



NEWS

NEWS FROM THE WAREHAM LAND TRUST • VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1 • WINTER 2010
This issue dedicated to the memory of Brendan McFadden



Good News (and some not-so-good news) for the Great Outdoors

“Across America, communities are uniting to protect the places they love, and developing new approaches to saving and enjoying the outdoors. They are bringing together farmers, land trusts, recreation and conservation groups, sportsmen, governments and industry... The Federal Government, the nation’s largest land manager, has a responsibility to engage with these partners to help develop a conservation agenda worthy of the 21st century.”

— President Barak Obama, April 16, 2010

Last spring, President Obama energized land protection advocates across the land when he launched the America’s Great Outdoors initiative. With charitable organizations of all kinds hit hard by a weak economy, federal support of environmental causes was good news indeed. On hand for the kick off were representatives of conservation organizations and land trusts nationwide, including regional partners of the Wareham Land Trust. The President’s goal is to reconnect Americans, especially children, to our seashores, great lakes and rivers, historic landscapes, national parks, farms and forests. In phase one of the initiative, the Administration held listening sessions across the country to explore priorities and learn about innovative community-based conservation programs. Next steps are to build on the best and the

brightest of local ideas by promoting existing programs, increasing conservation and recreation-based job and volunteer opportunities and encouraging more and larger public-private partnerships.

Shortly after the Great Outdoors Initiative announcement, we witnessed perhaps the worst environmental disaster in our nation’s history. Heartbreaking coverage of fish kills, oil soaked birds and livelihoods destroyed in the Gulf of Mexico dominated the airwaves. Yet, in the wake of this horror, new hope for the future of the environment emerged: On July 30, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Consolidated Land, Energy and Aquatic Resources Act (CLEAR) which among other things, mandates full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).^{*} Since 1965, the LWCF has protected more than seven million

acres of open space, including national parks, wildlife refuges, playgrounds, greenbelts and seashores even though it has only once in 45 years received its full \$900 million annual appropriation. At this writing, the Senate has yet to consider an energy reform bill but our hope is that it too will include dedicated LWCF funding.

At the state level, the Patrick administration continues to honor its pledge of at least \$50 million annually for open space protection. In 2009, that translated into 217 conservation projects protecting 18,644 acres through a combination of grants, fee purchases and conservation and agricultural preservation restrictions. An additional 3,029 acres were preserved through 147 conservation restrictions. 2010 funding has presented a greater challenge

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^{*}By way of reminder, the LWCF is funded with a small percentage of revenues from offshore oil and gas drilling leases. Over the years, monies have been diverted elsewhere and funding of the LWCF has risen and fallen with the environmental inclinations of sitting administrations and Capitol Hill.

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given even tougher economic times, but is on track to fulfill the administration's commitment.

The Wareham Land Trust has been the recipient of state grant money for several land acquisition projects in recent times as have other conservation groups with projects in our community. In this newsletter, we spotlight the Agawam River, which has benefited significantly from the Commonwealth's current open space commitment.

In Wareham, despite the lingering effects of devastating recession and a painfully slow recovery, the environment is still front and center on the local agenda. The state recently approved the Town's Open Space Plan which provides a municipal road map for land preservation and will clear the way for additional environmental grants and greater government funding. In addition, last winter, a volunteer citizens group, with guidance from the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, embarked on a comprehensive review of nitrogen pollution in our bays and estuaries and recently released a multi-year remediation action plan. WLT President John Browning, Vice President Mary McFadden and Board member Mack Phinney are contributing members of this important group.



photo by Kathy Pappalardo

Agawam River Trail

Along the Agawam

The River

It begins at Halfway Pond in Plymouth and wanders south a little more than ten miles through forest, pine barrens, long, narrow ponds and marshland till it joins the Wankinco to form the Wareham River and empty into Buzzards Bay. Along the way, it transverses the Plymouth Carver Aquifer, source of drinking water for seven communities in Southeastern Massachusetts, including our own. It hosts plants both rare and common and wildlife ranging from sun-bathing box turtles and the most delicate of damselflies fluttering about its banks to rare fresh water mussels and fascinating species of migrating fish. It passes cranberry bogs, skirts densely populated neighborhoods and travels beside and under roads and highways. It welcomes swimmers, boaters and fishermen. Its waters sparkle in the sunlight against a backdrop of early spring buds or bright autumn leaves. But all is not well with the Agawam.

