

Twenty years  
in the making,  
the Taunton River  
received Wild and  
Scenic designation  
in March 2009



By Scott MacFaden, *Land Protection Specialist*

“WILD AND SCENIC.” Plenty of images come to mind, but until recently, few people would have considered these images applicable to the Taunton River.

A major waterway through southeastern Massachusetts, the Taunton River has undergone numerous transformations over the past four centuries, from shipbuilding mecca to industrial resource to neglected dumping ground. As a consequence, the Taunton has suffered plenty of indignity, but don't be too fast to write it off.

The Taunton River is the longest undammed coastal river in New England and just recently received designation as a National Wild and Scenic River. Recognizing the Taunton as Wild and Scenic acknowledges what local advocates have been saying for many years—the Taunton River is rich in biodiversity, history, and culture, and supports healthy populations of birds, fish, and wildlife. It is also a popular human recreation destination for canoeists, kayakers, and bird-watchers and boasts the largest herring run on the east coast.

The US Senate passed a bill approving the Wild and Scenic designation of the Taunton in January 2009 and the House followed suit. At the end of March, President Obama's signature made it official. CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Wild And Scenic At Last

A group of steadfast activists began advocating for the Taunton River back in the late 1980s—now, the culmination of their effort is cause for celebration by everyone touched by this exceptional waterway.



The Wildlands Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving land and preserving the natural heritage of Southeastern Massachusetts. We work to permanently protect and steward important habitats and landscapes, including woodlands and fields, ponds, coastal areas, agricultural lands, and river systems.

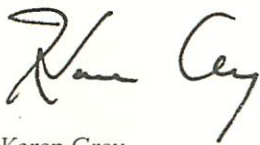
# Caring For The Lands Entrusted To Us

Public trust is one of the most important assets a non-profit can have. For a land trust, that trust is established in many different ways, not the least of which is the careful and responsible management of the lands entrusted to it.

As I write, the Wildlands Trust stewardship team is out taking advantage of the mid-March thaw to complete trail work, new signage installations, and parking lot construction in Plymouth, Duxbury, and Marshfield. Thanks to funding from the Seth Sprague Charitable Foundation, the Entergy Foundation, and the Makepeace Neighborhood Fund, the Trust was able to undertake projects to upgrade the infrastructure at several of our most visited preserves. This was a very much-needed step.

The Trust has an admirable record in land conservation, having protected nearly 6,000 acres of land throughout 32 communities in southeastern Massachusetts. Our holdings are an excellent representation of the diverse landscapes and habitats of our region, which are now permanently available for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. While we are extremely proud of the vision and hard work that went into saving these properties, we are now expanding our priorities to include a strong commitment to their upkeep and management.

"Stewardship" projects like the ones described above are an ongoing obligation at a land trust. Providing our members with access to safe, healthy, and well-maintained conservation lands will be a focus for the Trust in the years ahead. Public trust and member pride are our building blocks for the future.



Karen Grey  
Executive Director



Keep an eye out for new signs that will help you identify Trust properties and trails.

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Marilyn Levandoski

Administrative offices of the Wildlands Trust are located at 165 West Street, Duxbury, MA.

FOR INFORMATION about membership or the benefits of conveying land or conservation (including agricultural) restrictions to the Trust, call or write:

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of Southeastern Massachusetts  
P.O. Box 2282  
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(781) 934-9018 Phone  
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PHOTO CREDIT: Cover photo and all photos for "Wild and Scenic At Last" by Ruth Douillette



# Trust Adds 58 New Acres In the First Quarter Of 2009


The towns of Wareham, Plainville and Taunton are represented in the completed projects.



**Towhee Road Addition**  
5 ACRES, WAREHAM

Great landscape context with its upland woods nestled among other conservation land.


- Wetlands
- Deciduous Forest
- Mixed Woodlands
- Upland Fields
- Coniferous Woodland
- Priority Species
- Critical Habitat
- Tidal River




**Crystal Springs CR**  
32 ACRES, PLAINVILLE

Conserves peaceful tranquility of the woods; supports local farming; a Religious Lands Conservancy project.


- Wetlands
- Deciduous Forest
- Mixed Woodlands
- Upland Fields
- Coniferous Woodland
- Priority Species
- Critical Habitat
- Pond and/or River

**Gordon Preserve**  
21 ACRES, TAUNTON

Protects a mosaic of habitats; expands protected open space in a lightly developed area of the City of Taunton.

