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**2024
ANNUAL
REPORT**



Aquidneck
— Island —
Land Trust



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A letter from the Executive Director



Aquidneck Island is a gem of natural beauty. Our coastal landscapes, defined by farmlands, freshwater ponds, and forests form a tapestry of interconnected ecosystems that sustain wildlife and human communities alike. From the migratory birds that find refuge in wetlands to the fertile farmlands that produce fresh, local produce, Aquidneck Island is a testament to the harmony that can exist between nature and human activity.

Aquidneck Island's future depends on the actions its residents and we, the Aquidneck Island Land Trust, take today. It is our pledge that our organization will remain laser focused on protecting the lands and freshwater that make this place so extraordinary. We are committed to preserving open spaces and safeguarding the Island's natural beauty for generations to come. Central to our mission is land conservation and the restoration of our freshwater bodies, which supply over 70% of the Island's drinking water. Additionally, we will continue to work in partnership with our four communities, Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, and Naval Station Newport, to address the pressing challenges of flooding, stormwater pollution, and shoreline erosion brought on by a changing climate. Our Island deserves our full commitment to ensure a great future for our natural resources and our residents. Together, we can ensure a resilient and sustainable future.

One Island, One Future. You may have noticed an important change in this Annual Report. We are putting "Island" back into our organization's name! With this change, we will once again be known as the Aquidneck Island Land Trust. This was our original name when the organization started back in 1990, and we think it makes sense to return to it to emphasize that we are centered on protecting our lands and waters on Aquidneck Island. We have just one island. We are dedicated to protecting it so that people and nature can thrive here both now and long into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry Sullivan".

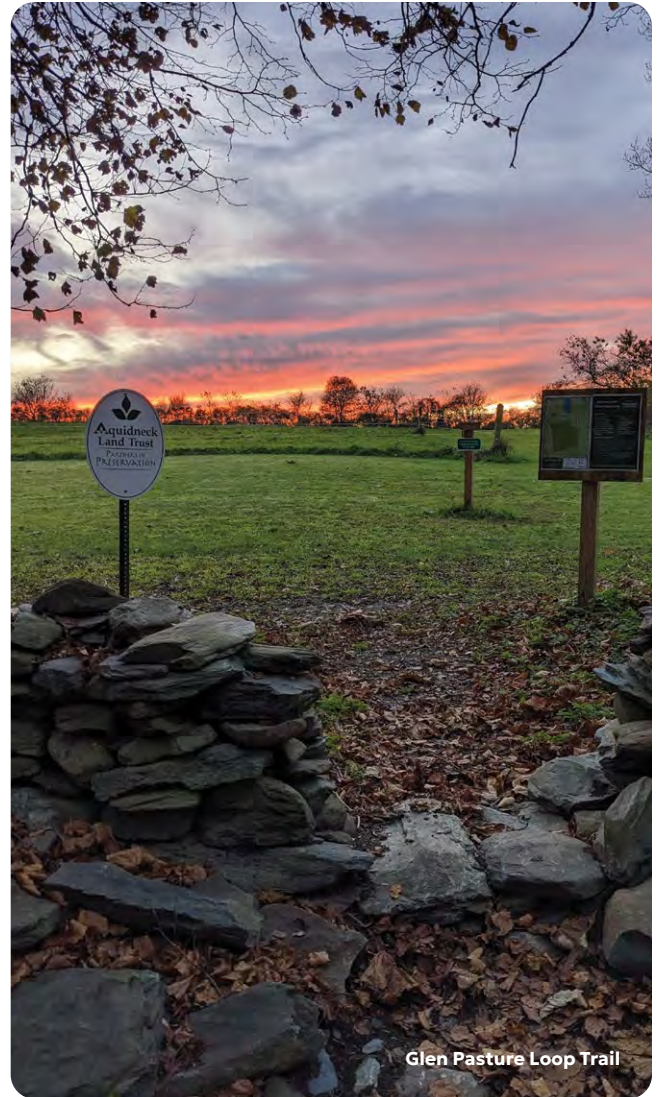
Terry Sullivan
Executive Director
Aquidneck Island Land Trust



Conservation Recap

Land Protection

This fiscal year the Land Trust preserved four new properties across the Island including a salt marsh on the northern shores of Portsmouth, 25-acres of farmland in Portsmouth, an 11-acre meadow in Middletown's Paradise Valley, and Spring Park, Newport's newest park. These lands collectively provide public access, conserve our drinking water and coastal watersheds, support working agriculture, create connected habitats, and make us more resilient to climate change. They demonstrate the benefits open spaces provide to our community. The Land Trust's land protection efforts continue to be strategic and focused, prioritizing conservation of our most important natural and agricultural resources, with the understanding that our community still has a need for more workforce and affordable housing.



Highlighting our Water Resources

On Aquidneck Island, we live on top of our water supply, and the Land Trust team was active in the community this year teaching about watershed conservation, and what our community can do to help improve our water quality. Land Trust staff brought our interactive "Do It Yourself" (DIY) watershed model to local schools and hosted a day of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center's Summer Camp, led on-the-ground watershed tours, gave public presentations and participated in panels on water resources, and even gave a watershed sermon at Channing Church in Newport. The Annual Donner Foundation Climate Program, which includes a community presentation and a guest lecture to students from a climate expert and a resiliency exhibition similar to a "Science Fair", featured Dr. Soni Pradhanang from the University of Rhode Island, a watershed and climate expert.

