



A MARTHA'S VINEYARD LAND TRUST

# Newsletter

Winter 2024

CEDAR TREE NECK SANCTUARY

Issue No. 82



A MARTHA'S VINEYARD LAND TRUST

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Founded in 1959 by Henry Beetle Hough and Elizabeth Bowie Hough

From the President, *Adam R. Moore*

# Our Forest Future



American Holly, *Ilex opaca*. Photos by Adam Moore

It is evergreen, yet not coniferous. Its leaves are smooth, yet prickly. Its bark is smooth, and light in color, yet the tree is not an American beech.

In the winter, this tree beckons the woodland walker. Its glossy green leaves gleam in the winter woods. Amid the drab, gray stems of the oaks and hickories and vibur-

nums, this tree stands out. The tree is American holly, *Ilex opaca*, and it is our native holly. From Chappaquiddick to Aquinnah, American holly grows in the wild across the

The hollies, we celebrate. American holly appears poised to flourish in the growing space soon to be afforded it.

entirety of Martha's Vineyard. For the forests of our island, American holly is the tree of the future.

On a foggy Christmas Eve morning, I set out with my son, Huck, in search of festive boughs of holly. The day was a damp one. A steady drizzle fell in the woods. Drops of rain gathered on the lichen-crusting twigs of oaks, and gently dripped onto the forest floor below. A cold mist drifted past the bare, red twigs of the bristling huckleberry.

We ventured out to Roth Woodlands in Chilmark, as on this property—the headwaters of the Mill Brook—American holly grows in profusion. Here grow mature hollies, perhaps 30 feet tall, and stout pole-size trees, and a plethora of eager saplings, sprouting up everywhere across the forest floor. We sought boughs of the female trees, where the branches bore not just the prickly, green leaves, but also bright red berries.





We were not disappointed. With two pairs of loppers, we snipped plenty of boughs, and enough to bedeck our table with holly arrangements.

In our Island forests, our American beech trees are likely doomed to a drawn-out death by defoliation due to the beech leaf disease. The beeches, we mourn.

Our pitch pines will manage with their new companion, the southern pine beetle, but most of the mature ones will likely die within the next decade. We will thin the pine forests to give the remaining pitch pines a fighting chance, and saw the felled ones into hardy lumber. The pines, we tend and we harvest.

But what of the hollies? The hollies, we celebrate. American holly appears poised to flourish in the growing space soon to be afforded it. It grows in wetlands and uplands. It grows in the shade beside the beech, and will take over when its neighboring beeches die. It grows in the shade of hickories and oaks in the picnic woods of Quansoo. Perhaps its prickly leaves make it unpalatable to browsing deer.

Some years ago, on a forestry field trip, I visited the sunken forest at the Fire Island National Seashore, off of Long Island. The sunken forest is a grove of American hollies. The hollies fill a depression behind the dunes, and a trail allows one to ramble beneath their evergreen canopy. The memory of this grove has remained with me for decades. I envision the same such groves of American hollies, and much grander groves of hollies of greater stature, emerging in the woodlands of our island.

In the lifetime of our grandchildren, our conserved lands shall grow splendid forests of American holly. They will be the pride of Martha's Vineyard and a delight to future woodland walkers. In this new year, I offer a toast to American holly, the forest of our future.

## Huckleberry Barrens Universal Access Trail

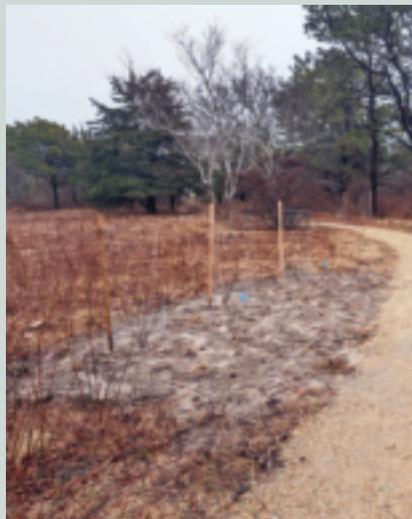
By Kristen Geagan



Universal access trail at Huckleberry Barrens. Photos by Kristen Geagan

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation recently received a grant from MassTrails, a grant program administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. This funding allowed us to design and implement our first universal access trail at Huckleberry Barrens, located in Edgartown.