The Water

As it flows, the Agawam absorbs fertilizers, septic seepage, fuel and sediment run off. The Wareham wastewater treatment facility—though subject in recent years to the most stringent discharge limits in the Commonwealth—further degrades the river downstream. The state of Massachusetts describes the Agawam as *impaired*, a Town of Wareham report called it *degraded*, and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, has identified it as one of the more eutrophic estuaries in the Buzzards Bay watershed—in other words, nitrogen loaded and oxygen starved. Fortunately, efforts are underway to address nitrogen pollution in Wareham, including the Agawam River. But much work lies ahead.

Flora and Fauna

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) has designated the Agawam River corridor a *priority water body/critical supporting watershed* (upstream and upland areas that have positive or negative affect on downstream habitat) and has identified parts of the corridor as core habitat for rare species, including the endangered American Waterwort (plant), Long's Bitter-cress (plant) and the Northern Red-bellied Cooter (reptile). The Agawam is also home of one of the most diverse anadromous fish runs in the Buzzards Bay watershed. Anadromous fish are those that each year, like clockwork, migrate from coastal waters to fresh water to spawn. American Shad, Rainbow Smelt, and White Perch spawn downstream in the Agawam while so-called river herring—alewives and bluebacks—favor upstream Glen Charlie and Halfway ponds.

What happened to the herring?

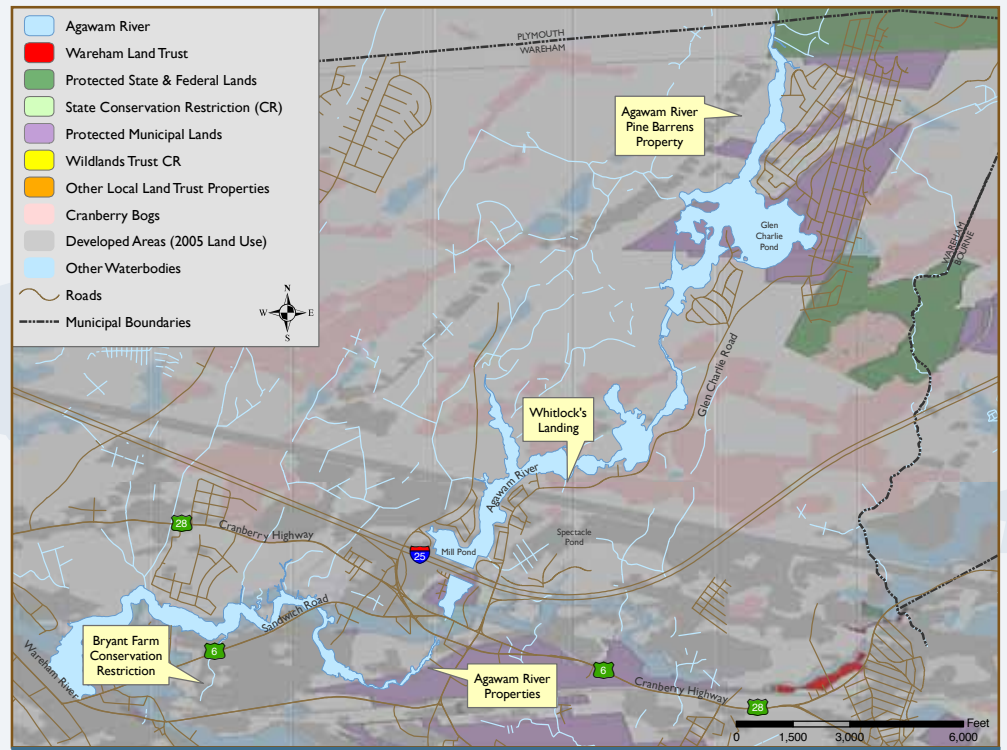
Centuries ago, the Agawam's bountiful fish population nourished Native Americans and early settlers and the river was the site of one of the earliest herring runs in the new world. More than 350 years later, a fish ladder remains on the same spot as that very early one and three other ladders are positioned elsewhere along the river. In recent years, despite the best efforts of the Town of Wareham and the MA Division of Marine Fisheries, populations of river herring have plummeted along the Agawam and also in coastal rivers up and down the eastern seaboard. The decline in fish numbers has far-reaching implications for a number of species. While river

herring are primarily bait fish today, they are an important food source for osprey and the endangered roseate tern. Some scientists attribute their falling numbers to environmental factors while local fisherman point the finger at offshore industrial fishing boats that inadvertently scoop up river herring in massive nets intended to catch mackerel and sea herring. In Massachusetts, a moratorium on “the harvest, possession or sale” of river herring is in effect until at least 2011. In the meantime, Wareham herring agents, in collaboration with the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, monitor Agawam herring populations, record water temperatures and provide data to help scientists identify factors responsible for the slumping fish populations.