- Wetlands
- Deciduous Forest
- Mixed Woodlands
- Upland Fields
- Coniferous Woodland
- Priority Species
- Wildlife Corridor
- Wet Meadow



**TOWHEE ROAD ADDITION**  
Wildlands Trust worked with the Indian Neck neighbors in Wareham to protect this small but important parcel. Protecting this wooded parcel expands conservation lands in the area and helps to protect wildlife corridors. We are grateful to the neighbors who helped to save this land and to ensure the wooded roadside views are forever protected.

**CRYSTAL SPRINGS CR**  
As part of our commitment to the Taunton River watershed, Wildlands Trust adds a new town to its list with the Crystal Spring Conservation Restriction (CR) in Plainville. Wildlands Trust worked on this Religious Lands Conservancy project with MLTC's Bernie McHugh and the Sisters of Crystal Spring Center for Ecology, Spirituality and Earth Education. This CR ensures the protection of the property's woods and open spaces. In the words of the

Sisters, "the protected property will serve as a basis for the recovery of the soul and the connection of human intimacy with the natural world in this ecological age." We thank the Sisters in Plainville and those in Kentucky for their commitment to conservation and for inspiring us to redouble our efforts to leave a lasting legacy.

**GORDON PRESERVE** Candace Gordon developed a portion of her property in Taunton while donating 21 acres to the Wildlands Trust. Ms. Gordon and the Trust worked to reshape the original design of the open space parcel to include direct access for Wildlands. We thank Ms. Gordon for donating the property and for her responsiveness to our concerns.

## SAVING THE WORKING FARM

# An Update On the O'Neil Farm In Duxbury

### HISTORIC O'NEIL FARM TODAY



For the past year, the board of the Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc. (HOF) has been in active discussions with consultants from the Farm Viability Enhancement Program. The goal has been to develop a sound business strategy to plan for the farm's capital needs, and to identify "value added" products, such as cheese and ice cream, that will help make the farm profitable.

Although statistics vary, there seems to be a consensus that anywhere from 2,000 to 5,000 acres of Massachusetts farmland are lost to development every year. Fortunately, New Englanders have a strong interest in our farming heritage, as well as a growing awareness of the value of locally-grown products. As a result, along with the broader land conservation movement, there has been a growing commitment to take the necessary steps to preserve our remaining local agriculture.

In 2005, the Wildlands Trust spearheaded a preservation strategy for Historic O'Neil Farm in Duxbury, Massachusetts. The O'Neil Farm, a small dairy farm on the Duxbury-Kingston town line, has been in continuous agricultural use since the early 1700's. In spite of the financial challenges facing him, Carl O'Neil was determined to continue operating O'Neil farm as a viable, self-sustaining business.

Some seven years after Carl O'Neil and the Wildlands Trust first began their discussions on the future of the farm, a good deal has been accomplished. The Wildlands Trust successfully raised \$4.3 million dollars

to purchase the farm. Permanent agricultural and conservation restrictions were then placed on the property. A new tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation, Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc. (HOF) was formed, and the farm property was transferred to it. The final step was for Carl O'Neil and the new corporation to enter into a lease allowing Carl to continue to operate the farm.

Recently, a beautiful 3,700-foot walking trail has been completed and is now open to the public. A second trail is in the works.

Hundreds of visitors have been welcomed to two "farm days" on the property to enjoy music and refreshments, get up close to real farm animals, enjoy hay rides and other activities, and share the experience of a real, working dairy farm.

There is still much to be done, of course, but Carl O'Neil's vision of a viable, permanent dairy farm in Duxbury is now much closer to reality.

*This piece was excerpted from Edible South Shore, Spring 2009, with the permission of the author (Doug Muir) and publisher. [www.ediblesouthshore.com](http://www.ediblesouthshore.com)*



# The Important Role Of Volunteers

The Trust is always in need of committed individuals to help us monitor our lands throughout the region.

By Jessica Schultz, *Director of Stewardship*

Volunteers have always played an important role at the Wildlands Trust. At the core of our volunteer activities is an Adopt-a-Preserve Program, which assigns volunteer Preserve Stewards to keep a watchful eye on a particular property. Preserve Stewards also help our professional stewardship staff carry out projects that require physical labor. Although we have many active volunteers, we still have a strong need for Adopt-a-Preserve volunteers from across our 32 town region.

## What does it mean to be a Preserve Steward for the Wildlands Trust?

Simply, it requires a deep appreciation and love for the land and an interest in being outside. More specifically, the job entails light trail maintenance, trash pick-up, kiosk maintenance and most importantly, alerting and reporting to staff any issues that might arise at a preserve. With well over 100 properties spread across 4 counties, Trust volunteers are key to efficient and effective stewardship.

