



Help Bring Nature to Dennis Port!

THE DENNIS
CONSERVATION
LAND TRUST



About Us

A Private 501(c)(3) Nonprofit

- Founded in 1988
- 17 Trustees & 17 Advisors
- ~40 additional volunteers
- 2 F/T staff & 2 F/T AmeriCorps

Mission

- Protect land for conservation purposes
- Educate students and the public
- Provide and encourage nature access, study, and appreciation

Accomplishments

- Protected >680 acres of land
- Founded Science Fair Internship Program for DYRHS students
- Acquired Environmental Study Center @ NEAF



Tonight's Outline

1. Overview

2. Ecology

3. History

4. Protection

5. Access

6. Funding

7. How to Help



Dennis Port is the 5th most densely populated zip code on Cape Cod.

How do the Villages of Dennis Compare?

	Dennis Village	East Dennis	South Dennis	West Dennis	Dennis Port
Protected Open Space	874 acres	1,141 acres	593 acres	208 acres	250 acres
Poverty Rate (2023)	3.3%	4.2%	4.5%	5.4%	18.9%
% of Minorities in population	7%	7%	13%	12%	20%
Number of formal nature trails	3	6	5	1	0
Population Density (per sq. mile)	490	539	847	698	1,162

Courtesy of the Dennis Assessing Department (open space), the United States Census Bureau (demographics), and institutional knowledge (trails).

Exciting opportunity

DCLT has under agreement the purchase of **13.45 acres** of land (red) in Dennis Port abutting the Plashes Conservation Area

This project will:

- **Phase I:** Secure *undevelopable land* for public enjoyment
- **Phase II:** Create the opportunity for *miles* of new trails across **61 acres**
 - Collaborate with Town's Conservation Commission
 - Connect walking communities and businesses between Rt. 28 and Lower County Road
 - Including improved access from Rt. 28 motels to beaches
 - Provide edu. program opportunities
 - Support local tourism as a unique natural attraction

