



Land Matters

**Aquidneck
Land Trust**

SUMMER 2005

Governor Carcieri announcing Aquidneck Land Trust's largest deal to date!
(See page 4 for details.)

Outstanding Progress! 109.33 Conserved Acres in 2005

This year alone, the Aquidneck Land Trust has conserved the following properties totaling 109.33 conserved acres:

45.55-acre Town Pond Area Portsmouth

Town Pond contained a large salt pond connected to Mount Hope Bay by a tidal channel when much of it was converted into a barren mudflat in 1949. It was a disposal

site for dredged sediments from the Mount Hope Bay shipping channel. Today, its ecological value is still compromised, no longer providing the diversity of habitat that once attracted abundant wildlife. That is about to change because Town Pond is the focus of a restoration project to convert the marsh into a rich aquatic habitat resembling the Town Pond that existed prior to

1949. The Land Trust provided \$50,000 to the State of Rhode Island for a Conservation Easement on the site and \$15,000 for a survey plan to help with long-term stewardship. This money provided by the Land Trust will bring in \$195,000 in matching funds from the federal government for the restoration work.

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Edward Sortwell Clement, Jr.

Dear Land Trust Supporter,

This year promises to be one of the Aquidneck Land Trust's best years to date, and that is good news for everyone who loves Aquidneck Island.

This year alone, we have already completed six strategic conservation transactions adding more than 109 acres to our conservation portfolio. That number amazes me because when I started working for the Land Trust in August 2000, our total conserved acreage stood at about 500 acres. What a positive difference a committed organization with terrific supporters can make!

In early June of this year, the Aquidneck Land Trust completed raising the \$3 million needed to purchase a Deed to Development Rights on a 75-acre portion of the beloved Escobar's Highland Farm to protect this cherished land in perpetuity. The closing is scheduled for September.

Then, near the end of June, we signed an agreement with the City of Newport and the Town of Portsmouth to conserve an approximate 483-acre area in Portsmouth containing three of Aquidneck Island's seven public water reservoirs. This agreement is the most important and largest conservation agreement entered into by our organization since its inception. Recently, this historic event was celebrated by Governor Carcieri, local officials, and Land Trust staff and supporters. We anticipate closing on the Conservation Easement for this project in the coming months.

The Aquidneck Land Trust also hired two very talented people this year to fill two important positions. Andrew Arkway started as the fulltime Stewardship Director on May 23rd. David F. Guertin, Jr. started as the fulltime Development Director on June 27th. Please make sure to welcome them to our community.

I am still not done giving you great news. On June 30th, the Aquidneck Land Trust hosted its 3rd Annual Golf Tournament at Newport National Golf Club's Orchard Course. It was the most successful golf tournament to date for the Land Trust in terms of dollars raised for our important mission and number of golfers who participated.

On July 19th, the Aquidneck Land Trust moved one step closer to the completion of the Sakonnet Greenway Trail when The Pennfield School conveyed a Trail Easement to the Land Trust. The Land Trust has now acquired 6 of the necessary 8 Trail Easements for what promises to be the Island's single longest public trail.

Our successes this year gives us great hope, but development pressure on Aquidneck Island remains fierce. Our Island's ecological viability, beauty, and heritage are being directly threatened. Our window of opportunity is now so we must act. Conservation can't wait on Aquidneck Island! Your support has enabled the Land Trust to do great things this year. Thank You! Your continued investment in the Land Trust and the Island's future will enable us to keep the momentum going and continue to deliver good news to you at a time when the future of Aquidneck Island is being crafted.

Sincerely,

Edward Sortwell Clement, Jr.
Executive Director



Outstanding Progress

29.78 acres of Miantonomi Park, *Newport*

After two years of hard work, the City of Newport, the Miantonomi Memorial Park Commission and the Land Trust conserved Newport's largest park with a Land Trust Conservation Easement in May. Miantonomi Park is the Land Trust's largest conserved Newport property to date. The easement ensures that the Park's conservation values, such as recreational, habitat and scenic attributes, will remain protected forever.

15.30-acre Silvia property, Sakonnet Greenway, *Middletown*

In May, the Silvia family and the Land Trust conserved 15.30 acres on Green End Ave. The property contains Prime Agricultural Soils, the United States Department of Agriculture's highest ranking for agricultural soils. It also affords scenic vistas to passersby on Green End Ave. and Howland Ave. The Glossy Ibis, a bird listed as a Species of Conservation Concern in Rhode Island, has also been observed feeding on the site. Green End Ave. is now a little bit greener!