Educational programming extended beyond just water - the Land Trust continued class partnerships with University of Rhode Island and Salve Regina University, hosting multiple courses at preserves for students interested in conservation biology and ecology. We completed a number of Walk and Talk events on topics including pollinators, birds, and fall foliage. And the Land Trust Annual Art and Writing Contest, sponsored by Sixteen On Center, engaged students from all over the Island, encouraging them to create their own masterpieces of the Island's beautiful landscapes.

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Trails and Land Stewardship

The Land Trust completed the Glen Farm Stables and Pasture Trail, adding another mile to the north end of the Sakonnet Greenway Trail. The trail is the longest continuous nature trail on the Island, and now exceeds 11 miles! Visitors can park at Linden Lane, walk north to cross a new bridge over a creek, and walk by horse paddocks along the perimeter of historic and scenic Glen Farm Stables, with the option to exit at Glen Farm Road near more trails at Glen Park. With this connection, a pedestrian can now walk off-road from the Sakonnet River at Glen Park/Manor all the way to Newport Vineyards in Middletown.

This fiscal year the Land Trust continued to partner with the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society on their ReSeeding RI Initiative by maintaining 400 RI native plants at Spruce Acres Farm for seed harvest, planted 40 native plants and seedlings at preserves, and performed targeted invasive species removal at select properties. We also completed a Soil Health Action Plan, a year-long effort funded by the American Farmland Trust to better understand local agricultural practices, build staff knowledge on soil health, and encourage best soil practices in our land protection and stewardship work.



Lazy Lawn

The 11-acre Lazy Lawn property in Middletown's Paradise Valley adds to connected habitats in the area with its pollinator meadow and wetlands. The Land Trust worked with the descendants of Luisa Gindrat and Samuel Greene Arnold on the deal, who have owned the property since 1843.



Sullivan Preserve

The 2.5-acre Sullivan Preserve, donated at the end of 2023, provides salt marsh habitat and a natural buffer to sea-level rise and storm surge. The preserve is part of a 40+ acre contiguous salt marsh and beach ecosystem south of Mt. Hope Bridge. Public access is available via a Coastal Resources Management Council coastal access pathway that runs along the beach.



Spring Park

The Land Trust partnered with the Spring Park Committee, City of Newport, and Church Community Housing on Newport's newest park, Spring Park, permanently protecting the historic site. Once a gas station, the park is now a gathering place that celebrates the city's history and religious freedom.



Zurlo Farmland

When 25 acres of Zurlo Farmland were about to go on the market off Paquins Lane in Portsmouth, the Land Trust partnered with neighbor Paul Zurlo to conserve the farm. The land, located in the St. Mary's Pond watershed, will be farmed sustainably with rotational grazing of grass-fed cattle by Slate Hill Cattle Co.



Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center Summer Camp at Little Creek Preserve

A letter from the Board Chair

What a wonderful year we've had at the Aquidneck Island Land Trust! Between closing on our 101st conserved property, being awarded a significant grant to prepare our Island for the impacts of climate change, and expanding our beloved Sakonnet Greenway Trail, 2024 proved to be a year of success.

I am grateful to all my fellow Trustees and the Land Trust staff, our dedicated volunteers, and of course, our supporters, without whom so many of our goals cannot be realized.

Thank you for a wonderful year,

Jonathan Gewirz
Board Chair



A Widow Skimmer Dragonfly at the recently conserved Zurlo Farmland



THE ISLAND WAY

Sakonnet Greenway Trail thrives with volunteer stewardship

**“We’re really lucky to live on Aquidneck Island, which is such a beautiful place. What a gift it is.”
– Will White**

Will White and his dog, Allie, on the Sakonnet Greenway Trail

People on Aquidneck Island know Will White and his dog Allie.

No matter the weather, they’re a fixture on the Sakonnet Greenway Trail getting in a quick walk before dinner or checking the trail’s condition on a weekend morning; “We see him out there all the time,” said Alex Chuman, Conservation Director.

For more than a decade, White has maintained a stretch of trail near his home on Bramans Lane in Portsmouth. The trail was relatively new when he moved in, and he watched with interest as it started to grow. He walked outside one day, saw the overgrown grass and thought, “Well, maybe I’ll just mow it real quick.”

“The years went by, and I just kept on doing it,” White said. He expanded his footprint over

time, and from middle school on, his son Henry – now an adult at flight school in Texas – came along and helped out as well.

“I’m a normal guy with a normal job, I don’t have a ton of time,” said White, who works for a yacht builder. “It doesn’t have to be this big grandiose thing to try to help. A little bit goes a long way.” Still, it makes his day when he’s pulling invasive weeds or trimming the vines creeping into the edges of the trail, and runners, hikers, or horseback riders go out of their way to stop and say thank you.

“We’ve developed friendships over the years,” White said. “It’s great to be able to just get out and walk in nature, get some fresh air, and feel better. If people are in a better mood, it just makes the whole place better.”

When Chuman was new to his role at the Land Trust, he wondered how one segment of the trail

was always perfectly neat; “I said, how is this getting done? Then one day, I met Will.”

Hiring someone to maintain this trail segment could cost the organization thousands of dollars.

“We’re lucky to have a lot of people who come out to volunteer, but it’s not often we find someone so committed. There’s an endless amount of work to be done. It makes such a difference for us,” said Sean Grandy, Stewardship Manager.

The Sakonnet Greenway Trail – which is the longest continuous nature trail on Aquidneck Island – stretches for 11 miles, crossing 16 properties, including both public and private land. The trail begins on Linden Lane in Portsmouth, and loops through vineyards, forests, pastures, golf greens, and farm fields before reaching the trail’s other end near Wyatt Road in Middletown.