Whether it is a boardwalk built by an eagle scout, a trail maintained for easy access by a member, or the Herculean efforts of a Preserve Steward to remove invasive species and reclaim old field habitat, we are continually reminded of the impact our volunteers have. If you are currently a Trust volunteer and have not had the chance to be in contact with the new Preserve Manager, Jim Dehner, feel free to drop him an email or phone call.

**Want to get involved?** If you have the desire to get involved with preserve monitoring as a volunteer, contact the Wildlands Trust today. Jim Dehner can be reached at [jdehner@wildlandstrust.org](mailto:jdehner@wildlandstrust.org) or 781-934-9018.

## WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!



And to show you how much, the Wildlands Trust is partnering with Weston Nurseries in Hopkinton, Kennedy Gardens in Scituate, and Morrison's Home and Garden in Plymouth to brighten up your spring. New and renewing members will receive a 10% discount on all plant purchases. Watch the mail box for your 2009/2010 Wildlands Trust Member Renewal!



TWO THOUSAND CHILDREN, their families, and teachers visited Willow Brook Farm in 2007 and 2008! Naturalists from South Shore Natural Science Center led 2nd thru 4th graders from Hanover, Norwell, and Pembroke in exploring the varied habitats of this Pembroke preserve.

## Wild And Scenic In The Making

—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Enacted by Congress in 1968 amidst a national ecological awakening, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act established a process for designating qualifying rivers. The intention was to create a system of Wild and Scenic rivers across the country. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System currently protects over 11,000 miles of 166

Begin with a small but tenacious group of activists who first discussed the possibility over 20 years ago. Bill Napolitano, Senior Environmental Planner for SRPEDD, the regional planning agency in Taunton, was one of those early activists who recognized the river's potential and has been instrumental in pursuing the designation.

### MEET THE RIVER OTTER OF THE TAUNTON RIVER



A common sighting along the Taunton River, the North American river otter is among the hundreds of plants and animals that will benefit from the Wild and Scenic designation. Otters are right at home along the Taunton, building their dens in natural hollows. They live in a variety of climates and landscapes around North America, but are extremely sensitive to pollution and will often disappear once a water source becomes contaminated.



rivers in 38 states, including four other Massachusetts rivers, the Westfield, and the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord (the last three designated jointly).

For a river to qualify, it must possess one or more "Outstanding Resource Values". A river's qualifications for designation are vetted through a Wild and Scenic Study Process, which typically takes about three years and is conducted by a study committee comprising public officials, conservation groups, and interested citizens. At the instigation of river advocates, and with the strong support of the Commonwealth's congressional delegation, the National Park Service initiated a feasibility study in 2000 for the upper Taunton River. Most of the lower Taunton was subsequently included in the study as well. The study's results indicated that the river possessed six outstanding resource values—Agriculture, Ecology and Biological Diversity, Estuary, Fisheries, History and Archaeology, and Recreation.

To what might we attribute the Taunton's resurgence as a Wild and Scenic River?

As Bill recounts, "To the many people who have been involved in bringing the Taunton River back into the public eye over the past twenty years, Wild and Scenic designation is the fulfillment of a dream. It will provide the river with a voice and affirm its vitality as a treasured regional resource".

In practical terms, what will this designation mean for the Taunton's future? Far from a merely symbolic legislative gesture, Wild and Scenic status provides protection for the river and access to federal funding for river stewardship. It prohibits federal support for any activity that would impair a river's free-flowing character or its outstanding resource values.

A permanent-standing Taunton River Stewardship Council, which includes a seat for the Wildlands Trust, will work to implement a community-based stewardship plan. The National Park Service will offer staff guidance and support, and potentially funding, to help realize many of the goals in the stewardship plan.

One of the most significant benefits of the designation is the confirmation of a vibrant

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# Thank You For Your Contribution

The Trust relies on private philanthropy to fund the work we do to save land throughout the region. You, our members, *are* the Wildlands Trust. Thank you for your vision and for your dedication to preserving land for future generations.

## New Life Members

The Trust welcomes as life members people who have worked with us to preserve their land. For her generosity in 2008, we thank:

Candace M. Gordon, *Sharon*

## Welcome New Members

We welcome these new members who joined the Trust between November 2008 and February 2009:

Michael P. Brazel, *Boxford*

Maggie & David Chiles, *Philadelphia, PA*

Josh & Leslie Cutler, *Duxbury*

William Earley & Tom Kraska, *Marshfield*

Abigail Hardy, *Norwell*

Ben & Gina Keller, *Scarsborough, ME*

Josh & Lee Keller, *Hilliard, OH*

David J. Lupone, *Plymouth*

Bob Mills, *Charlton*

Anna & Charles Pearson, *Hastings-on-Hudson, NY*

Mike Shea, *Fairfax, VA*

Alan P. Wolcott, *Plymouth*

## Thank You, Volunteers!

Thanks for all you do — the Trust wouldn't be where it is without volunteers.

