



# BLOCK ISLAND CONSERVANCY

November 19, 2010

Dear Members and Friends of BIC:

Following a summer that many on the island judged practically perfect, in terms of weather at least (though a few of us found it a tad hot, humid, and rainless), the autumn season has so far been characterized by relatively mild temperatures, frequent storms, and bouncy boat rides. Fortunately, however, the weather gods did not repeat last year's dirty trick – a howling nor'easter on the Sunday after Columbus Day – and this year's annual meeting, featuring the postponed appearance of Senator Jack Reed, was a great success. The enclosed newsletter contains more information about the event, as well as the detail behind the summarized Treasurer's and Stewardship reports that were quickly covered before Senator Reed's presentation, and several additional articles on other topics of current interest.

The second annual meeting of the BIC Advisors took place on August 14<sup>th</sup> at the Block Island Community Center. This year we widened the field by inviting representatives of BIC's conservation partners, including the Nature Conservancy Field Office and the Block Island Land Trust, to join the audience. Again the group spent a productive two hours in a broad ranging and frequently spirited discussion of a diverse set of issues suggested by a few topical questions prepared by the Board. For the Board, these discussions provide invaluable input from conservation veterans that helps steer our course throughout the year.

The annual Land Trust Alliance Rally was held at the beginning of October in Hartford, making it possible and even affordable for several of our Board members to attend. Derek van Lent and I participated in an all day seminar on accreditation conducted by both LTA personnel and members of the LTA's independent Accreditation Commission, and came away with a much broader and deeper understanding of the process in which the entire Board will be intensely engaged for the next two years or so. (Please see Derek's article in the newsletter for a comprehensive look at why this process is so important for BIC). Barry Saxe, meanwhile, had a full agenda of stewardship seminars and workshops stretching over four days. We also found opportunities to get acquainted with Board members of a few nearby land trusts to share experiences, and as a result are meeting next week with colleagues at the Sakonnet Preservation Association in Little Compton to learn from their recent experience of assembling the application for LTA accreditation.

I am very happy to report that we now have a new conservation project in our sights: the BIC Board is cooperating with the Nature Conservancy in a joint effort to negotiate the purchase of a conservation easement over 9.5 agricultural acres on the northeast portion of Sprague Farm abutting conservation land. The property has been farmed for generations, and is a long-standing conservation priority because of its importance to the preservation of viable Block Island grasslands. We are very grateful to Joe Sprague for his demonstrated commitment to the conservation value of this property and optimistic that a mutually satisfactory arrangement will be reached in the coming weeks.

With your generous and unfailing support we have, in the wake of the Mitchell Farm project, slowly but surely continued the restoration of funds available for acquisitions. It is solely because of the faithfulness of our membership that the Board has been able to make a major commitment in support of the purchase of a potential Sprague Farm easement. We ask you now to make as generous a donation as you can so that BIC can be assured of the ability to continue to provide a strong guiding hand in preserving and defending the natural legacy of Block Island.

On behalf of the entire Board, I extend warm wishes to you for a happy holiday season.

Best regards,

Stephen Record  
President

# Memorials

*Paul Rivers' B-Day*  
Robert & Joyce Mailhouse

*Laurel Bolgiano*  
Sinde Smolowitz

*Robert & Gloria Littlefield Hull*  
Rev Wm & Gail Martin

*Jennifer Clossett*  
Corey Family: Amy & Timothy  
&  
Families and Harry & Joanne

