The Pocasset Ridge Journey—People Preserving Places

Earlier this year the final piece of a 15-year preservation project was put in place when a small parcel of land that fronts on Main Road was protected by the Tiverton Open Space Commission. This sliver of wooded wetland and granite outcrop might not seem much to celebrate, except for the fact that it joined two large aggregates of parcels that now make up a single, contiguous 500-acre protected forest, the Pocasset Ridge Conservation Area.

Saving a mature, continuous canopy forest of this size along the densely populated southern New England coastline is a major environmental achievement. It involved negotiating the purchase of eleven separate land parcels, cobbled together over a period of 15 years by three different land preservation organizations and a long list of funders.

The eventual scope of this project would seem daunting at the outset, assuming anyone truly envisioned where it would end, or tried to assess the overall challenge of getting it done. But, over the years, one by one, opportunities arose to protect individual properties, and the local “triad” of land protectors, the Tiverton Land Trust, the Tiverton Open Space Commission, and The Nature Conservancy, seized them. Each in its own way coordinated efforts, negotiated with owners, wrote grants, and found the funding until the final piece of the puzzle was put in place this year.

There are many stories that can be told about this project, but one major acquisition came out of a 40-year relationship between Tiverton Land Trust board member Mike Shand and his friend from New York, Arthur Tasker. When these two old friends were together a few years ago, there were many common interests to talk about, since Tasker has been involved for several years with land preservation projects with the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, and Long Island’s Peconic Land Trust.

The conversation naturally led to Mike’s role with Tiverton Land Trust, and his passionate description of an extremely valuable parcel in a major forested tract that was targeted for protection. This resonated with Tasker. As the executor for the estate of his long-time acquaintance, J. Philip Anderegg, he was in a singular position to help. The estate included...
President’s Message

As I approach the end of my 10-year term on the board of the Tiverton Land Trust, I find myself thinking about what has made the us such a successful organization. Two groups of people keep us moving forward: our dedicated volunteers and our staunch financial supporters. And we doubly appreciate those of you in both capacities!

But there is nothing as constant as change. We build in change as a vital part of our organizational development by limiting our directors’ terms. Our support base also changes as other demands inevitably wear away at our ranks of volunteers and financial contributors.

And so we work hard to do what every non-profit volunteer organization must do to survive and thrive: bring in new members, new active volunteers, and new financial supporters. Fortunately, this isn’t a hard sell. Our recent Land Trust Association accreditation demonstrates that we are doing the job of land preservation in Tiverton according to the highest national standards. And our properties, both beautiful and well-maintained, are recognized as crucially important community assets. For me, one of the most satisfying things over the past 10 years has been a direct role in decisions and actions that will benefit our town forever. I have only to walk a short distance onto the new trails at Highland Woods Preserve to experience an immediate and tangible result of my tenure.

So if you aren’t already a Tiverton Land Trust volunteer, please consider becoming one. There are rewarding volunteer opportunities of all kinds and degrees. The 10-year term limit for directors means that we are constantly in search of new leaders for board service. And if you are not a regular financial contributor, please become one, starting with the donation envelope in this newsletter. End-of-year donations and memberships are our primary source of operating revenue. Please be as generous as you can.

Finally, I want to express my admiration and appreciation for all of the land trust volunteers I have worked with over the past 10 years. These are some of the most dedicated, public-spirited, and hard-working people I have ever met. Thanks, everyone, and I hope to see you out on the trails.

John Foley
President
For many people, September 17 was a usual Saturday of children’s sports and chores. But for a group of dedicated volunteers, exhibitors, and grill masters, it called for an early morning arrival at Pardon Gray Preserve.

The usually tranquil fields were full of activity, transformed into an old-fashioned country fair. The focus is always on family fun and food at a reasonable price. The south field filled with children and parents enjoying a perfect autumn day—playing games, fishing in the inflatable pond, driving toy trucks in the sandbox, and more.

Close by, a line of excited families waited for Bill Hathaway to tow them in a hay wagon with his big red tractor. Later, goats were rounded up for a border collie herding demonstration. Other outdoor activities abounded: pony rides, fire extinguisher training, a fire safety drill in a smoke-filled trailer. Tiverton High School students helped youngsters build bird houses. The Aquidneck Native American exhibition, pumpkin decorating, and scarecrow construction areas were crowded all day.

The stage was filled with great local musicians and bands. An enthusiastic crowd enjoyed the entertainment while eating homemade pies topped with Gray’s ice cream. Others toured the tent to take part in interactive displays or get an early start on holiday shopping from local artisans. With the largest attendance ever, all ages left with smiles on their faces after a nonstop day of family fun. The pie table ladies smiled most broadly when they took in a $1,000 bonanza from an anonymous contributor in honor of Marcia Phillips.

