



NEWS FROM

ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST

Protecting Nature for Our Community

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORLEANS VOTERS CAN PROTECT 4.5 ACRES FOR WOODLAND AND WATERSHED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ORLEANS CONSERVATION TRUST South Orleans Property Will Safeguard Critical Habitat and Drinking Water

Orleans, MA /April 2, 2024 – The Town of Orleans has an opportunity to partner with the Orleans Conservation Trust (OCT) to protect 4.5 acres on Eli Rogers Road in South Orleans. The land serves as an important link between preserved land in Brewster and the 500-acre protected Orleans Watershed. It is within the Mass. DEP Zone II Groundwater Protection District, signifying its critical importance to the protection of drinking water.

OCT and its partners at The Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trust (The Compact) secured a loan to purchase a 5.5 acre property for \$1M last June. With OCT's help, the Compact divided the property and sold off a house lot to offset project costs by about \$600,000, leaving 4.5 acres slated for conservation. OCT seeks a partnership with the Town to protect the remaining land through the Town's purchase of a Conservation Restriction (CR). The CR would allow the Town to protect the property while avoiding the burden of land management needs, which would be handled by OCT.

The Orleans Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has recommended funding OCT's application for \$200,000 in Town funds. CPC's inclusion of the project in their budget advances it to Orleans voters, who will have a chance to support the purchase at the May 13th Town Meeting. The land was appraised at a value of \$700,000 last year, meaning OCT is asking the Town to contribute just 29% of the land's value.

The total project costs for the conservation project have exceeded \$1.1M, which included demolition of two aging cottages on the property. In October, the state awarded OCT a \$175,000 Conservation Partnership Grant for the purchase – the largest grant amount allowed by the program. OCT will be conducting private fundraising this spring to secure the property's protection. OCT will need to raise about \$100,000, in addition to the \$200,000 it is counting on from the Town.

The removal of the cottages last fall allows the land to be "rewilded," which is especially important in this area; the surrounding land serves as habitat for rare species, as well as breeding habitat for vernal pool wildlife. The septic system was decommissioned, thereby eliminating septic effluent and safeguarding the Town's drinking water supply – the Town's wellfield sits just to the north of

the property. Over the winter, OCT volunteers helped spread a native seed mix that will create a vibrant meadow where the neglected homes once stood.

“It’s also important that the home that was resold will provide stable housing to a young family, so we’re thrilled that we’ve been able to meet multiple community needs with this project,” says OCT President Kevin Galligan.

Were it not for OCT’s involvement, the Eli Rogers Road property could have been carved up into as many as four residential lots. A 4-lot development underway nearby at the beginning of Quanset Road provides a juxtaposition to the conservation outcome on Eli Rogers Road. “It’s unfortunate to see the land on Quanset being torn up and developed with large homes,” says OCT Executive Director Steve O’Grady, “but sometimes these jarring visuals are exactly what we need to spur people into action. Voters can say ‘no’ to that alternative by voting ‘yes’ to support the Eli Rogers Road project at Town Meeting.”

Orleans Conservation Trust is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1970. Over its 50-year history, the Trust has preserved more than 660 acres in Orleans. Among the most active land trusts on Cape Cod, OCT stewards a range of ecosystems, from freshwater ponds and wetlands to saltmarshes, wooded upland, and coastal grasslands, managing its lands to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, restore native ecosystems, and provide public recreation and education through a network of trails and informational signage. OCT also educates residents and visitors about important natural values and environmental issues in Orleans and around Cape Cod via grants to Orleans schools, guided walks, free lectures, its website, newsletter, and other communications. Learn more about Orleans Conservation Trust here: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/847083186>.

[All photos cleared for use.]



Before and after removal of the cottages. The area is being restored to much-needed meadow habitat. Photos by Steve O'Grady.



The two cottages in the foreground have been removed. The 500-acre Orleans Watershed sits just to the north. Photo by Stephen O'Grady.



A wetland on the property serves as important habitat to songbirds, amphibians, and more. OCT will attempt to certify the wetland with the state as a vernal pool. Photo by Stephen O'Grady.

Land Protection Opportunity: 33 Eli Rogers Road



Preservation of the 4.5 acres at 33 Eli Rogers Road (outlined in red) will provide critical woodlands and watershed protection. Parcel layer and imagery provided by the Town of Orleans.