Our Properties

The Agawam River was already an environmental hotspot when the Wareham Land Trust was incorporated in 2001 and from its earliest days, the WLT identified land along its banks as acquisition priorities. To-date, the WLT has been instrumental in preserving more 180 acres of open space in the Agawam River Corridor.

Our first Agawam River property was **Bryant’s Farm**. Working with the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, the WLT successfully brought the 101 acre parcel



Map prepared by: Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program, www.buzzardsbay.org
Agawam River Map

before Town Meeting for Community Preservation Act funding in April of 2004. The property lies near the juncture of the Agawam and the Wankinco, not far from the mouth of the Wareham River. Home to magnificent osprey and a large and diverse choir of native song birds, species of rare flora and more common woodland critters, the property is owned by the Town of Wareham though the WLT serves as steward and holds a conservation

restriction on the land. The property is open to the public for hiking, bird watching, kayaking and canoeing.

The smallest of our Agawam properties, **Whitlock’s Landing** on the Agawam Mill Pond was acquired in 2005 with a Massachusetts Conservation Partnership grant and private donations. Measuring less than a half acre, the tiny waterfront jewel is a quiet oasis that offers superb fishing and



Bryant’s Farm

photo by Nancy McHale



Whitlock’s Landing

photo by Martha Maguire

public river access for kayaking and canoeing. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife holds the property's conservation restriction.

The WLT purchased the 68 acre **Agawam River Pine Barrens** property with member donations and grant money from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, (specifically, Bouchard oil spill penalty funds which were earmarked for protection of sensitive habitat in the Buzzards Bay watershed). The grant was administered by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay and coordinated with 25 local, state and national partners. The property includes, as the name suggests, pine barrens, but also wetlands and nearly 5,000 feet of frontage on the Agawam River at Glen Charlie Pond. In addition to safeguarding the public water supply, the protected Agawam River Pine Barrens property is a great place for a hike or a paddle in a kayak or canoe.

Access to the **Agawam River Conservation** properties lies practically hidden at the end of Knowles Avenue, a residential street in the Depot area of East Wareham. Listed in its entirety as a *priority habitat* by the NHESP, the first piece of this property, the **Agawam River Trail** parcel, was awarded 50% funding by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs under its Conservation Partnership Grant Program in 2009 (our third EOE grant under this program). During the fundraising campaign to complete purchase of the property, the A.D. Makepeace Company issued a challenge and committed adjacent river front parcels to the project should the Land Trust meet its goal. With help from members, friends and partner organizations (including the MA Department of Fish and Game who also holds the Agawam River Trail property's conservation restriction), the Wareham Land Trust met



Agawam Pine Barrens

photo by John Browning

the challenge and a total of nearly ten acres of pristine, environmentally sensitive wetlands, upland and riverfront land were protected. One of the Makepeace parcels links the new Land Trust property to Bryant's Farm creating a 300 acre greenway with a one mile long riverine corridor for wildlife, including some globally rare and endangered species. Thank you ADM!

The Future

Much of the land surrounding Halfway Pond and the upper Agawam River is owned by the A.D. Makepeace Company. On its drawing board is "River Run," a mixed use development in Plymouth inside the Agawam River watershed which will ultimately include 1,175 homes. In a transfer of development rights with the town of Plymouth and an agreement reached with the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game in April of 2009, ADM will be permitted to construct a high density "smart growth" community on the site. In return, more than 160 acres of environmentally sensitive pine barrens near Halfway Pond and Maple Springs in Wareham and longer term, another 1,000 plus acres of rare and endangered species habitat within the Agawam River corridor will be protected from development forever. Additionally, ADM has agreed to

make River Run "nitrogen-neutral" and to explore avenues for improving the Agawam's water quality. While development within the Agawam corridor is inevitable, enlightened development is enviable. Not surprising, the land deal forged by ADM with the Commonwealth was praised by lawmakers and environmentalists alike.

More recently, the Wareham Water District was the recipient of funds from the Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program (BBNEP) to protect 180 acres of land in the Plymouth-Carver Aquifer including frontage on the Agawam River (Glen Charlie Pond). When completed, the purchase will not only protect drinking water supplies, but also, forested watershed and rare species habitat.

The river has far to go before Coalition for Buzzards Bay Baywatcher water testers issue an "all clear" on its water quality. However, with conservation partners, including the WLT, developers, town governments and agencies, cranberry growers, anglers and ordinary citizen-volunteers working together, the future looks brighter for the Agawam River.