*Ruth & Colby Barrell*  
John & Laura Breunig

*Barry Homan*  
Dan & Rosemary Millea

*Virginia Slate*  
Dan & Rosemary Millea

*Lou McIntyre*  
Dan & Rosemary Millea

*Don Huggins*  
Dan & Rosemary Millea

*Mary Newhouse*  
Sally Guerry

*David Bosland*  
Richard & Margaret Flynn

*Dennis Wokoff*  
Rally & Fran Migliaccio

*Dorothy Cozzolino*  
Robert & Mary Lou McBurney

*Flavia Clark*  
Robert & Mary Lou McBurney

*Peter Guernsey*  
David & Joanne Bates  
Grier & Barbara Horner

*O'Meara*  
Bill Pease & Loretta Berry

*Read Kingsbury*  
Don & Dorothy McCluskey  
Matthew & Rosalind Moskowitz  
Clifford & Constance Smoot  
Richard & Micheline Weisbroat  
Gordon & Frankie Smith  
Paul & Charlotte Kingsbury  
Craig & Ruth Kingsbury Miller  
William & Mindy Kingsbury  
Robert & Marion Kingsbury  
David & Peg Lewis  
Glenn & Judith Kingsbury

*Bob Pollitt*  
Diane Bean

*Bill Young*  
Diane Bean

*Mike DelPadre*  
Diane Bean

*Edrie Dodge*  
Diane Bean

*Jeannette Batchelder*  
Diane Bean

*F. Albert Starr*  
David Shipley  
Winfield & Marian James

Don & Lydia Littlefield  
Barbara MacDougall & Weld Coxe  
Richard & Micheline Weisbroat  
Elizabeth Theve  
Carolyn Byers  
David & Peg Lewis  
Blake & Michele Phelan

*Jean Forbes*  
Jessie Edwards

*Thomas McErlean*  
Rally & Fran Migliaccio  
Ruby Saleh  
Gregory & Karen King  
Lee Ann Johnson  
Glenn & Elizabeth Goggins  
Sean & Jacqueline Dowd  
Diserio, Martin, O'Connor &  
Castiglioni LLP  
Carrie, Kelly, Janine, Liz, Orlando  
& Shafern  
Dennis Holtzapffel  
Families of Jeremiah &  
Kyran Cassidy  
Kimberly Duhamel  
Susan Cirafesi  
Joseph & Eileen DiSalvo  
Aviva & Gershon Distenfeld  
Eric & Elizabeth Johnson  
Luke Gaynor  
John Corcoran  
Peggy Sansone  
Dorothy Pierson & Family  
Robert & Marilyn Broege  
William & Phyllis Horne  
Frances Guerrette  
Jennifer Adler  
Joe & Jane Giaquinto & Family  
Norik Momose  
Victor & Vivian Skaar

Andrea Yaakov & Daniel  
Shemesh  
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Swift  
Neil & Sheila Holt  
Jessie Edwards

*David Smotrich*  
William & Donna Carlton  
Sam & Edie Talmadge  
Elise Weisbach  
John & Audrey Frank  
Larry & Elaine Amdur  
Christine Kligopoulos  
Genesys Engineering, PC  
Norman & Fern Bruckner  
Lydia Levine  
Richard & Barbara Feldman  
David & Irvine Foster  
Eunice Greenberg  
Barry & Deirdre Paster  
Bharat Patel  
Christopher & Rosalind  
Roosevelt  
Seymour & Patricia Strongin  
Harvard Class of 1955  
Peter & Susan Alden  
David & Alexandra Austin  
Deborah Barr  
Margaret Ann Bauer  
Steven & Carole Chirogianis  
Bill & Honey Eisenberg  
Arlene Petty  
Larry & Sharman Rosen  
Phyllis Tannin  
Arnold & Jewel Schaffer  
Peter Gess & Debbie Kenyon  
Melvin & Enid Wolfson

# Honors, Celebrations

*Their Wedding*  
Kyle & Terin Draper

*Ray & Barbara Ripper*  
The Lewis Family

*Dave & Peggy Lewis*  
Paul & Stacy Henshaw

*Joan Corwin*  
Theresa Cipraini

*Justin & his animals*  
Ken Maxwell & Arlene Tunney

*David & Lorraine Epstein*  
Philip & Wendy Epstein

*Mary Meeker*  
Brad Sherman & Georgia  
Zarafonitis  
John & Marie Kaufman  
Kerstin Cehrs Canastar

