



# NEWS

NEWS FROM THE WAREHAM LAND TRUST • VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1 • AUTUMN 2008

Every now and then we have an opportunity to change our world for the better. For most of us, these opportunities are small — tiny gestures that provide meaning in our lives and allow us momentary satisfaction, clearing litter from a beach for example, or planting a tree in a public place. When we join with others in a shared mission or pursuit of an objective, such opportunities grow in size, frequency and stature as when a group of individuals join together as a land trust to preserve sometimes small but critical parcels of forest, fields and marsh. But when individuals, organizations and even governments collaborate in the pursuit of common goals, the impact can be enormous, profound, and sometimes, even a little divine...

## Preserving Paradise

Nature has been exceptionally kind to the coastal lands surrounding Widow's Cove at the opening of Onset Bay into the Cape Cod Canal and Buzzards Bay.

Clear waters lap sandy beaches bordered by marshes, meadows and wooded uplands. The far reaches of the land known as Great Neck in Wareham was home to the Wampanoag centuries ago and today, the remains of a Native American fish weir and shell midden attest to the archeological significance of the area. Throughout the ages the more numerous inhabitants of Great Neck have been of the four-legged, leafy and winged varieties, ranging from the now-threatened roseate tern and eastern box turtle to the ubiquitous squirrel, chipmunk, sea lavender and gull. Over the years, a number of families and a religious organization have lived, vacationed or worshiped on parts of the furthest Great Neck lands, respectfully co-existing with indigenous flora and fauna.

Now, in a magnificent collaboration of individuals, nonprofit organizations and the public sector, the Great Neck Conservation Partner-

ship Project proposes to preserve and protect this sliver of paradise forever.



# The Great Neck Conservation Partnership Project

The Great Neck Conservation Partnership Project (GNCPP) will create the largest protected area on the Wareham coastline.