Sheriff's Meadow staff created a new section of trail and upgraded an existing section to create a loop with a firm, level surface. The existing trailhead was also updated to allow for a dedicated accessible parking space with safe entry and



First phase of plantings.

exit onto the property. The path also includes a self-guided native plant demonstration area. The first phase of plantings, sourced from Polly Hill Arboretum, has been installed and a second phase of planting will occur in 2024. Of particular note is that many of the native species that were planted and that already grow on the property are edible. The plants will be labeled with both their common and scientific names and the public will be invited to harvest the nuts and fruits.

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation is seeking input from users regarding the accessibility of this trail and all of our properties that are open to the public. We hope to form an Advisory Committee dedicated to making our properties accessible to all. If you are interested in joining this committee, please contact Kristen Geagan at [geagan@sheriffsmeadow.org](mailto:geagan@sheriffsmeadow.org).

# Land Acquired at 78 Campbell Road in West Tisbury

By Adam Moore



Two-story building. Photos by Noah Froh



Three-bay garage.

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation is delighted to report that, on December 21, 2023, it purchased 7.7 acres of land at 78 Campbell Road and 55 Line Drive in West Tisbury from Carol Kenney. The purchase price for the land was \$1,822,500. The land will soon host Sheriff's Meadow Foundation's maintenance facility, office, and staff housing. The purchase of this property accomplishes a most significant strategic goal of Sheriff's Meadow Foundation.

The property features two buildings that will prove essential to the operations of Sheriff's Meadow Foundation. The first is a large, three-bay garage. This garage is already housing the Foundation's mowers, tools, and equipment. It will serve as a critical workshop, repair shop, and storage space. From this relatively central location, Foundation staff can reliably service and maintain all of the Foundation's properties around the island.

The second building is two stories, and is approximately 5,000 square feet in size. The second floor features a two-bedroom apartment that will be used for staff housing, an office, and a workshop. The workshop on the second floor will be converted into additional office space. The first floor is slab on grade, and will be renovated to host office and meeting space for the Foundation. Surrounding the buildings is a paved area that will provide parking.

The land is notable for several reasons, but especially for the trail connections

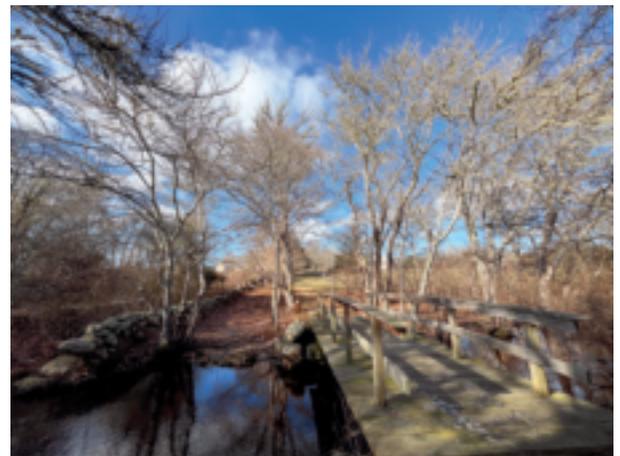
that it offers and makes possible. The land slopes down to the Tiasquam River, where a charming wooden footbridge spans the stream. The footbridge connects an existing trail to a trail easement that has been donated by Ellen and Edwin Harley. This trail runs around the perimeter of the pastoral Stonewall Farm, and offers links to a variety of Land Bank trails in the neighborhood. On the other side of the Tiasquam, the Campbell Road property can ultimately be connected to the King's Highway and thence to other trails in this area.

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation will place a permanent conservation restriction on the land, and give this restriction to the Town of West Tisbury. The conservation restriction will include a building envelope that surrounds the area of existing buildings on the property. Sheriff's Meadow Foundation has also agreed to maintain Campbell Road, as part of the Special Permit that has been issued by the West Tisbury Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Foundation gives a special thanks to Carol Kenney. As the seller, Ms. Kenney worked very cooperatively with Sheriff's Meadow Foundation throughout the acquisition process. Sheriff's Meadow thanks its neighbors, many of whom wrote important

letters of support during the ZBA Special Permit process. The Foundation offers a very special thanks to all those who made generous donations to enable Sheriff's Meadow Foundation to purchase this property.

Sheriff's Meadow still needs to raise funds to support the renovation of this property. Currently, we are seeking to raise an additional \$400,000 for building renovations.



Footbridge over the Tiasquam River.