*Marie Hunter*  
Jennifer Adler

*Norman Topf*  
Ken Maxwell & Arlene Tunney

*Dr & Mrs. Arnold Koff*  
Anthony & Jackie Fastaia

*Miriam & Forrest Foss*  
Elizabeth Haines



# BLOCK ISLAND CONSERVANCY

Block Island Conservancy Inc. Newsletter

December 2010



Photo by Dan West, courtesy of Block Island Times

## Conserfest again!

For the third year in a row, Conserfest rocks! Through music and art, Conserfest has brought us a different and fun way to help protect the environment and the natural beauty of Block Island. Conserfest is a grassroots project originating on Block Island, in the fall of 2007. The efforts of Block Island Conservancy have been inspirational to the Conserfest founders, who recognize the importance of raising awareness for conservation, especially among younger generations. Through benefit concerts, Conserfest furthers the work of BIC by providing a new platform to address young members of the community.

As time passes and generations turn, it is especially important that those of us who enjoy this special place take notice of what we have. Conserfest reminds us all that if we love Block Island as it is today, we must take ownership of this gift we have been given. Through new memberships in BIC, Conserfest and its attendees have become agents for preserving the character, landscapes, and wildlife of this beloved island. With more than 40% of Block Island preserved as open space

*Continued on page 3*

## Annual Meeting Report

The annual Block Island Conservancy meeting was held on October 17th, 2010, at Saint Andrew Parish Center, with approximately 80 people in attendance. Arrayed around the room, for the members in attendance to view at their leisure, were the results of the second iteration of the student photo project; please see the accompanying article for further information.

Since the distinguished guest speaker, U.S. Senator Jack Reed, had only very limited time to spend on the island, the business meeting was kept particularly brief in order to maximize the time available for Senator Reed's talk and subsequent question and answer session. A complete report on his presentation, reprinted from the *Block Island Times* edition of October 23rd, 2010, appears on the last page of this newsletter.

During the previous year, Mike McQueeny and Peter Greenman resigned from the Board and were replaced by Bill Comings and Sue Gibbons, respectively. The unexpired term that Bill was filling ended in October, and he was nominated by the

Board for a full term in his own right. Vice President Betty Lang chose to resign at the end of her term; Rosemary Tobin was nominated to take her place on the Board. The third nominee, Secretary Shannon Cotter Marsella, whose term was also expiring, sought the opportunity to serve an additional term as an officer in accordance with the By-laws. The assembled membership voted unanimously to approve all three nominees.

At the subsequent Board meeting on November 13th, the following officers were elected to serve for the next year: Stephen Record, President; Bill Comings, Vice President; Shannon Cotter Marsella, Secretary; Debbie Howarth, Treasurer; and Barry Saxe, Stewardship Director.

On November 14th, a volunteer crew of West Lane residents and BIC directors planted five trees at selected sites in the West Lane neighborhood; a sixth tree awaits designation of a suitable location by the residents. All the trees were donated by BIC to honor the service of directors who have stepped down from the Board over the past two years.

## “What Do You Want to See on Block Island in 20 Years?”

Students Answer with Photos

Four years ago, at the Block Island Conservancy's annual meeting, someone asked the guest speaker, John Mullin, how we, as a community, could come to a consensus about what we want for Block Island and its future. His response was, “Ask the children of the Island.” So Shannon Cotter Marsella, a Block Island School teacher and a member of the BIC board, did just that.

“That first year, the Block Island School's 5th, 6th, and 7th graders produced amazing results,” said Cotter Marsella. “The variety of responses showed that the students had a lot to say about their futures here on the Island and that conservation was definitely a part of it.” That first batch of pictures can still be seen at the Island Free Library.

*Continued on page 4*

# TREASURER'S REPORT

The Block Island Conservancy continues to benefit from the financial support of its members despite the fiscal challenges of the past two years. General contributions over the last twelve months were down as was interest income on CDs and money market accounts due to low interest rates; however, the combined income from donations and interest was still strong enough to cover operating expenses. Operating costs include maintaining an office with a part-time paid administrative assistant, keeping our members and the community informed of our endeavors, and supporting our conservation partners on the island. Operating funds also cover attorney's fees relative to land acquisition, appraisals and the expense of the annual financial review and tax return preparation by our accountant. Excess revenues over expenditures to this fund are targeted for land acquisition. At this time, we

have completed all current land acquisition commitments. We are fortunate, thanks to the generosity of our members, to be able to add to the land acquisition fund while we await the next opportunity to acquire land and/or easements. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, operating funds generated by donations and investments totaled \$57,900. Our operating expenses totaled \$42,000.

