



# DENNIS CONSERVATION LAND TRUST

## Summer 2024 Newsletter

[www.dennisconservationlandtrust.org](http://www.dennisconservationlandtrust.org)

### The Tobey Dream

Change has been constant in the land protection “business” on Cape Cod. Prices rise. Parcels get smaller. Land deals are increasingly complex, and there’s ever less undeveloped land left to conserve. And because of this change, our acquisition priorities have never been clearer. It’s no secret – Tobey Farm is at the top of our list.

After 334 years of caring for their land, the Tobey Family’s remaining 19 acres are at stake. Nestled between DCLT’s 8-acre Tobey West property and its 14-acre Tobey East property, Tobey Farm is an icon of Cape Cod’s agricultural heritage. In 1690, over 100 acres of this pristine habitat were given to widow Mehitable Tobey as compensation for the loss of her husband in King Philip’s War. Today, still in the family, Tobey Farm is known as “the oldest working farm on Cape Cod.” Now that’s a legacy to protect.



No other land conservation opportunity is more important to our Town’s environmental future. Conserving the property would safeguard Chase Garden Creek from further degradation as development pressures continue to mount. If protected and properly managed, the property provides the ideal space for saltmarsh health and migration as sea levels rise. It would also ensure a continued shelter for biodiversity, providing safe haven for the many imperiled, state-listed species found in the area today.

Just imagine: an 85-acre tract of contiguous, publicly accessible open space along Old Kings Highway at the very gateway to Dennis Village. To develop a vision for shared community use of Tobey Farm, we have already begun working with nonprofit partners. Could we create our town’s first ADA accessible nature trail on site? Could the farm remain in active agricultural use? Could the farmhouse provide staff housing for nonprofit partners? Could the barn be rehabilitated into educational space? Opportunities for passive recreation and community enrichment seem endless, that is – if we can make it happen.

Whenever and however the rubber meets the road, we will need all hands on deck. We must count on everyone – nonprofit partners, our individual supporters, Dennis voters, and Town leadership. This is one opportunity that Dennis and the Cape cannot afford to miss.

We know the scale of this effort will be significant, not quite that of the Cape Cod Sea Camps acquisition in Brewster last year, yet similar to Crowes Pasture two decades ago. But whatever the effort, the payback to the public will be perpetual and well worth the one-time cost.



With summer having begun, the Trust is in the midst of its busiest time of the year. We are onboarding summer interns and staff. We are tending the first seedlings at our own farm. We are preparing to host our best Auction ever, this July. But first and foremost, we are preparing for this, perhaps our most priceless land protection project yet.

Donations restricted to land conservation can be made at any time by visiting:

[DennisConservationLandTrust.org](http://DennisConservationLandTrust.org) or by mail: DCLT, P.O. Box 67, East Dennis, MA 02641

## Jen Clifford's Biodiversity Project

Before arriving at DCLT, I never thought of myself as a scientist. My undergraduate background is in geography and education, and despite my love of the outdoors, science has never been my favorite subject. Despite this, DCLT saw a scientist in me on my first day at the office last October. When I started my AmeriCorps placement, I was thrown headfirst into the world of community science.

What is a community scientist? Well, they're you, me, and anyone else in a community interested in contributing to scientific research. Community scientists help professionals by advancing scientific priorities on the ground level.

For my project, those priorities are the 137 rare species that inhabit Cape Cod and are protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. The task before me was to assemble a guide that would help community scientists identify these species in the wild and make reports of their observations to the State, a task that helps protect land without the expense of acquiring it.

To create this yet-untitled guide, I first analyzed species and mapping data from the State to calculate distributions of rare species reported across the Cape.

## Tara Brew's Experiment on the Farm

Growing up in the suburbs, I had little experience with agriculture or even gardening. I never really had the patience to sit and wait for a plant to grow.

Part of me thought farming would be easy – intuitive; that I would simply have to tap into the portion of the lizard brain our predecessors used to figure out that if you put a seed in the ground it will grow, and if you're lucky, you might get to eat because of it.

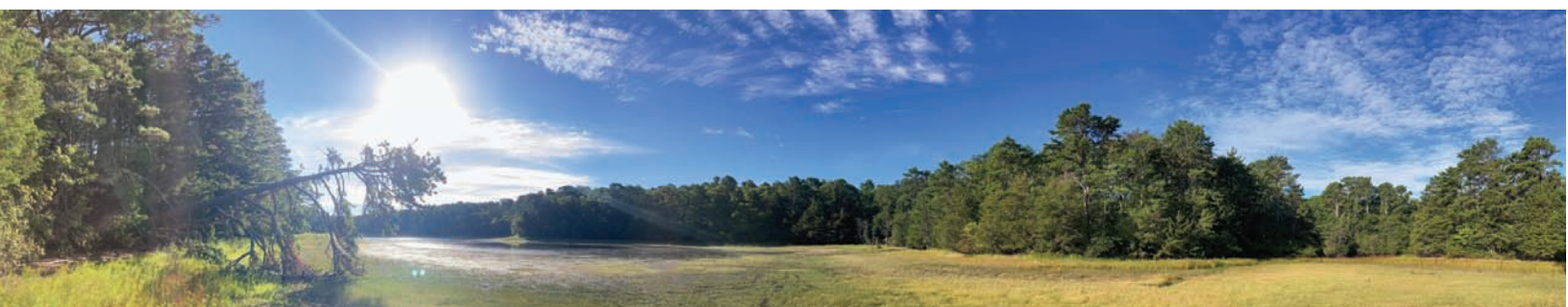


And now, the fun part: I am designing identification sheets for various species that have been observed in Dennis and getting out into the field to look for them.

