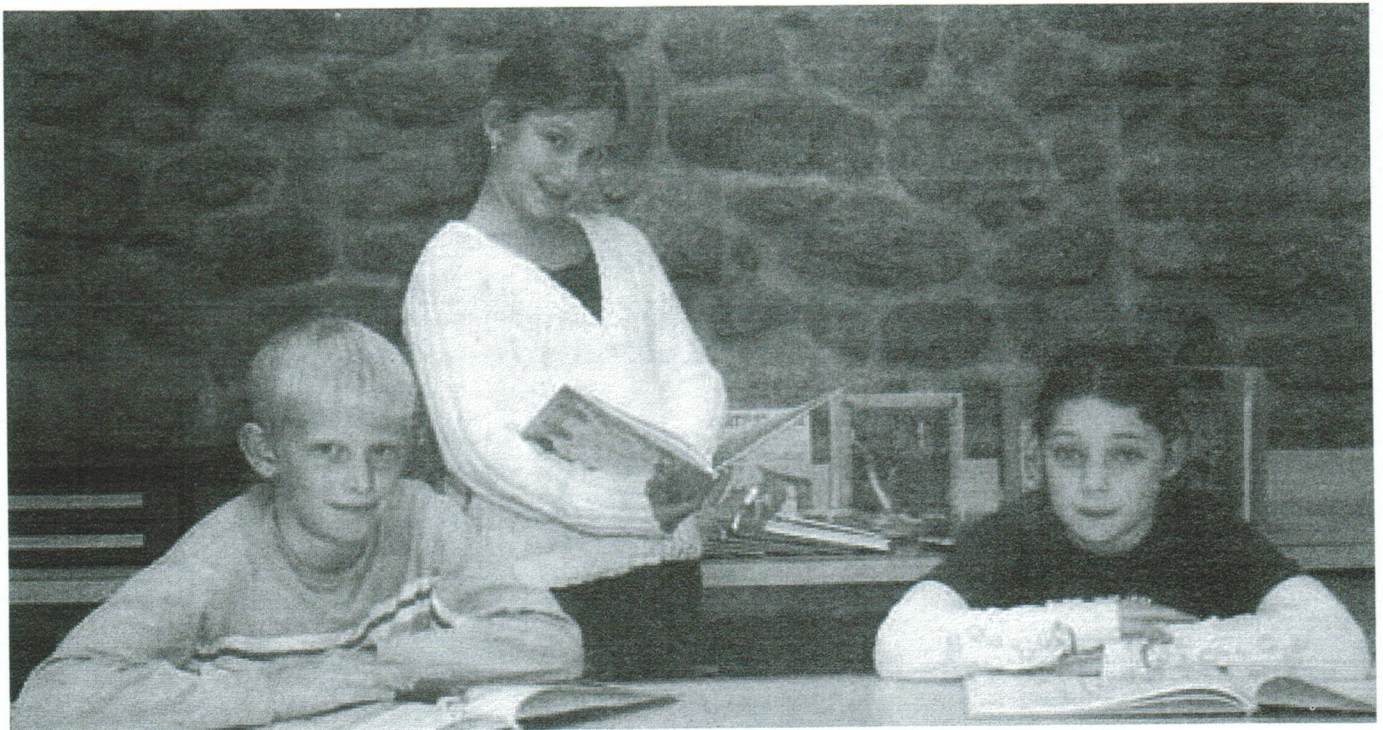
*Below: Wilbur McMahon book reviewers
Sean Tullson, Kelly Harlow and Raleigh Silvia*