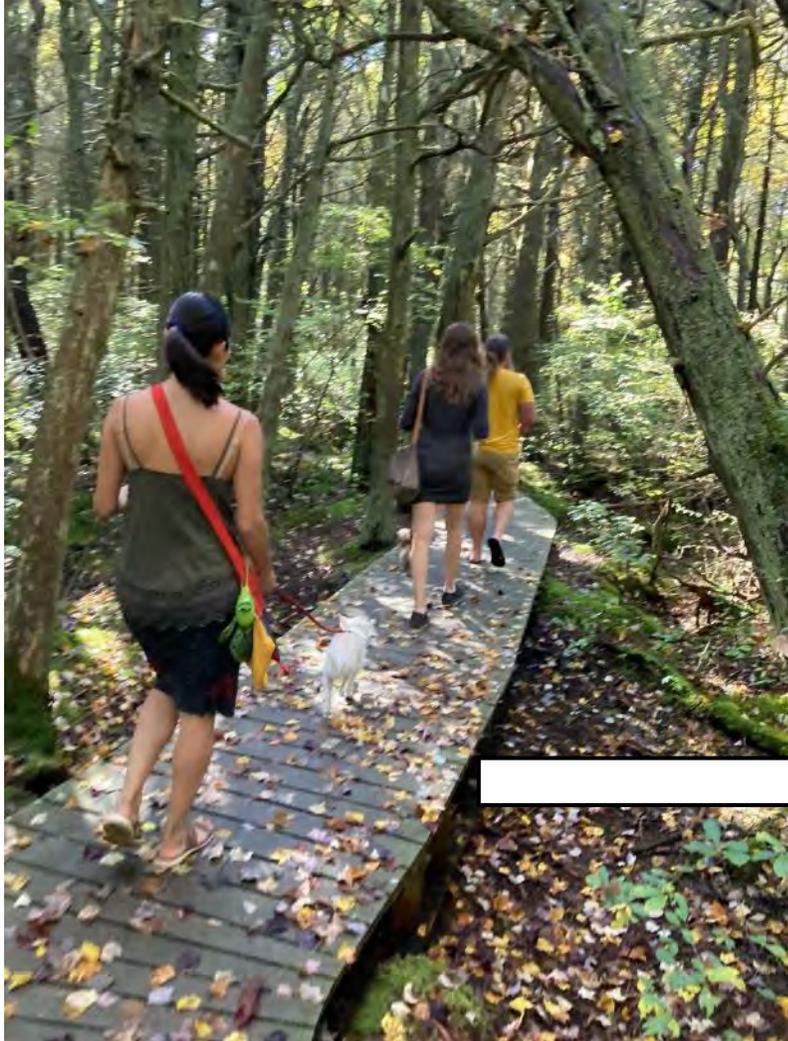






Phase II: Trail Development

Goal: Completed ~2028



**National Seashore's Atlantic White Cedar
Swamp Trail**

Clapp Property, Dennis Port

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Lydia Rheinhardt

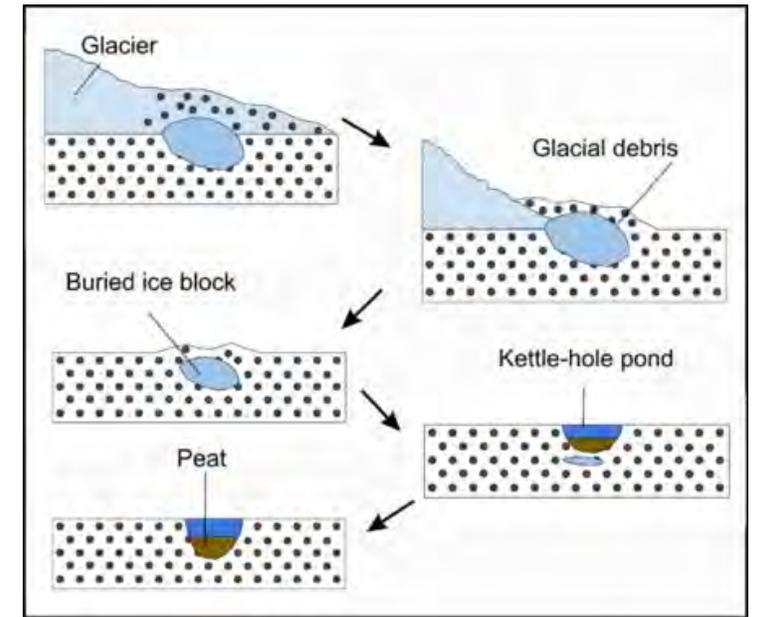
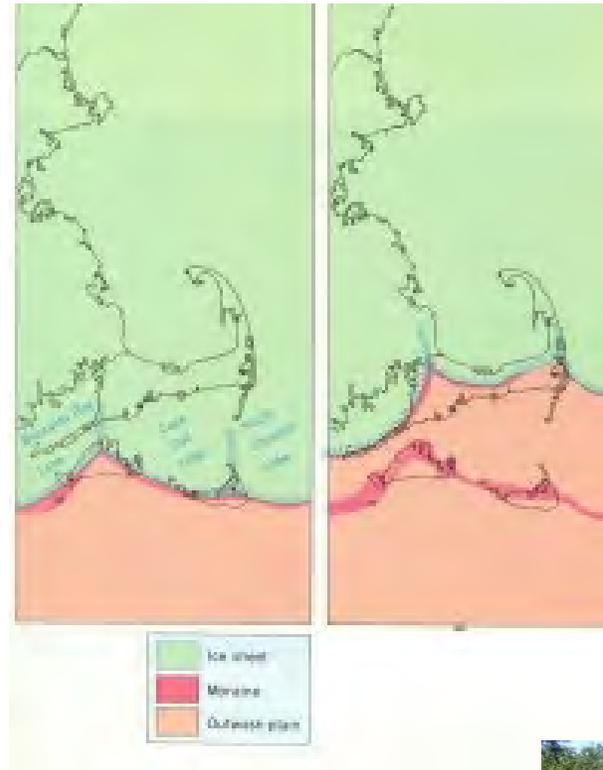
Formation of Atlantic White Cedar Swamp

Glacial sheets covered New England until nearly 18,000 years ago...

Their retreat left behind deposits of sand (Cape Cod) with chunks of ice that melted to create wet depressions (kettle ponds and swamps) that turned into wetland

AWC need:

- Wet, peat-rich, acidic soil
- Lots of sunlight
- Time



Conversion to Cranberryland

Wild cranberries grow well in sand, so wetlands were filled in and farmed.

But many were abandoned and reclaimed by nature, but not unchanged.

Southern Plashes shows an abundance of evidence of cranberry farming (ditches, wetland indicator species, neighboring swamp).

