

# CHATHAM CONSERVATION FOUNDATION BULLETIN

Spring  
2020

*The Chatham Conservation Foundation preserves land for the benefit of  
the people, plants, animals and ecosystems of Chatham.*

## *Preserving Frost Fish Creek*

*by Gerry Stahl  
Board of Trustees*

Every year, Chatham's Community Preservation Commission (CPC) funds projects to preserve open space, restore historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. This mission is closely aligned to our mission to preserve land for the benefit of the people, plants, animals and ecosystems of Chatham.

This spring, the CPC will recommend funding CCF to conduct two environmental studies on Frost Fish Creek. Like Muddy Creek before its restoration, this beautiful resource has severely impaired water quality due to tidal restrictions from failing culverts under Route 28. It also presents an opportunity to restore a 15-acre saltmarsh on CCF land. A preliminary study by the APCC recommended more



Photo by Carol Odell

Frost Fish Creek in late winter.

in-depth studies to support a design for carefully restoring the health of the marsh and coastal resiliency.

Completing these studies will allow the Town to

become eligible for state funding for completion of the preservation project.

In recent years, CPC funds have supported two important CCF projects. The first was the restoration of the historic Mayo House on Main Street, now the CCF office. Then in 2019 we received support

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### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



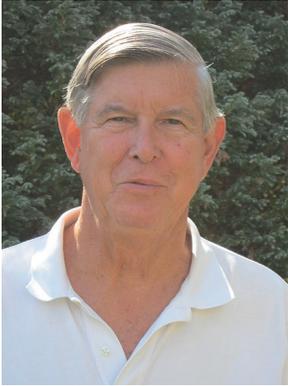
**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Monday, August 17**  
**5:30 pm**  
**Wequassett Inn**

**Guest Speaker:**  
**Andrew Gotlieb,**  
**Executive Director**  
**Assoc. to Preserve Cape Cod**

*Chatham's land trust since 1962*

## President's Message: Spring brings proactive projects

by Bob Lear  
President of the Board of Trustees



Dedicated readers of these “messages” may recall that in last Fall’s issue I wrote that CCF was shifting focus from acquisition of properties to stewardship, monitoring and maintenance of existing holdings. Around the time that was written the Cape experienced a trifecta of tornado, cyclone and hurricane. The cumulative effect required the full time efforts of our land steward team, and hired arborists, for months. There were trails to clear, and fallen trees and branches to remove from our and our abutters’ properties. In addition, we conducted a major clean-up at our soon to be acquired house and lots in South Chatham. (See story on page 5.) Prior plans to conduct comprehensive assessments of the properties over which CCF holds conservation restrictions had to be delayed.

However, with spring almost upon us we have returned to our efforts encouraging use of our trails by the public. We are also engaging in proactive projects such as applying for a Community Preservation Grant to partner with the Association to Protect Cape Cod to conduct a scientific study of conditions at Frost Fish Creek to better protect it from future sea level rise and impact from run-off.

As I have in the past, I encourage all our members to look at our property map, note the areas you would like to investigate and have a look. Then, if you “see something say something”. Or more precisely, if something appears inappropriate, call, email or send us a photo. Better yet, investigate becoming part of our volunteer group to help conserve the natural beauty of Chatham.



## Executive Director's Report:

by Dorothy Bassett  
Executive Director

Happy spring! The flowers are opening at Sylvan Gardens, red-wing blackbirds are singing in the marshes, and sunlight is streaming into the windows past 4pm! We’ve been working on some exciting new projects including our wildlife camera, collaborating with other land trusts, and an assortment of summer offerings.

This year our Foundation has our first local business partnership with the My Generation Energy wildlife camera. Understanding the animals in the woods we protect helps us to be better stewards of the land, and cute animal photos are always great for outreach to the public.

Collaborations are so important to the conservation groups on the Cape. In 2016 CCF contributed \$50,000 towards the Harwich Conservation Trust’s purchase of a 17-acre property (14 acres in Harwich, 3 in Chatham) with approximately 1,400 feet of shoreline on Muddy Creek/Monomoy River. Now the valley of woodland, wetland, and meadow is forever protected, and the public will be invited this spring to the special opening of the Muddy Creek Headwaters Preserve.