We are also seeking to install a solar panel system on the buildings, and this system may offer special opportunities for donors. If you are interested in seeing the property, making a donation, or helping to support the solar panel system, please contact Sheriff's Meadow Foundation at 508.693.5207 or via email at [moore@sheriffsmeadow.org](mailto:moore@sheriffsmeadow.org).



# Species Spotlight: Pitch Pine—*Pinus rigida*

By Kristen Geagan



Pitch pines at Caroline Tuthill Preserve. Photo by Kristen Geagan



Aerial view of original area affected by Southern Pine Beetle.

Pitch pine, a native species of pine, can be identified by its needles of three. A rugged



and salt-tolerant tree, it can grow in harsh, barren environments and needs disturbance

to maintain its habitat. Named *rigida* due to its rigid cone scale and needles, pitch pine is a vital food source for the imperial moth caterpillars. The imperial moth is a species that is listed as “threatened” in Massachusetts. Pitch pine seeds are also a great source of winter food for many birds and other wildlife. Although currently of limited economic use, pitch pine was once a booming industry.

The sight of the gnarled branches of these ubiquitous trees will disappear, changing the ecology of our natural communities.

as we know it will change as these beetles eat their way across the island. The sight of the gnarled branches of these ubiquitous trees will disappear, changing the ecology of our natural communities and leaving a gap in our woodlands that young pitch pine sprouts will struggle to fill as they compete with other species, lack of disturbance, and development.

Take the time to stop and admire these rugged trees while you can.



Affected pitch pines. Photos by Noah Froh

Its sap was used to make pitch, tar, and turpentine. Due to its high resin content, “candlewood” was also used as a light source prior to the availability of other fuels, such as whale oil.

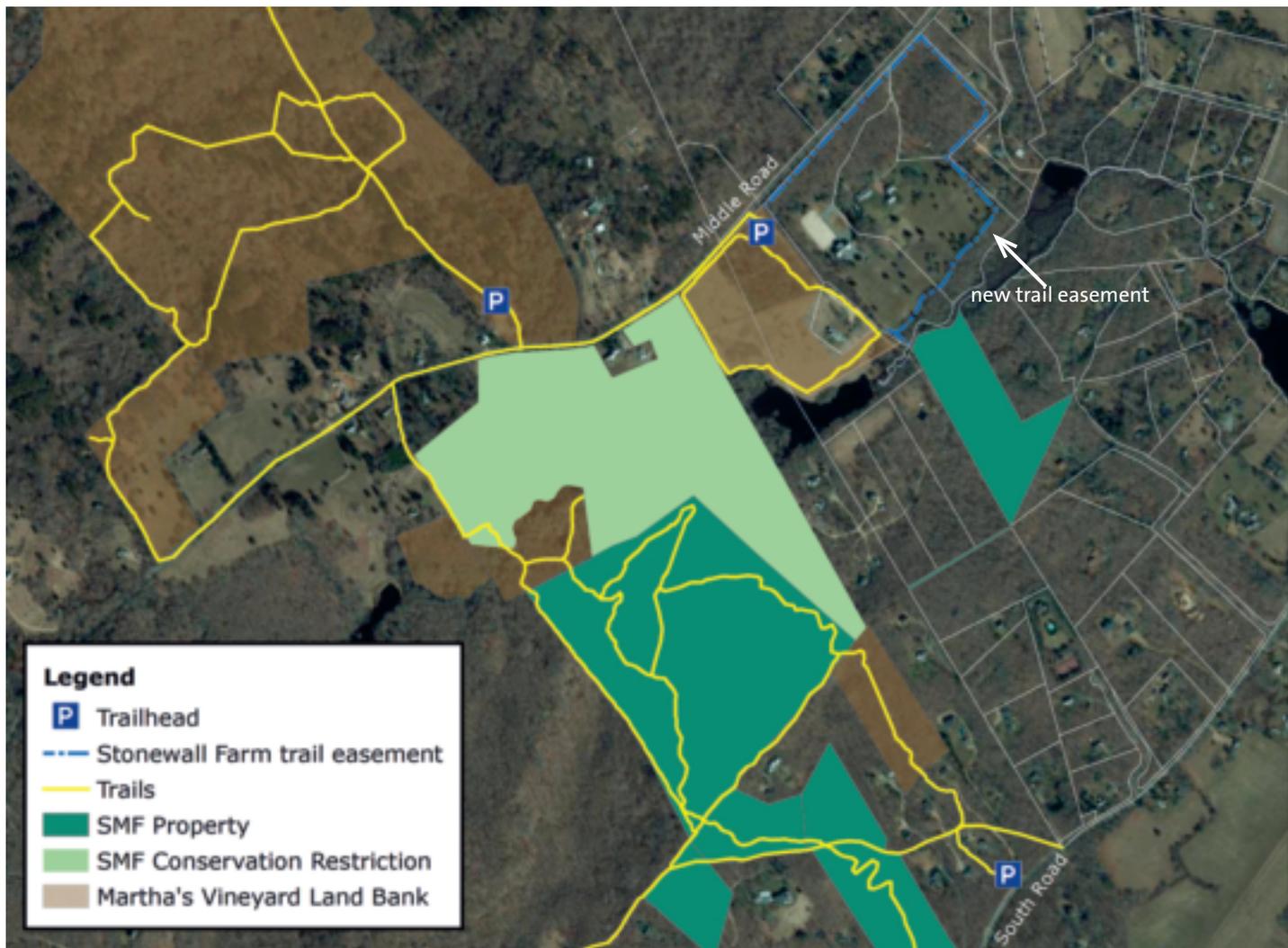
Recently due to the warming winters, the southern pine beetle, a rice grain-sized beetle native to North America, has made its way north to our shores. It is swiftly attacking our pitch pine forests. The landscape



