

2021 NEWSLETTER

Aquidneck  
Land Trust

# LAND MATTERS



# ALT'S Board of Trustees and Advisors



Ellen Bowman



Martha McConnell

Two new board members were elected and introduced at the 2021 Annual Meeting in February, held via Zoom: Ellen Bowman and Dr. Martha McConnell. Members of the Board of Trustees serve up to three, two-year terms, attend monthly meetings, oversee ALT's finances, and help shape our policies and initiatives. Trustee Karen Menezes was thanked for her years of dedicated service. We are very grateful for her support and wish her the best.

The Board of Advisors, chaired by Annie Sherman Luke, consists of 40 members, many of whom served on the Board of Trustees. New to the list of Advisors in 2021 are: Leslie Ballard Hull, Ala Auersperg Isham, Elizabeth Leatherman, and Sue Petrovas.

## Board of Trustees

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## Board of Advisors

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## Staff



From left to right: Alex Chuman (Conservation Director), Laura Freedman Pedrick (Development Director), Martha Curley (Finance Director), Chuck Allott (Executive Director), Meghan Harris (Office Manager), Julia Coll (Development Assistant), Gretchen Markert (Communications & Outreach Manager).

Cover Photo: Albro Woods

# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

We have missed seeing you in person this year and hope you have kept well. The ALT staff, board, and advisors have remained busy and I am very pleased to share a few details of our many successes with you here. As an ALT supporter, you can take pride in knowing that your generous donations have been used thoughtfully and productively, helping our small team accomplish a tremendous amount for the good of our community. I am proud of them and grateful to you!

- The new 165-foot boardwalk at Little Creek Preserve is now open. This public amenity offers visitors of all ages a terrific way to enjoy birds and other wildlife in a serene setting. A viewing platform and three built-in benches provide comfortable spots for relaxation and contemplation. Look for a mounted binocular station on the boardwalk later this year!
- The conservation easements for Ballard Park and 5.27 acres of Sweet Berry Farm are complete, raising our conserved acreage to 2,641.11 acres across 85 properties. The easement for 7.56 acres of historic Glen Farm is nearly final and we have begun fundraising for two important Portsmouth properties. Read more about Rego Farmland and Jones Preserve on page 6. We are in active negotiations or pending agreements on a number of other important properties and hope to announce additional conservation successes soon.
- ALT, The Preservation Society of Newport County, and Preserve RI completed a collaborative effort to remove 77 telephone poles and bury utility lines in the scenic Third Beach area. The three non-profits are partners in the Scenic Aquidneck Coalition and worked together to restore the historic landscape and promote coastal resiliency for the benefit of the community.
- A 20'x40' picnic pavilion has been installed at Spruce Acres Farm, thanks to a generous grant from The Champlin Foundation and gifts from private donors. We also planted a new pollinator garden next to the pavilion, creating an attractive picnic and meeting spot for the community.
- We've partnered with Grow Smart RI to offer a series of four Land Use 101 workshops this summer and fall, with the goal of helping citizens feel more comfortable engaging in land use policy in their communities.

Our challenges are many, but with your continued support, we are equal to the task of protecting the most important properties on Aquidneck Island while there is still time. Thank you for being our Partners in Preservation. Together, we will continue our efforts to conserve and maintain public trails, protect our drinking water supply and wildlife habitat, support local agriculture, and ensure that the scenic vistas we will cherish remain in place for future generations.

Thank you,



Charles B. Allott, Esq.  
Executive Director







# Conservation Updates

ALT's newest land campaign focuses on two important Portsmouth properties, Rego Farmlands and Jones Preserve. With your support, we can permanently protect 27.4 acres of prime farmland and forested land from development. These parcels have high conservation value and are located along East Main Road, providing scenic views of the Aquidneck Island landscape. With your support, we will raise the \$150,000 needed to complete this land campaign and ensure that Rego Farmlands and Jones Preserve remain protected forever. Your donation of any size will help ALT conserve these two key open spaces. Thank you!

