

Sakonnet Preservation

newsletter of the Sakonnet Preservation Association

The serviceberry, a quiet offering

In meadows, along woodland edges, and even in quiet backyards across Little Compton, a native tree blooms each spring—its delicate white flowers catching the morning light like scattered snowflakes. This is the serviceberry—also known as shadbush, juneberry, or by its botanical name, *Amelanchier*. More than a seasonal delight, the serviceberry is an ecological cornerstone and a quiet teacher. In June it bears small, sweet, purple berries—easily missed unless you're paying close attention. Yet this modest tree offers far more than fleeting beauty or fruit.

In her book *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*, botanist and author Robin Wall Kimmerer reimagines how we live in relationship with the Earth. Drawing from Indigenous knowledge and ecological science, she invites us to see the serviceberry not just as a plant, but as a model for a more generous way of living. Kimmerer proposes an “economy of belonging”, one not rooted in competition or scarcity, but in reciprocity, connection, and shared abundance. And in this vision, the humble serviceberry leads by example.

The serviceberry offers its gifts freely. Its early blooms nourish pollinators just waking from winter, and its summer berries feed birds, foxes, and people alike. Unlike many ornamental plants that dominate rather than integrate, the serviceberry thrives in community. It supports life without demanding the spotlight. As Kimmerer writes, “The serviceberry is a lesson in generosity.” Its fruit ripens gradually, offering sustenance to many over time. No rush, no hoarding, just the quiet, enduring rhythm of enough.



Planting a serviceberry is a simple yet powerful way to support local biodiversity. These small trees sustain dozens of native bee species, offer shelter to birds and serve as host plants for butterflies and moths. Their vitamin-rich berries are a native alternative to cultivated blueberries—sweet, nutritious, and deeply rooted in our landscape's natural rhythms. In Little Compton, where coastal and woodland habitats are both precious and vulnerable, every serviceberry planted helps support the web of life: soil, plant, insect, and bird, all interwoven. Robin Wall Kimmerer reminds us that the true wealth lies in relationship—with each other and with the land. The serviceberry embodies that truth. It invites us to move away from extraction and into stewardship—to participate in an economy where value is not measured in profit, but in care.

To plant a serviceberry is to make a statement: I belong to this place. I will care for it, and let it care for me. **Sakonnet Preservation** encourages the use of native plants in local landscapes. Native to Rhode Island, these *Amelanchier* species thrive in our region:

- *Amelanchier canadensis* – Canadian serviceberry
- *Amelanchier arborea* – downy shadbush
- *Amelanchier laevis* – smooth serviceberry
- *Amelanchier spicata* – dwarf serviceberry

Ideal for small yards and native plantings, these trees provide food for birds and pollinators, add natural beauty to the landscape, and root us more deeply in the places we call home. Consider adding one to your yard this fall, and help nurture a future rooted in reciprocity.

Viennia Booth, Administrator

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sound finances

ethical conduct

responsible governance

lasting stewardship

From the President

The gifts brought to us by the success of our five-year fundraising **Campaign for Sakonnet Preservation** cannot be underestimated. Culminating in the spectacularly popular 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2022, we are reaping the benefit of standing on solid financial ground in turbulent times. The outpouring of continuing community generosity from our donors allows us to finance skilled staff, rent an enlarged workspace, and develop our conservation priorities proactively. While adding land protection projects to our portfolio of responsibilities, we are tackling complicated stewardship projects and enhanced public education with our school, our easement landowners, and the community at large. We work hard at ensuring our work aligns with the highest standards of conservation practice required to remain nationally accredited, and most importantly, deserving of your trust.

That we are able to accomplish this in the midst of national financial turmoil is a blessing we do not take for granted. The compatibility and mixed skills of our board and staff members, supplemented by an active team of community volunteers supporting this work at all levels, is our strength. We have a lively and exciting work environment helping us feel we can contribute meaningfully to the quality of life in this special community. Land protection, environmental education, and stewardship responsibilities are legacy work extending our efforts well beyond our lifetimes and those of our land and financial contributors. We could not do it all without the continuing support of our community and generous donors. THANK YOU from all of us at **Sakonnet Preservation!**

Annual Meeting

Sakonnet Preservation's Annual Meeting will take place at the Little Compton Community Center on July 23, 2025. Mocktails, beer and wine, as well as hors d'oeuvres, will be served downstairs starting at 6 pm. Upstairs at 7 pm, a short business meeting will be followed by speaker and Little Compton resident Sue Theriault. The public is invited to join us for this free, celebratory event.

