



Nantucket Land Bank



\* *January*  
*2022* \*  
*Newsletter*



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# Cultivating Local ACKriculture



The Land Bank works to provide “Conservation, recreation, and agriculture for the benefit of the public.” Agriculture has long been the lesser-known component of the Land Bank Act, and we are striving to change that. When we purchase property with strong agronomic value, we work with both established and aspiring local farmers to provide them an opportunity to pursue their agricultural endeavors. Through partnerships like these, we are proud to enable Nantucket’s farmers to cultivate and harvest island-grown food for the benefit of our community, while preserving scenic pastoral views of open farmland.

One of these longstanding partnerships is with Sustainable Nantucket. The Land Bank leases 8 acres of land at Mt. Vernon Farm to Sustainable Nantucket, which provides farming infrastructure, educational programming, and a roadside farm stand with the goals of showcasing local farming, increasing local food production, and nurturing farmers’ skills and productivity. Fog Town, Washashore, Eat Fire, ACK Sweetwater, and Flower Power Farms are all cultivating Land Bank land at 168 Hummock Pond Road through Sustainable Nantucket’s Community Farm Institute.

Moors End Farm, located at 40 Polpis Rd., is another of our agricultural partners. Moors End Farm was founded by Steve and Sue Slosek in the mid-1970s and continues to be run by the Slosek family today. During the generational transfer of this family farm, 19 of the 25 acres that make up Moors End have been purchased by the Land Bank. Since its inception, the farm has grown into a diverse operation that includes cultivation of produce, livestock, poultry, and a plant nursery.

Our newest agricultural collaboration is My Grandfather’s Farm, operated by Tom and Nick Larrabee. The Land Bank purchased this property at 101-103 Hummock Pond Road to enable the creation of a new local farm on the island. The Larrabee family has owned this land since 1935 and began negotiating a sale to the Land Bank with the understanding that Tom and Nick sought to preserve the agrarian nature of the property. They are hoping to transition the property towards a mixed farming operation with livestock, mixed vegetable, and perennial fruit production. We are excited to see this new operation take shape!

Additionally, the Land Bank is partnering with local farmer Jordan McHugh to create a heritage apple orchard on the Land Bank’s 61 Millbrook Road property. 49 trees, made up of various varieties of heritage apples and some pears, were planted in 2020, and in a few years’ time should provide islanders with the classic Massachusetts experience of apple picking.

We continue to actively look for additional agricultural land to preserve on the island, and encourage our fellow Nantucketers to support our island farmers and buy local!



🍏 Millbrook Heritage Orchard 🍏

# Partners in Sustainable Agriculture: Nantucket Land Bank & American Farmland Trust



*"Agriculture changes the landscape more than anything else we do. It alters the composition of species. We don't realize it when we sit down to eat, but that is our most profound engagement with the rest of nature."*

– Michael Pollan

The Land Bank owns and manages nearly 3,500 acres of land dedicated to conservation, recreation, and agriculture on Nantucket. We currently own 6 farming ventures, 4 of which are in active cultivation, while the other 2 remain in development. Starting with 13 acres of Moors End Farm in 2001, the Land Bank has acquired 64 acres of agricultural property across the island. Much of this land has been purchased recently. As a result, the Land Bank is working to refine our agricultural policies so we can responsibly meet the demands of our community's growing agricultural needs.

To further our understanding of owning and leasing farmland, the Land Bank is seeking guidance from the American Farmland Trust (AFT) on how best to sustain productive and ecologically sound agriculture. The Land Bank's agricultural and land preservation objectives are neatly aligned with the AFT's three pillars: keeping farmers on land, promoting rigorous farming practices, and protecting farmland.

Founded in 1980, the AFT played a role in launching the agricultural conservation movement by creating Farmland Protection Programs and Agricultural Land Trusts across the nation, proactively working to save and support farmland and farmers. Farmland is a vital part of our infrastructure, but it is a finite resource. AFT advocates for smarter conservation practices to address the ongoing need for adequate farmland, healthy soils, and skilled farmers to work the land. After years of decline, there are now many people interested in going into farming, but it is a challenging profession with tight margins. Implementing conservation measures helps to ensure that a farm can sustainably be passed from one generation to the next, thus safeguarding a locally produced food supply. Their motto is aptly "No Farms, No Food, No Future".