## Rego Farmland



Rego Farmland is a 12-acre active hayfield boasting 100% prime farmland soil. ALT will purchase this property and lease the land for farming. It is located within the ALT Sakonnet Greenway Habitat corridor, which runs north/south, and is also part of a valuable east-west passage stretching across the middle of the island. It is connected to other open space properties and farms, creating a continuous habitat patch for wildlife to migrate, forage, and nest. Rego Farmland fronts East Main Road and is part of the scenic view corridor that stretches to the Sakonnet River.

Scan here to donate!



## Jones Preserve



Jones Preserve is a 15.38-acre site located within a 92-acre tract of contiguous forested and wild land. It features successional forest and scrub-shrub habitat, with a mix of native species such as bayberry, red maple, and birch. It serves as habitat for resident and migratory birds, raptors, and small mammals. Jones Preserve is contiguous to other ALT-conserved land and is located within the corridor of connected lands known as the Sakonnet Greenway. This corridor includes 40 properties protected by ALT and covers 1,365 acres of land on the east side of Aquidneck Island. Aside from one home site, the land will be managed as a combination of wildlife habitat and farmland.





*Thank you to our loyal Evening at Home supporters!*

**Greenway Protector**

William and Amy Medeiros

**Trailblazer**

Ellen and Steven Bowman  
Sue and George Petrovas

**Wilderness Seeker**

Anthony and Allison Allott  
Heather and William Burgess  
Julia and Ed Coll

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**Friend**

Charles Schwab and Co., Inc.  
Adam Chuman and Megan Joseph  
Anne Mills  
Sandra Pattie  
Bill and Nancy Peresta

**Additional donations gratefully received from:**

BankNewport, Siena Bardin, Annie Becker at Lila Delman, Bowan's Wharf, Nicholas Brown, Berthon USA, Samuel and Patricia Chase, Mrs. Taylor Chewning, Estes Twombly, David and Mary-Ann Fiaschetti, Robert and Angela Healey, Kathy and Pierre Irving, Mary M. Jennings, Peter LaFreniere, Chad Loeb and Susan Behan, Diane MacEachern, Theresa and Mark MacKinnon, Elizabeth Minifie, Bruce and Cheryl Munick, Newport Restaurant Group, Patrick's Residential Management, Salve Regina University, Stephen Senteio, Sam and Jill Sirrico, Anson and Marilyn Stookey, Martha Ullman, Carol and Kelly Worth

*As of 8.25.21*



*"I really loved it and think it is a very personal, unique and fun event."*



*"We loved our dinner! It was a real treat to be at home with family and enjoy all the goodies. The flowers were so pretty as well."*

Our second Evening at Home fundraiser was a great success! Islanders loved our special 'unhosted' event, gathering in groups of every size to enjoy two beautiful summer evenings in support of ALT. With delicious meals from McGrath's Clambakes and Catering, local wine from Newport Vineyards and Greenvale Vineyards, flowers from Garman Farms, and 'next morning' zucchini bread from Sweet Berry Farm, we provided all of the ingredients for a festive summer evening. Participants picked up their Evening at Home packages from our office and then enjoyed a special dinner at home with their families and friends. We thank all of our generous supporters, sponsors, and in-kind donors for their support!

*"We had the best time!"*



*"The ALT team is exceptional and guides this event masterfully! We and our guests very much enjoyed the meal, the flowers and of course the cause!"*

*"With their acquisition of Spruce Acres all those years ago, we are forever indebted to ALT for the beautiful open land that directly abuts our home. We are grateful every day for the hard work that goes into procuring these parcels of land. This island is lucky to have them!"*



# Happenings at Oakland Forest & Meadow

In 2000, ALT banded together with the community to save the 30.1-acre old growth forest and meadow in Portsmouth from development into condominiums. The forest was once part of a ‘gentleman’s farm’ owned by the Vanderbilt family in the 1800 and 1900s. American beeches, cored on site in 2000, were shown to be as old as 200-300 years. In addition to the beeches, the forest includes other old growth species such as white oak and red maple. There is a row of 100-year-old rhododendrons running through the section of the old estate. This year, the Oakland Forest was formally adopted into the Old Growth Forest Network, in recognition of its old growth status!