The Land Trust has just completed an extension to the trail, connecting the Linden Lane trailhead in Portsmouth to the Glen Pasture Loop, off Glen Farm Road, which adds a contiguous mile to the Greenway Trail. The new trail segment meanders around horse paddocks, crosses a creek, and features scenic views of historic Glen Farm Stables. Hanna Lloyd, an environmental studies student at Salve Regina University, is a frequent trail user who recently became more aware of the role that the Land Trust and its volunteers play in making this resource available.

As the inaugural Board Student Fellow for the Aquidneck Island Land Trust, she’s enjoying this opportunity to experience the full footprint of the organization’s work, visiting projects, participating in volunteer stewardship events, and sharing what she’s learned with her peers.

“Conservation is something that our generation should be concerned about,” Lloyd said. “This protection of land and the environment will affect not just us, but our future children as well.”

White and his fellow volunteers are a big part of ensuring that the trail remains accessible for the people who use it each year, regular mowing and clearing fallen branches, but also contributing to larger efforts like building bridges to install over boggy segments of the trail. The landowners along the trail also make critical contributions,

maintaining their sections and allowing access so that everyone can benefit. The Land Trust estimates 60,000 annual visits to its trails.

“It’s a lot of land. As a small staff, we can’t do it all alone,” said Chuman.

White has watched the trail grow over time, stretching across many of the different types of habitats that make up Aquidneck Island. He loves seeing the shady forests, the pastures full of cows, and the grassy meadows where bobolinks – a favorite field bird – gather in the spring, their bubbling call sounding like R2D2 from Star Wars, he said.



Whether building the trail or caretaking, piecing together small contributions add up to much more than the sum of their parts. On an island of only 25,000 acres, the value of that land protection and stewardship is visible all around you, every day. Supporting that conservation with his volunteer efforts is a straightforward way to make a difference for everyone on Aquidneck Island, White said.

“I’m happy to do my part,” he said. “Every acre you lose is one you’re just not going to get back. Once it’s lost, it’s lost forever.”

If you would like to volunteer for the Land Trust, reach out to Sean Grandy at sgrandy@ailt.org.

FAMILY LEGACY

Son realizes his father's wishes with conservation commitment

**“Preserving open space on an island is always a top priority.”
– J. Forster Peabody**

Mowing Peabody Farm with a 1949 Farmall Cub tractor. Deer spotted in the background call this preserve home.

John Forster Peabody is the fourth Rhode Islander to carry his name. His family has been on Aquidneck Island since the 1600s, with branches of the family tree stretching across Southern New England. Peabody men and women helped build our local communities, putting down deep roots in the rich soil.

Now, thanks to a new partnership with the Aquidneck Island Land Trust to protect 9.5 acres of open space in Middletown with a conservation easement, he knows that his family's history here will live on for many more generations. Peabody, who goes by his middle name, grew up on his grandpa's farm, a homestead that the family has owned since 1912. Back then, the land was a market farm, where vegetables were grown to sell in the city.

“It's a very special place,” Peabody said. “I remember, as a kid, my dad saying that he never

wanted to see the family farm built on. I grew up knowing that he wanted to see the land conserved.”

Peabody's father was part of the initial conversation about protecting the land several years ago, but he fell ill and died before they were able to finalize the arrangement with the Land Trust.

“They really cared about the land. You could tell that it meant so much, to both of them, to be able to conserve it,” said Alex Chuman, Conservation Director.

While he wasn't able to sign the easement documents himself, Peabody's father knew in his last days that the protection work was underway and that it would be his lasting legacy.

“The one thing I can be thankful for is that dad's final wish is fulfilled,” Peabody said.

An earlier John Peabody bought land with his brother more than a century ago. He started a little farm on the upland parcel, and his brother took the coastal land. The shoreline isn't in the family anymore, but it is still called Peabody's Beach, known for its gentle little waves and a favorite of families with young children.

"As luck would have it, my grandfather didn't like working on the water, he got seasick," Peabody said with a laugh.



Peabody Farm circa 1965 with potatoes

He remembers growing up on the working farm, and the smell of potato blossoms in the evening air. Long after Forster's grandfather's farming days had passed, his father carried on the family tradition by growing massive vegetable gardens, mending the colonial stone walls that cross the property, and digging up invasive plants in the field by hand. Neighbors recognize the two antique tractors that Peabody displays on the farm – a bright green 1937 John Deere BN and a faded red 1949 Farmall Cub, both bought by his grandfather when they were new.

Space is at a premium here. People are moving onto the Island and there's less and less open space. The Peabody land isn't close to dense residential development, in fact, it's just across the way from the Norman Bird Sanctuary. Peabody has seen mink, deer, and ground nesting birds, and he's watched coyotes and red-tailed hawks hunting in the neighborhood over the years.

Each patch of open space that can be protected adds to the overall network of wildlife habitat

in the region. That connected habitat is key for helping species adapt to a changing climate. The terms of the easement allow for future agriculture, but if not being actively farmed, grassland areas will be maintained for habitat, with limited mowing, much as the property exists now.

That relatively natural state and agricultural value made the farm a perfect candidate for conservation, Chuman explained. "It's really a scenic part of Middletown, with prime farming soils, near lots of other conserved land."

Peabody currently lives in Connecticut, near where his wife was raised, but he dreams of returning to Middletown someday, perhaps growing sunflowers or pumpkins for neighbors to come pick. His son (the fifth to carry the name) is now a senior in college at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, and he, too, feels the pull of family history and supports protecting the farm.



The 1937 John Deere BN has been recognizable to neighbors for generations

"If my son had his way, we'd be down there already," Peabody said, with pride that he has passed on not only the family's deep sense of history, but also a strong conservation ethic.

Preserving open space on an island that has some areas of very dense development should be a top priority for everyone, he said. After considering the easement for so long, it felt wonderful to be part of the solution.

