



NEWS FROM

# ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST

Protecting Nature for Our Community

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## **ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST RECEIVES \$100,000 GRANT FROM MASSACHUSETTS DIVISION OF ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION FOR NAMEQUOIT BOG**

*Orleans, MA / November 27, 2024* – Orleans, MA – The Orleans Conservation Trust (OCT) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) to support planning and design of an eco-restoration project at OCT's 23-acre Namequoit Bog Conservation Area. This funding will enable OCT to gather data and develop a comprehensive restoration plan for the bog, with the ultimate goal of transforming it into a thriving wetland ecosystem, either as a freshwater wetland, estuarine wetland, or a combination of both.

Namequoit Bog is a complex wetland system that sits just above sea level yet currently functions as a freshwater wetland ecosystem. The grant will allow OCT to carry out crucial planning and design work, laying the foundation for a multi-phase restoration project aimed at improving water quality, supporting local biodiversity, enhancing resilience to climate change, and promoting the ecological health of the surrounding areas, including Paw Wah Pond and Little Pleasant Bay. Key areas of focus will include planning for the removal of invasive species, the introduction of native plant communities, and the evaluation of hydrological changes that may benefit or challenge restoration efforts.

"This property serves crucial ecosystem functions today: filtering runoff and septic effluent from surrounding homes before water enters the Pleasant Bay system, buffering against coastal flooding, and providing valuable wildlife habitat. But we need to understand how to manage this critical resource now and into the future as sea levels rise. This DER grant will be a huge help," says OCT Director of Land Stewardship, Tom Keras.

The property was once a cranberry bog, as evidenced by ditches running through the wetland and "borrow pits" along the banks surrounding the bog, where sand was excavated to apply to the cranberry vines to stimulate new growth. With financial support from the Town, OCT purchased the property from the Heyelman family in 1998. A member of that family, Rachia Heyelman, still owns over 20 acres in the vicinity of the bog and plans to bequeath that land to OCT. The bog also abuts the 26-acre Namequoit Wood Conservation Area that was anonymously donated to the Trust in June. The assemblage of protected land here serves as a stronghold for local wildlife.

"We have been investing more each year in the stewardship of our lands," says Executive Director Steve O'Grady. "I think the community is starting to take notice of that. I hope there are other

landowners out there who realize how much we care and consider OCT when they're deciding what will become of their property.”

The grant contract period runs through June 2026. The award to OCT was one of 12 from DER's Cranberry Bog and Coastal Wetland Restoration Program, six of which will support planning and design work, and six of which will support construction on projects across Southeast Massachusetts.

Learn more about Orleans Conservation Trust here:

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/847083186>.

*Orleans Conservation Trust is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1970. Over its 50-year history, the Trust has preserved 700 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 grants to Orleans schools, guided walks, free lectures, its website, newsletter, and other communications.*

[All photos cleared for use.]



A network of ditches through Namequoit Bog are evidence of the land's historic use as a cranberry bog. Photo by OCT staff.



Namquoit Bog from above, with Paw Wah Pond and Pleasant Bay visible in the background. A slough holds water year-round most years, and ospreys have nested in standing dead trees in the bog in recent years. Photo by Hardie Truesdale.