## Green Infrastructure at the Meadow’s Edge

As part of the Island Waters Initiative, two Wet Vegetated Treatment Systems (or man-made wetlands) were completed on City of Newport and Aquidneck Land Trust land along the outside of the meadow. These systems are a retrofit of previously existing stormwater basins on the property and will function to help improve and filter stormwater draining into St. Mary’s Pond, one of our drinking water supply reservoirs.

These new man-made vegetated wetlands are “green infrastructure” designed to improve water quality with a natural and wildlife-friendly look and feel. Native pollinator friendly meadow grasses and wildflowers have been seeded and will start to take off next year.

Island Waters is a coalition led by the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission that also includes Aquidneck Land Trust, Clean Ocean Access, and the three island municipalities. Fuss & O’Neill engineers designed the system with work being completed by East Coast Construction.

### SEDIMENT FOREBAY

This feature pretreats stormwater before it flows into the Wet Vegetated Treatment System (WVTS). Pretreatment is extremely important for removing sediment and debris that may otherwise compromise the efficiency of the WVTS.

### VEGETATION

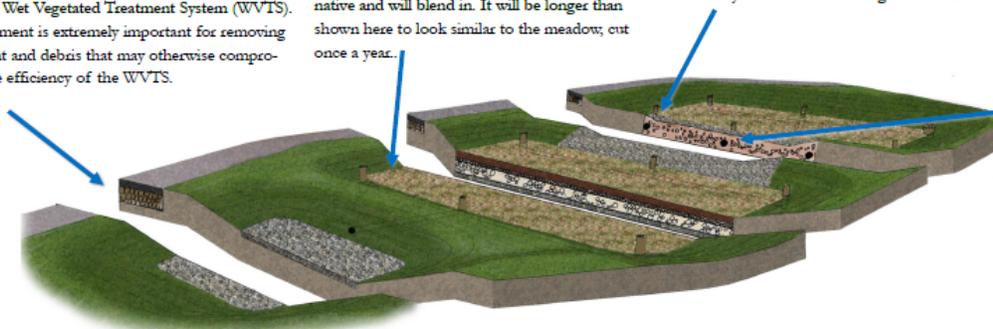
The vegetation at the surface of the WVTS is native and will blend in. It will be longer than shown here to look similar to the meadow, cut once a year.

### PERFORATED RISER PIPES

The perforated riser pipes collect stormwater and convey it to the subsurface gravel media

### SUBSURFACE GRAVEL MEDIA

The gravel media is where a majority of stormwater treatment occurs through processes such as filtration, adsorption, and plant uptake. Filtration is where stormwater passes through a porous media that captures and retains solid contaminants. Adsorption is where stormwater passes through a porous media that chemically attracts and accumulates dissolved pollutants. Plant uptake is where plant root zones capture and use nutrients found in stormwater. Most common are phosphorous and nitrogen



# Tidbits from the Trail

Our trails are open dawn to dusk and are free to the public for hiking, running, dog-walking, horseback riding (on sections of the SGT), and cross country skiing. Haven't been on the trails in a while? Here's a quick rundown:

The **Sakonnet Greenway Trail** covers 10 miles through Portsmouth and Middletown. The trail runs along farmland (wave to the cows at Aquidneck Farms!), woodlands, golf course, and meadow, a true snapshot of inner Aquidneck Island.

**Little Creek Preserve** is a 15-acre preserve off of Bramans Lane featuring a half-mile loop connecting to the Sakonnet Greenway Trail. With a mix of habitats in a relatively small footprint, it's a great spot for birding and wildlife viewing. A brand new 165-foot boardwalk terminates at a viewing platform over the marsh, complete with a binocular station for birdwatching.



The **Gewirz Trail at Spruce Acres** is 1.5 miles through the old tree Christmas tree farm with interpretative signage and a new picnic pavilion awaiting your use.

**Oakland Forest & Meadow** includes an old-growth American beech forest, a rarity in southern new England. Walk through the beeches and meadow on a half-mile loop trail off of Carriage Drive in Portsmouth.

