



Fall 2024

CHATHAM CONSERVATION FOUNDATION, Inc. BULLETIN

The Chatham Conservation Foundation, Inc. (CCF) is a nonprofit, donor supported, community land trust that preserves open space in perpetuity for the benefit of the people, plants, animals, and ecosystems of Chatham, through acquisition, stewardship, education and advocacy.

by
Lauren Arcomano

Protecting Chatham's Water Supply: A Community Effort

Did you know that 18% of Chatham acreage is water? Therefore, water quality and conservation will always be key concerns in this town. We rely on good water quality for drinking water, shellfishing, aquatic recreation, and healthy ecosystems. We have a single aquifer to meet all our water needs, making the community vulnerable to challenges from population growth and climate change. Maintaining a safe, sustainable water supply requires conservation efforts, infrastructure investments, and public awareness.



Photo by Carol Odell

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Photo by Cathy Weston

New Rain Gardens Prevent Water Damage to Millpond Overlook Trail

by Cathy Weston

By creating the Mill Pond Overlook Trail, we did more than open up access to a nice walk in the woods and a scenic overlook. We created a new but unavoidable problem based on the configuration of the entrance part of the trail – straight downhill, with slopes to either side, a perfect channel for excess rainwater and future trail erosion.

We observed substantial runoff in a few rainstorms, which are trending toward increasingly intense periods of rain, like the recent 8-inch September storm. Most of the water was coming from either Stage Harbor Road or directly down onto the trail, while some came from either side of the trail.

Led by Director of Land Stewardship Julie Baca, the first challenge we tackled was getting the water off the trail, by directing its flow over to the side, especially on the steeper part of the trail. To do this, we dug a trench on the left side of the trail and filled it with gravel. Connecting to this trench, we dug diagonal trenches in the trail, which were filled with a 6" pressure treated water bar and more gravel. The water flowing down

Left: AmeriCorps members helped CCF staff and volunteers on the rain garden project.

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Chatham's land trust since 1962

Letter from the President of the Board of Trustees



Tim Burt
President
Board of Trustees

Dear Friends of the Chatham Conservation Foundation,
I'm Tim Burt, your newly elected President of the Chatham Conservation Foundation, and I'm excited to lead this organization alongside our dedicated Executive Director, Lauren Arcomano. Having served on the Board since 2020 in multiple roles—including Treasurer, Vice President, and Chair of the Land Stewardship and Management Committee (LSMC)—I've been hands-on with nearly every aspect

of our work. From developing budgets to maintaining trails, repairing signage, and removing invasive species, I've had the privilege of rolling up my sleeves and contributing directly to CCF's mission.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous contributions of our departing Board members, particularly our past President, Bob Lear. We are immensely grateful for Bob's leadership, and we're pleased that he will continue to be actively engaged with CCF in the future. Jane Harris, another key member stepping down due to term limits, will remain a key member of our Climate Action Task Force. Their expertise has been invaluable, and we look forward to their continued involvement.

We continue to explore new opportunities for land acquisition. While open space in Chatham is limited, we are actively pursuing several possibilities that align with our conservation goals. We have met with and spoken to numerous landowners this year as part of our ongoing search to acquire more property. We are always seeking new opportunities to expand our protected acreage and preserve Chatham's natural beauty. Securing new properties will not only expand the almost 800 acres we already protect but also enhance ecological connectivity and provide additional space for the community to enjoy.

This is why your support is more critical than ever. Whether through financial contributions, land donations, or volunteer efforts, you play a pivotal role in the success of our initiatives. Together, we can maintain the natural beauty that makes our community unique while ensuring we have the resources to protect and steward the lands under our care.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy J. Burt". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tim Burt
President, Chatham Conservation Foundation

Meet our Docent: Carol Anne Peers

CCF's headquarters at 540 Main Street in Chatham are in the historic Mayo House, built in 1820 and restored by CCF through the help of a grant from the Town of Chatham. We offer tours through selected rooms not used as CCF office space on Fridays and Saturdays, 10am – 3pm, through December. Meet our docent Carol Anne Peers, who welcomes visitors to Mayo House:

Why should people come visit Mayo House?

