

Sakonnet Preservation

Newsletter of the Sakonnet Preservation Association

Conservation Champion – Debbie Wiley

Sakonnet Preservation is honored to protect two properties donated by Debbie Wiley — a conservation easement on two acres donated in 2009, and now a six-acre property given in December of 2019. This latest of her contributions protects significant and diminishing coastal scrub-shrub wetland habitat, essential to birds and monarch butterflies as they migrate and to other animals, all on a property that was contemplated for development. A magnificent stand of mature tupelo trees at the north end of the property is pictured below.

Debbie's grandfather rented property in Little Compton beginning in the 1920s, and she has been spending summers here for her entire life. "Little Compton is my mental home," she says. It has pro-

vided a meaningful and necessary contrast to her demanding professional life in New York City; however she has witnessed significant and concerning changes to Little Compton over the years.

"I learned how important land protection is from my parents. My late mother might be considered a 'back-handed conservationist' — she realized when land around us in New Jersey was already under threat that proper planning is the best protection."

Debbie believes that Little Compton's greatest strength and hope for the future lies in the collaboration among the groups working to protect this special place. She first became aware of Sakonnet Preservation during a bike tour featuring Little Compton properties protected by Sakonnet Preservation, The Nature Conservancy (TNCRI) and LC Agricultural Conservancy Trust (LCACT). As she learned more, she understood just how important this cooperation is.

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7 South of Commons

Little Compton, Rhode Island



sound finances
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President's letter

Making Dreams Come True

The year 2019 was a dynamic and successful one of land conservation for Little Compton and for Sakonnet Preservation. This included contributions by landowners who chose to forego potential development of their property for the betterment of us all, as well as generous philanthropic gifts of all sizes to our organization. We also rely on the vital energy of volunteers who lead us to land transactions, tackle the complexities involved, and provide the continuing stewardship required for each acquisition.

Our challenges include new construction going on apace, with the resulting fragmentation of our forested landscape and loss of open fields and scenic views that define our town's character. These threats have gotten the attention of local landowners. We have witnessed remarkable willingness by landowners and neighbors to address these issues by securing conservation protections on existing undeveloped land. Their commitment and persistence is truly inspiring. Because of them, generations to come will have the benefit of the natural beauty and resource protection that make Little Compton such an extraordinary place. With their generosity, and yours, we are able to help make this dream come true. *Thank you ALL!*

– Abigail Brooks

“ *Briggs Beach, Inc. looks forward each year to supporting your efforts and future successes... they're invaluable to the community. We appreciate all your hard work.* ”

Carol Appleton, Nancy Westfeldt, Ronald Bogle,
Susan Finnegan, Leslie Wilson

Since becoming Chair of the board of TNCRI in 2016, Debbie has encouraged this collaboration at each step. "Every organization working to preserve Little Compton has a role to play; yet when they all co-operate, Little Compton is better for it. When I had the chance to protect my two properties, I felt that Sakonnet Preservation was the right group to work with for these projects. I'm happy to keep Bailey's Ledge open and to preserve habitat for wildlife and migratory birds."

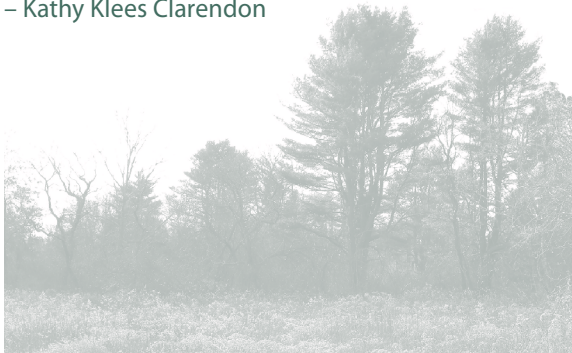


Debbie believes that Little Compton's greatest strength and hope for the future lies in the collaboration among the groups working to protect this special place.

Her most recent property donation is a perfect example of the collaboration happening in Little Compton: the Chair of TNCRI, donating a parcel to Sakonnet Preservation, which abuts land preserved by the LCACT!

