

## MIDDLETOWN

# Couple donates land to improve water quality

By Matt Sheley

Staff writer

Efforts to clean up stormwater got a boost recently, thanks to a donation to the Aquidneck Land Trust.

Executive Director Chuck Allott told The Daily News on Friday that John and Deborah Warner recently gave a 5-acre parcel along the Maidford River on Paradise Avenue, north of the intersection with Prospect Avenue, to the Middletown-based land protection group.

Taken alone, the gift might not seem like a big deal, but it is an important factor in the ongoing work to improve the quality of rainwater runoff, Allott said. Clean stormwater runoff has been cited as a way to help reduce processing of drinking water for human consumption.

“What we’re trying to do is create a riparian buffer along the entire length of the Maidford,” Allott said. “If we were

able to control 300 feet of buffer and wetland so development couldn’t occur in that zone, it would improve water quality in a measurable way, and the generous gift from the Warners continues that work.”

Formed in 1990, the land trust has saved about 2,600 acres across Aquidneck Island from development forever — or about 10 percent of the island’s total acreage.

Allott said the Warners recently subdivided a 14-plus-acre wooded lot on Paradise Avenue into three parcels. One of the lots, the 5-acre site, was intended as a gift to the land trust. The other two lots each will be used for a single-family home.

Attorney Robert Silva, who represented the subdivision proposal before the town, said the 5-acre site given to the land trust could have been developed for another home. But the Warners wanted to

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make sure it would never be built upon.

“They always said the buffer for the Maidford was an important part of their project and frankly, I agree with them,” Silva said. “We’re reading so much about stormwater and this will have a direct impact on that, and it will look the same it has for years.”

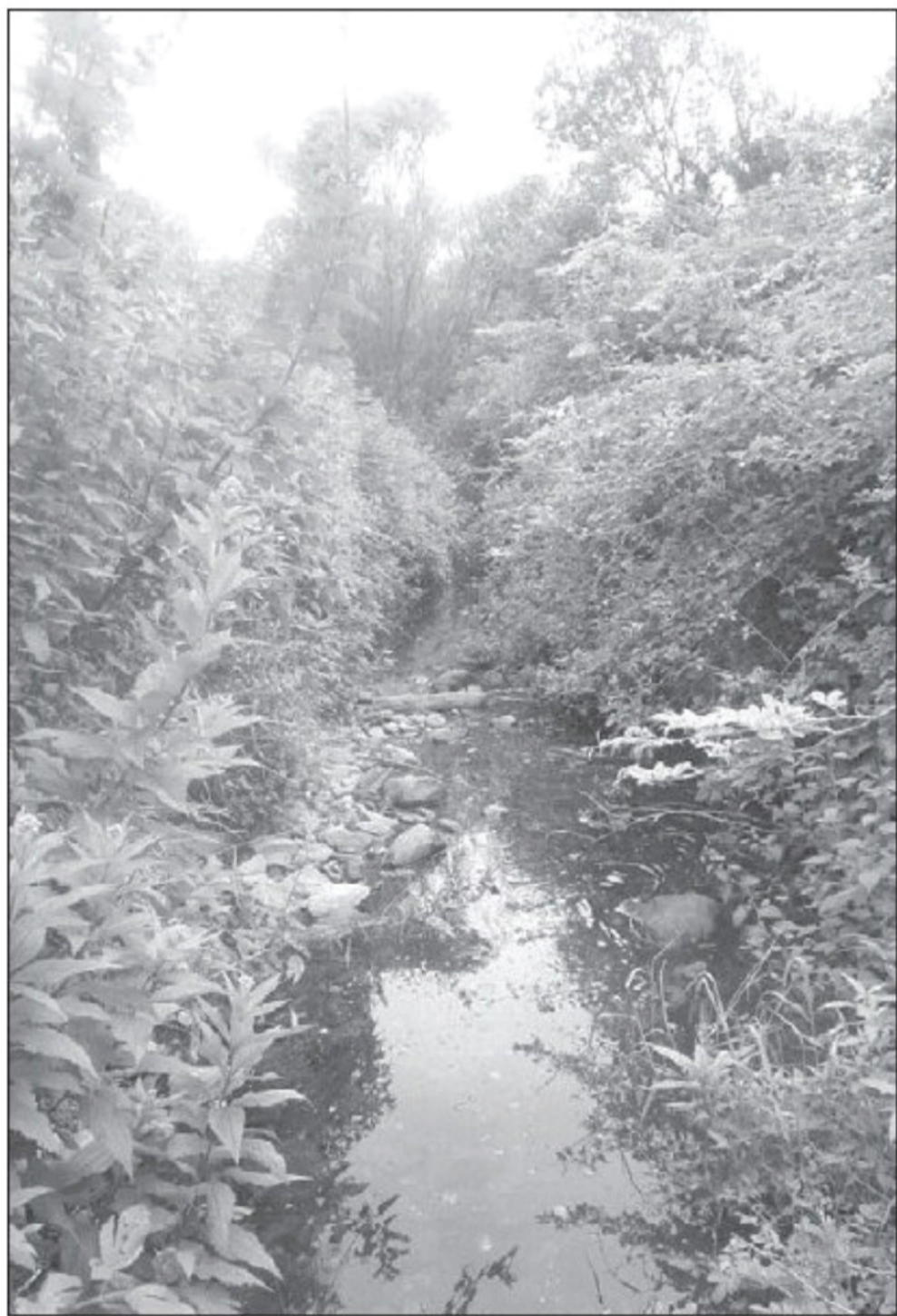
Allott said about 360 feet of the Maidford River runs through the Warner parcel. It’s close by the town of Middletown’s Paradise Valley Park featuring Boyd’s Wind Grist Mill; the park is also conserved by the land trust.

All are part of the land trust’s Sakonnet Greenway system, a collection of open space on the east side of the island intended to help wildlife and nature have a fighting chance against development.

Besides the stormwater component, Allott said the Warner property is important for its wetland and wildlife values.

Allott said the site will not be developed. However, he didn’t rule out the possibility of creating a natural stormwater management control system there if necessary. Similar systems are in place at Paradise Valley Park and off the intersection of Green End Avenue, Paradise Avenue and Berkeley Avenue.

“To say this parcel alone will have ‘X’ percentage of water



Aquidneck Land Trust photo

**The Aquidneck Land Trust recently received a 5-acre property along Paradise Avenue in Middletown as a gift from the owner. The former farm is situated along the Maidford River, a source of the island’s drinking water.**

quality improvement alone is tough to measure, but when it’s taken as part of the whole, there’s no doubt it makes a difference,” Allott said. “When

this prospect came up, there’s no doubt it was one we were excited about.”

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