We are going through a planning process with the AFT to help us prioritize objectives and establish parameters for the use of the Land Bank's agricultural properties. The first step in this process is to define what agriculture means to the Land Bank. The AFT will provide insight into various farming methods, infrastructure options, and management strategies. The AFT will also serve as a resource for both short-term and long-term issues that may arise with the management of farmland. The culmination of this process will be to develop a public Request for Proposals, which will give all interested farmers a fair opportunity to be considered for the leasing of Land Bank farmland.

The Land Bank is grateful for this collaboration, which will further our goals of conserving land for farming and engaging with stakeholders to implement environmentally sustainable agricultural practices on the island. We aim to support our farmers and help them flourish as they endeavor to produce healthy food for our tables.



# Meet Rachael Freeman:

## Environmental & Agricultural Coordinator

Since 2015, Rachael has worked as our Environmental Coordinator and more recently, she has taken on the bulk of our agricultural responsibilities. As we reflect on agriculture at the Land Bank, we sat down with Rachael to learn more about her background and goals!

**Tell us about yourself! Where did you grow up?  
What and where did you study?**

I was born in Cambridge, MA and grew up in the Boston area. My father's side of our family is originally from Nantucket so we would come down and visit my grandparents often and sometimes summer on the island. I studied biology and chemistry as an undergraduate and have a masters of plant biology. I moved to Nantucket for a seasonal job with the Nantucket Conservation Foundation in 2003 and have been here ever since. I am married to Sam Slosek of Moors End Farm and, at this moment in time, we have 3 children, 2 dogs, fish, a bearded dragon, and a turtle.

**What drew you to the Land Bank and how would you describe your job?**

I started working for the Land Bank as a contractor performing field research and report writing. I had worked exclusively for non-profits or in educational settings prior to my job at the Land Bank and I like that my job now entails the implementation of research concepts. We don't spend a ton of time doing theoretical research, but we are always using others' findings and implementing them to manage our properties in an environmentally-friendly way. Another facet of the Land Bank that I really enjoy is that we truly work for the public and this is something that I feel good about.

**What is the most interesting thing about your work for the Land Bank? What do you most enjoy about it?**

Being the environmental and agricultural coordinator at the Land Bank is fascinating and hard. My staff and I are responsible for a broad range of topics including environmental permitting, habitat management, water quality, landscaping, soils, crops, coastal resiliency, rare species, and invasive species. One of our jobs is to educate others by trying to make everything we do accessible. Every day we are empowering people to make sustainable decisions through our work.

I am also constantly learning. Often we end up working with fascinating consultants that

specialize in fields in which we need expertise. Meeting brilliant scientists and designers as a component of my work will always be inspiring.

**What is your favorite Land Bank property and why?**

The Shawkemo Hills area. I love the topography of the glacial moraine and the geologic history of the site. Also, no matter how many times I walk there, I sometimes still find myself in a spot I have never been before!





# Year in Review



## 2021 at the Land Bank

2021 was an eventful year for the Land Bank! We had a particularly busy fall, opening 3 new properties to the public: **Easy Street Park, the Creeks Preserve, and the Dog Park.**



### New Executive Director: Jesse Bell

In mid-June, Jesse Bell assumed the position of Executive Director of the Land Bank. Jesse already has over 14 years of experience at the Land Bank, and believes that Nantucket's open spaces are a fundamental part of island life. We are so excited to see where Jesse takes us!



### Expanding our Land Bank Family

We were lucky to be joined by three new employees in 2021!



Tom Geras,  
Property  
Maintenance  
Technician



Eleanor Antonietti,  
Executive Assistant



John Kuszpa,  
Director of Property  
Management

### Coast to Coast Adventures!

This year, we were thrilled to finalize the Coast to Coast Trail with our friends and collaborators, the Nantucket Conservation Foundation and Mass Audubon. We celebrated the opening of the Coast to Coast Trail by having our second annual Cross Island Hike follow this course. We had nearly 150 people join us at the beginning of the 24.7 mile trail that winds through Nantucket's fields, forests, and wetlands from west to east.



### Looking forward...

In 2021 we completed 4 property acquisitions which totaled 9.3 acres. We are also in the process of planning several projects that will improve our existing conservation, recreation, and agricultural properties. We have big plans for 2022 and can't wait to continue serving our community!