Phillips Preserve.

# Stonewall Farm Trail Easement

By Kristen Geagan



Sheriff's Meadow Foundation is very pleased to announce that Ellen and Edwin Harley have generously donated a trail easement around their Stonewall Farm, LLC, property at 52 Middle Road in West Tisbury.

At three-quarters of a mile in length, this trail will be open to the public, free of charge, every day of the year. The trail will considerably expand the trail network in the area. Beginning at the Land Bank's Tiasquam Valley Reservation trailhead off Middle Road, the walker may walk on the Stonewall Farm trail easement northeast, in the woods near Middle Road. Near the property corner, the trail will turn to the southeast, traverse the woods, and then reach the edge of a pasture. From here, the

path will loop around the farm, following the edge of the pasture. The trail offers stunning views of the pastoral landscape and the sound of the Tiasquam River babbling to the south.

The trail will then connect back to the Land Bank trail system after crossing Murphy Road. Walkers can head back to the trailhead or continue on a longer ramble through the Brookside Ridge Preserve or through the Tiasquam Valley Reservation and to points beyond. Sheriff's Meadow staff will be working on securing the necessary state and municipal permits to create the trail this winter with hopes of having the trail open to the public this summer.



## *Photos of trail easement looping the farm*



*Photos by Noah Froh*

*Photo by Kristen Geagan*

## *New Year's Day Walk, 2024 Cedar Tree Neck Sanctuary*



Director of Stewardship Kristen Geagan led a hardy group on a challenging New Year's Day hike at Cedar Tree Neck Sanctuary. We climbed the hilly terrain, scaled stiles over stone walls, and crossed pavement to get to the Irvin Trail. Following the walk participants warmed up with coffee, beverages, and snacks before heading off to celebrate the New Year.

*Photos by Susan Hughes*

# Sheriff's Meadow Foundation Happenings

## Treasure on the Trails:

### *The Eben Horton Glass Float Project with MV Glassworks*

By Catherine Hall



Photo by Michael Chmielewski

Since its launch in June 2023, “Treasure on the Trails: The Eben Horton Glass Float Project with MV Glassworks” has inspired hundreds of Islanders and visitors to hit the trails in search of a Martha’s Vineyard treasure to call their own.

Released in waves of 25 at a time, the staff of Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation worked together to carefully and strategically hide the beautiful, hand-crafted glass floats, commissioned from MV Glassworks, across its



Don Lynch, finder of float #100.

19 public conservation properties in June, August, October, and December. Hidden amongst bushes of huckleberry and bayberry, tucked into hollows of trees, concealed by tangles of fallen pitch pine, hanging from branches of beetlebung trees, veiled behind clusters of rocks—these treasures awaited their seekers. From dusk until dawn, in rain or sunshine, explorers of all ages and abilities excitedly set out on the trails of our conservation lands—from Chappaquiddick to Aquinnah—to be the first to find a coveted float. Some notable hiding spots that staff particularly liked were located in the hollowed-out trunk of the mighty oak “wolf” tree at Quansoo Farm in Chilmark, tucked beneath a pile of fallen red maple leaves on the bluff overlooking Menemsha Pond at Eastman and Knapp Preserves in Aquinnah, and by the colossal glacial erratic at Brookside Ridge Preserve in Chilmark.

