



Dartmouth Week

Officials celebrate protection of Ocean View Farm

Douglas McCulloch
Sep 30, 2017



Buzzards Bay Coalition President Mark Rasmussen introduces guest speakers. BY DOUGLAS MCCULLOCH

Efforts to protect the Allens Pond watershed from development groups and officials celebrated the preservation of the largest the South Coast on September 29.

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Staff from the Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust, Buzzards Bay Coalition, and Round the Bend Farm were joined by local, state, and federal partners who helped make the \$8.1 million project to secure Ocean View Farm from development possible.

The groups officially closed on the 115-acre property, which has been a farm since the late 18th century, in August using funding from state and federal sources, Community Preservation Act funding that was approved at Town Meeting, and private fundraising. It is part of a broader project to protect the Allens Pond watershed from development.

The property will be split between Dartmouth Natural Resources Trust and Round the Bend Farm, which borders the property. DNRT Executive Director Dexter Mead said the organization already has plans for its portion of the property, including nature trails, a boardwalk across wetlands on the site, a parking lot for visitors, and an observation platform overlooking Allens Pond.

"We really want to make this an enjoyable and inspiring place for people to visit," Mead said. "It's important that people come out and are able to enjoy these properties so they can become advocates of conservation."

Mead said DNRT will also undertake habitat restoration projects. That will involve transforming a 13-acre site currently used to cut hay into grasslands, and restoring a 14-acre cornfield into native shrublands.

With the addition of the Ocean View Farm real estate, Round the Bend Farm will double its size to 94 acres, explained Executive Director Desa Van Laarhoven. That will help further the non-profit working farm's production operations. She hopes the new land will open up more farmland for a diverse group of farmers.

"It is inherent in RTB's mission to honor all those who set the table, yet are often unseen, and this acquisition will greatly expand our mission to do so," Van Laarhoven said. "We envision opening this land to a new generation of farmers – to women and people of color – who have historically worked the land, but were traditionally locked out of long-term leasing and ownership."

Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary of the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, touted the partnership between the land conservation groups and state and federal agencies to secure funding in just 15 months to save one of the most beautiful pieces of property he's seen in the state.

"I get to go to every corner of the state... and this stacks up as beautiful of a place as you're going to see," Beaton said.

Once all the pieces of the project are in place, the Allens Pond Completion Project will eventually preserve more than 200 acres of forests, wetlands, and working farmland, in addition to the 600 acres already owned by Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary.

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Round the Bend Farm Executive Director Desa Van Laarhoven discusses her vision for new farmland on the property. BY DOUGLAS MCCULLOCH

A view of one of several fields on the property. BY DOUGLAS MCCULLOCH

Grass in the area closest to the water. BY DOUGLAS MCCULLOCH

The property ends in Allens Pond. BY DOUGLAS MCCULLOCH

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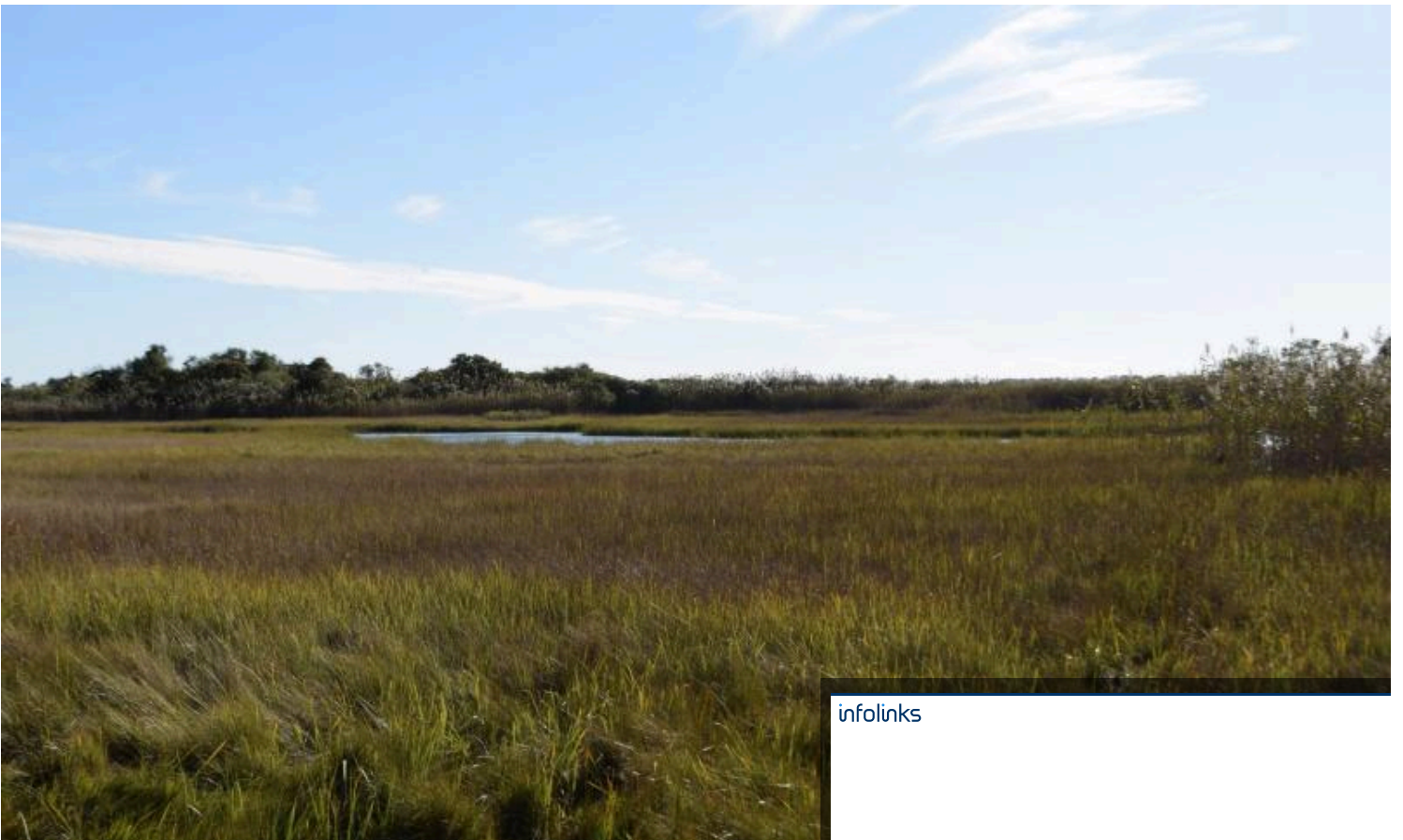
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