It is the original house on this parcel of land and by far the oldest house on Main Street. I am delighted that CCF was committed to restoring this special building and making some of the rooms and historic artifacts available to the public!

Please describe your role at Mayo House.

I serve as an interpretive guide, introducing visitors to Mayo House and the man who built it, Josiah Mayo. I get great pleasure out of describing how Josiah Mayo did everything himself.

What is your background?

I like to say I have had "9 lives!" I have a background in art history and worked for the Met Museum of Art in New York for 16 years. Later, in Boston I wrote the content for historic tours. I then moved to Cape, where I was an interpretative guide for 19 years.

What is your favorite part about the job?

I like describing the property and placing it in the context of the history of Cape Cod. I am always learning new things about the history of this area!

CCF's offices are open Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm for the work of the Foundation. We invite members and friends of CCF to come by to pick up trail maps, visit our Mini-Meadow on Main and find information on other environmentally related sites and attractions around Chatham.



Photo by Ellen Mckey

Please come visit Mayo House during Chatham's
Christmas by the Sea Stroll
Saturday, December 14th

Director of Land Stewardship Report



Julie Baca
Director of Land
Stewardship

Occasionally, my work takes me out into or on the water. For example, every few weeks the past two summers I have gotten to wade into the freshwater bog (maintained fresh by old cranberry bog infrastructure) at Frost Fish Creek to stick my arm into bacterial impaired water to collect water quality samples. You're jealous, I'm sure. A few times, my boots have filled with mud while monitoring swampy places and with some regularity I must find my way over ditches. Now and then, I get the

luxury of a quarter mile boat ride to Strong Island! But perhaps my favorite water-based outing is monitoring trips down Muddy Creek.

In September, Lauren, Tyler (our hardworking high school intern), and I launched kayaks at Jackknife Cove just before high tide. That's the trick, float in on the high tide and hopefully by the time you have reached the end of the Creek the tide has turned to carry you back out. With the majority of the banks of Muddy Creek preserved by CCF, Harwich Conservation Trust, and the Town of Harwich, you don't notice many houses for the first half of your trip. I usually feel like I have been transported to wilderness further away from Chatham. King fishers have made themselves well known with their staccato calls on each of my trips on the Creek and it's a good place to see herons and osprey.



Photo by Julie Baca

CCF and Harwich Conservation Trust staff and volunteers venture down Muddy Creek.

On our way back up the Creek, at the southern end of CCF's longest stretch of land along the Creek, Tyler and I had to depart our kayaks to monitor on land. Lauren was ready to tow our kayaks to the northern end of the property, more than 0.5 miles away. The land trek is not for the faint of heart; we have to navigate head-high poison ivy, steep slopes, and

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Executive Director's Report



Lauren Arcomano
Executive Director

As we come to the end of an exciting year for CCF and look ahead to 2025, I am incredibly grateful to work with such a wonderful team of dedicated staff and knowledgeable, active board members. Our team is united in its focus on conservation and stewardship, and it's through our combined efforts that we continue to protect the natural beauty of Chatham.

I am proud of the incredible progress we made in outreach and engagement this year. **We hosted our second Environmental Fair** with participation from over 25 nonprofits from across the Cape and four native plant nurseries, and as we move forward, we are planning a bigger and better **Earth Day Celebration for the third consecutive year**. This past year we saw the community rise to the challenge and we cleaned up over 30 miles of Chatham roads, beaches and trails. Our Earth Day Forum brought together concerned citizens and experts to discuss the critical issue of coastal resilience in Chatham. Looking ahead to 2025, our Earth Day Forum will explore another pressing issue we face in this town: water quality.

Our partnerships with local and regional organizations continue to thrive, including our work with the **Communications Group (Compact)** to launch a collaborative calendar of Cape-wide conservation events. Our redesigned CCF website, which will go live later this fall, will feature a link to all our events as well as those of 25 other regional nonprofit groups. The new site will also include an expanded section on CCF and Town of Chatham trails, enhanced resources on native plants and educational videos on a wide variety of topics.