This initiative was started with the goals of encouraging more Islanders and visitors to explore the miles of trails offered by SMF, utilize the free TrailsMV mobile app,\* and increase engagement across our social media platforms.\*\* It has been an incredible experience not only accomplishing these goals, but also interacting with the Island community in a whole new way! From

phone calls and emails, to social media posts and messages; we have been delighted to see families and hikers enjoying our properties with a renewed sense of wonder and excitement. Perhaps what was most inspiring was, whether a float was found or not, the understanding that the true treasure to behold was that the natural, beautiful, rural landscape and character of Martha’s Vineyard was always at the forefront.

Don Lynch of Vineyard Haven, the lucky finder of float #100 hidden at Middle Road Sanctuary, shared his thoughts with us on Instagram, “[This is] an absolute fantastic program. My hope is that [others] have all the excitement of the program as I did while really taking in the outdoors. One good point I noticed is that people slow down and take their time while looking...not [just] ‘getting their steps’ trucking along... and that allows of’ Mother Nature to tap on their shoulder.”

Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation would like to give special thanks to Alan Rappaport and Bill Plapinger for encouraging this exceptional effort. We would also like to thank MV Glassworks for working with us to create these beautiful floats stamped with our logo, and for also offering a very special prize to four raffle winners over the course of this project. Furthermore, we would like to thank Eben Horton, of the Glass Station Studio, who implemented this popular project on Block Island and supported us in bringing a similar treasure hunt to Martha’s Vineyard.

To look back at the “Treasure on the Trails” 2023 waves, please view the highlight available on the SMF Instagram page. More information about this project can be found on our website in the Activities section, the SMF Facebook page, and the TrailsMV app/ social media platforms.

\* Available in the App Store and Google Play

\*\* @sheriffsmeadow and @trailsmv

# Southern Pine Beetle Forest Stewardship Notes

By Adam Moore



Lumber from pitch pine logs.

“This is going to be your desk!” said Joe Rogers, as he gestured to a plank of pitch pine, fresh off the sawmill.

I smiled, and took a closer look at the plank and at the stack of lumber. Some of the boards were mainly heartwood, the somewhat rot-resistant, aromatic wood at the core of each mature pitch pine. Red in color, the heartwood boards are generally clear of knots, and the most durable wood that the pitch pine offers. Other boards contained more sapwood, which is more of a cream color, and lacking in the chemicals that confer the natural rot-resistance to the heartwood. Perhaps the most striking wood, though, is the sapwood containing the blue-stain fungus. Many of the logs, and many



Adam Moore marking trees.

of the sapwood boards, contain this naturally-occurring, harmless fungus. Although it has no impact on the strength of lumber, the blue stain does impact the appearance. It confers a striking, zebra-striped pattern upon the stained board. Some discerning buyers of wood find this characteristic distinctive, and pay more for the blue-stained lumber.

Having tarried enough beside the stack of

lumber, I bundled up, and set out into the woods of the Phillips Preserve to mark pitch pines for additional suppression cutting and thinning. I marked, while Noah Froh tallied, and intern Jack Carbon measured the diameter of each marked tree with a pair of giant calipers. I wore old, outdoor clothing that I have sacrificed to the task of marking timber. When marking timber, one uses a one-quart paint can that is outfitted with a spring-loaded, special nozzle, and the whole contraption is referred to as a paint gun. Squeeze the trigger, and the gun sprays blue paint onto the tree to be cut, but also sprays a fine, blue mist onto the hat, face, gloves, clothing, and boots of the person pulling the trigger. Marking timber gives one the opportunity to inspect each tree in the forest. The job is a patient one of pacing through the woods, stopping beside a group of trees, and quietly judging which trees ought to remain and which ought to be cut.

We have been approved for two streams of funding related to forest management. First, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation issued approval for funding of forest stewardship plans for the Phillips Preserve, Caroline Tuthill Preserve, West Chop Woods, and the Reynolds property. This funding will cover staff time devoted to the forest inventory and writing the plan, and totals \$19,840. Second, Mass-Wildlife has approved a grant of \$75,000 for the logging needed at the Phillips Preserve associated with the southern pine beetle. Here, we will use the funds to hire Cape

Cod Firewood to safely and quickly fell and skid the pitch pines that I have marked.