Another group conservation effort is Sipson Island, a 24-acre gem next to CCF’s Strong Island in Pleasant Bay.

The new non-profit Sipson Island Trust and the Friends of Pleasant Bay have enlisted the conservation trusts of Chatham, Eastham, Orleans, Harwich, and Brewster to pledge nearly \$450,000 toward the \$5.4 million acquisition of the land.

Thanks to our community’s efforts and generosity, at the time of publishing, 90% of the funds have been raised to save the island for conservation.

Between our wildlife camera and big preservation projects, we’ve been quite busy planning our summer programs. Follow us on Facebook to see our wildlife photos and guided walk announcements, and sign up for email updates on our website. Thank you for supporting the Chatham Conservation Foundation, I look forward to seeing you on the trails and at our Annual Meeting this summer!



# Land Steward's Report

by Julie Baca  
Land Steward



For land stewards, winter and early spring are prime land monitoring time. We have a respite from growing season stewardship demands like mowing and cutting new growth from the trails, and the woods are easier to traverse and look across. It's been quite a tame winter for such work.

Part of what sustains me in this work are the beings I observe on conservation land. I was wandering at a parcel supporting tupelos, red maples, and highbush blueberries the other day and was noticing signs of spring in the call of a red-winged blackbird and the sighting of woodcocks. And, don't forget to keep an eye out on social media for pictures from our wildlife camera run by volunteer Antonia Porcari! For us at the office, a fresh folder of images from the camera is more tantalizing than a box of chocolates- and we're all about chocolate.



Photo by Julie Baca

Kate Witte is the AmeriCorps volunteer working this year with CCF Land Steward, Julie Baca.

This year we have been fortunate to host AmeriCorps Cape Cod member, Kate Witte, one to two days each week to help us with stewardship work. Kate came to the AmeriCorps program after graduating from Messiah College with a B.S. in environmental science and a B.A. in sustainability studies. She is no stranger to the area, having grown up visiting her grandmother in Harwich. Kate has been a great teammate in the field, and I am often learning from her. Kate and I are continuing the work of past AmeriCorps members, to routinely baseline



Caught!.....on CCF's wildlife camera at Cockle Cove.

all of our properties in our land stewardship database. This is a thorough visit where we walk the entire property boundary, document the current conditions with photographs, and monitor invasive species.

Separately, I have been visiting properties with Conservation Restrictions (CRs) held by CCF on Town and privately owned land. A Conservation Restriction, which limits the development and uses of a property, is a tool for protecting conservation values of a property in perpetuity. The CR holder is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the terms of the CR. Becoming acquainted with these parcels and some of their owners, partners in conservation, has expanded my understanding and appreciation for the history of the conservation land in Chatham.

This summer I look forward to reaching out to members of the community to help with this stewardship work. If you are interested in office or field work, please be in touch. My email address is [landsteward@ccfinc.org](mailto:landsteward@ccfinc.org)

## Seeding the Future

by Dorothy Bassett  
Executive Director

The importance of the use of native plants in landscaping is gaining traction, and there are many beautiful and hardy plants to choose from. Red columbine, milkweed, and native strawberries to name a few. But what many gardeners and landscapers don't know is that in addition to choosing native plants, genetic diversity from plant to plant is also an important factor for a healthy landscape.

Most nurseries sell plants which are clones. For instance, plants grown from rooted cuttings all have the same genetic makeup, and are more sensitive to being wiped out by disease, pests, environmental factors, etc. But in nature, individual plants and the seeds



Cayte McDonough collecting seed of bushy bluestem on Cape Cod (*Andropogon glomeratus*).