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Photo by Lauren Arcomano

Trustees Bonnie Rosenthal and Beth Taylor volunteered in the CCF booth at the Environmental Fair in September

Rain Gardens at Mill Pond

Article and Photos



The problem



Julie Baca, Tim Burt, Scott Tappan, and Cheryl Grau excavate a rain garden

the trail would come to the diagonal trench and the water bar would direct the flow into the left-side trench.

We were incredibly thankful to have an AmeriCorps Cape Cod team help with this work – we got it all done in a single long day!

Next, we needed to direct the water out of the left-side trench so it could gradually seep into the soil. We did this with three rain gardens, one near the street and two part-way down the trail. The idea of a rain garden is a level garden bed that is set below grade by a few inches to capture and filter runoff. The garden is first filled with soil and gravel that will allow water to percolate into the soil and is then populated with plants that can tolerate both dry and wet conditions – generally native plants. The runoff water from our trenches would flow into the rain gardens and be captured there, rather than continue to flow downhill.

The biggest challenge in this plan was the clay soil – yes, there are patches of clay soil among all the sandy soil in Chatham, and we were unlucky enough to have some. This meant we had to lighten the soil in the rain gardens. Over a series of work sessions with our dedicated volunteers, we dug out the top 6” of each garden and set the soil aside. We then laid in gravel, mixed part of the dug-out soil with sand and mulch and replaced 4” of the mixture back into the rain garden. Extra soil went to build berms around the garden and to fill in a low area further down the Mill Pond Overlook trail.

Finally, it was time to plant, based on the planting design by trustee Cathy Weston. This was the reward for all of

Water! (continued from page 1)

The Role of the Chatham Conservation Foundation (CCF)

CCF plays a critical role in preserving open spaces that protect our aquifer and ensure the long-term health of our water supply. By conserving land, the Foundation helps maintain ecosystems that filter rainwater, recharges groundwater, and decreases inputs of pollutants (from septic systems, lawn maintenance, etc.) from reaching the aquifer.

CCF has been collaborating with the Town and regional and state agencies on an ongoing special effort to improve the water quality and ecosystem of Frost Fish Creek.

What You Can Do to Help

Residents can further support water quality and aquifer sustainability by adopting these practices:

- **Reduce outdoor water use:** Water lawns and gardens only when necessary and follow town-imposed water restrictions during peak seasons.
- **Plant native species:** Native plants are better suited to the local environment and require less water and fertilizer.
- **Maintain septic systems:** Regular inspection and maintenance help prevent groundwater contamination.
- **Use eco-friendly landscaping:** Avoid harmful chemicals, like

pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, that could leach into the aquifer.

Together, we can protect Chatham’s water resources and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.



Join us on Earth Day, April 22nd

for a special forum at Chatham Bars Inn on the topic of

water quality. Our speaker will be Andrew Gottlieb from the APCC.

d Overlook Trail *(continued from page 1)*

by Cathy Weston

the heavy work in preparing the gardens. With support from a grant from the Chatham Garden Club we planted over 200 perennials, ferns, and small shrubs in the three rain gardens

This work was completed in July, and the plantings in the rain gardens settled in and put out blooms. But as luck would have it, there were only light rains the rest of the month and none in August. However, we were able to see our solution in action in the big September rainfall. I visited the trail in the middle of the rain on Saturday and was pleased with the results. Water was indeed flowing through our trenches, the rain gardens held 2-3" of water, and most of the trails were relatively dry. We will continue to tweak the solution to address some areas that are still wet in heavy rains.

They say that water always wins; in our case, we are harnessing its excesses to create a sustainable trail and beautiful gardens.

Rain gardens can also be effective in controlling excess water in the home landscape. To learn more, you can access helpful fact sheets and guidance at www.apcc.org or at www.mass.gov. On either site, search for Rain Garden.

