



NEWS FROM

ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST

Protecting Nature for Our Community

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST RECEIVES EXTRAORDINARY GIFT OF LAND 26 Acres on Pleasant Bay Protected

Orleans, MA /August 9, 2024 – On June 27, an anonymous donor gave the Orleans Conservation Trust (OCT) a 25.79-acre waterfront property on Pleasant Bay. The donation is the largest and most valuable upland property OCT has acquired since 1973. Excepting the Eastward Ho! golf course, this was the largest unprotected property anywhere on Pleasant Bay. With this large gift, the Trust has surpassed a significant milestone: 700 acres protected in Orleans.

“Words cannot adequately express our excitement and sincere appreciation for this incredible gift,” said OCT President Kevin Galligan. “It shows how good things can happen in our world when we have long-term relationships, and when donors recognize that their conservation values align perfectly with the mission of the Orleans Conservation Trust.”

The land, named Namequoit Wood Conservation Area at the request of the donor, is largely forested with a mix of pine, oak, red cedar, and maple. There is a state-certified vernal pool – crucial for breeding amphibians – as well as 620 feet of Pleasant Bay beachfront, backed by a 40-foot-high coastal bank. The land has long been enrolled in the Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program, which “supports and encourages private forest landowners’ efforts to manage, enjoy, and care for their land using a long-term approach.” The donor had carefully managed the property to promote wildlife habitat and biodiversity while protecting water quality. OCT’s ownership ensures careful management for those purposes will continue for generations to come.

The property hosted a portion of Camp Viking (1940s through 1980s), one of several summer camps on Pleasant Bay where hundreds of boys sailed, practiced archery, and played softball. A modest home, two small bunkhouses, a boathouse, and a garage will be removed by OCT, consistent with the donor’s wishes. The area will be seeded with a native grass and wildflower mix, which will jumpstart the rewilding effort. The old softball field has long since grown in and boasts a healthy stand of milkweed, the favorite plant of monarch butterflies.

The land abuts additional OCT-protected lands – the 22.3-acre Namequoit Bog and an additional 3.5-acre saltwater property on Namequoit River – making for more than 50 acres of contiguous conservation land. This property significantly expands an assemblage of hundreds of acres of protected lands in South Orleans.

Mark H. Robinson, Executive Director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, who consulted on the project, said “In almost 40 years of working with hundreds of private landowners on open space protection, I can list on one hand the number who have made such a generous contribution to conservation on Cape Cod. This is surely one of those. The property’s size, strategic location in the Pleasant Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the mix of upland forest and field, saltwater and freshwater wetlands, the width and breadth of the property—all of these features make it a flagship property in OCT’s preservation portfolio.”

Because the property’s primary purpose will be habitat preservation, public access will be limited to OCT guided walks. “The donor wished to minimize human disturbance, so our guided walks will provide a unique opportunity to see this magnificent property,” said OCT Executive Director Steve O’Grady. “We have a mix of public access opportunities amongst our landholdings, and we are always willing to work with landowners to achieve their wishes.”

***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.*



The land donation protects Pleasant Bay water quality and preserves a beautiful viewshed along the bay shore. Photo: Stephen O’Grady.



The property includes a mix of woodland and open habitat and affords stunning views of Pleasant Bay and its islands. Photo: Stephen O'Grady.



Bunkhouses that once housed summer campers will be removed from the property and the area will be rewilded, consistent with the donor's wishes. Photo: Stephen O'Grady.