The **Town Pond** preserve, off Anthony Road in Portsmouth, is a state property on which we maintain a trail. Say hi to the osprey and egrets on this great 1-mile out and back to the shores of Mount Hope Bay.



*Sakonnet Greenway Trail*

The fifth grade at **The Pennfield School** adorned their section of trail with wooden rounds carved with their favorite quotes from environmentalists this year. Pennfield is one of seven landowner partners that have a segment of the Sakonnet Greenway Trail on their land.



*Trail Creatures on loan from the RI Land Trust Council*

The **RI Land Trust Council** distributed 30 steel creatures to land trusts throughout the state. We put two of them on our Spruce Acres and Oakland Forest trails for you to discover! See them, and 28 others, on land trust trails across Rhode Island.

## Trail Visit Summary

Trail Visits October 1, 2020 - September 20, 2021	Total Count	Percent Total Use
Spruce Acres	3,235	7
Oakland Forest	3,577	8
Sakonnet Greenway Trail (Portsmouth sections)	16,546	36
Sakonnet Greenway Trail (Middletown sections)	22,795	49

**46,153** total trail visits October 2020 to September 2021

*\*Groups/individuals are counted as 1 visit*

# Partners Restore Third Beach

The scenic vista along Middletown’s Third Beach has been restored after 77 telephone poles were removed and the utilities buried in a recently completed project spearheaded by the Scenic Aquidneck Coalition. The effort restored the natural beauty of the historic area and will promote resiliency against storms and flooding. The coalition is made up of three non-profit organizations: ALT, The Preservation Society of Newport County, and Preserve RI. The group completed a similar project along Second Beach in 2017. The project was funded by donations from over one hundred Aquidneck Island residents and the van Beuren Charitable Foundation. An outdoor reception at the Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge marked the completion of the project in August.



*From left: Senator Jack Reed, Val Talmage (Preserve Rhode Island), Hope van Beuren (van Beuren Charitable Foundation), Dwight Sippelle (donor), Trudy Coxe (Preservation Society of Newport County), Chuck Allott (Aquidneck Land Trust), Barbara VonVillas (Middletown Town Council)*



*Photos: Andrea Hansen Photography*

## Collaboration

Aquidneck Land Trust partners with organizations to support clean water, working farmlands, accessible parks and trails, scenic viewsheds, effectively managed wildlife habitat, and smart environmental policy.

**Coyote Smarts:** [www.coyotesmarts.org](http://www.coyotesmarts.org)

**Green Infrastructure Coalition:** [www.greeninfrastructureri.org](http://www.greeninfrastructureri.org)

**Island Waters:** [aquidneckplanning.org/projects/257/](http://aquidneckplanning.org/projects/257/)

**Scenic Aquidneck:** [www.scenicaquidneck.org](http://www.scenicaquidneck.org)

**Newport Open Space Partnership:** [www.newportopenspace.org](http://www.newportopenspace.org)

**HEZ/Women’s Resource Center:** [newportheatheyquity.com](http://newportheatheyquity.com)

# ALT treehouse



# Grants

Thank you to our generous foundation supporters, who improve our organization and our community!

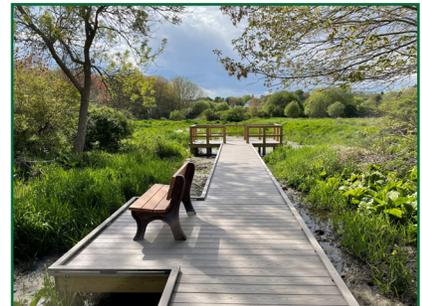
## The Champlin Foundation

A new 20'x40' wood pavilion was erected at Spruce Acres Farm in September, thanks to a grant from The Champlin Foundation. The pavilion will provide a sheltered meeting place for picnics, short programs, and relaxation. The grant also helped fund a pollinator garden adjacent to the pavilion area and along the nearby stone wall.