14.90-acre Sullivan property, Center Island Greenway, *Middletown*

At the intersection of Valley Rd. and Green End Ave., this parcel has important wildlife habitat and water resource values while also affording scenic views to passersby. Species listed on the Rare Native Animals of Rhode Island list, such as the Great Blue Heron, the Cooper's Hawk, and the Great Egret, have been observed on the property. A major tributary of Bailey Brook also bisects the land. Shortly after leaving the parcel, this tributary joins the central Bailey Brook corridor and then empties into Green End/North Easton's Pond, one of Aquidneck Island's seven drinking water reservoirs, which is just south of the property. The land is also near the recently conserved Kempenaar Valley parcel.

2.62-acre Harrison property, Sakonnet Greenway, *Middletown*

Between Wapping Rd. and Peckham Ln., the Harrison property on Little Creek Ln. is in the Sakonnet River sub basin of the larger Narragansett Bay drainage basin. The property doesn't fall within a public drinking watershed, but Little Creek, which passes through the land's southeast corner, drains directly into the Sakonnet River, about three quarters of a mile downstream. It also has agricultural values based on the presence of Soils of Statewide Importance, a United States Department of Agriculture classification. Fauna such as Downy Woodpeckers, Yellow Warblers and Song Sparrows have also been observed on the property.

1.18-acre Clubhouse Partners meadow abutting Norman Bird Sanctuary, Sakonnet Greenway, *Middletown*

Earlier this year, the Land Trust received a Conservation Easement on this gorgeous open field habitat which serves as a critical buffer, providing perpetual wildlife habitat and protection to the abutting Norman Bird Sanctuary. Meadow habitat for birds and other wildlife is quickly disappearing across the United States due to development pressures. The Clubhouse Partners meadow will now remain available for wildlife.

Slated to Be Conserved in the Near Future:

- 75 acres of Escobar's Highland Farm in Portsmouth
- 483 +/- acres, including Lawton Valley Reservoir, Sisson Pond, St. Mary's Pond, and associated buffer lands in Portsmouth.

"To date, the Land Trust has preserved 1,213.12 acres, nearly tripling its conserved land in the past five years."

Conservation Easements ensure land's conservation values, such as agricultural, recreational, habitat and scenic attributes will remain protected forever.

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Land Trust's Largest Deal To Date: A Staggering 483 Acres

"Good conservation is like good government, it requires check and balances. A Conservation Easement can act as such a set of checks and balances."



Newport Mayor John J. Trifero, Portsmouth Town Council President Mary Ann Edwards, Aquidneck Land Trust Executive Director Ted Clement, Governor Donald Carcieri and Aquidneck Land Trust Vice Chairman Stuart MacNaught.

Residents from Portsmouth, Middletown and Newport depend on the public water reservoirs.

This summer, the Aquidneck Land Trust signed an agreement to conserve its largest property to date — approximately 483 acres in Portsmouth that includes three of Aquidneck Island's public water reservoirs.

Governor Donald Carcieri announced the agreement concerning Lawton Valley Reservoir, Sisson Pond, St. Mary's Pond, and all the associated buffer lands at a Land Trust media event earlier this month. Other officials and dignitaries in attendance included the following: Senator June Gibbs; Newport Mayor John J. Trifero; Portsmouth Town Council President Mary Ann Edwards; various Town Council members; Portsmouth Town Administrator Robert Driscoll; Middletown Town Council President Paul Rodrigues; Middletown Town Administrator Gerald S. Kempen; Noreen Drexel of the Alletta Morris McBean Charitable Trust; Kristen A. Pauly of the Prince Charitable Trusts; Audubon Society of Rhode Island's Executive Director Lawrence Taft; Sakonnet Preservation Association's Chair Heather Steers; Tiverton Land Trust Chair Trish Sylvester; former Rhode Island Land Trust Council President Ann-Marie Ignasher; Portsmouth Open Space Committee Chair Joan Sousa; and many others.

As part of the agreement, the City of Newport is to convey a Conservation Easement to the Land Trust on the 483 +/- acres public water reservoir area in the coming months. In 2004, the Land Trust completed an innovative and extensive mapping project that identified all of Aquidneck Island's conserved lands and the status of those lands. That project demonstrated that not all conserved lands are equal. In other words, there are different levels of protection afforded conserved lands. For purposes of the project, three conservation levels were identified: the highest level, Land Conserved with a Perpetual Conservation Restriction (e.g., Conservation Easement); the middle level, Land Conserved with a Deed Restriction; and the lowest level, Land Held with Conservation Intent Alone. Conserved lands falling into the latter two levels can be further secured with a perpetual conservation restriction such as a Conservation Easement. Good

conservation is like good government, it requires checks and balances. A Conservation Easement can act as such a set of checks and balances. The recent conservation agreement signed will move the 483 +/- acres area up from the Land Held with Conservation Intent Alone level to the Land Conserved with a Perpetual Conservation Restriction level.