The Wareham Land Trust

Protecting the Land

The Wareham Land Trust has never been busier. Final agreements on the Great Neck Conservation Partnership Project should be completed this fall and more than 300 acres of paradise will be protected forever. In the meantime, Mass Audubon, the WLT and partner conservation organizations along with AmeriCorps and Student Conservation Association volunteers have been hard at work preparing parts of the property for its public debut in late November.



photo courtesy of K. Sferro, MASS Audubon
WLT President John Browning
at Great Neck trail clearing

The WLT always keeps an eagle eye out for open space that supports rare species, protects public water supply, provides recreational access to bays and rivers or may be threatened by development. Currently, we have our

sights on property along the Weweantic River. If all goes well, our very first project, the Fearing Hill Conservation Property, will be joined by others along this environmentally sensitive riverine corridor.

Indoors, too

Though our focus is on the great outdoors, the WLT also brings nature inside to educate the community and advocate for the environment. The Land Trust hosts a series of popular presentations on topics ranging from

the ecology of pine barrens, marine animal strandings (and rescues) and the ecosystems of local streams to programs with particular appeal for the younger set, including “Turtles Gone Wild,” presented by Don Lewis, (better known as the Turtle Guy) who enchanted a standing room only audience with tales of turtle romance, turtle rescues and turtle relocations.

Whales took center stage when researcher Dr. David Wiley described his work tracking these huge, magnificent and endangered sea creatures on Stellwagen Bank. And, during a talk late last spring, marine scientist John Chisholm assured a rapt crowd that it was “safe to go back into the water again” as he explored the fascinating and mysterious world of the Great White Shark. Plans are already taking flight (hint, hint) for the WLT’s 2011 community outreach and lecture series. Watch local newspapers for details.



You say goodbye, I say hell-o



photo by Kathy Pappalardo

It was with sadness that the WLT bade farewell to land protection specialist Heidi Blythe last spring. Heidi left the area to join her husband in the Washington, DC area, but not before leaving an exceptional and fortunately, indelible mark on land preservation

in our community. Heidi researched and drafted successful grant applications for many of our properties, including Mark’s Cove, Columbia Street and the Agawam River Trail parcels and prepared a number of private conservation restrictions. In addition, she did yeoman’s work collecting data, drafting parts of the Great Neck Conservation Partnership grant application and shepherding both the Great Neck application and associated conservation restrictions through myriad levels of red tape. We are grateful for her work protecting open space in Wareham and we wish Heidi well.

With Heidi’s departure, the Wareham Land Trust (along with the Coalition

for Buzzards Bay who shares this position with us) was left with a huge hole to fill. Enter Jesse Ferreira. A Wareham resident, Jesse lives along the Weweantic and understands first-hand the urgency of protecting land in the Buzzards Bay watershed. Jesse joined the Wareham Land Trust in July and already his enthusiasm is palpable at meetings and in the WLT’s Main Street office. His track record includes managing more than 2,000 acres of conservation land with the Trustees of Reservations as well as experience in grant writing, youth volunteer development and collaboration with landowners and conservation partners. Welcome Jesse!

“We understand that conservation is not contrary to economic growth. It is an integral part of economic growth.”

—President Obama



photo by Andrew W. Griffin/Wareham Week
A young shark aficionado at WLT lecture

Membership

Join our efforts to preserve Wareham’s open space and natural resources—today!

Membership Categories

Individual:	\$10	\$ _____
Family:	\$20	\$ _____
Supporting:	\$25	\$ _____
Friend:	\$50	\$ _____
Sustaining:	\$100	\$ _____
Sponsor:	\$250	\$ _____
Benefactor:	\$500	\$ _____
Lifetime:	\$1,000	\$ _____
Incorporator:	\$5,000	\$ _____
Conservation Leader (or land donation):	\$10,000	\$ _____
Other contribution:		\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Town/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Please send contributions to:
The Wareham Land Trust Inc.
P.O. Box 718
Wareham, MA 02571

The Wareham Land Trust is a 501(C)(3) charitable organization. All gifts and bequests to the WLT Land Trust are tax-deductible within IRS guidelines.

Please visit us online at www.WarehamLand.org or call 508-295-0211.

Wareham Land Trust Meetings

Wareham Land Trust public meetings are generally held four times a year. Please watch local papers for announcements of dates, times, and locations. Board meetings are open to the public and are held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the WLT office at 219 Main Street, Suite E, Wareham.

The Wareham Land Trust

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