While I will need to leave this project and DCLT at the end of July, with the onboarding of new service members, I know the project has a bright future. In time, I hope more folks come to realize, like me, that there's a place for everyone to contribute to science and conservation.

Then, I took a Cape Cod horticulture class, and everything began to feel infinitely more complicated. As much as I learned about starting a garden, native and pollinator species, and so on, I also learned everything I needed to worry about: too much water, too little water, or the wrong type of water, and the same for sun, nutrients, insects, and fungi. And each plant has its own specificities for each of those things. The pressure was on.

Fast forward some months, and I've learned that the spirit of experimentation is a key part of the process. Perfectionism has no place in gardening. In time, I believe this farm will provide an opportunity for people of all ages and experience levels to throw a seed in the ground and see what comes up, to try new things, and have them fail and not fail, and hopefully to find a sense of community and personal fulfillment in the meantime, as I have.



## Welcome, Fernando, Joel, and Lauren

### Fernando Mendonca, Ph.D., Biodiversity Scientist

Fernando joined DCLT's staff in mid-June 2024 after serving in a volunteer capacity on DCLT's Community Science Committee for two years. Before then, Fernando was an ecology Professor in Brazil, where he worked to study species diversity and fisheries in the Amazonian Rainforest. Fernando brings to DCLT a track record of actionable scientific research and multicultural, multi-lingual community engagement. His focus will be leading DCLT's Biodiversity Initiative, focused on improving biodiversity conservation across the Commonwealth. In his free time, Fernando enjoys spending time with his wife and daughter as they explore the nature and culture of their new home on Cape Cod, USA.



### Joel Freedman, Advisor



Joel joined DCLT's Advisory Board after helping DCLT craft and negotiate a walking trail easement through private property adjacent to its headquarters at Not Enough Acres Farm. Joel currently works part-time in real estate law and had served for many years on the Town of Lincoln's Zoning Board of Appeals. Joel and his wife split their time between Lincoln, MA and Dennis Village, where Joel's family has owned a home since he was a teenager. Joel is actively involved in DCLT's Land Committee and also serves in the "Core Group" of Dennis Citizens for Responsible Development. In his free time, he enjoys hiking, traveling, and watching the Red Sox.

### Lauren Dreyer, Outreach Coordinator

Lauren joined DCLT's team as part-time Outreach Coordinator in March 2024. She is a marketing strategist with extensive experience in digital marketing, branding, and project management for small consumer packaged goods startups to Fortune 500 giants. Originally from Nebraska, Lauren has fond memories of spending summers with family on the shores of East Dennis. In 2022, she and her husband decided to become permanent residents and settled in Brewster. Lauren serves as a Cape Cod and the Islands Score.org Mentor and as a Board Member of the Brewster Ladies Library.



Please join us at the Sea View in Dennis Port on Sunday evening, July 21st, for our 23rd Annual



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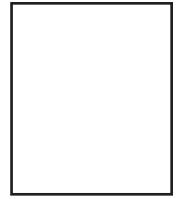
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- Jen Clifford's Biodiversity Project
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- Welcome, Fernando, Joel, and Lauren
- 2024 Auction
- Let's GROW Native! (below)

### Let's GROW Native!

When we go on vacation, many of us try to "go native" and live like the locals do in our chosen vacation spot. If you're on a staycation or a vacation on beautiful Cape Cod, you might want to "GROW native" too, by populating your yard and garden with trees, shrubs, and herbs that are native to Cape Cod.

Did you know that many native plants:

- thrive in Cape Cod's unique weather system and withstand windy conditions, salt spray, drought, and the other challenges that Cape Cod weather poses;
- require less watering and fertilizing (even organic fertilizer, improperly used can harm our groundwater);
- are often more resistant to disease, reducing the need for pesticides;
- support native animal species – birds, bees, butterflies, and moths – that are an important part of Cape Cod's ecosystems and agroecosystems.



So many lovely trees, bushes, and herbs are native to Cape Cod. Think beach plum, bayberry, goldenrod, red cedar, white oak, pitch pine, white pine, black cherry, American holly – the list goes on! Your local garden center experts can help you identify native species that will thrive in your yard, just be sure they know you're GROWing native.

Lawns are not a natural habitat on Cape Cod, so it can be difficult to find appropriate native species to plant in them. Many Cape Codders are using clover to supplement, or substitute for, grass in their lawns. It's greener, requires less water and mowing, needs no fertilizer, and feeds native bees and other pollinators. It can even keep the rabbits out of the flower beds because they can munch on the clover instead!

For more information, visit [CapeCodNativePlants.org](http://CapeCodNativePlants.org) to find the perfect plants for your garden and check out APCC's new publication "Guidelines for Cape-Friendly Landscapes," which you can find at [APCC.org](http://APCC.org).