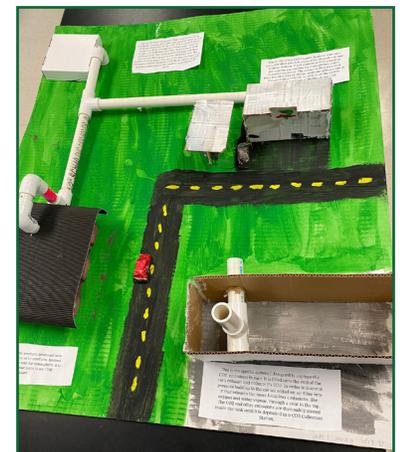
## Rhode Island Foundation

A grant for improvements to our new boardwalk at Little Creek Preserve in Portsmouth was awarded by the Rhode Island Foundation. The grant will underwrite the purchase and installation of a permanent outdoor binocular station on the viewing platform to allow close-up observation of birds using the marsh. It will also fund a new bench on boardwalk and an interpretative sign on the natural history of the preserve. To celebrate the improvements, ALT will plan three free nature walks with an ornithologist, wetlands specialist, and biologist.



## The William H. Donner Foundation, Inc.

A program to promote climate resiliency education to local high school students was underwritten for a third year by The William H. Donner Foundation. Science classes at Rogers High School and Portsmouth High School studied climate change and considered ways that Newport County could protect residents and infrastructure from rising ocean levels and storm surges. Dr. Kelton McMahon, from the University of Rhode Island, presented a remote learning lecture to each school, titled, "Modern Climate Change: Adapting to current changes while mitigating future disasters."



## Corporate Donors

We are grateful to our annual corporate sponsors, who support our mission throughout the year.



*Own your tomorrow.*



# Spruce Acres News

A splendid 20'x40' wooden pavilion is now in place at ALT-conserved Spruce Acres Farm, providing a shaded picnic area for visitors. A team of Amish craftsmen assembled and installed the pavilion in mid-September, improving what had previously been an unshaded asphalt slab. A series of raised beds adjacent to the site has been planted with native plant species, creating a pollinator garden.

The lead funder for this improvement was The Champlin Foundation. Donald and Sylvia Hampton also contributed to the effort, in honor of the Hampton and Smith families. And a group of children from the nearby Island Farm neighborhood in Middletown generously requested donations to ALT in lieu of gifts at their birthday parties, triggering dozens of donations that collectively made a real difference! We thank all of them for their support and enthusiasm.



## Green Island Society

You can help conserve Aquidneck Island for future generations by making a planned gift to the Aquidneck Land Trust. Please let us know if you have included ALT in your estate plan so that we can welcome you to the Green Island Society. We honor this society throughout the year and thank its members for their generosity and foresight.

### Thank you to our Green Island Society members:

<i>Andy Arkway*</i>	<i>William Mershon*</i>
<i>Dennis Bristow</i>	<i>Jim and Jane Moore</i>
<i>Annie Castelnovo and Bill McMullen</i>	<i>Paul Simone and Carol Chabot</i>
<i>Beth Everett*</i>	<i>Edwin G. and Catherine S. Singsen</i>
<i>Michele Foster</i>	<i>Jonathan and Bettie Bearden Pardee</i>
<i>John* and Joanne Gorman</i>	<i>Drs. Christopher Pargellis and</i>
<i>Bruce Hoitt*</i>	<i>Denice Spero</i>
<i>Nancy Jamison</i>	<i>Don and Meg Steiner</i>
<i>Paul and Beverly Kelly</i>	<i>Sheila Reilly</i>
<i>Roger and Sandra King</i>	<i>Lisa Trainor</i>
<i>Sanne Kure-Jensen</i>	<i>Marjorie Ward*</i>
<i>Marcella Clark McCormack*</i>	

*\*DECEASED*

***Leaving a legacy to protect the island we love.***

*For more information, contact Laura Freedman Pedrick at [lpedrick@ailt.org](mailto:lpedrick@ailt.org) or 401.849.2799, ext. 18.*