Book Review

*Forest Explorer: A Life-Sized Field Guide
by Nic Bishop/Scholastic Press, 2004*

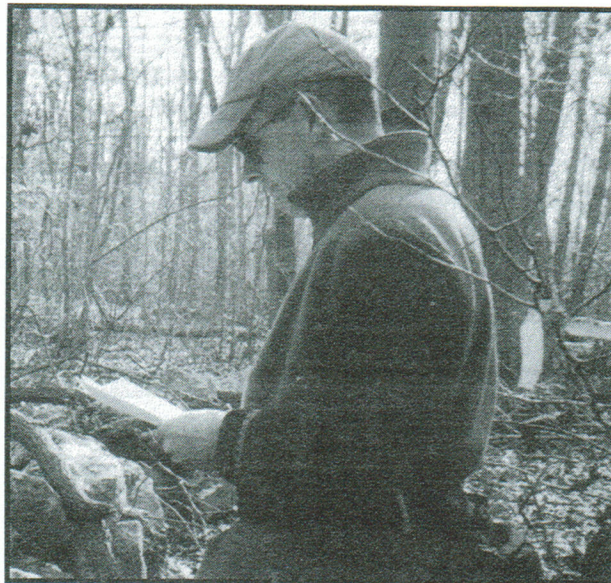
This book for budding naturalists is readily accessible to children in Grades K-6. The stunning photographic guide is sure to excite an interest in the study of natural history. Each of seven double-paged spreads is a collage created by computer technology using a montage of 60 different life-size photos. The collages are organized by season, layers of the forest and life after dark. Readable field notes giving facts related to the animals in the scene follow each spread. The 130 different insects, birds, mammals and reptiles pictured are ones children are likely to see during a walk in the woods. Children are encouraged to keep a forest journal to record their discoveries. A wonderful picture index and a section on how to explore the woods with suggested projects and equipment are also included.

Piper Hawes



LARRY'S LEGACY

Longtime Board Member Larry Anderson, who contributed to major organizational growth and land acquisition during his tenure on the SPA Board, was recognized by President Heather Steers as he retired from the Board at the July 2005 Annual Meeting. A Director since 1991, Larry served as Vice-President, President from 1998 to 2001, and Chairman of the Land Protection Committee from 2001 to 2003. In addition to the additional 85.22 acres that were protected during his Presidency, Larry helped transform SPA into the active and vibrant land trust it is today.



By creating committees on the Board and increasing annual Board meetings to monthly ones, Larry brought a structure to SPA that has helped the organization to fulfill its mission. He initiated and edited the SPA Newsletter, educating Little Compton residents about the association's activities and broadening their awareness of issues related to land protection. He established the Annual Appeal, drafted the Model Conservation Easement still used today, and even found SPA office space.

The end of Larry's service on the Board will give him more time to focus on his writing and to serve Little Compton as the Chair of the Little Compton Charter Review Committee. His expertise and passion for thoughtful use of Little Compton's land resources will continue to benefit the town through his service.



Sakonnet Preservation Association

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO BECOME
A NEW MEMBER.

*Enclosed is my tax deductible
membership contribution.*

_____ Individual Member	\$20
_____ Family Member	\$25
_____ Sustaining Member	\$35
_____ Special Gift	\$_____

Sakonnet Preservation Association

P. O. Box 945, Little Compton, RI 02837

Phone/Fax: 401. 635. 8800

Name _____

Permanent Address _____

Town _____

State _____

Zip _____

Phone _____ Summer phone _____

E-mail _____

Summer Address _____

Little Compton Land Trusts Join in Town Mailing

In early November 2005, the Sakonnet Preservation Association joined with the two other land protection groups with interests in Little Compton to send a town-wide mailing outlining conservation options to residents. The mailing included a letter signed by John Berg of The Nature Conservancy, George Mason of The Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust, and Heather Steers, President of SPA, explaining the shared goals of all three groups: to protect Little Compton's natural resources and as well as its small town atmosphere.

An enclosed card explained the different missions of the three trusts with contact information for each, and a pamphlet from The Land Trust Alliance (a national organization) described various conservation options for landowners.

An Advisory Committee for the three Little Compton Land Trusts meets periodically to discuss common interests and to coordinate efforts to preserve the farms, fields, forests, water resources, and natural habitats of Little Compton.

Jana Porter

Postal Customer

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



Sakonnet Preservation Association
P.O. Box 945
Little Compton, Rhode Island 02837-0945