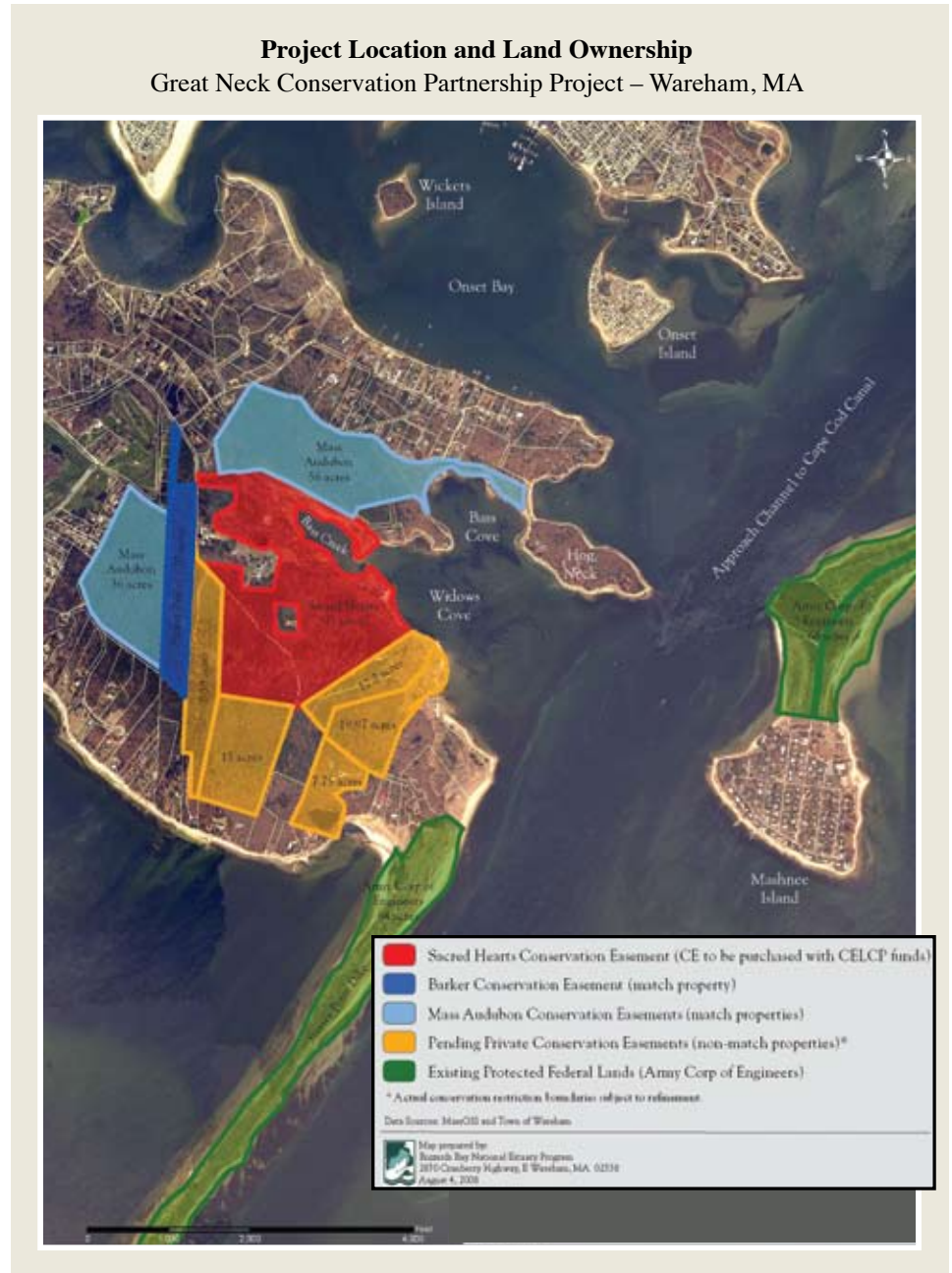


In addition to providing habitat for rare and endangered species, the land represents a priority coastal vegetation community and abuts one of the region's longest continuous eelgrass beds which serves as a nursery and provides shelter and food for a wide variety of marine species. A dazzling patchwork quilt of sand and rocky beach, salt marsh, forest, ponds and vernal pools, the more than 300 acres comprising the GNCPP are owned by more than a half dozen landowners including private citizens, Mass Audubon and the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts.

## Partners in land and spirit

Mass Audubon owns two major though separate pieces of the Great Neck Conservation Project puzzle: One parcel includes sandy beach frontage on Bass Cove as well as interior upland. The second inland property is heavily forested. Both will be sewn into the larger GNCPP creating an extensive uninterrupted greenway of contiguous conservation lands.

Key to the Great Neck Conservation Partnership Project is the Sacred Hearts parcel which surrounds Bass Creek and lies alongside Widow's Cove. For nearly sixty years, the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts has operated a contemplative retreat house ("the Seminary" to locals) on a



total of 119 acres at Great Neck. The serenity of the location combined with the spiritual ministrations of the Sacred Hearts staff offers comfort to the sick and sorrowing as well as respite from the hustle and bustle of twenty-first century life. Recently, the Seminary investigated ways to raise funds in order to expand and modern-

ize its facilities while preserving the land for the community's spiritual mission. Despite a deep-pocketed builder waiting in the wings, members of the Sacred Hearts community chose to protect the land and their home, agreeing instead to sell just the development rights to all but a small part of their holdings.

**Private landowners** on Great Neck are donating conservation easements on more than sixty additional acres of the total project. Most parcels are family properties, handed down from generation to generation along with a tradition of responsible stewardship of the land. Many of these families have generously contributed funds to the GNCPP as well.

As facilitator and local mission control for the GNCPP, the **Wareham Land Trust** has been instrumental in bringing property owners and partners to the table to negotiate and hammer out details of underlying agreements. Eight years young, the WLT has already preserved more than three hundred acres of open space in Wareham through purchase, donation or conservation restriction. Each project is different, each land parcel valuable and uniquely important, all undertaken in pursuit of the land trust's mission: *to preserve our diverse lands and natural resources*. Today, the WLT joins other like minded organizations to complete the most ambitious land preservation project in Wareham's history. Land Preservation Specialist Heidi Blythe serves as GNCPP point person for the WLT, drafting grant applications and expertly shepherding the deal through local, state and Federal approval processes. Ultimately, the WLT will co-hold CRs on several of the parcels

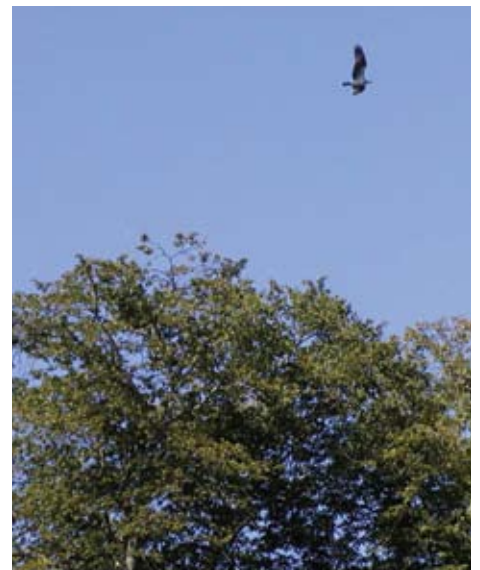
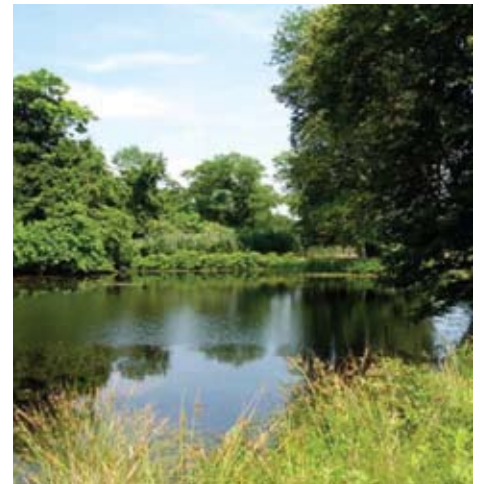
sharing stewardship responsibilities with other partners.