The significance of conservation level differences and the 483 +/- acres agreement was highlighted by the recent Big River Reservoir Area matter, according to Land Trust Executive Director Ted Clement. There was a proposal to develop an approximate 18-acre portion of this State owned and State designated open space area in West Greenwich into a State Police headquarters.

"The Big River Reservoir Area crisis was a clear message to communities that they should move quickly to identify all their conserved lands along with the levels of protection afforded those lands so that the comprehensive process of better securing weakly protected properties can begin around Rhode Island," Clement said.

The agreement reached on the 483 +/- acres area will benefit all three communities on Aquidneck Island because residents from Portsmouth, Middletown and Newport depend on these public water reservoirs.



Preservation of Escobar's Highland Farm Set for Sept.

This June, the Land Trust raised the necessary \$3 million to purchase the Deed to Development Rights on Escobar's Highland Farm. The closing is slated to occur by the end of September.

A recent grant of \$188,328 from the State of Rhode Island's Agricultural Land Preservation Commission enabled the Land Trust to fulfill its ambitious fundraising goal. The result of this effort means that the Land Trust will permanently protect 75 acres of the Portsmouth, R.I., farm. On the Island and beyond, the Escobars are considered heroes for bucking the rampant development trend. They agreed to the bargain price of \$3 million to ensure their land remains open space for all time. The money will help the family pay inheritance tax on the farm.

The grant from Rhode Island's Agricultural Land Preservation Commission was one of eight grant awards from four partners. It provided the final dollars needed to fill the coffers and reach the \$3 million purchase price agreed upon August 12, 2004. Other partners and their total contributions include:

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service \$1,311,672
2. Town of Portsmouth \$750,000
3. State of Rhode Island \$688,328
4. The Nature Conservancy, through a grant from The Champlin Foundations \$250,000

Louis and Jane Escobar continue a family tradition started by Louis' father who came to Portsmouth from the Azores when he was 13 and purchased the land in 1937. Preserving the land as well as the tradition of the working family farm will be Louis and Jane Escobar's legacy. Highland Farm produces dairy cows and local milk that is part of the wildly successful Rhody Fresh cooperative, sells Christmas trees and compost, and hosts farm tours, hay rides, and much more. From the corn maze in the early fall to the annual July 4th fireworks, the farm is a tradition that means everything to the Escobars and our community.

**\$3 million raised
for the Landmark
Conservation
Transaction!**

Walk & Talk Series Announced



Miantonomi Park and the first Land Matters Walk and Talk program of 2005.

The Land Trust's mission will be fully realized by engendering love and respect for the land in the greatest number of people. Our Land Matters Walk & Talk series is an effort to get people out on the land so that they can better appreciate and connect with this cherished place. On Memorial Day, the first program of the year was offered at Miantonomi Park to a terrific group of Land Trust supporters. Please mark your calendars and make a date with the Land Trust for any of the following remaining programs (all programs free of charge):

Escobar Highland Farm – September 10th

Visit this vibrant example of one of the few remaining family farms in the area. The Escobars are working with the Aquidneck Land Trust to preserve a 75-acre portion of this farm of statewide importance for future generations. This tour will be a chance to meet Louis Escobar, one of Portsmouth's most engaging residents. Tour the dairy barn to learn about the modern techniques used to continue this age-old practice. Later, get lost in the corn maze, which covered eight acres of fields last year and featured two miles of trails.

We will be meeting September 10th at 9 a.m., at 133 Middle Rd. in Portsmouth, rain or shine. Space is limited, so please RSVP to Andy Arkway at aarkway@ailt.org by September 5th.

Town Pond – October 22nd

Tour the salt marsh restoration project underway at Town Pond in Portsmouth. The project is intended to restore the rich, natural salt marsh ecosystem that once existed on this site. The \$3.5 million restoration is being accomplished through a public/private partnership among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, R.I. Department of Environmental Management, Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, Aquidneck Land Trust, and a variety of other organizations.

The tour will be led by Tom Ardito, Director of Policy and Communications for the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program. Meet at 9 a.m., on October 22nd at the end of Bayview Ave. in Portsmouth, rain or shine. Space is limited. RSVP to Andy Arkway at aarkway@ailt.org by October 19th.

Sakonnet Greenway Trail – November 19th

In celebration of the anticipated acquisition of the remaining needed trail easements for the first phase of the Sakonnet Greenway Trail, take a walking tour of this portion of the public trail. When completed the first phase of Sakonnet Greenway Trail will stretch approximately 2.8 miles from The Glen in Portsmouth to the northern boundary of the Orchard Course of the Newport National Golf Club.

Meet November 19th, 9:00 a.m., near the Brown House at The Glen in Portsmouth. Space is limited, so please RSVP to Andy Arkway at aarkway@ailt.org by November 15th. The tour will be guided by Aquidneck Land Trust staff, and will proceed rain or shine so please dress appropriately. Sturdy shoes are recommended.