We continue to receive Mitchell Farm pledges as expected. In the fiscal year ended June 30, 2010, we received \$59,900 in pledges. The balance of pledges due is \$135,014 payable over the next two years. As we move forward, the pledge money will continue to replenish the land acquisition funds used to accelerate payments to Adrian.

The Stewardship Endowment Funds at the Rhode Island Foundation are slowly recovering from the economic downturn. In December 2009, the Board of Directors once again elected to forgo receipt of the December interest payment in favor of allowing that money to earn interest and help the accounts recover principal. The

funds experienced a one year growth of 13.6% as of June 30, 2010. Although the funds have not completely recovered, we are confident that the funds will return to former levels in the near future.

Memorial and honorary donations increased last year from \$5,175 to \$11,000. The interest earned on the endowment funds and memorial and honorary donations are what BIC uses to cover the costs of maintaining our properties and trails. Block Island Conservancy again printed trail guides sponsored by island businesses; the net proceeds of the trail guides are also designated as stewardship funds. In all, income to Stewardship in fiscal year ending June 30, 2010 was \$21,850 against expenses of \$22,650.

We are thankful for the continuing support of our members. This support enables us to sustain our commitment to protect Block Island's natural heritage, rural character and public access to its resources by preserving land as open space through acquisition or via conservation easements.

*Debbie Howarth, Treasurer*

## Our Road to Accreditation

The Block Island Conservancy is about to embark on a path toward recognition as an accredited land trust by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This will be a journey of self improvement for our organization at times strenuous and arduous but in the end very rewarding. We will be joining many other conservation organizations that have made the commitment to improve their efficiency and business practices to insure their success and

the longevity of their work.

In January of 2005 the BIC Board of Directors approved a resolution to adopt, and to manage BIC in alignment with, the 2004 Land Trust Standards and Practices as defined by the Land Trust Alliance. Since then we have added new policies and revised some old ones to be more in compliance with these standards and practices. In 2007 the Land Trust Accreditation Commission began the accreditation program to give community

institutions the seal of approval that they were following national quality standards for protecting natural places and working lands forever. They are an independent commission within the Land Trust Alliance and do not share staff or board members.

Dr. Sharon Goldsmith, an international accreditation consultant, states that "accreditation measures an organization against consensus-based standards as defined by their industries, and publicly recognizes those organizations that achieve accreditation. Accreditation requires an evidence-based verification process in which applicants demonstrate how they comply with each defined standard. ... [T]he process itself often transforms how an organization works in beneficial ways." We will be demonstrating our compliance, competence and achievements to the Land Trust Accredita-

### Block Island Conservancy Board of Directors:

**Stephen Record**, *President*

**Bill Comings**, *Vice President*

**Debbie Howarth**, *Treasurer*

**Shannon Cotter Marsella**, *Secretary*

**Barry Saxe**, *Stewardship Director*

**Laura Michel Breunig**

**Logan Mott Chase**

**Tom Doyle**

**Sue Gibbons**

**Steve McQueeney**

**Rosemary Tobin**

**Derek Van Lent**



# STEWARDSHIP CORNER

Many little known BIC properties are well worth a visit. For example, the Attwood property, located near Sachem Pond off Corn Neck Road, provides a pleasant respite during a bike trip to the North Light. Although the path includes a somewhat steep climb to the top of the hill, one's efforts are rewarded by a view of the pond, the lighthouse and the blue-gray waters surrounding the tip of the island. Especially at the height of the summer, there is a sense of solitude on the hill. It provides an excellent locale for a picnic lunch: bring a blanket and provisions and enjoy the walls, fields, some nice pine trees and wildflowers in summer and autumn -- and maybe a migrating flock of robins or an overheard merlin in the fall. BIC acquired this property from William Attwood in 1985; it comprises 1.8 acres. Dead trees and overgrowth of poison ivy and bittersweet vines were removed and the hill's contours emerged. Regular mowing has encouraged flowering goldenrod and other native plants. Of note are the parallel stone walls along the

road -- any guess as to their purpose when built years ago?