"If you want future generations to be able to have a place to enjoy, it's your responsibility to preserve it now," Peabody said.

If you would like to explore conserving your land, please contact Alex Chuman at achuman@ait.org.



Playing cornhole at Winterfest, held at Spruce Acres Farm in February



Stewardship Assistant Kelsey McKeon uses a penetrometer to complete a soil health assessment at a Land Trust conserved farm



The town line of Portsmouth and Middletown, running through Spruce Acres Farm

Landowner Partners

The Aquidneck Island Land Trust has conserved 2,841 acres since its founding in 1990.

We gratefully thank these very special individuals, families, businesses, neighborhood associations, municipalities, and other government agencies who have partnered with us to preserve and steward their land in perpetuity.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Anonymous (3) | The Faria Family | Manuel Peters, George Peters, and Marie Ney |
| Sandra B. Allen | Farmlands, LLC | Town of Portsmouth |
| Lewis Arnow | Farmscapes Holdings, LLC | The Preservation Society of Newport County |
| Friends of Almy Pond | Greenscape, LLC | RI Agricultural Land Preservation Commission |
| Mr. and Mrs. Daniel J. Alvarnas | Green Valley Country Club, Inc. | RI Department of Environmental Management |
| Edythe Anthony | Hamilton Family Charitable Trust | RI Water Resources Board |
| Muriel Anthony | Mrs. Samuel M.V. Hamilton | Peter and Ann Randall |
| Armory Revival Company | Diana Harrison | Realty Financial Partners |
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| Joe Brito, Jr. | The Estate of Helen Jones | Salve Regina University |
| Robert and Judith Brooks | The Kempenaar Family | Dennis Silvia |
| Carolann Brown | Joe Lacerda, Jr. | The Silvia Family |
| James F. Carlin | Lazy Lawn Realty LP | Mrs. John J. Slocum |
| James Chadwick | Marcella McCormack | John J. Slocum |
| Church Community Housing Corporation | Town of Middletown | Jason and Meredith Spitalnik |
| City of Newport | Middletown Main, LLC | F.M. Sullivan |
| Clubhouse Partners, LP | Middletown Open Space and Fields Committee | The Sullivan Family |
| Corey/Sears Farm | Katherine M. Murphy | SVF Foundation |
| Denys and Margery Cousens | The Nature Conservancy | Sweet Flag Partners |
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| Mary Cushing Coleman | Newport National Golf Club | U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) |
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| Roberta Faria | | |

Their vision for the future and appreciation of the past leaves a priceless legacy.

LOVE OF PLACE

Longtime Middletown residents support land protection for the future

**“It really was a small town. You knew everybody. People just took care of each other,”
– Amy Medeiros**

Amy Medeiros at An Evening at Home fundraiser in July

Amy Medeiros has lived on Forest Avenue in Middletown since 1937. Over eight decades, the hemlines have moved up and down. Hairstyles changed, taking on configurations no one could have predicted. The cars rolling down the street grew larger, then smaller, then even bigger.

But through all those years, growing up and building her life here, Medeiros has been proud to be part of this community where she once played in the pastures of her grandparents’ farm. She cherishes those memories and sees that same spirit in her friends and neighbors today.

“It really was a small town. You knew everybody. People just took care of each other,” Medeiros said.

So, when a piece of her grandparents’ property came up for sale and she learned that the

Aquidneck Island Land Trust was positioned to protect it with an easement that would allow for farming long into the future, it was an easy decision to get involved, she said.

That land is now part of the protected Sweet Berry Farm, a beloved local institution where the Land Trust has partnered to conserve nearly 90 acres under agricultural easements.

Over the years, Amy and her husband Bill have been among the Land Trust’s most dependable supporters. They don’t describe themselves as philanthropists, but the couple has quietly supported key efforts by the Aquidneck Island Land Trust for the simple reason that they love this place and don’t want to see it lose the natural character that makes it so special.

“It’s sad to see how much has changed. We just want to be part of protecting what’s still around,”

When the Land Trust launched an “at home” fundraiser during the pandemic, they were among the first of the organization’s friends to show their support, making a generous donation that they have repeated, even increased, every year since.

“Their support has made countless projects possible, from protecting open space to helping our community adapt to a changing climate,” said Ed Magro, Director of Development at the Aquidneck Island Land Trust. “Their love and respect for the history of the Island is helping us secure its future.”

Amy and Bill met at a friend’s wedding and built their snug white house with a broad front lawn in 1955, on a plot of land right next door to her parents. Amy spent decades working as a secretary at Naval Station Newport, watching it grow from 500 to more than 3,000 employees. Bill is a well-known fixture along the shore, running a boat hauling business and working with the Newport Yachting Center to prepare for the big boat show – only retiring this year on the cusp of his 93rd birthday.

“I know he’ll be back to visit them every day,” his wife laughed.

Over time, the couple has quietly become entwined in the fabric of this community, their commitment to Middletown constant through accelerating change to their world. They’ve seen dear friends pass away, watched the neighborhood children move on to live in Boston or Providence or places farther afield.

Through it all, Medeiros has never questioned that long-ago decision to stay.

She talked about a family member who moved away and found a home in a warmer climate but said that she couldn’t imagine leaving the winter snow, the changing autumn leaves, and the fresh green leaves in the springtime. The diversity of the landscape here, with the sea, the woods, and the fields all in harmony, just felt right.

Amy has always known that this was her place.

And now, she’s proud that the Aquidneck Island Land Trust is helping her leave a legacy.