LAND MATTERS
Walk & Talk



One Step Closer to the Sakonnet Greenway Trail

It is not easy trying to complete the largest public trail on Aquidneck Island, but the Land Trust just moved one step closer to the completion of the Sakonnet Greenway Trail. The Aquidneck Land Trust has been working for approximately five years to obtain all the necessary Trail Easements required to make the approximate seven-mile Sakonnet Greenway Trail a reality.

On July 19th, The Pennfield School conveyed a Trail Easement to the Land Trust. The Land Trust has now acquired six of the necessary eight Trail Easements required for the Sakonnet Greenway Trail.

Once finished, the Trail, which is contained in the picturesque Sakonnet Greenway on the eastern side of Aquidneck Island, will be the longest single public recreational trail on the Island. It will connect two municipalities. The trail will extend from The Glen in Portsmouth, around Newport National Golf Club, and onto the Town of Middletown's recreational complex on Wyatt Road. A 2.2 +/- mile segment of the Trail, around Newport National Golf Club's Orchard Course, is already built and open to the public.

Ted Clement, the Land Trust's Executive Director, said, "I would like to thank The Pennfield School for its wonderful contribution to the community. It will help benefit countless numbers of people."

Regarding the Land Trust's trail efforts (the Sakonnet Greenway Trail and the completed Oakland Forest and Meadow Trail), Clement said the Land Trust's mission will not be fully realized by simply putting open space aside but by also engendering love and respect for the land in the greatest number of people.

"One of the best ways to deepen people's connection to the land is through experiential education," said Clement, who as an Outward Bound Instructor, regularly saw his students have profound experiences in nature that turned them into better stewards of the Earth. The Land Trust's trail efforts will help get people out on the land so that they can better appreciate and connect with this cherished place.



Sakonnet Greenway Trail will allow for various recreational and educational activities.

"One of the best ways to deepen people's connection to the land is through experiential education."

ALT's 3rd Annual Golf Tournament the Best Yet!

The Aquidneck Land Trust hosted its third annual golf tournament at Newport National Golf Club's Orchard Course on June 30th. This was the most successful golf tournament to date for the Land Trust in terms of dollars raised for our mission and number of participants. The Land Trust would like to thank its sponsors for helping make the event a great success: Advanced Financial Services; Carey, Richmond & Viking Insurance; Northeast Engineers & Consultants, Inc.; and Realty Financial Partners. We were also very appreciative for our Hole in One Sponsors: Auto Center/BMW of Newport; and Golfer's Warehouse. Finally, some very special individuals also deserve recognition for making the day a memorable one: Arthur Chapman; Lyn and Peggy Comfort (Golf Tournament Co-Chairs); and Kathy Correia.



Golfers on the course.

New Staff at ALT



David F. Guertin, Jr.



Andy Arkway

David F. Guertin, Jr. is the Land Trust's new Development Director, managing fundraising operations, events and helping with donor relations and communications.

Prior to coming to Aquidneck Island, Guertin was director of development at Battleship Cove in Fall River for five years. He supported 30 percent of the non-profit's \$5 million annual budget and was responsible for administration and planning, financial and project management, and event management. Having spent most of his career in the not-for-profit sector, Guertin was able to work effectively with a series of committees and boards to improve organizational fundraising performance and steward major gift relations with prominent foundations and companies. He has also served as director of development at Herreshoff Marine Museum and America's Cup Hall of Fame, where he established the organization's first development effort and directed a \$7.5 million capital campaign.

"As much as I've enjoyed maritime historic preservation causes, land preservation is a critical, time sensitive objective I am thrilled to be a part of it here on Aquidneck Island"

Guertin earned a BA from RI College, manages an eight-acre farm in Tiverton abutting more than 1,000 acres of conserved land and owns the historic 1740 "Pineapple House" in Newport.

Andy Arkway is the Land Trust's new Stewardship Director who is working directly with landowners to help ensure that the special parcels in our care remain conserved. Andy will also be working on the Land Trust's projects that will help connect people with the land.

A former Roger Williams Park Zookeeper, Arkway brings a wealth of international conservation experience to Aquidneck Island, having performed conservation work in far-flung regions of the world. He has protected Leatherback Sea Turtle nesting sites in Costa Rica, performed GPS mapping and forest surveying in Papua New Guinea, and participated in a primate population census in the Amazon Basin in Peru.

"I had imagined I'd end up overseas working in conservation. But have come to realize we live in one of the most beautiful places on the planet...I feel fortunate to be part of the team here at the Land Trust where we have a concrete way to accomplish positive, valuable conservation work."

Arkway, who speaks Spanish, is enrolled at the University of RI and he will receive his Masters of Environmental Science and Management later this summer. He holds a BS in Animal Science from URI and graduated from Moses Brown School in Providence.

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