While DCLT's acquisition is (mostly) untouched in comparison (mature AWC stand, saturated soil, old trees).



Wildlife

Eastern coyote (*Canis latrans*)

Wildlife

Cooper's Hawk (*Astur cooperii*)

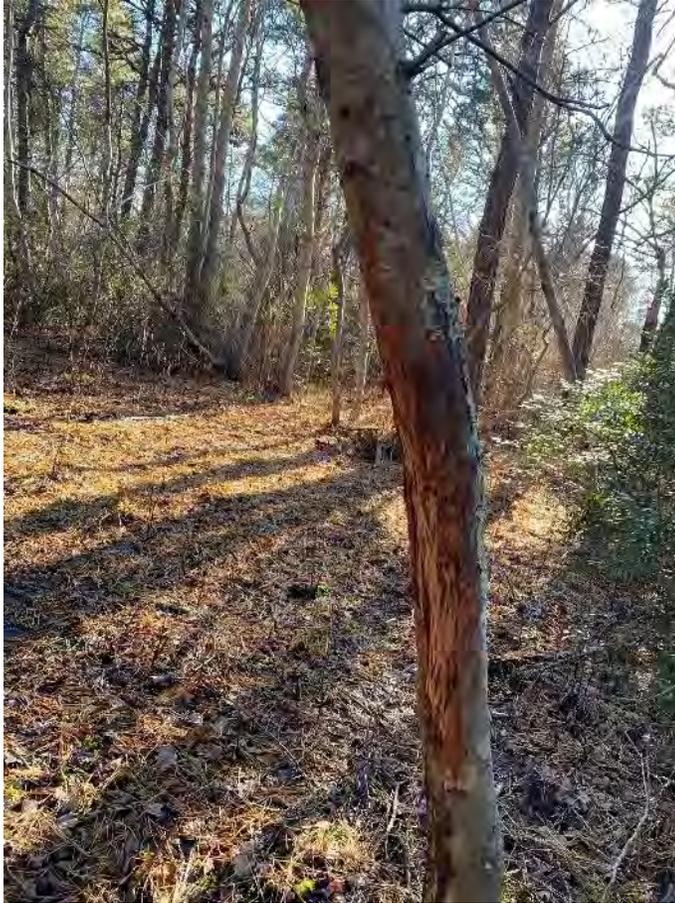
Wildlife

Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)

Wildlife



Bicolored swallow
(*Sunira bicolorago*)



Deer rubbing



Northern watersnake
(*Nerodia sipedon*)

Wildlife



American mink (*Neogale vison*)



White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Spring & Summer Sampling Plans

Biodiversity Inventory

- Wildlife Cameras (mammals)
- Coverboards (herpetofauna)
- Dipnetting (amphibians, fishes)
- Increment borer (tree ageing)
- BioBlitz (plants, birds)



Seeking experienced volunteers!

lydia@dennisconservationlandtrust.org

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Charly Raymond

History – Cedar Use By Settlers

- Ideal wood product
- Profitable winter business
- Masts, fence posts, classic CC shingles, and clapboard
- Integrated into every avenue of colonial life
- Christmas trees - Lester Edwards and Burt Derick



From NJ Dept. of Env. Protection



Courtesy of DHS

A DENNISPORT CHRISTMAS

The hunt for the Christmas tree was a singular excursion for a young boy. Dad would take us to the Plashes to look for that wonderful creation of God, the swamp cedar.

Fom DHS Newsletter Dec. 2001
Vol. 24 No. 10



Courtesy of DHS

History – Cranberry Cultivation

- Wild cranberries harvested by Indigenous Peoples and early colonists – consumption, red dye, medicinal, etc.
- 1816 - commercial cultivation method discovered in Dennis by Henry Hall
- Cedar swamps cleared for cranberry bogs
- By 1890, approx. 360 acres of cranberry bog being cultivated in Dennis (Reid 1996)



Courtesy of DHS



Courtesy of DHS



Emptying handpicking tin

From the Register
December 22, 1977

History – Cranberry Bog in the Plashes

- Many bogs on the Cape were operated by retired sea captains
- Captain Eleazer Kelley Crowell of Dennis Port had 30 acres of bog – The Plashes?
 - May have lived on corner of Upper County Rd. and Depot St.
 - Discovered tobacco spray to fight off fireworm
- Cooperage located on Sea St.