She notices when parcels go up for sale, when families are faced with the tough decision of letting a plot of land go, and she jots off a quick email to the Land Trust. Every lot that can be connected to conserved land makes a difference. Knowing that the Land Trust can work to protect that landscape, one piece at a time, makes it easier to weather the immense changes as the Island evolves.



Amy and Bill with Development Chair, Bettie Bearden Pardee during a Trolley Tour at Sweet Berry Farm

As new people move in, she wants them to be able to experience the diversity of the Island’s landscape, with homes tucked in between the farms and the shops. She worries that big summer estates and hotels are replacing family homes so that neighborhoods risk losing their character, and she frets that young people who want to build their lives here are faced with such high costs of living.

She wants to see the protection of farmland and habitat and shoreline balanced with the need for affordable housing, so that coming generations can look back on their lives, as she and Bill do, with a deep sense of pride in their community.

“At our age, we just really want to do the best we can for the place we love,” Medeiros said.

If you’d like to donate, contact Ed Magro at emagro@ailt.org or visit ailt.org/donate.

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WEATHERING THE STORM

Aquidneck Island Land Trust launches multi-year effort to grow Island resilience and sustainability efforts

Ocean Drive, Newport

**The climate crisis does not respect municipal boundaries ... we are all in this together.”
– Lea Hitchen, Town Planner for Portsmouth**

When a series of big Nor’easters rolled in last winter, waves eroded the coastline and rose to historic heights across the region. Roads were flooded, while seawater and salt spray on Easton’s Beach came perilously close to the City of Newport’s drinking water infrastructure as the Atlantic rose.

Examples like this exist all over the Island; aging infrastructure overdue for repair or systems that can no longer meet the communities’ needs and require creative new solutions, explained Paige Myatt, Director of Climate Resilience for the Aquidneck Island Land Trust and project director for the new coordinated resilience project.

Ensuring that our infrastructure is climate-ready for the future, across the Island, will take a tremendous investment of time, money, and community collaboration. Now, a new partnership among the municipalities on the Island, the US Navy’s Naval Station Newport, and the Aquidneck Island Land Trust has secured a \$2 million federal grant to start moving

– together – toward that more resilient future.

Climate resilience in this context means having systems in place to help manage the effects of extreme weather so that our communities can continue to thrive. It’s an issue that faces all of Rhode Island’s coastal communities, Myatt said.

“It would be really hard for any one town to get these things done alone,” she said. “We realize that the capacity to tackle these challenges needs to be multiplied, with a regional perspective to get to the root of these problems. There is a lot of momentum to maintain, and this project allows us to grow the work in a meaningful way.”

The funds come from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Climate Resilience Regional Challenge; a competitive grant program administered by the Office for Coastal Management.

The project was developed in close collaboration with the municipalities of Middletown, Newport,

and Portsmouth, as well as Naval Station Newport. Aquidneck Island was one of just 19 grant recipients among 870 communities nationally that expressed interest in the program.

Aquidneck Island Land Trust is proud to serve as the “host organization,” with a role of hiring staff like Myatt to manage the project, facilitating conversations, and sustaining a network to amplify the partners’ individual efforts. Myatt started her new role in October, though she comes to the partnership with several years of experience working toward similar goals in a regional coordination role for the State.

“The Land Trust is proud to partner in service of helping our Island become more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate,” said Terry Sullivan, Executive Director of the Aquidneck Island Land Trust. “We are hopeful that this effort will further a variety of climate resilience projects, particularly efforts that protect and restore our Island’s critical water resources. It has become clear that we must do more to protect these water bodies from stormwater pollution, especially during the big storms that we have been seeing more frequently.”

There’s a long history of collaboration across Aquidneck Island, Myatt said.

“We’re all addressing the same challenges,” she continued. “Flooding doesn’t reach the town line and just decide to stop. Opportunities multiply when we work together.”

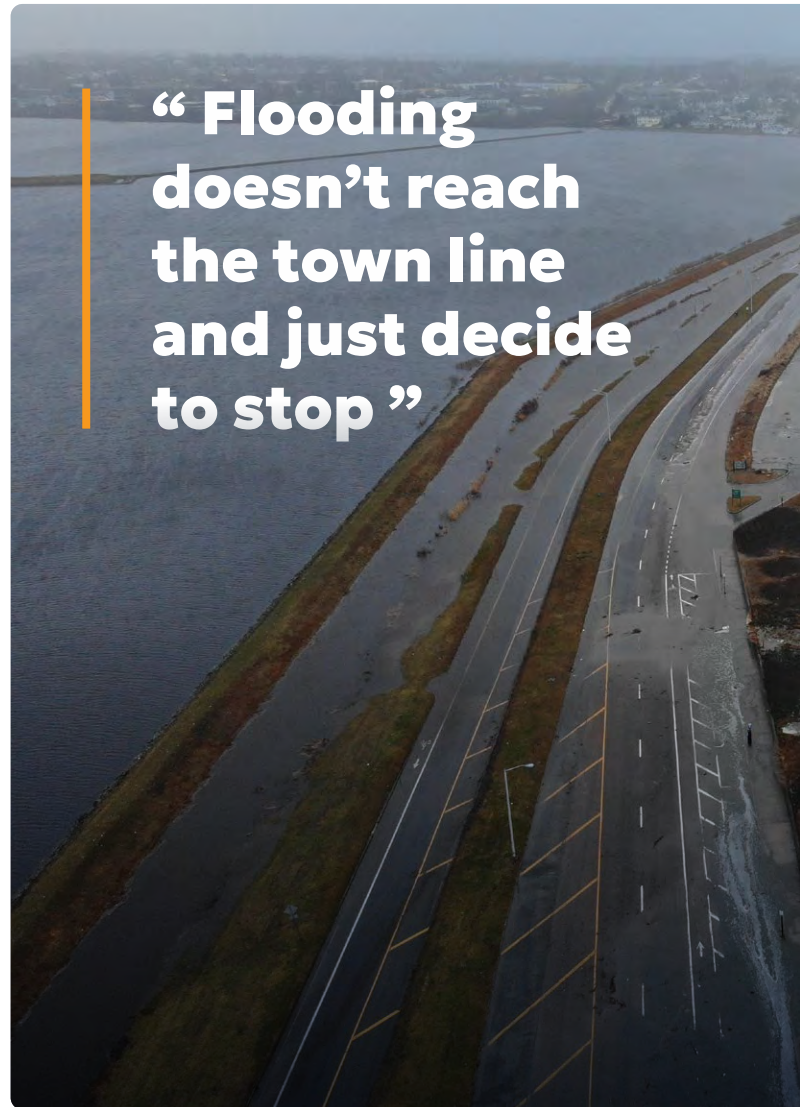
Whether freshwater flooding from large rain events or coastal storm surge, Aquidneck Island faces significant challenges from more frequent and intense hurricanes and tropical storms. Much of the land’s elevation is not far above sea level. The Island is connected to the mainland by a network of bridges. That infrastructure is a liability shared by everyone.

