



NEWS FROM

ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST

Protecting Nature for Our Community

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST PARTNERS WITH ORLEANS SCHOOLS New Grant Program and "Outdoor Classrooms" Will Bring Kids Closer to Nature

Orleans, MA /April 13, 2023 – The Orleans Conservation Trust (OCT) has partnered with Orleans schools on two new initiatives that will enhance environmental education for local students. OCT Director of Land Stewardship Alex Bates led teams of volunteers and AmeriCorps Cape Cod members in refurbishing a trail that leads from Orleans Elementary School (OES) and Nauset Regional Middle School (NRMS) along Boland Pond, right on school property. At each trailhead are newly created "outdoor classrooms," equipped with sturdy wooden benches installed at "kid level."

OES fifth graders visited their outdoor classroom for a trial run, bringing notebooks to document evidence of producers, consumers, and decomposers in the forest food chain. Back in the (indoor) classroom, the class looked at water bugs, baby crayfish, and other Boland Pond life under microscopes. "I love it! I can't wait to go again!" exclaimed one student. OCT will maintain the trail and classrooms so that they remain safe and accessible for the students.

Working closely with administrators and teachers at both schools, OCT also recently launched a pilot grant program that will support nine outdoor education projects between OES and NRMS. Nearly \$18,000 will be awarded for this year's grant, which will help teachers and hundreds of students enhance their environmental education by working with Wampanoag community members, Mass Audubon educators, and the Center for Coastal Studies during the current spring term and the next school year.

OES Principal Elaine Pender thanked OCT for providing the new outdoor classroom and the grants: "The outdoor learning space and new funding opportunities propel our efforts to offer purposeful educational experiences that connect to students' everyday lives. By understanding their local environment, they become local experts and stewards of their community."

The grant program adds an important new dimension to OCT's educational work, says Executive Director Steve O'Grady. "Members can look forward to the teachers and students reporting on their progress at our Annual Meeting this summer. We also plan to showcase the projects in more detail in our newsletters."

Orleans Conservation Trust is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1970. Over its 50-year history, the Trust has preserved more than 660 acres in Orleans. Among the most active land trusts on Cape Cod, OCT stewards a range of ecosystems, from freshwater ponds and wetlands to saltmarshes, wooded upland, and coastal grasslands, managing its lands to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, restore native ecosystems, and provide public recreation and education through a network of trails and informational signage. OCT also educates residents and visitors about important natural values and environmental issues in Orleans and around Cape Cod via guided walks, free lectures, its website, newsletter, and other communications.

[All photos cleared for use.]



Orleans Elemenatry School students try out the new outdoor classroom space. Photo by Cirrus Farber.



Fifth grade students explore the edge of Boland Pond. Photo by Cirrus Farber.



Orleans Conservation Trust staff and volunteers install benches in the outdoor classroom. Photo by Diana Landau.