"What you notice becomes your life." Sue will reflect on the people, ideas and experiences that inspired and shaped her native plant journey and how this passion has taken her beyond her own yard into work with local organizations, including **Sakonnet Preservation**, the Little Compton Tree Committee and the Sogkonate Garden Club. These groups all promote the importance of habitat-supporting stewardship of both privately held and conserved properties. Sue serves as Vice President of the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society and as leader of its statewide program **ReSeeding Rhode Island**.

Please join us!

Conservation site selection

A strategic approach to land protection

Protecting land for future generations requires more than good intentions. It demands a systematic approach to evaluating each potential acquisition's conservation values. Whether considering a conservation easement or the outright ownership of a property, we must carefully assess multiple factors to ensure our limited resources achieve maximum conservation impact and we have the long-term capacity to properly steward what we accept.

Through years of refinement, our evolving site selection process currently centers on nine core criteria that help us screen properties for their conservation value.

Water Protection Properties within wellhead protection areas or drinking water supply watersheds that serve the essential function of helping ensure potable community water supplies.

Special Ecosystems Vulnerable ecosystems based on assessing whether properties harbor rare, threatened, or endangered species that represent irreplaceable conservation opportunities.

Habitat & Wetlands Lands containing wetlands, stream corridors, or high-value wildlife habitat that provide crucial services including flood control and water filtration while helping reduce contamination of stream flow into coastal ponds and the ocean.

Agricultural Soils Prime farmland soils and soils of statewide importance that deserve permanent protection, particularly when committed to continued agricultural production.

Forest Parcels within larger forested areas that protect drinking water, filter air, and sequester carbon, while providing flood protection, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation opportunities supporting public health.

Connectivity Properties that abut or are close to existing conservation land that create larger, more resilient protected areas to better support wildlife movement and ecosystem function.

Public Access Properties with the potential to support public access without significant compromise to conservation values.

Scenic Value Parcels that provide scenic views from roadways and from off-shore that contribute to community character and protect elements of the historic rural landscape that defines our region.

This approach ensures that every potential acquisition receives evaluation based on scoring criteria rather than subjective preferences. The result is a portfolio of protected lands intended to preserve Little Compton's natural heritage and resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

Joy Elvin, Executive Director

Get involved. Make a difference.



The landscape of Little Compton thrives because people like you care deeply about preserving its natural beauty, wildlife, and rural character. There are many ways to be part of this important work:

- Volunteer for stewardship projects
- Attend community walks and events
- Stay informed—subscribe to our newsletter
- Spread the word about land conservation

Sakonnet Preservation relies almost exclusively on donor contributions for its work preserving open space and providing conservation education to all ages in the community with activities, volunteer opportunities and web-based as well as mailed newsletters. Donations supporting our work can be paid by check; credit card payment online at sakonnetpreservation.org; with contributions from donor-advised funds; with gifts of appreciated stock; or with Required Minimum Distribution funds from an IRA. For direct transfer of funds or financial instruments please contact us for instructions.

Beyond the garden gate

How childhood exploration shaped a literary icon

As a child growing up on scenic estates in Scotland and northern England, this curious mind developed a profound connection with the natural world. Together with her brother, this youngster collected and carefully studied various small creatures, meticulously sketching their forms and behaviors. These childhood encounters with nature would later become the foundation for characters that would enchant millions.

In 1902, a first book featuring one particularly mischievous garden visitor was published, achieving immediate popularity and launching what would become a remarkable literary career. Over the nearly two decades that followed, a collection of 24 charming tales emerged, each filled with delicate illustrations that perfectly captured their animal subjects.



But there was more to this creative soul than just storytelling. A passionate interest in scientific observation, particularly mycology (the study of fungi), revealed a mind equally devoted to art and science. This dedication to scientific inquiry was so serious that in 1897, a paper on fungal spore reproduction was prepared for the prestigious Linnean Society—despite the fact that women at that time were barred from attending meetings.

This pioneering English figure, who blended artistic vision with scientific curiosity and created some of the most beloved characters in children's literature, was none other than Beatrix Potter, creator of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.