Photo by Dan Jaffe © Native Plant Trust



Photo by Joseph A. Mannus

Bushy Bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus*) has striking fluffy, silvery flower heads. The sheaths surrounding the flower clusters take on a salmon-orange color in fall.

they produce have slightly different genetic makeup, which provides resilience. This effort can be helped by encouraging native plantings at homes and in public landscapes, asking local nurseries for New England native plants, and finding out where plants were propagated and if they were grown from seed or cloned.

To preserve the character and uniqueness of the plants in our region, the Chatham Conservation Foundation is collaborating with Nursery Production Manager Cayte, McDonough, of Native Plant Trust on seed collection in thriving populations of common plant species on conservation land. Native Plant Trust works with land trusts and conservation commissions, and takes no more than 20% of the seed produced by a given population in one year to ensure that the species is conserved at the site.

*continued on next page*



Photo by Deb Donaldson © Native Plant Trust Photo

Cardinal-flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) is a 1-6 ft. perennial with showy, red flowers on 8 in., terminal spikes. Cardinal Flower depends on hummingbirds, which feed on the nectar, for pollination. Seeds were collected at Frost Fish Creek.

## CCF's Land Donors are Heroes of Conservation

by Dorothy Bassett  
Executive Director

There are many lasting ways to leave a beautiful legacy, and most come down to one thing: giving. Giving of time, experience, knowledge, donations, energy, land, and care. The Foundation is so grateful for all the forms of giving that our community has shared to invest in our mission of preserving land for the benefit of all. Donations of land are very significant. We would like to highlight one of those extraordinary gifts today.

After receiving a town-wide mailing from CCF several years ago, Chatham resident, Daniel Devine began to consider including the Foundation in his estate planning. Dan was from a military family and was predeceased by his parents Daniel and Mary, and his only sibling Thomas. The family had bought the end of a cul-de-sac in South Chatham. Dan had always planned on leaving



Chatham resident, Dan Devine, has bequeathed his home and two adjoining parcels to CCF. He is pictured here with his dog Taylor.

*The Foundation is so grateful for all the forms of giving that our community has shared to invest in our mission of preserving land for the benefit of all. Donations of land are very significant.*

the bulk of his estate to charity, but which one? Dan had been reading about a couple of projects and charities in Chatham, and decided that since he's been living in the town, it made sense for him to keep his bequest local and benefit the community in some way.

"Dan chose the Chatham Conservation Foundation as the organization would enable Dan's park-like property to

be preserved and enjoyed by others. Now that he's gone, he has that as his legacy. He was a very nice man and I'm glad he'll be remembered for his generosity and love of nature" said friend and legal counselor Lisa Sherman.

Dan left his home and two adjoining parcels to CCF last year. Per Dan's wishes the three-parcel gift of 1.31 acres abutting town water department forest may be used as housing for conservation employees and volunteers and/or for environmental office space, and will be maintained as the beautiful green open space that he enjoyed with his family. Dan proudly served in the Navy and was proud of the service history of his parents and brother. The foundation will install a beautiful bench at the property in memory of Dan and his family. The collection of all four of their service flags presented at their respective funerals will be displayed in the home they all so loved.

### *Seeding the Future* continued from page 4

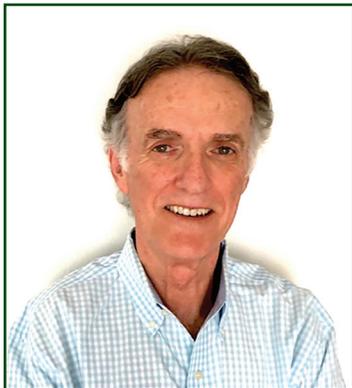
The seeds are used for native plant restoration, ecological landscaping, and education. According to Cayte, "Our native plants are well adapted to our region's climate, and they support healthy ecosystems. Plants grown from seeds from western or southern North America might not be adapted to our colder winters, for example. The plants that are native to here have co-evolved with the insects that are here. A lot of traditional nurseries produce cloned plants, which do not offer genetic diversity for robust landscapes."

Native Plant Trust is our nation's first conservation organization and the only one solely focused on New England's native plants. Their conservation department works to save rare species from extinction, and they've

trained about 1,500 plant conservation volunteers over the years to monitor and protect rare and endangered species.