E. K. Crowell's cranberry bog in 1892 from "The Cranberry" by the Bradley Fertilizer Company:



E. K. Crowell
Courtesy of DHS

Clipping from The Register December 22, 1977:

No one seems quite sure when the last commercial bog in Dennis, where it all began, closed up. Several people speculate that it may have been an old Makepeace bog on Fresh Pond, land now owned by the town near Route 134. That would have been over 10 years ago.

The Plashes area of Dennis Port, still marshy, might have been productive in more recent years.

History – Ice Skating & Harvesting

- Youngsters ice skated on ponds
 - Even in more recent times
- Winter work for summertime fishing businesses
- Ice houses: Edgar and Nathaniel Wixon & Joseph Chase
- Earlier Captain Jonathan P. Edwards



Harvesting Ice

Anson & Esther Howes collection

From Nancy Thatcher Reid's "Dennis, Cape Cod"



(Top) David Howes and the ice cutting machine on Scargo Lake, Feb., 1934.
(Bottom) The ice house on Scargo Lake with youngsters Dick, David and Warren Howes.

From the Register Feb. 4, 1982



Courtesy of DHS

Any historic anecdotes or pictures of the Plashes?

Email:
charly@dennisconservationlandtrust.org



Courtesy of DHS

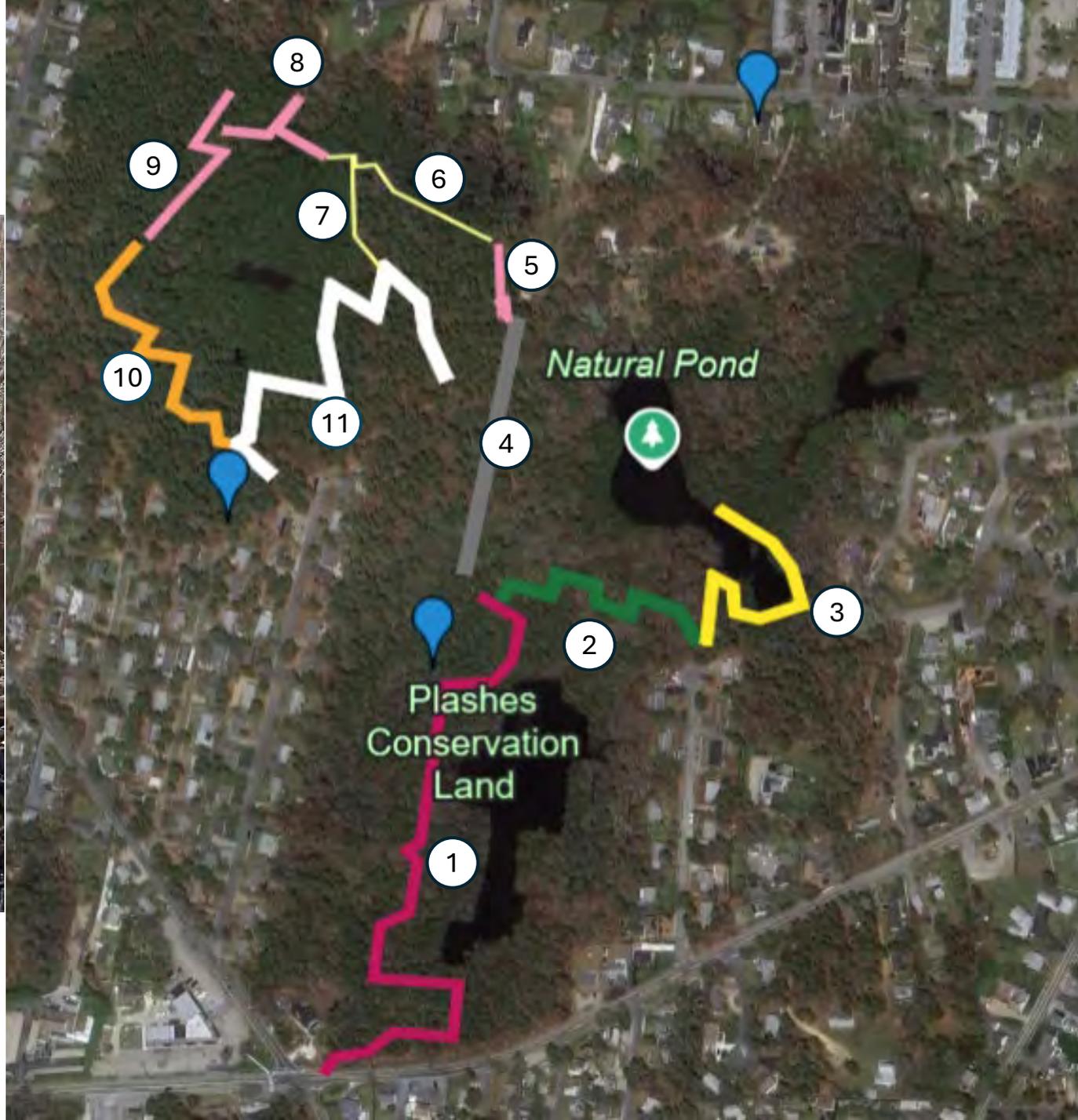
More Recent History

- Long history of diverting water and filling wetlands *after cranberries* for housing development
- Dennis Port largely built out pre-zoning; densely developed with small lots
- The Town acquired the Plashes Conservation Area in the 1970s for conservation and recreation purposes