Potter's life journey powerfully illustrates why children's outdoor play is not merely recreation but a vital foundation for lifelong passions and achievements. Those early days spent exploring the countryside, observing wildlife, and sketching animals didn't just provide childhood amusement, they planted the seeds for extraordinarily creative and scientific pursuits that would shape her entire life's work. When children roam freely in nature, collecting leaves, watching insects, or simply wondering at the world around them, they develop a curiosity that can blossom into profound knowledge, creativity, and purpose. Just as Potter's childhood explorations transformed into beloved stories that have enchanted generations, every child who climbs trees, examines pond water, or follows butterfly paths, is building neural connections and forming questions that may one day change our world in ways we cannot yet imagine. The greatest gift we can offer our children is not structured enrichment but the freedom to discover the natural world with wonder—for in those seemingly simple moments of play, future scientists, artists, and visionaries are born.

Joy Elvin, Executive Director



Reclaiming native habitats

The Taylor & Lisle restoration project

For any visitors or passersby to the Taylor & Lisle property since **Sakonnet Preservation** acquired it through donation in 2008, one thing is clear: what was once a hayfield is now overwhelmed by invasive species. Asian bittersweet vines strangle trees, multiflora rose forms impenetrable thickets, and Japanese knotweed steadily advances through meadow areas. But change is coming to this special 3.3-acre parcel, as our team embarks on an ambitious five-year restoration project.

The Taylor & Lisle property represents a common challenge in land conservation. When agricultural fields are abandoned without proper ecological transition planning, invasive species often capitalize on the disturbance. Today, approximately 60% of this property is dominated by non-native invasives including autumn olive, burning bush, European privet, and various honeysuckle species. Even the stream corridor running through the western portion has been overtaken, limiting access to this natural resource for our local wildlife.

"This property has tremendous potential as wildlife habitat," explains Adam Yorks, our Stewardship Director and certified Rhode Island Invasive Plant Manager who will oversee the project, "but that potential can only be realized through active restoration."

With permission from CRMC, we hope to implement a species-specific restoration plan that honors our no-herbicide policy. For the 1.6 acres of invasive shrub/scrub, we'll use our sickle bar mower, hand tools and other low-impact methods to minimize disturbance to nesting birds. Cleared areas will be immediately replanted with diverse native shrubs sourced from Rhode Island growers, with each plant marked and protected from deer browse with wire mesh cages.

For the challenging Japanese knotweed infestation, we're adopting a proven method combining timed mowing with tarp smothering. The affected 8000 square-foot area will be covered with durable woven ground covers secured with an extended perimeter to prevent root spread. The common reed or *Phragmites* population will be controlled through strategic repeated mowing, while invasive gray willow will be removed and replaced with native pussy willow along the stream channel.

Throughout the five-year project, we'll conduct intensive monitoring and maintenance to ensure invasives don't reestablish. Newly planted natives will be carefully tended with mulching and watering as needed.



When complete, the Taylor & Lisle property will showcase a mosaic of native habitats: meadow, wet meadow, maritime shrubland, and shrub swamp with a healthy riparian zone along the stream channel. This diversity will support a wide range of native wildlife that depends on these increasingly rare habitat types. This project represents our commitment not just to preserving land, but to enhancing its ecological value through active stewardship. The thoughtful replacement of invasive plants with native alternatives follows a "like-for-like" approach, maintaining vegetation structure while dramatically improving habitat quality. Recently, we have been working directly with landowners and sponsoring workshops that teach non-native plant identification and removal techniques with suggestions for appropriate native plantings to replace them.

Visit our website to learn how you can support this restoration project and our related educational initiatives through donations or volunteer opportunities. One-by-one and together, we can transform our impaired landscapes into thriving native ecosystems that benefit our entire community for generations to come.

Adam Yorks, Stewardship Director

Among the various conservation groups working in Little Compton, **Sakonnet Preservation** is distinguished by its willingness to accept properties for conservation that may not be a priority for other groups. We are open to accepting small parcels which make up a high percentage of the remaining undeveloped land in our community. Such parcels are vital for protecting groundwater, habitat corridors, historic stone walls and scenic vistas that define our precious landscape.