Cathy Weston will be speaking more about rain gardens during CCF's Winter Webinar Series on Saturday, February 15th at 10:00am. Registration for this event will be available soon on the CCF website.



left: Charley Goheen joins the crew in planting the upper rain garden



Completed trenches and water bars

Special Ways to Support CCF

CCF is extraordinarily grateful for members whose commitment to conservation is expressed in contributions beyond annual membership donations. Here are some examples of their generous support:

- Donations of land, either outright gifts or sales at below market rates
- Adding conservation restrictions on portions of their land, whereby they retain ownership of the land but ensure it remains as conservation land in perpetuity
- Unrestricted gifts from donors' IRA Required Minimum Distributions
- Gifts to honor or memorialize a loved one
- Legacy contributions to CCF's endowment to expand our long-term capacity
- Donations to CCF's land acquisition fund
- Bequests of property for CCF to leverage for environmental purposes
- Donations of funds for specific purchases of tools and equipment, including signage, educational materials, and technology
- In-kind donations of special expertise, consulting, and services

If a special gift of this type meets your charitable goals, please consult your financial advisor and CCF's Executive Director, Lauren Arcomano at 508-945-4085.

Executive Director's Report

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One of our newest partners is Monomoy Fish and Wildlife Services who are using one of our properties as a temporary home until they can rebuild and relocate their offices and visitor center after being displaced from Morris Island. This property was a gift from Daniel Devine who bequeathed us his house and land in West Chatham six years ago. CCF used this property to provide housing for AmeriCorps Cape Cod members for 5 years, and we are pleased to be able to help Monomoy Fish and Wildlife now.

This summer we held a **special fundraising event** at the beautiful home and garden of CCF Vice President Cathy Weston. Over 80 friends and members enjoyed a stroll through two acres of native plants. Future fundraising events are critical to our success; **if you would like to host an event, we would love to work with you. Please reach out to me with your ideas.**

Finally, I want to extend a very warm personal welcome to Tim Burt in his new role as CCF President. His leadership, financial acumen, and commitment to hard work will be invaluable as we chart an exciting path forward.

Thank you for being a part of our efforts and accomplishments this year and your ongoing support in the year ahead!

Lauren Arcomano

Lauren Arcomano
Executive Director



Photo by Dawn Dinnun

Staff and volunteers greet guests at the fundraiser garden party hosted by Cathy and Craig Weston in July. Bebe Williamson on left, seated Carolyn Parker, Lauren Arcomano and Ellen McKey, standing.

Director of Land Stewardship

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dense tangles of briars. At one point, I decided my best approach was to slide on my back down a slope under some thick vegetation. I haven't resorted to that before. We were happy to see that the property remains generally unplugged by invasive plant species and, in my five years with CCF, I have watched the salt marsh vegetation proliferate along the edges of the Creek following the tidal restoration. As in any site visit, we kept our eyes out for human activities that may be detrimental to the conservation values of the property. Unfortunately, we found a few instances of tree cutting for views.

This leads me to a serious note. Not only can encroachments damage conservation values, managing them also takes our time away from other activities needed to maintain healthy conservation land. Even a little bit of encroachment from multiple neighbors can add up. We have around 49 miles of perimeter to our properties. If one foot of encroachment occurs along the whole perimeter, that's almost 6 acres of disruption.

So, here are a few tips for being good neighbors of conservation land:

- Know your property line before conducting any vegetation management, construction, or storage
- No vegetation management should happen on CCF property without our permission
- Landscaping debris dumped on conservation land can smother vegetation and spread invasive species. Landscape debris should be composted on your own property or brought to an appropriate facility
- If you are planning a project on your property that you think may affect CCF conservation land, please reach out to us by email (landsteward@ccfinc.org) or phone (508-945-4084). We are happy to discuss plans with you and to try to identify shared property lines. Sometimes neighbors sponsor native plant restoration work on our properties.

It takes a village to support conservation!



The Chatham Candle Co. is a proud sponsor of the Chatham Conservation Foundation. We have created a unique candle for CCF and donate 50% of all proceeds to the Foundation.