The Harrison trail is a favorite "walk in the woods" between West Side Road and Beacon Hill Road, a round-trip that takes a leisurely hour. The trail consists of a string of pedestrian easements through private properties. Walkers should take care to stay on the path. Starting at the trailhead off Jane Lane (across from Champlin Road), the trail goes up and down hills and along well-mowed paths, with one stone wall to cross. It passes behind the newly constructed West Side homes and the Island Cemetery. Some of the Cemetery's more interesting monuments can be admired from this vantage point, as can the stillness of the Great Salt Pond. The path's beauty lies in its closeness to the trees and brush and the periodic views of overgrown stone walls. Many birds flit across the path. When you reach Beacon Hill Road, you emerge at the oft-photographed Beacon Hollow Farm with its horses, donkeys, chickens and ducks. At this point, the Harrison Trail ends but you may cross Beacon Hill Road to continue along the Greenway trails, all the way to Black Rock if desired.

Since so many walkers bring their dogs on the trails -- a great thing for both owners and dogs -- it is worth mentioning trail etiquette as it pertains to pets. All dogs must be kept leashed and should never be allowed free on private property. Even the most well-trained dog may chase a deer, spook livestock or scare a child coming up the trail.

Finally: in your wanderings on the west side, stop by the Martin property at the corner of West Side and Old Mill Roads. This beautiful wall-enclosed property consists of four main fields. You'll notice that the northerly ones are knee-high in growth, yet the southerly fields have been recently mowed. Next summer and fall we anticipate that you'll be able to observe interesting differences in the vegetation across the property due to our revised mowing plan. The northwest field, along West Side Road, will be mowed in February; in future years both fields along West Side Road will be mowed annually in February. The northeast field will be mowed every other year beginning in February 2012; the southeast field, twice annually, in July and September. We hope this new plan will encourage wildflowers and native grasses.

*Barry Saxe, Stewardship Director*

tion Commission.

The benefits of having achieved accreditation will largely be self improvement, building up our systems to be more successful, increased efficiency and confidence in our work. We will further secure our records and documentation methods to be sure we can (1) demonstrate organizational viability and sustainability and (2) ensure auditability of our procedures and processes. These improvements will help us defend our properties and easements if they are legally challenged in the future. We will add one more feather in our cap to assure our community, current and future donors that we can responsibly and sustainably preserve their properties indefinitely. It will deepen the trust our board members put in themselves knowing they are proceeding under the best standards and practices.

In the process we will root out any weaknesses we may have in the way we conduct ourselves now. Whether those are in training new board members, record keeping or periodic review of properties under our charge, we will identify areas of improvement, adopt the proper changes and increase the performance of our already strong organization. Our accreditation committee is made up of Derek van Lent, Debbie Howarth and Stephen Record. There are twelve Standards and Practices to be reviewed with many sub-categories within each standard. The direct participation and effort of all the board members will be required to appropriately examine ourselves and recommend the necessary upgrades to achieve accreditation.

*Derek van Lent,  
Accreditation Committee*

*Conserfest continued from page 1*

in perpetuity, it's a legacy that will be passed to future generations.

The 2010 Conserfest events once again included daytime surfside performances at Fred Benson Town Beach, as well as a matinee event on the deck at Yellow Kittens, followed by a full night of music on the inside stage. All in all 13 acts performed throughout the day including local and off-island bands. In addition to all musicians having donated their time and talents, a silent auction was held and featured donated artwork by local artists. 127 new or returning members signed up for BIC and \$5400 was donated to BIC's general fund. Thank you to all who volunteered their time and effort for the 2010 Conserfest Block Island events. For more about Conserfest visit [www.Conserfest.org](http://www.Conserfest.org).