Land Trust Advocacy Days in Washington, DC

Representatives of land trusts around the country meet every year in Washington, DC for the national Land Trust Alliance's Advocacy Days. The gathering spotlights the importance of conservation to members of Congress. The Nature Conservancy estimates that each \$1 invested in conservation programs returns \$1.58 in real value to communities. Conserving and stewarding land has historically been viewed positively and with bi-partisan support. But the value of relatively small programs such as ours, supported by federal grants and leveraged with local volunteers, isn't always appreciated, making outreach to our Congressional representatives important.

This year, Board member Davy Cutts attended Advocacy Days on behalf of **Sakonnet Preservation** and visited the offices of Senators Reed and Whitehouse, and Representative Amo, whose District 1 includes Little Compton. As one example of leveraged investment, Cutts described the volunteer and contracted work of forest management on SPA's conserved Blanchard property, vital to maintaining its conservation values. This effort is facilitated by annual grants of \$4,000 from the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) currently experiencing major staffing and funding removal. Cutts also shared details about the joint application from SPA and the Town of Little Compton to the RI DEM for funding to secure engineering plans for the Ponderosa Pond watershed and the associated Dunderly Brook water flow out of the pond to the fire hydrant on Meetinghouse Lane. This work is needed to provide a reliable water source in case of a fire

emergency at the Commons as well as to maintain the conservation values of the Ponderosa Pond and stream flow, and to control it for both flooding and drought. RI DEM, which receives 30% of its funding from federal programs experiencing deep funding cuts, has approved the grant request for the initial planning. Will there be grants available to support the recommended engineering plan? Highlighting local conservation activity, made possible with critical federal fund investment, is especially important at this time of Congressional budget decision-making.

Both Davy and Rex Linville, accompanying him as a representative of the Land Trust Alliance, are grateful to Senator Reed and Representative Amo for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with them. Although unavailable to meet, Senator Whitehouse provided legislative staff to hear their concerns. Cutts was the only attendee at the event representing a RI-based land trust.



On being a Board member

A lifelong learner finds a “green growing edge”

Achieving a certain advanced age arrives with no lack of advice on how to focus one’s retirement. Two sources of guidance landed solidly with me: 1) do more of what you love, and less of what you don’t love (a colleague) and 2) always keep a “green growing edge” about you (author Mary Pipher). The opportunity presents itself to reframe one’s personal direction, goals, and priorities. My intention for this time is to embrace lifelong learning, be outdoors more, protect our environment, make community connections, and engage in fun exercise while being useful.

In 2019 Lawre Goodnow asked me to join her as a Sakonnet Preservation Association (SPA) property monitor. I saw an opportunity to address my environmental interests while having a good time and getting exercise with my friend. When Abigail Brooks invited me to join the SPA board in 2023, a “yes” was my easy and quick answer. I was excited about the opportunity to engage more deeply with a community organization whose work and mission are so closely aligned with my values.

Being a board member comes with a time commitment and set of responsibilities while opening one’s eyes to our surrounding land and current events with related impacts on the environment. It provides diverse learning experiences that include exposure to expert speakers, mentoring from stewardship teachers, in depth learning from attending national land trust conferences, and more. The topics keep broadening for me: watershed risks and opportunities; good bugs; native plants; invasive plants/vines; bird life and bird counts; conservation corridors; fostering a yard of butterflies and lightening bugs; leaving the leaves; creative uses of hemp; turtle behaviors;

how to coexist with deer, coyotes, foxes, woodchucks, rabbits, possum, and other wildlife; the emerging area of green burials; open spaces to hike while contemplating who walked there before me, and so very much more. The notion that a plant likes “wet feet”, once puzzling, now makes perfect sense to me. Little did I know the range of topics I would be exposed to and the diverse conservation properties I would monitor and appreciate.

I am learning more about Little Compton and its residents, both past and present. I make connections and collaborate with fellow citizens/neighbors who possess shared values. There are many of them determined to protect the natural wonders of Little Compton. This is good for the soul. **Sakonnet Preservation** board membership has helped me keep that “green growing edge” about myself, which makes it a great fit for a self-declared lifelong learner. Happily, there is much more to learn.

Jeannie McAllister



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2024 Financial Report

Sakonnet Preservation Association is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The financial records are independently reviewed annually.

