



The Heron

Fall 2003

The Newsletter of the Mattapoissett Land Trust, Inc.

The Short- and Long-Term Impact of the Bouchard Oil Spill on Buzzards Bay

By Tom Richardson

Remember the oil spill? It doesn't get much press these days, but the spill continues to affect Buzzards Bay in many visible and unseen ways. Final numbers are still being disputed, but the Coast Guard puts the total amount of oil spilled from Bouchard Barge 120 on April 27 at 98,000 gallons, making it the second worst oil spill in the Bay's history. According to the Buzzards Bay Project, 139 miles of shoreline were "oiled," 90,000 acres of shellfish beds closed, and over 450 birds killed as a result of the spill. No marine mammal deaths were reported, and the affects on finfish and lobster populations are as yet unknown (an unusual mass die-off of skates is being investigated). Here in Mattapoissett, 2.16 miles of shoreline were assessed as "heavily oiled," most of it along Brandt Island, Mattapoissett Neck, and Angelica and Strawberry Points (only Fairhaven had more heavily oiled shores, at 5.11 miles). Total cost of the cleanup is expected to run \$30 to \$100 million, according to the Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries. The Buzzards Bay Project currently puts cleanup costs at \$40 million.

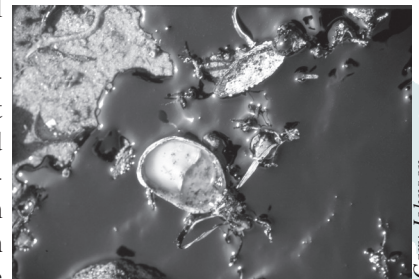
So where do we stand today? According to MLT Board Member Sue Reid, who also works for the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, day-to-day cleanup operations have largely ceased, except where new oiled areas are discovered. Experts continue to assess certain affected areas, such as salt marshes, for long-term damage and economic loss. Some 600 damage claims have been filed with Bouchard thus far, most of them by commercial shellfishermen.

While cleanup crews worked tirelessly to remove oil from the sea surface and shoreline, a lot of oil still remains in the environment. Some of it washed out to sea, some of it may have settled to the ocean bottom, some of it was dispersed into tiny droplets by wave action and may be suspended in the water

column, some of it was likely consumed by petroleum-eating microbes, and some of it was covered by new vegetation and sand. Reid says that Bay residents can expect to encounter oil-encrusted rocks and pilings for years to come, as well as isolated tar balls and oil patches exposed by shifting sands. Patches of oily film may also be visible in marsh areas and on exposed tidal flats, both of which prove difficult to clean without causing damage to the surface. Biologists still don't fully know how residual oil toxins will affect the ecology of salt marshes and shellfish beds, but they do know that the type of oil spilled in the Bay can remain present in marsh soils for decades.

On the shellfish front, 52,000 acres of shellfish beds were reopened on October 10. Thirty-eight thousand acres remain closed, some due to oil contamination and others because of high levels of harmful bacteria.

Locally, three areas of Mattapoissett have been assessed as zones of "maintenance, attenuation or no action," which basically means the oil could not be fully removed by cleanup crews and may have to



Gary Johnson

"An unexpected and unwelcome intruder at Brandt Island Cove"

be left to dissipate on its own. These areas include the stretch of coast along Angelica Point, Strawberry Point and Pine Island Pond; the tip of Mattapoissett Neck; and Brandt Island Cove. The latter is the site of the Munn Land Trust property, which was heavily affected by the spill.

Continued on pg. 2

Bouchard Oil Spill can't.

"I kayak with my wife on a regular basis in the Brandt Island Cove area each week," reports Land Trust Vice-President Paul Osenkowski. "Each time that we go on shore at the Munn Preserve with the kayaks, we always end up with oil on the boats. We have observed that Seal Island has had oil on the rocks that the cleanup crews said they just couldn't get at. This is an annual wintering place for gray seals. Each year in March we go out to observe them as they sun themselves on the rocks at low tide. There's sure to be some effect on the seals this year."