# Reed talks energy policy, cable, at BIC

By Dan West

Note: The following article is reprinted in its entirety, with permission, from the *Block Island Times* edition of October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010.

10/23/10 — The United States is facing serious environmental and energy problems, U.S. Senator Jack Reed told Block Island Conservancy at its annual meeting Sunday. He listed rising sea levels, increased electricity demand, wars, oil spills and an out-of-date electrical grid. However, Reed pointed to a bright spot in the country's future — its students.

Reed, with co-sponsor Rep. John Sarbanes of Maryland, introduced the No-Child-Left-Inside Act, which provides funding for schools to incorporate environmental education and promote outdoor activities.

Reed said that he was partly inspired by a field trip to Lewis Farm he took two years ago with the Block Island School kindergarten class. He explained how kindergarten teacher Deborah Hart used the trip as a foundation for future lessons.

"I was impressed with how intricately tied into the lesson plan that field trip was," Reed said. "It is an excellent example of what we can and should be doing."

In a question-and-answer session Reed was asked about helping facilitate a transmission cable to the mainland. He said that if for whatever reason the wind farm were not to be installed, then a transmission line would have to be considered, citing the island's high electricity rates and reliance on diesel generation.

Block Island Power Company Chief Operating Officer Cliff McGinnes Sr. pushed Reed to commit his staff to help the island pursue financing options for the cable. Reed agreed saying that a member of his staff would contact McGinnes within 48 hours.

The Monday after Reed spoke at the BIC meeting his representatives were in contact with McGinnes as promised.

According to McGinnes, BIPCo is gathering information for the senator on the distribution system upgrade and he has volunteered to meet with the senator's staff in Washington. McGinnes said that Reed's representatives are also researching the mainland transmission cable.

Reed also commented on the current debate over energy policy. He said that by promoting clean energy production and the manufacture of generation components like wind turbines and solar panels, the U.S. could become a leader in a "clean energy revolution."

He pointed to China, which is installing high-speed rail and investing in large alternative energy projects, as evidence that the U.S. could fall behind. He also referenced Europe's fuel efficiency standards, which are stricter than in the U.S.

Reed did say that the country has begun to make steps in the right direction. He touted Rhode Island's Special Area Management Plan — approved this week — as a model for responsible zoning for offshore wind. He also praised President Obama's \$67 billion investment in clean energy; however, he remarked that the nation's electrical grid



Photo by Dan West, courtesy of Block Island Times

would require \$75 billion during the next five years simply to keep it maintained.

Reed said that by investing in the country's energy infrastructure it could create more jobs than buying oil from foreign nations. He said that along with clean energy generation demand reduction should also be part of the country's energy strategy. Steps like insulating homes could both create jobs and reduce dependency on foreign oil.

Reed's also touched on conservation efforts on Block Island and mentioned a bill he is sponsoring to make tax breaks on conservation easements permanent. He called the conservation work done on Block Island a "testament to cooperation between public and private groups to promote conservation."

"I commend the conservancy for its extensive work over many years to have this special place keep its special character," Reed said.

## *Student Photos continued from page 1*

Continuing the project that started four years ago, last year's 5th, 6th, and 7th middle grade students at the Block Island School were once again asked to take photos of what they love about Block Island and what they still want to see here in 20 years. This year's collection of the 5th, 6th, and 7th graders' pictures is just as outstanding as the last project. Not only are they different from each other, they are

different from the first group of pictures as well. But all the pictures seem to have common themes: nature, tradition, history, family, and pride. The current compilation of photos was presented at this year's Block Island Conservancy annual meeting and will be on display in the Block Island School cafeteria. A calendar displaying the new photos is also in the works.

The students did what we asked them to do; now it is up to us to listen to them.

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Stephen Record, President

This newsletter was prepared by Shannon Cotter Marsella, Laura Michel Breunig, Justin Lewis, Derek van Lent, Barry Saxe, Debbie Howarth, Martha Ball, Stephen Record, and CRI Design.