Sakonnet Preservation is in excellent financial health and continues to build a strong foundation for our conservation mission. Our investment portfolio of \$2.8 million generates substantial annual returns that cover the majority of our operating expenses, ensuring sustainable operations while preserving our capital base. With total net assets valued at over \$8.5 million, (which includes the value of our conservation easements and properties owned outright) and minimal liabilities, we maintain the financial stability needed to protect Little Compton’s natural landscapes for future generations.

Key financial highlights

- Investment returns (\$303,479 total - cash returns + unrealized gains) exceeded operating expenses (\$209,423) by 45%
- Strong asset base of \$8+ million with minimal debt (only \$17,509 in liabilities)
- 50th Anniversary Campaign nearly complete at 93% of all pledged gifts
- Conservative debt-to-asset ratio of just 0.1%
- Diversified funding through investments, donations, and restricted contributions

Balance sheet highlights (pie chart below)

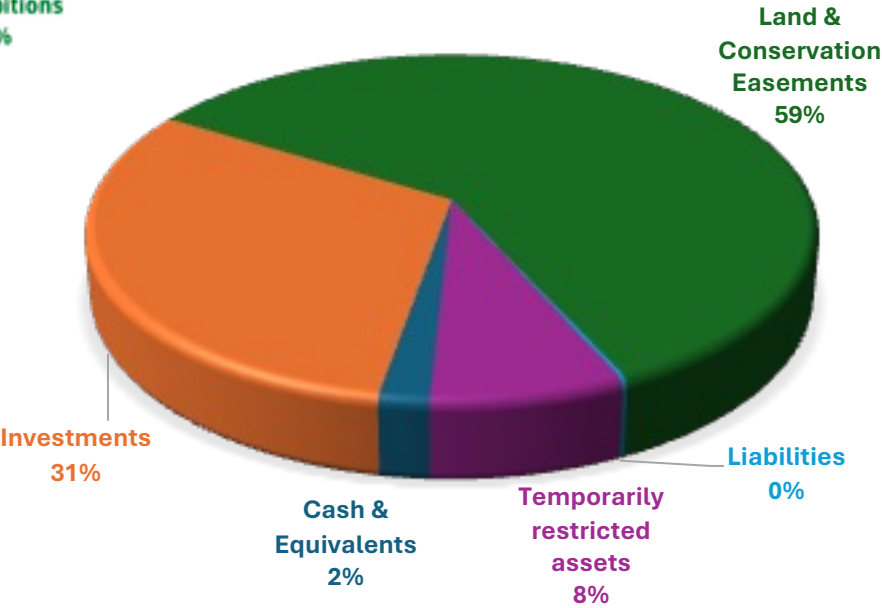
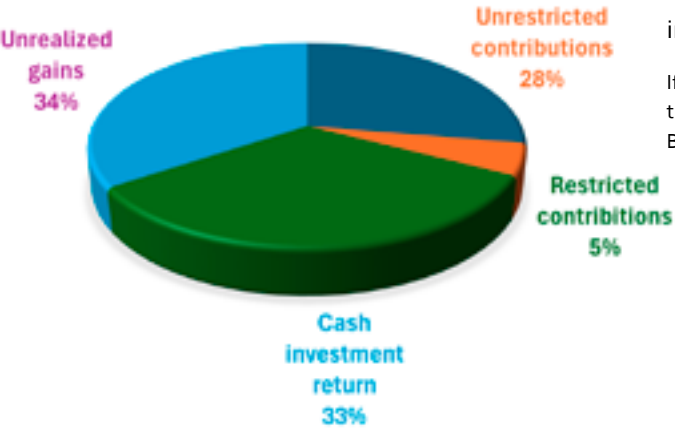
• Cash & Equivalents	\$177,306.00
• Investments	\$2,817,961.00
• Land & Conservation Easements	\$5,415,688.00
• Liabilities	\$(17,509.00)
• Temporarily restricted assets	\$682,258.00

The financial statements of the organization are prepared using the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America (US GAAP) established by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB).

Budget vs Actual – Expenses for 2024 were in line with the budgeted forecast. Investments exceeded projections. SPA also exceeded estimated revenue as donations have not declined. The stock market is currently volatile, and SPA has invested carefully to minimize instability.

If you would like a copy of the Sakonnet Preservation’s Audited Financial Statements for the twelve months ending December 2024, prepared by Katharine Estes, CPA, please contact Vienna Booth, spa@sakonnetpreservation.org

Income statement highlights



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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.

