



Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

4102 acres, representing 7% of Martha's Vineyard, have been conserved by the land bank since voters created it in 1986. Please visit them; maps are available at town halls and libraries; online at www.mvlandbank.com; and at the land bank office in Edgartown.

Acquisitions

A septempartite arrangement, perfectly complicated, was concluded. It resulted in the conservation of 4.9 acres of backdune, stream and pond, as the **Elder Jeffers' Pond Preserve**. The seller was the Moshup Trail Limited Partnership and the price was \$185,000. The tangles to be resolved in advance included pre-existing encroachments, boundary-line juggling and the disposition of overdue taxes. The seven parties included the land bank and its private-sector counterpart, the Sheriff's Meadow Foundation, as well as the town and the tribe, the latter two of which received donations of off-site property interests as a result of the land bank's efforts. The town's lot is slated to be used for affordable housing.

Affordable housing also figured in a second up-island transaction. The land bank expanded its **Gay Head Moraine** property by purchasing, for \$90,400, a 4.5-acre shrub swamp owned by the Island Housing Trust Corporation.

And it figured in a down-island transaction. The land bank and the town of Oak Bluffs exchanged fungible 24-acre properties at the **Southern Woodlands Reservation**, so that the town's would now have access back to a public road. The land bank had sought to effect the exchange in 2004, when the reservation was being assembled, but the town wasn't ready. The commonwealth legislature and governor had to approve the trade.

Islanders knew their priorities when they established the land bank thirty-seven years ago. One was the protection of old family farms — and in 2023 the land bank completed one of its goals-since-inception when it conserved the 34.9-acre northerly field and environs at the venerable Flat Point Farm. This complimented the 2013 conservation of its 38.4-acre

southerly pasture. The price was \$2,533,875 and the sellers were siblings Arnold Fischer, Jr., Eleanor Neubert and Jean O'Reilly. It is integrated into the land bank's **Short Cove Preserve**.

Land management

Ecological inventories and studies continued at many land bank properties: Aquinnah Headlands Preserve, Black Brook Preserve, Cove Meadow Preserve, Edgartown Great Pond Beach, Elder Jeffers Pond Preserve, Great Rock Bight Preserve, Manaquayak Preserve, Ocean View Farm, Paint Mill Brook Preserve, Peaked Hill Reservation, Pecoy Point Preserve, Poucha Pond Reservation, Priester's Pond Preserve, Quenomica Preserve, Squibnocket Pond Reservation, Tisbury Great Pond Beach, Tisbury Meadow Preserve, Waskosim's Rock Reservation and Wilfrid's Pond Preserve.

The commonwealth is reviewing the Quenomica Preserve draft management plan. Staff is preparing applications — under the various town bylaws, the wetlands protection act and the endangered species act — necessary to the opening of the Squibnocket Pond Reservation.

General public access to a stretch of Lambert's Cove was achieved with the opening of the James Pond Preserve. But the preserve is more than its beach: the loop trail capitalizes on the prismatic nature of the property, as hikers on the path will observe the pond, the dune, the sound and Naushon Island shifting in and out of view. A reservation system, first used at the Manaquayak Preserve, will be used to allocate parking in the summer.

Upgrades included the installation of aluminum beach-access stairs at the Great Rock Bight Preserve escarpment, as well as replacement of the fishing pier and causeway boardwalk at the Blackwater Pond Reservation. Deteriorated decking on the walkways spanning the Fulling Mill Brook was targeted; the work is expected to be completed before the summer.

Habitat was improved. A cluster of old sheds was removed at the John Presbury Norton Farm — but two of the concrete basements were retained, one for snakes and the other for bats. Staff uprooted pines that were encroaching into the sandplain grassland at the Trade Wind Fields Preserve, buckthorn that was colonizing the Farm Pond Preserve and japanese stiltgrass that overran a portion of the Great Rock Bight Preserve.

Aspiring, more or less hopelessly, to thwart the ravaging southern pine-beetle, the land bank felled infested pitch pine at the Ripley's Field Preserve.

Thickening vegetation along both the North Road and Menemsha Crossroad sides of the beautiful Bliss Pond Farm was cut down. The vista is expansive. Likewise the vista at the Toms Neck Preserve, across Pease's Pond, and the Sepiessa Point savanna.

Trailheads were installed or expanded at the Caleb's Pond Preserve, Waskosim's Rock Reservation and Whippoorwill Farm. New trails were created — at the Ripley's Field Preserve, per a request from neighbors to supplement the Red Coat Hill Path ancient way, and at the Wilfrid's Pond Preserve. Staff addressed erosion along the steep trails at the Great Rock Bight Preserve and Tisbury Meadow Preserve.

