



Director's Report  
January 23, 2015  
Kris Ramsay

### **Administrative**

**2015 Budget:** In mid-November and again in early December, I met with the Executive Committee to review and revise the draft 2015 budget. This budget was presented to the full Board on January 13, at which time the Board unanimously approved the proposed 2015 budget.

**Declaration of Trust:** The Governance Committee met on October 21, November 20, and December 15. At each meeting the committee reviewed the feedback from members and revised the amended language to best suit the expected needs of the Trust moving ahead. Since that time the revised Declaration has been reviewed by attorney David Parke, who provided a few suggestions that were discussed and most accepted as needed by the committee and the Board.

The primary revisions to the DoT include:

- Reaffirming our purpose, which is to acquire and hold land in its natural state for conservation purposes forever;
- Ensuring that the Trust conforms to all state and federal regulations, thus guaranteeing that the Trust retains its charitable status;
- Raising the minimum number of Trustees from 5 to 7;
- Giving a vote to each member of any two-person household, that makes a gift or joins as members at a level at least twice the amount of an individual membership (currently \$25);
- Creating an independent nominating committee process to nominate and elect future trustees; and
- Establishing achievable quorum levels for our future meetings, elections, and amendments to the Declaration of Trust.

At its January 13 meeting the Board of Trustees scheduled a Special Meeting of the Members on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 5:00 pm at the Orleans Council on Aging (150 Rock Harbor Road, Orleans). This Special Meeting will present the proposed draft of the **revised Declaration of Trust (DoT)**, which has been approved unanimously by the Trustees. Most members were notified of the Special Meeting by e-mail during the second week of January, and a postcard was sent out to Members for whom we don't have email addresses. Members will be asked to approve this revised DoT in the spring.

**Orleans Water Quality Advisory Panel:** I continue to attend the advisory panel meetings every other week. For all the meeting materials, go to <http://www.town.orleans.ma.us/water-quality-advisory-panel/pages/workshop-materials>. At the January 13 Board meeting I provided an overview of the OWQAP planning process, the materials that have been provided, the revised hybrid plan being proposed, modifications to the nontraditional projects being evaluated, the financial model overview, and key milestones that need to be completed before spring Town meeting.

**Green Week/AmeriCorps Week:** Since November 2014, OCT AmeriCorps Individual Placement (IP) Frank DeLeo and Town of Orleans Tree Warden AmeriCorps IP Matt Rusnak have laid the groundwork for Green Week 2015, which will run from April 13 – 17. The main focus continues to be the Town's Boland Pond restoration project and finding ways to work with students from the middle and elementary schools. Tentative plans for the week are to:

- Install a walking trail south of Boland Pond that will traverse both the Nauset Elementary and Middle School for students and teachers to use;
- Create an outdoor classroom with direct access to the edge of the pond;
- Construct bird and duck boxes to be installed on school grounds and within the pond;
- Construct a shed to store, among other things, outdoor educational equipment;
- Plant native shrub species outside the greenhouse;
- Clean up any trash found within the woodlands on school grounds;
- Remove invasive plant species from school grounds; and
- Implement educational lessons for students from both schools.

Early in January, I made a presentation to the Nauset Regional School Committee, which voted to support the trail installation. On February 9, I will present to the Elementary School Committee and request its support for the trail installation.

Since this is a collaborative effort among a number of organizations, the Barnstable County AmeriCorps Program has decided to host its National Volunteer Week in Orleans to further support our Green Week efforts. On January 22, we were informed that we have been awarded a \$4,500 Massachusetts Service Alliance grant, which the County will match dollar for dollar, giving us a total of \$9,000 to offset costs associated with the projects listed above.

Town-wide Trail Guide: In May of this year, the Trust was awarded a \$15,000 Community Preservation Act grant to help fund the design and printing of a Town-wide walking trail guide. This past month the layout of the maps and the trail narratives were finalized. The only thing left to do is to color-code the trails themselves so that map users will understand exactly where they are on the trail at any given point. It is my hope that these maps will be printed and be available to the public by mid-March.

### **Land Acquisition**

Braddock Potential Gift: On December 12, 2014, we recorded the plan of lands, deed, and conservation restriction associated with the preservation of 2.1 acres located at 1 Braddock's Way, Orleans. Since these documents were recorded before the end of 2014, the Braddocks will be able to take advantage of the state tax credit. Since the closing we have sent the Braddocks an official acknowledgment letter for IRS purposes, notified the Town assessor of the change in ownership, and worked with the appraiser to update the property appraisal to meet IRS specifications.