“Work in this area must be grounded in shared values and cooperation,” said Lea Hitchen, Town Planner in Portsmouth. “We are all in this together.”

As future storms become stronger, roads may flood or become so damaged that emergency vehicles can’t get through, people could lose access to schools and social services, drinking water and sewer resources could be threatened. The impacts are myriad and intertwined.

“We’re talking about climate resilience for the natural and built environments – the ability to adapt to a changing climate in the face of increased storms – but social resilience as well,” Myatt said.

A lot of resilience projects have co-benefits that can build a sense of community and make local people’s lives better. For example, repairing a road to address flooding could overlap with making bicycle and pedestrian improvements that boost transportation and recreation opportunities. Similarly, broader adoption of composting programs can divert food waste from landfills, improving soil health, which will, in turn, allow the ground to absorb more rainwater, reducing flooding and improving water quality.



**“ Flooding
doesn’t reach
the town line
and just decide
to stop ”**

While much of this effort is focused on planning for the future, communities are also implementing specific projects now that fit into that bigger picture.

Community leaders have started learning from other coastal cities and towns facing similar challenges – scattered from Martha’s Vineyard to Cape Cod and beyond – that have developed innovative solutions for climate resilience.

Starting this year, residents will have opportunities to participate in developing a climate resilience action plan, a detailed strategy and comprehensive list of projects that need to be tackled to prepare Aquidneck Island for a changing climate, this planning will identify projects for future funding opportunities.

Local leaders have been thinking about these issues for years and have a long list of potential projects. Collaboration efforts started several years ago,



and the communities are excited to build upon that progress to work toward creating a more resilient region, explained Ron Wolanski, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the Town of Middletown.

In the coming year, residents will continue to see resilience efforts progress across the region:

- In Portsmouth, work has begun to reduce flooding on Riverside Street in the low-lying Island Park neighborhood.
- In Middletown, a pump station near Second Beach will be floodproofed.
- In Newport, the City will repair the seawall and implement nature-based solutions to protect against seasonally high tides and storm surge in King Park, with funding provided by a \$2.4 million grant from Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank.

The climate resilience action planning will eventually weave together a comprehensive and prioritized list of these types of projects and more, as identified by municipal experts and the broader community.

But the beauty of this program is how it will ensure that a variety of voices are invited to shape the plan. Historically, those most affected by extreme weather have not always been part of planning and developing solutions.

“We need to ensure everyone feels welcome and has a seat at the table,” Myatt said. “We hope this effort allows more people to become involved, providing opportunities for both engagement and education.”

The residents of Aquidneck Island will not feel the impacts of climate change equally. People are facing the same rising tide – both literally and figuratively – but they are meeting that danger with wildly different resources, depending on income, geography, cultural identity, and countless other factors.

“Looking at this collaboratively and through various different lenses is so important,” said Bari Freeman, founder and Executive Director of Bike Newport. “We need a diversity of people both contributing to and benefiting from climate resilience solutions.”

Freeman has worked on community building through her organization’s Ride Island initiative, as well as the greening urban spaces working group of the Newport Health Equity Zone. The Aquidneck Island Land Trust’s inclusive approach to leadership will be key as partners seek technical assistance and funding, she said.

“The urgency is clear. These are very pressing issues, and the impact and the outcomes are so amplified by coalition,” Freeman said.

Ensuring equitable approaches is an important pillar of Growing Regional Resilience Coordination

Weathering the Storm

on Aquidneck Island. The leaders of this effort will ensure that all Islanders – from Common Fence Point to Newport’s North End, to neighborhoods at the southern tip of the Island – are invited into this effort and will share in the benefits of the work.

Moving in concert makes this work more feasible, as towns share knowledge and resources to lower costs by avoiding duplication. Through this grant, Myatt aims to build a web platform to share information on local projects, examples of best practices from around the world, as well as resources developed by local, state, and national partners. A great deal of useful information exists, but it’s not yet easily accessible in one place, she said.



Flooding on Berkeley Ave. in Middletown

Cost sharing and avoiding duplication of effort is key, as climate resilience requires significant investment. But there are also steep economic consequences to inaction. Aquidneck Island receives nearly four million visitors each year, with tourists and summer residents spending hundreds of millions of dollars at local businesses.