Despite the fact that cleanup efforts have largely ended, Reid emphasizes the continued importance of reporting any signs of oil. "At this point, with the oil spill unified command post having been dismantled and day-to-day cleanup operations having been terminated, it is more important than ever before for citizens to contact the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection or GeoInsight, the Licensed Site Professional, to report any oil that comes off to the touch or appears to be mobile," says Reid. "Taking this sort of initiative is the only way to ensure that additional, important cleanup will occur." To contact GeoInsight, call (978) 692-1114. For detailed information on the spill, see the Buzzards Bay Project website at www.buzzardsbay.org.



Gary Johnson

"Work crews collecting oil on the Munn Preserve on Brandt Island Cove"



*We would like to
hear from you!*

Whether your contributions come in the form of tax-deductible financial gifts or through volunteer services, your support matters! Your annual membership contributions support the operating expenses of the MLT. Mowing, inspections, forestry services, trash pick-up, legal and accounting advice are all part of what keeps the organization vital and growing. In addition, whether you are concerned about preserving the scenic beauty of Mat-tapoisett, maintaining its biodiversity, or fear the degradation of Buzzards Bay waters from septic systems and chemical run-off, there are many ways you can volunteer your time and services, allowing for the enjoyment and education of future generations. To become a member of the MLT, renew your membership, learn more about upcoming events, and find out about volunteer opportunities, check out our new website: mattlandtrust.org, or email us at mattlandtrust@earthlink.net. We would like to hear from you and welcome any suggestions or comments!

Check us out online!

Visit us online at www.mattlandtrust.org. You'll find information on who we are, the mission of the MLT, pictures and descriptions of several of the properties maintained by the land trust, volunteer opportunities, and upcoming events.

There's also some great merchandise, including hats, t-shirts for babies through adults, fleece sweatshirts and more, that show your support of the MLT. You can custom-design your selections with various colors and MLT logos, and it's just in time for the holidays!



Who We Are:

Brad Hathaway

Members of the Mattapoissett Land Trust represent a diverse community that shares a common mission — the preservation of Mattapoissett land and open spaces for present and future generations. In an effort to illustrate our members' backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs, we have introduced a regular "spotlight column," beginning with introductions of MLT board members. The inaugural column highlights Brad Hathaway, who helped found the MLT in 1974.

Brad Hathaway has served on the land trust board of directors for almost 30 years. His roots to the community run almost as deep as his convictions regarding environmental preservation and conservation. Born and raised on Sconticut Neck in Fairhaven, MA, he met his future wife, Priscilla Alden, when they were high school seniors. Following receipt of a journalism degree from Boston University and a stint in the Korean War, Brad and Priscilla married and settled in Mattapoissett, where family ties date back to the early 1700s. They have raised three children together- David, Jane, and Joshua- all of whom share a love of the environment and an appreciation of having grown up in Mattapoissett. Brad and Priscilla will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this July.

Before retiring ten years ago, Brad worked at the *New Bedford Standard Times* for 37 years in a variety of positions, working his way up from cub reporter to city and features editor. In addition to his active community involvement, his favorite pastimes include stamp collecting and walking. "I've come to appreciate much more of Mattapoissett's open spaces and greenways" he says, having logged nearly 16,000 miles over the last 15 years.



When asked why he chose to become involved with the Mattapoissett Land Trust, he stated that it was out of a conviction that if Mattapoissett was going to remain "special", it would have to be through the formation of a private organization committed to educating the public about the need for environmental protection and providing a vehicle for land preservation of open space and greenways. "At first, MLT did this by accepting gifts of land," says Hathaway. "We now hold and manage more than 400 acres. More recently, we have had to purchase land (for example, the Tub Mill Brook property), and currently on the agenda we are now trying to coordinate acquisition through purchase and donation of land near our existing properties, in order to increase the biodiversity that

they can support. The financial support of townspeople and the cooperation of current landowners will combine to provide Mattapoissett's future citizens with a legacy of untold value forever. I see this as just the beginning of MLT's new initiative to balance development with land protection."