Walton Potential CR: As reported last month, on November 12, 2014, the Town Open Space Committee voted to support the proposed CR. On January 23 we received feedback on the CR from the state. In the coming week(s) we will edit the document based on the state's suggestions, and then move ahead to get votes of support and signatures from the Town's Conservation Commission and Board of Selectman (as required). We are also assisting Mr. Walton through the appraisal process.

### **Land Management**

Upcoming AmeriCorps Project: On January 30, I worked with 6 – 8 AmeriCorps Fire Core members at Namequoit Bog. (On January 14 a letter was sent to all the abutters of the property to inform them of the work to be conducted.) We conducted controlled brush burns to reduce the amount of dead vegetation found within the bog. This work is needed because many of our local plants and animals require open, sunny habitats that are not found in heavily shaded areas. To date, the careful cutting of the dead vegetation has proven effective in opening a closed canopy, and has produced a positive response in the bog's plant community—especially for wetland herbs that require sunlight at the surface to germinate and grow. Mowing back and removing dead vegetation has also benefitting surface-basking reptiles, amphibians, and insects.

Property Booklet: In the coming month, the Land Management Committee will meet to discuss, among other action items, updating the Trust's property booklet. The committee is particularly interested in finding the most cost-effective and efficient way to provide a digital option that would be available to Members via the Trust website. Ideally we would showcase the location of each property along with its acreage, acquisition date, trails (if any), and any unique features of the site.

## Communications/Marketing

Newsletter: On January 9, I met with Diana Landau (chair of Marketing and Communication Committee) to discuss the general layout and content of the spring 2015 newsletter. Since then I have developed a timeline to get each of the stories completed, and identified the family whose donation will be featured in a two-page story. I expect the newsletter to be completed and mailed out by the end of April.

Hats: I concur with several Trustees who believe we should make OCT-branded billed caps available, and am in the process of getting bids and working out the design.

## Fundraising

Year-end Appeal: The year-end appeal mailing was finalizing and mailed out during the first week of December. Compared to last year's year-end appeal, we saw a response rate growth of 9% and an increase of roughly 8% in the dollar-amount of gifts received. The Fundraising Committee recommended that thank-you letters be sent to each of these donors.

## Educational Meetings/ Programs

### Recent Walks:

- **Twinnings Pond Conservation Area** – On December 19, I led a walk through the Twinnings Pond Conservation Area. Among other things the 15 attendees learned in detail about how the land came to be preserved, recent land management efforts, and local animal species commonly found on site.
- **Hosea's Swamp** – On January 5, some 45 Trust members and others enjoyed a chilly but rewarding walk along the edges of Hosea's Swamp, a unique Atlantic white cedar woodland off Quanset Road in South Orleans. Kris Ramsay, Orleans Conservation Trust (OCT) director, and Marcus Hendricks, board member of the Native Land Conservancy (Mashpee), co-led the interpretive walk. Also present was Mark Robinson, director of The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, Inc.



Upcoming Walk: On February 5 at 10:00 am, Frank DeLeo and I will co-lead a walk at the Marion Hadley and Samuel Watson Peck Conservation Area (off Arey's Lane). This property is made up of two large residential lots that were purchased in 2006 by the Town of Orleans to preserve all of the high hill overlooking the entrance to Arey's Pond, an active small-craft boatyard and mooring area. Those lots constitute this 8.2-acre property fringing the hill, where the last Indian meetinghouse in Orleans was sited. The land falls within a state-designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern and has been known to attract otters.

Recent Lecture: On Monday, January 5, at 6:30 pm, the Orleans Conservation Trust (OCT) hosted the first of five presentations in our *2015 Winter & Spring Lecture Series* at the Orleans Yacht Club. For more than an hour and half, Norman Smith, director of the Mass Audubon Blue Hills Trailside Museum, amazed and inspired the 100-plus attendees gathered on a cold winter night as he discussed his Snowy Owl Project.

Upcoming Lecture: On Monday, February 2 (*since rescheduled for Thursday, February 5*), Bonnie Snow, longtime Orleans resident and amateur historian, will discuss the history of the lands now conserved on Town Cove, including Sea Call Farm, Meadow on the Cove, and the Windmill. The presentation will take place at the Orleans Yacht Club (39 Cove Road) and will run from 6:30 – 7:30 pm (doors open at 6:00 pm).