“Together, we can address projects that will benefit not only our communities, but also the many visitors

that enjoy the Island’s scenic and natural beauty, setting an important example for how similar places can tackle these common challenges,” said Patricia Reynolds, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the City of Newport.

And the US Navy – the fourth community on the Island – balances economic and social concerns with issues of national security. More than 3,000 people work at the base, hundreds commute in and out every day, and they must maintain the same municipal infrastructure – roads, water, buildings – as any other community. The impacts of a changing climate can make that daunting for a coastal installation.

“The Navy has recognized the security threat that climate change poses to its military installations around the world,” said Cornelia Mueller, Naval Station Newport’s Community Planning Liaison Officer. “The Naval Station stands ready to support efforts to implement transformative, resilience-building projects that will, no doubt, enhance the military mission now and into the future.”

On a coastal island, climate resilience affects nearly every aspect of life. By coming together for collective action, Aquidneck Island can offer an example to other communities across the world that are facing the same risks.

“These issues are big,” said Myatt. “But we’re all committed to optimism and a solutions-oriented mindset. We very much believe this is the start of something that will last and make a positive impact for generations to come.”

If you’re interested in getting involved in Island resilience efforts, contact Paige Myatt at paige@aquidneckresilience.org.

Including the three Aquidneck Island municipalities and Naval Station Newport, nearly two dozen local organizations and individuals lent their support to the grant application, calling for regional collaboration on climate resilience: Aquidneck Community Table, Common Fence Point Association / Preparedness Committee, Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District, Elizabeth Scott, FabNewport, Melissa Welch, Middletown Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Newport Energy and Environment Commission, Newport Restoration Foundation, Rhode Island Marine Trades Association, RI Department of Environmental Management, RI House of Representatives, Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank, Ride Island (Bike Newport, Grow Smart RI, Toole Design), US Sen. Jack Reed, US Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, US Rep. Gabe Amo, Sarah Whitehouse, Save The Bay, URI’s Coastal Resources Center/RI Sea Grant, and the van Beuren Charitable Foundation.

The Green Island Society

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

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Dennis Bristow

Annie Castelnovo and Bill McMullen

Conrad and Karen Donahue

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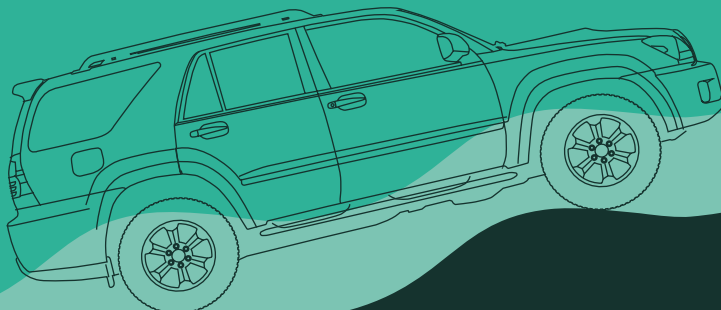
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For more information about how you can leave your legacy on Aquidneck Island, please contact Ed Magro at emagro@ailt.org or 401-367-4544.

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Aquidneck Island Land Trust

Scan the QR Code or visit: bit.ly/404mAwU



FINANCIAL SUMMARY (UNAUDITED) for the Twelve Months Ending September 30, 2024

| Total Support & Revenue | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Grants | \$ 199,864 |
| Donations & appeals | \$ 437,849 |
| Membership dues & other income | \$134,769 |
| Net Investment gain | \$1,845,924 |
| Net special events income | \$267,203 |
| Land Acquisition Donations & Pledges | \$827,192 |
| In-kind contributions | \$285,700 |
| Total Support Revenue | \$3,998,502 |

| Total Expenses | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Program Expenses | |
| Conservation & Resiliency | \$ 3,849,861 |
| Stewardship | \$ 316,295 |
| Outreach & Education | \$ 255,212 |
| Management & General | \$ 337,542 |
| Fundraising | \$ 377,358 |
| Total Expenses | \$ 5,136,268 |

| | |
|---|----------------------|
| Total Net Income | (\$1,137,767) |
| NET ASSETS beginning of the fiscal year | \$24,926,211 |
| NET ASSETS end of the fiscal year | \$23,788,444 |
| Land (owned in fee) | \$9,949,732 |
| Land Preservation Fund | \$ 2,865,008 |
| Stewardship Investment Funds | \$ 8,731,773 |
| Legal Defense Fund | \$ 261,167 |
| Other Designated & Restricted Funds | \$ 38,725 |
| Merritt Neighborhood Fund | \$ 123,781 |
| Carol C. Ballard Park & Wildlife Preserve | \$ 346,426 |
| Spruce Acres, Little Creek, Trail & Misc. | \$ 284,537 |
| General Operating Fund | \$ 610,330 |
| Property & Equipment | \$ 576,966 |
| TOTAL NET ASSETS | \$23,788,444 |

86% of the \$3.6 million used in this fiscal year on conservation easement acquisitions was raised by the Land Trust in prior fiscal years. Conservation easements are expensed, not capitalized as fee parcels are. Therefore, that expense decreases Net Assets.