-Ruth Anderson	-Mary Hathaway
-Kathleen Carr	-Barbara Kelley
-Lourdeen Casoni	-Marilyn Kozodoy
-Julie Durant	-Judson Lyon
-Chuck Foster	-Ellen Milt
-Mary Gartung	-Margie Saunders
-Kris Gaskins	-Dorothy Werny
-Dianne Grady	-Sara Wilson
-Lorrie Hall	

## In Honor of

THE BROUGHAM FAMILY  
OF DOTEN ROAD

-Jonathan & Carolyn Brougham, *Richmond, VA*

PAMELA BROUGHAM &  
PETER MOORE

-Jonathan & Carolyn Brougham, *Richmond, VA*

MR. & MRS. SAMUEL E. DAVIS

-Eric P. Schmidt, *Westminster, CO*

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STANLEY & ANN EMERY

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ROBERT & CHRYSZYNE HOMER

-Mr. & Mrs. David A. DeGhetto, *Norwell*

LESLIE & MICHAEL KNIPPENBERG

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-Gail Lee & Patricia Swimm, *Lakeville*

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-Reid & Estelle Weedon, *Cohasset*

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-Dr. & Mrs. Edward S. Emery, *South Burlington, VT*

JERRY & MAUREEN SHEEHAN

-Michael P. Brazel

BRUCE, MARK, & DAVID ZARO

-Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Iovino, *Hingham*

## In Memory of

JOHN & GERTRUDE BLADES

- Pamela Blades, *Pembroke*

JANE BURSON

- Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Iovino, *Hingham*

RUTH CARPENTER

-Richard & Victoria Brown, *Duxbury*

-Florence & Charles Gregg, *Duxbury*

-Meredith Kent, *Northborough*

-Noele Lee, *West Roxbury*

RICK CONANT

-Ellen Conant & Ron Fortgang, *San Francisco, CA*

LAURA DHOOGHE

-Ann Marie Cappannari, *Plymouth*

-Virginia E. Davis & Karl A. Lekberg, Jr., *Plymouth*

-Richard & Loretta Dunham, *Flagler Beach, FL*

-The Elliott Family, *Madison, CT*

-Mary P. Farina, *Plymouth*

-Edward Hansen & Geraldine Grant-Hansen,  
*Denver, CO*

-Constance & Rena Melahoures, *Plymouth*

RUSS HAGLOF

-Susan & Wendell Chamberlain, *Kingston*

-Linda Leddy, *Manomet*

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-Jean C. Stewart, *Marshfield*

JOHN ZARO

-Dr. & Mrs. Joseph F. Iovino, *Hingham*

**SAVE THE DATE! WILDLANDS TRUST ANNUAL MEETING: SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2009**

## Wild and Scenic In The Making

—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

constituency that cares about the Taunton. Wild and Scenic designations don't just happen spontaneously—they only occur following

years of patient advocacy, research, and hard work, and require the support of each community along the river.

The Taunton River has a lot of friends after all, and the Wildlands Trust Trust is pleased to be among them.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



## PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT

### STRIAR CONSERVANCY Halifax, MA

Step back in time with a visit to the Striar Conservancy.



THE 165-ACRE STRIAR CONSERVANCY is the perfect place to enjoy a spring walk along the viewscape of the Winnetuxet River and its flood plain.

The habitat diversity at Striar is exceptional. The marshes, seepage swamps, flood plains and upland forest support more than 90 species of birds, including the state-protected upland sandpiper, barn owl, and Coopers Hawk. Deer, fox, and the locally uncommon river otter all thrive in the Striar Conservancy. This segment of the river also supports one of the best warm water fisheries in Southeastern Massachusetts. A beautiful man-made pond near the trail's end provides a worthy destination for a long ramble.

The Wildlands Trust and the Town of Halifax joined forces to establish a multi-property conservation area encompassing nearly 250 acres along the lower Winnetuxet River in Halifax.

**How to get there:** From Rte. 106 in Halifax, take Thompson Street South (Rte. 105 South). Proceed two miles to parking lot on left. From Rte. 44, take Rte. 105 North. For detailed directions and a map of Striar Conservancy, visit [www.wildlandstrust.org](http://www.wildlandstrust.org). Printed guides are available at the site, and a trail-side display interprets many of the property's natural features for visitors.