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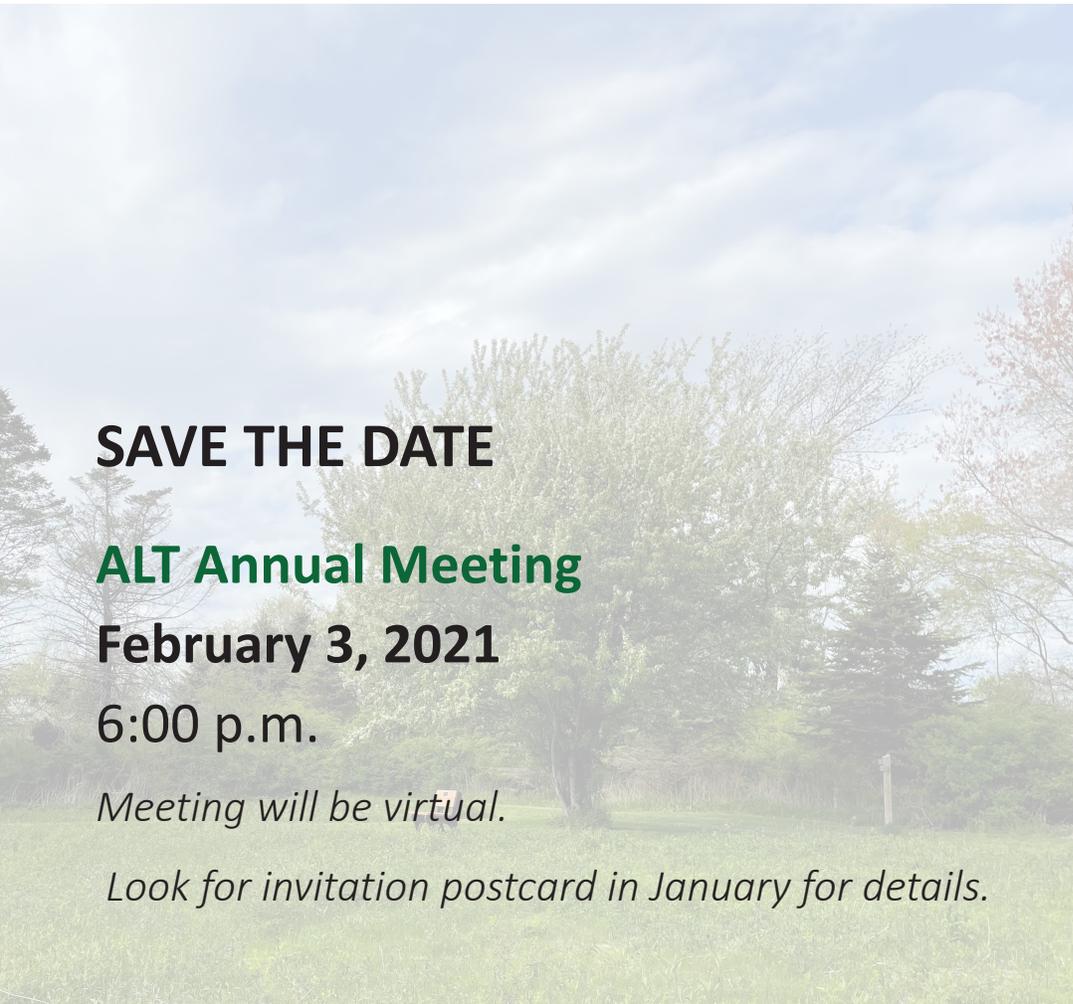


Stay informed and connect  
with ALT online:

[www.ailt.org](http://www.ailt.org)

@aquidneckland

401-849-2799



## SAVE THE DATE

### ALT Annual Meeting

**February 3, 2021**

6:00 p.m.

*Meeting will be virtual.*

*Look for invitation postcard in January for details.*

### SAVE YOUR RECEIPTS!



Help us conserve land by saving your Clements' Market receipts. Please drop them at our office, mail them to us, or bring them to any ALT event. Clements' Market will generously donate 1% of their value back to ALT, helping us conserve more of our island for all to enjoy.

Thank you!