Great gift item for the holidays! Come by our store at 400 Main Street or order online:

www.chatham-candle.com

Welcome New Members!

CCF is pleased to welcome the almost 60 new members who have joined us in 2024! Among these new members are many who responded to our spring outreach, a mailing to inform over 700 homeowners about the wonderful conservation properties in their neighborhood.

To all our new members: thank you for caring about the environment and supporting CCF's efforts to ensure we have healthy, thriving conservation properties throughout Chatham. This is a community effort, and we greatly appreciate each and every contribution.

There are many opportunities for you to be involved, and we hope you take advantage of them:

- Free winter webinars
- Walks and events in the spring, summer and fall
- Weekly volunteer projects led by Julie Baca, our Director of Land Stewardship
- Other volunteer projects, including event and fundraising support and office assistance
- Earth Day events in April
- Annual Meeting in August



2024 Trail Walk Season: Something for Everyone!

Another very successful CCF trail walk season lasted from January 1st through the end of September. Guided trail walks are one of the Foundation's most important outreach tools, educating members and non-members alike about the properties and mission of the Foundation. Altogether, we led 14 walks on CCF properties, including 11 trips to Strong Island, and we partnered with Friends of Trees and Friends of Sylvan Gardens for three additional walks. Walks were developed around a wide variety of themes, including tree identification, photographing nature and the natural history of Pleasant Bay, and we again offered our very popular September birdwatching walks on Strong Island.

Thank you to the guides who joined CCF staff and trustees in leading trail walks this season:

Gerry Beetham

Photographer

Mark Faherty

Science Coordinator, Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary

James Junda

Ornithologist, Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary

Phil Kyle

Natural Historian and Educator

Tom Walker

Botanist

A very special thanks to Jay and Christy Cashman for providing transportation for our Strong Island trips.

Photo by Gerry Beetham

Looking Ahead to 2025 Programming

CCF will kick off the 2025 trail walk season with two First Day Hikes on January 1st, this year at the Mill Pond Overlook Trail (see box). Summer trail walks will run June through September, featuring weekly trips to Strong Island in August and September. Dates and details will be available on our website later in the spring.

We are pleased to announce our third Winter Webinar Series taking place on Saturdays in February and March. The webinars are presented free-of-charge as a community service thanks to the

generosity of CCF members and donors. Dates and speakers include:

February 1, 2025

Update on CCF Restoration Projects:

Mill Pond Overlook Trail

Julie Baca, CCF Director of Land Stewardship

February 15, 2025

Managing Water Run-off with Rain Gardens

Cathy Weston, CCF Vice President and Ecological Gardener

March 15, 2025

Cape Cod's Year-Round Birds:

Food and Shelter Endurance

Phil Kyle, Local Naturalist

Speakers and topics for webinars are being finalized. Dates and details coming soon on our website!

CCF BOOK CLUB

A little over a year ago, a small but eager book group formed to read books focussed on nature and conservation of the environment. They read a book a month and the list is quite varied. Titles so far include non-fiction, fiction, poetry, essays, biographies etc. Coming up:

Nov. 11th The Winemaker's Daughter by Timothy Egan

Dec. 9th Special Places: On Cape Cod and the Islands by Robert Finch

Feb. 12th The Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted by Justin Martin

The CCF book club meets at 4:00pm in the Mayo House.

Please join us!



First Day Hikes

Please join us as we welcome the new year with morning walks on January 1st along the Mill Pond Overlook Trail at 10am and noon. These walks are part of

#FirstDayHikesCapeCod, a collaborative effort between the Foundation and other conservation groups around the Cape holding outings and walks on January 1st. CCF walks are free but please register at www.ccfinc.org.



**Chatham
Conservation
Foundation, Inc.**

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(honoring their
72nd Wedding Anniversary)
James & Nancy Donohue



Save the date!
2025 Annual Meeting!
Wequassett Inn
Monday, August 4th
4 - 6pm



Photo of the Season

Photopher: Kim Yeager
Location: Strong island



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