Sakonnet Preservation is eager to work with conservation minded individuals like Debbie Wiley. Her property was one of two donated to us in 2019, and both donors had preserved properties with us before. Our solemn promise is to protect these irreplaceable pieces of Little Compton.

– Kathy Klees Clarendon



Sakonnet Preservation

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

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www.sakonnetpreservation.org

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Start your Amazon shopping at Amazon Smile, and .5% of your eligible purchase goes to SPA. Go

to Smile.Amazon.com/ch/23-7225987, or type in Sakonnet Preservation Association when prompted.

Save the Date for Our Annual Meeting – July 7th!

If you are concerned about climate change and what it might mean for us here in Little Compton, this compelling speaker has spent his career working on the issue. David Vallee is the Hydrologist-in-Charge of the National Weather Service's Northeast River Forecast Center, and will give us a great deal to think about. He is a life-long resident of Rhode Island and considers it a tremendous privilege to be serving the people of the very region he calls home. You may even recognize him from his appearances on the Weather Channel, the History Channel and the Discovery Channel!



David Vallee, 2020 Speaker

Much of New England has been experiencing an increasing trend in annual average temperature, annual average precipitation, and the number of heavy rainfall events over the past several decades.

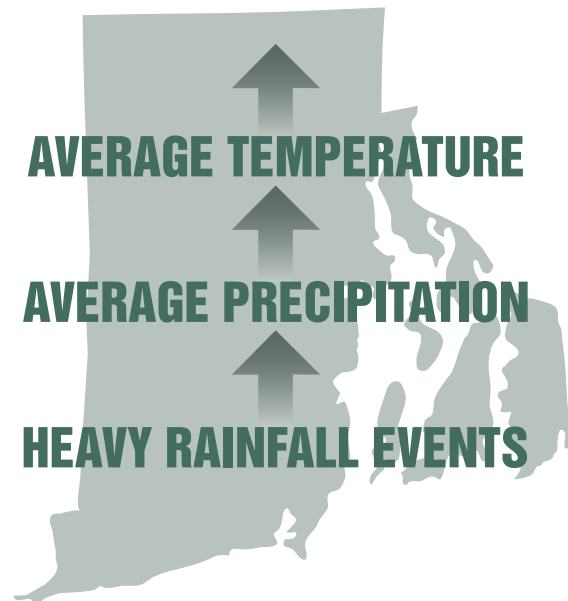
During this same time period, the region has experienced an increasing number of moderate to major flood episodes. Events have included the record floods of March 2010, the spring snowmelt floods which sent Lake Champlain to record elevations, the catastrophic flooding associated with the passage of Tropical Storm Irene in western New England, the remarkable thirteen-inch rainstorm that struck Long Island, New York in the summer of 2014, and most recently the 5 to 8 inches of rain which produced record flooding along the upper Mohawk River this past October. The common threads in each episode

were a persistent storm track and the ability of each storm system to tap a tropical moisture source which resulted in very heavy rainfall on already saturated ground.

The vulnerability of our coastline to tropical cyclones has never been greater. Tropical Storm Irene and Hurricane Sandy struck the region during the late summer and early fall of 2011 and 2012 respectively. The impacts along the shoreline were devastating and provided an ever present reminder of the tremendous impacts these types of storms can bring in the face of rising sea levels and a retreating coastline. Plan to join us for this important presentation on July 7.

We look forward to seeing you at the Little Compton Community Center!

Talking Climate Change



Much of New England has been experiencing an increasing trend in annual average temperature, annual average precipitation, and the number of heavy rainfall events over the past several decades.

“ *We are pleased to support conservation in LC, our new home.
Thank you for preserving the beautiful farm coast!* **”**

Anne Finestone and Charles Dolan, new members

Managing Forests: Taking the Long View

Forests are complex, continuously evolving ecosystems. Under stress from climate change, insects, diseases and storms, some trees endure while others succumb. To better understand changes that had taken place on one of our forested properties, we hired forester Ryan Bourque. While every property owned by SPA has an individualized management plan, we decided that a forest management plan would give us a better opportunity to understand this property and enhance the site.