General Operating Support & Revenue (Included Within The Figures to the Left)

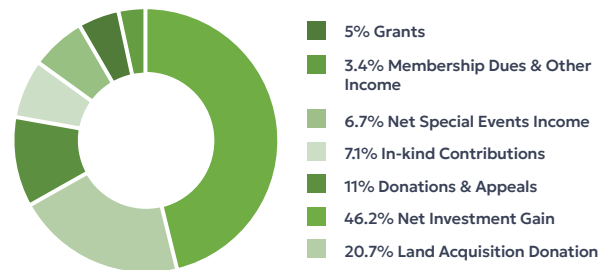
Operating Support & Revenue
\$1,393,498

General Operating Expenses
(\$1,336,794)

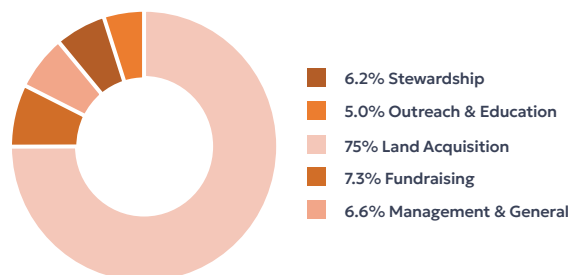
General Operating Net Income
\$ 56,704

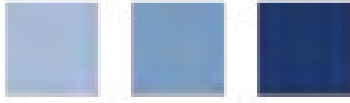
As of September 30, 2024, the Land Trust protected 2841.04 acres at a cumulative cost of approximately \$55,691,600, exclusive of legal and administrative costs related to the purchases.

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Conservation Efforts

2,841 Acres Conserved (1990-2024)

255 Acres In Newport (25 Properties)

929 Acres In Middletown (42 Properties)

1,657 Acres In Portsmouth (38 Properties)

11.5% of The Island Conserved By The Land Trust (1990-2024)

Water Resources

48 Properties Within Drinking Watersheds Protected

22% of Land Within Drinking Watersheds Protected

4.3 Miles of Coastline Conserved

527 Acres of Wetlands Conserved

Recreation

875 Acres of Recreational Land Protected

41 Public Access Properties

2 Golf Courses Protected

13.6 Miles of Free Public Trails Created and Maintained

Farmland

1284 Acres of Farmland Protected

36 Properties with Farmland

100% of Farmland Owned by the Land Trust is Leased



Recreation

27

Parks Protected and public preserves



Farmland

36

Properties with Farmland



Water Resources

9.8mi.

Of Stream Bank Conserved



Conservation Efforts

101

Properties Conserved (1990-2024)

Collaborations

Aquidneck Island 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.

Formed coalitions include:

- Growing Regional Resilience Coordination on Aquidneck Island**
- Newport Health Equity Zone**
newporthealthequity.com
- Newport Open Space Partnership**
newportopenspace.org
- Almy Pond The Watershed Protectors**
- Scenic Aquidneck**
scenicaquidneck.org
- Rhode Island Land Trust Council**
rilandtrusts.org
- Green Infrastructure Coalition**
greeninfrastructureeri.org

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Our heartfelt thanks to those who contributed to the Aquidneck Island Land Trust during the fiscal year concluding on September 30, 2024.

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The Garmans of Garman Farm at the Landowner and Volunteer Appreciation Party



Garter snake at Little Creek Preserve



Monthly volunteer event in held in March, mulching the Pollinator Garden at Spruce Acres Farm

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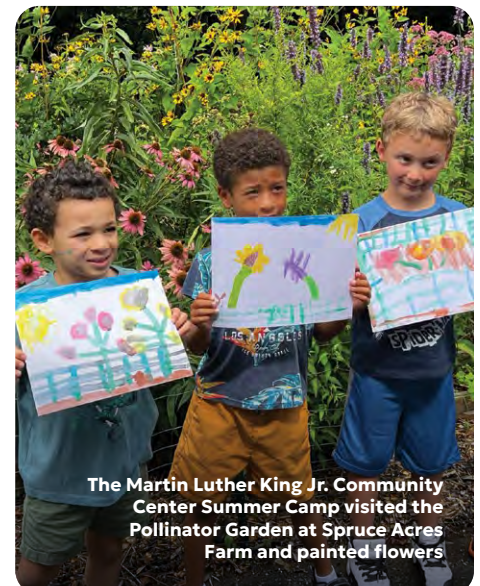
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Charles Clarkson leads a Bird ID Walk and Talk at Town Pond in Portsmouth



Families enjoy a hike during Winterfest in February



The Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center Summer Camp visited the Pollinator Garden at Spruce Acres Farm and painted flowers

Tribute Gifts

In memory of Susan Angier
Selene Angier

**In memory of Al, Bunnie,
Stubby, and Tim**
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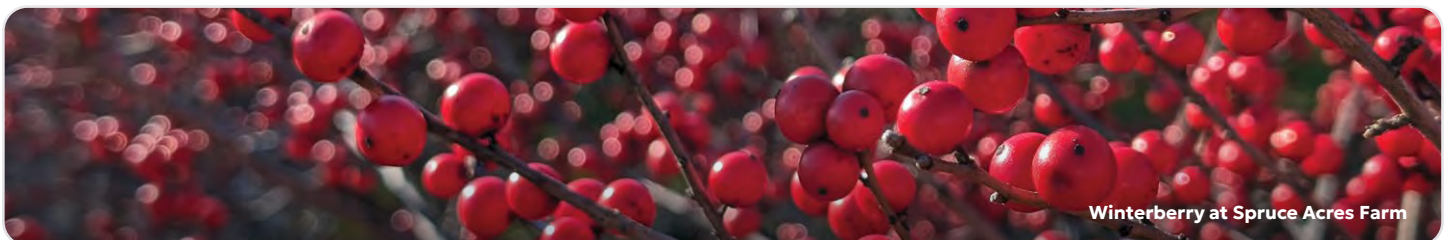
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In memory of Ronald Wicks
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Bumblebee at Hedly Street Preserve



Winterberry at Spruce Acres Farm



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The Land Trust's commitment to preserving open spaces, safeguarding habitats, and promoting sustainable land use resonates with our dedication to responsible development and environmental stewardship. Together, we'll build a greener future.