- Formal trails have not *recently* existed, other than Tom's Path



USGS, 1943

Informal Trails



Today



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How is Land Protected?

Two Primary Tools

- (1) Acquire Ownership
- (2) Acquire Conservation Restriction
 - Extinguishes development rights
 - Permanent vs. temporary

Ensuring Forever Protection: “Protective Overlays”

- Provides additional protections
- For example, DCLT owns land, town holds conservation restriction
- Or, another conservation entity owns the land, and DCLT holds the restriction
- If one entity goes under, or fails to monitor, the land remains protected



Protecting Clapp Land

- Currently owned by David and Susan Clapp
- Already protected by a restriction held by the Town's Cons. Commission
 - **1976:** Lester Edwards and Winnifred Clapp placed a temporary restriction on the property
 - **1987:** Edwards and Clapp families make restriction permanent
- Purchase price: \$100,000
 - \$20,000 below appraisal
- Once acquired, DCLT to work with Town to amend the restriction
 - Amendment must *improve* protection of the property's conservation values



Protecting Clapp Land

Proposed Restriction Amendments

- Remove environmentally detrimental, but currently allowed uses
 - Forestry & agriculture, including livestock grazing
- Add explicit allowance for trails and trail structures
 - Not currently prohibited, but not expressly allowed
 - Will reduce stewardship issues
- Create 1-acre “no disturb zone” with no permitted access
- Long process