Property Updates

Shoolman Property Donation – Mrs. Edith Shoolman, a long-time advocate of land preservation, who passed away in March of this year, has, in a final generous act, bequeathed to the Land Trust her house and gardens in the Brandt Beach community of Mattapoissett. Mrs. Shoolman and her husband, Eliot, were early supporters of the work of the Land Trust, donating the 80-acre Oldfield Farm in Rochester to us in 1984. We are seeking an appropriate way to memorialize her magnanimous support.

Hiller Cove Project — The Land Trust has entered into an option agreement with Mr. Skip Boardman to purchase 54 acres in eastern Mattapoissett, adjoining our existing Martocci and Coyne Properties. The lots are in an area of Supporting Natural Landscape as defined by the state's BioMap Project and should help maintaining biodiversity in the region.

The Land Trust recently invested in a **zero-turning radius lawn mower** to care for several of the land trust properties. It's a very efficient machine that allows the driver to trim closely to obstacles at a fairly high speed, leaving a nicely finished product. This machine has allowed the "grounds keeper" to make the Dunseith Gardens, Tub Mill and Munro properties nice places for the people of Mattapoissett to come and relax. States Paul Osenkowski, "The fact that so many people have commented on the pleasant appearance of these parks speaks highly for the fact that the MLT wants to help keep 'Mattapoissett Special'."

It's great to see the **community using and enjoying land trust properties**. The gardening division of the **Mattapoissett Woman's Club held a plant sale** at Dunseith Gardens and, as thanks, Janet White, the new president of the Woman's Club, and her husband Ken planted 300-400 tulip and daffodil bulbs at the entrance way to Dunseith Gardens. These should provide a great show this Spring! Also, Jennifer DeSouza and Michael Young chose the **Munro property for the site of their wedding vows**. With about one hundred guests in attendance, the couple enjoyed nice weather for their outdoor ceremonies, "The wind was blowing perfectly that day. And the waves and the wind provided a melody that was good enough for two people who grew up by these waters," stated Michael. Best wishes to the couple for a long and satisfying future together!



Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.
Post Office Box 31 • Mattapoisett, MA 02739

Calendar

Saturday, November 1, 10 a.m.

Fall Field Walk

Explore the habitats and wildlife of the Field Property, 64 acres of land located on the east side of Brandt Island Cove. We'll meet at 10:00 am at 100 Mattapoisett Neck Road (parking on the road) to walk, with Bill Field as our guide, the latest property on which the MLT has agreed to purchase the conservation restriction.

Rain Date: Saturday, November 8

Saturday, November 8, 9 a.m.

Dunseith Gardens Workday

Join area Boy Scouts as we all help get Dunseith Gardens – home of “Salty the Seahorse” - ready for winter! Bring along work gloves, rakes, and plastic trash barrels, if you have them.

Rain Date: Saturday, November 15



The Heron is published bi-annually by the Mattapoisett Land Trust. The MLT, formed in 1974, is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization incorporated under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Its purpose is to preserve open space for the enjoyment of current and future residents of Mattapoisett, as well as to educate the public about the sound use of natural resources, and to work with other organizations having the same goals.

Our membership consists of annual contributors -- our primary source of revenue -- and a volunteer board of directors: Bob Atkinson, Ruth Bates, Brad Hathaway, Elizabeth Leidhold, Paul Osenkowski, Luana Josvold, Jenny Mello, Blanche Perry, Diane Perry, Susan Reid, Elizabeth Richardson, Allan Schubert, Sue Watgen and Gary Johnson, President. The Mattapoisett Land Trust is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization. All contributions are fully tax deductible.

Mattapoisett Land Trust, Inc.
P.O. Box 31 • Mattapoisett, MA 02739
Email: mattlandtrust@earthlink.net