

Hinckleys Pond Group Donates To Jenkins Bog Purchase **11 August 2021**

By: William F. Galvin

Members of the Hinckleys Pond Association listen to a presentation from Fred Jenkin's of the Jenkins cranberries bogs adjacent to Hinckleys Pond. The Harwich Conservation Trust is in the midst of a fundraising campaign to purchase and preserve the 31-acre parcel.



(GERRY BEETHAM PHOTO)

HARWICH – With the help of the Hinckleys Pond Association, the Harwich Conservation Trust is making headway in raising funds to purchase the 31-acre Jenkins bogs property adjacent to the pond.

The association has contributed more than \$40,000 toward the trust's goal in donations small and large.

"You don't get to do things that mean something very often. But this is one of them," association president Deb Selkow said.

An estimated 80 members of the association met on July 31 with HCT staff and the property owners to discuss the importance of preserving the former cranberry bogs for open space and expanding walking trails.

The trust has a major fundraising campaign underway and is seeking to raise the \$800,000 to acquire the land by the end of

December. The group needs another \$350,000 to purchase the property.

The Jenkins land is located along the southeast corner of Hinckleys Pond, adjacent to the Cape Cod Rail Trail. Residents around that pond have been pushing for more than a decade to improve its water quality; there has been a history of cyanobacteria blooms and fish kills in the pond caused by excessive phosphorus infiltrating the waters.

The town funded an alum treatment in the pond a few years ago as a means of inactivating the phosphorus, and conditions have improved.

“It’s inspiring to see such a groundswell of neighborhood support for this priority watershed project,” said Michael Lach, executive director of Harwich Conservation Trust. “They recognize that the best way to protect the health of Hinckleys Pond and the Herring River is to preserve the surrounding land like this 31-acre property.”

Members of the HPA have donated generously, Lach said, with contributions of between \$25 and \$5,000. Siblings Sebastian and Solange Riley-Faggen, 8 and 10 years old, recognized the importance of preservation of the open space and contributed \$80 raised from selling painted shells and lemonade.

HCT President Tom Evans addressed the bigger water quality picture, pointing out the Herring River flows through Hinckleys Pond all the way to Nantucket Sound. HCT has been very active in saving land in the river’s watershed, he added.

“Over several decades now, beginning with the town acquisition of the Bell’s Neck Conservation Area, the town and the trust both worked hard to create what is now essentially a conservation-wildlife-water quality corridor extending from Nantucket Sound all the way to Hinckleys Pond,” Evans said.

“What better way to protect that entire watershed than to protect its headwaters, especially when so many of the Cape’s estuaries are now struggling with nitrogen and phosphorus overloading,” he said.

The property owners, Fred and Barbara Jenkins, attended the annual HPA meeting to support the trust's goal of conserving the property. Fred and his father Jim Jenkins purchased the bogs in 1997 and farmed them together until Jim Jenkins passed away in 2018.

With the price diminishing due to oversupply of cranberries being harvested in the Midwest and Canada, Fred Jenkins said it has become increasingly more difficult to make a profit. The family had its last harvest in 2020 and decided to sell the property. The Jenkins' made the decision not to sell the upland for housing development, instead choosing to establish a conservation legacy working with HCT.

"It will be a new chapter for this highly visible and ecologically important 31-acre property in the watershed of Hinckleys Pond and Herring River," Lach said.

The Brown family, which owns a bog on the opposite side of the pond, is working with the trust, researching the restoration potential for the bog, he said.

"The proposed ecological restoration of the bog would protect another key part of the Herring River watershed, restore natural habitats, provide educational opportunities and extend public access to this wonderful property," said Melissa Bride, daughter of bog owners Jake and Barbara Brown. "We need to aggressively protect Hinckleys Pond and the watershed."

The trust is also researching the cost for ecological restoration of the retired Jenkins' bogs, Lach said. HCT is exploring collaboration with Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, located directly across Route 124 from the bogs, to offer students and faculty "outdoor classroom" learning opportunities.

The trust received a helping hand in the fundraising campaign from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, owners of the Cape Cod Rail Trail, which purchased a 1.4-acre parcel of the property in June for \$180,000. Those funds will be applied to the HCT campaign goal. The trust also has a \$220,000

match challenge, which leaves \$350,000 remaining to complete the \$800,000 campaign.

“We’ve done it before and we can do it again, but only if everyone pitches in to protect land and water,” Lach said.