

The Sandwich Conservation Trust

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Fall 2015 Newsletter and Appeal

Dear Members and Friends,

This year the SCT newsletter is taking the form of this personal note from me, offering a bit of comment, land conservation history, and an appeal for your help to sustain our organization.

The Sandwich conservation trust is 30 years old this October. It began when Sherry Sass and I took a course on land preservation at Cape Cod Community College, given by Peter Ryner and Jon Whitten. During one lecture, the concept of a non-profit conservation land trust was explained. Such a trust could accept gifts of land, raise money and purchase property, arrange conservation restrictions with landowners, help educate the public about conservation issues, and assist town government when called upon. Sherry and I looked at each other with the same thought: “We should start a conservation trust in Sandwich!”

This was easier said than done, but soon we had a small group of potential trustees: Sherry and myself, Sandwich banker George Sutton, attorney William Beard, and my wife-to-be, Lynn Parete. We began the long process of building an organization – beginning with the drafting of a formative document - a Declaration of Trust - recorded in the Registry of Deeds. Other tasks: building membership, seeking funds, starting a newsletter and holding public meetings. This was all driven by our great concern over the extraordinary pace of land development on Cape Cod.

It was exciting to have something positive to do, in reaction to the growth rate, but our progress was rather slow going at first. Our first major accomplishment was to bring, by petition, an article to the 1986 Sandwich town meeting, to purchase 86 acres in the Maple Swamp. This parcel included frontage on Service Road and three beautiful hilltops. In 1987 we received a boost, through a gift of 7 acres of quiet upland on Roos Road from Thomas Gelsthorpe.

I like to say that we are a conservation trust who has “done a lot with a little”, meaning that with very little expenditure of money, we’ve managed to preserve 217 acres: 77 acres (22 parcels) owned by the SCT, and 140 acres held in conservation restriction (8 parcels). We have led many walks over the last 30 years, held annual meetings and educational seminars for the public. We have assisted town conservation efforts in various ways, and worked to improve our

preserves. All of this has been done through volunteer effort. From time to time a conservation trust needs technical assistance. For this, the SCT has been fortunate, through our membership in the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts. Executive Director Mark Robinson and his excellent staff have helped us in countless ways since our beginning.

30 years ago we had no idea what the future would bring for the SCT, and now we have the advantage of being able to look back, note progress, and think about the future. Though we still will be preserving lands, we have come to realize the importance of carefully maintaining what we already have. This means improving public access to preserves and keeping trails open - physical tasks - but we also want to improve our organization. This is where you can help.

We want our organization to be sustainable and effective as a conservation voice in Sandwich. This means building membership and increasing our financial stability. We need your help. Please use the enclosed return envelope to renew your membership and perhaps add an extra donation if you can – gifts to the SCT are tax- deductible. We are a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit.

I'd like to invite you to attend the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Sandwich Conservation Trust. It will be held on **Sunday, October 25th, at 2 PM in the East Sandwich Grange Hall** at 91 Old County Rd. SCT members and the public are invited. I will be giving a talk and slide show on the interesting history of a beloved local preserve – the former East Sandwich Game Farm. This 135 acre gem has strong connections to Native American occupation, farming under Nye and Hoxie ownership, and a picturesque career as a game bird farm from 1912 to 1987.

The Thornton W Burgess society, Inc. now manages this beautiful property with the owner, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Great credit is due to the Burgess Society and its many devoted volunteers, backed by the Sandwich Water District and other local agencies. Since 1996 they have done a sterling job of clearing the farm of fencing, buildings and debris, and of establishing a first class preserve with intriguing, gorgeous trails and views. My presentation will focus on history and evolution of this marsh-side landscape over time, portrayed with vintage photographs.

Please join us on October 25th for a pleasant time in a beautiful old community building in a particularly nice rural setting. Refreshments will be available.

Thank you so much for your interest and support.

Yours in Preservation,

John Nye Cullity
President