



**BLOCK ISLAND
CONSERVANCY**

2021 Fall Newsletter



The Nature Van!

This summer, the Block Island Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy launched a new mobile nature program, the Nature Van! We moved out of our fixed location on Weldon's Way and each day, the Nature Van was stationed at various locations around the island. The goal of the new outreach program was to meet hikers, birdwatchers, and other nature enthusiasts where they are — on the trail. At least 500 visitors stopped by the Nature Van, well more than the number of folks we might have engaged with at the former BIC Education Center on Weldon's Way.

The Nature Van was staffed with a fantastic seasonal assistant Cici Conroy, a sophomore and environmental science major from Bates College, who greeted trail users, shared information about what was happening on the trail or island that day in nature, handed out trail maps and other information, and educated people about conservation's mission and efforts on Block Island.

Look for the Nature Van again next summer!

Composting on Block Island - An Opportunity!

This summer marked the third year of Block Island Conservancy's composting program. We were once again at the Farmer's Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays throughout the summer, providing a free collection site for compostable waste.

Composting is an alternative waste management strategy for organic materials, which, according to the Environmental Protection Agency make up a substantial component of the nation's waste stream. This type of waste will biodegrade when exposed to oxygen, something that does not happen in a traditional landfill, where organic material instead takes up valuable space. When composted, organic materials will break down to create nutrient-rich soil that can be used by farmers and gardeners.

The Block Island Conservancy has pursued composting as an alternative strategy for managing Block Island's waste. The carbon footprint of our waste is huge; trash generated on the island is driven to the transfer station, trucked down to Old Harbor, ferried across to the mainland, and then hauled up to the Johnston Landfill, which is expected to reach capacity by 2050. Composting on Block Island would not only reduce the community's carbon footprint, but also create a product for farmers and gardeners on the island. At the BIC annual meeting in October, guest speaker John Culpepper from the nonprofit, Compost for Good, spoke about some of the challenges and more importantly the opportunities for Block Island to develop a community wide resource recovery program.

Mr. Culpepper spoke about the opportunity and potential cost savings achieved by separating organics from Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) and processing that material right here on Block Island. In many communities, food waste, along with yard waste and other compostables can represent 50% or more of the MSW. By processing organics here, we would save the expense of moving the waste to the mainland while producing "Black Gold", a valuable nutrient rich organic product that many gardeners, farmers and landscapers purchase and import from the mainland.

The BIC will continue our work this year to advance this opportunity by focusing on gathering community input, establishing a compost champion(s), connecting with other communities and possibly increasing our composting capacity to keep organic nutrients here on Block Island. This helps build local resilience and improves our soil all while reducing our global greenhouse gas emissions.

Bequest Received by BIC

The Block Island Conservancy received a generous bequest from the estate of Francis Lorson this year. After a great deal of consideration, the Board elected to invest the money in the Parnassus Core Equity Fund, which specializes in socially and environmentally responsible investments.

The Board may use the funds to help jumpstart our sustainability work on the island, particularly as the composting initiative continues to grow. The BIC may also use some of the funds for other high priority projects to conserve and protect the natural resources of Block Island.



Land Stewardship

A particular focus of our stewardship efforts this year was the re-marking of our trails and trailheads around the island. A generous volunteer, Neil Rodin, carved directional signs that are now up on the Harrison Trail (trail that leads from Beacon Hill to West Side Road), the Carey/Walsh trail complex, in Nathan Mott Park, and at the Win Dodge Preserve. Entrance signs are going up at various BIC properties to draw attention and welcome trail walkers to the many beautiful places to explore on the island.



LOOK FOR NEW TRAIL SIGNS

Adopt a Trail

In partnership with the Block Island Land Trust, this year we launched the “Adopt-A-Trail” program. The goal of this joint effort was to engage volunteers (individuals or families) in regular monitoring of the walking trails. We had twenty teams of volunteers that joined in. They committed to regularly walk a specific trail section, becoming familiar with the trail and the surrounding area. They were asked to make note of any unexpected changes such as issues concerning use and stewardship and to report them should they arise. They sometimes engaged with interested visitors providing help with directions, history, and conservation information. Volunteers were trained by Clair Stover Comings and Nigel Grindley, our Stewardship Director. You might see an “Adopt-A-Trail” volunteer out and about wearing a “Trail Volunteer” cap!

Land Acquisition

The Block Island Conservancy is working to conserve two parcels of land, one at the center of the island that includes open meadow and a freshwater wetland system, and the other on the southwest side of the island that will connect two large parcels of conserved land and provide trail expansion opportunities. In addition, we are working with our partners to protect the Overlook Property. This would join previously protected open space, prevent dense over-development on the shores of the Great Salt Pond, and create an opportunity to provide permanent public access to the Pond, one of our most valued resources.

Leadership Change

In September, the Block Island Conservancy said goodbye to our terrific Executive Director of three years, Clair Stover Comings. Clair is leaving the organization to spend time with her growing family. During her tenure with the Block Island Conservancy, we achieved our accreditation renewal with the Land Trust Alliance, balanced our budgets to ensure the organization’s longterm stability, added more trails and protected more open space for all to enjoy, and expanded the Block Island Conservancy’s scope of work to include a focus on sustainability, particularly through creating an on-island composting program. Thank you Clair for all you have accomplished for the BIC!

In preparation for Clair’s departure, we began interviewing for her replacement in August. We are excited to introduce our new Executive Director, Caroline Barr. Caroline spent her summers growing up on Block Island and has worked at various shops and restaurants here throughout high school and college. After graduating college in 2011, Caroline moved out to California where she has spent several years living and working between San Diego and Block Island. After working for 8 years in community relations for Ironman Triathlon, Caroline started her own event operations company and moved back to Block Island full time this past May. She has been working on her business as well as making and selling sea salt at the Block Island Farmers Market with her family’s salt company, Block Island Salt Works. Her love of Block Island is what drew her to this position, and we are very excited to have her join the BIC.



Caroline Barr
New Executive Director

BIC Annual Meeting

BIC’s 2021 Annual Meeting was a well-attended affair that was generously hosted by the Draper family at the 1661 Inn. Members heard from John Culpepper, co-founder of the organization Compost for Good. You can read more about composting and his presentation on our website <https://biconservancy.org/compost/>. Thank you again to Rita and the entire Draper Family for hosting our meeting!

Thank you Leonard

Leonard Perfido has stepped down from the board after serving for three terms. We are very grateful for all of his contributions to the Board. He organized and chaired the BIC Advisors committee and was an advocate for the creation of the Executive Director position. He led the effort to preserve the Durfee Lot on West Side Road and for many years led the Walk the Walls trail walk across the street on the Martin Lots. Leonard and his wife Ruth established and endowed the Eric Jess Spier Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation which provides for the annual stewardship expenses at the Martin Lots. Thank you Leonard for your service!

BIC Board of Directors

The Block Island Conservancy has a strong twelve-member board of directors. Officers include Dorrie Napoleone (President), Jim McCormick (Vice President), Laurel Littlefield (Treasurer), Marti Dunne (Secretary), and Nigel Grindley (Stewardship Director). Rounding out the board are Mary Cerulli, Bill Comings, Seth Draper, Matt Fastuca, Heather Hatfield, Rosemary Tobin, and Meg Vitacco.