For the common plants, their Nasami Farm nursery in Whately MA uses seeds collected by volunteers and staff to grow plugs. These plugs are used to restore native landscapes on the Cape and beyond. From both Nasami Farm and their Framingham location, Garden in the Woods, they sell plugs and larger plants to the public, which advances their mission to conserve and promote the region's native plants to ensure healthy biologically diverse landscapes. The Chatham Conservation Foundation is proud to offer support for this conservation effort on the Cape and beyond.

## New Trustees



### Dr. Michael Franco

Mike, a Fall River, MA native, has retired to his home in Chatham after a forty year career as an independent consultant to higher education institutions and other non-profit organizations. His expertise in marketing and strategic

planning, program development and budgeting will be helpful to CCF. Mike and his wife, Susan, have owned their Chatham home since 1987 and established it as their residence since his retirement. Mike was appointed to the Board in December for an interim term. His name will be on the ballot for the member vote in August.

### David Doherty

We are delighted that David is rejoining the Board of Trustees. However, he has never been far from the organization as he has been working behind the scenes ever since leaving the board in 2016. David's in-depth knowledge of the people and property of Chatham has been so important to his role in conserving open space. Previously, David served many years as trustee and CCF's president from 2005-2012. He is an Honorary Trustee as well. Last June, David received the Ansel B. Chaplin Award from the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts for his outstanding contribution to conservation. David and his wife, Abigail are long time residents of Chatham and very active in the community.



## In Memoriam

Four former board members who died recently will be remembered fondly and missed.

**Anne Foster** died February 8, 2020. Anne served as a Trustee of the Foundation for many years in the 1990's.

**Steven LaPierre** (11/29/1947-1/19/2020) was a Trustee from 2012-2018 and contributed to the Foundation's fundraising efforts.

**Nathaniel Mason** (6/21/47-11/21/19) was a trustee from 2017 -2019 contributing to the efforts of the finance committee.

**William Schweizer** (9/44/1927-11/13/2019) served the Foundation as Trustee, and President; he was subsequently made Honorary Trustee. He guided the Foundation through many of the earliest acquisitions.

We acknowledge the contributions made by these former trustees which have helped CCF become the organization it is today. We extend our sympathies to their families.

## Preserving Frost Fish Creek *continued from page 1*

to restore the property at the Nickerson homestead, where an archaeological dig has uncovered artifacts from the 1664 homestead of Chatham's earliest colonial residents.

The CPC projects are funded by a surcharge on property tax bills and a state match of those surcharges. After various town reviews, our project will be presented for a vote at Town Meeting on Monday, May 11. We hope we can count on your support for this vital project.



Photo by Carol Odell

Frost Fish Creek

# Take A Walk for Health!

by Carol Odell  
Board of Trustees

With the closing of schools, the cancellation of cultural events and people being asked to work from home in order to contain the coronavirus, we are having to rethink how we spend our free time. The stress of these changes and other situations of our current, busy lives can be alleviated with a simple walk in the woods.

Spending time in the open air among the trees is known to improve our physical and mental health. The Japanese have a term for this practice, “Shinrin-yoku” or “Forest Bathing”. Forest Therapy Guides lead groups on meanders through nature encouraging participants to slow down and become aware of smells, textures, tastes and sights.

Walking, itself, has wonderful regenerative qualities. The automobile, the telephone, and the internet have made our lives more convenient, but have seriously



Photo by Dorothy Bassett

Above: Trail along the ridge of the borrow pit at Frost Fish Creek

Below: The ADA trail at Sylvan Gardens

***“In every walk with nature,  
one receives far more  
than he seeks.”***

**John Muir**

cut into the time we spend walking outdoors. Homo Sapiens were designed to stand upright and walk and to walk outdoors. Yet according to the EPA, the average American spends 93% of his or her time indoors!