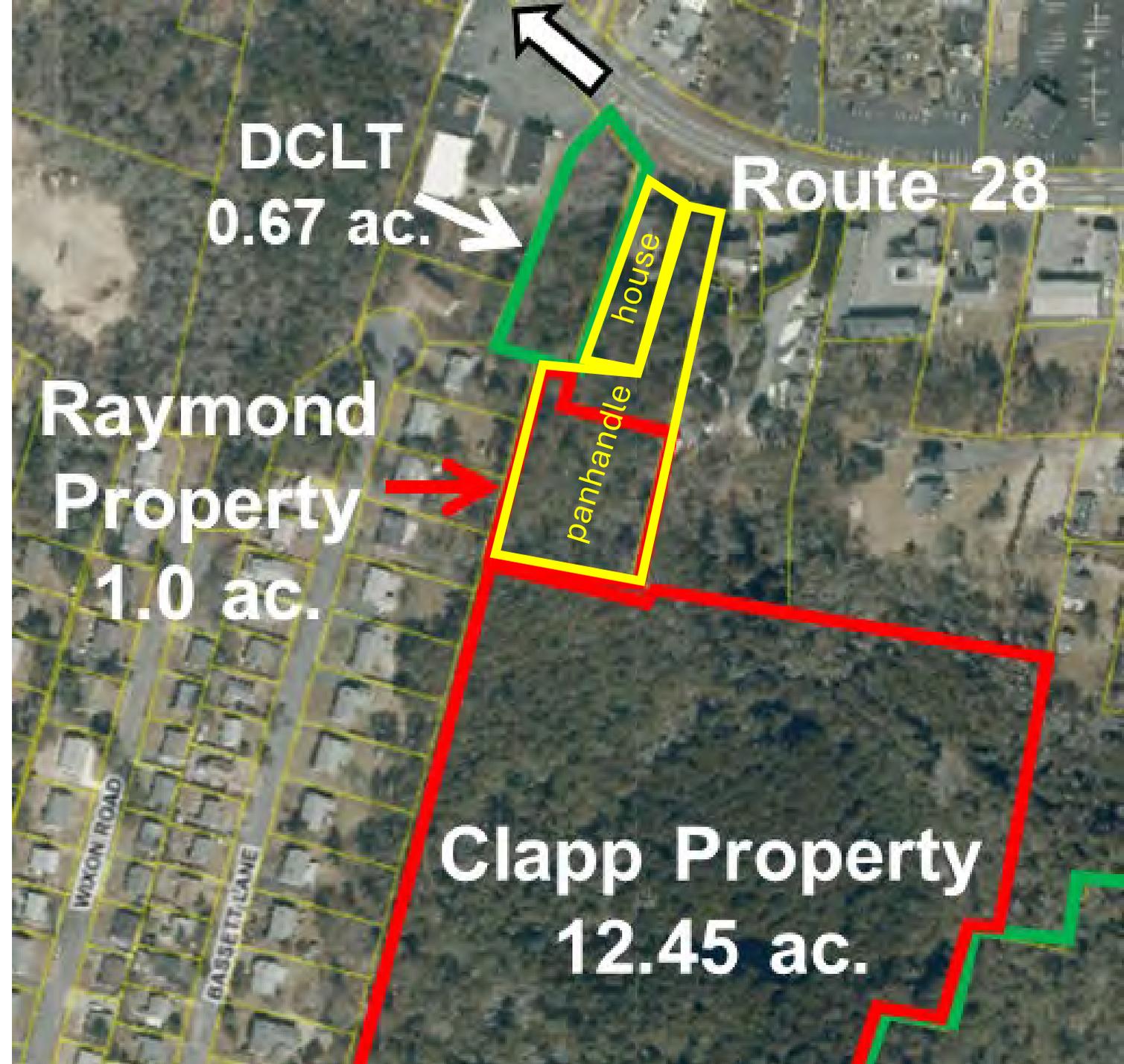
Outcome

- Better conservation protections
- Formal, constrained public access
- DCLT owns; town holds overlay



Protecting Raymond

- Joe and Laura Raymond recently purchased 301 (house lot) & 303 Main St. (undeveloped lot)
- Graciously agreed to sell the back 1 acre of their new lot at 303 Main Street
 - Paying appraised value:
\$270,000
 - Creates connectivity from Route 28 via DCLT's existing property at 293 Main Street
 - Generously donated by Mary Ann Cravenho
- Once acquired, add protective overlay: DCLT to donate new permanent cons. restriction on 293 Main and Raymond ~1.67 acres



