



*The Friends of Canonchet Farm's mission is to improve, manage, and preserve Canonchet Farm in partnership with the public for the enjoyment of present and future generations.*

## Our Vision and Recommendations for Canonchet Farm

April 2009

The Friends of Canonchet Farm was formed in an effort to improve, manage, and preserve Canonchet Farm, and to encourage activities that foster appreciation of the natural environment, beauty and historical significance of this property. The Friends of Canonchet Farm has received the 501(c)(3) designation as a charitable organization and is currently positioned to raise funds that can be used to supplement the town budget for the Canonchet Farm property. We foresee the Town of Narragansett forming a partnership with this organization and its volunteers to improve and preserve Canonchet Farm for the pleasure and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Many people currently enjoy and use the trails on Canonchet Farm, but the trails need significant upgrading and continued maintenance in order to realize their full potential. Currently the trails are used by those who walk, hike and run, as well as those interested in observing nature.

Our recommendations include projects that address park improvement, educational programs, conservation and outdoor passive recreation for people of all ages. The recommendations are divided into three phases based on public interest, as well as the time and funds needed to accomplish the projects. All recommendations are subject to the approval of existing authorities including, but not limited to, the R.I. Coastal Resource Management Council, R.I. Department of Environmental Management and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**PHASE ONE:** Projects in this phase will increase and control accessibility, and optimize use of this property. They will also increase and promote public awareness, appreciation of and respect for Canonchet Farm and its natural environment, beauty and historical significance. These projects can be completed using volunteers working in cooperation with Narragansett Town employees or contractors. The projects require minimum funding and are of primary interest.

1. **Access:** Resolve issues involving access to the park, parking, and hours the park will be open.
2. **Mapping:** Prepare an accurate map including features presently on the property such as stone walls, quarries, trails and wetlands, and the location of prospective improvements as listed in this plan.

3. **Inventory:** Compile and publish an inventory of wildlife, plants, and geological and historical features.
4. **General cleanup:** Clear the west beach parking lot, the dumping grounds to the west of the meadows and the area north of the Sprague Park maintenance garage of stumps, tree trunks, sand, concrete, telephone poles, metal objects, and other debris.
5. **Trails:** Widen the existing nature trail and extend it to the western portion of the property.  

Create a network of spur and loop trails off the main trail. Install a uniform system of signage to direct walkers and highlight features of interest such as specimen trees, vernal pools and glacial remains. Design boardwalks and other structures to cross wet areas where needed. Improve the circular trail just north of the beech grove to highlight the glacial erratic, granite quarry and Little Neck Pond vista. Begin design on a boardwalk to Pettaquamscutt Cove for observing wildlife.
6. **Vista Enhancement:** Selectively *THIN* the lower story of the forest of undesirable invasives and other species, weeds, and brush to enhance ground level vistas through the trees from a limited number of specified vantage points. Primary vistas could be to Little Neck Pond, Pettaquamscutt Cove and the ocean. Vista enhancement would be included in all phases.
7. **Biodiversity:** Manage the property to maximize the diversity of both plant and animal species.
8. **Stone Walls:** Recognize that there are many wonderful examples of expertly crafted stone walls of historic significance on the property but many are seriously overgrown with vines, weeds and other invasive species. Clear these walls of the debris, and place signs near the walls explaining their style and their original use.
9. **Trees:** Develop a management plan to protect and care for selected specimen trees and groves throughout the park. Some examples are the beech, sassafras, birch and tupelo groves, elm trees and very grand English oaks. Identify key specimen trees and other plants with signage.
10. **Education:** Develop outdoor educational programs for adults and young people.
11. **Outreach:** Reach out to various groups that could provide assistance and ideas for any of the improvements. These groups include, but are not limited to:
 

<p>The Audubon Society of Rhode Island          Area schools          Boy Scouts of America          Girl Scouts of the USA          Narragansett Conservation Commission          Narragansett Indian Tribe          Narragansett Lions Club          Narragansett Tree Society          Narragansett School Department</p>	<p>Narrow River Preservation Association          The Nature Conservancy          R.I. Wild Plant Society          South County land trusts          South County Museum          U.S. Fish &amp; Wildlife Service          URI Master Gardeners          volunteer stone masons</p>
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12. **Planning:** Start the analysis and design groundwork in preparation for projects in Phases Two and Three.

PHASE TWO: Projects in Phase Two require further development of items described in Phase One and a degree of coordination that goes beyond volunteer work. These projects may require approvals from the Town of Narragansett and other governing and regulatory agencies, more preparation, greater expertise and some funding.

1. Continue items started in Phase One.
2. Improve accessibility by constructing short trails with firm but permeable surfaces to selected points of interest.
3. Enhance trail surfaces as permitted by regulatory authorities.
4. Build structures that enable wetland crossing while allowing proper drainage.
5. Repair stone walls on a case-by-case basis.

PHASE THREE: Items in this phase require a much higher level of organization, approvals and permits, and funding. These are projects that are contingent upon sufficient interest, park usage and available funds. In all cases, these projects should foster appreciation of and preservation of the natural environment, beauty and historical significance of the property, and be in line with our mission.

1. Convert Anne Hoxsie Lane from the gate at the west side of the gravel parking lot to the South County Museum to a broad footpath restricted to pedestrians and emergency and park maintenance vehicles. In order to preserve the environment and protect the safety of visitors, allow no motorized vehicular traffic in the park except at the entrance parking lots.
2. Develop, in conjunction with the South County Museum, a visitors center, picnic area and restrooms in the museum cluster. Explore the use of the Narragansett Community Center as another visitor resource. No new buildings are to be constructed.
3. Construct a boardwalk and observation platform into the marsh areas along the Pettaquamscutt Cove with concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and R.I. Coastal Resource Management.
4. Improve existing gates in appearance, strength, security, functionality and location in compliance with the Town of Narragansett safety requirements. Recognize that Anne Hoxsie Lane, Strathmore Street and Sprague Park entrances should provide access to the park with Anne Hoxsie Lane as the primary entrance and visitor parking facility.
5. Eliminate the existing beach overflow parking lot in the lower meadow and beach employee parking lot at the corner of Boston Neck Road and Narragansett Avenue, as both of these lots are environmentally unsound.
6. Redesign the gravel parking lot on Anne Hoxsie Lane in an environmentally sound manner.
7. Designate the Anne Hoxsie Lane gravel parking lot for park visitors only. Work with the Town of Narragansett to develop alternative beach parking such as the parking lots at the three Narragansett schools serviced by a shuttle service to and from the beach.