We hope you will continue to support the Tiverton Land Trust and its mission all year long. If you would like to become involved in Pardon Gray Day or join another committee you can reach us through the website: www.tivertonlandtrust.org.

—Sue Thayer-Kramers
a substantial fund to support land conservation. It was Tasker’s responsibility to select properties that would honor Anderegg and his wife, Etienne.

Tasker had already coordinated support for several major projects to protect watersheds in the Adirondack Mountains; to secure the last large parcel of the Baxter State Park wilderness area in Maine; and to save a valuable 20-acre parcel on Long Island Sound. Then came the fortuitous visit with Mike.

Tasker followed up with several visits to Tiverton to walk the land and meet with the Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy. The compelling vision behind the project, along with on-site appreciation of the Pocasset Ridge ecosystem, led him to support the Tiverton Land Trust’s protection of the critical 56-acre parcel.

Many individual efforts like this have led to the creation of The Pocasset Ridge Conservation Area. The preserve will be jointly managed by the three land preservation entities, in cooperation with Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, which provided grant support for several parcels. The goal is to have the area ready for public access in 2017. There is much work still to be done, such as developing a trail system and trailhead infrastructure.

Saving the Pocasset Ridge Conservation Area is an amazing success story that required years of sustained effort dealing with complex negotiations and multiple owners, supporters, and visionaries. Fifteen years ago it was an impossible dream, but the sustained work by each of Tiverton’s land preservation troika has, indeed, made it possible.

Yes, many stories can be told about this journey, and one began with two old friends getting together.

— Garry Plunkett

Seeking a Part-time Membership Assistant

Are you looking for a part-time position to supplement your income while making a difference in our community and environment? TLT is seeking a part-time Membership Assistant to:

• Enter and update donation, membership and volunteer data in Salesforce, our cloud-based relationship management software

• Produce gift and participation acknowledgement letters in a timely and professional manner

• Prepare routine and custom reports such as mailing lists and donor levels

Time commitment is approximately 8 hours a month, with more time in December, January and June. The accuracy, confidentiality and timeliness of your work will be critical to our organization and its membership.

Knowledge of Salesforce is preferred. But if you are familiar with mail-merge software and have solid experience in Microsoft Word and Excel, we are willing to train you in Salesforce. For further information, please email info@tivertonlandtrust.org with your name, phone number, and a few sentences about your qualifications. A member of the staff or board will contact you.
NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS:
Bill Gerlach and Eric Watne

BILL GERLACH is a nearly lifelong resident of Tiverton. He moved here in 1979, graduated from Tiverton High School in 1992, and returned to raise his family in 2005. Bill brings to the Tiverton Land Trust close to twenty years of business management experience with a focus on marketing, strategy, and customer experience design. More importantly, he brings a strong love of environmental stewardship, community, and public service.

Bill has held volunteer positions with the Tiverton Recycling Committee, Tiverton Library Building Committee, Cub Scouts Pack 10, Tiverton Little League, and Tiverton Youth Soccer. He also served on the Tiverton Town Council from 2012 to 2014. As Council Liaison to the Tiverton Conservation and Open Space Commissions, he helped establish greater protections of Stafford Pond, Tiverton’s only public drinking water supply.

Bill’s wife Sara is also a Tiverton native. They have three children who keep them on their toes. Bill enjoys all things outdoors, from backpacking to running to gardening. He also manages the local Facebook group, Sustainable Sakonnet. Bill holds a BS in psychology from Syracuse University and an MBA from Northeastern University.

ERIC WATNE has been a Tiverton resident for 12 years and a Rhode Island resident for more than 30 years. Eric’s background is in affordable housing finance. He has held positions at Rhode Island Housing, Cushing Companies in Boston, and most recently with Fannie Mae in their Housing & Community Development division. Before moving to Tiverton, Eric and his family resided in Newport, where he served as a Commissioner on the Newport Housing Authority.

Eric and his wife Catherine have two daughters, Emily and Liz, who are Tiverton High School graduates and currently attend college.

Eric holds a BA from the University of Washington in Seattle and an MBA from the University of Rhode Island. In addition to his new role on the TLT board, Eric is president of the Rhode Island Christmas Tree Growers Association and is captain and a competing member of the Narragansett Boat Club in Providence, the oldest rowing club in America.

COMING SOON – New Website

The Tiverton Land Trust is moving our website to a new host and the Joomla! Content Management System (CMS). The CMS will allow the board to more easily update and manage the site. In addition, the CMS allows us to better connect with our members using community-building features, electronic newsletters, online event registration and unlimited rich media to showcase the beauty of Tiverton’s open space. Board member Jennifer Escher is heading this effort.
The wonder is that we can see these trees and not wonder more.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Please be generous in your support of the Tiverton Land Trust – as you have been in the past!