### The Promise

Once completed, the Great Neck Conservation Project will join roughly 300 acres of open space in a mosaic of astounding vistas protecting fragile coastal ecosystems and offering Wareham an oasis of peace and serenity. A heretofore hidden Eden will open to the public with a two-and-three-quarter-mile-long walking and hiking trail revealing verdant landscapes and breathtaking open water views. The project will protect plant and animal habitat providing endangered species an opportunity to regain lost ground while more common varieties can continue to live in peace far from the bulldozer's roar. By sheltering these acres from future development, coastal waters will be protected from runoff and pollution associated with residential building. Drinking water quality will be preserved from inevitable degradation by avoiding the seepage of contaminants through porous sandy soil to the aquifer below. Additionally, in light of Wareham's ever-worsening budget shortfalls, maintaining the land as open space will save the Town the expenses of education, sewer and other costly municipal services developing these hundreds of acres would incur.

*At a recent meeting hosted by the WLT for municipal officials and committees, Mass Audubon's Director of Land Protection, Bob Wilber explained:*

*"This is a once in a lifetime opportunity that goes so far beyond the usual land deal: The GNCPP recognizes the historic, scenic, ecological and recreational value of the properties and ensures these 300+ acres will remain natural and unspoiled while providing public access for passive recreation. At the same time, the project allows the good people of Sacred Hearts to remain on their land continuing their very important work of spiritual healing and retreat."*



## The Process

**The Conservation Restriction:** The logistics of protecting so many different parcels on Great Neck and uniting owners and conservation partners is almost as multifaceted as the terrain itself. The common thread however is a preservation tool known as a conservation restriction (CR) or easement referenced earlier in the newsletter. A CR allows nonprofit organizations or government agencies to acquire the development rights on a particular

*Wareham Land Trust immediate past president Jim Munise explained:*

*“The Conservation Restriction as a preservation tool is what makes this project work. To purchase these properties outright would be prohibitive, no matter how many groups and individuals were involved. With willing and cooperative partners, land owners and CRs, we are able to protect this very large, very environmentally important tract of beautiful land from development forever.”*

property without actually buying the land. Because the cost of a CR is substantially lower than an outright land purchase, conservation groups can leverage what are all-too-often limited resources. Plus, a CR allows the landowner to continue living on the property and in some cases, to stipulate certain land uses, even as it protects a parcel from future development. One of the most utilized tools for land protection in the U.S. today, a CR is an effective means of protecting land in perpetuity and for some landholders, can also be a source of needed funds. Regardless of motivation, the outcome is always good for the environment.

The Great Neck Conservation Project will rely on four major sources of

funding for conservation restrictions to protect the ecologically important 300 acres. The total \$8.26 million cost of easements, as immense as it sounds, is a mere fraction of what it would cost to purchase the properties outright.

Mass Audubon has pledged to provide easements on its 92 acres of land. The Wareham Land Trust and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will hold CRs on these properties.

**The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program:** The Sacred Hearts Community has agreed to sell development rights to 95 of their 119 acres of land. Some funds for the Sacred Hearts easement have come from private donations, but the lion's share is expected to come from the Coastal and

Mass Audubon and the Massachusetts DCR in collaboration with the WLT prepared the application and in July, the Sacred Hearts CELCP grant application was cleared by the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management for submittal to the Federal Government. The application, which seeks \$2.3 million in funding, is the sole application submitted this year by the Commonwealth and is supported by senators Kennedy and Kerry and Representative Barney Frank. However, the GNCPP/Sacred Hearts proposal is only one of 53 applications submitted from 27 states requesting more than \$77 million from a projected allocation of only \$15 million for FY 2009. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) administers CELCP and will rank the



Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP), a competitive federal funding program established by Congress in 2002 “for the purpose of protecting important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values or are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses.” The value of the conservation restrictions on several of the other GNCPP parcels will serve as matches and leverage for the CELCP application.<sup>1</sup>

GNCPP/Sacred Hearts application this fall. Upon approval of the 2009 Federal Budget, NOAA will release funding results, probably early next year. With adequate program funding (and a little help from on high), we expect the deal to close in 2010. Mass Audubon and the Mass DCR will hold the CR on the Sacred Hearts parcel.