Mr. Bourque developed the detailed plan after site visits to the property. Our first goal was to ensure a safe environment, especially for our neighbors and any contractors or volunteers working on the property. We were also interested in promoting a healthy and diverse forest ecosystem while maintaining the property's aesthetics.

The benefits of forests are profound. In addition to providing habitat and scenic value, Little Compton's forests act as natural filters that control the flow of run-off from roads and other impervious surfaces.

This forest management plan included detailed descriptions of the two forest stands on the property, with data on the stand age, density, average tree diameter, site index, overstory and understory species, soil types, and management recommendations. The forest management plan was developed in line with RI Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) specifications so that SPA could apply for funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. With cost-share assistance through NRCS, we embarked on a multi-year plan to enhance the property. We began to improve one of the forest stands through thinning, with guidance from Mr. Bourque and NRCS staff. Thinning removes smaller, weaker trees to enable more desired trees to flourish.

A group of hard-working volunteers and board members helped fell trees that had been marked by the forester, and they constructed brush piles. Brush piles are a NRCS-approved practice that provide habitat for woodland wildlife such as ground-nesting birds, songbirds, reptiles and small mammals. Members of the SPA board also assessed trees around the perimeter of the property and decided to have one tree cut down which seemed potentially hazardous to a neighboring property. Mr. Bourque noted that some of the dead trees on the property were due to gypsy moth infestations in recent years. The upside is that birds and other wildlife may move into these dead standing trees, or "snags", while a new generation of trees will take advantage of the sunlight and grow in the understory.

The benefits of forests are profound. In addition to providing habitat and scenic value, Little Compton's forests act as natural filters that control the flow of run-off from roads and other impervious surfaces. They help secure a steady supply of groundwater, and their impressive root systems protect against erosion. Forests play a major role in storing and sequestering carbon, offsetting emissions from burning fossil fuel.

Our forest management plan is just one way we are thinking long term about how best to steward the land. It involves many minds and many hands, and we hope to repeat this process on other properties. Sakonnet Preservation is in it for the long haul!

– Mary-Kate Kane, Stewardship Director



Join our Weekend Stewardship Crew!

Contact Mary-Kate for details.

mkane@sakonnetpreservation.org

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great deal to us and we are profoundly grateful.*

*Please contact Kathy Klees Clarendon with any questions at
kclarendon@sakonnetpreservation.org or call (401)635-8800.*

Sakonnet Preservation 2020 Winter Film Series

Microcosmos

March 13, 2020 – *Special time* – 5pm – Little Compton Community Center

All ages family movie night! Pizza at 5pm, then a screening of *Microcosmos*.

It may appear tiny to the human eye, but there is no denying that the insect kingdom — as captured by the filmmakers behind this documentary — is as dramatic, action-packed and beautiful as any other. Indeed, using a variety of film techniques and an inspired score, the moving image of a beetle pushing a ball of dung takes on the mythic quality of Sisyphus with his boulder. Meanwhile, endless caterpillar caravans suggest, amazingly, the rhythm of modern highways during rush hour.

Seed: The Untold Story

April 10, 2020 – 7pm – Little Compton Community Center

Few things on Earth are as miraculous and vital as seeds — worshiped and treasured since the dawn of humankind. This documentary follows passionate seed keepers who are protecting a 12,000-year-old food legacy. In the last century, 94 seed varieties have disappeared. A cadre of 10 agri-chemical companies, including Syngenta, Bayer, and Monsanto, controls over two-thirds of the global seed market, reaping unprecedented profits. Farmers and others battle to defend the future of our food.

The Messenger

May 8, 2020 – 7pm – Little Compton Community Center

Su Rynard’s wide-ranging and contemplative documentary *The Messenger* explores our deep-seated connection to birds and warns that the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own. *The Messenger* is the artful story about the mass depletion of songbirds on multiple continents, and about those who are working to turn the tide. In ancient times humans looked to the flight and songs of birds to predict the future. Today once again, birds have something to tell us.

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401.635.0080

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Sakonnet Preservation