CCF properties have some wonderful trails; they are not strenuous or difficult and they are close-by and accessible with the exception of Strong Island. The trail on Strong Island does require a boat to get there, but it is worth the trip. Caution: the current coming into Pleasant Bay from the north cut is quite strong and the best time to go is spring and fall when the flies have gone. Barclay Pond and Frost Fish Creek Trails are well-maintained by CCF Land Steward and volunteers and parking is available. Sylvan Gardens is a Town property with an ADA compliant trail with a mixture of native and exotic plants. Trail Maps are available on the CCF website and at the Mayo House.

Walking the trails is a healthy activity in so many ways. We encourage you to participate in CCF’s scheduled walks or just meander a trail on your own.

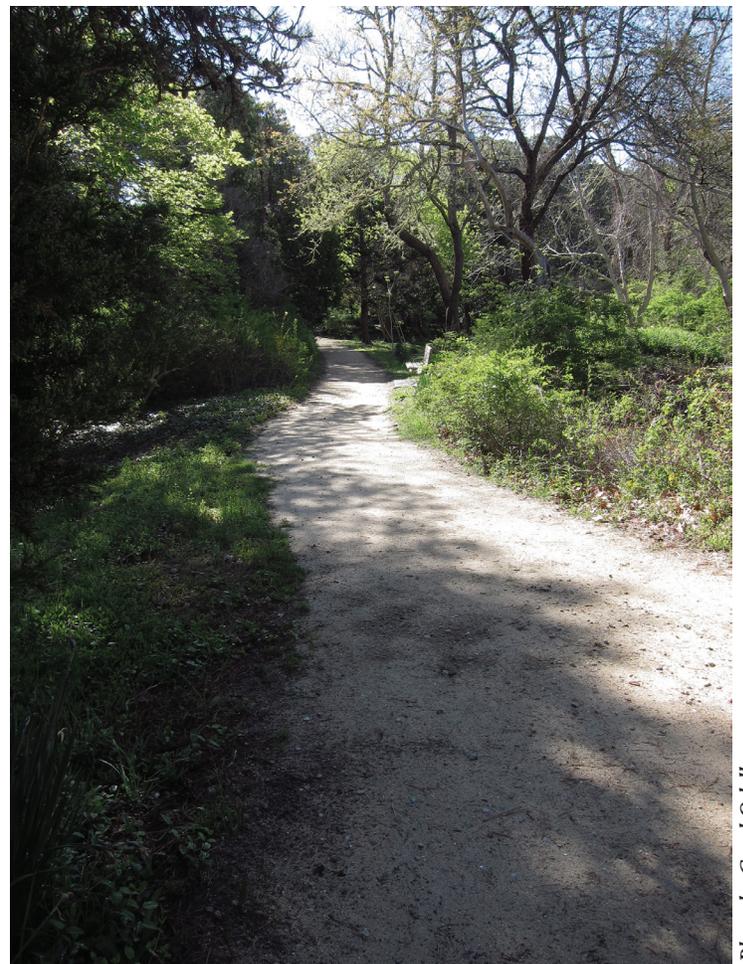


Photo by Carol Odell



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**OPEN SPACE PROTECTED TO DATE**

Parcels	Classification	Acres
149	Gifts	377.21
42	Purchases	243.83
47	Easements & Restrictions	215.12
237	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>836.16</b>

**Recent Memorial Donations  
given in the names of:**

*Betty Clements  
Marion Burke Dick  
Anne Foster  
Steven LaPierre  
William Schweizer*

*"Outdoors we are confronted everywhere with wonders; we see that the miraculous is not extraordinary, but the common mode of existence. It is our daily bread."* Wendell Berry

**Tax Smart Giving  
from your IRA**

**You pay no federal income tax on your IRA withdrawal if you make a gift directly to CCF:**

- You must be 70½ at the time of your gift.
- Your gift must go directly from IRA to CCF.
- Spouses must use their own IRA for gift.
- Gifts may not exceed \$100,000. per taxpayer.
- Gifts must be completed by Dec. 31, 2020.

**Mayo House Office Hours  
by appointment**

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