The Wareham Land Trust and Mass Audubon will hold conservation restrictions on the private family parcels and will monitor those properties for adherence to the terms of the agreements.

# The Missing Piece

## The Barker Property

By now you've scrutinized the Great Neck Conservation Partnership Project Map (on page 2) and are wondering about the dark blue strip of land... Joining one Mass Audubon parcel to both the Sacred Hearts property and private conservation land as well as providing primary access to the GNCPP properties is a long and narrow 20 acre strip of forest upland belonging to the Barker Family Trust. The family has agreed to sell development rights to a key section of their property and the Great Neck conservation partners have worked closely with them in an effort to bring an agreement to fruition. The Wareham Land Trust worked with the Wareham Conservation Commission to prepare and submit a Self-help Grant application on behalf of the Town to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for partial funding and also, presented a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant application to the Town of Wareham for funds to purchase a CR on the Barker parcel. The Self-help Grant was approved and the Community Preservation Committee green-lighted the CPA application for consideration at Town Meeting where the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of funding. Sadly, municipal sign off is a requisite for the Self-help funding and eleventh hour confusion resulted in an impasse and the forfeiture of reimbursement funds as well as a demand by the Wareham Board of Selectmen that the CPA funding article be returned to Town Meeting for reconsideration in October.

Without this piece, the Great Neck Conservation Project mosaic is incomplete. However, the loss of Self-

help funds, while disappointing, is not insurmountable. The Barker Property part of the project has been thoroughly vetted and a proposed management plan reviewed and approved by Massachusetts DCR, Mass Audubon and the Wareham Land Trust. Included in the plan is the provision for the WLT to hold the CR along with the Wareham

"This project is just the kind CPA was designed to make possible. The GNCPP is perhaps the most exciting conservation project the Community Preservation Committee has ever considered—one that provides the Town with an opportunity to collaborate on a project of national significance."

—Nan Miller,  
Chair, Wareham Community  
Preservation Committee

Conservation Commission. All that remains is to move forward. But how?

### We need your help.

Please join us as we unite with conservation partners to preserve these 300 acres on Great Neck and pursue our ongoing goal of protecting open space throughout Wareham.

<sup>1</sup> In April of 2007, Wareham Town Meeting approved a \$500,000 CPA application for the GNCPP (not to be confused with the separate 2008 Barker Property CR application). This initial pledge by the Town was a critical first step in launching negotiations among the partners. However, should CELCP funding be awarded, local CPA funds from the 2007 grant application will be returned to the Town for future projects.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**Very simply: Come to town meeting on October 27th and for as many evenings as it takes until the Barker Property CR funding article is revisited. Reaffirm the community's already declared overwhelming support for this important project by voting YES on Article 11. Say yes to this article and say yes to the Great Neck Conservation Partnership Project.**

**Say YES to preserving paradise, right here in Wareham.**

#### Great Neck Conservation Partnership

Mass Audubon

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

The Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management

The Wareham Land Trust

Coalition for Buzzards Bay

Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program

The Town of Wareham Conservation Commission

The Town of Wareham Community Preservation Committee

# Great Neck Conservation Partnership at a Glance

## 300 acres including:

- 1.4 miles of shoreline
- 2.3 acres of coastal beach
- 19 acres of salt marsh
- 40 acres of rare coastal forest
- 5.3 acres of barrier beach
- 1 freshwater pond
- 3 possible vernal pools
- 13.5 acres of wetland
- 2.75 miles of public walking trails



## Membership

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

### Membership Categories

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

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](http://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 all other months at 7:00 PM at the WLT office at 219 Main Street, Suite E, Wareham.

### The Wareham Land Trust

#### Directors:

Kevin Bartsch, John Browning,  
James Clemmey, Charles Gleason,  
Lauren Griffith, Susan McCombe,  
Mary McFadden, Nancy McHale,  
James Munise, Kathleen Pappalardo,  
Malcolm Phinney, Dale Scott,  
Claire Smith, Lawrence Stifler

#### Board of Advisors:

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Mary Crowley, Martin Himmelfarb,  
Martha Maguire, Robert Scott, David Stone,  
Sandra Wheeler, Daniel Williams

#### Land Protection Specialist:

Heidi Blythe

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