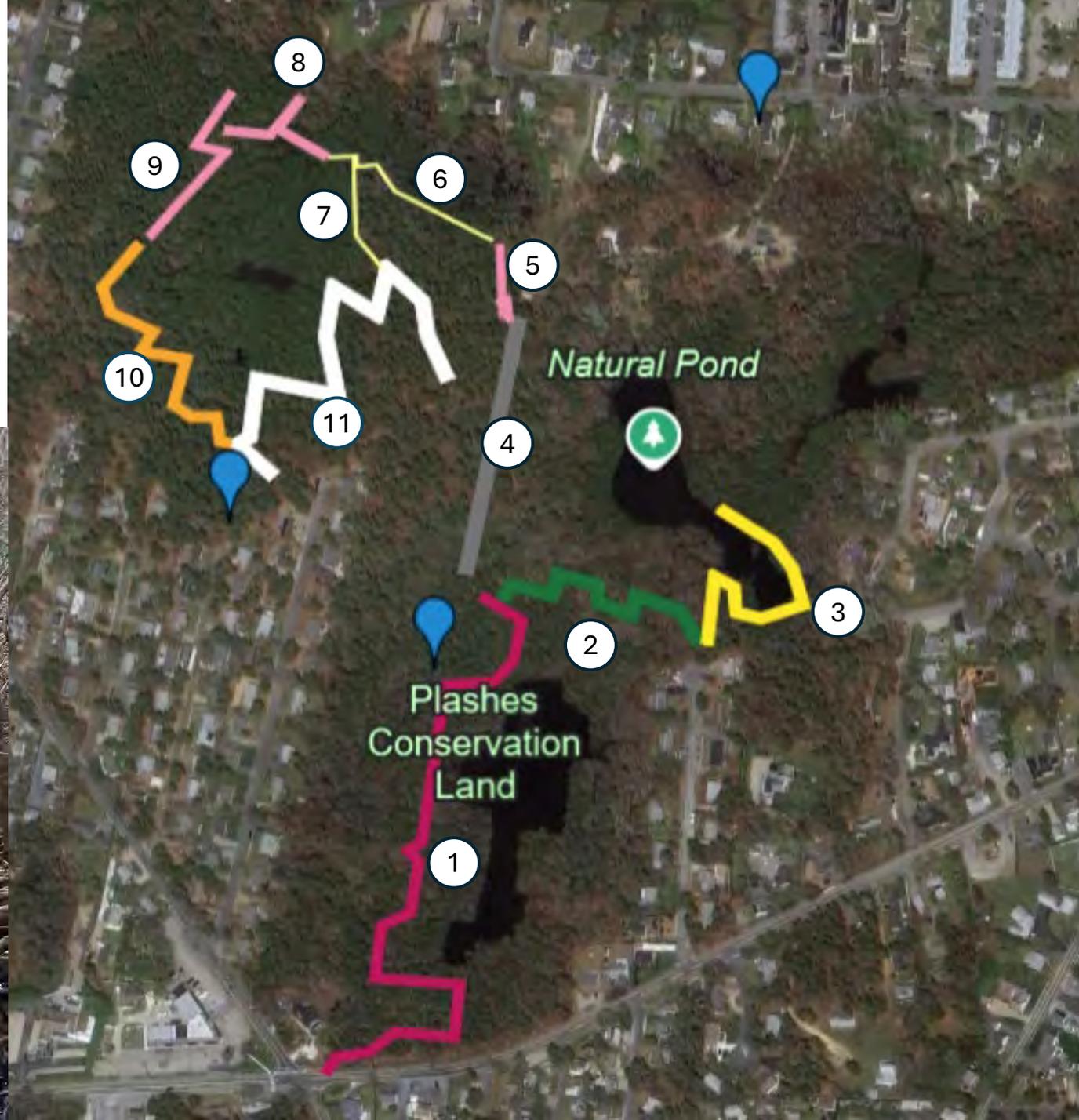
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Current Access

- Informal
- Wandering
- Unpermitted
- Unsafe!



Future Access

Goals & Considerations

- Wetlands
- Walking connectivity
- Elevations & Accessibility
- Signage
- Parking
 - Not on Route 28
 - Not down residential road(s)
 - Exploring places with frontage on Shad Hole and Lower County Road
- Potential trail distances
 - Urban trails: 1 mile / 10 acres x 60 acres = **6 miles**
 - Wilderness trails: 1 mile / 30 acres x 60 acres = **2 miles**



Plashes Acquisitions - Feature Sketch



Legend

-  Crosswalks
-  Proposed access
-  Tom's Path (only existing trail in area)
-  Whitecedar swamp (~4 acres)
-  Isolated temporary ponds / pools
-  Example trail layout for illustration purposes (length shown is 3,000' incl. 1,000' distance through cedar swamp – future boardwalk)
-  # Photopoints (see next page)

Notes

- This area contains no NHESP, BioMap, or Certified Vernal Pool features
- Both parcels contain "Farmland of Statewide Importance" (not shown)
- Both parcels contain "Prime Forest Land of Statewide Importance" (not shown)
- Both parcels contain "Prime Forest Land of Statewide Importance Wet" (not shown)
- Both parcels are in an EJ Block – Income

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Project Need

Phase I – Acquisition and Planning

- Raise \$479,000 for Feb. 2026 closings
 - \$370,000 simple purchase price
 - \$35,000 closing, professional & contracted service
 - \$74,000 preliminary stewardship, fencing, trail & feature design
- Our challenge: Tight timeline AND project ineligible for CPA Funds and usual state land acquisition grants
- Focus on foundation support and local fundraising

Phase II

- Determine parking, trailhead, trail layout, signage, etc.; obtain permits; construction
- Eligible for CPA Funds and MassTrails Grant Program



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How to Help

Make a Gift

- Every dollar counts
- More donors -> stronger grant applications
- *The value of your gift accrues across generations*

Spread the Word

- Tell a neighbor, share on social media, tell or help us connect with new supporters & business owners

Follow & Subscribe for Updates

- Join our project-specific email list
- Fundraising status updates
- Potential fundraising event(s) in Jan.

Volunteer

Contribute Information & Feedback

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Connect with Us

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Checks can be mailed to:

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