The land bank's livestock herd — comprising some 173 goats, including 36 kids born in the spring — systematically grazed 72 acres island-wide, as part of the agency's grassland restoration protocol. The land bank goatherd bred 20 does, using the institution's own arapawa buck plus an alpine buck borrowed from Flat Point Farm.

As usual, the land bank field crew continued ongoing general maintenance on various land bank properties across the island.

40-44 Meetinghouse Way, Edgartown

After 32 years at 167 Main Street in Edgartown center, the land bank office moved to 40 Meetinghouse Way ... and after 17 years at the Southern Woodlands Reservation, the land bank land management workshop moved to 44 Meetinghouse Way. Purchase of the conjoined properties allowed the land bank for the first time to conjoin in one location all of its activities and functions — administration, property management, staff housing and, as needed, pasturing of livestock, as 40-44 Meetinghouse Way abuts the land bank's Quenomica Preserve North and its fields. The Edgartown town meeting will decide in 2024 whether to purchase 167 Main Street, at the discounted price of \$1,550,000.

XIH

The 31st annual XIH ranged 17.3 miles from the Long Point Wildlife Refuge in West Tisbury to the Tashmoo inlet in Vineyard Haven. Approximately ninety people participated in the cross-island trek. Some 75 started; 43 — the most ever — completed the entire hike. The

route passed along 12 conservation properties and 8 named ancient ways.

Budget and related matters

The following chart synthesizes the land bank's annual finances. Anyone wishing to review the budget in its entirety, which includes a narrative describing the purpose of each line item expenditure, is encouraged to read it on the land bank website:

	fiscal year 2023 budgeted	fiscal year 2023 actual	fiscal year 2024 budgeted
	cash amount and percentage of total	cash amount and percentage of total	cash amount and percentage of total
revenues	\$17,000,000	\$16,338,172	\$13,000,000 *
administrative expenses	(\$ 736,988) 4%	(\$ 656,157) 4%	(\$ 754,698) 6%
land management expenses	(\$ 3,302,764) 19%	(\$ 1,949,647) 12%	(\$ 2,771,535) 21%
debt service expenses	(\$ 7,857,137) 46%	(\$ 7,879,942) 48%	(\$ 8,190,837) 62%
reserve expenses	(\$ 100,000) 1%	(\$ 50,000) 0%	(\$ 50,000) 1%
unencumbered new receipts	\$ 5,003,081 29%	\$ 5,802,426 36%	\$ 1,232,930 10%

As of December 1, 2023 the land bank treasury contained some \$12,365,000 in cash, to fund all expenses including new acquisitions and the payment of debt service for existing properties.

The asterisk (*) indicates the land bank’s revenue projection.

Per statute, first-time homebuyers paid no land bank fee on purchase prices at or below \$800,000; in 2024 the threshold will be \$900,000. This is called the “m” exemption and 34 transactions qualified for it in 2023.

Gifts

The land bank gratefully accepted the following gifts: (1.) Robert and Patricia Ivry, \$72, in honor of Richard Kazis; and (2.) Tammy Kallman, \$100, in memory of Wayne Kallman.

Transfer fee revenues

Fiscal Year 2023 transfer fee revenues were:

	transfer fee revenues received July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023	percent of total
Aquinnah Fund	\$ 176,120	1 %
Chilmark Fund	\$ 612,720	4 %
Edgartown Fund	\$ 3,603,504	22 %
Oak Bluffs Fund	\$ 1,659,147	10 %
Tisbury Fund	\$ 1,165,586	7 %
West Tisbury Fund	\$ 958,450	6 %
<i>central fund</i>	\$ 8,175,527	50%
	\$ 16,338,172	100%

This represented a 27% decrease over the previous year.

Commissioners and staff

The land bank commission currently comprises the following members: Steven Ewing,

Edgartown; Pamela Goff, Chilmark; Wesley Mott, commonwealth; Kristen Reimann, Oak Bluffs; Sarah Thulin, Aquinnah; Nancy Weaver, Tisbury; and Peter Wells, West Tisbury. The year-round land bank staff comprises the following individuals: Janette Andrews, fiscal officer; Jean-Marc Dupon, conservation land assistant; Maureen Hill, office manager; Zachary Jessee, goatherd; Harrison Kisiel, land superintendent; Jeffrey Komarinetz, conservation land assistant; James Lengyel, executive director; Antone Lima, crew manager; Julie Russell, ecologist; Timothy Sheran, conservation land assistant; Blake Wasson, conservation land assistant; and Bryn Willingham, ecology assistant.

Respectfully submitted,

James Lengyel
Executive Director