And I have marked a lot of pitch pines. As of press time, I had marked 1,899 pitch pines totaling about 93,485 board feet of sawtimber. These are trees that ought to be removed because they are full of beetle larvae that are ready to emerge as adults when the weather warms up, and trees that ought to be removed because this pine forest is too dense, and thereby very susceptible to infestation. Essentially, each pine tree needs to have the wind blowing around it. This disrupts the chemical communication of the beetles, and may spare some of our mature pitch pines.



Noah Froh measuring. Photos by Catherine Hall

I recommend a similar thinning at West Chop Woods. At West Chop Woods, I will be leading a guided public walk on Saturday March 16. At West Chop Woods, the power line right of way offers an excellent place to stack up the logs and deal with the tops of the felled trees (known as “slash”). With respect to this slash, we are seeking a temporary authorization from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for the use of an air curtain burner. This would enable us to safely and economically dispose of all the treetops, bark, and slabs, and leave behind an attractive site and a forest that has a reduced wildfire risk and is better than we found it.



# SMF First Annual Trail Run

By Noah Froh and Susan Hughes



Take Your Mark... Go!



Huck Moore, first male finisher.

Sheriff’s Meadow Foundation hosted its First Annual Trail Run on a cool, gray, windy day on October 15, 2023. The run traversed three miles of twisty, hilly trails at the Caroline Tuthill Preserve in Edgartown. Some 62 hardy souls—young and old—ran that morning. Huck Moore was first to finish in the male division and Bryn Willingham finished first in the female division.

All the participants received a bright orange hat, and a special poster designed by Melissa Nellis Patterson. Everyone seemed to enjoy the “low-key” event and refueled with bananas, granola bars, and Chilmark Coffee, post run!

We extend a huge thank you to Reaan Steenkamp and Dianne Booth of the Martha’s Vineyard Running Company who provided the timing equipment as well as tents, signs, and valuable knowledge. We also want to acknowledge Cronig’s Markets, Jon Malone at Edgartown Bikes, and Todd Christie of Chilmark Coffee. And lastly, we want to recognize the volunteers and members of our Trail Run Committee,

who gave their time and input over the last few months!

We invite you to sign up for the 2024 Trail Run to be held next fall! More information available in the late spring.



Bryn Willingham, first female finisher.



Photos by Tobias Russell Schaeffer



## *Squibnocket Pond Reservation*



Sheriff's Meadow Foundation is pleased to report that Squibnocket Pond Reservation will be opened to the public in the fall of 2024. With our partner, the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank Commission, we are now applying for the necessary local permits. Once permits are in hand, we will spend the spring and summer creating the trails, trailheads, footbridges, and the like that are called for in the plan.

We thank you for your generous support and for your patience through this permitting and planning process.

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*Thank you for your continued support!*



### **New Stock Donation Information**

For donors interested in making a gift of stock, please note that we have new stock donation information. We have changed investment managers from Vanguard to Brown Advisory, and therefore the donation instructions have changed. For the new instructions, please contact the Sheriff's Meadow Foundation office at [moore@sheriffsmeadow.org](mailto:moore@sheriffsmeadow.org) or call the office at 508.693.5207.



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PO Box 1088  
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568  
[www.sheriffsmeadow.org](http://www.sheriffsmeadow.org)

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## Upcoming Guided Public Walks



For more information and to register, please scan the QR code.

### West Chop Woods, Vineyard Haven

Saturday, March 16, 2024  
10am-12pm

Located less than a mile and a half from downtown Vineyard Haven, join Adam Moore at the trailhead off of Franklin Street to explore the pitch pine oak forest and old cart paths of West Chop Woods and learn about forest health.

### Quansoo Farm, Chilmark

Saturday, April 20, 2024  
10am-12pm

Discover Quansoo Farm and the historic Hancock Mitchell house with a tour by SMF staff. Learn about the ecology and history of the 146 acre preserve.

### Chappaquiddick Trails

Saturday, May 18, 2024  
10am-12pm

Join SMF for a spring adventure. Take your car or bike on the Chappaquiddick ferry. Park at MVLB Three Ponds trailhead at the Chappy Community Center. Walk the new Ames trail to the Slater trail, up to Tilghman Preserve, back through MVLB's Three Ponds Preserve to the Chappy Community Center.

## Save the Date

Annual Summer Benefit  
Monday, July 15, 2024

### Seasonal Employment Opportunities

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation is currently hiring for multiple seasonal positions.

For full job descriptions please visit [sheriffsmeadow.org/jobs](http://sheriffsmeadow.org/jobs)

Cover Photo by Susan Hughes